



Truncated Characteristics of "White Dominant Culture" by Tema Okun

- 1) **PERFECTIONISM** – fixation on all that is "wrong," with little grasp of all this is good/helpful
 - Culture of appreciation, learning, and right sizing mistakes
- 2) **SENSE OF URGENCY** – fixation on quick and/or highly visible results, detrimental to inclusivity
 - Realistic workplans that will meet your full goals, and plan for decisions in time crunch

Realistic workplans. Leadership that understands that everything takes longer than expected. Think about range of options.
- 3) **DEFENSIVENESS** – new ideas/proposals received as threatening to power and/or inappropriate
 - Open acknowledgment of how resistance can and will inhibit mission and innovation

Ask folks to explore what they are defending. Discuss ways in which defensiveness or resistance to new ideas gets in the way of mission. Consider power.
- 4) **QUANTITY OVER QUALITY** – obsession with measurable results, process not counted or valued
 - Include process and quality goals that guide how you are going to approach your work

Seventh Generation thinking. Make sure your goals speak to how you want to do your work, not just what you want to do. Add measured that keep you grounded in what's important
- 5) **WORSHIP OF THE WRITTEN WORD** – belief there is one "right" way to do things, devalues relationship building and other ways of making progress/sharing ideas/trying things out
 - Accept that there are many ways to reach one goal, and watch for pushing of only one way

Encourage creative ways of documenting or recording or reflecting. Practice listening; because our culture doesn't value oral tradition or storytelling wisdom.
- 6) **PATERNALISM** – entirely about power and who believes they can make decisions for whom
 - Be transparent about power + decision-making, include people affected in decision-making
- 7) **EITHER/OR THINKING** – in attempt to simplify complex things, create unnuanced options of for/against, making it difficult to learn from mistakes, accommodate conflict, consider alternatives
 - Encourage creativity, an abundance of possible solutions, and slow down in order to analyze

Stop over-simplifying complex issues. Avoid assigning a single cause to a challenge, acknowledge ways oppressions intersect and reinforce one another.
- 8) **POWER HOARDING** – power seen as limited, only so much to go around, feels threatening to share
 - Understand that change is inevitable, and good leaders develop the skills + power of others
- 9) **FEAR OF OPEN CONFLICT** – equating bringing up difficult issues with being impolite/unprofessional
 - Role play ways to handle conflict before it happens, there is more than one way to share

Develop skills to meet your fear, and work to avoid letting it drive our beliefs, actions, and decisions.
- 10) **INDIVIDUALISM** – little experience or comfort working as part of teams, individual recognition norms
 - Evaluate contributions not just of individuals, but teams, including who delegates + contributes well

Seek to understand all the ways we are informed by our dominant identities, including our complicity with being positioned with being both "better" and normal which requires dehumanizing others as being less than . Realize that leadership is dynamic.
- 11) **PROGRESS IS MORE, BIGGER** – systems of accountability + success measures, skip quality + values
 - Create Seventh Generation thinking, match back to all goals – how and why, not just what
- 12) **OBJECTIVITY** – belief that there is such a thing, that emotions are irrelevant/bad, and 'logic' rules all
 - Acknowledge world view impacts each person's approach + strive to understand rather than dismiss
- 13) **RIGHT TO COMFORT** – those in power have right to emotional + psychological comfort, scapegoating others
 - Don't take everything personally, understand discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning

Understand that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning and that feedback and criticism will not kill you. Don't require that those who raise hard issues do it in "acceptable" ways. (Applies to Power Hoarding and Fear of Conflict, too)

One Right Way (along with perfectionism, paternalism, objectivity and "Qualified: We are all impacted by our world views, including those that believe in 'objectivity'. We must learn to question and get comfortable with the limits of our knowledge.