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Racial justice, relational responsiveness and responsibility

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1. The call for racial justice

Issues of social justice are very much part of our 21st century social landscape. This is particularly the case when it comes to racial justice. The ongoing injustices felt by Black and other People of Color in predominantly white cultures has been very much at the forefront in the contemporary social justice debate. The use of deadly force by the police when encountering Black and other People of Color has brought the underlying dynamics and tensions to the fore and the Black Lives Matter movement has further raised it as a critical social issue.

While much media attention has been on police shootings and racial injustice in the United States, the phenomenon and associated underlying issues of racial injustice is widespread throughout the western world. In the 2021 conference held jointly with the AFT, CMM Institute and Friends of KCC, (<https://www.aftconference.co.uk/>) more than one presenter described the ongoing racial discrimination experienced in the United Kingdom (e.g. Nana Bosnu & Nick Pendry; Taiwo Afuape). Parallel issues have been identified in Australia when it comes to the relationship between representatives of white culture and indigenous people, especially in terms of police brutality and deaths in custody (e.g. Cunneen, 2020).

Racial injustice has been with us for centuries now and, despite a plethora of more recent initiatives to rectify the imbalance, looks likely to continue. Indeed, in some ways, the police treatment of Black and other People of Color, especially in the western world, seems to be exacerbating the problem. Given the CMM Institute's mission is to contribute to the making of better social worlds by reflecting on current patterns of communication and offering better ones, it is more than timely that we reflect on the current situation of racial injustice and the possible means of making better and more socially just worlds. While our concern is with the broader issue of social justice, we focus on the critically important and particularly confronting specific case of racial injustice to pursue the issues here.

We begin this exploration with an appreciation of the sensitivities surrounding issues of race and nomenclature. First, there is the understanding that there is no genetic basis in support of different "races" (e.g. see Angier, 2000; Graves, 2004). There is, in fact, no substantial basis, other than superficial appearance, to differentiate one presumed "race" from another. The very concept of race is a social construction, not a biological reality, and it is important to note here that even the idea of "whiteness" is a social construction (Norton, 2014). Understanding the idea of "race" as a social construction acts as the critical leverage in our ensuing relational argument in the next section.

Second, we acknowledge that Black and other People of Color cover a diverse group of people, especially when particular ethnic considerations are taken into account. The acronym BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) is a term deployed to cover this very diverse group of people, although it is mainly used in the United States and not so much elsewhere. Indeed, for some, the acronym BIPOC fails to capture the differential ways that people can experience racism (Daniel, 2020). Moreover, in Australia for example, the Indigenous people are Black. This makes it difficult to traverse the sensitivities surrounding various terms—especially working across cultures, experiences and time periods—and whatever terms we opt for will not capture all the differences,

ambiguities or political nuances. We acknowledge this and only hope that we are able to traverse this minefield as sensitively as possible when we choose to use the descriptor term “racialized people”. More specific terms will be used when relevant to the example or particular argument.

2. From a communication perspective

A relational process framework

One of the striking features of contemporary racial injustice stories is the focus on how this injustice is expressed in everyday encounters between racialized people and whites. Indeed, the stories about interpersonal slighting, harassing and even killing seem to appear far more often in the media than the more conventional accounts of inequality in terms of standard social standing measures, such as housing and schooling. This is important: it brings to the fore a sense that the quality of our interpersonal/social life matters very much when it comes to issues of racial justice and, we would argue, to social justice in general.

It certainly seems clear that the many political reforms and attempts to make structural changes to social standing through policy measures have done little to decrease the sense of felt racial injustice around the Western world. In the US, Robin Diangelo (2019) observes that structural policy changes only go so far and she points to the example of US schools remaining largely segregated despite strong support from a majority of whites for the 1954's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. In the UK, Taiwo Afuape (2021) asks “why do we keep developing initiatives that look good on the outside but amount to very little to change the lives of Black people?” And, in Australia, I ask why does the racial tension and a felt sense of significant injustice on the part of Indigenous people appear to be increasing, despite the legislative changes for greater social justice? We would suggest it is because we need to attend to interpersonal relations where it really matters.

When it comes to racial injustice, the issue of relationship quality is not one confined to encounters between explicit white racists and racialized others. As Robin Diangelo (2019) shows in her insightful analysis of the “nice” form of racism perpetuated by white progressives in the United States, relationship quality matters even when people are not ostensibly racists. She argues that, if we are to make any real headway in ending racism, we need a “radical relationality”:

[R]adical relationality—liberatory action informed by the recognition that all living things are interconnected and do not exist independently—is foundational to ending racism. Radical relationality is anathema to white supremacy and the patriarchy it issued from, and can ameliorate the effects of racial weathering while building the coalitions necessary for systemic change. (Diangelo, 2019, p. 14)

This proposal for a “radical relationality” is provocative and, no doubt, intentionally so. Unfortunately, we suspect the use of the word “radical” could hinder more than promote the

exploration of a liberating type of relationship between racialized and white people. Nevertheless, this proposal opens the door for a more nuanced and perhaps less emotionally charged consideration of how racial injustice is perpetuated in everyday encounters and how we can redress the injustice in the very same everyday encounters. This is where the Theory of the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) shines, with its distinctive communication focus and its heuristics for helping us understand relational dynamics.

When the idea of social justice is shifted into a relational framework, using the practical theory of CMM and its particular communication perspective, a whole new playing field opens up before us. It is a playing field in which communication is taken to matter in a very powerful sense. Our communication processes are not trivial affairs or occasional processes, incidental to other matters of importance. Rather, communication is of consequence: it matters in its own right and, most importantly, it matters because in each and every interpersonal encounter we bring about our social life. On this playing field, social justice is as much brought about in our communication processes with others as is all other aspects of our social life, including the very socially constructed idea of “race” that we mentioned earlier.

Conventional takes on social justice conceive of it as a goal—something to be achieved as a result of structural changes. In marked contrast, from our communication perspective, we are proposing that it is something that is enacted in each and every interpersonal encounter. In our encounters with others, we interact justly, more or less. In this way justice, and racial justice in particular, can be seen as a quality of our interactions with others—a feature of the process and not a goal at all.

In a fairly straightforward way, we could say a just relationship is one in which equity and fairness is expressed in interaction. However, that captures only the surface of things and sidesteps what is perhaps one of the crucial aspects of the communication process: that it is a joint process, a process that is co-created between people. The interdependency between people in relation with each other in communication has been described as joint action. It is the way that we engage in joint action together that shapes our understandings in communication. It is the way we engage in joint action that brings about new creations and understandings each joint step of the way. As John Shotter (1993) has remarked, a joint action world is a world of its own outside of causality or simple human action. So, somehow in this “zone of indeterminacy”, racial justice or injustice is co-created.

There are significant and wide-ranging implications of this sense of joint action and co-creation, many beyond the scope of this essay (see e.g. Jensen, 2020; Penman, 2016, 2021a). However, there are two critical implications that we will need to address as part of our explication of racial (and social) justice as a relational process: co-construction and power.

First, the very notion of co-construction and joint action points to the direct involvement of all parties in the encounter. In other words, all parties are implicated—however inadvertently, unwillingly or unknowingly—in the injustice and those injustices will not change until/unless both parties and their way of being together change. This recognition parallels that of Sunddarajan & Spano (2004) in their use of CMM to explicate the co-construction of domestic violence:

Rather than asking why abuse happens or seeking to discover its causes, CMM asks how relationships become abusive. In this way CMM creates “a framework for treating domestic violence as an emergent property that is co-constructed in conversations between the participants in abusive relationships” (p.46)

For us here, in this essay, our question becomes one of “how do relationships become unjust?” and “how is the injustice co-constructed between participants in unjust relationships?” Although in asking such questions, we are by no means suggesting that any, both, or all parties are necessarily actively complicit in any unjust relationship. Rather, the idea of co-construction, is meant to explicitly acknowledge the irreducibility of the relational “unit” in generating meaning; including that associated with a felt sense of injustice.

Second, the notion of co-construction takes on greater complexity when we bring the issue of power to the fore. There is a paucity of CMM work exploring the issue of power, although both Victoria Chen (2014) and Stan Deetz (2014) make significant offerings of ways to redress this lack. As Stan Deetz (2014) observes, “the most important forms of power reside within meaning being coordinated” (p. 218) and what we need to do is “return to explore the moments of co-constitution and the circumstances making particular conditions possible rather than accept the productions as given” (p. 222-3).

While recognizing that power is substantialized in the interaction, as Deetz (2014) and Chen (2014) do, we nevertheless have to acknowledge that it also pre-exists in the structure of law, police practice, court systems and the like, and that these structures facilitate the differential ability to act in more or less powerful ways. As such, racialized people rarely have the same hold on, or recourse to, accorded power as do police officers or white people in general.

Given the above, it becomes important to distinguish between different forms of power and their varying relational impact in considerations of racial injustice. Taiwo Afuape (2011) draws on Proctor’s domains of power in therapy to differentiate between positive and negative power, where negative power is power over another person, expressed through domination, coercion or authority, and positive power is power generated collectively. She also points out that power is “not something we can ignore or eradicate; we have to do something with it. Power cannot be removed but it can be linked to ethics, responsibility and responsiveness” (Afuape, 2011, p. 186) and when it is, it is characterized as positive power.

Our challenge here will be to account for the particular conditions that contribute to racial injustice and to make explicit the ways that power is expressed in the very process of meaning-making. Our further challenge is to show how we can link power to a sense of ethics, responsibility, and responsiveness in relationships to create positive power. As we will show in the following sections, the practical theory of CMM has a number of heuristics that we can draw on to address these challenges and to help us make sense of the relational processes engendering racial injustice.

Aimed at bringing about change

When we call on CMM theory to help us make sense of our social world we are not doing so “just to know”; rather, we are doing so in order to make things better. CMM is a practical theory and making things better is an important, and indeed integral, part of what CMM is all about.

In one of his last published pieces, Barnett Pearce offered us the following invitation:

So when I invite all of us all to “make better social worlds”, please hear this as invitation to engage and promote personal and social evolution...We don't know what “better social worlds” or “personal and social evolution” is in general or as abstract concepts. But we certainly have the intelligence to act wisely in this moment, in these circumstances, to respond to the current situation in ways that will promote the evolution of our social institutions and ourselves. (Pearce, 2014, p. 35)

We can do no better than respond to this invitation by considering what it might take to act wisely in situations of racial injustice. However, it is significant to note in Barnett Pearce's invitation that he does not offer a definition of “better social worlds” nor does he believe we could ever have such a fixed definition. When we work together to co-construct a better social world, that better social world will emerge from a collective effort in often unanticipated directions. With this sense of an emergent better social world, we are orientated to acting wisely in the moment, not trying to impose our will on others or our pre-determined grand vision of a better world.

The policy initiatives meant to bring about structural change (e.g. composition of, and achievements in, schooling) try to impose the will (usually political) of a preconceived “better social world” and, as has been noted more than once, have not been overly successful—particularly when it comes to racial justice. Such initiatives lack the interpersonal, collective effort that is critical to bringing about better social worlds. Such initiatives are also, more often than not, directed at superficial first-order change and not change that matters.

According to John Shotter (2009), problems of our social world—and racial injustice is an exemplar social world problem—are divergent problems that arise from “difficulties of the will”, not “difficulties of the intellect”. Difficulties of the intellect can be resolved using conventional logic but not difficulties of the will. Difficulties of the will arise from how we relate ourselves to events occurring around us, including the way we experience our life as it happening with others. These difficulties call for changes in our way of relating to the world that draw on our “understanding from within”, or “witness thinking” as Shotter (2010) refers to it. This understanding from within the joint action also forms the foundation for the “acting wisely” that Pearce (2014) refers to in the quote above.

When we are advocating for a better social world from a CMM perspective, we are in essence advocating for changes in our understandings from within. This approach is in marked contrast with a more typical social justice advocate who ends up falling into the trap of attempting to impose a preconceived “will”, however well-intended, and who address the problem as one of the intellect and not of the will. The more conventional approach of the social justice advocate often has the

unfortunate tendency to appear as authoritarian as the parties they may be opposing. This tendency to an authoritarian stance of many social justice advocates has led quite a few social commentators to raise warnings about, and even the accusation of, illiberal outcomes. (e.g. see the Economist, 2021). Indeed, as James Scott (2012) warns, this is a common dilemma in many cases of social change and upheaval, where massive disruption or defiance can, under certain conditions, lead directly to authoritarianism or fascism. However, our CMM orientation sidesteps such conditions leading to authoritarianism because it places the locus of change, fair and square, within the relational process. As such we are not advocating for any particular change, although we are advocating for a change that is co-constructed as more desirable by those experiencing encounters as racially unjust.

It is also important to point out, that the moral sense that permeates our CMM orientation is driven more from an obligation-based framework than a rights-based one (Penman, 2016). A rights-based approach starts from the perspective of the individual and their entitlements: a person has a right to speak, vote, not be discriminated against and so on. This rights-based approach is one usually adopted by the typical social justice advocate. In contrast, an obligation-based approach arising from the CMM ethos starts from the perspective of the other and asks how we ought to communicate with them. In other words, the shift from rights to obligations moves our focus from advocating for the rights of the individual to do or expect something, or whatever the activism concern is, to the responsibilities to others that must meet if we are to become fully human in a social world. This shift to obligations also redresses an important neglect in understanding of citizenship and humanity—that of our duty and obligation as citizens, as well as whatever rights may be implicated.

Here I'm not suggesting that rights are unimportant, rather that our obligation to the other is primary from within a CMM ethos. Mind you, it is not just that ethos that supports such a claim and there are many other like-minded propositions from others who start their understanding of the world from that of persons-in-relation. Perhaps most notably though is Levinas (e.g. see Pinchevski, 2005) who argues that because we are irreducibly relational beings our primary ethic resides in being responsive and responsible to the call of the other. From the Levinasian perspective, it is not the presence of I, the participant, that counts, but rather the extent to which the other commands responsibility from I. As a simple analogy, think about our everyday encounters with people in the street, where once you have caught the eye of the other you feel compelled to acknowledge the other (well, at least some of us do). In the same manner we can feel the call of the other whenever we are conscious of that other. It is this call of the other that acts as the underlying logical force for action and that is, almost by definition, missing in racially unjust practices. Our challenge here is to consider how this lack of a felt sense of obligation to the other contributes to the racially unjust encounter, as well as how we can make this sense of obligation to the other come to the fore in such encounters.

In sum

A relational framework for understanding social justice issues, and racial injustice specifically, calls for a tectonic shift in how we construe the issues and how we respond to a perceived need for change. And, although tectonic, this move is also empowering as the onus of responsibility shifts from the state, or other outside forces and/or institutions, to that of people-in-relation. The locus of change lies in the joint action, not in structural reconfigurations in society at large and the impetus for change shifts from a rights-based argument, to an obligation-based sensibility.

We are suggesting that we go about working within this relational framework using a relationally-responsive, and responsible, form of understanding that emerges from an “us”. We are also suggesting that the various models and heuristics of the practical theory of CMM, give us a relationally-rich language for developing this relationally-responsive understanding. We will use these heuristics in the following section to show how we can develop a different sense of racial injustice and how we can expose the pervasive dynamics at work.

The exploration in the next section will also allow us to expand on the power element when considering how justice gets played out in the doings between people. By definition, socially unjust episodes have a power imbalance between participants. Some have more legally sanctioned power than others (e.g. police vs accused), some have more socially sanctioned power (e.g. white males vs females) and others have combinations of both. We will develop this account more fully in CMM terms.

In the fourth section of this paper, we will then turn our attention to considering how, in the light of our understanding of the social forces at play in just or unjust encounters, we can make it better. How do we engage in creative resistance that invites relationship realignment? What interventions are possible that honor our fundamental obligation to the other?

3. Accounting for the dynamics of racial injustice

From a CMM perspective, all communication is about meaning generated jointly. This making-together process is described in terms of two primary activities—coordination and coherence—while recognizing that there is always a third element at play—mystery. When people interact, they engage in actions, often taking turns, in a more or less organized manner (the coordinating part). As they do so, they tell themselves, and others, stories to make sense of their joint actions (the coherence part). Usually, they coordinate and interpret actions without giving it much thought beforehand, or reflection afterward, and so there is often no allowance for alternative stories or other possibilities of meaning-making (the mystery part).

These three elements—coordination, coherence and mystery—are jointly responsible for the patterns we create in communicating. The ways in which we coordinate, the stories we draw upon to make sense, and the way that mystery does or does not come into play, combine in a myriad of different ways to create our social worlds. Particular combinations of these elements can account

for the creation of racially just and unjust encounters. Below we consider key elements of unjust patterns, drawing on CMM heuristics for understanding coherence and coordination. Mystery, plays very little part in the dynamics of racial injustice, and we shall leave our consideration of this for the next major section in which we consider how to engage justly.

Coherence and stories

Storytelling is a fundamental human activity. The stories we tell ourselves and that we live by are what create our sense of ourselves as individuals (e.g. who we are, our moral stance), as relational partners (e.g. being a good friend, a parent or spouse), as a community (e.g. what we do together, what defines our larger group), and as a nation (e.g. being democratic). In creating these manifold stories, we draw on a cornucopia of shared vocabularies, stories, myths, beliefs, values, and taken-for-granted common sense and from this cornucopia of social resources we generate our everyday understandings that guide our actions.

We don't just draw on a single story to make sense of particular moments or of lives in a longer-term sense. We have many stories. There are big stories and little stories and different types of stories provide contexts for other stories. But each and every story has consequentiality—each and every story leads us to live our lives in some ways and not others. So, what are the stories that can lead us to live our lives in racially just or unjust ways?

Injustices of all forms revolve around difference and, when it comes to racial injustice, the flow-on effects of differences in a person's color can be profound to life-threatening. The visual appearance of a person is one of the easiest markers of difference and, it seems, one of the easiest ways to construct a swathe of stories of "otherness". Barnett Pearce (1989) described four different communication forms on the basis of how we treat the "different" others and how open we are to change in our stories of sense-making about them and us.

The four different communication forms are monocultural, ethnocentric, modernistic and cosmopolitan. Drawing on Jensen's (2020) latest refinements, we can distinguish between these four forms in terms of the ways that stories are treated; each form having its distinctive meta-story that acts to delimit and define the dominant cultural story-lines and, as a consequence, impact directly on the social resources that can be called to make sense of the social world. This, in turn, has direct implications for if, how, and when racial injustice is brought about.

While monocultural forms are rare today, defining the form helps to set up points of contrast for the other, extant forms. In essence, in a monocultural world, there is only one broad cultural story: our world is the only world, our culture, the only one and there is only one way to live a life with others. Nothing is under challenge in a monocultural frame and there is no risk to the social resources for meaning-making. With no different "others", there is no story frame for injustice.

Ethnocentric cultures are still deeply enmeshed in their heritage, values, traditions and ways of being; so deeply entrenched that it is nearly impossible to question the assumptions inherent in their ways of being. However, ethnocentric cultures differ from monocultural ones because they

know there are other ways of being. Knowing that other ways exist means that, in this cultural frame, it is necessary to make clear insider/outsider distinctions. Not only is there a distinct “us” and “them”, there is a great unwillingness to put the cultural resources of “us” at risk and a concomitant determination to treat “them” as inferior. The dominant meta-story is “our way is better than your way”. Racism flourishes in this cultural frame, where white privilege and power readily forces racialized people into the category of the inferior “other”.

Modernistic cultures place importance on progress, on new knowledge and new technologies supplanting old ones, and new values replacing the old. Jensen (2020) describes the dominant meta-story as one of liberal progress. Yet, even though modernists are open to change, they retain an element of ethnocentrism in that their dominant meta-story is seen to be superior to other types of stories. With this dominant meta-story, all people are seen as “the other” to the extent that the progress narrative is continually moving us forward and, yet, not all others are as progressive as others. On the surface, one would expect that this liberal progress meta-story would set up a cultural frame in which racism does not flourish. Yet, Robin Diangelo’s (2019) exposé of “nice racism” clearly shows how white progressives can still perpetuate racism, albeit in an oblique rather than blatant way.

Finally, we have a cosmopolitan cultural frame in which we treat others, including ourselves, as both natives and non-natives, as both us and them. We accept that we all share a common humanity and we all construct our cultural stories through the communication processes we engage in. On the other hand, the stories we do construct are different across cultures. A key characteristic of the cosmopolitan frame of mind is the way cosmopolitans seek to understand the different stories of others, working within their dominant meta-story as one which believes we are enriched by many diverse stories. Consider this definition from Arthur Jensen:

Cosmopolitans participate fully in their own values/traditions while recognizing others’ traditions and practices as equally significant for them. In practice, cosmopolitans seek to coordinate differences through dialogue and engagement rather than eliminate those differences through assimilation, tolerate them via passive acceptance, or ignore them altogether. (Jensen, 2020, p. 17)

The different non-cosmopolitan ways of responding to difference captures two popular policy responses to racial difference: the cultural assimilation and melting-pot policies, specifically. Both of these policy approaches see difference as a problem that needs to be dealt with. In contrast, a cosmopolitan approach sees difference as an opportunity that needs to be explored and this opportunity and exploration takes place in our communication with others. Racism is contraindicated with a cosmopolitan frame of mind.

Contexts of meaning and logical forces

Each of the different cultural forms described above, and their dominant meta-story, act as the higher-order context in which other, more specific stories about self, relationships, and different others are constructed. In CMM terms, we are always acting and making/managing meaning within

multiple contexts. Some of these contexts include our definitions of the episode (the situation at hand), our relationship, our self (e.g. ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, political, religious, national), organizational/group/ family cultures, world-views or philosophical stances, and many more. It may be helpful to think of these various contexts as nesting one within another, much like opening a set of babushka dolls. Larger (or higher-order) contexts can be thought of as encompassing smaller (or lower-order) contexts and thus influencing the action and meaning making that takes place. But the hierarchy is not rigidly fixed and different levels can change their positions in relation to others.

The impact of the different contextual levels on each other in meaning-making is described in CMM terms in terms of logical forces. Simply put, logical force is the pressure or sense of obligation we feel to respond in one way and not another. We can experience different types of forces that operate on us in different ways. Over time, different types of forces, and names, have been identified withing CMM theory. Here we consider the most recent and most extensive set of forces described by Jensen (2020).

Prefigurative or contextual—where the higher order contexts and immediate circumstances, including prior events serve as a compelling force for action. Taiwo Afuape (2021) argues that racism acts as the highest order frame in dominant white cultures, especially where ethnocentrism is the norm, and this acts as a powerful contextual force affecting all meanings.

Substantializing force—where we give substance to a contextual understanding by enacting it in interaction with others. It has both a downward and upward quality: we may use a pre-existing cultural belief to decide how to behave in a conversation and then in behaving we develop/reinforce that belief further. This force may play a significant role in the perpetuation of police violence against racialized people. The cultural beliefs (held by police officers as well as many others) that racialized people are both less than and more dangerous, assumed to be predisposed to criminal acts, etc. is substantialized by treating them as such and then interpreting almost any behavior on their part as evidence of guilt.

Practical force—the felt force to try to bring about or get a desired response form the other. Strong practical force is felt when we act in anticipation that the other will respond in a particular way or when we act in order to fervently hope they will. This practical force is operating in the “talk” that Black parents in the US have to have with their children, advising them on how to behave in order (hopefully) to get a less violent response.

Reflexive needs—the force felt when a person needs a particular kind of response to develop or maintain contextualizing stories. The felt force of reflexive needs sets the stage for joint actions to generate the reflexive effects to fulfill the needs.

Reflexive effects (confirmatory force)—this force confirms or reinforces the stories we hold. This force is upward and reflects the way the response of the other reinforces our higher order meanings.

Reflexive effects (implicative force)—the feeling that our action sequence is modifying one or more higher-level contexts of meaning. This is perhaps the most important effect when it comes to

bringing about change, and for it to be a force for positive change, there needs to be positive experiences in the joint action. Afuape (2011, 2021) sees resistance as creating this important implicative force to bring about change. However, as with her distinction between negative and positive power, she identifies both a destructive and creative form of resistance.

How does this play out between whites and racialized people

The hierarchy of meaning framework gives us an overview of the dynamics but we need to consider how it plays out in joint action as well. Each person brings their own meaning framework into any encounter and the unique combination of those frameworks contributes directly to the quality of the joint action that emerges and, in particular, to the degree of social justice or injustice perpetuated.

In order to illustrate this, let's consider two different scenarios, with two different patterns of joint action, although both illustrate racial injustice at work. First, there is the prototypical pattern that emerges when police encounter Black males (George Floyd being an exemplar case).

Black males and White police

Black males and police bring with them potentially powerful contextual influences that make every encounter problematic, if not deadly. Black males, in particular, are highly likely to have prior, significant negative experiences. Drawing on the research overview of Smith Lee & Robinson (2019) in the United States, Black youth, especially those living in economically disadvantaged communities, are stopped, interrogated, and arrested by the police at higher rates than White youth. Encounters with police are so frequent in the lives of economically disadvantaged Black males that young men in San Francisco's Fillmore neighborhood described being stopped and searched as a regular routine and federal investigations by the U.S. Department of Justice (Civil Rights Division) have found ample evidence of the unconstitutional targeting of Black people by police.

In addition, Simon's (2016) historical analysis of US policing shows that, even though the overall police force is far more diverse and less ostensibly racist than it was, the policing model in use today continues to reinforce racism. This model is a direct outcome of the aggressive "war on drugs", with its heavy emphasis on proactive street confrontations of minority youth, that is a direct continuation of policing tactics used against minorities in the civil rights era and then codified as crime prevention policing during the war on crime. This "war" stance provides a substantial contextual force that, if coupled with a racist cultural frame, often has deadly consequences.

If we extrapolate from the above observations, it is easy to suggest that any encounter between Black men and White police is clouded with a pervasive contextual, or prefigurative force, of racism—even if it is not necessarily present in any particular police officer. Every Black man, and especially Black youth in disadvantaged US neighborhoods, enters such an encounter with police with a powerful cultural frame that interprets police action as the start of an harassment or arrest episode. And every police officer enters the very same encounter with the same expectation: that it could be or will be an harassment or arrest episode. We capture this dynamic in Figure 1.

White male police officer

Cultural:	ethnocentric/racist
Organizational:	we are a legitimate force in society engaged in a deadly war on crime
Life script:	I am a male police officer protecting our society
Relational:	I am legitimised to use force as I see fit/people are obliged to do what I say
Episode:	proactive street confrontation

Black youth

Cultural:	we live in a racist society /ethnocentric frame of mind
Life script:	it's us against them/I am an oppressed Black person
Relational:	expect the worst from the police
Episode:	harassing street confrontation

Figure 1. Imagined meaning hierarchies for a White police–Black youth encounter

With the very first utterance of the police officer—e.g. “get out of the car” or “stop or I’ll shoot”—there is a powerful compulsion on the part of the Black person to expect something negative. That they then act with fear makes sense within their meaning framework and substantiates the police expectation. This substantializing force further reinforces the higher order framework of racism. At the same time, there is every reason to expect that, in the case of the police officer, there are further reinforcing practical effects in play—this is the felt force of trying to bring about the actuality that the suspicious Black person deserves to be arrested (even if for something as trivial as possibly passing a counterfeit \$20). And, of course, the reflexive needs of the police officer for a particular kind of response to develop or maintain their contextualizing stories, is likely to add to an already very powerful combination of logical forces.

I appreciate that this analysis paints the police officer in a very negative light. However, it seems to me that not only is it a likely scenario given what we know of such situations, but it is also one in which the institutional/legal power of police acts to further reinforce the inevitability of a less than desirable encounter on the part of the Black person as well as one in which they will most likely feel powerless to change. It is easy to see that the logical force of the encounter can be overwhelming.

When you consider the complex interplay of forces from the perspective of the Black person, it is hard to see what meaning framework they could draw on to enact behaviours that allowed them to walk away safely from any police encounter. Taiwo Afuape (2021) has suggested that resistance to the seemingly racist encounter can engender an implicative logical force of change to the higher

order meaning framework. However, for this to be a positive or creative form of resistance that does not lead to arrest would require a significant change in the contextualizing framework of the police officer as well as the Black person. While not denying the possibility, the current cultural ethos makes it very unlikely.

Black people and White progressives

Diangelo's (2019) discussion of what she calls "nice racism" provides another opportunity to consider how the interwoven logical forces of a White progressive in their encounter with a Black person actually acts to perpetuate racism, despite the progressive stance of the former. Her examples, when coupled with Serwer's (2019) analysis of what he calls the "false promise of civility" and Martin Luther King's (1963) analysis of the White moderate with their shallow understanding and smoothing of racist troubled waters, provide the basis for our imagined encounter here.

The scenario is based on one of the dynamics often observed in Diangelo's organizational diversity training, in which Whites tend to position themselves as never having been told many specifics about racist behavior (systemic or otherwise) and blame their organizations or even racialized people themselves for the lack of learning rather than bothering to seek out any information on their own. This mentality has been called a "cornerstone of imperialism" and is especially onerous when Whites ask racialized people to teach them about racism. Diangelo (2019) describes this particular situation as having the following reasoning: 'We'll observe you and seek to understand you. In doing so, we'll relax while you work. You'll provide us with the fruits of your labor and we'll consider them. We'll decide what to keep and what to reject.'

In the following example (Figure 2), drawn from Diangelo's (2019) book, a Black woman, called in to help an organisation committed to social justice, is asked to talk about her experiences of racism to a sea of white faces. I am using one white member of that organisation in this example of the social justice facilitation group.

White progressive

Cultural: Racist culture/ modernist frame of mind

Organizational: We are an organization committed to social justice

Life script: I am an open-minded person who believes in orderly progress towards a just society.
I am beyond race/I am a non-racist

Relational: I try to be supportive of People of Color but have trouble when they still think I am being racist

Episode: Organisational session to learn about racism

Black presenter

Cultural: Racist culture is more pervasive than Whites can admit/modernist frame of mind

Organizational: Committed to equity training

Life script: I'm dedicated to helping White people understand how they perpetuate racism

Relational: I expect defensiveness from White people

Episode: Organisational session to teach about racism

Figure 2:
Imagined meaning frameworks for a White progressive-Black presenter session

4. Engaging with difference justly

At the end of section 2, we wrote about the need for a relational framework using a relationally-responsive, and responsible, form of understanding that emerges from an “us”. We also wrote that the various models and heuristics of the practical theory of CMM, give us a rich language for developing this relationally-responsive understanding. In the previous section, we have used some of this relationally-rich CMM language to lay out some of the relational conditions for the creation of social injustice. Here we turn this around and ask how, from a relationally-responsive and responsible framework can we contribute to the creation of the conditions for just relationships.

From what we have already said, some form of sensitivity or sensibility that could be described as cosmopolitan is a basic prerequisite. Recall that we described a cosmopolitan frame of mind as one that sees difference as an opportunity that needs to be explored and this opportunity and exploration takes place in our communication with others. We also asserted that racism is contraindicated with a cosmopolitan frame of mind. However, at the same time, we recognise that developing this frame of mind or sensibility is not easy (see Jensen, 2020; Penman, 2021a).

There are two different sets of considerations in our exploration of how we can engage with difference in just and productive ways using a cosmopolitan sensibility. First, there is the consideration of what it takes for us as participants in encounters with racially different others to work with those differences creatively. Second, there is the consideration of what we can do as change agents, facilitating others to engage with racial difference. We consider these in turn below.

In the interpersonal encounter

John Stewart (2021) uses the phrase “co-constructing uniqueness” when he talks about what happens in conversations that change the way we treat each other. I find this phrase especially pertinent here when we are considering how to engage with difference justly because of the way it

highlights two critical features of relating justly: it is a co-constructed process and that each encounter with racially different people will play out in uniquely different ways.

The second observation regarding the complex differences between people helps to highlight that, even though people may be from one racial group or another (and treating “race” as a very loose, socially constructed concept), there is great variability within that group in terms of mindsets, meaning frameworks and the stories by which each person lives their life—for both racialized groups and whites. Given this, there can be no hard and fast rules to be applied universally in any “racially-challenging encounter”. Indeed, to do so would be racially unjust. On the other hand, we can approach every encounter with a sense of what may be called for to engage with the manifold differences between each of us, using our cosmopolitan sensibility.

Dialogue, civility and tension

A cosmopolitan sensibility orientates us to particular ways of engaging with others and to particular communication practices that make living with difference possible and productive. These communication practices draw on the skills and actions needed to be able to engage in dialogue with others, such as deep listening, working collaboratively, allowing others to feel felt and striving to keep the conversation going (Penman, 2021b).

Perhaps it's important to emphasise here that we are not using the term “dialogue” loosely. We are, in fact, using the term from a very specific perspective—the prescriptive approach that draws on the work of Martin Buber (see e.g. Pearce & Pearce, 2003; Stewart & Zediker, 2000). Amongst other things, this form of dialogue is characterized by the participants acting authentically and genuinely engaging in the process in a mutually collaborative way that ensues the participants can go on together (Penman, 2000). And most importantly, this approach to dialogue is fundamentally orientated to the call of the other.

We discussed the call of the other in the first part of this essay and asked how we can make this felt sense of obligation to the other come to the fore in racially diverse encounters. And there is no doubt that engaging in dialogue does just that. However, we don't always get the opportunity to engage in dialogue with racially different people and we don't always engage with racially different people who have the particular skills and mindsets to do so. Yet, we still need to respect their differences and be open and responsive to their “call”. A broader sense of dialogic civility will do just that.

Ron Arnett (2001) has proposed this idea of dialogic civility to describe a communication style that promulgates a civil society and, as such, is functional in the public domain. His notion is very deliberately premised on a morality of obligation or responsibility to the other in such a way that he refers to dialogic civility as “responsibility in praxis”. This communication style has sufficient dialogic features that it is possible for a common space for diverse viewpoints to be created where differences are heard and not disregarded (for an elaboration of this see Penman, 2021b). Most importantly, perhaps, is the idea that this form of dialogic civility is characterised by being invited and not demanded. To demand a dialogic encounter is to, in effect, negate the very possibility of one.

At this point we need to emphasise that dialogic civility is something quite different from the civility that Serwer (2019) refers to in his essay on social justice. Serwer shows in very clear terms how an opportunity for social justice during the short-lived period of Reconstruction following the American Civil War was allowed to slip away because what he calls “civility” was prized more than justice. As he puts it “the gravest danger to American democracy isn’t an excess of vitriol—it’s the false promise of civility.” (Serwer, 2019). For Serwer, civility is a form of politeness that covers over difference. I suspect this may be the same form of civility that Diangelo (2019) points to when she talks about white progressives and their “nice racism”. In contrast, when linked with dialogue, the idea of civility we are promulgating here is one that directly engages with difference. This is very much the sense of civility that Ron Arnett (2001) articulates with his idea of dialogic civility.

In advocating dialogue or dialogic civility in encounters between people of different racial groupings we are committing to a morality of obligation or responsibility towards others that, in turn, respects differences. In doing this, we are also opening ourselves up to interpersonal tension. Working across difference and exploring possibilities, by necessity, brings tension with it. However, rather than being tension to be avoided, this is tension that acts as the wellspring for change.

In his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Martin Luther King also observed the importance of certain form of constructive tension. He lamented the white moderate who

...prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice.” He also acknowledged the importance of tension to achieving justice. “I have earnestly opposed violent tension,” King wrote, “but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth.” Americans should not fear that form of tension. They should fear its absence.” (Serwer, 2019)

Recalling Jensen’s definition of cosmopolitanism (2020, p. 17), we can see that the negative peace that King refers to arises from a attempts to eliminate difference through assimilation, tolerate through passive acceptance or ignore altogether. In contrast, a positive peace based on constructive, nonviolent tension is fostered by a cosmopolitanism that seeks to coordinate difference through dialogue and engagement.

Co-construction, disruption and repair

When we appreciate the co-constructed nature of all encounters, racially just or otherwise, we find ourselves in a very different world of understanding: it is, to use John Shotter’s (1993, 2010) phrasing, a world of joint action calling for a relationally-responsive way of understanding. This form of understanding emerges from an “us” that is essentially out of our individual control. Recognizing this, changes the way we imagine we bring about racial justice relationally. If we can’t control it, what can we do to change it?

Perhaps one of the more fascinating and challenging aspects of the social change process is its often apparant lack of rationality or so-called common-sense logic. Developing a relationally-responsive way of understanding is richly rewarding but it carries with it the need for a greater tolerance of confusion, uncertainty and the fundamental unknowingness of interpersonal life, with all of its consequent tensions. Creating good, second-order change calls for messiness, and it is this second-

order change that is most called for in situations of racial injustice. Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch's description captures a key aspect of this form of change:

While first-order change always appear to be based on common sense...second-order change appears, weird, unexpected, and uncommonsensical; there is a puzzling, paradoxical element in the process of change (Watzlawick, et al, 1974, pp. 82-3).

We need to engage with racially different others knowing that racial injustice is not going to be resolved through the application of a "technique", or by technical control of the situation, or the application of logic in the form of such things as compensatory policy implementations. Nor are we going to bring about greater racial justice through one-off interventions, even if relationally-responsive. None of these things brings lasting change. Instead, we need co-constructed change: change brought about jointly by people of different color in how they relate with each other. This form of lasting change is neither easy nor untroubled; but it can happen when people commit to co-constructing something better.

The case study used by John Stewart (2021) in his paper about co-constructing uniqueness is a striking example of how such change is possible. Stewart draws on the story of Jennifer Thompson-Canning and Ronald Cotton (2010) from their book *Picking Cotton: Our Memoir of Injustice and Redemption*. Ronald was jailed for 11 years after being identified by Jennifer as her rapist. He was finally exonerated by DNA evidence and, when released, wanted to hear Jennifer's story about what had happened. Careful reading of their ensuing relationship shows how they co-constructed uniqueness through appealing to the other's humanity, being mindfully present to each other and working constructively to understand.

The above case study amply demonstrates that relationship work can be painful, messy, complicated and confusing at the best of times and perhaps no more so when it comes to working with racial differences. On the other hand, this complicated, confusing messiness can act as the very basis for the constructive, nonviolent tension referred to by Martin Luther King in the earlier quote. Working through this tension over time is the pathway to better relationships.

I have previously argued (Penman, 2021b) that discomfort, dis-ease and tension play an important role in finding new openings and new possibilities for bringing about innovative change in our relationships with others. What is equally important is that this messiness of discord needs to be played out fully enough to present opportunities for successful repair and re-engagement. It is in the full playing out that the real relationship work gets done and that the real "radical relationality" suggested by Diangelo (2019) can emerge.

Taiwo Afuape's (2011, 2021) proposal regarding resistance has much to offer itself here. She distinguishes between a destructive and creative resistance, where creative resistance opens up new possibilities and embraces difference. This sense of creative and destructive resistance acting as liberating and oppressing forces respectively bears striking parallels to the positive and negative tension described by Martin Luther King (Serwer, 2019). Afuape's (2011, 2021) idea of creative resistance brings about the constructive, nonviolent tension necessary for growth that King calls positive tension.

Creative resistance works when resistant acts have sufficient inherent implicative logical force to counteract the quite strong contextualizing force of racism. In the CMM hierarchical model of meaning described earlier, Jensen (2021) refers to this implicative force as a reflexive effect characterized by the feeling that our action sequence is modifying one or more higher-level contexts of meaning. This is perhaps the most important effect when it comes to bringing about change. And for it to be a force for positive change, there needs to be positive experiences in the joint action.

Most of us are familiar with the idea of resistance as expressed in marches, protests and the like, where resistance is expressed directly as a group. However, here we need to consider what creative resistance can mean in our everyday encounters with people of different colors. As white people, how can we resist acting in an overt or “nice” racist ways, how can we stop being oppressive to racialized others? As racialized others, how can we resist the imposition of a racist meaning on us, how can we refuse to be oppressed? Moreover, how can each of us do so, while keeping the conversation open?

There is no easy answer to the above question. As I've already said, the application of a universal technique is not the answer, and any moves of/for resistance are subject to unique co-constructions. Instead, what we can do is hone our sensitivities to the possibility of/for resistant speech acts and the openings that may exploit creatively. As John Shotter (2009) has argued, we cannot plan for innovative change in racially-challenging encounters, let alone impose it, but we can prepare for change. To prepare for change calls for what Shotter calls “living on the edge”.

These “edge-living sensibilities” (Penman, 2021b) are similar to James Scott's (2012) account of an anarchist sensibility that celebrates local knowledge, common sense and everyday creativity, along with a great tolerance for confusion and improvisation. When it comes to edge-living in our everyday communicative encounters with others of different colors, we need to develop our capacity to play at the edge of meaning, for finding ways of generating alternative viewpoints, for naming creatively, and for responding unexpectedly—all in an endeavour to resist the expected, the conventional and the default cultural meaning frame of white superiority.

Injecting creative resistance moves into a relationship can be a powerful initiator of change but we still have to sustain it. Given the strength of the downward contextualizing forces maintaining the status quo of white superiority playing out the disruption and tensions of creative resistance can be challenging. It calls for what Gallegos, Wasserman & Ferdman (2020) delightfully refer to as “dancing with resistance”. Gallegos et al (2020) draw on the dancing metaphor to highlight three important aspects of working productively with resistance: it is a dynamic process, characterized by a joint performance, and there is a possibility of jointly creating something new.

The other important feature of this dance metaphor is that it occurs over time. This is a critical requirement for any significant change to occur. As said above, any disruption process, including resistance, needs time to play out and, most importantly needs time to generate a “repair”. This is where the practice of dialogical civility plays a key role.

While there can be a spontaneous, almost visceral, sense to enacting edge-living sensibilities, they are still expressed within a moral compass. The very idea of a relationally-responsive manner

necessitates an ongoing consideration of the other. This ongoing consideration of the other calls for the listening, questioning and coordination skills that are all requisite aspects of being dialogically civil with others. If we listen deeply and question with genuine curiosity, while at the same time respect the essential open-endedness of our social world, we keep our engagement with others open and show a responsive respect for their stance and being.

By way of illustrating our proposals here, recall the two scenarios we introduced in Section 2 of the Black youth–White police encounter and the Black presenter–White progressive session. In the training session, let's assume that the Black presenter has some edge-living sensibilities and that she is alert for opportunities to creatively resist and that the White progressive is at least open to a realignment. On the Black presenter's part, she might detect a hint of negative resistance on the part of the White progressive when he declares he is not a racist. In turn she, could inquire, in an open invitational way, if he could say more about what it means to him to be a non-racist. That is certainly an opening for a new type of dance that has possibilities for a relational change.

In the police-youth encounter, just about everything is in "favor" of the White police officer dominating the encounter and forcing the meaning by virtue of their accorded power. As stated earlier, it is hard to imagine what form of interpersonal resistance on the part of the Black youth could have sufficient implicative force to change the overall racist framework of the encounter. This is the extreme situation where the combination of legislative power, a strong racist cultural framework and the police organisational framework all work to conspire against the Black youth. In such circumstances, third-party intervention and supportive structural changes play a more important role and, indeed could offer the only possibility for change. This does not negate the importance of a relational framework for understanding and changing racial injustice but it does point to the importance of outside agents in facilitating and fostering change. Indeed, in our current predominantly ethnocentric/racist culture, the intervention of outside agents is likely to be the major, if only, impetus for relational change and we offer some positive examples of this below.

As change agents

When we are working as change agents, we are doing so from a third-person perspective. In the context of racial injustice, our specific focus is on drawing attention to communication patterns perpetuating racial injustice and on offering ways for helping people engage with difference arising from color more justly. As change agents our role is to facilitate greater relational awareness and greater relational responsibility. Below, we consider two different types of approaches orientated to relational change: a) systemic questioning offered in therapeutic-like contexts or specific interventionist circumstances to enhance relational reflexivity, and b) broader training practices offered by facilitators to enhance relational or dialogic eloquence.

Systemic questioning and relational reflexivity

Relational reflexivity is the capacity to be both aware of, and to reflect on, our relationships with others. John Burnham (2005) describes this form of reflexivity as creating opportunities for considering, exploring and experimenting with different ways of relating. When it comes to racial

injustice experienced in interpersonal encounters, the capacity to be relationally reflexive and to use it creatively is a key element in bringing about change. And one of the best ways of cultivating this relational reflexivity is to ask questions.

Questions are the lifeblood of learning, growing and changing, especially those arising from uncertainty and designed to explore options to open up new possibilities. These open questions, asked from a genuine curiosity, allow us to generate accounts of what may be going on in joint action, to invite reflection, and to initiate change. Circular or systemic questioning, is a particular type of guided open question, developed to be a powerful tool for demonstrating connections and exploring relationships (e.g. Creede, Fisher-Yoshida & Gallegos, 2012). And, as Barbara McKay (2021) illustrates, circular questioning is an invaluable tool in systemic therapy.

The whole idea of circular questioning evolved from an early therapeutic approach of the Milan Group. This group of therapists recognised the creative power of questions and worked to develop a way of using them for the co-creation of accounts “pointing from past and present into future possibilities for change immediately the questions are asked. The questions they found created insight, changed perspectives, opened up new methods of solving life’s challenges and developed future possibilities” (Cronen, Lang & Lang, 2009, p. 8). While circular, or systemic, questioning is primarily used in therapeutic situations, it can be used beyond such contexts. If we consider the second example we have been using, of the training session involving a Black presenter and a White progressive, circular questions could be used by another facilitator to open up the reflections further.

Cronen et al (2009) identify four different ways in which circular questions can be used to generate relational reflexivity. Some of the questions aim to help with making connections amongst different participants and in the case of our example, could include “how do you think Pauline (the Black presenter) felt when you said you (White progressive) were a non-racist?”, “could there be others in the group who felt the same?”, or “are there others in the group who might think differently?”.

Other questions are asked to help make connections in time. These are especially important in helping participants reflect on how actions create the conditions for the next actions and change the perception of past actions. In our example, such questions to Sandra, the White progressive, could include “would you have labelled yourself as a non-racist before the company publicly committed to social justice?”, “how do you think that naming reflects the future commitment of your organization to social justice?” Pauline, the Black presenter, could be asked “If you continued to help the organization meet their social justice standard, how do you think you could improve things?”

A third set of questions explores the connections within and between participants’ stories. For example, we might want to explore with Sandra, the White progressive, her story of being a non-racist: “when did you start to say that you were a non-racist?”, “do you recall anything that specifically prompted it?”, and “how important is it to the way you see yourself?” In contrast, we could ask Pauline about her anti-racist story and how important it is to her.

A fourth set of questions are aimed at making connections between person positions, acknowledging directly that we think and behave differently from different positions. For example,

we could ask Pauline about how much her resistance to the word “non-racist” might change if she were not acting as representative of Black people? And we could also ask Sandra, to speak about her non-racist story from her position as a member of the local sport team and not as a staff member of an organisation striving for social justice.

Cronen et al (2009) also show circular questioning can be used to flesh out the CMM heuristic model based on hierarchies of meaning, logical forces and storied coherence. The types of circular questions and the examples given above offer a broad coverage of the options available to a change agent using systemic interventions. McKay’s (2021) therapeutic case study offers a parallel set of considerations that could be used for interventions in racially unjust contexts.

Systemic interventions of the form described above work well with small groups of people working together to reflect on and change their relationships with each other. Systemic interventions of the form described above are less likely to be amenable, however, to the type of situation described in the Black youth–White police encounter. Broader, systemic change is warranted to change the racist framework, especially within the police culture and organisations that contribute such strong contextualizing force to any such encounter.

Transformational change and relational responsibility

Change programs orientated to learning and development play a significant part in any broader systemic social and/or organisational change. In keeping with our central relational story, we have chosen to use the idea of “relational responsibility” to capture the orientation of programs needed to help participants engage in just relationships with peoples of different colors. This term “relational responsibility” is intended to capture our recurrent themes of relational responsiveness and relational reflexivity and to link it to the felt sense of obligation to the other that is the hallmark of a truly relational approach.

In order to be able to act in a relationally responsive and responsible manner in the context of peoples of different color, the color difference needs to be valued and not feared. Racism flourishes in an ethnocentric cultural frame, where white privilege and power readily forces Black and other People of Color into the category of the inferior “other”. This is in stark contrast to a cosmopolitan frame in which the difference in the other is valued as offering opportunities for new understandings and meanings to emerge. Yet, as Jensen (2020) acknowledges, cosmopolitan communication is not widely practiced and requires a level of cognitive development that is not commonly found in our contemporary society.

Our task here, and elsewhere, has been to consider how we can contribute to this shift in levels of thinking and the concomitant shift to the form of cosmopolitan communication and, specifically, how we can do so in a way that transforms rather than just trains? Here I want to consider two core requirements for a change program bringing about a transformation in our ways of relating with different others: changing our stories and acquiring new relational skills.

We described the different frames of mind earlier in terms of the different stories that we can draw upon to make sense of different others. To change the frame from the racist/ethnocentric one or

even the modernist one to a cosmopolitan form requires a dramatic change in the social resources we draw upon to make sense of our social world. In order to bring about this change we need to situate people where their resources are put at risk (Parish-Sprowl, 2014).

Putting resources at risk is a CMM way of talking about the challenge of transformation. You could see this as equivalent to the idea of a disorienting dilemma used in transformational learning (Mezirow, 2000) and to the way that Kegan (2000) talks about the importance of contradiction, paradox and oppositeness in bringing about changes in levels of consciousness. This is also the way in which I talked about second-order change earlier as being weird, unexpected, and uncommonsensical with a puzzling, paradoxical element (Watzlawick, et al, 1974).

Resistance can be a significant way of putting social resources at risk in racially challenging contexts, and when it creates dilemmas, contradictions and even paradoxical situations it has the potential for being creative in the sense described by Afuape (2011). For this potential to come to fruition, the resistance needs to be accompanied by learning opportunities for developing new stories that change meaning frames.

Let's take the example of Sandra, White progressive, and Pauline, the Black presenter, and consider what could ensue if Pauline won't accept Sandra's self-labelling as a non-racist. It may be that this creates an ideal resistive moment for the organisational facilitator/trainer to explore another way of "storying" Sandra's life-script and, as a consequence, another way of thinking about racial differences within the group as a whole. In this instance, I can envisage the whole group, including Pauline, exploring other ways of talking about racism and, thus developing new ways of relating with each other—as racialized others and whites—that take responsibility for the other.

Re-storying can still be done without the critical incident or experience of resistance and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) work of Wasserman and her colleagues (e.g. Wasserman, 2014; Gallegos, Wasserman & Ferdman, 2020) is a prime example of such an approach. In terms of our Black youth-White police example, this DEI approach lends itself directly to use in changing the organisational police culture that perpetuates acts of violence against Blacks and People of Color.

Reverse mentoring is a particular approach used in DEI programs and is one popular in the UK. A pertinent example can be seen in the Reverse Mentoring project of New Scotland Yard (2021) where three young women have mentored a trio of the Metropolitan Police's top women officers for six months. The reverse mentoring project helped officers get closer to communities they serve by gaining fresh perspectives on issues including domestic abuse, knife crime and social inequality.

Other programs for changing the relationships between racialized people and the police draw on other forms of re-storying, including that of improv training for enhancing those edge-living skills mentioned earlier. The Second Wave is one such program in The Netherlands, aimed at breaking down the stereotypes between Moroccan youth and police in Gouda and providing opportunities for developing new relationships (<https://vimeo.com/61116920>).

At the same time that re-storying is occurring, there is a need for the development of matching relational skills—skills that allow a cosmopolitan sensibility to come to the fore. There are a number

of different skills associated with a cosmopolitan form of communicating and Jensen (2020) has identified at least 16 of them. All these communication skills call for a way of relating with others premised on a fundamental relational responsibility to them. A core set of the practices identified by Jensen (2020) draw on the skills needed to be able to engage in dialogue with others.

In CMM terms, dialogue is a special form of joint action, distinguished not so much by what is said in the process but by how the participants relate with each other. They ask questions to invite answers, not to make a point; they speak as part of their contribution to the joint action unfolding, not to make an impact on the other person; and they are open to being changed, not set in their own stance. Dialogue can also be described as an interpersonal process in which participants stand in the tension between holding their own ground as a listener and talker and being profoundly open to the other as a listener and talker. To hold your own ground requires displays of genuineness, openness and reflexive awareness. Being profoundly open to the other requires displays of curiosity, creativity and being in the present.

This form of dialogue is often thought of as a highly specialized and intimate form of engagement, but this is not necessarily the case. The idea of dialogic civility was introduced earlier to highlight the fact that dialogic-type engagements can still occur in public spaces. And the work of the Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC) in the cities of Cupertino (Spano, 2001) and San Carlos (K. Pearce, 2010) amply demonstrate that whole communities can learn to use dialogic skills to make better communities together. However, as that very same work also demonstrates, this form of public dialogue is unlikely to happen on its own without some form of intervention (Spano, 2001).

The PDC work in Cupertino is particularly pertinent to our concern here as it demonstrates how change agents can work within communities to facilitate dialogic events, including events designed to engage with issues of cultural diversity and with community safety. Spano (2001) describes the processes and interventions that brought about significant change in the community's capacity to work together dialogically and the impact this had on the community. Of significance is that the original story of "racial" issues had changed significantly to a story of "cultural enrichment" and "diversity" (Penman, 2001). Also of significance was the way that local police were involved in the project from the start and the positive impact this had on the officers feeling involved and being part of the community.

The outcome of the Cupertino project holds great hope for changing the relationships between police and communities of Black people and People of Color in other contexts and locales. And the outcomes of the other approaches and case studies offered here, add to this sense of hopefulness. When we can open ourselves up to new stories and new ways of being with others good things can happen.

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