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An Institutional Model for Tolerance and Peace Using a Formulaic Integration of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Prof. David L. Everett

Hamline University

3.1 Introduction

Given the hyper-polarizing taking place within the society recently, there have been gentle overtures for tolerance and peace. These overtures typically take the form of either creating specific positions or learning opportunities that take the place of institutional apparatus or operate in parallel. Many institutions have established, by various names, an entity that is charged with weaving tolerance and peace objectives into existing equity, diversity, and inclusion goals, for example, Chief Diversity Officer and Director of Inclusive Excellence and Institutional Culture titles, just to name a few. The success of this approach and roles is mixed. This chapter proposes a road map that, while not guaranteeing success, increases the chance of genuine integration of tolerance and peace through new ways of thinking about and approaching equity, diversity, and inclusion.

In exploring genuine integration of tolerance and peace, institutions need to focus on essential components that contribute to leadership development, ownership characteristics, and partnership opportunities. They need to expand their thinking about the practical meaning of tolerance and peace and find ways to establish critical methods of engagement, exploration, and evaluation. Traditional approaches, such as affirmative action programs and diversity training workshops, have proven to be ineffective and even counterproductive as they tend to conflate individual and institutional implications. When the two are properly delineated

and defined, however, the most effective approaches make strategic and synergistic use of competency, capacity, and community. Institutions in which constituents and stakeholders are equipped, accountable, and connected significantly improve efforts that can have a transformational advantage not easily offset by other institutional characteristics and social dynamics.

Institutions and systems throughout the world are undergoing substantial demographic change, with members of previously under-represented and unrepresented groups making up increasing proportions. This inclusion of members of minoritized groups is not, however, a comprehensive reflection of tolerance and peace — tolerance, in this sense, equates to *equity*, and peace equates to *inclusion*. Too often, institutions and systems have settled for the goal of diversity versus inclusion and equity, and thus have been agnostic about prescriptive-only culture dynamics. The evidence, in fact, suggests that not only do institutions and systems often reproduce rather than remedying patterns of marginalization, exclusion, and oppression, but also that substantial disparities remain between and among groups across a number of wellness indicators. Thus, those seeking to understand and address these patterns and disparities must do the following three things: examine current institutional realities, address the systemic nature of those realities, and make the connection between realities and culture.

Current realities highlight issues of tolerance and peace within our society — refusal to collaborate, unwillingness to engage different narratives, and the labeling of dissenting experiences as uninformed, to name but a few. These realities, however, upsetting and unfortunate, have created a tension of opportunity to discuss tolerance and peace in a more robust and substantive manner. The fundamental understanding of the role institutions play in addressing tolerance and peace has shifted from what was once perceived as reactive and temporary to what many now recognize as proactive and necessary. As such, institutional approaches that have typically implemented initiatives targeting specific areas must now employ a more comprehensive approach that encompasses multiple areas, which extends beyond compliance, status quo, and business as usual. As the need for tolerance and peace continues to grow — individually, institutionally, systematically, and structurally — the practice of equity, inclusion, and diversity allows for institutions to truly see the integral value of a more expansive approach that can focus on three areas: leadership, ownership, and partnership.

3.2 Leadership

Why is staying within the silos of “status quo” so natural and preferable? A sociological response could be that what is known breeds a certain level of security and comfort, but a reply from a pedagogical perspective would question whether security and comfort should, in fact, be goals at all. This has been the question at the core of the pursuit for tolerance and peace. With either response, an important understanding is the dual nature of the endeavor: institutional as well as individual institution being the context, individual(s) being the content. Thus, the pursuit of tolerance and peace must address leadership dynamics, if it is to be successful.

According to Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, leadership would be a safe undertaking if institutions faced problems for which they already have the solutions.¹ This is a critical lens through which to view the pursuit, and practice, of tolerance and peace as it distinguishes *technical* challenges — those which people have the necessary know-how and procedures to tackle from *adaptive* challenges and those that require experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments from numerous places within the institution.² As adaptive challenges present themselves, the tendency is for members of an institution to look to an expert to provide a technical solution: “Tell me/us what to do.” This approach allows institutions and individuals to avoid the dangers, either intentional or unintentional, of risk and vulnerability by treating adaptive challenges as technical. Which is why, Heifetz and Linsky conclude, management is more prevalent than leadership.³

To define leadership as an activity that addresses adaptive challenges considers not only the values that a goal represents “but also the goal’s ability to mobilize people to face, rather than avoid, tough realities and conflicts.”⁴ The most difficult and valuable task of leadership in the area of tolerance and peace may be advancing goals and articulating strategies that promote adaptive solutions — undertaking the iterative process of examining where an institution is, how it arrived to that point, and what it needs to do to move.

¹Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, 13.

²Ibid.

³Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, 14.

⁴Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*, 23.

In other words, a big-picture perspective, fueled by the need for change and immersed in constant action.⁵

The assertions of Heifetz and Linsky suggest that, regarding tolerance and peace, leaders cannot simply recognize the challenges facing an institution but must be careful to understand their historical *and* structural nature while interpreting them in adaptive terms. If, as Barbara Crosby and John Bryson argue, in order to coordinate action and make headway on resolving a complex institutional problem, those involved need to be aware of the whole problem system and recognize that it has to undergo significant change;⁶ engaging the broad scope of systems and structures at both the macro and micro levels is essential for leadership. Challenges facing institutions require a process that addresses the various dimensions collectively. The pursuit of tolerance and peace, in an equitable fashion, would have to include careful attention to the role of culture, commitment, and communication. Yet, throughout this process, a clear focus on leadership, perhaps even shared leadership, must be employed to avoid institutional pitfalls of isolation, perpetuation, and stagnation. John P. Kotter explains that “needed change can still stall because of inwardly focused cultures, paralyzing bureaucracy, parochial politics, a low level of trust, lack of teamwork, arrogant attitudes. . . and the general human fear of the unknown.”⁷

Given the climate of polarization, it would be prudent for leaders to imagine a different manner by which change occurs in institutions. Traditional strategic planning processes, in which an identified “upper” management team creates a plan with a set of “SMART” goals — specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-framed — and then systematically disseminates it into the system for implementation, tend to incorporate linear methods to obtain complex, dynamic outcomes. Since, according to Kotter, attempting to create major change with simple, linear, analytical processes almost always fails,⁸ *situational management* must be replaced with *shared leadership*. For certain institutions, such as higher education, it is very difficult, arguably impossible, to enforce change given certain realities such as tenure, faculty approval, and board consent. As a result, leadership that engages across silos embodies a transformational mindset that mobilizes versus manages — a

⁵Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, 53.

⁶Crosby and Bryson, *Leadership for the Common Good: Tackling Public Problems in a Shared-Power World*, 9.

⁷Kotter, *Leading Change*, 20.

⁸*Ibid.*, 25.

traditional approach that will be unsuccessful because it inadequately engages the breadth and depth of the institution.

John Kotter defines management as a set of processes that can keep a complicated system running smoothly, whereas leadership is a set of processes which creates or adapts institutions to significantly changing circumstances.⁹ Unfortunately, a management mindset has been institutionalized, resulting in a culture that discourages leaders from learning *how* to lead. Ironically, this institutionalization is a direct result of past successes — the repetitious pattern of “doing what has always been done.” Kotter diagnoses the syndrome as follows:

Success creates some degree of market dominance, which in turn produces growth. After a while, keeping the ever-larger organization under control becomes the primary challenge. So attention turns inward, and managerial competencies are nurtured. With a strong emphasis on management but not leadership, bureaucracy and an inward focus take over. But with continued success, the result mostly of market dominance, the problem often goes unaddressed and an unhealthy arrogance begins to evolve. All of these characteristics then make any transformation effort much more difficult.¹⁰

The combination of both institutions that resist change and leaders who have not been taught how to create change is lethal, particularly because sources of complacency, status quo, and business as usual are rarely adequately addressed. Urgency and change are not issues for those that are comfortable with, and who have been asked to simply maintain, a current system of policies, processes, and practices.¹¹

In addition to practicing situational management versus shared leadership, another common error made by institutions is to pursue change in a non-integrative manner. Crosby and Bryson distinguish two types of organizations: in-charge, or hierarchical, and networked, or shared (Figure 3.1). The in-charge organization has at its apex an individual or small group that establishes organizational direction, determines guiding policies, and transmits directives downward. Embedded in this type of organization is the assumption that the organization engages in highly rational, expert-based planning and

⁹Kotter, *Leading Change*, 25.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 29.

informed decision-making at the highest level. Highlighting the inadequacy of this structure, Crosby and Bryson see a need for a networked approach that includes a variety of cross-stakeholder engagement and inclusivity as a better, more beneficial model to influence change.¹² As they point out:

Change advocates have to engage in political, issue-oriented, and therefore messy planning and decision making, in which shared goals and mission are being developed as the process moves along. New networks must be created, old ones co-opted or neutralized. These networks range from the highly informal, in which the main activity is information sharing, to more organized shared-power arrangements.¹³

For the networked model to be effective, two premises must be accepted. First, a certain loss of autonomy will be experienced. Within a hierarchical model, lower levels may possess knowledge but lack the trust in, and relationship with, upper levels. As a result, that knowledge may not get shared. Here, an approach that Geoffrey Vickers calls “acts of appreciation” becomes a useful lens because appreciation merges judgment of what is *real* with judgment of what is *valuable*. Identifying problems involves new appreciation of how something works, what is wrong with it, and how it might become better — from multiple perspectives. This appreciation subsequently shapes the way a problem is defined, the solutions considered, and the experiences of those impacted.¹⁴

Second, an understanding of culture is pivotal. Edgar Schein distinguishes three levels of organizational culture: artifacts, which are visible organizational structures and processes; espoused beliefs and values, which are strategies, goals, and philosophies; and underlying assumptions, which are unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings.¹⁵ Institutional culture is inextricably linked to historical and current realities. Not accepting this inter-relationship will undermine the efforts of any network with which it becomes involved. As Schein points out:

“The most central issue for leaders, therefore, is how to get at the deeper levels of a culture, how to assess the functionality of the

¹²Crosby and Bryson, *Leadership for the Common Good*, 5.

¹³*Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴Crosby and Bryson, *Leadership for the Common Good*, 15.

¹⁵Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 26.

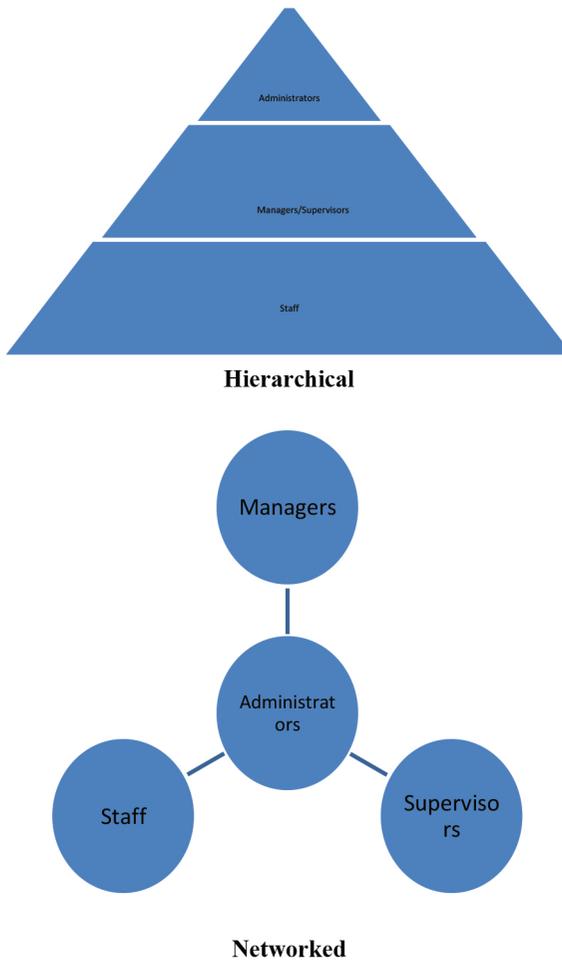


Figure 3.1 Hierarchical vs. Networked.

assumptions made at that level, and how to deal with the anxiety that is unleashed when those levels are challenged.”¹⁶

Schein defines culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think,

¹⁶Ibid., 37.

and feel in relation to those problems.”¹⁷ Given this definition, one can see not just the historical connection between institutional culture and leadership but also the problem posed by a networked model: any challenging or questioning of basic, underlying assumptions will release anxiety and defensiveness.¹⁸

For purposes here, the use of “culture” builds on Raymond Williams’s notion of culture “as the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life.”¹⁹ From a leadership recognition standpoint, I assert a slight modification: *Systems do as designed, individuals do as allowed*. The pursuit of tolerance and peace requires a leader to shepherd and enhance ownership. While managers seek to control ownership, leaders must work to inspire ownership. Managers approach ownership from a hierarchical perspective; leaders, on the other hand, are more global in their approach to ownership.

3.3 Ownership

To effectively promote and practice tolerance and peace, an institution needs to establish some level of ownership in terms of where it is, how it arrived there, and what needs to be done. In most instances, policies, processes, and practices have a direct correlation to outcomes. A lack of ownership, or the practice of deflection, not only can manifest itself on an individual level but can also be fostered by an institution that tolerates conditions that contribute to intolerance and oppression. Institutional habits, left unchecked and uncorrected, can encourage a lack of ownership and undermine trust and transparency, resulting in unclear priorities, silo mentalities, and habitual conflict avoidance that invariably take away from addressing key issues — individually and institutionally — associated with, and necessary for, a culture of tolerance and peace. To combat this, ownership should involve an embracing and unpacking of institutional history, considering its effects at various levels, as well as its impact across the institution, leaving no structure, function, or area unexplored.

Power and privilege dynamics are constant institutional realities that can either help or hinder attempts at ownership. To make strides toward establishing accountability, institutions must begin with the frank acknowledgement that there are embedded causes of persistent, patterned orders of inequity — specifically, who has access and to what extent. This entails barriers and

¹⁷Ibid., 17.

¹⁸Ibid., 32.

¹⁹Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 63.

constraints that are more burdensome for those with the least amount of power and least access, leading to “meaning-systems” that, “while originally only ideas, gain force as they are reproduced in the material conditions of society.”²⁰ The power and privilege dynamics within institutions stem from the acceptance of social mindsets that result in conditions becoming a part of, and reinforcement for, contingent applications and meanings — directly resulting in distrust; limited, if any, inclusion; and lack of communication.

Because culture is a critical component, it is essentially the construct that establishes values, practices, and, most importantly, sanctions that mark the institutional way of life. In the final analysis, it comprises what people do, how they go about doing it, and the impact throughout.²¹ While the modern use of the term *culture* obscures the original, dynamic, and creative meaning of “tending, harvesting, or cultivating,” retaining this active sense alerts us to the fact that culture is not some inert abstract reality but is always in process, in that it is always affecting and always being actively produced. Specific historical context may inform culture, but different content influences it. Consequently, culture is not a monolithic stationary entity that should be rejected, accommodated, or even transformed but rather is an existential reality that exists in a critical, discriminating, and constructive manner.²²

So, what is the implication for tolerance and peace? Mirroring a worldview predicated on inequitable social structures directly places institutions in patterns of domination and subordination, possibly oppression. For these patterns to be purged, the behavior must be identified and addressed as a critical response to the need to achieve outcomes — healthy, positive, or otherwise — for all persons, groups, and stakeholders of the institution. Under these circumstances, ownership must be understood and approached in terms of *challenge*. Similarly, as an equity-building component, culture needs to be rediscovered as a cultivating process that creates standards, models expectations, and addresses behavior.

Another key component to ownership is the development of metrics that intentionally and progressively move the institution in a critical way. The management adage that “what gets measured gets valued” is particularly relevant. Because the biases that perpetuate intolerance are largely unconscious and reflexive, shifting an institution’s emphasis from “fit” to “need” requires more than the “good intentions of well-meaning people.” Without clear and

²⁰López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*, 10.

²¹Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*, 27.

²²Ibid.

robust measures to track equity efforts and outcomes, a tendency to revert to habitual, ingrained thinking, and behavior patterns restricts innovative investment and measurement. Metrics help institutions avoid the types of traps identified by Banaji and Greenwald as “mindbugs” — ingrained habits of thought and approach that lead to errors in perception, remembrance, reasoning, and decision-making.²³

Strategically used, metrics can prioritize initiatives, establish targets, and, most importantly, evaluate impact. This institutional aligning of metrics can then serve as evidence of commitment while serving a cultural purpose as well, prioritizing engagement with and exposure to *difference*. These two elements, as well as the factors associated with them, must begin with deep dives into the past and present institutional realities — policies, processes, and practices that impact the creation and sustaining of culture. This unpacking of historical and current realities is a critical step in revealing the developmental aspects and effects relative to current climate, comfort, and achievement.

It is crucial that all levels throughout the institution model the importance of tolerance and peace. From senior leadership to front-line staff, the entire community must take ownership and be held accountable for application and advancement. The leadership team, by its actions or lack thereof, can signal importance through active involvement in the development of equity goals, designation in the strategic plan, and articulation in mission. Staff must work to ensure that department and team interactions model the institution’s emphasis on tolerance and peace. Too often, institutional activities lean toward preferred exclusion — for the sake of “safe spaces,” “avoiding conflict,” and support of individualism — rather than intentional inclusion that can contribute to learning, growth, and development.

Owning the responsibility of creating a tolerant and peaceful-minded professional corps is also essential. Diversity requires more than numbers, and inclusion demands more than a superficial seat at the decision-making table. All aspects of the reward system must be continually reviewed and renewed from within an equity framework. For example, in higher education, the work that many underrepresented faculty and staff do with under-represented students must be valued in professional annual assessment systems such as

²³Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald, *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*, 4. While the authors do not link the term to institutional bias explicitly, the broader connection between individual, institutional, and larger society is made clear — “understanding how mindbugs erode the coastline of rational thought, and ultimately the very possibility of a just and productive society, requires understanding the mindbugs that are at the root of the disparity between our inner minds and outward actions.” 20.

tenure and promotion; assessment methods that identify creating a tolerant and peaceful campus must be in staff evaluations; and the demographic makeup of teams, areas, and departments should be a criteria for leadership evaluation. Development opportunities could include, but not be limited to, education courses, professional workshops, and action research projects — all of which not only enhance individual competency, but institutional capacity as well.

3.4 Partnerships

Building a culture of tolerance and peace is both institutional as well as individual — a “both/and” versus an “either/or” construct. The very nature that it involves both capacity and competency is problematic because it flies in the face of equality — whose historical understanding and practice implies that once equal rights were achieved, individual ills and conditions of under-represented groups would be remedied. This ignores that a certain majority holds the structural bloodlines “in society to infuse their racial prejudice into the laws, policies, practices, and norms of society.”²⁴ It is ironic that such an understanding and practice would be so misapplied, given that institutions have historically dealt with the problematic in ways that have recognized the underlying need for, and practice of, equity (e.g., the United States G.I. Bill), thereby making social transformation possible and standing as a structural principle in democratic idealism — *access*.²⁵

Partnership is a powerful means to create access. It becomes a way of thinking that transforms silo mindsets into innovative pathways. Partnership, when done well, invites commitment, eliminates competitiveness, and encourages a sense of belonging. Internally, partnerships can help diagnose problems more comprehensively and clearly; externally, they may help identify sources that can help provide better solutions. The view that education, healthcare, or any other “system” is solely the responsibility of institutions in those systems is a fledgling concept. Each sector, whether by choice or force, has taken a decentralized approach in which partnerships have become not just beneficial but essential. Simply put, partnerships work to define problems more broadly, expand strategic thinking, and explore collective solutions.

²⁴Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, 22.

²⁵See J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, “A Structure, Not an Event: Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity,” in *Lateral: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association* 5, no. 1, 2016.

Whether referred to as “community engagement,” “civic engagement,” or “campus partnerships,” collaborative constructs can assist with institutional capacity. Partnerships can involve a variety of areas, levels, and entities that can help with a wide range of issues including lack of recognition, resources, and ability to respond. Many of the partnerships necessary to create successful strategies for tolerance and peace will involve building pathways of imagination and innovation, inside and outside the institution. Approaching these as authentic relationship-building, opportunities can be an integral step in building trust, removing misconceptions, and contributing to the realization that the need for relationships may not just be prudent but also transformational.²⁶

Martin Luther King called the art of alliances complex and intricate.²⁷ It can be argued that his assertion was accurate because building alliances is much more detailed than putting exciting combinations and ideas on paper. It involves an acknowledgement of self and common interests, validation of individual and group identity, in addition to affirmation of isolated and shared resources. If, as King argued, we employ the principle of selectivity along these lines, we will find millions of allies who, in serving themselves, also support the various institutions that house them, “and on such sound foundations unity and mutual trust and tangible accomplishment will flourish.”²⁸

Another aspect that is advantageous to explore is *who*, or *what*, has power — defined as the ability to construct, control, coerce, and change. When Cornel West speaks of perpetrators of free-market fundamentalism and authoritarianism, he defines them as “plutocratic leaders, corporate elites, elected officials, [and] arrogant authoritarians.”²⁹ In other words, they are those in socially constructed positions who have the ability and authority, based on access, to designate the parameters of association. In civic institutions, such persons would be presidents, executive directors, or other “gate-keepers” who can make significant decisions with profound institutional impact. This is important because true authentic engagement begins with trust, transparency, and robust relationships.³⁰

²⁶See Lee G. Bolman and Terrance E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*.

²⁷Washington, *A Testament of Hope*, 309.

²⁸Ibid., 310.

²⁹West, *Democracy Matters*, 21–23.

³⁰Ibid., 28.

As they studied successful change efforts, Crosby and Bryson “realized that organizations had to find a way to tap each other’s resources (broadly conceived) in order to work effectively on public problems. That is, they had to engage in sharing activities, which vary in level of commitment and loss of autonomy.”³¹ This brings to bear a critical point: most leaders and institutions are either unwilling or uncomfortable to forfeit autonomy and power. This is especially true where hierarchy is the tradition. For institutions to advance, the philosophical approach must change to visualize what can be accomplished by a shared-power structure that otherwise without, renders institutions less informed, responsive, and resourceful. Shared-power arrangements may be most useful in creating a climate where those with little to less institutional *authority* feel a sense of *creative deviance* that enables them to step away from providing answers that soothe and readily raise questions that disturb.³²

Distinguishing silos can be a challenge to creating partnerships. There are several sources of the silo mentality that can affect institutional culture: areas of expertise, learned behavior, and unwillingness to think broadly across the institution, just to name a few. Structure and culture of the institution can also foster a silo mentality. If institutions do not establish cross-functional meetings, training, and development sessions, or even impact-evaluation discussions related to policies that bring people from different areas, departments, and levels together, individuals will remain in their “caves of comfort.” It is imperative that institutions create and promote a culture that prioritizes sharing, collaborating, and “outside the box” thinking.

3.5 Conclusion

I have offered a networked approach to tolerance and peace that is made more effective through integration with equity, diversity, and inclusion. It is my belief that specific dimensions of this approach are critical and anticipate that this perspective will assist institutions in recognizing crucial areas and aspects to address institutional capacity as well as individual competency. In one study, more than 80% of companies identified leading change as one of the top five core leadership competencies for the future. More importantly, 85%

³¹Crosby and Bryson, *Leadership for the Common Good: Tackling Public Problems in a Shared-Power World*, 17.

³²Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 188.

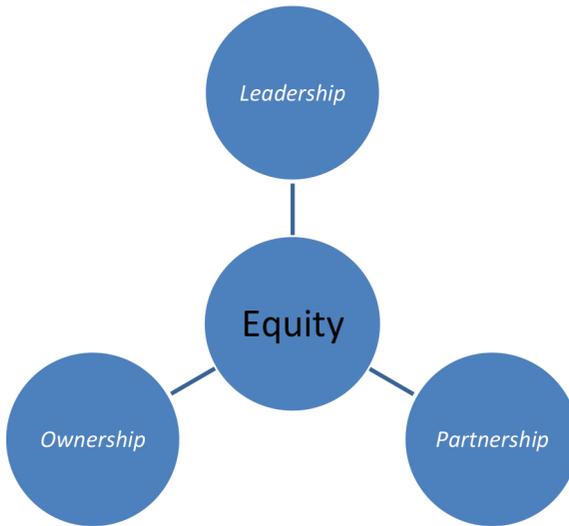


Figure 3.2 Hierarchical vs. Networked.

felt that this competency was not as strong as was needed.³³ Make no mistake, tolerance and peace is about change, on an institutional and individual level. A networked model that gives attention to leadership, ownership, and partnership is critical. As we engage much broader ways of thinking about tolerance and peace, institutions need to expand their approach to encompass the internal and external dynamics associated with equity, diversity, and inclusion. Approaching tolerance and peace in this manner allows strategies to pull together the use of competency, capacity, and community to formulate institutional plans where constituents and stakeholders are equipped, accountable, and connected.

³³See J. Stewart Black and Hal B. Gregersen, *It Starts with One: Changing Individuals Changes Institutions*.