Journal #3 Knowing inclusion from the experience of exclusion

The best definition of justice I have ever encountered is that justice is learned through the experience of injustice. I believe this to be a profoundly accurate definition. I’m starting to realize more and more with each class I take and each research article I read that it can at times be challenging to see injustice through a privileged lens. Likewise I am seeing how it can be challenging to understand exclusion through the lens of inclusive privilege. When you are part of the in crowd or included, it can be difficult to realize how easily others might feel excluded. Certainly there are overt ways to exclude, but too often exclusion is informal and subtle, yet there are professional consequences.

Durban (2011) note that rich, strategic dialog often results from informal networking and social networks (Durbin, 2011). We recently presented in class the importance of inclusion and the many ways companies can provide an environment that nurtures social interactions with employees that might otherwise not have those less formal opportunities. This can really be crucial given the different personality types we work with and sometime that we work for. One of the male supervisors I had at Fisher-Price was a very nice person and was mostly fair in his treatment of his staff, but he definitely had a notably higher comfort level working with male employees versus female ones. I had a male counter-part who often spent time with our supervisor socially. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t edge myself into the equation. Almost every day at lunch they would go for a run. I took up running, but still they would go without me. I am a big sports fan, I made sure to pay special attention to the sports teams he cared about and bring them up in conversation as I knew he liked to talk about sports (especially baseball which is also my favorite sport and one I am fairly knowledgeable on). No matter what I tried, it was to no avail. He wasn’t going to let me into his informal, social interactions. This was disheartening. I really speaks to inclusion more than diversity which has been such a focus of our discussions in this class.

While there is lack of consensus as to how we create inclusion, or even how it is defined, I believe the quest for inclusion is crucial and as leaders, it is our responsibility to create inclusion in organizations and in society and to and work diligently towards creating more equitable organizations conducive to success for all rather than some. It’s also important to see on a very micro-level (like my previous example) how we can influence inclusion and exclusion. In my example that seemingly small exclusion (as a female, I’m unwelcome in discussions of sports and going for a run) can actually result in serious professional and economic outcomes. Watson (2012) found that this informal networking is highly correlated with professional opportunities which result in better performance outcomes for the more involved (included) employee. With so many barriers facing women and people of color in the workforce, it is so important to consider inclusion at every level and how inclusion can assist in overcoming so many of these barriers. This really reminded me of the Mezzo, Micro, and Micro level inclusion which was discussed in depth in the text. As a leader, I am trying to be more cognizant of inclusion from all levels.

Reference

Watson, J. (2012). Networking: Gender differences and the association with firm performance. *International Small Business Journal*, *30*(5), 536-558. doi:10.1177/0266242610384888

Durbin, S. (2011). Creating Knowledge through Networks: a Gender Perspective. *Gender, Work & Organization*, *18*(1), 90-112. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0432.2010.00536.x