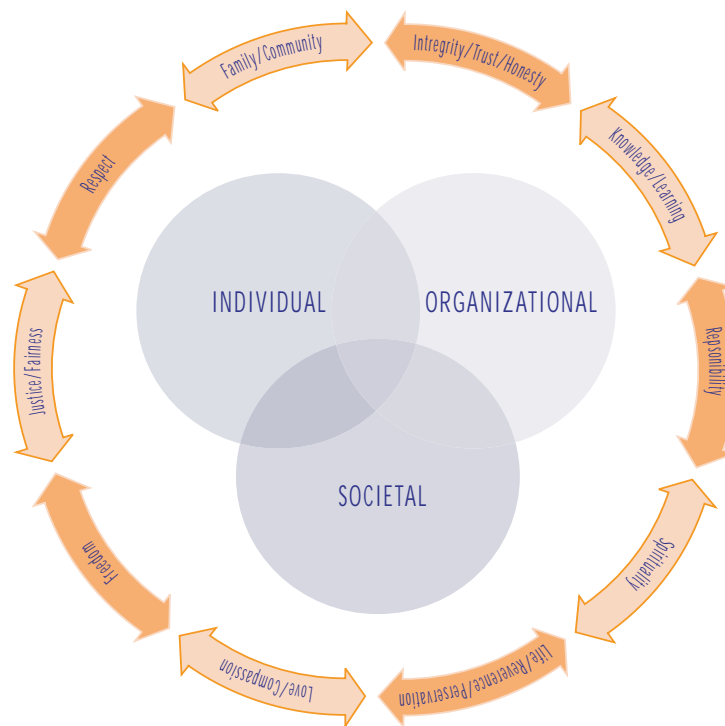


# Exploring a Conceptual Framework for the Practice of Diversity

Developed by The Diversity Collegium for Collegial Review  
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## **The Conceptual Question at the Heart of the Symposium**

Can a framework for the practice of diversity be constructed and agreed upon, that encompasses the various approaches used by diversity practitioners, researchers, and writers, and that provides a foundation of form and discipline for this emerging professional field?

## **Vision of diversity**

Breathing life into the dream of unleashed potential of individuals, organizations and society, and based on the following shared, core values:

- Justice and fairness
- Respect
- Love/caring/empathy/compassion
- Responsibility
- Family/community/relationships
- Integrity/honesty/truth
- Life/reverence/preservation
- Spirituality
- Learning/knowledge
- Freedom

## **Definition of Diversity**

Any collective mixture, brought together for a purpose, characterized by similarities and differences including people, concepts, or things.

## **Background to the Development of the Framework by The Collegium**

The Diversity Collegium is a group of about 25 diversity practitioners representing both external consultants and internal corporate diversity managers focused on advancing the field. The group was formed in the early 1990s by a handful of diversity experts to begin to explore definitions, concepts, and practices with the hope of better defining the emerging field and to build on each other's work. As the group continued to meet (about three times a year since its inception), others were invited to join. It became increasingly clear that members employed widely divergent views about the definition, focus, and scope of "diversity work."

While practitioners frame the discussion and their work from a number of different perspectives, there are a few universally accepted mental models. The varying and sometimes conflicting models include social justice, oppression, race and gender, business case, legal, and communication, just to name a few. For example, some practitioners believe that race and gender are the core dimensions of diversity and therefore the work should be positioned from the perspective of historical patterns of exclusion for these groups. The argument is that if we take care of race and gender issues, the by-product will be greater acceptance of other differences. Others focus their work from a legal argument and work passionately to uphold laws designed to alleviate inequities.

As we began to discuss and debate these different approaches, we concluded that there is no right or wrong approach, and that the "model" (whatever it might be) had to acknowledge, validate, and include the myriad of perspectives. We concluded that diversity was more than a "topic," it is more like a professional field, and the practice of diversity contains a number of different "branches" (i.e., approaches, areas or aspects). We have used the field of psychology as a comparison. Psychology is defined as the "study of human behavior." There are a number of different specialties or branches of study within this field including child psychology, abnormal psychology, social psychology, etc. Each, obviously focuses on a different aspect of the field. Then there are professionals that "practice" psychology. This helped us think about diversity as a field, and we began to explore the "practice" of diversity, and to identify the "branches" of the practice.

## Branches of the Practice of Diversity

We identified three general branches into which most of the current diversity work, thinking and writing fall:

- Individual/Group Diversity
- Organizational Diversity
- Societal Diversity

### ■ *Individual / Group Diversity:*

Effectiveness today requires competencies beyond what individuals usually learn in their own cultural, ethnic, linguistic or national group. To be effective in all environments, individuals must be able to bridge differences and similarities with others. In response to these needs, this branch focuses on personal development and transformation, as well as group process, such as the impact of social identity groups on individual and group interaction, or the effectiveness of multicultural teams.

### ■ *Organizational Diversity:*

This branch focuses on the performance of the organization, and how well its culture incorporates the talents of all its people. Using appropriate organizational development theory and tools, structures, practices, norms, and policies are examined for their capacity to integrate and sustain stated diversity goals. A business case is usually strongly articulated in this approach because the organization's performance is believed to be at stake.

### ■ *Societal Diversity:*

The practice at this level explores how societal members contribute to and prosper within the society. Those working in this branch address issues such as social justice and equality, ethics, oppression and economic justice. At an international level, the dynamics of nation-states, globalization, and global stewardship are often explored as a means to assess their contributions and social responsibilities.

## **The Global Perspective**

While we believe that the three branches are useful in providing a contextual framework for the practice of diversity, there was agreement among The Collegium members that we had not adequately integrated a global perspective on diversity work into the proposed model.

To further examine globality, Collegium members spent one of their meetings exploring values that might transcend diverse cultural groups and nationalities. Consistent with, but expanded from the research of Rushworth Kidder on global values, we listed 10 universal values, plus three business values based on the work of Michael Tracy and Fred Wiersma. As a group, Collegium members explored the potential alignment between these values and the conceptual framework's three branches of diversity practice.

We discovered not only significant overlap, but another level of insight: by creating a matrix of the three branches and the 13 values (see matrix attached), we could identify primary types of diversity approaches at each branch level consistent with each of the values. In other words, we began to see that universal, global values may underlie various approaches to diversity work in the three branches of the practice.

We regard this as a first cut at understanding the range and depth of diversity work, and which hopefully offers texture to how diversity may be considered and practiced globally.

### *Sources:*

Kidder, Rushworth. *Values for a Troubled World* (Jossey-Bass, 1994)

Tracy, Michael and Fred Wiersma, *The Discipline of Market Leaders* (Addison-Wesley, 1995)

## **Moving Forward**

The Diversity Collegium presents this Conceptual Framework at the June 2001 Diversity Symposium at Bentley College, Waltham, Massachusetts. The Collegium has invited an experienced group of colleagues and experts in the diversity field to review, critique and discuss this framework and its relationship to the Practice of Diversity. Three respected diversity experts will each respond to, explore and expand the model by writing a paper from the vantage point of one of the three branches and presenting it to the Symposium attendees. It is the hope of The Collegium that this discussion and debate will move us closer to a universally accepted conceptual framework for the Practice of Diversity.

**A Matrix  
Comparing 10 Global Values and 3 Business Values  
to the  
Types of Diversity Work Practiced**

<b>Global Values</b>	<b>Branches of the Practice</b>		
	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Societal</b>
<b>No. 1- Respect-</b>	1. Understanding stereotypes/assumptions/judgments 2. Dialogue 3. Affinity groups (understanding differences)	1. Valuing and managing differences 2. Affinity groups (managing differences) 3. 360-degree performance feedback & customer feedback 4. Dialogue 5. Levelism/heirachy 6. Harassment-free workplace (policies & training)	1. Dialogue 2. Understanding and reconciling differences
<b>No. 2- Justice/ Fairness</b>	1. Prejudice/bias reduction 2. Reverse discrimination 3. Valuing differences	1. Affirmative action 2. Overcoming oppression 3. Harassment prevention 4. Organizational policies, practices, systems 5. Worker rights 6. Organizational development/change management 7. Glass ceiling/promotion issues 8. Business ethics	1. Human rights 2. Digital divide 3. EEO 4. Isms 5. Race relations 6. Gender relations 7. Profiling 8. Legal & justice systems 9. Community relations (wealth/power/status) 10. Coalition building 11. Truth & reconciliation work

Global Values	Branches of the Practice		
	Individual	Organization	Societal
<b>No. 3- Integrity/ Truth/ Honesty</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Values work</li> <li>2. Ethics training</li> <li>3. Transformational coaching</li> <li>4. Personal well being</li> <li>5. Conflict resolution</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Business ethics (leadership/stewardship)</li> <li>2. Organizational systems/policies/practices</li> <li>3. 360-degree feedback</li> <li>4. Performance management</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Public policy</li> <li>2. Legal system</li> <li>3. Stewardship</li> <li>4. Truth and reconciliation work</li> </ol>
<b>No. 4- Freedom</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Empowerment</li> <li>2. Efficacy</li> <li>3. Advocacy</li> <li>4. Victimhood</li> <li>5. Personal transformation</li> <li>6. Managing backlash</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affirmative action</li> <li>2. 4 levels of safety - physical, emotional, political, spiritual</li> <li>3. Individual freedom vs. organizational requirements</li> <li>4. Leading change/ change management</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Political freedoms</li> <li>2. Freedom of speech</li> <li>3. Self-determination</li> </ol>
<b>No. 5- Family/ Community</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mediation</li> <li>2. Employee assistance programs</li> <li>3. Team building</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work/family balance</li> <li>2. Employee assistance programs</li> <li>3. Affinity groups</li> <li>4. Team building</li> <li>5. Cross-cultural training &amp; awareness building</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affinity groups/ support groups</li> <li>2. Self-determination (reclaiming neighborhoods)</li> <li>3. Community organizing (economic development)</li> </ol>
<b>No. 6- Love/ Compassion/ Empathy/ Caring-</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personal transformation</li> <li>2. Interpersonal competencies</li> <li>3. Affinity groups/ support groups</li> <li>4. Sensitivity &amp; awareness training</li> <li>5. Emotional intelligence</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Culture change</li> <li>2. Affinity groups/ support groups</li> <li>3. Stress management</li> <li>4. Health &amp; safety</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affinity groups/ support groups</li> <li>2. Healing and reconciliation</li> </ol>

<b>Global Values</b>	<b>Branches of the Practice</b>		
	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Societal</b>
<b>No. 7- Life/ Reverence/ Preservation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health care with multicultural competencies</li> <li>2. Efficacy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conflict resolution</li> <li>2. Core values work</li> <li>3. Business ethics</li> <li>4. Non-violence programs</li> <li>5. Health care with multicultural competencies</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Environmental racism</li> <li>2. Bio-diversity</li> <li>3. Conflict resolution and mediation</li> <li>4. Genetic research</li> <li>5. Animal research</li> <li>6. Bioethics</li> <li>7. Policy work</li> <li>8. Non-violence programs</li> </ol>
<b>No. 8- Responsibility</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Individual development</li> <li>2. Accountability</li> <li>3. Walking the talk (i.e., advocacy training)</li> <li>4. Moral development</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social responsibility/global multinational</li> <li>2. Harassment free environment</li> <li>3. Business ethics</li> <li>4. Diversity plan implementation</li> <li>5. Board/leadership development (i.e., walk the talk)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community building</li> <li>2. Town hall meetings</li> <li>3. Public policy</li> <li>4. Volunteer work</li> <li>5. Leadership development</li> </ol>
<b>No. 9- Knowledge/ Learning</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Competencies work</li> <li>2. Continuous learning</li> <li>3. Personal transformation</li> <li>4. Diversity and cross-cultural training</li> <li>5. Culture specific training</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge management (knowledge sharing)</li> <li>2. Technology &amp; globalization</li> <li>3. Corporate universities.</li> <li>4. Null curriculum (what's not taught in schools)</li> <li>5. Metrics</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Educational policy/legislation</li> <li>2. Digital divide</li> <li>3. University curriculum development</li> </ol>
<b>No. 10- Spirituality</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Personal transformation</li> <li>2. Coaching</li> <li>3. Values clarification</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Socially responsible actions</li> <li>2. Values clarification</li> <li>3. Religious diversity</li> <li>4. Spirituality at work</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leadership</li> <li>2. Understanding/respecting/valuing differences</li> <li>3. Religious diversity</li> </ol>



<b>Business Values</b>	<b>Branches of the Practice</b>		
	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Societal</b>
<b>No. 11- Innovation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Team facilitation</li> <li>2. Creativity enhancement</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Team facilitation</li> <li>2. Business case for diversity</li> <li>3. Metrics</li> <li>4. Cognitive &amp; style diversity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Education policy (equity, opportunity, etc.)</li> </ol>
<b>No. 12- Markets/ Customers</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overcoming stereotypes &amp; assumptions about ethnic/minority groups</li> <li>2. Cultural sensitivity training</li> <li>3. Product/market development/ utilizing affinity groups</li> <li>4. Customer service</li> <li>5. Understanding the business case for diversity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Niche/targeted &amp; global markets</li> <li>2. Multi-cultural sales</li> <li>3. Market research</li> <li>4. Assess issues/ marketing channels</li> <li>5. Philanthropy/ community involvement</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Government and public sector service to diverse citizens/ constituencies</li> </ol>
<b>No. 13- Quality/ Productivity/ Profitability</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rewards and recognition</li> <li>2. Employee empowerment</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work/life balance</li> <li>2. Metrics (ROI)</li> <li>3. Risk management</li> <li>4. People side of reengineering</li> <li>5. Linking diversity to TQM</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reinventing government</li> <li>2. Technology &amp; globalization</li> </ol>