

EXAMINING A CULTURALLY DIVERSE NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATION THROUGH THE LENS OF EMBEDDED INTERGROUP
RELATIONS THEORY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Organizational psychology as a field has been moving toward more work with social change organizations. The non-governmental organization (NGO) is one common type of social change organization, but while studied in the international development literature, it is rarely explored through the lens of organizational psychology theory. This study uses one such theory, Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory, and its related methodology of organizational assessment, organizational diagnosis, to examine a culturally diverse NGO. The analysis describes the NGO from an intergroup perspective, revealing how organizational and identity group memberships affected individuals' experiences of their roles, including their personal and professional needs, work orientation, and attitudes toward power, authority, and decision making. Results also show how the intersection of group memberships and the system within which the organization was embedded helped explain individual experiences, group dynamics, and organizational functioning. Overall, the study found that challenges the NGO faced were related to both organizational growth and diversity. This study serves as a rare model of an organizational diagnosis of a culturally diverse NGO. Recommendations for consultants working with culturally diverse NGOs include using self-awareness and a social justice perspective. Findings imply a need for further research on different cultural models of work, organizational growth, and change in order to better inform consultants in their work.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For three months in 2008, I had the opportunity to consult to a culturally diverse non-governmental organization (NGO), a rare experience for someone studying and practicing organizational psychology. After finding limited applicable resources in the organizational psychology literature to guide my work, I confirmed my belief that this is a rarely studied type of organization in the field. To conduct my consultation, I relied on international development NGO management literature and Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory, an organizational psychology theory I knew to be useful in consulting to diverse organizations.

This dissertation is a comprehensive examination of the NGO through the lens of Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory. The study uses organizational diagnosis methodology and further theory-guided analysis to understand what an NGO can look like from an intergroup perspective. Since there is a growing movement within organizational psychology to focus more efforts on understanding and consulting to social change organizations such as NGOs, this study serves as an example that can start to fill the existing gap in the organizational psychology literature, point to directions for future research, and offer lessons learned to organizational psychologists consulting to NGOs.

This first chapter explores the background of the study and where it sits within the field of organizational psychology. Chapter II explores relevant literature in two areas – NGO management and organizational diversity. Chapter III presents the theory used in this study, Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory. Chapter IV details the study’s methodology – organizational diagnosis and theory-based analysis of one NGO. Chapter V and VI provide the results of the study, a description and analysis of the NGO, including groups, subthemes, and major themes. The paper concludes with Chapter VII, a discussion of the study and its implications for future research and consultation.

Background

Organizational psychology as a field rarely focuses on understanding organizations outside the corporate sector. While there is some literature on non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations are rarely, if ever, studied. Organizational psychology is distinct from, but often closely associated and discussed interchangeably with organizational development, which “emerged from efforts to improve the performance of organizations, largely in the for-profit sector” (Brown, Leach, & Covey, 2004). Like organizational development, organizational psychology is often practiced in the corporate world and based on knowledge culled in that setting. This can lead to the view that organizational psychology’s practitioner values “are dominated by the business values of an idealized free-market capitalism” (Lefkowitz, 2008, p. 442). While organizational psychology is rooted in the humanistic values typical of psychology, in practice these values sometimes conflict with the business demands of “performance effectiveness and productivity” (Miner, 1992, p. 293).

Recently, however, there has been some push for a shift in the focus of the field, as well as for new interpretations of organizational development for social change and social justice (Brown et al., 2004; Sinclair et al., 2006). Paul Winn, in a 2004 presidential address to the American Psychological Association's Division 13 asked the room of consulting psychologists to "revisit [their] professional mission" and "ask [themselves] what [they] stand for and what [they] intend to achieve in [their] respective roles" (Winn, 2005, p. 176). A few years later, in a 2008 special issue of the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, where authors attempted to complete the sentence, "To prosper, organizational psychology should...", Lefkowitz (2008) proposed that organizational psychology should "attempt to modify its self-image by expanding its espoused values to encompass a scientist-practitioner-humanist model, within a broader social perspective" (p. 449). He argued that this model would reflect "the broader societal responsibilities of a true profession," but also realized that "this would entail some proactive changes" (Lefkowitz, 2008, p. 449). One suggestion he had was "to increase the extent of [organizational psychology's] professional practice with 'underserved' constituencies such as non-profit organizations" (Lefkowitz, 2008, p. 443). In a similar vein, Brown et al. (2004) suggested that "organizational development concepts and tools [could] be used to solve problems and foster constructive change at the societal level" in part by "strengthening social change-focused organizations" (p. 2).

What is "social change?" I conceptualize it here as Brown, Leach, and Covey (2004) defined it: "sustainable improvements in the lives and prospects of impoverished and marginalized groups" (p. 3). They defined social change organizations as those "organized around social change or problem-solving missions" and reminded us that all

organizations are “critical to ongoing societal operations as well as pivotal actors in social problem solving and transformation.” Social change organizations focus on a range of issues including “poverty alleviation, human rights and democratization, and ecological sustainability” (Brown et al., p. 3).

If psychologists indeed are going to move in the direction of taking up their perceived societal responsibilities and organizational psychology is going to further expand into work with social change organizations, there needs to be greater understanding of these organizations. While not completely unique settings for organizational psychology work, social change organizations do have particular missions, conditions, concerns, and stakeholders that set them apart from for-profit organizations. NGOs, a subset of social change organizations that work outside the United States but also exist outside of local, state, or federal government, have their own set of defining characteristics. One of these is that they can be especially diverse places. They often draw their staff from different cultures and countries, leading to multiple perspectives, functions and roles that result in organizational tensions or conflicts. While organizational psychology’s interest in diversity has steadily grown (Cooper et al., 2008; Romney, 2008; Sue, 2008; Thomas, 2008), as organizations have become increasingly diverse, the organizations studied are often for-profit entities with characteristics and concerns that do not apply to NGOs. Thus culturally diverse NGOs, which strive to achieve social justice and change, are left as organizations understudied by organization psychology, but ones that fall squarely within the discipline’s expanding field of view. This study attempts to contribute to organizational psychology’s emerging conversations about social change organizations by examining one culturally diverse NGO.

CHAPTER II

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN CONTEXT

Although community organizations have a long history of existence, the currently conceived NGO only came into being and proliferated in the last few decades. In that brief period of time, NGOs have changed along with the evolving global socio-political landscape around them. Discussions of NGOs as organizations are mostly found in the international development NGO management literature, but the growing body of research on culturally diverse and social change organizations also sheds light on NGOs, specifically ones with staff from many different cultures (Chadha, Jagadananda & Lal, 2003; Ebrahim, 2003; Edwards & Fowler, 2002; Fowler, 1997; Human & Zaimann, 1995; James, 2001). Three areas covered in the literature are particularly relevant to this study: 1) organizational learning in NGOs, 2) diversity in organizations, and 3) consulting to diverse organizations and NGOs. While few empirical studies are offered, the writing reveals thinking by both researchers and practitioners about NGOs, diversity, and consulting and provides a context for better understanding this study's consultant-led exploration of one culturally diverse NGO. An examination of these areas of literature in this chapter explores current understanding of NGOs as culturally diverse organizations embedded in influential contexts.

Non-Governmental Organization Management in Historical Context

International development literature includes a significant body of work on NGOs as organizations. A brief survey of relevant literature on NGO management and its historical development provides a context for understanding structures and processes within an NGO. NGOs did not become major players in the field of international development until the 1990s, after much of the international development community grew disillusioned with the large amount of foreign aid given to the developing world in the 1980s with little observed progress. Although the lack of attention NGOs received before the 1990s could make it appear as if they “suddenly appear[ed] as new actors in development,” Lewis (2008) explained that they did exist before, but were then “discovered, nurtured and praised” until they “rapidly became elevated to a position of new importance within the tripartite institutional landscape of state, market and civil society” (p. 44). NGOs’ “rise to prominence” was the result of a convergence of factors, including “the emergence of a new set of ideas about alternative development practices, centered on attractive – yet frequently ill-defined – concepts such as empowerment and participation” and “the ascendancy of a neoliberal ideology that favoured policies of privatization, good governance and a general shift away from the idea of state-led development” (p. 41).

Thinking around NGOs developed an idealistic bent. As Fisher (1997) explained, assumptions grew about the “increasing inability of the nation-state to muddle through as it confront[ed] the long-term consequences of its own ignorance, corruption and lack of accountability” (as cited in Lewis, 2008, p. 52). In contrast to the state, NGOs’ “closeness to the poor, committed leadership, and capacity to build access to services”

(Lewis, 2008, p. 51) were thought to make them more effective actors in development. NGOs were imagined to be able to avoid bureaucracies and corruption, save money, and involve local communities (Cernea, 1988). In reality, however, NGOs faced challenges adapting to their newly mainstream role. These included ideological conflicts, balancing the changing needs of local constituents with international donors, and, redefining relationships with communities, civil society, government, media, and the private sector (Brown et al., 2004; Harding & Chapman, 2004).

As attention focused on NGOs' potential to change communities and the challenges associated with growth and change, outsiders moved in to build their management capacity in order to help them fulfill their perceived destiny (and the fantasy of many involved in international development) of being more effective agents of change and service providers. Management science began to be applied to NGOs, but the mainstream management field remained focused on the private sector (Lewis, 2008). NGOs therefore have rarely been the target or recipient of cutting-edge management science. They have more often been urged to adopt standardized methods and templates, such as log frames, or have felt like they were receiving outdated management advice (Edwards, 2002; Edwards & Hulme, 1992; Fowler, 2002). With limited study of their management and organizational needs, most NGOs have not been able to benefit from solutions tailored to their unique circumstances.

Part of the problem has been ambivalence from within the NGO community itself about the role management should play in their organizations, since "few social change organizations place a high value on organization and management, at least until the need for better use of resources becomes overwhelmingly important" (Brown et al., 2004, p.

9). Not surprisingly, as Korten (1990) pointed out, “a sector that often saw itself as made up of a set of alternative actors...often remained ideologically suspicious of mainstream management ideologies and practices” (Lewis, 2008, p. 44-45). Out of this internal debate “developed an important set of tensions at the heart of the management/development interface: between those who saw the need for mainstream management practices and those who saw NGOs as sites for resisting such practices and developing alternatives” (p. 45). Debate in the late 1980s raged between competing visions of NGOs held by two camps:

those who saw the need for NGOs to professionalize their work in order to scale up their activities and take on more active roles in the mainstream of development, and those...who argued against this on the grounds that NGOs should protect their identities as organizations that provided alternative thinking – alternative both to the encroaching managerialism implied by business management orthodoxy, and to the powerful international donors such as the World Bank whose motives and practices were distrusted by many NGO activists. (p. 46)

Management is a power-laden concept and many NGOs were fighting for equality, rights, and empowerment of marginalized people. It is unsurprising then that some NGOs were resistant to embracing traditional management and hierarchical structures in which one person or group explicitly has power over another.

Nonetheless, donor agencies and others pushed their agendas and expected NGOs to professionalize, transforming from “small-scale, resource-poor organizations located on the fringes of so-called alternative development work” to efficient, effective machines with “new systems of accountability” (Lewis, 2008, p. 49). Rarely have NGO management systems “emerge[d] organically as part of an NGO’s own agenda” (Lewis, 2008, p. 49). Instead globalization and international funding bodies with power and resources have imposed Northern or Western managerialism on grassroots organizations.

Concerns have remained that if Southern NGOs become “mirrors” and incorporate Northern attributes as part of their culture, they might develop an identity mismatched to the goals, partners, and beneficiaries of their work (Fowler, 1997).

As internationally funded NGOs have developed into more formally managed organizations, NGO staff members have evolved, as well. Many NGO staff arrived as activists and had to adjust to life as managers within an organization. Lewis (2008) offered three reasons why this transition to positions of management could be difficult:

1) NGOs had a ‘culture of action’ which devalued time spent on organizational issues but united staff around a shared ‘moral purpose;’ 2) public perception that NGOs’ money should be spent on programmatic not administrative costs; and 3) a reluctance by staff interested in ‘alternative’ thinking to engage in management, a practice they perceived as ‘mainstream.’ (p. 47)

In this way NGO staff members struggled with individual internal conflicts, influenced by conflicts in the NGO and public culture surrounding them.

Additionally, hierarchical differences among NGO staff members and between them and their beneficiaries – differences between “lowers” and “uppers” – affect organizational functioning and how staff members feel about management. Some theoretical writing (Chambers, 1997; Fowler, 1997) has raised the question, “In development work, whose reality counts?” and argued that NGO professionals have the obligation to “continue to evolve, apply, share and spread participatory approaches and methods” (Chambers, 1997, p. 236), because, “in order to be sustainable, development has ultimately to be controlled by those most concerned and affected” (Fowler, 1997, p. 73). This concept is particularly relevant to the internal processes and structures of a culturally diverse NGO with staff members who share an identity with the organization’s beneficiaries. Chambers (1997) argued that NGO staff members who are “uppers” by

virtue of their identity, himself included, need to “disempower [them]selves, controlling only the minimum, handing over the stick, devolving discretion, encouraging and rewarding lowers’ initiatives, and finding fulfillment and fun in enabling others to express, analyse and act on their diverse realities” (p. 237). One way of empowering “lowers” is to bring them into positions of power within the NGO. This raises yet another complex internal dynamic that can affect how management is handled within the organization.

Resistant to conforming to mainstream or externally imposed management practices, many NGOs have developed and expanded, passionately pursuing their missions, but forgetting they need basic nuts and bolts to be able to be effective (Dichter, 1989). Rather than swinging the pendulum completely back to focus only on the basics, NGOs have struggled to strike a balance between imposed structures and their own emerging needs:

As NGOs have grown in scale and ambition, there are those that have recognized limits to their own effectiveness and begun to examine management and organization issues in more depth, recognizing that idealism and alternative ideas require appropriate organizational frameworks if they are to make any impacts on longstanding and complex problems of poverty and inequality. (Lewis, 2008, p. 54)

At this point in time the search for alternative management structures that can suit NGO needs in the face of donor needs continues.

Organizational Learning in Non-Governmental Organizations

In the face of NGO management challenges, international development research and practice have focused on organizational strengthening, labeling it capacity building (Brown et al., 2004). Organizational learning has been seen as one important way by which NGOs can build their capacity. The body of literature on organizational learning is

extensive, although mostly based on research on the corporate sector. It focuses on such concepts as knowledge acquisition and management, social systems, and productivity as related to learning. A subset of this literature that has been popular within international development is based on Senge's (1990) concept of the learning organization, a "pragmatic, normative and inspirational" model (Easterby-Smith, 1997). The ways in which both learning organizations and organizational learning have been written about in the development literature are relevant to understanding and consulting to NGOs and are explored below.

NGOs face particular struggles in creating systems and priorities for organizational learning. Edwards (2002) summarized some of these issues:

In most NGOs systems for accessing, storing, transferring and disseminating learning are underdeveloped, under resourced and inefficient. Information overload is common – there is a huge amount of information around, but too little a structure to ensure that the right people get what they need at the right time. There must be a balance between different kinds of learning...and particularly between internal and external learning, formal and informal learning processes, and the need to achieve coherence while respecting diversity...If the balance shifts too far toward the formal, local initiative may be stifled and the process can become academic; if it moves too far in the other direction mistakes might be repeated and opportunities for wider learning lost because people are only learning from their own, limited experience. (p. 336)

He suggested that "building learning capacities should take precedence over building costly structures for information storage and retrieval" (p. 336). Even with a focus on building learning capacities, other complex NGO dynamics can result in learning challenges:

There can often be many hierarchical levels and a variety of sectors or units, as well as remote offices, each with their own cultural contexts, each of which may have very different worldviews. The challenge in the development field is to instill learning capabilities, including the learning challenge of consistently and effectively working with others, in a range of very diverse organisations, which operate at

different and/or multiple levels and in profoundly different contexts. (Roper & Pettit, 2002, p. 263-4)

If NGOs are to learn as organizations, they must pay attention to their unique contexts and incorporate and address the diversity inherent within them.

Because NGOs' contexts are continually changing, the organizations must be self-aware, reflective, and adaptive. To survive, they must create and evolve their organizational structures accordingly. This process can be more successful when an organization is engaged in ongoing learning. Senge's (1990) model of a learning organization argues for the creation of "organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together." The learning organization model has been appealing as "a potential antidote to more traditional organisational practices of many NGOs, which can often be hierarchical, narrowly construed, and non-participatory" (Roper & Pettit, 2002, p. 262). Approaches based on the learning organization model have been applauded for developing knowledge and building capacity for NGOs' future development, emphasizing leadership and team development, minimizing hierarchy, and increasing accountability (Brown et al., 2004; Roper & Pettit, 2002). The concept of learning organizations has been framed as an ongoing way to ensure that an organization has the capacity to continue growing and strengthening on its own, no matter what new challenges or contexts it might face.

While NGOs have embraced the transformative promise of organizational learning in general, the learning organization concept in particular contains problematic

aspects rooted in geographical and organizational cultural differences. Since NGOs do not have shareholders or profit-making goals, corporate models of learning do not always meet the needs of NGOs and grassroots development work, which hold more mission-based values. Much of the literature and capacity building work has taken an uncritical “modern Western” orientation “with a bias towards dynamism and disequilibrium” and “rapid response and high performance” (Roper & Pettit, 2002, p. 260-1). From a social justice perspective, such theories from the private sector can be insensitive to local contexts and unconcerned with many NGOs’ mission to transform current societal structures (Harding & Chapman, 2004; Power, Maury, & Maury, 2002). Learning organization theory limits its own transformative capacity by not taking into account problematic underlying structures, particularly power structures, which many NGOs and the populations with whom they work target to change (Kelleher & the Gender at Work Collaborative, 2002; Roper & Pettit, 2002). Social-change oriented development literature has asked provoking questions not often found in private sector literature, such as, “What is a learning organisation learning?” and “Is the learning happening within a set of cultural and organisational norms or challenging those norms both internally and in [the organization’s] work in society?” (Kelleher & the Gender at Work Collaborative, 2002, p. 314). Thus while there remains dissatisfaction with learning organization theory on its own as a concept wholly useful to NGOs, researchers have been asking thoughtful questions to realize its potential as a tool.

Some theories that pre-date learning organization theory (Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1978; Freire, 1970) have been more embraced by the critics for being in line with NGOs’ values and social change missions and for encouraging practices such as critical reflection,

empowerment, collective action, and the transformation of values, behavior, oppressive structures, and power dynamics (Boch & Borges, 2002; Kelleher & the Gender at Work Collaborative, 2002; Roper & Pettit, 2002). For instance, Paulo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) remains a seminal work in the field. In it, Freire challenged the objectivity of knowledge and the existence of experts and argued for knowledge creation and critical analysis of one's reality as tools for empowerment and collective action (Kelleher & the Gender at Work Collaborative, 2002; Roper & Pettit, 2002). This other work might inform the concepts in the organizational learning literature and help adapt them to an NGO context. Additionally, more recent thinking, such as the suggestion that unconscious feelings play a role in the construction of reality within an organization (Von Krogh, Ichijo, & Nonaka, 2000), can also expand traditional organizational learning theory.

Diversity in Organizations

Although the international development literature has taken much from the writing on organizational learning, it has drawn minimally from organizational research and writing on diverse organizations, perhaps because much of the latter is based on the for-profit sphere. However organizational literature that has looked to address some of the changing dynamics as a result of globalization and increasingly diverse workplaces can inform an understanding of NGOs as culturally diverse settings. Diversity has been a hot topic in the field of organizational studies in recent years and there is a growing body of literature on culturally diverse organizations (Cooper, Wilson-Stark, Peterson, O'Roark, & Pennington, 2008; Romney, 2008; Sue, 2008; Thomas, 2008). Literature in this area is emerging from within existing fields, such as organizational psychology,

behavior, and development. Some are promoting new subfields, such as international organizational development and change (Neumann, Lau, & Worley, 2009). While interpretations, definitions, and approaches across the fields are diverse, they have begun to examine organizational issues in an international context, generating findings that contribute to understanding organizations operating in more than one country with international staff. Some of the issues that are particularly useful to this study are reviewed below.

To begin, diversity can be defined as

‘the range of human differences that exist among people, including age, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, physical ability, social class, religion, education, place of origin, job, rank within the hierarchy, and other characteristics that go into forming a person’s perspective.’ (Romney, 2008, p. 141)

People have different identities and every individual belongs to a number of different identity groups. Identity group membership in turn influences organizational dynamics. Alderfer’s (1987) theory of Embedded Intergroup Relations, which will be fully explored in Chapter III, is rooted in the presence of different group memberships in any interaction or relationship between two or more people and the resulting dynamics. Intergroup dynamics in the workplace may be conscious, but are often unconscious, particularly when they reflect historically rooted tensions and relative group power in larger society (Alderfer, 1987; Bond, 2007; Chrobot-Mason, Ruderman, Weber, Ohlott, & Dalton, 2007; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Based on these dynamics, any organization will face diversity-related issues in almost every aspect of its work, where identity group members “collide” working within the same organization (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2007, p. 2016). Some issue areas that have been studied include leadership, management, power, and staff motivation. Cultural differences on a variety of levels can affect each of these

areas and research has looked for ways to define, study, understand, and harness cultural differences for the benefit of both organizations and individuals (Christian, Porter, & Moffitt, 2006; Thomas, Jr., 2008).

Hofstede (1983) argued that nationality affects our identity, conditions our thinking, and determines our experiences with institutions and systems. From this perspective he developed an empirically-based terminology to describe national cultures and differences in people's work-related values that is now widely used and has shaped much of the literature in this area. He identified five dimensions of national orientation, including power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and time orientation. In his model, management and organizing are "culturally dependent" because they "do not consist of making or moving tangible objects, but of manipulating symbols which have meaning to the people who are managed or organized" (Hofstede, 1983, p. 87). We learn these meanings within the cultural context of our daily lives. He argued that since "organizations are devices to distribute power and...make things predictable," the decisive dimensions of [organizational] culture are Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance" (Hofstede, 1983, p. 86).

More recently, Gelfand, Erez, and Aycan (2007), in a review of the research on cross-cultural organizational behavior, attempted to outline what is known about cultural factors influencing work experiences. Areas covered included motivation, organizational commitment, psychological contracts, justice, citizenship behavior, person-environment fit, interdependence, negotiation and disputing, teams, leadership, and management. The authors noted that much of the research "focused on intracultural comparisons – comparing attitudes and behaviors across cultural groups" (Gelfand et al., 2007, p. 497).

Research has also examined the lived experiences of diverse populations within organizations. In reviewing the literature Sue (2008) found that marginalized groups could experience detrimental climates at work based on co-worker biases, affecting productivity, promotion, and retention. Sue et al. (2007) found that employees of color, women, and gays often described their workplaces to be hostile, unsupportive, and invalidating.

Leadership and Management

Leadership and management has been a focal area of study within diversity research. Viewing existing management theories as ethnocentric, many researchers and practitioners over the past few decades have articulated a need for newer theories of management and leadership that take cultural diversity into account (Hofstede, 1983). In addition, cultural context has been identified as an important factor for leaders to consider in determining the most effective leadership strategies within their organizations (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2007).

Hofstede (1983) proposed Individualism and Power Distance as the most relevant dimensions for leadership. Individualism focuses on the fundamental issue of “the relation between an individual and his or her fellow individuals” and whether a society is loosely or tightly integrated (Hofstede, 1983, p. 79). Power Distance is “how society deals with the fact that people are unequal” and the resulting “degree of inequality” (Hofstede, 1983, p. 81). He offered examples such as the fact that the United States, which scores high on Individualism, has generated leadership theories based on the idea that individuals ultimately seek “self-interest,” and the fact that “the word ‘duty,’ which implies obligations towards others or towards society, does not appear at all in the U.S.

theories” (Hofstede, 1983, p. 85). On the other hand, he found that “leadership in a Collectivist society...is a group phenomenon” (Hofstede, 1983, p. 85).

Power Distance affects concepts of participatory leadership, as well. Hofstede (1983) found that in the U.S. “individual subordinates are allowed to participate in the leader’s decisions, but these remain the leader’s decisions” (p. 86). In countries with higher Power Distances, many of these in the Global South, “individual subordinates as a rule do not want to participate,” expecting “that leaders lead autocratically,” and “by their own behavior make it difficult for leaders to lead in any other way” (Hofstede, 1983, p. 86). However, in Collectivist societies with high Power Distance, including all Asian countries, “subordinates in a group can still influence the leader” (Hofstede, 1983, p. 86). In cultures with low Power Distance, “management privileges” can be uncomfortable (Hofstede, 1983, p. 86). While not a nationality, NGOs, which strive for equality among all staff, might be seen as low in Power Distance and therefore have managers who are uncomfortable in their roles.

One responsibility of leaders and managers is to motivate their staff. Motivation, also varies by culture, particularly with respect to Individualism. In an Individualized society people are motivated by a “need to fulfill their obligations towards themselves,” whereas in a Collectivist society people work “to fulfill their obligations towards their ingroup” which might be “their family” or a “larger unit: their enterprise or their country” and “seek ‘face’ in their relationships with ingroup members” (Hofstede, 1983, p. 87). For instance, in the United States “people are basically motivated by a desire to achieve something,” but in other countries “security” and “maintenance of good interpersonal relations” are “powerful motivators” (Hofstede, 1983, p. 87). The implication for leaders

is that they must create organizations with possibilities for “individual performance” and “interpersonal solidarity” depending on the culture of their staff members (Hofstede, 1983, p. 87).

Another leadership responsibility is setting organizational policy, a task embedded in culturally bound concepts of equity and inequities in larger society. Policies can support or discourage different groups within an organization and groups may have different needs based on societal inequities in health care, employment, and education (Sue, 2008). At the same time, some cultures feel that attending to the different support needed by different groups is unfair, whereas others see unfairness when these differences are ignored (Bond, 2007). Cultures can also view fairness differently based on their level of Power Distance and perceptions of types of justice (Kim & Leung, 2007).

Settings that Support Diversity

Studies have begun to determine which factors make a work environment supportive of diversity. Based on a multi-year case study, Bond (2007) suggested that such settings recognize that experience and privilege vary across identity groups and have four main qualities:

1. Contextualized understanding: an emphasis on understanding people [and their differences] in relationship to their contexts
2. Culture of connection: a sense of connection among members that helps bridge differences
3. Recognition of multiple realities: differences are acknowledged
4. Accountability for impact: individuals are held accountable for the impact (versus intent) of their actions (Bond, 2007, p.16-19)

Ely and Thomas (2001) added that organizations that have an integration-and-learning perspective toward diversity can achieve the benefits and desired outcomes of having a

diverse organization. They defined the integration-and-learning perspective as one in which the following occurs:

the insights, skills, and experiences [that] employees have developed as members of various cultural identity groups are potentially valuable resources that the work group can use to rethink its primary tasks and redefine its markets, products, strategies, and business practices in ways that will advance its mission. (Ely & Thomas, 2001, p. 240)

Sue and Constantine (2005) offered an “ideal and aspirational definition of a multicultural organization,” as opposed to a monocultural one. The multicultural organization should aim to be the following:

committed (action as well as words) to diverse representation throughout all levels, sensitive to maintaining an open, supportive, and responsive environment, working toward and purposefully including elements of diverse cultures in its ongoing operations, carefully monitoring organizational policies and practices to the goals of equal access and opportunity, and authentic in responding to changing policies and practices that block cultural diversity. (Sue & Constantine, 2005, p. 223)

This multicultural organization is consistent with the concept of multiculturalism, which argues for the equal status of all cultures present in a diverse setting, as opposed to having one dominant or promoted culture. The examples above illustrate how, with the wide focus on diversity in the literature and growing number of studies, researchers are generating similar but nuanced concepts of organizational characteristics that support diversity.

Consulting to Diverse and Non-Governmental Organizations

As writing and thinking about capacity building in the international development literature have grown, so has its application in NGOs. The work has been conducted by support NGOs and consultants, but perhaps most often by donor organizations, who view their relationships with grantees as inherently capacity building. However, due to the

power differential and donor expectations of Western-style organization and management, NGOs can have difficulty honestly revealing their organizational development needs to the donors that can meet them, directly or indirectly (Harding & Chapman, 2004). Donors, beneficiaries, and NGOs themselves all hold the organizations to high standards, even though resources and capacities are usually limited. While still nascent, independent consulting to NGOs has the potential to carve out a larger role in capacity building, separate from, if perhaps still funded by, donor institutions.

The limited resources that organizational consultants can turn to as guidance for consulting include the NGO management, capacity building, and diversity literature and journalism and books on relevant geographical and socio-political issues. One exception is Fowler's 1997 guide, *Striking a balance: A guide to enhancing the effectiveness of non-governmental organisations in international development*. Drawing on a wide range of research and personal experience, the book offered guidance to those working to improve the functioning of NGOs. Paying attention to diversity challenges on multiple levels, Fowler (1997) highlighted relevant cultural differences between the Global North and South. Differences included Northern individualistic perspectives versus Southern collectivist values of "support and reciprocity," often misread as "corruption or nepotism;" Northern favoritism toward short-term results as opposed to longer-term consensus-building processes; Northern expectations of simultaneous equal power distribution and quick decision making among Southern NGOs and staff; and Northern priorities of effective service delivery versus caring. Amid this diversity, Fowler (1997) suggests that in order to help NGOs' cultures reflect their values, one should ensure that "beliefs and values are understood and actively shared" among staff

members and that “structure and systems reflect principles derived from organisational values” (p. 73).

NGO leaders and managers are key players in aligning organizational values and practices. Fowler (1997) provided a useful outline for their unique “critical tasks:”

To provide a consistent guiding image and moral ethos; to retain and promote sensitivity to deprivation and injustice experienced by the poor; to build a culture of association within the organisation which encourages sharing, and promotes reflection for learning; to bring coherence between members’ interests and organisational objectives; to act as a ‘holder’ for the psychological needs and frustrations of staff and volunteers; to reconcile individuals’ values and contributions with collective needs; to put the process of personal relations into sustainable development; and to enable followers to become leaders themselves. (p. 75-6)

He stressed how important it was for NGO leaders and managers to do their work with transparency and an eye toward social justice for all stakeholders, including organizational staff, especially when both foreigners and locals were involved. A final important contribution was a summary of key traits needed by “change agents” working with or within NGOs: “patience, a habit of listening rather than talking, interpersonal sensitivity, team work, self-confidence without arrogance, empathy, commitment, respectfulness, diplomacy, perseverance, communication skills, and an ability to analyse and diagnose events” (Fowler, 1997, p. 84).

To guide consultants working in culturally diverse NGOs, the organizational literature offers theoretical writing, building on diversity research as described above, to complement Fowler’s guide. The American Psychological Association (2003) produced a set of guidelines for work in multicultural settings, however they defined multicultural “narrowly, to refer to interactions between individuals from minority ethnic and racial groups in the United States and the dominant European-American culture” (p. 2).

Recommendations more specific to consulting to organizations and to international work have come from within the organizational fields, addressing a need for better education of consultants around the influence of diversity and culture on their work (Sue, 2008). The literature has been based mostly on consultant experience and stressed the importance of cultural competence with self-awareness as a critical base.

Cultural competence has been defined as “the knowledge, attitude, and skills required to work with people from different cultures” (Romney, 2008, p. 142). In order to be culturally competent and understand their client systems, consultants need to learn about other cultures, both directly from clients and from books and other sources (Cooper et al., 2008). They also need to learn about and be attuned to the impact of organizational culture and climate on marginalized groups within organizations (Sue, 2008). On a broader level, every consultant-client relationship can be seen as a cross-cultural one and all organizations are settings for intergroup interactions. Therefore, the more a consultant approaches consultations from this perspective, in addition to being armed with cultural knowledge and paying attention to diversity issues in any presenting organizational problem, the better prepared he or she will be to do the work (Romney, 2008; Thomas, Jr., 2008).

An important building block of cultural competence is self-awareness. More than 25 years ago, Hofstede (1983) called upon consultants and researchers to be self-aware in their cross-cultural work, asking those in the field to “bring about...an understanding of how the culture in which we grew up and which is dear to us affects our thinking differently from other peoples’ thinking, and what this means for the transfer of management practices and theories” (p. 89). In the past few years, researchers and

practitioners have continued to emphasize this crucial foundation to engaging in organizational work. Romney (2008) framed self-awareness as cultural humility and encourages reflective practice that questions one's assumptions, lenses, and tools. Cooper et al. (2008) told consultants to "bring your authentic self to your work" (p. 192), but reminded them that it also "takes concentrated effort to avoid cultural myopia and colonialism" (p. 199). They suggested that consultants listen to, respect, validate, and value multiple perspectives and individuals' different realities. Sue (2008) highlighted and unpacked the need for consultants "to understand his or her own worldview in relation to other diverse worldviews related to race, gender, sexual orientation, and other sociodemographic dimensions" (p. 159), without which clashes between diverse realities "will continue to be played out in how [organizational] problems are defined and in the solutions that are offered" (p. 163). Thus writing continues to encourage consultants to build their self-awareness as much as possible in order to make themselves better tools to help diverse organizations.

In approaching a consultation, consultants must think critically about the theories and implicit assumptions they bring with them. In the context of working with diverse organizations, a growing body of writing has looked at the cultural bias of Western management theories that have dominated the literature. In one article relevant to this study, Richards (1991) found change and management development impossible to introduce within a Southeast Asian cultural context. Marshak (1994), aiming for a wider and deeper understanding of organizational change across cultures, examined a model of change based in East Asian and Confucian traditions and compared it to Lewin's (1951) traditional organizational development model. Wong (2007) questioned traditionally accepted perceptions of the superiority of the Western "rational, bureaucratic"

organizational model and its transformative potential among organizations that might adopt it within the Global South. He identified how management theories and practices have traveled across national borders as they have spread around the world, but have changed inevitably in the process, and called for greater awareness and discussion of such processes, with particular attention to historical context and power.

The diversity writing most relevant to working with NGOs has taken a social justice approach (Romney, 2008; Serrano-Garcia & Bond, 1994; Sue, 2008). Romney (2008) defined socially just organizations as ones that “do not discriminate and work to include, empower, and promote individuals and groups who have been discriminated against,” providing “equity and fairness for [their] members” (p. 141). From this perspective the author pointed out the tendency for diversity consulting to “deny the role of power and privilege” and highlighted one of the most difficult organizational tensions to reconcile, “the interests of the underrepresented with the interests and needs of the organization as a whole” (Romney, 2008, p. 141). Consultants must be “on the side of all members of a social system” in order to help them “come together [to] accomplish the organizational mission” (Romney, 2008, p. 141). To understand the perspectives of all members and build relationships, an assessment is the ideal first step in diversity work. Consultations should be inclusive, legitimize all voices, and encourage intergroup dialogue and reflection on the systems of privilege, power, and culture in which the organizations are embedded. Sue (2008) argued for a style of practice which she called multicultural organizational consulting, one that should not be “value neutral,” but instead aim to get organizations “to review their policies, practices, and organizational

structures to remove potential barriers” and adjust them to “support and advance cultural diversity...altering the power relations...to minimize structural discrimination” (p. 167).

Overall, the literature provides guidance to consultants to work on individual, group, and universal levels, build trust and relationships, pay attention to context, recognize different group needs for organizational support, and remain aware of language differences and accompanying challenges in the consultation (Cooper et al., 2008). Throughout any work with a client in a diverse setting, the consultant needs to be ready to harness his or her cultural competence and play multiple roles, including expert, educator, and process analyst (Sue, 2008).

Further research is needed to deepen our understanding of effective consulting to culturally diverse organizations through practice and science, providing a database to inform both consultants and leaders on how such organizations can take advantage of their diversity (Cooper et al., 2008; Neumann et al., 2009). More studies are also needed of specific populations, particularly national cultures in addition to sub-national cultures. For instance, the “culture-specific issues” section of the *Consulting Psychology Journal*’s 2008 selected bibliography on diversity consulting contains no articles focusing on Southeast Asians, as distinct from Asian-Americans, except one article on Filipinos. In addition to within culture group research, researchers have called for a greater focus on “the dynamics of culture in intercultural encounters,” including “differences in motives, justice, negotiation, and leadership” (Gelfand et al., 2007, p. 497). More study is needed on how “hybrid cultures” are created when more than one culture is present in an organization, and “how people negotiate and manage their cultural differences in ways that increase positive outcomes both for themselves and for the organizations” (Gelfand et al., 2007, p. 497).

Despite limited literature directly addressing consulting with culturally diverse NGOs, there is encouragement to do this work and build the existing body of knowledge based on practice. From a social justice perspective there is a need for NGOs to connect their values to their organizational structures and become more democratic organizations where voices at all levels hold power (Kelleher & the Gender at Work Collaborative, 2002; Power et al., 2002). In order to support this goal, theory and consulting practice need to innovate and develop accordingly, in conversation with each other. Brown et al. (2004) called on practitioners to use the theory that is offered and dive into application with social change organizations, pushing the boundaries of current practice, relying on trial, error, and innovation:

Encourage OD theorists and practitioners to make forays into new domains where they will inevitably be operating at (and often over) the edge of their competence – but where new perspectives, alternatives and possibilities may be revealed by their successes and failures. The field can grow from the experiences of mavericks as well as from the work of established practitioners – indeed, the OD field was in large part founded by mavericks from better-established fields and professions who applied their insights to compelling social problems. So we would argue for both processes—codifying and professionalizing on the basis of existing experience and exploring and inventing in the problem domains where OD might have value to add. (Brown et al., 2004, p. 33)

Researcher-practitioners have opportunities to learn from real organizations and fill gaps in the literature, for much of the writing on NGOs has been theoretical and experience based, but not empirical, and includes few case studies thoroughly examining organizations in depth (Ahmed, 2002; Boch & Borges, 2002). The body of literature studying NGOs as organizations, how they develop and learn, and consultations to them is still young. In addition, as NGOs and their contexts continue to evolve, existing literature can become less relevant. Thus there is a continual need for new studies on NGOs and new thinking to accompany their growth and changes.

Building on the existing bodies of literature reviewed, this study attempts to explore some of the current gaps, the largest and most specific of which is the lack of case studies documenting NGOs from the perspective of organizational studies. A few do exist and have raised interesting findings. One study of an NGO in Pakistan found that organizational fairness, supervisor support, extrinsically satisfying job conditions, and female and personal supportiveness were significantly related to employees' perceived organizational support, which was in turn related to their organizational commitment (Salim, 2005). While mostly consistent with findings in the non-NGO sector, this study found that two job conditions not usually examined in developing countries – female supportiveness and personal supportiveness – were important factors in employees' perceived organizational support. A study of leadership in Palestinian community-based NGOs in Israel (Zeiden, 2000) found that the organizations faced different issues than Western organizations did, calling for correspondingly different leadership competencies. Seven clusters of competencies, mostly focused on relationships inside the NGOs, were found to be most important, including Progressive and Committed Vision with Strategic Adaptability, Systematic, Social Activist, Adaptive Foresight, Interpersonally Open and Responsive, Democratic and Organized. Least important factors focused on external relationship and technical-financial issues including Financial Know-how, External Acquaintance and Networks, and Diplomatic and Catalytic. A qualitative study that facilitated self-analysis and assessment among indigenous public health NGOs in Suriname examined perceived levels of organizational empowerment and relationships between NGOs, communities, governments, and donors (Kok Sey Tjong-Caffe, 1997). Finding NGOs to be weak, unstable, and dependent on external resources, the study saw

a need for more research on empowerment, as well as capacity and relationship building with indigenous NGOs.

In light of the limited research and case studies documenting organizational issues faced by NGOs, particularly culturally diverse ones, as well as consultations with such organizations, it is important for consultants and theorists alike to know more about what is occurring in the organizations on the ground, as they grow and change in an ever-evolving environment. To this end, this study offers an examination of one culturally diverse NGO through the lens of an organizational psychology theory, Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory (Alderfer, 1987). The study is based on a consultation using the theory's related organizational diagnosis methodology, which provides a comprehensive tool to help organizations learn about and transform themselves, while addressing concerns about cultural diversity. In doing so, the consultation attempted to meet two of Bond's (2007) criteria for settings that support diversity; it strove to create a "contextualized understanding" of the NGO staff members in relationship to their contexts and to identify the "multiple realities" that existed within the organization. The study's findings add to the literature on how organizations develop in a non-Western context, of relevance to the fields of international development, organizational diversity, and consulting.

CHAPTER III

EMBEDDED INTERGROUP RELATIONS THEORY

As the brief history of NGO management in Chapter II suggests, NGOs are diverse organizations that exist and evolve within a changing, dynamic world. Culturally diverse NGOs add particularly complicated internal forces by bringing together a mix of individual identities among their staff. NGO management literature has paid much attention to management, but not as much to the human make-up of the organizations – those doing the managing and being managed. Examining the dynamic forces within and surrounding culturally diverse NGOs is crucial to understanding them and an appropriate theory can offer a lens for this purpose.

Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory (Alderfer, 1987) provides a framework for analyzing and understanding individuals' and groups' experiences with a focus on their identities. Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory is an open systems theory that seeks to understand organizational dynamics by examining individual, group, and systemic relationships. Alderfer (1997) defined a group by both its inherent properties, internally and externally, as well as the relationship between its members:

A human group is a collection of individuals (1) who have significantly interdependent relations with each other, (2) who perceive themselves as group, reliably distinguishing members from nonmembers, (3) whose group identity is recognized by nonmembers, (4) who, as group members acting alone or in concert, have significantly interdependent relations with other groups, and (5) whose roles in the group are therefore a function of expectations from themselves, from other group members, and from non-group members. (p. 202)

In Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory, each individual is a member of certain identity and organizational groups, each of which share a common world or organizational view. Identity groups are usually ones into which a person is born, such as gender and ethnicity. Organizational groups refer to a person's place in an organization, such as department or position in the hierarchy. Dynamics then arise from interactions between these groups at both the conscious and unconscious levels and can be derived from intergroup relations both within the organization and in the world at large.

Alderfer (2005) laid out five laws of intergroup relations that govern group boundaries, power differences, affective patterns, cognitive formations, and leadership. Systemic forces are key, and each interaction between individuals is not just about the individuals, but also about the groups, identity and organizational, that each represents.

Alderfer's (2005) second law states:

In any transaction with others, each individual – whether intending or not – represents multiple identity (e.g., gender, race, family, sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc.) and organization (program, work-group, hierarchy, profession) groups. Which groups a person represents in a given transaction depends upon which other specific groups are present and on the relationship among those groups.

Thus, depending on context, certain group memberships can be more salient than others. This context, or the system in which the group is “embedded,” plays an important role in shaping the relationships and determines the group's “optimal boundary permeability” under which the group functions best at any given moment in time. As Alderfer (2005) explained,

the vitality of a group depends on the extent to which the group's boundary is neither too open (thereby risking the hazards of being under-bounded) nor too closed (thereby risking the dangers of being over-bounded) in relation to the environment in which it is embedded. A relatively malevolent environment or especially emotionally demanding task requires lower permeability than a

relatively benevolent environment or less emotionally demanding work for optimal vitality.

Boundaries can be a helpful unifying concept to explain an organization's functioning.

Adjusting them is often the aim of interventions working to alleviate organizational problems.

Within the bounds of individuals' group memberships and contextual forces, Alderfer's theory leaves room for each individual to exist as a unique combination. His third law, "The Experience of Persons as Multiple Group Representatives" states that

The affect, cognition, and behavior of persons as multiple group representatives depend upon: (a) their intra-psychic methods for coping with complex affect and cognition; (b) their unique relationships to the multiple identity and organization groups evoked in a given transaction; (c) the affect, cognition, and behavior of their multiple identity and organization groups evoked by the transaction; and (d) the qualities of the inter-group relationships among those groups. (2005)

Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory can be a theory that examines organizations on the group level, but also leaves room for individuality.

Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory also posits that unconscious "parallel processes" can occur in an organization as a result of the fact that the relationships between the groups individuals represent affect individual relationships. Under the theory, groups can only become functional and productive when unconscious forces such as these have been raised to the conscious level and addressed. Thus understanding these group memberships and how they interact can lead to a better understanding of how an organization works.

This suggests that to understand NGOs better, it can be useful to explore staff members' identity and organizational groups and the resulting intergroup dynamics.

Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory is particularly useful with culturally diverse

NGOs because of the diversity of the staff and the interaction with beneficiaries of the organizations' work.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory provides an intergroup perspective through which organizations can be understood by focusing on the relationships between the groups within an organization. Organizational diagnosis is a methodology that grew out of this theory and provides a way to learn more about the lived experience of working at an organization from an intergroup perspective.

This study explores the application of Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory to one NGO using organizational diagnosis methodology, asking the question, “What does an NGO look like through the lens of Embedded Intergroup Dynamics Theory?” This chapter provides an overview of the organizational diagnosis methodology and then describes how it was used in consultation with the NGO. The chapter also details the methodology used to further analyze the organization through the lens of Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory after the consultation, in order to more completely describe the NGO, the groups within it, and the resulting intergroup dynamics.

Organizational Diagnosis Overview

Based on his theory of Embedded Intergroup Relations, Alderfer (1980) developed a methodology for assessing organizations called organizational diagnosis and defined it as “a process based on behavioral science theory for publicly entering a human system, collecting valid data about human experiences with that system, and feeding that

information back to the system to promote increased understanding of the system by its members” (p. 459). This process enables an organization to learn about itself and follows three steps – entry, data collection, and feedback. Each step in the process has its own goal and prescribed methods, but the process is also recursive.

During entry, the consultant has two goals: 1) “to determine which units of the system (individual, group, and organization) will participate in the diagnosis” and 2) to reach an agreement with the client about the consultant’s and client’s “respective roles during data collection and feedback” (Alderfer, 1980, p. 460). In this phase, the consultant sets the parameters for the diagnosis and contracts with the client for both the work and to set everyone’s roles during the project.

The goals of the second step, data collection, are 1) “to gather valid information about the nature of the client system” and 2) “to prepare an analysis of that data for delivery to the client during feedback” (Alderfer, 1980, p. 462). The data collection phase “begins when the consultant prepares a methodology for eliciting information and contacts members of the client system to implement the methodology” (Alderfer, 1980, p. 462). It “ends when the consultant has analyzed the data and is prepared to feed back the results to the client” (Alderfer, 1980, p. 462).

The third phase of a diagnosis is feedback, which has the goal of “promot[ing] increased understanding of the client system by its members” (Alderfer, 1980, p. 466). Usually, feedback “consists of a series of meetings between the consultant and client during which the consultant presents the data analysis and the parties discuss and interpret the data” (Alderfer, 1980, p. 466). It is this step that ends the diagnosis “and possibly prepares for a transition to planned change” (Alderfer, 1980, p. 466). Alderfer

(1980) suggested that “overall feedback design should bring together people who are interested in the information presented...in a way that is most likely to promote learning from the experience” (p. 466).

Organizational diagnosis allows the consultant to use his or her understanding of the system and the groups within it to design a process that takes this perspective into account to best promote learning within the organization. It is a particularly useful methodology for an organization that does not already take time to be self-aware and struggles with intergroup communication and understanding. Organizational diagnosis provides an organization with a framework within which it can learn about itself, uncover some of the underlying conscious and unconscious dynamics that can get in the way of the work it is trying to accomplish, and start on a pathway toward change.

Organizational Diagnosis of the Non-Governmental Organization

Over a period of three months, I contracted with a client organization, NGO X, and followed the three prescribed steps of organizational diagnosis methodology (Alderfer, 1980) to gather data from its members and learn about the organization. This section describes the three steps of diagnosis as they were conducted. The first step, entry, includes the context of the consultation and a description of the organization, based on what I learned during this first phase. The second step, data collection, includes a description of how data were collected from the organization and analyzed. The last step, feedback, explains how I delivered my findings to the organization, how staff responded to them, how I made sense of the findings together with the members of the organization, and how I concluded the consultation.

Preserving the Confidentiality of Organization and Participants

Due to the political situation in the region, the security of NGO X, the staff members within it, and the communities with whom they worked might be compromised if any were identified in this study. Additionally, the NGO world is small and it can be easy to identify an organization if too many details of its work are revealed. Therefore, in order to maintain my commitments as a consultant to the organization, I do not explore many aspects of NGO X in detail. I discuss the staff mainly in terms of two ethnic groups, Asians and Westerners. A number of other ethnic groups were represented among the staff members from one Asian country, but to preserve confidentiality and protect staff identities, I refer to the specific groups as ethnicities A, B, C, and D. I do not explore the cultures in depth, even though they significantly affected organizational dynamics. NGO X's programmatic work is kept general and referred to only as having three branches, the office and Training Programs A and B. I also only superficially explore the context in which NGO X worked, including the history and politics of the region. While the compromise of concealing these details diminishes the richness of the individual, group, and organizational stories, it allows this organization to be studied at all.

Entry

NGO X, based in a city in Southeast Asia, has a decade-long history of working for human rights in the region. A second part of the organization is based in the United States, but my work focused on the Southeast Asian branch. I arrived at NGO X through an American volunteer placement organization without a set work plan, but with a

general understanding that I would be consulting on its organizational functioning to the leadership of the NGO. During my initial visit to the NGO, I learned the context in which the organization was operating at the time and that leadership thought that the timing was right to focus on its internal functions. I started making observations and taking detailed field notes.

The Southeast Asian director and assistant director, based on consultation with the executive director and United States director, shared with me their presenting problems:

1) gaps in knowledge about what tasks staff members were doing, what they wanted to be doing, and how long they were taking to do them; and 2) individuals rarely taking leadership or decision-making responsibility. They asked me to focus my work on staff task assignments and roles (what they called a “role review”), decision making, and time keeping.

From this initial contact with NGO X I had a basic understanding of the organization and its context. However, I needed to learn more about the organizational dynamics and diverse experiences of various groups and employees of NGO X that might have been contributing to these dynamics. I shared with leadership my theoretical lens and discussed with them what I thought was the best approach. We contracted for me to conduct an organizational diagnosis with the Southeast Asian branch, still focusing on the areas requested.

Description of the Non-Governmental Organization and its Context

As discussed above, I gained an initial understanding of NGO X during the entry phase. I will provide this description here. A more complete description of the

organization, based on the diagnosis and theoretical analysis, is presented in Chapter V – Results I.

At the time of the consultation, NGO X was a unique organization straddling the lines of being a grassroots, community-based organization and an international NGO, with no clear model to follow based on other organizations. It existed within a region rich with historical and political context that greatly influenced the organization's external work as well its internal dynamics. The NGO had developed three areas of programmatic work and helped build a human rights movement. An external evaluation conducted the year before my work had shown that the NGO was having an impact on its target communities and that the movement was growing. Still, NGO X faced certain challenges working both with these communities on the local level, as well as on the international level. These challenges were reflected internally in the issues the organization faced employing staff from the communities in which it worked, as well as from other countries.

During the time I spent with NGO X, it was governed by an eight-person board of directors and run by an executive director. The executive director oversaw both the United States branch and the Southeast Asian branch. As mentioned previously, this study focuses on the Southeast Asian branch, although the U.S. director was working from the Southeast Asia branch during the time of the consultation. Within the Southeast Asia branch, under the executive director, were a director and assistant director (also sometimes called team leader and assistant team leader), who oversaw the entire Southeast Asia program.

The rest of the organization was roughly divided into three sub-groups. Two were separate training programs and the third was a group of office staff members who conducted other programmatic research and work. Each group was housed in a separate location around the city. Training Program A was the organization's original training program, while Training Program B was a newer addition. Both training programs were residential and students came to live on site during the period of the programs in the same building complexes where the training program offices were located. During the consultation, Training Program A had 16 students who were participating in a year-long program. Training Program B did not have any students at the time, but brought together 12 students every year for a four-month program. At the time of the consultation, NGO X staff members were a diverse group – young to middle-aged, from both Western and Asian countries (all but one Southeast Asian), and an almost even mix of men and women.

In terms of job titles, the office group included a program coordinator, project coordinator, research and program associate, project associate, alumni program coordinator, and administrator. At the time of the consultation they also had an intern. A team leader ran Training Program A but was on a leave of absence during my consultation. Under this leader were a training coordinator, administrator, teacher, two teaching assistants (also called interns), and two cooks. They had one volunteer. Training Program B was run by a training program coordinator and was also staffed by two program associates, two alumni coordinators, and two cooks.

As was fitting an organization that felt the need for a role review, there was no one set organizational chart. There was a proposed Training Program B structure, which

the program was in the process of filling out through hiring. There was a “structure truck,” which was the term the management team used to describe the proposed structure for the office-based staff members involved in one branch of NGO X’s programmatic work. Lastly there was a proposed structure that delineated supervisory relationships among the office staff. No one at NGO X could show me an organizational chart that represented a complete picture of the current structure of the organization. Figure 1 is a chart based on my understanding of the organization at the time of the diagnosis. The lines represent supervisory relationships. Dotted lines represent unclear relationships. For ease of presentation, this is a simplified version that does not include all of the unofficial relationships, particularly between members of the leadership team and staff members at every level of the organization.

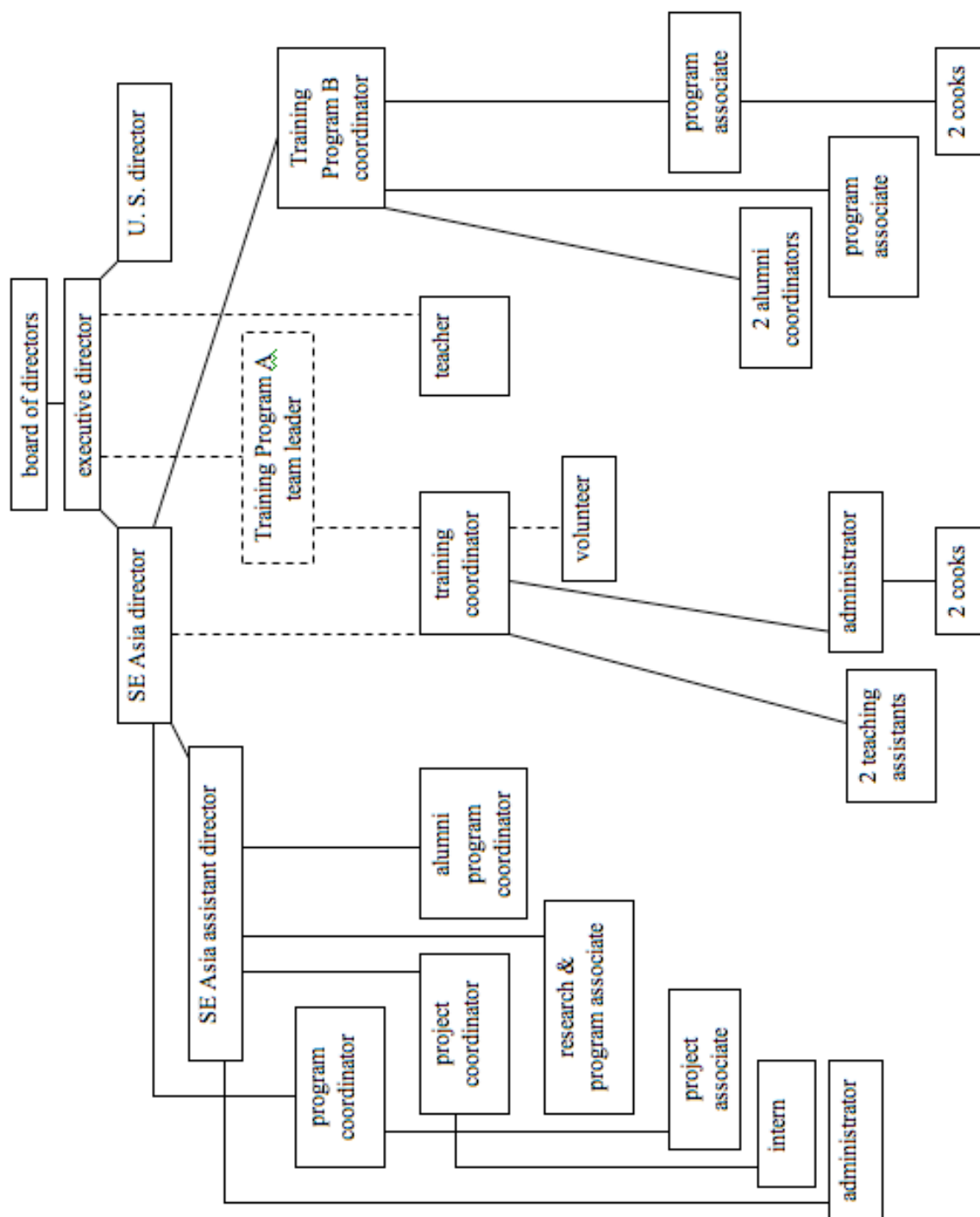


Figure 1. Organizational chart. This figure illustrates the organization at the time of consultation. Lines represent supervisory relationships. Dotted lines indicate unclear relationships.

Context of the Organizational Diagnosis

When I entered the organization, NGO X was responding to changes in the external environment, strengthening existing programs, and contemplating regional expansion. International events had brought more attention than usual to some of the areas in which NGO X worked, providing the organization with an even greater opportunity to affect change. How the organization had responded to these events, however, made it clear that staff roles, decision making, and time keeping needed to be clarified for the organization to function effectively. In addition, one staff member was on extended paternity leave and three full-time staff members (not including short-term interns and volunteers) had joined the organization within the previous six months. In light of the organizational context, as well as recent changes in staff, leadership saw that the organization was in need of internal attention to better equip it to work toward its mission.

As part of my consultation to NGO X, I signed a contract to provide the organization with a feedback report and recommendations as a result of the diagnosis. In addition I would help plan and facilitate a core values discussion at one of their staff meetings. I would discuss my recommendations, problem solve, and develop and leave them with a step-by-step plan to implement organizational changes based on what I found through my work. I committed to helping them implement the plan as time allowed, beginning with a revision of job descriptions and potentially including assistance in developing models for decision-making structures. I also offered to help develop an evaluation plan for implementation of any organizational changes.

Data Collection

As has already been discussed, I studied NGO X using the organizational diagnosis approach (Alderfer, 1980). I decided that this methodology, based on Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory, would allow me to examine the different group memberships the staff represented and the interactions between them as keys to understanding the underlying dynamics of the organization. Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory and diagnosis methodology would give me tools to explore and help uncover some of the unconscious dynamic forces I suspected were keeping the organization stuck and focused on the more superficial tasks of renaming and rewriting job descriptions.

With my theoretical framework in mind, I drafted a work plan for the diagnosis. I would gather information from staff through individual interviews based on the areas of focus management requested: 1) tasks needed to complete NGO X's mission and current staff task assignments and roles, 2) staff perceptions and experiences of keeping time, and 3) staff perceptions and experiences of decision making. I would also explore through the interviews how staff experienced being in the organization in light of their identity group memberships. I would garner further information about the organization through observations and archival review.

Participants

I conducted 23 semi-structured interviews with NGO X staff as part of the contracted organizational diagnosis. Interviewees included eleven office staff members, three of whom were directors (the executive director, Southeast Asia director, and U.S.

director), seven staff from Training Program A, and five staff from Training Program B. Three of the staff I interviewed were interns or volunteers from other countries.

Ten participants were female and thirteen were male. Fifteen participants were from Asian countries, while eight were from Western countries, including the United States, England, and Canada. All eight Westerners were white. The Asian participants came from four different countries, and the eleven participants from one of these countries represented four different ethnic groups. Five were from Ethnicity A, four from Ethnicity B, and one each from Ethnicity C and Ethnicity D. Again, I have concealed the identities of the ethnic groups to preserve confidentiality.

I did not interview the four cooks who worked for the training programs, since none of them spoke English and I chose not to use a translator to protect the confidentiality of what they would share in the interview. They were all Asian, two from the country in which NGO X was based and two from the country where NGO X targeted most of its work. They were not involved in any programmatic work.

Instrument

I developed a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A) for individual interviews with predominantly open-ended questions to allow staff to share with me what they felt was important without feeling too restricted by the interview protocol. Questions were intended to elicit information that would provide the organization's management and staff with an independent report and analysis of the state of the organization. Questions focused on staff perspectives on their jobs, as well as on the larger organizational issues the management felt were important at the time, including roles, decision making, and timekeeping. Through the interview questions, I attempted to

understand each participant's work experience on his or her own terms. Within my theoretical framework, I knew it was important to have an understanding, as much as possible, of what it was like for an individual to be in the organization, with respect to his or her identity and organizational group memberships. For this reason I included an interview question that allowed me to ask each participant what it was like for him or her to be a member of this organization, based on group memberships that either I had observed were salient or that they had noted during their interview.

I designed the interview, rooted in theory (Kahn & Cannell, 1965; Whyte & Whyte, 1984), to ease the participant into and out of the interview. The protocol was divided into three sections. The first section focused on job description and role. Within this section, the opening questions were more closed and straightforward to build trust and rapport with the participant. The questions that followed addressed potentially sensitive topics, including participant impressions and feelings about his or her job, co-workers, organizational functioning, and identity and organizational group member experiences. The second section covered time keeping systems within the organization, as requested by management. The third section was the closing and included questions to elicit important points from the participant, provide closure, and allow for the participant to share any last words he or she would like.

Procedures

In the diagnosis I used multiple methods to collect my data to make my conclusions more robust and increase their validity and reliability (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Handler, 1989). These methods included semi-structured interviews, observations, archival review, and use of self.

Interviews. To collect the interview data used for this study, I sent an email (Appendix B) to the subjects announcing the work and requesting to schedule interviews. Each interview took place in a private location at the participant's workplace during standard work hours. Prior to the commencement of the interviews, I read the oral consent script (Appendix C) to the participant. Before beginning the interviews, the participants had the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns. Participation in interviews was voluntary. At each interview I gave the participant the option to decline the interview and promised to keep any refusal confidential. Participants also had the option to refuse to answer any question. The interviews were to last no more than two hours, unless the participant wanted to continue for longer. Ultimately oral consent was received for each of the 23 interviews I had planned to conduct and no interviews were declined. The organization has authorized me to use the data collected as part of the assessment for the purposes of my dissertation. No further involvement by the participants was necessary for the current study.

Interviews averaged about two hours each, lasting from a half hour to four hours. The interviews were each kept to two hours unless a participant wanted to continue. Two interviews were split between two sittings due to unforeseen external circumstances. I took handwritten notes during one interview and notes on a computer during the rest.

Observations. In addition to the data collected during formal interviews, I gained further insight from the time I was able to spend with the organization and its members. I attended staff meetings and observed and participated in events ranging from weekend field trips and celebratory parties with Training Program A, to Training Program B job interviews, to informal staff lunches. When I worked, I was usually in the office, which

provided me with the opportunity to watch how office staff normally interacted. All of these chances for unstructured observation allowed me to witness NGO X and its staff members go through their days and interact in their natural environments, while I paid attention to culture, relationships, and identity and organizational group memberships, all in more focused ways as my hypotheses developed. I took written field notes during the time I observed the organization, as well as on my own, when I reflected on both the organization and my work (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Whyte & Whyte, 1984). Only I had and have access to these notes.

Archival Data. NGO X provided me with a number of documents to review to further inform my work, some requested, others not. These documents included the organizational charts described earlier, existing job descriptions, recent reports to donors, the employee manual, past meeting minutes, the recent external evaluation, and intern and volunteer policies. I read these documents to enhance my understanding of the organization, particularly its history.

Use of Self. The final piece of my method was my use of self (Alderfer, 1985; Alderfer, 1990; Kram, 1985; Smith & Zane, 1999). In conducting the diagnosis with NGO X I used myself as a tool to help me understand the organization better. This was particularly useful, and appropriate, when conducting a diagnosis on my own. The method required me to be as self-aware as possible, both of my own feelings and identity groups, in order to understand my experience of the work. This allowed me to separate out what I was picking up from the organization and learn from it. I experienced the organization as a participant observer, but at the end of the day stepped out of the system and reflected on it, aware of my place in it. It is important to note that I, as a young,

white, Jewish, American female, brought my own identity group memberships to the process.

Treatment of Data

Each interview was given an identifying code, with no name attached to it. The code contains subject initials and demographic data. The demographic data were used in the analysis of the interviews. The interviews are kept in a password-protected file on my computer. I am the only one who knows the password. A separate password-protected file contains the codes connecting participant names to their interviews.

The organization being studied does not have access to the individual interviews. I am the only person with access to them to maintain the subjects' confidentiality as promised during the interviews. The only deliverables given to the organization at the end of my work were a feedback presentation containing themes found during the assessment and a final recommendations letter based on my findings.

Three years after the completion of the dissertation, I will permanently delete the data. The identities of individuals, as well as the organization, are disguised in the dissertation so that none can be identified.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for the diagnosis involved a dynamic relationship between the data and myself in order to generate hypotheses about the organization. With the requests of the organizational directors in mind, I analyzed the data in order to provide them with appropriate and useful feedback using methods adapted from the grounded theory method, which "uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I also relied on clinical

field methods (Alderfer, 1987; Berg & Smith, 1985) to deepen my understanding of the organization in order to have as complete a picture as possible of NGO X, its dynamics, and context. Overall, I analyzed data from my interviews, observations, archival review, and use of self in a manner consistent with Rossman and Rallis's (1998) procedures for analyzing qualitative research: 1) organizing the data; 2) becoming familiar with the data; 3) generating themes, categories, and patterns; 4) coding the data; and 5) looking for alternative explanations of the data.

I carefully reviewed the data several times, looking at each interview for themes, subgroup perspectives, and thematic content and exploring my field notes and the archival documents to deepen my understanding of the data as a whole. As suggested by Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory (Alderfer, 1987), I identified the organizational and identity groups within NGO X. Once I had identified the most salient groups, I determined some of the characteristics of each group. Interviews were then examined by relevant identity and organizational groups to find larger, common themes. For example, each of the organization's three units were examined separately to explore individual differences resulting from different work cultures. Hierarchical groups were examined to look at management and staff. Differences between males and females were explored, as well as differences between Asian and Western ethnic groups. These different groupings covered the most relevant identity and organizational groups as suggested by Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory and the case itself. I looked for overall patterns in order to protect the confidentiality of staff members, but in doing so, necessarily lost some unique points of view.

Once the initial results were determined, additional memos, field notes, and observations were again used to interpret the data and facilitate analytic insight. Final themes directly related to the experiences of the participants and were backed up with direct quotes from participants and my observational notes. The themes suggested ways to explain the data and the dynamics of NGO X.

Thus, as is essential to conducting a diagnosis from the theoretical perspective of Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory, I used multiple levels of analysis to examine the data through different lenses (Berg & Smith, 1985; Handler, 1989). I looked at the data on the individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup and systemic levels (Alderfer, 1987). I also used myself as a lens through which to examine my findings, paying attention to my feelings throughout the project to see what they might tell me about the organization, but always conscious of my own group memberships and biases. Examining the data from as many different levels and perspectives as possible was consistent with my theoretical perspective and contributed to a comprehensive set of hypotheses about the data.

Feedback

I organized and delivered the findings of the diagnosis to the organization in a way that I, as a consultant, thought would be most helpful to them. First, I organized the results into six overarching organizational themes. Within each theme I highlighted a key tension that the organization struggled to balance. I defined these tensions as “key balances,” a phrase I felt might be more comfortably heard by organization during feedback. I framed these key balances as internal issues they faced as a growing, culturally diverse NGO. The themes, and their underlying key balances, included the following:

1. Organizational identity: To be an international or grassroots organization
2. Diversity: To have a cohesive yet diverse staff made up of men and women of different ages from the Global North (West) and Global South (Southeast Asia)
3. Structure and support: To provide staff and organization with enough structure and support needed to be effective, but without losing autonomy or participation
4. Communication: To keep staff informed of each other's work, but not overwhelmed
5. Decision making: To involve staff in decision making but not have to have input from everyone in every decision
6. Life in organizational groups: To accommodate each group's perspectives and needs

Setting these themes in context, I developed a feedback presentation that included the following:

1. Summary of the diagnosis process
2. Total number of interviews conducted, broken down by staff position in the organization, gender, and ethnicity
3. Limitations of the consultation
4. Description of the feedback process
5. Conceptualization of the organization's history, growth, development, current state, future, and context

6. Summary of the current state of the organization, including its unique combination of characteristics and value added through its work
7. Six themes
8. One thing staff would change about NGO X
9. Systemic challenges
10. Discussion of respect within the organization
11. Conclusions

The feedback presentation is not included as an appendix here because it was a PowerPoint presentation that I later adapted into the more comprehensive recommendations letter (Appendix D) delivered to the organization at the end of the consultation.

Through a series of meetings, I delivered the findings of the diagnosis to the organization to promote greater understanding and provide staff members with a forum in which they could react. I had wanted to deliver the feedback only twice, once to the executive director to review the presentation before the all-staff meeting and once to all of the staff together, in order to allow the staff to experience the session as a whole. Staff schedules, however, did not permit a single all-staff meeting while I was still consulting to NGO X. Therefore I chose one date that would accommodate most staff and another date that would at least pull out members of only one group, Training Program B.

I presented a single set of findings to each group. In total, there were three feedback meetings: one with the executive director, one with 16 staff members the next day, and one 19 days later with three staff from Training Program B. A few Training Program B staff members were unable to be present for feedback due to their travel

schedules and one office intern – the only East Asian staff member – had already left the organization; they received the feedback presentation via email.

After findings were presented in the meetings, I asked the participants for their reactions. They were asked to answer four questions:

1. What surprised you in this feedback?
2. What was most important?
3. What was missing here?
4. What should we really focus on and address?

In the first and third meetings, participants responded individually. In the second, larger meeting, participants were broken down into smaller groups to discuss the findings, share reactions, and make recommendations based on the salience of their group memberships.

The first of the smaller groups was management as defined by the executive director.

This group included the executive director, the U.S. director, and the Southeast Asia director. The other three groups were divided by language, so that group members could most easily communicate with one and other. One group consisted of Western staff members, while the other two groups were made up of Asian staff members. The one East Asian staff member had already left the organization, and staff members from one of the Southeast Asian countries represented in the organization all worked for Training Program B and were not at this feedback session. Therefore the remaining Asian staff were all from the same Southeast Asian country. Because this was a large group, I divided it into two by gender, a salient division within it. I decided to highlight the language and ethnic group differences, since these issues seemed to be rarely openly addressed as a group, even though almost everyone had noted identity group issues

during their individual interviews. I recorded what the participants in all three meetings reported in response to the reaction questions.

Following the feedback meetings, I emailed a copy of the presentation, as well as the responses and recommendations that staff shared with each other during feedback, to all staff, in order to let people digest the information on their own time. While I was still available to consult to the organization, I facilitated a few meetings and tried to prepare them to use what they had learned through the diagnosis to move forward and take next steps. These meetings included a task and role meeting with the director and assistant director and a session at the all-staff meeting to brainstorm next steps in one specific area raised by the diagnosis. To complete my work with NGO X I prepared a final recommendations letter (Appendix D) for the organization, based on the findings, as well as thoughts and recommendations developed during the feedback meetings. The letter suggested three “steps to strengthen each individual’s ability to work effectively and with personal satisfaction in his/her role at the organization, thus strengthening the organization’s ability to achieve its mission.” The letter also gave recommendations under each feedback theme and provided an extensive list of issues that had arisen during the diagnosis and action steps the organization could take to address them.

Further Analysis of Data

Building on the data analysis during the diagnosis consultation, I further analyzed and reflected on the data using qualitative research methods, in order to develop a more thorough picture of NGO X. Qualitative research, as defined by Corbin and Strauss (2008), is “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification.” Qualitative methods are useful in

research that attempts to understand and provide intricate details about phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

I first systematically examined the interview data using a version of the grounded theory method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This method “uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon.” Each interview was coded by interview protocol question, similar to the first step of the grounded theory approach, open coding. I then grouped the responses to each interview question into refined categories or subthemes as appropriate, only when a category or subtheme had been mentioned by at least three respondents. This is similar to grounded theory’s second step, axial coding. Next, within each category I looked for trends among salient groups, including ethnicity, gender, geographical unit (i.e. office, Training Program A, or Training Program B), and hierarchical group (i.e. uppers, middles, lowers, using a common framework for describing hierarchical groups) (Chambers, 1997; Oshry, 1995; Smith, 1982). Finally, because responses to interview questions overlapped and were often similar, I grouped the results into seven larger themes, in which group trends were identified. Based on this analysis, Chapter V – Results I presents a detailed description of NGO X and the experiences of its staff members that is the result of the interviews conducted as part of this study. It illustrates the groups within the organization and their perspectives on key themes that emerged from the data, all as understood from both the diagnosis and this second round of analysis.

I then built on this grounded theory analysis and combined the findings with those uncovered through the other data sources generated from the diagnosis in order to pull out major themes, described in Chapter VI – Results II, both in Tables 1-4, which

describe each of the salient groups by major theme, and in an accompanying narrative that explains the three major themes that emerged. The other data sources were used in the further analysis because they provided both fact and insight and helped me determine dynamics on multiple levels, including intragroup, intergroup, organizational, and suprasystem. These sources included the following:

1. Written notes taken during the interviews
2. Written notes and observations taken during meetings and other face time with the organization, including the record of staff responses during the feedback presentations
3. Documents provided by the NGO that described its organizational structure, including organization charts and job descriptions
4. Written findings I developed, including the feedback presentation and recommendations letter
5. Written notes I made for myself throughout the diagnosis to self-reflect and process the work
6. My personal recollections of the diagnosis

In summary, this study places needed attention on the dynamics of a growing, culturally diverse NGO. Since the study is based on an organizational diagnosis, it employs a qualitative approach to research and is limited in that it only examines one NGO. Although the study is therefore exploratory, it serves as a model for future diagnoses of culturally diverse NGOs and as a source of hypotheses about NGOs. These hypotheses can lead to suggestions for both consultants to NGOs, as well as future research.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS I: IDENTIFICATION OF GROUPS AND SUBTHEMES

Further analysis of the organization and consultation through an intergroup lens after the diagnosis helped to examine the organization in a more systematic and detailed way to reveal themes and group trends within the data and counter any biases I developed while working in the system. The three research questions the data analysis sought to address were the following:

1. What were the organizational and identity groups present within the NGO?
2. How did the identity and organizational group memberships of staff members of a diverse NGO affect how they experienced their jobs or roles?
3. What organizational dynamics were associated with group differences?

The results that contribute to answering these questions follow below.

Identification of Groups in the NGO

Organizational Groups

Across the organization, staff members could be broken down into organizational groups based on one of two criteria – geographical unit and hierarchical level (see Figure 1 for organizational chart). After data collection, it was clear that geographical unit divisions were relatively straightforward, consisting of three units – the office (11 staff), Training Program A (9 staff), and Training Program B (7 staff). For the duration of this study, the executive director and director of the U.S. Office were both based in the

Southeast Asia program office. For this reason I have grouped them into the office category.

Hierarchical levels were less straightforward and the study showed that in reality they did not correlate exactly as one might imagine based on job titles or an organizational chart. Staff could be broken down into three groups: 1) uppers (executive director, Southeast Asia director, and US director), 2) middles (assistant director; Training Program A team leader and training coordinator; office project, program, and alumni program coordinators; and Western volunteers, including the Training Program A teacher), and 3) lowers (Training Program B program coordinator and alumni coordinators, administrators, program and project associates, and Asian volunteers and interns).

In terms of the leadership group, the assistant director fit in somewhere below the director. Throughout the consultation, leadership grouped the assistant director with the leadership group for certain meetings and managerial decisions, but ultimately stated that she was not part of the leadership group. Therefore, officially, leadership considered her part of a second-tier leadership group. This second-tier group also included those in charge of the two training programs – the Training Program A team leader, sometimes the Training Program A coordinator (who unofficially served as the acting team leader and therefore was in a variable position in the hierarchy), and the Training Program B coordinator.

Under, but sometimes overlapping the second-tier leadership group were the coordinators. This group had a certain degree of autonomy and responsibility and took some leadership over the programs they worked on. The group consisted of the office

project and program coordinators, including the alumni program coordinator, and sometimes the Training Program A training coordinator. The two Training Program B alumni coordinators officially fell into this group by virtue of their job title, however since they were program alumni and only part-time staff, they more informally, and accurately, fell into the lower group with the interns and volunteers. Among coordinators there were hierarchical divisions as well.

Associates were at a level below the coordinators and had less autonomy in their work. They could be considered part of the lower group and included the office research and program associate, the office project associate, and the two Training Program B program associates. Responsibilities included a wide range of activities, such as research, writing, trip planning, student travel coordination, errands, and accounting. The Training Program B program associates' actual daily tasks would sometimes make them more accurately a part of the administrative group.

The administrative group included the office administrator and the Training Program A administrator. The administrators took care of many of the small tasks, ran errands, went to the post office, and managed the accounting.

Interns and volunteers could be considered a separate group, although they were treated differently as individuals depending on country of origin and role within the organization. The Training Program A teacher could have been into this category, since he was working as part of a volunteer program, but he was Western and in daily practice fell into the middle of the hierarchy, along with another Western volunteer who mostly worked in Training Program A but also did some work in the office. The Training Program A teaching assistants were alternately called interns and fell into the lowers.

Included in this category were any other foreign volunteers or interns. At the time of the consultation there was one Asian intern in the office who fell into the lower level of the hierarchy.

The four cooks for the training programs formed the lowest hierarchical group. They did not attend staff meetings. One of the Training Program A cooks also served as a driver and ran errands as needed with his car, including providing my transportation from my apartment to the NGO X office locations

Identity Groups

Of a total of 27 staff members present in the organizational location where I was working at the time of the study, 8 were from Western countries, including the Americas and Europe, all were white, and 7 spoke English as a native language. The remaining 19 staff members were from Asia. Eighteen of these individuals were from Southeast Asia, including 4 from the country in which NGO X was based and 13 from the main country targeted by the organization's programmatic work. Within this target country live multiple ethnic groups, each of which speak their own language, often in addition to the national language. A number of these ethnic groups were represented within NGO X, although the majority of staff from this country (8) came from the same ethnic group. Four staff members came from a second ethnic group. One staff member each came from a third and fourth ethnic group.

Other relevant identity groups included gender and age. The organization had a higher number of men (15) than women (12), spread throughout the hierarchy. The staff also ranged in age from early 20s to 40s and could roughly be grouped into younger and

older groups, split generally between younger, single staff and older, married staff with families.

Interview Data Results with Group Trends

A grounded theory analysis of the 23 interviews conducted with all of the present staff besides the cooks revealed certain trends in the data, sometimes across the organization, but often along group lines. The section below presents these results, grouped into themes to show the patterns that emerged. Percentages reported are fractions of the total number of staff interviewed and do not include uninterviewed staff. As much as possible, the results are presented in the words of participants.

Interactions with Others

Enjoyment and Success

Seventeen staff members (74% of staff) shared that interacting with others was a part of their jobs that they enjoyed and made them feel successful. Seven of these individuals were Western (88% of Westerners), ten were Asian (67% of Asians), seven were female (70% of women), and ten were male (77% of men). Seven worked in the office (64% of office staff), six in Training Program A (86% of A staff), and four in Training Program B (80% of B staff). Respondents were spread throughout the hierarchy. They noted working with external individuals and groups, as well as students and staff within the organization. Fifteen of these respondents, ten Asian (67% of Asians) and five Western (63% of Westerners), all but two in the lower middle and lower levels of the hierarchy, felt successful when their interactions with others involved helping in some way and making them happy. These others included those within the organization, as well as outside organizations, communities, families, and alumni.

Staff. Eight staff members (35% of staff), five Asian (33% of Asians) and three Western (38% of Westerners), enjoyed and felt successful when they could help other staff within NGO X. They said, “I can take care of things for other people” and “resolve a lot of problems.” Three made statements about success with respect to the feelings of staff members below them in the hierarchy: “The cooks tell me they’re happy working this job” and “Staff feel ok.”

Seven participants (30% of staff), all of whom worked for the office or Training Program B, two of whom were Asian and five of whom were Western (63% of Westerners), simply thought working with other staff was one of the best parts of their job. They described the staff as “good vibes,” “fun,” “not stressed out,” “friendly, open,” “incredible,” “really smart, and committed.” One person said, “We try to be a family. We are friends. Friendship is a core value.” Another noted how her division of the organization was “friendly and warm” and her boss was “like an understanding friend and sibling.”

Students. Eight respondents (35% of staff) reported enjoying and feeling successful when they were helping students. These staff all worked in the training programs (67% of training staff). They mentioned liking “teaching,” “learning from,” and “getting to know the students” and their “perspectives.” Their goals were to “see students learning,” “loving each other,” “building trust, forgiveness, and understanding,” and “producing reports.” One person liked “organizing graduation and [seeing] what we’ve achieved.”

External individuals and organizations. Ten staff (43% of staff) said they enjoyed and/or felt successful when they were able to meet, connect with, and support outside

organizations and alumni. Six were Asian (40% of Asians) and four were Western (50% of Westerners). Of the respondents five worked in the office (45% of office staff), two worked for Training Program A (29% of A staff) and three worked in Training Program B (60% of B staff). All met with outside organizations and alumni as part of their jobs and liked “getting to know new people and building relationships with them.”

Staff reported a range of goals in their work with these individuals and organizations. Those working with local organizations aimed to have “steady contact,” develop mutual “understanding,” and help them “get organized,” “grow,” and “change things.” Those focused on alumni aimed to “clarify NGO X versus alumni work,” “help alumni overcome difficulties”...and give them “support, but let them do the work,” and “work with alumni groups to strengthen advocacy.” One person liked “still feeling close” to alumni. Those focused on positioning their work in the external world said, “[I want NGO X to] be a player in an existing movement,” “[I wish to] present well our supporting role of working closely with local organizations and the community to funders,” and I want to “spread the information and voice of local groups to the international community.” Others focused on the fulfillment of rights within the target countries: “[I work to help one of the target country’s] civil society be better able to protect human rights and the environment.”

Ten participants (43% of staff) wanted to “meet, spend time with, support, and work with other organizations and people” as a greater proportion of their jobs. Seven of these respondents were Asian (47% of Asians) and three were Western (38% of Westerners). Five respondents worked in the office (45% of office staff). Staff members expressed a desire to “build relationships” by “helping more with outreach,” “finding

more contacts,” including “NGOs in other countries,” “working more with alumni,” and “improving communication with people outside the organization.” Some noted wanting to “help others,” including guiding organizations to “fit their work with their mission” and “working with my own organization full time to educate more local people.” Three people wanted the organization to work more strongly with the local community on a long-term basis, focusing on the issues they face, supporting alumni, and improving the organization’s own image among them.

Three respondents, all based in the training programs, two Asian and one Western, thought that the organization should follow up with alumni more after they left the training programs. One said, “we should think about how to empower alumni and their communities.”

Two staff members, both at the lower level of the hierarchy and working for a training program, felt successful when they could earn money to support those important to them outside the organization: “I can get money to help my family.” “I can use my salary to support my organization.”

Identity

Gender. Eight respondents (35% of staff), six female (60% of women), two male (15% of men), half Asian, half Western, mostly from the office and Training Program B, discussed staff interactions with respect to gender. Female staff from both cultures shared the following: “I like an organization to be gender-balanced, but it's not balanced.” It’s “ok for gender. Many women are in high positions.” “It’s good having a woman in charge. If I have an agenda to push, she can tell me whom to talk to. I don’t see the women here struggling.” A few Western men spoke to gender issues as well: “There are

too many men working on these issues generally. The organization is doing a great job chipping away at cultural conceptions of women not being accepted.”

Many noted the intersection between gender and ethnicity. Western women noticed a lack of gender awareness among Asian male staff: They “can be subtly misogynistic, not in a bad way, just totally oblivious. I hear sexist comments. Part of the fun might be that Westerners get offended.” “Men take over physical stuff. I don't think it's a huge issue. Because of culture, they're not taking the moment to think about gender relations.” Asian women shared their experience of the difficulties women face in their cultures:

Being a woman is very difficult here. If I don't work, we don't have money to eat. In my culture men have the power, not the women. But work here depends on what you can do, not gender...My people are usually very quiet. Sometimes I make problems for myself because I'm too open.

Other Asian women said, “In my culture men are paid more attention to,” and “Sometimes women from my country can't share opinions.”

Language. Eight respondents (35% of staff), six of them Asian (40% of Asians interviewed), two Western (25% of Westerners) working in the office and Training Program A (44% of office and A staff combined), spoke to language issues among staff. Westerners shared their struggles around language. One Westerner stated, “Sometimes I don't know exactly what's going on, since I don't speak the Asian language. But I don't need to know everything.” Another Westerner shared her challenges:

Indirect communication is very common. It's passive, and at worst passive aggressive. If you're doing something wrong no one will tell you. They might be resenting you, but no one will tell you. You can be the subject of scorn. There's a lot of sensitivity about who gets credit for the work. The learning process was painful. Westerners are the biggest critics of Western culture. Mostly we try to shed it.

Asians shared their own perspectives on language. One said, “Asians say ‘no’ but don’t mean ‘no,’ ‘yes’ but don’t mean ‘yes’,” and “talk with ‘we,’” whereas Westerners say ‘I.’” Another Asian staff member said that “with Asians you need to feel it out more, but with Westerners you can be more direct.” While one Asian staff member did not report language issues because “here we talk my language,” other Asians said that they struggled: “It’s hard for me to have to use international language to be able to work.” “Sometimes I feel not confident with the language barriers and many foreigners.” One Asian individual in leadership said the staff members needed “continuous support on intercultural communication.” Three Asian males who worked in the office (75% of Asian male office staff), desired support for their communication with others. One mentioned wanting English speakers to continue to do the organization’s “writing and reporting.” Some wanted help communicating internally, others with those outside the organization, including donors and partners.

Culture. Five Westerners (62% of Westerners), mostly working at the office and mostly in the middle of the hierarchy, shared comments on the experience of being a Westerner within the diverse mix at NGO X. One worked on trying to “find a balance between accepting that you’re working in another culture versus setting limits of what you’ll put up with.” She thought that it was “about respect and human dignity.” Another had “lots of questions about how to be a Westerner” in the organization. One person thought that it was “very important to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of everyone” and that it was beneficial to “respect [local] people, identify their shortcomings, and talk to them bluntly.” He felt he could “get away with [this] because”, as he said, “I’ve been working with them and I’m going to still be here.” Asians know

what's going on the ground in [our target] country. He summed up his role with the following statement: “[Local people] know about security, confidentiality, and writing reports. The only thing I know is how to keep the kitchen clean.” One staff member shared thoughts on being a Westerner in her role: “I feel confident I'm doing a lot for the students and alumni. I don't know if anyone else could do this. I want to make sure people have positions here, but I don't want to take them away from their own organizations.” Another shared how it was “difficult coming in as an outsider.” She said, “I get legitimacy spending time outside work with and getting to know the Southeast Asian community.” A few commented on working outside their home countries: “It's hard to be away from family and friends.” “I don't feel at home in [my country]. I'm used to functioning outside of it.” “Westerners gravitate toward each other. It's logical. Staff is more like a family lately, but mostly just Westerners or people in couples. People mix a fair amount as friends outside of work.”

Four Asian staff members (27% of Asians), two men and two women, commented directly on their experiences of culture at work. One shared how he had learned the importance of ethnic and gender diversity and continued working to achieve it:

I prioritize hiring people [not of the majority ethnicity]. If possible, we can get other ethnicities to be involved more. Through working with the organization, I have learned a lot about ethnic and gender balance. You learn it and cannot forget it. If [other ethnicities] understand the work of the organization clearly, they can commit and do the work related to the mission and vision. Most important is getting someone who understands the organization clearly. If they do a good job and are honest and committed, then that'll be good.

Another stated how “the background and education of Asians is very different than that of Westerners.” He suggested that “maybe there is some staff development we can offer,” but felt “uncomfortable” asking for it, because “it's not my style.” The two women,

neither of Ethnicity A, shared how the organization could be seen as aligned with one ethnicity and how they responded to these perceptions:

When I go outside, and I tell people I'm working here, they say, 'Oh! That's a [Ethnicity A] organization. Why do you work there?' I tell them it doesn't just train [Ethnicity A] people – every ethnicity can get trained here. I convince them. People think NGO X workers get very high salaries. Sometimes it's a big challenge for me, explaining to other people that I'm working for all.

Another shared, "If I communicate with other local groups, sometimes they point out that the organization is mostly [Ethnicity A]. It can be a challenge that some people are the same ethnicity. They can stick together and are very close friends."

Three people who were more on the periphery of the organization, working either part-time or from home, said that they "did not see divisions" among staff members around identity. Two of these respondents were Asian. One thought that "everyone was working together." Another said he "never thinks about it." The third respondent thought that he might not "notice issues" as a "benefit of being a white male."

Tasks

Eleven staff (48% of staff), all at the middle and or lower levels of the hierarchy, reported that they felt successful when they completed their tasks or projects. Eight of these staff members were Asian (53% of Asians) and three were Western (38% of Westerners). They said they felt successful when they "do what needs to be done," things are "organized" and "up to date," "projects come to fruition," and "work is effective." Three of the Asian respondents, all at the lower level of the hierarchy, noted that they liked "being able to do everything" their job required and staying busy with tasks so that they were not bored.

Three men (23% of men) at the lower or middle levels of the hierarchy said their least favorite aspect of their jobs was doing technical or administrative tasks. Two were Western and one was Asian. They cited “financial reporting,” “working in front of a computer all day,” and “meetings” as specific activities that could be “boring.”

Twelve staff members (52% of staff) wished that someone would take over some of their tasks. Nine of these respondents were Asian (60% of Asians) – seven of them male (78% of Asian males) – and three were Western (38% of Westerners). Half of these respondents worked in the office (55% of office staff). One person simply wanted “recognition that I already have things to do and consideration for my workload.” Others requested a “division of labor,” where people “delegate and share the workload.” Two people wanted to hand off their fundraising paperwork to others. Some staff members had specific task requests relating to their current workload in such areas as administration, maintenance, student issues, management, communication, language, teaching, and travel. One thought it would be helpful for some staff members to help teach at Training Program B.

Four respondents, all newer staff members, mostly volunteers or interns, and three Westerners (38% of Westerners), did not like where they did their assigned tasks. One simply did not like the office’s location, another complained about “teaching when it’s hot,” and two people noted “transportation” difficulties.

Four respondents, all men (31% of men) and three Asian (20% of Asians) did not have “much” they did not like doing as part of their jobs. They responded, “I have no complaints,” “nothing,” and “I’m quite happy with what I’m doing now.” Four other

respondents, all at the lower level of the hierarchy in the training programs and all but one Asian, said that there were no additional tasks they would like to do.

Freedom and Opportunity

Individual Level

Ten participants (43% of staff), seven Western (88% of Westerners) and three Asian (20% of Asians), cited freedom and/or opportunity on the individual level as one of the aspects they liked best about their jobs. Six participants, all Western (75% of Westerners), said they liked being able to “do what I want.” These Western respondents worked for the office or Training Program A. They specifically noted appreciating the “opportunity to use my experience,” “level of creativity afforded to me,” “challenge,” chance to “be really innovative,” “hands off management style,” and “space to get better at my job – the sky’s the limit.” Three individuals, two Asian and one Western, who regularly traveled for work mentioned this opportunity as one of the best parts of their jobs. Two liked to “organize trips and go on them,” and one noted the beauty of his travels. Two Asian staff members at the lower level of the hierarchy appreciated how much they were able to learn through their jobs. Another Asian staff member higher up in the hierarchy liked being able to work with an international staff that “makes me look smarter.”

Nine respondents (39% of staff) wished to have the opportunity to use their existing ideas, experience, and/or skills they were not currently using. Four were Western (50% of Westerners) and five were Asians (33% of Asians). Skills mentioned included research, writing, public speaking, class facilitation, and publishing. One wanted to find a way to use his “network of friends and professors.” Others had ideas on how to “help the

training program save money” and “organize classes together” with the other training program.

Three staff members not in leadership positions, two of whom worked for Training Program A (29% of A staff), wished that “management would invest in staff development.” One noted the “need to help grow the people in the organization, not just change leadership.” Two of these respondents were Asian. The Western respondent, though, hoped that there would be more staff development available for Asian staff, not for herself. Three Asian respondents (20% of Asians), all at the lower level of the hierarchy, expressed a desire to further their education in order to grow as individuals. Two focused on “speaking and learning more English,” while one wanted to “go to university.”

Eight respondents (35% of staff) wished for the chance to have more responsibility at the organization. All were at the lower or middle levels of the hierarchy and almost evenly represented the other group memberships, with five males, three females, five Asians, and three Westerners. The types of responsibility ranged from “more time in class” to “helping to plan the curriculum” to “facilitating class on my own” to doing work that required traveling to other countries. One responded that he wished to build on his personal relationships with local organizations and “take more of a role” with them. He added, “I feel like I could give my opinion. I could do it. It’d be ok.” Two at the lower level of the hierarchy were more general: “I would like to take on other people’s work” and “I’d like to change my role to make it higher up.” Two in the middle of the hierarchy expressed ambivalence, saying, “I want more responsibility, but not here,” and

“I don’t know if I want to be in charge. I would need support to deal with staff and manage them.”

Organizational Level

Nine individuals (39% of staff), all office staff (82% of office staff), saw the chance to help NGO X grow, develop, and impact the world as a goal and/or best part of their jobs. Five of these people were in formal positions of leadership toward the top of the hierarchy. Six were Western (75% of Westerners) and three were Asian (20% of Asians). Staff members liked that they were part of an organization that was “really effective” and had a “positive influence in the world,” including drawing “more people to work on the issues.” Three stated that a larger goal of their work was to “unite students and civil society” to “take over” and bring about social change. They mentioned “bringing local groups together” and “increasing civil society’s ability to protect and defend their rights.” One person appreciated, as a Southeast Asian staff member, that the organization was “part of regional networks” and felt that its “international resources” made it “more comprehensive.”

Five Westerners (63% of Westerners) who worked for the office or Training Program B valued the importance of the work. They explained: “I care so much.” “It is incredibly important work” and is “rewarding to be helping people in a really messed up situation.” They liked the “organization’s mission, values, and areas” of focus, “getting paid for trying to save the world,” “feeling part of something valuable, contributing, and doing something useful.”

The three directors, two of them Asian, felt successful when they were managing the organization and thinking strategically to help the organization achieve its mission.

To them strategic thinking included “thinking about vision,” “expanding our regional work,” and “making good strategy through communication.” One person liked “managing and leading in a way that wins respect from staff,” while another liked helping the organization “focus and work properly.” All three wished to spend more time “building the capacity of” staff members in order to “strengthen” and “create a “solid system” within the organization and “continue our commitment for people not to clash.”

Time Management

Nineteen respondents, twelve of whom were Asian (80% of Asians) and seven of whom were Western (88% of Westerners), noted that they struggled with time management. Challenges included structure, clarity, cultural differences, balancing commitments outside of work, and work orientation.

Challenges

Four Asian staff (27% of Asians) noted that they did not always want to have a schedule for their work. This included not wanting to plan, stick to a schedule, organize, or control one’s hours. A few explicitly mentioned cultural differences: “It’s hard for Asian staff.” “I grew up being free, managing my own time in my own way. It’s very challenging for me to be put in a very strict situation. It’s better to [have my work managed] verbally, by what I’ve done or accomplished.” “Time keeping’s a very Western concept. No one gets this.” “My time management’s not good.”

Eight Asians (53% of Asians), mostly male, and mostly working in the office, mentioned that they regularly confronted problems or tasks that needed immediate attention and affected their ability to plan: “Things come up suddenly, even when you plan;” “The environment doesn’t stick to a schedule.” Individuals handled this by

“deal[ing] with whatever comes up” and “help[ing] people according to urgency.” One person felt that as a result, “I can’t control my time.” Another felt “confused when I get different requests at the same time.”

Related to this confusion, three Western respondents (38% of Westerners) noted that their roles were unclear to others in the organization and this affected their ability to manage their time. One person shared, “I have no idea what others expect of me.”

Five respondents, four of them Asian (33% of Asians), said that they could be too busy at work and “have a lack of time.” One person said, “Sometimes I work too much. If more people could help, that’d be good.” Another Western respondent shared, “I take too much home. The workload is way too heavy. I’d like to cut it in half or by 30-40%. Some people here work too hard, but not smart.”

Five respondents, all Asians (33% of Asians), struggled to manage pressure to appear as if they were working all the time. They reported, “If I get my work done early” or “take a break,” “I feel bad and it looks like I’m not doing my job.” One person had heard others “say it doesn’t look like I do anything.” Another was concerned about the perceptions of those outside the organization: “If people see [that we’re not working], it’s not good for our image.”

Time outside of Work

Eight people, five Asian (33% of Asians) and three Western (38% of Westerners) discussed striving to maintain a work-life balance. This was the area where Westerners mentioned the greatest personal struggles with time management. These Western respondents did not have children, while all but one of the Asian respondents did. Of the Asian respondents, two noted the challenge of balancing work and family, but responded

to it differently. One person “prioritized work over family.” Another noted that it was “difficult to manage family and work.” A third person noted that “family problems” could sometimes interfere with being at work. Four of the Asian respondents noted that they balanced work with obligations to their communities and “sometimes [had] to deal with issues” that could take them away from their jobs. The three Western respondents tried to balance their work and outside lives to varying degrees of success.

Eighteen respondents (78% of staff) talked about work being more about what was done, rather than the hours spent on the work, which often extended outside of normal business hours. The whole staff of Training Program B shared this sentiment, as did many members of the office staff, and three Training Program A staff members. These respondents were also more likely to be in the middle or top of the hierarchy.

Seven of the Western respondents (88% of Westerners) stated that they worked beyond normal working hours, including evenings, weekends, and vacations, and noted various reasons for doing so. They mentioned, “I love the work so much I don’t mind working weekends,” “Administrative work piles up when I’m in the classroom,” and “I’m a workaholic.” Some of these respondents’ roles included participation in student field trips on the weekends and occasional evening activities. One person said, “I do what I want and I do my job.” Most of the Asian respondents felt pressure to work overtime outside of the office, although some mentioned having difficulty working at home when they brought work there. They noted a drive to work for the cause: “When you commit to struggling for justice and don’t see the change, you don’t want to stop.” “You need to do the work continuously.” “You cannot just limit work to one set time.” Three also mentioned that “time building relationships” was an important part of their work that

sometimes occurred outside normal hours. Staff said they were “relaxed about working extra on long trips and not worried as long as the work was getting done.” “Everyone’s very busy, working very hard.”

Systems

Staff opinions varied on the existing time management systems within the organization. Four respondents, mostly Asian and from the training programs, all in relatively independent jobs, thought the existing timekeeping system where staff generally worked a 9am-5pm schedule “worked ok” because “everyone knows what they have to do.” Six people, all working in the office at least part of the time (55% of office staff), thought that there was no organized timekeeping system and had a range of reactions from “that’s fine for me” to feeling a need “to keep better track of vacation time, visa runs, and sick leave.” Eight respondents already structured their work in some way independently as individuals to address time management challenges. Four of these respondents were Westerners (50% of Westerners) and four were Asians (27% of Asians). The Asian respondents focused on having a schedule, and responses ranged from having a routine set of daily tasks to advanced planning. One shared, “I’m developing my time management.” The Western respondents talked about prioritizing, structuring, and organizing their work.

In light of being an activist organization, most staff members did not feel like a regimented system would be a good organizational fit. As one person summarized, “A lot of the work is after [hours]. [Management] has to be flexible and not focus on time keeping. Timekeeping and activism aren’t really functional. People don’t just work for the bill, they work for the cause.” Respondents mostly in the lower and middle parts of

the hierarchy made suggestions for how timekeeping should be handled within the organization: “You need to look at people’s workload” and “focus on job responsibilities.” “It’s about trust.” “I wouldn’t create a factory environment here with oppressive timekeeping or punch cards. It might make it less relaxed.” “As long as people do their work, I think it’ll be ok.”

Six staff members, four Asian (27% of Asians), two Western (25% of Westerners), half from the office and half from Training Program A, argued that timekeeping should depend on the individual: “For some people [the current system’s] fine, for others it’s too much freedom. Everyone has a different style.” “People’s work ethics are different.” “Some people are doing a lot of work. Others aren’t.”

Six people, five working in the office at least part of the time (45% of office staff), three Asian (20% of Asians) and three Western (38% of Westerners), specifically mentioned that supervisors should play a role in time management: “Change the amount of supervision depending on the person and the situation, as needed”...“if work isn’t getting done.” “Take the time to give each staff member enough support and make sure they’re happy. It has to be holistic. Clarify objectives and roles for everyone.” “With better supervision, timekeeping becomes less of an issue.”

Role Clarity and Direction

Needed from Management

Nineteen staff members (83% of staff) desired more clarity and direction in their work from management and leadership. This group of respondents included all eight Westerners in the organization as well as eleven Asians (73% of Asians) and were spread throughout the hierarchy. Ten of these respondents worked in the office (91% of office

staff), six worked for Training Program A (86% of A staff), and two worked for Training Program B (40% of B staff). Respondents of both ethnicities cited “confusion” and “lack of role clarity,” in addition to lack of knowledge of what others were working on. Some wanted to be better informed, requesting to “find out more about long-term goals and projects” and asking for others to tell them “what [they] need to do” and “how the budget works.” They also made suggestions for ways in which management and direction “could definitely be improved,” including more feedback and clearer responsibilities.

Other comments varied by ethnicity. Westerners specifically noted a “lack of clarity in everything” and a “carelessness that could make people’s jobs more difficult.” One Westerner thought that the “only people who took issue with management were Westerners.” Another person shared difficulties negotiating needs with managers, “Bosses aren't culturally sensitive to Westerners here, but we're supposed to be sensitive to Asians. It's refreshing when it goes both ways.” Suggestions for greater clarity included, “defined job descriptions that everyone sees,” “division” of labor, “leadership around setting programmatic strategies,” and “leadership not asking me to change direction in my work.” Another respondent shared how job clarity might help him: “If it’s clear what I’m supposed to do, I’ll do it 250%. I’m totally flexible. Whatever the team, organization, or partners need from me, that’s what I’ll be more than happy to do.” Suggestions for management included “retreats,” “trusting, open forums of communication,” a focus on the “bigger picture,” identification of “problems before they happen,” “planning,” and supervisory relationships between staff members of the same cultural and language groups.

Asians disliked irregularity in their jobs and being bored when they had “nothing to do” and were just “sitting in a chair.” They also cited “quick changes” in the organization that were “difficult to go along with, even though management expected it to be ok.” One Asian respondent pointed out that in terms of management, “Westerners and Asians are very different” and said she did not like “how I’m treated.” She found it difficult to “ask people questions” because “in this office everyone’s so busy.”

Another respondent connected poor “communication among staff” with a lack of clarity around “whose job things were.” Asian training program staff requested supervisory support, including “a new supervisor,” “help dealing with student problems,” and “an experienced volunteer or supervisor to work with me” on a project.

Needed from Staff

Four respondents, all Asian (27% of Asians), said it would be helpful if staff members and students could take up their roles more independently. One staff member thought “students should do more things for themselves,” while another thought the staff members should also be looking after themselves and “cleaning up.” One respondent thought other staff members should communicate more with each other without being told to do so. Someone summed up the desire for others to take ownership over their work: “I’m fed up with getting calls when something small needs to be done. I’d like people to be making decisions more on their own.”

Determining Success

Six staff members, three Asian (20% of Asians) and three Western (38% of Westerners) said they looked for external cues to help them determine how they were doing in their jobs. Three staff members, all of whom worked for the training programs

(25% of training program staff), knew they were doing a good job when they received positive feedback. These staff members were at the lower level of the hierarchy.

Feedback came from students and managers, as well as the training program's evaluation form. Four staff felt successful as long as they did not hear or see any "serious problems or conflicts" and that things "ran smoothly." Two explicitly shared that they did not need to be told they were successful: "I don't need or expect feedback on my effectiveness," and I am successful when "nobody has told me otherwise." None of these respondents were directors, and three worked for Training Program A.

Staff at the lower level of the hierarchy reported that they could not say that they were successful or doing a good job. They made statements such as, "I don't know if I am successful" or "I never feel successful" or "like I've done a good job." Out of the five respondents who mentioned this theme, four were Asian (27% of Asians) and four worked in the office (36% of office staff).

Being in Management

Six people (26% of staff), including almost everyone in leadership positions of the organization, office, and training programs, noted that one of the least favorite parts of their jobs was being in management. Four were Asian (27% of Asians) and two were Western (25% of Westerners). As one person summarized, "I do not like management, but I have to do it." They noted not liking "supervising people and telling them what to do, especially if it's urgent," "having to make decisions people are unhappy with" or "where people don't get their way," "saying no to people," "curbing the enthusiasm," "not having extra time to spend with students and guest presenters," "seeing people have conflicts with each other," and "fundraising." One person shared the experience of

“trying to be a family” as an organization, but then finding it “scary and risky to have professional disagreements with friends.”

Leadership talked about how they provided the big picture for the organization: “Program staff only know their own program and experiences. Leadership sees the big picture. Most of the time leaders don’t make decisions. They make people think. They give people a bigger perspective.” Leaders can “evaluate and change the way of achieving the vision and mission periodically.” “As a leader, we double check and see program plans. Mostly we don’t change things.” “I want to back up and make sure the staff’s not out of control, make sure the work’s based on the mission and vision.”

Asian men shared their perspectives on managing in an international organizational. One shared, “Having an international staff makes me look smarter. It’s really challenging. I like it a lot. It raises my management skills a lot.” Another said,

Asian management style is verbal and indirect. You live as a model and talk in a group indirectly instead of pointing people out. It’s hard to supervise a Western person. It’s very hard to say ‘yes’ and ‘no.’ It’s very rude traditionally. Sometimes I think it’s better to work in a community organization. There are a lot of explosions from Westerners here. Asian staff members talk secretly about that. The stereotype of Western management is that it’s super direct, explosive. It’s accepted here.

A third Asian respondent stated, “The Western style of organizational management is challenging. I lack Western management skills. I have different values. You only have your heart to work from.”

Decision Making

Top-down Decisions

Sixteen staff members (70% of staff) noted how some decisions were made at the top of the organization. Eleven of these respondents were male (85% of males) and five

were female (50% of females). Ten were Asian (67% of Asians) and six Western (75% of Westerners). Nine worked in the office (82% of office staff), five worked for Training Program A (71% of A staff), and two worked for Training Program B (40% of B staff). They noted that the organization was “very hierarchical” and that decisions, programmatic and financial, were made by “the management team, mainly the executive director,” who could “get things done immediately.” One person noted that although staff had meetings to make decisions, leaders “already know their decisions” beforehand. A member of the upper hierarchy shared that part of a leader’s job description was “promotion and damage control of the organization” and “interfering with anything” as needed in order to keep the organization running.

Three people expanded on how decisions made by leaders could then feel “dropped out of nowhere.” One person shared, “I don’t need to be involved in the decision making, but I’d like to know what’s happening so I don’t feel surprised later. It’s inevitable, but I’d like to keep it to a minimum.” She added, “I don’t believe [leadership] should micromanage and be involved in every decision. I hate when decisions are driven by whim, mood, and personality.” Another person said, “The executive director talks informally with staff. We don’t know if something will happen or not. Then you just see a change. Organizationally, it’s not efficient.” One staff member thought that “the organization doesn’t work when leadership comes and lays down the fist, then doesn’t listen to people.”

Four respondents (17% of staff) said they did not know how or who in organizational leadership made some decisions. Three of these respondents were Asian females (50% of Asian females), and they were all at the middle and lower levels of the

hierarchy. One person shared, “On a scale of one to five, decision making here is a one, in terms of any process or knowing where it’s coming from.” Two specifically did not understand organization-wide decision making, stating, “I understand how decisions get made with the program I’m part of, but not with the organization” and “I don’t know what the organization’s doing.”

Three people, two of whom were Asian and at the lower level of the hierarchy, said that it was hard to stand up to power: “I don’t feel a sense of personal power in dealing with the executive director.” “When one person has the ultimate decision and power, it’s hard to fight that.” Two people described their experiences with supervisors: “When he tries to make decisions, I often feel in conflict with him, but can’t say anything in front of him. Sometimes I feel hurt or cry. I feel part of the decision making, but they never listen to me. I say black; they say white. It is better not to say anything.” “My supervisor can tell me to do things that aren’t my job, but I can’t say anything. I can talk with English people and they’ll help and stand up for me.”

Six respondents (26% of staff), four Asian, two Western, five male, and one female, said that the top-down decision making could make them feel like they were not a part of the organization. Four of the six respondents were low in the hierarchy. They shared their experiences: “I don’t feel like it’s my organization.” “I just feel like an employee.” “I can feel like I lost what I worked very hard on.” “Many days I feel like I don’t know what’s going on. It doesn’t really affect my work, but it’s a little strange.” “I don’t have the same kind of personal involvement as I did in the first NGO I worked for. NGO X is a shell. I can go in and stay there for a while and do things that matter. If I belong to someone, it’s the groups I’m working with, not NGO X.”

Three respondents, all male (23% of men) and in the lower or middle part of the hierarchy, two of whom were Western, simply said that they did not like the decision making: “I don’t really like decision making here.” “It’s pretty bad. The organization doesn’t work when...leadership doesn’t listen to people.”

Participation

Thirteen respondents (57% of staff), eight of whom were Asian (53% of Asians) and five of whom were Western (63% of Westerners), said that they participated in decision making in some way. Of these respondents, eight were male (62% of males) and five were female (50% of females). They came almost evenly from each part of the organization.

Six respondents (26% of all staff), four of whom were Asian, two Western, and all low in the hierarchy, said that they could share their opinions: “Sometimes NGO X asks our opinions on things.” “I feel like my opinions are heard.” “I’m not afraid to speak out at a meeting for fear of higher ups.” “I think I have voice in deciding my own work.” “I feel like we (me and the executive director) have a strong relationship. He listens to me.”

Eleven respondents (48% of all staff), six Asian (40% of Asians) and five Western (63% of Westerners), noted how decisions could be made as a team or in a participatory way. Eight of these respondents were from the training programs (67% of training program staff) and three worked in the office (27% of office staff). Training Program A staff shared statements about making decisions via discussions as a staff team, as well as with students: “In weekly staff meetings we discuss possibilities, necessities, decisions. I discuss decisions in a group with staff or with students, if it concerns them.”

“We're trying the participatory way in the school. We try to make it a two-way process.”

“Within our team, we're very open.” “Usually we just agree with each other.”

Training Program B respondents spoke of making decisions with supervisors around certain issues and talking out conflicts. One Training Program B respondent shared the following:

On small, unimportant things, we can make decisions quickly. On important things, we talk together. If I don't agree, sometimes I ask my supervisor, who listens and understands. When we disagree and there's a conflict of opinion, we can talk. We know next time we have to talk together. We need to be open to others and to other ideas to keep going and not get lonely. Participation is very important. I think we need to talk more about our goals and vision. Everyone comes to NGO X with his or her own backgrounds and experiences. Everyone needs to grow and learn from different thinking and contexts. How can we all work together to achieve the same goals? By listening to each other. If everyone sees each other as a friend, it will be ok.

Another Training Program B staff member stated, “When certain issues come up, I can feel part of the decision-making process. Normally I talk with my supervisor, we combine ideas, and then she talks to her supervisor. That feels ok.” The respondent added, “Brainstorming meetings are good, too. They improve decision making.”

Office staff members shared their perspectives, which included giving input to those further up in the hierarchy: “Each year the programs have a meeting to propose their yearly plans.” “The team leader consults us on everything. Here in the Asia office, decision making is good.” “Big meetings are integral to decision making here. Often I give feedback to higher-level staff and then they decide what they want. A lot of us have equal voices.”

Seven respondents (30% of staff), five of whom were Asian (33% of Asians) and two Western (25% of Westerners), noted how people did not know always know enough and/or did not have to be a part of all decision making at NGO X. Five of these

respondents were male (38% of males) and two female (20% of females). Four of them worked in the office (36% of office staff) and three for the training programs (25% of training program staff). Five out of the seven were low in the hierarchy.

With regard to not needing to be involved in the decision making themselves, people shared the following statements: “There are times I don’t need to be involved in the decision making.” “Some things I don’t have information about. I want to participate in some things, if I can help, but if it’s outside my role, I think ‘OK. I cannot offer an opinion.’ It’s a big organization and has many staff, so we don’t need to come to participate in every decision. I can discuss and am happy to help out and offer an opinion if they want me.” “I don’t know a lot, because I don’t work on very deep issues, so on local partnerships, it’s hard to give my opinion. If I’m not a part of the project, I don’t have anything to say about it.” “I can’t decide for others what their work should be.”

Some respondents talked about how others might not know enough to be involved in the decision making: “Sometimes we need to make the rules even if the students don’t like it, for example, with security.” “Sometimes some of the foreign staff feel like they’re not part of the decision making. If new people don’t know the situation, then their opinion is blocked.”

Other statements included the following: “Sometimes the need you see isn’t seen by some. Sometimes other people see more than what you see.” “Sometimes no one thinks they can make the decision.” “Sometimes even though we’re working on the issues, we can’t make a decision.”

Autonomy

Seven respondents (30% of staff), five of whom were Asian (33% of Asians), two Western (25% of Westerners), mentioned that some decisions were or should be made by the individual involved. Five of these respondents were male (38% of males) and two female (20% of females).

Six people (26% of staff), all in the lower or middle part of the hierarchy, mentioned that at times they made decisions on their own: “Sometimes I get to decide myself.” “On different levels I can make some decisions, like when I’m in the field.” “My supervisor lets me make my own decisions sometimes.” “I can do what I want. I can have ideas. My supervisor doesn’t have power over me.” “I was told to make simple decisions by myself, with” one of my colleagues. Two people shared that they could be asked to make decisions they felt unprepared to make: “I’m not a confident decision maker here.” “Sometimes students ask me to make difficult decisions.” “Sometimes decisions are not part of my position, but I make them if no one else is around. I wish [one of my colleagues] were making those decisions with me.”

Five respondents (22% of staff), four of whom were in the upper part of the hierarchy and three of whom worked in the office, thought that parts of the organization should have some independence or said that they already did. Three of these respondents were Asian (20% of Asians) and two were Western (25% of Westerners). Three were female (30% of females) and two male (15% of males). Three people elaborated on the differences between parts of the organization: “Different levels should have different levels of decision-making bodies. You need to set up different decision-making authorities.” “Different levels are different.” “Each program is different. They each need

to make their own decisions.” One person observed that “Autonomy in Southeast Asia had meant, ‘Do whatever you want.’” Another noticed that the organization’s board of directors gave the organization a degree of autonomy and did not have “hands-on experience with the organization’s staff and work from month to month.”

Mission

Three participants, all Asian (20% of Asians) and at different levels of the hierarchy, said that decisions at NGO X should be made or already were made based on the organization’s mission. They elaborated, “Sometimes we can’t work on an issue, because it’s far from our mission or we cannot get the necessary information.” Another person shared, “I want to make sure the work’s based on our mission and vision.” One respondent said, in reference to decisions made in parts of the organization where she did not work directly, “If every project has the same goal – to help out with human and environmental rights – I’m ok with that.”

Organizational Policies

Understanding

Eight respondents (35% of staff), five Asian (33% of all Asians interviewed) and three Western (38% of Westerners), reported that they felt they generally understood the policies: “I guess it’s clear. The manual’s good as a reference.” “I sort of understand.” “I haven’t had the chance to read the staff manual, but my supervisor explained the policies to me.” “I listened to the policies two times.” “I think I understand the policies, but not everything.” Five of these respondents were male and three were female.

Nine respondents (39% of staff) mentioned specific parts of the “complex” organizational policies that they did not understand. Six of these staff members were

male (46% of males), three female (30% of females), five Asian (33% of Asians), and four Western (50% of Westerners). Five worked in the office (45% of office staff) and four worked in Training Program A (57% of A staff). They shared statements such as, “I don’t understand why there’s intern/volunteer information in the manual” if it is a collection of policies for staff. “I don’t know if NGO X has policies and opportunities for the interns. There’s no exact policy.” “I don’t understand the vacation and parental leave policies.” “There are legal terms I don’t understand.” “I don’t know why some people get things here and others don’t.” “They don’t tell us how to use organizational money to return home, but it’s in the policy that we can.” “I don’t understand the staff development funds policy. I’ve been ordering books and paying for them myself. I don’t understand the implications of signing the policy manual.” “Vacation days are unclear [in terms of] when we’re allowed to have holidays.”

Five people (22% of staff), all Asian (33% of Asian staff), mostly at the lower level of the hierarchy, said that they did not really understand NGO X’s policies. They explained: “I don’t really understand it.” “I don’t know anything.” “I don’t understand much. Sometimes I feel like I don’t take time to learn about it. I can feel like the policies are different in practice.” “Maybe I just have to read it. It’s a big policy paper.” “I haven’t gotten a staff handbook. I don’t know the policies.”

Six staff members (26% of staff), mostly in the middle of the hierarchy, three Asian (20% of Asians) and three Western (38% of Westerners), said that they had not fully had the chance to read the new staff policy manual: “I haven’t had the chance to read the 7,000 page manual yet.” “I’ve been too busy to look at the new staff manual, too

busy to even think about that stuff.” “I haven’t had the chance to read the staff manual. I don’t think it will really affect me.” “I skimmed it.”

Challenges

Six respondents (26% of staff), most of whom were in some kind of leadership position, four Asian, two Western, four male, and two female mentioned the challenges of making policy. They made statements such as the following: “Making policy is challenging – sometimes people are happy, sometimes they’re unhappy.” “The handling of policy could be better.” “Leadership wants feedback on policies,” but “there weren’t any spaces for employees to offer suggestions when the manual was written. The policies were handed down.”

Four people mentioned the challenges that came from cultural and regional differences. One person said, “It’s a challenge to balance benefits and salaries to Asian and international organization standards.” Another person shared,

Foreign staff members are more open to talking about their own way of thinking about the policies. I’m not sure if the Asian staff members don’t understand, or think it’s fair, or don’t understand it because the policies are in English. Even I have to read the policies seven times to understand them.

One person stated, “The staff manual reeks of American law. Because it’s in English, local staff might not read it all and might not be as aware as Westerners that signing something has certain implications.” Another said, “I like that NGO X pays international and local staff the same. One reason I love to work here is that I agree with that philosophy.”

Three people specifically noted changing policies: “The policies have developed and adjusted to NGO X’s situation.” “We’re trying to modify our policies all the time.” “The policy’s written, but things can change.” Three people asked for specific changes,

wanting the organization to provide greater financial and benefit support for individual and family needs, such as loan repayment, childcare, healthcare, and education. These respondents were all at the lower or middle levels of the hierarchy and worked in the office (27% of office staff).

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS II: MAJOR THEMES

As Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory suggests, the data can be understood by examining patterns along organizational and identity group lines. Based on the analysis, the clear overarching theme in the data was cultural difference. Differences emerged relative to why individuals were in their jobs, how they experienced them, and how aspects of their personal lives intersected with their work lives. The major cultural dividing line was between Asians and Westerners, but these cultural differences also affected the experience of other differences, such as gender and position in the hierarchy. Because cultural differences are recurrent throughout the data, to avoid redundancy they will be explored in detail in the three major themes that emerged from the grounded theory analysis in Chapter V: 1) personal and professional needs, 2) work orientation, and 3) decision making, power, and authority.

These themes existed within the context of a culturally diverse and growing organization, the understanding of which was informed by data collected through other methods – observations, use of self, and archival review. This chapter utilizes all collected data first to present descriptions of the salient identity and organizational groups discovered in the organization, broken down by theme. The chapter then includes a further exploration of the themes and the group patterns found within them both to

determine overall patterns within the staff members' experiences of being in the organization and to identify challenges of a growing and diverse organization.

Group Descriptions

Organizational Group Descriptions

Tables 1 and 2 below describe salient organizational groups based on the data.

Statements were reported by at least three members of each group, but do not necessarily describe the majority of group members. If a statement was reported by only a particular subgroup, it is noted in parentheses. Total numbers of staff include staff interviewed, not the cooks.

Table 1
Geographical Units

Group	No. of Staff	Personal & Professional Needs	Work Orientation	Decision Making, Power, & Authority
Office	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role clarity, direction, and feedback in work • Others to take over some of their tasks • More financial support for individual and family needs • Communication support (mostly Asian males) • More contact with local organizations and alumni • Understanding of parts of the organizational policies • Individualized time management by supervisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyed working with staff • Motivated by the importance and necessity of the work – chance to unite civil society to bring about social change, often by supporting local organizations and alumni; working for justice • Task accomplishment mattered more than the time put in and many worked continuously (men) • Dealt with sudden tasks routinely as they arose (Asians) • Comfortable without timekeeping system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top down for some decisions, but sometimes did not know enough or need to be part of the decision making • Parts of the organization were or should be autonomous • Those lower in the hierarchy could give input to those higher up

Table 1 Geographical Units continued

Group	No. of Staff	Personal & Professional Needs	Work Orientation	Decision Making, Power, & Authority
Training Program A	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role clarity, direction, and supervision in work • To use their ideas, experience, and skills more • More investment in staff development • Understanding of organizational policies • Individualized time management • More follow-up with alumni 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needed to be seen by others as working a lot • Enjoyed working with and learning from students • Motivated to impact students and support alumni • Looked for feedback or absence of problems to determine success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top down or participatory • Some decisions were made through discussions as a staff team and/or with students
Training Program B	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More follow-up with alumni • Better understanding of other parts of the organization • More staff to support the work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task accomplishment mattered more than time put in • Enjoyed working with and learning from students and staff, as well as teamwork • Motivated to impact students, support alumni, and be part of the important work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes participatory, talking out conflicts and decisions with supervisors • Some organizational decisions were made at the top

Table 2
Hierarchical Groups

Group	No. of Staff	Personal & Professional Needs	Work Orientation	Decision Making, Power, & Authority
Uppers	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriately staffed organization (not over or under) • Chance to develop staff members more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spent time on intangibles, urgent needs, and meetings • Aimed to think strategically and focused on internal workings of organization and external relationships • Motivated to see the organization develop and achieve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided big picture for other staff around decisions • Parts of the organization were or should be autonomous (some) • Challenged by policy making and management
Middles	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More responsibility and chance to use their ideas, experience and/or skills more • More management, direction, and role clarity • More financially security • Attention to work/life balance • Less technical/administrative work • Time to read staff manual • Better intraorganizational communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work accomplishment mattered more than time (no clocking in needed) and most worked outside normal hours • Some planned their time, others did not • Only rarely felt successful, based on feedback or task completion. • Anxious about whether they could get everything done (mostly Asians). • Motivated to build relationships, see no problems in the organization, and have NGO X be the change it wished to see in the world • Liked learning, traveling, and interacting with people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could share their opinions, but did not always know enough or need to be part of decision making • Did not like organizational decision making or always know how decisions were made • Decided independently sometimes

Table 2 Hierarchical Groups continued

Group	No. of Staff	Personal & Professional Needs	Work Orientation	Decision Making, Power, & Authority
Lowers	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More responsibility, consistent work, feedback and less technical/administrative tasks • Clear job expectations (interns, volunteers) • More financial security • Education (some Asians) • Time to read and understand staff manual (Asians) • Better intraorganizational communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liked being busy and wanted others to see they were working • Never felt successful • Felt obligated to help others when needed, even if busy • Worked independently (interns, volunteers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could share their opinions, but could also have difficulty standing up to power • Could feel like they were not part of the organization • Decided independently sometimes

Identity Group Descriptions

Tables 3 and 4 below describe each salient identity group based on the data.

Again, statements were reported by at least three members of each group, but do not necessarily describe the majority of group members. If a statement was reported by only a particular subgroup, it is noted in parentheses. Total numbers of staff include staff interviewed, not the cooks.

Table 3
Gender Groups

Group	# of Staff	Personal & Professional Needs	Work Orientation	Decision Making, Power, & Authority
Men	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More responsibility, but less tasks and technical/administrative work • Help with communication • Understanding of certain organizational policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivated to work overtime to fight for social justice • Dealt with tasks as they arose suddenly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions were often made at the top, which could make some feel not part of the organization • Did not like decision making • Participated in some way, but did not always know enough or need to be involved in the decision making • Some decisions should just be made by the individual • Challenged by policy making
Women	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More gender awareness and acceptance from Asian male staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivated to work overtime by concern about others' perceptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often did not know how decisions were made • Appreciated having women in positions of power

Table 4
Ethnic Groups

Group	No. of Staff	Personal & Professional Needs	Work Orientation	Decision Making, Power, & Authority
Asian	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More direction, responsibility, and chance to use ideas, less quick changes, tasks, and boredom • Help with written and oral communication • Understanding of parts of organizational policies (lower level of hierarchy) • Support balancing work and family and meeting family financial needs • Independent-working colleagues who take more responsibility for themselves • Staff development opportunities and further education • Understanding of need to handle community issues and work with local organizations • More time with other organizations and alumni • Individualized time management and less Western-style management and direct communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only some structured their work, mostly in terms of having a schedule, but dealt with sudden tasks regularly • Felt pressure to appear working all the time or to work extra either because they were activists or were concerned about appearances of doing their job (lower level of hierarchy) • Motivated to help others – alumni, staff, and their own families – make them happy and build relationships, inside and outside the organization • Liked being busy and completing tasks (lower level of hierarchy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals should make more decisions on their own • Decisions made at the top made some feel like they were not part of the organization • Some did not know how decisions were made • Uncomfortable saying no to others • Challenged by policy making • Decisions were sometimes made as a team • Imbalance of power among ethnic groups within NGO X

Table 4 Ethnic Groups continued

Group	No. of Staff	Personal & Professional Needs	Work Orientation	Decision Making, Power, & Authority
Western	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More role clarity for self and others • Easier transportation to the organization • More money to repay loans (younger staff) • More direct communication (i.e. struggled when Asians say “yes” but mean “no”) • To use their ideas, experience, and skills more • More time and motivation to read staff manual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivated by importance of work, independence, freedom, and creativity • Could be workaholics – most worked beyond normal hours - but some worked to maintain a work-life balance • Some structured their work and focused on organizing and prioritizing • Liked working with staff, students, alumni, and local organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware of outsider status and cautious about respecting local communities and staff, including equal pay scale for local and foreign staff • Some decisions were made in a participatory way

Major Themes

Theme One: Personal and Professional Needs

All staff members expressed certain needs, both personal and professional, sometimes speaking as individuals, sometimes speaking for a group. Personal and professional needs often overlapped, and individuals' personal lives, background and experiences all affected what they needed to do their jobs well. Individuals also expected and needed new support as a result of the increased size of the organization. Below are some areas where people expressed a need for increased support, resources, or understanding.

Direction

Individuals who worked in the office, Training Program A, and were at the middle and lower levels of the hierarchy, both Asian and Western, asked for more role clarity, direction, and feedback in their work. Overall staff needed more information and guidance to do their jobs well and know they were working in the right direction, which may not have been needed when the organization was smaller and more familial. Almost all staff that were not in positions of leadership stated they needed more guidance, although only sometimes using the phrase "supervision" or asking for it formally.

Culture influenced the ultimate reasons staff members sought more direction in their work. Westerners wished for clarity for themselves and others, so everyone could know what each other was doing and all could work more strategically toward the organization's goals. Asians wanted more direction in their work to keep them from being bored and ensure that others perceived them as working.

The organization had grown to a size where individuals did not always know what each other was working on, how their work fit into the larger picture of the organization, or even who each other was. Staff needed structures to be put in place to encourage more connection and communication between staff members and parts of the organization.

Two Western office staff members expressed this need for greater structure. One shared, “I wish for clarity and direction. There’ve been snapshots where we felt like a well-oiled machine. That feeling’s like a drug. When it’s not there, it leaves you wanting it.”

Another said, “Everything comes down to clarity and communication. I want to make sure our roles are clear. There are too many excuses made for people sometimes.”

Education and Training

Only the Asian staff – about half of all interviewed – expressed interest in education and training to develop as individuals and better staff members. They saw themselves much more as fighting for a cause because they “have to” than doing any “work” and therefore did not use the phrase “professional development.” However, these staff members wanted more opportunities to use the skills they did have and to develop more, so that they could be of even greater value to the organization and the cause. Some felt limited by their current education and wanted to learn more. Others had extensive practical experience from working with community-based organizations and wished for the opportunity to contribute skills honed there. They saw working at NGO X as a way to learn, gain experience, and make money for their families, many of whom were living in villages back in staff members’ home countries.

Westerners, on the other hand, liked their jobs because they were working for an important cause, but did not expect explicit professional development at NGO X, besides

having the chance to do the work. They often left the organization after two to three years and returned either to their home countries or moved on to work at other NGOs, sometimes in completely different parts of the world and/or focused on different issues. Asians often saw these Westerners as transient, either joining the cause simply to build their resumes or because they had difficulty finding work elsewhere. As one Asian office staff member shared: “Mostly westerners leave after a few years. They’re tired, not happy, ready to go, or can’t move up here.”

Gender Awareness

Women were well aware of the challenges they faced working in a culturally diverse organization with conflicting gender norms, but wished for greater awareness and understanding from the men, particularly the Asian men, with whom they worked. Asian women came from cultures where it was not always accepted for women to work or speak out. However their situations had changed having moved from their home countries or villages. They often needed to work to support their families, while simultaneously growing as activists fighting for justice. This context led the Asian women to break their cultural norms, but they, their families, and the Asian men with whom they worked were not always comfortable with their behavior. They wished that the Asian male staff members were more aware of the gender challenges they faced and more accepting of their choices. Western women, while more comfortable being outspoken activists and working women, also wished for greater awareness around gender issues from the Asian male staff.

Relationships with Those Outside NGO X

Both identity and organizational group membership shaped staff members' needs for stronger relationships with those outside of NGO X. Most of the organization (half of all office staff and half of all Asian staff) wished to have more direct contact and engagement with training program alumni and other community-based organizations. Training program staff expressed a desire for the organization to be more responsible for following up with alumni after they left the program. Asian staff needed time to devote to their home community organizations and community members. They felt an obligation to these communities and wished for understanding when meeting their communities' needs interfered with their work for NGO X.

There was also a tension between doing work that would capture the attention of national, regional, and international media and bring in donors and doing quieter, slower social change work on the ground. Those in the office, especially leadership, tended to work more for the media attention, while those in the training programs, also faced with protecting the security of the students, went about their work more quietly. A Western training program staff member summarized the "pressure" she felt within this context: "Staff gets pushed to have groundbreaking work for the money. I know how hard fundraising and providing job security for so many people is. But there's always a tension between having a showy program and just doing good solid work in a quiet way."

Communication

All staff members were aware of challenges associated with working in a culturally diverse organization; however individuals' group memberships, particularly

their cultural background and gender, shaped their communication styles and what they needed from others to work effectively.

Asian staff members highlighted language issues. They wished to both improve their English and find better ways of working around language differences within the organization. Men specifically spoke to needing support to more effectively communicate with donors, raise money, and represent the organization to the outside world. All Asian staff expressed constant challenges communicating in English within the organization, where business was officially conducted in English, including meetings, emails, and documents. These staff members spoke English as a second language with varying degrees of proficiency. They wanted help with written and oral communication— writing, reading emails, reading the staff manual, increasing their confidence to speak up in meetings dominated by English speakers, and help understanding what was said in those meetings.

Some Asians reported that Western communication styles were valued more within the organization than Asian styles. Email was particularly problematic as a regular means of internal communication. It could lead to miscommunication and Asian staff felt that talking in person was easier, more effective, and led to stronger relationships. Westerners, however, had more facility and comfort with emailing in English and used it often. Important organizational messages were regularly communicated via email, particularly when all-staff meetings were held infrequently. Asian staff also felt more comfortable deciding on their priorities while they were working, rather than organizing their work schedules in a more regimented way that Westerners valued and practiced.

Beyond English challenges, each of the ethnic groups working at NGO X spoke their own language, and those staff not in the dominant ethnic group reported feeling like they were in the minority.

Westerners brought differing levels of cross-cultural competence, experience, and self-identification as being Western, all of which affected their communication styles within the organization and how they perceived those of others. They reported that they worked to understand and respect Southeast Asian culture, but wanted their culture to be considered as well. One continuing challenge was the ongoing desire for their Asian colleagues to be more direct with them. Asians did not always say “no” directly, even when they meant it. Thus Westerners felt faced with trying to interpret their colleagues real meaning when “yes” could mean “yes” or “yes” could mean “no.” They sometimes felt like they were supposed to read minds.

The new staff handbook highlighted internal communications issues. Staff members almost universally did not fully understand the organization’s policies and benefits, as outlined in the new staff handbook. Asians often did not understand the dense English language in it or had not even attempted to read it. Westerners had not taken the time to read it either, even though they were not put off by the language, but merely its size. Thus the new handbook did not effectively communicate organizational policies to staff members.

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance held different meanings for individuals, based on their ethnic group membership, age, and stage of life. For Asian staff members it more often meant balancing family and community obligations with work obligations. For Western staff

members having a work-life balance signified having time for oneself, friends, and partners outside of work. Asian staff members prioritized differently in order to handle their work and outside obligations, but all felt a tug to live up to all of their obligations to the best of their abilities. Western staff members prioritized work while they were at NGO X, but not all were planning on being there long-term (two were volunteers on limited contracts). Their obligations tended more toward creating personal time and paying off education debt, to which some younger Western staff contributed most of their salaries. Western staff respected and supported the organization's equal pay scale for local and foreign staff, but wanted sufficient compensation and benefits to meet staff members' different needs.

The age and stage of life of staff members particularly affected their needs, and more Asians in the organization were older and had children. Among staff of both ethnicities, some were married and had spouses and children to attend to and take care of, some were single and had families who relied on their support, and some were single and paying off loans. Asian staff members had different community and family obligations than Westerners. They either had their own families or communities (nearby immigrant communities or home villages in their countries of origin) that could suddenly require them to leave work to attend to urgent situations, such as funerals, hospitalizations, and immigration crises, or they prioritized work over family but were conflicted internally about it. Asian discomfort with saying "no" made obligations difficult to ignore or delay.

Work Flow

Many staff members wished for a more regular flow of work. Almost everyone agreed that tasks came up suddenly within the organization, but depending on group

identity, individuals differed in their degree of comfort with this reality of organizational life, their coping strategies, and requests for support. Management wished staff members planned their work better and were available to be responsive to meeting variable needs. Westerners were more comfortable with planning and prioritizing, which could involve saying “no”, even though they acknowledged that, particularly at NGO X, sudden tasks would still come up occasionally.

Many Asian staff members, often at the lower level of the hierarchy, did not think they could plan at all because of unexpected requests and events, compounded by their discomfort saying “no” and desire to please others when those requests came in. Some simply did not like to plan their work and schedule ahead of time, enjoying feeling unrestricted and prioritizing according to the perceived or explicit urgency of requests as they went along. One person summarized his culturally based perspective, “I grew up being free, managing my own time in my own way. It's very challenging for me to be put in a very strict situation.” Many Asian staff also felt pressured by the Asian concept that work involves being at a desk or computer constantly. If individuals did not have work to do, they felt like they were not doing their job.

Recognition and Understanding of Cultural and Individual Differences

Staff members wanted others to acknowledge that their work behavior and needs were influenced by both cultural and individual factors. Staff members held a tension between understanding cultural influences and wanting to be seen as unique individuals. The way this tension was held varied by group membership.

Asians held this tension on one hand by acknowledging that Asian and Western backgrounds and “values” are “very different,” with Asians “learning about human and

environmental rights” as “new things,” but having their “heart[s] to work from.” Asians also are culturally unaccustomed to “saying what we need or feel,” particularly in the workplace. On the other hand, Asian staff members wanted to be seen as individuals. One person shared, “I want the same chance as others. I don’t want to be seen as [my ethnicity], just as staff.”

Westerners also struggled with cultural differences. They wanted their cultures to be considered by Asian staff at NGO X and felt, as one person said, “It’s refreshing when cultural sensitivity goes both ways.” At the same time, they wanted the care they took in navigating cultural difference to be recognized. One staff member shared his thoughts, “I have a lot of questions about how to be a Westerner here. [Asians] know where to find the fruits, spice, fish, meat, and recipe. The only thing I know is how to keep the kitchen clean.” Another person saw the role of Westerners at NGO X as being “needed for time management, efficiency, writing flow of logic, and relating to the West.”

Management, paying attention to the big picture, wanted all staff to have “full multicultural thinking” and wished for others to understand the challenges they faced running a diverse organization with “so many potential fractures.” One person summarized the challenges: “A bird’s eye view of this organization might look dysfunctional, but we’re functioning with two different cultural groups that have a big gap in the middle. The challenge is humongous. We are doing amazing work.” One person had learned about “ethnic and gender balance” through his time as a manager at NGO X and now “cannot forget.” Looking ahead, management was honest about the room the organization had to grow in supporting and empowering local work despite cultural differences and challenges. One person shared, “Often we don’t have time to

empower local people's ability to work. We get in the whirlpool of our own work and can never jump out. Slowly, change is happening compared to the past."

Theme Two: Work Orientation

NGO X staff members' perceptions of work varied in orientation toward mission or task, according to their organizational and identity group memberships. This orientation also affected how staff members felt their work time was best spent.

Motivation

Staff members felt that their work was "about the cause" – building civil society to unite for social change and justice – and explained how "when you care about the work...and commit to struggling for justice...you don't want to stop, you need to do the work continuously." Passion for the work varied by ethnic background. Those from the target country saw their participation in the organization and their fight for their country as a way of life, an unquestionable duty. The job was also a way to earn money for their families. Westerners were also committed to the work, but more generally committed to social change. Some Asians were suspicious of Westerners' full commitment, but Westerners felt confident they were adding something valuable to the organization, which motivated their work.

Staff members not at the director level wished to have even more responsibility in their roles and use their experience and skills as much as possible to help NGO X achieve its mission. This work orientation led staff members to work outside normal business hours, although they reported this overtime work differently according to their ethnic group memberships. Asian staff members said they felt pressure, either internal or external, to work outside the office. Westerners more often described themselves as

workaholics and stressed how much they valued the importance of the work and the freedom and flexibility they were given to be creative and work how they wished.

Those lower in the hierarchy had more of a task orientation toward work. They were concerned about working a lot, but more with regard to ensuring that others saw them working all the time. One Western training program staff member observed the following: “In Asia people think they’re supposed to be in front of their computer at the office during work hours or else you’re not really working.” Those at the lowest level of the hierarchy thought that their jobs were about overall hours spent at work and about dealing with problems as they arose. They liked feeling busy and having things to do, even though they said that technical and administrative work could be “boring”.

In terms of the organization’s geographical units, the staff of Training Program B and the office had more of a mission orientation to their work than a task orientation, while Training Program A staff, many of whom had lower hierarchical positions, were more task oriented. Training program staff also enjoyed the benefit of learning from the students with whom they worked.

Measures of Success

Individuals’ position in the hierarchy and the organization influenced their work orientation in terms of what they thought was important about the work they were doing and where they should focus their efforts.

Leaders were interested in organizational and staff development, as well as staff management. They felt successful when thinking strategically and sought to create a functional, effective organization. They were concerned about staff putting equal time

and effort into their jobs, but also wished they could spend more time helping these staff develop professionally.

Staff in the middle and lower parts of the hierarchy felt job satisfaction when they had and completed meaningful tasks or projects over which they had ownership and either found challenging or could see as being connected to the larger organizational mission. At the lower level of the hierarchy, however, staff members never felt successful.

Training program staff members strove to positively affect their students. Additionally, they wanted to spend more time empowering program alumni and their communities, which felt integrally connected to the organization's mission.

Staff members across the organization felt like relationship building could "be the best part of the work," and liked meeting and working with others both within and outside the organization. In particular, those who worked with local organizations and alumni as a primary part of their role felt successful when they were able to connect with and support them and wanted even more time to do so. Even those that did not work with outside organizations and alumni wanted to engage with them more. Of the staff members who expressed this desire, many were Asian, suggesting an Asian cultural preference for relationship building.

Time Management

For the most part, regardless of individual work orientation, staff members felt that others were on board with the organizational mission and "as long as people do their work and they have appropriate, fair workloads, we don't need to have strict timekeeping. It's about trust." They appreciated the freedom and opportunity to be creative and have

some choice and control over the work they did. The organization had no real system in place to monitor people's work hours, and only some people thought a system would be necessary.

Due to the diversity of the staff, it was thought that supervisors could help monitor people's work hours and tailor systems to individual circumstances and challenges, including culture. Asians were more likely to advocate for supervisory intervention only if an individual had problems around time management, due to cultural differences and "different styles." Westerners saw a need for more consistent supervisory relationships.

Theme Three: Decision making, Power, and Authority

Staff members held different definitions and expectations of what their jobs should entail, how much participation they should have in decision making, and who held or should hold power in the organization. They also had varying experiences with the use and abuse of authority. All of these factors varied by organizational and identity group membership.

Informal Hierarchy

A certain amount of ambiguity existed in NGO X's hierarchical structure, outlined below. Individuals managed this ambiguity in ways that often related to their group memberships.

An informal hierarchy existed within the organization. The executive director oversaw all of the work. Under him was the Southeast Asia director, who retained ultimate leadership over each of the training programs. He worked with an assistant director who did not hold direct power over the training programs, but did supervise

many of the office staff, including the project coordinator, research and program associate, and alumni program coordinator. The office program coordinator reported to the Southeast Asia director, and the project associate reported to the program coordinator. The administrator reported to the assistant director. The intern reported to the project coordinator. These reporting relationships were still being negotiated as to whether they would follow hierarchical lines or be divided up by language and ethnicity, with Southeast Asian staff reporting to the Southeast Asian director and Western staff reporting to the Western assistant director.

Within each training program, the hierarchies were a little clearer. The Training Program A team leader was in charge of his training program, even though he was on a leave of absence. During this time, he most directly reported to the executive director. Under him were the training coordinator, administrator, and teacher, none of whom were explicitly above or below each other in the hierarchy. The training coordinator supervised the two training assistants or interns. The volunteer had no official supervisor. The two cooks for Training Program A lay at the lowest level of the hierarchy.

The Training Program B program coordinator reported to the Southeast Asia director and supervised the two program associates and two alumni coordinators. There were no official differences in hierarchy among these positions. The two cooks for Training Program B lay at the lowest level of the hierarchy.

Power and Authority

The ambiguous hierarchical structure created certain power dynamics within the organization. Staff members within the organization felt they had different amounts of

power. This differed based on identity group, as well as place in the organization. It did not always relate to official job title or position in the hierarchy.

Those who felt more powerless were often members of marginalized identity groups within the organization based on ethnicity, language, or gender. Some saw Westerners and one Asian ethnic group as holding more power to make organizational decisions and receiving special privileges, regardless of position in the hierarchy. All of the representatives of this one ethnic group were also men. The Asian ethnic group with the next largest representation consisted of four women, who had strong skills but relatively low positions of power in the organization. NGO X staff members felt that they worked for human rights and those same rights should be respected within the organization, without having different classes of people internally. However without a formal hierarchical organizational structure, groups claimed power implicitly due to their identities, a paradox given the organization's mission.

These power dynamics often silenced staff members who shared that they did not always express their opinions because they lacked power, time, English and other skills, organizational knowledge, and/or job security; the organization did not offer all staff members a "warm and inviting atmosphere" in which to speak. Identity and organizational group memberships also shaped how people did or did not share their voices within the organization. Asian staff lower in the hierarchy expressed the most difficulty with saying "no" to or openly disagreeing with people in authority at the organization, thus influenced by both their identity and organizational group memberships. Women lower in the hierarchy appreciated having other women in

positions of power within the organization, helping them feel both authorized to speak up and that their voices were represented among the decision makers at NGO X.

Also affecting power and authority within NGO X were the different experiences with authority staff members brought to the organization. Staff members were embedded in historical contexts that may have led to anxiety about how authority uses power in any given situation. Westerners brought with them the harsh history of colonialism where authority was often used to benefit only those in power, rarely the local communities. Asians carried experiences of living under authoritarian government regimes within their own countries. These cultural backgrounds and experiences shaped staff members' feelings toward authority and hierarchical structures. They also shaped Westerners' concern for the security and needs of their Asian colleagues and students, revealing a felt responsibility to protect them in a situation where the Asians had less power over their own safety.

Decision Making as Seen from Lower Hierarchical Levels

Power dynamics also affected how people felt about decision making. Staff members' attitudes toward decision making mostly varied according to their place in the hierarchy. People lower in the hierarchy felt comfortable with the fact that "decisions often were made at the top" because they admitted that they "did not know everything" and had seen that with more responsibility at NGO X came more problems. However, without being a part of decision making, some staff members, mostly those lower in the hierarchy, no longer felt like they were a part of the organization. Gender also had an effect and women more often than men did not understand how decisions were made.

Staff members seemed most comfortable with team decision making or when they had the freedom to determine their own work. The amount of participatory or team decision making varied by organizational unit and level of decision making. For instance, the training program staff felt they had relatively participatory internal decision making with regard to how they ran their programs and worked with their students, but did not feel they had as much say in organizational or directional decisions that affected their units. Middle hierarchy office staff thought the training programs should have more autonomy from each other, the office, and organizational leadership.

All staff members not in leadership were also frustrated with the lack of transparency around organizational changes, but interpreted the situation differently depending on cultural group identity. Many Asians thought they did not know enough to understand why decisions were made. Westerners thought it was unhealthy organizational practice that they did not know what was occurring in the organization or what they were supposed to do in response to changes. Across groups, many want to know the organizational big picture and better understand why decisions were made.

Cultural identity affected how these staff members viewed decision making and organizational policies and how they should be decided. Asians, accustomed to more individual freedom and less structure in their societies, valued the chance to make smaller decisions independently and did not always see as much need for organizational coherence as Westerners did. Westerners, aware of their outsider status, were cautious about respecting local communities and staff needs and opinions in decision making that applied to everyone, such as deciding on an equal pay scale for local and foreign staff. Asians were also challenged by policy decisions and perceived some unfairness in

opportunities offered to them versus Westerners and experienced difficulty or confusion around how to access their opportunities as stated in organizational policies.

Management

Managers were not comfortable with the responsibilities of their role, including managing and making organizational policy, which led them to not always embrace their managerial duties. They acknowledged the difficulties of making managerial decisions, particularly in deciding on policies for an Asian and Western staff. One person described NGO X management from his point of view:

We try very hard to evaluate and compare ourselves with other international and regional organizations. We always invite people's feedback related to the policy. The challenge is to adjust the two offices and try to balance the benefits and salaries, related to Asia standards and international organizations here. We try to find a balance and stand on our own beliefs. We develop a lot through staff feedback.

Managers resisted taking up their authority and did not enforce any kind of time management system. Those who wished to make everyone happy, more often Asians, struggled with the tension that in management it is inevitably difficult for everyone to be happy and for there not to be any conflict. Asian managers saw teamwork as a way to manage Asian discomfort with directness in being managed. One person explained, "Sometimes people might not like to talk to me directly, but if we're working as a team, the person can talk to their supervisor and then the supervisor can talk to me."

Managers did express that one of their roles was providing the big picture for the rest of the organization. However staff members in the lower and middle levels of the hierarchy wished for even more understanding of other staff members' roles, the big picture at NGO X, and management's goals behind making organizational changes. They noticed the general lack of management and wished to have more guidance from

supervisors and leaders, including direction in their work, feedback, training, recognition of the amount and quality of their work, and clarity around their roles. While many individuals wished for greater oversight in their work, this desire conflicted with their culturally influenced concepts of authority and how it could be used. Many staff had hopes that organizational work could be managed through teamwork and that problematic behaviors could be dealt with on an individual basis.

Hypotheses for Future Research

One of the purposes of grounded theory research is not hypothesis testing, but the generation of hypotheses for future testing. The three major themes found in this study describe patterns among the experiences of staff members in one culturally diverse NGO. They generate a few overarching hypotheses about such organizations that can guide future research in this area:

1. Organizational and identity group memberships, particularly culture and gender, affect individuals' experiences of their roles, including their personal and professional needs, work orientation, and attitudes toward power, authority, and decision making.
2. The intersection of group memberships and organizational context can help explain organizational tensions and dynamics.
3. Individuals are unique intersections and combinations of group memberships, which shape how they take up their role and are viewed by others within the organization and contribute to staff members' feelings of both individualism and group identification.

The results and these emerging hypotheses are further explored in the context of theory in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION

Major Themes in Theoretical Context

The findings illuminate how complex forces played out in one culturally diverse, growing NGO, where individuals' identity and organizational groups influenced both how staff members experienced the organization and the resulting organizational dynamics and tensions. While both identity and organizational group memberships powerfully affected individuals' experience, it is the intersection between salient groups that most illuminated the organizational life of individuals. For instance, the influence of gender and experience of being in a position within the hierarchy were both clearer when examined through a cultural lens, and, conversely, the influence of culture was best understood when a person's place in the organization or hierarchy was taken into account. Group trends helped explain individual experience, but it was each individual's unique combination of identity and organizational group memberships and the intersections among them that shaped who they were and how they took up their role and were viewed by others within the organization. The organization as a whole, and the subgroups within it, became a combination of each individual experience. It also took on an extra layer of group life from the intergroup dynamics that lay within the organization and were embedded in the context of the outside world in which it existed. The

boundaries between groups were at various states of being under and overbounded, with respect to the organization's context.

With this in mind, the major themes can be discussed to explore their meaning in the context of theory. To discuss them more easily, they have been grouped into two sets of challenges – those of a growing organization and those of a culturally diverse one. This divide, however, is artificial and the two inevitably overlap.

Challenges of a Growing Organization

At the point in time during which I worked with NGO X, it proved to be a strong organization with a long-term commitment to the issues on which it was focused. The staff were smart, creative, passionate, committed individuals with strong values. They liked their jobs and wanted to work toward the organizational mission. They were activists committed to social change, building a network of others with whom to work. However, they were changing the world and forced to adjust to that new landscape. The organization had also grown from a few people living and working in one house to a larger organization with multiple workplaces. They had focused much of their energy on social change, leaving little energy for themselves, the internal workings of the organization, and managing outside perceptions. Individuals had much to say about the areas in which they worked, but not as much to say about the organization as a whole. Organizational systems were developing but had not yet been formalized. One director described the organization as being in its “adolescence, an unruly, disorganized teenager.” At the point of the diagnosis, this organization was in a state of growing into its new shape, matching internal systems to its current needs.

Physical Boundaries

As a result of its growth, the organization was divided by physical boundaries. In addition to the overall organizational split between the United States and Southeast Asia, within the Southeast Asia program the organization had three physical locations. In essence, there were three different organizations housed within NGO X's Southeast Asia program. This split gave each unit a degree of autonomy and privacy and served as a challenge to creating a unified Southeast Asia program. Of all three units, Training Program B was most tightly bounded and separated from the other two units. Both training programs, however, held tight boundaries to the outside world in order to protect the security of the students housed and learning within them. The office unit had the loosest boundary to the outside world, which was in sync with its mandate to interact with international, regional, and local organizations, as well as the media.

Psychological Boundaries

In addition to physical boundaries, the growing NGO X had developed psychological boundaries. The whole organization could be seen as overbounded to the outside world, extremely concerned with security and secrecy, but in reality still vulnerable. The overboundedness was most likely in response to perceived threats from a hostile world, including government authority, corporations, and competition from other NGOs and community-based organizations. The external environment in which the organization operated was so threatening and attention-drawing, including governments, competing NGOs, and other adversaries of the organization's work, that the NGO X "family" had tightened its boundaries to the outside world. This inevitably left loose boundaries on the inside of the organization. The lack of an organizational chart and the

fact that the organization operated with an informal hierarchy serve as evidence of some of the organization's loose internal boundaries.

A parallel process around boundaries occurred with each of the organization's physical units. Due to perceived threat or competition, each unit was divided from the others by psychological boundaries which amplified the physical ones. Thus the units were overbounded between each other. For instance, the two training programs had little interaction and collaboration. Training Program A worked closely with the office and had some overlapping staff, but informally Training Program B lay at the lowest level of the hierarchy and seemed to have developed an unintended independence and life of its own. This independence is consistent with being at the bottom of the hierarchy, according to Smith (1982). In essence NGO X was three organizations in one, each with its own culture. Thus, a significant challenge was how to loosen boundaries between units to find pathways for communication, spaces where the different parts of the organization could connect with and understand each other, and ways in which individuals and teams could take time out of their daily tasks to look at the big picture and envision organizational direction. As one staff member noted, "An emphasis on autonomy was not workable if we were to remain one organization."

Structure

Inside the organization, staff members looked for more guidance, structure, and leadership. Individual roles were not clearly defined on multiple levels – internally within the programs and organization and externally with alumni, partners, and local organizations. Staff members craved direction in their work in part because they did not have the kind of daily contact with other staff as would happen in a smaller organization.

This lack of regular contact among everyone also led to a need for individuals to be responsible for managing their own time, or for there to be a system to monitor this, and for there to be accountability around what staff members accomplished as part of their jobs. Maintaining the lack of structure were managers, some of whom were uncomfortable being more directive and wished for more communication, trust, understanding, ownership, and independence from their staff. However, on the individual level, the least favorite part of many other staff members' jobs was not having stronger guidance; they requested more clarity, direction, and personal and financial security. On the systemic level, staff members wanted more clarity around their roles in relation to others and a connection to the organization as a whole and to the communities with whom the organization worked.

As part of a growing organization, the voices of NGO X asked numerous questions about how the organization should function. They wondered when all of the staff should gather and how they could get to know each other. They wanted to know what other staff members did as part of their jobs and if others knew what they did as part of their own jobs. Staff members struggled with how to communicate with each other and when and how to use meetings. They questioned how to work with those outside this organization with whom they had relationships. They saw a need to clarify roles and organizational structures, set goals and strategic direction, and create order to manage the larger organization, but had not yet decided how to do so. By virtue of individuals' identity and organizational groups, staff members had different answers to these questions or wished for leadership to answer them. As the organization had grown to a

larger size, these were the questions it faced in determining how to effectively operate and move forward.

Growth in Social Change Organizations

Much of the internal underboundedness seen in NGO X is typical of social change organizations, identified as often uncomfortable with hierarchy and authority and therefore resistant to putting structures into place. Staff members also almost always have their hearts in the work, increasing the likelihood that they will blur the boundaries between work and life. However the struggle to become more appropriately bounded, to put structures and order in place in a way that makes sense for the organization and its stakeholders, is a normal step in the progression of growth from a small, familial organization to a larger one that can achieve more and greater things. When organizations do not manage this transition well, it can be the first step toward dissolution. NGO X was an organization that had grown but had not yet worked out the kinks that accompanied this growth. The organization was experiencing problems as a result. The communication, coordination, and collaboration staff members sought all related to the need to find optimal boundary permeability within the organization's current context.

Challenges of a Culturally Diverse Organization

A major challenge of this growing organization was in fact the subset of challenges of being a diverse organization. As the organization grew, and its diversity grew along with it, it became more difficult to meet and manage the varied personal and professional needs of all staff, as well as their work orientations and culturally and organizationally embedded perspectives on decision making, power, and authority. Each individual managed that struggle, exemplified by one comment, "You find a balance

between accepting that you're working in another culture and setting limits of what you'll put up with so that you're respected and treated with human dignity." The organization as a whole struggled to find a similar balance of taking individual and group diversity into consideration while working to move forward to achieve its mission. It faced the question of how to be intentional about diversity, maximize the resources and different strengths everyone brought to the organization, and work through challenges openly. Another issue was how to ensure that no one culture dominated the organization and that different cultural norms and expectations were respected and supported.

The dimensions of diversity found to be most salient within NGO X were culture and gender. The main cultural division was between Westerners and Asians, but there were very important national, linguistic, and ethnic divisions within each of these groups, all serving as boundaries between them. The many languages spoken within NGO X were immensely helpful in doing the work, but they also posed a particularly significant challenge for an organization that conducted its internal business in English. Cultural and gender perspectives within the organization varied on the dimensions discussed as part of the major themes – work orientation, definitions of success, work flow, work-life balance, decision making, power and authority, education and training, and gender awareness. The overall challenge was to recognize and understand cultural and individual differences among staff within the organization. Staff members needed the organization to create more space for individuals to spend time together and connect with each other across differences.

Relationship to the Cause

NGO X was an organization united by a passion for a cause – for the freedom and rights of all human beings. All staff members aligned behind this cause, however some considered their work more of a job and others considered it more a necessity or way of life. The perspectives on their jobs varied by individuals’ group and organizational memberships. To many of the Westerners, their position was temporary at the organization, and while they may have committed their lives to fighting for social justice, they did not necessarily plan on staying at NGO X and focusing on its issues forever. Their goals were to engage in important work in the world and achieve. Many Asians saw their positions at NGO X as formalized ways of continuing the fight for the rights of their people, a fight they had each begun individually long before joining NGO X as a paid staff member. They ultimately wanted peace in their villages, countries, and regions, some so they could return home and live full lives learning, farming, raising families, and participating in their communities. In the meantime, Asian staff members’ jobs at NGO X provided them with a way to support their families, immediate and extended.

Many staff asked for more responsibility as a way to contribute more to the cause. For Asians this responsibility also let them learn more and use skills they may have developed in their community based organizations. For Westerners more responsibility also built resumes that they might use later for jobs elsewhere and allowed them the chance to use skills and knowledge they might have gained in graduate school. For the Southeast Asian staff members who were from the countries where NGO X worked in particular, this was their life and doing this “work” was not a choice but an inevitability, a

duty. Despite the passion and obligation, staff members voiced complaints and comments typical of almost any workplace.

Culturally Embedded Concepts of Authority

The cultures and contexts within which staff were embedded undoubtedly greatly shaped their perspectives, sometimes on an unconscious level. One salient issue was authority. The backgrounds of people from each general culture within the organization – white Western and Southeast Asian – shaped how they felt about authority, especially how it could be misused. Staff members were embedded in historical and governmental contexts that could make them anxious about how authority uses power and shaped their feelings about management.

Colonialism is a complex example of how embedded staff dynamics were in a larger historical context. In Southeast Asia Western authority was used to colonize existing communities and take advantage of natural resources. This history not only might have imbued Westerners in NGO X with feelings of guilt, but also affected how Asian staff members perceived them, for instance with suspicion. Westerners might have been uncomfortable with the power they held, both in the past and present, by virtue of their skin color and birthplace. Asians may also have felt that Westerners perceived them as inferior. Colonialism's historical influence inevitably created many projections and assumptions about others. The history could have made it hard for Westerners to take up and use their expertise and resources as white outsiders and difficult for both ethnic groups to build trust and engage with each other without preconceptions.

Southeast Asian staff members brought a history of their own government regimes where authority had been used to benefit the few, not the masses. Some of them

came from an oppressive, closed society where a military leadership team held the power and authority at the national level and governed in a violent, authoritarian way, but where communities at the village level were led in a more participatory manner. This could make it hard for them to take up or trust authority and hierarchical structures. Additionally, each culture had its own tradition of how one should interact with someone higher in the hierarchy.

Southeast Asian cultures have more of a patriarchal tradition of respect for elders and authority. An Asian family cultural norm is that authority is not questioned within the family. Western culture tends to be more relaxed, perhaps influencing some Western staff members' greater level of comfort openly speaking to people in authority. Since the executive director talked about the organization as if it were a family, he may have been unconsciously taking up a traditional head of family role and creating an environment where his authority could not be questioned.

On top of these two cultural contexts lay the NGO mindset that came along with being outside government and business. NGOs are alternative structures with ideals of working at the grassroots and international levels toward the good of the larger population, often specifically targeting marginalized and vulnerable people. In NGOs participation and the voice of the people are often valued. Identification as NGO workers might have been most salient in NGO X staff members' shared belief in a participatory organization. Each individual within the organization held a mix of beliefs by virtue of his or her different group memberships. As a result, staff members faced internal conflicts as part of their roles.

In these contexts, it is no wonder that the organization struggled with an informal and often ambiguous hierarchy. Within NGO X, staff members both replicated and resisted the dynamics of the worlds in which they lived. Staff members who had more authority within the informal hierarchy often held it because of their group memberships, either familial, friend, or ethnic relationship to the executive director, a work focus on issues the executive director thought were most central to NGO X's mission, or perceived valuable skills coming in as an outsider. Management struggled to take up their authority, even for the benefit of the organization, and feel comfortable with it. The organization had come to a place as a growing, diverse organization where they were becoming aware of the existing authority lines. They were determining how to employ a model of management that could work for its current members and push the organization along toward the mission it was trying to achieve. Each staff member faced discomfort in some way around issues of hierarchy, structure, supervision, and decision making, but the origin of this discomfort remained largely undiscussed among the organization.

Life Stage

Another salient issue was the stage of life of staff members, the intersection of life stage and culture, and the resulting ways in which staff related to and needed things from the organization. Some staff members had spouses and children, but even younger, Asian staff members had more family obligations than Westerners. While the Westerners at NGO X were more independent and individualistic in their adult life, Asians were still tied to their families and communities and held accompanying obligations, whether they already had a family of their own or not. This obligation was amplified by the fact that Asian staff members lived within immigrant communities in the host country or had

family still living under threat in their home villages. The Asian NGO X staff members were often in more stable positions than other members of their communities and were called upon to help with anything from translation to loans to navigating visas to activism.

Younger staff members faced more educational needs than older ones. Westerners more often had already been to graduate school and struggled to pay back loans on an Asian salary. Asians wanted to improve their English and continue on to more higher education, such as college or graduate school, to further their ability to fight for their cause and provide for their families.

Relations with Outside Organizations

Determining how the organization would relate to outside community-based organizations and alumni was an ongoing challenge related not only to the organization's mission and identity, but also to the diverse identities of its staff members. Notably, many staff, particularly Asians and those in the office, wanted more direct contact with these groups and individuals. Some possible explanations for this phenomenon are that individuals seemed to feel like this was the "real work," since it was more directly connected to the people they were trying to serve, or that people might have been feeling like the organization was growing disconnected from its grassroots origins. Another factor might have been cultural differences between Asians and Westerners on how much they valued relationship building as part of work. Those lower in the hierarchy might have been interested in more direct contact in order to have clearer tasks that they could accomplish and have recognized by others.

Work Styles

Cultural differences in communication styles, comfort saying “no,” prioritizing, and advanced planning led to groups within NGO X responding to sudden requests and changes differently. Only Asians reported that things came up suddenly at the organization and they dealt with them then. This might be because Asians interpreted the phenomenon differently than Westerners. Westerners might have been more accustomed to multitasking, including the need to set limits and prioritize. Because Asians also had difficulty saying “no,” everything might have felt to them like an “emergency” or something that needed to be done right away. As one staff member shared, “I need to plan, but an emergency comes up every day.” Individuals were mostly left to determine (or not determine) priorities on their own, according to their own feelings and perceptions, because supervision lines were not strong or clear. Staff members did not have the structure of supervision to help them prioritize and determine tasks and goals in accordance with those of the larger organization.

Gender

Gender was salient mostly in how the cultures conceptualized it differently. In Asian cultures, males are given more authority. This might have influenced some female Asian staff members’ hesitancy to speak up at meetings and an impression some women shared that the men at the organization were too busy for them. It also might have affected the Asian males’ desire for support with their communication, so that they could take up their traditional role of competence, leadership, and authority. Without solid English skills, this role was threatened.

Working with Cultural Differences

It sometimes seemed like too many problems within the organization were attributed to cultural differences. Asian staff members often experienced the management and communication styles of people within this organization as representing all Westerners. Westerners did the same. This stereotyping and ethnocentrism may have made it particularly difficult to challenge certain behaviors in the workplace. With limited cultural awareness and understanding, staff members might have felt less empowered to distinguish between individual behaviors and styles and culturally based behaviors and styles.

Organizational Identity: The System and its Context

NGO X was in essence a family business functioning as an international and grassroots activist organization funded by donors from the Global North in a sea of other NGOs and community-based organizations. Each of these parts of its identity influenced its organizational dynamics.

Two of NGO X's founders and leaders were a married couple. Although they had children later on, it was as if this organization was their first-born child. The organization might be seen as a pairing group, according to Bion's (1961) theory of basic assumption groups, with the married founders acting as a pair the organization unconsciously hoped would give birth to a "savior." The two leaders embodied almost all of the intergroup dynamics within the organization (Asian vs. Western, grassroots vs. international, man vs. woman), and thereby held much of the tensions, conscious and unconscious, underlying the functioning of the organization. At the same time, they in turn greatly influenced and shaped the rest of the organization as it grew, both from their group

perspectives and in their perceived role as the organization's married parents. They were viewed by staff members in terms of these family dynamics as the organization changed from a small, familial group to a larger system needing containment and structure.

Tensions developed around the professionalization needed to run this larger organization, and resistance varied in relation to who had been at the organization since its early days and who was newer and less embedded in the organization's history.

Functioning as an activist group that attempted to be both grassroots and international, NGO X struggled with the tension of holding both identities at once, while growing as an effective organization. At the grassroots level they worked with communities whose rights were not respected by their governments. These dynamics influenced NGO X and its staff, who yearned for respect in the organization, as well. On the organizational level, NGO X did not always feel respected by other organizations for its achievements. One might draw a parallel here, between the feelings of being disrespected at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. Ethnic groups represented within NGO X often had tense relations in the external world. Intraorganizational tensions paralleled these deep-seated identity group divisions. Also cultural differences between Southeast Asia and the West were real. While there exists a cultural divide writ large between the Global North and Global South, often expressed in the interactions between donors and NGOs, NGO X was holding those differences within its own boundaries as well. It was inevitable that there would be some cultural misunderstandings and clashes within such a diverse organization that held these divisions within the larger world. Southeast Asian staff seemed to be more comfortable with less clarity, while Westerners craved it. The question the organization faced was,

“How do you impose the needed clarity, structure, communication, and supervision in this organization that has grown beyond its original familial size, in the face of a less-structured Southeast Asian culture, an anti-hierarchical NGO and activist spirit, and a desire to work on both the grassroots and international levels?”

In addition to the internal issues they faced, the tension of being grassroots and international directly affected the challenges NGO X faced presenting itself to and working with the external world. If NGO X’s dual identity was to be maintained, it was time for the organization to devote concerted attention and reflection to the question of how to function appropriately as both an international and grassroots organization. NGO X’s leadership and staff needed to develop a shared understanding of the organization’s identity and develop ways to effectively communicate that identity to the outside community, both locally and internationally, as well as strengthen the organization’s work with the local community in Southeast Asia.

NGO X’s funding came from donors in the Global North, emphasizing the difference in both power and culture between the Global North and Global South, even though NGO X had offices in both places. Part of gaining funding from these donors involved monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and functioning in a way that was acceptable to them. Often this involved a Western model of organization and management, as discussed in the literature (Power et al., 2002; Roper & Pettit, 2002). Western models were inevitably more comfortable for Western staff members within NGO X than for Asian staff members, and the favoritism toward these models affected authority dynamics within the organization. Thus the ways in which the organization was growing, and stumbling, partially reflected clashes between the Western donor culture and the Asian

community-based organization culture, including culturally based ways of working and the conflict of interest between donors' need to control resources and NGOs' goals to learn, innovate, and impact their target communities.

Self-Reflection

As a consultant using myself as a tool in this work, it is important to reflect on my experiences working with the organization and conducting this study.

Working with the Organization

In observing the underboundedness within the organization, clarifying my role was key to my consultation. The more I could be clear about my role, its definition and boundaries, the more I could set an example for the organization. I served as an external consultant more than an internal employee, although because I was taken on as a volunteer, this line blurred at some points. The organization initially viewed me as a fix-it person, but I strove to act as an outsider who could observe, gather information, and share my perspective to help them move forward.

I was a little hesitant to undergo even this large of a project alone, particularly not being able to bring in a co-consultant with different identity group memberships. In an ideal world, I would have brought on as a co-consultant an older male of Southeast Asian descent. Having a partner with these group memberships would have greatly enhanced my work, because the partner would have had a lens different than mine, but similar to parts of the organization, through which to relate to and understand it. However I was working for an organization with little money. I myself was a volunteer and there was little likelihood of them receiving funding from a donor to hire a consultant, let alone two. Thus I decided to go ahead and do the best job I could on my own, with the

resources I had. I did rely heavily on weekly conversations with my internship supervisor, a male with more work experience and who had spent some time in the country in which I was working, to assist me in my work and serve as an additional filter, opinion, and perspective.

Once I was aware of and had come to terms with the constraints within which I was working – on my own, within the limitations my identity and timeframe provided me – I set out to make the rest of my methods as sound and helpful to the organization as possible. My first goal was to normalize the underboundedness of their organization and to help them think through to what extent it would be beneficial to have more clarity within the organization. Even though I myself thought that there was no doubt they needed more clarity, I knew that the interviews were going to be a crucial step in this intervention. Only organizational leaders were involved in bringing me on as a volunteer and devising my work plan. Interviews with all staff members could build buy-in and motivate them to believe that change is possible. I could draw on the participatory rhetoric that they and so many other non-governmental organizations espouse, but so rarely successfully follow, and remind the staff I was doing this project with them, drawing from everyone's perspective (Edwards & Fowler, 2002). Although the organization only had an outdated written set of core values when I began, I aimed to reinforce the underlying values I had felt and read about this organization from the very beginning. The diagnosis method of interviewing everyone possible was a way to build the internal democracy and participation that was so evidently missing. I made sure as many staff as possible, especially the executive director, knew I was excited to be part of a project that helped them live out these values.

My interview protocol centered on the questions in which leadership was interested. In between the lines I tried to get to know them as people and reach out across the divide of culture, halting English, my white skin and temporary presence in their lives. I listened and learned as I went, trying to manage the projections the organization placed on me based on my identity, while also moving beyond some of my ignorance. As I conducted the interviews, it became clear to me that this was an organization united by a passion for a cause, for a country, a people – for freedom. This was not a typical workplace assessment for, as my interviews continued, it became clear to me, perhaps embarrassingly late, that this was not even considered “work,” in the Western concept that I brought with me, by many of the staff. For the Southeast Asian staff in particular, this was their life and doing this “work” was not a choice but an inevitability, a duty. However, I also heard complaints and comments typical of almost any workplace. As focusing on individuals’ daily tasks during the interviews came to seem less important, my attention was drawn to learning about each of these people’s stories, and serving as an open ear to listen to them, letting them feel heard and validated.

In line with my attempts to get to know everyone through their own unique experiences, I tried to ask people during my interviews what it was like for them to be who they were in this organization. Although exploring staff members’ group memberships was not part of my mandate, it was obvious to me, based on the theory I was using, that this data would play a large role in how I would understand and analyze the information collected during my interviews. Sometimes it felt like too personal a question to ask. Sometimes it was not even necessary, because the interviewee had already opened up so much about his or her life that I knew the answer. Sometimes I was

too shy to ask because of who I was. Sometimes it was difficult to explain to the person I was interviewing what I meant, because he or she had never stopped to reflect on this. Sometimes it was all too obvious to them. Other times the Southeast Asian cultural wall went up and I received the standard, “It’s fine. It’s good.” answer, leaving me only with facial expressions and body language to tease out their actual meaning, trying hard not to make assumptions or project onto their answers. I always tried to approach intergroup dynamics indirectly, gleaning information from those with whom people worked best, closely, and thought were helpful, asking for more information when an answer seemed to have more depth behind it than they initially shared. When interviewees’ guards came up and the issue felt too sensitive, I would try to normalize it for them, reminding, “I don’t need to know the details [of whatever story you are telling me or hinting at], but is it related to a pattern? Is there something from this I can learn?” Trying to distance myself from the role of organizational gossip, I hoped this would help people know that I was just trying to understand how their story related to the functioning of the organization.

One of my greatest challenges was juggling my many different roles – consultant, friend, anthropologist, volunteer, staff member, coach, companion, lunch partner, passenger, donor, mirror. In this foreign context, I questioned my usual boundaries around being a consultant in an organization, as well as the organization’s expectations and perceptions of me. I eventually loosened the rigid boundaries suggested by theory and balanced adhering to my traditional professional standards with developing relationships with these individuals and learning about and signing on to their cause, while I was there and in the future. Building friendships and a commitment to the

organization's mission gained me credibility in the system and suggested that this was what was needed to enter it as an outsider and gain the staff members' trust. Someone who was more of a friend or family member was a better match with the organizational culture than a more traditionally professional corporate consultant. Throughout the delicate balance of being both friend and consultant, I relied on my feelings and ethical code to do no harm to guide me.

Looking back, I think of the diagnosis as an intervention in itself. It called the organization's attention to its internal dynamics and issues in a public way and set an example that they warranted attention. The feedback sessions were more pointed interventions that allowed almost everyone to sit in a room, see themselves as one organization, and hear what they had shared with me mirrored back as a whole.

I spent much of my time struggling with how to analyze the data I collected both for the consultation and for this study. This challenge speaks to the complicated interplay of individuals' identities and group memberships. Looking at each group in isolation only provided a partial picture. The data only made sense if all the salient group memberships were examined. Even then there might have been underlying reasons that were not revealed during my interviews or observations and were not present in the data. The data set I collected was large and unwieldy, as is the world. All I could do was engage in the struggle.

My Group Memberships, Experience, and Use of Self

With the focus of this study being on group memberships, my own played an important role in the work and using myself as a tool. At the time of the consultation I was a white, Jewish female, a young early professional, 29 years old, less than two years

away from completing my doctoral degree in organizational psychology, and conducting a diagnosis on my own for the first time. I had arrived at NGO X through a volunteer placement organization, which also separately provided funding to the organization through its grantmaking arm, and thus I arrived aligned with this other organization. My personal commitment to social justice and change as part of my Jewish identity and values was an explicit aspect of my voluntary service, and I brought with me a lifetime of experience volunteering and working with non-profits, although none as fulltime and intensive as my time with NGO X.

Significantly, I served as a temporary volunteer, agreeing to work for free (although the placement organization had paid for my plane ticket), but only committed to staying to work with NGO X for approximately three months. While NGO X was used to having temporary volunteers in the past, I tried to carve out a role as even more of an outsider to the organization – that of a consultant – and kept myself from integrating into organizational life as completely as I might have serving as a more typical volunteer, doing teaching or research.

I had traveled extensively throughout the developed and developing world and had been to the country where NGO X was based once before, but only toured it briefly for two weeks. With this background I brought some limited first-hand experience of the culture and a few words of the local language. However, in preparation for my placement, I had done some additional reading about the base country, as well as the country NGO X targeted through much of its work, to learn more about the culture, history, and politics. I had also participated in a few hours of volunteer orientation via a conference call conducted by the placement organization. A last significant experience I

brought to the consultation was that, upon my departure to volunteer, I had just finished an internship where I learned about the needs and experiences of grassroots organizations in the developing world, most specifically in the region in which NGO X was based. This background was helpful, although even more knowledge and experience about the cultures within which I would be working would have better prepared me for the work and for putting the data I collected into cultural context, including ethnic, national, regional, and NGO culture.

It is difficult to tell how much my focus on the need for structure and boundaries in NGO X was a reflection of my Western and theoretical perspective. Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory shaped my findings, but even that theory is embedded in Western culture. I am left wanting to learn more about the possibility of models for organizational development and growth that do not call for more structure and hierarchy and Eastern or hybrid cultural models of organizational change and growth (Marshak, 1994; Wong, 2007). There are limitations to how much I can reasonably expect myself to be able to step out of the Western systems of thinking in which I am embedded, but I can learn more to expand my awareness, understanding, and ability to use other models. From the people with whom I worked, I learned there was a range of complex perspectives on organizational life and that there would be no perfect or easy answers to managing or incorporating them all. I thought it might be an important outcome if the staff could be empowered by tightening the boundaries within the organization, much as an adolescent can be empowered by having the proper structure in place to create safety and stability. However this also might have been a Western model of thinking.

I remained buoyed by the fact that, ideally, Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory and the diagnosis method allow for an organization under study to learn about itself on its own terms with an outside consultant, identify its own problems, and its own solutions. As a consultant, the best I could do was remain aware of my group memberships, biases, and embeddedness, and listen to the client with an open mind to helping them move forward in a direction they wished to go.

Limitations of Study

Limited Data

Sole Researcher

In this project I worked as an individual consultant with no partner, the perspectives of my own identity groups, identified above, and limited knowledge of NGOs and NGO X's organizational history and the geographic and political context. I also had limited time to spend with the organization, getting to know it and the individuals within it. All of these limitations restricted the amount of understanding I was able to gain about the system.

Cross-Cultural Interviews

An intergroup perspective highlighted some of the barriers I faced as a sole interviewer working with people from other cultures. I was a native English speaker. Many of my interviewees were not. I was from a Western culture. Again, many of my interviewees were not. This raised a methodological challenge and tested the traditional interviewing techniques in which I had been trained.

One Western male suggested that Westerners "would be very open" with me, whereas non-Westerners "might not because of trust." He said that Asians spoke with

“subtlety” and that “a lack of a direct answer was sometimes a clear answer.” He told me to “go about softly exploring things” and assured me there was room.

Asian participants had a more indirect style of answering questions. Therefore, my Western methods of asking questions and receiving direct answers did not always work. I had to follow this staff member’s advice and make other observations to try to garner what a person was trying to communicate to me. I feel confident that I discerned much of what people were trying to convey, but I was not always able to record the meaning in actual words attributable to individuals. This made it difficult to fully back up my findings with concrete data, thus limiting the findings, but also points to the importance of using myself as a tool in trying to understand the system and interpret what I heard, observed, and felt. As the theory suggests, my chance at understanding the system was limited as a sole interviewer without a partner with different group membership than me that represented other parts of the system, for example a Southeast Asian older male.

Another limitation may have been perceived power differences between me and my subjects and how that might have affected the data. Knowing that the project was part of reviewing job descriptions, management, and structures, participants might have been trying to show me through their answers that they were thinking about these issues in the way the organization was. They may have changed their answers to please me. My identity as a Westerner brought in by management might also have led others to see me as aligned with the power in the organization, thereby affecting staff members’ responses to me. Without the perspective of another interviewer, I can hypothesize, but it is difficult to discern.

An additional limitation of interviewing people from a culture that did not always communicate directly was that participants sometimes focused on other people's experiences and not their own. This provided me with more information about individuals than they were often willing to tell me directly about themselves, but that information was also filtered through someone else's perspective. Thus, the information was helpful in giving me a more complete picture of the organization and further insight into understanding it, but I often was working with people's perceptions of each other's experiences more than their direct perceptions of their own experiences.

Missing Data

Due to language limitations, I did not interview the four cooks in the organization, because they did not speak English. In retrospect, I would have gained a more complete picture of the organization if I had interviewed them, even if it was through a translator. They were part of the organization and held important experiences of being at the lowest level of the hierarchy. I had very limited exchanges with one of the cooks, who also served as my driver to and from the office. We had a friendly relationship, but because of language barriers, we could only share a few words or facial expressions. Another group whose perspective was not directly collected was the training program students. Training Program B was not in session during the diagnosis, however Training Program A was. I chose not to interview the students because their perspectives did not feel absolutely necessary to the consultation, it did not feel like a priority for them, and all of our time was limited. In retrospect, their English skills were strong enough and a group interview with them or a few individual student interviews might have shared more information about the system and its context to help me interpret staff members' experiences. It also

might have helped the students better understand the work in which I and the rest of the organization were engaged.

Generalizability of Findings

Because all of the data used for this study came from one organization, the ability to generalize this research is limited. The dynamics within the organization are related to the specific context in which it existed and the identities of the staff members within it. The very small sample size of some of the groups within the organization also limits the study's findings. However, the purpose of this study was to increase the understanding of the influence of identity and organizational group memberships on the work experience of members of a growing, culturally diverse NGO and to add to the limited knowledge in this area. While the study's limitations restrict the generalizability of its findings, the hypotheses developed in this study can be used in future research in order to expand knowledge in this area and improve consulting to and leadership of other culturally diverse NGOs. Both the individual interviews and the overall study serve this purpose. Each interview explored a unique combination of identity and organizational group memberships and was examined as a whole to try to assess it in light of the unique combination of factors affecting the interviewee and his or her experience at work. The study as a whole serves as an exploratory case to examine the dynamics of a growing, culturally diverse NGO.

Some issues raised in this study do have implications for situations outside of this specific case. Immigrant population issues apply everywhere in the world and the challenges faced by some of the Southeast Asian staff who were not living in their home country might be faced by others, including balancing community, family, and work

needs and obligations. According to the literature discussed in Chapter II, many issues NGO X faced were common as well. Many NGOs also have a culturally diverse staff and struggle with challenges around language, compensation, culture, work orientation and style, and cultural concepts of management, decision making, power, and authority. On another level of cross-cultural interaction, NGOs often face differences between the identity group memberships of their staff and those of the communities where they work, and are likely to be resistant to traditional management and hierarchy, desiring instead to be more participatory democracies. Thus while the results of this study cannot be generalized to apply to all NGOs, the findings do support some of the typical NGO trends discussed in the literature.

Implications for Research and Practice

Lessons Learned

Recommendations for Acknowledging and Working with Difference within an NGO

The amount of diversity in an organization, when examined from an intergroup perspective, can be unrelated to the size of the organization. This NGO was small, but among the staff a number of identity groups were represented, and each group brought with them unique challenges, cultures, and socio-political backgrounds and perspectives. The interaction of these groups led to complex dynamics, both conscious and unconscious. As identified in this study, the key challenges of a growing, diverse organization can include suboptimal boundary permeability; work, management, and communication styles; gender expectations; cultural perceptions of power, authority, and decision making; and individual and family needs. An organization's ability to function effectively as a cohesive team is related to the extent that leadership and staff can

acknowledge the differences among them, value and respect each other, and devise strategies to take advantage of and work with these differences.

Constructive conversations within and between groups need to be encouraged whenever possible. The more groups within an organization understand each other and actively work toward meeting each other's needs, the better supported each group can feel in doing their jobs and working toward the organization's mission. Translating important emails, documents, and events, such as staff retreats, might be appreciated by staff members whose first language is not the working language of the organization. While listening can be a challenge in an organization of activists and advocates, it is necessary in a diverse organization and can be helped by evening the language playing field as much as possible.

Decision making must achieve a balance between involving staff in decision making and clarifying decision makers, but not asking staff to give input in every decision. This acknowledges the differences between hierarchical groups within the organization. Leaders should take care to consider the effects of organizational changes on staff and involve them as much as possible in both the decisions to make changes and the change process.

Staff members need to stay informed of each other's work and roles, but not become overwhelmed by unnecessary information. Communication can be encouraged by the creation of spaces for people to talk to each other, both formally and informally. An organization can grow to feel more united as one organization when individuals and groups understand their places in the whole.

Recommendations for Organizational Psychologists and Consultants

Organizational psychologists and consultants have the opportunity to effect social change and multiply the effects of their work many times over by helping social change organizations be better able to fulfill their missions. The culturally diverse social change organization might even serve as a microcosm group for social change, providing a space for different cultural groups to identify and find ways to work with their differences, thereby generating learning that could radiate out through these individuals into greater society. If consultants choose to work with NGOs in this vein, some lessons can be taken from this case study.

Organizational diagnosis as a methodology for consultation can help an organization publicly and deliberately work toward all staff members having the same information and a greater understanding of each other's lived experiences, conscious and unconscious, both inside and outside of the organization. It is a model that can fit well with NGO values of social justice and participation. A diagnosis can be a step toward creating or reinforcing a culture of learning, listening, and reflective practice. Ideally it should be the first phase of work with an organization, followed by helping the organization move forward on the resulting recommendations.

Another utility of diagnosis methodology and Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory are that both stress the importance of paying attention to both conscious and unconscious forces. Diagnosis methodology can help one understand groups, group differences, reveal boundaries, and determine tensions – important in complex organizations. In illuminating these areas, this study provides an example to support that

NGOs are no different from other organizations in that they hold both a conscious and unconscious life within them that together contribute to organizational dynamics.

One important intergroup dynamic for consultants to keep in mind that all NGOs face is the difference between the “developed” and “developing” worlds, often particularly embodied in an NGO’s relationships with its donor organizations and sometimes with its board of directors. Post colonialism is a theoretical framework that addresses this difference, highlighting the power dynamics inherent in organizations working between these two worlds. Kenny (2008) argued that although little organizational research has drawn on post colonialism, “attention must be given to that which is not spoken and not written, the ‘non-discursive practices’ that make up part of organizational life” (p. 73). This points to the importance of exploring the unconscious processes in organizations, for which Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory provides a framework. While things spoken and written in an organization are by their nature conscious, things unspoken in an organization can be both conscious and unconscious. In her study Kenny found that “NGOs may, through the colonial ways of knowing that persist in social, cultural and even linguistic practices, be contributing to the reinforcement of Western-centered epistemologies, and the resulting confinement of the non-West into categories of the West’s own making” (Kenny, 2008, p. 73).

Studies such as Kenny’s, as well as this one, “can render taken-for-granted discourses open to examination” and begin to unpack the unconscious forces that operate in culturally diverse NGOs (Kenny, 2008, p. 73). Consultants must remember to pay attention to unspoken assumptions that can silence voices within an organization and help not only to raise the assumptions to consciousness, but also allow the voices to be heard.

In light of so many complex dynamics, to explore decision making within an NGO it might be helpful to break the process down into its different aspects in interviews. Responses in this study covered issues of power, organizational structure, individual experiences and feelings, assessments of others, and prescriptions on how to solve problems. Part of the challenge around decision making is realizing that organizations are neither families nor democracies. It can be valuable to help an NGO realize and understand what lies behind such fantasies (or other fantasies that they might hold) and how they can move closer toward accepting real power dynamics in order to achieve the organization's mission. Helping an organization understand its cultural make up and intervening on this front can only further such an organization toward its goals of social change and social justice.

Beyond holding a mirror up to the organization, there are other ways in which consultants can help NGOs work through some of their challenges. Boundaries can be a helpful unifying concept to explain an organization's functioning. Adjusting them is often the aim of interventions working to alleviate organizational problems. A consultant can help a typically underbounded NGO discover how to best manage its boundaries, finding an appropriate balance, or optimal boundary permeability, in an ever-shifting environment. A consultant can also help organizations live their values and empower staff through structure, feedback, information, and supervision. These kinds of structures might be seen as hierarchical and authoritarian, rather than empowering, and therefore resisted. A consultant can reframe management as leadership, guidance, support, and vision. A consultant can also attempt the difficult task of raising staff members' awareness about their own discomfort, both conscious and unconscious, around such

structures. Overall, a consultant must acknowledge his or her cultural frame and limitations, as well as those of the organization, and work with them to help the system without doing harm.

Diagnosis methodology increases a consultant's awareness of his or her identity and how that shapes the interaction with members of the organization and the organization as a whole. The culture of the consultant affects the work and both self-awareness and awareness of entering a different culture are both crucial. The culture of the organization, as well as the cultures represented within it, is also crucial. The more cross-cultural training and experience a consultant has entering into cross-cultural work with NGOs, the better chance of success. To the extent a consultant can think through and attend to the emotional impact of any interaction with the client system, in light of the groups represented by the consultant, the more effective the consultant will be. It also can be helpful to pay attention to cultural issues in consulting that might be understood differently out of the context in which the consultant is based, for example around boundaries, entry, or interviewing. Diversity training can be helpful to consultants in preventing the possible pathologizing of others' practices and attitudes. Studying NGOs and any other pertinent issues, i.e. geographical or issue-based, can lead to a better understanding of the system and ability to normalize the client's experiences where applicable. Although resources when working with NGOs are often limited, a further approach might be hiring a co-consultant or assistant from a culture represented within the client system. This person can help with translation, language, and other cross-cultural issues, providing a more effective way of interacting with the system and for understanding it. Part of engaging with someone on a local level can involve training in

diagnosis techniques in order to leave the person equipped to do similar work on his or her own following the consultation.

Throughout this study, the staff reminded me of the importance of the individual and how uncomfortable it was to be seen as just a member of a group. They pushed back on the group-level feedback I gave and wanted to get to know each other more as unique individuals. This is a lesson that might serve other consultants well in future work. In framing feedback in a diagnosis, the consultant can share with staff the balance of being individuals, but ones influenced by their group memberships, in order to assure them that the consultant is not just lumping them together without reason or without seeing each of them as unique people. A consultant might also find a large toolbox of effective ways to give feedback useful, so the consultant can vary the techniques based on the environment and organizational culture, within what theory would recommend. Particularly in consulting to NGOs, consultants may find that feedback presentations that include staff discussion and interaction might resonate best with participatory ideals. It can also be helpful to consult a sample of staff members from different groups within the organization to determine what might work best for them, before presenting to the larger organization. The use of such a liaison system is in line with diagnosis methodology and informed by EIRT theory and can also be used throughout a consultation to advise the work.

Kaplan (1994) suggested that organizations should strive to create an ideal work environment: “a community of souls wherein each is able to participate and find meaning, in which people respect each other as well as the rules which arise to regulate their behaviour, and where individual creativity is able to flower.” I found this quote

particularly appropriate to share with NGO X. However, the statement could apply to all organizations, non- and for-profits, just as the principles of Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory and organizational diagnosis methodology could apply to all organizations, as well. Organizations, no matter their mission, are all collections of individuals and groups which bring a multitude of identities with them.

While this study is an example of the vast visible differences that can exist among individuals within an organization, all organizations are diverse, no matter how they might look on the surface. Just because an organization does not have staff members from different cultures, language groups, races, or cultures, does not mean there are not differences among them. These salient differences change depending on the context and the relationships between the people present. For example, if NGO X only had Western staff, then other differences would rise up in importance, such as country of origin, class, or age. The dynamics that result from difference within an organization can both help and hinder the work there is to be done. Raising awareness of the issues is the first step toward creating a more functional organization with more satisfied, productive staff.

With this in mind, a consultant must be attuned to the diversity and otherness of any organization or system he or she chooses to enter. Working in any system as a consultant essentially means entering a foreign culture. Doing so in an actual foreign culture merely highlights this process. Maintaining this attitude during a consultation can enhance the care taken with the staff members, increase the consultant's empathy for them, help the consultant question assumptions, and remind the consultant to use staff members' own words as much as possible in feedback to increase their receptivity to hearing it from an outsider. The consultant is holding up a mirror and that mirror should

be reflective to those looking into it. Overall, a consultant can be most effective when he or she is humble and open to continuous learning, acknowledging the need for support when appropriate. Supervision played an integral role in this diagnosis, providing me with an outside advisor and mentor to guide me in conducting a sensitive and reflective consultation, and it might be a helpful part of any similar work.

Implications for Future Research

The study generated the hypothesis that identity and organizational group memberships affect the dynamics of a diverse NGO and how the staff experience their jobs or roles. Future research might explore and further tease out the implications of identity group dynamics in both social change and for-profit organizations, to better understand them and determine if there are any salient differences depending on the type of organization or the group memberships present within an organization. Specific identity groups can be further examined, including gender, race, ethnicity, and language. Research can explore how not only to promote but support participation within a culturally diverse NGO to determine what unconscious and conscious assumptions keep people's voices from being shared and heard. Work-life balance across identity groups within NGOs is another area open for research, including how staff define and manage the balance and the impact of varied perspectives on individuals and organizations. Future studies might also examine the issue of organizational identity among NGOs, including identity evolution and internal and external perceptions of organizations.

While boundaries can be a helpful concept for understanding a growing organization and its needs, the literature on growing organizations, especially outside of a Western context, is limited. From a Western perspective, the staff of NGO X resisted

professionalizing, but this change was likely necessary in order for the organization to grow. The question remains, “Can organizations in non-Western cultures grow without Western concepts of order?” Related questions include, “What is necessary for organizational growth? Are there building blocks that are not culturally dependent?” and “How is growth related to culturally embedded goals or values?” In organizations with diverse staff, it might be helpful to call on non-Western models of organizational change to best understand and help the organization. Having more than one model in mind could greatly equip a consultant entering a system and conducting work across cultures.

This study provided an examination of the lived experience of staff members inside a growing, culturally diverse organization. Future research can help discern how organizations of different cultures (both monocultural and mixed) grow, document and study non-Western models of change and growth, and explore how culturally diverse organizations can harness and manage these different models. It is imperative that this research be generated not only from Western researchers, institutions, and settings, but from those around the world.

Conclusion

The study of NGO X shows that culturally diverse NGOs can face challenges similar to all organizations, yet also face tensions based on their particular identities, make-up, and context. NGO X was a diverse, social change organization operating within a world where resources were divided between the Global North and Global South. It had grown from a small, familial size into a larger organization that needed more order to help the organization continue to work towards its mission. The organization faced two questions common to NGOs:

1. Can the organization be an effective catalyst for social change unless it practices what it preaches in terms of participation, democracy, non-discrimination, and empowerment?
2. Can the organization be effective at all unless it imposes a set of management structures and decision-making processes that cut across those values?
(Edwards & Fowler, 2002, p. 5-6)

NGO X, like many NGOs, needed to address these tensions while simultaneously attending to the multiple groups present within it, groups that were in constant relation with each other, based on dynamics both internal and external to the organization.

While the specific findings of this study are useful in describing only one organization, the case serves as a model of a comprehensive organizational diagnosis of a culturally diverse NGO, contributing to a limited body of literature. The findings suggest that the lens of Embedded Intergroup Relations Theory and organizational diagnosis methodology can be effective tools for an organizational consultant to understand a client NGO and are particularly appropriate due to the high level of diversity often present within these organizations. In this case, they served as a useful framework to understand NGO X and the groups, boundaries, and dynamics within it, reinforcing the theory's stance that both organizational and identity group memberships matter in shaping individuals' experience of an organization and organizational dynamics.

Only when consultants have a solid understanding of the make-up of culturally diverse NGOs can they effectively work with them, and the lessons learned in this study can guide those consulting to such organizations. Attention to multiple perspectives, existing power structures, and social justice must be critical aspects of any consultation to a culturally diverse NGO. If organizational psychologists choose to meet their professional responsibilities to enhance fairness, equity, relationships, and subjective well

being in the workplace in part by working with culturally diverse NGOs, they will not only need the guidance of further research, but will also have the opportunity to document their work and contribute to the literature themselves (“Definition of organizational psychology,” n.d.). Consultation case studies, as well as research on diverse workplace experiences and different cultural models of work, organizational growth, and change, can provide practitioners with needed broader perspectives and help them become more useful consultants to these diverse social change organizations.

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APPENDIX A

Individual Interview Protocol

I. Job Description and Role

1. Could you begin with giving me your job title? How long have you been in this job? Have you had others at NGO X?
2. What's a typical day at NGO X like for you? What do you do?
3. How do you manage your time spent on your NGO X work (both in and out of the office)?
4. What are you trying to accomplish in your job? How do you know if you've been successful?
5. Who do you work with as part of your role?
6. What do you like best about your job?
7. What do you like least?
8. Is there anything you would like to be doing that you are not doing now? [probe: do you have enough to do?]
9. Is there anything you wish someone else would be doing that could be helpful to you in your role? [probe: do you have too much to do?]
10. Is there anything that needs to be done that no one is taking responsibility for?
11. How do final decisions get made here? What has been your experience with this process? Do you feel a part of it? In what ways does it work? In what ways does it not?
12. Which parts of NGO X's policies do you understand? Which do you not?

13. What is it like to be a ____ staff member at NGO X? [probe: gender, ethnicity, organizational identity, as comfortable)

II. Timekeeping System

1. What has been your experience with the current timekeeping system?
2. What works? Why?
3. What doesn't? Why not?

III. Closing

1. If you could change one thing at NGO X, what would that be?
2. Are there questions that I should have asked?
3. Do you think others will be open with me in these interviews? Why or why not?

What might people not tell me?

4. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

APPENDIX B

Letter of Introduction

Dear staff,

I am writing to introduce our newest volunteer, Melissa Extein, who many of you met on Friday, and to tell you about what she will be doing for us between now and mid-April. Melissa will be working as a consultant on matters relating to roles and decision making; I attach a brief profile outlining her expertise. [The executive director, directors,] and I have asked Melissa to focus on three specific issues:

1. The fit between necessary tasks and people's job responsibilities.
2. Timekeeping.
3. Decision-making models.

The key purpose of this work is to make sure job descriptions have better clarity, and that people are satisfied with their program of work and have enough time to do it. For example, currently when a staff member [from another office] sends us an email with a general query, it goes to everyone, and then either many people respond in the same way - wasting lots of time - or no one does. Following Melissa's review, it will be clearer who deals with what, and decides what.

Melissa is hoping to assess the information she's collected - and make recommendations to management based on it - in about a month's time, so she'll be moving very quickly on this. She will be interviewing every member of the Southeast Asia staff. It should not take more than two hours of your time. All interviews and resulting information will be held by Melissa in the strictest confidence. It is important to note that this is a very different exercise than the External Evaluation that took place last year: that was about the organization as a whole, and how it looks from outside. This review is about taking a kind of "snapshot" of where we are right now, to make sure the insides of NGO X are healthy; about job clarity and satisfaction.

If you have a specific date and time in the next 2 weeks that would work for you, please let Melissa know. Otherwise, she will contact you shortly by email to arrange a meeting. If you'd prefer her to phone you, or have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact her at [email] or [phone].

With thanks and best wishes,
[assistant director]

APPENDIX C

Script for Oral Consent

Introduction. Before we begin with the interview, I wanted to talk briefly about the purpose of the project. The project has one main **purpose**. 1) It will provide the management here and the entire NGO X staff with an independent report and analysis of how things are going. It will focus particularly on areas the management feels are important right now. That includes roles, decision making, and timekeeping. You might think of it as a “snapshot” of people’s perceptions and experiences at one point in time. I’m really trying to understand your work experience on your terms. Could you share with me anything you’ve heard about the project besides the email that went out? Do you have questions?

OK, now I would like to review the **ground rules**.

Once we get started, I shall take no more than **120 minutes** of your time—and less, if we can get the work done sooner.

Everyone’s participation in this study is to be voluntary. When I finish going over the ground rules, I will ask whether you want to proceed with the interview. Anything that you tell me (including that you do not want to participate) will be **confidential**. No one in the department will ever know what you as an individual say.

I will provide **feedback** about what I learn (themes, aggregate data) to the management and to the Southeast Asia staff through a meeting.

I would like to take **notes** as you answer the questions in order to have a record of what people say, so I can prepare an accurate report of the findings. If you feel strongly that you’d prefer I do not take notes, I won’t. Or, if you would prefer that I not take notes on particular questions, I will stop.

I will be asking you about your job, as well as about things across the wider organization. It will be focused on the time since you’ve been at NGO X.

We have finished the introduction and ground rules. Shall we proceed with the interview? Do you have any questions before we begin?

Alright, it seems like we are ready to begin. Is it all right with you if I take notes? (Note the **time** and tell the person when the interview will end at the latest.)

APPENDIX D

Recommendations Letter

MEMO

Subject: Recommendations for NGO X

From: Melissa Extein, Consultant

This memo provides recommendations based on findings from the assessment conducted of NGO X, described in the [DATE] work plan, and carried out from [DATE] to [DATE]. To move forward with these recommendations, focusing on the following three steps will strengthen each individual's ability to work effectively and with personal satisfaction in his/her role at NGO X, thus strengthening NGO X's ability to achieve its mission:

1. **Create clear organizational structure**, which includes revising job descriptions, implementing DARCI, clarifying decision making and supervision, defining meetings, and holding regular retreats.
2. **Create better ways for staff to communicate with one and other and participate in the life of the entire organization**, in order to strengthen NGO X's important democratic culture and keep everyone informed of each other's work.
3. **Create spaces for staff to get to know and value each other as individuals**, with different backgrounds, cultures, languages, strengths, and needs.

SITUATION

Leadership decided that this assessment should focus on staff task assignments and roles, decision making, and time keeping. Events over the previous months had made it clear that these areas needed to be clarified in order for NGO X to function effectively.

[CONTEXT] In light of this context, as well as recent changes in staff, leadership saw that the organization was in need of internal attention to better equip it to work toward its mission.

METHOD

This assessment included observation and interviews with 23 staff members that focused on their perspectives on their own jobs, as well as on issues in the larger organization. Findings were then fed back to the organization to promote greater understanding and allow a space to react.

A copy of the findings presented at the feedback sessions and recommendations that staff shared with each other during the all-staff feedback meeting on [DATE] have already

been emailed to all staff. Recommendations from the Training Program B feedback session will be emailed as well, now that it has been completed. In total, there were three feedback meetings: [DATE] with the executive director, [DATE] with 16 staff members, and [DATE] with 3 Training Program B staff. The recommendations below, based on the perspectives of all interviewed staff, follow the six themes around which the feedback presentation was organized.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Structure & Support: Systems should allow each program to have some degree of autonomy, while ensuring the following are in place across the entire Program: (1) meetings and supervision with clear purpose and structure; (2) clear roles and responsibilities; (3) program, project, and individual work plans; (4) coordination between NGO X programs; (5) staff learning opportunities; and (6) fair and consistently followed staff policies. Since the start of this project, new structures and support systems that respond to staff requests for more direction have begun to be put in place, for example establishing supervisory relationships and meetings among the Burma Project staff. NGO X is striving to provide leadership, staff, and the organization with enough structure and support to fulfill its mission without losing individual and programmatic autonomy, staff participation, or flexibility. As the structure and support systems develop, they should emphasize the value of participation (and other values to be established as part of the core values). The more all members of the organization are included in planning and creating organizational structures, the more these changes will reflect and address their needs. Some needs that have been raised include continued attention to how Training Program A and Training Program B can and should work together and separately and management training for those in supervisory roles.

Diversity: The Program's ability to function more effectively as a cohesive team will increase to the extent that leadership and staff can acknowledge the differences among them, value and respect each other, and devise strategies to take advantage of and work with these differences. The dimensions of diversity found to be most salient are culture and gender. The main cultural division is between Westerners and SE Asians, but there are very important national, linguistic, and ethnic divisions within each of these groups. The many languages spoken within NGO X are immensely helpful in doing the work, but they also pose a particularly significant challenge for an organization that conducts its internal business in English. Other challenges related to diversity include gender expectations, working and management styles, and individual and family needs. Constructive conversations within and between groups (cultural and gender) should be encouraged whenever possible. Translating important emails, documents, and events, such as staff retreats, might also be much appreciated by many staff.

Communication: Staff need to stay informed of each other's work, but not become overwhelmed by unnecessary information. As NGO X has grown and staff have come and gone, significant gaps have developed in communicating about projects and changes between different parts of the organization. There is a wish both for better communication between individuals, groups, programs, and offices, as well as a greater understanding of each other's roles. Communication can be encouraged by the creation of spaces for people to talk to each other, both formally and informally. These spaces can include meetings, supervision, retreats, and informal gatherings – in person, by email, phone, or Skype. To the extent these spaces can be created and maintained, NGO X can grow to feel more united as one organization, where each person and group understands its part in the whole. This need for creating and supporting better communication should be closely considered as organizational structures are developed.

Decision making: NGO X's decision making can become more efficient and effective to the extent that systems and tools can be used to involve staff in decision making and clarify decision makers, but not ask staff to give input in every decision. NGO X is currently in the midst of revising its decision-making processes by creating program directors and using the DARCI tool for project management. DARCI may be useful in that it is straightforward, involves little reading, clarifies decision making, and creates little hierarchy of power. It will be important to distinguish between DARCI structures and organizational structures and be wary of any complicated working relationships created by using DARCI. For example, a person might be a "D" on a project and have authority over his/her supervisor who might be an "R" on that project. Beyond project management, decisions often must be made about entire programs or the whole organization. When decisions are made about programmatic or organizational changes, leaders should take care to consider the effects on staff and involve them as much as possible.

Life in Organizational Groups: The more leadership and staff understand each other and are open to working toward meeting each other's needs, the better supported each group will feel and the better able to do their jobs. Within NGO X, the leadership and staff each have different perspectives and needs, with inevitable variability within each group. Staff would like leadership to help give them more clarity, direction, and personal and financial security. For example, staff would like a better idea of what they should be doing in their jobs and how it contributes the whole. They would also like to be able to meet financial obligations, such as paying back education loans or supporting their children's education. Leadership could benefit from staff communicating with them more, staff trusting and understanding that leaders are trying hard to do what's best for NGO X, and staff taking ownership over their work and its parameters. These

needs may all be addressed by working on the other themes listed above while paying attention to the different needs of leadership and other staff.

Organizational Identity: If NGO X's dual identity is to be maintained, constant attention and reflection is needed on how to function appropriately as *both* an international and "grassroots" organization. NGO X's identification as an international and "grassroots" organization presents a constant tension, externally and internally, for all parts of the organization. The organization's ability to function more effectively will increase to the degree that NGO X's leadership and staff develop a shared understanding of the organization's identity, in terms of being both international and "grassroots", and are able to effectively communicate that identity to the outside community, both locally in SEA and internationally. A pressing concern around maintaining NGO X's identity, particularly among SE Asian staff, is how to strengthen the organization's work with the local community in SEA.

NEXT STEPS

One way to move forward with these recommendations would be to continue brainstorming the above areas one at a time in small groups, broken down by language as desired, during staff meetings. After these all-staff discussions, small groups of diverse and interested staff members could form action teams, in order to pursue particular issues and/or move forward with staff recommendations generated during the meetings. Leadership might set the expectation that each staff member join one action team, since these kinds of task forces are not already part of NGO X culture.

Besides the larger themes, specific issues that could be covered in similar action team format (with or without an initial all-staff discussion) include the following:

- Inter-office communication
- Cross-cultural communication
- Staff getting to know each other
- Staff policy monitoring
- Working with the local community
- Retreat planning

Suggestions for moving forward with systemic and structural changes within NGO X include the steps below:

- Develop program & project work plans
- Apply DARCI to each project
- Create chart to show supervision relationships
- Create & monitor individual work plans in supervision meetings
- Revise job or role descriptions

- Further assess organizational needs
- Fill task gaps
- Define roles
- Discuss among leadership, teams, & and between supervisors and supervisees

With any next steps it will be important to keep in mind that staff may more easily accept any changes the more they can understand why the changes are happening. It can be helpful to think carefully about the process of any change before it happens, as well as any potential negative effects or challenges. Changes should also be monitored and evaluated as much as possible.

The following are recommended staff discussions and trainings, based on the findings of this assessment:

Discussions

- Staff policies and benefits
- Planning for being out of the office (i.e. vacations, moves between offices, working out of the office)
- Women's experiences, perhaps as part of a regular Women's Group
- Continuing inter-training program collaboration
- Security policies
- NGO X's position on certain regional countries
- Timekeeping systems
- "Personal ecology" – self-care, setting boundaries, respecting boundaries of others and what that means in different cultures, different attitudes and feelings toward work at NGO X (job vs. life)
- What does "participation" mean at NGO X?
- What does each program do?
- What should staff meetings be used for and how can they be more empowering?
- How can there be more collaboration across programs?

Trainings (using internal resources as much as possible)

- Supervision, including how to supervise and what supervision means at NGO X, using staff handbook as a starting point
- Emotional intelligence for leadership and/or anyone interested
- Developing management skills for leadership
- Orientation for new staff
- Cross-cultural communication and understanding
- Listening skills for advocates
- Meeting facilitation

The All-Staff retreat this fall will be a useful setting to check in about changes underway, plan new changes, and have some of the above discussions and training. It will also be a

great opportunity to help NGO X form as a cohesive team. In planning the retreat it will be important to keep realistic expectations in mind for how much can be accomplished during such a short period of time. Simply having everyone together in one place to get to know and talk to each other will help the organization take great strides forward.

CONCLUSION

In completing my work with you, I want to express my appreciation for the cooperation I received at each step in the process. The work has been both challenging and rewarding on a personal level. You are an inspiring organization, full of passionate, hard-working individuals. NGO X is in a normal period of development. These findings and recommendations, based on everyone's participation in this project, will help NGO X successfully grow into an even stronger team, more able to defend human rights and move forward into the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to be part of this worthwhile undertaking and for welcoming me into the NGO X family.

Melissa Extein
Consultant