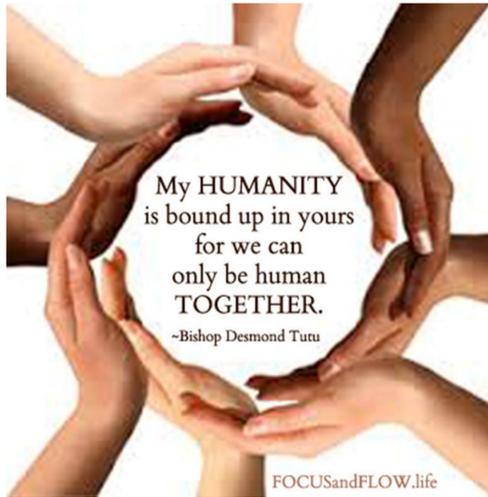


The 12 Ds: Diversity Principles for Interaction and Transformative Change

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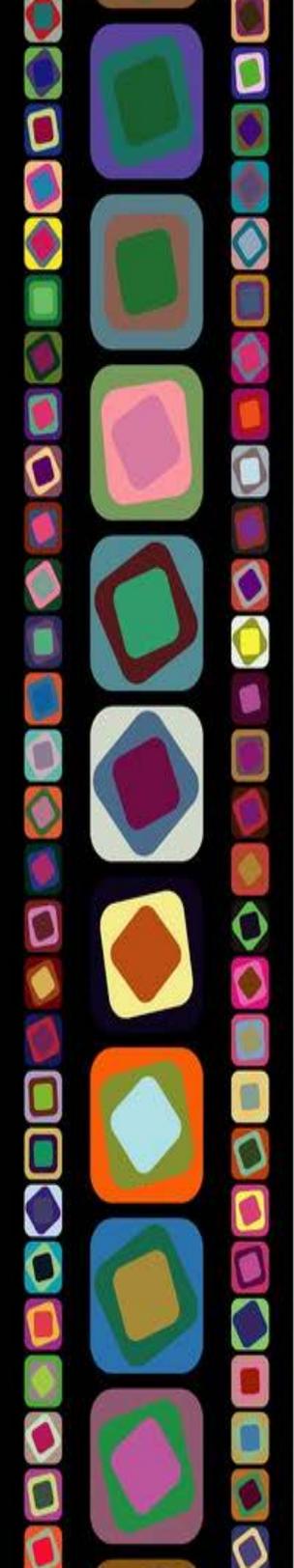


Societal injustices involve humankind’s unrealized potential for living together optimally in the context of our diversity. Natural human differences become stratified such that there is asymmetrical access to valued resources (e.g., safety, health, education, information, etc.), and rigid “us” vs “them” divisions are created that result in dehumanization. Optimizing diversity means recognizing its contextualized sociopolitical, sociocultural and sociohistorical dynamics, while simultaneously maximizing its strengths and leveraging its benefits to elevate persons, groups, organizations, and communities towards the highest manifestation of humanity’s collective potential.

The 12 D’s for Optimizing Diversity are offered as a grounding conceptual system to inform the development and implementation of interventions for working across differences toward the ultimate goal of “being human together”.

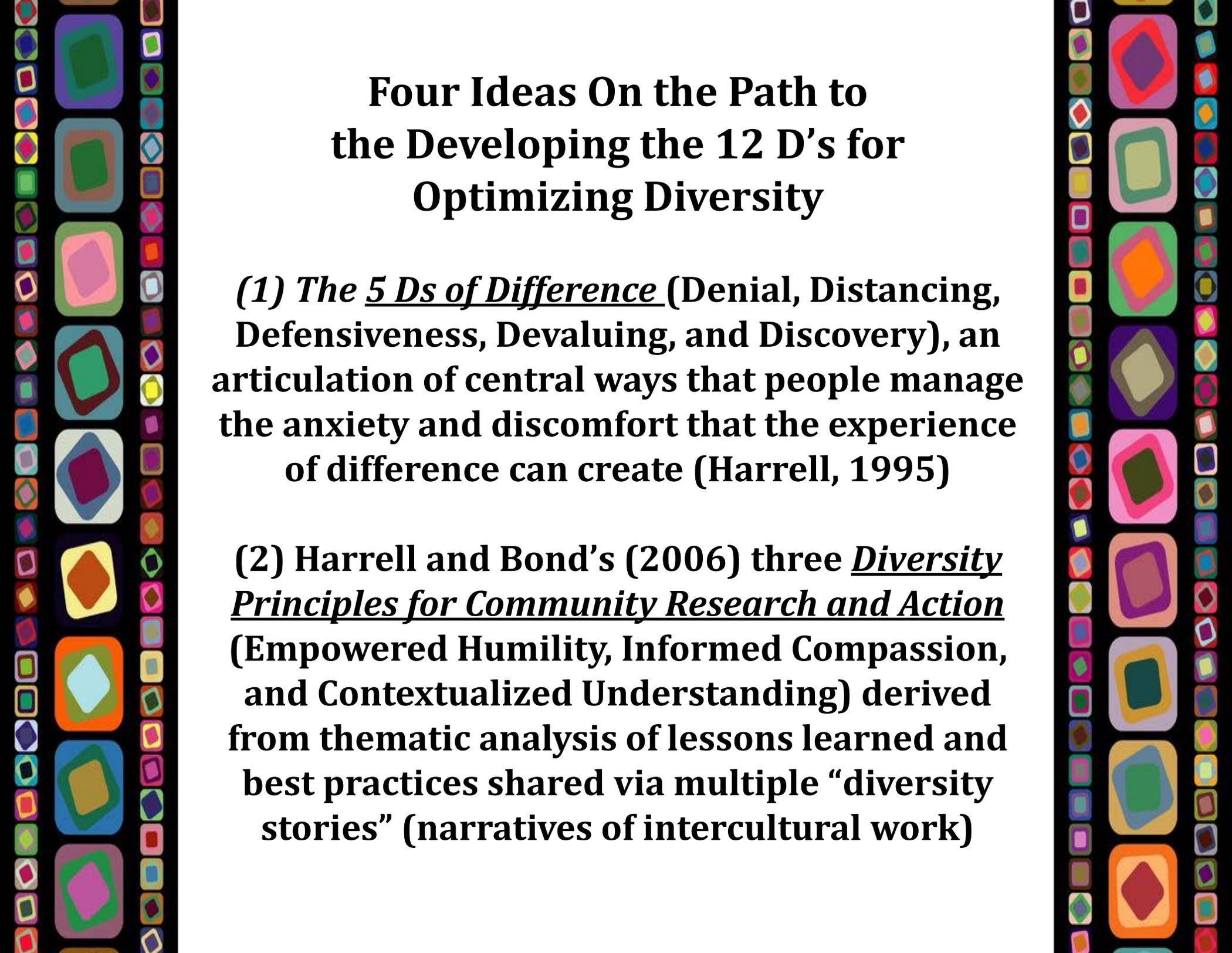
The 12 Ds are grouped into three clusters based on a larger model hypothesizing that three core change processes facilitate development and transformation on multiple levels of analysis (Harrell, 2015). These three processes emerged from a review of literature on change and healing processes across diverse cultural contexts. It was found that many cultures address personal, relational, and collective challenges utilizing culturally-embedded strategies that share three common mechanisms: Contemplative Processes, Communal Processes, and Empowerment Processes. While there are multiple culturally-embedded expressions of these processes, there appear to be shared, culture-transcending aspects of human transformation that can be drawn upon to inform a range of change efforts.

CONTEMPLATIVE PROCESSES	COMMUNAL PROCESSES	EMPOWERMENT PROCESSES
Mechanisms of Change: Experiential awareness, critical consciousness & meaning-making (Awareness, “Being”, & Consciousness)	Mechanisms of Change: Relationality and interconnectedness (Alliances, “Belonging”, & Connection)	Mechanisms of Change: Creative, committed and liberatory action (Agency, “Becoming”, & Choice)
The Developmental Principle Appreciation for motivation- and emotion-related developmental processes involved in multicultural and sociopolitical change.	The Dignity Principle Emphasizes the worth and value of all persons, the shared human condition; embraces diversity as a part of humanity.	The Dream Principle Vision of optimal personal and collective processes and outcomes; Allowing space for hopefulness and visualization of desired goals.
The Dialectic Principle The necessity of complex, both/and thinking; recognizing and struggling with the co-existence of apparent opposites (e.g., similarity and difference) and making room for multiple truths and identities.	The Drawing-Near Principle Utilizing connectedness to social identity communities for support, solidarity, and affirmation; Openness to giving and receiving support from those who are different; Nurturing inclusion and belongingness.	The Declaration Principle Naming and claiming of personal and collective truths; affirming social identities; sharing untold stories; naming oppression and its effects; speaking truth to power.
The Deconstruction Principle Engages critical reflection and analysis that contextualizes difference and intergroup phenomena in broader cultural, historical and political contexts; Inquiry into root causes.	The Dare Principle Taking risks to bridge and cross boundaries of difference; tolerate intergroup anxiety and persist in relational efforts; stepping in to the vulnerability of transparency and disclosure.	The Do Principle Processes that support agency and action; creative processes that challenge existing structures and status quo.
The Deepening Principle Reflective and communal practices that increase self-other-world awareness and enhance connectedness; discovering and revealing layers of identity and relationship.	The Dialogue Principle Authentic sharing and deep listening across differences; emphasizes mutuality and facilitates empathy; connectedness through sharing stories, experiences, and understandings.	The Dynamic Principle Recognizing the inevitability of change and evolution that contain possibilities for transformation; understanding that identities, relationships, organizations, etc. evolve and transform over time.



The *12 D's for Optimizing Diversity* reflect an integration of (1) empirical research on intergroup relations and implicit bias, (2) sociohistorical and sociopolitical work on conceptualizing the dynamics of diversity, oppression, and liberation, (3) efforts to identify competencies, promising practices, and features of successful intergroup work, and (4) the author's nearly 30 years of experience researching and providing training relevant to cultural diversity.





Four Ideas On the Path to the Developing the 12 D's for Optimizing Diversity

(1) *The 5 Ds of Difference* (Denial, Distancing, Defensiveness, Devaluing, and Discovery), an articulation of central ways that people manage the anxiety and discomfort that the experience of difference can create (Harrell, 1995)

(2) Harrell and Bond's (2006) three *Diversity Principles for Community Research and Action* (Empowered Humility, Informed Compassion, and Contextualized Understanding) derived from thematic analysis of lessons learned and best practices shared via multiple "diversity stories" (narratives of intercultural work)



(3) Harrell and Gallardo's (2008) description of a multicultural worldview as involving an attitude of inclusion and the view that human differences should be valued, honored, and affirmed. A multicultural worldview embraces “a view of people of all cultures as fully human with dignity and a right to self-determination”, “an awareness of social and economic asymmetries that confer privilege based on social location” and “a belief in the power of interdependencies and interconnectedness across cultures”.





***(4) Positive intergroup relations* (Harrell, 2017) is defined as humanizing processes that emerge from extended, growth-promoting interactions among people across stratified social identities where both differences and commonalities are embraced and processed with a co-existent critical consciousness of the historically-situated, culturally-infused context, and current sociopolitical dynamics; they are characterized by intentional and proactive efforts to *honor, welcome, affirm, engage, enhance, challenge and commit* through meaningful and authentic interactions towards greater equality and justice.**



Positive Intergroup Relations

- ✓ **honor** the inherent dignity and humanity of others as existing within layered sociohistorical and sociopolitical contexts;
- ✓ **affirm** and provide opportunities to highlight both superordinate and distinctive social identities in ways that make room for differences and similarities to co-exist;
- ✓ **welcome**, encourage and create space for authenticity and truth-telling, both one's own and others, such that participants experience being fully seen and heard with acknowledgement and awareness of their contextualized experiences;
- ✓ **engage** through interactions and meaningful dialogue characterized by the presence of mutuality, recognition of interdependencies and shared history, positive attributions, experiences of connectedness, increasing comfort in interactions, cognitive and behavioral flexibility, appreciation, humility, trust, respect, and empathy;

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- ✓ **enhance** and contribute to the development and expression of strengths and promote empowerment, growth and transformation such that the best of all parties has the opportunity to emerge toward a larger goal of enhanced collective well-being;
 - ✓ **challenge** preconceptions and projections through the courage and willingness to identify one's own biases, as well as recognize and resist oppressive power dynamics that may arise in the interaction; and
 - ✓ **commit** to tolerating uncertainty and intergroup anxiety, mobilizing the stamina and sustained engagement necessary for recovery from relational ruptures, and utilizing inevitable points of conflict as opportunities for deepening understanding.

Conclusion

The *12 Ds for Optimizing Diversity* are offered as an integrative framework for interactive processes (e.g., intergroup dialogue) that contain the potential for transformative change. The principles build upon the author's previous work and can be applied in setting as diverse as classrooms, counseling and therapy, workplaces, prisons, community-based service settings, and social action groups. The author has begun using them more systematically to guide consultation and training related to diversity and intergroup relations work.

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