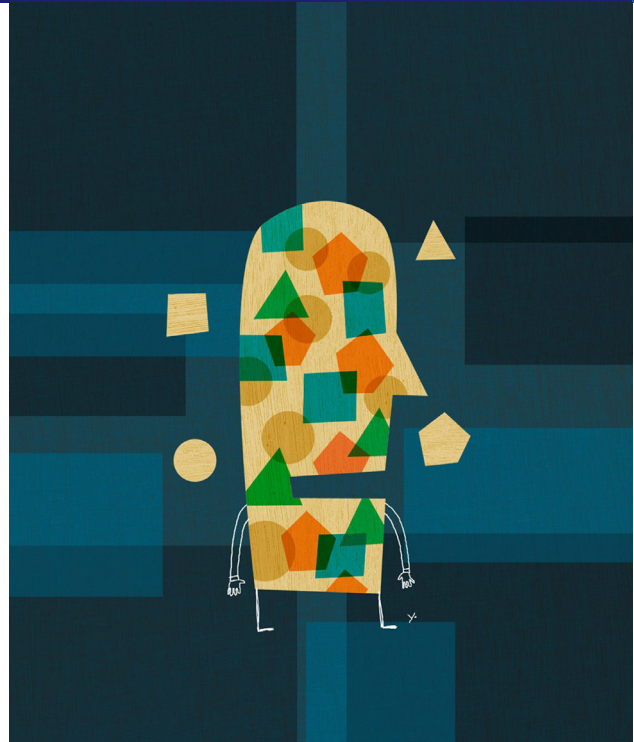




Time, Space and Social Justice in the Age of Globalization: Research and Applications on the Simultaneity of Differences

Evangelina Holvino



In this articleⁱ I present highlights of my research on the simultaneity of social differences – what it is, how it came about and how am I applying it - and share learnings about research for diversity, inclusion and social justice (DISJ) derived from my practice. Research is a neglected area of NTL's mission and I find it usually plays a very limited role in organizations. So, I hope my experience contributes to strengthening the role of research in the future of NTL and the organizations and communities it serves.

In its beginnings, research in NTL took different forms: action research, survey, qualitative, evaluation research. Its purposes responded to the founders interests: to help democratize society (Kurt Lewin); resolve social conflicts (Ken Benne); learn about groups (Ron Lippitt); and apply it to work (Lee Bradford)ⁱⁱ. As a community of scholars-practitioners it is important that we acknowledge and reconnect with their legacy of an approach to research that does not dichotomize inquiry, practice, and knowledge building.

While the goal of social justice and change continues in NTL, my title highlights two things which have radically changed since NTL's beginnings: the collapsing of time and space, and new approaches to our understanding of social differences. I am addressing, therefore, the problem and promise of differences in the age of globalization, an example of which is well represented by the story of Alma as retold by anthropologist, Ted Lewellen in his book *The Anthropology of Globalization: Cultural Anthropology Enters the 21st Century*.ⁱⁱⁱ

Alma was born in the small village of Cacahuatpec, in Oaxaca, Mexico. She learned to sew, but married young to a subsistence farmer and had seven children. They could barely survive. So, she moved to Tijuana to join her sister in law and work as a maid. She then crossed the border illegally, worked in a clothing factory run by Cubans hiring

undocumented workers and, after many trips back and forth to Tijuana to see her family, she was deported. She found work in a *maquila*, an export zone factory along the US-Mexico border. (Created by the Border Industrialization Program in 1965 and further supported by the North American Free Trade Agreement, *maquilas* (now found all over the world) are an important and contradictory source of income and exploitation, especially for young, single Third World women.)

Ted Lewellen asks the deceptively simple question "Who is Alma?" She is a postmodern woman who moves easily between different worlds, almost between centuries, at home in her Mexican village or among the skyscrapers of Los Angeles. And, indeed, she represents many differences, sequentially and simultaneously: woman, peasant, internal and transnational migrant, skilled laborer, mother, head of family, housekeeper, entrepreneur, Mexican alien in the US, *mestiza* in Mexico. The easy categories of the past seem oddly out of place in Alma's world; a world that is fragmented and one in which space and time have imploded.

Alma is just one of many stories and possibilities for thinking about identity, differences, work, family, and social justice in the 21st century. Another figure, illustrated on the back cover of the July 2011 edition of *The Economist* in an advertisement for Itaú, "the Global Latin American



bank,” is the ballet dancer Paloma Herrera. (http://www.italu.com/#vik_muniz). Born in Argentina, Paloma is one of 30 artists whom *The New York Times* critics chose “as among those most likely to change the culture for the next 30 years” and the only one in the category of dance. Unlike Alma, her image is used to sell a bank. She is so highly specialized it may not be as easy for her to move between different worlds as it is for Alma, in spite of her constant international travel. Understanding the contrast and similarities between these two women’s identities illustrates the complexity of social differences today.

Like these women, as a Latina, born and raised in Puerto Rico, who moved to the USA as an adult, traditional one-dimensional models of identity and differences do not explain my experience very well. Such models (and the activities based on them) ask me to choose between my gender, or my mixed race, or my ethnicity – splitting me into pieces, while I experience myself as whole. I identify with the complexity that Alma and Paloma represent: “Ni de aquí, ni de allá” – neither from here nor there (the title of a popular song by Spanish composer and singer Juan Manuel Serrat). I am neither American nor Latin American; neither White nor Black; both Spanish and English speaking; somewhere in between Catholic and Protestant; and a forced carrier of a US passport (Puerto Ricans were unilaterally declared US citizens in 1917 by the Jones Act). Both personally and professionally, I am intrigued by social differences and how they operate at various levels: for individuals, in organizations, and in society.

Thus, there are three questions at the center of my research on DISJ: how can we develop more complex models of differences that have more explanatory value and power in the age of globalization?; how does the understanding that social differences like race, gender, class, and sexuality are interrelated processes, translate into organizational change interventions that take into account those interactions?; and what do we gain by using more complex models of differences in our practice of diversity, inclusion and social justice in organizations and society?

I will review next traditional models of differences and identity and present the simultaneity model as an alternative. I will provide examples of its application in my work and will conclude with learnings from my research practice, which I hope will inspire us to do more DISJ research.

A historical perspective on models of differences

Familiar models of identity, such as racial identity development models, emerged in the United States from the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Their influences were psychological, humanistic and developmental. While these models have contributed much to acknowledging differences, understanding social identity, and nourishing identity politics and group pride, they have also been strongly criticized for being too simple, linear and one dimensional – they only address one difference at a time.^{iv} In addition, these models tend to present differences as *essential* and *innate*. In other words,

being a woman or a Black person is seen as an inherent, fixed and unchangeable characteristic. Usually, some differences are considered more important than others. For example, the Dimensions of Diversity Wheel^v, widely used in Diversity and Inclusion training, ranks differences as more or less central, based on whether they are internal (or primary) or external (secondary), usually meaning innate vs. chosen. Differences appear disconnected from each other, leading to the study of differences like race and gender as “*independent variables*.” But for Latino scholars, like Gallegos, Ferdman, and Quiñonez-Rosado, Latino/a identity is formed by a combination of geography, culture, race, nationality and colonialism; all seen as inseparable dimensions of identity.

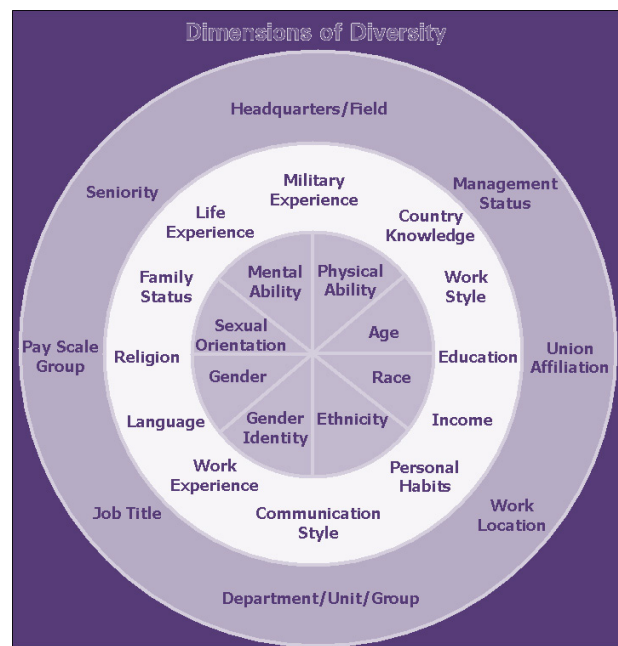


Figure 1: source: Google - Dimensions of Diversity Wheel

Dominant models of identity also treat differences as *universal*, and *ahistorical*. But my own experience provides a good example of the changing and contextual ‘nature’ of race. In Puerto Rico, I was classified (and learned to see myself) as ‘White’. When I came to the United States I learned that my racial identity was brown, ‘of color,’ Hispanic, Black, or mixed. When, after a few years in the US, I worked in northern Nigeria, imagine my surprise when I was called by a group of schoolchildren “bature, bature” – which means, ‘White American’! Today, I would not go back to Puerto Rico and call myself White: geography, context and history have changed my ‘race’.

These models of differences have practical consequences, which I believe are detrimental to DISJ work. For example, the data on women is seldom disaggregated by race, ethnicity and level (one indicator of the class structure in organizations) to understand how these differences influence the experience of women differently. Or, identity dimensions are discussed serially as in a workshop on gender, then another on race and so on: the ‘add and stir’ approach.



From treating differences as	To treating differences as
Essential	Power relations
Innate	Socially constructed
Independent; additive	Interacting; interdependent
Fixed	Changing; multiple
Universal	Historical; contextual

Figure 2: Changing assumptions about differences ©Holvino, 2006

Drawing from Black and Third World feminism, and literary, cultural and political studies, I offer and use another set of premises to understand differences. I now see differences as social relations along dimensions of power, which create and reproduce inequalities (they are not innate characteristics of being). We probably all agree with the premise that differences are socially constructed; for example, it is not the physical sex differences between men and women that are significant, but the social meanings attributed to these differences. And these meanings are *historical, changing, and specific* to a time and place. For example, in his book, *Black in Latin America*, African American scholar Henry Louis Gates, lists 134 words used in Brazil to designate Blackness, depending on color, class, education, and so on. Differences also *interact* to give meaning to each other. This premise that differences *intersect* as social processes and to construct our identities, and that they need to be studied at the intersections, is what is known as intersectionality. African American management scholars Bell and Nkomo represent this image as intersecting circles to stress this interrelatedness. This idea is not new. Since the 1800s activist Black women like Amy Jacques Garvey, were denouncing “the evils of imperialism, racism, capitalism, and the interlocking race, class, and gender oppression that Black and other women experienced

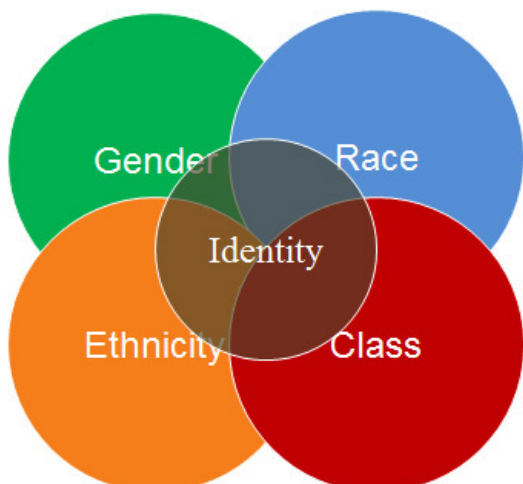


Figure 3: Intersectionality Model ©Bell and Nkomo, 1992

globally, particularly in colonial contexts”.^{vi}

However, the image of intersections implies ‘a center,’ a place in the middle where different identities come together, like different roads meeting at a busy traffic light. This center suggests the existence of a core identity which is still somewhat independent, outside the processes of differences and power, stable and unitary, and too fixed and static, as scholars Rachel Luft and Jane Ward critique. Today, some of the most exciting research on intersectionality is in the field of gender identity and sexual orientation. In a 10-year study of four young, non-heterosexual women’s exploration of their transgendered experience and identification, Diamond and Butterworth found that the women no longer see the need to embrace publicly one, and only one, ‘true’ identity (male or female, heterosexual or gay/lesbian, or transgender). Rather, they move fluidly among a number of different identities, challenging the notion that we are born unequivocally and permanently male or female, or for that matter ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’ or ‘heterosexual’. So much for stable identities based on binaries!

All this has led me to the model of the simultaneity of differences, based on intersectionality and transnational feminist theory; a theory which seems better equipped to deal with the growing complexity of differences in the world, because it seeks to understand how movement across nations – the ‘trans-national’ - impacts women’s (and men’s) lives differently. Transnational feminism enriches theories of differences by paying attention to the material and discursive processes that produce inequality, including the role that states and governments play. By ‘material’ I mean all those processes that impact our physical life and our bodies such as the economy, war, and the environment. By ‘discursive’ I mean those processes that represent and create the ways we talk and think about our world. For example, as reported by the Pew Research Center, in the last two decades in the United States we have experienced the greatest transfer of wealth from the working and middle classes to the affluent classes. These changes in wealth concentration have been accompanied by corresponding changes in language: the rich are now called “job creators”; the President refers to taxes as “revenue enhancement”; the social safety net (in particular Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid) is now called “entitlement programs”, and citizens are now “consumers.”

Simultaneity, then, means the *simultaneous processes of identity, and organizational and societal practices* that produce and reproduce particular identities and relations of inequality and privilege, both materially and symbolically. Because these processes co-exist and are always in interaction and transaction with each other, I offer the image of a hologram as a metaphor to convey that the whole of one’s identity contains the various differences that contribute to it, while each difference also reflects the whole. This is an ongoing, never ending process. In other words, achieving identity nirvana, as suggested by developmental models of identity, is not possible with simultaneity.



Race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, nationality, ... are simultaneous processes of

- individual identity,
- Institutional/organizational practices
- and social/societal practices

...Identity(ies) is/are multiple, contradictory, contextual

Figure 4: Simultaneity Model ©Holvino, 2010

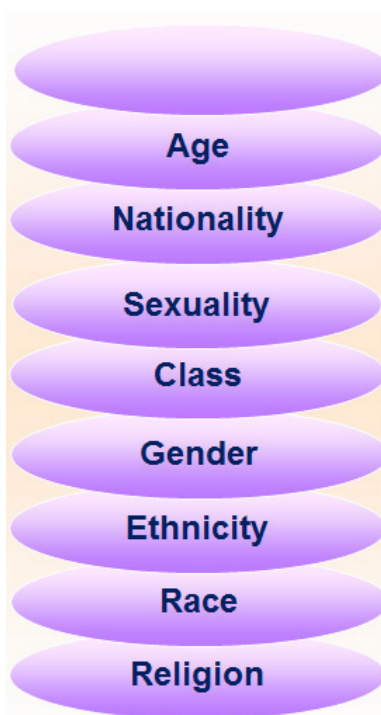


Figure 5: Holvino's Simultaneity Model ©Holvino, 2011

The dilemma of simultaneity is that while differences such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality operate at the same time, the importance or salience of specific differences at particular moments varies given the geographical, organizational, and social context. The metaphor of the hologram may convey this movement and multiplicity better than the metaphor of intersecting circles. When I work in Africa my nationality as an American citizen and a Christian become figural (Fig 5) while my 'Latinaness' and minority racio-ethnic-gender status are in the background. The opposite is true in the United States, where my Latina identity and Spanish accent are foreground, while my Christian privilege and US citizenship recede to the background.

A related dilemma is that we tend to be more aware of the differences that bring us disadvantage and less aware of those that bring us privilege. I wonder if part of

the resistance to owning our multiple identities is that we cannot tolerate the contradiction of experiencing ourselves as disadvantaged and privileged at the same time. Similarly, research in the field of DISJ has focused more on the differences and intersections of inequality, and it has lagged in studying the differences and intersections of privilege, such as in the increasingly productive work on "masculinities" and "Whiteness."

The practice of simultaneity

The model of simultaneity would not be exciting to me, if it did not have practical applications at the individual, the group and the organization-societal level. I offer an example of each next.

At the individual level, in the spring of 2009, Sonia Sotomayor was nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court by President Obama. After much controversy, she was selected and now sits as the third woman and first Hispanic Supreme Court Judge in the history of the United States. Sotomayor represents the simultaneity of race, ethnicity, gender, and class and is a role model of enacting simultaneity. Throughout her life, she has owned her complex identities as a "Newyorkrican" (a person born in New York of Puerto Rican parents) and a Latina professional of poor working-class background.

In the speech entitled "A Latina Judge's Voice" (delivered to a group of law students at Berkeley University in 2001), that generated much controversy during her confirmation and saw her labeled as a racist, Sotomayor said "I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a White male who hasn't lived that life." In the speech, she expands on her cultural identity and alludes to other identities that enrich who she is: her degrees from Ivy League schools and the historical context of *Brown v. Board of Education*^{vii} in which she grew up. Other experiences that formed her identity are her activism in the Puerto Rican community, her academic success and subsequent stellar career as a lawyer and judge, and her childhood diabetes. She admits to no simple answers about what makes for her complex identity. Sotomayor's speech was about the importance of identity, the under-representation of Hispanics, women, and Women-of-Color on the bench and the need to have different identities making judicial decisions. She wants students to think about what difference their identity will make on the bench and to consider the impact of social differences like race, gender, and culture on court decisions.

In a USA Today article, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan were reported as changing the performance of the Supreme Court from "behind the scenes" influencing and consensus building to more open discussions and direct persuasion between the judges on the bench. Their arguments are more energetic and forceful and Sotomayor is described as persistent and demanding about facts and prisoners' rights. I propose that when you acknowledge and live in the world from a 'simultaneity of



identities' stance – a stance like Sotomayor's, that owns her complex identity formed at the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity and class deprivation and privilege - you see the world and use yourself differently.

At the group level, a review on diversity research by Ramarajan and Thomas suggests that managing multiple identities positively, leads to intergroup tolerance and openness, more diverse social networks, and innovation in teams' performance. This is because experiencing identities as compatible and enhancing of each other, produces better congruence between one's self-perception and others' perceptions, which in turn supports interactions across group differences.

In my own work with a Woman-of-Color employee resource group (ERG) in a financial institution, I learned about the power of a simultaneity lens to diagnose and intervene in a group. This group had documented the discrepancies and gaps between the situation of White women and Women-of-Color in the organization and successfully made the business case for a Woman-of-Color ERG, separate from the White women's group and other ERGs of Color. But the newly formed ERG was falling apart as a result of internal disagreements about goals and strategies. After interviewing the members, I concluded that this group of Latina, Asian and African American middle and high level managers, needed to explore their ethnic and class differences in order to succeed.

Thus, in a working meeting I asked them to form into same racio-ethnic subgroups and to ask "a difficult question" they had for others in their same-group and a difficult question they wanted to pose to another subgroup.^{viii} As they shared highlights of their conversations, they discovered that they were making assumptions and judgments about each other based on their dominant identity, without considering their multiple identities. For example, the African American and Latina managers had different assumptions about how to demonstrate commitment to the group's mission. For the African Americans, with their background in the civil rights movement, activism meant being "out there and visible in the organization," working for change. For the Latinas, given their cultural background, their expression of commitment and activism was "to establish personal and trusting relations with junior women and to mentor them closely."^x I used the simultaneity lens to ask the group to explore and not ignore the intersections of differences that seemed relevant to the task such as race, ethnicity and gender. In the end, the group was able to acknowledge some of their differences while also working for their common goal.

An application at the organization and societal levels involves current work at the Center for Gender in Organizations, where we have been delving into the narratives of multiple identities and their significance using the construct of 'cultural scripts' or 'repertoires'. Cultural scripts seem to capture the confluence of multiple

identities and suggest that individuals are empowered when they can access cultural scripts that come from different settings in order to enact and negotiate 'hybrid' identities.

Dr. Michal Frenkel's study of gender identity in the Israeli hi-tech sector provides an example of cultural scripts at work. She shows how affluent, high-tech women workers were able to maneuver in-between two different cultural repertoires – one based on a global masculinity script of the technology worker, devoted to the organization '24/7'; and another more local repertoire based on the strong family orientation of Israeli society, which exalts motherhood. Drawing from these two contradictory cultural repertoires, the women constructed a third identity that challenged on the one hand, the dominant image of the 'ideal hi-tech worker' and, on the other, the traditional Israeli femininity of 'devoted motherhood'. The women accomplished this new identity by their extensive use of work-family balance organizational discourse and policies, arguing that they could be both 'good workers' and 'good mothers'. This hybrid identity changed their everyday negotiations at work and their organizations' cultures.

I use the terms *cultural scripts* and *cultural repertoires* interchangeably to refer to "...people's mental image of a setting's expected mode of behavior" (Dhingra 2004) and "ways of thinking about what one can/cannot do or say" (Holvino 2010). Cultural scripts or repertoires limit or enhance the available range of strategies for action a person can draw from, and are deployed selectively according to the situation.

I contrast this success story with a different socio-cultural reality - that of Latino and Latina professionals in US corporations. My research suggests that the cultural scripts they draw from their Latin American backgrounds, such as 'personalismo' or 'familismo' (where friendly, harmonious and close family relations are valued), do not 'fit' the dominant scripts of '24/7' availability and aggressive displays of competence and ambition of US corporations.^x While the Israeli women were able to combine contradictory scripts, most Latino managers feel they have to choose between their Anglo and Latino scripts, unable to combine or deploy them selectively to meet a situation. Incorporating 'nation' into analyses of differences, help us see how Israel's pro-natal policies support the high-tech women's use of work-family arrangements to create a new identity, while the 'assimilation-melting pot' discourse in the United States limits the ability of Latino/a managers to use their cultural scripts positively.

Some final words

So far, my key messages are: 1) Traditional models of differences and identity have certain assumptions, which are no longer helpful for DISJ under conditions of globalization; 2) the simultaneity model is based on an alternative set of premises to understand social differences, such as differences are multiple, simultaneous and changing; and 3) If you use simultaneity, you will 'see' and 'work' differently.



I return to the broader topic of research for DISJ to share learnings from my research journey. I borrow from Marta Calás and Linda Smircich, feminist organizational scholars and colleagues, who taught me an approach to social research focused on the tasks of revising, reflecting and rewriting.^{xi} Applied to DISJ, this means to: 1) revise the theories, models, and practices that are not serving DISJ well; 2) to reflect on why and how these theories, models, and practices do not serve the goals of social justice - for example, what do they leave out and what are their unintended consequences?; and 3) to rewrite our models, theories, and practices so that they can serve the purposes of DISJ in our current context and given our learnings of the past.

This is what I have tried to do in developing the simultaneity model of differences. In the process, I have learned that research for DISJ, while it is (like all research) about systematic inquiry, it also demands certain conditions and commitments, the most important of which are:

- An ethical-political stance concerned with social justice for all, which challenges current theories and dominant discourses, while using coherent theoretical frameworks.
- A commitment to practical applications that help us understand and transform the dynamics of inequality into equality.
- An understanding that research is not 'value free' and thus, to be a DISJ researcher is to position oneself in a vulnerable place; one that is between insider-outsider and in between finding the truth and speaking truth to power.
- Extraordinary persistence, because funding is difficult, access is limited and one is working against the status quo.
- A research community that enables one to engage with like-minded scholars, test ideas and applications, and find mentors and global colleagues who can challenge and support us by sharing resources, collaborating and critiquing our work.

These are important and difficult times for social justice in the world and it is tempting to respond with a call to action; actions which usually end up being familiar and somewhat comfortable and comforting.

Not surprisingly, I end with a call for more research, because there is no realistic dream of social justice without research to support it, and no useful practice without reflection and knowledge about how to guide and improve such practice.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Evangelina Holvino is President of Chaos Management, Ltd., a consulting partnership providing organizational solutions for collaborative, equitable, and participatory work through consultation, facilitation and education. She designs and facilitates change interventions in four areas: Diversity, equality and inclusion strategies; Facilitating groups for organization and community change; Leadership and career development for Latino/as and people of color; and Developing internal resources for change.

Dr. Holvino is a Faculty Affiliate at the Center for Gender in Organizations at the Simmons School of Management in Boston. Her research, writing and presentations focus on the simultaneity of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and nationality and the opportunities and challenges these differences create in organizations. She received her doctorate degree in organizational development from the University of Massachusetts and has taught at the School for International Training, the American University/ NTL Master's Program, and the Harvard Educational Leadership Doctoral Program.

Dr. Holvino is a 2005 recipient of the Anna Maria Arias award for Latina entrepreneurship. She is a member and previously served on the board of directors of the NTL Institute and is a Fellow of the AK Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems.

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NOTES

- i This article is adapted from a keynote delivered at the 2011 NTL's Annual Conference Diversity, Inclusion and social justice: the dream, the research and the practice and addressed the theme of 'the research.'
- ii See for example Benne, 1964 and Kleiner, 1996.
- iii Lewellen takes Alma's story from the book by Norma Iglesias-Prieto, 1997, *Beautiful Flowers of the Maquiladora*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- iv See for example, Kumashiro, 2001, Spickard and Burroughs, 2000 and Yuval-Davis, 2006.
- v For many versions of this model visit <http://www.google.com/search?q=Diversity+Wheel&hl=en&client=firefox-a&hs=ZOU&rls=org.mozilla:en-S:official&prmd=imvns&tbn=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=jP2bT-vzGKew6QHd7LXjDg&ved=0CEgQsAQ&biw=1024&bih=625>
- vi See Guy-Sheftall for more on this history.
- vii Brown vs. Board of Education is the 1954 landmark decision by the Supreme Court of the United States that declared segregated public schools for Black and White children unconstitutional, paving the way for educational integration and the Civil Rights Movement.
- viii See Proudford.
- ix See Holvino, 2006.
- x See Holvino, 2010. b.
- xi See Calás and Smircich.

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