Letting It All Hang Out: Sameness and Difference

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Part 1: Intention for the POD experience

Our Pod uncovered very quickly that we wanted to attempt a facilitative experience of diversity. Our original intention, which evolved over time, was to surface difference *as a means to deeper coherence*. Some of us were interested in letting our differences parade around in the nude in order to see them as they truly were. Additionally, without explicitly defining difference, we agreed to be and participate as a living commitment to allowing what would emerge to surface, rather than quickly focusing on something specific. We weren't simply interested in stirring up difference for its own sake, rather, we wanted to use the surfacing of our differences to bind us ever closer. Our intention iterated into a desire to uncover differences in order to generate 'new life': not to smooth those differences over in some sort of faux coherence. Initially, we pitched a tent on an 'insider vs. outsider' diversity lens-- that way, anyone could locate themselves inside the experience of diversity and we explored the difference between shadow and hidden differences. However, the lens of racial diversity, at least for the Americans in the group, was alive and created a provocative point for discussion. There was a willingness and curiosity to open a long held, controversial and, often, polarizing topic. The diverse opinions and experiences or the three Americans in the group gave rise to a rich pod experience.It was at the same time frustrating for some because the American racial climate was not as personally engaging those living in Europe and in Asia, although it was enlivening in a different way. Visible progress towards a finished product was scarce and this pushed some of us up against internal edges. So goes diversity in perspective taking!
Our exploration took to diversity in the workplace, the sensitivity in surfacing race, culture and difference as a perspective for members in groups we have facilitated. Diversity topics were centered around differences in team collaboration dynamics and understanding of leadership based on different cultural or professional backgrounds.
As expected clear intentions for our POD activity emerged from our discussions.

Intention for the Diversity POD project
Despite the variations in themes, the group as a whole was excited to explore our capacity to work with diversity in group facilitation. More specifically, we brought forth these three intentions for the pod project:

- To generate awareness and stimulate conversation about topics and dynamics that are often kept out of sight
- To provide each cohort with relevant points of discussion intended to forward personal and interpersonal growth
- To generate four quadrant assessment of perspective taking and their implications in conversations around sameness and differences

Why it is important

I'm so scared of dying without ever being really seen - <u>David Foster Wallace</u>, *How hidden the heart...How frightened we are of being known, and yet how desperately we long for it.* - <u>Hannah Kent</u>.

Isn't it so that to be seen and known is the longing of humanity? Our world is mind-staggeringly diverse. The level of diversity goes from macro-level things as obvious as visible physical characteristics and behaviors, all the way down to micro-differences between individuals who look similar, but who have had different life experiences.

This is a very ripe moment in history, and as facilitators, we have chosen to be in relationship with people and groups and cultures - all of whom seem to be asking to be recognized - to be seen. How are we to do this?

We notice that we consciously or unconsciously, impact one another. Sometimes this impact is life-giving, while other times it is life-limiting. Sameness and difference within a group and across groups can can and does seem to take life and give life to groups we have facilitated. Our pod was drawn to exploring the internal responses to perceptions of sameness and differences that we, or groups we facilitate, might be blind to. How do we honor and surface some of those differences that are keeping us from fully expressing and experiencing life? How can we have sensitive and truthful conversations on something as potentially polarizing as differences? Especially when some of those differences have either been historically neglected or, worse, used for nefarious purposes. We must begin with ourselves or we'll have no hope of offering something better to the broader world. How could each one of us, if we are blind to the confusing array of diversity contained within our own particular body-minds, ever dare to purport to know how other individuals or groups should relate to diversity?

As emerging Integral Facilitators, our responsibility to the whole includes unfolding our hidden differences and learning to hold as many perspectives as possible. With a shared recognition that it is not what differentiates us that separates us but, rather, it is the fear of what we do not know or understand that divides. It takes two to know one. Differences, attuned to, explored and integrated give rise to the fullness of Life, open the door to whole-hearted experience of Aliveness.

If we, as Integral facilitators, commit to serve Life - expanding our awareness, focusing our attention, zooming in and zooming out - the recognition and inclusion of more diversity and greater complexity is what we integrate into the

whole of experience. When we differentiate and integrate the parts of the whole, we can't help but extend inward and outward - to self and other. We become the invitation to be fully seen and known.

Part 2: POD process & key challenges
Pod process by quadrant

I	IT
SUBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVE
Of course our individual processes were hidden but we listened and danced with our own internal dances and processes of exploration around questions such as: How do I feel now? Do I feel like an insider vs and outsider in this group? How does my perception of belonging or not belonging impact my participation?	We all showed up and participated in almost every meeting and either viewed or listened to the zoom recording to catch up. We negotiated the decision to allow what emerged from the group to shape us. We shared our resources and invited each other to share our thoughts, emotions, memories, perceptions and experiences.
WE	**IT'S**
INTER-SUBJECTIVE	INTER-OBJECTIVE
We explored values, meanings, language and some cultural backgrounds while we allowed a shared vision to emerge. This process helped us to get to know each other better and began to shine a light on the group shadow	The tools we used to organize our process were the Zoom platform, Doodle poll, Google docs and of course email. We facilitated discussion, listening, and sharing of resources such as videos and articles to . Our group structure evolved over the months as we shared and we incorporated concepts from different perspectives.

Pod process by primary polarity
As we look at our POD process on diversity through a retrospective lens, the dynamic movement between the poles of "focusing in" and "allowing emergence," the value of both perspectives becomes more visible.
We all moved to the emergence pole when one of us invited us all - but especially those who tend to want to focus in on a task - to consider allowing the clear direction to emerge from the group or center of the circle. The ability to trust the process and trust the group was an edge we each chose to explore internally.
Towards the final deadline a leader emerged to encourage us to move from

exploration to the task at hand. The end result was that we lived into greater embodiment of Integral becoming and Integral Facilitation. We participated in, witnessed and supported the co-creative process organized around a specific goal - Pod project - but not bound by the course requirement/goal. It was our ways of being, individual and collective, that rendered a meaningful POD experience.

Key challenges

- We had considerable challenge defining what we meant by some key terms of the diversity discussion: What kind of diversity? Gender? Race? Ideational? What is diversity good for? What is it not good for? When we surfaced the topic of 'white privilege' we ended up spending a fair amount of time on trying to define what the term does(n't) mean and whether or not we all thought it even existed in America. We also talked more about diversity from the "IT" perspective

- Because it took us some length of time to nail down what we thought was the best way to facilitate a diversity experience, we didn't take opportunity of the diversity palpable within the group. Some in our group have already admitted to holding back opinions because they feared it would 'derail' the trajectory. We did not plumb the depths of our own diversity within the group. For this to happen, we need to work on taking risks to intervene in the moment when the 'playing nice', 'the glove didn't come off' actually happened. The safety and trust takes time to establish, probably more than one POD project.

- If we looked at the challenges from a content perspective without noting time as a constraint, it might appear we avoided delving into the heart and guts of where the contraction is in regard to diversity, particularly on the topic of race. The limitation of time and concurrent commitments and responsibilities outside of our pod were a factor in why we didn't dive more deeply. Maybe a default of not wanting to stir conflict, but, more than that a sensitivity and responsibility to knowing how far we could take things in a the span of each call across 5 time zones.

- One of the challenges that wasn't identified, was the tendency to share individual or shared perspectives without the deeper exploration of those through inquiry. It often felt that we got clear on how one or all of us felt about a topic, or dynamic, but in the face of differences in perspectives there was limited and and possibly curiosity to explore the other's perspective more deeply.

- Limitation in the conscious willingness and consent to be changed by each other

Key advances or successes

- Consistent participation on every scheduled bi-weekly, to weekly, to twice in one week calls
- Always room to check in on a personal level

- Mutual regard and a generative level of trust developed
- Self-revealing in levels of comfort or discomfort as we meandered for a while formulating a structured plan
- Resources shared outside of pod only conversations
- Acknowledgement of those whose initiatives, styles (humor, directness), or input moved us forward in key ways
- Despite some hesitations around allowing others to change us, we are all able to identify changes resulting from the process.
- Effortless effort in design phase of the project and group paper writing

Part 3: The Pod Project as Facilitated Experiential Exercise

We landed on a few principles to guide our decision on which exercise to choose:

- We need to ground "diversity" in a context, in a concrete experience that all members of the cohort could relate to and have a direct, personal experience with, so decided to focus on the POD experience primarily.
- We want to bring forth an explicit. lived experience of "diversity" within the cohort
- We want the lived experience of "diversity" to range from mild to provocative
- We want to include a range of topics within "diversity", including topics around race, learning styles, and team collaboration, identity and shadow

With these principles in mind, we decided on conducting an IF cohort version of "Crossing the Line" exercise. See addendum #1 for the "script."

Part 4: Personal reflections on the pod experience

Sandy

This POD project was an amazing journey and very different from my last POD experience. At the beginning, we decided very quickly to work on the subject of Diversity and Difference. It is pertinent to our own group as we are very diverse and different in terms of age, culture and profession. The scope is also very big that there seemed to have difficulties in honing in on a topic that can be meaningfully covered in the POD context. The discussions progressed slowly and took many unanticipated turns. For many weeks, a concrete plan for presentation still had not been crafted. Being a person who tends to work with a clear path, I was getting a bit concerned. Normally, I would get anxious with such uncertainty. As a practice to be more comfortable with the unknown, I tried to relax and trust the group. Amazingly, at the last two weeks, the energy suddenly converged and the presentation turned out to be simple, and yet beautiful. I was impressed by the group's capacity to hold differences, being honest about it and allowed it to progress naturally.

Michelle
Throughout our pod experience, I noticed that I was very aware of and pressured by "time to delivery". During the the exploratory and divergent conversations in the group, my felt-sense of boredom, annoyance, and zoning out became my nudge to synthesize the topics brought up to move the conversation from diverging brain-storm or spinning down into one rabbit hole into a synthesized direction. When our group was still diverging and discussing during the last few weeks and days, my nervousness around completing the project "on time" led me to set up structures, put theoretical themes into concrete decisions that we have to make in terms of group exercises. These "masculine" interventions were effective in nudging towards a concrete completion of the project. I notice that while the masculine energy felt familiar, and I was annoyed at myself for taking on this familiar role, I am embodying it more "cleanly", with not so much nervousness, annoyance, or resentment mixed in as I had previously. As I would love to practice expressing more of my "feminine" receptivity and playful, directionless creativity, next time I would put this intention out in the group and invite them to support me in that practice.

Margie
I came into the process wanting to focus on a direction very early and was delighted with diversity, belonging/not belonging and developing trust as potential topics. My personal experiences with hiring a two new employees and the overt pressure I was under to make sure we had some dark skin in our work mix spilled over and fueled my desire to discuss diversity.
I was much less comfortable with waiting to allow our actual direction to emerge from within the group and became concerned when we seemed unfocused as the weeks progressed, but ultimately did choose to breathe and feel into "trusting the group."
When Michelle started taking control and actively facilitating my comfort level went up. Although I do enjoy discussion and hearing different opinions, I really like to meet a deadline in advance!
Looking back, I regret that we did not take time to discuss diversity/inside/outside within our own POD. I would have liked to hear more from the people who did not resonate with racial issues
and did not make time for this.

Bryan
When our group lighted upon our topic of diversity quickly, I was both excited and a bit nervous. I was (and continue to be) working out my relationship to difference and diversity and was grateful to have the wonderful people in my POD as conversation partners on the path of articulation. I sensed some hesitation on my part as well b/c I hadn't fully articulated my thoughts

Tara
Coming into formation, taking shape with each other is how I experienced our

initial meetings. A new pod experience, with a backdrop of what had come before and been generated in a different group over the first intersession. We were, from the start, in the experience of diversity. What came into view is the recognition of how aware or unaware, interested or disinterested we are in the countless ways diversity presents itself and occurs in the I and We of experience. I was impacted/changed by the way we occurred together. Most striking, is how much more could come forward if we paused to engage curiosity in the face what asserts itself as certainty or uncertainty in perspective taking and perspective telling. I'm in a deeper inquiry because of this experience in regard to aligning with the Intention of Mystery in a way that dismantles the structures of "my" and "your" (as separate or disconnected) intentions, and, at the same time powerfully addresses issues that divide. I felt and witnessed the moments and dynamics in which historical patterns were activated in me and am using the learning to bring more experimentation to current and ongoing experience.

Addendum #1
Facilitated Experiential Exercise - "Crossing the Line."

INTENTION
·   To generate awareness and stimulate conversation about topics and dynamics that are often kept out of sight
·   To provide each cohort with relevant points of discussion intended to forward personal and interpersonal growth
·   To generate four quadrant assessment of perspective taking for the sake of strengthening competencies of Integral Facilitation

FACILITATION INSTRUCTIONS
The exercise we're about to engage in is intended to identify some of the similarities and differences we have experienced in the Integral Facilitation program. We want to acknowledge those differences and bring to the surface differences that may not have been recognized about yourself and each other. The intention of the exercise is to break through barriers to authentic relationship, collaboration, and effective facilitation for generative outcomes. The activity is simple and will proceed as follows. Please lineup on one side of the line and face the center of the room. I will call out specific statements and ask that all those to whom the statement applies cross the line and turn to face those on the other side. For example, 'Anyone with blue eyes please cross the line'. If this describes you, you would cross the line and then turn back to center facing the group you just left. As much as possible, notice your sensations, energetic movement and feelings, as well as thoughts that arise about people on both sides. After a few moments you will be asked to return to the side from which you started. I will then continue with a new statements, and the process will be the same for the remainder of

the statements read aloud. At times, you may experience discomfort and/or resistance during the exercise . We urge you to lean into the discomfort as an opportunity for learning and gaining insight. At the conclusion of the activity, there'll be time for discussion.

GROUND RULES
There are two important ground rules for the activity.
1.   The first involves listening, while maintaining silence throughout the exercise. No talking, whispering, giggling or nonverbal communication.
2.   The second is a commitment to respect for each person present. All that is shared throughout the exercise should remain confidential. Nothing that is shared is to leave the room. Following the completion of today's work, if you feel a need to talk to a particular person or group, please ask permission of the person/group to raise the issue for discussion.

Are there any questions before we begin? Okay, please maintain silence from this point forward.
CROSS THE LINE IF . . .

- You live outside of the United States *
- You are an only child *
- You self-identify as conservative (or religious or an activist) *
- Your actions have ever caused harm to another person *
- You are comfortable with homosexuality *
- You have felt discomfort that alienated (caused you to distance yourself or separate) you from your pod and your experience.
- You have been frustrated by differences in your pod or coaching group.
- You have felt the sameness in your pod or coaching group is "fake" at some level.
- You have had a negative assessment of someone in your pod or coaching group that has gotten in the way of you connecting or getting to know the person further.
- People who are too spiritual bother you.
- Your emotions sometimes get in the way while facilitating
- You have had the experience of not being seen or heard in your pod.
- When facilitating there are certain types of people who trigger/bother you.
- You like to be right.
- You wonder if your opinions are respected in the group.
- You've learned so much and integrated what you've learned so well, that you think you're almost as a good a facilitator as Diane.
- You don't believe in the idea of "white privilege".
- You believe that people can be morally sensitive and anti-racist while, simultaneously, not believing in "white guilt" and systemic racism.
- You believe we are missing something in the conversation about race**.**
- You have risked derailing the direction of your POD by putting your opinions out

8

there.
- You have withheld opinions during your pod meetings that you did not share with your pod.
- When facilitating you tend to orient more from one or two quadrants than from all four.
- You often dominated conversation in your pod *
- You sat back and let others take the lead in your pod *
- You risked a new way of being, working at your edge in your pod *
- At times, you have felt that your pod has not been completely honest with each other.
- You went along with the group when you would have rathered take things in another direction *
- Your judgement of one of more people in Cohort 4 kept you from getting to know them more fully *
- "White privilege" is present in this cohort.
- There are times when your race or ethnicity is not acknowledged.

Part 3: Reflection as a pod (10 mins - 2 min per participant)
Please move into your pod group
- What did you learn from this experience?
- How do you think it's going to impact you going forward?
(2 min each)

DEBRIEF
Please break into your pod project groups for the following discussion. (2 min each)
1. What did you learn from this experience?
2. How do you think it's going to impact you going forward?
3. Intention versus Impact
4. What were the strongest feelings you had as you participated?
5. What was most surprising to you about the exercise?
6. Were there times when you just went with the flow instead of going how you really felt? If   you're comfortable sharing, which statements were they?
7. How did you feel when there were a lot of people on your side of the line? How did you feel when they were very few people on your side of the line?
8. What questions do you have that you would like to raise with the group?
9. What's the relevance of this activity to Integral Facilitation?

Part 4: Share with the wider cohort (10 min - 2 min per cohort by spokesperson)

ADDENDUM #2
List of resources consulted.

Activities:
We consulted a number activities to help unpack sameness and difference, including:
- Breaking Prejudice - Insider/Outsider Activity
  http://breakingprejudice.org/teaching/group-activities/insider-outsider-activity/
- Cultural Compass Assessment
  Found in - Experiential Activities for Intercultural Learning link below
https://books.google.com/books?id=WK7KBgAAQBAJ&pg=PT157&lpg=PT157&dq=the%20cultural%20compass%20paula%

dq=the%20cultural%20compass%20paula%
20chu&source=bl&ots=ZMWpcJKwST&sig=MWZs_rbCyjQSJf41XFYq3CnIyqg&hl=en&
sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjxoJOo7LTTAhUKiVQKHdLtCyoQ6AEIHjAB#v=onepage&q=the%
20cultural%20compass%20paula%20chu&f=false

- "Making the implicit explicit"
- "Experience in Diversity" - Experiential Exercise of unilateral dominance/takeover, for example Facilitated British Colonization.
- "Barnga" - demonstrates how quickly in-group out-group dynamics.
- Crossing the Line. This exercise can be adapted to explore diversity from many perspectives.
- "The person I least want to be"- Helps get stereotypes out in the open.
Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege
https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/diversity-workshop-guide-to-discussing-identity-power-and-privilege/

Videos
A Black/Conservative Perspective on why Racism is not the reason for Black Peoples' Problems (Larry Elder)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oww-4wdrvgI

A Black Perspective on Black Lives Matter (Larry Elder)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piwaBO6U43U

Statistical (and other) evidence that undermines the "White Privilege" argument (Ben Shapiro)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrxZRuL65wQ

Another brief one (Jordan Peterson)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHEYZraB8hY

The Immorality of Group/Class Guilt (Jordan Peterson)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-SGqRToXYE

Freedom Writers - Line Game (6 min)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYYf-mUmPqI

Freedom Writers - The Showdown (3.5 min)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HU_BueZZNd8

Clip from Documentary The Color of Fear - Vignette 8: Racism (6.5 min)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iGhBtGoWI0&feature=youtu.be

Clip from Documentary The Color of Fear - Vignette 19: Racism (4.5 min)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soRypA8A0KI&feature=youtu.be

Jane Elliot's Anti-Racism Experiment (5 min)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NHeFgaVWs8

Written information – a partial listing
Gabe's blog on diversity
https://tendirections.com/our-differences/

Self-Concepts and Self-Concept Change: A Status Dynamic Approach By RM Bergner and JR Holmes scheduled for publication in Psychotherapy
LINK