

The “Voice Project”

Adapted from the work of Dr. Carney Strange

The purpose of this assignment is to raise consciousness about the implications of race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and religious belief for how we construct concepts of leadership in modern organizations. Inclusion of some values and principles ultimately leads to the exclusion of others, values and artifacts that differ significantly from the “normative” experience. That’s reaffirming and supportive of those who do share common characteristics. The perspectives, experiences, and meaning of subdominant cultures are always at risk. The challenge is to actively seek out alternative voices – those meanings, perspectives, experiences, and values different from our own – and to assure that they are heard and understood as part of our explanation of the world around us (Strange, 1997).

Rationale for the “project”

Our nation’s demographics are changing rapidly. It has long been argued that part of the reason students are required to learn other languages and about cultures is that it broadens the student’s understanding of society and how he or she is shaped by and in turn shapes the culture in which we live. The same reasoning applies to all aspects of diversity in an educational community (Bowser and Hunt, 1981; Katz and Ivey, 1977; Willie, 1981).

Once these students leave the educational environment, the vast majority of them become full-time organizational members in today’s society. “Successful people are going to be successful because of their ability to deal effectively with people who are different from them. An American’s way of communicating is radically different from that of someone from France or Japan, or almost anywhere else” (New York Time Magazine, 2002). This means **you** in the very near future. Are you prepared?

- While minorities make up one-third of the U.S. population, 40 percent of the children 18 and younger are minorities.
- In California today, 66 percent of those younger than 20 are minorities; in Texas, the figure is 60 %. That’s the future labor force.
- Minority youngsters being educated today will comprise 35% of the nation’s workforce by 2010.
- In November 2005, women represent 15.7% of the corporate officers in America’s 500 largest companies. These percentages are up from 12.5% in 2000 and 8.7% in 1995.
- In January 2010, women represent 51.4% of management, professional and related occupations.
- The largest companies in America (at least 20 billion in annual revenue), reported a larger concentration of women and minority directors on their boards. Seventy

- percent of these companies report having at least two women and 53% have two or more minority directors.
- A 2000 Newsweek poll shows that 83% of all Americans believe that gay and lesbian people should have access to equal rights in terms of employment and public accommodations. This is up from just 56% in 1977.
 - By the year 2043, whites will be the minority in the United States.

Project Outline

1. Select a “voice” other than your own, for which you will assume responsibility as an advocate in letting it be heard as part of our class discussions about leadership this semester. You will choose this voice from a list of options given to you in class. For example as a Caucasian male, you might consider the perspective of an African American non traditional student, or a student with a disability, or a Latino male.
2. Develop your expertise in that voice by examining literature and relevant reading materials (ex. Library research, articles, books, documentaries, movies, etc.); observing behavior and interacting in the context of individuals who are thought to live in that voice; (ex. Attend HALO meeting) and/or interviewing people presumed to speak in that voice (ex. FHSU faculty member, staff, or student; family member or friend).

Compile this information into a 3-4 page (12 point font, double spaced) research paper that is to be turned in during class. This paper should be divided into two sections.

Section One – Compile research and data about your chosen voice. Use the suggestions above to complete this part of the paper. You should cite a minimum of 4 sources (only two of these sources can be electronic). If you have not reached a level of discomfort with this project, you might not be digging deep enough in your research. Interviews and interaction with those of your chosen voice are strongly encouraged. Please include a works cited page with sources cited in APA format.

Section Two – This section should be written in **first person**, explaining how it feels to live in this voice. Some questions/thoughts you might think about are as follows:

- Provide evidence of you being discriminated against
- Are there other people of your voice at FHSU? in Hays? in Kansas?
- How do other people at FHSU? Or in Hays, KS view you?
- Do you consider yourself qualified to do leadership? Do others consider you qualified to do leadership?

We will spend class time discussing your voice, what you have learned, and how it pertains to leadership. This project/paper is worth 50 points.

Throughout the semester you will be asked to let your selected voice be heard in the context of our class discussions about leadership. We will incorporate your voice through various class assignments throughout the semester.

This project is designed to **challenge you** and give you the opportunity for a true learning experience. Rather than just “reading about” cultural differences on a particular day in class, this approach is process-oriented and assumes that we will all be better served by individuals who understand differences, not as a state of being, but as a process, and who furthermore have developed empathy for another. Being careful to listen and understand other voices will only enhance your learning and your preparation for doing leadership in communities and modern organizations as we move beyond the post-progressive era.

A Sampling of Possible “Voices”. There are many, many others. Be creative.

- African-American female
- African-American male
- Asian male
- Asian female
- Caucasian male
- Caucasian female
- Bi-racial
- Hispanic or Latino male
- Hispanic or Latina female
- Native American male
- Native American female
- Returning adult learner
- Visually impaired
- Paraplegic
- Deaf
- Gay male
- Lesbian female
- Muslim
- Islamic
- Jewish
- Christian
- Buddhism
- Hindu
- Atheist

This project is about challenging the status quo in your thought process as it relates to the varied aspects of diversity. Push yourself beyond where you already *are* in this area.

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The purpose of this assignment is to raise consciousness about the implications of *race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and religious belief* for how we construct concepts of leadership in modern organizations. Inclusion of some values and principles ultimately leads to the exclusion of others, values and artifacts that differ significantly from the “normative” experience. That’s reaffirming and supportive of those who do share common characteristics. The perspectives, experiences, and meaning of subdominant cultures are always at risk. The challenge is to actively seek out alternative voices – those meanings, perspectives, experiences, and values different from our own – and to assure that they are heard and understood as part of our explanation of the world around us (Strange, 1997).

Rationale for the project

Our nation’s demographics are changing rapidly. It has long been argued that part of the reason students are required to learn other languages and about cultures is that it broadens the student’s understanding of society and how he or she is shaped by and in turn shapes the culture in which we live. The same reasoning applies to all aspects of diversity in an educational community (Bowser and Hunt, 1981; Katz and Ivey, 1977; Willie, 1981).

Once these students leave the educational environment, the vast majority of them become full-time organizational members in today’s society. “Successful people are going to be successful because of their ability to deal effectively with people who are different from them. An American’s way of communicating is radically different from that of someone from France or Japan, or almost anywhere else” (New York Time Magazine, 2002). This means **you** in the very near future. Are you prepared?

- In 2012, it was reported that roughly 45% of all students in K-12 are of minority race and ethnicity
- After the 2012 presidential election, it was discovered that 42% of voters under the age of 30 were from minority groups.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2014 there were more than 20 million children under five years old living in the U.S., and 50.2% of them were minorities.
- By 2020, more than half of the nation’s children (those under 18 years of age) are expected to be part of a minority race or ethnic group.
- In 2014, California reported that 61% of residents belonged to a minority race or ethnicity.
- The U.S. Census bureau projects that minorities will make up almost 55% of the U.S. population by 2043; whites will be the minority.
- In 2014, women consisted of only 14.6% of executive officers, 8.1% of top earners, and 4.6% of Fortune 500 CEOs.
- Women held only 16.9% of Fortune 500 board seats in 2014.

- In 2013, women accounted for 51% of all workers employed in management, professional, and related occupations.
- According to a June 2015 survey by the Public Religion Research Institute, approximately 70% of Americans favored laws that would protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people against discrimination in jobs, public accommodations, and housing.
- In 2014, the U.S. poverty rate was 14.8% (46.7 million people)

This project is designed to **challenge you** and give you the opportunity for a true learning experience. Rather than solely reading about cultural differences on a particular day in class, this project is process-oriented. A guiding assumption is that we will all be better served by leaders who understand differences, not as a state of being, but as a process, and who furthermore have developed a habitual instinct toward empathy for another. Being careful to listen and understand other voices will only enhance your learning and your preparation for doing leadership in diverse communities and organizations, as we move beyond the post-progressive era. Moreover, this is an essential first step toward developing the competence necessary to critique and transform modern organizations.

Instructions

1. Select a “voice” other than your own, for which you will assume responsibility as an advocate in letting it be heard as part of our class discussions about leadership this semester. You will choose this voice from a list of options given to you in class, or you may come up with your own. If you choose to do the latter, your voice must be approved by your instructor. You are encouraged to challenge yourself by choosing a voice with which you have had little experience or exposure. For example, as a Caucasian male, you might consider the perspective of an African American non-traditional student, or a student with a disability, or a Latino male. The subject of your voice should engage at least one of the following issues: race, nationality, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and religious belief. For students who identify as members of marginalized social groups, it may be as beneficial to engage a voice that has been privileged as it may be to engage another voice that has been commonly marginalized or one which has been marginalized in a different way.
2. Develop your expertise in that voice by:
 - a. Examining literature and relevant reading materials (eg. library research, journal articles, books, documentaries, movies, etc.)
 - b. Observing behavior and interacting in the context of individuals who are thought to live in that voice (eg. attending BSU, HALO, or Gay-Straight Alliance meeting)
 - c. Interviewing people presumed to “speak” in that voice (eg. FHSU faculty member, staff, or student; family member or friend)

INTERVIEWS

Should you choose to interview someone, your interview questions should be approved by your instructor, or other approved university resource at least two business days BEFORE the interview.

BEFORE you begin the interview, inform the participant(s) of the following:

- Why you are interviewing them
- What you will do with the information they are telling you
- If you are recording the interview, that you will destroy the file once you are done with the assignment
- How you will protect their confidentiality
- That they can decline to answer any question they choose, and can end the interview at any point they wish
- That if they have any questions or concerns about the interview, they can contact your professor (give them your instructor's contact info).

3. Compile your collected information into a research paper, that will be discussed during class. This paper should be divided into two sections.

Section One – Compiled research about your chosen voice. Use the suggestions above to complete this part of the paper. **You should cite a minimum of four (4) sources** (only two of these sources can be electronic). If you have not reached a level of discomfort with this project, you might not be digging deep enough in your research. Interviews and interaction with those of your chosen voice are strongly encouraged.

Section Two – In this section, you are to reflect on what you learned. Examine stereotypes; examine your *privilege* in comparison to the privilege of your selected voice; discuss how what you learned is related to leadership. When formulating this section, consider the following:

- How do dimensions of identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, sexual orientation, social class) define your selected voice?
- Before this project, did you have any inherent assumptions, understandings, or impressions about your selected voice? How did you come to hold these?
- How does my inherent privilege affect my ability to do leadership, compared to my selected voice's inherent privilege?
- What implications does this information have on how you construct concepts of leadership in modern and diverse organizations?
- Consider how the characteristics of your selected voice might predispose a person to conditions that would enhance or inhibit leadership development.
- How may this project and experience influence or affect how you may lead in the future?

- Why is it important to understand this information?

This project is about challenging the status quo in your thought process as it relates to the varied aspects of diversity and privilege. **Push yourself beyond** where you already *are* in this area.

Formatting

Papers should be 4 – 6 pages double-spaced, and written in 12 pt. Times New Roman font. All citations should be done in APA Style.

Use the attached grading rubric as a guide to this project.

Possible Voices

A sampling of possible “voices” is listed below; there are many, many others. Be creative.

African-American female	Deaf
African-American male	Gay male
Asian male	Lesbian female
Asian female	Muslim (Islamic faith)
Caucasian male	Jewish
Caucasian female	Christian
Bi-racial or Multi-racial	Buddhist
Hispanic or Latino male	Hindu
Hispanic or Latina female	Atheist
Native American male	Pansexual
Native American female	Transgender
Returning adult learner	Low-income
Visually impaired	Veteran
Paraplegic	

The Voice Project was created by Dr. Carney Strange, with minor adaptations by Dr. Maureen Wilson, and further adaptations by Dr. Dafina Lazarus Stewart.

**LDRS 300 Introduction to Leadership Concepts
Voice Project Research Paper Grading Rubric**

	Criteria			
	Novice	Apprentice	Proficient	Distinguished
<i>Section One: Research</i>	Little to no research was conducted on the voice. The section is largely comprised of personal opinions.	Minimal research conducted on voice. Somewhat bias views are presented. The findings were mentioned with little comparison or connection to each other.	Research has been conducted on voice. Some objective and some bias views presented. The findings were compared, contrasted and/or connected to each other.	Exhaustive research conducted on voice. Objective, balanced view from various perspectives. The findings were thoughtfully compared, contrasted and/or connected to each other.
<i>Section Two: Reflection</i>	Little or no explanation or reflection on learning, no or few details to support reflection.	Does not go deeply into the reflection of learning, generalizations and limited insight.	Relates learning with research and project, personal and general reflections included.	Shows great depth of knowledge and learning, reveals feelings and thoughts.
<i>Section Two: Connection or Application to Leadership</i>	Little to no connection or logical application to the content of working in diverse, modern organizations.	Some connections or logical application to the content of working in diverse, modern organizations.	Adequate connections or logical application to the content of working in diverse, modern organizations.	Strong connections or logical application to the content of working in diverse, modern organizations.
<i>Empathy & Competency</i>	Demonstrates no ability to work with and/or understand people who are different from them.	Demonstrates little ability to work with and understand people who are different from them.	Demonstrates moderate ability to work with and understand people who are different from them.	Demonstrates ability to work with and understand people who are different from them.
<i>Formatting</i>	Major formatting errors and/or grammatical errors.	Some formatting errors and/or grammatical errors.	Few formatting errors and/or grammatical errors.	No formatting or grammatical errors.

LDRS 300: Introduction to Leadership Concepts
Voice Project Paper Assignment

This is the assignment sheet for the Voice Project Paper. It is worth 50 points.

This assignment will be turned in and presented in class following Chapter 11: Followership in the Understanding Leadership textbook. This paper will replace the “Activity” portion of the homework for that chapter. The discussion questions are still due, but you don’t need to complete or submit the activity.

To complete this assignment, please do the following steps in order:

1. Read chapter 11 of the book carefully.
2. Identify and build a profile of a group of followers that are significantly different from yourself in some meaningful way (not in every way). This could be a difference in race, gender, age, nationality, physical attributes or disabilities, or other forms of diversity. In the one-page profile, include the following information:
 - a. Name (give your person a representative name)
 - b. Age
 - c. Gender
 - d. Nationality
 - e. Race
 - f. A company, organization, or some kind of context for your work together (be short and general)
 - g. A bio of the person (a short history)
 - h. Whether this person is independent or dependent, and active or passive (see page 140 in the textbook)
3. Write an additional two page paper detailing the following information:
 - a. What special considerations or actions would you likely need to take as a leader working with this person to be successful?
 - b. Describe this person’s behavioral style according to Kelley.
 - c. What might this person’s view of the world or your organization look like? Try to authentically take on the perspective of this person.
4. Bring your one-page profile and two-page paper to class on **the day is it due according to your instructor**. Be prepared to share your work and what you learned with the rest of the class.