American Journal of Community Psychology, Vol. 37, Nos. 3/4, June 2006 (© 2006)
DOI: 10.1007/s10464-006-9012-0

On the Edge of Diversity: Bringing African Americans and Latinos Together in a Neighborhood Group

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Published online: 18 April 2006

This article describes challenges we encountered when organizing a group of African Americans and Latinos in a community where ethnic tensions had been normative. We relate how the first author, a Caucasian with a university affiliation, entered this diverse community and employed ethnographic methods in an attempt to understand it. The ethnography provides a context for the principal challenge we encountered: ensuring that the group had ethnic balance. Focusing on the group's first meeting, we describe the uncertainty of whether our work would be helpful or harmful to the community. We conclude with reflections on the gaps between science and practice in diverse communities; the utility and limits of ethnography; the multiple ecological levels of influence on the community; dilemmas around a White male taking proactive stances while trying to empower a group consisting mostly of women of color; and the influence of values we brought to the community.

KEY WORDS: African Americans; Latinos; ethnic relations; empowerment; ethnography; community organizing.

After learning about a community where after-school fights between Latino[4] and African American children were so common that their school dismissed them separately, we encountered the diversity challenge of creating a bi-ethnic group whose members would work together to change their low-income neighborhood. We describe our initial involvement in this neighborhood, our work to understand community dynamics, and our efforts to organize a neighborhood group rooted in collaboration between African Americans and Latinos. With a focus on the group's first meeting, we describe the uncertainty of whether our efforts to create a group would be helpful or harmful to the community and the challenges presented by our assumptions that ethnic diversity and collaboration would be both important and productive.

CONTEXT

Our story took place in Woodbridge,[5] a low-income apartment community in a small southeastern town. Woodbridge, whose residents were mostly African Americans and Latinos, was known to town residents primarily as a place for crimes such as drug sales, robberies, assaults, and prostitution. Woodbridge was dilapidated, with many windows boarded up, appliances abandoned at street side and broken glass scattered everywhere, even where children were playing. We learned of Woodbridge from a newspaper account of the nearby elementary school's dismissing the community's African American and Latino children separately because

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[4] We use the term Latino to describe persons of Latin American origin, although in Woodbridge such residents were more likely to use terms reflecting national origins, such as Mexican.

[5] All names of places, people and organizations are pseudonyms.

a simultaneous exit resulted in too many fights between members of the groups on their walk home. We recognize that we as European Americans did not on the surface appear to be likely candidates to work with Woodbridge residents; once when Berryhill was walking down a Woodbridge street a police officer stopped him, saying he could not figure out what he would be doing there. However, Berryhill was a male bilingual graduate student in clinical-community psychology who had experience working with Latino and African American children, some expertise in conflict resolution, and a need to conduct a community project to fulfill degree requirements. Linney, a female professor, was Berryhill's mentor, with a wide range of experience in community work addressing race relations and multicultural education.

We contacted the elementary school and learned it was making multiple efforts (e.g., conflict–resolution training) to help teachers and students deal with the challenges of working together in a multicultural environment. Meanwhile, despite the fact that tensions in the Woodbridge community were a likely source driving fights on the children's walks home from school, there were no active efforts to bring ethnic groups together in the neighborhood. Thus, we were interested in working with the Woodbridge community, but thought hard before deciding to do so, in large part because of diversity challenges. Our ethnic background was one of several factors dividing us from Woodbridge residents. We lived in a medium-sized city, the state's capital, a 90 min drive from the small town where Woodbridge was located. In terms of class, we had "white-collar" status, whereas most of the people in Woodbridge lived in poverty.

Following the suggestion of Heller (1990), we decided to undertake ethnographic work to learn about life in Woodbridge, build trust with its residents, and explore whether they had common interests in improving the circumstances of the community's children. Two men with ties to the Woodbridge community helped Berryhill make contacts there (as a faculty mentor Linney did not go to Woodbridge). The first was an African American leader of a Woodbridge after-school program that aspired to serve all of the community's children but whose participants were virtually all African American. The second was a White graduate student in public health working on efforts to improve health care for Latino residents. These men introduced Berryhill to apartment tenants and the manager of the complex, explaining that he was interested in working with residents to improve the community if they so desired. Berryhill then began going to Woodbridge on weekend days to do ethnographic work consisting of observations and conversations at convenience stores adjacent to the community and the apartments or yards of residents.

Interested in Woodbridge's history, we learned that in earlier decades it had been a neatly landscaped place whose residents, all White, included lawyers and other professionals who rarely locked their doors. We were not able to unearth all the events that changed Woodbridge over the years. However, we did learn that in the 1980s, with the community aging and its luster waning, new ownership offered subsidized rents that attracted lower-income residents, and the apartments ultimately became home to mostly African Americans. The community's ethnic makeup then changed dramatically in 1994 when a group of Latinos moved in. They had been recruited from the Texas–Mexico border area after a meat-packing plant adjacent to Woodbridge had trouble employing enough local workers. The plant's troubles, in the view of many African Americans, were the result of low wages and poor working conditions. As the Latino community grew to about 50% of the Woodbridge population, many African Americans saw their new neighbors as providing a steady supply of workers for the plant, making it improbable that wages or working conditions would improve there.

As we will note in our story, our ethnographic work taught us that there were multiple reasons that African Americans and Latinos were largely divided in Woodbridge. We also learned that despite their differences, African Americans and Latinos had common perceptions of community problems such as crime and garbage and held common goals for their children such as a safe place to play. The residents were not speaking much about after-school fights among children, perhaps because there were few at that point or perhaps because they were more focused on a related issue: they wanted their children to receive bus transportation instead of walking about a half-mile along a busy four-lane street to the elementary school.

As we learned about Woodbridge, we continued to see the issue of the children's fights as a symptom of broader community problems and tensions and began to envision the organization of a bi-ethnic group that would ease such tensions by working toward community change. One factor we had to consider was that Woodbridge lacked visible leaders, in

part because of high mobility. Few Latinos wound up living there more than 2 years, as moves to pursue better jobs or living conditions were common. Although some African Americans had lived in Woodbridge for longer stints, they were slowly moving out and being replaced by Latinos. As it was not public housing, Woodbridge also lacked a tenant governing council.

We thus considered different models of organizing to provide a setting in which leaders could emerge. In large part because of the friction among ethnic groups, we took a community development approach designed to foster relationships through which residents could support each other and share resources and a sense of belonging while building consensus around tackling common problems (Pilisuk, McAllister, & Rothman, 1996; Rothman, 1974). We also borrowed from knowledge about intergroup relations (Brewer & Brown, 1998); Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Jackson, 1993); empowerment (Riger, 1993; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988); small wins (Weick, 1984); and sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). We developed a conceptual framework to guide our work toward creating an alternative setting (bi-ethnic group) where residents could work toward solutions to common community problems in ways that would promote collective empowerment and a stronger sense of community, ultimately reducing ethnic tensions. We put our framework into action by shifting from collecting ethnographic data to speaking with residents about organizing a community-based group. For a full account of our work, see Berryhill and Linney (2000).

CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

We found many diversity-related challenges in our work; the principal one we share here was the need to create and maintain a group that had ethnic balance in a context in which participants did not view a bi-ethnic group as prerequisite to community improvement. In the classic study of Sherif's boys camp, groups were created and dissolved experimentally (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). In Woodbridge, we had no means to ensure balanced participation among the community's ethnic groups. Sherif's groups also put aside rivalries to work together on common goals that had implications for survival. In Woodbridge, one common goal, less crime, involved physical safety, but others such as litter in the neighborhood, were likely viewed with less urgency. The need for bi-ethnic cooperation in reaching goals also was likely to be less apparent.

For us, however, the possibility of ethnic imbalance in this neighborhood organization was not an idle concern. We worried that a group consisting solely or mostly of, for instance, African Americans, would result in resentment toward Latinos for not helping improve the community. Under such circumstances, there was also the possibility of community mistrust if Latinos viewed the African American group's actions with suspicion. We could then envision Latinos organizing their own group, and either duplicating or conflicting with the efforts of African Americans. Under such a scenario, community-organizing efforts would have serious iatrogenic effects. For us, failing to organize a group would have been preferable to creating one lacking ethnic balance because we had concluded that separation and mistrust were maintaining the community's problems and undermining progress.

Unlike some diversity challenges, this one did not blow in as a crisis; it was expected from the beginning based on our ethnographic work, in which we learned historical reasons that Woodbridge's African Americans and Latinos had been separated. We began to see that we were about to contend with a well-entrenched social regularity (Seidman, 1988) of segregation and limited intergroup contact in our efforts to form a bi-ethnic group. Our worries mounted as evidence from multiple sources foreshadowed the difficulties we would face in bringing members of the two groups together.

Obvious issues that divided Latinos and African Americans in Woodbridge were the already noted mobility of residents and geographic separation, as Latinos and African Americans tended to live on opposite sides of the apartment community. Residents also typically had a limited amount of time for socializing, as many worked overtime shifts or two jobs in places like the meat-packing plant and convenience stores.

We also saw that the diversity that made Woodbridge seem so culturally vibrant to us seemed to keep residents apart. African Americans were more likely to go to a typical convenience store next to Woodbridge, whereas Latinos shopped in a store across the street that featured tortillas and other Mexican foods. Even though most African Americans and Latinos shared a common bond of Christianity, they usually went to different places of worship. Language was the largest cultural barrier, as Spanish was the primary language of many Latinos

and English the language of African Americans. Even those who had been interested in talking with neighbors of differing ethnic backgrounds had gotten frustrated. One African American resident who had tried in years previous to rally the community around a children's safety issue had given up in part after frustration that she could not make herself understood to Latinos.

We first wondered if Latinos would come to any public gathering because at least some lacked legal residence. Drawing attention to the community thus had potentially strong disadvantages for Latinos. We learned that a raid by the Immigration and Naturalization Service in 1997 resulted in the deportation of many Latinos living without papers in Woodbridge. We also learned that rumors of new raids made some residents reluctant to venture out even to convenience stores. Under those circumstances, we wondered how many would be willing to participate in a group interested in community concerns. After learning about the documentation dynamics, we tried to convey that legal status had no importance for us by not mentioning it. That in turn left us in the dark about how this issue would affect the formation of a bi-ethnic group.

We also had reasons to wonder if African Americans would join a community group. We found Latinos generally to be more optimistic about their economic prospects than African Americans, who seemed more resigned and pessimistic. (We hypothesized that the difference was due to a longer history of oppression for African Americans in the Southeast.) To our way of thinking, if the pattern of optimism and pessimism were similar with regard to community improvement, African American participation in a bi-ethnic group might be minimal.

As we began to plan an initial meeting, we realized that even the site for such a gathering could be problematic. With residents having full work schedules and sometimes lacking transportation, they were unlikely in our view to attend meetings at a site such as the elementary school. The most obvious place for a group to meet, at least initially, was the community after-school office, a renovated apartment. However, it was located near the entrance of Woodbridge where African Americans exclusively lived and was near a street corner where crimes were common. We knew fear of crime kept at least some residents apart; one Latino resident told us he bought a $200 truck because he feared harassment on the 10 min walk through Woodbridge to his job at the meat-packing plant. When we asked Latino residents about meeting at the after-school office, they replied it was not a problem. However, we wondered if this was a polite answer and not a truthful one.

With many doubts about the prospects for forming a bi-ethnic group, we weighed our options. One was to consider community ethnic divisions too large to bridge with a group and make no attempt to form one. However, we already had discussed the possibility of a group with residents. Furthermore, we viewed walking away as adding us to the list of professionals who collected information in a disadvantaged community and exited without a trace of effort to improve it.

Fear of inaction, fortunately, was not our only motivation for continuing. In the ethnographic work, we were heartened as Latinos and African Americans opened their doors to Berryhill, a Caucasian outsider. We also saw evidence of community integration, particularly with children who would play together. Most of all, we were encouraged as we learned that aspirations for Woodbridge sounded quite similar among African Americans and Latinos. Living in a place where crimes and litter were common and play areas lacking, residents of both ethnic groups worried about the welfare of Woodbridge's children. This common bond, heretofore unspoken in the community, gave us the desire and the courage to pursue establishing a group that could create a new story for Woodbridge.

Therefore, Berryhill asked residents to come to a meeting to discuss community changes they desired and form a group to work toward such changes. A few said yes and none declined, but most were noncommittal. The most salient reservation came during a conversation with a Latino head of household, the first Berryhill met in Woodbridge, who asked why the group being formed could not consist solely of Latinos. We wondered whether this question was unspoken by other residents. We recognized that no one was telling us they saw ethnic relations as a principal community problem; no one was citing intergroup cooperation as a linchpin to community improvement.

The meeting was set for 6 p.m. on a Sunday evening in the after-school office. Arriving 20 min early, Berryhill waited for residents. When the hour to meet arrived, none had come, creating some very anxious moments. Had we failed altogether? Was it time to knock on doors of those expected to come? Then, five minutes later, six residents entered the office to attend the meeting.

They were all African American women.

Berryhill served cookies and punch and watched the door, hoping that Latino residents would come, extending the social time. On the bright side, the African American women were displaying courage and faith in giving up part of an evening to form a group that did not yet have a mission or name. At the same time, the absence of Latino residents meant that our fears of iatrogenic effects might be coming true. Was the site, in the African American half of Woodbridge, the problem? If so, how could we get this group to move elsewhere? Was something else stopping Latinos from coming?

Twenty minutes later, when no new arrivals had come, Berryhill started the meeting with introductions. With our concerns in mind, he noted his hope that other residents, including Latinos, would come. Then he asked the women present if they had goals for Woodbridge. Without hesitation, they said they were sick of broken glass, trash, and crime; they wanted them out of the community. There were concerns about the community's children walking along a busy street to the elementary school because of the lack of bus transportation. Berryhill added that he had heard residents bemoan the lack of play areas for children; the women agreed they would like to see a nearby park constructed. At this point the first meeting could have been considered a success, had a diverse group attended. However, the women present did not reflect the ethnic balance we saw as crucial for this community-development initiative.

At that moment, Alejandra, one of the Latino residents Berryhill had come to know in his ethnographic work, walked in. The new diversity was a relief, but new questions emerged. How would the African American women who had just come together so nicely react to this latecomer? How would Alejandra respond to being the sole Latina present?

Berryhill did a quick bilingual introduction, and the African American women smiled and gave a warm welcome. They asked Alejandra to bring more Latinos to the next meeting. One African American resident said she was interested in learning Spanish. Alejandra was told of the goals established at the meeting; she said they sounded good and had none to add. The meeting ended with an agreement to come back next week to begin discussing ways to reach the group's goals. Those present were going to try to talk neighbors into coming. We had a bi-ethnic group, barely.

The group's first meeting was not, of course, the end of the story. It unfolded with notable successes: a bi-ethnic group calling itself UNITY, probably the first of its kind in the state, formed and pursued common goals; group members made cross-ethnic friendships; the group made itself known in Woodbridge; it raised money via a yard sale; it became known regionally via press coverage in the local newspaper and a television station. Yet the story has many downsides. UNITY remained small, mostly consisting of the members who came to the first meeting. It did not achieve the community-improvement goals identified in the early stages. An example of the difficulty of change in Woodbridge—and the ethnic tensions that accompanied change efforts—was UNITY's unsuccessful community cleanup one Saturday. After several meetings, group members felt ready to stop talking and take action; they wanted to increase their visibility and attract new members. Berryhill noted the easiest target for a "small win" (Weick, 1984) would be a neighborhood cleanup. Group members agreed on the following weekend, a time when Berryhill was not able to attend as he had a commitment to attend a community psychology conference. When Berryhill returned 2 weekends later, he met discouraged African American UNITY members. They said the cleanup was publicized by signs and word of mouth, but only a few members of the Woodbridge community showed up to help. They cleaned one side of the apartments in the morning, but Latinos had not come. When the two Latino members came to the meeting a few minutes later, they reported they wound up having to go to work the morning the cleanup was scheduled, but had cleaned the other side of Woodbridge (also with limited help) in the afternoon. Even though we had people of different ethnicities merged into one group, UNITY members had failed to unify in their efforts, and the benefits of working side by side on a common concern had not been accomplished.

It would be misleading to imply that ethnic tensions always ran high in UNITY. African Americans were understanding about factors like changes in work schedules, and members of the groups wound up interacting with jokes and laughter as they planned a yard sale in which they collected clothes and other goods and raised awareness of their presence and funds for their cause.

Yet, the ethnic balance we sought always was precarious. Although new African American and Latino residents showed up for UNITY meetings and events, only a few returned. We wondered if the group's diversity was a factor keeping some residents from participating. We also wondered if external factors such as exposure in the media were having a

negative impact on Latino UNITY members. Of the three news reports done on UNITY, none included a single interview of Latino members, perhaps because reporters did not think they would be able to communicate with them. Although the Latino members did not complain, to our minds they were getting a message from official institutions that they were valued less, and we worried that it was dampening their enthusiasm for group participation.

For us the story concluded when Berryhill had to end involvement in Woodbridge to complete other graduate school requirements and take an out-of-state internship. UNITY members decided to work with the public-health graduate student already working on other initiatives in Woodbridge. However, the group disbanded a few months later—about a year after its inception—after its principal Latino members, Alejandra and her husband, moved to another state and some African American members left Woodbridge to move to other parts of town.

REFLECTIONS AND DISCUSSION

Our ethnic diversity challenges in Woodbridge have led us to reflect on several themes: (1) the gap between the science of diversity-related matters and the practice of such matters; (2) the utility and limits of ethnographic work; (3) the multiple ecological levels of influence on Woodbridge's diversity dynamics; (4) dilemmas around being proactive in our work, especially given ethnic and gender differences between us and UNITY members; and (5) the values that influenced our desire for ethnic balance in UNITY and led us to a paradox.

First, our efforts to create a group with ethnic balance had us trying to be the kind of reflective practitioners defined by Schön (1987). He describes a topography in professional practice that features a high ground, where problems look manageable with the use of theory and techniques derived from research. The topography also has a lowland, the "real world," that is swamp-like and replete with messy problems that can defy technical solutions. In other words, there is a gap between theory and practice, and social scientists do not have a stellar track record of putting theory into practice (Berkowitz & Wolff, 1996). We knew that the scientific work (e.g., Sherif et al., 1961) on which we based our efforts was simple compared to Woodbridge, where a complex history and deep-seated ethnic differences existed. In contrast to the Eagles and Rattlers of Sherif's camp, our challenge was to create an alternative setting that would attract diverse ethnic groups in the absence of a broadly held assumption that multi-ethnic collaboration was important. In the lowland, we also constantly ran into matters, such as finding an optimal meeting location, on which science was silent. In short, being in the lowland made us sweat and worry; answers were rarely obvious there.

Second, because of the uncertainties of working with complex diversity issues, we came to be disciples of Heller's (1990) encouragement of ethnography. In fact, it is difficult for us to imagine how Berryhill, as a European American outsider, could have worked with Woodbridge residents without taking time to get to know some of them and understand the context of their lives—the "before the beginning" (see Sarason, 1972). The practice of listening in informal settings helped us forge connections with residents in ways that were far more likely to fit the cultural norms of Latinos and African Americans than would have a formal needs assessment. Miller (2004) notes that researchers who have not established trust in communities of interest are likely to have participants give them information that is superficial, politically expedient, or socially desirable. We saw our ethnographic work as providing the opportunity for residents to provide more in-depth, personal and honest insights into their lives and community. In the end, it opened our eyes to the diversity challenges we faced. It also provided evidence that African Americans and Latinos had common goals that made a bi-ethnic group desirable and feasible. We do not want to portray ethnographic work as a panacea. At times it felt uncomfortable and intrusive. We also noted that some residents, typically African Americans, seemed ready for us to stop learning in our ethnographic phase and take some action. Others, typically Latinos, seemed quite comfortable sharing information but not in joining a community group, and thus our relationship with them largely ended when UNITY was formed. However, on balance, we agree with Banyard and Miller (1998) that qualitative methods have the potential to allow social scientists to better understand matters of diversity and context.

Third, we recognize the need to consider multiple ecological levels of influence on diversity dynamics in specific situations, an interplay that traditionally has been "hazy" (see Trickett, Watts & Birman, 1993). In Bronfenbrenner's (1979) terms the group we helped create is a microsystem. However, factors affecting the diversity we sought in our microsystem were located in higher levels of Bronfenbrenner's

(1979) framework. In Woodbridge, there was a lack of mesosystemic connections between the familial microsystems of Latinos and African Americans. This lack of connections among Woodbridge's ethnic groups was influenced by exosystemic factors. Crime in Woodbridge, for example, created a common bond between the community's ethnic groups (each wanted less of it), but also helped keep residents of diverse backgrounds apart by keeping them closer to home or in automobiles. The mass media's ignoring of Latino UNITY members was another exosystemic factor that we felt made the challenge of attracting Latinos to UNITY more difficult. Also at the exosystemic level, immigration policies that were enforced to deport Latinos likely had an impact on our ability to bring Latinos into UNITY.

We highlight the multiple levels of influence because we hope that community psychologists will follow Bronfenbrenner's (1979) call and work to create change at levels beyond those of individual and microsystem, particularly because the source of problems often lies elsewhere. Such change is consistent with the mission of community psychology laid out at is founding (Bennett et al., 1966). We wonder how different Woodbridge and our work might have been if, for example, federal and state policies on immigration had been different. We also wonder, given the challenges we faced at all of Bronfenbrenner's levels, if we had enough resources to promote lasting change in Woodbridge.

Given that we did attempt change, in retrospect we wonder if following a more proactive strategy for our challenges would have been helpful. For example, as we moved toward organizing a group, we could have been more explicit with residents in saying that a diverse group was essential. However, in our efforts to empower residents, we wanted to follow their lead. When asked about their community, they spoke little about after-school fights and ethnicity—and more about problems such as crime, garbage and no play areas for children. We thus did not emphasize the need for a bi-ethnic group, but rather noted that the entire community could pull together to work on identified problems. Had we been more proactive in voicing the need for bi-ethnic cooperation, we might have faced less tension at our first meeting. That is, when our initial group consisted solely of African Americans, with more groundwork laid on the importance of having a bi-ethnic group, it likely would have been easier to point out that the group's first mission should be to attract Latinos. Yet what if the African American group members had disagreed? Or what if they had agreed, and then we had tried to attract Latinos without success? Would we then have told African American group members we should not go forward? In short, we do not believe the dilemma around creating ethnic balance would have gone away had we pursued a more direct strategy with regard to bi-ethnic participation.

Another issue on which we might have been more proactive is the legal status of Latino residents. We adopted a "don't ask-don't tell" policy, leaving us uncertain of residents' status and how it might affect their willingness to join a community effort. We could have been upfront and told residents we were not concerned about their immigration status. Yet we think about how Latino residents might have responded to that message: *These university folk think so stereotypically about us*; *we're Latinos*, *so we must be illegal.* We see the need to reframe thinking about immigration. Flores and Benmayor (1997) have a model of "cultural citizenship" that promotes thinking about undocumented migrants (they eschew the term illegal aliens) as people with talents, aspirations and agency who can contribute to communities instead of being branded as lawbreakers with deficits. We are attracted by such thinking and the empowering work that results from it. Nonetheless, at the organizing stage we did not have a forum to communicate such a philosophy. Had we had a means to convey it, we still view it as unlikely that Latinos would have responded immediately to a new framework employed by a single organizer. Furthermore, others (including African Americans in Woodbridge) may not have responded favorably had we been more proactive regarding immigration issues.

A final area in which we could have been more proactive is that of news coverage of UNITY. Specifically, we could have encouraged reporters to interview Latino members of UNITY, and in hindsight, we wish we had.

Yet for us being more proactive, even with good intentions, always carried the danger of being less empowering. We watched a variety of people with more "privilege" and status than most Woodbridge residents interact with UNITY members. These included the after-school director (an African American male), the owner and manager of the apartments (a White male), and a homeowner (an African American female) who lived nearby and came to initial UNITY meetings. A common thread we noticed with each is that they invariably took strong stands, telling residents what they should do. We were trying to

break that regularity, in no small part because in our case it would mean a continuation of White people telling people of color what to do.

Furthermore, Berryhill, a male, was the primary organizer and convener of UNITY, with Linney, a female, serving as a supervisor whom residents did not meet. As we addressed the expected challenge of bi-ethnic group participation, an unexpected diversity issue emerged: a male organizer had put together a group dominated by females. Previous research, although limited by having mostly White middle-class participants (Carli & Eagly, 1999), indicates how problematic this dynamic can be. Women are typically at a disadvantage vis a vis males in work groups (Carli & Eagly, 1999), with men seen as more competent than women in group situations (Wood & Karten, 1986), and women deferring to men more often than men to women (Pugh & Wahrman, 1983). It is notable that these results can change when women are perceived as superior to men in ability. However, given Berryhill's university affiliation, female superiority was not likely to be a prevailing perception in Woodbridge. We wanted to label privilege and challenge values and assumptions, as Bond (1999) urged community psychologists to do. In other words, we wanted to keep our eyes open to the reality that Berryhill's views, no matter how well intended or grounded, came from a White male middle-class perspective and try to create means for women of color to take the lead in defining problems and seeking solutions.

This leads us to our final point: we recognize that we brought our own values to Woodbridge, and that those values sometimes proved difficult to reconcile with each other. We view values as neither inherently good nor bad, but think social scientists should recognize the values underlying their work (Sarason, 1978). One of our values was wanting to work with Woodbridge residents in ways in which they would be empowered to make positive community changes. Another value, this one at the core of our diversity dilemma, was that participation of both ethnic groups was a necessity in any group we helped organize. Those values did not converge neatly: There was never an explicit request from Woodbridge residents that we help them form a bi-ethnic group (and there was one request that we make the group mono-ethnic). Thus our values were creating a paradox of the type Rappaport (1981) encouraged community psychologists to "unpack."

We wish we could say that we solved our paradox, but to the extent that any unpacking occurred, most credit goes to Woodbridge residents. We often think about the welcome the six African American women gave Alejandra after her late entrance to the first UNITY meeting. To our way of thinking, the women were combining empowerment with communion and cooperation in ways that Riger (1993) suggested as an ideal combination. When we contrast that warm response with the lack of interest in intergroup relationships we saw prior to the meeting, we are struck by the power of alternative settings (Sarason, 1972). For us it was a vivid example of people's openness to diversity, even in generally adverse circumstances, when the environment is conducive. Put another way, a strength of openness and acceptance on the part of the women emerged in the new setting, and it was a major reason we had some success meeting our diversity challenge of group ethnic balance.

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