"DEALING WITH OVER 400 YEARS OF HURT": CREATING LINES OF FLIGHT
TO ADDRESS MORAL AGENCY

by

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A Thesis
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Destinee, for the love and light that you are. Keep shining bright from above, sweet cousin.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This thesis is about underrepresented employees speaking and being heard in a large bureaucratic organization. Constrictive master narratives on what it means to be an employee have challenged the ability for underrepresented employees to speak and be heard. The role and importance of narratives is explored through narrative theory. Organizational theory, power, and race are also explored to understand how these dynamics might impact narrative processes. Critical Narrative Theory (CNT) is used to understand how employees story their experiences of being underrepresented employees in the organization. Additionally, CNT is applied to the traditional conflict resolution practice of dialogue to intervene on the narratives being shared by the employees to support them in constructing stories that re-cast them as moral agents. Using John Winslade's "lines of flight" approach, the stories from the employees are analyzed to understand how they assign power and how they might break free of this positioning.

Lines of flight are identified in their narrative statements that allow openings for the employees to describe themselves in new ways as moral agents. By using aesthetic ethics, the researcher supported the employees in thickening their descriptions of themselves as having more possibilities to act within the organization. This thesis resulted in the employees taking the initial steps necessary to speak and be heard and institutionalized the process of speaking through a "diversity dictionary" project.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1930s, Franklin D. Roosevelt commissioned artists to create posters of

America's national parks through a New Deal program. The posters highlighted the giant

sequoias, geysers at Yellowstone, mountains at Grand Teton, and many other natural

wonders (Figure 1). With such awe-inspiring and unique images it is often hard to

reconcile the violence, oppression, and marginalization that occurred with the

establishment of many national parks. The conflicts that emerged between the agency and

marginalized groups continue to present day. Conflict is understood in a narrative lens,

which as discrepancies in how parties story the events, people, and plots. In conflicts, the

stories a party tells about the other are often "thin" in that they are polarizing and lacking

complexity. Central to understanding conflict is how the parties story themselves. It is a

process of uncovering who can speak and who has agency. This thesis will explore the

stories of a group of underrepresented employees from the National Park Service, and

asks how can these employees restore their moral agency in order to be heard in the

organization?

Background

This thesis begins with an exploration of the National Park Service's origin story

and provides additional historical information to problematize this origin story and create

a more complete rendition of the agency's beginnings. A more exhaustive account of the

history is critical for understanding the organizational conflicts and challenges this research attempts to address.
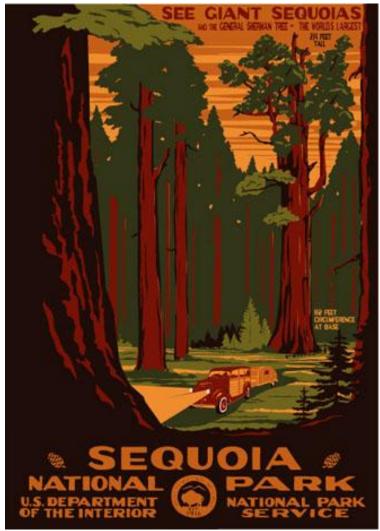

Figure 1 Sequoia

When the National Park Service was established in 1916 through the Organic Act, the agency charge was "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by

such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations" (NPS Organic Act). The passage of this act and the creation of the National Park System secured a preservation ethos in America. It declared that not only was there beauty and wonder in the United States, but that it is an American birthright to experience such ideals. Stephen Mather, the agency's first director, explained, "The parks do not belong to one state or to one section.... The Yosemite, the Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon are national properties in which every citizen has a vested interest; they belong as much to the man of Massachusetts, of Michigan, of Florida, as they do to the people of California, of Wyoming, and of Arizona" (Mather, n.d.). Taken even further, some have argued that national parks were America's best idea. Ken Burns popularized this notion with the creation the "America's Best Idea" 6-episode documentary series that celebrates the National Park Service centennial. The series shares a very familiar origin story of the National Park System, which begins with the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 through a congressional act. This event became a watershed moment for the creation of additional parks, as well as the emergence of a conservation movement. Much of this was driven by key figures such as John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt, who were well known for their passion for the natural world.

However, often missing from this story is a critical reflection of the historical context that framed the creation of the National Park Service. The establishment of Yellowstone National Park occurred during the period of Manifest Destiny and Indian wars. Yellowstone was home to various American Indian tribes including the Shoshone, Crow, Blackfeet, Flathead, Kootenai, Bannock, Nez Perce, and others (Nabokov 2004).

The establishment of the park led to the creation of new policies to restrict indigenous groups from utilizing the land for hunting, travel, or religious purposes (Nabokov 2002). The creation of other parks also resulted in further restrictions of American Indian use. In other cases, indigenous peoples had long been removed from the lands and more recent inhabitants, who were often lower income, were displaced (e.g. Shenandoah National Park and Great Smokey Mountains National Park). While some conservationists expressed concern over the plight of American Indians, the movement was ambivalent at best and did not examine how the conservation movement impacted minority and poor communities (Taylor 2016). While Mather stated that national parks were for "every citizen" the removal and poor treatment of minority and low-income communities implied that "citizen" only included certain Americans.

The limited inclusion of who might be considered a citizen is not a surprise given that the conservation movement was dominated by white, male, wealthy elites that largely came from urban areas. A number of narratives emerged that aligned parks with masculinity, virtue, nation building, and spirituality (Taylor 2016). Nation building was a key theme that rallied elites to support the creation of a National Park System. Mather used his wealth and political connections to generate enthusiasm for a system of sites that sparked a sense of national identity and pride (Dilsalver 1994). He also stated, "Who will gainsay that the parks contain the highest potentialities of national pride, national contentment, and national health? A visit inspires love of country; begets contentment; engenders pride of possession; contains the antidote for national restlessness.... He is a better citizen with a keener appreciation of the privilege of living here who has toured the

national parks" (Mather, n.d.). Again, national parks are storied as places of national

pride for citizens without acknowledgement of the history of imperialism or prior

indigenous relationship with these places.

The absence of the indigenous history in the origin story can be linked to the

eugenics movement that was also developing alongside the conservation movement. Both

movements shared similar concerns that the country required urgent attention to address

pressing problems. For conservationists, it was the threat of industrialization and human

development on the natural landscape. Eugenicists were concerned that human problems

were developed due to the over population of undesired groups (Allen 2013). To solve

these pressing problems, it would be necessary to conserve the best natural resources, and

people. While not all eugenicists were conservationists or vice-versa, some shared these

two beliefs, including well-known conservationists such as Theodore Roosevelt, Grant

Madison, and Charles Goethe. These men played significant roles in the establishment of

national park sites, including Denali, Glacier, Mesa Verde, and Crater Lake. The National

Park Service also owes the establishment of the field of interpretation to Goethe.

Interpretation is the field that focuses on visitor information, orientation, and awareness

of park resources. Goethe believed that by teaching others about natural selection, they

would also grow to see the importance of selective breeding or restrictive immigration

laws. This belief gets to the core linkage of eugenicists-conservationists (Allen 2013). A

common example is seen with the Save the Redwoods League. Many of the leaders

involved were also leading proponents of restrictive immigration laws that would inhibit

all but northern Europeans from coming to the United States. Goethe, one of the leaders, likened saving the redwood trees to saving the Nordic race (Taylor 2016).

Figure 2 NPS Ranger

The convergence of these ideologies also brought the myth of natural areas being free from human activity. The complete erasure of the indigenous history and impact on the landscape played into this myth of a wilderness escape. Muir has been criticized for his misanthropic views and assertion that "nothing truly wild is unclean" (James 2014).

Muir regarded dirtiness as a result of human influence. In addition, he often spoke highly of animal life and expressed concern over the protection of animals, while simultaneously disparaging American Indians (James 2014). The story of national parks being natural places, devoid of human history, and for white elites to build national pride is in direct conflict with indigenous and other marginalized groups who have alternate experiences with how the National Park Service came to be and who it is for. In the present day, a predominantly white visitor base and tumultuous relationships with underrepresented communities make it clear that the conflict over who belongs in parks continues.

Just as there has been a story about who can visit national parks, there has also been a story about who can work for national parks. The image below is another New Deal era work that showcases a national park ranger. Harry Yount, also known as Rocky Mountain Harry, was the first park ranger and set the archetype of the ideal ranger. Yount, who served in Yellowstone in 1880, is remembered as a rugged outdoorsman who spent long periods in the wilderness collecting animal specimens for the Smithsonian. At Yellowstone, he was hired to protect the wildlife and enforce park rules. Yount is also credited as one of first white men to spend significant time in Yellowstone (Supernaugh 1998). In 1994, A Harry Yount award was established by the agency to award rangers who excelled in their ranger duties (Murray 2016). On the ideal ranger, Mather stated, "They are a fine, earnest, intelligent, and public spirited body of men, these rangers. Though small in number, their influence is large. Many and long are the duties heaped upon their shoulders. If a trail is to be blazed, it is 'send a ranger.' If an animal is floundering in the snow, a ranger is sent to pull him out; if a bear is in the hotel, if a fire

threatens a forest, if someone is to be saved, it is 'send a ranger.' If a Dude wants to know the why, if a Sagebrusher is puzzled about a road, it is 'ask the ranger.' Everything the ranger knows, he will tell you, except about himself" (Albright and Taylor: 1929). While there is now more acceptance of rangers who are neither white nor male, the archetypal ranger of Harry Yount still remains in the present NPS culture. Through Yount's experience, it became a National Park Service preference to rely on the knowledge of white explorers rather than the indigenous groups who had inhabited the same landscapes for thousands of years. It also began the practice of using a police style force to protect the wildlife from people, which embedded the misanthropic preference for the natural environment over people.

The organizational challenges of today

How have these origin stories of the beginnings of the National Park Service and ideal employee impacted the organization? Today, the National Park System is a collection of over 400 sites that showcase many of America's natural sites, and significant cultural stories. The system now includes locations that tell the stories of underrepresented groups such as Harriet Tubman, Cesar Chavez, and the Stonewall Inn. Many sites have also begun to tell the difficult stories of the NPS role in disenfranchisement of native groups. While these gains are significant and meaningful, the National Park Service is also rife with organizational conflicts.

Many of these conflicts can be traced back to the story of the ideal ranger who is rugged, independent, and holds the protection of the environment above all else. Today, the NPS is a workplace for over 22,000 employees who are dedicated to carrying out the

mission of preserving and protecting the resources with much of the same fierceness as Yount. While celebrating 100 years and reflecting upon the second century of service, a sexual harassment scandal also became very public after the filing of a class action lawsuit from victims of sexual harassment at the Grand Canyon. This case led to others coming forward, and soon the DOI Inspector General began investigating allegations of sexual harassment and hostile work environment at Yosemite and Yellowstone National parks. These are two of the earliest parks and considered to be two jewels of the system. Whistleblowers have spoken out at congressional hearings and dozens of current and former employees have shared their stories with the media. *High Country News* explored cases that emerged over the past year in Canaveral National Seashore, Yosemite, Yellowstone, Chattahoochee River National Recreational Area, and uncovered old cases from 2000 with female U.S. Park Police officers (Gilpin 2016). The news outlet began to receive tips from dozens of current and former employees on allegations of harassment and hostile work environment. A survey is currently underway to determine how pervasive experiences of harassment and hostile work environment may be.

Other organizational challenges beyond harassment are also apparent. The racial makeup of employees in the organization has remained stagnant for decades with only 17% of racial minorities. These statistics persist during a time when the United States population has shifted to 65% white and 35% minority groups. It is also concerning that indigenous people only make up 1% of the workforce for an organization that stewards lands that once belonged to native people. While the organization has made some strides in achieving gender parity over the years, the number of minority employees has not

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increased since the 1970s. Recently, it was discovered that African American male employees are leaving at a higher rate than they are entering the organization (K.Williams, personal communication, June 2016). Trends like this point to the underlying cultural and systemic issues that make retention of minority employees difficult. There are also pervasive attitudes held throughout the organization that position racial minorities as the Other.

In preparation for turning 100 years old and entering a second century of service, "A Call to Action" plan was created to describe the vision and goals for "connecting and creating the next generation of park visitors, supporters, and advocates" (Call to Action 2012). The Call to Action included the recommendation to survey the NPS workforce on diversity readiness as a first step in developing a diverse and inclusive organization that reflects the changing demographics and remains relevant to Americans of all backgrounds. This study included an agency-wide survey, interviews, and focus groups with employees at various levels. This study aimed to gauge the "climate" of diversity readiness of the organization and employee perceptions of the current climate. There was a 20% response rate to the survey that was disseminated to over 18,000 employees (NPS I&D Cultural Assessment Report 2012). The assessment produced 7 overarching findings on the employee perceptions about diversity and inclusion, the organization, and implementing change.

One of these findings indicated that employees believe that the NPS does not see diversity and inclusion as important based on the actions taken on recruitment, hiring, retention, promotions, awards, and other experiences. Diversity and Inclusion efforts

were described as token efforts that never lead to change. They also found that NPS executives often viewed the terms diversity and qualified as mutually exclusive. From their perspective, too much effort was spent on increasing numbers rather than finding qualified applicants.

The results also revealed perceptions of what is required to advance in the organizations. Participants shared that the NPS has an insular culture that prefers people who begin their careers with the NPS or have significant NPS experience rather than looking outside for candidates. Others described a "good ole boy" culture that preferences the rugged ranger stereotype. The assessment, interviews, and focus group responses indicated that many viewed the NPS as a highly bureaucratic, hierarchical, and risk-averse culture that does not value difference or new ideas.

Another finding examined the relationship between diversity of staff and remaining relevant to changing demographics in the nation. Staff shared that many visitors did not see themselves reflected in the NPS workforce or in the stories told at NPS sites. Participants commented on the role policy can play in restricting diversity recruitment or how visitors can engage with parks.

Finally, participants underscored the role of the park superintendent as a significant barrier in having a consistent employee experience across over 400 park units. Employees shared that this could make a big difference in whether or not diversity and inclusion efforts were taken seriously from park to park. As a result of these findings, the NPS was rated at the level of "awareness" in the diversity and inclusion continuum. The

awareness level indicates that the organization is in a place where it recognizes difference and is beyond a uni-centered view, but may be uncomfortable with this difference.

The NPS Inclusion and Diversity Cultural Assessment provided a sense of the organizational climate as it relates to diversity and inclusion. The results revealed the disparate views of employees who believe diversity is synonymous with unqualified to the employees who believe diversity to be essential in telling more complete stories at NPS sites.

Additionally, the Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS), a yearly federal government-wide survey that ranks agencies on the best places to work in the federal government, ranked the NPS 262 out of 305 in 2016. The survey focuses on effective leadership, work-life balance, support for diversity, development, pay, and other categories. Strikingly, the EVS also indicates that employees consistently rate the NPS high in the importance of the mission of the agency. Despite the challenges within the NPS culture, the commitment employees have to the mission remains steadfast.

Employee Resource Groups

Improving the workplace culture, attracting and retaining diversity, and increasing relevance to the public are difficult organizational conflicts that would be better solved by adding new voices into the conversation and adding complexity to some of the existing origin stories that exist. The increase of racial minorities and others with diverse perspectives has been attributed to the increase in innovation and problem solving in organizational settings (Page 2008). The NPS recognizes the role that employees can play in creating change and have adopted Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) as an

organizational strategy to improve the recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups. ERGs have existed in the private sector since the 1970s and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has recognized them as a diversity and inclusion best practice for government agencies. The NPS, which is a sub-bureau of the Department of the Interior (DOI), has allowed employees to participate in DOI ERGs since they have existed. However, the NPS began forming its own ERGs with the emergence of a diversity and inclusion office in 2013.

The creation of these groups seeks to draw together employees with common identities or interests to connect employees who may be otherwise isolated, raise concerns on organizational policies that may impact groups, and empower employees to collaborate with management in creating changes that would lead to a more inclusive work environment. Currently, there are six ERGs within the NPS, including African American, Hispanic/Latino, LGBTQ, American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian, Women, and a group focusing on innovation and empowerment.

The ERG strategy is also aligned with the Call to Action to create a more relevant, diverse, and inclusive NPS in the second century of service. The Call to Action is an effort to rally staff around a future vision of the National Park Service and empowerment of staff is a dominant theme. The action plan also recognizes that the NPS faces unique challenges that were not present when the organization began. Some of these challenges include the difficulty of caring for employees and tackling difficult stories. For instance, after 9 bible study participants were murdered in Charleston, South Carolina the city was left on edge before Dylann Roof was captured. Black park rangers who worked at local

civil war sites worried their visibility might inspire other racially motivated attacks. After Roof was taken into custody, investigators discovered that he had visited a number of civil war sites, including several NPS locations before ultimately deciding to carry out his attack on Emanuel AME Church. The African-American ERG was able to communicate with NPS leadership about the fears staff were experiencing and led the agency in developing a facilitated dialogue workshop in Charleston to unpack what it means to interpret the history of racial subjugation at historic sites. The shooting also re-opened the debate over the display of the Confederate battle flag. The NPS responded by removing Confederate battle flag merchandise from park gift shops. The agency has committed to telling a more complete story about American history and these moments underscore the importance of having racially diverse employees to collaborate with on unprecedented challenges. Through these tumultuous events, both leaders and employees felt the value of having a robust employee resource group program.

Another unstated outcome of these groups is that they can potentially elevate the voices of underrepresented or marginalized groups in the organization and provide a platform for "speaking and being heard" (Cobb 2013). In this sense, employees would be able to state their concerns and in turn, managers would acknowledge these concerns in speaking, formal statements, or in other ways.

The potential to provide opportunities for employees to speak and be heard could lay the foundation for addressing organizational conflicts and challenges. However, how might this be done in a federal agency where bureaucracy restricts those who are able to speak and be heard by positional authority? In the examples found across agencies,

Employee Resource Groups or affinity groups are often synonymous with hosting special emphasis month events or other activities that raise awareness, but do little to challenge organizational policies or problems. How can these groups be utilized to express their voices in a way that leads to a meaningful contribution? The agency cannot simply mandate that marginalized voices be witnessed as the new way of operating. The formation of Employee Resource Groups does not inherently lead to the recognition of the marginalized or allow one's voice to be heard. The existence of these groups have brought improvements in the recruitment and retention of minority employees at organizations, yet the question of how to allow space for these voices to emerge has not been explored. Instead, when marginalized voices have been offered authorization by the organization it has only been through accident, instead of intentional action.

Narrative practices or interventions provide a framework to create the first shift needed for these underrepresented groups to express their voices. Expressing one's voice and elaborating stories that have been previously silenced, is a pre-condition for the formation of legitimacy and the construction of a better-formed story. My research will focus on this specific step in the process and will ask, how can Employee Resource Group leaders restore their legitimacy and moral agency? How can this be institutionalized? These questions aim to generate new knowledge about how these leaders make sense of their own experiences, and support them in sharing their voices more widely. Exploring these questions will allow for emerging methods to be applied to persistent challenges that impact the ability of marginalized groups to be heard and contribute to making an impact in the organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As we've seen, our beloved national parks are also contested spaces with even longer histories of betrayal and oppression. The National Park Service, "America's best idea," also struggles with internal challenges related to its organizational culture. How can we understand these paradoxes? A critical examination of the intersection of narrative, organizational theory, power and race will be used as points of exploration to add specificity to the problems occurring within the National Park Service.

As noted in the introduction, the stories we tell provide meaning and leave lasting impacts. While the story of Harry Yount is not regularly recited within the National Park Service, his story is institutionalized in the organization from the yearly Harry Yount ranger award, to the artwork and quotations inscribed in the built environment. There are certainly other factors that have also contributed to the current NPS culture, however the story of Yount and more importantly the story of who a ranger is, still impacts the organization today.

While one story may seem inconsequential, the power of stories cannot be overlooked. Narrative theorists argue that stories do moral work. Through our speech acts, we position others and ourselves in particular ways that assign moral agency (Harré and Van Langenhove 1991). Rom Harré developed positioning theory, which reveals how people implicitly and explicitly situate themselves and others in respect to action,

rights, duties, and morals. Positioning theory draws from the field of psychology and has been extended across multiple disciplines including conflict resolution. Positioning theory focuses on three components: the story line, positions, and speech acts. When applied to conflict stories, this type of analysis provides a lens for understanding how parties make sense of the conflict and make moral judgments. In short, we position one another morally through our speech acts. For example, the quotes from Stephen Mather reveal how he positioned national parks as egalitarian and sites of national pride. This type of positioning was reinforced in the artwork and in other statements made about the parks. Further, he elevated the role of rangers in stewarding these places. Alternatively, American Indian tribes have positioned some national park sites as sacred places to worship and practice religion. The Hopi have described the Grand Canyon as the earth navel, or beginning of civilization. Distinguishing how parties position themselves and others allows a framework for understanding how parties make sense of conflicts and are assigning moral agency.

Hilde Nelson (2001) expounds upon the notion that the stories we tell do moral work. She describes how narrative can be used to assign dominance and marginalization. Nelson argues that our stock stories in society work to create the master narrative. These are the stories that have been around our culture for a very long time. For instance, the inferiority of African-Americans is an old narrative that has been around since the founding of the United States. This master narrative has been resisted since its creation, however it was not until the Civil Rights movement when African-Americans gained a powerful voice in American society. In the master narrative of African-American

inferiority, African Americans were positioned as mentally, socially, and morally incapable, as compared to whites. The movement produced counter stories that began to dislodge the master narrative of inferiority through effective counter stories that restored moral agency. For example, once the counter-story focused on equality for all people gained momentum, political and legal changes were made.

In addition to identifying how stories position others morally, narrative theory can be used to understand and analyze stories, and create interventions. Narrative practice has largely developed in the field of therapy and counseling to intervene on problematic narratives. Michael White (1990, 2007) introduced narrative into the field of family therapy in the 1980s. White utilized practices that interrupted totalizing statements patients made about themselves and generated access to an enlarged sense of what was happening. One of these practices is externalization, which supports the client in understanding the "problem" as something that is separate from themselves rather than the individual being the problem (White 2007). John Winslade, Gerald Monk, and Alison Cotter (1998) have also carried this work into the conflict resolution field by introducing narrative mediation. Narrative mediation critiques the problem-solving approach and suggests a narrative framework that focuses on the story presented by parties. With this approach, the mediator engages in deconstructive inquiry to move towards a discussion of the conflict that does not blame either party (Winslade, Monk, and Cotter 1998). Samantha Hardy (2008) offers an alternative approach to narrative mediation where mediators can assist parties in telling a more ironic story by using an alternative genre. Hardy argues that in conflicts parties often tell a melodramatic story in the classical

literary sense where there is a protagonist who is searching for justice against an antagonist. Instead, assisting parties in creating a tragic story would allow them to see the characters as more nuanced with both positive and negative traits. When this type of reflection occurs and the conflict party is no longer searching for things to turn out perfectly, more alternatives can open up.

These efforts to integrate narrative in conflict resolution were taken a step further with Sara Cobb's (2013) introduction to critical narrative theory, which provides an alternative lens for understanding and assessing conflicts. Cobb argues that our current conflict resolution practices, while varied and often effective, are limited in the ability to disrupt the nature of conflicts, or create lasting peace. Instead, narrative can be used as a lens for understanding the meaning systems underneath conflicts and provide a framework for transforming conflicts to reduce marginalization and violence (Cobb 2013). Cobb argues that while conflict resolution work aims to address marginalization through engagement and participation with conflict parties, there is little theorizing on how to engender participation. "Speaking and being heard" is a core component of critical narrative theory and distinguishes what it means for marginalized parties to speak and be heard. Drawing from Rancière, Cobb notes that it is not just any kind of speaking that will allow one to be heard. Instead, it is essential that the speaker express their moral agency in order for the listener to elaborate this story.

Critical Narrative Theory offers new insights into how conflict resolution practices could be implemented through a narrative lens. An underlying framework for utilizing a narrative approach is supporting parties in creating more complicated stories,

which Cobb calls "better-formed stories." This is a multi-step process in which the practitioner guides the parties to reflect upon what aspects make them morally good or legitimate, and notice when this is not the case. Through examining oneself and the other party in this critical way, space is opened up to explore potential solutions for moving forward. A similar process is suggested to create a narrative braid. Cobb (2013) designed the narrative braid as a process for elected officials to convene parties in conflict and re-tell the conflict story in a way that weaves together the positive attributes and needs of each party. This results in a metaphorical braid where the negative and positive traits of each party are embedded together. In this bridging of perspectives, the elected official can affirm each party.

These are some examples of the way that narrative practice can disrupt dysfunctional dynamics in conflicts. Each practice mentioned works to generate new possibilities where there is currently limited or no direction. These practices allow conflict parties and others to enlarge their sense of the conflict, as well as themselves and the other parties. Narrative work attempts to create interventions in how conflict parties are creating meaning in the conflict. This approach works with parties to create ontological shifts in how they understand the conflict and choose to act. Narrative intervention pushes parties to engage in double-loop learning (Argryis 1978) to challenge their underlying assumptions and beliefs that may not be readily apparent to them.

Organizations, Power, and Race

Narrative theory provides a case for the importance of stories and the need to create interventions to break up problematic conflict narratives. It is important to

understand organizations, and how power and race play out within them in order to make sense of the narratives and plan interventions that sufficiently address these dynamics. Organizational theory and the intersection of race and power will contextualize the current challenges this thesis attempts to address.

Organizational theory provides insights into how organizations are structured and function in the "classical" sense. The classical understanding of organizations can be traced back to German sociologist, Max Weber. Weber argued that society functions by the assertion of authority or will over others. He distinguished a new type of authority, which is called rationale-legal. With rationale-legal authority, people submit to the authority of laws and processes rather than particular people or leaders. When applying this type of authority to an organization, it results in the creation of a bureaucracy, which focuses on rules, procedures, and job roles. Weber believed that bureaucracies were the most efficient types of organizations as they resulted in more uniformity in carrying out actions rather than relying on individual discretion (Grey 2009).

Another classical teaching in organizational theory is scientific management. During the time period of rapid industrialization in the United States, Fredrick Winslow Taylor introduced scientific management, which measured the length of time it took to complete work tasks in order to set benchmarks (Grey 2009). The human dimensions of workers were largely ignored with scientific management, and it was not until later that new consideration was given to the establishment of management positions to ensure control, efficiency and decency towards workers. This is also known as the human relations approach and has been critiqued as strategies that ensure the worker is more

productive, rather than being truly concerned with the individual. These classical understandings of organizational theory continue to heavily influence current functions of organizations and shape the overarching paradigm through which we understand the purpose and function of organizations. Karen Lee Ashcraft summarizes the concern in this way, "Still the most influential organizational form, bureaucracy aims to depersonalize power through legal-rational authority, which shuns emotional, personal considerations in the application of rules. In this way, bureaucracy excludes capricious influences on management. This "objective" model of rationality is predicated on the repression of feeling, casting emotions as fearsome, chaotic forces that compromise public justice" (Ashcraft 2009: 309).

While new theories and strategies continue to emerge, there are no new organizational forms that have replaced bureaucracies in a widespread way (Grey 2009). The protest movements in the 1960s and 1970s influenced the field of organizational studies and new types of organizations began to be imagined that broke from bureaucratic forms. Post-bureaucratic or postmodern organizations were described as more fluid organizations where people were treated as individuals and assignments were based on competence rather than hierarchy (Grey 2009). Post-bureaucratic organizations have been characterized as relying on consensus based decision making and assigning tasks based on competency in lieu of hierarchal status (Grey 2009). While these are promising alternatives to the classical functions or organizations, these models have yet to take hold. The rationale-legal framework has proven to be deeply engrained in organizational cultures and makes efforts for change seem intractable.

The current organizational paradigm supports and reproduces bureaucratic organizations and processes. Even the organizational change theories often fall within this paradigm and theories of change are presented that aim to explain, predict, and control change processes and outcomes (Morgan and Spicer 2009). Without questioning our underlying assumptions about organizations, we can never point to what works and what does not. We have to challenge the mainstream notions of organizations because otherwise we overlook important distinctions, such as power. For example, diversity management strategies have argued for recognizing that we all have unique perspectives to bring, without examining who holds power in the organization (Macalpine and Marsh 2005). Critical Management Studies (CMS) has emerged as a school of thought to critique the classical understandings of organizations and management that continue to drive thought on how organizations should function. CMS draws from the Frankfurt school theorists such as Jürgen Habermas to critique the positivist methods that have been used to understand organizations and name the ways in which power and control become naturalized (Scherer 2009).

The work of Michel Foucault and feminist scholars provide additional insights on the ways in which power is constructed in organizations. In *Discipline and Punish* (1979) Foucault argues that knowledge is subjective and informed by our experiences in life. At the time, this was a notable departure from previous understandings of power, which situated the concept as suppressive. Instead, Foucault argued that power could serve multiple purposes in being both suppressive and generative. He also intertwined power and knowledge by arguing that you cannot have one without the other. He writes, "We

should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault 1979: 27). Organizational theorists have applied Foucault's conception of power/knowledge to investigate the ways in which organizations assert control over individuals, as well as the ways in which individuals might refuse this subjugation (Knights 2009).

Feminist scholars have built upon Foucault's notions of power/knowledge, and one contribution is standpoint theory. Standpoint theory asserts that all knowledge is partial and will be different based upon our experiences in life (Allen 1996). When applying standpoint theory to organizations, it directs one to examine how organizational knowledge is being generated. When there is not an examination of how organizational knowledge is formed, organizational practices, decisions, and policies can be portrayed as neutral, when in fact they are laden with the preferences of the dominant group. Further, Allen argued that when race and gender go unnamed, the dominant white male perspective becomes the default (Allen 1996, 1998). Diane Grimes argues that this can show up in the form of "re-centering" and "masking" whiteness (Grimes 2002). Re-centering whiteness acknowledges differences, but does not attempt to re-structure power or go beyond a surface level understanding of difference. Avoiding discussions of whiteness or white privilege, denying differences, assuming minorities are inferior, or attacking others for negative traits are indicators of masking whiteness. Thus, race, class,

gender, sexual orientation, as well as other lines of difference impact the production of organizational knowledge. It is necessary to interrogate and examine this organizational knowledge so that the power is not re-centered on whiteness.

In addition, critical race theorists have argued that we must intentionally and actively elevate the voices of marginalized people in order to resist re-centering whiteness. Critical race theorists have led the charge in awakening others to the pervasiveness of racialized power dynamics and the necessity of people of color sharing their experiences of racism. Critical race theory (CRT), led by Derrick Bell, Kimberly Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, and other legal scholars, emphasizes the existence of racism and explores how it operates (Crenshaw 2011). CRT charges that racism maintains its power due to its ability to adapt and take new forms even after discriminatory practices are outlawed. As such, we must examine our systems, institutions, and history to look for how racism has been or may be operating.

CRT also points to other common practices of viewing racist acts as individualized occurrences or as disconnected from the historical context. These practices can be further understood by examining color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2006) and microaggressions. Bonilla-Silva argues that color-blind racism is a new version of racism that is more covert and institutionalized. This type of racism emerged after the Civil Rights movement and is marked by non-racialized and coded language that obscures the existence of racial inequities. Instead of explicit racism that is evidenced in hate crimes, color-blind racism causes people to espouse the values of equality without recognizing the systemic nature of racism. Microaggressions, the unintentional, yet minimizing verbal

slights towards underrepresented groups, are another expression of color-blind racism (Sue 2010). Both colorblind rhetoric and microaggressions can undermine the ability for underrepresented voices to emerge. It is critical to examine the experiences of people of color to gain a more nuanced understanding of how racism currently impacts one's ability to be speak and be heard.

I've argued that narrative theory reminds us that stories do moral work and it is essential to find ways to interrupt these narratives in ways that address marginalization. In order to analyze and intervene on narratives occurring in an organization, it was necessary to explore foundational work on organizational theory, as well as how race and power are enacted in organizations. Classical understandings of organizational theory have minimized conflict through scientific management and other strategies. However, more recent understandings of organizational theory emphasize that conflict in organizations is not only natural, but can be a healthy function to promote change and growth. Additionally, whiteness can become the naturalized way of asserting power in organizations and it is essential to not only name whiteness, but for marginalized voices to be expressed and heard. Applying a narrative lens to organizational inter-party conflict can serve as a way to identify the narrative landscape of race and power, as well as provide a means to alter the conflict.

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

To investigate my research question, I will utilize critical narrative theory (CNT) as the methodology. Sara Cobb (2013) introduced CNT to re-imagine conflict resolution theories and practices as narrative processes. CNT emerged from the critique that conflict analysis and resolution (CAR) theories and practices draw too heavily from logical positivism, aiming to predict and control rather than examining how the humans involved in conflicts ascribe meaning. Cobb points to the CAR field's propensity towards quantitative processes such as regression or variance. It is not a critique of quantitative research, rather it suggests that there is an over reliance on these types of frameworks in the field. As such, CNT draws from the growing body of research in conflict resolution that pulls from social constructivism and recognizes multiple truths and socially constructed meanings. CNT also pushes to advance a framework for how to judge or evaluate these meanings.

How is CNT utilized to investigate conflict narratives? First, Cobb argues that conflict can be understood as a narrative process, where there is a discrepancy between how two or more parties describe and story the conflict. CNT aims to first identify the narratives in a conflict. It asks, who are the characters? What are the themes in the conflict? What are the major events that have occurred? Narrative analysis provides a means for understanding how people understand themselves, and the other party. This

pushes against normative frameworks that analyze conflicts without gauging how the people involved in the conflict are experiencing it.

Cobb breaks from other conflict resolution theorists by arguing that not only should practitioners interrupt problematic narratives, but they should also support parties in creating new stories that legitimize the marginalized and add complexity to the story line. In essence, CNT aims to make sense of the stories being told and support the storyteller in telling a more complicated account in order to interrupt problematic narrative systems.

In this sense, CNT returns to the calls from Galtung and Burton that conflict resolution address marginalization. For Cobb, oppression exists when parties cannot speak or be heard. CNT provides a framework for researchers and practitioners to examine who is not speaking or what stories are not being told. The aim is to support marginalized voices entering the discourse. Thus, CNT aims to not only identify the narratives, but to support the creation of new narratives that can alter the conflicts that exist.

There are three concepts that anchor critical narrative theory: natality and legitimacy, speaking and being heard, and agency. Natality is used by Arendt to describe birth and the potential that is generated through being born. She writes, "the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting" (Arendt 1998: 9). Through our natality, we are legitimized to exist and authorized to speak.

"Speaking and being heard" is another foundational concept of critical narrative theory that draws from Arendt's argument that being born gives us the authorization to speak. Cobb also draws from Rancière who argues, "speaking is the process of being constructed by the Other as a human being, and this has to do not only with hearing, but with legitimizing the voice of the speaker" (Cobb 2013: 155). Rancière (2007) also argues that not all speaking will bring the desired state of being viewed as legitimate. Instead, some forms of speech, such as protest or positioning the self as marginalized, do not allow the speaker to be emancipated. Rancière argues that protests and complaints due little to make change because these types of speech acts do not allow the listener to construct the speakers as morally legitimate.

Thus, being heard relies on a relational understanding of agency, which argues that the self can only be defined or constructed in relationship to others. Along with identity construction, agency is also produced through relationship with others. Cobb argues, "agency is not produced because the Self pronounces itself; it can be produced only relationally because the Self advances descriptions of itself that are adopted, contested and elaborated by the Others" (Cobb 2013: 153). Cobb draws on Hilde Nelson's argument that in order to restore moral agency to the speaker, counter stories must be produced that legitimize the speaker. The construction of the speaker as legitimate will result in the speaker being heard.

In short, CNT argues that narratives must be altered in order to create new meanings and possibilities to transform conflicts. This process of altering stories can be viewed as an intervention. How can this be practiced and what are the ethics behind it?

Cobb offers aesthetic ethics as a framework for applying CNT to conflict resolution practice. According to Cobb, "An aesthetic ethics is a form of narrative practice that emerges natality, promotes conflict resolution, and reduces totalitarianism and "radicalization."" (Cobb 2013: 235).

Aesthetic ethics guides the practitioner to engage with stories in a way that recognizes the storyteller's natality and supports them in elaborating their legitimacy. In this sense, the aim is not to manipulate stories, but to engage in a type of intervening that affirms the humanity of both the Self and the Other in effort to increase complexity of the existing story.

Cobb offers a framework for "better-formed stories" as a means of practicing aesthetic ethics. Better-formed stories are those that legitimize conflict parties, add complexity, and allow for the creation of a new, shared future. Better-formed stories do not contain the five narrative patterns that lead to conflict escalation or add to problematic conflict dynamics. These five patterns include: the reduction of narrative complexity, conflict parties ignoring or denying the legitimacy of other parties, the externalization of responsibility, conflict parties inverting the meaning of the Other, and silence, which can make way for violence (Cobb 2013).

Invoking six narrative turns in conversation with conflict parties can create better-formed stories. The first turning point is creating legitimacy and its shadow whereby the party is constructed as both legitimate and illegitimate. In this way, one's shadow side is mirrored with their legitimacy to bring more complexity in the story of characters. The second turning point is creating illegitimacy and its shadow for the other(s). Here the

shadow or illegitimate side of the other is explored to expand the morale order. What factors contribute to one's shadow side? Can this shadow side be legitimate? Understanding that one's shadow side may be legitimate can help expand the moral order and move beyond binaries. The third turning point is creating an interdependent history. This part focuses on creating a new history where all parties contributed to the problem. This history reveals that they all have both legitimate and shadow sides, as well. The fourth turning point is creating a new future. At this point in the process, the parties chart out a future based on their new-shared understanding of their roles in the past. Finally, the last turning point is anchoring the new narrative.

Better-formed stories aim to liberate the storyteller and lead to change. This engagement recognizes the role stories can play in the continuation and escalation of conflict. Applying narrative theory to traditional conflict resolution practices can support the development of stories that do not contribute to conflict escalation. Stories that delegitimize others have to be interrupted, yet in a way that also supports the storyteller and assists in creating a story that recognizes the legitimate and illegitimate sides of all parties. This practice strives to create a new narrative that increases complexity, legitimacy, and allows for the creation of a more beautiful story (Cobb 2013).

Design

In practice, I will employ CNT in a dialogue process with employee resource leaders during their in-person ERG leader workshop in Washington DC. This section will

describe how I designed the dialogue process, how CNT was incorporated into the design, and define my role as a researcher in my own organization

I applied the framework of Critical Narrative Theory and aesthetic ethics to a dialogue process for Employee Resource Group leaders. The purpose of the dialogue was to gain an understanding of how Employee Resource Group leaders storied their experiences, and facilitate the leaders through a process to plan action steps for elevating their voices in the agency. A dialogue process was selected for several reasons. First, dialogue is a traditional conflict resolution practice that enables parties to share their perspectives, while also hearing the stories of others in a safe environment (Schirch and Campt 2007). The dialogue process provides a framework for multiple speakers to share their perspectives in a relatively short amount of time. Additionally, dialogue is a dynamic process and allows the participants to engage in double loop learning through engagement with other participants and the facilitator, which is one goal of CNT. One critique of dialogue is that it can allow for problematic narratives to gain traction when they are not interrupted. However, dialogue that is facilitated through the lens of CNT can lead to the facilitator working with participants to introduce complexity and disrupt totalizing narratives. The dialogue process is adept at responding to my research question and incorporating a CNT frame. Finally, this process was selected due to my experience in facilitating dialogues over the past five years.

During this workshop, I used dialogue as an intervention tool to surface the stories that have not been expressed or are having difficulty gaining traction. My aim was to generate empowerment with the participants so that they could express their voices

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within the organization. By conducting a dialogue with a group of employees that share feelings of underrepresentation, it can provide the opportunity to conduct intra-party work and allow group storytelling to take place. The dialogue can allow participants to elaborate their experiences of being in the organization in ways that may not have been previously shared or understood. María Pía Lara argues that people can share stories that are "disclosive" in that they shock us into new meanings. These disclosive statements can make room for reflection and deliberation that did not previously exist (Lara 2007). The dialogue setting can create the space for participants to make the disclosive statements that cannot usually be uttered.

The participants of this workshop included 11 employees from the following NPS ERGs: the Council for Indigenous, Relevancy, Communication, Leadership, and Excellence (CIRCLE); the Employee Empowerment Collective (formerly the African American Employee Resource Group); the Hispanic/Latino Organization for Relevancy, Advising, Leadership, and Excellence (HORALE); the Innovative Leadership Network; the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Employee Resource Group; and the Women's ERG. 11 leaders from these groups gathered together in Washington D.C. during June 2016. There were 6 racial minorities (African American, Latino/a, American Indian, and multi-racial), 5 Whites, 4 LGBTQ, 7 women, 4 men, as well as 5 individuals with more than one marginalized identity (e.g. women of color or LGBTQ women). All participants serve in leadership roles in their ERG as a collateral duty assignment. In addition, they are all stationed in different national parks or offices across the country. They come from various career fields and positions in the

organization, from entry-level park guide to superintendent of a park. Prior to the workshop, the participants had limited interactions and engagements. Most of the participants had not met one another in person before. Participants who were part of the same ERG may have interacted by phone, but had not necessarily met one another in person. This workshop was also a first for the NPS in general. NPS specific ERGs are a relatively new creation, and many of the groups had recently formed in the past year. However, by the time of the workshop all but one group had a charter and an organizational structure. The overall aim of conducting the dialogue was to create a space where Employee Resource Group leaders could story their experiences, and create a narrative intervention to support them in telling a more complex story of themselves to generate moral agency.

As a researcher, it is important to explain my role in the process. I currently work for the National Park Service and interface with Employee Resource Groups regularly. I had existing relationships with many of the leaders and others I met for the first time during the workshop. I do not supervise any of the leaders or members of the ERGs or have authority over their ability to receive awards, compensation, or disciplinary actions. In carrying out this project, I facilitated dialogues with the participants and conducted an exit survey. I also continued to regularly engage with the group in meetings through my official capacity, which is not part of the scope of this study. I was drawn to this project because I have wrestled with the question of what it would mean to speak and be heard in a highly bureaucratic government organization that would clearly benefit from the injection of new ideas from diverse perspectives. I have wondered this both from the

perspective of an employee, and as a diversity and inclusion practitioner seeking to

support the agency in advancing equity across the service. While diversity and inclusion

is important work, the advocacy lens often obscures possibilities of creating shared

futures between in-groups and out-groups. The goal often ends with elevating the

perspectives of the disenfranchised rather than creating a shared future vision. In carrying

out this thesis with a conflict analysis and resolution (CAR) perspective, I hoped that new

ways might emerge to create space for speaking and being heard in an organization and

diffuse "us" versus "them" frames.

Dialogue

I will outline how my design for the dialogue and explain how CNT is

incorporated. To start, I conducted the dialogue with the 11 participants that included

four major sections: 1) Purpose and Group Agreements 2) Community Building 3) Deep

Dive and Reflections 4) Synthesis and Closing (see Appendix – Dialogue Template). The

dialogue was not audio recorded or videotaped in order to create a safe space where

participants felt comfortable sharing. I took notes while participants were discussing in

small groups, as well as after the session. Additionally, some data was provided by

participants, such as their written answers to some dialogue questions and written

statements in the post-workshop survey.

I sat in a circle with the participants and began the dialogue by providing an

overview of the purpose and my role as a facilitator. I explained that dialogue is about

bringing together people that don't look alike, act alike, or think alike so that we can do

the things together that we can't do apart. I shared that over the course of the dialogue,

we would explore their experiences of being Employee Resource Group leaders in our organization and that by the end of the dialogue, they will have gotten to know one another a little better and gained a sense of their unique experiences that may not be widely known or understood.

Next, we discussed the group agreements, which are the principles participants agree to in order to maintain a safe environment of mutual respect in the dialogue. The overarching group agreement was, "Bending without breaking," which encourages participants to take risks without breaking the core of who they are. Each participant received a handful of pipe cleaners as a visual cue of bending without breaking. I invited participants to manipulate and play with their pipe cleaners and shared that we want to practice bending and stretching ourselves in conversation, but not to the point of breaking. This group agreement reminds participants that they get to choose how much risk they take in sharing during the dialogue.

After participants agreed to the group agreement, I posed community-building questions that allowed them to engage in self-reflection, and also to get to know one another on a deeper level. The community building questions are important in order to build trust amongst participants, and set the stage for engaging in deeper, probing questions.

I posed three community building questions that were answered in rounds. I instructed participants that I would pose different questions to the group that they would answer in pairs or triads. I posed the questions one at a time, allowed participants several minutes to discuss, and then instructed them to find a new partner to discuss the next

question. This method of doing the community building questions in rounds allowed for

the participants to have deeper interactions with multiple participants. Additionally, I

answered each question aloud before asking them to break into small groups in order to

model the level of depth and provide an opportunity for participants to learn more about

myself and gain trust in sharing with me as a facilitator. Each question was constructed to

allow for individuals to share something unique about themselves. This begins the

process of telling a more complex story by allowing space for participants to hear unique

stories from one another. It can allow for individuals to learn something new or learn

things that they can relate to. The following four questions were posed to the group:

- What's a nick-name, funny name, term of endearment or abbreviated name that people called you when you were growing up?
- What's a recent event/experience that made you laugh hard or it put a smile on your face?
- Share the name (and short story about) of a person who shaped you into the person you are now and/or the person you're becoming.
- What is one of your dreams?
  After participants had enough time to share their answers and hear the responses

of others, I brought the participants back into the full group and asked them to re-

introduce themselves by sharing their responses to one of the questions. For instance, a

participant would share their name, where they work, the group they lead, and their nick-

name or a response to a different community building question. In this process, the

participants had an opportunity to share new information with everyone, which allowed

the group members to get to know one another or become re-acquainted if they already

knew each another. This process also set the stage for participants to laugh and share with

one another, which supports the creation of an environment where they can feel comfortable sharing.

During this stage of the dialogue, I practiced aesthetic ethics by elevating the multiplicity of identities that were present in the room. This act draws on Hannah Arendt's notion of plurality, which emphasizes the individuality of each person's experience rather than a reduction to common themes (Arendt 1998). This can be done instead of emphasizing commonality, which can work to strengthen the power of some narratives and reduce others. By calling out the new stories of being heard in the organization, more space is opened up to explore the various characters, plots, and themes that may not have been described before. Through this work, the stories can be explored to uncover the shadow, or illegitimate side, of these stories. The practitioner and storyteller work together in identifying aspects of the story that are simple and denigrate others, while generating new stories that liberate and empower.

The third phase of the dialogue consisted of the deep dive questions and reflection. At this point in the dialogue, I began to ask more probing questions that prompted a deeper level of reflection and sharing. The deep dive questions asked the participants to share their identities and indicate how comfortable they felt bringing their full selves to work. The purpose of this line of questioning is to get a sense of how the participants believe others perceive them and how they perceive themselves. Again, I modeled by sharing my responses to the questions before turning it over to the participants. I asked participants to find a new partner that they had not already shared with to answer the following questions:

- What identities do you bring into this space?
- On a scale of 1 to 7, rank your comfort level in bringing your full self to work. Share your reasoning behind the rating.

As participants shared their answers with the entire group, I summarized their responses; reflected back questions raised by participants to the entire group, and asked additional probing questions when necessary to gain an understanding of the person's perspective. To draw out plurality within the dialogue, I pointed out the diversity of experiences in each perspective to allow for new stories to enter into the conversation.

Finally, in the Closing/Synthesis phase of the dialogue, I summarized key points made by the participants and highlighted new insights they may have shared. In this section, I invoked the practice of "witnessing" the suffering of others that sets the pre-condition for a speaker to feel heard and elaborate a new narrative. Witnessing is "a process of elaborating stories of suffering in ways that open them to a new aesthetic, one that leads to the emancipation of the teller and the witness" (Cobb 2013: 182). In summarizing the dialogue, I emphasized the complexity of what people shared in the negative and positive encounters with the agency.

Action Planning

A second phase of the workshop included additional dialogues to examine the action steps the members proposed to take to share their perspectives of Employee Resource Group leaders. This phase of the dialogue included a brain storming session with participants to explore the range of possibilities that existed. I asked participants what next steps they wanted to take and recorded their suggestions. After brain storming

an exhaustive list of potential next steps, we narrowed the list by discussing the items that generated the most discussion and energy.

I facilitated this exercise through the practice of aesthetic ethics by inserting probing questions about the characters, plots, and themes that were present in the participants' stories in effort to push towards the development of a more complex story. This practice of aesthetic ethics becomes critical for leading to the formation of a better-formed story that will not act to re-create or reinforce the conditions that have led to the marginalization of voices. It also allows for a process in which the untold stories can be voiced and people can be seen as moral agents. The new narrative landscape that is created is essential for the creation of change and the repair of moral agency.

Applying CNT and aesthetic ethics to this research project results in an inductive approach where I assessed what emerged from the workshop rather than testing for any particular information. After the completion of the workshop, I sent a short survey to participants to ask, what they gained from participating in the workshop and feedback on what they believed they needed to do going forward. The following questions were posed in the exit survey:

- What, if anything, did you gain by participating in the dialogues during the ERG Leader Workshop?
- What, if anything, challenged you about the dialogues or other components of the workshop?

Since completing the workshop, what next steps do you believe should be to be taken to advance the voices of ERG leaders and members?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section I will review the participants that were included in this study, describe the concept of "lines of flight" that will be utilized to analyze the collected data, and discuss the themes that emerged.

The collection of data began with the dialogue with ERG leaders. In total, there were 11 participants, with representatives from CIRCLE, EEC, HORALE, ILN, LGBTQ, and the Women's ERG. As noted in the methodology section, participants engaged in dialogue with one another and completed a short "exit survey" following the completion of the dialogues to provide insights on what they may have gained from their participation.

Lines of Flight

I will utilize Deleuze's concept of "lines of flight" to analyze this data. John Winslade (2009) applies Gilles Deleuze's concept of "lines of flight" to analyze narratives and intervene on totalizing narratives during a series of therapy sessions. I will apply this same concept to analyze the dialogue with Employee Resource Group leaders. Winslade draws from Deleuze, a post-structuralist philosopher and a contemporary of Michel Foucault. Drawing from Foucault's descriptions of power, Deleuze pushed against the type of empiricism that preferences one truth over multiple meanings and interpretations. This came at a time when others were also challenging the notion that

people's lives were drawn from multiple cultural narratives rather than strictly from one particular culture. Deleuze contended that power still exists as a force in people's lives despite the multiplicity of backgrounds and cultures one could be influenced by. He argued that power impacts our life choices and can be understood as lines of power. For Deleuze, multiple lines of power exist in people's lives and are often in conflict. These lines intersect with lines of subjectivation, which are the lines made through a process of distinguishing the self in the context of societal narratives. This is the process of constructing ourselves, which is influenced by larger narratives and how we see ourselves as individuals. Deleuze introduced the concept of "lines of flight," which are shifts in the narrative that disrupt the lines of power (Winslade 2009). Winslade describes lines of flight as, "shifts in the trajectory of a narrative that escape a line of force or power" (Winslade 2009: 337). Deleuze describes what lines of power mean in the following statement:

"We live in a world that is generally disagreeable, where not only people but the established powers have a stake in transmitting sad affects to us. Sadness, sad affects, are all those which reduce our power to act" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 61).

Deleuze is concerned with how individuals contend with the forces of power that impact their lives. He asks, "how might one live?" given the lines of power that reduce one's ability to act (Winslade 2009: 336). For Deleuze, there are always a multitude of options that are available. He pushes to expand the sense of multiplicity that exists in our experiences. Through this lens, additional options can emerge and people can move

beyond totalizing sentiments that leave us without many options. This opening to new options is what Deleuze describes as a line of flight.

Winslade argues that therapists/counselors should look for the intersections of lines of power and lines of subjectivation in order to create lines of flight. These intersections become tangled and once a line of flight is identified, the process can begin to detangle (Winslade 2009). For Foucault and Deleuze, the goal was not to simply distinguish the problem, but to offer direction into how the lines of power could be disrupted in order for people to create transformation in their lives. Winslade argues that they are "not just any act of resistance but particularly creative shifts that give rise to new possibilities for living" (Winslade 2009: 338). Lines of flight can also be described as lines of possibility. They can move individuals from an interpretation of having very few opportunities to a new experience of emerging possibilities.

Winslade introduces this concept of lines of flight to bring it to the world of therapy. Winslade demonstrates this with clients by asking questions that introduce multiplicity in response to statements that suggest a monolithic way of being. Deleuze describes lines of flight as "bending a line of power" to note that they can be slight shifts in the current trajectory. Winslade believes that these small changes can have large impacts on the course of a person's life. He provides an example of a conflict resolution session with a couple in which one participant describes herself as being unable to forgive. The woman used "totalizing" (White 2007) language, which described her problem in a negative way that existed in an either/or context. Winslade opens a line of questioning to distinguish if she has examples of forgiving herself with other people or in

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other settings. This line of questioning allowed her characterization of herself as being "unforgiving" to be explored and examine other experiences, evoking multiplicity over totality. For the participant, her line of subjectivation was her characterization of herself as unforgiving and the line of power was the description of her partner as acting inappropriately with other women. These lines became entangled and the exploration of instances when she was able to forgive others was introduced as a line of flight to create new meanings.

This type of narrative process can also work as a conflict resolution practice to distinguish the narratives around power, and to draw out the particular lines of flight to help untangle the web of lines. I will describe the lines of power that appeared during the ERG workshop, as well as the lines of flight that emerged.

As mentioned in the design section, the dialogue was composed of four sections. The first included a focus on community/relationship building and getting to know one another. This design was chosen in effort to establish a solid foundation on which participants could begin to candidly share themselves and their reflections on how they experience the organization. This is a critical step in order to build trust and also advances Deleuze's notions of multiplicity. By allowing participants the opportunity to distinguish themselves, they can allow others to see them beyond their identity groups, while at the same time providing opportunities of connection when other members see pieces of themselves in the other. This process underscored the importance of building relatedness with one another.

The next phase of the dialogue opened up the inquiry of what identities people held and how they experienced the organization. What was their experience in bringing their full selves to work? Participants were again asked to choose a new partner to share their responses. The dialogue offered a rich conversation of how the participants storied their experiences of working in the organization. Many shared the sense that you simply cannot be yourself within the organization. Others noted how they persisted to be themselves despite not feeling welcomed in the organization. There were clear lines of power and lines of flight that emerged in the conversation. For the sake of organization, I will discuss the lines of power that appeared first, and then describe the lines of flight that emerged. However, during the conversation the lines of power and lines of flight crisscrossed throughout the conversation

Identifying the lines of subjectivation, lines of power, and lines of flight

One by one, the eleven participants shared their individual responses to the dialogue prompt with the entire group. I will describe the responses that elaborated a line of power. The first participant to share told a story of being profiled by NPS law enforcement officials. The individual, a man of color, explained that there have been several occurrences of being stopped by NPS law enforcement while he was on duty. He believed he was stopped because of his race. He stated that when he spoke up about this to his superiors, he was retaliated against. The participant expressed the fear of being retaliated against and a fundamental sense that he needed to safeguard himself from the organization. Several others affirmed this notion that you cannot be yourself in the organization, especially if you appeared to be "different." Another person described the

NPS as a culture of "do what you're told" and that it was necessary to bring a particular

version of yourself in order to survive. For one participant, this meant hiding parts of

himself so that others did not perceive him as "the artsy gay guy." Another noted that she

had not been treated well at previous parks because she was perceived to be very young.

A female participant built onto this idea by adding that she is a woman without children,

a city dweller, interested in racial justice work, and perceived as "different" in the

organization. She believed that this translated into people not trusting her, as she did not

fit the version of who you are supposed to be in the NPS. Participants continued to

elaborate on the characteristics that "do not belong" in the organization. Another

participant acknowledged that she had no fear in speaking out because her ancestors had

been beaten for standing up for themselves. However, she worried that agency leadership

would be uncomfortable with her outspoken nature and she didn't want her reputation to

"screw it up for members." Others shared the notion that the organization does not value

the perspectives and talents employees might bring. A participant noted that many of his

co-workers did not want him to do work outside of his job description. He shared that

although he had a master's degree and could do more than paint buildings, his superiors

did not support him in doing other types of work. Another participant shared a similar

experience of the organization not understanding the value she added by being bilingual.

She described herself as "being able to understand two cultures," which could be

leveraged to engage diverse communities.

These statements from the ERG leaders present an overarching line of power that

the organization does not allow employees to bring their full selves to work. Participants

expressed a range of experiences that did not quite "fit" NPS culture, from being a member of a particular identity group to having certain skillsets or interests. Participants described their race, sexual orientation, age, personality, parental status, and skillsets as potential deterrents for having a sense of belonging in the NPS. It was striking that all participants, regardless of identity, received some indication that they were not the ideal employee or could not bring their full self to work.

I probed participants to describe whom the NPS preferred as an employee, and one person described a person who "does what they are told." The group began discussing the NPS uniform, which also thickened the description of the preferred NPS employee. Participants noted that the uniform is neither engaging nor welcoming. Female participants complained that the uniform was too masculine and that you were not allowed to alter it in any way. One participant described an experience when she first began working at the NPS and had her uniforms tailored to better fit her body type. She was told that this was not allowed and instructed to stop wearing the tailored uniform and order a new set. The uniform conversation added to the description of a culture that is rigid, masculine, and averse to change.

How might one find ways to escape the forces that produce these sad effects and assert something more life giving? While these lines of power entered the conversation and were elaborated by a majority of participants, lines of flight also entered the conversation through descriptions of positive or nuanced experiences. I will describe the lines of flight that entered the conversation.

Early on in the conversation, one participant shared that she felt she could bring her full self to work. She stated that while this had not always been the case for her, she tried to make the most of her experiences. She noted that because she is a military spouse, she can never be sure how long she'll be at one particular site and so she tries to make it a positive experience. Another person spoke about their experience of coming out as LGBTQ. Their learning was that "if I'm not weird about it, people won't be weird about it." Others elaborated this notion of having some power to impact the situation by sharing that "they walk into a room of judgment, but that they are comfortable with themselves." Another participant called out the work ERGs are doing to make the agency more inclusive. They shared that ERGs and straight allies create a space for them to bring their LGBTQ self to work. These descriptions began to create an opening in the conversation that both individually and collectively through their work with ERGS, they held some power to make a difference for themselves and others. Participants then began to move towards problem solving of what needed to be done in the organization to address this narrative of what the NPS is and who works there. One participant called for the need for more innovation and creativity that could be harnessed through art. The sentiment was that art could be used as an activity for both bringing comfort to old wounds and for stimulating new thoughts and ideas.

At this point, the ERG leaders were already weaving together a complex story. Some had had very negative experiences in the organization, and others had experienced these things for quite some time. Many shared what they did to make it through, by turning to art, creativity, or being confident in who they were. The mix of stories created

the sense that it was actually a complex experience to be in the organization. Near the end of this open dialogue, one speaker stated, "there has been 400 years of pain and that we [the NPS] had to talk about this in order to move forward." The statement implicitly referenced 1619 when enslaved Africans were first brought to the United States. This line of flight acted as a reflective judgment that I utilized as a facilitator to explore and anchor the line of flight.

María Pía Lara (2007) pushes forward a theory on reflective judgments. Reflective judgments are focused, particular statements that shock us into new meanings and understandings about the past. Reflective judgments contain disclosive words that are spoken and validated by listeners. They provide new ways of understanding historical atrocities and events and bring new moral understanding. Lara provides the example of Raphael Lemkin who coined the term genocide. Lemkin was attempting to describe the mass killing of Jews during the Holocaust and found that other words that had been previously used, such as barbarity, did not add any new understanding to the Holocaust. Instead, he coined the term genocide, which combines the Latin words for "race or "tribe" and "kill." The term genocide then served as a way of being morally specific and shocking. Lara argues that reflective judgments are necessary in order to make sense of the past and give voice to what may have been previously unsaid. Through this process, we can move towards self-reflection and deliberation in the public sphere. The notion of a healthy public sphere comes from Arendt's (1973) argument that debate and dialogue are central for creating a healthy democracy and fighting against totalitarianism.

The statement that we must talk about the hurt of the past was a reflexive

judgment that opened up a new line of flight for the group to elaborate on something that

had not been previously spoken. The statement was vulnerable and revealed that

underlying the lines of power, was a sense of hurt from having one's past overlooked and

stepped over. The sentiment was that if we cannot have real conversations about the dark

aspects of our country's history, there would not be much hope in us working together.

For the speaker, this was what was missing in order to do meaningful work. The

statement was picked up by another speaker and elaborated on. The second speaker

extended the first speaker's time frame. It was not only 400 years of hurt since slavery

began, it was the hurt that has been here since our nation was "established" and native

people were forcibly driven from their lands. The statements acted as lines of flight from

the previous lines of power because the judgment was also a call for how to move

forward using the collective wisdom present. It was a call to the participants in the room

to use their power to tell the stories that have not been said. As a researcher/facilitator, I

called attention to this statement by directing further inquiries as the conversation

progressed. It was also important to privilege a statement that normally goes unspoken in

spaces where the white male power/knowledge dynamic (Macalpine and Marsh 2005) is

naturalized.

Elaborating Lines of Flight

The next aspect of the workshop allowed space for participants to continue their

dialogue, along with generating new narratives on how they wanted to describe their

Employee Resource Groups. Participants went through a process in which they individually wrote out the major themes they saw in their groups. In this phase of the workshop, the lines of flight were elaborated or deepened. Winslade discusses how lines of flight do not have to create a dramatic shift, but even slight deviations from the previous trajectory can lead to new possibilities that alter the way forward. The thinking is that over a period of time, a slight change will lead to a different place, and as slightly different people (Winslade 2009).

At one point during this process, a participant raised the issue of how the term "Chief" is used to describe positions in the agency. Many times, a position title includes "Chief of Maintenance" or "Chief of Resources Management." The participant explained that the term Chief is sacred in native cultures. It is a title that is bestowed upon someone who is esteemed and accomplished. The participant felt the use of Chief in a casual and uncritical way, was dismissive of native history and culture. This disclosive statement deepened the earlier line of flight that was created with the announcement that there has been "*over* 400 years of hurt." It was this moment in the workshop where disagreement entered the space. Another participant responded that he did not find the use of the term offensive and thought it could be used in multiple ways. Some defended the use of the term, while others stepped in and affirmed that the term was offensive. I intervened by affirming for the defensive participants that they were not personally trying to be hurtful, and that it was also the case that the statement caused pain for participants in the room. I made this call to legitimize the initial speaker's concern over the term that it caused hurt because of the power imbalance in the room. The participant was in the minority based

on their ethnicity and they took a risk in raising an important issue that revealed

vulnerability. The conversation occurred late in the day when energy was low so we

resumed the conversation the next day during the morning check-in. The intention was to

name the tension that was in the room and open up space to distinguish how the group

wanted to support one another during difficult conversations.

I explained that so many times when doing this work across cultures, we hit

roadblocks and stop because of power dynamics and misunderstandings. The intent was

to acknowledge that it happened and think through how we could be leaders in having

these tough conversations. The room was quiet and serious. Participants acknowledged

that the conversation on the word "Chief" was important and expressed appreciation for

the participant who brought the issue to the space. Others stated the need to explore how

the group should work together so as to not replicate problematic dynamics they are

trying to undo. Overall, there was a sense that these were conversations that we needed to

have. Through intervening, space was able to open up to a fuller conversation about what

had happened, how people felt, and what people wanted to do moving forward. The

intervention not only normalized that it is okay to discuss race, discomfort, and

disagreement, it also offered up an alternative experience to silence conversations around

race (Sullivan 2014). These types of disruptions are necessary to push for alternative

ways of expression. If I had not intervened and the conversation continued as if nothing

happened, it would have fed the power/knowledge framework that talking about race or

difference is not what one is supposed to do. Upon reflection of this conversation and

others that took place during the workshop, participants shared:

"I feel very new and untested. I want to have more training and more dialogues and more openness like this, every day! It is hard to go back to environments where these sort of conversations are not always on the agenda!"

"The only challenge that I had was my own bias. I had to step out of myself to understand. I need more training when it comes to facilitated conversations."

"One of the other participant summed it up well - the issues we have to address are uncomfortable, but we need to face them. I think just facing the facts was a bit of a challenge, but being in an environment where everyone was respectful and welcoming turned the "challenging" conversations into constructive dialogue."

"I do think the dialogues raised my awareness on issues I hadn't thought of before--important ones. I was grateful to be in an environment that supported open dialogue on difficult topics."

"There were clearly some moments and conversations that were more tense than others, but I appreciated walking through that together as a group."

Through this process, a reflective judgment made in a group dialogue became a line of flight to move the conversation towards exploration of multiple meanings. The line of flight created a shift in the narrative for a conversation to open up around the meaning of a hurtful organization process whereby individuals have the word "Chief" in their job titles. This opened up space for a difficult conversation in a room with a racially mixed group. However, instead of becoming stuck or mired down in the conversation the participants expressed vulnerability in sharing their understandings of the term and support for the individual who raised the concern.

Institutionalizing Lines of Flight

Through dialogues and the exit survey, participants identified four central themes on how they would like to communicate about Employee Resource Groups. They also identified a project they would embark upon moving forward to share their collective voice. Participants brainstormed how they wanted to communicate about Employee Resource Groups moving forward. From this session, they narrowed down the list of themes to four overarching messages, which include:

- ERGs facilitate cultural change within the organization
- ERGs raise the visibility of underrepresented groups and advocate for their perspectives
- ERGs create a sense of belonging for employees
- ERGs hold the NPS accountable to organizational best practices

This session provided an opportunity to identify central communication messages the groups could align around in order to provide a unified message to the service. Along with these themes, the members identified the first action they would take as a collective group. They decided to work together to create a "diversity dictionary" which would provide a means to share more personal understandings of identity terms, such as Latino and Hispanic, Queer in LGBTQ, or indigenous.

One participant also shared how native people distinguish one another. They shared that there are natives who grew up on the reservation, natives who find out they are native later in life, and t also those who grew up in isolated white societies. For the participant, it was an important distinction for people to know how native people saw one another in their community. The diversity dictionary project will serve as a way for the groups to tell a deeper story about their individual and group identities.

This project would be an initial step at sharing their voices with the service in a meaningful way that would also support raising awareness for employees more broadly. In essence, this project institutionalizes a line of flight by introducing Deleuze's calls for multiplicity into the organization. By allowing multiple stories that include intersecting identities to enter into the organizational discourse, this provides new possibilities for existing in an organization that some characterize as rigid and unchanging.

ERG leaders also articulated their thoughts on messages that should enter the organizational discourse in the exit survey:

"I believe that ERGs (and their members) should be at the forefront of agency initiatives, both internal and external. ERGs should be empowered to fulfill the advisory capacity that most are designed to serve. I also believe that leadership must demonstrate a commitment to ERGs in the form of agency-wide message(s) and support in the forms of advocacy, time, and funding. A few words, shared publicly, can go a long way."

"As I mentioned during the workshop, I am particularly interested in mining the civil rights stories we preserve and promote in the NPS as a way to highlight the urgency of relevancy among all managers and employees. If we don't reflect in the workforce the values we interpret, then we have no authority to tell those stories."

"We can't fix everything, but we can still make noticeable improvements with positive return on investment; we can untangle red tape; we can invest in our employees' development from the bottom up; we can foster an environment so employees have a safe and supportive place where they can succeed; we can actually pay attention to issues and

find opportunity for improvement, instead of waiting for the really bad stuff to happen before action is taken."

Their responses and plans for initial action steps indicate that while many still had reservations about the will of the agency to embrace organizational change, they were able to find alignment in how they could collectively serve.

Complexity and Narrative Turns

Participants provided insights on how they story their experiences of working in the organization through the dialogues and the exit survey they completed after the workshop. The experiences were varied and included descriptions of how they saw the organization, negative encounters they had experienced, as well as positive accounts of feeling included or hopeful for the future. Participants agreed that in order to "make it" in the NPS, it required you to bring a particular version of yourself to work and "do what you are told." However, the responses varied in how participants dealt with this reality. New lines of flight were opened up to provide new possibility in dealing with the organization. Additionally, the group chose to act as a collective, versus working independently in their silos of each group. Together they formed a connected and collaborative future through the diversity dictionary project. The exit survey provided an opportunity to see the ways in which participants described the conflict after the workshop. Many participants described the confidence and belief they had in their fellow co-workers, but cast doubt on the ability of creating change in the organization, which are found in these responses:

"We have some many great people that work for the agency but we have a long way to go to begin fixing or working on the problems."

"[I] am increasingly concerned that the NPS is going to find a way to keep the established culture in place and will continue to find ways to reject the efforts of culture change agents."

"Dialogues revealed that many of the challenges/issues I perceive on a relatively small scale in the workplace -- through personal experience and anecdote-- are, in fact, pervasive and systemic."

These responses show that many participants expressed appreciation and confidence in their colleagues in making changes, however little had changed in their descriptions of the agency as being rigid and overbearing. These findings reveal that participants were able to make one narrative turn in elaborating their own legitimacy, however more work needs to be done in order to continue to the next narrative turn to create a better-formed story.

Limitations

Through this CNT project, new lines of flight were created in the dialogue with ERG leaders and initiated a process for them to institutionalize their legitimacy within the agency. However, this study was limited in that it did not engage agency leaders or others with the organizational authority to address the lines of force elaborated by the ERG leaders. Thus, additional narrative turns were not possible. This work laid the foundation for speaking and being heard but it did not collect data around whether or not people are

being heard. Future research could be conducted to determine whether organizational

leaders are elaborating the narratives of underrepresented voices.

CONCLUSION

Over 100 years ago, the National Park Service began as an organization to protect and preserve the cultural heritage and natural resources in the United States. While the ambitions were noble, American Indians and other racial and ethnic minorities were not included in this process. As the agency embarks on its second century of service, it has provided an opportunity to reflect and re-examine how it can engage with the difficult stories of the past. It is also a moment to chart a new direction in how the organization will remain relevant to the American public.

On the brink of the second century, this thesis sought to explore how underrepresented employees at the National Park Service storied their experiences of working in the organization and to empower them to create new stories of how they might describe their efforts of creating organizational change. Through research employed with aesthetic ethics in dialogue, the Employee Resource Group leaders shared their experiences and narrated the ways in which they thwarted the impacts of challenging dynamics. Lines of flight were created to open up new possibilities for speaking in the organization and this was institutionalized through the creation of the diversity dictionary project. The end result was a collective effort that drew in the multiple identities of ERG members in order to share a bit of themselves with the rest of the agency. By institutionalizing the legitimacy of these groups, they can begin to

dislodge the master narrative of the rugged and independent NPS ranger that was heroicized by Harry Yount.

It is recommended that future research investigate whether ERG leaders are being "heard" in the organization as defined by Cobb. This work could also be expanded to involve NPS leaders in dialogues with ERG leaders to create a better-formed story. This approach could also be utilized by other organizations that have Employee Resource Group programs. Too many times, ERGs are relegated to the role of special emphasis month event planners rather than engaging underrepresented voices in meaningful connection.

Future research should also emphasize the role of community building in dialogue processes. For CAR practitioners, narrative practice can be greatly enhanced with a strong community building process to allow participants to build relationships with one another in a short period of time. The process allows for a new way of intervening in an organizational conflict that acknowledges identity and power, rather than stepping over these important aspects in favor of protecting management, as is often the case in classical organizational theory. This practice can be further explored and adapted to meet specific project needs.

This thesis also pointed to the potential of reinvigorating the public sphere with healthy discourse and debate by supporting groups in speaking and being heard. At the conclusion of the ERG Workshop, the leaders were in the nascent stages of speaking and being heard with new possibilities for telling a more complete story of the National Park Service. It is a story that acknowledges the preservation ethos that has allowed for so

many treasures to be set aside for posterity, while also shedding light on the stories of marginalization that are not often included. By returning to witness the impact of "*over 400 years of hurt*" it allows suffering to be expressed. Cobb argues that oppression is apparent when groups cannot speak and/or be heard by the Other. In opening up space for unspoken stories to be told, the conditions are laid for speaking and being heard.

Why does it matter if the employees of the National Park Service can speak and be heard? When thinking broadly of organizations the employees who work there often become invisible or at worst are reduced to stereotypes. In government, notable stereotypes include being lazy, overpaid, and even corrupt. However, government employees are also citizens, who are subject to the same identity politics as the rest of the populace. While it is convenient to lump all of the National Park Service's challenges on the organizational structure, policies and procedures, or even history, it is also a place that is made up of people. By focusing on the employees of the National Park Service, a first step was made in altering how the organization functions. How the NPS mission is carried out is partially based upon who works there and how they do this work.

Employee Resource Groups can play a significant role in re-shaping the stories that are told in the organization and how the history of the nation is interpreted to visitors. Their voices can support the agency in becoming more inclusive, culturally relevant, and address the challenging issues that the organization is faced with in regards to the history, memorialization, and commemoration of difficult events that continue to divide the country. By creating spaces for their voices to enter the organizational discourse there is possibility for telling more nuanced stories to the public. One role of the National Park

Service is to serve as the nation's storyteller. These stories become legitimized and sanctioned because of the authority the organization has as a government agency. The potential impact of the National Park Service interpreting more complex stories cannot be understated.

Telling more complete stories can also lead towards the transformation of conflict. For Arendt, we are each authorized to speak by nature of being born. The absence of voice cuts off the possibility of public participation and deliberation. Not only is speaking critical to our personhood, it is essential to a healthy democracy. As a government organization, the National Park Service can greatly impact the stories that are told and produced about American history. National park sites are commonly spaces for reflection, debate, and protest. There is a tremendous opportunity for the agency and its stewards to weave complex stories that allow marginalized voices to be heard and support the creation of a healthy public sphere. The stories that are told at national park sites can thicken the societal narratives we have and open up space for having the tough conversations. Just as the ERG leaders wrestled with the conversation over the meaning of the word "chief," as the nation's storyteller the NPS can also support citizens in grappling with contentious subjects. In the present environment when the country is extremely polarized, the need for practices that increase critical thinking, deliberation, and complex stories is at a zenith.

Exploring Voice with ERG Leaders
Dialogue Template
(2-3 hour dialogue)

Supplies: Snacks, speakers, pipe cleaners

Room set up: Chairs arranged in a circle

I.   Arrive and greet participants (food/snacks, music) – **10 mins**

II.   **Review Purpose** and **Group Agreements** – **5 mins**

Purpose – Exploring Voice

Purpose of dialogue: Dialogue is about bringing together people that don't look alike, act alike, or think alike so that we can do the things together that we can't do apart. Over the next two hours, we will explore our experiences of being Employee Resource Group leaders in our organization. By the end of the dialogue, we will have gotten to know one another a little better and gained a sense of our unique experiences that may not be widely known or understood. By taking the time to explore our experiences, we will get a deeper sense of one another and ourselves.

Group Agreements:

- Bending without breaking
- Conversation, not conversion
- Respect confidentiality

III.   **Introductions and Community Building** (Choose two questions from below) – **30 mins**

- What's a nick-name, funny name, term of endearment or abbreviated name that people called you when you were growing up?
- What's a recent event/experience that made you laugh hard or it put a smile on your face?
- If you were doing something else (assuming it's not your current work) that tapped into your gifts, passion and talents, what would that be?
- What's the funniest memory you can recall from your childhood (or the funniest story people tell you about when you were growing up)?
- Share the name (and short story about) of a person who shaped you into the person you are now and/or the person you're becoming.

After they have completed 4 questions, have them return to their seats inside the circle. Ask participants to re-introduce themselves and answer ONE of the questions they answered.

IV.   Deep Dive Question – 40 mins
- What identities do you bring into this space?
- What experiences do you have of these identities being honored in the organization? Have there been times when these identities have been suppressed in some form?
- How have people storied you as "Other" in the past?

- If this person/group really knew you, what would they know?

 V.   Synthesis and closing -- 20 mins
Participants will respond to the following questions orally or by writing their answers on pieces of paper. After a discussion on their responses, I will close the dialogue by summarizing our conversation and offering next steps.
- What has resonated with you about the experiences others have shared? What challenged you?
- What, if anything, are you taking away from today's dialogue?

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BIOGRAPHY

Colette Carmouche is an Employee Engagement Coordinator for the Office of Relevancy, Diversity, and Inclusion (RDI) at the National Park Service. In this role she manages a facilitated dialogue program that engages employees in peer-to-peer discussions on critical topics and issues. Additionally, she delivers training and facilitated sessions to deepen awareness around diversity and inclusion, and administers a robust employee resource group (ERG) program to increase employee engagement. Previously, Carmouche served as a Cultural Resource Manager for the National Park Service. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology and African and African-American Studies from the University of Rochester. Colette Carmouche is a Master's of Science candidate at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. Her research and practice interests include racial conflicts, narratives, facilitated dialogue, and coaching. Carmouche has received ontological and conflict coach training from Co-Active coaching, Accomplishment Coaching, and the School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution. She is currently pursuing her ACC credential.