

Diversity Paradigms (JD Palmer)

(Paradigm: The Merriam-Webster Online dictionary definition: "a philosophical and theoretical framework of a scientific school or discipline within which theories, laws, and generalizations and the experiments performed in support of them are formulated; *broadly* : a philosophical or theoretical framework of any kind'.)

Paradigm I – the golden rule

The fundamental imagery of paradigm I is that everyone is an individual and that we are more similar than we are different. The dominant of this Paradigm is the notion that "I treat everyone the same; I believe any differences among people are due to individual characteristics, not any 'group' a person is a part of. I'm colour blind, gender blind." A paradigm I person typically is someone of good faith, with self-image as a good and a fair person. At the same time, a Paradigm I person does not usually explore his or her underlying unconscious prejudices or those of other people. In fact, Paradigm I would conceptualize prejudice as existing in only a few "bad" or "prejudiced" people, in isolated incidents.

Paradigm I does not see diversity issues as systemic, nor does it perceive "typical" issues or behaviour among various groups. For a paradigm person, diversity is a matter of individual responsibility and morality.

Vision and preferred approach to change. Paradigm I change leader want an organization where everyone can be individual, where no prejudice or barriers exists to create disadvantages, and where all can be rewarded according to their abilities. The desire state is an effective organization and a pleasant work environment where everyone can raise their potential. Business results will improve through minimized interpersonal friction and better management; each person will be empowered to contribute to his or her maximum.

Being focused on individuals getting along together, Paradigm I interprets any disharmony among people as being individually motivated. Paradigm I people do not perceive patterns among people or among "types" of people. The preferred method for valuing diversity involves getting everyone to try harder to treat each other with respect.

Paradigm I change leaders resist programs which separate out the issues faced by specific groups. They specifically resist "awareness training," believing that this will provide negative imagery and put bad notions in people's head. They are highly critical of special programs or numerical targets to increase the representation of selected groups, believing that these efforts are counter-productive, unfair to other organization members, and group people without regard to their individuality.

When morale is low or conflicts arise in the organization, Paradigm I change leaders recommend third-party consultations, team-building meetings, one-on-one counselling,

and sometimes individual training in assertiveness, conflict management, or problem-solving. The driving motivation is “we should all just be decent to each other and treat people as individuals.”

Meaning of “diversity.” For Paradigm I, the word “diversity” means an atmosphere where everyone in the organization is appreciated **regardless** of their differences. Paradigm I people are uncomfortable thinking about people based on what group they belong to, and they feel it is artificial to focus on concerns of blacks, women, national groups, ethnic groups, etc. Diversity means everyone is an individual; each is special and different. In a phrase, for Paradigm I “diversity” means the golden rule- “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Organisational impact. When the prevailing view of the changed leaders is Paradigm I, the organization, over time, takes on some very predictable characteristics. Inside the organization, people perceive each other as being unique and different. They see themselves as sensitive to each other’s character traits and personal quirks, individual backgrounds and family patterns, etc.

However, the organization’s members have not usually stretched their experience by dealing with the deep issue of people who are significantly different from themselves. They apply the Golden rule from their **own** frame of reference, and usually with people rather like themselves. So in attempting to “treat everyone the same” they don’t usually know how to put themselves into someone else’s shoes who may be very different. An organizational culture of “sameness” is usually created by Paradigm I change leaders; this may not be an environment which different kinds of people consider welcoming or nurturing, even though the Paradigm I people mean well organization members do not see this, believing that the “door is open to all who are qualified.”

Paradigm II – right the wrongs

The fundamental imagery of Paradigm II is that there are specific groups, in the organization as in the larger society, who have been systematically disadvantaged. Paradigm II feels a pressing need to rectify these injustices.

The exact identification of the disadvantaged group (I will call it the “target group”) depends on the organization’s environment; the organization mirrors the society it lives in. In Germany the target group might be in the Turkish factory workers population. In Japan, it could be ethnic Koreans. In San Francisco, it could be lesbian, gay and bisexuals; in Canada, Francophones. In U.S organizations, two major targets are black men and women, and women of all races. Other target groups in the U.S (such as Hispanics) become focal when they are present in the surrounding local culture in sufficient proportions to raise awareness and prompt actions.

Visions and Preferred Approach to change. Paradigm II changes leaders want an organization where injustice has been correct, and where groups who selectively and systematically disadvantage in the past are now able to have respect and participate equitably in the rewards of the organization. Paradigm II believes that business result will be improved by the fresh perspectives of the Target Group. Managerial and interpersonal effectiveness will also improve dramatically, as the Target Group's skills and sensitivity in working with people are added to the mix, and as other learn from working through the barriers to effective integration of the target Group.

Systemic change efforts in Paradigm II focus on programs and efforts to remove the disadvantages and barriers which have been identified for the Target Groups. The measure of success is that the Target Group's members will be equitably deployed and rewarded throughout the organization, as shown by statistics on recruiting, salaries, rankings, job levels, turnover, etc., as well as attitude surveys.

Training in Paradigm II centres on having the majority members learn how the target Group feels, "walk a mile in someone else's shoes," and on having them face up to their negative prejudices. A component of confrontation is seen as valuable in training, to break down normal perceptual barriers so real learning or change can take place. It is seen as crucial that training take place in a learning group containing enough Target Group members for dialogue to take place.

An important element of Paradigm II's preferred approach is that the effort should remain focused. While acknowledging that other groups may also experience barriers and disadvantages in the organization, Paradigm II is clear that the Target Group's needs must be dealt with first. In doing this, the organization will learn important skills and principles which will enable it later to respond to the concerns of other groups. Paradigm II change leaders fear that the effort will be "watered down" if too many groups' needs are addressed at the same time.

Meaning of "diversity" Functionally then, for Paradigm II, 'diversity' means the establishment of equality and justice for the specific target groups who are demonstrably disadvantaged by systemic prejudice and differential treatment. Correcting this situation is the driving priority for Paradigm II; once this is accomplished, the same principles would be applied to other groups. In phrase, for Paradigm II "diversity" means "right the wrongs".

Organizational impact. When Paradigm II is the dominant framework of the change leaders, programs focus on the target groups, improving how the organization recruits, trains, develops and rewards one or two "target groups" who are clearly not receiving the same organizational advantages as the majority. Usually the organization has in mind the "next" target group which will be focused on when the current program shows positive results.

At times when Paradigm changes are being championed, tension and anxiety can develop to a significant degree, since the change leaders are usually thrust into an adversarial role with others in their own organization who do not share Paradigm II perspective. Frustration and impatience can run high on the part of the target group members; and people are prompted to 'take sides.' At times strong demands are made to management on behalf of the target group, on the belief that "no one gives up power – you have to take it." Change leaders sometimes experience discouragement and burnout.

Paradigm II conveys a sense of split world, a dichotomy, and a struggle to bridge the gap. The language which characterizes a paradigm II outlook often conveys these polarities and opposition. This is reflected in "we/you" types of dialogue between target group members and people in the organization who appear to wield the power or to control access to what's desirable in the organization. Paradigm II language in the U.S, for instance, characterizes "white males" versus "black and women" as a dichotomy. Separate formal or informal structures and programs to develop the target group are considered the appropriate way to foster the growth of disadvantaged groups.

Paradigm III –Value all differences

The fundamental imagery of Paradigm III is that of an organization where all groups and individuals are appreciated for their differentness; and where the organization has skills at working synergistically so that its effectiveness is greater than the sum of all its parts.

Paradigm III change leaders want people to be conscious of what makes each other different. Paradigm III expects everyone to be appreciative of the heritage and culture of many different groups, and be responsive to the self-image and uniqueness of each individual. This marks a clear difference from Paradigm I, which rejects "grouping" people, minimizes differences, and values treating everyone the same.

Vision and preferred approach. Paradigm III changes leaders envision an organization where individuals reach beyond their own experience to understand and interact effectively with a wide range of others who are truly different from themselves. Organization practices and norms include many styles and approaches in the pursuit of excellence. Thus, everyone is able to contribute in their own unique way. Creativity, the decision process, and organizational results improve exponentially; results and solutions are found which were not thinkable in a more homogenous organization.

Paradigm III change leaders believe that to focus on only one or two target groups would mean having to do it all over again later with subsequent target groups, and meanwhile the organization would not be striving to value all differences. Therefore, the approach is that the organization should become skilful at leveraging 'differences.' This encompasses a wide range of significant differences, including race, gender, and class, as well as nationality,

native language, psychological makeup, organizational or functional home base, style, and more.

Systemic change in paradigm III focuses on the ability of managers to build and leverage organizations where the inclusion of many kinds of people leads to excellence in business results and organizational climate. This appreciation of differences is built into hiring, development, and reward systems. Criteria for success include not only statistics regarding deployment of identifiable groups, but also “softer” measures including examination of how managers develop subordinates, and how teams enhance their results through creativity and problem-solving provided by diversity.

Training in a Paradigm III framework emphasizes self-knowledge- learning the patterns of one’s own prejudices-and interpersonal skills, as well as specific learning about cultural history or characteristics of many different groups and “types.” Confrontation and “victim/oppressor” dichotomies are downplayed. The lesson is that all must learn to appreciate each other’s contribution to better results.

Meaning of “diversity” Thus, in Paradigm III, “diversity” means consciously and sensitively deploying the talents of all the types in this organization, without emphasizing or putting priority on any specific difference or group. Paradigm III puts importance on all kinds of differences-ethnic and racial heritages, gender, problem-solving and creative approach, professional disciplines, native language, home organization, etc. In a phrase, “diversity” means not “do as you would be done by” but “value all differences”.

Organizational impact. Paradigm III change leaders work to create an organization which proactively and consciously includes and appreciates a wide range of types. The organization does not single out target groups for systems change, but simultaneously and equitably works at recognizing the unique needs of many different types and groups. This could mean special programs for different groups at different times, but also might not have any special programs.

Paradigm III language patterns convey sensitivity and appreciation for differentness, and might not use terms such as “blacks and women” or “white males” as dichotomies. People are interested and enthusiastic about learning about themselves and others, and all organizational systems are geared to maximizing diversity while honouring and pursuing the fundamental needs of the organization.

Paradigm IV (added by B. Lee) – ‘the inevitability of pain and suffering (inequity, injustice and oppression)’ and ‘the human instinct for compassion’ (The ecology of compassion)

Inequity, injustice and oppression stem from many things including ignorance, greed and fear. These are all part of the ‘human condition’ and therefore no matter how much we’d like to imagine a world that was free from ignorance, greed and fear, (it’s also okay to have these as a vision and aspiration) the reality is that these are ever present. This is not pessimism it’s a reality check and provides the foundation for one the theories why compassion is regarded as a natural part of the human instinct. For compassion to arise there need to be suffering, not because we wish it, but because we see it, are concerned about those who are suffering and are motivated to do something about it (based on what is needed).

We can learn not to see, care or act – indifference. Disconnection. Powerlessness. Rejection. We can also learn to connect with are natural compassion.

Visions and Preferred Approach to change. Paradigm IV change leaders see organisations as systems in a process of constant flux, and see inequality, injustice or oppression not as definable problems needing specific solutions, but rather as complex ‘problematic’ situations requiring multiple responses to meet multiple needs using sophisticated simplifications (Ang, 2011) as a opposed to simplistic solutions. Paradigm IV believes that business result will be improved by connected with our shared humanity and emotional lives. Managerial and interpersonal effectiveness will also improve dramatically, as we begin to see our interconnectedness, as Martin Luther King jr so eloquently shared:

‘All [people] are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly’.

Systemic change efforts in Paradigm IV focus on connecting with our natural compassionate instincts and skilfully respond (based on needs) rather than react and ‘rescue’ (based on personal distress reduction or assumptions). The measure of success is that all needs are considered, at an individual and collective level, and collaborative action is taken in response to those needs.

Training in Paradigm IV centres on building individual and collective cultures of compassion, including self-compassion, healthy emotional regulation, cultural humility and altruism. It is seen as crucial that training take place in a learning group that is ‘safer’ and offers the opportunity for deep learning.

A key element of Paradigm IV’s preferred approach is that the role –modelling compassion at all levels (self, close other, stranger and those we find difficult). Paradigm IV moved away from the notion of ‘either/or’ in terms of prioritising toward ‘and/and’ and that everyone’s need are important and crucially that everyone’s needs can be met, once we fully understand what they are and how best these can be met.

Meaning of “diversity” Functionally then, for Paradigm IV, ‘diversity’ means the ‘unleashing’ of our natural instinct for individual and collective compassion for all people based on their suffering and needs. Building a culture of compassion is the main priority for Paradigm IV; once this is accomplished, we see how the dynamics of an ‘ecology of compassion’ a constant means are of addressing the ‘inevitability of organisational pain’.

Organizational impact. When Paradigm VI is the dominant framework of the change leaders, programs focus on building cultures of compassion, and improving how the organization pays attentions to, is concerned about, understands, and skilfully responds to the needs of individuals and groups experiencing the adverse effects of discrimination, injustice, prejudice or oppression.

Paradigm 5 – integral (meta) perspective. Observing, navigating and applying all paradigms. (see also integral theory’s).