

DRAFT

Leadership Diversity and the Diversity, Organizational Communication, and Citizenship Imperatives

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## DRAFT

In the twenty-first century there is overwhelming acceptance of the idea that leadership diversity is not only a matter of workforce reality, but it also makes plenty of business sense (Winston, 2001). A diverse workforce is in a better position to serve a diverse population. However, the way we have handled leadership diversity in the past made it a moving target (Irizarry and Gallant, 2006). What is essentially needed is a form of leadership that would be inclusive and would be equipped to manage diversity consistently regardless of the ethnic, racial, gender, social class, or any other identity of the followers. In this paper, I argue that leadership diversity cannot be achieved through mere tinkering, but rather through a fundamental overhaul of existing narratives and images of leadership. Three imperatives guide this overhaul of leadership: the imperative of diversity, the imperative of citizenship, and the imperative of organizational communication.

One of the key challenges in leadership diversity is the definition of diversity and representation. New theories, such as those of active representation, cultural relativism and cultural pluralism, are more sensitive to issues of diversity within cultural/ethnic/gender/orientation groups than existing theories of representative bureaucracy that emphasize group-based diversity and representation. These theories pose an important challenge to leadership within organizations. Two other fundamental shifts in public sector organizations and their environment have created new imperatives for leaders that converge with the imperatives generated by a redefinition of diversity. Organizations in the twenty-first century are driven by a need to make decisions in a participative manner, which mandates a need for less top-down communication and more all-channel communication. Similarly, the drive to have responsive organizations and the emphasis on the consumerist standpoint of citizens invite the kind of positional pluralistic leadership that would be capable of processing citizen feedback.

This paper first explores the literature on diversity and representation in an attempt to redefine the concept of diversity. Second, the paper explores organizational communication realities that create a need for a specific type of inclusive leaders. Third, the paper looks at citizenship needs, particularly the privileging of participation and standpoint in the relationship between organizations and citizens. While each of the first three sections mandates certain characteristics for a leader, the final section proposes a convergence in characteristics created by the changing realities in each of the three areas. Leadership diversity, the paper concludes, is not simply a diversity matter or a leadership matter. It is fundamental to the ability of organizations to be responsive to the needs of clients or citizens – i.e. fundamental to conducting the business of government.

### **Diversity Defined and Refined**

What does diversity mean? In a narrow sense, diversity in organizations is interpreted as representation, management, retention, and hierarchical progression of members of minority and gender groups in an organization. Most organizations have representation goals – defined by the representation of different ethnic, racial, gender and other societal groups in the organization. In recent years, group-based representation has become a moving target for several reasons. First, group-based representation views individuals as members of cultural groups - which in turn results in forcing individuals within these groups to adhere to group norms and to “speak-as” members of groups (Spivak and Gunew, 1993). This creates a potential for cultural hegemony evident in associating individuals with cultures they do not necessarily associate with. To remedy this problem, the paper calls for a form of cultural pluralism (Spinner, 1994) or cultural relativism (Gutmann, 1993) that is more sensitive to individual cultures than to group cultures (Alkadry, 2007).

Second, group-based representation could result in a form of passive representation that yields representation without power. Women’s representation in the workforce is a case in point. While women make up half of the workforce in many organizations, they tend to hold a much lower proportion of the decision making positions within these organizations. The paper calls for an active representation that is

## DRAFT

more sensitive to the representation of interests rather than the physical representation of cultural/ethnic/gender/sexual orientation groups (Hindera and Young, 1998; Young, 1990).

Before discussing my issues with group-based representation, it is important to note that I am not advocating eliminating programs to increase the participation of members of historically disadvantaged groups in public and private organizations. Many diversity calls can be reduced to the recruitment and retention of people from certain ethnic, racial and gender groups. Historically, people from these groups have been discriminated against because of their group ethnic, racial, gender, social class, or other affiliation. Mirroring societal group diversity in organizations is essential to reversing historic disadvantage – a way to reverse historic discrimination and may be an “isms”-busting mechanism within organizations. It is certainly a mean to achieve ethnically and racially diverse organizations with gender parity, but would not automatically result in a representative bureaucracy unless it is accompanied by a fundamental reshuffling of power relations within these organizations. Fundamentally, group-based mirroring of society in organizations is very problematic if it is the end goal of organizations. There needs to be a representation of group interests and issues within organizations (Young, 1989). Otherwise, representation becomes a matter of tokenism and a matter of “appearance of representation” rather than true representation. Group-based representation could very easily become a picturesque representation that does not go beyond projecting an image of representativeness. Having said that, the introduction of minorities and women into organizations is a fundamental prerequisite for leadership diversity.

Group-based representation is very obtrusive in that such politics ties individuals to scripts and roles over which they have very little control. In the way that technical rational organizations propose norms of behavior, group-based identities propose certain norms of behavior that are culturally situated (Appiah, 1994; Spivak and Gunew, 1993; Fergusson, 1984). Spivak and Gunew (1993) criticize the tendency of group identities to dominate and circumvent individual identities. They argue that “the question of “speaking as” involves a distancing from oneself. The moment I have to think of the ways in which I will speak as an Indian, or as a feminist, the ways in which I will speak as a woman, what I am doing is trying to generalize myself, make myself a representative, trying to distance myself from some kind of inchoate speaking as such. There are many subject positions one must inhabit; one is not just one thing. . . .” (p.195). In our attempt to be inclusive and to give voice to individuals we risk silencing them further by suppressing their individuality and favoring the role they are expected to play as members of a group.

The matter is even further complicated when speaking as a member of a represented group becomes not just a matter of perception, but rather an elaborate expectation. Spivak and Gunew (1993) further argue that “when the card-carrying listeners, the hegemonic people, the dominant people, talk about listening to someone “speaking as” something or the other, I think there one encounters a problem. When they want to hear an Indian speaking as an Indian, a Third World woman speaking as a Third World woman, they cover over the fact of the ignorance that they are allowed to possess, into a kind of homogenization.” (p. 195). As we represent individuals based on their group affiliation and as we expect them to speak as members of groups, we also risk resorting to colonial images and symbols of the once-colonized people (Bullivant, 1990; Said, 1993; Shohat and Stam, 1994; Wilson, 1993).

More precisely, the problem this author sees with group-based representation is the idea of cultural oneness of groups. Just like we have wrongly argued that there is an oriental culture (Said, 1979) – or that there is an orient – we seem to argue that there is an African American culture, a Hispanic culture, an Arab culture, a lesbian culture, a female culture and so forth. There is an underlying Eurocentric assertion that while whites are diverse culturally, ideologically and in many other ways, the Other is an ideological and cultural oneness. Furthermore, the Other could be branded with a characteristic that it does not identify with – precisely Said’s point in *Orientalism*.

There is an abundance of evidence of the leaky-bucket of group-based representation. The efforts to increase the representation of women and minorities in organizations seem to have left minority women

## DRAFT

out (hooks, 1981; Yeatman, 1994). The lack of constituency for social class seems to have resulted in lower socio-economic groups being underrepresented (Oldfield, 2004). We also need to be cognizant of the power of certain socio-economic groups within certain minority groups. Is a minority or a gender group being defined by the morals and cultural experiences of its more affluent members? If one were to accept the definition of the hegemony of a political class as the situation where a “class had succeeded in persuading the other classes of society to accept its moral, political and cultural values,” then the dangers of a class practicing internal hegemony within a social group are very real (Bullivant, 1990).

Representative bureaucracy is based on the notion that “the social composition of the bureaucracy should reflect that of the population as a whole; and that larger numbers from certain underrepresented groups should be brought [into] the public service” (Kernaghan & Siegel, 1989, p. 470). Representation is essential for the ability of government to serve its citizens, but also for its ability to command their loyalty (Riggs, 1970). Representative bureaucracy is rarely seen as a process that would result in social justice or equality, but the premise of representative bureaucracy is that this will occur once diversity exists at all levels of organizations. Achieving representative or diverse organizations becomes an end in itself—a form of representation often referred to as passive representation.

Active representation is more sensitive to the representation of interests rather than the physical representation of cultural/ethnic/gender/sexual orientation groups (Hindera and Young, 1998; Young, 1990). Active representation empowers individuals from represented groups in the decision-making and implementation stages, and impacts the groups represented in the policymaking forum. Passive representation is achieved when the bureaucracy mirrors society in terms of group representation (Hindera & Young, 1998; Thompson, 1975). Both active and passive forms of representation emphasize the representation of groups—both internally as employees and externally as customers, consumers, clients, or citizens. Alkadry (2007) argues:

The main flaw of passive representation rests in its inability to provide meaningful results-oriented representation. The most that such a form of representation could hope for is a bureaucracy that reflects the visible diversity in society. Such a form of representative bureaucracy would not necessarily serve the functions of participatory democracy.

Passive representation might yield a change in organizational behavior toward different groups, and it might result in better responsiveness (Meier, 1993). Hindera and Young (1998, p. 656) suggest that “the relationship between passive and active representations changes at three critical points: when the critical mass is reached; when the group constitutes a plurality (i.e. social prominence) of agency personnel; and when the group constitutes a majority (i.e. social dominance).” Passive representation is therefore very important to achieving responsive organizations, but is not the end-game.

The alternative to group-based representation is a form of cultural pluralism (Spinner, 1994) or cultural relativism (Gutmann, 1993) that accepts difference and otherness regardless of the legitimacy granted by group-identity (Alkadry, 2007). Cultural pluralism is about inclusiveness and acceptance of “difference” and “otherness.” Applying principles of cultural relativism to the principle of representative bureaucracy, one could see how difficult it would be to achieve representation without creating a bureaucracy of all society. Representative bureaucracy that is merely a passive mirroring of societal groups could easily become a form of pluralistic integration. Alkadry (2007) notes:

Pluralistic integration is very close to the main ethos of many public organizations—both internally and externally. Internally, public administrators will follow habitual scripts and would have little power to write their own scripts in the bureaucracy. An example would be the admitting of a very diverse workforce into a dominating organizational culture that will absorb diversity not on diversity’s own terms, but rather on the terms of the bureaucracy. Externally, citizens receive services also prescribed from within realities of the organization and not their own realities.

There are two key implications of moving away from group-based passive representation for leadership diversity. First, representation and diversity would be defined by what the leader does rather than who the leader is. Second, managing a diverse workforce would need a different type of leader who is capable of exercising cultural relativism. In this situation leadership diversity becomes an issue of inclusiveness and respect for the cultural uniqueness of every member of the organization. In the final section of this paper, pluralism and positionality are seen as leadership strategies that would satisfy these needs and move us away from representation without power that is apparent in passive representation, and also away from the hegemonizing hegemony that is obvious in cultural oneness of groups.

### **Critiques of Organizational Communication**

In the past few decades, the field of organizational behavior has seen a widespread revision of rational bureaucracy's decision making and formal relations. Formal organizations and top-down decision making have been largely criticized as incapable of achieving a responsive organization (Hummel, 1997; Alkadry, 2003). Calls for new forms of communication within organizations have come from different places and empowerment of employees and participatory management has become the prescribed standard in much of the contemporary literature in the field of public administration. This literature is too large to be covered in this paper, but two concepts seem most relevant – one developed by Jurgen Habermas and the other developed by Antonio Gramsci. While both theories precede the management revolution, together they provide the fundamental theoretical foundations of this revolution.

Habermas distinguishes between "work" or "purposive-rational action" and "interaction." He argues that work or purposive-rational action is "either instrumental action or rational choice or their conjunction. Instrumental action is governed by technical rules based on empirical knowledge" (Habermas, 1970, pp. 91-2). Habermas (1970) invites a new interpretation for rationalization in which "interaction" or communicative action rather than technical rules guide human behavior in organizations. Consensual norms rather than technical rules represent the grounding for human behavior in the rational organization. This interaction also provides the following:

Incompetent behavior, which violates valid technical rules or strategies, is condemned per se to failure through lack of success... Deviant behavior, which violates consensual norms, provokes sanctions that are connected with the rules only externally, that are by convention. Learned rules of purposive-rational action supply us with skills, internalized norms with personality structures (Habermas, 1970, p. 92).

According to the above definition, rationalization becomes a tool for emancipation, and an "extension of communication free of domination" (p. 93) – almost the opposite of rationalization envisioned by Max Weber.

Habermas' dealing with the rationalization as an emancipation tool and his focus on the interaction aspect of rationalization is consistent with his invitation for practical rationality. He argues that internally the bureaucracy could be centered around a form of practical rationality, which would not only bound the top-down centralism but also induce new points of access to the bureaucracy by the people. Internally, the power of rationalized bureaucracy is decentered through a Habermasian notion of practical rationality (Gouldner, 1976). Under practical rationality members of the public and officials are bound "only by rules they can articulately justify...and thus premises an ecology of speakers who cannot give one another orders, because they have relative equality; who have some means of enabling them to resist compulsion and who must therefore be persuaded 'rationally'" (Gouldner, 1976, p. 51; as quoted in Hearn, 1978).

Habermas (1971, 1973) was keen to distinguish between technical and practical rationality (Habermas, 1973, p. 3). His was a bridging of the two forms of rationality. Hearn (1978) summarizes Habermas's recommendation of treating both aspects of rationality: "a bureaucracy where technicians are joined with workers in meaningful dialogue, and technical expertise is circumscribed by political discourse.

## DRAFT

In this way the revolution of organizational technique would be accompanied by a cultural revolution in which practical questions concerned with the conscious selection of ends would enter into rational communicative action" (p. 44-5).

While Habermas failed to acknowledge the individual rights of the rank and file, he provided through practical rationalism for an organic form of organization that Gramsci has described earlier into the century. Habermas' insistence on consensual norms as the main guide for human behavior still puts him in the second place to Gramsci where norms were less important than the representation of the rank and file in the decisions and processes of the organization (the Communist Party in this case). Really distinct about Habermas' emphasis on consensual norms is that it allows for bureaucracy to develop its own norms on the line of the consensual norms. This could be detrimental to the ability of the bureaucracy to be organic.

Gramsci's closest encounter with instrumental rationality is his critique of what he refers to as "Americanism and Fordism," which derive "from an inherent necessity to achieve the organization of a planned economy" (p. 279). Gramsci was originally interested in the transition from economic individualism into this planned economy that Americanism and Fordism refers to. However, he found his way into studying rationalization of work by Fredrick Taylor. Gramsci equated Taylor's mechanization of the worker and the work process with industrialization itself. Gramsci noted: "Taylor is in fact expressing with brutal cynicism the purpose of American Society – developing in the worker to the highest degree of automatic and mechanical attitudes, breaking up the old psycho-physical nexus of qualified professional work, which demands a certain active participation of intelligence, fantasy, and initiative on the part of the worker, and reducing productive operations exclusively to the mechanical, physical aspect" (p. 302). The goal of Taylorism, Fordism or Americanism is the evolution of a new type of person "suited to the new type of work" (p. 302). That person is none other than the technical rational being. Driven by financial incentives, or hegemonized by "the organization," its culture or its hierarchy, this being is reduced to a machine.

Gramsci (1971) also focuses on the internal dynamics of that organization. He argued that a stale bureaucracy would infringe upon access of the rank and file to the political leadership. Gramsci (1971) discussed the new type of "career' functionaries, technically trained for bureaucratic work (civil and military)." (p. 187). An important implied critique that Gramsci provides is one of the separation of politics and administration. He argues that: "Unity of manual and intellectual work, and closer links between legislative and executive power (so that elected functionaries concern themselves not merely with the control of the State affairs but also with their execution), may be motives of inspiration for a new approach in solving the problem of the intellectuals as well as the problem of functionaries" (p. 186).

Gramsci (1971) identified two sets of theories of organic centralism -neither of which he considers democratic centralism and rather labels as bureaucratic centralism. The first set of theories of organic centralism veils the dominance and hegemony of one group over the whole organization. The second set of theories are equally determined to reign one part of the organization over the whole but pay little attention to concealing that intent. Again, Gramsci insists that both are forms of bureaucratic centralism.

"Organicity" Gramsci argues "can only be found in democratic centralism which is:

a "centralism" in movement - i.e. a continual adaptation of the organization to the real movement, a matching of thrusts from below with orders from above, a continuous insertion of elements thrown up from the depths of the rank and file into the solid framework of leadership apparatus which ensures continuity and the regular accumulation of experience. Democratic centralism [as compared to bureaucratic centralism or the so-called organic centralism] is "organic" because on the one hand it takes account of movement, which is the organic mode in which historical reality reveals itself, and does not solidify mechanically into bureaucracy; and because at the same time it takes account of that which is relatively stable and permanent, or which at least moves in an easily predictable direction, etc. (p. 189).

Gramsci then argues that bureaucratic centralism

## DRAFT

indicates that the leading group is saturated, that it is turning into a narrow clique which tends to perpetuate its selfish privileges by controlling or even by stifling the birth of oppositional forces - even if these forces are homogenous with the fundamental dominant interests (p. 189).

Gramsci traces bureaucratic centralism to "lack of initiative at the bottom,...the political immaturity of the peripheral forces." (p. 189).

Gramsci, almost a century ago, discussed the concept of an elastic organization that "comes alive in so far as it is interpreted and continually adapted to necessity. He calls for "an organic unity between theory and practice, between intellectual strata and popular masses, between rulers and ruled" (p. 190).

It is important to note that organic centralism which Gramsci recommends assumes a certain level of activism among administrators. In a sense, organic centralism has a prerequisite of organic individuals and intellectuals. Gramsci here moves largely away from Lenin's perspective on bureaucracy. While Lenin puts much of the emphasis on the leaders, Gramsci blames the occurrence of bureaucratic centralism on the "lack of initiative and responsibility at the bottom" (p. 189). He blames the poor participation on the political immaturity of the periphery- the rank and file. In every respect Gramsci forces a choice between the "professional" and the "organic." The professional is technical, instrumental, complacent, rational and very predictable. The organic is the opposite: responsive, critical, engaging and far from predictable. This is the kind of choice that could lead public administration reformists and theorists to tinker less and overhaul more. The professional leader is the exclusionary, while the organic leader had the ability to be inclusive. The need to be inclusive is also important when considering the need to be responsive to citizens or clients.

### **Consumerism**

Calls for citizen participation are often related to two key concepts: popular sovereignty and consumerism. Popular sovereignty emphasizes that a collective public would possess powers amounting to sovereignty – with the public assuming the traditional role of the sovereign through democratic institutions and/or practices. Consumerism is defined in this article as an administrative need to obtain information on consumer preferences and needs. Consumer information is essential for administrative and policy effectiveness.

A manifestation of that notion of popular sovereignty is Lincoln's famous proclamation that government should be not only for the people but also by the people. Popular sovereignty rests on the assumption that citizens will obey government and its laws in return for their right to participate in the political process (Birch, 1964). There are many interpretations of popular sovereignty and its implications for democratic governance (Cain and Jones, 1989). Popular sovereignty is about empowered citizens who collectively make the highest authority in the state. However, popular sovereignty by itself does not call for direct citizen participation in political and administrative affairs (Grofman, 1989; Wittman, 1989). Most theorists suggest that participation should take place through electoral processes and other forms of representative politics (Dionne, 1991; Greider, 1992; Rimmerman, 1997).

Consumerism is the government need to gather information on consumers of public services. This information is used to develop appropriate policies and administrative procedures. The complexity of this information stems from the increasing complexity and diversity of the issues addressed by government (Bens, 1994). Governments in the post- Progressive era became more involved in issues that deal with the welfare of citizens, which made gathering information about consumer needs and preferences important for crafting public policy (Schachter, 1995).

Policy and administrative decision making requires information about the people being served. At the heart of this information gathering process is the assumption that policy makers could gather information about a "collective public" – an assumption that is increasingly being contested (Hummel, 1997; Miller, 2002; Yeatman, 1994). There is doubt about the ability of administrators to form knowledge claims

about the consumers of public services when these consumers do not participate directly in the administrative process (Miller, Alkadry, and Donohue, 2001). The doubt is particularly about the ability of public administrators to remove themselves from observed phenomena and make so-called objective claims about a "reality" and a policy situation that is being judged, observed or resolved. This paper uses feminist standpoint epistemology to argue that information used in policy and administrative decision making should be based on participation of individual citizens, and not information about a collective public. Information provided by individual citizens provides the better source of intelligence about consumer preferences and needs.

Feminist scholars have been instrumental in launching an all-encompassing investigation of the objectivity of the observed knowledge, of the observer of knowledge and of the observation processes (Olsen, 1994). The process of making knowledge claims is the primary focus of feminist epistemic investigations (Rose, 1987; Rose and Rose, 1976; 1979). If the observation is dependent on the observer and the social context, then the observation process must be based not on external observations but also internal reflexivity of the observer.

Rose (1987) constructs the argument that what distinguishes feminist methodology from non-feminist methodology is that it promises to fuse together subjective and objective tools of knowledge building. This somewhat mirrors Harding's (1986, 1987, 1993) defense of "standpoint epistemology." Harding argues that science's objectivity is essentially compromised by the failure of scientific methods to examine the context of science. She rejects the objectivity assumption that science is value free and independent or external to social context. The subject is male and the context is patriarchal and male dominated. Thus, according to Harding, a feminist epistemology's largest contribution is to initiate scientific observation from the experiences and "lives" of the marginalized people (Bar-On, 1993). This will make scientific questions more critical and will reveal more comprehensive results.

If we were to transpose standpoint epistemology on organizational decision making, feminist scholars would question the ability of leaders to obtain, to act on, objective knowledge. They suggest that the more subjective and standpoint-based the observation is, the closer we might get to observing realities. These become realities from where people/citizens stand. Feminists were not the only ones to question the ability of administrators to make judgments about the realities of citizens. Postmodernists also question such ability.

There are two major implications for the above discussion of standpoint knowledge. First, objective claims about reality become suspect because the objectivity of the observer, the observation and the observed reality are also suspect. Second, the recognition of knowledge's subjective nature invites the representation of various perspectives other than, but not excluding, the dominant one. Citizens are privy to information that the administrator, the policy analyst, and the politician would not know. A welfare recipient is privy to information about being on welfare that salaried politicians and administrators would not have. This is by itself a source of power to participants in the administrative process. The lack of objective knowledge and the ability of administrators to make universal knowledge claims brings new focus to the need to empower both the consumer and the front-line administrator. This would ensure that gathered intelligence from the public and about the public is dealt with on an individual basis and not as a collective public. The leader's role is to ensure proper transmission of information from the front line to the policy level and the transmission of power from the policy making level to the front line.

### **Organicity, Positionality and Pluralistic Leadership**

Leadership diversity, is defined by Morrison (1992) as the acknowledging that diversity is indeed a leadership issue and is "the integration of diversity within the leadership ranks." (p.4). It is about having a wide pool of talent at all levels of the organization and the translation of this talent in the breadth of ideas

## DRAFT

and views within the organization. (Kuczynski, 1999). This means valuing different “leadership styles, ways of identifying and solving problems, motivating and resolving conflict, and developing and providing goods and services as “added value” rather than as problems” (Rosener, 1996, p. 14).

The three imperatives discussed in the paper create different, yet converging, leadership mandates. First, there is a need for active representation that shies away from the hegemonizing tendencies of group-based representation. While their selection might be done on the basis of belonging to groups, individuals are first and foremost individuals and so is their culture. The challenge therefore is to treat every individual as a cultural entity, which is a difficult task for any leader, but is the fundamental prerequisite of leadership diversity. Kezar (2000) describes positionality theories of leadership which may have a recipe for dealing with this diversity imperative :

Positionality theory acknowledges that people have multiple, overlapping identities and thus make meaning from various aspects of their identity, including social class, professional standing, and so forth. Therefore it is more complex and dynamic than standpoint theory while retaining its epistemological concerns. Positionality theory assumes that power relations can change and that social categories are fluid and dynamic, affected by historical and social changes (p. 726).

Human agency and power relations are central to positionality theory. Kezar (2000) adds: “Positioned individuals possessing multifaceted identities within a particular context influenced by conditions of power construct leadership in unique (individual level) and collective (group level) ways simultaneously.” (p. 727). Power is not centralized in the leader but is rather distributed at all levels. Positionality empowers people at all levels of the organization. Every individuals regardless of location on the hierarchy is empowered. Kezar calls for a fundamental change in the way we have approached and understood leadership. Images and traits are no longer effective and will make little sense in the presence of positionality.

Second, the imperative of consumerism suggests a greater need for responsive leaders that are capable of understanding and appreciating the standpoint of consumers served by their organizations. I argue that positionality theory (Tierney, 1993) is largely an expansion of, and accommodates, standpoint principles. Alkadry (2007) notes that:

If public administration aims to achieve a diverse workforce in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity, then representative bureaucracy is certainly the route to achieve that diversity. However, if public administration’s goal is to be responsive to a multicultural society, then we need to supplement strategies of representative bureaucracy with strategies that are sensitive to cultural relativism ... Representative bureaucracy is the floor, and not the ceiling, of what should be expected from a democratic public administration in a multicultural society.

There is a fundamental question of whether technical rational organizations are capable of being inclusive enough consistent with the needs of pluralistic leadership. Such organizations emphasize hierarchy, authority and structure over participation and inclusiveness. Pluralistic leadership results in diversity and diversity results in pluralistic leadership (Bass, 1990; Millman and Kanter, 1986). Pluralistic leadership is very consistent with notions of participation of all in the leadership decisions and the understanding of multiple perspectives within the organization and outside it (Kezar, 2000).

Third, the imperative of organizational communication suggests a role for the organic leader – the closest definition of an organic leader is Gramsci’s definition of the organic intellectual – which Gramsci essentially sees as a leader. Gramsci sees in the intellectual not only as a leader but also as a poet, thinker, reader and activist. Levinson (2001) suggests:

Gramsci’s organic intellectual is at once a poet, a thinker, a reader, and an activist: a poet because he invents the language that links center to margin; a thinker because he does not accept the paradigms of the reigning common sense;...a reader because his activity is initiated not by the realities in front of his eyes but by the center/margin ties he must piece together and interpret; and

## DRAFT

an activist, because the forging of language via thought induces the discomfort that potentially de-alienates those on the margins of the state, initiating political practices” (p. 72-73).

It is obvious from Gramsci’s notes on bureaucracy and on intellectuals that he would want administrators to be no less than intellectuals. Gramsci’s criticism of professional intellectuals who transmit status quo stale, stable knowledge could well be transformed into a criticism of professional administrators operating on stale norms and habits. Organic intellectuals on the other hand are ones who would “engage critically and would evolve knowledge” (Tickle, 2001, p. 159).

Organic leaders are precisely Gramsci’s intellectuals. They are essential to derail centuries of instrumental rationality and stale organizational cultures. Instrumental rationality and traditional bureaucratic principles will not simply co-exist with new pluralistic organic leadership. Arguably, only top-down management can exist in a formal hierarchical organization with strict lines of communication and authority. Organic leaders help transform the culture of the organization and the behavior of leaders and followers.

It is certain that the “received view” of leadership is debunked. Communicative leadership replaces top-down leadership. The leader that would deal with the 3 imperatives of organizational life and diversity is organic, pluralistic and positional. While positional leadership and pluralistic leadership have been explored in detail in higher education literature, there is a great need to explore these two forms in non-educational environments. Organic leadership has largely been ignored in leadership literature and in public administration literature, but might be the lifeline for survival or any type of participatory pluralistic leadership.

## DRAFT

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DRAFT

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