Inequity @ Work

Angela Gist-Mackey, Ph.D.

May 3, 2024

epic Advancing the Value of Ethnography

INTRODUCTION

Angela Gist-Mackey, Ph.D.

- **Pronouns:** She/her(s)

- **Expertise:** Organizational Communication

- **Teaching:** Organizational Culture, Identity & Stigma, Identity & Equity, Qualitative Research Methods, Job Searching, Harmful Workplace Contexts

- **Research:** Power, Inequity, Social Class (SES), Workforce, Higher Education, Non-Profits

- **Community Engagement & Service Learning**

- **Prior Work Experience:** Advertising Industry

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PUBLISHED RESEARCH

NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

Sociomaterial struggle: An ethnographic analysis of power, discourse, and materiality in a working class unemployment support organization

Angela N. Gist-Mackey [a] and Debbie S. Dougherty[b]

[a]Department of Communication Studies, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, USA; [b]Department of Communication, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO, USA

Using the ontological lens of sociomateriality with the theoretical notion of struggle, this critical ethnography explores interactions within an unemployment support organization run by white collar workers who train working class populations for skilled blue collar occupations. Results illustrate how sociomaterial struggle is enacted in two ways: struggle against embodied others and struggle against discursive forces. The first theme, *struggle for control*, occurs between blue collar trainees and white collar trainers. Second, the *struggle for upward mobility*, occurs when trainers and trainees struggled alongside one another in collaboration toward the goal of upward mobility. Participants' struggles organize in a complex combination of materiality and discourse throughout this unemployment support organization, mirroring social class relations in the United States.

AGENDA

1. Introduction & Overview
2. Defining Power
   - What is power?
   - Function of power
   - Risks of power
3. How does power manifest at work?
   - Function
   - Manifestations
   - Consequences
4. Equitable Organizing
   - Mitigating hierarchy
   - Sharing power
   - Fostering workplace dignity
5. Case Study Activity
   - Small group discussion
6. Debrief

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OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the influence of changing demographics, discrimination, and inequity on the workforce

2. Understand workplace power and inequity and how they occur

3. Explore equitable ways to organize work

4. Learn about practical approaches to foster workplace dignity

5. Analyze real-life case studies that apply your knowledge of diversity, equity, and inclusion

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STARTING POINT...

- We each view the world, ourselves, and others from particular standpoints

- Everyone is an expert in their own lived experience

- We ALL have been targets and perpetrators of bias and prejudice

- Please maintain confidentiality and discretion

- Engage in a brave space during interaction

- Being mindful of culture, difference, and equity is about <u>human dignity</u> and <u>respect</u>, NOT about being politically correct

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(GOLDSTEIN HODE, 2015)

INEQUITY MATTERS

DISCUSSION

- How was power related to my experience?
- How was inequity related to my experience?
- Was anyone disempowered or empowered?

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AUDIENCE POLL

- When you think of **power at work** what comes to mind first?
  - Title and Rank
  - Seniority and Tenure
  - Authority or Decision-making
  - Influence or Popularity
  - Something else (please share)

AUDIENCE POLL

- When you think of **<u>inequity at work</u>** what comes to mind first?
  - Hierarchy or organizational structure
  - Haves and the have nots
  - Unfair treatment
  - Workplace perks (e.g. corner office, window, technology, gym membership)
  - Something else (please share)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do you define power in your own words?

- How do you define inequity in your own words?

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WHY CARE ABOUT INEQUITY?

- Demographics are changing
- Social Identity Groups are more vocal
- Increased demands for equity
- Value for differences is under threat
- Benefits (creativity, productivity, better quality products/services, less conflict)

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INEQUITY & IDENTITY

Race: socially constructed classification scheme tied to cultural and ethnic groups and norms (Gist & Goldstein Hode, 2017)

- Often confused with phenotypes, which are biological manifestations such as facial features, hair texture, skin color, etc.

Gender: socially constructed set of meanings tied to our expression of gender identity related to social norms of femininity, masculinity, androgyny, and being genderqueer (Allen, 2023)

- Often confused with sex, which is based on biological manifestations such as reproductive organs, hormones, etc.

Disability: physical, mental, or sensory impairment that substantially influences one or more major life activities; could be readily apparent to others or not (Allen, 2023)

- Often mistaken as a deficit or detriment as lacking in some way

Social Class: an open stratification system that is associated with systematically unequal allocation of resources and constraints (Henry, 2001)

- Often confused with income, education, debt-to-income ratio, material possessions, job type, etc.

Sexuality: social expression of social relations and social reference to bodily desire(s), real or imagined, by or for others or for oneself, together with the related bodily states and experiences… (Hearn & Parkin, 1995)

- Often confused or conflated with gender, sexuality is a diverse experience related to culture

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What other identities have you witnessed being treated inequitably?

- What identities are stigmatized commonly in your workplaces' cultures?

WHAT IS POWER?

- Working Definitions
  - Ability to act otherwise (Gramsci, 1926)
  - Control over valued resources (Magee & Galinsky, 2008)
  - Influence over others' behavior (Zoller, 2014)
  - Power relationships: *over, to, with* (Berger, 2005)
    - *Over – Dominance*
    - *To – Resistance*
    - *With – Mutually empowering relationships*

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POWER

POWER IN ORGANIZATIONS

- Useful functions of power
  - Execute work
  - Coordinate efforts
  - Complete complex accomplishments

- Harmful manifestations of power
  - Discrimination
  - Exploitation
  - Oppression
  - Prejudice
  - Stereotypes
  - Stigma

(ALLEN, 2023; ZOLLER,2014)

CONTROL IN ORGANIZATIONS

- Simple control

- Technical control

- Bureaucratic control

- Concertive control

Forbes
THE FRESHMAN
ELIZABETH HOLMES LEADS THE

the quint
theranos

Bad Blood
Winner of the FT/McKinsey Business Book of the Year Award 2018
Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup
The story of Elizabeth Holmes and Theranos
John Carreyrou
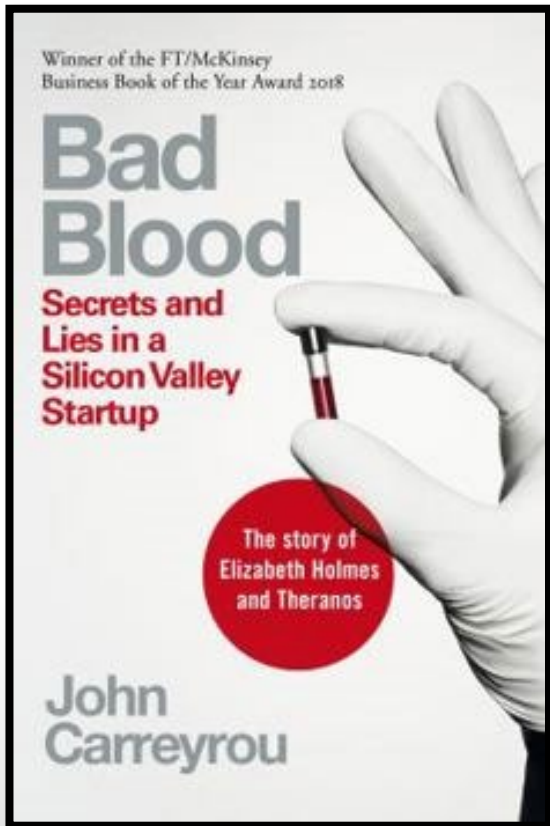
CNN Business   Markets   Tech   Media   Calculators   Videos

Former Theranos COO Ramesh 'Sunny' Balwani reports to prison, attorney says

By Catherine Thorbecke and Jennifer Korn, CNN
2 minute read · Published 5:39 PM EDT, Thu April 20, 2023

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TECHNOLOGY

Elizabeth Holmes has started her 11-year prison sentence. Here's what to know

HEGEMONY

- Concept that describes how we consent to our own oppression, control, or domination (Gramsci, 1926)

- There are many areas in life where we choose to be controlled and allow power to be exercised over us
  - Legal System
  - School
  - Work
  - Marriage
  - Prison
  - Gender norms

- Hegemony can range from positive to negative

HEGEMONY: Norms of Professionalism

- Norms of professionalism are biased
  - Characteristics of Professionalism
    - Emotional neutrality
    - Body of knowledge
    - Formal standards of conduct
    - Service orientation
    - Social status
    - Training and education
    - Self-control
    - Social control
   - Formal associations
    - Professional identity

(LAMMERS & GARCIA, 2009)

🔓 Free access | Research article | First published online May 29, 2021

The Paradox of the Black Professional: Whitewashing Blackness through Professionalism

Marcus W. Ferguson, Jr ⓘ ✉ and Debbie S. Dougherty View all authors and affiliations

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Abstract

Discrimination against Black workers in the United States workplace is an ongoing problem. This study explores one understudied type of discrimination—the paradoxes and contradictions that create untenable situations for Black professionals who work in largely white-dominant organizations. Through in-depth interviews with self-identified Black professionals, we developed a novel theoretical concept we term *the paradox of the Black professional.* The participants uniformly identified white assumptions underlying the meaning of professionalism and were forced to navigate the impossible expectations of needing to be white while inhabiting a Black body. The findings suggest that organizations expressing a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity need to rethink the meaning systems and expectations that drive the professional and organizational discourses around which work is organized.

Paradox of the Black Professional

- Double Bind#1: Blackness is not welcome in the workplace; Conformity is required

- Double Bind #2: Unachievable performance expectations

(FERGUSON & DOUGHERTY,2021)

BUSINESS

Black Workers Really Do Need to Be Twice as Good

African American employees tend to receive more scrutiny from their bosses than their white colleagues, meaning that small mistakes are more likely to be caught, which over time leads to worse performance reviews and lower wages.

GILLIAN B. WHITE OCTOBER 7, 2015

Paradox of the Black Professional

- Double Bind#1: Blackness is not welcome in the workplace; Conformity is required

- Double Bind #2: Unachievable performance expectations

- Double Bind #3: Embodiment Double Bind
  - Voice
  - Hair

(FERGUSON & DOUGHERTY,2021)

C.R.O.W.N. ACT RESEARCH

80%

"I have to change my hair from its natural state to fit in at the office"

Black women are 80% more likely to agree with this statement

BLACK WOMEN ARE:

1.5x More likely to be sent home from the workplace because of their hair

83% More likely to report being judged more harshly on her looks than other women

C.R.O.W.N Research Study (2019). Conducted by JOY Collective.
Study conducted in the U.S. among 2000 (1000 Black and 1000 White) Women, Age 25 – 64. All data tested at 95% confidence level.

(C.R.O.W.N. Research Study, 2019)

Paradox of the Black Professional

- Double Bind#1: Blackness is not welcome in the workplace; Conformity is required

- Double Bind #2: Unachievable performance expectations

- Double Bind #3: Embodiment Double Bind
  - Voice
  - Hair

- Response: Conformity v. Resistance

- <u>Cultural Labor</u>: Vicious never-ending cycle of contradictions that emerge as Black professionals manage the competing cultural demands

(FERGUSON & DOUGHERTY,2021)

WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

- 15 Characteristics
  - Perfectionism
  - Sense of urgency
  - Defensiveness
  - Valuing quantity over quality*
  - Privileging the written word*
  - Belief in one superior way to do things
  - Paternalism
  - Binary either/or thinking*
  - Power hoarding*
  - Fear of open conflict
  - Individualism*
  - Centering self
  - Belief that more is better
  - Value for objectivity
  - Right to comfort*

AUDIENCE POLL
WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

- Which of these 15 characteristics have you seen enacted in a workplace? (select all that apply)
  - Perfectionism
  - Sense of urgency
  - Defensiveness
  - Valuing quantity over quality
  - Privileging the written word
  - Belief in one superior way to do things
  - Paternalism

  - Binary either/or thinking
  - Power hoarding
  - Fear of open conflict
  - Individualism
  - Centering self
  - Belief that more is better
  - Value for objectivity
  - Right to comfort

(JONES & OKUN, 2001)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What emotions or attitudes emerge when you hear about white supremacy culture in the workplace?

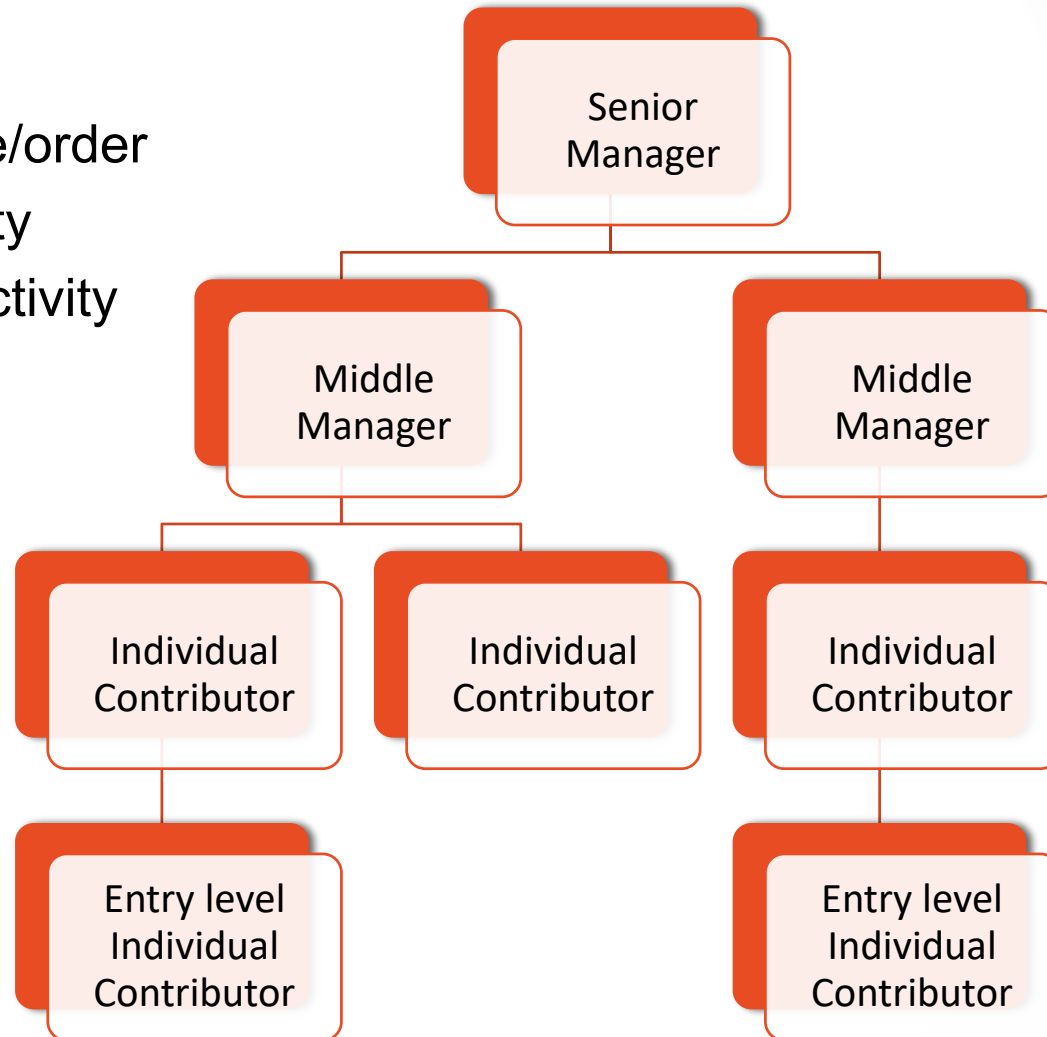- Are there any industries that you think are more or less likely to enact white supremacy culture?

5-minute break

HIERARCHY

- Function
  - Provides structure/order
  - Reduces ambiguity
  - Coordination of activity

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HIERARCHY GONE WRONG
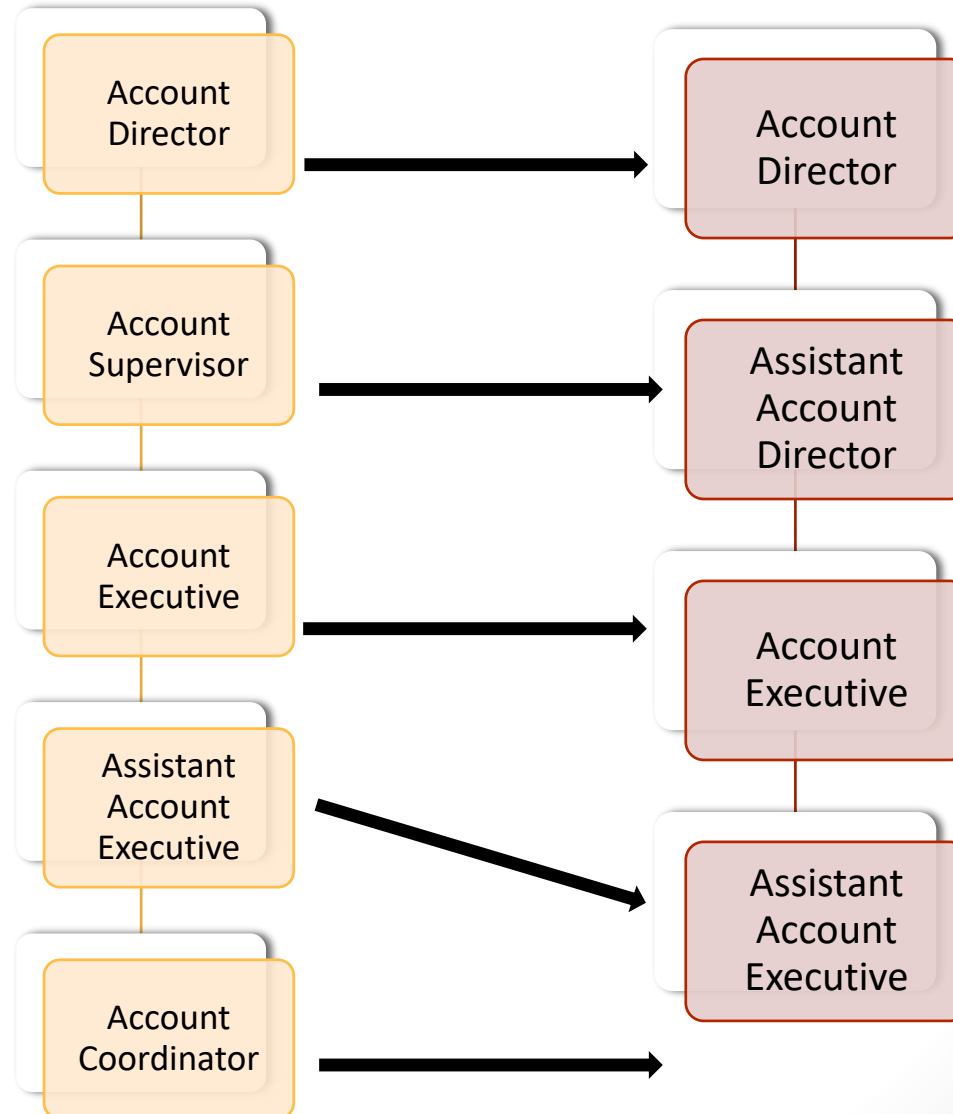
Example: Merger AKA & Fitz+Co

HIERARCHY

AUSTIN KELLEY ADVERTISING

FITZCO

Austin Kelley Advertising	FITZCO
Account Director	→ Account Director
Account Supervisor	→ Assistant Account Director
Account Executive	→ Account Executive
Assistant Account Executive	→ Assistant Account Executive
Account Coordinator	→

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HIERARCHY

AUSTIN KELLEY ADVERTISING

FITZCO

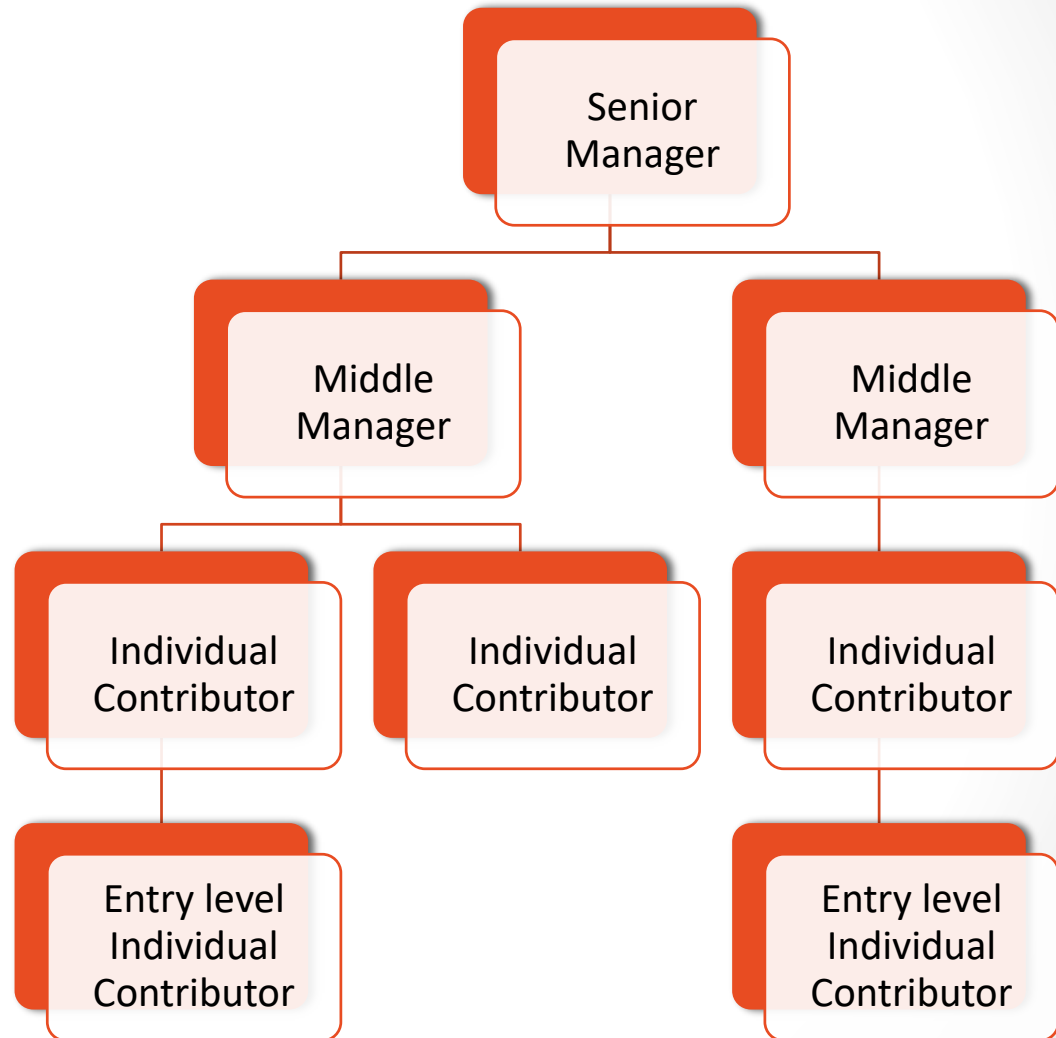| Austin Kelley Advertising		Fitzco
Account Director	→	Account Director
Account Supervisor	→	Assistant Account Director
Account Executive	→	Account Executive
Assistant Account Executive	→	Assistant Account Executive
Account Coordinator	→	?

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HIERARCHY

IDEOLOGY

- Ideology: taken for granted assumptions about reality/world and how it should be.
  - Examples of Ideology:
    - Organizational Hierarchy
    - Domination
    - Patriarchy
    - White Supremacy
    - Culture of Poverty
    - Heteronormativity
    - Normality
    - Deficit model of aging

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What ideologies are present in your workplace culture?

- *Organizational Hierarchy*
- *Domination*
- *Patriarchy*
- *White Supremacy*
- *Culture of Poverty*
- *Heteronormativity*
- *Normality*
- *Deficit model of aging*

What other ideologies, not listed above, have you noticed at work?

RESISTANCE

- Occurs when people undermine, subvert, or overthrow the power being exercised over them

- Successful resistance typically leads social change in society

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How have you seen people enact resistance at work?

- What are the risks of enacting resistance at work?

- What are the potential benefits of resistance at work?
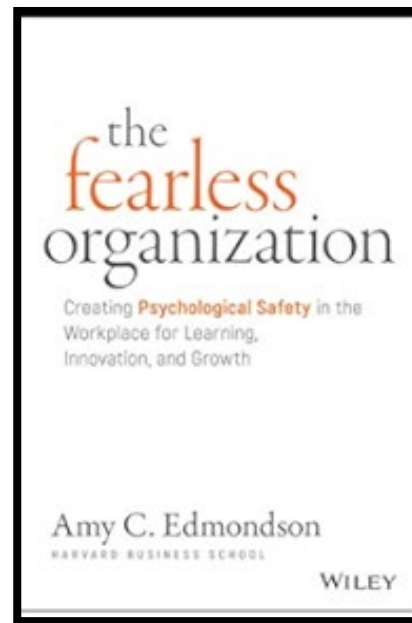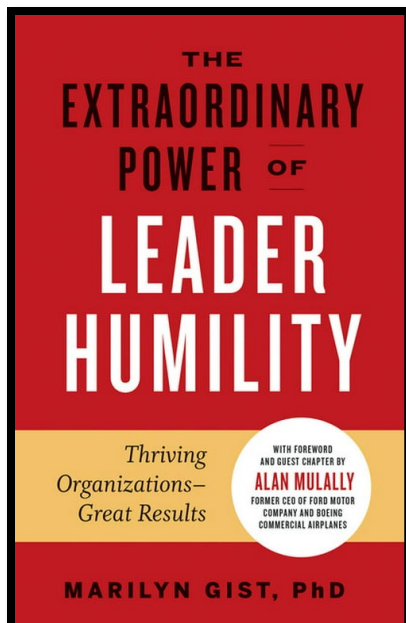
EQUITABLE ORGANIZING

- Mitigate power imbalances in our workplace
  - Examine policies, procedures, systems, processes, and structures
  - Explore how they affect different groups of people
  - Who gets disproportionately affected?
  - Who benefits?
  - How can resources and support be more equitably organized to support marginalized, lower status, or stigmatized people?

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EQUITABLE ORGANIZING

- Sharing power and resources

  - Values Reciprocity

  - Normalizes Employee Voice and Dissent

  - Embraces Leader Humility (Gist, 2020)

  - Cultivates psychological safety (Edmondson, 2018)

THE EXTRAORDINARY POWER OF LEADER HUMILITY

Thriving Organizations— Great Results

WITH FOREWORD AND GUEST CHAPTER BY **ALAN MULALLY** FORMER CEO OF FORD MOTOR COMPANY AND BOEING COMMERCIAL AIRPLANES

MARILYN GIST, PhD

the fearless organization

Creating **Psychological Safety** in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth

Amy C. Edmondson

HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

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EQUITABLE ORGANIZING

- Fostering workplace dignity and wellbeing

Dignity: a personal sense of worth, value, respect, or esteem that is derived from one's humanity and individual social position, as well as being treated respectfully by others.

(HODSON 2001; LEE, 2008; LUCAS, 2015; CHESTERFIELD ROYAL HOSPITAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST, 2019)

INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

- Self-Monitoring
- Perspective Taking
- Active Listening
- Asking Questions
- Seeking and Responding to Feedback
- Break up barriers to silence
- Micro-affirmations

(PASTOREK, 2021)

BEING A BYSTANDER

- Bystander Roles
  - Recognize
  - Report
  - Support

- Bystander Intervention
  - Direct
  - Delegate
  - Distract

- Culturally Adapted to Context
- Bystander Stress

ARE YOU A BYSTANDER?

(Kingkade, 2016; Bowes-Sperry & O'leary-Kelly, 2005; Keyton et al., 2018; Miner-Rubino & Cortina 2004; Richman-Hirsch & Glomb 2002; Gutierres et al. 1994)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How have you seen people treated with dignity at work?

- How have you seen people treated with indignity at work?

REVIEW

1. Introduction & Overview
2. Defining Power
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   - Fostering workplace dignity
5. Case Study Activity
   - Small group discussion

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CALL-TO-ACTION

Build skills in recognizing inequity in individual behavior and organizational processes, policies, and structures:

- As <u>unintentional perpetrators</u>, build awareness of our own biases and power, take responsibility, and be open to feedback.

- As <u>bystanders</u>, develop response strategies from which to choose in the moment to help reduce uncertainty and make taking action (at least a little) less stressful.

- As <u>targets</u>, if you experience inequity develop support networks and coping mechanisms, learn your rights, and process for grievance.

- As <u>leaders</u>, model inclusive communication and decision-making; advocate for inclusive policy development/revision, recruiting, hiring and promotion, and program funding decisions; be transparent in your leadership; publicly own your missteps and mistakes; you are human, after all.

AUDIENCE POLL

Which call-to-action will you consider?

- Participate in personal mindfulness
- Engage in ongoing diversity education
- Use and model inclusive communication
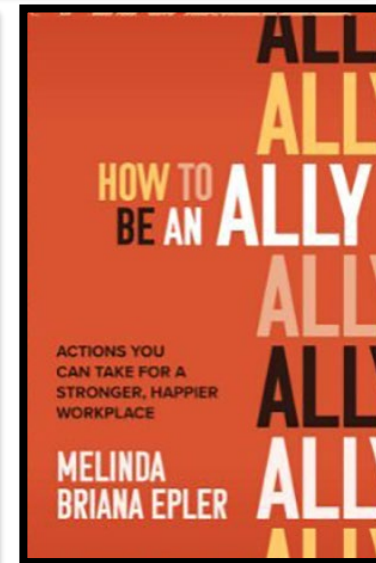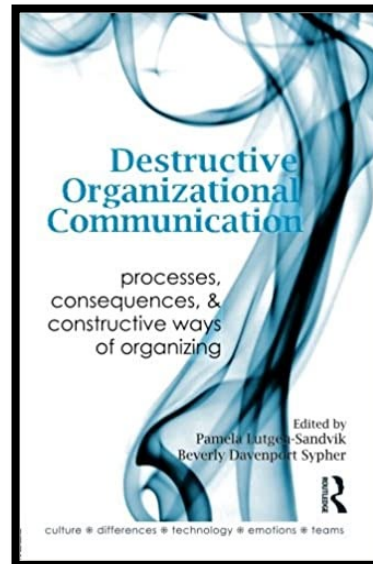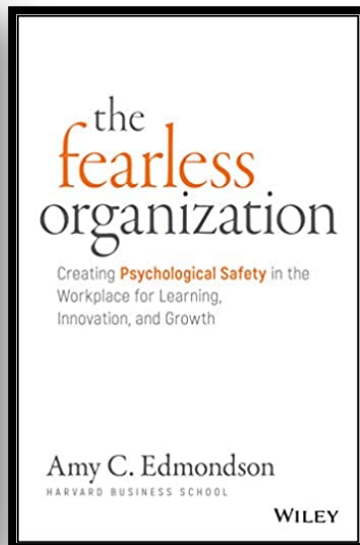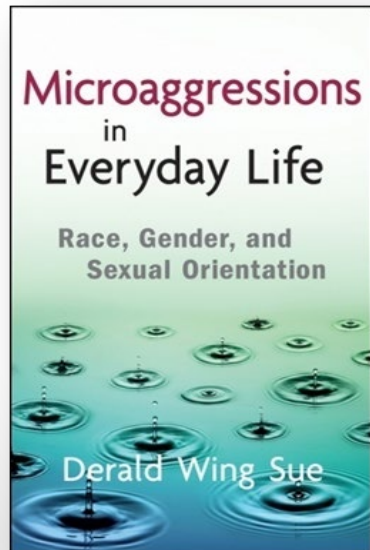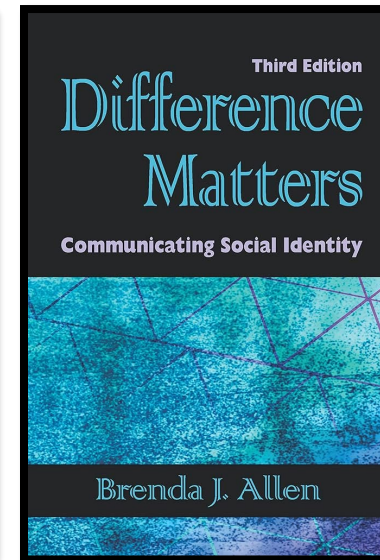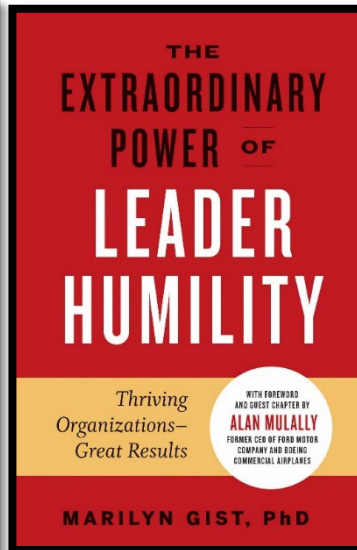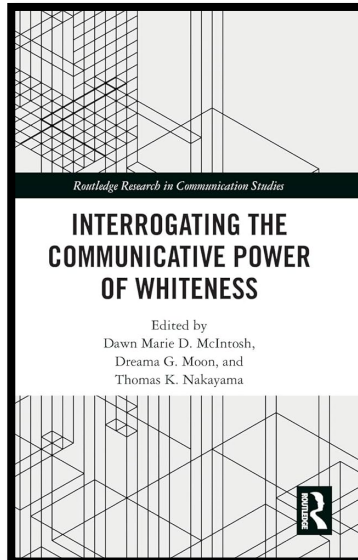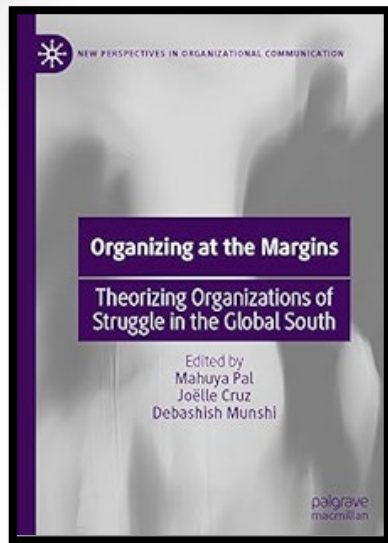- Commit and be an ally to others

CASE STUDIES

1. You'll be put into zoom break-out rooms for 10 minutes with a partner.

2. Read your assigned case study aloud.

3. Discuss the discussion question with your partner:

- **What identities are relevant to your assigned case?**
- **How is power relevant to this workplace situation?**
- **What type of inequities occur in your case?**
- **What factors would make it difficult to speak up or enact resistance?**
- **If you witnessed this event, what could you do to respond and advocate for equity?**

4. Share the space and time.

5. Select a spokesperson for the group who'll share one highlight from the group discussion in the debrief.

DEBRIEF: CASE STUDIES

1. Name one major takeaway from your group's discussion.

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RESOURCES: Books

Organizing at the Margins
Theorizing Organizations of Struggle in the Global South
Edited by
Mahuya Pal
Joëlle Cruz
Debashish Munshi

Routledge Research in Communication Studies
INTERROGATING THE COMMUNICATIVE POWER OF WHITENESS
Edited by
Dawn Marie D. McIntosh,
Dreama G. Moon, and
Thomas K. Nakayama

THE **EXTRAORDINARY POWER** OF **LEADER HUMILITY**
Thriving Organizations— Great Results
WITH FOREWORD AND GUEST CHAPTER BY **ALAN MULALLY** FORMER CEO OF FORD MOTOR COMPANY AND BOEING COMMERCIAL AIRPLANES
MARILYN GIST, PhD

Third Edition
Difference Matters
Communicating Social Identity
Brenda J. Allen

Microaggressions in **Everyday Life**
Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation
Derald Wing Sue

the **fearless** organization
Creating **Psychological Safety** in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth
Amy C. Edmondson
HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL
WILEY

Destructive Organizational Communication
processes, consequences, & constructive ways of organizing
Edited by
Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik
Beverly Davenport Sypher
culture • differences • technology • emotions • teams

ALLY ALLY
HOW TO BE AN ALLY
ALLY
ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE FOR A STRONGER, HAPPIER WORKPLACE
MELINDA BRIANA EPLER
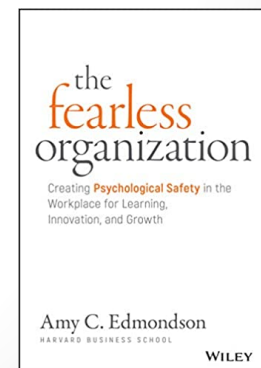ALLY

RESOURCES: Personal Assessment

RESOURCES: Workgroup Assessment

Psychological Safety at Work – Edmondson, (2018)

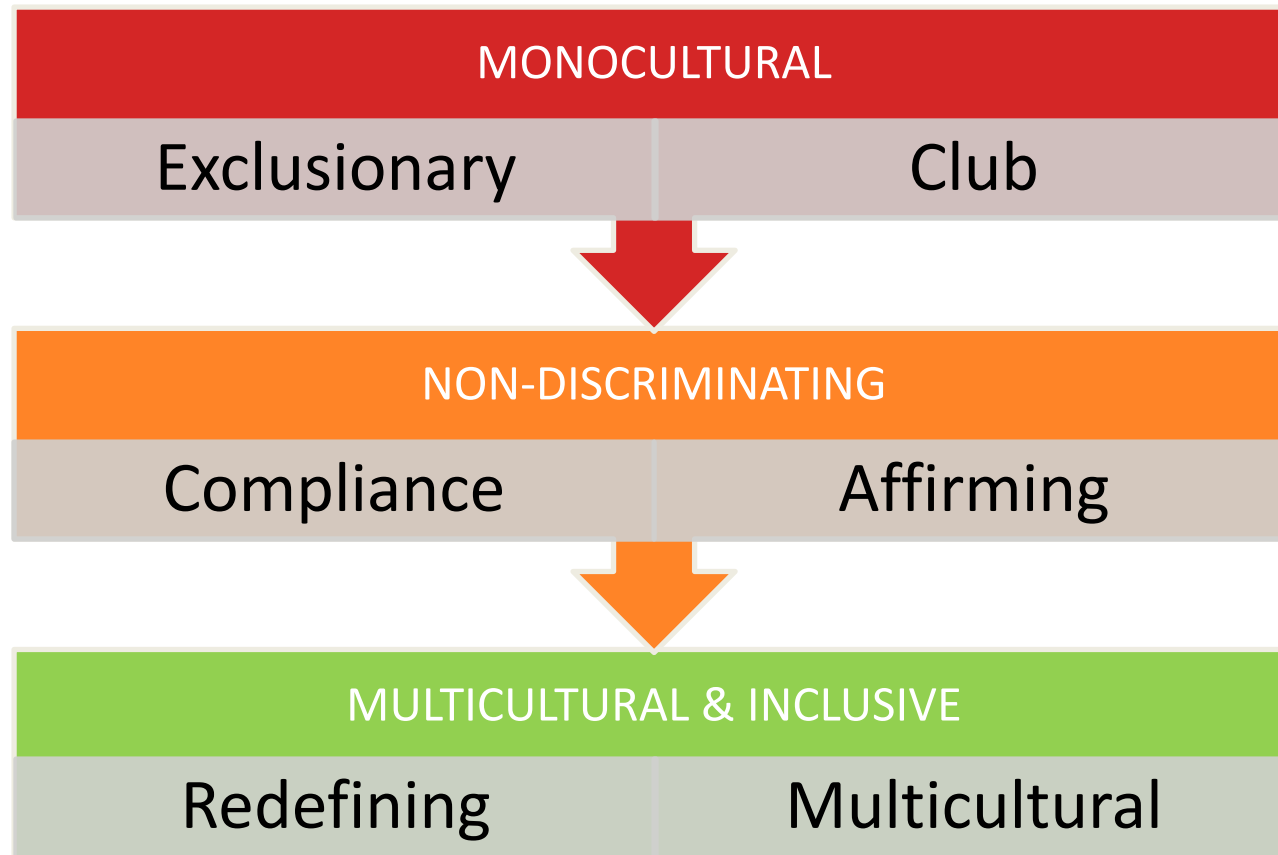On a scale of 1-5 how would you respond to these questions:

- If you make a mistake on your work team, it is often held against you. *
- Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
- People on this team sometimes reject others for being different. *
- It is safe to take a risk on this team.
- It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help. *
- No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
- When working with my team, unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

* Indicates reverse coded statement
(Edmondson, 2019)

the fearless organization

Creating **Psychological Safety** in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth

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HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

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RESOURCES: Organizational Assessment

Multicultural Organizational Development - Jackson & Hardiman

MONOCULTURAL	
Exclusionary	Club

NON-DISCRIMINATING	
Compliance	Affirming

MULTICULTURAL & INCLUSIVE	
Redefining	Multicultural

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

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https://angelagistmackey.weebly.com/

ANGELA GIST-MACKEY, PH.D.

epic Advancing the Value of Ethnography