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Implementing grassroots inclusive change through a cultural audit

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to implement diversity and inclusion practices in an USA university department through the application of a cultural audit in the style of participatory action research (PAR). The cultural audit process demonstrates an inclusive, grassroots approach to creating actionable solutions that brings about positive organizational change and can be replicated by others.

Design/methodology/approach – The version of an organizational cultural audit described here included two phases. The first was quantitative in nature, using a survey to collect data that would provide the organization with a perspective of how its culture is perceived (Fletcher and Jones, 1992) and serve as the basis for the second, more crucial phase. The second phase utilized PAR qualitative approach. Having data presented in aggregate form allows for truer reactions to how others believe they experience the work environment, as opposed to making assumptions about how others may experience the work environment. A cultural audit such as this relies heavily upon the qualitative narrative that is exposed when participants react to the quantitative data presented. In fact, the real assessment begins not with the quantitative data collection process, but with the presentation of the quantitative data and the analysis of how participants respond to what they see.

Findings – The researchers found social and practical implications for empowering employees to develop a culturally agile organization. Results showed that participants generally viewed the culture as lacking transparency and needing values-based guidelines for everyday interactions. Participants thought they should value diversity, but viewed the culture as having a gap in solutions to apply that value. Incentivizing actions that promote diversity and inclusion and better shared governance were needed to address cultural problems in the organization. Recommendations for actionable solutions included: developing shared language through a values statement, restructuring onboarding and mentoring support, increasing transparency of standing committee work, membership, and minutes to foster trust and communication, implementing group guidelines for respectful interactions, and the creation of regular, planned social events to enhance human relations. This case study is significant because it uses an innovative method to not only study diversity and inclusion in a university setting, but also take action, thereby filling a gap in the literature on critical studies of organizations.

Research limitations/implications – For those trying to institute a similar experience for their organization, it would be important to note that the cultural audit was a grassroots intervention, designed to help the division discern what kinds of lived experiences and shared assumptions exist within.

Practical implications – The case study presented should serve as a roadmap for how individuals can garner support for conducting a similar cultural audit with their own organizations.

Originality/value – This case study is significant because it uses an innovative method to not only study diversity in a university setting, but also take action, thereby filling a gap in the literature on critical studies of organizations.

Keywords Action research, Organizational change, Inclusion, Critical diversity, Cultural audit

Paper type Case study

Introduction

Transformation is difficult. As organizations grow and experience change, many voices on the margin can get drowned out. Cultural audits can be used as an inclusive method to conduct diversity research by engaging all stakeholders in the interpersonal process of change and garnering buy-in for change. Educational organizations that undergo growth in programs often focus on structural and systemic change at the expense of tending to the impact on individual, interpersonal relationships. It is critical to tend to shifts in values, beliefs, and how the change process impacts people for the change to be fully successful. The cultural audit allows for that. In this case study, our research objective was to implement diversity and inclusion practices through a visionary process that forced us to see who we were and who we wanted to be.

Inclusive change can only come to fruition through buy-in from all members of an organization. In this case, the researchers leveraged participatory action research (PAR) methodology (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988) because the purpose of this project was addressing a perceived problem from a grassroots effort. It emerged from the ground up and empowered all employees as stakeholders to use their voices and share their experiences. Positioning employees as experts on this organizational change effort made sense given the desire to enhance inclusion by tapping into everyone's insights. Employees were uniquely qualified to provide feedback on issues with which the organization had been grappling. Faculty and staff, who were not administrators and served on a Diversity and Inclusion Committee, experienced the need for self-assessment on these matters, collectively built survey questions, and organically followed where those data led them to come together in person to probe these challenges deeper in community with one another. The process was entirely self-organized and participatory.

The researchers in this case were also members of the organization, serving as junior-level faculty, having been in their roles for two years. Additionally, the researchers served as co-chairs of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, which organized, managed, and facilitated the cultural audit discussed in this paper. The participants of the cultural audit included all members of the organization. Some participants were also members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and served as facilitators of the process as well.

The researchers hoped participants would be transformed by this process along with the organizational culture. The overarching research question was:

RQ1. How do we create grassroots inclusive change through a cultural audit?

Initially, the committee collected quantitative data through a cultural audit survey that identified problem areas, and then used qualitative PAR design to conduct solution-focused circle of actions. The researchers employed a case study to describe this research because it allows for diving into the complexities of people's social group relationships to foster positive transformational change.

A novel approach: the cultural audit
Schein (1992) defines culture as "a pattern of shared assumptions." Culture is also referred to by Bolman and Deal (2013) as the way we do things around here. A cultural audit is defined as a qualitative diagnostic methodological process that reveals how bias manifests within an organization's informal and formal practices and cultural norms. It uses the voices of the people to reveal strengths and weaknesses in the culture (May, 2014) and can force organizations to see who they are and who they want to be. Cultural audits can help establish a clear rationale for building concrete diversity and inclusion outcomes into the organization, allow for comparisons to other organizational cultures, identify critical elements related to power and influence (like how decisions are made), how communication happens, and be used to accomplish change. Cultural Audits examine the generally held beliefs people have in organizations about diversity and inclusion, especially related to working with each other. Using a cultural audit is a novel approach because it uses the expertise of people within an organization, rather than hiring outside "expertise," and allows for a greater focus on individuals and relationships that make up the structures, rather than just the system or structure itself.

Case study description
At a large, public, urban, research (university) in the Midwest, the division of (organization), an academic unit with both faculty and staff, underwent significant growth in 2014 when it became deemed as the hub for experiential learning. The primary mission had long been focused on cooperative education and internships with the goal of gaining work experience

in preparation for a professional career. In 2014, the unit expanded to include existing service-learning and undergraduate research programs that fit the mission of learning beyond the classroom walls, and expanded international experiential learning, as well as created a program focused on pre-health students. With new diverse program offerings came the need to conduct a self-assessment regarding diversity and inclusion within the organization which would provide insight into daily practices, strengths, and gaps.

Contextual background: Diversity and Inclusion Committee formation
In the wake of a 2015 tragedy where a white university police officer shot and killed a black unarmed motorist near campus, members of the division developed a grassroots, first-ever Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Faculty governance approved creation of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, which had strong interest in participation from faculty and staff. The committee included diverse representation by gender, program, age, experience and roles.

The (University's) definition of diversity was used: "Diversity recognizes a broad concept of diversity that includes considerations such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability status, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, sexual identity, sexual orientation, religion, and regional or national origin" (University of Cincinnati, 2015). The committee defined inclusion as "both being fully ourselves and allowing others to be fully themselves in the context of engaging in common pursuits" (Ferdman, 2010, p. 37).

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee considered self-assessment a first step to understand collective beliefs that were ingrained in the organization. It was important to focus inwardly before we attempted to direct attention on these matters outwardly. Did policies and practices hinder equity? Did the organization promote the values of one specific group over another (Gardenswartz and Rowe, 2007)? The committee adopted the cultural audit to address these questions.

Literature review
Critical diversity and the need for cultural agility
The breadth of the study of organizational culture is extensive. Given that interest was in the way diversity and inclusion manifested in organizational culture, the researchers deemed it necessary to ground this cultural audit in critical organization studies. According to Zanoni *et al.* (2010), "critical diversity studies emerged in the mid-1990s" (p. 9). The critical approach challenges the concept of diversity as simple business rationale in organizations and for ignoring power relations. Critical diversity is more than embracing cultural differences that exist and appreciating those differences. It also includes examining issues of parity, equity, and inequality in all forms. This cultural audit needed to be grounded in this orientation because the goal of this project was pragmatic and prioritized taking action, not just tolerating one another's differences through words.

The cultural audit process confronts issues of oppression and stratification that revolve around issues of diversity. "A theory of critical diversity includes an analysis of exclusion, discrimination, and it challenges hegemonic notions of colorblindness and meritocracy" (Herring and Henderson, 2011, p. 632). Thus, using critical diversity as the theoretical lens supported the research question of how to create grassroots inclusive change through a cultural audit.

Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1995), a framework intended to explore co-existing identities, is essential to critical diversity scholarship. Applying intersectionality to this organizational case study allowed members of the community an opportunity to share the power dynamics from their own wide-ranging intersectional perspectives and from the frame of reference of their salient professional and personal identities as faculty, staff, administrators, men, women, people of color, young professionals, new hires, parents, etc. Furthermore, using intersectionality as a theoretical lens on this case supported our intentions to be as inclusive as

possible by deconstructing assumptions about categories of people to foster positive change in social practices (McCall, 2005). The cultural audit attempted to understand how all employees made sense of diversity and inclusion, not just those at the top.

The benefits of diverse workplaces that practice inclusive leadership are well documented. May (2014) asserts that these types of organizations make stronger business decisions and are better able to adapt and innovate. Building a diverse and inclusive organizational culture leads to a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Testa and Sipe, 2013). Besides the business advantages, the overall health of an organization's culture may be enhanced by diversity and inclusion because it prevents groupthink mentality and pressure to conform. Prasad and Mills (1997) argue for more focus on common, everyday dilemmas related to studying the benefits of organizational diversity. The idea of "managing diversity" is an outdated concept. A more substantive approach is to look to the organizational culture to examine practices that reinforce the hierarchical status quo or challenge it. The relationship between the literature in organizational culture (focused primarily on corporate culture) and critical diversity studies (draws from Sociology) illustrates a shift from diversity and inclusion to equity and justice.

Cultural agility is the ability of members of an organization to be flexible in adapting to a new cultural context. According to Brown *et al.* (2016), a culturally agile organization is created when leaders "(1) understand their own culture and how it shapes their experience, (2) understand and appreciate cultural difference with others, and (3) incorporate this knowledge into their interactions and decision making." Developing an organization that practices cultural agility was a goal of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Therefore, a sub-group of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee developed a cultural audit to assess the reality of our cultural agility. "Once a cultural audit begins, the change process begins" (May, 2014, p. 3).

Transformational change

Transformational change occurs when managers and employees engage in a mutually purposeful process of examination, which requires members to shift their attitudes, beliefs and cultural values (Bartunek, 1988). When applied to diversity work, the difficulty in co-creating transformational change within organizations is the separation of individual change from structured, systemic change. Much of transformational change focuses on the organization, allowing the individual to potentially avoid much needed interpersonal growth around their own identity and the acknowledgment of the identities of others.

However, transformational change on an individual level cannot occur without an analysis of the systemic and oppressive issues and constraints the organization has created. The issues individuals experience within organizations, especially regarding oppression, injustice, and discrimination, stem from the structures of the organization. People tend to view organizations as identity neutral, but in fact they take on the identity of the system in which they are constructed (Acker, 1990).

Acker (1990) explains this through the lens of gender identity in organizations, "To say that an organization, or any other analytic unit, is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (p. 146). Divisions within organizations occur along lines of individual identity, the symbols and images "that explain express, reinforce, or sometimes oppose those divisions" (p. 146), interactions between individuals that enact dominance and submission, and organizational fit. Constructs such as cultural fit, language, ideology, dress, interruptions, turn taking, policies, evaluation, and hierarchy all contribute to the division amongst individuals of differing identities (Acker, 1990). If not properly explored, these divisions can manifest in destructive ways.

Transformational change has been criticized as having lofty goals but lacking in practical guidance (Benschop and Verloo, 2011). Continuing with gender as an example, the

"bifocal approach" is a feminist intervention strategy for transformational change (de Vries and van den Brink, 2016). This approach uses the metaphor of bi-focal glasses to focus on both developing individual agency (up-close view) and systemic changes (high level, distant view). One of the largest challenges with attempts at transformational change is the ability to sustain it. "The generative, experimental and open-ended nature of transformative approaches, necessary because of the context specific, dynamic and shifting nature of gendering processes, means that change is entirely dependent on organizational insiders maintaining the impetus for change" (Benschop and Verloo, 2011, p. 432). So, without trying to fix people, the bi-focal approach supports individuals working to transform the inequitable social order in an organization. This is a small-wins approach. To move the needle on organizational change, there is a need to address beliefs of an organization. Cultural audits can accomplish this by applying the bi-focal approach, which assesses a shared understanding of the current reality of the organization and how individuals can take ownership in creating change.

According to Chapman (2002), "Transformational change benefits from strong leadership that identifies new pathways for organizations to follow, and builds the momentum for change even though the future state of the organization remains undefined." (p. 18). Transformational approaches require employees be empowered so that real, intended change can occur. Both employees and managers must be committed to the mutual education of each other and learn from the other's actions (Freire, 2000). In these cases, positive relationships between employees and their managers are essential for organizational success (Gilbert, 1985, p. 449). Once empowered, employees must take control of the transformational change process. Individuals who are a part of the organization will be affected by the change and serve as change agents so long as their participation in the change efforts contributes positively to the reframing process (Tichy and Devanna, 1990). According to Freire (2000), critical pedagogy centers on helping people question and challenge dominant beliefs enacting change. In summary, the participants of the cultural audit practiced a critical pedagogy by engaging in a thoughtful, rigorous, and sustained inquiry into diversity and inclusion that sought to inspire and empower everyone in the organization to work towards a more inclusive social transformation.

Methodology
The research objective was to implement diversity and inclusion practices through a visionary process that asked members of the organization to see who they were and who they wanted to be. The overarching research question was:

RQ1. How do we create grassroots inclusive change through a cultural audit?

In terms of research structure, the version of an organizational cultural audit described here included two phases. The first was quantitative, using a survey to provide the organization with a perspective of how its culture is perceived (Fletcher and Jones, 1992) and serve as the basis for the second, more crucial phase. The second phase utilized a PAR qualitative approach. Given the sensitive nature of this process, as well as the unpredictability in how the process would affect the individuals participating, it was essential to begin by collecting statistical results so that participants could react to data. Having data presented in aggregate form allows for truer reactions to how others believe they experience the work environment. A cultural audit relies heavily upon the qualitative narrative that is exposed when participants react to the quantitative data presented. The real assessment begins with the presentation of the quantitative data and the analysis of how participants respond to what they see. The discussion and sharing processes involved in the second, qualitative phase are the most critical components of the cultural audit. These discussions serve as the most significant points of information used to determine outcomes of the cultural audit that show where future efforts should be directed.

Ethical considerations

Access to participants was streamlined due to collecting backyard research in the organization where the researchers held roles as faculty (Creswell, 2014). While the researchers held their own insider knowledge of diversity and inclusion practices in the unit, they did not assume to understand the experiences of everyone else. Therefore, it was important to prioritize reflexivity throughout the process to enhance validity (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015). For example, the researchers took into account organizational history and context as the cultural audit was process developed. Apparently, there had been a history of mistrust with the way other survey data had been collected. One person shared that they were reluctant to take the survey because they were worried they would get into trouble for something. Wright (1986) stated that special care should be taken to ensure participants give honest not politically expedient answers.

The first version of the cultural audit survey included five demographic questions regarding participant's role within the division, unit affiliation, prior experience, gender and age. The purpose was to analyze patterns within demographic considerations and affiliations. Participants expressed a concern that their identity could easily be discerned during a statistical review of the data. Therefore, it was in the best interest of everyone to remove obstacles that could keep people from completing the cultural audit. In order to protect participants' anonymity, these questions, along with a question about satisfaction with employment were removed. Any information that had been inadvertently collected were expunged prior to data analysis.

The researchers were not external to the organization, but were participants as well. While external consultants could potentially eliminate design bias, this could also limit buy-in from participants. A grassroots cultural audit will garner much more participation and willingness to address systemic concerns than an external process placed upon the organization. The case presented shows that high participation in a study such as this is possible, when the participants know that the impetus for the study has come from within their own ranks.

Peer debriefing also enhances the validity of qualitative research. There were many conversations early on about how intentional the Diversity and Inclusion Committee must be because it was the first committee focused on the topic. The researchers realized that it was important to tread lightly since taking on a project like this can have a major cultural impact. Gaining small wins was deemed a success because it was understood that deep systemic change is a long process. "The time needed to change organizational culture and attitudes should not be underestimated" (Bardoel and Sohal, 1999, 263). Practicing patience and celebrating small wins should be considered part of any cultural audit process.

PHASE I – survey data collection

When developing the survey instrument, a sub-group of committee members drafted belief statements pertaining to the issues studied in this process. Each question began with "I believe […]" to reflect that participants directly experienced these issues themselves. The researchers also met with the university's chief diversity officer (CDO) who served as an external auditor. She reviewed the questions on the survey instrument and suggested edits.

The researchers placed each belief statement into one of six scales, working environment, relationships, individual experience, hiring and representation, leadership and organization, and diversity and inclusion training. The scales used a five-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. Participants could also select "Choose Not to Respond." Four questions did not fit within one of the six scales and remained as additional questions. These included a question about satisfaction with the participant's employment, relationship with a mentor, and an open-ended question on power dynamics. The Diversity and Inclusion Committee added seven additional questions among the six scales, for a total of 79 total questions. Table AI outlines the questions within the survey.

The researchers discussed the cultural audit process with the participants during a division meeting to help participants understand the nature of the instrument, how the results would be shared, and why the cultural audit was important. The survey invitation e-mail included additional context. The statements included a definition of a cultural audit defined by the researchers, a definition of the word diversity defined by the university, and a definition of the word inclusion defined by Ferdman (2010).

It is important to note that the division head supported the survey, which helped the response rates. The survey was built through a password-protected online survey and administered by e-mail from the university's CDO. It was estimated that it would take 15 minutes to complete. To ensure anonymity, each participant was given a random number, known only to the CDO. This was done so that the CDO could follow up with participants who had not yet completed the survey. Participation was voluntary.

The response rate was extremely significant: 98 percent. Of the 40 invitations, there were 38 full responses, one partial response and one unopened invitation. The CDO aggregated the data and sent it to the researchers. To ensure anonymity, the researchers did not have access to the individual response sets. This process limited the types of analyses that could be done. The results of the survey were presented in slide deck to participants as part of the next phase of the cultural audit.

PHASE II – participatory action research

Phase II consisted of qualitative, PAR. William Foote Whyte founded PAR in 1991 as an outgrowth of Action Research, founded by Kurt Lewin (Adelman, 1993). Both PAR and action research are collaborative and reflective inquiry processes whereby the researcher uses discussion with people to better understand and improve a given situation (Adelman, 1993). However, according to Stoeker (1999), PAR is more grassroots and oriented towards social change. Educators commonly use PAR as well (Ferrance, 2000). This phase of the cultural audit was the most crucial to diving deep into understanding the norms, practices, attitudes and experiences of individuals and groups within the organization.

Stage 1. Members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee facilitated a two-stage process: a results-sharing stage and circles of action stage. The first stage was the results-sharing session. Participants were invited to attend one of three results-sharing meeting and attendance was not required. Out of the 40 members of the division, 33 attended, an 83 percent participation rate. Two members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee facilitated these sessions rather than external facilitators, meaning that all members of the conversation (participants and facilitators) were stakeholders in the grassroots process.

Each session started with conversational ground rules. To accomplish this, the committee utilized ROPES from the University of Wisconsin Green Bay Diversity Circles (Knudsen, 2008). The three sessions maintained a consistent format, starting with cultural audit results shared via e-mail and then facilitators shared a slide deck summarizing results during the sessions. Sharing the results in advanced allowed participants to be better prepared to engage in dialogue. The participants were then invited to comment or just listen. The committee identified a note taker to document the sessions. The note taker was the same person for each session to help ensure notes were consistent. The analysis of the notes taken during the session yielded themes and guiding questions. The Diversity and Inclusion Committee debriefed themes and questions and then used them to guide the second stage where the results would be used for departmental improvement.

Stage 2. The second stage included the circles of action sessions. The goal for these sessions was to continue to create a sense of community while taking ownership for co-constructing actionable solutions to move the organization forward. They were a place to listen to others' perspectives on organizational dynamics, speak authentic truths and most

importantly, decide how to translate ideas into action. "Sustained [behavioral] change happens when people understand, accept and act. It is only through their actions that change to support a new vision or strategy becomes real" (May, 2014, p. 2).

Participants could attend one of four circle of action meetings. Each meeting was facilitated by two members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Facilitators reminded participants about the high response rate to validate the survey findings, distributed a handout with the survey themes and questions discerned from the results-sharing sessions, shared the ROPES guidelines, and provided an option to submit anonymous comment cards. Facilitators then broke participants up into smaller groups and asked each group to address one of the themes: work culture that incentivizes individualization over collaboration based on centering reappointment, promotion and tenure (RPT) criteria, how to overcome the lack of trust in relationships between faculty and between faculty and staff (relating in a less hierarchal way), how to treat each other with respect (value individual expertise) and gain skills to address conflict in a healthy manner, ensure hiring a diverse workforce, the need for more transparency from leadership and inclusion in decision making, incentivizing and rewarding diversity and inclusion training, the possibility of a mentoring program, and the perception of cliques. Facilitators guided participants to help them develop actionable solutions to the issues presented. Groups used flip chart paper and markers to write up their actionable solutions. Each small group presented to the larger group. Facilitators then collected the flip chart papers and transcribed them. There were high levels of participation and engagement in the circles of action, likely because the process was intentionally inclusive and empowering, as well as having support from the division's leadership. Table AII outlines the circles of action questions that were used to brainstorm solutions.

Results

Phase I cultural audit survey results

Each of the six scales were analyzed independently. The researchers summed the percent of strongly agree and agree to create a positivity score and the percent of strongly disagree and disagree to create a negativity score. The percent for neutral and choose not to respond were left separate. The scales were also aggregated for comparison. Each item and scale was placed on a graph so that participants could review them.

A rating scale was used to indicate categories that were reviewed positively with agree and strongly agree responses, areas that had a high level of uncertainty with neutral responses, and those that need attention as a result of less positive ratings. Relationships and leadership and organization were the categories that had the least positive ratings. The scale is given below:

Rating	Interpretation
Positive rating of 80% or more	Outstanding
Positive rating of 70% or more	Strengths
Positive ratings of 50–69%	Possible opportunities
Positive ratings below 50%	Probable opportunities
Neutral rating of 25% or more	High level of uncertainty
Category	Positivity
Work environment	59.99
Relationships within org	51.01
Individual experiences	60.08
Hiring and representation	60.19
Leadership	45.22
Inclusion training	61.86

Narrative responses were also analyzed for content. In all, 22 (of 38) participants answered the question, "Is power visible in the organization." Nine participants said power was visible; two participants said power was not visible. One respondent thought power was sometimes visible and one other respondent was unsure about what the question meant. It is important to note that not all survey participants (16 of 38) answered this question, which may indicate that some people felt uncomfortable responding to this question. Five participants shared that they felt faculty were treated better than staff. One respondent said, "Faculty often act like they are superior to staff and staff's knowledge and expertise is not valued."

In all, 19 (of 38) participants answered the open-ended question asking for comments, questions, or concerns. Topics mentioned included the presence of cliques, lack of trust, special treatment of faculty compared to staff, lack of diversity and inclusion, and feeling unappreciated. However, one respondent stated, "it was a great place to work with passionate colleagues." Four participants questioned what the survey would be used for and its validity. While we did not collect demographic data in the survey, we were able to discern some differences in trust between groups based on the narrative questions.

Phase II circles of action results

In each circle of action session, small groups of people brainstormed solutions across the following categories: diversity and inclusion, work environment, relationships, individual experiences, hiring and representation, and leadership and organization. Participants were reminded that relationships and leadership and organization were the categories that had the least positive ratings.

The circles of action began by acknowledging that in the diversity and inclusion category, the majority (97 percent) of survey participants agreed that the organization should value equity, diversity, and inclusion but only 47 percent thought the organization valued diversity in action and only 70 percent thought diversity training should be required. Therefore, the participants were able to establish common ground by seeing that diversity was valued by the organization, but still needed to leverage this information to work towards solutions in applying it. It was acknowledged that individuals cared about racial differences in particular, but it was questioned whether the organization did. One person acknowledged that the organization helped them develop skills to work with diverse people.

In the work environment category, participants discussed revising our reappointment, promotion and tenure (RPT) criteria and teaching evaluations because the reward structure valued independent work. The RPT process seemed to lead to competition, judging and comparing, as well as siloed viewpoints. Participants established that the organization needed more collaboration and should incentivize it. A lack of mentors was also noted which could speak to the lack of collaboration. Implementing structured, mentoring support was a actionable solution, as most reported they did not have one. Mentoring was also needed for onboarding and training new employees related to introductions to other employees and gaining knowledge about standing committees. There was a question about whether the responsibility for faculty development (including mentoring) belonged to administration.

In the relationships category, members of the organization were satisfied with their jobs and the status of external relationships with employers and students but realized those external groups had never been surveyed. There were high levels of mistrust between faculty and staff, and faculty and administration. This seemed to surprise some, but not others. In one circle of action, the distrust between faculty and administration was categorized as a "betrayal." One person questioned when and where this betrayal happened. The overlap between staff and administration roles, like that of the business manager, was noted. Disconnect between intention and action (lack of transparency) was noted as possible

cause of mistrust. The hierarchy of decision making was discussed as it relates to the growing size of the organization. However, staff had a high level of trust amongst themselves. This concept was validated by two staff members in one of the circles of action. Trust was seen as a "fixable area." Several people concluded that members of the organization have their hearts in the right place but need to treat internal relationships with the same care as external relationships. If more practices were in place that encouraged healthy relationships, internal relationships could be treated with as much care as relationships with our "customers." Even though mistrust existed, it was pointed out that did not imply that people were not worthy of trust. It was noted that the organization continues to do well in its actual work despite these relationship issues, but it was not clear how the organization would continue to do so without addressing these same issues. Communication was identified as a topic of concern related to relationships because of the lack of flow and opportunity to communicate across teams. Transparency, a better understanding of shared governance, and socialization were needed. A shared governance training, the distribution of all meeting minutes, having an open committee meeting, and having a central committee spreadsheet that tracked roles and appointed positions were suggested as actionable solutions to facilitate transparency. Potluck and hot topic lunches were proposed to enhance socialization. A conflict mediation training was suggested to address how to disagree in a healthy way.

In the individual experiences category, participants discussed how respect was defined because only 61 percent of participants said they felt respected. Respect was defined as valuing people's time, expertise, contributions and point-of-view, as well as how they are treated during and after a disagreement. The organization's history was brought up in the context of how conflict used to be had more openly and was normalized. Now, people wanted the organization to be a place where there are calm and respectful conversations. It became clear that staff felt fearful of speaking up at meetings because faculty had not been respectful in the past. One example was cited where a faculty member said a staff member could not vote on the mission statement. Another example was provided where faculty would walkup and interrupt staff and sometimes take their belongings (like office supplies). Staff felt "shut down" a lot. The majority felt like people outside of the division valued their work, but not within the unit. There was a feeling that those working with cooperative education were valued over everything else. Overall, there seemed to be a general lack of listening, condescension, openness and understanding of people's roles across the division. People felt as if they could not speak up without repercussions. Many just disengaged. One solution was to create ground rules in order to create an environment of respect. Suggestions also included involving staff in decision making, utilizing their skills, and acknowledging when you make a mistake. Lastly, someone clarified, "inclusion is not just having everyone at the party, it's feeling like you are wanted at the party."

In the hiring and representation category, participants acknowledged that perceptions of diversity are based on our backgrounds. People were unsure about whether efforts to recruit diverse employees were sincere because gender diversity existed, but not in other areas. Brainstorming conversation centered on whether the organization was doing enough to ensure a diverse workforce. Suggestions were made to plan ahead to ensure broad reach and adequate time to recruit diverse candidates when hiring, create learning modules to prepare students for diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and potentially require a one-day training/workshop to increase awareness within the organization.

The leadership and organization category had the lowest rating. The hierarchy of decision making was discussed at length. There were many questions on shared governance and how the unit compared to other units on this topic. One participant mentioned that the organization did a lot of voting on decisions compared to corporate America. A new layer of hierarchy was acknowledged as a result of adding team leader roles into the administrative structure.

The chief complaint was lack of transparency in communication regarding hierarchical decisions without solicitation of input in advance. Examples were provided, such as lack of meeting agendas and minutes. Therefore, simple solutions were suggested to provide meeting agendas to foster inclusivity and respect, as well as help people feel prepared. Incentivizing and rewarding collaboration was also suggested.

When discussing the role of "power," in the organization, participants discussed the development of social, collaborative physical spaces that could foster understanding and empathy for others and reduce cliques. Participants desired an "open-invite culture" where people could "come as they are." It was suggested that members of the organization "self-interrogate to address our perceptions." Participants offered ideas like the creation of … lunch and learns that rotated and focused on learning about individuals or a common read or service project to connect and work toward a common goal.

Summary of main findings for phase I and II
Overall, the important outcomes were that participants generally viewed the culture as lacking transparency and needing values-based guidelines for everyday interactions. Participants thought employees should value diversity, but viewed the culture as having a gap in solutions to apply that value. Incentivizing actions that promote diversity and inclusion and better shared governance were needed to address structural problems. It has been said that "culture eats strategy for breakfast," (Davies, 2002). Though this quote usually refers to business, it can also be applied to higher education institutions. The following section answers *RQ1*.

Recommendations for actionable solutions based on phase II circle of action results
As a result of implementing a cultural audit using a multi-phased, PAR approach, which included a survey instrument along with hosting results-sharing and circles of action sessions, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee put forward twelve recommendations for actionable solutions based on the results of the research that would have immediate and long-term impact on organizational practices. For example, it was recommended the ROPES method be implemented as guidelines for all standing committee meetings. Committee chairs were charged with introducing ROPES to committee members and using it to set committee communication expectations. A complete list of recommendations for action can be found in Table I.

Limitations
Limitations exist when conducting an analysis such as the one described here. For those trying to implement a similar experience for their organization, it is important that the cultural audit is a grassroots intervention, designed to help the discern what kinds of lived experiences and shared assumptions exist. The case study presented should serve as a roadmap for how individuals can garner support for conducting a similar cultural audit with their own organizations.

Another limitation for this study was the small number of participants. While participation rates were very high, and nearly all members of the organization participated, a small sample size prevents the use of demographic data. Due to the sensitive nature of the cultural audit, it was completely justified that participants were reluctant to share specific demographic information. When these questions were eliminated from the survey instrument, buy-in for the study did increase. However, this limited some of the analyses that could be completed. If this type of cultural audit is conducted within a larger team, then demographic data would be critical in the initial analysis phase so as to not silence minority voices through a larger majority response.

Immediate implementation	
Tracking standing committees	To increase transparency, an Administrator should maintain a spreadsheet available to all that tracks standing elected and appointed committee memberships. Consider diversity represented on committees and reach out to those possibly marginalized
Open meetings	Every third meeting of key standing committees could be open to division for questions/comments
Archive meetings	Provide note-takers/minutes for all meetings to foster transparency
Ground rules/guidelines	Ground rules/guidelines for interaction should be established for all faculty and team meetings
Regular social/collaborative gatherings	[Organization] should organize regular, optional, informal, social time such as hot topic lunches, potluck, and common readings. Provide opportunity for cross-team interaction
Long-term implementation	
Create values statement	To foster trust and relationship building, (organization) must have agreed upon values. The Diversity and Inclusion committee recommends creation and approval of a values statement that will be transparent to all and definitive to our culture. This will give us a shared language and common understanding about how we interact with each other
Faculty and staff role clarity	Faculty and staff roles are inherently different when it comes to work schedule and responsibilities. Therefore, role expectation should be clarified in an employee manual
Re-structured faculty meetings	Faculty meetings re-structured to provide time to discuss faculty-generated topics in-depth
New employee orientation, training and formalized Mentoring Program	Spearheaded by administration/administered and carried out by all
Create D&I learning outcome	To prepare students for diversity and inclusion in the workplace
Reward collaboration	Encourage faculty to lead collaborative projects that allows others to join. Consider this a step toward excellence within reappointment, promotion, tenure criteria
Revise reappointment, promotion, tenure criteria	Less emphasis on individual work as sole measure of success

Table I.
Cultural audit results: actionable solutions

Discussion

A cultural audit done in this grassroots manner is limited by the point-in-time that it is presented. The analysis, sharing, and actionable solutions are only as useful for as long as the organization remains in a similar structure. In the case of the division at the (University), several new hires were brought on board following the audit. These new hires had to be brought up to speed by sharing the analysis and presenting the results and actionable solutions. However, organizational change is inevitable. Naturally, the next step is to conduct the cultural audit again as they should be undertaken in regular intervals (Bardoel and Sohal, 1999).

Additionally, the importance of understanding the way that power dynamics affect relationships, especially during a time of intense change, was key to the attempt to unearth assumptions, unconscious bias and to build a healthy learning organization. Due to our critical approach to diversity, it was clear that examining relationships had to be a central category of exploration in the cultural audit and that the lived experiences of those who felt marginalized in the division get into the survey. For instance, special care was taken to include a belief statement that had to do with feeling as if one's expertise was valued because certain people shared they felt it was not.

There was resistance to the cultural audit at times and support at times. "Identifying any negative factors related to the organization can be tantamount to self-criticism" (Testa and Sipe, p. 37). The critical approach to diversity also allowed us to assess our dual role as

researcher and participant. One researcher struggled with how members of the division would react to participating in a cultural audit and whether it would make any difference. It can be difficult, with grassroots processes where the facilitator is also a participant, to find ways to be objective and at the same time vulnerable. The point though, is to trust the process and trust the people around you that doing the difficult work is worth it, because in the end it will improve the experiences of others.

According to (Kelderman, 2016), diversity and inclusion has to be part of the core DNA of an institution. In terms of reflecting on the methodological choice, the cultural audit process was the best tool to accomplish the goal of centering matters of diversity and inclusion in our organization. It also led to positive action by serving as the springboard to creating programming like an LGBTQ Safe Zone training and $5000 in funding for internal diversity and inclusion grants. Also, circles of action made the best sense because "action research allows practitioners to address the concerns that are closest to them, ones over which they can exhibit some influence and make change" (Ferrance, 2000, p. 6). Action research was the best fit to empower participants to collaborate in a solution-focused way.

The goal to become a more collaborative, inclusive environment, with more trust, sense of belonging, equal access to opportunities, respect, common purpose, and appreciation of individual attributes was kept at the front and center. Re-focusing on this goal when getting stuck, helped move the process forward.

Below are some reflections on navigating this methodology for those who are considering implementing a cultural audit:

(1) Allow the process to be organic and grow from within. The primary concept for this type of cultural audit is that the study was developed in-house and grew out of a shared need for dialogue around diversity and inclusion. Enabling those who are affected by the organizational culture to be the ones spearheading the activity will increase buy-in. This not only affects participation, but also in how solutions are enacted and carried out.

(2) Identify support networks beyond the organization and external to the process but related to the organization. When a process such as this is implemented by the members of the organization, an external consultant may nullify the purpose of a grassroots cultural audit. An external entity is still important to support the process, but one should be chosen based on its relationship to the organization. In the case, this was the CDO.

(3) Encourage voices on margins to participate in the development of the process. Often, those who already feel marginalized may not feel as if they even have a voice to help develop the process of a cultural audit. These individuals should be encouraged to assist in the development of the cultural audit and play a key role in helping to identify the felt-difficulties that exist within the organization. These people may be the change agents in your culture to put PAR into place.

(4) Get support from the top. Authorities, who have control over resources, budget and space must be involved early on in the process. While they should serve a limited role (if any) in the development of the process, they are critical in getting buy-in from the organization's membership. Authorities who encourage these types of grassroots interventions will serve as champions of change when the participants are able to develop actionable solutions.

(5) Finally, the focus of the cultural audit should be on the sharing of data-driven results from circles of action. These in-person, qualitative features are the real cultural audit. The survey is simply a tool to get you to where you want to be. It serves only to provide the context for the discussion. The real work of the cultural audit occurs when members are able to discuss, share their experiences, and resolve conflicts.

Conclusion

This paper proposes the use of cultural audits as a helpful approach to doing critical diversity management work. Cultural audits can aid in our understanding and advancement of diversity and inclusion in organizations. The administration of this cultural audit was not intended to be a business strategy to gain competitive advantage in our marketplace the way some organizations use diversity. Rather the goal was to gain insight into diversity and inclusion as core values, and positively impact the culture by addressing existing inequalities that were anecdotally discussed at the water cooler, during happy hours, and behind closed doors. It is challenging to change an organizational culture and overcome institutionalized ways of doing things. While such changes will not happen quickly, small incremental changes can be made over time. Zanoni *et al.* (2010) call for more empirical studies of diversity in organizational settings that work towards social change. These studies involve doing things. This cultural audit demonstrates an inclusive grassroots approach to creating actionable solutions that brings about change and can be replicated by others. We have implemented some strategies and have more to do, but this case study demonstrates the core values of diversity and inclusion are evidenced not only by our words, but also through our actions. As a result, these actions have changed our culture.

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Appendix 1

Item	Definition	Scale
Work culture (working environment)	Composite of the following statements: I believe [my organization] has a culture that embraces differences. I believe the climate in [my organization] for faculty/staff of color is as good as the climate for non-faculty/staff of color. I believe [my organization] has a collegial environment. I believe many people at [my organization] care about the problems that people from other racial/ethnic groups face. I believe [my organization] goes beyond tolerance for people's differences and toward acceptance. I believe [my organization] provides an environment for the free and open expression of ideas, opinions and beliefs. I believe [my organization] values collaboration over individual achievement to get work done. I believe [my organization] accepts diverse work styles and ways of thinking. I believe [my organization] should value equity, diversity, and inclusion. I believe [my organization] demonstrates value for diversity through its actions	1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree, choose not to respond
Work culture (relationships)	Composite of the following statements: I believe [my organization] employees have healthy working relationships with each other. I believe faculty and staff in [my organization] have healthy working relationships with employers/community partners. I believe faculty and staff in [my organization] have healthy working relationships with students. I believe [my organization] faces challenges with employers related to diversity and inclusion. I believe [my organization] is an intentionally welcoming environment for students from diverse backgrounds. I believe [my organization] faces challenges related to diversity and inclusion in our work with each other. I believe most people at [my organization] are open to having their assumptions challenged. I believe trust exists between staff at [my organization]. I believe trust exists between faculty at [my organization]. I believe trust exists between faculty and staff at [my organization]. I believe trust exists between administration at [my organization]. I believe trust exists between staff and administration at [my organization]. I believe trust exists between faculty and administration at [my organization]	1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree, choose not to respond
Work culture (individual experiences)	Composite of the following statements: I believe I can be fully myself at work. I believe I fit within [my organization]'s current cultural norms. I believe my expertise is valued within [my organization]. I believe treating everyone the same creates an inclusive work environment. I believe [my organization] is a good fit for me. I believe my colleagues within [my organization] value my work. I believe my University colleagues outside of [my organization] value my work. I believe community members I work with (e.g. employers, community partners, etc.) value my work. I believe my work matters to the division. I believe I am respected at [my organization]. I believe everyone is treated with respect regardless of job level or background at [my organization]. I feel proud to work at [my organization]	1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree, choose not to respond
Hiring and representation	Composite of the following statements: I believe [my organization] faculty and staff represent diverse races and/or ethnicities. I believe [my organization] faculty and staff represent diverse gender identities (male, female, transgender, other self-identified forms of gender expression). I believe [my organization] faculty and staff	1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree, choose not to respond

Table AI.
Scales, items

(continued)

Item	Definition	Scale
	represent diverse age/generational ranges. I believe diversity exists that isn't "seen." 0verall, I believe [my organization] faculty and staff represent a wide range of diverse identities. I believe [my organization] makes genuine efforts to recruit faculty/staff of color. I believe [my organization] makes genuine efforts to recruit female faculty/staff. I believe [my organization] makes genuine efforts to recruit a diverse age/generational ranges. I believe hiring more underrepresented faculty and staff should be a top priority at [my organization]. I believe in recent years [my organization] has made a sincere effort to improve the number of underrepresented faculty and staff (race/ethnic/gender/age). I see myself working at [my organization] in the next 2 years	
Leadership and organization	Composite of the following statements: I believe I navigate departmental politics well. I believe [my organization] is a fair and equitable place to work. I believe I am included in the decision making of the division. I believe decisions are made in a hierarchical way at [my organization]. I believe I am included in professional development opportunities in the division. I believe the leadership in [my organization] values equity, diversity, and inclusion as important. I believe leadership in [my organization] is shared. I believe [my organization] is transparent in communication. I believe [my organization] has an openness to asking questions. I believe the division's strategic priorities are transparent. I believe I am included in an informal network at [my organization]. I believe [my organization] invests financial resources in diversity and inclusion. I believe all faculty and staff at [my organization] have access to resources. I believe [my organization's] vision embraces diversity and inclusion. I believe [my organization] rewards actions of diversity and inclusion	1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree, choose not to respond
Diversity and inclusion training	Composite of the following statements: I believe I have a good understanding of what is meant by the term diversity. I believe I have a good understanding of what is meant by the term inclusion. I believe [my organization] has helped me develop the skills to help diverse teams address conflict. I believe I have access to resources that would better equip me to teach and facilitate discussions addressing issues of diversity. I believe I am skilled at teaching and facilitating discussions that emphasize diversity and inclusion. I believe [my organization] should address issues of diversity and inclusion in the courses we teach. I believe that [my organization] faculty and staff should be required to participate in diversity training. I believe my experience in [my organization] has contributed to my knowledge, skills and personal development in understanding and working with people of diverse backgrounds. I know where to go in case of a bias incident	1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree, choose not to respond
Other questions		
Mentorship	Do you have a mentor in [my organization]?	1 = formal mentor, 2 = informal mentor, 3 = no mentor
	How satisfied are you with your mentor relationship?	1 = very dissatisfied 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = neither, 4 = satisfied, 5 = very satisfied
Power dynamics	Is power visible at [my organization]? In what ways?	Open ended

Table AI.

QROM

Appendix 2

Item	Circle of action questions
Work culture (working environment)	1. How can we incentivize and reward collaboration in a structural environment where people work independently (and there are perceptions regarding RPT and merit pay as only rewarding individual effort)? What are some collaborative efforts, projects that could work?
Work culture (relationships)	Now that we have established we have trust issues to overcome (with the exception of between staff), how can we foster trust? What was the "betrayal" that broke the trust? Can we not let history repeat itself here? How do we define trust? Now that we know 50% of us think we face challenges with employers related to D&I, how can we overcome this? Do we need to ask students if they have healthy working relationships with us? Employers? If so, how do we move this forward?
Work culture (individual experiences)	How can we work towards being more respectful to each other, especially faculty to staff? Do we need to define respect? How can we address disrespect openly? Can we create "rules of respectful engagement?" How can we be clearer about decisions that call for faculty governance so that staff don't feel excluded? How can we move towards valuing people's expertise within our organization?
Hiring and representation	What more can we do to ensure we are hiring a diverse workforce? Don't focus on problems here, focus on solutions
Leadership and organization	How can leadership increase transparency in communication? For example, someone mentioned timely agendas for meetings. Always having minutes. How could we implement this? Other ideas? How could the division's strategic priorities become more transparent? How might our organization become a fairer and more equitable place to work since only 35% of people currently think it is. How might people feel more included in the decision making of the division (understanding the limits of working in a hierarchy)? Again, focus on solutions, not limitations of structure
Diversity and inclusion training	Who can help us develop skills to address conflict? How can we guarantee we address diversity in our courses since 73% think we should? How can we move forward with requiring a diversity training since 70% agree we should? How can we actively incentivize and reward actions of diversity and inclusion?
Other questions	
Mentorship	Do we need to create a mentoring program within our organization? What might that look like (assigned, use of outside mentors)? Is this the role of the Associate Director to oversee faculty development? Could we connect this with valuing our colleague's expertise by using peer mentors? How satisfied are you with your mentor relationship?
Power dynamics	How do we address the issue of cliques? Is it okay? How can faculty relate to staff in a less hierarchical way?

Table AII.
Circle of action questions

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