Class, Race, and Gender: Person-in-Role Implications in Taking Up the Directorship

Mary B. McRae

Class, race, and gender are dimensions of diversity that often influence the ways in which members of groups and organizations become authorized to take on certain roles, responsibilities, and tasks. Class, race, and gender carry a range of perceptions and emotions depending on where an individual is located in the hierarchy of attributes of those who generally have authority and privilege. These dimensions also influence an individual's access to or control over valuable resources, power, and status. Skin tone and gender are often used to determine where one fits in this hierarchy. In the past few decades we have seen some transitions: women and those from minority groups moving into positions of power and authority in organizations that are predominantly White. Making this transition in authority, role and task need to be examined from the perspective of those who are new to authority roles and the social identity groups to which they belong, as well as by those who have traditionally been in positions of authority.

This chapter will explore this transition from the perspective of a Black woman from a working class background taking up the role of Conference Director. Based on my experience, I will explore the intersection of boundaries, authority, role, and task as they relate to class, race, gender and some of the psychodynamic processes in taking up the role of Conference Director. Davis (1981) referred to race and class as being status incongruent with roles of authority. Thus, a Black woman Director of a conference may be incongruent with staff and members' perceptions of the role of Black women in society. Some may have never worked with a Black person in a position of authority.

Characteristics associated with race and class stereotypically connote a range of superior and inferior capability of people according to their racial and/or social class group. There are levels of authority in any given group or organization, and historically in American society, those with authority have been people with lighter skin colors, with upper/middle income, and mostly male. Thus, the upper class has more status due to the availability of resources, opportunities, and power. Groups with more social and economic power also have the ability to control or to shape perceptions and stereotypes. In other words, they create the reality for all social identity groups (Sampson,

1993). All of these groups exist in a world of social systems and subsystems where members of the various social groups must coexist together. As this country becomes more diverse, it is crucial to examine what happens in organizations when people who have historically not held authority or leadership take on these roles. Social class remains the silent factor in Group Relations work, yet it is an integral part of the lives of those who are staff and members in conferences, but it is seldom talked about. The literature on Group Relations has discussed race and gender issues (McRae, 1994; Noumair, Fenichel, & Fleming, 1992; Reed & Noumair, 2001), but class seems unspeakable and unacknowledged, perhaps because it is not readily visible.

I will focus on my learning from a conference series on race that was co-sponsored by New York University (NYU), my employer, and the New York Affiliate of the A. K. Rice Institute. All of the conferences were held at NYU. The Group Relations conferences at NYU were an attempt to create a space where race was central to the study of authority and authorization in groups. When relating across race, Black people often feel angry that they are expected to teach and contain all the aggression, and White people often feel guilty and immobilized by the fear of being labeled racist (Andersen & Collins, 1995; Hurtado, 1996). My goal was to create a space where race along with another relevant issue such as class, ethnic identity, and culture could be studied in relation to authority and authorization. I was looking for a way of valuing differences, without victimization being the currency for learning, and hoping that the Group Relations model, which creates a temporary learning system, would provide an environment where participants could experiment with new behaviors and engage in difficult conversations.

The President of the New York Affiliate at the time, Bernard Gertler, and I came up with a mentoring model for training new directors that involved a senior member taking on the role of Director the first year paired with a junior person who worked as Associate Director. These roles would then be switched the following year. This model would be instituted at NYU, starting with the author in the role of trainee. We decided on a Black woman as my mentor, a senior in the work, Kathy White, who had been directing conferences for many years. I had worked with and admired her and was thrilled when she agreed to mentor me. It is important to explain how I decided to conduct conferences at NYU. I had been asked for some years to consider taking on this role, but had been reluctant. This reluctance had to do with my own fears that were remnants of internalized oppression around class, race, and gender. It took a traumatic experience of loss to seize what finally became a wonderful opportunity.

THE BIRTH OF A CONFERENCE

The first conference, "Race and Class in Group and Organizational Life," was organized while I was in an angry and defensive mode. I was angry and hurt over the murder of my brother and concerned about the issues of race and class that had surfaced while dealing with this tragedy. *The Daily News* ran a story on December 7, 1997 entitled "Bed-Stuy Barber Shot Dead at Club

During a Confrontation." Although the article described my brother, Frank McRae, who owned a barbershop, as a "fixture in his Brooklyn neighborhood," it implied that the cause of his death was *his* involvement in a confrontation. This accusation was unwarranted and invalid according to a number of witnesses (McRae, 1998). My brother and I (along with my parents and five other siblings) grew up in North Carolina. We were sharecroppers whose family had migrated to New York for a better life. We both made transitions. Because I was eight years younger and not much use in the fields at that time, I was able to pursue more educational opportunities. Frank never finished high school.

The trajectory of our experiences due to class, race, and gender are both similar and different. In some ways, his lifestyle reflected that of many working class individuals with limited education, few role models, and no support on how to make a business strive. As a Black man, his sense of authorization by society to strive was thwarted by the negative stereotypes and projections ascribed to his class, race, and gender. As a Black man, he was negatively stereotyped as aggressive and dangerous, and his working class social habits (playing illegal numbers and cards in after-hours social clubs) associated him with criminal activity. His death, for me, became symbolic of how those with authority in institutions can use those at the lower end of the social stratum as containers for all that is negative and feared in our society and engage those with lesser authority in the process. I began to question how those from the lower stratum take up the role of authority and how others authorize them.

CLASS, RACE, GENDER, AND ROLE

In retrospect it was not the best way to begin my training as a Conference Director. It did force me, however, to confront my fears, especially those connected to class, race, gender, and role. One of the scars of being from the working class is the fear of not being good enough or not having sufficient preparation (Sennett & Cobb, 1972). The world in which my brother and I live has been hostile and unforgiving at times. As the owner of the barbershop, he managed his role with few encounters with those outside of his race and class. Fanon (1967) stated that "as long as the Black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others" (p. 109). As a professor and Conference Director, I have managed my role in the midst of predominantly White organizations. My experience in White organizations has been both positive and negative. I had progressed in such organizations quite successfully, yet I also had the experience of invisibility, to be seen and not heard, and to have my contributions couched in the not so respected affirmative action hire perspective. The stereotypes of class, race, and gender are not easily escapable even when major transitions have occurred. These stereotypes prevail not just in the minds of the observer but also in those who are the objects of the perceptions. In some ways, I think both sides fear change and transitions. It is as if we all collude in maintaining the oppression on the part of the oppressed and those with the privilege to oppress. I believe this is an unconscious process that is worthy of further exploration.

In *Working Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory*, Tokarczyk and Fay (1993) stated that women academics from the working class feel torn by a desire to maintain their family ties and to fit into the academy. As hooks (1993) stated:

> Maintaining connections with the family and community across class boundaries demands more than just summary recall of where one's roots are, where one comes from. It requires knowing, naming, and being ever-mindful of those aspects of one's past that have enabled and do enable one's self-development in the present, that sustain and support, that enrich (p. 106).

Tokarczyk & Fay further maintained that the achievements of women from the working class do not indicate that class is nonrestrictive; people do not pass out of one class into another, though their tastes, expectations, and habits may change. They argued that the scars of being consistently and subtly demeaned as a member of the working class persist in our lives. These scars can make those from the working class cautious in taking on new ventures, especially leadership roles in dominant elitist institutions. Taking on new ventures, especially leadership roles, requires a sense of inner authorization and emotional support for upward mobility. My transitions through various positions to that of psychologist, professor, and Conference Director have all been made with the support of a combination of those in roles of authority in organizations and my family. Others have generally thought I was more ready to take on various roles and tasks than I have at the time.

The inequalities in the class structure cuts across race and gender (Mantsios, 2001). In examining issues of class, race, and gender, it is important to consider the politics of belonging to various social identity groups and recognizing that one person can hold multiple identities (Sampson, 1993). Because race and gender are more visible, they may become more salient. As we move into the 21st century, the gap between social classes in this country continues to grow, however, and we can expect to see issues of class become more pronounced across and within race and gender groups (Mantsios, 2001). I am suggesting that class will become a more pressing issue in group and organizational life as the distance between those with and without resources increase.

My brother's death forced me to examine my experiences with class, race, and gender in a different way. It freed my unconscious and my spirit from some of the negative stereotypes and projections that had taken their toll on me over the years. The loss of my brother highlighted my connection to the working class and to African Americans and what it meant to be the other, the outsider, and a container of what society deems as negative. The loss also made me want to claim the other parts of myself: for example, the professional, the expert, the parts my brother bragged about to his friends when I visited his barbershop. It was time to integrate the various parts of myself more completely. By this, I mean that I am learning to hold on to the sharecroppers' daughter, the professor and Conference Director, the experience of not having and of having privilege. They are all a part of me, and each brings strength to me and informs me of different lifestyles, ways of being, and ways of knowing.

From a systemic and Group Relations perspective, social identities like race, class, and gender stimulate certain unconscious processes in groups such as projective identification, role differentiation, and envy (Wells, 1990). Group Relations methodology provides an avenue to explore the ways in which groups and organizations use individuals from various social identity groups as spokespersons, leaders, scapegoats, heroes, and enemies because of stereotypical assumptions about those sub-groups such as race, class, and gender (Reed & Noumair, 2001). I would like to think that my brother, on behalf of those from the working class, pushed me forward to provide a forum to study these issues. I am sure, however, that my colleagues, especially those in the New York Center, who are middle and upper class, also pushed me forward to do this work. It is in this way that I, as an individual, do work on behalf of the group-as-a-whole and put forth some of the complexities of working class, race, and gender as they relate to authority, role, and task.

TAKING UP ROLES OF AUTHORITY

As a professor, I have achieved what Leach (1990) called position power. The university authorized me to make use of its facilities and resources, which are highly valued commodities, and I have the academic freedom to engage in a variety of educational and scholarly activities. I was authorized by the university and by the AKRI New York Affiliate to conduct each of the Group Relations conferences at NYU. This formal authorization was derived from my position in both organizations. When a role is obtained through position power, however, its legitimacy could be questioned by competitive others, especially those with similar records of experience. The legitimacy of my authorization to conduct conferences was challenged because it was gained partly by position power and because of perceptions others held about me related to my social class, race, and gender. While authorization to take on a role in an organization is quite complex, I will only focus on the class, race, and gender aspects of this process.

My authorization to conduct conferences came from the New York Affiliate of the AKRI's Executive Committee's (EC) request for me to conduct a diversity conference at NYU. Next, NYU authorized me to use their space and finances to implement the conference. In order to work in A. K. Rice sponsored conferences, one has to have "the right to work," which means that you have been a member in a number of weekend and residential conferences. I received the right to work through the grandfather clause since I had been teaching Group Relations work and conducting weekend conferences with my students for some years. The one requirement that I had not met, at that time, was membership in the nine-day national residential conference. Thus, from an organizational perspective, I had not technically met all the experiential criteria. In my role as professor at the university, I had established legitimacy in my research and scholarship. Group Relations conferences were new to the university, and it was important to establish some credibility for this venue in a growing research-oriented environment. One perception of my work at the university was

that Group Relations work was rather dated "touchy-feely stuff" from the 1960s. In one organization, I had not properly paid my dues; in the other, I was involved in work of a mysterious nature. In addition, my race, class, and gender positioned me as a member of multiple identity groups that have been disenfranchised. The negative stereotypes and projections ascribed to a working class, Black woman contribute to questions of legitimacy of role. Perhaps my vigilance around issues of social class, race, and gender are related to differences in power and patterns of domination that have been a part of my experience (Andersen & Collins, 1995).

In retrospect, I wonder if the Affiliate's contracting me to work with a Black woman, who is clearly identified as middle or upper class, was in some ways a message to have me take her place. She was no longer very active, and there were no other members of color involved in the organization at the time. What I was not and could not be was a replacement for Kathy White. While very much alike in several ways, we are also quite different. In my eyes, she is the essence of sophistication, elegance, and what she calls the professional class. On the other hand, I am from a working class background, and it often shows in some of my behaviors and values: my hair is locked; I often accent my attire with Afrocentric objects; I am an activist from the late sixties and seventies who is outspoken about racial injustices and oppression; I have challenged the organization on its work around racial issues. Some might say that I carry my race and class boldly and defiantly, while Kathy has learned to weave hers into the fabric of her being, choosing carefully when to show her colors. These differences influenced our interactions with the organization. In some of my interactions with the EC, I felt that I represented the denigrated other who was dependent and needed help in performing certain tasks, while my mentor was perceived as capable of high-level performance. My experience was loaded with the assumptions and projections of incompetence in the organization because of my race and class (Ainlay, Coleman, & Becker, 1986; Fiske, 1993).

Obtaining authorization means establishing legitimacy of one's role in an organization (Leach, 1990; Sennett, 1980). It seemed that Kathy's years of experience with the organization and her work as a consultant with middle and upper income Whites provided a familiarity and confidence that fostered legitimacy and authorization in her roles in the organization. Also, she had been very active in the center and the national organization for many years and had been authorized to hold a variety of roles in conferences.

Social class is marked by differences in power (Andersen & Collins, 1995). It was clear to me that my mentor possessed the power to influence others in the organization. They did not see her race so blatantly. She was perceived as being more a part of them. In this way, social class cuts across race as well as gender. While I seemed to have little power to influence the thinking of the EC, she seemed to have tremendous power and had no problem asserting it. This was highlighted at the very beginning of the process. She was able to negotiate her role as Director without having any meetings directly with the EC. She politely and simply refused to meet with them by

being unavailable. Her behavior was not questioned, at least to my knowledge, by the EC, while my behavior was under constant scrutiny.

The EC assigned one of its White male members as liaison to work with my mentor and me in organizing the conference. In our first task, we had numerous telephone conversations before determining a date for the conference. There was some concern about scheduling the diversity conference at NYU in the spring and the traditional conference at Teachers College, Columbia University in the fall. The issue of which conference was more highly valued was discussed heatedly with little sense of collaborative spirit. My experience was that he had difficulty listening to me. When I stated what I wanted, it never seemed to be quite in line with what the organization had in mind. It felt like I was making requests that were consistently being rejected. My strong feelings about the diversity conference were interpreted as aggressively pushing for what I wanted without considering the traditions of the organization. My passion was experienced as emotional and irrational, which are stereotypes that are often attributed to the behavior of African Americans and the working class (Landrine, 1985). While I am not sure if my White male colleague ascribed these stereotypes to me, I felt that he experienced my disagreements in that manner. He would become defensive, and the conversation would be stalemated. I would get off the phone with him and call my mentor, who was excellent at helping me to re-frame my thoughts so that I could communicate more effectively. The discourse felt accommodative on my part in that I was working to learn how to use his language and his terminology so that I could be understood (Sampson, 1993). While this was an invaluable learning experience for me, it was also an indication of how difficult communicating across class and race can be. As a working-class person, I often feel a sense of inadequacy when in situations that require confrontation with a middle-class person. How can I confront them in a manner that can be heard but not experienced as threatening? Joseph (1981) observed that many members of the working class and Black women use a feisty and aggressive style of confrontation. This style of interaction does not mean that one is ready to engage in violent behavior but it is a way of making sure you are heard as serious. My experience is that middle-class folk see this behavior as aggressive behavior, however, and they get defensive and categorize me as hostile and unavailable for interpersonal engagement. My mentor, who was raised with middle-class values, was able to decode meanings and provide alternative ways of thinking about the discourse that allowed me to be more productive in future encounters. I must state that her years of training and expertise in consultation were an integral part in facilitating communication between the liaison and me. I also agree with Landrine (1985), however, that when class is an issue, Black people and working class become synonymous. I became the object of the anger transmitted through their liaison that was directed to my mentor, the unavailable Director. It was easier for projections of conflict and tension to be directed at me, especially since my identification with the working class and Blackness was more salient.

BOUNDARIES, ROLE, AND AUTHORITY

In the second conference when I became the Director, I experienced what Obholzer (1997) described as a sapping of my authority. This occurred in two ways. First, I lost staff and then members. I attributed these losses to not feeling fully authorized by both sponsoring institutions and to the dynamics of the role of Director as related to class, race, and gender. Before the conference began, I lost four of the people hired in consulting roles due to death, personal problems, or illness. While the death of a consultant could not be considered as undermining or sabotaging my authority, these losses in some unconscious way began to put my authority as Director at risk and challenged the boundaries of the enterprise. Three of these people were senior consultants whose work I had admired and wanted very much for them to be a part of my first directorship. Therefore, I began the conference with a sense of disappointment and dread. At the time, I experienced these events as a bad omen that I managed by staying busy, working on all types of tasks, filling the vacancies, and consulting with my mentor for support and direction. Staying busy and using physical energy is a working-class behavior. It prevents too much thinking and allows you to get a variety of tasks completed. When anxious, I do what my working class family has done best: work or attend to specific tasks at hand. For a Director, this behavior can be counter-productive because it takes focus away from the enterprise as a whole and makes it harder to contain organizational boundaries. Sometimes work takes the place of reflective thought. Reflection, of course, puts one in touch with the pain of the experience of assault on role and task.

Second, I realized a couple of weeks before the conference that my colleagues in the university were not encouraging their students to attend the conference. In frustration, I wrote a letter to the faculty and the academic dean inquiring about the lack of support for a conference on race and ethnic identity in our school. Was it not an important issue for our faculty and students to deal with? While the dean stated that the conference was relevant and important, I felt as if the work on diversity served both institutions as a politically sensitive act, but not really to be taken seriously. A few days before the conference, we lost seven members who had been on the boundary of entering the membership, and during the conference, members seemed to be in and out of the events. The boundaries for the conference felt loose. In my role as Director, I was unable to establish an organization that felt safe for staff and members to work mainly because of my lack of experience, fears, and difficulty in containing the negative projections of incompetence without internalizing them. My experience was that the losses were related to the fairly quick ascension of a working-class, African-American woman to directorship. It seemed similar to a form of hazing: it felt like a test to see if I could handle a very difficult situation or a challenge to an affirmative action hire who just might not have been qualified for the job. My fear was that the working class girl in me had not been good enough at engaging her staff and colleagues who were mostly middle class. My identification with those negative projections made it more difficult for me to take on the role of Director.

In the first staff meeting, it was impossible to get the staff to join in my opening statement to the conference membership on the issues of oppression, privilege, and disenfranchisement as they related to race and ethnic identity. The title of the conference was "Race and Ethnic Identity in Group and Organizational Life." The only White male on the consulting staff confronted me about how I framed my comments. He was concerned that he was being set up as a scapegoat, that as the White male, he would be identified as the oppressor. With a high level of anxiety, I began to question my own decisions, and this set the tone for the entire conference. My identification and containment of the projections and fears started before the first staff meeting, and I was not able to give them back until the very last day of the conference. The projections of incompetence, weakness, and passivity are attributes that are not a part of how I am usually experienced. In fact, I tend to pull for the opposite stereotypes ascribed to Black women. There was one White woman colleague on staff with whom I have worked who claimed that she and I had an out-or-body experience, we switched roles, and she became the assertive Black woman and I, the stereotypic passive White woman.

I felt like I lost my voice and my mind. There were moments when I felt the need for direction on matters that I was quite capable of managing. As a working-class, African-American woman, I wondered how I could know more about what to do than this group of middle-class, experienced consultants at the table. I split off my role of authority and projected it into those who I perceived as middle class (in this case class seemed more salient than race or gender) and who I had tended to see in roles of authority. I split off my strong parts into the White women, while identifying more with the weakness and passivity ascribed to White women and the working class. The staff also projected their inadequacies onto me. My strong identification as a member of the working class influenced my taking in those projections and stifled my ability to stay in the role of Director. I became the sharecroppers' daughter again and questioned my ability to take on a position of higher status. How could I stay grounded in the present and still not forget where I come from?

My race, class, and gender elicited negative projections. Examining this phenomenon created a sense of reality and sanity. It helped me to regain the authority of my role when staff and members of the organization seemed to challenge my very being. Understanding the projections helped me to become visible in the midst of an organization's environment that seems to prefer that I remain invisible. Morrison (1993) described this process as it relates to African Americans in a dominant White society.

> Africanism is the vehicle by which the American self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; not history-less, but historical; not damned, but innocent; not a blind accident of evolution, but a progressive fulfillment of destiny (p. 52).

Skolnick and Green (1993) noted that the drive to dichotomize, to divide into good or bad, and to create the denigrated other is a defense mechanism used to split off and project into the "other" as a container for undesirable aspects of the self.

ENVY AND COMPETITION

The working-class "girl" in me has difficulty getting in touch with the fact that middle-class women and men from any racial group would envy her, the sharecroppers' daughter. According to Obholzer (1997), "envy results in a destructive attack on the person in authority…the envious attack may take the form of a debate about general principles or technical issues…, and is presented as if it were in the pursuit of progress" (p.44). The issue of envy had first surfaced when I was Associate Director. In this conference, a consultant who had a long-standing relationship with my mentor told me that she thought that requiring students in my group dynamics class to attend the weekend conference was unethical. Of course, this comment was made during the Institutional Event when the staff was doing their work publicly and one of my students was in the room. I experienced her comment as an angry attack, not envy. I saw her as a privileged White woman with a sharp mind and one of the most skilled consultants I have known. Why would she be envious of me? It was later when I realized that I held a highly prized role, I was performing well, and I had developed an envious relationship with someone who was a powerhouse of experience and charisma.

In the role of Director at a staff meeting, I was continuously asked or reminded that I needed to consider certain tasks if I had not already, or I was asked to make a decision that someone thought needed to be made immediately. A few of the consultants even consulted with me privately on various tasks. In the midst of all this, I felt that I had not lived up to the expectations of my mentor. She sat quietly, observed, and said little. I felt abandoned by her and unsure of how to receive the consultations. The little Black sharecropper girl crept up inside of me. What was I doing sitting at the head of this table trying to manage all of these smart people who probably had more experience than me? I was not aware of the envy that some of the staff members had of my ability to be a Director and conduct a conference at an institution such as NYU. Competition and envy from subordinates comes with leadership. The salience of social identities such as race, class, and gender and the meanings attributed to them can prevent leaders from acknowledging the dynamics of competition and envy. In this instance, my insecurity and my identification with the limitations ascribed to my class, race, and gender made it difficult to contain the feelings elicited by this experience. Competition and envy were not only in full operation in this temporary organization, but consultants who wanted to take her place had successfully split my mentor from me.

When I was able to regain my voice and mind and take on the role of Director with a certain level of confidence and assertion, I was perceived as the Black militant who was unavailable to hear and protect White staff and members. It was yet another way of splitting me from my mentor and placing me in a position that did not allow for my connections and caring across or within race. Kathy and I were split, with her representing Whiteness and me Blackness. My experience of the split and projections in these incidents was the connection across class, even when within racial groups and connections across race were frightening and anxiety producing. The connections across

perceived differences of class and within race were a threat to the norm of a system that became dysfunctional. This system needed to free itself from the denigrated other by making sure that there was no joining or integration of disparate individuals or units. Also, the reality of multiple identities and the ability to hold on to the intersection of these identities seemed untenable.

Leach (1990) described the process of self-authorization as developmental. It is based on relationships with figures of authority in an individual's life and how they have been internalized. I have fortunately had strong role models (like my mother) and mentors that consistently encouraged and supported me to take on roles of leadership. The developmental process of self authorization consists of four stages: "1) unfreezing one's existing view of self; 2) identifying with role models…; 3) differentiating from these role models…; and 4) acting independently and interdependently" (p. 308). "Unfreezing" for me occurred during a staff meeting when it became clear that my staff and mentor expected me to do my job. It came in the form of a simple question from one of the consultants, "Mary, as Director, what do you think we should do?" This question, at that particular time, acted as a reminder of the role I had taken. It challenged me to get in touch with past experiences of being an effective leader, and it highlighted the reality of my role and competence. I had organized this conference. I was also able to hear the voice of my mentor telling me that in the role of Director, one takes in projections and holds them without internalizing them, using them as data to understand the life of the organization. It was clear to me that my mentor and I had different views about how issues of race and class should be worked in Group Relations conferences. It was all right for me to be different. She would not disown me, and if she did, I could live with it. It was the process of identifying the sense of inadequacy, recognizing my abilities, relating to my mentors' teachings and to her affection for me, and separating myself from her that allowed me to find my voice and to act more independently and thus interdependently.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINING OF DIRECTORS

First, the model for training new directors discussed in this chapter is worthy of further use and study. Having an experienced mentor who I admire and work well with provided an incredible learning experience for me. This model allowed me to observe the Director role closely the first year, learn the tools of the model and identify things that I wanted to replicate as well as things I did not. The most difficult task in taking up the role of Director in the second year is the courage to do things differently and to negotiate these issues with the mentor. Taking up the role of Director requires tremendous authority and responsibility. A good place to start is by identifying and owning one's special contribution to the work. Directors each have different qualities that make them special in the role. It is important to take what the mentor has that feels like a fit and to step out with one's own interests with which the mentor may or may not agree. It wasn't until I directed my second conference that this became clear to me.

The next issues to consider are authorization and sponsorship. In order to take up the role of Director, one needs to feel fully authorized by the institutions that sponsor the conference. When the issues of race, class, and gender are central, the question of whether institutions are just acting politically correct or whether they are committing to working out differences is foremost in the minds of those who come from disenfranchised groups. It is important to have conversations with sponsoring institutions about the types of support that are needed and expected. One way of determining the contractual agreement is to clearly define what it will take to feel and be perceived as fully authorized in the role of Director. What are your expectations and needs from the sponsoring institutions? It is also important in university-based conferences to understand how the work of the conference relates to the overarching theme of the work being done in the university. If the university is a research institution, what will the learning be from the conference that will contribute to further research and study? What role does the conference play for the university, administrators, faculty, and students? Those of us in disenfranchised groups need to learn how to more fully utilize the resources available to us. Sometimes we fear that not knowing means ignorance, when in fact there is no reason we should or could know this information if we are new to the role. There are many people with years of experience who can be invaluable resources on how to negotiate sponsorship and what it means, as well as helping with utilizing the tools of the Group Relations model.

For those of us from disenfranchised groups, the role of authority creates a dialectical experience of being both privileged and not privileged. On the one hand the role of Director is one of privilege; it comes with the authority to make decisions that impact on others' experiences. On the other hand, we cannot rid ourselves of our experiences lacking privilege. In some ways, we are in a position to do for and to others what has been done for and to us. This could cause tension and issues of trust for those who have always lived with privilege, while those from similar identity groups may feel empowered by our presence in the role of Director. The challenge for the Director is to engage members from multiple identity groups in authorizing the Director in role by creating an atmosphere of social justice. This means demonstrating a commitment to recognizing and hearing multiple voices and identity groups.

The next issue that influences how race, class, and gender might impact the role of Director is that of envy and competition. The challenge for a Director from a disenfranchised background is to acknowledge the pain of some of their experiences, while valuing their expertise that warrant envy by others, both those who have been more privileged and those who have similar backgrounds. Sometimes the idea that someone from the middle or upper class could be envious of someone from a lower class is unthinkable and unspeakable. The working-class person may be more prone to use their background to elicit guilt and shame from middle-class peers. These feelings make it difficult for the middle-class person to openly compete and get in touch with their envy for the position of the person with a working-class background. This is true for race and gender as well. Directorship is a position that elicits envy from those who are ambitious and are often great staff consultants. New

directors must learn to create a holding environment that allows for a variety of feelings and projections to surface in a non-evaluative way. When directors from working-class backgrounds acknowledge the privilege of the role and the envy and competition it pulls for from staff and members, it can be a very freeing experience for everyone involved.

Directors, especially those who belong to denigrated identity groups, who choose to conduct conferences on issues of diversity need to be prepared for the negative projections associated with them, the fear of corruption, and the terror of what it means for them to be effective. Taking on the role of Director requires making a transition by seeing oneself in a role of authority over others from different classes, races, and genders. It requires a willingness to speak the unspeakable, to name difficult feelings and thoughts, and to engage in unfamiliar conversations. It requires seeing oneself as a "good enough" authority figure who is capable of managing across the boundaries of various social identities and knowing that by practice you will do it a little better each time.

CHAPTER 11

Class, Race, and Gender: Person-in-Role Implications in Taking Up the Directorship

Mary B. McRae

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