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“Inclusion initiatives may be expressed and experienced as more authentic when leaders integrate technical and organic approaches by helping their employees develop and balance conscious dimensions of understanding and sensing.”

Beyond Talk

Developing Consciousness for Genuine Inclusion

By William Brendel,
Abdelfatah Arman,
and Leila Farzam

Abstract

Over the past decade, an unprecedented number of workplace inclusion initiatives have yielded weak, counterintuitive, and fragmented returns. With few exceptions, a review of recent literature and practice demonstrates that inclusion efforts tend to give preferential treatment to *either* the development of competent thinking and behavior *or* authentic feelings and intuition. We argue that this dualistic approach contributes to inclusive behaviors that lack sincerity and inclusive feelings that lack action. Integrating, balancing, and naturally applying inclusive behaviors relies on our ability to expand awareness in real-time, creating a conscious space for both conceptual and non-conceptual consideration. We present numerous ways in which OD practitioners can help clients develop this form of consciousness through applied mindfulness practices and Eastern dialectical thinking.

Keywords: inclusion, consciousness, authenticity, dialectical thinking, applied mindfulness

It is just as necessary to make the mind's concepts sensible—that is, to add an object to them in intuition—as to make our intuitions understandable—that is, to bring them under concepts. These two powers, or capacities, cannot exchange their functions. The understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only from their unification can cognition arise.

—Immanuel Kant (1781),
Critique of Pure Reason

Minority representation in the U.S. workforce is projected to exceed 50% by 2032 (Wilson, 2016), and as the demographic landscape changes, so too does our orientation to diversity. With its origins in equal rights and antidiscrimination efforts, which focused on broad identity groups,

diversity work is beginning to address the more complex experience of “belonging to multiplex, fluid categories” (Nkomo et al., 2019, p. 500). Some address this complexity by taking a localized, case-by-case approach (Farndale et al., 2015), such as European nations that tend to focus on individual languages, national cultures, and gender (Mor Barak, 2017; Point & Singh, 2003). Conversely, others such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) suggest a more universal definition, including “the similarities and differences between individuals, accounting for all aspects of one personality and individual identity” (2019, p. 78).

Learning how to develop inclusion is no less complex and comes with its own inherent paradoxes that employees find difficult and sometimes painful to navigate (Ferdman, 2017). A careful review of recent literature and practice demonstrates that

inclusion scholars and practitioners gravitate toward one of two different approaches to developing inclusive organizations, which we refer to as *Technical and Organic Inclusion*. Drawing from a large body of evidence, we argue that treating these approaches separately and preferentially promotes a dualism that makes it difficult to embrace inclusion with the complexity it deserves. The little research that does argue for integration does so, ironically, through a ‘Technically’ Organic lens.

To help OD practitioners address this dichotomy and suggest mechanisms for mindfully and dialogically addressing them, this article first illustrates the polarity between Technical and Organic Inclusion approaches. We draw from research that challenges the assumption that focusing exclusively on either of these areas necessarily improves the other. Instead, they seem to yield false-positive results: inclusive behaviors that lack sincerity and inclusive feelings that lack action. We then take a step back from the aspects of inclusion that employees pay attention to—namely thinking and talking about inclusion—to highlight the characteristics of conscious awareness that offer greater vantage point for an integrated approach. Drawing from this knowledge, we offer specific mindfulness and dialectical practices that OD practitioners, particularly those interested in Conscious OD (Brendel, forthcoming), may use to help employees balance awareness, and integrate a paradoxical understanding of inclusion from within.

Divided Attention

Technical Inclusion

Research and practice that leans toward a “Technical Inclusion” paradigm emphasize conceptualization, functionalism, measurement, and observable improvement. For example, Mor Barak (2019) suggests that an inclusive organization is that which “accepts and utilizes the diversity of its workforce while being active in the community” (p. 8). Here the stress is placed on planned and observable change, which has been explored and tested at great length over the past decade through subjects including equal representation, access to

resources, and equitable authority to contribute (Bell et al., 2009; Block & Noumair, 2017; Dijk et al., 2012; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007; and Zanoni & Nishii, 2013). The Technical Inclusion paradigm is decidedly binary. If an organization has diverse representation as defined by leadership, it remains diverse by its own definition unless its composition is fundamentally changed, or the metric has shifted.

An implicit assumption amongst Technical Inclusion proponents is that concrete changes in behavior, systems, and structures should lead to improvement of the characteristics of Organic Inclusion. This assumption is shaky at best, considering that research suggests it is not safe to assume that technical applications effectively change the impressions of identity groups that have traditionally been excluded (Shore et al., 2018). For instance, even though Google invested over \$264M in 2014 and 2015 in learning initiatives that focused on technical inclusion, in 2019, black employees comprised just 3.3% of their workforce, and only 2.6% hold leadership positions (Newkirk, 2019). Similarly, in addition to millions being invested by industry, according to Gallup the gender pay gap has barely improved (Miller & Adkins, 2016).

Learning new concepts and approaches to inclusion may lead to technically observable changes in behavior, but there is no guarantee that these changes will be viewed as authentic. Research demonstrates that individuals are capable of intuiting feigned emotion (Adolphs, 2003), which heightens feelings of exclusion and distrust in leaders (Caza et al., 2015). Studies also show that the authenticity of apologies is judged not by words but by our ability to sense genuine suffering in the person making the apology (Bonensteffen et al., 2020; Hornsey et al., 2019). Without addressing a sincere change in heart, technical inclusion efforts are in danger of backfiring (Dobbin & Kaley, 2016).

Organic Inclusion

Developmental approaches that pay greater attention to “Organic Inclusion” attend to fluid and deeply sensed dimensions of belonging, incapable of being planned well

in advance, or measured with accuracy. Organic inclusion expresses itself naturally and in the moment. To this end, SHRM (2019) defines workplace inclusion as “the extent to which each person in an organization feels welcomed, respected, supported, and valued as a team member” (p. 76). This definition leads with the subjective dimension of feeling as the ultimate indication of an inclusive workplace. Research regarding this emphasis has focused on sensing respect (Avery & Thomas, 2004; Strauss et al., 2003), feeling valued (Van Ewijk, 2011), being accepted (Nishii, 2013; Roberson et al., 2017), and psychologically safe (Nemetz & Christensen, 1996). In sum, Organic Inclusion entails a phenomenological orientation, encompassed by the emotions, sensations, and intuitions associated with the direct experience of being at work. This is a direct nod to the irreplaceable role of mindfully observing harmful sentiments that employees unintentionally reinforce through organizational culture. The importance of developing a mindful culture, is captured well by Jones (2021) who suggests that, “Just as we can intentionally monitor and manage many of our own personal tendencies, we must be mindful of the personality-determined tendencies in the variety of organizations we work with” (p. 66).

As unsafe as it is to assume that Technical Inclusion efforts lead to Organic Inclusion, the opposite is also not well supported. For instance, Deloitte’s *State of Inclusion Survey* recently found that even though 73% of respondents feel comfortable addressing bias in the workplace when they perceive it, only 29% stand up in the moment on behalf of themselves or their coworkers (Deloitte, 2019). Research demonstrates that well intentioned moral nudges (Dangaard & Gravert, 2018), or emotional pleas for social change that draw attention to undesirable behaviors, often leave people feeling ashamed or guilty to the extent that they cease prosocial change (Rogers et al., 2018).

Integrated Inclusion

For inclusion to be expressed authentically, we propose that OD consultants must help their clients skillfully balance and attend

to technical and organic characteristics in an integrated fashion. For this reason, we concur with Ferdman's (2017) holistic definition of inclusion, which balances both paradigms so that "people of all identities and many styles can be fully themselves while also contributing to the larger collective, as valued and full members" (p. 235). This form of alignment is expressed succinctly by Briana Joyner (personal communication, 2006), Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer for the Minnesota Historical Society, who suggests that "Inclusion is not just what we do, it is who we are."

For inclusion to be expressed authentically, we propose that OD consultants must help their clients skillfully balance and attend to technical and organic characteristics in an integrated fashion. For this reason, we concur with Ferdman's holistic definition of inclusion, which balances both paradigms so that "people of all identities and many styles can be fully themselves while also contributing to the larger collective, as valued and full members." This form of alignment is expressed succinctly by Briana Joyner, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer for the Minnesota Historical Society, who suggests that "Inclusion is not just what we do, it is who we are."

Despite Ferdman's (2017) recent integrated paradigm, it has been our experience that a preference toward Technical Inclusion still prevails, especially in periods of significant disruption, as leaders are forced to conserve mental energy due to competing demands. This can result in a 'checkbox mentality' that overlooks the rich, lived experience of collegial inclusion. This disproportionate leaning toward the development of Technical Inclusion mirrors a similar leaning in conscious awareness itself, which tends to favor a conceptual orientation toward information, over a more intuitive orientation that feels and senses information. Discussed next, these primary differences in consciousness hold clues as to how employee development efforts might cultivate more sincere expressions of inclusion.

Undivided Attention

OD initiatives that hope to increase inclusion must seek to help employees balance attention to both Technical and Organic dimensions of inclusion. Though consciousness remains too complex a feature for this article to explore in great depth, psychologists and neuroscientists generally agree that consciousness involves the way an individual subjectively experiences information (Blackmore & Troscianko, 2018; Block, 1995; Koch et al., 2016; Pitts et al., 2018). We adopt Block's widely

referenced terminology (1995), which identifies consciousness as the interplay between *Access Consciousness* (AC), and *Phenomenal Consciousness* (PC). Block (1995) suggests that AC and PC function simultaneously, and to varying degrees, one operates in the foreground as a primary form of experiencing, while the other operates in the background as a secondary form of experiencing. Unless we are intentional about shifting and sustaining our awareness, it is typical for one form of consciousness to overshadow the other.

Access Consciousness

AC serves as a holding environment for thinking, wherein the individual is cognitively primed to articulate, reason, react, or respond (Block, 1995). According to Block (1995), AC is: "(1) poised for use

as a premise in reasoning, (2) poised for rational control of action, and (3) poised for rational control of speech" (Block, 1995, p. 231). The term 'poised' is likely repeated because reasoning itself does not guarantee prosocial behaviors such as inclusion. Ultimately, AC involves the emergence of one's inner voice and thoughts. It follows that elements of Technical Inclusion including concepts, language, and behavior are experienced primarily through AC.

For example, equitable systems are concrete, clear-cut, and may be identified and discussed through language. Studies demonstrate that a clear drawback of dominant AC is that conceptual processing tends to be skewed toward self-serving biases (Dijksterhuis & Aarts, 2010; Leary, 2004; Lyddy et al., 2016). Relegated to thinking alone, AC does not provide an adequate space for sensing into these biases, which makes it difficult to recognize automatic, implicit biases (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

Phenomenal Consciousness

In contrast, PC entails the 'without-words' quality of being in the present moment. Commonly referred to as the "what it is like" quality of experience (Block, 1995), PC involves awareness of the felt encounter, outside of finite language and reasoning. For example, if we adopt the perspective of an employee who is experiencing a micro-aggression in front of co-workers, even without identifying or describing the offense, PC provides a visceral awareness of what the experience of discrimination feels like.

It follows that elements of Organic Inclusion, largely phenomenological in nature, are felt and sensed through PC. In many ways one can feel or intuit belonging without first having to describe it, just as one may emote toward a painting before understanding its provenance. When PC is dominant, the feeling that accompanies belonging resides in the foreground of our awareness. *Figure 1* (next page) depicts the relationship between AC and PC.

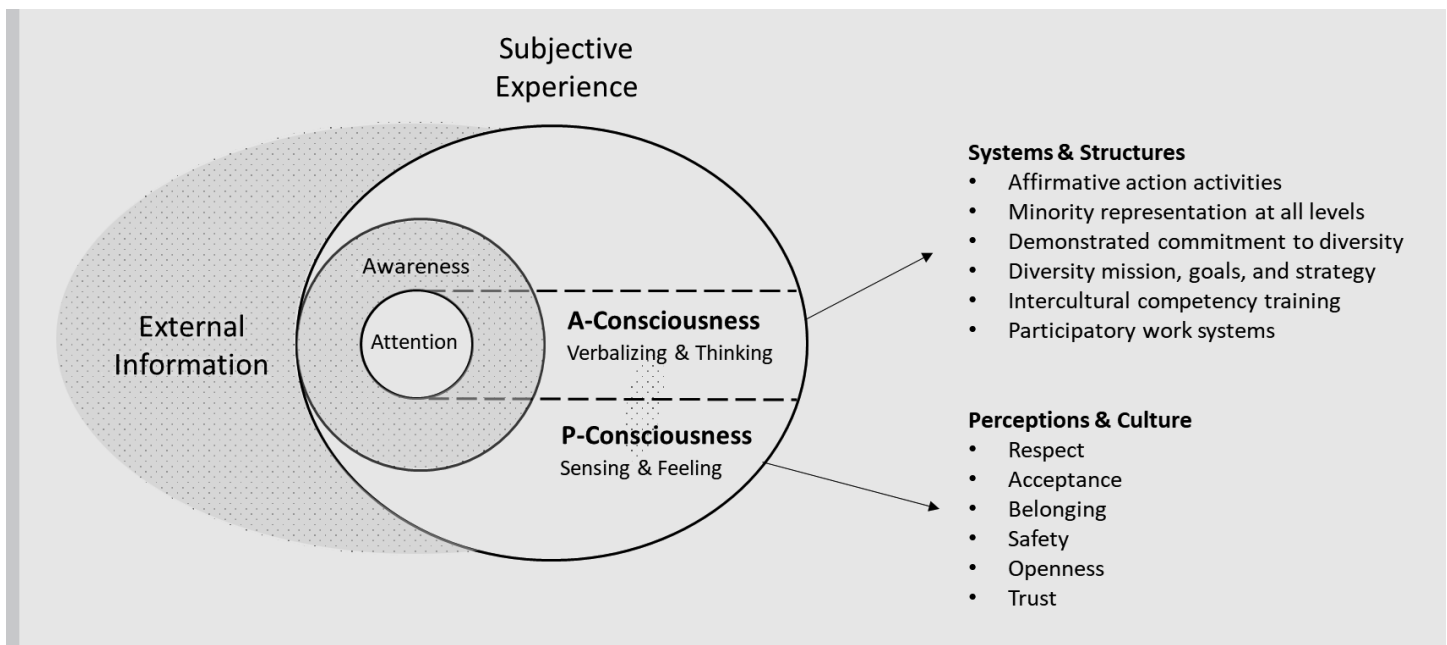


Figure 1. The Conscious Experience of Technical and Organic Inclusion

Balancing Awareness of Inclusion

Balancing attention between AC and PC is difficult in part because the modern workplace expects and rewards the products of AC. It is also difficult because it requires an activity of mind that feels unfamiliar to many of us. Mindfulness practice defined as an “awareness that emerges by paying attention on purpose to the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment” (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145).

Mindfulness may be practiced formally in a meditation setting by paying attention to sensations that arise in the body, including one’s sense of well-being or interoception (Hanley et al., 2017), and by cultivating a somatic sense of care and connection with others (Hutcherson et al., 2008; Salzberg, 1995). These practices have gained steam in some organizations with the aim of increasing employee well-being and in others as an approach to leadership development (Brendel & Bennett, 2016). To be in one’s own skin, is not only a term that may be thought of through conceptual abstractions around race, but also as the literal sensory organ that is linked directly to the present moment, capable of expressing an astounding depth of intuition (Brewis & Williams, 2018). It surfaces in language like ‘feeling goosebumps,’ ‘being rubbed the wrong way,’ and ‘skin

crawling.’ By accessing the language of our body, beginning with forms of knowing that express themselves ‘skin-deep,’ we are in a better position to push the boundaries of our taken-for-granted assumptions; that is, better than through Access Consciousness alone.

In addition to strengthening awareness through meditation, which is shown to extend far beyond the practice setting (Buchheld et al., 2001), mindfulness may also be applied intentionally throughout the workday by shifting and sustaining attention in prosocial and adaptive ways (Chiesa & Malinowski, 2011; Lin et al., 2016; Lyddy et al., 2016). In linking mindfulness with Use of Self, a concept that implicates a mastery of observation and aligning one’s actions with their values, Long (2020) suggests that “Mindfulness is a potential source of practices that develop the individual’s capacity for the best action to benefit the individual, team, and organizations for which they are serving” (p. 32). With the aim of balancing AC with PC, research demonstrates that the following practices deserve careful consideration for integration with inclusion training programs.

Self-Transcendence

To help leaders deal with complexity, it is said that OD practitioners must help leaders move from an inward mindset, which positions others as objects, to an outward

mentality that consciously embraces others as subjects who have needs that are equally as important as our own (Pugh, 2020). Formal mindfulness practices are demonstrated to temper harmful aspects of the ego, a device of conceptual processing that often uncritically seeks self-preservation and self-importance (Dijksterhuis & Aarts, 2010; Leary, 2004; Lyddy et al., 2016). Various formal decentering meditation practices (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Shapiro et al., 2006), involve expanding attention into PC so deeply that the subjectifying language of ‘I, me, and mine,’ and objectifying language of ‘them and others’ are no longer separated or identified (Dunne, 2011; Fucci et al., 2018). Through this process, an individual senses being ‘one with’ (Hutcherson et al., 2008), rather than merely a ‘part of’ a collective (see Figure 2 on page 53). Decentering practices, which interrupt ego anxieties, include formal meditation practices from Vedic and Chinese traditions, including Transcendental and Qigong (Travis & Shear, 2010) as well as Choiceless Awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 2016) and Shikantaza (Leighton & Wu, 2000).

To complement inclusion training techniques that protect ego-identity (e.g., role play), self-transcendence may help to establish a new relationship with one’s own *fallibility*—a dominant form of self-knowledge that arises in such settings (Brewis, 2019)—without ego-threat or attachment. During workshop free-writes

and dialogic reflection, one can practice letting go of the self to witness the constructivist and malleable nature of subjective experience. Practiced in and outside of the context of inclusion, this may also cultivate a greater conscious flexibility to self-author and break pernicious behavioral patterns in real-time. It may also provide a center of consciousness from which an individual may speak with greater intentionality, apologize with greater sincerity, and release patterns of self-shame that inhibit personal development. This decidedly Eastern approach captures a tenet offered by Dōgen Zenji, founder of the Sōtō school of Zen Buddhism, that the best study of the self is to “forget the self” (Kopf, 2012, p. 58).

Formal mindfulness practices may also be utilized to systematically dismantle existing biases in the workplace. For instance, *Loving-Kindness Meditation*, a form of mindfulness practice that locates and identifies the sensations we often associate with compassion and wishing others well-being, is empirically demonstrated to strengthen one’s sense of social connection with others and decrease intergroup biases as well as racial biases. Similar forms of meditation are shown to help decrease physician bias toward patients, age, and race bias, and have recently been positioned as a remedy for ‘White ignorance.’

Bias Recognition

Implicit bias occurs when behavior is driven by a previous, emotionally charged experience, which is remembered in a manner that is not entirely accessible through self-report and introspection (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). When triggered and acted upon in a knee-jerk fashion, this sensate form of information is shown to influence harmful organizational behaviors. For instance, newly-appointed supervisors who are more inclined to overlook information that challenges stereotypes regarding subordinates when evaluating their performance (Goodwin et al., 2000). Similar to intuition, this also is said to motivate behavior through nonconscious emotional information (Lufityanto et al., 2016, p. 623). *Stopping* (Li et al., 2016) is an applied mindfulness practice that may be

intentionally practiced in the moment an employee notices indescribable discomfort in PC, while interacting with someone of a different background, in order to cease acting upon potential implicit biases. Specifically, stopping involves noting a negative thought by sensing its emotional charge as it arises in one’s awareness and then intentionally letting go and focusing on a different object of attention (Li et al., 2016).

Loving-Kindness Practice

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fies the sensations we often associate with compassion and wishing others well-being (Salzberg, 1995), is empirically demonstrated to strengthen one’s sense of social connection with others (Hutcherson et al., 2008) and decrease intergroup biases (Kang et al., 2014) as well as racial biases (Stell & Farsides, 2016). Similar forms of meditation are shown to help decrease physician bias toward patients (Burgess et al., 2017), age, and race bias (Lueke & Gibson, 2015), and have recently been positioned as a remedy for ‘White ignorance’ (Polinska, 2018).

Loving-Kindness is also a practice that draws one’s attention to the relationship between emotion and self, illuminating that ‘I am not my sadness,’ but rather ‘I have sadness.’ In this way individuals are better able to sit longer with the fluidity

with which they emote and in doing so determine whether it is linked more with ego than with issues of organizational inequity (Brewis, 2017). This practice can stem shallow forms of moral signaling and, for instance, better align one’s sense of outrage with selfless, ethical acts that concretely restore justice.

Reappraisal

The applied mindfulness practice of *Reappraisal*, enables positive, prosocial, emotional regulation (Li et al., 2016) by transforming negative interpretations of situations into positive ones. This might include noticing a visceral sense of intolerance arising in PC and then embracing it through a prosocial interpretation. For instance, an individual may recognize some form of prejudicial intuition as it arises in PC, and rather than establishing a guilty and self-cynical interpretation, they welcome the feeling as a significant step toward personal growth. For some individuals, judging the self harshly may unintentionally diminish their desire to accept contradictions, such as those that exist between conscious and subconscious beliefs. Reappraisal may be a helpful tool for reinterpreting self-judgment as a humbling object lesson regarding inclusion. Reappraisal may also be the linchpin between sensate awareness and the accepting nature of Eastern dialectical thinking, discussed next. Research suggests long-term formal meditation practice helps to develop a general, non-dualistic world view, where individuals are likely to communicate with “dialectical, paradoxical, and complex styles” (Gill et al., 2015).

Integrating Paradoxes of Inclusion

Depending on how employees are guided in conceptually processing contradictions, learning one’s way through inclusion can be experienced as an elegant dance, an excruciating dilemma, or both. Three dominant paradoxes, likely to occur in dialogue concerning inclusion, all stem from how one identifies one’s self, the degree to which they are attached to that identity, and how safe they feel allowing their identity to evolve.

First, the paradox of *Autonomy and Connection* suggests that no relationship can exist without relinquishing individual autonomy, and if too much connection exists, it can annihilate the relationship due to the loss of individual identity (Baxter, 1990). The inverse also holds true, in that “too much autonomy paradoxically destroys the individual’s identity, because connections with others are necessary to identity formation and maintenance” (Baxter, 1990, p. 70). Ferdman (2017) similarly addresses this paradox in inclusion work as a tension between belonging as a function of sameness (e.g., equal membership in and representative of the collective), and uniqueness (e.g., freedom and encouragement of authenticity). Social pressures toward sameness often result in concrete organizational inequities. Consider how, at an unconscious level, employees who stand to gain the most resemble the archetype of the ideal employee, which resembles characteristics of the white male persona (Baker & Brewis, 2019).

A related paradox includes the degree to which individuals are open or closed to disclosing information that produces vulnerability (Baxter, 1990),

an essential element for intimacy that can also produce psychological harm. Nonetheless a balance between *Openness and Closedness* produces a creative tension and invites a diversity of views, thoughts, and applications (Baxter, 1990). Similarly, Ferdman (2017) refers to the tension between feeling safe to be who we are (through actions and expression), while also embracing a degree of uncertainty, leaving one’s “comfort zone,” and working to adapt to new ways of being and working together (p. 242).

Employees also encounter the paradox of *Predictability and Novelty* which refers to the tolerance each of us has in dealing with newness over predictability (Baxter, 1990). For inclusion to be authentic, groups should avoid overly rigid (Altman et al., 1981; Baxter, 1990), or excessive repetition (Kelvin, 1977) and to some degree embrace and appreciate novel worldviews and strategic assumptions that stem from different upbringings and experiences. Ferdman (2017) positions a similar tension as the paradox of *Boundaries and Norms*, which moves between concrete and agreed-upon expectations for the way individuals work together, and the ability to entertain

and integrate new perspectives and forms of interaction.

Just as employees may practice and apply mindfulness to establish an open, accepting, and non-dual orientation to inclusion through PC, a mirror practice in AC involves dialectical thinking, a process of processing and accepting the validity of paired opposites, or contradictions (Cornforth, 1968; Nisbett et al., 2001; Peng & Nisbett, 1999). From a psychological perspective, individuals who experiment with this advanced form of thinking stand the greatest potential for personal growth and development (Riegel, 1973, 1976).

Western Dialectical Thinking

The Western approach tends to be motivated by a general discomfort with contradiction and lack of control, and may be characterized as a vigorous, resolution-oriented, and pragmatic method (Basset, 2006). It can engage a multitude of activities within AC, including critical reflection, debate, and dialogue. The underlying assumption of Western dialectical thinking is that “balance, stability, and rest are more desirable than a state of

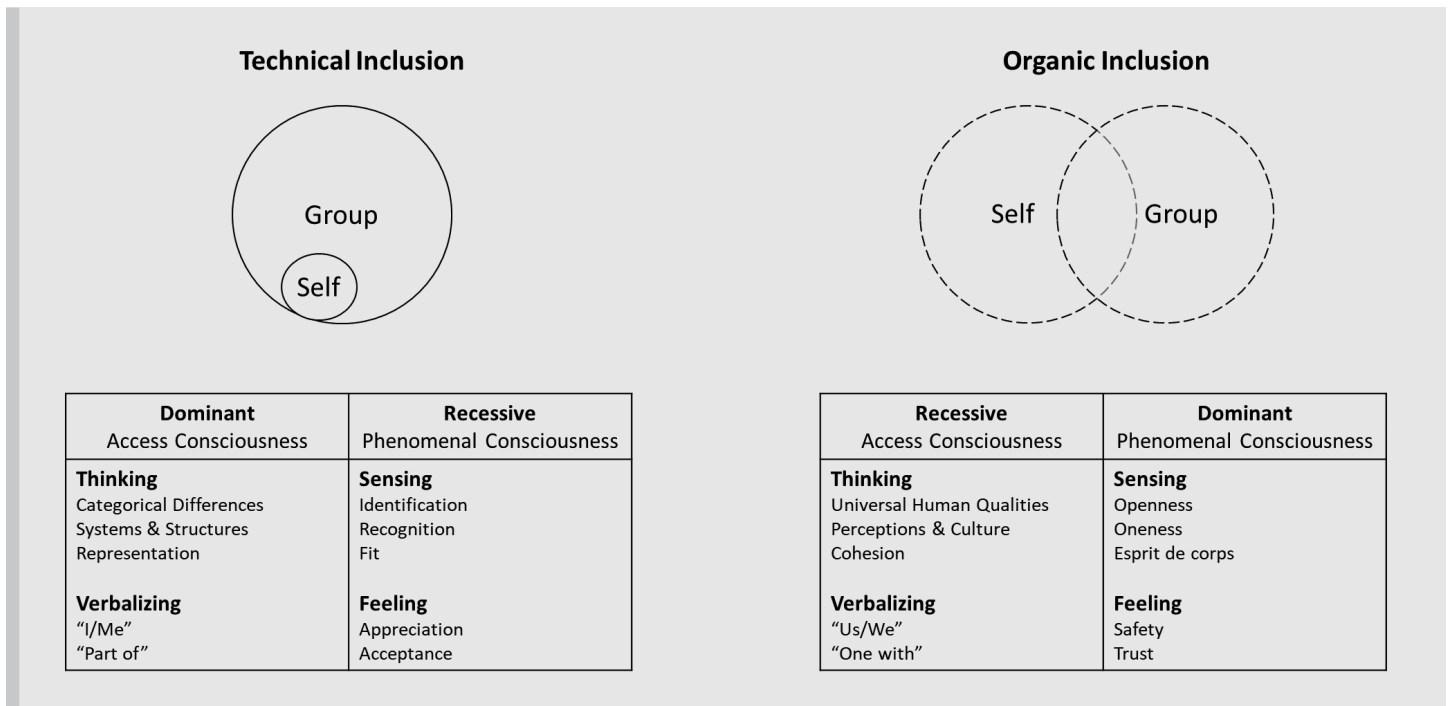


Figure 2. Inclusive Thinking, Sensing, Verbalizing, and Feeling

upheaval, conflict, and change” (Riegel, 1976, p. 690). As a result, many of us have been conditioned to strive for synthesis when presented with thesis and antithesis (Riegel, 1976). Left to devices of AC, this approach can be more problematic because efforts to resolve contradictions often lead to further contradictions (Riegel, 1973), which may escalate anxiety and defeatism around inclusion.

Consider how in Western philosophy, the term authenticity is generally agreed upon to mean “true to oneself” (An, 2004,

Eastern Dialectical Thinking

Eastern dialectical thinking assumes harmony and interdependence amongst opposites, and establishes an accepting, generative, and integrative stance. It acknowledges the limitations of thinking, and recognizes the influence of unconscious biases (Basset, 2006). Rather than relying on snapshot assessments of reality, this perspective assumes that the abstractions we draw from reality are fleeting and can change from moment to moment and sometimes abruptly so (Lu et al., 2020).

In addressing paradoxes of inclusion, an Eastern dialectic approach readily recognizes that opposites, such as autonomy and connection, cannot exist independently. This stems from the philosophy of *Yin and Yang*, which suggests that if one side should prevail over the other, both cease to exist, and therefore tensions present a necessary harmony. In this light, Eastern dialectical thinking is not meant to seek resolution, but rather transcend argument altogether and instead see the ‘greater picture.’ The concept of acceptance does not imply that change should not be sought.

p. 155). This egoic orientation is expressed through a language-oriented form of consciousness which positions the subject to distinguish their Self as identifiable and separate from others. Self-identifying language systems are also socially constructed and manifest in finite comparisons between nationality, gender, identity, race, religion, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability, and educational background. A Western orientation, therefore, aligns more readily with Technical Inclusion efforts, which are driven through language and conceptual processing. This approach may be conditioned in part by the classic agenda of Western psychology, which views the development of an enduring, and identifiable Self as a central aim of human development, wherein “people see themselves as independent, responsible, goal-oriented agents of their own lives while granting others the same right to separate personhood” (Cook-Greuter, 2000, p. 229).

For transcendent wisdom to become manifest through Eastern dialectical thinking, “The ego must be decentered from its throne in the psyche” (Basset, 2006, p. 292). Fittingly, studies have demonstrated that traumatic events that challenge individual identity, are especially conducive to establishing transcendent wisdom (Wink & Helson, 1997). This Eastern form of thinking may hold greater developmental potential following distressing events concerning inclusion, such as the experience of marginalization or scapegoating.

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and instead see the ‘greater picture.’ The concept of acceptance does not imply that change should not be sought. Instead, proactive acceptance—whether through applied mindfulness or dialectic thinking—conditions equanimity, a calm psychological space for addressing attachments to contradiction that harm the well-being of employees. Perhaps it is for this reason that transpersonal development benefits from acts of embracing rather than resolving contradictions, and welcoming questions rather than forcing answers (Riegel, 1973, 1976).

Eastern philosophy’s view of authenticity is greatly influenced by the Confucian concept of *Cheng*, which translates as “to face one’s universal self with universal true feeling” (An, 2004, p. 155). In this sense, the most authentic experience does not occur in distinctness from, but rather in oneness with all of humankind. This requires a conscious orientation to experience that does not seek and confirm individual differences, but instead non-judgmentally intuits a sense of unity with others. This has been described as a process of self-transcendence that is related to the mindfulness practice discussed earlier. In early stages, self-transcendence provides an organic space for self-awareness and perspective taking, and in more advanced stages a sense of non-self (Watts, 2011). In addition to Confucianism, Eastern dialectical thinking is influenced by Taoist and Buddhist teachings, which caution against the illusion and impermanence of all categorizations, most notably the Self (Tuske, 2013).

Conclusion

Inclusion initiatives may be expressed and experienced as more authentic when leaders integrate technical and organic approaches by helping their employees develop and balance conscious dimensions of understanding and sensing. One distinct way of developing this capacity is through the paired introduction of applied mindfulness practices and dialectical thinking. The payoff of such efforts should be measured not only in terms of pay equity, promotion, and fair performance ratings, but also the

authentic expression and experience of inclusion in everyday life. This approach warrants additional research because it provides holistic, growth-oriented practices that may lead to the well-being of the business and its employees.

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