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Chapter 8

Racial Identity Development and the Mediation of Conflicts

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This chapter describes a new approach to conflict resolution that is informed by racial identity development and oppression theory. At the heart of this approach is the belief that oppression dynamics have an impact on every dispute. Through our analysis and concrete examples, we explore how an understanding of these dynamics can be incorporated into mediation training and practice. This chapter draws on the experience of the Multicultural Student Conflict Resolution Team, a program we first developed at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.¹ In particular, it focuses on how mediators who are trained in racial identity development theory can make use of it in their intervention techniques.

From the outset we want to note that the use of oppression theory and racial identity development theory (Hardiman and Jackson 1997) in the course of mediation training or intervention is a significant departure from the way mediation has typically been practiced in the United States. The use of these theories reflects our assumptions about the relationships between the people involved in any mediation. We believe that the social group memberships of the disputing parties and of the mediators make an impact, regardless of the conflict that instigated the use of mediation (Wing 1996, 1997a; Wijesinghe and Kandel 1997). These assumptions are not wholly congruent with the widely held view of mediation in the United States and therefore provide a challenge to the development of a new mediation approach.

The predominant view of mediation reflects a devotion to the con-

cept of neutrality which our approach challenges as impossible and undesirable in an oppressive society. In addition, the common approach to mediation focuses on each mediation participant as an *individual* with individual needs that can be negotiated according to their specific context. In this approach to mediation, the participants have the opportunity to describe their concerns and to work toward developing a mutually acceptable agreement or plan for the future for their specific relationship. Another hallmark of typical mediation practice in the United States is leaving the decision making in the hands of the participants. These characteristics are seen as benefitting each participant by promoting empowerment (Bush and Folger 1994) and democratic participation (Susskind and Cruikshank 1987). Yet despite these potential benefits, the focus on individual needs and participation does not sufficiently account for the fact that society is stratified by *group* membership. As a result, we argue, all disputes are influenced by group membership identities such as race, class, and gender. A focus on the impact of one's identity as related to larger social groups is crucial in mediation since people receive or lose out on privileges based on their social group's standing in society. It is this view, indicting oppression as the problem and defining all action even in mediation as tied to either perpetuating or dismantling it, which inevitably undermines the promotion of neutrality in conflict intervention (Wing 1996).

Therefore, as we were conceptualizing the development of the mediation program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, we faced the dilemma that our views on social justice and the typical approach to mediation appeared incompatible. Despite the fact that both mediation and social justice emphasize empowerment and democratic participation, as described above, the two fields also contain beliefs that clash. For example, mediators commonly promote neutrality and gear their interventions toward individual conflict resolution, while social justice advocates typically organize for value-driven systemic social change. How were we to reconcile these two approaches? Were they reconcilable? It became our goal to explore an approach to mediation that operationalized our interest in a social justice practice. In the process, we explored how a mediation practice driven by a commitment to neutrality could perpetuate social injustice and the ways in which a new approach to mediation practice might incorporate social justice. We discovered that at the center of

these analyses for future practices were an understanding of social identity development and racial identity development.

This chapter begins with a brief description of the theories that have informed our mediation approach. We then describe a typical dispute that appears on many college campuses and illustrate how mediators' understanding of oppression and racial identity development theory could positively influence their intervention in such a dispute. We end with some of the questions and challenges that still remain for us as we continue to explore how to make mediation a social justice practice.

Our Assumptions

First, we would like to begin by acknowledging that it is as White women from the United States whose first language is English that we write this chapter. We assume that these and other aspects of our identities have informed our perspectives on social justice and mediation and our work in combining the two. It is from these positions that we write about our work.

Our mediation approach is rooted in a perspective on social justice and oppression dynamics: how power operates and how access to resources is distributed in society.² This is at the core of our approach since these factors often feed the development of conflicts and influence the dynamics that occur within a mediation session. In particular, they fundamentally influence access to the currency of power that exists within a mediation session and thereby influence the material results of a mediation (Wing 1997a).

To elucidate our approach to mediation, we briefly explain our analysis of oppression (the reality that exists in society at present) and social justice (a goal for society). In our view, social justice requires that structures in society be designed to meet the needs of all. Yet, at present, society's institutions favor certain starting places, identities, and positions over others (Rawls 1971) and this affects relationships across all strata of society. Therefore, actions such as mediation which affect the distribution of resources must take this stratification into account. In this way, mediation will invariably either undermine or perpetuate oppression.

This approach to social justice names the problem to be dismantled

as oppression: the systematic subjugation of groups of people based on their real or perceived social group memberships (Hardiman and Jackson 1997). In a society in which oppression plays an integral part, many conflicts are likely to emerge as a direct result of the differing circumstances that people experience due to oppression. As a result, mediators must make efforts not to perpetuate this condition of oppression in their interventions.

According to this view of society, all relationships occur in a context influenced by social stratification. All of us are members of social groups (based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and the like) and experience the effects of oppression, which are tied to such social group memberships. "Social oppression then involves a relationship between an agent [dominant] group and a target [subordinate] group that keeps the system of domination in place" (Hardiman and Jackson 1997:17).

Another important concept is the developmental process individuals go through whether they are members of a dominant social group (receiving privilege) or of a targeted social group (being denied privilege). This process is well described in the Social Identity Development Theory (SIDT) (Hardiman and Jackson 1997). The SIDT is particularly useful for mediators since it highlights the role of conflict in the developmental process in relation to social group memberships and oppression.

Before briefly describing the stages of identity development and their implication for use by mediators, we want to offer a few caveats. While a developmental model implies unidirectionality and compartmentalization, the SIDT can be understood as more fluid and circular. In fact, it is most helpful to view it as a series of different lenses through which people may view the world. A person may tend to use a lens reflecting a particular stage and after a time may use the next lens in the developmental sequence most frequently. And while people may move from one stage to another in what appears to be a linear fashion, as they experience further oppression or develop a deeper understanding of oppression and/or their identity, they may instead move more deeply into what would appear to be an "earlier" stage. In effect, we can see this model as a spiral of movement, like the peeling of an onion, rather than as solely a linear process. An example of this might occur when a person moves more deeply into an "earlier" stage after experiencing identity-related violence. The

movement through the stages of identity development will be further analyzed in the section below describing each stage.

The SIDI does account for the fact that while someone may be in one stage regarding their gender identity they may be in another stage regarding their racial identity (Hardiman and Jackson 1997; Wijesinghe and Kandel 1997). However, a limitation of the SIDI is that it does not account for the complex realities of how one aspect of one's social identity is affected by and interwoven with other aspects of one's social identity. For example, an African American woman and a White woman can experience gender identity quite differently due to their racial identities. In addition, SIDI does not provide a framework for the complexities of Biracial and Multiracial identities. Instead, it concentrates on the general commonalities of experience as people use each of the stages' lenses.

We have found it useful to introduce mediators to the SIDI in general. However, given that the focus of this chapter is on Racial Identity Development Theory (RIDT) and mediation interventions, we limit our discussion to racial identity development while noting that this is only one of the aspects of social identity development which we teach mediators.

Racial Identity Development Theory

According to the Racial Identity Development Theory (Hardiman and Jackson 1992) we use when training mediators, the first stage in the developmental process is Naïve/No Social Consciousness. With this as the lens, a person is unaware of the rewards and sanctions associated with membership in a racial group and with breaking the rules of one's racial group. In particular, people utilizing this lens learn to accept the framework that Whites are superior to people of color. Once this unconscious acceptance happens, people enter the Passive stage of Acceptance (Stage two). In Passive Acceptance, a person is unaware of this outlook. However, in Active Acceptance conscious acceptance of these beliefs and perpetuation of racial stratification occurs.

Stage three is referred to as Resistance since it is during this stage that a person focuses on understanding and resisting the existence of racism and its manifestations. By doing this the person is questioning

the dominant group's definition of acceptable reality—the status quo. When one uses the lens of this stage it often results in conflict. People in Passive Resistance may engage in confrontations only in relatively safe situations, or may seek to avoid them entirely. However, despite this, they may still experience internal conflict between their past views and values and the new understanding that emerges with the discovery that oppression exists as a problem. When people are focused on actively engaging with others in the struggle against racism even beyond safe confrontations they move into what Hardiman and Jackson (1997) refer to as Active Resistance. In this way an individual can move beyond being a subject acted upon by others within an oppressive system to being an actor in his or her own life.

Stage four of the RIDT is Redefinition. Here people focus on redefining their own racial group's history and culture. Conflict often emerges as people experience this stage. For example, people in other stages of identity development can become angered by the focus or actions of those in Redefinition, as when White Anglos (non-Hispanic or non-Latino Whites) in Resistance attempt to join a group of people of color (in Redefinition) who choose to come together without White Anglos present. Conflicts can also emerge because some people believe that conscious and unconscious self-segregation by groups of people of color is the source of racial discrimination and tension. Yet these same people often do not see the conscious and unconscious self-segregation of White Anglos as responsible for racial tensions. Yet people in Passive Resistance, who may sense the existence of racism, may still see the coming together of a group of people of color without White Anglos as discomfiting to White Anglos. Unsure of what to do about racism, some individuals in Passive Resistance may prefer not to be confronted by reminders of racial identity.

We see this kind of conflict in our trainings when we discuss dividing the participants into two groups—people of color and White Anglos—for part of the activities on racism. Often several White Anglo trainees, while acknowledging that racism exists, comment that dividing into separate groups will exacerbate racial tension. We have observed that the comments made from the concerned participants at this point fall into two categories. Some people are uncomfortable with the idea of explicitly discussing each other's personal views on racism at all while others prefer to discuss the topic in a mixed racial setting. Frequently we hear from the latter that they prefer such an

environment because they want to learn how people of color feel and what they want White Anglos to do about racism. Perhaps the people fostering mixed racial group discussions are in Resistance and are seeking engagement with all others to discuss racism. However, individuals who say they want to talk in a mixed environment because they do not think White Anglos know anything about racism might be in Passive Acceptance.

In our trainings we have found that a large number of people of color and a smaller number of White Anglos look forward to the opportunity to meet in separate groups to discuss racism. These individuals are likely in Redefinition or Internalization (Stage five). They are likely to understand the benefits of meeting in homogeneous groups—target and dominant—to discuss racial identity and racism. These are examples of typical group conflicts that are actually tied to the stage of identity development which people are in, as opposed to their racial group membership.

Conflicts also occur between people when they are all in the Redefinition stage. Disagreement can emerge as they struggle together to create a new positive racial identity and find that they are not in agreement with one another about how to accomplish this. We see this occur in the separate group discussions on racism we hold during the mediation trainings. Often, as trainees of color discuss the illegitimacy of the racial categories ascribed to their communities by White society, there are different views about the political ramifications of identifying according to these categories. In the discussions among White Anglos in this stage, common topics of debate include: whether there is such a thing as White culture separate from White privilege and whether White pride has a place in the antiracist movement.

The final stage (five) of the RIDT is Internalization, when people look to internalize a new sense of racial identity not based on or in reaction to the assumptions and functions of racism. Having raised their consciousness about their own relationship to racism, people often have an increased appreciation for the experience of targets of all forms of oppression (for example, women, people with disabilities, or lesbians, gays, and bisexuals). An instance of someone moving into Internalization may have been when a man of color commented at the close of one of our trainings that he had done a tremendous amount of work on racism in his own life but had not thought much about sexism. Not until his interaction with other trainees did he

begin to realize that he had previously not understood the experiences of women of color and White women. During the training he began to understand some of their experiences with regard to sexism in light of his own experiences with racism. At the end of the training he felt more prepared to respond to both male and female mediation participants.

In summary, each person involved in the mediation is viewing the world through one of the stages of racial identity development (Wing 1998). Therefore it is crucial that mediators understand racial identity development theory so that they fully appreciate the impact of their own lens and others' on the conflict resolution process.

RIDT and Mediation Practice

The use of the RIDT in mediation has to be managed carefully, given the historical expectation in the United States that mediators do not provide education, solve problems for participants, or name the participants' reality for them. Since most people expect mediators to be neutral, it would be seen as clearly inappropriate for a mediator to analyze the participants by telling them which stage of racial identity development the mediators thought they were using. While many in the field of conflict resolution recognize that neutrality is a difficult if not impossible task, there has been general consensus that attempting to achieve it is a valued goal.

In this context, how could we best introduce RIDT as a tool for mediator training and intervention? To answer this question, we took a look at the reality of neutrality. We carefully explored the findings in the conflict resolution field and concluded that mediators could not be neutral (Cobb and Rifkin 1991a). Specifically we found that what was asked or not asked, how a mediation session was set up physically, and how the process was facilitated all reflected the mediators' values and levels of consciousness about oppression and social justice. Believing that neutrality was impossible, we went further and explored the notion that mediators ought not be held captive by the idea of neutrality which can obscure the realities of oppression and social injustice (Cobb 1994; Moore 1997).

To illustrate these points, let us look at how the different stages of the RIDT can influence mediator interventions. For example, a

mediator who uses an Internalization lens might intervene quite differently from one who sees the world through a Passive Acceptance lens. Consider a mediator in Internalization. She might ask questions that allow for or even encourage participants to speak about their experiences in ways that recognize oppression as it exists in their lives and their relationships. This mediator would be able to see that a participant who is in Active Resistance, for example, could have come to mediation primarily to discuss and express anger about racism and how he has experienced it in relation to the other participant. In contrast, the other participant might be in Passive Acceptance, with a lens that does not reveal any focus on race. This latter participant might not view the relationship or the conflict that brought them into the session as related in any way to racism or racial identity (Wijesinghe and Kandel 1997). Using the RIDT, the mediator in this case would have a tool for understanding why the two participants were having difficulty agreeing on what the focus of the conflict was and that an agreement regarding issues of racism would not be likely to emerge at the session. This mediator could also be in a position to understand the need for *each* participant to name, explore, and have validated the story of their experiences according to whatever stage they were in.

Yet a mediator using a lens from Passive Acceptance would probably find it neither easy nor worthwhile to solicit such stories and might lack the tools to understand where both participants were coming from in terms of their approach to the issues of race and racism. This situation speaks to the need not only for RIDT to be taught to mediators but for mediators to attempt to explore what lens *they* function with regarding racial identity. This can help mediators see how their lenses might influence the types of questions they solicit and the ways in which they influence the involvement of each participant in the mediation session (Wing 1997b).

Mediators have the crucial role of assisting participants to share their experiences during a session; and here, specifically, we want to highlight the significance of being able to storytell about the dynamics of oppression, racism, and racial identity in mediation. This is particularly important due to the general discomfort and fear that most White Anglos in this country have about engaging in conversations about race and racism. Given this reality, mediation is empowering as a site where stories regarding race are either allowed to surface and

treated as real or are colonized by their suppression (Cobb and Rifkin 1991a; Cobb 1994; Wing 1997b).

As noted in previous research on mediation and storytelling (Cobb and Rifkin 1991a), access to storytelling, to engaging in the discourse of a session is a critical aspect of the mediation process. The ability to tell one's story, utilizing the lens of whichever stage one is functioning in, and having one's words responded to and built upon is a source of power. Therefore, providing access to this storytelling process is a fundamental way in which power is managed and controlled within a mediation. During a session, mediators facilitate access to this vital resource and in this way can either perpetuate or undermine the power imbalances between participants which stem from target or dominant identities.

Since we see the mediator's role fundamentally as facilitating access to story development, it is important to describe the characteristics of the storytelling process and to show how they are interwoven with issues of power and social justice. Mediation research by Cobb and Rifkin (1991b) found that

not all people share equal access to the narrative process . . . to construct a story that is recognized by the others as coherent. Thus the mediators will necessarily have to adjust their interventions to account for the political nature of narrative interaction.

However, when mediators do not recognize that there is unequal access to the narrative process and do not adjust their interventions accordingly, they can support the maintenance of hegemonic power relationships. Since mediators are rarely trained to view mediation in this light, examinations of actual mediation sessions overwhelmingly find that the dynamics reflecting such power relationships continue to occur and are not interrupted in the session.

The distribution of access to communication influences the participants' ability to engage in a mediation and thus it affects the content outcome, such as an agreement, as well as the quality of their mediation experience. As Cobb and Rifkin (1991b:18) have put it:

Story facilitation recognizes the mediator as an active participant in the co-construction of the narrative. . . . Although the mediators can attempt to monitor their influence, it must be recognized that mediators, as do the rest of us, legitimize certain stories over others. Thus once the "magic" of mediation is critically examined, it must be

understood as a political process which privileges certain speakers/disputants over others.

All this must be considered when training mediators so it can be accounted for in their interventions. Mediation must be seen as a political process, requiring not neutrality but rather recognition that each mediator operates from a particular stage of racial identity development that influences their practice. In addition, training needs to promote reflection on how stages of racial identity development influence whose stories about which topics mediators are fostering, summarizing, building upon, asking questions about, and assisting the other participants to understand (Wing 1997b).

Typically, mediators are not trained in the areas mentioned above, being trained instead to attempt to balance power in a session by utilizing symmetry in their interventions: to ask the same questions to each side, to give equal time to each side, and in all other ways to attempt to treat participants equally. We note here that these are common ways of attempting to operationalize the notion of neutrality. However, treating those participants the same who have had asymmetrical experiences regarding oppression, violence, and access to power due to group identity can actually serve to support the needs and expectations of those from a dominant group (Rouhana and Korper 1996). This symmetry of intervention commonly occurs by excluding racial identity and racism from the discussion. Since such discussions are not of concern to most people in Acceptance, mediators do not pursue these concerns. It becomes evident when using this analysis that a symmetrical approach could benefit those belonging to a dominant or higher power group, White Anglos, and exclude and undermine the target or lower power group members, people of color (Bell 1997).

The use of a symmetrical intervention process in mediation can perpetuate silence about racial oppression by not providing a conversational space for stories about racism. Mediators in Acceptance support the maintenance of the structural status quo and consequently the preservation of the dominant group. An example of this is when a mediator does not acknowledge experiences of racism as relevant to a discussion. By such an exclusion participants do not have access to storytelling or agreement building about this topic. This exclusion serves to undermine full participation in the mediation process for

the person desiring the discussion involving racism and is in direct contradiction to the goals of those in Resistance, Redefinition, and Internalization. These goals often include gaining more power for those in the target group and increasing the balance of power between the groups. If mediators use lenses from these later stages, their attempts to gather participants' stories and to help them build agreements are more likely to be related to issues of inequality, racism, and power imbalances based on racial identity.

Again, what we are emphasizing here is that it is not possible for a mediator to intervene in a neutral manner. It becomes evident that the degree of the mediator's consciousness and the stage of RID she is in influences her intervention. It guides whether her focus is on providing a symmetrical intervention process which supports the goals of those in Acceptance, or whether her focus is on assisting the participants to meet their storytelling needs given the actual realities of their lives.

Since research has shown that mediation is a political process and that the way a story is facilitated can either empower the participants or disenfranchise them (Cobb 1994; Cobb and Rifkin 1991b; Rouhana and Korper 1996), it will help to examine further the complexities of facilitating storytelling in mediation. This examination will also highlight how story facilitation can provide for the use of the RIDT.

Story Facilitation and RIDT

Mediators could benefit from learning the pragmatics of how to facilitate a storytelling session—a mediation—in ways which do not allow for the domination of one participant's story over another's. In particular, the mediation session should offer a space for the stories involving race and racism. Understanding story facilitation can help provide mediators with tools for specific intervention techniques that make it possible for each participant to tell his story without disenfranchisement. Mediators can then promote access to the resources of storytelling and legitimation through visible and valued participation in the mediation.

There are three features of storytelling that help us understand the pragmatics and politics of mediation: narrative coherence, narrative closure, and narrative interdependence (Cobb 1994). As a story is told

in mediation, characters, plot, and relationships are described which the other participant(s) can elaborate on, not respond to, or can contest. The more complete the story is, the less vulnerable it is to critique and attack by another participant, thereby affording it narrative coherence and closure. Stories that resonate more with dominant cultural myths than other narratives "have more stability because the broader culture has already done the 'work' to seal off discursive sites where these meanings can be contested" (Cobb 1994:56). For example, when a stereotype that exists in the dominant culture is perpetuated in a story told in mediation, it has a legacy and is told and heard with greater meaning than merely as part of a participant's story. The cultural stereotypes of the broader society help to seal and legitimize the perceptions of many participants who have not unlearned what they had been taught during Acceptance (Harro 1994; Wing 1998). If a participant's story is not part of a larger story supported by the dominant culture, it can lack this coherence and closure.

The next feature of storytelling is narrative interdependence. When telling their story mediation participants frequently frame the other participant as their victimizer and themselves as the victim. This relationship defines a narrative interdependence that is common in stories of conflict. Cobb (1994:57-58) notes that

this accounts for the cycles of escalations in which conflicts are enacted. Here narrative theory provides a rationale for third-party intervention in conflicts: Disputants inside of narrative structures reproduce conflict stories as they try to transform them. The resolution of conflict requires the intervention of a third party precisely because the third party can alter persons' discursive positions and, in the process, generate a new pattern of interaction, a new interdependence.

Once again, the mediator plays a crucial role since she manages the access to storytelling. She could, for example, facilitate a discussion which builds on one participant's victimization more than the other participant's. In this way, the mediator assists in the colonization of one participant's story and helps to empower one at the expense of another.

Marginalization and domination are a function of the degree to which a person can self-define in the discourse (Pallai in Cobb 1994) and the degree to which these self-definitions are elaborated upon by others (Cobb 1994). In addition to being marginalized during the discourse of

a mediation session, it is important to note that there can be attending material results from being effectively silenced during the mediation process (Wing 1997a). For example, an agreement may not reflect the essential needs of both participants if they have not been able to fully develop their own stories and be understood beyond their role as the victim or the victimizer in the story of the other participant.

The transformation of a participant's role in a story can occur when the interpretation of a story changes, carries new meaning, and is built upon. It is during this process that a new understanding of the past occurs which creates the potential for new roles for each participant in future stories. Mediators can use several methods to assist with such story transformation, including: circular questioning, re-framing—looking at other possible interpretations, framing positive connotations of the other participant—and externalizing the conflict as something that is outside the people involved. This understanding of mediation as a storytelling process which mediators facilitate, charges mediators with the role of managing a conflict intervention based on narrative construction, narrative destabilization, and narrative transformation (Cobb 1994).

As stated earlier, mediators need to understand both the larger power dynamics that occur on a macro level in society as they are tied to identity-based oppression, and to attend to the manifestations of these dynamics in a mediation session on a micro level. This is the case whether such manifestations are due solely to oppression or whether micro-level domination is also occurring due to the discursive finesse of an individual (Wing 1998). It is the mediator's responsibility, then, to prevent story colonization through the careful facilitation of story construction which ensures that all participants' narratives are given the opportunity to develop as complete, coherent, and capable of being transformed as well as built upon by others. Let us take an example: a mediator might initiate by asking both a White Anglo participant and a participant of color how race may be related to the relationship or the issues at hand. This could: (1) help to create an environment in which the participants know that topics considered "difficult" to deal with in the culture at large are welcomed as points of discussion within the session; (2) let the participants know that the mediator is aware of the larger stories of race in society and how these stories can and do permeate relationships between people of different races, as well as members of the same race. (3) Give the

creation of an alternative interpretation or future story, undermining a cycle of blaming; and (4) make a discursive place for the person of color, for example, to discuss a topic not often validated in the stories told outside the room in society at large. This is particularly important since a participant in a mediation session might not even raise the issue of race, concerned that such stories will be unwelcome, and anticipating that the mediation is likely to replicate his experience in the larger culture.

In the illustration above, the mediator's intervention is geared toward providing effective story facilitation for both participants while attempting to prevent story colonization. This intervention must be handled with delicacy since the mediator who asked how race might be related to the mediation could potentially alienate someone in Acceptance. For example, the White Anglo participant might not have viewed race as an issue and could experience the mediator's introduction of it into the conversation as a threat to conflict resolution and to her position in the story under discussion. Viewing the circumstances from an Acceptance lens, perhaps, she might see race as irrelevant and fear that a discussion of it could lead to the participant of color framing her as the victimizer, a role with which she feels she has no connection. The fact that the mediator introduced the issue of race could anger and alienate the White Anglo participant from the mediator and the process.

In order to decrease the chances of such alienation and maximize the possibility of the White Anglo participant sharing a story regarding race, the mediator would undoubtedly utilize features of the mediation process such as private sessions. By meeting with each participant separately the mediator works to create as comfortable a conversational context for exploring these issues and feelings as possible. The White Anglo participant may be responding to an unsolicited question about race. However, her response can be seen as part of her story in the mediation to be explored, understood, and built upon as well.

It is here that our approach departs fundamentally from other mediation practices in the United States as we argue that mediators need to make asymmetrical interventions; that is, by raising questions of race knowing some participants may not share the perspective that it is a relevant topic. However, we remain committed to hearing and legitimizing each participant's story and perspective that arises in response to such questions. Therefore, it is also the mediator's job to

prevent the colonization of the story of the White Anglo person using the lens of Acceptance in this example.

While we have highlighted how a mediator might be able to effectively make use of RIDT, we acknowledge that some mediation practitioners and participants who expect and value neutrality might find the use of RIDT problematic. However, given our guiding assumption that oppression exists and that it is within a context of oppression that we mediate, we question the choice of mediating without accounting for it. More specifically, if a mediator does not consider the differentials of power *and* the ramifications that oppression might play within a mediation and between the participants, we ask whose interests the mediation serves (Wing 1998)?

As we have mentioned previously, it is quite common for mediators to work hard to balance the power differential between participants during the session. However, these mediator interventions traditionally do not account for the larger societal imbalances of power that exist due to racial group memberships. Additionally, in striving for neutrality mediators typically attempt to balance the power between participants by utilizing symmetrical intervention techniques. However, such interventions favor people from the dominant group, namely, White Anglos, and are likely to exacerbate such imbalances.

Some Implications for Mediation Practice

Clearly, the mediation field would benefit from further research and experimentation with the way mediation processes can more effectively incorporate a social justice approach. A few ways we have explored include training members of many different identity groups for our mediation team, thereby promoting mediation skill development in different communities. We recommend working to ensure that the materials, approach, and design of trainings reflect the different realities and needs of the trainees (Bailey 1997). It has been our hope that by having mediators from many different identity groups and, in particular, by having people of color who are in later stages of the RIDT and are mediating with White Anglos who are allies (also in the later stages), our program can accomplish a number of things. For example, we hope that these mediators' interventions will support storytelling and transformation and prevent story colonization.

In addition, we want participants coming to mediation to be able to work with members of a Multiracial team committed to social justice within the mediation setting.

There are other benefits to having mediators of many different backgrounds available to work in a particular mediation program. When a participant sees someone like himself at the session he may be more likely to trust the process, anticipating that his story may be validated. It can make it possible to hold mediation sessions in the first language of the participants, without requiring translators. A mediation occurring in a participant's first language provides recognition of and validation for her identity and also gives her access to being understood in her own tongue (Moraes 1996).

Ensuring that each participant has the access he needs to storytell and that no one is disenfranchised in the mediation process is a significant challenge for mediators. This challenge is reduced by an understanding of oppression theory, RIDT, and the dynamics of storytelling facilitation. However, more needs to be known to assist mediators in operationalizing tools to make mediation empowering for all participants seeking to engage in this conflict intervention process. In order to explore further how an understanding of oppression dynamics, RIDT, and story facilitation can be utilized in mediation we have constructed a case study for analysis.

Case Study of a Student-Faculty Dispute

The following case is a composite drawn from our experiences mediating conflicts on a variety of college and university campuses.

Tamara, an African American student majoring in psychology at a small liberal arts college, contacted the Mediation Program because she was upset about a grade she had received in a class she had taken. Tamara was an undergraduate honors student and had never received a grade below an A in any course before. In this class, however, she had received a C. She told the coordinator the following story. She had spoken to Professor Murray about her grade and was told that her written work was weak and that her lack of participation in class discussions had contributed to her final grade. The professor reminded her that the course syllabus had clearly explained that the grade would be based on the two assigned papers, worth 80 percent

of the grade, and class participation, worth 20 percent. Tamara tried to talk about her discomfort level in the class, which she felt had contributed to her overall performance, but the professor felt that she had graded Tamara fairly. The student had contacted the Mediation Program because she had come to the conclusion that, while she wanted her grade changed, it was even more important for her to be able to tell Professor Murray why she had uncharacteristic trouble in her class and to feel that the professor understood her feelings.

The Mediation Coordinator, a White Anglo woman, contacted Professor Murray, also a White Anglo woman, who told the coordinator the following story. She explained that she was very disturbed about Tamara's performance and had talked to her on several occasions during the semester to find out what was wrong. She said that Tamara had been reluctant and unwilling to really talk to her. After teaching for over a decade she prided herself on having had good relationships with African American students and felt that she had a special commitment to helping them be successful. The situation with Tamara not succeeding in her class was, she explained, unique in her experience and was upsetting. She hesitated to come to a mediation session, claiming that it was her right as a professor to grade as she saw fit. But she agreed to participate when she understood that the grade issue was secondary to Tamara, who hoped to focus on communicating her perspective to the professor. Professor Murray said that she wanted to hear Tamara's concerns and to convey what her own had been.

At one level this is a typical dispute between a student and a professor which most campus-based mediation programs would accept, based on the willingness of the participants to mediate. With a student initiating mediation over a grade complaint, participation would not be assured as many professors feel that grades are not negotiable and that their academic freedom is inviolable. However, in the event that a professor was willing to discuss the relationship or the circumstances surrounding a grade, a case would proceed. In this case study the case did ultimately go forward despite Professor Murray's initial reticence.

The two mediators who facilitated this session were a White Anglo woman who was a faculty member at the college, and an African American woman who was an undergraduate there. Neither of the mediators knew Tamara or Professor Murray. The mediation was

structured according to typical mediation practice which the mediators described: first the mediators would give an introduction to this confidential process, each participant would tell her story, a facilitated discussion between them would follow, and the session would conclude with a written or oral agreement, if one was reached. The mediators told the participants that both mediators might have private sessions with each participant and that the mediators periodically would be taking breaks to caucus together.

The mediators asked Tamara if she wanted to begin with her story of what had brought her to mediation. They gave her the opportunity to go first since she was a member of several targeted groups: a young person, a woman, and an African American. While not explaining this to either Tamara or Professor Murray, the mediators wanted to show Tamara right away that she would have access to storytelling in the mediation, in contrast to what many of her experiences in society were likely to have been.

Tamara began her story by explaining that she had been uncomfortable in the class from the very beginning when Professor Murray announced that she had been a civil rights activist and was committed to racial equality. It had seemed to her that the professor was looking directly at Tamara when she spoke about her commitment to fighting racism. While Tamara respected the professor's political perspective and experience, as the only African American student in the class she felt that Professor Murray had expectations of her that made her feel uneasy. Tamara wondered out loud to the mediators if Professor Murray had been seeking her approval. She went on to say that Professor Murray seemed to look at her whenever she talked about African Americans, and had called on her several times asking what her reaction to particular topics being discussed was from a Black perspective. Tamara resented being the "spokesperson" for African Americans and felt she was being stereotyped.

Although she attended class regularly, she became increasingly distracted and unable to concentrate. She agreed that her papers weren't very good but felt that Professor Murray's insensitivity was a major cause of this. Her discomfort became so severe, she stated, that she eventually did not speak at all in class. When she had tried to talk about this with the professor, Tamara had felt unheard and that she was being lectured.

Professor Murray began her story by saying that she was unsettled

by Tamara's account. She said that she had been aware that Tamara was unhappy and felt that she directed a lot of comments toward her as a way of getting her involved because she was the only African American student in the class and that she had thought she was being helpful by reaching out to Tamara. She underscored how much she saw herself as "championing" students of color and that she had always been recognized by her colleagues and other students as a particularly sensitive teacher around issues of race. She recounted numerous occasions in which she had reached out to Tamara and discussed Tamara's work with her outside class and how Tamara had been distant and nonengaging. She closed by expressing her concern about the entire situation and again asserted she still felt that she had given Tamara an appropriate grade. At this point the mediators caucused briefly.

The mediators checked in with each other to ensure that they had similar understandings of the two stories. Next, they strategized for the following session. The mediators noted that among the variety of issues raised, both participants indicated an understanding of the reality of racism in society at large. Both the participants acknowledged, albeit in different ways, that racial identity had been a factor in their interactions. The mediators noticed that there was a real difference between their perceptions in that Tamara focused on the manifestation of racism within her classroom experience and her interactions with the professor, while Professor Murray did not seem to view racism as a factor in their relationship or in the classroom. The mediators noted that both participants had concerns related to racial identity that they had each raised in their stories. Then the mediators talked about how to help facilitate further storytelling about this.

The mediators then discussed how RIDT might apply and which strategic interventions they would pursue. They speculated that Tamara might be looking at this situation with a lens from the Resistance stage. They also noted the additional power imbalance due to Tamara's student status and Professor Murray's status as faculty. They noted that they needed to make sure that Tamara's story was legitimized, at least by the mediators and ideally by Professor Murray as well. They then speculated about what lens the professor might be using. It appeared to them that she had used the lens of Resistance in her understanding of dynamics in society and, perhaps, she had been using a Passive Acceptance lens in her classroom. The mediators also

acknowledged the same need to legitimize the professor's story and hoped that eventually Tamara might understand Professor Murray's intentions and experiences, in this way also legitimizing the professor's story. Drawing on their oppression training, the mediators wondered how they could help Professor Murray understand Tamara's experience through the lens that the professor used to understand racism in society at large. This focus is an example of how an understanding of oppression theory and RIDT can lead mediators to make an asymmetrical intervention.

Together both mediators met with each participant separately and asked them to delve more deeply into their stories. The mediators then asked each participant questions about their understandings of the other's experiences, perceptions, and intentions. Because the mediators wanted to help Professor Murray see that Tamara viewed her experiences in the classroom similarly to the way the professor, herself, viewed racism in society at large, they asked her the following question. The African American mediator addressed Professor Murray, saying, "It seems that both of you share an understanding of what behaviors took place in your class. But it seems that Tamara did not experience it the same way that you intended her to." The White Anglo mediator then said: "Tamara experienced a sense of isolation and deep discomfort in class even though you made it clear today that you intended the opposite—to include her and to encourage her participation. When you asked her to provide the 'Black perspective,' she has said that made her feel stereotyped. Given the disparity between your intentions and what you have learned were her experiences, what are you thinking now?" Professor Murray thought briefly and then expressed her hope that she would never again single out, even unintentionally as in this case, a student based on race. At this moment she turned to the African American mediator and said, "What should I do to never offend another African American in class again?" In response, the White Anglo mediator said, "It's clear that you've understood Tamara's experience and that you want all your students to feel welcome in your classes. And one of the things that you mentioned that you do not want to replicate is asking an African American to speak for all others in their racial group." After a pregnant pause, the professor exclaimed, "Oh, no! I guess I did it again by asking you [looking at the African American mediator] to tell me how not to offend any other African American student in the future." At

this moment the professor commented that she planned to think some more about this.

When the mediators met with Tamara they shared with her Professor Murray's stated intentions and the professor's understanding of how her classroom behaviors affected Tamara. They followed this by asking her what she was thinking at this juncture. Tamara indicated that she could now see that the professor had wanted to encourage her to participate and had wanted her to feel welcome in the class. She also reiterated how offended she had been based on her experience in the class, but that she now felt ready to accept the professor's story of her intentions.

The session came to a close with all four present. Tamara and Professor Murray expressed their new understandings to one another and although the grade was not changed, both indicated that they felt pleased about what had transpired in the mediation. Tamara indicated that she was relieved to have been able to express herself and be understood by her professor. (The mediators later noted to each other that this was the first time in the mediation that Tamara had referred to Professor Murray as "my professor.") Professor Murray stated that she had found the mediation useful and that she had a lingering doubt about her decision not to change the grade, something she thought she might revisit after the mediation.

Case Analysis

As we reflect on the case, we can see the characteristics of storytelling taking place: narrative closure, narrative cohesion, narrative interdependence, and the moves that the mediators made to assist in story legitimization and story transformation. For example, when Tamara and the professor spoke about their experiences with each other they framed the other as having been in the wrong and framed themselves as mistreated or misunderstood. This demonstrates the narrative interdependence present in their stories. The mediators worked to show an understanding for each of their perspectives and also worked against the narrative coherence and closure that was likely to support the professor's story regarding the role race had played as opposed to the lack of narrative coherence and closure that was likely to occur regarding race in Tamara's story. They accomplished this by

keeping Tamara's narrative of her experiences related to race and racism in the classroom alive. They assisted both participants to fully explore their own narratives and each other's, which led to mutual story legitimization and the building on each of their stories by both the mediators and the other participant.

This process led to story transformation as Tamara and Professor Murray altered the role the other had played in their discourse. For example, this occurred when Tamara began to refer to Professor Murray as "my professor." Potentially, such story transformation in discourse as occurred in this mediation could lead to material changes in the future. In this case, although Professor Murray still maintained the power to refuse to change Tamara's grade, she made it clear that given her new perspective, she would be seriously considering changing it. In addition, the professor mentioned her commitment to use her new understanding in future classes to ensure that she did not ask students of color to speak for their racial group. Should that materialize in the future, the mediation, based on the story transformation which occurred, would have contributed to material changes.

This case illustrates that mediators trained in the dynamics of oppression and racial identity development theory understand that these factors influence all present in a session. As a consequence of infusing mediation training with social justice theory and storytelling techniques, mediators have more tools to facilitate problem solving, relationship building, and conflict resolution. In the case we have described the mediators made strategic interventions based on explicit discussions in their caucus about how racial group membership and identity development affected the conflict. While these issues may not be directly addressed in every mediation case, the strategic moves and questions that mediators with RIDT training pursue depend on the stories told, consciousness of racial group membership, identity development, and the dynamics of oppression.

Conclusion: Racial Identity Development Theory and Mediation Practice

The cultivation and exploration of the aspects of the stories involving race is unusual in the field of mediation. Even when participants themselves raise an identity issue, mediators generally feel unre-

pared to manage the discussion. There are a number of reasons for this: mediators are wary of violating neutrality which they believe would occur by discussing a topic with which at least one of the participants may not feel comfortable; they are not trained to facilitate conversations about race which is a controversial topic in this country; and they are commonly trained to work with the participants to narrow the topics discussed down as much as possible for the purpose of agreement building.

Therefore, the typical approach to mediation (in which issues of race, racism, and racial identity are less likely to be raised and discussed) perpetuates the imposed silence that exists on these topics in our society. In other words, story closure and cohesion favor the individual from the dominant group, White Anglos. Since the story in society which predominates reflects the lens of Acceptance, racism is viewed by many mediators as not an issue and they view the relationship interactions between the participants in the mediation as occurring only on an individual level. If the framework of Acceptance is allowed to remain the more powerful story in mediation, then the participant describing her personal story through the lens of Acceptance finds it easier to have her story legitimated than the participant using a different lens. To counter this we suggest that mediators enter a mediation with a carefully framed set of assumptions about racial identity and conflict such as we have explored in this chapter. This will allow mediators to raise questions which explicitly explore the role of race in the experiences and relationships of the participants. And as we have already explored, this can prevent a story about race from being colonized. In the process, it can provide further access for all participants to more fully engage with each others' stories.

Over the last several decades mediation has become an increasingly popular form of dispute resolution in the United States, offering an expedient and often successful alternative to litigation and claiming the ability to resolve underlying issues (Fisher and Ury 1981), transform relationships and society (Bush and Folger 1994), empower disempowered (Davis 1989), and build stronger communities (Shonholtz 1984). However, social justice advocates have asked whether mediation can fully meet these expectations as long as its practice is based on neutrality. We believe these expectations can be more fully met by focusing more explicitly on the complexities of social identity. We wish to make mediation a social justice practice, a practice which

understands that social identity is central to conflict and its facilitation in relationships and communities. However, there are challenges in construing mediation as a social justice practice.

These challenges arise from the fact that despite the existence of areas in which the traditional rhetoric of mediation and social justice overlap, their underlying values are, in many ways, at odds. For example, while both fields express an interest in empowerment, inclusion, and balancing power there are core conceptual differences between the two. Mediation in the United States is driven by the ideology of neutrality; social justice is value-driven. Mediation focuses on the micro level of specific relationships; social justice focuses on a macro-level structural analysis. Mediation seeks conflict resolution between participants; social justice seeks social change, which inevitably requires conflict engagement. Mediation typically focuses on the needs of the participants; social justice focuses primarily on the rights of groups (Wing 1996). Yet despite the significant differences between these two fields, we have found some theory from each helpful in bridging the paradigmatic differences. We have used theories of oppression and racial and social identity development (Hardiman and Jackson 1997) from the social justice field and narrative theory (Cobb and Rifkin 1991a) and symmetrical intervention theory (Rouhana and Korper 1996) from the mediation field.

Our challenge has been to use theory from both fields in the service of a social justice approach to mediation and to explore through mediation practice what works, for whom, and why. We see this social justice approach to mediation as a work in progress and we hope others from both fields will join us in further exploration. Additional research is needed to explore more concretely how to operationalize the theories behind the approaches we have discussed. RIDT and narrative theory can offer a new perspective to mediation practitioners. However, the mediation field is driven by intervention practice and until theory is grounded in well-defined techniques, mediators—even those welcoming the new approach—will be hard-pressed to change their intervention styles (Rifkin 1994).

Therefore, continued research is needed to expand the understanding of how oppression and racial identity development influence mediator intervention, the participation of those utilizing mediation services, and specifically what techniques should be used to account for it. This is a particularly important endeavor as our society engages in

the healthy reexamination of racial identity, recognizing the complexities of its social construction in a society structured by oppression and increasingly made up of Multiracial and Multicultural families, schools, and workplaces. This work to reexamine racial identity development theory and to integrate its use in the practice of mediation is an exciting process which is only in its infancy.

NOTES

1. This program was designed by the Biracial team of Leah Wing, Janet Rifkin, and Martha Wharton in 1993, and has benefitted from the Multiracial team efforts of Richard Ford, Pilar Hernandez, Deepika Marya, and Vilmarie Sanchez in the years since then.
2. While we recognize that oppression dynamics within a society are tied to historical and material conditions that transcend national boundaries, for the purposes of this chapter we have chosen to focus on the present domestic U.S. context.

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Chapter 9

Core Processes of Racial Identity Development

Maurianne Adams

What we are looking at here is not an *ethnic* identification or culture, but an awareness of shared experience, suffering and struggles against the barriers of racial division. These collective experiences, survival tales and grievances form the basis of a historical consciousness—a group's recognition of what it has witnessed and what it can anticipate in the near future.

—Marable 1995:187

While writing this chapter, I was coteaching a course on Blacks and Jews in the United States. My coconstructor and many of our students identify themselves as Black, but others who "look" Black and who grew up in Chicago, New York, or Boston prefer ethnic designations such as Afro-Caribbean, West Indian, Jamaican, or Haitian. Their complicated racial and ethnic lineages include parents or grandparents not born in the United States, and their family trees include Blacks, Whites, Asians, and indigenous peoples of the Americas. The students disagree with each other over the terms *race* or *ethnicity* to describe their own self-definitions, but uniformly reject the U.S.-based ethnicity of African American. They are children of the African Diaspora who describe their cultures in different ways but agree on their experiences of racism in the United States and its impact on them and on their families.

I am the product of another dispersed and "mixed" people for



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