PART I

Ways of Thinking

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WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT AND ACROSS DIFFERENCE

This note begins with the hypothesis that many of us genuinely feel "stuck" when we engage in reflection and discussion about issues of "diversity."* At the level of explicit content, we generate limitless examples of seemingly insoluble dilemmas and untenable trade-offs: how do we respect another's point of view without devaluing our own, how can we be sensitive to the experiences and feelings of others without curtailing our own experience of fundamental personal liberty, and how can we address societal inequity toward some without imposing it upon others. At the level of implicit content and interpersonal reactions, we face another set of obstacles: a whole range of learned but unconscious assumptions about those who are different from us, as well as feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, guilt, mistrust, and hopelessness that block communication and learning.

Most of us want to see ourselves as (and, in actuality, to be) fair, open-minded, intellectually honest, self-aware, and even empathetic. In fact, most of us *do* see ourselves as all these things. But nevertheless, most of us would acknowledge the great and painful conflicts and inequities that wrack our personal relationships, businesses, governments, countries, and our world—conflicts and inequities that often break down along lines of group differences (racial, ethnic, religious, gender, etc.).

So somewhere between all our individual good intentions on the one hand, and our interpersonal and group behaviors or impacts on the other, the equation breaks down. It seems that the way we think and talk about our interactions with difference limits the responses we can generate.

Psychologists tell us that when we are considering change, we can target three levels: our beliefs, our feelings, and our actions. They will further explain that the most difficult target is the first, and that the most feasible approach to change is through actions (or behavior), where changes will in turn affect our feelings and finally our beliefs. Therefore, in this note we have targeted reasoning behaviors, our cognitive strategies—not the thoughts and beliefs themselves but rather the way we put them together. By changing our thinking habits (and consequently the conclusions we act upon), we can begin to have an impact on feelings and beliefs.

The purpose of this note is to examine some of the habitual ways of thinking that are applied to so-called diversity questions, to reveal the commonalities and limitations of these models—the ways they can reinforce unexamined assumptions and destructive emotional reactions, and to suggest an alternative way of framing such questions that opens up the possibility for creativity and new learning.

Diversity Questions

Before we look at some of our mental models and ways of reasoning about diversity questions, let's define just what these questions are. The term *diversity* has come to refer to any number of issues and concerns, and although you or I

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* Over the last decade or so in the United States, the term *diversity* has become a kind of code word for issues triggered by the impacts of race and gender, and increasingly other types of difference—ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, class, etc.—in businesses, schools, government, and other contexts. This note is written out of, and refers to, experience in the United States, but the reasoning model can be applied in other contexts as well.

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may be thinking of very different things, we will often talk about diversity as if we mean the same thing. In fact, one of the barriers to fresh and unbiased thinking about diversity that we will discuss below is our tendency to present equivocal concepts as if they are clear, solid, and single in their meaning.[1]

To avoid this pitfall and to facilitate our discussion here, it may be useful to identify several of the *types* of questions that are often subsumed under this rubric of diversity:

- How and why we, as individuals, perceive, feel about, and behave toward other individuals whom we characterize as "different" from ourselves. We may attribute these differences to individual traits or to membership in a particular "group."
- How and why we, as individuals, perceive, feel about, and behave toward groups to which we do not belong.
- How and why institutions (families, businesses, schools, churches, governments) reflect, operationalize, and perpetuate these perceptions, feelings, and behaviors by rendering them invisible and/or "undiscussable."
- How and why these perceptions, feelings, and behaviors might be changed.

These are questions of efficiency, productivity, equity, social harmony, group and individual survival, legality, public policy, and morality. And as this note will eventually argue, they are fundamentally questions about the human potential, drive, and need for learning and growth.

Habitual Ways of Thinking About Difference—Patterns of Duality and Oppositionality

From psychologist Carl Jung to anthropologist Edward T. Hall, from philosopher Simone de Beauvoir to linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, many scholars have noted the ubiquity, across varied times and cultures, of certain patterns of duality, dichotomy, and binary opposition in human language and thought. Dichotomies in themselves are not a problem; they are simply a pattern of perception. However, the tendency to oversimplify our observations by limiting them to *binary* oppositions as opposed to more complex and multiple perceptions, and the tendency to value one term of the dichotomy over another, whether appropriate or not, creates difficulties. If we require ourselves to self-consciously critique the very reasoning and critical thinking processes that we bring to bear upon questions of diversity, we will see a consistent application of these patterns, a consistency that restricts our answers for such questions to either/or, right/wrong, you/me choices.

In the following pages, we will examine nine descriptions of ways we typically think about difference, in an effort to reveal the dichotomies that shape and constrain our reasoning. Although some of the authors and approaches described below focus exclusively on race or gender or on the United States, the conceptual tendencies they discuss extend to other forms of difference. The objective here is not to explain the origins of racism or sexism or any other form of oppression, but rather to make visible the habitual but often unconscious patterns of thinking that keep us from thinking and acting our ways out of inefficient and destructive behaviors.

Mary Ann Glendon and Rights Talk

In *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse,* Harvard Law professor Mary Ann Glendon examines the distinctive way in which thinking and talking about rights has developed in America. In particular, she observes an emphasis upon "absolute" rights; that is, there is a tendency to view rights as an "all or nothing" affair. People say that they have the "right to do and live as they choose," and any attempt to place limits around that statement is seen as a

1. Chris Argyris, "Teaching Smart People How to Learn" *Harvard Business Review* (May–June 1991), p. 103.

"slippery slope," a dangerous assault on freedom that will result in repression. For example, people who themselves would never wish to offend a colleague will bristle at discussions of sexual harassment, arguing that their right to free speech is in jeopardy.

Glendon also observes a tendency in the United States to emphasize the protection of individual rights, but without a balancing emphasis upon responsibilities. She argues that these characteristics are not universal when one looks at other nations' official statements toward human liberties, providing historical and contemporary examples from other countries of a balancing language of duty and commitment to community.

Glendon argues that this emphasis on "absolute" rights and the omission of a balancing emphasis upon responsibilities compromise the United States' ability to move toward reasonable and equitable solutions to inevitable conflicts:

> Our rights talk, in its absoluteness, promotes unrealistic expectations, heightens social conflict, and inhibits dialogue that might lead toward consensus, accommodation, or at least the discovery of common ground. In its silence concerning responsibilities, it seems to condone acceptance of the benefits of living in a democratic social welfare state, without accepting the corresponding personal and civic obligations. In its relentless individualism, it fosters a climate that is inhospitable to society's losers, and that systematically disadvantages caretakers and dependents, young and old. In its neglect of civil society, it undermines the principal seedbeds of civic and personal virtue. In its insularity, it shuts out potentially important aids to the process of self-correcting learning. All of these traits promote mere assertion over reason-giving.[2]

Thus, the tendency toward dichotomous thinking which Glendon observes in American discourse on rights feeds divisiveness and limits our reasoning and problem-solving repertoire.

Self-Definition through Oppositionality

In the introduction to her classic text, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir writes about the human tendency to perceive and understand experience as dualities or binary oppositions:

> Things become clear, . . . if, following Hegel, we find in consciousness itself a fundamental hostility toward every other consciousness; the subject can be posed only in being opposed—he sets himself up as the essential, as opposed to the other, the inessential, the object.[3]

In other words, we define ourselves, our identity, in opposition to, or as distinct from, others: I know who I am because I am not you. This self-definition through oppositionality can be problematic as it sets up a chain reaction: my sense of myself is built upon my ability to distinguish myself from you; therefore I value the ways in which I am different from you; therefore I begin to devalue the traits that make you distinct from me.

Michelle Fine, a psychologist who has written extensively on gender and race in education and social policy, provides us with an example of how this process of self-definition through oppositionality works. She was asked to research and testify in the 1993/1994 legal proceedings considering whether or not The Citadel, an all male military college in South Carolina, was constitutionally bound to admit women students. In her observations and interviews at the school,[4] she noticed that male students were regularly exhorted to behave in ways that would prove their

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2. Mary Ann Glendon, *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 14.

3. Simone de Beauvoir, "Introduction to *The Second Sex*," in *New French Feminisms*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), p. 45.

4. Keynote address to Columbia University Teachers College Winter "Roundtable on Cross-Cultural Counseling and Psychotherapy: Race and Gender," February 18, 1994, New York.

masculinity, their strength, their courage, rather than behaving "like a woman." She concluded that the institution was organized around a concept of "oppositional identity," arguing that despite their official exclusion, women were in fact, "omnipresent at the school as [entities] to be reacted against," and that the institution reinforced a "fragile sense of masculinity perched on opposition to women, as 'the other.'"

Fine pointed out that "as they are currently constituted, whiteness and maleness are about denigration of 'the other,' [and what is needed, therefore,] is to give whites and males other ways to see their identity than through oppositionality." Fine has put her finger on one of the ways in which "self-definition through oppositionality" is self-perpetuating and resistant to change: if I begin to see those different from myself in a more positive light, does that mean that I will begin to see myself more negatively? Where is the appeal, or the motivation, in that? It seems that I need to begin to be able to define myself in a more complex way, and not simply in opposition to others along some dimension of difference, be it gender, religion, race, sexual orientation, or something else.

Cultural Generalizations: Dichotomy or Continuum

Deborah Tannen, linguistics scholar and author of the national bestseller, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation,* has argued that women and men tend to develop and use communication skills for different purposes, often resulting in misunderstanding:

> *Intimacy* is key in a world of connection where individuals negotiate complex networks of friendship, minimize differences, try to reach consensus, and avoid the appearance of superiority, which would highlight differences. In a world of status, *independence* is key, because a primary means of establishing status is to tell others what to do, and taking orders is a marker of low status. Though all humans need both intimacy and independence, women tend to focus on the first and men on the second. . . . If women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy, while men speak and hear a language of status and independence, then communication between men and women can be like cross-cultural communication, prey to a clash of conversational styles.[5]

Studies like Tannen's can be very useful in helping us to put ourselves in the shoes of others, to see the world through a different lens. But Tannen herself is among the first to caution against the dangers of generalizing about the behavior of an entire group. She understands that the tendency to value one pole of a dichotomy over another can result in prejudices reinforced: for example, if she describes differences in the conversational styles of men and women, men's style may tend to be valued over women's. Nevertheless, she fears even more the mutual understanding that will be lost if such concerns stop us from trying to understand the degree to which patterns of difference do seem to exist between the genders.[6]

Interestingly, if we take this debate to either extreme, understanding is sacrificed. If we affirm that there *are* differences between identity groups (in this case, between genders), we can get lost in generalizations and stereotypes that keep us from seeing the distinctiveness of individuals and the commonalities between these same groups, and that can reinforce discrimination. On the other hand, if in our efforts to ensure equal treatment and opportunity, we assert that there are no generalizable differences, that men and women differ only as individuals differ, we sacrifice the insights of work like Tannen's, or Carol Gilligan's, or that of any number of anthropologists who study cultural patterns.

In casual conversation about Tannen's work, we are likely to hear variations on the following: "I *did* recognize the patterns she writes about in

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5. Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), pp. 26, 42.

6. Ibid., pp. 14–16.

my male/female friends' behavior. She really had them down. But, you know, I don't think I really fit the pattern she describes for *my* gender." In this instinctive response, we can see the crux of the issue: it is much easier and appealing to generalize about others than to be generalized about ourselves. Similarly, we tend to assume that others will be unaware of, and thus bound by, their gender or cultural conditioning, while being perfectly willing to believe in our ability to see through and therefore escape our own. Both of these tendencies can block true understanding and communication.

Shelby Steele and "Seeing for Innocence"

In his 1990 book of essays, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America,* Shelby Steele offers an analysis of racial dynamics built upon the concepts of power and innocence. He argues that the conflict between races is a conflict over power, and that this pursuit of power is rationalized by an appeal to innocence:

> Your difference from me makes you bad, and your badness justifies, even demands, my pursuit of power over you . . . the human animal almost never pursues power without first convincing himself that he is *entitled* to it. And this feeling of entitlement has its own precondition: to be entitled one must first believe in one's innocence, at least in the area where one wishes to be entitled. By innocence I mean a feeling of essential goodness in relation to others and, therefore, superiority to others.[7]

Steele goes on to explain that while whites in America have historically defended their subjugation of blacks with claims of innocence, blacks in the sixties began to use this equation to their own advantage. Blacks claimed the innocence that derives from being the victims of white racism, thereby gaining some power of their own. Thus, both blacks and whites are invested in seeing themselves as innocent, and since their innocence is based on the other's guilt, this means that they are unconsciously motivated to see the other in ways that preserve conflict, racial disharmony, and prejudice. Ironically, each group claims the status of "victim," a status that disempowers them with regard to dismantling racism, discouraging individual initiative to get past these issues.[8]

There are several dichotomous thought patterns embedded in this model of behavior. First, individuals are seen and see themselves in terms of a single identification, black or white, as opposed to possessing multiple identities. Second, individuals are seen and see themselves as existing in a state of guilt or innocence, thereby limiting their options for learning, change, and complexity.

Although Steele's analysis focuses on American race relations, the fundamental model aptly describes a pattern of self-defeating dichotomization that can apply to other types of difference as well. His model can shed light on many of the counterproductive behaviors we observe around diversity. For example, sometimes individuals will resist behaving in a more supportive manner toward those different from themselves because such a change implies, in their minds, that they were somehow at fault or "guilty" in the past. Or sometimes individuals will look for ways to maintain their criticisms, even stereotypes, of those who are different from them in an effort to preserve a sense of innocence. And sometimes individuals will resist acknowledging and embracing the successes of other members of their own "identity group" (race, gender, etc.) for fear that such success casts doubt upon their own righteous experience of oppression—their "innocence" in Steele's terms.

Cornel West and "Racial Reasoning"

In his 1994 book, *Race Matters,* philosopher and theologian Cornel West describes a particular

7. Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. 5.

8. Ibid., pp. 8, 14.

way of thinking he finds all too prevalent among black leadership in America today. "Racial reasoning," as he names it, is a way of thinking about black progress that tries to promote the race as a whole at the expense of many within its ranks.

The basic line of reasoning that West observes goes like this: since "America's will to racial justice is weak . . . black people must close ranks for survival in a hostile country"; this "closing ranks mentality" depends upon individuals' ability to lay claim to "racial authenticity" because if one is not "really black," or "black enough," he or she would be a threat to the group as a whole (in Steele's terms, they would not possess the entitlement that goes with "innocence"); as soon as one's sense of security and legitimacy is based upon racial authenticity, numerous reasons for exclusion emerge, and before we know it, black progress or "black social order" seems to rest upon the subordination and control of certain other blacks.[9]

West argues that:

> The claims to black authenticity that feed on the closing-ranks mentality of black people are dangerous precisely because this closing of ranks is usually done at the expense of black women. It also tends to ignore the divisions of class and sexual orientation in black America—divisions that require attention if all black interests, individuals, and communities are to be taken into consideration.[10]

He calls for a corrective to this limiting and separatist form of thinking that attempts to correct one form of oppression while participating in another. His antidote is a new form of reasoning that bases its claims to moral authority not on "black authenticity" but on a "mature black self-love and self-respect . . . [based] on the moral quality of black responses" to the experience of racism. This reasoning would replace exclusivity and closed ranks with a "coalition strategy," welcoming the support of those genuinely committed to combating racism regardless of their color or ethnicity, and it would embrace truly democratic ideals rather than justifying the subordination of some blacks in the service of others.[11]

As with Steele's concept of "seeing for innocence," West's model of "racial reasoning" holds lessons for our thinking about other forms of difference as well. It underscores the diversity that exists within identity groups as well as between them. And it illustrates the ubiquity and limitations of dichotomous, us/them patterns of thinking.

Chris Argyris and "Defensive Reasoning"

In his research on organizational behavior, Harvard professor Chris Argyris has observed a pattern of behavior among managers that effectively, if unintentionally, blocks learning, and he calls this pattern "defensive reasoning." Argyris observes that in all his studies, across nation, gender, age, education, race, and so forth, there seem to be four values that guide people's action:

1. To remain in unilateral control.
2. To maximize "winning" and minimize "losing."
3. To suppress negative feelings.
4. To be as "rational" as possible—by which people mean defining clear objectives and evaluating their behavior in terms of whether or not they have achieved them.

The purpose in all of these values is to avoid embarrassment or threat, feeling vulnerable or incompetent. In this respect, the master program that most people use is profoundly defensive.

Defensive reasoning encourages individuals to keep private the premises, inferences, and conclusions that shape their behavior

9. Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 37, 38.

10. Ibid., p. 41.

11. Ibid., pp. 43, 44.

and to avoid testing them in a truly independent, objective fashion.

Because the attributes that go into defensive reasoning are never really tested, it is a closed loop, remarkably impervious to conflicting points of view.[12]

In numerous case examples, Argyris demonstrates how this dichotomous approach to our role and functioning in organizations—winner or loser, in control or controlled—makes us fearful of new information and new perspectives, solidifying into a profoundly anti-learning stance. His antidote is to propose an alternative approach to action that is based upon making our premises and inferences transparent and discussible, and pursuing free choice rather than control in relation to others.[13] In the service of learning and growth, what was once perceived as a threatening or embarrassing contradiction can then be seen as the source of innovation and new insight.

Argyris's observations have obvious relevance for thinking about differences of identity. Without the willingness to reveal the sources of and assumptions behind our conclusions, we unwittingly reinforce others' tendencies to hear and understand us in terms of their preexisting stereotypes.

Thomas Gilovich and How We Know What Isn't So

In his highly readable 1991 book, *How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life,* social scientist Thomas Gilovich describes and illustrates a series of reasoning errors, both common in human thinking processes and remarkably resistant to corrective factual data. If we examine these frequent reasoning flaws, we readily recognize how they can help to generate and reinforce counterproductive ways of thinking about diversity.

Gilovich examines the following cognitive tendencies:

- Our preference for clear dichotomies when considering options: yes/no, right/wrong, all/nothing. We tend to oversimplify experience in an effort to categorize it into these dualities, and then to hang onto our analysis with excessive confidence.
- Our preference for believing that all experience is controllable, a preference that may lead us to attribute causality or personal choice in situations where there is none.
- Our preference to see structure and consistency in experience rather than pure randomness.
- Our "tendency to be more impressed by what *has* happened than by what has *failed* to happen, and the temptation to draw conclusions from what has occurred under present circumstances without comparing it to what would have occurred under alternative circumstances."[14]

He then suggests a set of corrective cognitive tactics in order to minimize the frequency of reasoning errors:

- Focus not only on the foolishness of basing conclusions upon "incomplete and unrepresentative evidence," but also on the frequency with which "our everyday experience presents us with biased samples of information." We need to ask ourselves, "what do the other three cells look like?" In other words, what are the counter examples, the contradicting evidence that we have not considered, or even attempted to gather?
- Recognize our tendency to ignore the frequency with which our status, position, iden-

12. Chris Argyris, "Teaching Smart People How to Learn" *Harvard Business Review* (May–June 1991), p. 103.

13. Chris Argyris, *Strategy, Change and Defensive Routines* (Marshfield, MA: Pitman Publishing, Inc., 1985), p. 261.

14. Thomas Gilovich, *How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 186.

tity can cut us off from certain kinds of data or overexpose us to others.

- Recognize our "talent for *ad hoc* explanation . . . the facility with which we can explain a vast range of outcomes in terms of our preexisting theories and beliefs. . . . Our beliefs thus appear to receive too much support from equivocal evidence, and they are too seldom discredited by truly antagonistic results." Gilovich suggests we counter this tendency by using "consider the opposite" strategies: "Suppose the exact opposite had occurred. Would I consider that outcome to be supportive of my belief as well? . . . How would someone who does not believe the way I do explain this result? . . . What alternative theory could account for it?"
- Recognize the "uncertainties and distortions of secondhand information."
- Ask ourselves "whether our beliefs are really as widely shared as they appear. The absence of explicit disagreement should not automatically be taken as evidence of agreement."[15]

Although Gilovich is writing about cognitive behavior in general, it is easy to see how these various tendencies can contribute to an adversariality, a resistance to change and to trust, and a closed mind when dealing with questions of difference. Although diversity issues involve emotional, political, historical, and economic levels as well, an understanding of these reasoning errors can aid us in our attempts to unravel their complexity.

Pareto Optimality/Scarcity Thinking

In many cultures, modes of reasoning borrowed from economics have penetrated deeply into our patterns of thinking about other areas of experience. Several of these mental paradigms can constrain our thinking about questions of diversity. There is a sort of "all or nothing," "me or you" quality to these reasoning patterns that can predefine the range of options we might conceive for a particular dilemma.

For example, microeconomic equilibrium models of optimal resource allocation assume as a minimal requirement the condition of *Pareto optimality:* "a situation where no one in the economy can be made better off without someone else . . . being made worse off."[16] Although intended only as a descriptor, we can observe a tendency to evaluate the desirability of action choices in terms of this condition. In other words, if a particular course of action betters the position of some at the expense of worsening the position of others, it is considered suboptimal. This seems sensible enough until we consider the situation where the privilege of some may be a direct result of the exclusion of others. As in the economic markets from which this concept derives, it all comes down to the initial resource distribution. Adhering to this pattern of thinking precludes change.

A preoccupation with resource scarcity, the assumption of a "limited pie" to be divided among all comers, is another example of an economics-based approach to thinking about the choices diversity presents. The point is not that scarcity does not exist, but rather that the *assumption* of scarcity limits our creativity and sense of possibility, and ill positions us for the redefinition of goods and resources that such choices require.

Masking and Overdetermined Terminology

Questions triggered by diversity in the workplace go to the heart of some of our most cherished assumptions about our organizations and perceptions about ourselves: meritocracy, equal opportunity, fair treatment, unbiased standards of performance, and so forth. And painfully, these questions point out seeming contradictions and inconsistencies in those assumptions and perceptions.

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15. Ibid., pp. 186–189.

16. Stanley Fischer and Rudiger Dornbusch, *Economics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983), p. 521.

These contradictions and inconsistencies are often the result of the way certain concepts and terminology acquire meanings over time, through repeated use and misuse and through association. The concept of meritocracy, for example, is firmly held and valued by many as the preferred and only truly fair, efficient standard by which to evaluate performance. We will often argue about the importance of *continuing* to reward individuals according to their merit, slipping in the assumed premise that this has been the case in the past. Yet we fail to examine the ways and reasons by which individuals are and have been rewarded in actuality.

"Merit" is, first of all, a subjective term. The indicators that cause us to *see* merit are multiple and are based upon many factors besides observable talent: familiarity, comfort, prior relationship, recommendation by a friend, association with familiar schools and institutions, prior commitments or a sense of obligation/guilt/gratitude, and so forth. All of these factors can be masked by the term "merit."

Even with these distorting factors put aside, how do we define "merit"? A candidate may exhibit ability along many criteria and a decision, often subjective, is made about how to prioritize these criteria. And once a few abilities have been defined as primary, how reliable are our measures?

This discussion is not intended to argue against the usefulness of attempts to evaluate "merit," but rather to point out the ways such concepts seem to take on a solidity, a clarity in our rhetoric which they often lack in actual experience.

Reframing Diversity

In all nine of these reasoning models, we have seen that a tendency toward dualism in our thinking can restrict the way we frame and answer questions of diversity. And the most fundamental expression of that dualism is in our self-definition: I define myself as either male or female, gay or straight, right or wrong, and so on. In our earlier discussion of "oppositional identity," we said that I know who I am because I am not you. This is not an affirmation of my own identity or even an understanding of differences, but rather an exploitation of them as a "short-cut" to self-insight and self-esteem.

But let us consider an alternate approach to self-definition and to the consideration of, and interaction with, others. Rather than defining ourselves "in opposition to" someone else, let us incorporate opposition into ourselves. Let us adopt a "multiple perspective" rather than an oppositional and dualistic one—a multiple perspective that can comprehend alternate viewpoints not so as to excuse oppression but rather to clarify it, to expose the pain of one individual group without denying that of another. For ultimately, understanding and *experiencing* "the compelling quality of contradictory realities is the only way, short of violence, to resolve their differences."[17]

What we are talking about here is a new way to approach and address the conflicts and the dilemmas posed by our encounters with differences, based upon a new way of defining ourselves and our own point of view. By defining ourselves multiply, by perceiving others multiply, by generating multiple hypotheses in response to seeming trade-offs, by seeking out and embracing disconfirming data and complexity, we open up the potential for new growth and learning, for creativity, and for breaking the cycle of reductionist dichotomies that keep us locked in a mutually self-destructive pattern of separation, discrimination, oppression, anger, and guilt.

To this end, let us examine the following model for reframing diversity[18] (see Exhibit 1), first in terms of our own identity and then in

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17. Mary C. Gentile, *Film Feminisms* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), p. 8.

18. Excerpts from Introduction to *Differences That Work: Organizational Excellence Through Diversity,* ed. and introduction by Mary Gentile (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1994.) pp. XV–XVII reprinted by permission.

EXHIBIT 1 Reframing Diversity: A Model

1. *Multiple Identities*
   We all have multiple identities, one or another of which we may identify with more strongly at different moments in our lives and in different contexts.
2. *Salience*
   We often experience contradictory urges or needs for a sense of belonging or "fitting in" on the one hand, and for a feeling of uniqueness or "specialness" on the other. Thus in a particular situation, one of our multiple identities may feel more salient to us than others.
3. *Costs and Benefits*
   Some identities exact a higher and/or different cost (or provide greater and/or different benefits) for the bearer in a particular societal, historical, or even situational context than others.
4. *Choice*
   Sometimes individuals have a choice of becoming recognized as members of a particular identity group in a particular setting, and that choice brings certain costs and benefits, as well.
5. *Redefinition and Change*
   Our individual identities are always developing, we are continually negotiating, defining, and redefining the internal coherence of our original values, our new experiences, and our multiple identities.
6. *Shared Goals*
   Identity differences do not preclude the development and pursuit of "shared goals" among and across identities.

relation to others, both individuals and groups. This model is really a set of observations, insights, and acknowledgments that can serve as tools for promoting understanding of, and conversation about, diversity.

Our framework consists of the following six observations:

1. ***Multiple Identities:* We all have multiple identities, one or another of which we may identify with more strongly at different moments in our lives and in different contexts.**

For example, we all have our gender, race, ethnic origins, religion, age, sexual orientation, class, educational background, etc. Sometimes we may stress one of these identities over others, and sometimes these identities may be in conflict. For example, we may feel discomfort expressing some of our views in a context where they might feed stereotypes about one of our identities. For example, when I am with a group of women, I may be more cognizant of the commonalities of our experience based upon gender, whereas when I am with a mixed gender group of colleagues at work, I may identify more strongly as an individual with a particular educational and professional experience held in common with my peers in that context.

From these multiple identities, we can begin to recognize that we each have experienced positions of relative privilege and relative exclusion in different contexts. Nevertheless, we negotiate more or less coherent, if complex, personalities.[19] This internal negotiation of identity can be a model for understanding the negotiation of a group identity and interactions, in social contexts or in business settings. And seeing our own identities multiply can be the beginning of seeing others in more complex, less stereotypical, and ultimately more realistic ways. We will not view women, African-Americans, or white men as all

19. C. D. Alderfer, "Intergroup Relations and Organizations," in *Perspectives on Behavior in Organizations,* ed. J. R. Hackman, E. E. Lawler, and L. W. Porter (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983), p. 410.

alike because we will see ourselves and each other as so much more than just our gender or race.

2. *Salience:* **We often experience contradictory urges or needs for a sense of belonging or "fitting in" on the one hand, and for a feeling of uniqueness or "specialness" on the other.[20] Thus in a particular situation, one of our multiple identities may feel more salient to us than others.**

In some contexts, we may tend to emphasize our ethnic identities, for example, in order to feel special or unique. In other contexts—family gatherings for instance—we may emphasize the same ethnicity as a means to feel part of the group. These conflicting urges can trigger complicated reactions of loyalty, rejection, pride, and guilt within the same individual and between different individuals.

Understanding our own mixed desires around a sense of belonging and a feeling of uniqueness can give insight into what may sometimes appear as the desire of other individuals or groups to "have it both ways," to have their particular history of achievement and perhaps oppression recognized, as well as to be treated "just like everybody else." But as this second observation suggests, in a sense everyone wants it "both ways," and that may not be such a bad thing if we are self-aware and realistic about it.

3. *Costs and Benefits:* **Some identities exact a higher and/or different cost (or provide greater and/or different benefits) for the bearer in a particular societal, historical, or even situational context than others.**

In the United States, for example, the historical experience of African-Americans has had very real implications, generally speaking, for access to education, information, and financial resources. In a group of African-Americans, however, the lone white individual may experience a temporary situational cost for being/feeling different that, if understood and explored, can serve as a foundation for empathy for all present.

Treating this lone white's experience as if it is "the same" as, or somehow equivalent to, the experience of African-Americans is not accurate, but it is also inaccurate and counterproductive to insist that this individual has never experienced the pain of exclusion. It is certainly a different pain, without the historical and institutional and cultural weight of the African-American's experience of racism, but it may serve as the beginning of shared insight. It suggests an appeal to empathy rather than merely guilt.

4. *Choice:* **Sometimes individuals have a choice of becoming recognized as members of a particular identity group in a particular setting, and that choice brings certain costs and benefits, as well.**

Some identities, such as gender, race, and age, *tend* to be immediately evident. Other identities, such as religion or sexual orientation, can be less evident. It is useful to understand the potential advantages and disadvantages of so-called invisible diversity. For example, as a gay or lesbian person, often one can choose to "pass." This choice gives gay/lesbian people greater control over the impression they make on others at the same time that it creates personal and political dilemmas.

On the one hand, they may judge that to be open about their sexual orientation could be unsafe, either professionally, socially, or even physically. But on the other hand, they may wonder if their discretion is actually a manifestation of internalized homophobia and a lack of self-confidence. Or is it a betrayal of gays and lesbians more generally because it allows others to assume they are not working with and depending upon homosexuals in their daily lives? Understanding the advantages and the burdens of having a "choice" about how one's identity is

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20. Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), p. 147.

perceived is critical to thinking about and addressing questions of diversity.

5. ***Redefinition and Change:*** **Our individual identities are always developing, we are continually negotiating, defining, and redefining the internal coherence of our original values, our new experiences, and our multiple identities.**

Individual identities—and group identities—are not static. If we remain aware of our own process of self-definition which involves a continual reconciliation of the multiple aspects of our identities, we can be more open to the same process in those with whom we learn and work. We need not be "frozen" in a single role or stance, nor need we "freeze" others. We are more than the sum of our "identities," and our behavior is not predetermined or fixed because of them.

6. ***Shared Goals:*** **Identity differences do not preclude the development and pursuit of "shared goals" among and across identities.**

Effective response to diversity is dependent upon the acceptance of some primary objectives to which we all are willing to commit. In the workplace, such objectives might include survival of the firm, and therefore a commitment to the productivity and innovation necessary for that survival. This does not imply that a respect for and sensitivity to individual and group differences are not important—after all, the shared objective is *not* the survival of the firm at *any* cost—but rather this suggests that there are at least a few areas where our commonalities are as salient as our differences.

The preceding model—its insights and acknowledgments—can serve as the foundation and the impetus for both internal and external dialogue and inquiry about diversity. It gives us a way to think and talk about diversity as a learning process in which we all are or can be engaged, thereby providing a powerful *motivation* for these discussions.

The model defines diversity *inclusively,* indicating that it is about all of us. It offers a way to understand the behaviors and dynamics of both groups and individuals within them that is *descriptive, rather than judgmental.* Nevertheless it is based upon certain clear values, primarily the value of learning, the desirability of pursuing knowledge about oneself and others, and the acknowledgment that in a diverse and interdependent world, one of the most valuable kinds of knowledge is about understanding and communicating across differences.

Confronting a Decision

With this model in mind, what are some of the key questions we might bring to framing and addressing questions of diversity? How does this model have an impact on our decision making? How does it address the suboptimal patterns of thinking described earlier in this note? [See Exhibit 2 for a checklist of questions that reveals when we are falling victim to the reasoning "traps" described earlier, and that suggests alternate responses to the same decision, based on the model above.]

Let's take a look at an example of the different ways we can approach the same issue, depending upon what types of reasoning frameworks we are using. We will take up an example that is frequently raised as a diversity dilemma and pose it in the words we are likely to hear:

> **If you have two candidates for a job—a member of the majority identity group in your organization (let's say a white man) and a member of a group "underrepresented" in your organization (let's say a white woman)—and the man is better qualified, whom do you hire?**

Some of the responses to this question we are likely to hear, or offer ourselves, include:

- *You always have to hire the "more qualified candidate." If you don't, you are putting the effectiveness, perhaps even the survival, of the organization in jeopardy.*

This argument, and the dilemma itself, are posed using the "masking and overdetermined

EXHIBIT 2 Interrogating Our Thinking

The following checklist of questions can help us to recognize when we are falling into restrictive patterns of reasoning and to push ourselves beyond these common traps.

Mary Ann Glendon and Rights Talk

Traps	*Escapes*
Does my thinking reflect a fearfulness or insecurity about inadvertently "giving away" my rights?	Am I more interested in understanding the reasons why others may feel that insecurity? *and* Does my thinking reflect a security in my own identity and an openness to new ideas that is born of the awareness that my identity is multiple and dynamic, and that change does not necessarily mean loss?
Am I focused only on preserving my own privileges, rather than also understanding my appropriate and necessary responsibilities to the community I inhabit?	Am I trying to understand the different costs and benefits associated with differing identities and positions in that community, including my own?

Self-Definition through Oppositionality

Trap	*Escape*
Do I define myself by the ways in which I am different from others, or in terms of "the ways I am not" (i.e., not ignorant, not guilty, not a failure, not weak)?	Do I define myself more complexly, recognizing the differing and even conflicting aspects of my own multiple identities? Can I admit that I have things in common with the people I most admire as well as with those of whom I am most critical?

Cultural Generalizations: Dichotomy or Continuum

Trap	*Escape*
Do I tend to see people either as representative of and somewhat determined by their group identities, or as distinct individuals completely free of any group identity determination?	Am I able to recognize the conflicting needs for both a sense of uniqueness and also a sense of belonging to a particular group, in myself and others?

Shelby Steele and "Seeing for Innocence"

Traps	*Escapes*
Does my argument focus on justifying the blame or innocence assigned to a group and its individual representatives?	Am I focused on understanding the differential costs and benefits of individual and group identities, and trying to find shared objectives?
Am I locking myself or others into one aspect only of my/their identities?	Am I trying to see the multiple aspects of my own and others' identities, and perhaps finding shared ground by so doing?
Am I invested in proving or holding on to a sense of oppression or a victim status?	Am I open to the changing, dynamic aspects of individual and group identity?

Cornel West and "Racial Reasoning"?

Trap	*Escape*
Does my argument reflect a defensive, "closing ranks mentality," requiring others to prove their group "authenticity" if they are to stand with me? Am I setting up ever-new tests or thresholds of legitimacy for those who "deserve" to share my position?	Am I interested in finding ways to embrace multiple perspectives and ever-wider circles of participation, building a "coalition strategy," to address conflicts and to enable true learning?

EXHIBIT 2 *(concluded)*

Chris Argyris and "Defensive Reasoning"

Traps	*Escapes*
Am I more interested in being "right" than in learning?	Am I open to, or even appreciative of, the potential to change one's mind, to see things in a new way?
Do I present my point of view in a way that discourages negative feedback and questioning?	Do I embrace disconfirming data and multiple perspectives as an opportunity for learning?*

Thomas Gilovich and How We Know What Isn't So

Traps	*Escapes*
Do I tend to frame my decisions as dichotomous, either/or choices?	Am I able to hold multiple options, not all necessarily mutually exclusive, in my mind? Do I think in terms of dynamic and transitional solutions, as opposed to permanent answers?
Do I habitually look for someone to blame or praise for any outcome?	Can I recognize the limits of my own, and others', control?
Do I cut myself off from the conflicting and multiple aspects of my own experience and perceptions, tending to allow only one of my inner voices to dominate?	Do I try to remain in touch with differing perspectives within, as well as those from outside?

Pareto Optimality/Scarcity Thinking

Trap	*Escape*
Do I approach any attempt to improve conditions for some, from a defensive stance of "as long as it doesn't affect me . . ."?	Am I willing to redefine the terms of cost and benefit? Am I willing to consider that some aspects of myself may benefit from a choice that costs other aspects of myself?

Masking and Overdetermined Terminology

Trap	*Escape*
Are my arguments built upon rhetorical appeals to loaded concepts that I do not question and "unpack"?	Am I able to see that the same concept or term may look and feel very different from various perspectives (i.e., the historical perspective versus the eternal present, the individual perspective versus the organizational, or your perspective versus mine)?

*Catherine Bateson talks about this practice as learning skills for changing times, arguing that when we experience discomfort with new information or unexpected reactions, we should recognize that discomfort as a cue to try to learn something, and the *very process of trying to learn cures the discomfort.* (From a reading and lecture on *Peripheral Visions* at the Brattle Theatre, sponsored by Wordsworth Books, Cambridge, Massachusetts, June 21, 1994.)

terminology" discussed earlier. This confident assertion of "who is best qualified" serves to disguise any number of prior choices and unconscious assumptions. It asserts as unambiguous an evaluation that is often sublimely subjective. It assumes a clarity about what constitutes qualification for this job, when that conclusion itself is also often based upon tradition rather than science. And it begs the question of whether decision makers are able to perceive the relative qualifications of the candidates objectively, denying the impacts of stereotyping, historical op-

pression, and the documented perceptual effects when individuals make judgments about members of a group other than their own.

This argument also illustrates the tendency to analyze and argue only one side of an oversimplified dichotomy that Gilovich describes in *How We Know What Isn't So.* Has the respondent asked himself or herself, "in this case, what are the potential *positive* impacts of hiring the woman, and what are the potential *negative* impacts of hiring the man?"

- *If you don't hire the man, you are trying to right past injustices with current ones. You are trying to counteract discrimination with another form of discrimination, for the only thing working against the man is his gender.*

Aside from continuing to repeat the assumptions about qualification noted above, this argument illustrates Gilovich's concerns about our tendency to oversimplify events into either/or choices and to ignore unstated data. For example, the argument takes as an assumption that in any other situation, the only data considered in making a hiring or promotion decision is this unexplained criterion of "qualification." It ignores the fact that such decisions always involve weighing a number of considerations, such as seniority against targeted experience, depth of expertise against breadth, familiarity with the project against outside experience, and a candidate who brings significant experience in areas that are already represented in the project team against a candidate who brings less experience but in an unrepresented area. Might gender be just another set of criteria in this mix?

This argument also reflects a version of Steele's "seeing for innocence," where somehow "being qualified" is equated with having a right to a particular job and not getting that job is seen as a form of undeserved punishment. Thus, the male candidate's "innocence" is implied, while the female candidate is therefore "guilty" of obtaining a job unfairly. As noted above, this formulation contains all sorts of blurred distinctions and unconscious assumptions, but nevertheless carries an emotional weight that feeds a divisive "us against them" perspective on this dilemma.

Finally this argument (reminiscent of Pareto optimality) blurs individual perspectives, experience, and accountability with group perspectives, experience, and accountability. It asserts that accumulated injustices toward and by groups in the past are being paid for with an individual injustice in the present, ignoring the fact that discrimination was and is always an individual *and* a group experience. We can address discrimination effectively only if we address it at both levels. This realization does not necessarily suggest that either candidate should be hired in this case; it merely suggests that the fact that both individuals and groups are affected by any actions taken is unavoidable.

- *If you hire the man, you are passing up the opportunity to begin to make a change in the demographic mix of the department/organization—a change that will be necessary in order to attract and best support other women and minority members in the firm.*

This argument, like the first one we examined, illustrates the tendency to analyze and argue only one side of an oversimplified dichotomy . . . only it is a different side. It ignores the importance of trying to make a decision that will result in a *successful* hire, regardless of gender, not only for the firm's benefit but also for the benefit of the other women and minorities in the firm now and to come. Additionally this argument, and the dilemma itself, beg the question of why we are concerned with "representation" in the first place. There are legal arguments, moral arguments, and "business" arguments that may underlie this concern [See Managerial Effectiveness and Diversity: Organizational Choices, in Part III for a discussion of these arguments, or "motivations."] However, if organizational decision makers do not adequately think through this question, their judgments risk superficiality, cynicism, and self-contradiction—or at least, accusations of the same.

- *If you hire the man, you will demonstrate that the organization is not really interested in diversity.*

Once again, this argument raises only one side of an oversimplified dichotomy; it ignores other data about the company's policies and actions around diversity. The more sophisticated argument might be that "if you hire the man, the organization will *appear* to not really be interested in diversity." This argument suggests something about the kind of consistency and trust the organization needs to build in order to be free to make difficult decisions as it sees fit.

- *If you hire the woman, you are not doing her any service for she will experience negative reinforcement around her performance.*

This argument illustrates our readiness to interpret evidence about an employee's performance in ways that support prior conclusions, what Gilovich refers to as our "talent for *ad hoc* explanation." This tendency can result in self-fulfilling prophecies.

- *If you hire the "less qualified candidate," you are not doing other women any service for you are reinforcing the perception that their successes may be based on identity rather than merit.*

The problem with this argument is that it ignores the fact that this perception can be caused by decisions to hire a woman or "minority" candidate, regardless of their qualifications. It also embodies an unstated and unexamined assumption that other hiring decisions are always based purely on objective qualifications, that this is the desired state of affairs, and that we can and do know what these objective qualifications are. "Merit" in this statement is an instance of "masking terminology."

However, this argument does surface the importance of thinking through and communicating decision criteria clearly. Differing perceptions ought to be respected, considered, and addressed, but they ought not be a source of tyranny for they always cut both ways.

The point of these observations is not to suggest that any or all of these responses are necessarily wrong, but rather to suggest that each of them is incomplete. The original dilemma, as posed, asks for an either/or choice, when the real take-away from such a decision is the learning, the relationship, and the process created by communicating about it. Ultimately there will be times when the hiring decision will go one way and times when it will go the other, for good reasons, but the test of the decision-making process is whether all parties can keep talking and working together afterward toward shared goals.

Applying the Model for Reframing Diversity

In order to achieve this objective, we need other ways of posing the dilemma that will shed new light on the question. After all, each of us has heard the arguments listed above before and yet many of us are no closer to a comfortable answer to the dilemma.

So let's revisit the original question in light of our model for reframing diversity:

> **If you have two candidates for a job—a member of the majority identity group in your organization (let's say a white man) and a member of a group "underrepresented" in your organization (let's say a white woman)—and the man is better qualified, whom do you hire?**

First of all, the way this question is framed tends to discourage multiple identities, within ourselves, others, or our organizations. Rather we may experience the question as requiring us to define ourselves oppositionally—that is, as for or against "merit" as a basis for hiring decisions. What's more, the oppositional self-definition gets worse, because we may experience this choice as pitting a commitment to "merit" against a commitment to diversifying an admittedly "unrepresentative" or skewed employee pool. Finally, one more link in this chain of dualities aligns white males with a commit-

ment to merit and a disregard for diversity, while white women are aligned with a commitment to diversity and a disregard for merit.

Thus we can see that without an attempt to reveal and unpack the assumed alignments within the framing of this question, the respondent feels himself or herself torn, forced into an artificial choice that fails to reflect the true complexity of any of the parties. Because the choice is framed as a static dichotomy, using masking rhetoric and built upon a denial of shared goals, it literally pushes us into many of the reasoning pitfalls described above.

Now, of course, people and experience present us with challenges and dilemmas on a regular basis, and they are often posed in less than constructive ways. We cannot control the ways in which others identify and frame the questions they ask us. We can, however, restructure these choices in order to avoid some of the impasses we found in the responses above. We can do so by reflecting upon the decisions we face and asking the following questions derived from our proposed model for reframing diversity. With practice, this process of examining and reposing the choices we encounter will enable us to approach all such decisions in a new manner, designed to maximize learning and our openness to innovation and unexpected insights.

I. Multiple Identities

- *What are the aspects of ourselves (of others, of the organization) that are engaged in addressing this decision?*

In other words, are we bringing the full range of our multiple identities to this question? Are we openly addressing the potential conflicts or contradictory responses these different aspects trigger in us, or are we prematurely aligning with a single "side" of ourselves? The goal is not to define ourselves oppositionally, but rather to internalize the oppositionality, to acknowledge and name our internal conflicts, thereby reducing the defensiveness in ourselves and others. That defensiveness blocks openness to new and potentially conflicting ideas, and reducing it allows for the generation of multiple perspectives and multiple hypotheses that boost our ability to see through masking terminology.

In the sample decision presented above, I might ask myself if I feel free to explore all my possible reactions, or if I feel pressure to foreclose my exploration and avoid entertaining a response that might feel as if it positions me as "anti-merit" or as "anti-diversity." If I feel discomfort around examining all aspects of my response, that's a pretty good signal that there is something to examine.

In particular, I would ask myself if I feel as if I have ever been awarded opportunities on any basis other than merit. If so, how do I feel about that? Do I feel I proved the decision sound? Do I feel as if someone else had a "right" to my opportunity, or do I think it is appropriate that other criteria enter into these decisions sometimes?

I might also ask myself if I feel as if others have been awarded opportunities on bases other than merit, particularly when I felt I had a claim on the opportunity. How have I reconciled these experiences of relative privilege and relative exclusion within myself?

Running myself through this exercise of getting in touch with multiple perspectives within myself makes it easier for me to imagine a similar range of responses in others, and in the organization. Such thinking discourages the painting of my own or others' points of view with a single brush. It allows me to consider this decision as both an individual situation facing specific managers, as well as a representative action on the part of the organization—rather than as just one or the other.

II. Salience

- *What aspect of our (others', the organization's) multiple identities feels most salient in this situation?*

To which aspect of our identity do we feel the desire/need to belong or "fit in"? Around which

aspect of our identity do we feel the desire/need to "stand out" and be unique? And consequently, which aspects of ourselves are we suppressing? And why? What would be the cost of standing out in one way, or not fitting in another?

In the sample decision presented above, I might ask myself whose approval is most important to me here? Whom do I want to stand with, and why? And how do I want to be recognized around this issue? Once I recognize this experience of "salience" around some specific aspect of my identity, I free myself to stand apart from it, to question it, and to try on other points of view—and, of course, to see the same kind of tendencies operating in the others involved in this decision.

III. Costs and Benefits

- *What are the costs and benefits associated with engaging each aspect of our (others', the organization's) identities in response to this decision?*

By addressing this question, we can begin to unpack the baggage of history (culture and ideology, the experience of dominance and oppression) that comes along with different aspects of our identities. The fact is that not all experiences of relative privilege or relative exclusion are equal.

In the sample decision above, for instance, one might ask whether or not the cost of a single career move to the white man is balanced against the range of career opportunities to which he has and will be exposed. Further, one might ask whether this position may represent one of the relatively few opportunities to which the other candidate has or will have access without the additional experience available in the new opening.

IV. Choice

- *To what extent do we (others, the organization) have a choice about how we will be perceived in this situation?*

In addition to the forms of "invisible diversity" mentioned above, there tends to be a greater range of possible images available to those who are in the numerical majority and/or the "higher power" group in a particular context. Understanding the abundance or scarcity of choices available to ourselves and others enables us to better gauge the impact of our decisions.

In the sample decision above, it appears that the woman has no good choice. She will either be perceived as unqualified for hire and therefore be passed over, or she will be perceived as unqualified for hire and taken on anyway. If she is to be hired, clearly the managers involved and the organization need to communicate about their criteria and goals in such a way as to offer her a fighting chance.

V. Redefinition and Change

- *How might we (others, the organization) redefine our identities so as to facilitate new learning and greater effectiveness within and among our multiple identities?*

For example, since I now have access to that aspect of myself that acknowledges that not all my accomplishments have been solely due to my autonomous effort, I can begin to question and redefine the concept of merit qualification in my organization. I can talk more openly about the variety of criteria I now do, and always have, sought out in candidates for hire. I am not locked into an Argyrean pattern of defensive reasoning that effectively precludes learning and change.

VI. Shared Goals

- *What shared goals can we identify among all parties to this decision?*

For example, all parties can be committed to the hiring organization's efforts to more fully understand their hiring criteria and to their enhanced ability to select candidates who can

function effectively to the betterment of the firm and their own careers—in other words, to maximize productive learning and growth.

Conclusion

So finally, we are trying to reframe this question in such a way as to:

- Encourage exploration of all perspectives, both between and within each party to the decision.
- Avoid denying/suppressing aspects of each party. Address and balance the different costs/benefits associated with the identities of each party.
- Maximize choice for all parties.
- Allow change within each party.
- Identify and pursue shared goals among all parties.

Instead of the dilemma as originally posed, we might ask:

> **How do we assess and communicate merit criteria and representation goals in our organization? What action plan can we develop to ensure meeting both these criteria and goals? When evaluating two candidates for possible hire (one white man, one white woman), how might we position the decision within the context of this plan?**

This revised question allows us to position the decision within a history that extends both backward (allowing us to address past inequities) and into the future (allowing us to place each action step within a projected stream of actions, and avoiding the overweighting of any single choice). It acknowledges at least two agendas for the organization and requires an integrated approach to design an action plan, rather than assuming a contest between them. It positions the actual hiring decision within a context that acknowledges issues that go beyond either candidate, creating the opportunity/necessity to communicate about the choice in ways that depersonalize the issues and preventing candidates from being dubbed as qualified or not, deserving or not, and so forth.

Thus we have attempted to both understand the ways in which our habitual ways of naming and reasoning about questions of diversity limit the responses we generate, as well as the ways in which we can begin to break out of those constraints. With practice, this type of analysis becomes a habit as well, and it allows us to think about these challenging issues in fresh ways; it begins to shift our emotional responses to these questions from the realms of frustration, anger, guilt, and blame to those of openness and excitement about the possibility for new understanding.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN MANAGERIAL BEHAVIOR: THE ONGOING DEBATE*

1. The Debate

Do men and women have distinct leadership styles? Do they approach management differently? Two perspectives have dominated the ongoing debate on gender differences in organizational leadership and management behavior. Psychological theories emphasize the different outlook, attitudes, and values inculcated in men and women during their development and socialization. In contrast, situational theories argue that gender differences are few, and largely an artifact of differences in opportunity, power, and lack of representation in business and organizational settings. To date, the evidence from

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* This note was prepared by Kristin Daly and Herminia Ibarra.