

**Diversity Issues and Challenges Facing Youth-Related Nonprofit
Agencies**

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Introduction

Issues of diversity face us at every turn. We hear of, and participate in, diversity training seminars, and we are continually reminded of dramatic population shifts that will change the very faces of our customers and employees in the decades ahead (Chemers, Oskamp, & Costanzo, 1995; Cox, 1994; Elmes & Connelley, 1997; Prasad & Mills, 1997; Thomas 1991, 1995). We also hear of lawsuits and judgements against corporations and agencies that have been shown to inadvertently and systematically discriminate against particular sectors of the population. Feelings of hope for a more just system are coupled with feelings of anger and frustration by some that believe so much more has to be done, and feelings by others that too much has already been done. Discomfort with diversity issues surrounding race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, age, and physical ability manifests itself in many dimensions of contemporary life (James, 1996; Minors, 1996, Prasad & Mills, 1997). Instead of substantive discussions about diversity, much of the political and social commentary are based on stereotypes, political positioning, and economic frustration. The emotional rhetoric associated with diversity leads to animosity, misunderstandings, divisiveness, blame and anger.

One of the greatest challenges for human service agencies today is understanding how issues of “difference” come into play in the workplace; not just how we treat our employees but also how we treat our constituents. As Daley and Angulo (1994, p. 172) note, “Understanding and nurturing diversity is a significant challenge facing community developers and the governing boards of nonprofit organizations.” As many scholars have noted, it is time to identify the ways that agencies inadvertently erect barriers to “people of difference.” This line of research is essential because no matter how much we come to understand that our constituents are increasingly elderly, Hispanic,

African-American, individuals with disabilities and so on, if leadership, middle-management, and staff are not committed to working with these diverse constituents, then exclusion, inequity, and injustice will persist. As many scholars have suggested, exclusionary policies and practices are pernicious, subtle, and powerful. Often such practices are unconscious and/or are the result of historical organizational policies, traditions, and culture. Most management would hope that systematic programmatic exclusionary behavior does not exist in their agencies in policies and programs including service provision and treatment of customers and employees. But research to date suggests it exists to varying degrees in most agencies (James, 1996; Minors, 1996) and until we come to understand that the ways in which such issues manifest themselves in agency life, it will be difficult to effectively eradicate it.

In recent years, there has been an increased call for nonprofits to come to a better understanding of the influence of diversity within their organizations. Much of the research to date has focused on workplace inequity (Gibelman, 2000; Shaiko, 1997) and board composition (Alpeki, 1998; Daley and Angulo, 1994; McNeely, Blakemore, & Washington, 1993; Widmere, 1987), and organizational change (Ewert, Yaccino, & Yaccino, 1994; Ostrander, 1993; Pearlman & Bova, 1992). With regard to workplace inequity, it has been found that there are patterned inequities by gender and race in salary and promotion opportunities. Workplace and board inequities are the result of a multitude of factors such as the historical legacy of the organization, traditional hierarchical structures of power within the organization, discrimination, and differences in occupational careers development ladders. Those calling for organizational change and transformation suggest that nonprofit organizations must become increasingly self-analytical about the nature of their mission, their constituents, and governance procedures. As Ostrander (1993) notes, it is essential that nonprofit organizations move increasingly toward building a “community of difference” where attention is paid to issues of mission, privilege, democratization, resource

allocation, silenced voices, conflict resolution and consensus building. Crystal and Bova (1992, p. 21-22) called for nonprofit agencies to ask themselves as series of questions with regard to diversity:

- ❖ Is the environment within our organization welcoming and supportive of all types of people?
- ❖ Does our organization's membership reflect our community in all its racial, religious, and ethnic diversity?
- ❖ Do our programs and advocacy efforts serve all segments of our community?
- ❖ Is the community reputation of our organization one that would cause diverse people to want to be involved?
- ❖ Do we look for ways to help people in our organization become knowledgeable about culturally diverse groups?
- ❖ Do we strive for a broad representation on our board and staff?

Despite the apparent simplicity of these questions, it has been recognized by many (Allison, 1999, 2000a; Ewert et. al., 1994 Ostrander, 1993) that organizational change is slow and meaningful assessments of such questions are often much more complex than they might appear. Such analysis requires a great deal of institutional introspection, critical reflection, and organizational commitment.

Moreover, such change is developmental in nature. Thomas and Ely (1996), for example, conducted in-depth analyses of major corporations and characterized three paradigms that of current organizational responses to diversity. The Discrimination-and-Fairness Paradigm is characteristic of agencies whose diversity initiatives focus predominantly on increasing the numbers of women and minorities in order to change their organizational demographic profile. Success is often measured by compliance with minimal federal Equal Employment Opportunity requirements and

the ability to recruit and hire “people of difference.” Like Minor’s non-discriminatory organization, individuals and groups are expected to *blend* into the established organizational culture and hierarchy.

A second approach to workplace diversity Thomas and Ely described is called the Access-and-Legitimacy Paradigm. Agencies and organizations reflecting this paradigm acknowledge the need for diversity in organizations in order to legitimate connections and enhance marketing efforts with constituents groups. Hiring language focuses on attracting ethnic/racial employees to work in niche markets. African-Americans is hired to interface with African-American constituents, Hispanics with Hispanics, and so on. As Thomas and Ely note, however, this approach pigeonholes staff and has the potential to marginalize minority management since their contribution is only perceived valuable to the organization in that “special” role (Thomas & Ely, 1996)

Thomas and Ely (1996) characterize the third, most hopeful, yet least pervasive, organizational response to diversity as the Learning and Effectiveness Paradigm. From this perspective, diversity is not just used as an effort to increase diversity representation or a corporate strategy to capture niche markets. Instead it is used as a tool to enhance and expand the perspectives and effectiveness of the organization as a whole. It involves “rethinking primary tasks and redefining markets, products, strategies, missions, business practices, and even cultures” (Thomas & Ely, 1996, p. 85). Such organizations recognize that employee input is frequently grounded in their diverse backgrounds and experiences and this diversity can be used to foster creative and productive working environments that are more responsive to the needs of constituents.. In such organizations, diversity of ideas, perspectives, and philosophy are fostered and valued as a key component of a vibrant and dynamic organization. The authors (Thomas & Ely, 1996, p. 80) suggest, however, that “the desired transformation requires a fundamental change in the attitudes and behaviors of an organization’s leadership. And that will come only when senior

managers abandon an underlying and flawed assumption about diversity and replace it with a broader understanding.” The role of leadership in transforming the organizational cultural is very important. As Morrison (1987) notes, the active commitment of senior management to diversity, and its application to all levels of agency life, is essential to success.

Given the broad contexts within which diversity-related issues can manifest themselves in agency life, the goal of this project was to provide an open-ended inductive analysis of issues and challenges perceived as important to leadership, including CEOs and agency directors. The investigator approached this study from the methodological procedure of creating a dialogue (Giddens, 1987) between research and managing practitioners (Ostrander, 1993) so as to garner their views on critical issues and challenges. It is assumed that these professionals, have substantial insights into diversity-related issues that confront them. And although an essential piece of the picture would be to garner perspectives from diverse program participants and non-participants, that information is beyond the scope of this project.

Purpose of the Study

The goal of this project was to identify and analyze: 1) diversity issues and challenges that effect agency life, 2) barriers that potentially inhibit agency diversity and sensitivity, 3) strategies utilized, if any, that enhance agency diversity, and 4) identification of future diversity opportunities and challenges In-depth interviews were conducted with 14 agency management/mid-management leaders from major youth-related agencies (i.e., YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs) seven cities within the Phoenix metropolitan area.

Methods

This exploratory investigation asked nonprofit senior leadership (CEOs) and middle management (agency directors), to identify and discuss the types of diversity-related issues and challenges they perceived their agencies face now and in the years ahead. The respondents included

fourteen professionals (i.e., 2 CEOs and 12 agency directors), including six women and eight men. The years of experience in youth-related nonprofit agencies ranged from 6 to 30 years.

This research project was commissioned by the Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management (CNPLM) of Arizona State University. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were utilized (Babbie, 1995). Initial contact between the researcher and the respondent was arranged in a letter of introduction from CNPLM asking program directors to participate in the project. The investigator made follow-up contact and interviews were conducted. In addition to pre-arranged interviews, CEOs/directors were asked at the time of the interview for the names of additional staff (i.e., snowball sampling) who might provide important insights into diversity-related issues and challenges.

Each interview consisted of approximately 20 semi-structured questions (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1990). Interviews covered topics such as professional experience and training, the nature of the organization's philosophy toward diversity, agency responses to issues of diversity, and the nature of barriers that inhibit opportunities and access for users/employees. Respondents were also asked to identify strategies used to overcome barriers.

The investigator attempted to create an environment where a free-flowing discussion of diversity issues could take place without strict adherence to the order and wording of the interview items (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). After reading an initial statement outlining the purpose of the interview, the investigator explained that diversity included any issues regarding gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age, and disability. Initially, respondents were allowed to focus on the dimensions of diversity they wished to talk about. In most cases, race/ethnicity were most frequently discussed. Follow-up probes were used to identify any additional issues/barriers not previously discussed.

Interviews were tape-recorded and lasted between ½ to 1½ hours. A note log and taped summaries were developed following each interview noting major issues/themes suggested by the respondent. Interviews were subsequently transcribed. The constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was utilized as the primary analytic technique. The initial analysis of data was guided by the general interview questions. However, since the questions purposely designed to be broad and open-ended, the investigator worked through the interview data identifying particular concepts discussed by each respondent. During the subsequent analysis, the investigator created a verbal matrix that allowed her to cluster common concepts and relevant quotes together (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The final phase allowed the investigator to refine the organization between the concepts and quotes. Guiding themes were developed during this phase. The goal of this phase was to insure consistency between the language of respondents and the final categories used to describe their perceptions and experiences. This latter phase resulted in more comprehensive and parsimonious themes and over-reduction of data was avoided. The quotes provided by respondents reflect major themes. The goal of such qualitative assessment is to uncover major issues and challenges rather than to test specific hypotheses about inherent relationships.

Findings and Discussion

Mission

The mission of these agencies focuses on the psychological, social, ethical, and educational development of youth. The stated mission of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America (1999) is, “To inspire and enable all young people, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to realize their full potential as productive, responsible and caring individuals.” The mission of the Valley of the Sun YMCA (1999) is “to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.” As CEOs and agency directors noted in the interviews, the

centers provide educational and recreational programs that foster children's self-esteem, sense of competence, sense of belonging, and the ability to socialize with others of diverse backgrounds.

Our mission is to provide services to young people to give them an opportunity to succeed in life. We are a youth developing agency.... We use recreation as a hook to bring kids into the building. The actual program that we do is we develop the child, we build their self-esteem.... It is a very important part of the program, we are teaching kids how to socialize, how to interact with one another. We teach them how to win, how to lose gracefully, how to compete in a way. The main thing we teach them is how to get along. (6)

All of our policies, the policies that just jump out and grab you, that exist really indicate that kids come first. Bottom line – it's the children (2)

I think again, diversity has been around for a long time. I think the Y is probably a better organization, that we have really tried to embrace people of all ages, races, sex, income, religion all that stuff. So, we have been inclusive organization for a very long time, we say that in our mission. But when it comes to people within your organization, what we don't tend to do is celebrate the differences within us and among our own staff. Plus another thing, diversity is good for business, making sure that our boards are representative of our communities that we serve. You can't serve that community if you are not pulling people from that community. I think we realized that we need those different perspectives and we can't just be part of a groupthink. We need to have people of all backgrounds to bring their input and we can actually do a much better job of serving people. (10)

Those principles that are in our mission are demonstrated through character development. We are highly committed to character development and character development is the demonstration and acceptance of the minimum four core values that we subscribe to...honesty, caring, respect and responsibility. (4)

Although most respondents agree that their programs are designed to serve all children, there is clear recognition that many of their constituents include low income and minority youth¹. This diversity is an important descriptor of the program users, but it also serves as one of the benefits for program participants.

We serve three types of populations/kids. The one kid that comes just because it's an attractive program, there is something there they want. .. The second group of children comes from very risky neighborhoods that have limited income, the parents still care. There is a concerned adult in the household and between Boys and Girls Club, school and the parent, are the kids going to make it. Chances are real high. Finally, the last category is the one the school has thrown out, the parents don't even realize they exist and if they do notice them they really prefer not to have them around. It's the kids that nobody else wants. (2)

And if you look at the faces that are in the clubs, it's a diverse group. And when you're in there it doesn't matter if your mom drives a Mercedes and your dad is on welfare, you just a kid and you learn to get along. And I think that if you were to ask alumni, the thing that they probably learned the most was how to get along with other people, with other races. And the second thing they tell you is that people had the impact on them, at one point or another, made them want to strive for more. It wasn't because we have great computer lab, it was the people, the relationship that were able to make with staff and listening to them and giving them advice. That's what really makes the place special. (6)

Importantly, both of these organizations are in the early implementation stages of national diversity initiatives.

Community Relevance

It should be noted from the outset, that many of the agency leaders felt that they were making important contributions to the vitality of their communities. It was the perception of the investigator that these agency management and staff were strongly committed to serving all members of their communities and provided important opportunities for individual and family development. With that said, however, many respondents realized that diversity-related issues were complex and there was an ongoing need to find better ways to reach out to different parts of their communities.

Several respondents spoke about the degree to which programs/agencies were perceived as relevant to their constituents (e.g., individuals, families, and neighborhoods). One respondent noted that community relevance is often based on "faith." It is often assumed that program management and staff know of community perceptions and needs. Others suggested that more frequent and systematic efforts to communicate with community constituents was important in order to have a better sense of the current and changing needs of both youth and families.

Q: How do you know you are tapping the community and being relevant to the different populations in your community? A: We don't. Right now we don't... I have been with the Y 15 years and have never, outside of going to community leaders and asked their perception of the YMCA...the most comprehensive and

important step, [is to understand] what the perception of the community is. Are we doing what we need to be doing and where do we need to change? (10)

Y's across the board need to do a better job of getting out into the true community and let people know what we do because people still think we are just a gym and swim place. They don't understand the other developmental programs and other needs that we meet. I've met people that are in business are in the police department that had no clue that this facility was here. Now that blows my mind. But I have to say, I think that's one of our issues of not getting out and building those relationships and letting people know what else we are doing. I experienced the same thing when I was in Baltimore, in an inner city branch, two blocks away people had no clue we were there. It had been there since 1865 or something, how could you not know the Y is down there? (8)

Image out in the community. I don't know if we know how we are viewed in the community. Until we're viewed as an organization of attraction where everybody's welcome... I don't know that true progress can be made. That's the other part, what does the community think, and therefore what do we have to do, what are the action steps around changing that perception or clarifying that perception or focusing that perception.(4)

One of the complicating factors for many program directors was that the demographics of their communities were undergoing rapid change. Neighborhoods, for example, that had been historically white and low income and minority populations were increasingly residing in lower to middle class. These emergent and "new" communities made it very difficult for programs to stay abreast of changing community needs.

Our community and our service area is growing and our demographics are changing at an enormous rate, if we don't wake up and be prepared for that market, we are going to be totally left. We are not going to be able to serve them. We are not going to be able to design and create programs that will enhance or entice those folks from coming into our facility. Because we won't have any representation, we won't be aware, we won't have knowledge of their needs, and they will not come to us. We won't be reflective of our true community. (8)

Another offered:

The question is to understand what the community thinks of us—we need to find out what this 'new' community thinks of us. What are their perceptions, what are the actions and steps needed around changing that perception or clarifying that perception or focusing that perception. (4)

Several directors noted that it was essential to work consistently to educate community constituents about the range of programs offered by these agencies. Too often, perceptions of program relevance rely on historical images rather than current information on actual opportunities.

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Community Trust and Fearfulness

Although many agency directors felt that they had positive relationships with their regular program participants, many noted that lack of trust and fearfulness existed in certain parts of their communities. These issues emerged predominantly among disenfranchised groups where issues of poverty, drugs, and gangs were part of the social landscape. Several program directors noted that the fear and protectiveness of parents often influenced the participation rates of the very children the programs hoped to target.

We also see fearfulness in our community...fearfulness about a number of things. One is the whole stranger/danger deal. Their children are constantly in danger. We have opportunities that we can provide these children that many parents are afraid to use. One instance is the scholarships [we provide] to camp, a wonderful camp, the kids are well taken care of. We personally drive them up to camp, we make sure they have the clothing, the camp counselors are wonderful. The parents from these communities are afraid of letting their children go...fears of letting kids participate and take advantage away from them, a fear of having them away from them. (2)

When asked about the source of this fear she noted:

I think it is protectiveness [by parents] because they are exposed to so much. There is so much violence and so much sexual assault and molestation with some children. There is so much manipulation with children. The gangs and drugs and that culture is so prevalent on their streets. Every time their little ones walk out the door they are susceptible to being victims to that. And in our parent's world, they see it as

extending out across the whole world. That there is no safe place, every place is like that. Even camp is like that. Their whole world is so narrow. (2)

It is perhaps difficult for individuals from more privileged backgrounds to understand the source and depth of this fear and potential distrust. It is particularly important to remember that for many families, particularly those who are marginalized, it is difficult to understand the differences between non-profit and governmental agencies. In such cases the government may not be seen as neutral or helpful but rather is feared. This perception might lead to caution or complete avoidance of the program.

Some of our programs exist in very distrustful neighborhoods...We deal with parents of the most limited opportunities. So we're dealing with many troubled families. They are so used to being called into the school when their kids are suspended...they are dodging the IRS, the INS...they are cautious when answering the telephone. They are so used to being kicked out, thrown out, suspended, reprimanded so they isolate themselves and there is no trust (2)

Several directors talked about the importance of acknowledging policies that might increase the potential for distrust. Several noted that constant information gathering from parents/ children and frequent turnover of staff could potentially undermine a sense of stability and trust. It is important to remember that although many "mainstream" families are used to such questioning and perceive it as harmless, marginalized communities might begin to wonder why such information is being gathered.

We have developed the trust because we make all kids welcome—we don't ask for statistics, we are not going to ask if your child has been vaccinated, if they are an alien or not an alien [sic]. The trust is there, but it takes a long time, it takes the same person, staff, facility, knocking on the same door reassuring the parents that nothing has changed...The consistency of staff brings ease to the parents. If the parents see Bill, and Bill has been there the past five years, they know Bill is going to take care of their kid. (2)

When I first got here, we had a large group of the native community that chose not to come here because there was no longer a Hispanic running the program. They were very territorial, they were culturally strong, and I guess it was their way of saying, you are not one of us. Earning their trust that we do a good job and serve their community took time...a good year and a half. A lot of people see us as outsiders, we are coming and working with their kids. In the beginning that is exactly what it

was and I think now they have the trust and it's just an issue of them learning more about us. (13)

Community Images

Related to issues surrounding community relevance, are issues related to the images and stereotypes that the community may hold about many youth-related agencies. Many directors indicated that many parents, particularly those from mainstream society, view participants as low income and/or predominantly minority. This perception may cause these parents to under-utilize programs that exist to serve all youth. Parents occasionally verbalize this concern to community agency directors. As one noted, "The conation is that the Boys and Girls Club is for the bad kids, for teenagers, or the tough street kids." (9).

Other similar comments were made:

...we still have to overcome the perception that "that is where the poor kids go, that is where the minority kids go." We are trying to embrace everybody and say this is not about poor kids or Hispanic kids, this is for everybody. How does the community perceive us? Do they still think that is where the troublemakers go? This is not what we do. (6)

Another program director related a story from a parent concerned about the nature of youth who attended the program:

I want to know what type of kids really go here. Tell me, are there a lot DES kids (e.g., low income)? Are they all black or Hispanic kids? Do they wear shoes? I want to know?" The director mused, "I'm thinking, where is this guy coming from?" trying to bite my tongue and be professional. Nine times out of ten, I tell them the same thing, "You know what sir? Whatever school you go to, whatever neighborhood you live in, walk out into that area and whatever kids you see there are the same type of kids that you'll see in the club." (9)

Several directors noted how important it was to educate community members about the true nature of program participants:

But a lot of people just have a mind set that the Boys and Girls Club is just full of gang members, its full of hardened criminals, its not a place that I would send 'my kids.' Informing the community of what the Boys and Girls Club is, the misnomers out there that it is only for kids that are low income, and its not. A lot of it is just getting that information out to the community. That is not what we are, maybe once

upon a time that what it was. We are here and we do a lot of different programming. Another misconception is that all we do is rec. programs, letting them know that we do prevention programs, we have state of the art computers, and we do literacy, things like that. (12)

By telling our story, the type of kid that we serve. By showing people the kids. We have programs where we showcase our children that have grown through the system, where they have gone, what their accomplishments are. So people can see these kids are going to be successful, tax-paying citizens. I really think the communities look at you and you could be a burden to society or you could be part of the system that is going to contribute to the well being of the overall community. That is what we try to show them, that we are providing the initial skills and training and will be impacting kids and the future of our community. (6)

Language Barriers

Many respondents noted that language differences between service providers and constituents often led to difficulties in program delivery. Many noted that their staff was often only English-speaking which made it difficult to provide adequate services to Spanish-speaking communities.

When you are dealing with a lot of Hispanic families, they don't speak any English. We have to be sensitive and that is something that we do. Do we have somebody on staff if somebody walked in off the street, how are we going to communicate with them? (5)

The biggest issue is the language barrier, so often. Not having enough staff that speak the tongue. Another one is along that the communication barrier as far as being able to offer programs to them. So often we automatically do a flier that is in English and we don't consider doing it in Spanish. (12)

One respondent indicated that although bilingual or trilingual staff would be ideal, one short term solution would be to give management and staff greater intercultural communication skills that might help them better deal with diverse constituents. Basic conversational skills as well as a knowledge and receptivity of dealing with diverse constituents would help:

...if we give a person who has no Spanish, some beginning conversational Spanish so they can say hello, thank you, answer the phone, help guide them through an application for the youth sports program, then we are starting to go beyond just common respect and common decency towards relating to another human being. It doesn't even have to be in the category of bilingual or tri-lingual, it has to be 'I understand you, you understand me' and that can be at a very non-technical level. Human communication. I know very few words of Spanish,

and it would help if I knew basic levels. Granted we need bilingual staff to truly communicate, but all of us should be able to do the basics. And that's a different level. (4)

Some agencies actually provide incentives to their staff to enhance their linguistic ability:

I have had a couple people call me today and say, "Oh by the way, I'm bilingual." Great, because ...we want to make sure that we are taking care of everyone in the community and we don't want anyone to feel alienated. Some of the staff have gone on their own and signed up for Spanish classes. I speak a little bit, I should brush up, which is encouraging. If you do that on your own, I'll (agency) pay for half of your class. I think that is an effort, someone being very conscious of the needs, being aware of the cultural differences and being prepared for just those differences.

Several noted, too, that it is inappropriate to rely only on Spanish surname staff to provide translation since often, for many of these staff, English is their primary language and it should not be assumed that they are fluent in Spanish.

You do get now, some people that maybe have a Hispanic surname and don't speak Spanish. So your staff may be very diverse but then you ask how many can communicate, and sometimes it may not even be the Hispanic last name people, it may be somebody else. (5)

...If we need translations we call up all of our Hispanic men and women in the organization and that 9 times out of 10 they don't speak it. They may have the Herredia or Garcia or Gonzales is the last name but they don't speak Spanish and they certainly don't read or write it. (2)

Hiring, Retention, and Promotion

Staff hiring and retention were particularly salient issues that emerged in the interviews. These agencies have a core of full-time staff but must rely heavily on part-time staff. Issues of high turnover not only effected the consistency of the programs offered, but created additional issues related to community relations and staff diversity. With regard to diversity, most agreed that quality of staff hired was central to their mission, but recognized the importance of having a staff that reflected to some degree the composition of the community. In addition, however, most agreed that staff diversity was important regardless of the racial/ethnic composition of the community because it provided children with an understanding of the cultural diversity.

The program that we are attempting to do with diversity is kind of to take a mosaic approach where we have a lot of different people valued together. It's not a melting pot, where you

lose your identity, where you lose your culture but the beauty of being able to say, everyone brings something of value to our table. And we want to learn as a culture, and I mean by a culture – an organization, that each of us has sessions and training and support to learn how to be able to say, because of your background, you make us stronger, not weaker. That's different from performance. I don't care what color you are, what background you have and so on, if you can't perform you shouldn't be working the job. You can use all the excuses you want, the reality is performance is separate from diversity in generally bringing out the value of diversity. I think, sometimes, our society gets it mixed up. And that is where it gets really difficult. (5)

In the community we are in, one of the challenges we have is providing role models that reflect the faces that we serve. Finding those role models...sometimes you have a staff that is reflected of the population we are serving (6)

Whether you have a diverse population, whether you live in [a predominantly white community]. "We don't need diversity here." That's not true, at all. It's still there and we are still teaching people, we are providing and awareness and eventually a change of attitude. When people are knowledgeable about something or someone then they are not threatened and then it's not unfamiliar and they are not uncomfortable with it, so they embrace it more.(8)

Diverse staff brings lots of value. And you've got to have them diverse to reflect all areas of your community. And actually even if you're in a totally let's say Hispanic or white population, people say, "We're just going to reflect our community" – that's not good. They need a little diversity in there, they need to be able to understand that if they are in a total white, Hispanic or African American culture – that exposure of having a white person work in that community. Sometimes I get these people and see, "h, a white can't work here, they don't understand the community." What do you mean a white can't work there? Actually it might be good for a white to come there – you want an all African American staff work in an African American community, well let's give me a break...our challenge is to have a culture that values diversity. (5)

Several directors spoke of strategies to enhance their staff diversity. Most agreed that hiring the most qualified person for the job was the primary criteria, but many noted that they worked to insure that their programs were reflective of the community. Clearly not utilizing quotas, many spoke of targeted hiring and insuring that the job applicant pool reflected a diverse population.

But you still want to hire the best person for the job, make sure that you are giving yourself a pool. Actively searching and not waiting for them to come to you because they might never. It's not about quotas...it is about getting the pool of people and actively recruiting and making sure that you have a good base of candidates from which to make your decision. (10)

You look at the applicant, do the best job, and interview the ones you have and look at what your needs are within the club. But you can't really say, you can't hire because he is male

or he is not Hispanic. You can't do that as far as guidelines and policies. But you can look at say look at the staff, look at what we are looking for, and do the best you can with the applicants you have. (11)

With our full time staff, we try to incorporate what the community make up is...it kind of does that itself without targeting certain groups. We have an outreach program position that to me only makes sense that you have someone that is, primarily going to be targeting youth of this area (12)

Many respondents noted, however, that staff recruitment and retention is an increasing difficulty because of a strong economy with low unemployment as there is strong competition for talented workforce. Since the nonprofit sector often pays salaries lower than most public and corporate sectors, the potential pool of applicants is commensurately small.

You go to work for Burger King or some of those guys, they are getting paid \$7-8 an hour. For our club I don't think they are getting more than \$6 an hour. Its actually one of projects that we are working on, our club we need to pay our staff more. If we want to keep them, we need to get out all of this minimum wage stuff and start paying them more. (13)

We tend to hire part time. The large majority of our people are part time. It tends to be under \$9 and hour and with the competitive market you can go out and be a cake decorator at Fry's for \$12-15 an hour. We tend to experience turnover, which isn't good because then you have to retrain. (4)

[Salary] is definitely part of the issue. Especially, and I don't know how sexist this will sound, but I think it is really difficult for women because this is a good old boy system. From a male perspective, the difficulty I have is that I am working in a nonprofit agency and I trying to support this family. I can't make money, I have more and more demands financially to support my family and how do you do that? So in order to take advancement and move on I need to go some place else, and do I want to do that? (11)

Moreover, several noted that the nature of the workplace has changed. The frequency of career change is commonplace in today's corporate, public, and private sectors. One respondent suggested that in today's market, many potential job applicants perceive themselves as "free agents" that seek to expand their skill development in a range of different organizations. These dynamics lead to a young workforce pool that is substantially different in attitudes toward organizational loyalty and career development strategies.

Staff retention... is actually the biggest challenge that YMCA's face right now and the trend for 2000. ...getting good staff. The market is so competitive out there, if you are a minority

and talented, you are going to get scooped up. Again, I think diversity is a major focus for a lot of organizations and they are taking a look at it. Basically that is a big issue and I think it is going to be an issue in our future as well. (10)

Typically, there is a high staff turnover when you're dealing with college students, and that's the majority of people we hire. Their schedules change, they graduate. We like to hire someone in their junior year because at least they have some maturity behind them. Hiring an 18-year-old freshman and they turn around and with 17 year old in a clubhouse. We'd like to have a little bit of distance in age here. Even if we hire a junior and their schedule works out that they can maintain the job, we have them 2 years, we're doing real, real good. (2)

The major issues facing, in terms of diversity, is being able to understand that there is a very high employment rate and knowing that there is a situation of finding employees, and being able to identify employees. And then making sure that we identify a diverse group of employees. And to be able to retain those employees and develop those employees through a long term work environment. They might change careers 5-10 times rather than stay with one career for 30 years. Knowing that, we are going to invest in the future and employees and we got to also look far enough to realize they may change and go to other nonprofits. So one of the most difficult things we have to look at is that people are moving and changing jobs on the corporate level and the nonprofit level more so than ever before. (5)

This respondent continued:

The loyalty market is not necessarily an important thing anymore. And this is happening with the nonprofit, I'll go to the YMCA and get training in childcare and I'll pick up some skills in childcare then I'll go with another company or another nonprofit. Because I'm a free agent – the free agency is not only happening in sports, it's happening all over the place....the workforce being a nonprofit pay scale versus the corporate world will come into play. (5)

And so much of what we do is the program the children come for, because they are so deficient in the basic elements in life. It's being loved and nurtured and just cared for. These kids would come and just sit in front of you for 24 hours, if you just told them you loved them for 24 hours and ignore their bad behavior. (2)

Several directors spoke of the need to have on-going initiatives that build the employment workforce and reinforce current staff, particularly part-time staff. Strategies identified included competitive pay levels, staff recognition efforts, 'grow your own' style junior staff training programs, and creative recruitment efforts.

We recognize the fact that if you have a high turnover, you're not going to do a very good job with the kids. Kids, it takes time to break down barriers and become a person that a kid can trust. Therefore we put a lot of emphasis on maintaining staff. We put a lot of emphasis on how we keep part-time people. Our goal is if we hire a college student, I would like to

keep them for four years...and in those four years they can have an impact on a child. You can't pay them minimum wage, you can't pay them \$6,7,8 an hour because to them money is money, and they would leave for money. The other thing we do is, we provide them with, and we help them with a college education. If you work for us part time, you can get your tuition reimbursed at the end of every semester. So that is just an incentive to keep them. Little things like that. We do training programs, we do staff retreat once a year where we invite all our staff to come together and then we work on our objectives for the following year. We have a recognition program where we recognize our staff, our part time and full time people once a month. They get a plaque, there a certain things we do...just to keep showing people that we appreciate them. (6)

We are doing a better job now of working with our own kids, we have some homegrown full time employees now that have gone through the system and on to college and are now working for us full time. For many years, we were very, lax in trying to influence our young people. That this is a career, you can make a living, raise a family working with children. When we started realizing that we had a shortage of people, we started implementing programs where now kids can work while they are going to the program. Get them involved in our junior staff-training program, where we give them some pocket money. Where we can also work with them on job skills and stuff like that. They start seeing that they can be role models and mentors to the young kids. Now, I am starting to see more and more of our top kids saying, I want your job. I want to go to college and work with kids like you. So, we are doing a better job of that and I think that is going to help us have faces. (6)

Respondents also noted the importance of helping staff realize that although they might not be receiving salaries as high as they might in other career tracks, there were important psychological benefits to working in such communities. Many actually used this focus in helping to motivate staff to continue.

We are always very competitive as far as salary and have to continue to be that way. We've got to rely on teamwork, give them a good environment, a good, positive environment to work in. But it is very difficult, this can be a stressful job too... [working] long hours and weekends, [working] nights. You're not going to make as much at a YMCA as you are for a city. There is a very competitive job market out there. We have to hope that people will be here for a deeper purpose rather than for the money, even though the money definitely helps and we try to give as much as possible. (10)

Why should I be doing this when I could be making more? Not necessarily the sales pitch we do but you can go make \$8 over there doing that. Damn glad you can flip them fries and do them burgers and more power to you but you know what. Yea, I'm paying you a couple bucks less but you are changing lives over here. The experience, the knowledge and that good stuff that you are going to feel at the end of the day or the end of the year, you can't buy that, you can't replace that. You are going to get down and dirty and you are going frustrated and hot. You are going to wonder why you have to put up with Billy and ...But if you're patient and you hang in there with us, it's going to change. (9)

Several respondents noted that there are additional barriers created with hiring and retention. A significant portion of part-time staff is young and has little experience dealing with disenfranchised youth and families. Moreover, many of the demands of the workplace can lead to high stress that may lead to turnover.

You know we have, again this past year has been very hard on us because the market is ripe for jobs. Again, the hours, the demands of the jobs, the ability to deal with masses of children [make the job difficult]. And we're not dealing with nice little kids that come in and are so appreciative of having an opportunity to play basketball. We are dealing with kid that walks off the street with their own bottle of Ridlin in their back pocket, they have a straight F report card and you're the person they look at. Mom probably won't see it all because she really doesn't care. And you're getting this kid in your building, a building that can physically accommodate 120 kids and you have 125 in there and you should be staffed no less than a 1 to 20 and you're only operating with 4 staff people, you're down two. It takes a saint to do it. We all think the glory of this type of work when you see a young child achieve and you graduate and to college. There is a lot of footwork and hard work you have to do before you get to a point where you see a child do that. Most of our staff turnover is so high. (2)

I think some of our best staff could potentially be parents because there is something about a parent. They have their own children, they have an insight that becomes deeper than anybody graduating from college and no matter how many degrees they have. There are the instincts that are hidden all of a sudden jump up when you have your own child and you look at another kid and you instinctively the problem – that kid is hungry. At 22 – 24 years old you don't know why that child is whining all day long and causing a problem. It's real hard to teach that to young college kids coming out into the field. What are the issues of children, as a parent you just know it because you have experienced it with your own children. I would love to be able to attract a mature crowd. And its something when you think of recreation you always think young and energetic, I found benefit from having people who are established and returning to work. And especially moms returning to work. (2)

In addition, the use of extensive background checks had the potential to dissuade potential job applicants who might be concerned about, or philosophically disagree with such procedures.

I think three years ago we started, more significant background check, which also included the drug testing. The first time we initiated it, about 5 or 6 people flunked. It was unbelievable and I was wondering how I was going to run the summer programs.

Fingerprinting is submitted annually. We do an annual recheck and drivers license checks like one every 6 months. You won't find any other agencies as thorough as us. The other thing though too is that eliminates a lot of people. They have to come flawless, we will not hire if there is anything there. Even if its arrests that have not resulted in conviction. If there is a series of arrests that would lead to a suspicion. (2)

Diversity Staff Training

Most of the directors spoke to the importance of on-going diversity training, both formal and informal, for both staff and management. It was important that these efforts be on going and deliberate. Not only was such training essential to increase an understanding of diversity, but it too had the potential to provide introspective opportunities for management and staff to uncover their own biases and stereotypes.

I think it just creates awareness. I think about our diversity training last year. The theme was “let’s look and see what kind of differences we have.” It’s just an awareness almost like our character development training, we all know that we are supposed to be caring, responsible, honest, respectful, but until you get into the scenarios where you are actually challenged and stuff. It’s kind of like, ‘Oh my gosh, am I ethical?’ All this training is going to happen but it needs to be top down...if we aren’t doing it how can we serve as the examples. It will come to where it hits everyone but it is very important that we as the leaders of the organization are aware of it that we are buying into it, that we take it to our staff. If we don’t do it, it’s not going to happen. Just like many things, if the leadership doesn’t communicate its not going to happen. (10)

The best one [diversity training] I went to... was interactive. This lady just had us stand in groups...to find out how we can stereotype people. We all do it. We make assumptions. I started thinking, okay, I have to look at people, how other people see other people and try to help them with their ideas of prejudices... I think its just naturally going to happen as we have more and more diverse people in the workforce. Communities are going to be exposed whether they want to or not. It just kind of forces it I guess. (14)

We do some [diversity] training, but I don’t think it is enough. A lot of the training we do is formal, but a lot of it is informal. It happens in staff meetings and in mentoring. [It happens] when I am walking the floor talking to kids dealing with issues and talking to them [staff] about how to deal with parents or other kids. Yes, there are some that are a lot more sensitive to those needs and those community issues than others. Not that they all walk in with the same level of sensitivity to those issues. Some of them do, some of them don’t. We try to do everything we can, in training, how you deal with kids, how you deal with issues as well as that informal stuff. (11)

Several respondents talked about the importance of continually sensitizing staff to the subtle differences of culture that influence everyday behavior. This sensitizing behavior ranged from educating staff about subtleties of cultural behavior differences through providing programs that might be more relevant to the population served.

First of all, I always try to get them to understand there are differences in cultures and within the cultures of cultures. Just because someone doesn't look you in the eye doesn't mean its disrespectful, you have to understand where that is coming from. Understand the community we are in, that it is different from [other communities]. I try to get them to be more sensitive in the individuals that they are dealing with. And also along that, not dealing with people as a whole, don't stereotype them. Just because they are Hispanic that is how they are, just because they are white and they are in this community, whatever. The other thing I try to instill in them is that it is not too late for them to learn and they should learn from the kids. That opens up their minds and breaks down a lot of the barriers versus the its my way or the highway kind of attitude....Again, you get rid of the stereotypes...and then the other thing I would say, trying to figure how the staff can figure out from the kids where they are getting their attitudes and perceptions from. (12)

Right, I believe to be a good diverse staff, I don't think you necessarily have to be in the minority, you just have to be a person that can...can relate to kids and the kids can relate to them. The way they are seen and admired – they got it. But people say, oh yea it's because they can understand minorities, I'm talking about the Anglo kids and how they bond to them. They are just good. It's a matter of training those people we have to be better, to deal with things. (6)

It's all about different things, engaging membership, engaging volunteers so it's the total big picture. It's talking about our programming and how are we designing and creating and developing our programs and services in the YMCA that are diverse. Are we including on our program literature, in our program design, are we including lingo and art that reflect everyone. It's a major, huge commitment.(8)

Given the many challenges the staff face with regard to diversity, it was felt that the amount of time spent on diversity training was inadequate. Several indicated that many full-time staff had opportunities to participate in some limited diversity training opportunities. However, most new part-time staff orientations lasted about three hours. This orientation dealt with all components of agency policies and procedures and diversity was dealt with only tangentially, if at all. As one respondent noted, the financial investment that would be required to train staff in a meaningful way would be difficult to justify, especially given the high turnover in part-time staff.

It's more like the [staff] training focuses on a lot more day to day behavior rather than here is what the best practices are in regards to being a diverse organization. (2)

They get about 3 hours and then hey, here you go. They have to have their certification in child care, but as far a YMCA history, philosophy, understand the culture – it's three hours and pick it up from the rest of the world. Now the reason it isn't, look at how expensive it is to send part time employee. I invest a \$1,000 and you're gone in 3 months. Now the question being and the challenge, like you said, is if I spend that \$1,000 and send you away

for a week, maybe I'll keep you a year instead of 3 months. I'd have to pull my calculator out or ask the CFO— let's see if we kept someone for a year vs. 3 months. Would it pay off? (5)

I think the major thing is 5-10 years down the road is to be able to take our staff, get them through training a lot quicker and a lot more extensive. We probably take about 3 hours to orient somebody and throw him or her on the desk. We need to take somebody a week, and go through a comprehensive training program for a whole week. Included in that week is diversity training. One whole day on understanding diversity alone. I think our biggest challenge is to do a good job. This would be the most powerful thing we could do for diversity. (5)

Bias and Stereotypes

One of the reasons that diversity training was important was because of biases and stereotypes that continued to exist among some management and staff. Often, it was assumed that many of these prejudices and biases worked at an unconscious level and individuals were not aware that they were treating diverse groups differently. Their existence, however, threatened to undercut diversity initiatives with an agency.

The first thing that comes to mind is that we don't know enough about what diversity really means. I don't think we've heard enough about people who know about diversity. In other words, there is the majority of us that I feel have to learn about what diversity really means. We are all caring and we all want to include all. That isn't the particular problem. It's like not seeing it for what is, not recognizing it when we need to recognize it and change it. Not knowing if we're being prejudice...you look around and we don't appear to be very diverse. Our percentages of what people are at management levels and on our boards. We embrace it yet we may not look it. And if we don't look it, then we're not hearing about it because we're talking to ourselves, if you know what I mean. There's a problem. (4)

Biases, biases will stop it. You have people who have biases toward other people who don't even know they have biases. The biased person, people may tell you one thing and act another way. So, I think that bias is something that can kill diversity and whether you're joking, whether you're doing something – whatever... You've got the 'good old boy' system [by those] that really feel like they want to hold the power and pass it on to similar people...others who are not quite comfortable with [diversity]. I think that will slow us down. If you haven't changed the feelings of people then you haven't really changed the culture. (5)

People actually need to step outside the box and think about their behaviors more. ...a lot of this [prejudice] is learned, its unconscious. We have no idea unless you have been in an environment where you are exposed and have been taught and learn to appreciate differences, and are aware of things that may be sensitive to be people who are different, to Latinos, to Indians . They just don't know; they are unaware of their own behavior. (8)

The interaction with staff that were not comfortable or had not been exposed...what stuck out most in my mind, this one instance, it wasn't friendly...it wasn't a welcoming environment. This one particular situation, I remember kids used to come up to our front desk membership area and we had towel service and they would ask for change. The lady that was behind the desk would give them change. One time, some of the kids who participated in the program got a free membership, so they started coming to the Y. Some of the kids of color came in, asked the staff for change and she directed the kids to go out the building and across the street to another building to get change. And I thought "why did she do that?" I was really, really upset that we would even think of not treating everyone the same. It was unconscious, she didn't even think. (8)

...because that will call for people to actually step outside the box and think about their behaviors. A lot of this is learned, its unconscious, we have no idea [how we are behaving]. Unless you have been in an environment where you are exposed and you have been taught and learn to appreciate differences and be aware of sensitive things that may be sensitive to people that are different, to Latinos, to Indians. They just don't know, they are ignorant about that. (8)

Prejudicial attitudes and biases were compounded in situations where the racial/ethnic identity of the manager/staff was different from that of the community/previous administration. This type of intercultural conflict led to a host of different responses including program boycotts by 'offended' community members, or verbal tension among staff and management.

You have that prejudice, within a race prejudice, that kind of thing. It could be based on economics, it could be based on skin color, and we have that a lot of that in the African American community. If you're white, you are more susceptible, so we have a lot of that, I guess in people just being aware of how we treat one another.(8)

What I have noticed in my short time here, is for some reason, and I don't know how to describe this best or tactfully. But I have noticed it's the , 'I think I'm better than you' or 'That's mine, you're intruding' in our community. This is our community, you don't understand our needs.

So I think there is a lot of attitudes that will be our biggest obstacle. The attitude is that, 'I don't want to work with you, I am better than you, you are taking my jobs, you are taking my space, you're in my space, you don't understand my community.' If we can move those attitudes and understand that we are all being here trying to address the same needs, our kids, our families, community development, meeting needs. It doesn't matter if you're Latino, if you're white, if you're black. The needs and the issues are still the same. It's going to be crucial because that is going to be a major factor in being successful and being able to go out and solicit community involvement and collaboration. (8)

Leadership and Organizational Commitment

The importance of strong and persistent leadership in establishing diversity initiatives and tone was regularly reiterated. Not only did the leadership need to demonstrate her/his commitment, but had to establish on going strategies to make certain that those initiatives and tone permeated all levels of agency life.

What difference does leadership make in setting the tone? I think it makes all the difference in the world. I think about the change in CEO's that we have had where diversity wasn't even remotely a priority...and then having [this new leader] come from a very open diverse community. All of a sudden he is looking around and going, "Hey, what is the make up of our staff?" And really taking a look at it and saying this is important, let's go. It makes every difference in the world as far as the CEO. Obviously, I believe it will make a huge difference to executive directors, that we need to be looking at these things. I think we always need to hire the best person but we always need to make sure that we are getting the greatest pool of candidates, a very diverse pool of candidates. (10)

Diversity issues can start at the top or at the bottom. They can be at the highest position or at the lowest position and then they'll reflect the entire organization. Problems begin when the leadership hasn't called upon or called people on the carpet for establishing barriers.

It's not just our CEO or Vice President saying , we will hire or we will recruit or we will interview people of color, it's got to be so much more. It's a commitment because people that believe it will do it, they won't have to be told. They'll make a special effort, they will know they will be conscious. Like me, I am very much aware that my community here is very diverse. Even if it wasn't, that's important to me. (8)

It is very important that we as leaders of the organization are aware of [diversity issues], that we are buying into it, that we take it to our staff. If we don't do it, it's not going to happen. Just like many things, if the leadership doesn't communicate, it's not going to happen. Leadership makes all the difference in the world. (2)

I think if people see this as an on-going process, it's not just a flavor of the month. It takes time, its building the trust in this association that I can see is the most vital part that needs to happen. It used to be a very prohibitive society where we did not appreciate the differences in others, it was not celebrated at the top. I think there is still a lot of fear left over from the previous administration. [The new leaders]...is the most inclusive person I have ever met in my life and here he is just going, 'Why aren't they doing this?' He is a lot more understanding than me, I'm like. 'I can't believe that, look at this.' You can absolutely trust what he says is true. It is more frustrating for me that people aren't more like him.(10)

Several noted, however, that the diversity initiatives required not just a philosophical commitment but additional resources and assessment to insure its success of programs.

The biggest challenge, and I am going to preface it and talk about being reactionary or being on the proactive side, is to have the resources funneled into those directions to deal with those diversity issues? Or do we wait until something happens and react and say, okay yeah, we need to do that? I think the challenge will be how do we do that? And where will we pull the resources to make that a priority? (11)

Sustainability is another thing. Certainly it is an on going issue and there has to be a reallocation of resources. I mean in a very business way, in our budget, in our training budget, in our staff recruitment budget...very specific dollars. Because if you don't spend money on it and it's not in the budget where is it really going to go? And if its not part of an organizational goal, meaning if it isn't in my job description or job responsibilities and everybody in the Y, then are we going to get measured on it. And if we're not measured on it, how far does it go? If there is no money behind it and we're not measured on it then it will not happen. (4)

... because if you think about it, those leadership positions are the ones that are making the decisions that effect the general population, which is the minorities. So, we're talking about programming, we're talking about locations of Ys. We're talking about all major types of issues that are sensitive... But once you try, or once you are make your branches and your programs diverse, what are some of the things that arise that are really crucial in maintaining that diversity and still allow people to be welcome, to feel welcome, to be engaged and feel comfortable. (7)

You know this diversity issue, one of the things that trouble me with it is the time lag on it. It's happening right now and here we are, we're having meetings and training. There will be papers written there will be all this stuff, and still we are not serving. We're not putting anything into action now what makes a difference today. This isn't high-tech. If it were high-tech, the solution would be there. It isn't driven by profits, so where is the sense of urgency. As people, we need to figure out how to create that sense of urgency...to get going. (4)

Board Sensitivity and Composition

One consistent theme that emerged is the importance of fostering diversity among the respective Board of Directors. The Boards in many of these agencies have historically consisted of non-minority business leaders in the community. As Board members, one major responsibility is to contribute resources and raise funds. Most directors it was important to simultaneously sensitize current boards about diversity issues, but also to become more proactive in identifying minority business leaders who can become involved board members. Most respondents noted that board composition has continued to increase over the past decade in both gender and race/ethnicity, but that work needed to continue in this regard.

Still finding people of color to sit on boards is very, very difficult. That is an on-going thing and we have to be conscious of that. I work hard trying to find people of color to sit on my board, but that is not all diversity. We find people of all sorts of different backgrounds. I think we need to do a better job of recruiting females as well. (10)

And the question is that I brought up is who's mentality do we have to change? We have to change our board of directors' mentality. If you're board is predominantly white and they're not very diverse, who do you think they are going to hire? They are going to hire someone of their own image, whether you serve 98% Hispanic or Afro-American or whatever. That's the way they are, so we have to do a better job of educating our board of directors in the diversity issue. They are the ones that hire, national doesn't. (6)

We have a corporate board and we have a few boards in all the communities. You know, we do have some diversity on our board. At one time when we had more women than men. And that's good – great board members. But the reality is that you would like to be diverse, but at the same time when you are in this business you want people who are going to raise money for you. If you come to a table and have the capability of either giving money or raising money, We don't have the luxury of saying, we are looking for an Afro American who can either raise is money or give us money. We can't do that. We are looking for people who want to contribute and want to give their time and resources, or have the capability of getting resources. (6)

Several directors mentioned that they have worked to develop strategies to enhance the diversity of their board, although they indicated it was a difficult task. Despite the difficulty, however, it was felt that positive change was underway.

I think one of the things we have to do is a better job of developing our board and seeking business individuals who are looking to be involved in the community and looking for opportunities like we can do here. So that is on us. We are still trying to learn how we can do that. Typically when I am dealing with people because of the business community, I am looking for people in the business community who can step up and be involved. Typically a lot of the people I have been dealing with are non-minority individuals who have the businesses or the money or the resources to be able to contribute as a board member. I typically have a lot of those individuals who will come to me. I have not done enough of my work in developing the individuals we can go out an find, okay this is a Hispanic run business or this is a Black run business. Target those individuals to get them involved. Again, I think some of that is on us, we've got to develop better strategies to go out and target and recruit those individuals. (11)

One thing that I have to do here is have a auxiliary board and you would like it to be representative of the community. My board still does not have the diversity that it would need to be representative of the community. I need those individuals to be involved. I need diverse staff members to come in and offer their services. It is extremely difficult. (11)

Second big dilemma, with diversity, is not measuring it. What doesn't get measured, doesn't get done. People now because of quotas are scared now to measure. So, they bring

out a new concept called changing the culture. If you need a bilingual staff, you've got to go out and get a bilingual staff. You can't say we are going to, you've got to do it and you've got to measure it? And then you know if you are making the progress. Rather than just hypothetically speaking – oh, what a wonderful operation we value culture and diversity, welcome to our staff – does any speak bilingual – no. Not one this staff, that's ok, we value it... You've got to measure what you want. You've got to show people you are serious about it. (5)

We try to get a diverse board and we need to do a better job at that. I always look back and see what the history is...we'll go back 20 years ago and we would probably have one woman on our board. Today you take a snapshot, 20 years later, and you probably have about 8 women on the board...and you probably have about 25% minorities. You have a different snapshot. In the direction we're going, twenty years from now take another snapshot and you have a different reflection. It's a matter of education. Bring on members and you say, here is what our mission is, here is what we see, and here is what we want to do with kids, family and community. Is this something that appeals to you? (5)

Finally, one respondent noted that it is very easy for leadership to put diversity on the “back-burner” when other priorities and pressures arise. But as she noted, diversity intersects all levels of organizational effectiveness and can only serve to enhance program programs and policies.

Diversity effects every piece [of the program]. If it's not there, membership will not grow and increase. If it's not there, you can't go out and get more dollars because we've realized we need to raise more dollars, you're excluding populations of people that are donors. Volunteerism, we heavily volunteer based, you're excluding tons of people that would volunteer. And you talk about youth programs, but if you are not diverse in those areas of providing diverse programs, you can exclude a whole bunch of kids and families. Having people not put it on the back burner, understand how it is so inter-related to all the other things that we do. It's not like this little independent thing out here. It is an important component of everything that we do. So, having people actually realize and wake up and realize that and then this organization still has to figure out, what do we need to do. (8)

The Role of the University

Since this project was sponsored by the Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management of Arizona State University, respondents were asked if there was a role that universities could play in helping with diversity-related issues and challenges. The suggestions included educating current students about diversity-related issues, channeling talented undergraduates to nonprofit agencies, providing diversity forums for a host of nonprofit agencies, and more long-term strategies such as organizing a cabinet of nonprofit leaders to develop strategies to increase potential undergraduate

applicant pools. One respondent noted that it is important to make sure that current students are well informed about diversity issues in the curriculum:

I have a quite a few people who have worked with the American Humanics program. I don't know if it [diversity] is in the curriculum. Diversity is such a new thing. In the Boys and Girls Club movement it's a big deal now, it's a real big deal. They are starting to really focus on diversity. What does it our leadership look like? Does it reflect our clubs? Do our clubs reflect the population we serve? In the American Humanics program, I'm not sure if that is part of the curriculum, but I believe it has to be. (6)

Another important university function would be to identify and channel talented youth of all ethnic backgrounds into the nonprofit workforce.

...if you [the university] sees any kind of talented individual and you could see them involved in Boys and Girls Club or any other agency. (11)

I'm sure the university would be very instrumental in helping us, funneling and working together to funnel, diverse staff. Helping us, there has to be exposure to some type of training that we can implement or help to develop our own, where we create an on going awareness. Where we train staff on how to recruit, hire and retain people of color. ..Because usually all people of color are stuck in the [minority] places, and that is something that drives me crazy. (8)

Several more seasoned managers noted that young staff today sometimes have unrealistic job expectations. Many are impatient and expect to move up the management ladder very quickly.

Others do not necessarily have the experiential skill to work in difficult community programs.

I think that is a different breed, a different group of people coming through that look at us like, 'I want your job, but I don't want to wait 28 years.' Do you know how long I had to wait, do you know what I had to do? I graduated from there but I had to pay my dues. Now they want to be Executive Directors right away. And I say, you can't do that. The best thing in the world that I did was go through the proper channels to learn everything. I could tell you what it takes from the bottom all the way to the top. When you do that it really helps you understand the big picture. Maybe its part of the culture that is coming through right now. (6)

I'm not sure if they [the generation behind us] are getting it. We hear talk of us becoming a global economy and a global this and a global that. I'm not sure the young people coming up behind us really truly appreciate where American came from. Or maybe just total ignorance of it. That ignorance might be good, they may just accept everybody. Or it may be bad in that they only accept who they feel they should accept. (1)

It used to be you had to pay your dues. Many come in with the attitude "I want to make the highest end [salary] right now, but I don't want to do this, this and this." You are just kind

of say to yourself, “Oh my gosh!” In certain ways, you have no choice with a 2% job market. A lot of our young staff has never seen a bad economy. We have to be competitive, this is not an employers market right now and not that you want to beat on people, but we certainly have seen a difference. So, we have to change. If I kept my old mindset of-you’re going to do this and you’re only going to make this much-we wouldn’t have any staff.

I do not think that young people are prepared for the world of work. There is not enough practical experience. Young people over the age of 18 who we hire are not prepared for work. They are personally undisciplined. They really have less of a sense of what hard work is really all about. And I think technology is part of this, everything is just like pressing a button. Problem solving skills, I am shocked, and I hope it’s not because I’m older. But what I’m seeing is that kids do not have problem solving skills, they have never been allowed to work through an issue. (2)

In addition to the ongoing preparation of students, it was suggested that the university could facilitate training and education forums for nonprofit leadership. These forums could serve as important venues for program directors and agency leadership to come together to discuss and strategize about current and future issues.

By invitation start to connect people around diversity. So the Boys and Girls Club and the Y and Campfire Girl and the Arizona Ecumenical Council and the Volunteer Resource Center are all talking to each other about diversity. Get the Morrison Institute involved somehow. Get it on the top list of Valley wide initiatives. If there is something that is interesting, get it into a corporate boardroom and get them involved. (4)

I think one, if they call together a cabinet of nonprofits to meet on a regular basis on this issue of staff, retention, recognition, diversity and development of future employees. It meets on a regular basis and talks about how we can take the Humanics program as a feeder program for nonprofits future staff greater than what it currently is. [We need to] begin nurturing and recruiting them at the junior college level and even at the high school level. That whole department of American Humanics could go under a new system. We should talk to him [University President}, get his vision and say, look we want to graduate 500 students in the future. I would be willing to have one of our staff sit on that type of consul...and we could develop a training budget. The nonprofits get together and say in order to make this work, we know that colleges aren’t going to pick up all the cost. We’re going to have to put in \$10,000 a year or some amount of money. I think that together, all even small nonprofits, chip in some dollars, put it into a training budget, put it into a development budget and see if we can match it through foundation money or someone else. (5)

This respondent continued:

I think [the American Humanics program] provides a tremendous workforce, they have the best students coming out of there. We hire a number of them and they are excellent, there

are just not enough of them. That's why we need to sit down and brainstorm. How can we get three times as many people going through it, supported by the nonprofits and by the American Humanities to put out instead of 30 kids a year. I don't know the number I'm just estimating, I think we put out maybe 50 or so and we have nonprofits fighting over them. If we could get 500 kids out for the Valley it would be incredible because those are the ones who are highly skilled. That maybe more effective than trying to do it on our own. (5)

Summary and Suggestions

This project was undertaken in order to better understand major diversity-related issues and challenges facing select youth-serving agencies today. Because of their size and mission, Boys and Girls Clubs of Metropolitan Phoenix and the Valley of the Sun YMCA were utilized as the target agencies with whose staff interviews were conducted. This report summarizes the major themes that emerged in conversations with the agency leaders. The discussion that follows will be organized in two broad areas: 1) community relationships, and 2) organizational relationships. Suggestions for action are proposed.

Community Relationships. One of the most salient issues raised by respondents focused on the relationship between the agency and the community. There was an ongoing concern not only about the extent to which programs were meeting the needs of diverse constituents, but also a very basic and important question of relevance. There appeared to be a clear understanding that service areas were made up of a host of multiple neighborhoods each representing a complex and dynamic array of race/ethnic, income, and religious groups. More importantly, it was clear that the demographics of these neighborhoods were constantly changing. The notion of these emergent communities (Allison, 2000b) challenged management to question their influence and contribution to their entire communities. It placed added responsibility on the agencies to find ways to tap into the pulse of the communities they served. Several suggested that although they felt a responsibility for more systematic community assessment, most of their contact relied on occasional contact with visible community leaders.

The difficulty of community relationships was compounded by two other factors. First, it was recognized that management and staff often did not have the linguistic skills to deal with community members whose primary language was other than English. This made it difficult, for example, for them to serve families whose primary language was Spanish. And although several agencies were able to identify bilingual volunteers and staff, organization-wide this led to diminished services (e.g., service provision, marketing materials, community assessments) to non-English speaking groups. Second, management recognized that issues of trust and fearfulness existed among historically disenfranchised members of society who were often in need of their services. This lack of trust and fearfulness was a barrier that resulted in under-utilization of program offerings. Competing with this perception, were the negative images and stereotypes held by others from the majority culture that felt uncomfortable with their children interacting with low income and minority youth. Parents with this perspective were often reticent to have their children participate in the programs. Although agency staff worked to educate such parents on a case-by-case basis about the richness that such diversity would bring to their children, there was still a concern that this image limited involvement by some. It is not altogether clear how pervasive these perceptions are in the current communities.

Organizational Relationships. Hiring and staff retention were identified as important issues to the long term ability of agencies to serve diverse constituents. Most recognize that it was important to have a staff that generally reflected the community served, although most agreed that a diverse staff was important in all programs so that children would learn to appreciate diversity.

At the most basic level, several respondents suggested that simply finding enough applicants to keep up with the rate of turnover among part-time staff was their most difficult challenge. Most recognized that offering salaries that were competitive with the for-profit sector, as well as public agencies, was difficult. The lower salaries, coupled with the potentially stressful job situation and

off-time work hours (e.g., evenings and weekends), made it difficult to keep part-time staff for sometimes more than one to two years. Many of the agencies hired college students as part-time staff that often has a built-in turnover pattern.

Each organization had developed retention strategies that would help soften the turnover problem. For example, flexible working hours, aid with college tuition, fostering positive work environments, and an effort to remind staff of their important influence on children and families were used to help foster morale, commitment, and loyalty. With regard to the maintenance of diverse staff, the issue is compounded because the percentage of the minority pool is small to begin with and there is much competition for these individuals. Most managers recognized the importance of trying to create as diverse applicant pool and then hiring staff based on strength of qualifications.

Among full-time staff there was some concern verbalized that promotion within the agency was a problem simply because of the limited number of higher level management opportunities. Moreover, many of the individuals who hold upper-level management positions hold onto those positions for long periods of time, thereby limiting promotion opportunities within the agency.

Diversity training was viewed as an important component of sensitizing the work force to diversity issues. Moreover, it was seen as an important tool to help staff and management become increasingly aware of unconscious biases and stereotypes that influenced their own behavior. Although such training was available to most full-time staff, most believed the amount of time spent in such training was inadequate. It was further recognized that part-time staff received little or no formal training in this regard but several directors noted that they utilized informal education to better prepare staff to deal with diverse constituents. Most agreed that more training was essential, however, several noted that, particularly for part-time staff where turnover was high, the cost/benefit ratio of meaningful in-depth training was questionable.

There was little doubt among most respondents that strong leadership was essential to the success of any diversity initiative. Several had noted that during points in their careers they had worked for individuals for whom diversity was a non-issue. This attitude influenced program offerings, community relations, and hiring patterns. Most stated that if leadership did not actively demonstrate its commitment to diversity at all levels of agency life, it would likely not succeed within the organization as a whole. Several noted that it was essential that leadership follow through not just with philosophical directives, but resources and accountability programs as well.

As stated in the Introduction, there is a substantial amount of scholarly work that discusses the historical under-representation of women and minorities on nonprofit boards. Many of the directors/CEOs interviewed for this project identified this as an issue in their agency as well. Most noted that over the years there has been increased diversity representation, but recognized that greater efforts needed to be made in this regard.

In summary, it appears from the interviews conducted, that diversity is something that many of the agency directors/CEOs have given careful thought. The depth of their answers suggests that it is part of the organizational consciousness. This is a critical first step. The issues that many of the agencies are dealing with seem to rest on developing effective and efficient strategies to address these issues and challenges.

Suggestions for Action

Given that this investigator is not fully aware of what action(s) specific agencies have already undertaken to address their own diversity issues and challenges, I offer some initial suggestions that evolve from a consideration of data provided by the interviewees. Moreover, given the commitment and experience of these and other professional agency leaders, there are a host of ideas and strategies that could be developed in “think tank” fashion. For the good of the organization as a whole, opportunities should be provided for their ideas to surface and be shared

rather than remain vested only within their own agency (Senge, 1996). This bottom-up approach to strategic directions and program ideas would result in a host of doable actions. At the same time, however, each organization can continue with its national diversity initiative directives while empowering agency staff and management to initiate specific strategies at their level as well.

Community Relationships:

1. Develop an organizational strategy to assess current and emerging community constituents. This may begin on a small scale and expand as insights, skill, comfort, and strategic sophistication increases. For example, begin by finding knowledgeable and culturally sensitive community leaders (e.g., religious, educational, informal leaders) who might share their insights with management and staff. Expand this over time to include surveys and focus groups of both traditional and emergent communities.

2. Create and/or expand youth advisory boards to be as inclusive as possible to talk with management and staff about their issues and concerns.

3. Cosponsor events with other community agencies where under-served communities/neighborhoods might be present.

4. Develop organization-wide and program specific marketing strategies (e.g., bilingual program materials, open houses) that can be circulated in the local communities.

Organizational Relationships

1. Develop an organization-wide hiring and retention strategy. This may involve initially a series of small but concrete steps such as a marketing strategy to canvas community colleges and universities about potential job opportunities (e.g., job fairs, community youth meetings). Such programs may link with university American Humanics programs to allow college students to become involved in issues pertaining to hiring and promotion.

2. Develop “think tank” opportunities for management to share ideas and strategies on concrete diversity-enhancing strategies regarding issues such as building a diverse board, hiring and retention strategies, and formal and informal diversity training strategies. Many already have established experience in this area. By allowing them to gather on a regular basis, such ideas can be shared. This empowers both staff and management to invest more directly in diversity-related issues but it also provides an opportunity for important and creative ideas to emerge. Some form of Diversity Repository of Ideas can be created for web input and circulation so that staff can be empowered to share their ideas with the larger organization. At the same time, top level management can continue to work from the top down on the national initiatives that are underway. This allows for a simultaneous bottoms-up and top-down approach to diversity.

3. Management should continue to foster its “grow your own” job training agenda. Strategies again can be devised to make certain that such efforts reach the broadest range of talented youth within the community.

4. The university (e.g., Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management) can help sponsor Valley wide nonprofits forums that can bring leadership together to address shared issues related to diversity (e.g., hiring/retention, marketing, reaching underutilized populations). Such efforts would foster the diffusion of ideas that are central to organizational growth and transformation (Argysis, 1993; Schein, 1996).

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