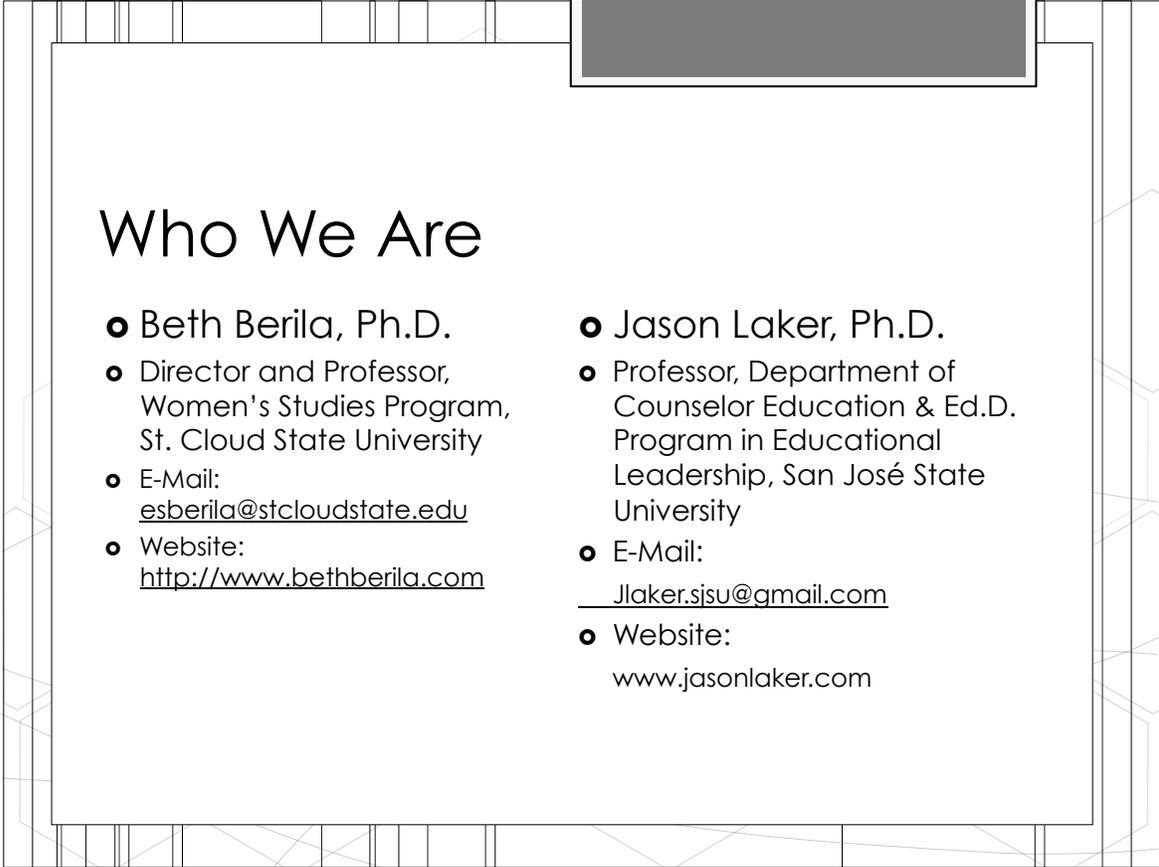


Mindful Dissonance:

Reframing Student
"Resistance" to Learning
about Oppression



Who We Are

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The Power of the Narrative

- Our stories are meant to:
 - Illustrate the power of naming complex lived experiences
 - Model initiative and risk-taking
 - Empower others to name and share their experiences and stories
 - Journey toward finding words that are both/and synthesis rather than either/or.

Sharing Our Stories

- Reflection
- Please share an experience in which your worldview/belief system around identity/diversity was challenged.
- What impact did it have on your learning and experiences?

Examples from Professional Practice

- How do we translate our own stories into professional practice for the benefit of working with college students to advance their learning and development?
- What experiences might you have in doing this work yourselves?

Student “Resistance”

- Complex and Multifaceted.
- A dynamic process.
- Outward manifestations do not always emerge from the same internal experiences.



Some types of “resistance”

Privileged student

- “Too bad. I like my privilege and I deserve it.”
- “I don’t feel privileged. I may be white but I can’t pay my bills.”
- “But the problem is so big. How does one person make a dent in it?”
- “I agree slavery was awful, but that was all in the past.”

Marginalized student

- “It’s not my job to take care of you. No one worries about taking care of me.”
- “I know racism exists, but my family and I have risen above it.”
- “You’re suffering? Good. Now you have a small taste of what it has been like for LGBTQ people.”

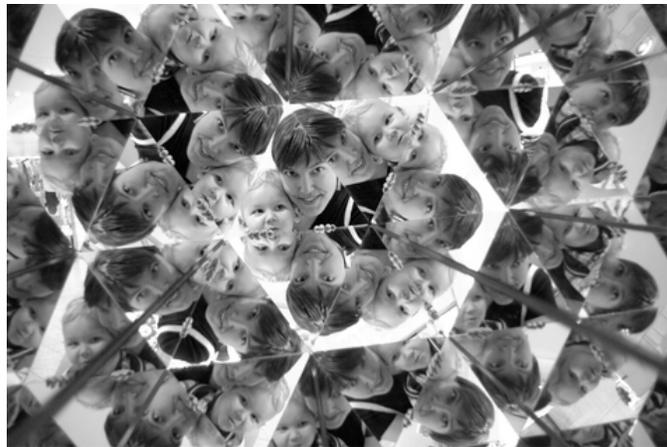
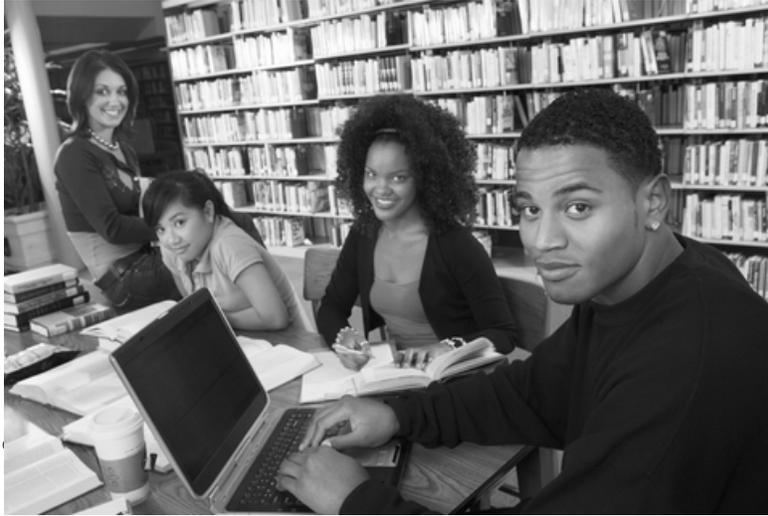


Scenario #1

- Working class white male
- Histories of childhood abuse
- Run-ins with the law
- Became a cop
- Injured on the job
- The Experience.
- The Storyline.
- Broken Promises of whiteness and masculinity.

Scenario #2

- Miyumi is a Japanese American college student who is super excited to be in her Women's Studies class. She hasn't had very many out queer teachers, and since she just came out a couple years ago herself, she was excited to take a class with this particular Queer teacher. Miyumi has gotten involved with a lot of the LGBT student groups on campus, gets excited to go to Pride every year, and is learning as much as she can about LGBT and Women's issues. She feels more empowered than she ever has in her life. She has a group of friends, has a girlfriend she is head-over-heels in love with, and wears all kinds of rainbow colors. Sure, she doesn't like to look at her body. She still feels pretty uncomfortable in her own skin because she doesn't fit the standard model of beauty in society, but that's weird, because she doesn't want to fit it. She is proud to be butch, and she loves women, so why is she still so body conscious, she wonders? Course, it probably doesn't help that her Mom, who moved to Minnesota from Japan when she was a teenager, still wants her to get married (to a man) and start a family. Her Mom makes comments all the time about her hair being too short and her clothing to baggy and not attractive enough. She wants to please her Mom (her family is super important to her) but she also wants to be able to be who she is.



Reframing it as Cognitive Dissonance

- Holding two contradictory ideas simultaneously.
- An inevitable part of the process of unlearning oppression.
- We are often **unsettling a person's sense of self and worldview**. So these reactions are **inevitable**.
- Defensiveness, denial and trivialization=socialized behaviors that keep the system in place.

Where can Transformational Learning Occur?

The Soft Edge



The Hard Edge



Engaging in Dialogue Across Differences

What do we mean by
dialogue?



di·a·logue¹dī·lŏg,-lŏg/noun: dialogue; plural noun: dialogues

a discussion between two or more people or groups, esp. one directed toward exploration of a particular subject or resolution of a problem.

I would add, for the purpose of building mutual understanding (e.g. about each other as people, respective viewpoints, personal history and experiences, needs and desires).

The Power of the Narrative

- Jason's "Dr. Newby" Story
- Thich Nhat Hanh on Compassionate Listening
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyUxYflkhzo>

Identities are mutually bound

“An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being...Identity requires difference in order to be, and converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty”

-William Connolly, *Identity\difference: Democratic negotiations of political paradox*

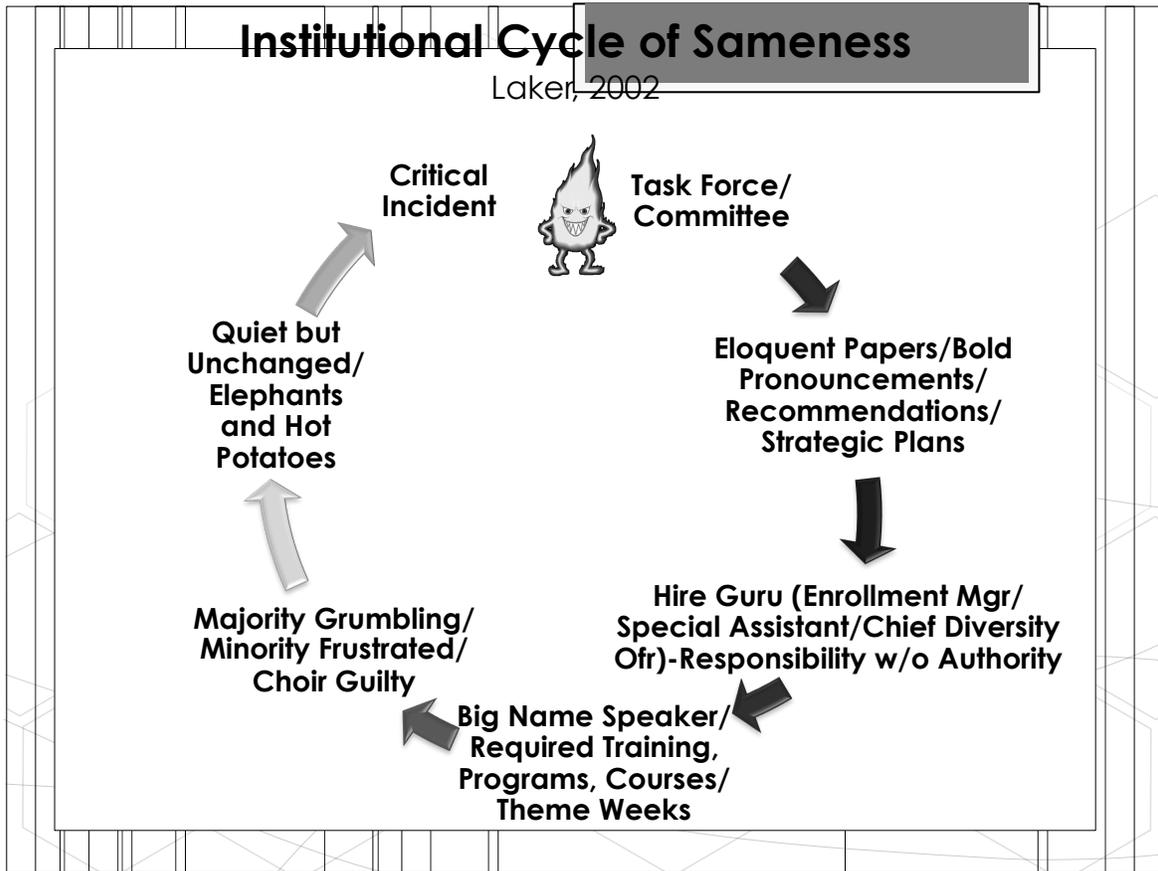
Invisibility

A common form of blindness to privilege is that women and people of color are often described as being treated unequally, but men and whites are not. This, however, is logically impossible. Unequal simply means, “not equal,” which describes both those who receive less than their fair share and those who receive more. But there can't be a short end of the stick without a long end, because it's the longness of the long end that makes the short end short. To pretend otherwise makes privilege and those who receive it invisible.”

-Allan G. Johnson, *Privilege, Power, and Difference*

Institutional Cycle of Sameness

Laker, 2002



Outbursts/
Confrontations

Diminishing
Images/
Narratives

Lateral
Politics/
Violence

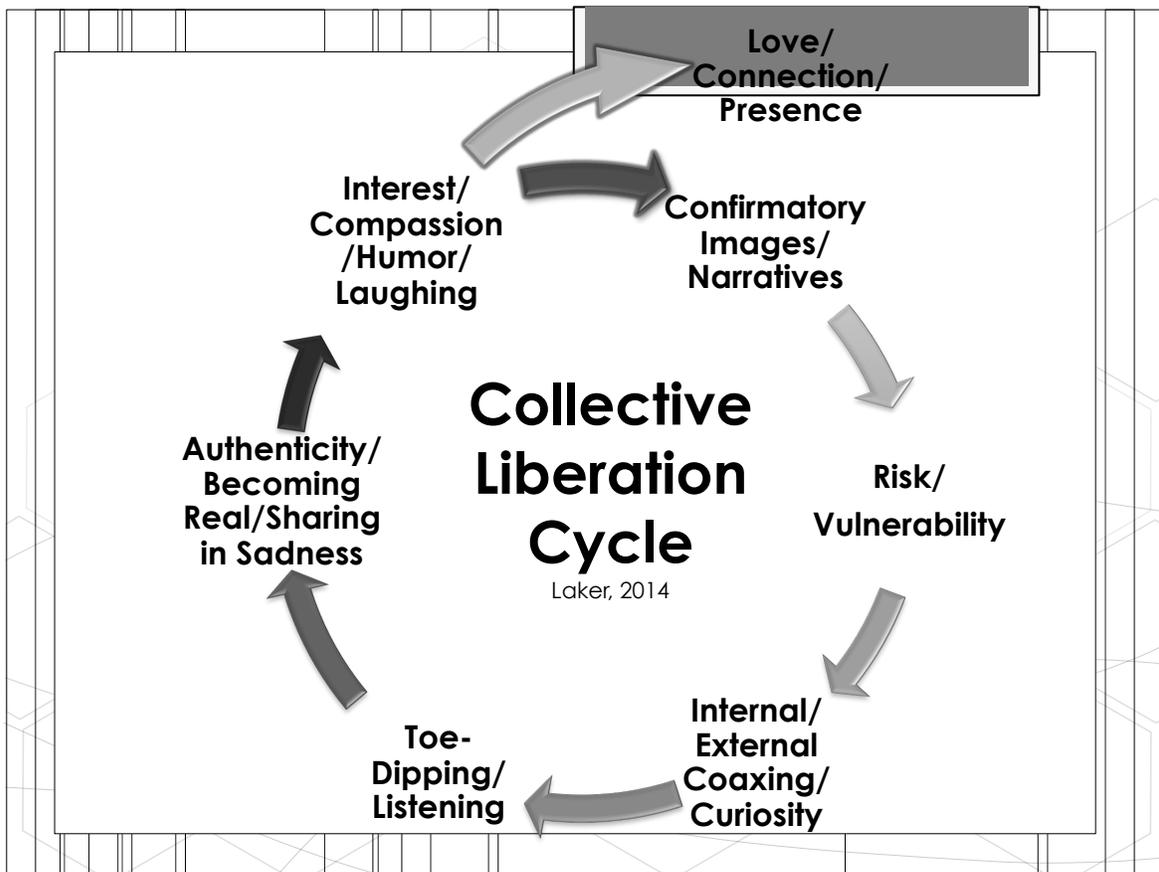
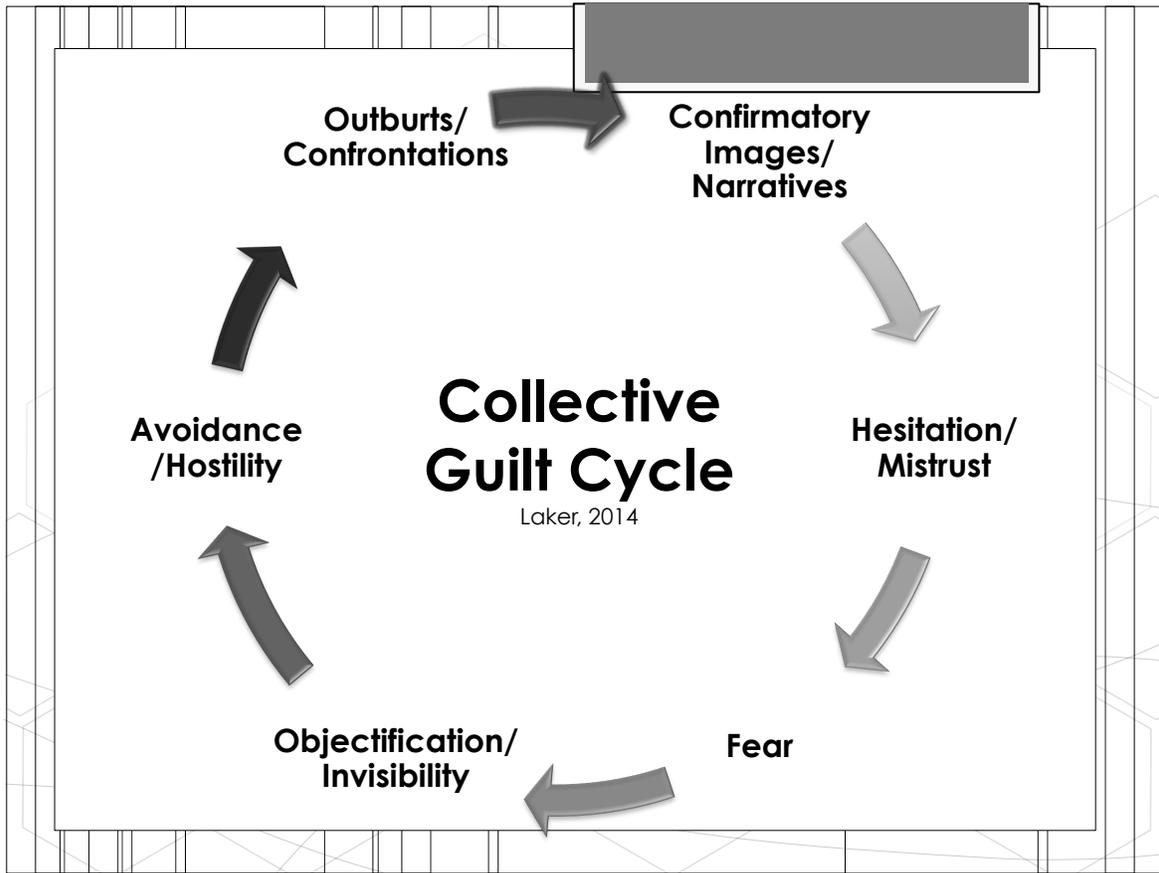
Collective Shame Cycle

Laker, 2014

Internalization/
Colonization

Dirty
Laundry/
Secrets/
Shame

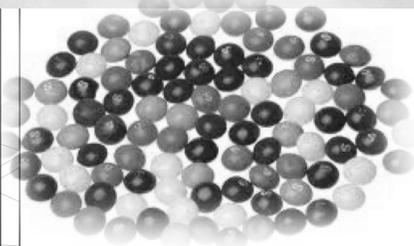
Mistrust of
Self/Others



Caring Provocations

- How have you been affected by these cycles?
- How have you fed these cycles?
- Who or what is served by these cycles?
- If these cycles were dismantled:
 - What would be interrupted or stopped?
 - What would you have to let go?
 - What does “arriving” mean, and what is gained/lost?
 - In what ways does fear affect your relationship with these cycles?

Jason's “Skittles and Pretzels” story...



Inclusive Communities



Nutrition Facts

Serv. Size Unlimited
Servings Daily

Amount Per Serving

Calories 0 **Fat Cal. 0**

%DV*

| | |
|--------------|------|
| Heart | 100% |
| Listening | 100% |
| Courage | 100% |
| Humility | 100% |
| Honesty | 100% |
| Hard Work | 100% |
| Stubbornness | 0% |
| Discomfort | 50% |

*Percent Daily Values (DV) are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Pema Chödrön:

- “As a way of working with our aggressive tendencies, Dzigar Kongtrül teaches the nonviolent practice of simmering. He says that rather than ‘boil in our aggression like a piece of meat cooking in a soup,’ we simmer in it. We allow ourselves to wait, to sit patiently with the urge to act or speak in our usual ways and feel the full force of that urge without turning away or giving in....we stay in the middle between two extremes, in the middle between yes and no right and wrong, true and false. This is the journey of developing a kindhearted and courageous tolerance for our pain....[and for] gaining inner strength.”

Mindfully Sitting with Cognitive Dissonance

- Be. Breathe. Sit with the reactions.
- Witness: Get bigger than the reactions.
- Reflect: How are these reactions part of the system?
- Intentionally Engage: Mindfully decide how to respond.

Thank you! Please feel free to contact us:

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