



UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

**DEI and Belonging:
Changing the Narrative and Creating
a Culture of Belonging in Nonprofit Organization**

by

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Dedication

This capstone is dedicated to my family who have supported me as I pursued my dream of earning a Master's degree.

Abstract

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) has become the latest trend in an effort to move the needle forward for many nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations are the voice of the community and they play a vital role in making sure they highlight the plight of the community they serve. While nonprofit organizations are caring about the welfare of the community they serve, they must also consider the emotional and psychological wellbeing of their employees by creating an inclusive workplace where they can feel like they belong and show up and be acknowledged for their uniqueness and contributions to the nonprofit organization. To build a culture of belonging in the workplace nonprofit organizations must expand their inclusive policies to create an environment where all employees can thrive.

The objectives of the research are: (1) To identify challenges and barriers to implementing DEI and belonging policies nonprofit organizations are facing. (2) Conduct research in strategies and trends that nonprofit organizations are using who are already expanding their DEI practices to focus on belonging. (3) Highlight the impact of belonging on nonprofit organizations culture. (4) Outline a model for moving beyond DEI and expanding inclusive policies to promote belonging.

Keywords: belonging, psychology, employee resource groups, inclusion, organizational performance

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Section 1. Introduction

Today we live in an era where individuals are more and more looking for meaning, purpose and fulfillment in their work. This has brought DEI to a place where nonprofit organizations (NPOs) can no longer claim to have DEI policies that promote inclusive policies and practices in the workplace. Nonprofit organizations as leaders and moral voice of the community, must now embrace the move away from simply practicing DEI, into the expansion of inclusion to begin to encourage acceptance of uniqueness to create a culture of belonging within NPO workspaces. According to The Washington Post, employers should not just focus on the number of women, people of color or behaviors that make people feel included, rather the focus should be on whether workers feel like they can be themselves in the workplace and feel like part of a community (McGregor, 2019). Nonprofits organizations are in an ideal position to lead the charge in transforming workplaces, because their role is about highlighting all forms discriminations and injustices. As more and more individuals continue to demand equity and inclusion in the workplace NPOs must embrace this new direction. The nonprofit sector is going through a seismic power shift and as such it is the right time to change the face of its leadership. The hope is that the new leaders come from within nonprofit organizations. According to The Nonprofit Times, there is shortage of vision and ability to recognize potential in NPOs and if we do the work of building and supporting leadership at all levels, those who will be successors can be easily identified (Coentro, 2020).

Nonprofit organizations employ individuals who are at the forefront and are deeply affected by many of the social challenges they are trying to solve, however they are not prioritizing making sure these individuals feel welcome in the workplace. NPOs must work to ensure that those from communities it serves take the lead in providing solutions. Coentro, argues that those in leaderships positions must commit to investing in the development of BIPOC leaders, so as to change the face of leadership and create a sector that takes the lead in racial

diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (The Nonprofit Times, 2020). Additionally, NPOs must keep DEI focused at the very top level of the organization, a commitment level that is still not a priority in many organizations. When the most powerful in the hierarchy of an NPO make it a priority to sustain and maintain an initiative like DEI and belonging and work to embed it throughout the organization, it is then that change can happen (Geisler, 2021). It is clear that for NPOs to succeed in building a culture of belonging it has to be a top down approach as opposed to bottom up.

This is a crucial time for nonprofits to begin the work of making sure they are taking the lead in providing the framework for achieving a culture of belonging in the workplace. It begins with moving away from performative DEI and taking a strategic approach to identifying ways that nonprofit have perpetuated assimilation instead of uniqueness and individualism, exclusionary practices versus inclusion in the workplace then prioritize making changes. When there is intentionality in the approach the results are increased retention of underrepresented groups within nonprofits. Intentionality also builds trust and transparency required to allow employees to feel like their opinions matter and that they are valued and respected. By creating space for lived experiences, acknowledging bias, and understanding the historical context of race, nonprofits have a chance to be that leader shaping DEI and belonging policies in the workplace.

Nonprofit organizations by virtue of the space they hold within our community are equipped with tools to provide the opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to show up in an authentic manner, without fear of judgement or retaliation for voicing their opinion in the workplace. Nonprofits ultimately benefit from a dynamic workforce that is mission-driven, where ideas and innovation can blossom because employees feel accepted and validated for who they are and their contributions towards the nonprofit's mission. Ongoing research continues to emphasize the importance of belonging and there are reports in recent times that support a need for more exploration of expansion of inclusive practices to harness to power of community in the workplace through employee resource groups (ERGs and affinity resource groups (ARGs), promote emotional and psychological wellbeing and encourage sense of belonging in the workplace.

There are several benefits to creating a culture of belonging in the workplace. By promoting inclusive practices, a more equitable and just community can emerge where trust is built and nurtured; by eliminating hierarchies and siloes within the workplace, a new way of power sharing and level of engagement can be attained and in those environments is where people perform at their best.

There is existing research in the nonprofit field and other sectors that is addressing DEI and belonging. However, belonging is a relatively new area where more research specific to the nonprofit sector is needed. This research report is an effort to bridge the gap in knowledge of how nonprofit organizations (NPOs) can expand their inclusive practices through understanding the psychology behind belonging, inclusive leadership, allyship, organizational performance and emotional wellbeing to create a model for belonging. In this report, First the need for belonging in the workplace will be explained. Second, the report will offer an analysis of existing expert views on the topic of belonging while highlighting emerging themes. Third, the report will explore existing models or frameworks for DEI aimed at achieving belonging in the workplace. Fourth, research methods, and data analysis will highlight all findings of DEI and belonging that nonprofit organizations currently implement. Lastly, the implications and recommendations section will submit an expanded concept of inclusion that all nonprofit organizations regardless of size can adopt to build a culture of belonging.

The Need for Belonging in the Workplace

Diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace is critical to the success of best in class nonprofit organizations globally. In 2020, racial events like the George Floyd murder, the presidential elections, COVID- 19 global health crisis and economic uncertainties all served to inform the direction diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives for many nonprofit organizations (NPOs). More and more, nonprofit organizations are looking at how to expand beyond diversity and inclusion to cultivate a sense of belonging in their workplace where employees can bring their authentic selves to work. While DEI has been around for some time, the concept of belonging in the workplace in the context of DEI is a new focus in scholarship. Nonprofit organizations must embrace new ways to expand their inclusion initiatives to promote and

support a culture of belonging that drives employee retention, satisfaction and overall performance. It is critical for nonprofit organizations to be aware that supporting employee's capacity to voice their opinion and be heard is essential to sustaining a culture of equity, inclusion and belonging. Nonprofit organizations are leaders within the community, and it is time for them to take the lead in transforming workplace experience for all employees. Understanding historical contexts according to Nonprofit Quarterly allows NPOs to build capacity and skills to surmount racial biases, stereotypes, legal and policy barriers that limit progress for people of color in the workplace (Ferris, 2019) This literature review examines expert arguments on the topic of belongingness in the workplace in the context of DEI in nonprofit organizations, focused on the research around psychology of belonging according to Kennedy, (2021, p.45) and Oberfield, (2016, p.763) who both define belonging as a fundamental human need and that workplaces must prioritize it. Also, exploring inclusion as a vehicle for nonprofit organizations to achieve a culture of belonging in the workplace, Ferdman, (2014 p.4), Shore et al., (2011, p.179), Mor (2019, 937) all agree that inclusion is crucial to achieving a sense of belonging within NPOs. Nonprofit organizations must also include strategies for nurturing inclusive leadership as part of their framework for belonging. Inclusive leadership goes beyond cultural competence and managing diversity to creating and incorporating conditions that fosters differences without having to hide identities, while letting those identities be their best and do their best and see value in being who they are, and belong and participate in ways that's appreciated, engaging and safe (Ferdman, et. al., 2020, p.1). Nonprofit organizations that are mission-driven must also prioritize performance to deliver on mission. This can only be achieved when NPOs implement inclusive practices that engenders a willingness to embrace the mission of the nonprofit and innovate to deliver on such mission. Nonprofit leadership must focus on empowerment as a solution to the feeling of unbelonging. NPOs in order to build a culture of belonging have to prioritize giving employees agency and autonomy that can serve to increase commitment to mission and values of the organization. According to the Urban Institutes National Center for Charitable statistics (NCCS) there are 1.54 million nonprofit organizations in the US, what this means is that NPOs are a major force in modeling the ideal workplace, by supporting and cultivating future leaders who can bring belonging to the forefront.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction:

This literature review examines expert arguments on the topic of belongingness in the workplace in the context of DEI in nonprofit organizations, focused on the research around psychology of belonging according to Kennedy, (2021, p.45) and Oberfield, (2016, p.763) who both define belonging as a fundamental human need and that workplaces must prioritize it. Also, exploring inclusion as a vehicle for nonprofit organizations to achieve a culture of belonging in the workplace, Ferdman, (2014, p. 4), Shore et al., (2011, p.176) Mor, (2019, p. 937) all agree that inclusion is crucial to achieving a sense of belonging within NPOs. Nonprofit organizations must also include strategies for nurturing inclusive leadership as part of their framework for belonging. Inclusive leadership goes beyond cultural competence and managing diversity to creating and incorporating conditions that fosters differences without having to hide identities, while letting those identities be their best and do their best and see value in being who they are, and belong and participate in ways that's appreciated, engaging and safe (Ferdman, et. al., 2020, p.1). Nonprofit organizations that are mission-driven must also prioritize performance to deliver on mission. This can only be achieved when NPOs implement inclusive practices that engenders a willingness to embrace the mission of the nonprofit and innovate to deliver on such mission.

Psychology of Belonging

Nonprofit organizations must understand the connection between belonging and psychology as they continue the work of expanding inclusion within the workplace. The concept of belonging according to ongoing research is rooted in psychology. (Kennedy, 2021, p.45) and (Oberfeld, 2016, p.175) both argue that belonging is a fundamental need that's embedded into the fabric of the human being, so much so that it occupied a central space in Maslow's hierarchy of needs along with essentials like food, clothing and shelter. It is a concept that nonprofit organizations (NPOS) looking to build a culture of belonging, must have as a foundation for

success (Kennedy, 2021) argues that belongingness directly influences human behavior and in every aspect of human existence, we seek acceptance including our communities and workplaces. A sense of belonging is defined as a fundamental human motivation driven by a pervasive and compelling need to belong, that we seek to acquire and maintain (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497 Maslow, 1954, p.326). The research clearly acknowledges the importance of belonging as a bedrock of NPO or any organization, therefore NPOs need to belong as a fundamental value and a bedrock of their inclusive practices and embed it throughout daily engagements in the workplace. Furthermore, over the last several decades the need to belong connected to psychological wellbeing continues to increase, based on evidence-based research supporting the connection between individual need for organizational inclusion and a sense of overall wellbeing (Reza, et. al, 2020, p. 420). Nonprofit organizations have concrete research to use as a starting point for any model for improving workplace culture focused on belonging and inclusion. Also, there is a connection between belonging and depression. Being included or excluded is related to psychological developments like anxiety, depression, self-esteem and satisfaction, which in turn has an impact on behaviors at work or outside of work (Reza, et al 2020, p. 425). Psychology and social identity according to available research is critical to building community in the workplace. There is also a connection between psychology and social identity, people feel more comfortable and positive about groups that have similar identities as themselves hence have an easier time building trust and rapport, (Oberfield, 2016, p.763).

Inclusion as a Vehicle for Belonging

In order to arrive at belonging nonprofit organizations must first understand inclusion as a crucial component for arriving at belonging. Put simply diversity is a mix and inclusion putting in effort to make it work. Inclusion more and more has become a framework to think about and work with diversity (Ferdman, 2014, p. 4) and to systemically foster social equality across multiple dimensions of identity. Achieving inclusion means simultaneously acknowledging people's needs to belong and to be separate and distinct from others (Shore et al., 2011, p. 176). Mor (2019, p. 937), describe inclusion as an individual's sense of being part of an organization's formal and informal processes, formal being access to information or decision making and informal being "water cooler" or lunch meetings where information and decisions

tend to be less formal. Nonprofit organizations that want to shift their workplace to a more accepting space of individuality and uniqueness can start by embedding inclusion and inclusive practices into their hiring policies. Furthermore, Mor, (2015, p.83) argues that diversity and organizational culture contributes to the perceptions of inclusion, leading to job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, task effectiveness and wellbeing. Also, an employee's needs go beyond his sense of perceived equity in the organization but extends into the psychological aspects of being considered an essential part of the organization (Belle et.al 2015, p.79). Furthermore, one of the ways we experience being part of an organization or society is our sense of belongingness or lack thereof; belonging promotes a sense of self that enhances an individual feeling of being rooted and having a level of comfort in their everyday work life (McClure and Brown 2008, p. 3). Belonging is seen as a medium through which the relationship between employee and the nonprofit organization can be explored using evidence-based research that is centered on the individual and can uncover the spaces where the formal and informal interactions overlap creating opportunities for change (May 2011). Effective inclusion requires an overarching framework that eliminates the concept of color blindness as a foundation. Baumeister & Leary, (1995, p.501) argue that both color blind and multicultural approaches are received differently by different employees as a positive affirmation to their sense of belongingness in an organization. Nonprofit organizations hoping to build a lasting culture of belonging can start by moving away from the ineffective DEI trainings like implicit bias and focus more on historical contexts that have created systems and structures that have perpetuated an imbalance of power and has maintained a hierarchy that has predominantly male and white people in the positions of leadership.

Inclusive Leadership and Belonging

Building a culture of belonging in nonprofit organization (NPOs) begins with leadership. Leaders occupy an important role in shaping climates of inclusion within organizations (Gotsis & Grimani, 2016, p. 985.). Nonprofit organizations much like for profits have a hierarchical structure that promotes gaps between leadership and mid to low level staff. It is the responsibility of leadership to create space for all employees to feel like an essential part of the mission of the

NPO. Inclusive leadership behaviors are accountability for creating an inclusive culture, creating space for dialogue and engagement, showing up as one's true self at work, creating opportunities for transparent decision making, understanding and embracing resistance and communicating inclusion in relation to mission and vision (Ferdman, 2014, p.4). Inclusive workplaces are driven by a set of values that drives its policies and practices (Burrell et.al., 2009). The complexity of diversity requires organization to provide education and training and also establish regular engagement, training and monitoring processes to develop leaders who support, respect and tolerate an organizational culture that's diverse and inclusive (Burrell, 2015, Burrell et al., 2009, p. 567, Hubbard, 2008). NPOs have leadership values embedded in the mission and vision, so it is highly expected for those values to carry over into all levels of the organizations. This means that inclusive leaders must have an awareness of their bias toward quick decision making and power position in the workplace, and intentionally choose responses that are inclusive for each situation even if it means slowing down the decision-making process. (Brown, 2019, p.18) Inclusive leadership contributes to employee's perception of the workplace as a safe and comfortable environment where vitality and meaning can be achieved (Benyamin & Brender-Ilan, 2018). Inclusive leadership is in a position to highlight what's beneficial, as well as to reduce the unintended consequences of a diverse workforce. Inclusive leaders create high-quality relationships with their lower level employees, directly reducing the rate of turnover by promoting an inclusive workplace (Nishii and Mayer, 2009). NPOs must cultivate and embrace leaders that relentlessly develop and empower people to show up as their authentic self and be acknowledge for their uniqueness.

Belonging and Organizational Performance

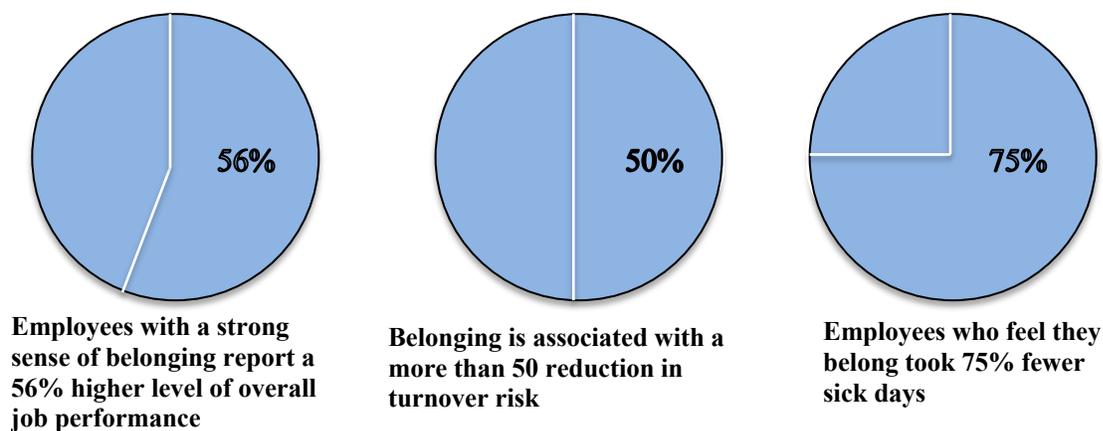
New research shows that belonging is directly connected to overall performance and nonprofit organizations can benefit immensely, by prioritizing inclusive practices that will enhance employees feeling of belonging that translates to applying themselves better, which can improve job performance. According to Burroughs & Eby, (2018) through work people find meaning, identity and support because it is where they spend the majority of their time. People who belong feel comfortable voicing their opinions, expressing ideas, contributing creatively to

the group, because they understand that their input is valued, leading to retention, innovation and overall performance (gqrm.com 2018). Employees will be more productive if they are valued for their uniqueness and social difference they bring to the organization and also rewarded through promotions (Knoppers et.al. 2015). An individual's perception of oneness or belongingness, where the individual defines themselves in terms of the organization, they work for reinforces performance and mitigates turnover (Stinglhamber et.al. 2015). According to Lichtenstein et. al., organizational identification (OI) is directly connected to employee performance and many employees develop their sense of organizational identity or lack thereof from their managers. Nonprofit organizations that aim to increase performance must support employees' feeling of inclusion by showing commitment to making changes, building trust and motivation, and satisfaction across all staff demographics (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). It would allow employees to be less burdened by concerns of inclusion, which could lead to flourishing and innovation. According to Better Up Belonging Report (2019), belonging impacts employees and organizations in multiple ways: (Figure 1)

- Employees with a stronger sense of belonging in general tend to perform better
- Employees with strong sense are more likely to stay at their jobs and more likely to recommend their workplace to other people
- Employee with strong sense of belonging show up for work and are less likely to take sick days

A sense of belonging also has a great impact on performance and profitability-

Figure 1: Adapted Chart for Belonging and Performance



Source: BetterUp Belonging Report, 2019

Additionally, Better Up Belonging Report survey of 1,789 full time employees from multiple industries shows that belonging boosts workforce effectiveness tremendously and has a massive impact on the bottom line. The report showed that if every worker showed a sense of belonging, for every 10,000 employees it would equate to an annual gain of \$52 million dollars in productivity, annual gain of \$10 million dollars in turnover related costs and 2,825 less sick days which translates to a gain in productivity of \$2.5 million dollars (Evan et. al., 2019).

Belonging and Emotional Wellbeing

According to ongoing research belonging contributes in a significant way to wellbeing of employees within organizations. Although more and more nonprofit organizations are taking steps to create a more inclusive workplace, underrepresented minority groups still feel undervalued, exhausted and unsafe from having to navigate an unwelcoming environment at work (Winter, 2020). Wellbeing along with belonging is seen as critical to building human capital according to Global Human Capital trends report (Deloitte, 2020). An inclusive nonprofit organization, where individuals feel valued for their work, as well as who they are coupled with being accepted as important members of the group increases individual satisfaction and wellbeing (Brimhall, 2019, p. 31). Inclusion promotes wellbeing by way of creating an environment of shared perception of a work environment that recognizes employees' individual talents, while encouraging a sense of commonality and belonging among all members of the organization (Mor Barak, 2015, p.83). Nonprofit organizations prioritizing wellbeing of employees create potential longevity and retention and employees who are more loyal because they recognize that the organization cares about their wellbeing. Poorer sense of belonging and connectedness has been linked directly to ongoing issues of mental health, likely due to feelings of loneliness and alienation that employees feel (Rubin et al., 2019, 267). Additionally, poor sense of belonging has been associated with lower job satisfaction (Borrott et al., 2016). Rezai et al., argue that a supportive work environment can lower anxiety and improve mental health tremendously,

moreover there is a connection between feelings of exclusion and depression that has been observed in research.

Belonging and Allyship

Nonprofit organizations must prioritize building supportive communities within the workplace as a way to bolster a sense of belonging. A key factor that contributes to a sense of belonging is support for minority underrepresented groups by the dominant more privileged group. Allies are people that are members of the dominant group within an organization who work to end oppression in their workplaces or personal lives by advocating for those in the oppressed minority groups (McNulty et. al., 2018). Employee voice mechanisms in the form of employee resource groups (ERGs) and ally groups together serve as vehicles for individuals to feel supported and valued in the workplace (McNulty De Cieri & Hutchings 2013). Scholars argue that the consequence of employee silence is isolation from career advancement opportunities which can stifle an organization's initiatives or derail meaningful progress while increasing loss of critical talent through alienation and attrition (Munoz & Thomas, 2006). Nonprofit organizations looking to deliver on their mission must break up siloes that lead to isolation by implementing resource groups. Employee resources groups serve as an opportunity for nonprofit organizations to address the harm of racism, by giving a roadmap of how white people can work for change by illuminating their responsibility in achieving that goal (D'Andrea, 2005). Affinity groups and race-based caucuses can go a long way in creating an inclusive culture within organizations. According to (Blitz & Kohl, 2012), processes like affinity groups, that highlight white culture and define privilege, and considers cultural differences a strength within an organization, while at the same time having open discussions about racial identity are more likely to effectively tackle bias and move towards equity. Blitz & Kohl (2012), provide a process for race-based caucus as outlined in table 1 below.

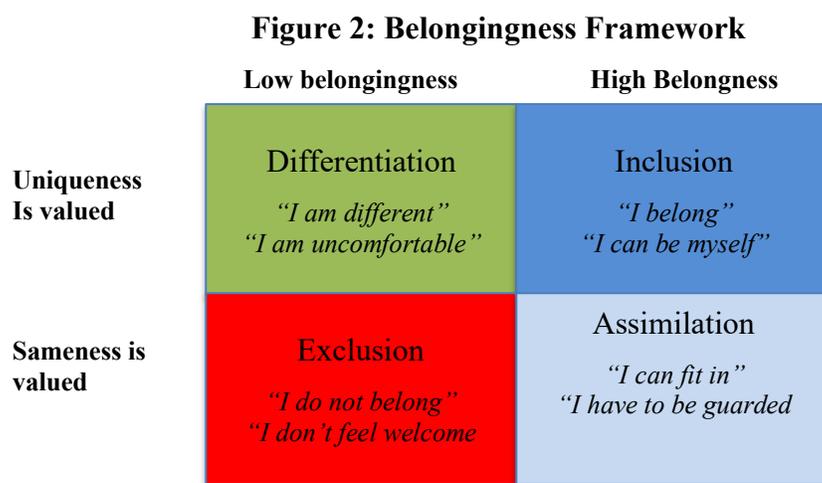
Table 1: Race-Based Caucus Framework

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make systems of accountability clear between people of color, White antiracism caucus, the institution's executive management group, community members and other constituents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in together with, and contribute to, all organizational initiatives created to address cultural and institutional bias, including things like making the workplace LGBTQ friendly, increasing access for disabled employees, and supporting religious inclusiveness.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The executive leadership should operate with honesty, integrity and transparency and discussions should remain open among all individuals and all groups involved in the antiracism endeavor.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White employees who are involved in the caucusing process must be available for evaluation and dialogue with people of color and others.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avenues for very critical feedback to reach all members of senior levels of management must be established.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shared mission or values statement between the White antiracist caucus and people of color caucus must be developed to clarify the intent and goals of all the racial affinity caucuses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly state the expectation that White employees within the organization will take an active role in addressing institutional racism as a function of their job, and submit the caucus as a means of awareness, support, education, and collaboration.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish forums, separate from caucuses, where staff who are unsure that issues of race and racism are appropriate for the workplace setting can have their concerns addressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose members for caucuses and participants from all levels of the agency's hierarchy within the organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and sustain ongoing dialogue about racism and racial identity with key people within the organization and also outside consultants to promote continued personal and professional growth and support creative problem solving.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly distribute relevant literature on systemic racism, White privilege, White racial identity and culture, and antiracist practices to all staff within the organization.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find ways to include an analysis of race and power and privilege into other discussions of marginalization and bias and develop partnerships that support the organization's progression toward genuine fairness, equity, and inclusion.

Belonging Literature and Frameworks

Scholarship on the topic of belonging is relatively new, it has mostly been addressed by for profit organizations and it's only now beginning to come to focus for nonprofit organizations and rightly so. A few scholars have now started bringing knowledge around belonging to the forefront. Shore et. al. (2018) argue that finding opportunities to include marginalized society members is critical at all levels of an organization's environment, where all can participate fully, furthermore these opportunities allow both nonprofit and for profit to operate effectively and enhance organizational success. Without a real commitment to inclusion nonprofit organizations will continue to lose valuable human capital including women, people of color, sexual and other minorities (p.186). Understanding why inclusion is critical to belonging requires us to gain an

understanding of the framework Shore et.al (2011, p.176), put together. Their argument remains that belongingness and uniqueness go hand in hand and there is a danger in emphasizing one without the other. In focusing on belongingness, it could lead to suppression of voice, thought, backgrounds and generally what makes people who they are. Conversely, if individuals just focused on what made them unique it could lead to isolation and segregation (p.1282). Ultimately, belonging literature expands inclusion and focuses on a balance of belonging and uniqueness based on Picket, Coleman and Bonner (2002) and Shore et.al's (2011) framework (Figure 2). This framework highlights belongingness and uniqueness as critical approach for organizations to implement to make people feel included. The framework highlights the fact that uniqueness addresses the issue of diversity and the idea that if everyone in an NPO was young, male and white then we have a lot of sameness. However, for belonging where some organizations value uniqueness and differences is reflected on the right side of the grid. Here, NPOs that value people for who that are regardless of the color of their skin, gender, sexual orientation, how old they are, or their level of education are located.

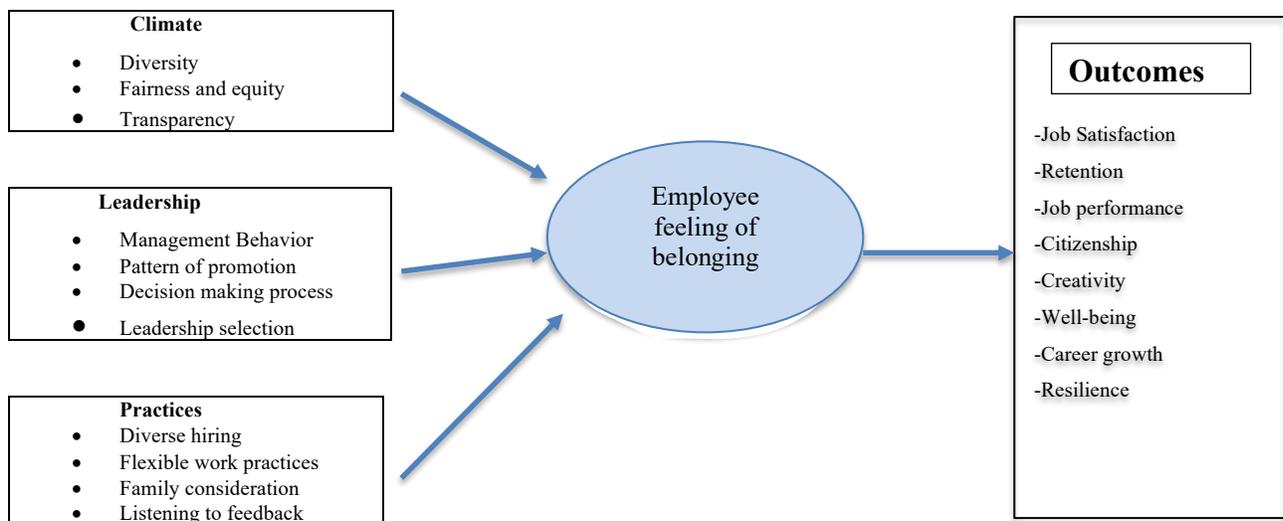


Developed by Lynn Shore – Model for Future Research

A second dimension of literature for belonging is centered around nonprofit organizations being proactive and strategic about organization commitment, job satisfaction and welling being of employees. Shore et.al (2011) argue that inclusive organizations will experience high quality

relationships with colleagues and supervisors, job satisfaction, well-being, innovation and creativity and career advancement. A framework adapted for belonging (Figure 3) based on Shore's model as it relates to HR and nonprofit management has a 3-level approach to achieving belonging. First is climate of the nonprofit, second leadership, and third is inclusive practices.

Figure 3: Adapted HR and HR Management for Belonging Framework



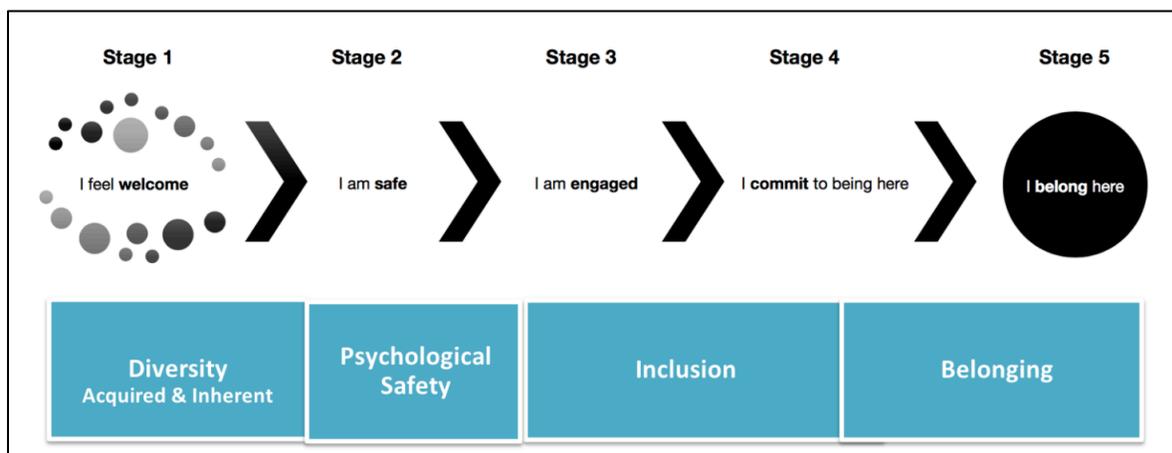
Source: Author's Creation, Adapted from Josh Bersin, 2020

Human resource management is a critical part of achieving belonging within a nonprofit organization. Nonprofit organizations looking to create an environment where individuals are valued for their uniqueness and differences can leverage their HR policies and processes to change the culture of their organization for the better. As illustrated in figure 3, HR department of any nonprofit can create a framework for belonging that addresses the climate within the organization, vis a vis diversity, fairness and equity and transparency. Secondly, leadership addressing management behavior, pattern of promotion, decision making and leadership selection. Lastly, practices which includes diverse hiring, flexible work practices, consideration for family and creating a feedback culture. These 3 key areas lay the foundation for employee

feeling of belonging where the outcomes are job satisfaction, retention, performance, citizenship, creativity and innovation, wellbeing, career growth and overall resilience.

Another framework for belonging is laid out as a continuum of belonging through stages. In this framework Mitchell, (2018) describes 5 stages (Figure 4). In stage 1 “I feel welcome” individuals are aware of a focus on equality and meritocracy, rather than a focus on individuality and uniqueness. This is the stage where there tends to be a focus on color blindness and the idea that the organization does not see color. In stage 2 “I am safe” individuals are aware of internal communications and support for underrepresented minority groups like employee resource groups and they feel they respected, valued and accepted. At the stage groups may feel comfortable having difficult conversations. In stage 3 “I am engaged” individuals become more vested in adding their perspectives and contributing unique ideas as well as what works and what doesn’t, and they are included in decisions aimed at creating equitable workplaces. In stage 4 “I commit to being here” individuals start to take on the responsibility of creating inclusive and diverse workplaces that aligns with the organizations mission and leaders of the organization commit to meaningful action. Lastly, in stage 5 “I belong” individuals at this stage do not questions whether the belong even if a negative situation arises within the workplace. At this stage leaders care about differences and want to hear how these differences shape perspectives.

Figure 4: Adapted, Silicon Valley's Change Catalyst



Source: Thriveglobal.com, 2018

Section 3: Methods and Approaches

The purpose of this research is to actively engage ongoing discourse around DEI and Belonging and contribute new knowledge to how nonprofit organizations can continue to build their capacity with regards to inclusive policies and practices that would support moving the nonprofit sector in general toward building a culture of belonging in the workplace regardless of the size of the organization. To achieve the overall objectives of this project the following following methods were employed.

Primary Data Collection: Primary data was collected from a series of 7 expert interviews, from a cross-section of the employment levels. Four of the interviewees were in the C-level of leadership, including a Chief Diversity officer, Chief Executive officer, a Senior Director of Human Resources and a Senior Director of Staff Learning. Three of the interviewees were mid to low level employees including a Specialist, Manager and an Associate Director. The nonprofit organizations selection was based on their organization's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. These organizations had proven track record of their DEI efforts evidenced in their mission statements on their websites, their commitment to making sure their staff participate in regular DEI trainings, or have DEI embedded in their HR hiring policies. The organizations selected were Year Up Inc, a workforce development nonprofit, University of San Francisco an institution of higher education, The Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation (TNDC), a housing development nonprofit and The East Oakland Community Project, addressing homelessness in the east bay area. The participants were selected from various employment levels to ensure responses from a diverse pool of candidates. In terms of demographics of participants, three participants were African American or black, three were Caucasian or white and one was a Pacific Islander. The respondents were asked a series of 10 open-ended questions (below). The questions were focused on inclusion and belonging culture within their organizations and respondents were given opportunities to offer up additional insights at the end of the interview. The interviews were 45 minutes to an hour, conducted over zoom. Their responses were analyzed in relation to level of belonging and inclusion being

discussed (Table 2) There were some common themes that emerged in the interviews (below) and analysis of all responses is are included in the data analysis section.

Interview Questions:

- How does your organization build a sense of belonging among staff and what are some inclusive practices implemented to achieve that goal?
- Describe your thoughts on employee resource or affinity groups in terms of promoting inclusion and belonging in the workplace?
- What are some steps your organization is taking to make sure minority racial groups have opportunities for advancement?
- Talk to me about your organizations DEI effort, how often does training happen, and what types do you offer staff?
- What are some HR policies that your organization has implemented to ensure that a diverse pool of candidates is interviewed?
- How has your organization prioritized wellness for staff and what are some actions taken to demonstrate it cares?
- How does your organization make sure staff feel like their opinion matters?
- How often does your organization send out surveys to gauge employee sense of belonging and how effective has it been?
- How is your organization making sure staff feel valued and respected?
- What would your employees say about their ability to balance work and personal life?

Interview Summary: There were several areas of inclusive practices that the interviewees mentioned in terms how their organization looked at belonging in the workplace. Some of the responses was that belonging was primarily driven by the people within the institution not necessarily by the leadership. And in some institutions because of the hierarchical nature, staff are left to find their own space or affinity within the organization, these groups happen organically and are not driven any effort by the organization. However, once these groups are formed, they are often recognized. Other responses mentioned employee resource groups (ERGs) and staff resource groups (SRGs) as crucial to their organization culture, also their organization is looking into performance and promotions as a way to create equity and also belonging. The agreement was that belonging will not be achieved without a discussion and understanding of historical contexts of all minority groups within an organization. There were also challenges mentioned when it comes to promoting belonging. A challenge that was mentioned was that having many diverse staff spread across different locations and how to bring them together to foster connection. Some other thoughts around promoting belonging that was

mentioned was having a social committee that is tasked with organizing luncheons and other social events aimed at building connection amongst staff. Additionally, in the last year being on zoom has created another level of isolation that is a challenge for working on building connections with their organizations. Other challenges mentioned is around maintaining resource groups and staff feeling like it was not worth their time leading to the group fizzling out. Lastly, there was also mention of the fact that sometimes there is more connection between staff within departments as opposed to staff within the whole organization which is where ERGs and affinity groups struggle.

Opportunity for Advancement within the Organization

Some of responses was that advancement within an organization was a luck of the draw based on where an employee happens to be located within an organization and who they happen to be connected, not the organization creating pathways for advancement. Other responses were that their organization was working toward creating a level playing field in the hiring process, by focusing on an individual's skills, abilities and experience instead of looking at the degrees they have or which ivy league they attended. Some other responses were that people have an idealized view that is not the reality in terms of professional development. There is also a policy of promoting from within that was mentioned in the responses and the fact that along with it comes the challenge of turnover if the most qualified candidates don't fill the roles. Another thing that was mentioned is the intentional focus on providing leadership trainings to prepare employees of color who are in the management level for C-level positions to increase diversity on the executive level.

Employee Access to Regular DEI trainings

In terms of DEI trainings and how often it occurs the responses were that there were equity trainings offered for employees to provide them opportunity to gain awareness, knowledge and skills around diversity and inclusion. Other responses included providing staff with anti-racist trainings, that goes beyond talking about how to combat implicit bias or other basic DEI trainings, but instead teaches the history of race and racism in this country and how it perpetuates systems and structures of oppression. These trainings are being provided as a mandatory for all staff from entry-level all the way to C-level staff. Some of the respondent talked about

commissioning a racial equity assessment and how the poor results allowed them to see that while they did not have a diversity issue, they did have a predominantly white leadership and people of color being at the lower level. There were responses around offering equitable and inclusive practices training to staff which are online trainings. Also, what was mentioned is the lack of clarity around the effectiveness of these trainings, because there hasn't been a good way of measuring it and aside from this no ongoing regimented training has been happening for their organization. There were also responses about organizations providing opportunities for managers to attend white supremacy culture trainings to help identify any traces of that within their organizations and working towards rooting it out. Some responses also mentioned HR moving away from focusing on just training and onboarding new hires to investing in employees who have been with the organization for more than 3 years through trainings like Harvard Management to support leadership development within the organization.

HR policies and Hiring from a Diverse Pool of Candidates

Some responses referred to having a diversity hiring policy and how it lays out their organization's value in terms of DEI and how hiring should be conducted bearing diversity and inclusion in mind. It includes how job descriptions are written, where these jobs are posted and also doing things like asking for diversity statements from candidates. There were also mentions of non-discrimination briefings to gain clarity on what the laws says. Other mentions of HR being intentional about what's in the job description was reemphasized, like are the requirements like education, and experience written in way that does not automatically exclude minority groups for example having a job description that's requiring not just Masters and PhDs but also certifications and other credentials to make the job description inclusive. There were responses from some respondents about needing to go over their job descriptions to remove any signs of implicit bias and mentions that they have no set rule around making sure there is a least one person of color in their pools of candidates for any given role. However, there is an understanding of how problematic it is if you only have white people in your pool of final candidates for role. The mentions of concerns about having predominantly white applicants and going forward with them as the final pool of candidates was also echoed by others in their interviews. Lastly, a response around how there is an ongoing effort by their organization to

build equitable practices and documentation that sometimes works, and other times falls through and that's the reality for some of the organizations.

Employee Wellbeing and Wellness

Some of the responses were that their organizations provided wellness programs which they continue to improve upon year after year. Also, responses acknowledged wellness for the workforce being connected to performance, basically that a healthy workforce performs better. There were also mentions of the importance of psychological, physical, emotional, financial and spiritual wellness. Other responses mentioned wellness for caregivers as a way to build a culture of belonging in their organization, so employees who are parents, or taking care of sick or elderly family members are in that group especially because of the COVID-19 pandemic they are dealing with homeschooling their children. Some mentioned employees were provided paid time off to take care of covid related issues. There was mention of emergency relief funds being provided to staff who are struggling due to the pandemic. There was also mention of flexible work time to allow staff to feel empowered to work when they are able to do so mainly because COVID-19 has had an effect on staff being constantly on zoom and working more hours than the usual 8-hour day. There is an understanding that staff have a lot of outside challenges going on due to the pandemic so there is some flexibility in terms of work hours. There is mention of team support being crucial to inclusion and belonging especially for staff who are caregivers and how the organization has created space for them to express if they are having a hard time and needing support.

Other responses touched on HR creating a role for health and wellness within the organization, however they also mentioned the fact that just because that's available to everyone doesn't mean everyone is well and healthy or even taking advantage of the resource. There were opportunities for weekly classes and going out of the office for walks, and employee health benefits included many wellness related resources where staff got reward points for participation. However, the pandemic changed all of that even though health and wellness become really important as they year progressed. There was also mention of telemedicine as a mental health resource which staff can access especially due to the pandemic lockdown. There was mention of the ability to take time off that during COVID-19 that did not take time away from you vacation,

wellness and sick days. Some of the response were of implementing a no meeting Friday and how successful or unsuccessful it has been.

Another response was around supporting staff during the elections and the racial tensions that swept the nation after the murder of George Floyd, employees were provided opportunities to take space. Managers were encouraged to let their direct reports know that they can log off their computers early as a way to mitigate zoom fatigue and other challenges brought on by the pandemic.

Employee Voice Within the Organization

In terms of having employee voices be heard, some of the responses focused on transparency and communication and overall building of trust within organizations so employees can feel comfortable voicing their opinion without fear of retaliation. Some mentions were around surveys that were conducted that found that the greatest area of improvement was around perceived transparency. When employees feel like their organization is not transparent there is major concern around trust. There was mention of the importance of getting feedback from those who are at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy whose experiences and voices may not be heard. There were responses around the importance of taking regular pulse check survey to get a sense of where the employees within the organization. Some mentioned that surveys were done quarterly while others were once a year and others said 2 to 3years. The responses also focused on the fact that there was so much going on in the country between the pandemic and the racial unrest and how it made it really important to make sure that employees feel like their voices matter. Also, there responses around manager feedback and performance check in and how it allows employees space to voice their needs to their direct managers. Responses also talk about organizations taking the pandemic into consideration when it came time for raises, some responses were that the raises were not merit based but focused more on support for all staff during the pandemic. There were responses around the effectiveness of surveys and how it allows the organization to see where managers can support in the career advancement of employees based on the information gathered from the surveys. Apart from surveys there was also mention of once monthly town halls to give space for employees to talk about any issues

within the organization and figure out ways to address them and even though this happens there are still lots of problems, complaints and issues.

Balancing Work and Personal life

There were responses around the fact that a high number of employees are non-exempt staff which means that if they work more than 8 hours a day or 40 hours a week they are getting paid over time something the organizations try to avoid as much as possible and from that standpoint people's jobs are structured so that they get their work done in 8 hours. For some jobs doing 8 hours is realistic while for some it's a myth especially now due to COVID we are working twice as many hours. There was also the talk about how often people actually read their emails. There was mention of how the fast nature of their organization creates an atmosphere where employees feel pressure to get things done at the expense of their personal lives. In these case responses included making sure managers are encouraging their teams to take their vacations and take time off and log off zoom early things like that to encourage staff to take time off. There were some responses of fatigue around COVID and how there is a blur between work and personal life that is a major issue, basically facing exhaustion daily because of navigating technology all day just to get work done. All responses mentioned work and personal life is a challenge that their organization is actively navigating during COVID. There were responses about how direct service work does not leave room for planning because things change from day to day or moment by moment and employees have to be nimble and prepared to meet the needs of the population they serve. Also, responses focused on encouraging employees to create boundaries for themselves and learn to say no when their plate is full and not feel guilty or feel like they are not doing enough.

Acknowledging and Celebrating Employees Culture and Background

Responses around celebrating employee diversity by celebrating their culture within the organization for some was something that starts with the employees themselves putting something together that is then often times supported by the organization. Some of these initiations come in the form of community building engagements organized by employees of color within the organization and they are an affirmation of the culture of the employees. Other responses talked about how their organization through their DEI report have been able to ask

employees about their feelings around representation, with questions asking about their culture and how supported they felt. Sending staff weekly messages that's translated in two other language was mentioned as a way to be inclusive and also during the organization's town hall 5 minute videos are shown to highlight the culture of the month for example Black history month or the lunar new year are some ways to celebrate the diverse background of employees. Some of the responses also touched on celebrating Juneteenth as well as having a different day for Columbus Day holidays also serves to Acknowledge native Americans.

All the interviews were conducted with a mix of C-level and mid to low level employees and responses across the board covered many aspects of inclusion necessary to move the needle forward in terms of building a culture of belonging within the workplace. The challenges for many nonprofit organizations are that after launching their DEI programs they must continue an iterative process of improving their inclusive practices based on the responses received from staff pulse check surveys. This would allow the organization to evaluate their performance based on key metrics of belonging which in community, authenticity, accepting and thriving as a minimum of what should be scoring high marks. However, belonging is still a relatively unexplored topic for nonprofit organizations, a good amount of literature on the topic were from for profit human resource companies. It would be incredibly beneficial to have more research from the perspective of nonprofit organizations, especially because having a DEI program within a nonprofit means there will be a need to hire in house experts to do the work within the organization if the goal is to do it well rather than using DEI consultants for a couple of trainings here and there.

Secondary Data Collection: A literature review of over 30 articles, scholarly journals books, and reports in nonprofit organization, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, focused on creating an expanded model of inclusion that has belonging as the end goal. In addition to peer reviewed articles, reports and other research and statistical data on nonprofit and for-profit diversity initiatives were consulted to lend credence to the context in with this report is written.

Limitations:

The limitations of these methods include the fact that there were only four nonprofit organizations and 7 respondents. Additionally, the research data is qualitative rather than quantitative. Even though valuable insights can be gleaned from qualitative research it does not give enough give enough depth of analysis. Also, the subjects who participated in the interviews work in nonprofit organizations that already have principles and values of DEI established. The findings may not be relevant to those nonprofit organizations. Another limitation would be that only one of my interview subjects is actually in charge of implementing DEI within their organization. The other subjects do not have the capacity to make the changes from the recommendations. This research is based on the overarching assumption that all nonprofit organizations no matter the size must want to implement inclusive actions that enhance and promote belonging culture in the workplace and this for those nonprofit organizations in the begin stages of implementation can benefit from the research. Future research should include a survey questionnaire focused on belonging should be included to gather that can be analyzed numerically and a minimum of 50 participants at varying level of employment within a nonprofit organization should be included. Also, there is a dearth of literature that focuses on belonging in the context of a nonprofit organizations which made the literature review process a bit of a challenge. While there is a wealth of information on DEI, there is less so of belonging particularly because the subject is the new trend based on the racial context and climate in the US at the moment.

Section 4. Data Analysis

Primary Data Analysis: Expert Interview Overview:

The expert interviews provided a wealth of information that helped support and reinforce the literature review findings. Not only did it lend credence to the values and frameworks in the literature, it also provided concrete recommendations for how these models can be utilized in nonprofit organizations. Through the interviews, the essence of inclusion and how crucial it is to implementing belonging is reinforced. The interview also confirmed that there is still a lot of work to be done in the nonprofit sector in terms of inclusion. The interviews highlighted the fact that many nonprofit organizations are struggling and there is no established play book for implementing belonging. The themes that emerged in the course of the interviews are discussed in Table 2 and it elaborates on the themes, with supporting quotes and strategic approaches to address each theme. A total of 10 themes relevant to building a culture of belonging in nonprofit organizations emerged including hierarchical leadership structure, lack of trust and transparency, balancing work and personal life, opportunity for advancement, implementation of ERGs. Others were homogeneity in leadership, infrequent and ineffective surveys, implementing community building as tool for onboarding, mental health and wellness and grounding DEI in historical context of race. The themes were based on the responses from lower-level as well as C-level employees of the all nonprofit organizations that participated in this research. The strategic solutions were suggestions provided by the respondents about how their nonprofit organizations or nonprofit in general can begin to build a workplace culture of belonging. Additionally, while there were differing opinions on what leadership can do to implement inclusive policies to promote belonging, there was consensus on the need for the nonprofit sector to take the lead on changing the culture of the workplace by implementing policies and practices that promote individual uniqueness and allowing people to show up as their authentic selves in the workplace. There was also a consensus in the gap between leadership and mid to lower level employees leading to a lack of trust and transparency, while interviewees in the leadership understood that changes need to be made, interviewees in the lower level staff didn't have confidence that those changes will ever be implemented.

Some of the quotes from the participants were a crucial to gaining a sense of the gaps and silos that are creating barriers to achieving belonging. In terms of the harm that hierarchies create the chief diversity office mentioned that “people that have the highest sense of belonging are often at the highest end of the leadership structure” what this shows is a clear connection between belonging and leadership and if individuals are given opportunities to advance to leadership position they are more inclined to gain a sense of belonging because advancement means validation and acknowledgement. Also identifying and naming the homogenous nature of the leaders encourages important conversations and work towards changing the dynamic the chief executive officer who was interviewed mentioned “To be a white leader in a community of color, in an organization that is predominantly people of color is somewhat uncomfortable” the first step to making changes is admitting there is a problem. For NPOs to continue to succeed in their mission, they must prioritize making leadership accessible to all employees who aspire to be in that position regardless of race, sexuality, age gender, ability or disability.

Table 2: Themes/Quotes and Strategic Solutions from Expert Interviews

Themes	Quotes	Strategies
Hierarchical Leadership Structure	“People that have the highest sense of belonging are often at the highest end of the structure”- CDO	Breakdown hierarchy and provide opportunities for staff to connect with leadership and open up the line of communication.
Lack of transparency and trust	“Staff may feel uncomfortable giving feedback for fear of retaliation”- KC	Provide managing up trainings for lower level staff and share survey data public in a timely manner. Also, follow through on feedback from survey.
Balancing work and personal life	“Work life balance is a constant struggle, I wish the organization planned better”-KC	Provide flex time opportunity and implement meeting free Fridays and encourage staff to create boundaries and make sure nonexempt are not working overtime
Opportunity for Advancement	“Advancement is a case by case basis and luck of the draw and who you have to report to”-CDO	Support staff with professional development funds and provide leadership mentoring Opportunities and manager support for professional development.

Implementation of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)	“Employee Resource groups are where people can come and share openly and vulnerably about their experiences”-EB	Promote engagement across ERGs to eliminate silos, by encouraging leadership participation and prioritize creating an anti-racist taskforce.
Homogeneity of leadership (White and Male)	“To be a white leader in a community of color, in an organization that is predominantly people of color is somewhat uncomfortable”-CEO	Create pathways for training and conduct listening tours with the CEO and other members of leadership. Prioritize DEI trainings for C-level staff in the organization.
Infrequent and ineffective surveys	“We run pulse surveys and I often wonder how many people are reading them and feeling like change is being enacted”- KC	Prioritize survey findings and model transparency, while making sure to focus on narrative section of the survey to gain better insights on how to improve.
Implement community building as a tool for onboarding	“I really appreciated when I first joined the organization and my manager set up one on one meetings for me with other employees”- VS	HR embed DEI into onboarding and make Racial Equity Trainings mandatory during onboarding. Prioritize Cross-functional team engagement as way to build community
Mental health and wellness	“There’s always been a lot of words around wellness, but when you try to live into it, there is a problem. I would like to see some honesty around wellness- FH	Provide COVID-19 or other emergency benefits to support wellness and consider a hybrid working model allowing employees the opportunity to work from home.
Ground DEI in historical Context of race	“Belonging in nonprofit need to come from the historical context, including 1619 project, Asian, African American and Latin American and indigenous studies” - CDO	Implement White Supremacy training to name that it exists and celebrate and acknowledge all cultural backgrounds in the organization. NPO prioritize understand the community it serves.

Secondary Data Analysis: Literature Review Frameworks

As previously discussed in the literature review, belonging is an emerging area of research in the expansion of inclusion in nonprofit organizations. Inclusion research has only begun to be explored as a multi-level framework that targets belonging (Ferdman & Deane, 2013). As figures 2, 3 and 4 demonstrates there are various approaches to belonging being tested by scholars, researchers and nonprofit organizations. It is clear that there is no rule book to figuring out belonging. It is more like an iterative process that nonprofit organizations must engage to achieve the goal of a workplace culture of belonging. What is abundantly clear from both the primary and secondary data analysis is that there is more research to be done. The secondary data served as foundation for and helped give context to the secondary data findings. The literature also showed that there are many approaches for arriving at belonging, however it is at the center of diversity, equity and inclusion. According to Shore et.al. (2011), belonging is directly at the center of inclusion, where an individual is encouraged and allowed to be who they are in terms of their uniqueness within a group. Additionally, inclusion as a vehicle for belonging has to do with how nonprofit organizations, their leaders and groups provide ways for people of many different backgrounds, with complexities of humanity, to engage and participate, and also add their thoughts and ideas in the mix without having to give up their identity (Ferdman, 2017). All secondary data agreed that inclusion is key to belonging, these two values are synonymous and nonprofit organizations must allow people to be their unique and authentic selves in other for that to be a reality. Lastly, all literature review frameworks are human centered, prioritizing people over performance, with the understanding the when people feel like they matter they are more inclined to have a vested interest in the mission of the nonprofit they work for and are more focused on performance contributing the overall goals.

Section 5: Implications and Recommendations

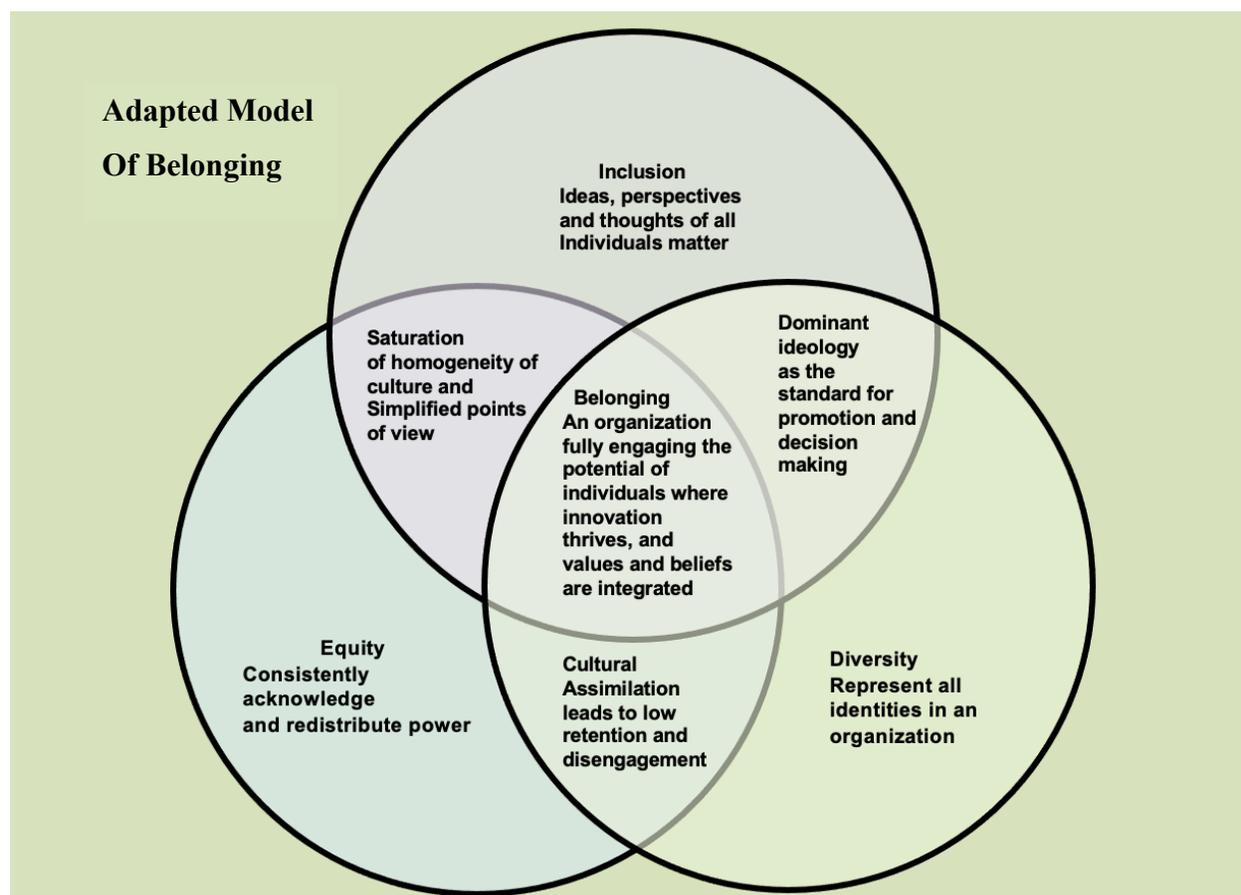
The implications of the findings of this research is two-fold: Inclusion must be at the foundation of belonging and should exist at all levels of the nonprofit organization. And what this means is that inclusion should drive belonging and uniqueness in any workplace culture. Additionally, most literature on belonging is born out of inclusion that offers multi-level frameworks on how to start the conversation, however that is where it ends, because there are no actionable strategies for a holistic approach for embedding belonging in nonprofit organizations DEI policies and practices. While there are emerging models of belonging based on Shore et.al's (2011), framework this research report seeks to fill some of the gaps by presenting two adaptable models of belonging. The first model (Figure 5) will be focus on the general approach that the nonprofit sector can take to start implementing belonging and second model (Figure 6) will focus on HR management within each nonprofit organization and how they can be intentional about embedding belonging in all policies and practices beginning with onboarding.

An Adapted Model of Belonging

The model presented (Figure 5) is adapted from Krys Burnette, (2019) model. This model addresses a nonprofit sector approach for implementing belonging. The model utilizes three different elements of DEI to illustrate the implication of an imbalance of all three concepts. The model is made up of three interlocking circles. First, there is an overlap between equity and inclusion and there is no diversity, this leads to a homogenous leadership structure withing the organization where the board is mostly male and white. Second, is an overlap between inclusion and diversity with no equity, this leads to a powers struggle and a dominant ideology when it comes to making decisions. Third, is an overlap between diversity and equity, with no inclusion this leads to employees having no choice than to assimilate and ultimately low retention and a lack of engagement among employees because they feel like outsiders and feel like they have no voice within the organization. Lastly, is an overlap between Inclusion, equity and diversity and here the organization has belonging at the center of its core values an actively engages the

potential of individuals and promotes space for innovation to thrive and integrates all values and beliefs.

Figure 5: Adapted Model of Belonging



Source: Author's Creation. Adapted from Krysta Burnette, 2019

The model presented (Figure 6) is based on Marlow's hierarchy of needs. This Model addresses a nonprofit human resources management approach for implementing belonging. Based on the hierarchy of needs there are 5 levels for HR implementation beginning from the bottom up. The first level requires embedding all DEI trainings in nonprofits organizational culture. This means regular trainings for all employees at all levels of the organization and included in this training are materials that focus on the historical context of racism in the US. Also, embed DEI trainings into all manager check ins, team meetings and all organizational activities. The second level focuses on HR utilizing inclusive practices in the hiring process, this

means HR must hire based on skills and experience not education, conduct blind reviews of resumes and interview a diverse pool of candidates. The third level focuses on how nonprofit organizations can enhance performance through inclusive leadership mentoring and providing opportunities for advancement. This means nonprofit HR must implement quarterly performance reviews, weekly manager check ins, prioritize professional development and opportunity for advancement, provide paid time off and prioritize wellness and promote from within. The fourth level is about community building with the nonprofit by implementing employee resource groups (ERGs) and affinity resource groups (ARGs) together these two programs provide a space for staff to feel valued and acknowledged for their uniqueness and allowed to bring their culture and background into the workplace. The fifth level is where nonprofit organizations can combine all aspects of the model and evaluate their DEI and belonging policies for success, by adopting belonging as a metric for organizational success.

Figure 6: Adapted Model of Belonging



Source: Authors Creations. Adapted from Marslow (1943)

Based on the models of belonging at the totality of the research finding recommendations are two-fold, one the nonprofit organizational sector approach as a whole (macro level) and two from the HR management perspective (micro-level).

Nonprofit sector recommendations:

- Nonprofit leaders no matter the size of their organizations must implement inclusion that embrace ideas, perspectives and thoughts of all employees
- Nonprofit leaders must work to eliminate dominant ideologies as the standard for decision making and encourage transparency through
- Nonprofit leaders must create opportunities to consistently acknowledge and redistribute power
- Nonprofit leaders must embrace and implement policies that promotes individuality and uniqueness as opposed to assimilation

HR Management Recommendations:

- Embed regular DEI and belonging trainings into NPOs culture by making sure all employees regardless of their employment level is required to participate in all trainings, include historical context of race in all trainings
- HR department of all nonprofit organizations must adopt inclusive hiring practices, including blind resume screening, interview diverse pool of candidates and hiring based on experience not education
- HR must work with leadership to provide opportunity for advancement, professional development and leadership mentoring for lower level employees
- HR must support implementation of employee resource groups to promote community engagement within the nonprofit
- HR should include as a metric for success in terms of organizational performance
- HR should provide opportunities for leadership and lower level employees to connect

Section 6: Conclusion

This research started with the argument that nonprofit organizations as the voice of the community and leading in the fight for equality, justice and access must, look inward and focus on building leadership capacities that prioritizes expansion of inclusion to create a workplace where individuals can bring their authentic selves and thrive. The literature review revealed many important themes and the main ones were explored based on expert arguments and the overarching conclusion argued by Ferdman, (2017) is that there are paradoxes of inclusion that cannot be ignored by nonprofit organizations, for example nonprofit organizations must choose where to focus on, people or profit (p. 240). He went on to argue that inclusion at its core involves contradictory facets coexisting in a tension filled paradox and also the fact that approaches that focus on one aspect of inclusion polarities does not succeed (p. 241). The balancing of this paradox is where nonprofit leaders must focus on in all aspects of inclusion including belonging. The findings of this research highlight that nonprofit leaders must embrace the macro and micro level approaches to achieving belonging. The macro level requires system and DEI policy changes and, on the micro, requires HR management implement the DEI policies as outlined in the models in figures 5 and 6.

Ferdman, (2017) suggests an interesting tension in inclusion as it relates to self-expression and identity. This is an area of research that would boost belonging in nonprofit workplaces. The two questions Ferdman poses are how can we foster a sense of belonging and unity that promotes inclusion in a diverse group, while coexisting with our differences and value to the group? Secondly, how can we be alike and different simultaneously? (p.243) these are two questions that research in NPOs must continue to iterate on. Belonging, much like any aspect of social equality when approached in a meaningful impactful way will come with its challenges. Considering the tensions, bearing the inherent paradox in mind it is the only way we can enrich ourselves individually and collectively and gain real benefits from inclusion work. Ferdman, (2017) argues that diversity and inclusion practitioners and other social equality advocates must be willing and prepared to see the opposing views not as something to resist, but a varying and normal part of inclusion practice itself (p. 259). This is where new research lies.

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Author's Bio

Rakiya Witwer is a workforce and international development professional with a background in Refugee and Asylum management, Social Welfare, Diversity Equity and Inclusion. She attended the University of California Berkeley California and majored in Social Welfare and Global Poverty and Practice, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Welfare. She was a Global Poverty and Practice (GPP) Fellow, a KASP and Leadership scholar and went on to intern at the International Rescue Committee in Oakland California. She attended graduate school at the University of San Francisco, School of Management and earned a Masters in Nonprofit Administration. She is the deputy director for the Network of Women for Sustainable Development of Nigeria an NGO she co-founded with Nigerian women around the world aimed at poverty action and alleviation in Northern Nigeria.

After completing her internship at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Oakland, Rakiya earned a full-time position as an Economic Empowerment Specialist. In this role she was able to support refugees and asylum seekers with job searches, resume editing, interview preparation and accompany them to job interviews. Rakiya's hard work and dedication at the IRC earned her the opportunity to run two programs Refugees@Work and Hospitality Link. The programs were funded by the Starbucks foundations and TripAdvisor respectively. These two programs provided entry-level jobs in the restaurant and hospitality industry for 80 of her refugee clients every fiscal year.

Rakiya's passion for her work earned her a nomination to be the IRC Way Day ambassador in 2018. In this role Rakiya also built partnerships with the city and county social services to support her clients. She initiated partnerships with WIOA to ensure that all her refugee clients had access to workforce training to get them started in the United States.

Rakiya went on to work at Year Up, a workforce development nonprofit that serves young adults of color. In this role she works with young adults to prepare them for jobs in the

technology and banking sector. She secures job placement partnerships with companies like Salesforce, Facebook, LinkedIn, Bank of America, Google, AirBnB just to name a few.

In her current position as the Employment Placement at Year Up Diablo Valley college, Rakiya has taken a lead role as a member of the DEI committee and other Affinity Resource Groups (ARGs) to continue to promote a culture of equity at Year Up. To that end she has taken several Racial Justice trainings including a certification from the Racial Equity Institute and Fundamentals of Facilitation for Social Justice Work from the Interactive Institute for Social Change.