

Iowa State University ILL



ILLiad TN: 87768

Borrower: VYF

Lending String:

COO,AAU,*IWA,KKU,OHS,DKU,RRP,UWO

Patron: Poindexter, Cynthia

Journal Title: The Diversity factor.

Volume: 2 **Issue:** 2

Month/Year: Winter 1994 **Pages:** 12-18

Article Author:

Article Title: Chesler, Mark A. / Strategies for multicultural organizational development.

Imprint: Philadelphia, PA ; Elsie Y. Cross Associ

ILL Number: 111424073



Call #: HF5549.5 M5 D57x

Location: GEN

ODYSSEY ENABLED

Charge

Maxcost: 30.00IFM

Shipping Address:

WALSH LIBRARY
INTERLIBRARY LOAN
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY
441 EAST FORDHAM ROAD
BRONX, NY 10458-5151

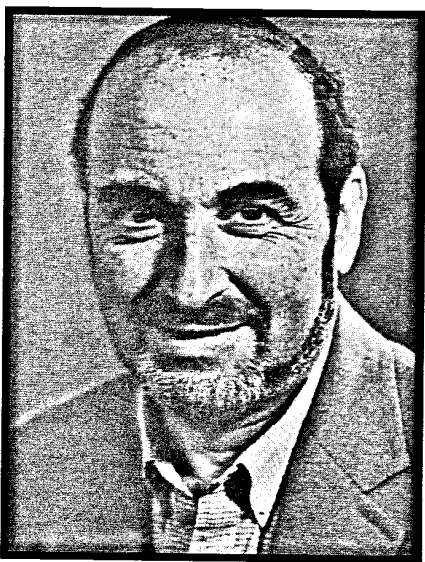
Fax:

Ariel:

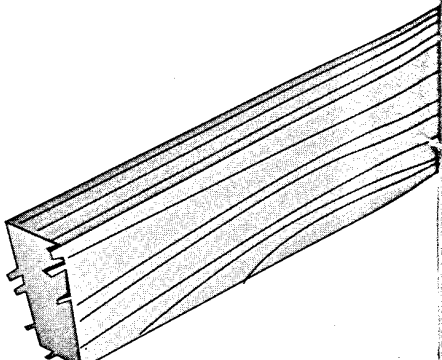
Email: illiad@fordham.edu

Strategies for MultiCultural Organizational Development

Mark A. Chesler



Mark A. Chesler, Ph.D., is professor of sociology and a faculty member in the Program on Conflict Management Alternatives at the University of Michigan. He is also executive director of Community Resources Ltd., an Ann Arbor-based social justice research and educational organization.

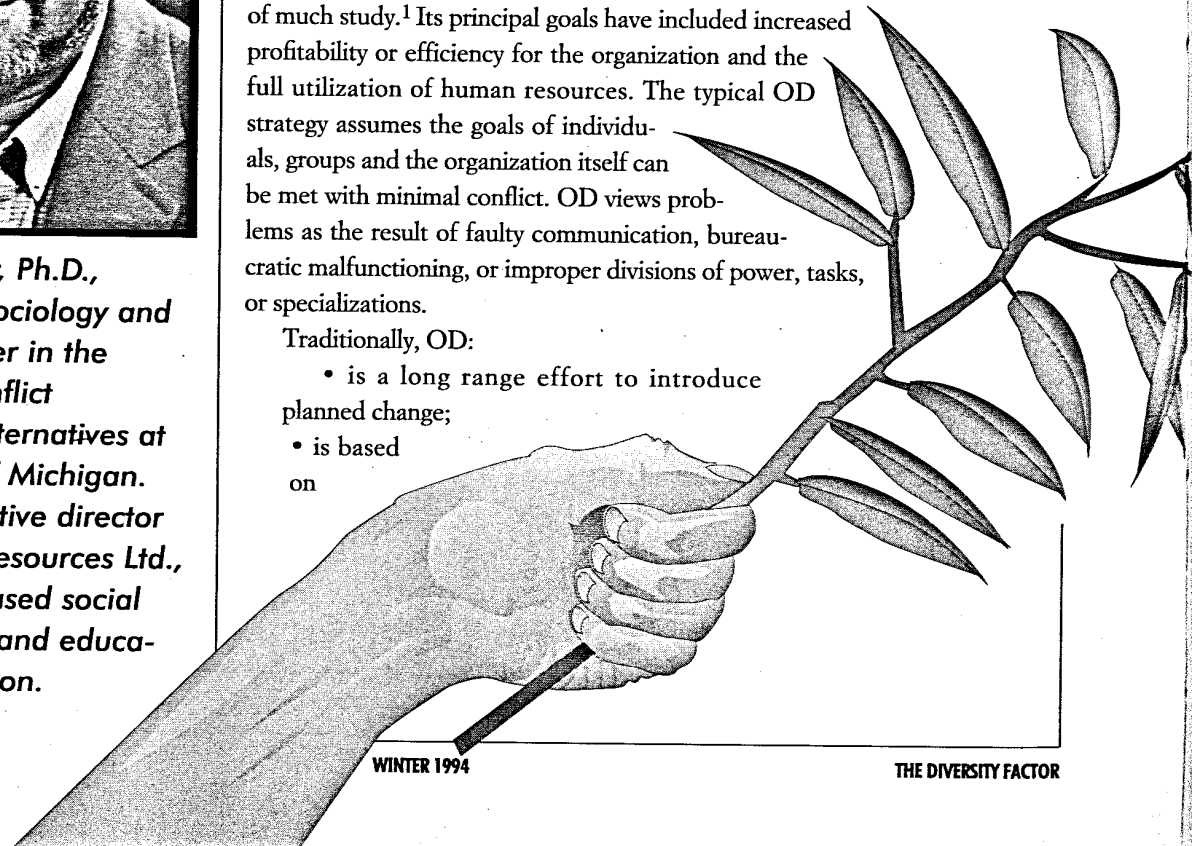


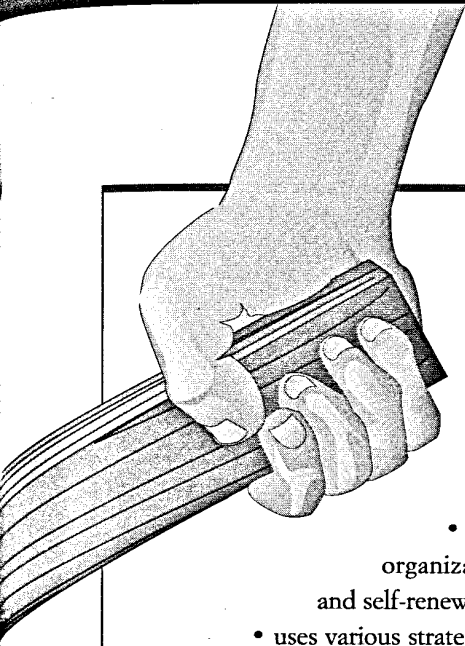
As the American workforce changes, organizations look to the field of Organizational Development (OD) for strategies to meet and manage these changes. In this article I contend that traditional forms of OD are not adequate to this task. A new approach to change, called Multi-Cultural Organizational Development (MCOB), is needed.

What is Organizational Development?

OD is a broad and diverse field, and has been the subject of much study.¹ Its principal goals have included increased profitability or efficiency for the organization and the full utilization of human resources. The typical OD strategy assumes the goals of individuals, groups and the organization itself can be met with minimal conflict. OD views problems as the result of faulty communication, bureaucratic malfunctioning, or improper divisions of power, tasks, or specializations.

Traditionally, OD:

- is a long range effort to introduce planned change;
 - is based on
- 



a diagnosis that is shared by the members of an organization;

- involves the entire organization, or a significant subsystem;
- aims for increased organizational effectiveness and self-renewal;
- uses various strategies to intervene into ongoing activities to facilitate learning and choose alternative ways to proceed.²

The major tactics for achieving these goals include:

- training and coaching
- goal setting and planning
- process consultation
- survey feedback (or other data)
- intergroup problem solving
- technostuctural intervention
- team building
- crisis intervention
- quality of worklife programs
- quality circles; and
- total quality management programs.

Within the broad field of OD there is a continuum of theory and practice that ranges from a consensus model to a conflict model. For the most part, the principles and tactics listed above are consistent with a consensus model.³

Those theorists and practitioners whose views tend to the conflict end of the continuum suggest, however, that understanding and managing organizations requires a political approach. They often see conflict as an inherent aspect of all organizations, starting with the difficulty of creating a harmonious fit between the needs of individuals and the priorities of the organization. A few people—mainly union activists and academics—focus on surfacing and using structural conflict among different organization units, or between individuals of different social, racial, or gender categories, or between workers and management, to clarify and negotiate differences.

In practice, most OD includes elements of both consensus and conflict models.

What is MultiCultural Organizational Development?

The new field, MultiCultural Organizational Development (MCOd), has been developed by theorists and practitioners who see limitations in traditional OD. Influenced by the civil rights and feminist movements, these scholars and practitioners charge that traditional OD has not paid close enough attention to issues of race, gender, class and other aspects of discrimination and oppression.⁴

According to Jackson and Holvino, "Traditional organizational development efforts have not made the kind of impact on social oppression in the workplace that its founders had hoped."⁵ Individual consciousness-raising about prejudice and discrimination has not been effective in creating lasting organizational change, nor have training interventions in general led to comprehensive efforts to alter organizational power and culture.⁶

Most innovations in organizations have involved the reduction of the most overt forms of prejudice and discrimination and the recruitment and hiring of people of color and white women. Relatively few research or practice efforts have gone beyond Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action programs. These were important gains, to be sure. But by and large, change efforts have been concentrated at the margins and lower levels of organizations; they have avoided challenges to established power relationships and dominant white and male cultures.

Like OD, MCOd theories occur on a continuum ranging from a consensus to a conflict orientation (see Figure One). Some writers and practitioners focus on diversity and the effort to understand and accommodate differences, while others focus on achieving equality and social justice.⁷

Those who advocate a consensus-oriented approach to MCOd stress the reform of organizational racism and sexism through "understanding differences" and "valuing diversity." While these programs may help organizations make important gains in educating white managers and in recruiting, supporting and advancing white women and people of color, they do not tackle issues of domination and oppression.

On the other hand, those proponents of MCOd who advocate a social justice agenda generally agree that:

- Racial, gender, class and other differences have a powerful impact on people and organiza-

Figure 1. Orientations and Assumptions of Different Approaches to Organizational Change

	Consensus	Conflict
Organizational Development	<p>Common values: Mutual organizational interests: Harmonious workplace: Person-organizational fit: Trustworthy authority: Coordination via collaboration:</p>	<p>Disparate values: Competing organizational interests: Contest and struggle in workplace: Exploitative authority: Coordination via control:</p>
MultiCultural Organizational Development	<p>Imminent racial harmony: Treatable gender bias: Problem=prejudice: Issue= appreciating diversity:</p>	<p>Racial hostility: Deep gender bias: Problem: organizational and societal oppression: Issue: reducing dominance/discrimination:</p>

racist and anti-sexist. This approach to multiculturalism does not simply accept or celebrate differences, but aims at a reduction in the patterns of racism and sexism that prevail in most U.S. institutions and organizations. One advocate of this approach is Elsie Cross who makes it clear that her approach to "managing diversity" includes the amelioration of oppression. This

tions. This social diversity embodies differences in attitudes, behavioral styles, ways of thinking, culture, and the like.

- In a society that constantly translates differences into ranking systems, some of the characteristic styles of diverse groups are seen as better than others. When diverse styles encounter one another, white and male styles dominate those of people of color and white women. People of color and white women (among others) have been systematically oppressed in the larger society, and thus in most organizations as well. In turn, white males are systematically privileged, empowered and preferenced.

- When the oppressed resist their oppression, overt interest-group conflict (racial, gender and class) naturally ensues. This conflict is NOT primarily the result of poor communication, inadequate managerial structures, poor coordination of task roles, or poor fit between person and organization. It is primarily the result of systems of oppression and monopolies of racial and gender power in society and the organization.

The social justice approach to MultiCultural Organizational Development is often frankly anti-

necessarily surfaces intergroup conflict.⁸

In my view, traditional organizational development, or OD that includes racism and sexism "awareness" programs, or even MCOD that proceeds on a consensus basis are not as effective as MultiCultural Organizational Development which takes seriously the challenges of systemic racism and sexism.

Effective MCOD

What tactics develop effective MCOD initiatives? While there are various approaches, they all recognize the necessity of challenging the culture and structure of white male oppression. These can involve:

- informing and enlightening white male managerial cadres through awareness or bias-reduction training;
- development and mobilization of leadership among employees/managers of color and white women, and the formation of interest groups, cadres and caucuses so members of oppressed groups can support one another in their efforts to change the organization;
- change in human resource and personnel policies and programs to meet diverse

Figure 2. Approaches to Organizational Change

	The "Olive Branch" approach:	The "Two-by-Four" approach:
Assumptions	<p>Trust and communication—consensus</p> <p>Everyone is in this together</p> <p>Decision-makers can and do want to improve the situation</p> <p>Lower-level members do not have a lot to say or do about it</p> <p>Not too much is wrong</p> <p>Conflict is unnecessary and can be overcome</p>	<p>Power and pressure—conflict</p> <p>Not everyone is in this in the same way or for the same things</p> <p>Power brokers will not improve the situation on their own</p> <p>Lower-level members can and do have a lot to say and do about it</p> <p>A lot is wrong</p> <p>Conflict is natural and can be a force for change</p>
General Approach	<p>Cooperative problem-solving</p> <p>Appeal to decision-makers with information with needs or concerns with grievances/requests with shared values</p> <p>Educate and persuade managers with reason with information with incentives with support with new options</p>	<p>Constituency organizing and surfacing conflict</p> <p>Persuade and pressure power brokers with information with pressure with incentives with demands</p> <p>Threaten managers with disclosure with embarrassment with disruption with lack of support with a "way out"</p>
Working "With"	<p>Decision makers and staffs</p> <p>Internal informal influentials</p> <p>Consensus</p>	<p>Others of the constituency or interest group</p> <p>Internal cadres</p> <p>External agents/agencies</p> <p>Coalition</p>

populations' needs;

- creation of new organizational mission statements, symbols, myths and norms—as well as changes in reward systems to punish or reward managers for behavior on issues of racism and sexism;
- creation of coalitions across race, gender and status;
- negotiated decision-making and interest-based bargaining as ways of using conflict productively;
- generation of power among people of color,

white women, and their allies to influence, threaten or coerce the change process; and the use of pressure and threat, including whistle-blowing, protests and external agents;

- multicultural forms of conflict resolution and dispute settlement that lead to more democratic management structures and procedures.⁹

Power is seldom "shared" or given away without challenge or pressure. When power changes hands, it is generally "taken"; therefore it is vital to develop new sources of power among formerly oppressed and disempowered organizational members.

Strategies for MultiCultural Organizational Development

While both traditional OD and MCOd use a variety of organizational change tactics, one of the key differences between conflict and consensus models of change involves the relative emphasis on communication and trust, or on power and pressure, as tactics.

Figure Two categorizes some common change tactics by their relative congruence with the consensus (olive branch, or trust and communication) model or the conflict (two-by-four, or power and pressure) model. Careful choices must be made among these various tactics and tactical approaches. Consensus tactics may work well in establishing a cooperative context for change, generating racial understanding and creating change in a relatively equal power situation. But in situations of great power difference they may lead to delay, co-optation, tokenism and agreements to make changes that are not implemented.

On the other hand, conflict—power or pressure—tactics can bring long-repressed issues to the forefront, especially when the divisions between groups are great or differences have become calcified. Conflict tactics can command attention, speed up action, and provide the framework for monitoring implementation efforts. Such tactics must, however, be backed by strong leadership and power; otherwise they may create heat and noise that drowns out dialog, and those elites who experience threat may counter-organize and overwhelm a change effort.

While it is possible to identify the distinctions between consensus and conflict strategies at the extremes of the continuum, in reality the situation is much more complicated; movement back and forth between the poles is common. There is a continuum within MCOd just as there is in OD.

OD does NOT equal MCOd!

There are both assumptive and analytic differences between MultiCultural Organizational Development and traditional OD. First, MCOd assumes that, on issues of race and gender, power is embedded in the white male

hierarchy and white males have a strong self-interest in maintaining that power and privilege. Serious change cannot occur around these issues without serious struggle and conflict. Those who hold the power and benefit from its privileges are not motivated to “share.” Typically, power sharing is quickly redefined by managers into “democratic” or “participatory management,” and then further redefined out of existence as “employee involvement.”

Second, issues of holding and maintaining power and privilege make the concept of working in the interest of the “entire organization” absurd. As a political system, the organization is constantly involved in negotiation among competing interest groups. When consensus-oriented ODers or MCOders say they are working for the good of the entire system, they are usually working for, and for the good of, the managerial cadre—disproportionately white and male—who hire and fire consultants as well as employees.¹⁰ From this position, it’s difficult to work for the interests of people of color and

white women (see Figure Three).

What happens, then, when traditional OD assumptions, analyses and tactics are employed in an MCOd effort? Can OD be effective in reducing institutional oppression? Can MCOd be done well without challenging the centers of monocultural power and norms?

When OD or a consensus form of MCOd is used in a MultiCultural Organization Change effort, the change tactics often seek consensus prematurely rather than surface and explore conflict. These tactics celebrate difference rather than challenge dominance or oppression. They help individuals adjust to monocultural norms and power systems, rather than alter the power systems and the culture. They create individual changes, while maintaining organizational structures and cultures of racial and gender power. And they mask real struggle with a patina of enlightened rhetoric and tokenism that maintains or solidifies organizational monoculturalism.

The current popularity of this approach has led some critics to label diversity programs and MultiCultural Organizational Development as the new “race industry”—an

**Individual
consciousness-raising
about prejudice and
discrimination has not
been effective in
creating lasting
organizational change.**

Figure 3. MCOD's Challenges to OD

- **White males are unlikely to change without significant appeal (including threat) to their self-interest**
- **Power must be taken to be shared**
- **Race and gender oppression is the rule; it is a fundamental element in U.S. organizations**
- **An organization is composed of units and people who differ from one another and are in (overt or covert) conflict with one another in important ways**
- **Organizational norms (and thus reward systems) reflect the dominance of the white male culture and its power**
- **People with power who are threatened by struggle will resist change and will counter-attack (overtly or covertly)**
- **The core power for change will come from people of color, women, and other oppressed groups**
- **On some occasions, some white males will vigorously support and join the MCOD effort**

industry more interested in its own maintenance and profit than in combatting oppression and attaining social justice.¹¹ The consensus approach may well merit such charges.

But is it feasible to adopt an approach that challenges white and male power structures and cultures—an approach that surfaces race and gender conflict and uses that conflict as the basis of the change effort? Can managers and consultants who take this route survive economically and politically?

The evidence is increasing that some leaders in major U. S. organizations are reading accurately the danger of current race and gender oppression. Whether prompted by the anticipated demographic changes in "Workforce 2000," by economic market necessities, by increasing racial and gender conflict in workplaces and living places, or by a

A revised version of this article will appear in *The Promise of Diversity*, forthcoming from Irwin Professional Publishing, a division of Richard D. Irwin, Inc.

commitment to "the right thing," some major players understand the assumptions underlying the MCOD approach. Books on valuing or managing diversity and a diverse workforce are selling like hot cakes, and some writers contend that many corporate managers "are already convinced that the multicultural model is the way of the future."¹² It remains to be seen whether these managers will act on that conviction, make long-term investments and take the risks necessary to turn the conviction into reality.

On the other hand, there is also substantial evidence that major stakeholders in many U.S. organizations resist this approach and seek to defend their own and others' racial and gender privileges. In these instances, managers, consultants and academicians who take a social justice-oriented MCOD approach must fight to survive.

Is it worth it? To protect our own self-interest, should we continue to adopt the more consensus-oriented approach and ignore the realities of the racist and sexist bases of systemic discrimination?

Whose survival is important to us? And survival at what level of economic or moral comfort or security? Oppressed groups in the U.S. are having an increasingly difficult time surviving—with or without MCOD. Eventually, none of us—or our society—will thrive unless we are able to respond proactively and progressively to continuing racial privilege and oppression.

Traditional Organizational Development theory and practice, and consensus-oriented MultiCultural Organizational Development, cannot lead our organizations to the kind of change that is required. We must face the challenges of the real world—which include power struggles, conflict and resistance—with courage and effective, appropriate strategies if we are to develop a socially just, economically viable, and truly multicultural future. ■

End Notes

1. See, for example, Burke and Goodstein, 1980; French, Bell and Zawicki, 1989; Friedlander and Brown, 1974; Sashkin and Burke, 1987; Sikes, Drexler and Gant, 1989.
2. Principles are based on the work of Goodstein and Cooke, 1984; Pfeiffer and Jones, 1978; Sherwood, 1983.
3. For discussion of the differences between a consensus model and a conflict model see Bolman and Deal, 1984; Bowen, 1977; Burke and Hornstein, 1972; Chin and Benne, 1969; Crowfoot and Chesler, 1974; Crowfoot and Chesler, 1982; Espinosa and Zimbalist, 1978; Friedlander

Strategies for MultiCultural Organizational Development

- and Brown, 1974; Holvino, 1993; Patten, 1991; Ross, 1971; Thomas, 1976; Walton, 1965.
4. Such critiques of traditional OD have been offered by Cox, 1990; Fine, Johnson and Ryan, 1990; Jennings and Wells, 1989. For pioneering studies of race and gender relations in organizations see Alderfer, et al., 1980; Alvarez and Lutterman, 1979; Fernandez, 1981; Kanter, 1977; Sargent, 1976.
 5. 1988, p. 1.
 6. Jackson and Holvino, 1988; Katz, 1988.
 7. See Cox, 1991; Jackson and Holvino, 1988; and Katz, 1988.
 8. Cross, 1991.
 9. Jackson and Holvino, 1988; Katz, 1988.
 10. Bowen, 1977; Ross, 1971.
 11. Mohanty, 1989-90.
 12. See, for example, Jamieson and O'Mara, 1991; Johnston and Packer, 1987; Loden and Rosener, 1991; Thomas, 1990; Cox, 1991, p. 40.

References

- Alderfer, C., A. Alderfer, D. Tucker, and L. Tucker. "Diagnosing race relations in management." *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1980), pp. 135-166.
- Alvarez, R. and K. Lutterman, eds. *Discrimination in Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979.
- Bolman, L. and T. Deal. *Modern Approaches to Understanding and Managing Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1984.
- Bowen, D. "Value dilemmas in organizational development." *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 13 (1977), pp. 543-556.
- Burke, W. and L. Goodstein, eds. *Trends and Issues in Organizational Development: Current Theory and Practice*. San Diego: University Associates, 1980.
- Burke, W. and H. Hornstein. *The Social Technology of Organizational Development*. La Jolla, CA: University Associates, 1972.
- Chin, R. and K. Benne. "General strategies for affecting change in human systems." In W. Bennis, K. Benne and R. Chin, eds., *The Planning of Change*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.
- Cox, T. "Problems with research by organizational scholars on issues of race and ethnicity." *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1990), pp. 5-24.
- Cox, T. "The multicultural organization." *Academy of Management Executive*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1991), pp. 34-47.
- Cross, E. "Issues of diversity." In D. Vails-Weber and J. Potts, eds. *Sunrise Seminars*. Washington, D.C.: National Training Laboratories, 1985. Revised, 1991.
- Crowfoot, J. and M. Chesler. "Conflict control and organizational reform: Three approaches." In G. Bomers and D. Peterson, eds. *Conflict Management and Industrial Relations*. The Hague, Netherlands: Nijhoff Pub., 1982.
- Crowfoot, J. and M. Chesler. "Contemporary perspectives on planned social change." *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 10 (1974), pp. 287-303.
- Espinosa, J. and A. Zimbalist. *Economic Democracy: Workers' Participation in Chilean Industry, 1970-1973*. New York: Academic Press, 1978.
- Fernandez, J. *Racism and Sexism in Corporate Life*. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1981.
- Fine, M., F. Johnson and M. Ryan. "Cultural diversity in the workplace." *Public Personnel Management*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1990), pp. 305-318.
- French, W., C. Bell and R. Zawicki, eds. *Organizational Development*. New York: Irwin, 1989.
- Friedlander, F. and D. Brown. "Organizational development." *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 25 (1974) pp. 313-341.
- Goodstein, L. and P. Cooke. "An organizational development (OD) primer." In J. Pfeiffer and J. Jones, eds. *The 1984 Annual: Developing Human Resources*. San Diego: University Associates, 1984.
- Holvino, E. "Organizational development from the margins: Reading class, race and gender in OD texts." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 1993.
- Jackson, B. and E. Holvino. "Multicultural organizational development." Ann Arbor: Program on Conflict Management Alternatives (Working Paper 11), 1988.
- Jamieson, D. and J. O'Mara. *Managing Workforce 2000: Gaining the Diversity Advantage*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.
- Jennings, C. and L. Wells. "The Wells-Jennings analysis: A new diagnostic window on race relations in American organizations." In W. Sikes, A. Drexler, and J. Gant, eds., *The Emerging Practice of Organizational Development*. Alexandria and San Diego: NTL-IABS and University Associates, 1989.
- Johnston, W. and A. Packer. *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century*. Indianapolis: The Hudson Institute, 1987.
- Kanter, R. *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books, 1977.
- Katz, J. "Facing the challenge of diversity and multiculturalism." Ann Arbor: Program on Conflict Management Alternatives (Working Paper 13), 1988.
- Mohanty, C. "On race and voice: Challenges for liberal education in the 1990s." *Cultural Critique*. Winter (1989-90), pp. 199-208.
- Loden, M. and J. Rosener. *Workforce America*. Homewood, CA: Business One Irwin, 1991.
- Patten, T. "The behavioral science roots of OD." In J. Pfeiffer and J. Jones, eds. *The 1978 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators*. San Diego: University Associates, 1979.
- Pfeiffer, J. and J. Jones. "OD readiness." In J. Pfeiffer and J. Jones, eds. *The 1978 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators*. San Diego: University Associates, 1978.
- Ross, R. "OD for whom?" *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (1971), pp. 580-585.
- Sargent, A., ed. *Beyond Sex Roles*. New York: West Publishing Co., 1976.
- Sashkin, M. and W. Burke. "Organizational development in the 1990s." *Journal of Management*, Vol. 13 (Summer), pp. 393-417.
- Sherwood, J. "An introduction to organizational development." In R. Ritvo and A. Sargent, eds. *The NTL Managers' Handbook*. Alexandria, VA: NTL Institute, 1983.
- Sikes, W., A. Drexler, and J. Gant, eds. *The Emerging Practice of Organizational Development*. Alexandria, VA and San Diego: NTL-IABS and University Associates, 1989.
- Thomas, K. "Working interests and managerial interests: The need for pluralism in organizational development." Los Angeles: UCLA Graduate School of Management (Working Paper 76-120), 1976.
- Thomas, R. "From affirmative action to affirming diversity." *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 2 (1990), pp. 107-117.
- Walton, R. "Two strategies of social change and their dilemmas." *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1965), pp. 167-179.