



Middle East Dialogue

Next Event: Friday, March 22, 2019
The Historic Quaker Meetinghouse
2111 Florida Ave. NW, Washington, DC

Selective religious incivility and Islamophobia in the workplace

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There have been several incidents in the United States that point to significant problems with religious incivility in the workplace. In 2016 when the company, Chargrill, fired 150 non-Christian workers over prayer breaks. The incident points to a growing challenge in the American workplace about what companies can do to accommodate their employees' faiths. The method of paper provides an exploration of how incivility and religious intolerance in the workplace can create a climate for devalued groups in technical and all workplaces through current and relevant literature. There is a significant amount of literature on religious conflict and incivility in a global sense there needs to be more exploration on how religious conflict, Islamophobia, and incivility manifests itself through everyday interactions in the workplace. It is essential to understand how organizations not only need to consider diverse talent but also the unique perspectives and dynamics that that diversity can bring to the workplace around gender, race, and various religions (Burrell et al., 2009). U.S. workplace religious incivility and discrimination is often driven by a lack of understanding and intolerance in ways to can devalue those of minority faiths like Seventh-day Adventists, Jews, and Sikhs (Moodie, 2016).

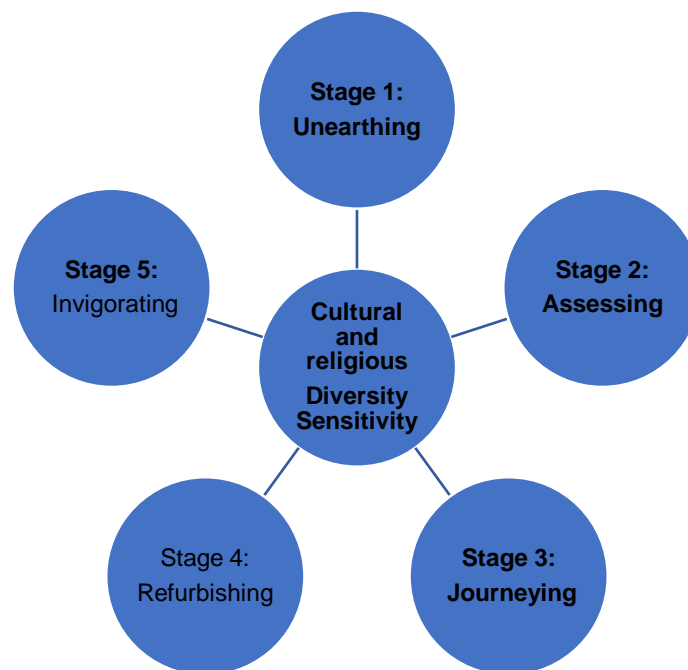
Several public incidents highlight how conflict around religion has created a breeding ground for incivility, profiling, hate and devaluing others that can bleed into the workplace, especially professional organizations looking to bring new groups of employees to the workplace that have existed in small quantities. A 2016 United States presidential proposal to bar foreign Muslims from entering the country has had a polarizing impact on those who are Muslim American citizens and those citizens of minority religions. An August 2017 protest in Charlottesville, VA, USA included marginalizing chants of "Jews will not replace us." The year 2017 represented the most significant one-year increase of anti-Semitic incidents in U.S. history. Regardless of one's political affinity, public debates and confrontations can have rippling effects beyond political discourse when one considers that these debates can represent employee beliefs related to religion that can lead to incivility and dehumanizing encounters in the workplace that hamper workplace productivity, employee commitment, and the accomplishment of organizational goals.

The public narrative is that Muslims who commit violence are considered as being the norm among Muslims; whereas Christians who commit violence are treated as individuals. For example,

members of ISIS consider themselves to be Muslims, and members of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) believe themselves to be Christians. In 2014, a Virginia leader of the KKK classified the organization as a non-violent Christian organization and stated that he considered it a falsehood that the KKK is a violent organization (Ashtari, 2015). KKK members have crosses on their robes, burn crosses to terrorize others, have firebombed African-American churches, and have a history of bringing bibles to attacks that have harmed and murder men, women, and children. The KKK has a historical past of terrorizing, threatening, torturing and killing people of color and those of Jewish faith. Yet Christians are not being questioned by politicians or co-workers, and no public figure has proposed that they are banned for their faith. All Christians are not being asked to carry the burden of the behaviors of the members the KKK, and yet those of other religions are not given that same courtesy. These same conflicting missing mutual courtesies and negative public narratives can manifest themselves in workplace discussions, interactions, and dialogs. These issues create a thorny landscape for conflict and a new normal for organizational leaders who are attempting to bring unique and diverse groups of employees to organizations.

The authors propose the use of the Darrell Norman Burrell Interfaith and Religious Diversity and Inclusion (DNBIFI) Model, which provides a developed framework that itself provides a roadmap for promoting constructive dialog and engagement.

Figure 5.



Darrell Norman Burrell Interfaith and Religious Diversity and Inclusion (DNBIFI) Model:

Unearthing

“Unearthing” in this model, represents the creation of forums and mechanisms for awareness; understanding; and the appreciation of international, cultural, and religious values, differences, and stereotypes.

Assessing

“Assessing” in this model is a systematic survey of the organizational culture and climate as it relates to international, cultural, and religious diversity – including the sharing of those results and perspectives throughout the organization.

Journeying

“Journeying” in this model represents the use of activities and interactive workshops to allow employees with diverse backgrounds to communicate, share life-changing experiences, and get to know each other socially and culturally in ways that might not occur in the normal work environment. These interactions allow employees to understand the kinds of behaviors that are present on an organizational scale and move from denial of differences, conflict, and tensions towards the appreciation and celebration of employee differences.

Refurbishing

“Refurbishing” in this model represents how the use of the earlier steps encouraged and fostered by leadership begins to influence the organizational culture and the perspectives of employees, doing so through the intervention of new organizational practices creating an organizational climate that celebrates international, cultural, and religious diversity.

Invigorating

“Invigorating” in this model represents how the expansion of ethnic diversity initiatives allows for a culture that celebrates differences—one where employees are encouraged to share stories about their diverse background instead of attempting to hide or minimize their international, cultural, and religious origins out of fear of being ostracized or isolated. Activities that demonstrate how employees value diversity are made part of employee performance evaluations. Positive agents for diversity are acknowledged and rewarded for their support of diversity in the organizational culture.

Many organizations do not have leadership training programs to help professionals understand the importance of respecting and valuing those from different religions (Burrell, et al 2009). Those who do plan to be leaders in this area must be properly trained and exposed to the proper content. Based on research (Burrell et al., 2009) and relevant conversations, the following books were identified that would provide insights into the content needed to help those playing leadership roles. These books can be used in a book club training session where leaders read one book a month and then engage each other in discussions around each book around topics that require honest reflection of what was learned and what could be different. The books identified as being vital are:

1. *A Concise Introduction to World Religions* (third edition) by Willard G. Oxtob. This book introduces readers to the frameworks of the world’s religions—which is a critical aspect of training and of helping others develop religious literacy.
2. *Microaggressions and Marginality: Manifestation, Dynamics, and Impact* by Derald Sue. This book provides a framework for Exploring the psychological dynamics of unconscious and unintentional expressions of bias and prejudice toward socially devalued groups. It thoroughly deals with the harm engendered by everyday prejudice and discrimination, as well as the concept of microaggressions beyond that of race and expressions of racism.
3. *Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives* by Howard Ross. The book allows readers to better understand what is needed to create more bias-conscious organizations in the belief that productivity, personal happiness, and social growth are possible if we first understand the widespread and powerful nature of the biases we don’t realize we have.
4. *Why Everyone (Else) Is a Hypocrite: Evolution and the Modular Mind* by Robert Kurzban. The book explores how our biases and judgements can often be inconsistent with the actual facts of a situation.
5. *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer* by Eboo Patel. This book explains what interfaith leadership is and explores the core competencies and skills of interfaith leadership and how to address the complex issues around those of different faith.

6. *The Gift of Our Wounds: A Sikh and a Former White Supremacist Find Forgiveness After Hate* by Arno Michaelis and Pardeep Singh Kaleka. The book talks about how a Sikh and former Skinhead formed a friendship focused on developing understanding and overcoming prejudice.
7. *Conflict Mastery: Questions to Guide You* by Cinnie Noble. This book introduces readers to various aspects of using questioning and engagement approaches to help individuals and groups manage conflict and difference.
8. *The Diversity Discipline: Implementing Diversity Work with a Strategy, Structure and ROI Measurement Focus* by Edward E. Hubbard. This book introduces readers to the important aspects of how to function effectively and competently as a Diversity and Inclusion professional in the workplace
9. *The World Café: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter* by David Isaacs, Margaret Wheatley, Robert Tannenbaum, Paula Yardley Griffin, and Kristine Quade. This book introduces readers to a framework and process for engaging in constructive dialogues between individuals.
10. *Crucial Conversations Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* (second edition) by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler. This book introduces readers to approaches for having difficult conversations about complex topics—which is a critical matter when it comes to talking about diverse religions and areas of difference.
11. *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath. This book provides a framework for helping individuals and organizations change for the better. This is required when addressing professionals who are hampering organizational and behavioral change.

Burrell Valued Diversity Equity and Civil Workplace Assessment Survey (2016)

Using the 5-point scale below, rate each question based on your organization's level of engagement on a:
 _5 = Frequent level _4 = Reasonable level _3 = Fair level _2 = Infrequent level _1 = Never

1. To what extent do you feel that a clear and openly publicized mission statement regarding equity and inclusion regarding culture, gender, race, religion, national origin, age, socioeconomic status, and disability?
 _5 _4 _3 _2 _1
2. To what extent do you feel that you are supported by your organization's culture and supervisors in terms of your ability to be open and honest about regarding your culture, gender, race, religion, national origin, age, socioeconomic status, and disability (if relevant)?
 _5 _4 _3 _2 _1
3. To what extent do you feel that your management and organizational leadership has a zero-tolerance approach to concerns and issues related to offenses towards others around bullying, harassment, discrimination, and prejudice regarding your culture, gender, race, religion, national origin, age, socioeconomic status, and disability (if relevant)?
 _5 _4 _3 _2 _1
4. To what extent do you feel that the supervisors and organization has policies, sets consistent expectations, rules, and consequences against behaviors that are non-biased regarding culture, gender, race, religion, national origin, age, socioeconomic status, and disability?

- _5 _4 _3 _2 _1
5. To what extent do you feel that tasks, visible project leadership roles, and significant training and professional development opportunities are distributed equitably by supervisors without regard to gender, race, national origin, or disability?
- _5 _4 _3 _2 _1
6. To what extent do you feel that your supervisors and organizational leadership show authentic concern against the use nonbiased verbal and nonverbal language by employees in organization regarding culture, gender, race, religion, national origin, age, socioeconomic status, and disability?
- _5 _4 _3 _2 _1
7. To what extent does your supervisors and organizational leadership encourage an organizational environment where commonalities are appreciated, and differences are understood and valued regarding culture, gender, race, religion, national origin, age, socioeconomic status, and disability?
- _5 _4 _3 _2 _1
8. To what extent do you feel that the behaviors and actions of your coworkers towards you match with the written values and mission of the organization around diversity, equity, inclusion?
- _5 _4 _3 _2 _1
9. To what extent do you feel that the organizational policies are relevant and fair as it relates to someone of your culture, gender, race, religion, national origin, age, socioeconomic status, and disability (if relevant)?
- _5 _4 _3 _2 _1
10. To what degree do you feel that organizational leaders are engaged in authentic actions, policies, and initiatives to ensure highly qualified members different cultures, genders, races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, or disabilities distributed equitably or constructively represented across the various job classifications from management to technical staff positions
- _5 _4 _3 _2 _1

Scoring Scale Burrell Valued Diversity Equity and Civil Workplace Assessment Survey

- 41–50 points** It seems extremely likely that diverse personnel, those of different cultures, genders, races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, or disabilities, in the organization feel much respected, and highly valued in the organizational culture by both their management and their coworkers.
- 31–40 points** It seems very likely that diverse personnel, those of different cultures, genders, races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, or disabilities, feel respected and valued to a certain degree in the organizational culture by both their management and their coworkers.
- 21–30 points** It seems somewhat likely that diverse personnel, those of different cultures, genders, races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, or disabilities, feel marginally respected and valued in the organizational culture by both their management and their coworkers.
- 11–20 points** It seems minimally likely that the prevailing feeling on the part of diverse personnel, those of different cultures, genders, races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, or disabilities, is that their expertise and work contributions are not respected and valued in the organizational culture by both their management and their coworkers.

0–10 points It extremely likely that diverse employees are have adverse feelings about the workplace civility, workplace culture, the management, and co-workers in terms of respectful behaviors, values, policies, and procedures regarding different cultures, genders, races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, or disabilities.

Bio:

Dr. Darrell Norman Burrell is a 2017 graduate of the National Coalition Building Institute's (NCBI) Leadership Diversity Institute. He has been a coach for several years with the Asian American Government Executive Network (AAGEN) and a guest lecturer with the Hispanic-Serving Health Professions Schools (HSHPS) organizations. He is a certified executive coach and a certified diversity professional. He is an alumnus of the prestigious Presidential Management Fellows Program www.pmf.gov. Dr. Burrell also has over 8 years of US federal government. Academically, Dr. Burrell has a doctorate degree and 5 graduate degrees. In 2016, Dr. Burrell completed a Master of Arts in Interfaith Action at Claremont Lincoln University as a Global Peacemaker Fellow where he engaged in research on diversity and inclusion in the workplace as it relates to religion. Dr Burrell has a doctorate degree with majors in Education and Executive Leadership Coaching from A.T. Still University. Dr. Burrell has an Education Specialist (EdS) graduate degree in Higher Education Administration from The George Washington University. He has two graduate degrees one in Human Resources Management/Development and another Organizational Management from National Louis University. He also has a Master of Arts degree in Sales and Marketing Management from Prescott College. Dr. Burrell has over 20 years of management experience in academia, government, and private industry. He has over 16 years of university teaching experience at several universities including George Mason University, Claremont Lincoln University, Averett University, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, University of The Cumberlands, The University of Virginia, The University of the Liverpool, and The Florida Institute of Technology. Dr. Burrell has over 80 publications and over 100 conference presentations. Dr. Burrell can be reached at: dburrell2@thechicagoschool.edu