

**Building Resiliency and Collective Power in the Workplace Through Trauma Informed and
Socially Just Conflict Transformation**

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Abstract

This paper critically examines trauma in organizational life, specifically in organizational conflict by exploring power constructs, and the roles of both social and individual identity, experience, and perception. It articulates tools and strategies to build trauma-informed organizations as well as strategies for managing conflict within them. This work also carries implications for societal change as connected to personal and organizational transformation.

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Introduction

Power, oppression, polarization, and conflict are phenomena found in many places, spaces and experiences in human life and society around the globe. These experiences carry substantial impacts, including traumatic ones. Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) gives voice and light to many issues, such as human rights and political marginalization, down to the very ways our relationships are made and sustained. Issues of power, social identity, and trauma are both catalysts and consequences of global conflicts and social oppression, but also manifest within our organizations and workplaces, even inside the very organizations which are designed to create social change and humanitarian relief from conflict. This paper takes a critical approach to the ways power, systemic marginalization, social identity, and trauma manifest in the modern workplace with keys to understanding and reframing it. It illuminates the seamlessly connected nature of personal, organizational, social, and political conflict in both the diagnostics and transformations.

The paper begins with an exploration of definitions of power as it relates to modern workplaces. This serves as a cornerstone of the first half of the paper which explores dimensions of power in organizations as it relates to trauma, social identity, and justice. This section also examines nuances and choice by considering matters of perceptions of power and conflict as well as options surrounding conflict engagement or avoidance. The second half of the paper explores specific tools and paradigms to promote peace, justice, conflict transformation, and trauma-informed practices within organizations.

Power in Modern Workplaces Defined

Power undeniably exists in modern organizations found in both explicit hierarchies and informal

modes of achieving influence (Galinsky et. al., 2010) as well as external actors of influence and control. By analyzing power dimensions through the four broader types of power: **power over**, **power to**, **power with**, and **power within** (Stuart, 2019), we can understand the consequences stemming from *power over* constructs in the workplace and transform them with awareness, structural shifts, and the strategic deployment of justice. We can enliven the capacities of *power to* achieving our best work through collaboration (*power with*) and empower members of workplaces to access and use their authentic *power within*.

The phenomenon of *power over* in the workplace is created and reinforced by organizational structures, psychological factors, and the broader experiences of social identities that infiltrate organizational life. While hierarchies can provide structure, definition, collectively understood processes, and mechanisms for accountability, they also provide a structure for the development of bureaucratic systems that disempower those with lower power who often perform the actual work while creating isolation for those at the top who make decisions for them (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002). Experiences of having power also alter the internal psychology of individuals to be less likely to accurately perceive and understand the feelings of others, coupled with a heightened willingness to act (Galinsky et. al., 2010). These dynamics can lead to stagnation of creativity and innovation, initiative and productivity, communication and relationships, and problem solving and conflict transformation, thus harming the work of the organization as well as the very hearts and souls of the people who give it life (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002). At its worst, it can lead to autocracy, which more aggressively seeks to strip the rights of individuals (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002).

Power as a Matter of Perception

There is an argument that power also has a subjective dimension. Cloke and Goldsmith (2000)

largely describe workplace and other types of conflict as matters of perception with parties commonly identifying as the archetypal “princess” who is powerless to the cruelty of their opponent, the archetypal “villain”. The “princess” seeks an outside “prince” to save her when what they really need is to invoke their own power within (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2000). This is echoed in the psychological tendency of humans to “protect a positive view of the self” which includes both how individuals see themselves and the way they perceive others to see them, thus causing an “inflated view of one’s own cooperativeness and their counterpart’s hostility” (De Dreu and Gelfand, 2008 pp. 14–16). Additionally, conflicts described as value laden touch a core internal value and invoke a strong perception of right and wrong regarding broader social issues (De Dreu and Gelfand, 2008). A further gray area is the presence of informal power in organizations, where those without formal hierarchical power can inform “where influence flows” (Galinsky et. al., 2010 p. 17). This may be leveraged through such traits and behaviors as strength of experience, personality, relationships with others, reputation, and so on. Another way power can be defined is the extent to which one party depends on another (Ury et al., 1989). This point is illustrated in power by labor movements where unions and organized workers mobilize the power of their labor (or withholding it) towards their employing company (Ury et al., 1989). Thus, power, at least to some degree, is in the eye of the beholder. At least a part of the solution when seeking conflict transformation or justice will involve organizational members of varying formal power levels accessing their power within.

Justice in Modern Workplaces

Justice is the quest for and attainment of accountability for wrongdoing and harm, along with structural changes to target the sources and structures from which such harms grow. Injustices in the workplace may arise when power over is exercised to the extent of creating harm stemming from unjust

conditions, structures, and behaviors. This can manifest in workplace “dark side constructs” in such forms as aggression, bullying and victimization (Aquino and O’Reilly, 2010; De Dreu and Gelfand, 2008), as well as the combination of various exercised bureaucratic powers such as personal blaming alongside impersonal responsibility, disempowerment in decision making combined with chronic miscommunication, and the avoidance of acknowledging or discussing grievances (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002). Cloke and Goldsmith (2002, p. 89) argue, “while it is possible to find solace in privilege, status, and power, these are ultimately dissatisfying, empty rewards” thus distancing members of varying power levels from accessing their authentic selves and valuable relationships. Considering a broader societal viewpoint, a confusing and frustrating dissonance is found in the broader quest for democracy and justice where the people rule in society and the experience in our organizations (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002).

Another model for analyzing issues of workplace conflict is the justice pyramid of interests, rights, and power which can be found in Ury et, al. (1989). The authors argue that the costs of engaging in workplace conflict are lowest when resolving disputes as a matter of interests, intermediate when resolving issues of rights, and highest when resolving issues of power - an aggressive approach of power play.

Conflict Engagement or Avoidance: A Power Lens

Conflict avoidance primarily occurs when one or more parties perceive the input of energy required and the risks of addressing the conflict to outweigh the benefits which, in effect, makes it seem easier to avoid the conflict than address it. Energy and risk concerns may range from such logistic factors as the input of time and subsequent delay of other tasks to significant psychological energy and risks. It is a huge behavioral and emotional jump from conflict avoidance to engagement (Mayer, 2012). Assessing the availability of resources to resolve the conflict and the availability of resources to cope are core parts in making the choice to engage. Resources to resolve the conflict include, most notably, the option of

working with a third person mediator. When this option is not available, or even when it is, there is a risk of unraveling the dynamics of the conflict only to see it escalate. The need for coping with the stress of conflict is an inconvenient side-effect of conflict's potential for productivity in organizations with the potential for a variety of psychological and physical strains to follow initial conflict stressors (Haslam and van Dick, 2010).

Regarding dynamics of power and level of concern, those with power are less aware and more shielded from the effects of their actions on others (Galinsky et. al., 2010). "Avoidance, accommodation and manipulation of conflict, taking precedence over dialogue, negotiation and resolution" are considered elements of bureaucracy (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002, p. 92). Those with less power can feel they have more at stake along with greater fear in confronting a more powerful other and can have a freeze response wherein the "behavioral inhibition system triggers anxiety, avoidance, and response inhibition" (Galinski, et. al. 2010, p. 18). Avoidance is a standard conflict style when a party feels low concern for the situation (Mayer, 2012). This may result from the sense of disconnection of a high-power party as well as more generally when the parties feel the conflict is mild and/or relationships less significant such as in short-term collaborations. However, both in terms of Eastern karmic philosophy and Western psychology, past experiences have a way of arising across space and time as feelings of power or powerlessness inform actions and sentiments in future situations (Galinsky et. al., 2010).

The PCS field is doing important, and at times, groundbreaking work to illuminate possibilities, tools, and potential for conflict transformation to help people be their best selves, do their best work, and have their best relationships. However, realistically, in organizations today there are many times when the decision to avoid conflict is made. There are times when this is the best decision and even constructive. For example, when engaging a conflict is physically or emotionally unsafe, when parties lack resources

to resolve the conflict and cope with its stressors and strains, or when there is a mutual lack of serious caring or concern regarding the conflict, or when one party refuses to engage (Mayer, 2012).

Promising Practices for Power in the Workplace

Organizational power dynamics are long held facets of modern life. Yet, some promising alternatives are emerging. Democratizing the workplace encourages self-managing, collaborative teams with group modes of accountability, and ownership and decision making (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002). Workplaces are on a trend of shifting away from strict top-down management processes (Rahim, 2017), and many are embracing more compassionate and collaborative processes. However, other research shows that more collaborative organizational structures can also lead to more conflict with more people and opinions having a voice (De Dreu and Gelfand, 2008). Therefore, careful consideration and design of conflict transformation practices should be implemented side by side organizational transformations to ensure that power is not simply reassigned to informal processes and individuals, but truly shared and leveraged for all to invoke their *power within*--to collaborate (power with), and create impact, productivity, and creativity in their organizations (power to).

Social Identity in the Modern Workplace

While modern organizations may be steadily enhancing out-facing aspects of diversity inclusion such as more women and people of color in high positions, undercurrents within organizations continue to strongly affect people of marginalized social identities. These act as quieter, or even subconscious (Smith-Crowe et. al., 2008) drivers of conflict ranging from interpersonal interactions within workplaces to the very ways our organizations are created and structured.

There is a small but significant body of thought on the notion that modern organizations are built on white, patriarchal, capitalistic, able-bodied premises. Attempts to promote diversity largely ask people

of diverse social identities to conform and merge within these frameworks rather than reassessing the way organizations function to be truly more diverse and inclusive (Acker, 1990; Jones, 2001; Smith-Crowe, et. al., 2008). These structures, coupled with power dynamics within organizations and broader society carry a potential for conflict, stress, harm and power dynamics but also potential for transforming our organizations when social identity challenges are identified and addressed.

In an unusually publicized conflict Spencer (2020), a former contractor with the Irresistible Project, an organization centered around producing the former Healing Justice podcast, depicted the conflict she experienced as exhibiting structural white supremacy. She cited Change Works' Jones and Okun's (2011) points on white supremacy as formative in modern organizations evidenced in such ways as a sense of urgency, perfectionism, defensiveness, and paternalism. These attributes largely echo Cloke and Goldsmith (2002)'s articulation of bureaucracy elements.

Women in the workplace provide another interesting social identity lens where the nature of womanhood (the physical, emotional, cultural, and social experience) can conflict with the modern organization. Acker (1990) argued that the presence and discussion of the unique procreative experiences of women, such as menstruation, breastfeeding, and "mythic emotionality", are often taboo in the workplace. Emotional expression in the workplace is seen as too gendered (Smith-Crowe, et. al., 2008) and discounting emotions is an aspect of bureaucracy (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002). The structure of the modern workday is also not built to encompass the unique realities of women both as principal caregivers (needing time to care for the needs of children and families) or for the embodied physical realities and cycles in the lives of women. For example, cycles of creativity and productivity for women shift in monthly cycles rather than a five-day workweek. Experiences of pregnancy and maternal care have to be carefully negotiated in organizational life rather than being built for and embraced as natural convergences

of life and work cycles. For an international example, Ram's (2008) case study discusses how recently educated and employed female social workers in India maintain newly empowered roles which involve a fluidity across various realms and geographies. Yet this fluidity also brings tension as it relates to female embodiment and perceived social roles of women as caregivers and domestic workers who do not travel and work in communities alone (Ram, 2008). There becomes a stark tension between social progress at work and honoring one's roots and familial ties, a tension often unique to the women's experiences (Ram, 2008).

Not only should we seek to build organizations more fully inclusive of diverse social identities out of a sense of what is right or promoting justice for groups who suffer from social inequities, there are many benefits as well. Diversity brings unique viewpoints which enables organizations to do their best work in a diverse world. Social identity stress theory describes the way ideas of self are co-defined with group identity and the benefits of feeling deeply connected to one's identity and group members (Haslam and van Dick, 2010). This collective identity can even produce "eustress" in the workplace, or a positive reaction in processing stress from conflict or otherwise (Haslam and van Dick, 2010, p. 332). Lastly, social identity groups with lived experiences of fighting for a more just world can also work from within their workplaces out to achieve a just world. In reshaping and transforming our organizations, social identities should be strongly considered from a lens not of inclusion into current systems but merging the social experiences of women, minorities, and disabled people into the very fabric of organizations, asserting our organizations as "social, political, and alive" (Haslam and van Dick, 2010, p. 346).

Trauma in the Workplace

Trauma appears in four main ways in modern workplaces. While dynamically intertwined, two are seemingly external (prior personal traumas endured by employees and collective social traumas of

employees belonging to marginalized groups) and two are traumas stemming from happenings within organizational life (those related to the more severe forms of workplace conflict and secondary trauma experienced by those in the helping professions). Trauma arises in organizational life based on a dynamic interplay of the various types of traumas which further research could illuminate to significantly benefit individuals, organizations, and scholarship.

Organizational and conflict scholars are scratching the surface at the dynamics of trauma individuals bring into the organizational landscape. Aquino and O'Reilly's (2010) work on workplace victimization shows a positive correlation between being targeted and the victim's behavioral predispositions, such as anxiousness, insecurity, diminished capacities to defend themselves, and having an obliging conflict style of putting others' needs before their own. Yet their research does less to explore what might have caused individuals to have these tendencies in the first place, not discounting the internalization of past traumatic experiences. As explored earlier, Gopin (2016) acknowledges how *most* people in conflict exaggerate a sense of blame on their opponent while elevating their own rightness. However, he notes that in people who have experienced severe abuse the opposite occurs. These people often jump to an exaggerated level of self-blame which can be just as debilitating to the conflict transformation process, if not more costly (Gopin, 2016). Gopin also notes that women are significantly more likely to engage in self-blame behaviors because of social conditioning to assume responsibility for others or because of higher instances of experiencing prior abuse traumas. Cloke and Goldsmith (2000) describe the ultimate process in conflict transformation, at its core, as fighting one's own inner dragon. Elaboration of further strategies for doing this are needed in the context of dealing with workplace conflict juxtaposed with internal conflict.

Looking at severe stress stemming from workplace conflict, the classic physiological response to

stress is shock, counter shock, and resilience. Put simply, “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger” (Haslam and van Dick, 2010). However, when the counter shock is severe, traumatic or near traumatic conditions can arise. Escalated, severe or protracted workplace stress may bring on extreme emotional exhaustion (Haslam and van Dick, 2010), as well as the deterioration of one’s health as heightened stress levels in conflict induce a host of physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate and changes in breathing which can be severe if protracted (De Dreu and Gelfand, 2008). While Haslam and van Dick (2010) assert the presence of unknowns surrounding when and why organizational stimuli lead to extreme stress in employees, exploring the possible correlation between experiences with trauma on all levels (personal, organizational, and social) and processing workplace stress and conflict would be an important line of inquiry.

As our organizations evolve away from strict top-down structures to more collaborative (Rahim, 2017), human-centered ones, the next frontier should be building trauma-informed organizations with structures and support to prevent and process severe workplace stress that support employees to “fight their inner dragons” (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2000) transforming this struggle into learning and growth that benefits themselves, their coworkers, the organization, and even society at large.

Tools for Reframing Organizational Life Towards Peace and Justice

While reconstructing our organizations to fully allow for the potential for peace and justice to flourish would go hand in hand with reconstructing our society, the following outlines several bold but achievable tools to bring a more trauma-informed and transformative approach to organizational life. Stringing together elements of the personal, organizational, social, and political, they begin with a discussion of weaving in mindful observation as a personal practice. There is then a more extensive exploration of an existing trauma-informed organizational framework, how it addresses the issues

discussed in this paper and how it can support conflict transformation organizational practices. Finally, there is a call to weave organizational transformations into social and political life via a set of frameworks around the solidarity economy and the politics of experience.

Mindful Observation of Self in Organizational, Social, and Political Life

Organizational conflict exists not merely in situational occurrences to be managed, but also as a phenomenon intricately connected with deeper levels of human experience, including ourselves and our pasts, our identities in society, and greater issues of social justice and peace.

A number of conflict practitioners and scholars continuously point to the self as the space where the potential for true conflict transformation lies; an inner world, that when explored, honored, validated, and applied can lead to tremendous healing and transformation for ourselves and our organizations. Cloke and Goldsmith (2000) discuss the prevalence of a core story which lies beneath the stories we tell ourselves and others about the external nature of the conflict and others' actions as well as the internal stories we tell to explain our own responses and actions. The deeper core story illuminates who we truly are and our deeper struggles and desires. Gopin's (2016), *Healing the Heart of Conflict: 8 Crucial Steps to Making Peace with Yourself and Others*, encourages conflict parties to start at the core of their being with a deep internal exploration to reveal inner truths that give meaning to conflict. Here, one can see the ways they might be gaining something from continuing the conflict even if on many levels they desire a way out of it (Gopin, 2016). Gopin's second step is to honor the range of feelings one has and identify if they stem from the conflict at hand or other wounds or needs. He asserts these inner places as the true points of resolving conflicts before we consider addressing it with our opponents. Even if only one conflict party goes on this inner journey, or if dialogue or mediation is not the intervention that is chosen, self-examination can still be transformative (Gopin, 2016). This inner practice is akin to mindfulness, an

ancient Eastern practice which Magee (2019) puts in a Western social context. Magee (2019) also encourages a deep personal exploration of our inner experience in conflict but guides us to, from this place, critique and gain further wisdom to resolve issues of social identity, specifically race. Thus, mindfulness utilizes an internal examination to understand oneself deeper in society. While organizational, social, and political transformations may be needed and signaled by organizational conflict, inner exploration must also be a crucial, and ideally, initial step in transforming such conflict.

Organizational Design for Conflict Resiliency: A Trauma Informed Approach

Building trauma-informed organizations as a design and praxis is largely in its infancy. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014) has developed a model for trauma-informed care that builds organizational structures, support and care designed for clients and staff members alike. These center the strengths and experiences of individuals at all levels of the organization “foster[ing] a belief... in resilience, and in the ability of individuals, organizations, and communities to heal and promote recovery from trauma...[as] a unifying aspect in the lives of those who run the organization, who provide the services, and/or who come to the organization for assistance and support” (SAMHSA, 2014). Through a lens of conflict analysis and transformation, I propose a framework for building organizational structures to prevent and transform workplace conflict and promote peace and justice aligned with SAMHSA’s six keys to trauma-informed care. The six keys are “1) safety, 2) trustworthiness and transparency, 3) peer support, 4) collaboration and mutuality, 5) voice, choice and empowerment and 6) cultural, historical and gender issues” (SAMHSA, 2014).

Safety

Both physical and psychological safety is imperative to conflict transformation. First, organizations should be designed to reasonably attend to the physical and emotional safety needs of its

members. Personnel and grievance policies should be created with a joint task force that includes people of varying social identities and life experiences, such as women, caregivers, people of color, and trauma survivors. This approach can facilitate offering accommodations that address specific needs identified by these groups while formulating them into organization-wide policies with checks and balances, thus avoiding reliance on the empathies of certain supervisors.

Second, processes and spaces of conflict transformation should be designed with safety in mind including for those who have survived personal or collective trauma. Such techniques can include contracting or appointing a trauma-informed conflict coach to meet with parties privately, trauma-informed facilitation skills when carrying out mediation or intervention to effectively steer the conflict away from destructive dialogue and towards constructive understanding and solutions, as well as healing resources, such as mindfulness exercises, counseling or health and wellness opportunities for parties during and after the conflict's life cycle. Also, the organization should provide other opportunities (outside of conflict) for its employees to reveal, understand and apply their core stories to their work thus preventing conflict escalation based on hidden emotions and unexpressed or under-expressed needs and experiences.

Trustworthiness and Transparency

Trust is one of the most valuable and little understood facets of human life; a unique resource that expands the more you use it; one that can be hard to build and easy to lose; and at the same time, crucial to the relationships which compose all types of organizational life (Furlong, 2020). Furlong (2020)'s Dynamics of Trust continuum offers a particularly poignant illustration of the correlation between level of trust and level of attribution of blame. Here, the less trust parties have for each other the higher the blame they apply to their opponent in the given conflict combined with a decreased likelihood of

considering situational factors as well as intrinsic ones (personal experiences, beliefs, traits, etc.) of the other (Furlong, 2020). At the lowest levels of trust, opponents often attribute their opponents' actions as hostile with the explicit intention to harm them or a willingness to cause harm to achieve their own goals or power (Furlong, 2020). A social identity dimension could be exacted from this model as the place where situational, intrinsic, and intentional factors converge at the deeper levels where such issues of implicit bias or internalized racism or patriarchy reside and trust falters.

Transparency is important as well as complicated in organizational life. Information is a vital resource in gaining, maintaining, and restoring trust, yet “misinformation, lack of information, different interpretations of information, even too much information” (Furlong, 2020) all pose difficulties in coming to understand and evaluate a situation and the people’s choices and intentions involved. Therefore, transparency should be promoted in organizational life with strategic balance in sharing information about decisions and issues that impact organizational members while operating with restraint to also make places for confidentiality (and trust building) within relationships.

Furlong (2020)’s model encourages the rebuilding of trust in conflict by establishing procedural trust or trust in the organizational process. With confidence-building measures, opponents build and strengthen their trust in their organizations as initial steps to rebuilding the deeply important personal trust in each other (Furlong, 2020). Thus, organizations, and their internal processes are positioned as opportunities to be vessels of rebuilding the crucial resource of trust to transform conflict in our relationships, organizations, and societies.

Peer Support

Peer support can be fostered by honoring the spontaneous connections of support, creativity, and idea generation between members in organizations, as well as intentionally creating spaces for this

practice. Organized meetings between team members, affinity groups of members with shared goals, experiences or identities, and horizontally structured groupings, such as cooperatives or self-managing teams (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002), can provide facilitated spaces for members to collectively express and troubleshoot concerns. Facilitation, intention, and some degree of structure is important to prevent these spaces from becoming ones of gossip or telling stories that keep parties locked in conflict by not transcending their core story (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2000). True to a peer model, organizational members of all levels can receive training to step into facilitator roles, thus further promoting empowerment and trust.

Collaboration and Mutuality

These are based on the concept that “healing happens in relationships and in the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making” (SAMSHA, 2014). Collaboration is rising in popularity in organizational theory with careful strategic planning but an eye for conflict which can increase in collaborative settings is necessary to ensure its healthy, trauma-informed, and even healing practices.

In Cloke and Goldsmith’s (2002) *The End of Management and Rise of Organizational Democracy*, the authors outline a framework for building organizations of self-managing teams where all are equally and democratically trained in aspects of successful group functioning, including conflict management. These teams implement their own policies and procedures from scratch by consensus and have means of self-correcting, democratically elected wider leadership, and embracing an approach of living and working in a learning organization (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002). It should not go unmentioned that the first step in achieving this is to “shape a context of values, ethics, and integrity” (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002, p. 103).

Empowered, collaborative group processes in workplaces offer unique and promising opportunities to correct power imbalances and elevate employee's rights, as well as give voice to needs and considerations as it relates to personal identities and experiences. Making such a profound shift in structure can also be a challenge. The personal dimensions for change and growth should be carefully attended to as we change and grow the organizational dimensions. Personal introspection, resiliency and trust are vital assets to grow and strengthen to make our organizations a place to flourish.

Voice, Choice, and Empowerment

This step emphasizes the “parallel processes” of trauma resiliency even across various power differentials (SAMHSA, 2014). Structures for operations, workforce development, and democratic decision making as well as programs and services simultaneously reflect and carry goals in trauma-informed care and transformation (SAMHSA, 2014).

In conflict, providing a variety of options for expressing oneself, one's needs, and getting to one's core stories are ways organizations can promote voice, choice, and empowerment. Gopin (2016) discusses how not all personalities and cultures are geared towards conveying issues in conflict through words or dialogue. Allowing for creative expressions, writing, and helpful deeds done with care and respect towards the environment of trauma-informed care also support workplace conflict parties to find and empower their voice.

Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues

This key calls on organizations to develop “policies, protocols, and processes that are responsive to the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of individuals...and recognizes and addresses historical trauma” (SAMHSA, 2014). A number of organizations are taking steps to evaluate their own policies and practices, address any areas of concern where they may be recycling historical injustices, and publicly

stating their commitment to work towards social justice. This key, however, also encourages a critical view of the formational elements of our own organizations to recognize where we may choose to compromise structural values to meet our clients and workers immediate needs, as well as join forces in society with other efforts for systemic change to continually promote justice in our organizations and societies.

Transforming Society Through Organizational Work

Transformation happens within ourselves and in organizations, but it also occurs in societal, economic, and political contexts. This section highlights two frameworks wherein I assert the value of building trauma-informed organizations to serve as a cornerstone. The solidarity economy is a model found at the convergence of economic, political, and social movements that critically challenges the foundations and impacts of capitalism and proposes an alternate cooperative-based model. The politics of experience is a term I have chosen to describe a more embodied and experience-based process for political grassroots social justice movements-one that complements notions of identity by specifically centering and building movement out of lived and collective experiences.

Incorporating Trauma-Informed Practices into Building the Solidarity Economy

The solidarity economy is an emerging social and economic structure that takes a critical view of capitalism and its traceable connections to patriarchy and white supremacy and provides an alternative economic and social framework based on cooperation. The solidarity economy provides a format for democratizing our workplaces by creating worker-owned cooperatives, the tenants of which include shared profits and shared governance which ideally lead to more healthy and empowered organizations. It also offers templates for other societal shifts such as land, housing and childcare cooperatives, and community supported agriculture food systems. What becomes crucial to achieving the goals of the

solidarity economy is to ensure foundations with systems and structures to prevent, manage and transform conflict. As De Dreu et al. (2008) state, more conflict can arise with more cooperative structures where there is less authority to strictly dictate processes, decisions, and expression. Therefore, conflict transformation processes and structures will be key to complementing the changing structures of organizations that the solidarity economy promises. Also, as the solidarity economy seeks to counter and recreate a system as an alternative to the destructive nature of capitalism, it is imperative to consider the legacy of capitalism in the form of trauma. Significant harm has been inflicted on people, communities, and ecosystems in the name of the extractive and dominating nature of capitalism, as well as the less overt, implicit mentalities and treatments that have trickled down to our communities, people and even our bodies. Thus, when rebuilding a more alternative and nourishing system of organizations, trauma informed processes should be a foundational building block of these organizations.

Towards A Politics of Experience: A More Embodied Political Social Change Framework

Grassroots social movement spaces have given rise to conversation, community, strategy, and advocacy for social change in ways that center social identity. This is referred to as the politics of identity. This provides a vitally important peer support strategy. I also argue for a complementary form of grassroots politics described here as *the politics of experience*. This provides an even more meaningful, embodied and healing modality for people to participate in social movements, a participation that currently has a high rate of burnout.

The politics of experience does not replace identity politics modalities but rather offers expanded opportunities to engage. Working with the politics of experience can involve a wide range of expression and storytelling around lived oppressive experiences as well as resiliency and can even include experiences of ancestors. It also involves listening and building of shared support and community in a

way that honors our experiences and seeks to build movement and social change based on these shared understandings. It provides opportunities for grounding, reflective, and/or spiritual practices to simultaneously work for healing individually and collectively in our society.

The politics of experience is already happening. Many movement spaces go deeper into understanding ourselves, our experiences, and our needs for healing and transformation: personal, organizational, social, and political. Continuing to creatively center this concept will generate more embodied political movement spaces also reflected in our organizations and in ourselves. The work of transforming organizational life should happen simultaneously on multiple levels, thus transformation on the individual and organizational level also connects to and parallels transformational approaches on the social, economic, and political dimensions.

Conclusion

Organizations are often the vessels and vehicles of important social change work. They also sustain individual livelihoods, communities, and societies. Individuals dedicate substantial time, energy, and relationships to their workplaces. This paper took a deep look at analyzing the personal experiences and relationships that make up organizations which are also situating in society. Trauma is a significant cross-cutting issue among the personal, the organizational, the social, and the political. Power is another parallel cross-cutting concept across these dimensions. Building organizations resilient to trauma means working across these dimensions to honor personal experiences, one's core story, while building conflict transformation practices that hold space for multiple core stories connected to present organizational realities. A close look at social identities facilitates understanding the formations of organizations and sheds light on ways to reconstruct them with their multitudes of voices and identities. Organizations are powerful places made up of personal expressions and situated in society. Building trauma informed,

conflict resilient organizations is pivotal to constructing a more just society and political reality.

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