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Toward a Refuge of Difference

Assessing the Opportunities and Challenges of Radically Inclusive Community Organizations

by

Mario Demetrios Castillo

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

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## Abstract

### Toward a Refuge of Difference

#### Assessing the Opportunities and Challenges of Radically Inclusive Community Organizations

by

Mario Demetrios Castillo

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Berkeley

Professor David J. Harding, Chair

Contrary to ideals many world religions champion, religio-spiritual organizations (ROs) have historically struggled with identity-based inequality. With more ROs disrupting this pattern and embracing a radically inclusive ethos, critical research can help us better understand these dynamic social spaces. This study adopts a mixed methods approach and a typology of work types to investigate some of the organizational and social processes associated with two self-proclaimed radically inclusive religio-spiritual organizations (RIROs) in the San Francisco Bay Area: City of Refuge (COR) United Church of Christ (UCC) located in the Coliseum Industrial neighborhood of Oakland, and East Bay Meditation Center (EBMC) located at the west edge of Oakland's historic Lakeside District. Descriptively, this study explores how COR and EBMC articulate and attempt to actualize organizational radical inclusion (ORI), address and, if possible, resolve interpersonal conflict, and engage in internal and external community outreach efforts. Analytically, this study explores some of the underlying motivations for these processes and how they impact individuals' experiences of ORI. Informed by theories of multiculturalism, community, and organizations, the argument advanced here is that religio-spiritual and ethical frameworks, as well as historical and organizational contexts, shape COR's and EBMC's policies, practices, and processes, ultimately impacting individuals' experiences of in-house diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). These findings contribute to research on RIROs specifically and DEIB more broadly by elucidating factors that bring about such spaces, identifying effective and ineffective mechanisms for achieving ORI and evaluating individuals' experiences of radical inclusion.

To my family  
and Neil

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## TOWARD A REFUGE OF DIFFERENCE

To commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the historic 1963 March on Washington, The King Center and the 50th Anniversary Coalition organized three marquee events in Washington DC, a Realize the Dream March and Rally on the National Mall, a Global Freedom Festival, and a concluding “Let Freedom Ring” Ceremony held on August 28th, 2013. The week-long event included worship services, presentations by various civil rights organizations, and notable speakers such as members of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s family, the late Congressman John Lewis, and former Presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama.

The anniversary celebrations commenced on Saturday, August 10th, with a concert titled “Reflections on Peace: From Gandhi to King,” which featured sacred Indian, Sri Lankan, and classical music, traditional hymns, and African-American gospel songs (Menzie 2013). Donnie McClurkin, the award-winning gospel recording artist and pastor of Perfecting Faith Church in Freeport, New Jersey, was scheduled to headline the event. On the eve of the concert, however, McClurkin was contacted by the mayor of Washington D.C., Vincent C. Gray, and, as McClurkin maintains, “uninvited.” Responding to the concerns of various gay rights activists, Gray dropped McClurkin from the program due to his controversial views on homosexuality. Though McClurkin had been open about the sexual abuse he suffered from male members of his family as a young child and the homosexual behavior he engaged in as an adult - what he described in his book *Eternal Victim, Eternal Victor* as the “abnormal use of my sexuality” - he has been an outspoken proponent of African-American ex-gay ministries (McClurkin 2001). Despite McClurkin's disappointment with Mayor Gray's decision, the event was successful without him.

In support of Mayor Gray’s decision, Yvette A. Flunder, presiding Bishop of the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries and Senior Pastor of the City of Refuge (COR) United Church of Christ (UCC) in Oakland, wrote an open letter stating what was needed, in addition to a meaningful apology from McClurkin, was a community-based strategy toward reconciliation and healing. “I am black. I am a woman. I am same-gender-loving and want all my freedoms celebrated,” Flunder insisted. Speaking as an inner-city pastor who had ministered to marginalized communities for decades and was aware of the many religio-spiritual community organizations espousing a more inclusive ethos, Flunder (2005:1-11) stressed, “America is losing its appetite for exclusive theologies and responding to theologies of inclusion and justice.”<sup>1</sup>

Bishop Flunder’s emphasis on reconciliation, healing, inclusion, and justice - ideals that many of the world’s major religions embrace - seems far-reaching compared to some of the “on-the-ground” practices of many faith-based communities. Whether recalling, for example, the racial restriction policy preventing African-American men from being ordained to the priesthood until 1978 in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Embry 1994; Mauss 2003), the devaluation and repression of women in Buddhism (Cabezón 1992; Klunklin and Greenwood 2005), Christianity (Küng 2005), Islam (Kassam 2010), and Judaism (Greenspahn 2009), the controversy over homosexuality in Christian congregations throughout America (Moon 2004), or the widespread homonegativity and hypermasculinity within orthodox American Protestantism (Miller 2007; Ward 2005), the sobering reality is that many religio-spiritual organizations (ROs)

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<sup>1</sup> Browne, Munt, and Yip (2010:35) argue against a rigid distinction between “religiosity” and “spirituality.” They criticize the view that “religiosity” implies blind adherence to institutional norms, while “spirituality” suggests a more open and critical exploration of personal beliefs. The authors believe this formulation is too rigid and frames these as opposing rather than interrelated phenomena. See also Halkitis et al. 2009.

have a history of racism (Cobb, Perry, and Dougherty 2015; Edwards, Christerson, and Emerson 2013; Scheitle and Dougherty 2010), sexism (Balkin, Schlosser, and Levitt 2009; Maltby et al. 2010; Sumerau, Cragun, and Mathers 2016), heterosexism (McQueeney 2009; Rodriguez and Ouellette 2000), ableism (Björnsdóttir and Traustadóttir 2010; Gaventa 2006; Reynolds 2012), and classism (Gleig 2014; Yancey and Kim 2008).<sup>2</sup>

Although more welcoming ROs like the Metropolitan Community Church and Integrity USA have been around for more than half a century, within the Sociology of Religion and Contemporary Religious Studies, research is lacking on ROs proclaiming to be what Bishop Flunder (2005) describes as *radically inclusive* (Comstock and Henking 1997; Thumma and Gray 2005). With more ROs embracing a radically inclusive ethos, critical research can help us better understand these important and potentially informative social spaces. Utilizing a mixed methods approach (see Appendix A) and the typology of work types presented below, this study investigates some of the organizational and social processes associated with two self-proclaimed radically inclusive religio-spiritual organizations (RIROs) in the San Francisco Bay Area: City of Refuge (COR) United Church of Christ (UCC) located in the Coliseum Industrial neighborhood of Oakland, and East Bay Meditation Center (EBMC) located at the west edge of Oakland's historic Lakeside District. Descriptively, this study explores how COR and EBMC articulate and attempt to actualize ORI (Chapter 1), address and, if possible, resolve interpersonal conflict (Chapter 2), and engage in internal and external community outreach efforts (Chapter 3). More analytically, this study explores some of the underlying motivations for these organizational processes and how these processes positively or negatively impact individuals' experiences of ORI.

This is one of the first sociological studies to examine RIROs and thus has important empirical implications. Whereas previous studies within the Sociology of Religion have focused on the individual as the main unit of analysis - emphasizing variables such as race (Becker 1998), gender (McQueeney 2009), and sexuality (Machacek and Wilcox 2003; Wilcox 2009) - they have done little to explore radical inclusion as a meaningful sociological concept and organizational phenomenon (Stainback, Tomaskovic-Devey, and Skaggs 2010). Interestingly, the literature that does mention radical inclusion is largely limited to non-academic texts written by and for members of various religio-spiritual organizations (Anderson 2007; Flunder 2005; Spellers 2006; Yang 2017). While this literature makes notable conceptual and observational contributions, a critical sociological and theoretical analysis is wanting. This study attempts to bridge the rigors of social science research with the conceptual and observational insights provided by non-academic religio-spiritual communities.

Because research on this topic often analyzes variables such as race, gender, and sexuality as discrete categories rather than mutually constitutive aspects of one's complete identity makeup (Frable 1997; Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010), the experiences of those who embody multiple marginalized identities (e.g., disabled queer women of color) are often underrepresented in the literature. This study is a departure from that trend. Attentive to Crenshaw's (1991) and Collins's (2015) notion of intersectionality, most of the participants interviewed for this study

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<sup>2</sup> Browne, Munt, and Yip (2010:37) assert that "homonegativity" is a more precise term to indicate the negative attitudes and mistreatment of homosexual people, as opposed to the clinical term "homophobia," which implies a psychological or medical condition, such as a phobia. Regarding "hypermasculinity," Benson (2001) describes it as a value system that exaggerates and distorts what is often assumed to be traditionally masculine traits, such as physical strength, aggression, violence, competition, and dominance.

embody multiple historically marginalized identities and thus bring a more nuanced perspective to our understanding of radically inclusive communities.

## CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Although research has sought to make sense of diversity and multiculturalism at the discursive (Alexander 2001; Prasad 2001), conceptual (Marvasti and McKinney 2011), practical (Mor Barak and Cherin 1998), and theoretical (Alexander 2001; Hartmann and Gerteis 2005) levels, Stevens, Plaut, and Sanchez-Burks (2008:118) observed that “research over the past 50 years has shown little consensus about what constitutes diversity.” No universal meaning exists because notions of diversity and multiculturalism are shaped by and deeply embedded within broader historical, cultural, and political forces (Marvasti and McKinney 2011). Indeed, these terms may even vary due to the ever-changing nature of common discourse (Hartmann and Gerteis 2005).

Consider Anshuman Prasad’s (2001) study of the *discourse of difference* in the United States from the 1930s to the 1990s. Prasad (2001) noted that two themes were particularly salient during this period: discrimination and diversity. Between the 1930s and 1970s, discrimination was a dominant theme in the Civil Rights discourse. As such, many of the social struggles of that era led to reforms aimed at removing barriers to equal employment, education, housing, and more. By the 1980s, however - and coinciding with the so-called Reagan Revolution and publication of *Workforce 2000* - there was a critical shift from merely fighting discrimination to actively promoting diversity, especially as “diversity” became popularly viewed as a boon for workplace productivity and profit maximization (Berrey 2015; Johnston and Packer 1987). Aware of this trend, Marvasti and McKinney (2011:634) noted that “During previous eras, diversity was seen as something to be reduced, ignored, or later as a source of positive identity and self-esteem [e.g., the ethnic pride movement of the 1970s]. However, the contemporary discourse is more rooted in increasing corporate profits.” Historical, cultural, and political forces - in addition to how notions of diversity and multiculturalism are contextually and discursively situated - shape and redefine these phenomena throughout society and time.

### *Disentangling Notions of “Diversity” and “Multiculturalism”*

Informed by the community and workplace organizations literature, I define *diversity* as the degree to which a group of people is heterogeneous with respect to personal, functional, ideological, and cultural attributes. Informed by sociological insights and the workplace organizations literature, I define *multiculturalism* as the degree to which a group of people contains, values, utilizes, and encourages ethnic, racial, cultural, and religio-spiritual diversity. While diversity has been discussed in the context of educational (Baez 2004; Brubaker 2001) and governmental institutions (Choi 2009; Cornwell and Kellough 1994), the community (Becker 1999; Cox 1993) and workplace organizations (Roberson 2006; Stevens, Plaut, and Sanchez-Burks 2008) literature provides a helpful definition. In a narrow sense, diversity refers to demographic differences such as race, gender, and age among group members (Ely and Thomas 2001; Mor Barak, Cherin, and Berkman 1998). Broader definitions, however, go beyond this to include different skills and knowledge as a result of educational and occupational background (Milliken and Martins 1996), varied learning styles and approaches to work (Jones 1999; Thomas and Ely 1996), different abilities, attitudes, perspectives, behaviors, and identities (Cox 2001; Robinson and Dechant 1997), and cultural norms and values (Cox 1993; Pless and Maak 2004). In this sense, Stevens,

Plaut, and Sanchez-Burks (2008:118) provide a limited definition of diversity as “the degree to which a workgroup or organization is heterogeneous with respect to personal and functional attributes.” I expand this definition to include ideological and cultural attributes. It is worth noting that merely increasing demographic heterogeneity does not necessarily increase organizational effectiveness; rather, “it is how a company defines diversity, and what it does with the experiences of being a diverse organization, that delivers on the promise” (Thomas and Ely 1996:2).<sup>3</sup>

There has been a tendency to equate diversity and multiculturalism; however, they are not interchangeable concepts (Bell and Hartmann 2007; Curry, Blandy, and Martin 1994). Whereas diversity, whether in the narrow or broad sense mentioned above, often emphasizes demographic variation within groups, multiculturalism emphasizes communities containing and valuing multiple cultures (Pusch and Hoopes 1979).<sup>4</sup> Because notions of multiculturalism are shaped by and embedded within broader historical, cultural, and political forces, how it has been discussed varies by context and author. For example, at the macro-social level, Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul (2008:159) contend that multiculturalism can refer to a demographic fact or description of society (e.g., the United States is a more multicultural society than Japan), an individual or collective ideology (e.g., that ethnic, racial, cultural, and religio-spiritual diversity should be celebrated), or a specific orientation by governments or institutions towards a diverse population (e.g., promoting or not multicultural policies). At the micro-social level, within the workplace organizations literature, multiculturalism is often characterized by the degree to which an organization values cultural diversity and is willing to utilize and encourage it (Cox 1991:34; Stevens, Plaut, and Sanchez-Burks 2008). I combine elements of the macro-social view, specifically concerning ideology, and the workplace organizations characterization to define multiculturalism as the degree to which a group of people contains, values, utilizes, and encourages ethnic, racial, cultural, and religio-spiritual diversity.

### *Toward a Notion of “Radical Inclusion”*

Combining non-academic texts written by members of various religio-spiritual organizations with notions of inclusion provided by the community (Becker 1998, 1999) and workplace organizations

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas and Ely (1996) identified four paradigms for understanding workforce diversity. The *resistance paradigm* reflects organizational resistance to change and adherence to an often unequal status quo. This attitude perpetuates workplace inequality but has been transforming in recent decades. The *discrimination-and-fairness paradigm* (DFP) views organizational heterogeneity as a moral imperative to ensure the just and fair treatment of all members of society. This approach focuses diversification efforts on providing equal opportunities, suppressing prejudicial attitudes, and eliminating discrimination. The *access-and-legitimacy paradigm* (ALP) recognizes that the organization’s markets and constituencies are culturally diverse; it, therefore, behooves the organization to match that diversity in its workforce to gain access to and legitimacy with those markets and constituent groups. Combining elements of DFP and ALP, the *learning-and-effectiveness paradigm* (LEP) suggests that the insights, skills, and experiences people develop as members of various cultural identity groups are valuable resources that the organization can draw upon, especially in ways that will advance its mission (Ely and Thomas 2001:243-246). Attempting to synthesize these paradigms, Selden and Selden (2001:317) introduced the *valuing-and-integrating paradigm* (VIP). Within this paradigm, when an organization’s mission/vision and the strategies designed to implement them reflect members’ worldviews, those members are more likely to be involved and committed (Brown, Harris, and Squirrel 2010:5).

<sup>4</sup> According to Jones (1999:9), culture refers to the “shared values, beliefs, meanings, symbols, attitudes, languages, patterns of thought and behavior, emotional expressions, products, artifacts, aesthetic standards and styles of communication created by a group of people, which are transmitted, learned, and internalized.” However, Cox (1993:230) and Ely and Thomas (2001) note that the degree to which one personally identifies with a cultural identity and the value one places on them can vary significantly.

literature (Stevens, Plaut, and Sanchez-Burks 2008), I define ORI as an intentional and action-oriented value system (Pless and Maak 2004; Yang 2017) whereby those historically and systematically excluded, marginalized, and oppressed in society at large - whether based on ability, age, disease, ethnicity, gender, illness, race, sex, sexuality, or some other factor - are recognized, welcomed, accepted, valued, loved, and even celebrated (Anderson 2007; Flunder 2005; Hope Pelled, Ledford Jr., and Mohrman 1999; Spellers [2006] 2021). Ideally, these members could access information and resources, be involved in work groups, influence decision-making, and feel a part of critical organizational processes (Mor Barak and Cherin 1998).<sup>5</sup>

### *Orienting Theories of Multiculturalism*

As self-proclaimed RIROs, COR and EBMC ideally align with the definition of multiculturalism provided above; therefore, it is fitting to draw on theories of multiculturalism to better understand how these two organizations articulate and attempt to actualize ORI. Hartmann and Gerteis (2005:218-232), responding to theoretical debates on divergent views of difference, identified three types of multiculturalism: *cosmopolitanism*, *fragmented pluralism*, and *interactive pluralism*. Cosmopolitanism “recognizes the social value of diversity, but [...] is skeptical about the obligations and constraints that group membership and social cohesion can place on individuals. [Consequently] this vision defends diversity only insofar as it allows and expands individual rights and freedoms.” Here, the emphasis is on tolerance and individual choice rather than mutual obligations. Fragmented pluralism “focuses on the existence of a variety of distinctive and relatively self-contained mediating communities as a social reality, but also as a necessity and strength.” This view acknowledges the importance of maintaining group culture and self-determination. Unlike assimilationism, wherein social groups get absorbed into the macro-social order, in this view, the individual gets subsumed by the group rather than the larger whole. Finally, interactive pluralism not only realizes the existence of distinct groups and cultures but also posits the need to cultivate common understanding across differences through mutual recognition and interaction. Cross-cultural dialogue and exchange become a defining feature and value for adherents of this view. Although COR and EBMC articulate an ORI model that aligns with interactive pluralism, in practice, especially concerning vulnerable individuals, they tend to reflect fragmented pluralism.

### *Orienting Theories of Community*

Because Chapter 2 focuses on *interpersonal* relational management and care as an aspect of community work, it is helpful to draw on theories of community to discuss how COR and EBMC address and, if possible, resolve interpersonal conflict. Perhaps the most well-known work on community, as characterized by traditional cultural values, is Ferdinand Tönnies’s (2002) groundbreaking book *Community and Society*, first published in 1887 (Delanty 2018:36). Tönnies’s notion of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) distinguished between traditional communities and modern forms of society. In *Gemeinschaft*, Bell and Newby (1979:24) note, “Human relationships are intimate, enduring, and based on a clear understanding of where each person stands in society.” They add that status is ascriptive, members are relatively immobile physically and socially, culture is relatively homogenous, and the moral custodians hold significant

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<sup>5</sup> See El-Amin (2022), Stamps and Foley (2023), and Verlinden (2023) for a broader discussion on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.



power and authority. An example of this expression is the family unit. Alternatively, *Gesellschaft* describes a system in which relationships are not necessarily intimate and closely tied. Self-interest is primary, and associations lack shared mores, beliefs, and values. An example of this expression is a corporate enterprise. With the emergence of community studies in the mid and latter half of the twentieth century, the notion of community began to take on a more postmodern shape. According to Delanty (2018:156), in the postmodern society, “group membership is more fluid and porous than in modern society.” The old certainties of class, race, nation, and gender that were the basis of industrialized society have become contested categories in what is now an age of multiple belongings. Though COR and EBMC are self-proclaimed RIROs, COR is traditional-leaning in its conflict resolution processes; however, there are hints of postmodern tendencies regarding organizational processes. Comparatively, EBMC is postmodern-leaning in its resolution processes; however, there are hints of modernist tendencies in its organizational processes.

### *Orienting Organizational Theory*

Because Chapter 3 focuses on *organization-wide* relational management and care as an aspect of community work, it is fitting to draw on organizational theory to better understand COR’s and EBMC’s internal and external community outreach efforts.<sup>6</sup> Classical theory, or *rational systems perspective*, focuses on the formal and instrumental structures of an organization, such as efficiency and management (Taylor 1919), bureaucracy and the division of labor (Weber 1947), and administration and departmentalization (Fayol 1954). This perspective views the organization as a collective of people working together to pursue specific organizational goals without regard to the interpersonal complexities that may arise in such circumstances. Because COR and EBMC are very aware of and often prioritize social and interpersonal dynamics, this view does not map meaningfully onto either case. Neoclassical theory, or *natural systems perspective*, on the other hand, advanced the notion that informal and interpersonal relations within an organization are more important and consequential than formal structures alone (Arensberg 1951; Thompson et al. 2003). This view is relevant to EBMC as a case because it assumes that people within an organization drive action based on individual motives and interests, patterns of cooperation, shared norms, and even conflicts among actors at all levels. The East Bay Meditation Center’s internal-facing *inquiry, collaboration, and (re)design* efforts align with this focus. Finally, contemporary theory, or *open systems perspective*, asserts that organizations must not be viewed merely as isolated entities but as embedded within a larger relational environment (Scott 2004). This view is relevant to COR because it acknowledges that organizations affect and are affected by other societal processes and systems. The City of Refuge’s external-facing *provisional service work* speaks to this focus. Of course, COR and EBMC align with each perspective to some degree; however, I emphasize the most salient perspective for each case.

## RESEARCH METHODS

I relied on two primary and two supplementary data sources (see Appendix A). Primary sources include interview and survey data; supplementary sources include ethnographic observations and content analysis (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011; Neuendorf 2017; Weiss 1995). From January 2019 to June 2020, I conducted 46 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with members (past and

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<sup>6</sup> According to Miner (2015:4), “Organization theory [...] has come to refer almost exclusively to the study of the behavior and nature of organizations in their environments.”

present) of two self-proclaimed RIROs in the San Francisco Bay Area. I recruited 21 participants from COR and 25 participants from EBMC. Of the 21 COR participants and 25 EBMC participants, 18 and 24, respectively, completed the survey questionnaire. From April 2019 to March 2020, I attended CORs Sunday worship service most weeks, and from May to June 2019, I participated in the seven-week New Member Orientation. At EBMC, I attended two weekly practice groups: The Alphabet Sangha, which met most Tuesdays, and The People of Color Sangha, which met most Thursdays.<sup>7</sup> In February 2023, I graduated from the center’s inaugural two-year Spiritual Teacher and Leadership (STL) training program. At both RIROs, I had informal conversations with members before and after various events. Finally, the content I referenced for this study includes the websites of each organization, emails, newsletters, social media posts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and various other publications about COR and EBMC.

*Two Radically Inclusive Research Sites*

In my search for suitable research sites, I considered several factors: the organization’s history; vision and mission; location; leadership and governance structure; economic framework; evidence of diversity and inclusion; and services and programming. With permission, I began collecting data at COR and EBMC in 2018. Both sites are ideal for this study because they claim to be radically inclusive and because they align and differ in interesting ways. Regarding similarities, both organizations are registered 501(c)(3) religious nonprofit organizations. They are both based in Oakland, California.<sup>8</sup> Most founders of both organizations embody historically marginalized identities. While COR was led largely by Bishop Flunder, a Christian lesbian of African descent, many co-founders were gay and lesbian parishioners of color. Likewise, EBMC was established by a diverse group of Buddhist practitioners “with the expressed mission of including cultural diversity as one of its organizational priorities” (Yang, 2017:57). Finally, both organizations value and are committed to radical inclusion, social justice and their respective religio-spiritual and ethical frameworks (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. Religio-Spiritual and Ethical Frameworks

	City of Refuge	East Bay Meditation Center
Ideal	The Christian Community	The Beloved Community
Religio-Spiritual and Ethical Frameworks	<u>Christian-Informed</u> Love, inclusion, justice, service <u>Ministry of Restoration</u> Love of God and Christ	<u>Buddhist-Informed</u> Non-harm, inclusion, justice, liberation <u>Five Buddhist Precepts</u> Abstain from killing

<sup>7</sup> According to Yang (2017:63), *sangha* originally referred to ordained monastic communities; however, more recently, it has come to encompass lay practitioners and friends who heed the Buddha’s teachings and support each other as they work toward individual and collective freedom.

<sup>8</sup> The City of Refuge opened in San Francisco near 14th and Belcher in the historic Castro District. Later, COR purchased a building on Howard Street, sold it, then bought an old union building in West Oakland, where the organization currently resides. The East Bay Meditation Center opened its doors at a storefront on Broadway in downtown Oakland and later moved to its current location at 285 17th Street. The center is raising five million dollars to buy a building. It is unclear whether EBMC will remain in Oakland, though that is the hope.

Intentional radical inclusion Unconditional welcome Celebration of diversity Social justice  <u>Village Ethics</u>  Balance of openness and privacy Inclusivity, accountability, boundaries Everyone has a seat at the table	Abstain from stealing Abstain from sexual misconduct Abstain from lying Abstain from intoxicants  <u>Five Core Elements of EBMC</u>  Buddhism and mindfulness teaching programs Gift economics Radical inclusivity Shared leadership Social justice and healing
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*Note:* Henderson and Bertin (2017:58) state that “The Beloved Community” was first coined by philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce and then popularized by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For Dr. King, “The Beloved Community” upheld the belief that an all-inclusive spirit of siblinghood would one day replace racism, bigotry, and prejudice.

Regarding comparative differences, COR was founded in 1991, and EBMC was founded 17 years later, in 2007. The social, cultural, legal, and political state of the United States and the world was different at these two moments in time, which explains some of COR’s and EBMC’s organizational priorities.<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, COR is more racially homogenous. Most of the leadership and members are of African descent. The East Bay Meditation Center is more racially heterogenous due in part to the policies, practices, and processes (3Ps) that have been in place since its founding (see Chapter 1). With Bishop Flunder as the matriarchal head, COR has a core group of leaders known as The Shepherd’s Table Pastoral Team (Board), many of whom have been with the organization since its founding. Though EBMC also has a Board of Directors, known as the Leadership Sangha (LSangha), the center experiments with shared leadership, which the center’s Strategic Plan (2018:9-18) defines as “a collaborative governance system based on mutual accountability and a culture of respect and inclusion rooted in Dharmic society values.” This model emphasizes decentralized decision-making, shared accountability, and collective stewardship, and underlies the democratic “committee style” conflict resolution processes I discuss in Chapter 2. Finally, both organizations are attentive to internal- and external-facing outreach efforts, albeit with different emphases informed by their distinct ethical frameworks and organizational mechanisms. The City of Refuge tends to be more *ministry* (i.e., externally) focused, and EBMC tends to be more *sangha* (i.e., internally) focused (see Chapter 3).

### *Sample Group Characteristics*

This study draws on interview data from 46 members of two self-proclaimed RIROs in the San Francisco Bay Area. Twenty-one participants were recruited from COR, and 25 were recruited from EBMC. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the 18 COR participants who completed

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<sup>9</sup> The City of Refuge launched its ministry when Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and LGBTQ+ communities faced many social, cultural, legal, and political challenges. For example, in response to the Los Angeles Police Department’s (LAPD) use of excessive force in the arrest and beating of Rodney King, the Los Angeles riots and various race-related civil disturbances shook the nation in 1992. One year later, in 1993, the newly elected President, Bill Clinton, signed the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' (DADT) policy into law prohibiting openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual persons from serving in the military. Then, in 1996, The United States Congress enacted the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), again signed into law by President Bill Clinton, which banned federal recognition of same-sex marriage. These efforts rendered members of the LGBTQ+ community unequal under the law. In addition to these overt forms of discrimination, the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States hit BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities disproportionately hard (Biggar and Rosenberg 1993).

the survey questionnaire, and Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for the 24 EBMC participants who completed the questionnaire (see Appendices B1-B5).

TABLE 2. COR Descriptive Statistics for Individual Level Variables |  $n = 18$

Variables	Mean   Percent	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Demographics</b>				
Age	55	12.13	38	73
18 - 25	0.00	--	0	0
26 - 35	0.00	--	0	0
36 - 45	0.11	--	0	1
46 - 55	0.28	--	0	1
56 - 65	0.39	--	0	1
66 +	0.17	--	0	1
Missing	0.05	--	0	1
<b>National Origin</b>				
Born in the US	0.94	--	0	1
Born outside the US	0.06	--	0	1
<b>Education</b>				
Less than high school	0.00	--	0	0
Some high school	0.00	--	0	0
High school (GED)	0.00	--	0	0
High school (diploma)	0.00	--	0	0
Some college	0.22	--	0	1
Associate degree	0.06	--	0	1
Bachelor's degree	0.22	--	0	1
Master's degree	0.22	--	0	1
Professional degree	0.11	--	0	1
Doctorate degree	0.06	--	0	1
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.11	--	0	1
<b>Currently Employed</b>				
Yes	0.61	--	0	1
No	0.33	--	0	1
Prefer not to say	0.06	--	0	1
Not listed	0.00	--	0	0
<b>Gross Annual Income</b>				
Less than \$10,000	0.06	--	0	1
\$10,000 - \$19,999	0.00	--	0	0
\$20,000 - \$29,999	0.00	--	0	0
\$30,000 - \$39,999	0.06	--	0	1
\$40,000 - \$49,999	0.00	--	0	0
\$50,000 - \$59,999	0.11	--	0	1
\$60,000 - \$69,999	0.11	--	0	1
\$70,000 - \$79,999	0.05	--	0	1
\$80,000 - \$89,999	0.05	--	0	1
\$90,000 - \$99,999	0.05	--	0	1
\$100,000 - \$129,999	0.17	--	0	1
\$130,000 - \$149,999	0.00	--	0	0
More than \$150,000	0.06	--	0	1
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Not applicable	0.06	--	0	1
Prefer not to say	0.22	--	0	1
<b>Relationship Status</b>				
Single	0.33	--	0	1
Partnered	0.22	--	0	1
Married	0.33	--	0	1

Separated (married)	0.00	--	0	0
Divorced	0.06	--	0	1
Widowed	0.00	--	0	0
Civil partnership	0.00	--	0	0
Separated (in civil)	0.00	--	0	0
Former civil partner	0.00	--	0	0
Surviving civil partner	0.00	--	0	0
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.06	--	0	1
Not listed	0.00	--	0	0
Experience with Psychological Difficulties				
Yes	0.50	--	0	1
No	0.39	--	0	1
Unknown	0.06	--	0	1
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.05	--	0	1
Person with Disabilities				
Yes	0.17	--	0	1
No	0.78	--	0	1
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.05	--	0	1
Race and Ethnicity				
Asian descent	0.00	--	0	0
African descent	0.83	--	0	1
Hispanic or Latino	0.00	--	0	0
Middle eastern	0.00	--	0	0
Native American	0.00	--	0	0
Native Hawaiian	0.00	--	0	0
European descent	0.17	--	0	1
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.00	--	0	0
Gender Identity				
Cis female	0.22	--	0	1
Cis male	0.22	--	0	1
Female	0.17	--	0	1
Male	0.22	--	0	1
Nonbinary	0.00	--	0	0
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.11	--	0	1
<i>Missing</i>	<i>0.06</i>	--	0	1
Transgender Identity				
Yes	0.22	--	0	1
No	0.78	--	0	1
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.00	--	0	0
Sexual Orientation				
Asexual	0.04	--	0	1
Heterosexual	0.07	--	0	1
Pansexual	0.00	--	0	0
Lesbian	0.11	--	0	1
Gay	0.21	--	0	1
Bisexual	0.11	--	0	1
Queer	0.11	--	0	1
Questioning	0.00	--	0	0
Same-gender loving	0.29	--	0	1
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.04	--	0	1

Not listed	0.04	--	0	1
<i>Multiple selections</i>	0.28	--	0	1

*Note:* Three participants from COR did not complete the survey questionnaire. Three data points for “National Origin” were gathered from the interview data. Missing data points for “Age” and “Gender Identity” were noted in the table. The column total for “Sexual Orientation” is greater than one because five respondents selected more than one category.

Among COR participants, most (39 percent) were between the ages of 56 and 65, and 28 percent were between 46 and 55. While not necessarily intentional, no one under 25 participated in this study. Most respondents (94 percent) were born in the United States, with one person indicating they were born in Germany. Regarding education and employment, 61 percent had a Bachelor’s degree or higher, and most (61 percent) were employed at the time of the survey. Of those who reported an annual gross income, 12 percent made less than \$50,000, 37 percent between \$50,000 and \$99,999, and 17 percent made between \$100,000 to \$129,000. Most respondents reported being in a relationship as partnered (22 percent) or married (33 percent).

Regarding mental and physical wellness, 50 percent of the respondents indicated having some experience with psychological difficulties (e.g., anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress), but most (78 percent) did not identify as persons with disabilities. The predominantly African American presence at COR explains why a majority (83 percent) of the sample identified as being of African descent. Respondents of European descent (17 percent) were the only other racial group represented. An equal number of respondents identified as cis-female (22 percent) and cis-male (22 percent), and 22 percent identified as transgender. I interviewed six people whose gender expression was beyond the cis-female, cis-male binary. At COR, one person identified as genderqueer, another as a transwoman, and two as transmen.<sup>10</sup> Finally, those who identified as heterosexual (7 percent) were in the minority, and those who identified as same-gender loving (29 percent) were in the majority.

TABLE 3. EBMC Descriptive Statistics for Individual Level Variables | *n* = 24

Variables	Mean   Percent	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Demographics</b>				
Age	50	11.12	34	71
18 - 25	0.00	--	0	0
26 - 35	0.08	--	0	1
36 - 45	0.29	--	0	1
46 - 55	0.33	--	0	1
56 - 65	0.17	--	0	1
66 +	0.13	--	0	1
<b>National Origin</b>				
Born in the US	0.75	--	0	1
Born outside the US	0.25	--	0	1
<b>Education</b>				
Less than high school	0.00	--	0	0
Some high school	0.00	--	0	0

<sup>10</sup> Cisgender refers to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their sex assigned at birth. Genderqueer or non-binary refers to someone who does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions. Transwoman refers to a transgender person who has transitioned from male to female, and transman refers to a transgender person who has transitioned from female to male.

High school (GED)	0.00	--	0	0
High school (diploma)	0.00	--	0	0
Some college	0.00	--	0	0
Associate degree	0.04	--	0	1
Bachelor's degree	0.21	--	0	1
Master's degree	0.46	--	0	1
Professional degree	0.08	--	0	1
Doctorate degree	0.17	--	0	1
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.04	--	0	1
Currently Employed				
Yes	0.63	--	0	1
No	0.25	--	0	1
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.12	--	0	1
Gross Annual Income				
Less than \$10,000	0.00	--	0	0
\$10,000 - \$19,999	0.00	--	0	0
\$20,000 - \$29,999	0.08	--	0	1
\$30,000 - \$39,999	0.13	--	0	1
\$40,000 - \$49,999	0.00	--	0	0
\$50,000 - \$59,999	0.04	--	0	1
\$60,000 - \$69,999	0.21	--	0	1
\$70,000 - \$79,999	0.08	--	0	1
\$80,000 - \$89,999	0.08	--	0	1
\$90,000 - \$99,999	0.04	--	0	1
\$100,000 - \$129,999	0.08	--	0	1
\$130,000 - \$149,999	0.00	--	0	0
More than \$150,000	0.04	--	0	1
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Not applicable	0.04	--	0	1
Prefer not to say	0.13	--	0	1
<i>Missing</i>	<i>0.05</i>	--	0	1
Relationship Status				
Single	0.17	--	0	1
Partnered	0.21	--	0	1
Married	0.42	--	0	1
Separated (married)	0.00	--	0	0
Divorced	0.08	--	0	1
Widowed	0.00	--	0	0
Civil partnership	0.00	--	0	0
Separated (in civil)	0.00	--	0	0
Former civil partner	0.04	--	0	1
Surviving civil partner	0.00	--	0	0
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.04	--	0	1
Not listed	0.04	--	0	1
Experience with Psychological Difficulties				
Yes	0.50	--	0	1
No	0.38	--	0	1
Unknown	0.04	--	0	1
Prefer not to say	0.04	--	0	1
Not listed	0.04	--	0	1
Person with Disabilities				
Yes	0.08	--	0	1
No	0.83	--	0	1
Unknown	0.04	--	0	1
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.05	--	0	1
Race and Ethnicity				

Asian descent	0.17	--	0	1
African descent	0.13	--	0	1
Hispanic or Latino	0.29	--	0	1
Middle eastern	0.00	--	0	0
Native American	0.04	--	0	1
Native Hawaiian	0.00	--	0	0
European descent	0.38	--	0	1
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.08	--	0	1
Specified	0.08	--	0	1
<i>Multiple selections</i>	<i>0.17</i>	--	0	1
<b>Gender Identity</b>				
Cis female	0.42	--	0	1
Cis male	0.42	--	0	1
Female	0.00	--	0	0
Male	0.12	--	0	1
Nonbinary	0.04	--	0	1
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.00	--	0	0
<b>Transgender Identity</b>				
Yes	0.04	--	0	1
No	0.96	--	0	1
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.00	--	0	0
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>				
Asexual	0.00	--	0	0
Heterosexual	0.21	--	0	1
Pansexual	0.17	--	0	1
Lesbian	0.04	--	0	1
Gay	0.38	--	0	1
Bisexual	0.13	--	0	1
Queer	0.50	--	0	1
Questioning	0.04	--	0	1
Same-gender loving	0.25	--	0	1
Unknown	0.00	--	0	0
Prefer not to say	0.00	--	0	0
Not listed	0.00	--	0	0
<i>Multiple selections</i>	<i>0.42</i>	--	0	1

*Note:* One participant from EBMC did not complete the survey questionnaire. Missing data points for “Gross Annual Income” were noted in the table. The column total for “Race and Ethnicity” is greater than one because four respondents selected more than one category. The column total for “Sexual Orientation” is greater than one because ten respondents selected more than one category.

Among EBMC participants, 33 percent were between the ages of 46 and 55, more than at COR (28 percent). Whereas only 11 percent of COR respondents were under age 46, 37 percent were that age or younger at EBMC. Most respondents (75 percent) were born in the United States; however, other reported countries of origin included India, Vietnam, China, The Dominican Republic, and El Salvador. Regarding education and employment, 92 percent had a Bachelor’s degree or higher, with a majority (46 percent) having a Master’s degree, and 63 percent were employed at the time of the survey, nearly equal to COR’s 61 percent. Of those who reported an annual gross income, 21 percent made less than \$50,000, 45 percent between \$50,000 and \$99,999, and 8 percent between \$100,000 and \$129,000. Most respondents reported being in a relationship as partnered (21 percent) or married (42 percent).



Regarding mental and physical wellness, like COR, 50 percent of the respondents indicated having some experience with psychological difficulties, and 83 percent did not identify as persons with disabilities, slightly more than COR (78 percent). Regarding race and ethnicity, EBMC is more diverse than COR, with 38 percent being of European descent, 29 percent Hispanic or Latino, and 17 percent Asian descent. Other racial and ethnic groups, such as African descent (13 percent) and Native American (4 percent), were also represented. Like COR, an equal number of respondents identified as cis-female (42 percent) and cis-male (42 percent), and 4 percent identified as transgender. At EBMC, one respondent identified as non-binary and another as a transman (see Appendix B5). Finally, most respondents identified as queer (50 percent), 38 percent identified as gay, and 21 percent identified as heterosexual.

### *Situating Organizational Work Types*

Organizations implementing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) initiatives include elements of what I present here as work types. *Identity work* is an organization's effort to develop, articulate, and actualize its stated vision, values, mission, and ideals to the public. This work informs the overarching goals of the organization. *Community work* is an organization's effort to create and maintain a sense of community. This involves interpersonal, intergroup, and organization-wide relational management and care. Community work often prioritizes inclusion, safety, collective responsibility and accountability, and community-building efforts. *Governance work* refers to who and what constitutes leadership, any consequential decision-making processes at the organization-wide level, vertical versus horizontal governing structures, and power dynamics. *Programming work* refers to the various training, curriculum, education, programs, processes, class series, and more developed to support community-building efforts, disrupt bias, challenge notions of dominance, educate the community about individual and social differences, and mitigate cross-group conflict. Finally, *resource work* refers to the organization's economic activities and financial concerns. This work concerns how financial resources are acquired, where financial resources come from, and the distribution of financial resources within and beyond the organization. Though timing constraints have limited the scope of this study to an exploration of identity work (Chapter 1) and community work (Chapters 2 and 3), below, using COR and EBMC as units of analyses, I note some of the literature-verified phenomena within each work type.

Regarding identity work, COR and EBMC express a firm commitment to diversity and inclusion (Edwards, Christerson, and Emerson 2013), are steadfastly committed to social justice and activist efforts (Roozen 2021), attempt to interweave discourses of difference with theology (Becker 1998), and rely on cultural anchors to promote organizational stability (Ghaziani and Baldassarri 2011). While evidence from COR is wanting, EBMC does attempt to align conflict resolution models with institutional values (Gleig 2014). Two examples of this effort discussed in Chapter 2 include the *Mindfulness-Based Operating Principles for Handling Tension* protocol developed in 2016 and the *Ethics, Restoration, and Resolution Council* (ER&R) developed in 2017 (see Appendices F1-F3). These efforts demonstrate EBMC's practice of aligning conflict resolution processes with core institutional values such as Buddhist precepts, radical inclusivity, shared leadership, and social justice.<sup>11</sup>

Regarding community work, COR and EBMC were established in racially mixed communities in the San Francisco Bay Area (Ammerman and Farnsley 1997; Becker 1998;

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<sup>11</sup> The five Buddhist precepts include: (1) abstaining from killing, (2) abstaining from taking that which is not given, (3) abstaining from sexual misconduct, (4) abstaining from lying, and (5) abstaining from intoxicants (Gerhards 2007).

Dougherty and Huyser 2008; Edwards, Christerson, and Emerson 2013; Emerson and Kim 2003; Emerson and Woo 2006; Gleig 2014), developed an inclusive institutional identity early on (Becker 1998; Gleig 2014), have, and continue to support the formation of, affinity-based groups (Ammerman and Farnsley 1997; Becker 1998; Edwards, Christerson, and Emerson 2013; Gleig 2014; Jenkins 2003), and work to foster cross-racial fellowship and networks (Becker 1998; Emerson and Kim 2003; Gleig 2014; Jenkins 2003). The East Bay Meditation Center strives to create “safer spaces” for its historically marginalized members, including Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ+) communities (Edwards, Christerson, and Emerson 2013; Gleig 2014; Jenkins 2003).<sup>12</sup> Larry Yang (2017:226-236), one of EBMC’s founding members, suggests that such spaces are made possible by creating communication agreements (e.g., *Agreements for Multicultural Interactions*), developing conflict resolution processes (e.g., *Mindfulness-Based Operating Principles for Handling Tension*), and designing pathways to restore relationships (e.g., *Ethics, Restoration, and Resolution Council*). Moreover, EBMC has weekly practice groups, one-day retreats, class series, and peer-led deep refuge groups to support this effort.

Regarding governance work, whereas both COR and EBMC aspire to diversify organizational leadership, teaching, and authority (Becker 1998; Edwards, Christerson, and Emerson 2013; Gleig 2014; Kim 2003; Sabharwal 2014; Yancey and Emerson 2003), EBMC has been more successful on this front (see Chapter 3). Throughout her tenure as the matriarchal head of COR, Bishop Flunder has advocated for marginalized communities to assume more powerful positions and roles within the organization. Counter to this hope, most of The Shepherd’s Table Pastoral Team are of African descent and identify as LGBTQ+. As such, the racial composition of the congregation is predominantly people of African descent. I assert that this lack of racial heterogeneity is partly the result of COR’s focus on ministry-driven provisional service work, which lessens the focus on developing internal heterogeneity. Comparatively, from day one, EBMC has sought to form a diverse board of directors, institute a practice of shared leadership, and develop leadership along multiple lines of difference. The center has also established a diverse teaching roster that has expanded considerably.

Regarding programming work, COR and EBMC utilize programming to disrupt bias, challenge notions of dominance, educate the community about individual and social differences, and mitigate cross-group conflict (Dougherty and Huyser 2008; Edwards, Christerson, and Emerson 2013; Gleig 2014; Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006). The City of Refuge does this most impactfully during the New Member Orientation, designed to facilitate stronger relationships between new and longtime COR members, educate new members about the organization, promote a more critical reading of the Bible, and foster a better sense of how to create a “Radically Beloved Community.” Prospective members were encouraged to adopt a *liberationist* versus *traditionalist* view of the Bible (see Boff and Boff 1987 and Pinn 2007). The former approaches the Bible from the point of view of the oppressed, whereas the latter approaches a reading of the Bible as the literal word of God. Comparatively, EBMC has consistently developed programming aimed at disrupting bias, challenging notions of dominance and inequality, and educating the community about individual and social differences. Of particular note, EBMC has developed programming designed to educate more socially and historically privileged communities about how their

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<sup>12</sup> The LGBTQ acronym has expanded to include intersex, allies, asexual, same-gender loving, and Indigenous Two-Spirit communities. The East Bay Meditation Center uses “Alphabet” as a more inclusive shorthand reference for these communities.

privilege impacts a space inclusive of people who do not identify in such ways. Ultimately, EBMC aspires to create a more socially aware and just community.

Finally, COR and EBMC have different approaches regarding how financial resources are acquired and distributed within and beyond the organization. Whereas COR generates money from tithing, donations, revenue from renting their space out in Oakland, and support from the larger UCC and other organizations, EBMC operates primarily on a Gift Economics or donation-based model and has done so from day one.<sup>13</sup> According to EBMC’s “Gift Economics Invitation Talking Points,” this model supports the center’s core values. It promotes generous giving, an essential component of spiritual freedom, and supports diversity and radical inclusivity because everyone is welcome. Participation is not connected to one’s ability to pay and is grounded in social justice principles of fairness and equity. Currently, COR owns an old union building in West Oakland, which they were able to buy once they sold their San Francisco space on 10th and Howard. The East Bay Meditation Center is raising five million dollars to buy a building once its lease in downtown Oakland expires. The center has yet to own a space in which it has operated.

### *Toward an Experience of Radical Inclusion*

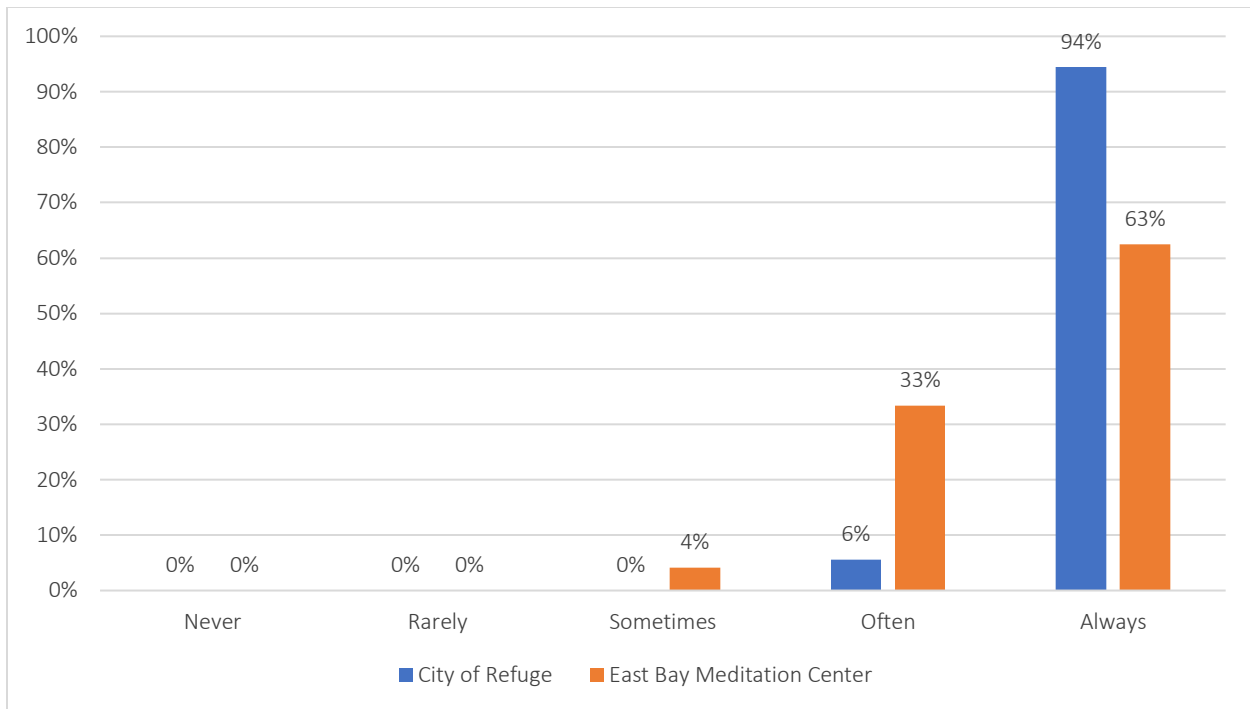
Do members of COR and EBMC experience these organizations as radically inclusive? Figures 1-4 present survey data assessing respondents’ experiences of feeling welcome at (Figure 1) and/or excluded from (Figure 2) their respective RIRO, and whether or not they view their RIRO as inclusive (Figure 3) and/or radically inclusive (Figure 4). Using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Never” to “Always,” Figure 1 shows that most respondents indicated feeling welcome at their respective RIRO. Of the COR group, 94.4 percent (17) reported *always* feeling welcome at the organization, and of the EBMC group, 62.5 percent (15) reported the same. Though neither COR nor EBMC respondents selected the “Never” or “Rarely” options, there is more spread in responses among the EBMC group, a noteworthy trend across all figures presented below.

Using the same scale ranging from “Never” to “Always,” Figure 2 shows a distribution that skews in the direction of the “Never” option when respondents were presented with the prompt, “I feel excluded at ORG.”<sup>14</sup> Of the COR group, 72.2 percent (13) reported *never* feeling excluded at the organization, and of the EBMC group 41.7 percent (10) reported the same. As with the previous prompt, there is more spread among the EBMC group, with 45.8 percent (11) indicating that they *rarely* feel excluded, 8.3 percent (2) indicating that they *sometimes* feel excluded, and one respondent indicating that they *often* feel excluded.

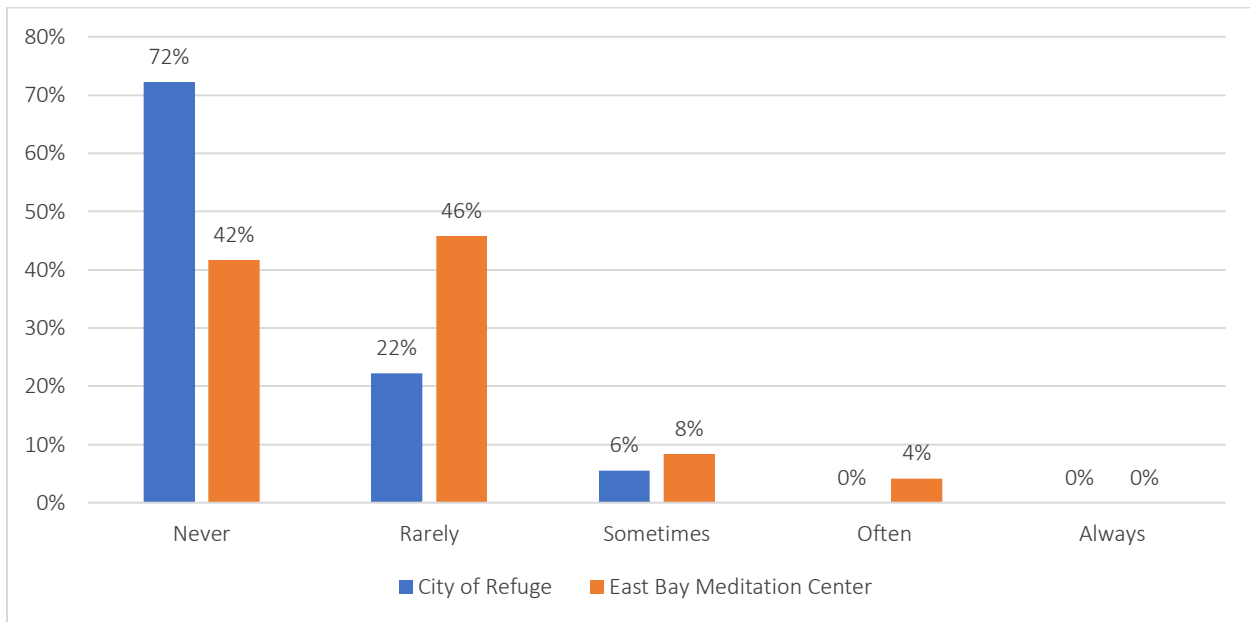
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<sup>13</sup> According to EBMC’s Strategic Plan (2018:12-13), since the center’s inception, there has been a focus on building a financial sustainability model rooted in the Buddhist concept of *dana*, generous giving, and social justice values of fairness and equity. “To become truly sustainable as an organization,” the document states, “which means relying mostly on contributions from individuals within the community rather than on grants from foundations or major fundraising events, over the next few years, we want to focus on a more robust implementation of our Gift Economics model. We are not substantially changing what we have been doing in terms of fundraising but becoming more explicit about certain aspects to create more transparency in the organization and encourage the Sangha to develop an increased sense of responsibility for giving.”

<sup>14</sup> The prompts presented here use the identifier ORG; however, I used the actual acronym of the organization in the survey questionnaire. Respondents from COR, for example, read prompts specific to that organization (e.g., ‘I feel welcome at COR’).



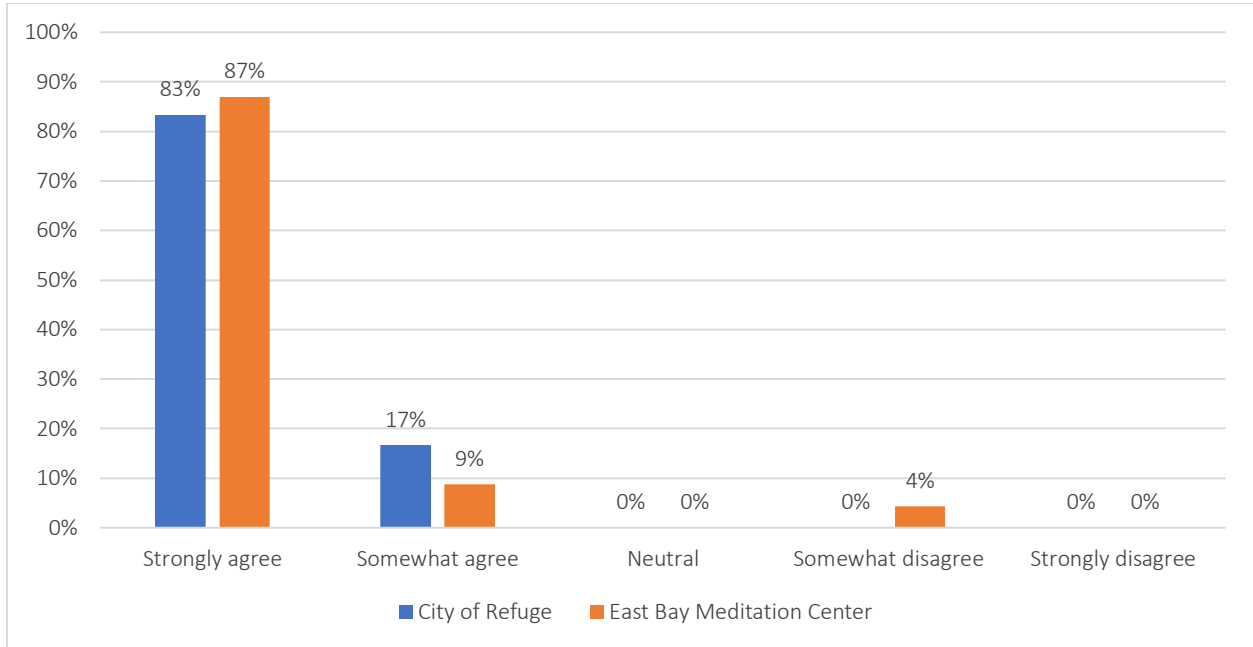
**Figure 1.** Participant Responses to Prompt: “I Feel Welcome at ORG”



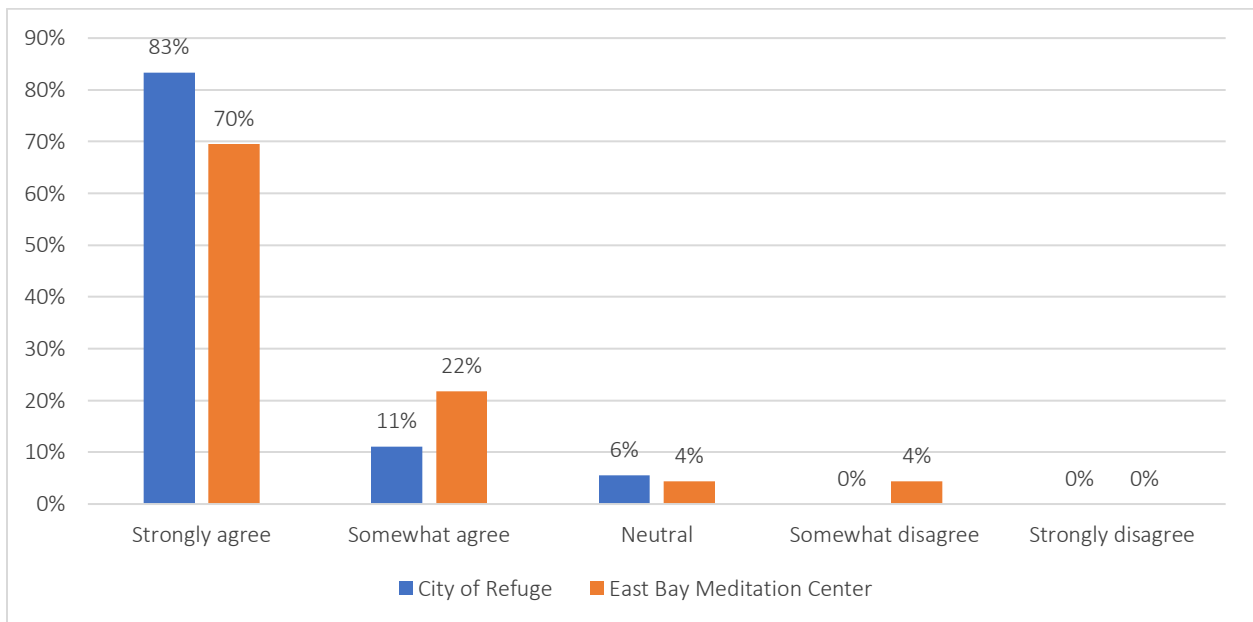
**Figure 2.** Participant Responses to Prompt: “I Feel Excluded at ORG”

Using a different 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree,” Figure 3 shows that most respondents agree that their respective RIRO is inclusive. Of the COR group, 83.3 percent (15) *strongly agree* that their organization is inclusive, and of the EBMC group, 87 percent (20) reported the same. Though neither COR nor EBMC respondents selected the “Neutral” or “Strongly disagree” options, one respondent from EBMC indicated that

they *somewhat disagree* that EBMC is an inclusive organization. Compared to COR, more EBMC respondents *strongly agree* that EBMC is an inclusive organization even though a lower percentage of these respondents *always* feel welcome at (Figure 1) - and *never* feel excluded from (Figure 2) - the center.



**Figure 3.** Participant Responses to Prompt: “ORG is an Inclusive Organization”



**Figure 4.** Participant Responses to Prompt: “ORG is a Radically Inclusive Organization”

Using the same scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree,” Figure 4 shows a distribution that skews in the direction of the “Strongly agree” option when respondents were

presented with the prompt, “ORG is a radically inclusive organization.” Of the COR group, 83.3 percent (15) *strongly agree* that their organization is radically inclusive, and of the EBMC group, 69 percent (16) reported the same. Here again, there is more spread among the EBMC group across all options, with 21.7 percent (5) indicating that they *somewhat agree* that the organization is radically inclusive (a ten percent increase from COR in this column), and one respondent indicating that they *somewhat disagree* with the prompt. No respondent selected the *neutral* option for this prompt.

Overall, the survey data shows that most respondents *often* or *always* feel welcome at - and *rarely* or *never* feel excluded from - their respective RIROs. Though there is more variation among the EBMC group, most respondents agree that the center is radically inclusive.<sup>15</sup> As the qualitative interview data will show, there is more complexity and nuance in people’s experiences than the survey data reveal.

This study is among the first to explore the notion of radical inclusion as an organizational and social phenomenon. The argument advanced here is that there is more than one way to be a radically inclusive organization. How a RIRO embodies ORI is reflected in its policies, practices, and processes (3Ps); however, one size does not fit all. In the coming chapters, I discuss some of the variations in how COR and EBMC articulate and attempt to actualize ORI (Chapter 1), manage conflict resolution processes (Chapter 2), and engage in community outreach efforts (Chapter 3). Further, this study delineates some of the causes and consequences of these differences. For example, I identify religio-spiritual frameworks, ethical frameworks, historical context (e.g., social, cultural, legal, and political), and organizational context (e.g., founders’ experiences of exclusion at other mainstream organizations) as meaningful causal factors that shape COR’s and EBMC’s 3Ps, ultimately impacting individuals’ experiences of in-house DEIB. While limited in scope, each succeeding chapter advances our understanding of organizational DEIB.

## DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

With *identity work* as an underlying basis, Chapter 1 explores how COR and EBMC articulate and attempt to actualize ORI and how such processes influence individuals’ experiences of ORI. Drawing on theories of multiculturalism, I find that while both organizations are committed to a radically inclusive ethos, there is more overlap in terms of articulation and less overlap in terms of actualization. Different emphases at each site partly explain these divergent on-the-ground outcomes. Oriented more towards the aspirational, COR respondents view ORI through a Christian-informed, faith-based lens. Oriented more towards the practical, EBMC respondents view ORI as an ongoing practice that is never fully realized or perfected. The City of Refuge and EBMC articulate an ORI model that aligns with Hartmann and Gerteis’s (2005) notion of *interactive pluralism* but, in practice, especially concerning individuals with mental health issues, the transgender experience of inclusion/exclusion and conflicting needs across groups, tends to reflect *fragmented pluralism*.

With *community work* as an underlying basis, specifically concerning *interpersonal* relational management and care, Chapter 2 explores how COR and EBMC address and, if possible, resolve interpersonal conflict and how such processes influence individuals’ experiences of ORI. Drawing on theories of community, I find that while both organizations are self-proclaimed RIROs, their approach to conflict resolution differs. The City of Refuge embodies a more

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<sup>15</sup> Of the sample group, only 16 percent identified as heterosexual, and 28 percent identified as of European descent, indicating that BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities felt welcome and included at their respective RIRO.

*traditional-leaning* approach (with hints of postmodern tendencies). Two reasons account for this: (1) Bishop Flunder is the core founder and matriarchal head of the organization, and (2) COR promotes and practices a family-like ethos. Unfortunately, this top-down approach has reportedly not worked well for some members and has resulted in people leaving the organization for good. The East Bay Meditation Center embodies a more *postmodern-leaning* approach to conflict resolution (with hints of modernist tendencies). Two reasons account for this: (1) the center's commitment to shared leadership, which emphasizes decentralized decision-making, shared accountability, and collective stewardship, and (2) the center's experimentation with different resolution processes. Though helpful, these efforts reportedly lacked the organizational infrastructure to effectively stabilize and resolve conflict among affected person(s).

With *community work* again as an underlying basis, this time concerning *organization-wide* relational management and care, Chapter 3 explores COR's and EBMC's community outreach efforts and how such actions influence individuals' experiences of ORI. Drawing on organizational theory, specifically the *natural systems* and *open systems* perspectives, I find that COR, inspired by an idealized notion of "The Christian Community," tends to be more ministry-focused (i.e., external-facing). While COR is responsive to internal matters and open to supporting members interested in launching values-aligned ministries, the organization has historically focused on serving communities outside the church with practical and time-sensitive needs, often in partnership with other organizations, thus aligning with the open systems perspective. Comparatively, I find that EBMC, inspired by an idealized notion of "The Beloved Community," tends to be more sangha-focused (i.e., internal-facing). While EBMC has influenced other mainstream religio-spiritual organizations to institute DEIB initiatives, to protect these qualities in-house, EBMC reaches out to its community members to assess needs, ensure representation, generate investment and engagement, and collaborate on organizational practices, thus aligning with the natural systems perspective.

I conclude this project by summarizing the major findings and discussing their implications for RIROs and DEIB research more broadly.

## CENTERING RADICAL INCLUSION

Years ago, I attended a “Sunday Celebration” at a well-known religio-spiritual organization in the heart of a densely populated and diverse metropolis. The organization - founded in the early 1900s and affiliated with the United Methodist Church - claimed to be *radically inclusive*. Even the founder, Reverend Ray - an African American minister in his 80s at the time - rarely missed an opportunity to remind congregants of the importance of loving and accepting others regardless of their station in life. Ray’s advocacy of this social ethic would be on full public display, for better or worse, on the day of my observational visit.<sup>16</sup>

At this particular celebration, Ray was invited to say a few words to the congregation; to lift spirits and inspire as he had done many times before. Slowly, he made his way to the lone-standing microphone in the middle of the main stage. As soon as he began to speak, an intoxicated middle-aged woman, who appeared disheveled and unkempt, began yelling nonsense loud enough for Ray, and most of the congregation, to hear. Interrupted, Ray, stopped talking, looked at the woman with compassionate curiosity, and watched as a team of all-male volunteer ushers rushed toward her. Despite the fast-approaching men, the woman continued yelling loudly without concern that the spotlight was now shining brightly on her. Ray, perhaps hoping to disrupt the awkwardness of the moment and settle any anxieties of concerned onlookers, gently leaned into the microphone and said with a fatherly tone, “Hello!” Instantly, the congregation erupted into laughter. The ushers, meanwhile, began escorting the noticeably frazzled woman to the back of the main hall. Though still visible to most people, she was surrounded and closely guarded by the team of volunteers. Because the woman continued to be disruptive and loud, she was eventually escorted out of the main hall. As soon as she was out of sight and her echoing voice trailed off into a distant silence, Ray said with jest, “At SOAR, what you see is what you get.” Again, the audience laughed uproariously, the sound echoing through the main hall as if to break through any tension that lingered in the air moments before. Then, as if to remind us of the importance of inclusion, Ray said, “I’m so glad that I’m at SOAR, where we welcome all people,” alluding even to those under the influence of intoxicants. Unfortunately, there was no update about the woman after her removal from the area. As such, I wondered if this was an example of radical inclusion or a failed attempt at realizing it.

This episode illustrates challenges that can arise in self-proclaimed radically inclusive religio-spiritual organizations (RIROs). Further, it raises interesting questions: How do RIROs articulate and actualize organizational radical inclusion (ORI), and how do such processes influence individuals’ experiences of ORI? I define ORI as an intentional and action-oriented value system whereby those historically and systematically excluded, marginalized, and oppressed in society at large - whether based on ability, age, disease, ethnicity, gender, illness, race, sex, sexuality, or some other factor - are recognized, welcomed, accepted, valued, loved, and even celebrated. Ideally, these members could access information and resources, be involved in work groups, influence decision-making, and feel a part of critical organizational processes.

## BEYOND THE “I” IN IDENTITY WORK

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<sup>16</sup> Names and other identifying information were changed to maintain subject anonymity.



This chapter explores how the City of Refuge (COR) and the East Bay Meditation Center (EBMC) articulate and actualize their commitment to organizational radical inclusion (ORI). By “articulate,” I mean how COR and EBMC present their organizational identity to the public. Here, I introduce the notion of *identity work*, which is not only the foundational work aimed at developing and articulating an organization’s stated vision, values, mission, and goals to the public, but also informs how said organization “does” *community work*, *governance work*, *programming work*, and *resource work*. By “actualize,” I refer to the policies, practices, and processes (3Ps) within COR and EBMC that foster and uphold ORI. Here, I introduce the notion of *mechanisms*, which are values-aligned 3Ps instituted prior to challenges that arose naturally within the organization. These mechanisms were developed at the organization’s founding and responded to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) related challenges in other organizations. In short, the identity work of an organization shapes the 3Ps that unfold within it.

Utilizing a mixed methods approach (see Appendix A) and drawing on sociological theories of multiculturalism, I explore how COR and EBMC articulate and attempt to actualize ORI. While both organizations are committed to a radically inclusive ethos, there is more overlap in terms of articulation and less overlap in terms of actualization. Different emphases at each site partly explain these divergent on-the-ground outcomes (see Table 4). Oriented more towards the aspirational, COR respondents view ORI through a Christian-informed, faith-based lens.<sup>17</sup> Oriented more towards the practical, EBMC respondents view ORI as an ongoing practice that is never fully realized or perfected. Although COR and EBMC articulate an ORI model that aligns with Hartmann and Gerteis’s (2005) notion of *interactive pluralism*, in practice, especially concerning individuals with mental health issues, the transgender experience of inclusion/exclusion, and conflicting needs across groups, they tend to reflect *fragmented pluralism*.

TABLE 4. ORI Mechanisms

	City of Refuge	East Bay Meditation Center
Orientation	<p><u>The Refuge Radical Inclusivity Model   Figure 5</u></p> <p>Aspirational, individual-level</p>	<p><u>Radical Inclusivity Practices   Figure 6</u></p> <p>Practical, organizational-level (3Ps)</p>
ORI Mechanisms	<p><u>Community work-related steps</u></p> <p>Reach out to the most marginalized            Recognize, value, love, and celebrate marginalized            Intentionally create ministry on the margins            Do not hide and undo shame and fear            Recognize diversity on the margin            Provide real hospitality            Ensure responsibility and accountability</p> <p><u>Identity work-related steps</u></p> <p>Recognize harm done in the name of God            The goal is not to imitate mainline church            Requires a new way of seeing and being</p> <p><u>Programming work-related steps</u></p>	<p><u>Community work-related practices</u></p> <p>Center location            Spaces reserved for specific communities            Demographics tracking            Event publicity and registration practices            Fragrance-free practice            Accessibility policy            Operating Principles for Handling Tension</p> <p><u>Resource work-related practices</u></p> <p>Generosity-based economics</p>

<sup>17</sup> Additionally, COR respondents view ORI as a value appointed by God and rooted in a Ministry of Restoration (see Table 1 and Flunder 2005:135).

## ORIENTING THEORIES OF MULTICULTURALISM

I define *multiculturalism* as the degree to which a group of people contains, values, utilizes, and encourages ethnic, racial, cultural, and religio-spiritual diversity. As self-proclaimed RIROs, COR and EBMC ideally align with this definition; therefore, it is fitting to draw on theories of multiculturalism to better understand how these two organizations articulate and attempt to actualize ORI. Hartmann and Gerteis (2005:218-232), responding to theoretical debates on divergent views of difference, identified three types of multiculturalism: *cosmopolitanism*, *fragmented pluralism*, and *interactive pluralism*. Cosmopolitanism “recognizes the social value of diversity, but [...] is skeptical about the obligations and constraints that group membership and social cohesion can place on individuals. [Consequently] this vision defends diversity only insofar as it allows and expands individual rights and freedoms.” Here, the emphasis is on tolerance and individual choice rather than mutual obligations. Fragmented pluralism “focuses on the existence of a variety of distinctive and relatively self-contained mediating communities as a social reality, but also as a necessity and strength.” This view acknowledges the importance of maintaining group culture and self-determination. Unlike assimilationism, wherein social groups get absorbed into the macro-social order, in this view, the individual gets subsumed by the group rather than the larger whole. Finally, interactive pluralism not only realizes the existence of distinct groups and cultures but also posits the need to cultivate common understanding across differences through mutual recognition and interaction. Cross-cultural dialogue and exchange become a defining feature and value for adherents of this view.

## ARTICULATING RADICAL INCLUSION

The articulated identity of COR and EBMC has a notable overlap. Both organizations value and are committed to radical inclusion, social justice, and their respective religio-spiritual and ethical frameworks; they state their vision, values, and mission on their websites; they are very active on social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter); they make frequent email announcements to members of the community, and they publish newsletters periodically.<sup>18</sup> Both organizations also integrate inclusive messaging within their brick-and-mortar locations. The City of Refuge and EBMC utilize these forms of identity work to convey a consistent values-aligned message to the public.

The City of Refuge and EBMC strive to make their organizational identity transparent via their respective websites. For example, COR provides a welcoming statement on its homepage emphasizing some of its core values and intentions. Elements of this statement, as I show below, are repeated in other forms of COR’s identity work (unedited):

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<sup>18</sup> The City of Refuge provides an opening statement at the beginning of every in-person and virtual worship service: “We worship Christ, and we welcome persons from all faith paths which harmonize with the ministry of Jesus Christ.” During my field observations at COR, other wisdom traditions, including elements of Buddhism, were incorporated into the Sunday worship service, albeit in a more peripheral and supportive way. Similarly, EBMC notes on its website: “We offer meditation training and spiritual teachings from Buddhist and other wisdom traditions, with attention to social action, multiculturalism, and the diverse populations of the East Bay and beyond.”

Welcome to City of Refuge, United Church of Christ. We are intentionally radically inclusive, welcoming all persons, regardless of race, color, ancestry, age, ability, gender, sexual or affectional orientation. We celebrate the Creator's Diversity! We worship Christ and welcome people from all faith paths that harmonize with the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Similarly, EBMC notes its mission and history on its website (unedited):

Founded to provide a welcoming environment for people of color, members of the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented communities, the East Bay Meditation Center welcomes everyone seeking to end suffering and cultivate happiness. Our mission is to foster liberation, personal and interpersonal healing, social action, and inclusive community building. We offer mindfulness practices and teachings on wisdom and compassion from Buddhist and other spiritual traditions. Rooted in our commitment to diversity, we operate with transparent democratic governance, generosity-based economics, and environmental sustainability.

Both organizations emphasize a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Whereas COR, in a more general sense, notes that they are intentionally radically inclusive and welcome all persons regardless of identity, EBMC's messaging is more specific in terms of which communities they aim to provide a welcoming environment for (e.g., people of color, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and people with disabilities). Additionally, both organizations note that they welcome people from different "faith paths" (COR) and "spiritual traditions" (EBMC), which adds an element of inclusion based on religio-spiritual orientation. Finally, EBMC lists offerings and operations rooted in the five core elements presented in the 2018 organization-wide Strategic Plan.<sup>19</sup> Whether visiting COR's or EBMC's websites, visitors have an opportunity to learn more about the organization's history and get a sense of their stated vision, values, mission, and goals.

Social media platforms are another effective way for COR and EBMC to continue their identity work online. On August 3, 2022, I perused both organizations' Facebook and Instagram platforms.<sup>20</sup> The City of Refuge's Facebook page states: "Bishop Flunder founded the City of Refuge UCC in 1991 in order [sic] to unite a gospel ministry with a social ministry. The City of Refuge is a thriving inner-city congregation that celebrates the radically inclusive love of Jesus Christ." Though this statement notes that COR was founded by Bishop Flunder, further down the page, we learn that the seed for COR "grew from a small group of mostly gay and lesbian Christians' desire to have a worship space that resembled the churches of their youth, but contained none of the toxic theology that was so often present in those spaces."

Two points are worth noting. First, most, if not all, of the longtime members view Bishop Flunder as the organization's charismatic founder, even though some original co-founding members are still active in the community. Comparatively, a diverse group of Buddhist practitioners founded EBMC and have labored from day one to promote an ethic and practice of shared leadership. Larry Yang (2017:165-166) wrote precisely about EBMC's founding body:

In the first years after we opened our doors, the Leadership Sangha was composed of an African American lesbian; a white upper-middle-class heterosexual man; an Asian American straight woman; a white, gender-neutral, queer-identified, large-bodied person; an Asian American queer

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<sup>19</sup> According to EBMC's Strategic Plan (2018:6), the center "envisions a Beloved Community of social justice and healing, grounded in Buddhism and aligned wisdom traditions. We commit to social justice, gift economics, shared leadership, and radical inclusivity as expressions of Socially Engaged Buddhism. We create a Beloved Community built on these values to actualize our mission as we grow into our vision for tomorrow."

<sup>20</sup> Though not discussed in-depth here, COR and EBMC also have Twitter and YouTube platforms.

[sic] gay man (me!); an African American heterosexual woman; an African American heterosexual man; and a white lesbian parent. We had three members with limitations or differences in abilities due to physical and medical conditions, including multiple chemical sensitivities (a form of environmental illness). Our ages (from thirties to sixties), level of education (from high school to graduate degree), and economic classes (from working to privileged) varied. Thus, we were pretty successful [sic] at creating diversity in our governance that reflected the community at large.

Dylan, a 41-year-old queer cis-woman of African descent and former member of the People of Color (POC) Coordinating Committee and Programming Committee echoed Larry's statement when discussing the shared leadership model as one of EBMC's core organizational values:

We at EBMC, historically, have developed as a center from a collective of people. No one person is the guru or the lead teacher. Several people came together to create the [organizational] infrastructure. It started that way. We were held as a community by a community model.

Most COR and EBMC founding members embody historically marginalized identities which partly explains why both organizations resolutely center axes of social difference. Further, while COR exemplifies a more vertical (top-down) leadership model, EBMC experiments with a hybrid vertical and horizontal model via shared leadership. A final point worth noting about COR's Facebook statement is that it articulates the organization's commitment to social action (e.g., 'to unite a gospel ministry with a social ministry') and radical inclusion (e.g., 'a thriving inner-city congregation that celebrates the radically inclusive love of Jesus Christ').

The East Bay Meditation Center's Facebook "Bio" page states: "Our mission is to foster liberation, personal and interpersonal healing, social action, and inclusive community building." Unlike COR, there is no mention of the founders; however, similar to COR, EBMC emphasizes social action and inclusion, though the expression of these values may differ across organizations. Even COR's statement "celebrating the radically inclusive love of Jesus Christ" registers differently from EBMC's commitment to "inclusive community building." The former suggests a celebratory mood inspired by an embodied ethic of inclusion modeled by Christ. The latter suggests a community-based ethic that is built and ongoing. One of the more important aspects of EBMC's notion of radical inclusion is that it is an ever-evolving aspiration. The Strategic Plan (2018:15) states that radical inclusivity "is complex to realize and requires consistent care and attention [and] there is a need for constant learning, self-examination, dialogue, and shifts in programs and practices to fully practice [sic] radical inclusivity in all its forms." Ultimately, the notion and practice of radical inclusion is not a static phenomenon. It is affected by the ever-changing experiences and needs of the community over time.

Other aspects of COR's and EBMC's Facebook profiles are worth noting. As of August 3, 2022, COR was "liked" by 3,131 people and "followed" by 4,067 people, including myself. Comparatively, EBMC's "liked" information was not listed, but the organization was "followed" by more than 10,000 people. Both organizations upload photos and videos and post information regularly. The East Bay Meditation Center also uses the "Events" and "Fundraiser" sections of the platform. Because EBMC operates on a gift economics model, community fundraising efforts are vital for the organization's continuation. It makes sense, therefore, that EBMC would utilize the "Fundraiser" section to engage this work.

One recent fundraiser video titled "Renato Almanzor on How to Awaken Love, Power and Justice [sic]" shows Almanzor discussing his relationship with the center, highlighting the power of gift economics, noting how the center is helping to strengthen social justice action, and ultimately encouraging viewers to support the center if they have the means to do so. "I am giving

because of what I have received, and my giving is an opportunity for EBMC to continue giving and being a space and place of refuge. To make this world as sacred as possible and awaken the love, power, and justice in all of us.” Additionally, the video description indicates that EBMC’s goal is to get 50 people to join the “Friends of EBMC” monthly donor group.<sup>21</sup> Here, Almanzor articulates the connection between the economic sustainability of the center and social justice-based action, which are two core values of the center. Like many of EBMC’s Facebook posts and stories, this video exemplifies the center’s strategy of having community members actively promote and participate in the organization’s identity work.

The City of Refuge and EBMC utilize Facebook to articulate and reiterate their organizational values, which they do on other popular social media platforms. For example, COR’s Instagram page shows 373 posts and 794 “followers.” The description states (unedited): “We are Radically Inclusive welcoming all faith paths which harmonize with the love of Jesus Christ!!! Co-Creating with God.” Again, COR mentions radical inclusion and welcomes people beyond Christianity. Comparatively, EBMC’s Instagram page shows 869 posts and 4,214 “followers.” The description states (unedited): “Wisdom Teachings, Social Engagement and Mindfulness Meditation.” Whereas COR mentions radical inclusion in this section but nothing about social action, EBMC does just the opposite, even though radical inclusion is a core value of the organization. Both organizations hold these values dear, and among the hundreds of posts throughout the years emphasize diversity, inclusion, and social justice. The City of Refuge often uses Instagram to announce worship services and events. These announcements include pictures of Bishop Flunder and other guest speakers. Posts also include information about the organization’s ministry services (e.g., the Word of Mouth pantry service), COVID-19 testing sites, and voter registration information. The East Bay Meditation Center posts about events (e.g., Mindfulness and the Possibility of Freedom with Angela Davis and Jon Kabat-Zinn), fundraising efforts (e.g., the Annual Dharma-thon), and information about practice groups, class series, and longer-term programming. The posts also spotlight members of the community. The City of Refuge and EBMC utilize the Instagram platform to articulate their commitment to the organizational values mentioned on their respective websites.

In addition to these platforms, COR and EBMC articulate their organizational identity via email announcements sent to subscribers. For example, the first email I received from COR on April 21, 2019, captures the inclusive ethos the church aspires to actualize (unedited):

Dear Mario,

We just wanted to take a moment to thank you for visiting our church again today. We realize you could have chosen any other place of worship to visit but you thought enough of City of Refuge to bless us with your presence and worship with us, and that gives us great joy!

City of Refuge United Church of Christ is a ministry of restoration. We are intentionally radically inclusive, welcoming all persons regardless of race, color, ancestry, age, gender, affectional orientation, and those who are specially-abled. We celebrate the Creator’s diversity. We desire to be a place of extravagant welcome to all persons - especially persons seeking a community built on honesty, openness and equity. We believe the call that we received comes from God and is both specific and radical. We seek to make the table of the Lord accessible to all!

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<sup>21</sup> According to EBMC’s website, “Friends of EBMC are supporters who give recurring monthly gifts,” which helps EBMC meet its monthly expenses. The center provides a five-tiered suggested monthly giving spectrum on its website. For example, if an annual income is less than \$25,000, the suggested monthly gift is \$10-\$25. If an annual income is over \$100,000, the suggested monthly gift is \$250-\$1000.

We trust that your visit with us was spiritually enriching, and we pray that you felt both welcomed and touched by the loving presence of our God. On behalf of Bishop Yvette Flunder, the Shepherd's Table, and our entire congregation, please come back again.

In Christ's Extravagant Welcome & Grace,

Bishop Flunder and The Shepherd's Table

In this message, COR's identity work again focuses on an ethic of radical inclusion. Key phrases like "ministry of restoration," "intentionally radically inclusive," "welcoming all persons," and "we celebrate the Creator's diversity" speak to some of the organization's core values. The opening statement at the beginning of every in-person and virtual worship service echoes these sentiments (unedited):

Welcome to City of Refuge United Church of Christ. We are a ministry of restoration. We are intentionally radically inclusive, welcoming all persons regardless of race, color, ancestry, age, gender, sexual or affectual orientation. We celebrate the Creator's diversity. We worship Christ and we welcome persons from all faith paths which harmonize with the ministry of Jesus Christ. Rev. Dr. Yvette Flunder, Presiding Bishop of Refuge Ministries, the Pastoral Team, and entire congregation thank you for worshipping with us today. Please come again!

These two messages provide a sense of how COR views radical inclusion and align with the definition above. Although there is no explicit statement to include historically marginalized and oppressed members of society, they emphasize welcoming all people regardless of their identity; a strong indication of welcoming all persons and celebrating diversity is key. Finally, the heading of most, if not all, COR email announcements I have received places the bolded words "radical inclusivity" at the top of the message.

The East Bay Meditation Center "does" identity work by publishing newsletters (most archived) and hanging a large, visible banner of the *Agreements for Multicultural Interactions* in the main gathering space at their brick-and-mortar location in downtown Oakland. During my last in-person visit to EBMC, the banner was hanging on a wall next to the main altar. The banner - like the Buddha statue, pictures of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Venerable Bhante Suhita Dharma, and a black mindfulness bell - was front-and-center, indicating the center's priority of respectful community conduct.

I asked Alana, a 54-year-old queer cis-woman of European descent, what she thought was being done at EBMC to promote a more inclusive environment. She mentioned the "enormous" impact of the *Agreements for Multicultural Interactions* and other forms of in-house identity work:

I'm thinking of the difference between intent and impact that is a part of EBMC's *Agreements for Multicultural Interactions*. It has been so useful to realize when I'm on the end of receiving the thing with the negative impact [sic], and it's important to me to remember that before saying something, my good intentions don't mean that it's going to land well [sic]. I can ask myself, 'How can I frame what I'm going to say in a way that won't cause harm?' So that list of Multicultural Agreements really helps make a radically inclusive environment, and the altar with the Black Lives Matters sign helps EBMC be more inclusive [sic] too!

For Alana, the Agreements were supportive regarding how she engaged with others at the center. Having a visual reminder of the difference between intention and impact encouraged Alana to pause and notice how she received incoming information that she perceived as potentially

negative and what she intended to share with others in the community. Curtis, a 34-year-old queer cis-man of African descent, also discussed EBMC's in-house identity work when asked what he thought was being done to foster inclusion at EBMC:

The Agreements! The things that are visible on the walls [sic]. Even the altar - I was noticing yesterday - is really kind of inclusive [sic]. I saw the Trans flag. I saw something for Black Lives Matter. I saw a lot of different cultures being seen, at least in the altar space, which was like, okay, that's like a visible and subtle way of embracing a lot of different cultures and identities.

Award-winning journalist, author, and Oakland native Jeneé Darden (2019), in her *Crosscurrents* story about EBMC, further notes the impact of the center's in-house identity work (unedited):

EBMC's sangha, or community, is a blend of different genders, cultures, and class. I look around the temple. Rainbow flags are draped along the walls. A photo of Martin Luther King, Jr. shares the altar with a Buddha statue, and near it, a memorial table with a Black Lives Matter sign. This is not only a spiritual center but a social justice space.

Incorporating signs (e.g., *Agreements for Multicultural Interactions*), symbols (e.g., Buddha statues and altars), and other forms of identity-based representation (e.g., Black Lives Matter and LGBTQ+ paraphernalia) are intentional ways EBMC "does" in-house identity work. As I discuss below, these efforts speak to what Hartmann and Gerteis (2005:231-232) describe as *interactive pluralism*: to realize the existence of distinct groups and cultures and cultivate common understanding across differences through mutual recognition and interaction. For EBMC, the Agreements are one effort to support cross-cultural dialogue and exchange.

## ACTUALIZING RADICAL INCLUSION

What actions have COR and EBMC taken to foster and uphold ORI? At COR, Bishop Flunder (2005:134-137) developed a teaching tool, adapted from the Alcoholics Anonymous twelve-step format, that joined the notion of radical inclusion with Jesus Christ (see Figure 5).

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1. **Radical inclusivity is and must be radical.** In its effort to be inclusive the church often reaches out carefully to the margin. Radical inclusivity demands that we reach out to the farthest margin, intentionally, to give a clear message of welcome to everyone.
  2. **Radical inclusivity recognizes, values, loves, and celebrates people on the margin.** Jesus was himself from the edge of society with a ministry to those who were considered least. Jesus' public ministry and associations were primarily with the poor, weak, outcast, foreigners, and prostitutes.
  3. **Radical inclusivity recognizes harm done in the name of God.** Many people rejected by the church got their burns from Bible-believing Christian flamethrowers. Contempt for the church and all things religious often stems from exposure to oppressive theology, biblical literalism, and unyielding tradition. It is neither Christ-like nor spiritual to be oppressive. No human being is born with a destiny to be oppressed or oppress others.
  4. **Radical inclusivity is intentional and creates ministry on the margin.** "On purpose," because of the radical inclusive love of Jesus Christ, the inclusive community deliberately makes a conscious and unapologetic decision to love and celebrate the Creator's diversity, welcoming all persons regardless of race, color, ancestry, age, gender, or affectual orientation.

Radical inclusivity practices and celebrates the Christian community outside of the dominant culture, believing that the realm of God includes the margins of society and is a perfect place for ministry. Marginalized people, now as in the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, respond to a community of openness and inclusivity, where other people from the edge gather. Such an atmosphere welcomes people to feel safer to be who they are.

5. **Radical inclusivity's primary goal is not to imitate the mainline church.** The true church belongs to God and is the body of Jesus Christ; it cannot be owned exclusively by any denomination, person, or group. Further, adherence to religious dogma is not freedom. There are wrongs in organized religion due to oppressive theology, bibliolatry, and some traditional beliefs, which prevent freedom for all people and which we can never fully right. Radical inclusivity, however, is ministry rooted in restoration - believing that God has given the church the work and ministry of reconciliation and using the power of love to model and demonstrate the radically inclusive love of Jesus Christ.
6. **Radical inclusivity requires a new way of seeing and a new way of being.** "From this day forward, we regard no one from a strictly human point of view, not even Jesus" (2 Cor. 5:16). This scripture passage implies that we can celebrate one another in some new and powerful way in Christian community - some way that both accepts who each of us is in a human sense and transcends our humanity, allowing us to see each other as God sees us. Christian community can truly be celebrated when we realize the church is a spiritual, mystical, faith community and we relate best when we make the drop from head to heart.
7. **Radical inclusivity requires awareness, information, and understanding.** The creation of Christian community among people marginalized by the church requires that the community be prepared and maintain a presence of cultural familiarity through education and training, which equips the community to understand, actively fight, and overcome oppressive and exclusive theology and practices. Sustaining and eventually celebrating community on the margin requires the church to reexamine relational ethics, develop a theology of radical inclusivity, and destigmatize its view of any group of people.
8. **Radical inclusivity does not hide and works to undo shame and fear.** The radically inclusive ministry of Jesus does not encourage people to hide their "unacceptable" realities (based upon the dominant culture's point of view or faith) in order to be embraced. True community comes when marginalized people take back the right to fully "be." People must celebrate not in spite of who they are, but because of who their Creator has made them. In order for marginalized people to have community they must develop community "naked" or exposed with their "marginality" in full view while often celebrating the very thing that separates them from the dominant culture.
9. **Radical inclusivity recognizes diversity on the margin.** People live and are located on the various margins of society for many different reasons. Most people live on the margin because the dominant culture and/or faith communities have forced them outside their boundaries to a margin. Not all marginalized people are poor, uneducated, or visible. Because most marginalized people are together on the margin does not mean that each affirms the other or that their common marginality will hold the community together.
10. **Radical inclusivity must be linked to preaching and teaching.** The creation of Christian community among people marginalized by the church requires preaching and teaching that defines and strengthens the essence of the community through a theology of radical inclusivity. Preaching and teaching defines, reinforces, and supports the collective theology of the community.
11. **Radical inclusivity demands hospitality.** Marginalized people experience hospitality where they have neither to defend nor to deny their place or their humanness. Real hospitality agrees



with the notion and acknowledges the fact that everyone already has a seat at the welcome table of God - all they need to do is claim it.

12. **Radical inclusivity is best sustained and celebrated when everyone in the community is responsible and accountable.** Sustaining Christian community requires an intentional effort to design a framework that includes everyone in the life of the church. The dissemination of duties and tasks ensure that all members share in and contribute to the welfare of the community. It is often difficult for people who have not had continuity in life to understand that freedom without responsibility and accountability is as detrimental as slavery. Freedom cannot be an end unto itself. Freedom from something must flow into freedom to be something else or it is not truly freedom. The object of getting free is being free: the object of being free is living free.

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**Figure 5.** Twelve Steps: The Refuge Radical Inclusivity Model | City of Refuge

These “steps” can be situated within the typology of work types noted in the Introduction. I situate steps one, two, four, eight, nine, eleven, and twelve within community work. I situate steps three, five, and six within identity work and steps seven and ten within programming work. Interestingly, this list does not speak to governance or resource work, noting a disproportionate emphasis on aspirational, Christian-informed efforts compared to the practical consequential efforts of decision-making and resource management.

Like COR, EBMC not only proclaims to be radically inclusive, it provides a list of “Radical Inclusivity practices” on its website (see Figure 6). These eight organization-wide practices aim to ensure that the organization is actively engaged in inclusive community building: “We ask everyone who comes through our doors to actively participate in co-creating the most welcoming, inclusive, and socially-aware environment in which to practice meditation and learn from our programs and teachers.” The East Bay Meditation Center views ORI as a community-based effort.

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1. **All-Dana Generosity-Based Financial Model:** EBMC charges no registration fees for participation in any events or programs (except fundraising events). Instead the Center relies on “Dana,” an ancient Pali word meaning Generous Giving. Rather than being charged a fee, participants are invited to make voluntary gifts, in proportion to their ability, as one-time offerings, or as members of the “Friends of EBMC” monthly donor program, to support the Center, and the teachers. This assures full access to EBMC’s programs, regardless of socio-economic status. In other spheres, this financial model is sometimes called “Gift Economics.”
  2. **Center Location:** The EBMC Leadership Sangha chose to open the Center in downtown Oakland, at a location accessible by BART and bus, in order to minimize barriers to participation resulting from lack of access to private transportation options.
  3. **Spaces Reserved for Specific Communities:** In order to provide “safe spaces” for certain marginalized communities, EBMC sponsors weekly practice groups reserved for People of Color, and for members of the LGBTQ+ communities. There is also a weekly practice group for people with disabilities, chronic illness and chronic pain. In addition, one-day retreats and class series are periodically scheduled for members of specific communities (e.g., for People of Color, for Women of Color, for the LGBTQ+ communities, etc.). These programs are intended to create spaces where members of these communities can feel safe, being less likely to face dynamics of oppression that are part of their daily lives, in our culture where progress is still needed to move towards a society free of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. The EBMC Leadership Sangha believes that these spaces are conducive to practitioners, especially newer

- practitioners, to be able to focus their full efforts on learning, and integrating into their lives, the practices of mindfulness meditation, compassion, and other wisdom teachings offered at the Center.
4. **Demographics Tracking:** During the registration process for EBMC’s events, prospective participants are offered the opportunity to voluntarily indicate whether they self-identify as a Person of Color, as being on the LGBTQ+ and Same-Gender Loving spectrum, as having a disability, or as being a young person. This voluntary reporting allows EBMC to monitor to what extent the Center is succeeding in reaching a diverse community.
  5. **Event Publicity and Registration Practices:** The EBMC Leadership Sangha has set a goal of maximizing the percentage of People of Color (POC) in attendance at each of the retreats, class series, and workshops for which EBMC requires advance registration (i.e., not for the weekly practice groups), except events reserved for certain specific communities. If at any time during the registration period, the percentage of individuals registered who self-identify as POC falls below the minimum percentage that EBMC wishes to have in attendance, we may prematurely close the registration for that event, allowing prospective participants to sign up on a waiting list. Non-POC individuals are then moved off the waiting list, and offered spaces to participate in the event, in such proportions to attempt to maintain the target percentage of POC in attendance.
  6. **Fragrance Free Practice:** We ask that everyone come to the center Fragrance Free. An increasing number of people in our community are harmed by a variety of common chemicals and fragrances, including ‘natural’ fragrances and aromatherapy products, such as fragranced essential oils. Due to allergies, asthma or other chemical sensitivity, they may have difficulty breathing, migraine headaches, flu-like symptoms and more. When we come to EBMC having used products on our bodies or clothing that include fragrances or chemicals, those who are allergic or sensitive are faced with the choice to stay and get sick, or leave and be excluded.
  7. **EBMC’s Accessibility Policy:** EBMC will continually seek to fulfill its mission of diversity and inclusive community building by consciously making the center accessible across the full spectrum of mobility differences, communication differences, sensory differences, chemical injury, multiple chemical sensitivities, and environmental illness. In so doing, we commit to collective access as a guiding principle, and treasure our practice as a sangha of “All of us, or none.” We will use the Americans with Disabilities Act as a starting, not an end place towards a thriving center and sangha that is welcoming, safe, and accessible for every body and every mind. We will use the principles of universal design to ensure equity across our sangha in the use of space, the ongoing creation of an integrated space, and to nurture a spirit of practice to improve access as much as possible, lessening the need to identify and remove barriers on an individual basis. From EBMC’s Accessibility Policy, passed in 2012.
  8. **Mindfulness-Based Operating Principles for Handling Tension:** Instead of assuming that our individual and culturally-based collective ways of knowing are the norm, we can choose to mindfully engage with others in culturally humble ways that might help us to learn, grow, respect, and better understand the reasons for their actions and behaviors, while we also become increasingly aware of what motivates our own actions and behaviors. EBMC operates through an evolving model of Shared Leadership [...] A key part of Shared Leadership is creating an organizational culture in which conflict avoidance is reduced, and commitment to recognizing and raising tensions before they escalate into conflict is increased. Mindfulness meditation helps us to recognize tensions in our bodies and in our minds, and to use these observations to interact more honestly and skillfully with others.

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**Figure 6.** Radical Inclusivity Practices | East Bay Meditation Center

I situate the first practice, generosity-based economics, within resource work and numbers two through eight within community work. Though much of COR’s “steps” and most of EBMC’s “practices” align with the latter, neither list speaks to governance work. Though Bishop Flunder (2005:31) has written about her desire to include marginalized communities in consequential decision-making processes, the organization has and continues to exemplify a vertical (top-down) governance model. Because EBMC is committed to a practice of horizontal-leaning shared leadership, and because this model is one of the five core elements of the center, it is an oversight not to include it among the radical inclusivity practices listed above.

Both lists above emphasize a radically inclusive ethos. Whereas COR’s twelve-step model foregrounds the aspirational and more individual-level aspects of ORI, EBMC’s list forwards a set of organization-wide practices (3Ps) designed to actualize it. For example, to be more inclusive, Bishop Flunder’s model encourages the COR community to “reach out to the farthest margin, intentionally.” Though she emphasizes individual-level qualities like love, authenticity, hospitality, and responsibility, questions remain about how, more precisely, to do this organizationally. The East Bay Meditation Center addresses this question more fully by attempting to maximize center accessibility for as many people as possible (e.g., generosity-based economics, center location, the establishment of fragrance-free and accessibility policies), actively and periodically tracking community demographics, ensuring historically marginalized communities have safer spaces to be in (e.g., spaces reserved for specific communities and registration practices), and providing a process of restoration and reconciliation when tensions arise (e.g., *Mindfulness-Based Operating Principles for Handling Tension*), which is more likely to occur in densely diverse spaces. Though not exhaustive, EBMC provides a blueprint for actualizing ORI.

## A FAITH-BASED EXPERIENCE OF RADICAL INCLUSIVITY | COR

*“There is a seat at the table for all of us.” - Darnell*

What are the experiences of those familiar with RIROs? Among COR respondents, ORI is a God-appointed Ministry of Restoration rooted in the love of God and Christ, intentional radical inclusion, unconditional welcome, a celebration of diversity, and a commitment to social justice values. The often-used expression “practice what you preach” matters in this context. Jimmy and Suba share below that being radically inclusive means loving, welcoming, accepting, embracing, and even celebrating people just as they are. Authenticity is valued, while qualities like guilt and shame are discouraged. Darnell, a 73-year-old same-gender loving cis-man of African descent, said of COR, “Everyone has a seat at the table.”

One of the first members I met at COR was a 70-year-old, single, gay cis-man of European descent named Jimmy.<sup>22</sup> He was kind, warm, and welcoming. Early on, he said one of his “gifts” was being hospitable and caring towards others. “I don’t know if you remember when I saw you for the first time,” he reflected. “It was like, I need to go back and hug this guy and make you feel welcome.” In this example, Jimmy embodied the 11th “step” of Bishop Flunder’s *Refuge Radical Inclusivity Model*: “Radical inclusivity demands hospitality.” It was common to see Jimmy greeting congregants with a smile and expressing a warm welcome. When I asked Jimmy about his experience of diversity at COR, he pivoted to a discussion of inclusion informed by both Bishop Flunder and his Christian faith:

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<sup>22</sup> Names and other identifying information were changed to maintain subject anonymity.

I don't know that I've ever heard anybody sit down and say, let's talk about diversity, but I know when Bishop talks about inclusion, she speaks mainly about the fact that we are the hosts. It's not our party. The Creator is the one that is inviting the people to the table. We can't tell you, 'You can't come to our table.' If we have somebody that comes in that is different, from a different religion or whatever, but they are doing the things that Christ did when he walked the world, then we need to put another leaf in [sic] the table. We need to find a place for them to sit at our table. If you were in the crack house last night and in your spirit, something said, 'Come to church today.' You're welcome here because God's in the crack house too. It's not about coming to church, it's about the Creator being everywhere at all times, and you're welcome here. If you were working out on the street last night, turning tricks, and God put it in your heart to be here, you're welcome [sic].

Like Jimmy, Suba, a same-gender loving woman of African descent, viewed ORI through a Christian-informed, faith-based lens. When I asked Suba what radical inclusion looked like at COR, she indicated that God- and Christ-like conduct precedes an ethic of inclusion:

I look at it this way, Mario. If a person walks in and they can't be included [sic], then we don't need to be City of Refuge. I believe this is what keeps me there [sic] because we include everyone. I don't think there's a guideline. If you are a mass whatever [sic], you can come because there is forgiveness in God, and if we can't exemplify that, then we're not being Christ-like. If we can't practice what we preach or what we exemplify, then we're not being any help to people that are on the margins.

Both Jimmy and Suba were speaking to two "steps" of the *Radical Inclusivity Model*: "Radical inclusivity recognizes, values, loves, and celebrates people on the margin," and "Radical inclusivity requires a new way of seeing and a new way of being." In order to "put another leaf in the table" for those on the margins of society, there is a need to cultivate an ethic of God- and Christ-like love and acceptance. For example, concerning the last step, COR members are encouraged to accept others just as they are in a human sense while also seeing them in a more transcendent way as God sees them. To illustrate this ethos, Jimmy shared a story about an incident at COR years ago involving an intoxicated young man struggling with personal issues:

One time, this young boy came into the church. He was drunk and jumped [physically attacked] somebody. I thought he was in the spirit, and when a couple of people took him down, it was the end of the service. I remember Bishop saying, 'We're closing the service.' She asked the deacons, 'Is he okay?' I didn't know what was going on. Ultimately, she said, 'If the only way this young man could get in church tonight is to have a few extra drinks, Saints, let's give this young man some love. Bring him up here, and let's love him.' How many churches would have called the police immediately and had him arrested when he jumped somebody in the church? But [sic] he was drunk. He eventually died of AIDS, I think, within a year. I think he was [consuming] alcohol to deal with his issues. I decided I would join the church when that moment happened. To see [Bishop], instead of calling the police and having him taken out, bring that young boy up and put her arms around him, give him love, and they all started hugging that young man [sic] and welcoming him. That type of thing has caused me always to feel like that's inclusiveness. That's diversity. We're not a matter of saying, 'You came in here drunk, so we can't have you at the table.' Bring him up here. Wherever you come from, you're welcome here.

This example highlights the connection between a faith-based ethic of unconditional love and welcome and the ongoing practice of ORI at COR. Bishop Flunder's decision to quickly halt services as the altercation unfolded and initiate a collective, community-based tending of the young man illustrates the leadership's efforts to welcome, accept, and even embrace people just as they are. Though this young man could have been subject to rejection and even arrest, he was neither turned away nor mistreated. Contrarily, he was cared for and "loved on" by the COR

community. What Suba spoke of in theory, Jimmy's story illustrates in practice. Challenges can and often do arise in radically inclusive spaces. Importantly, responses to these challenges may vary and have lasting consequences. Below, I discuss two areas that have proven challenging at COR: mental illness and transgender inclusion/exclusion.

*"It's a challenge to be radical with your inclusivity." - Andre*

When I asked Lamar, a 62-year-old gay man of African descent, how he thought COR defined radical inclusion, he mentioned accepting persons of all backgrounds and identities. He also stressed how challenging radical inclusivity can be in practice, especially if the community welcomes persons struggling with mental illness:

**Lamar:** I think radical inclusivity is defined at COR as the vehicle for fully accepting all persons regardless of their background, race, creed, color, sexual orientation, or affection-alization [sic]. That means that we take people regardless of where they have come from or where they have been. It means that we don't look down on poor people, formerly incarcerated, homosexuals, transsexuals [sic], of a different ethnic group, a different racial makeup, or a different faith path. We believe that the table of Christ is large enough and wide enough that everyone can have a seat at that table, no matter the vicissitudes of their life.

**Mario:** That sounds very appealing. In practice, what is your experience?

**Lamar:** In practice, it has been that, and my experience is that sometimes that's very difficult to do.

**Mario:** Why is that?

**Lamar:** Well, when you deal with people who have a mental illness, and we do, we accept them because it's radical inclusivity, but their mental illness is challenging. Whether we have people in the church threatening Bishop or threatening other people, I mean, we don't talk about this stuff all the time, but having a ministry where everyone is accepted is a difficult proposition. It's why many churches have a little litmus test. If you're not A, B, or C, we don't want you. For them, it's easier to have [homogeneity], you know, everyone being the same, look [sic] the same, think [sic] the same, what have you. When you have it so that everyone can be diverse and have their own thoughts and prejudice, you have to deal with what that means. Sometimes it means for us that we have people who are mentally ill who come here. We've had people who are unclean and homeless come here who haven't shaved. It means dealing with life on life's terms, and sometimes life is very gritty, nasty, dirty, uncompromising, and painful.

Early in my interview with Jimmy, I asked if there was ever an instance when somebody was not welcome at COR. Jimmy proceeded to share a story about a young person struggling with mental illness who was ultimately deemed high-risk and placed on a 5150 hold:<sup>23</sup>

**Jimmy:** We had a situation where a young man had a mental illness. Extremely brilliant. He would be on his medication, and he could pretty much do anything, and then he would feel like he was doing good, so he would stop doing his medication. When he was on his medication, he was part of [the COR community]. He'd get off his medication, you wouldn't see him for several Sundays, and all of a sudden, he'd come in. One time he walked into the church screaming with his hands up like this. Some of us thought he had a gun. At one point, I'm not going to call who and what, but at one point, leaders took him aside and let him know that we're going to 5150 him.

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<sup>23</sup> In California, law enforcement officers and mental health professionals can place patients on an emergency 72-hour hold if they are determined to pose a danger to themselves or others due to a mental illness.

**Mario:** Which is?

**Jimmy:** Go to jail. Not because we don't care but because he needs someone to make sure he's back on his medication. We can love you all you want, but if you're not on your medication, it's not right. So, the whole idea of locking him up and having him arrested was not because we wanted to get him in trouble but to get him back in rehab to get him back on his medication. Some people say, 'Well, you should have accepted him.' No. At that moment, we had to make a decision to not [sic] let him come into the church and disrupt.

**Mario:** What was the factor that motivated that decision? Was it a concern of the other members? Was it a concern for him? What?

**Jimmy:** I think it was more for him. I wasn't in the decision-making. I saw it going on, and what I saw was the person being very calm and gentle with him. It's like, 'Mario, we love you, but what you did is not acceptable, and we are going to have to have you put away [sic] so that you can get back on your medication.' It wasn't a matter of just like, 'Get out of here!' She was explaining why we were doing what we were doing. It was out of love. It was about caring about that person, knowing that that person was an okay person if they were on their medication. But when they get off their medication, they go bat crazy. You know. They walk into the church hollering and acting like a nut, and at that point, you can't let that happen and let the worship service go on because people are freaking out and don't know what's going on, especially if somebody comes with their hands up and they're screaming, and it looks like they've got guns in their hands. The people panic. So, it's a balance. Is that a time when it wasn't inclusive? It was more of a helping thing, but maybe somebody would say we shouldn't have done that.

Both Jimmy and Lamar point to some of the past mental illness-related challenges that have arisen at COR. Perhaps due to their longtime participation in radically inclusive spaces, these men seemed to expect such challenges to arise occasionally. Jimmy's examples reveal two different community-based responses to disruptive and potentially harmful members. Whereas in his first example, the intoxicated young man was cared for and "loved on" by the COR community - even to the point of halting the entire Sunday worship service - in his second example, the member struggling with mental illness was placed on a 5150 hold and escorted out of the center. Though he was aware that others could have called into question the degree to which COR was exclusive in this case, Jimmy mentioned that in both cases, love, care, and concern for the individual motivated each response.

*"Our sisters become our brothers, and our brothers become our sisters." - Kay*

Respondents from transgender and non-transgender communities discussed challenges with transgender inclusion/exclusion at COR.<sup>24</sup> For this study, I interviewed four people from COR whose gender expression was beyond the cis-female, cis-male binary. One person identified as

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<sup>24</sup> The main premise of *social identity theory* is that, in most situations, people think of themselves and others not as unique individuals but as members of specific social groups (Ashforth and Mael 1989). As such, people tend to classify themselves into categories that are meaningful to them. This classification ultimately shapes how individuals interact with others from their own and other social identity groups (Tajfel 2010). An important way, therefore, that a person defines a sense of self is through their membership in groups. This, of course, can have implications for an organization in terms of which groups occupy and have access to key positions and resources (Becker 1998; Edwards, Christerson, and Emerson 2013; Sabharwal 2014) and whether or not an organization actively protects diversity and inclusion (Gleig 2014). Further, as Mor Barak and Levin (2002) emphasized, a person's diversity characteristics can impact their experience of inclusion, fairness, stress, support, satisfaction, and even well-being within an organization.

genderqueer, another as a transwoman, and two as transmen (see Appendix B5).<sup>25</sup> I drew most of the insights about the transgender experience at COR from these participants.

Bishop Flunder has labored for years to encourage members of COR to embrace the transgender community. In her book, *Where the Edge Gathers: Building a Community of Radical Inclusion*, Flunder (2005:25-30) writes:

An authentic ethic of inclusion must reach from the center to the farthest margin and work its way back. When we reach for the ones who are the least accepted, we give a clear message of welcome to everyone. Jesus modeled this type of radical inclusivity when he openly received those most despised by society and the religious establishment [...] The transgendered [sic] community is on the edge of the edge. The church must be a sanctuary for members of the transgendered [sic] community because most of society has cast them off completely. This community of persons who live their lives opposite of their [assigned sex at birth] is among the least understood on the margin of church and society; in the African American faith community, they are truly objects of disdain [sic]. The church can be made a safer place for transgendered [sic] persons by doing three things: developing spiritual and practical support groups for transgendered [sic] persons within the ministry, providing sensitivity workshops for the congregation, and involving transgendered [sic] persons in various levels of governance and decision making.

Despite Bishop Flunder's best efforts, challenges did arise on this front within the organization. When I asked Lamar what some of his challenges were as a member of COR, he mentioned feeling uncomfortable around transgender people.

I didn't have a good understanding of transgenders [sic] before I came to this church, and so learning about transgender-ism [sic] and trying to understand and having people who have transitioned while they're at this church from female to male and remembering to refer to them as a male. Sometimes that's been really hard because I have known you for 20 years as a woman. Now I know you as a guy, and I keep saying 'her' when I should be saying [sic] 'him.' So that's been a challenge. Newness brings challenges, and when we're confronted with new concepts and new thinking, it sometimes can be [challenging] because it rubs against the old thinking patterns that we have created and accepted for many years [sic].

While many gender non-conforming people interviewed for this study mentioned being misgendered (e.g., using incorrect pronouns) by other COR members - as Lamar confessed to doing above - that was a milder offense than some of the other challenges mentioned. Shane, a 57-year-old transman of African descent, spoke frankly about his rocky experience as a transman at COR. For example, I asked if his involvement at COR had been continuous. He mentioned that he had taken a break from the organization about seven years ago while undergoing a very personal and difficult female-to-male transition. He noticed that other transmen who had decided to transition while frequenting COR were leaving the church and not returning. Ultimately, Shane surmised that COR was not the best place to undergo such a vulnerable process. When I asked Shane what he thought some of the reasons were for transmen leaving the church, his response pointed to a gender-based bias:

It varied. Some people felt disrespected that their manhood wasn't acknowledged and/or [sic] appreciated and that they weren't truly seen as men. Because the church [...] being founded by a

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<sup>25</sup> Cisgender refers to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex. Genderqueer refers to a person who does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions. Transwoman refers to a transgender person who has transitioned from male to female, and transman refers to a transgender person who has transitioned from female to male.

woman [...] all of the leaders, except for one or two, are women. And so, it was like there's no place here for me, really [sic]. Unless you are a gay man, then it's okay, but if you're a biological man or even a transman who happens to be heterosexual, there's not a space [sic] for you.

Shane believed that COR, an organization founded and governed predominantly by cis-women, was partial to certain identity groups. Cis-men and transmen, unfortunately, were not as warmly included as gay men or lesbian women. Shane elaborated further on the difference between transwomen and transmen at COR:

**Shane:** We had transwomen [at COR] who were present, so being transgender was acceptable. But then when you look at it, it's like, yeah, but now you're a woman, so, all right. You're in the hierarchy because the place, the ministry, was founded by a woman. All the leaders [sic] are women. You're supposed to be welcomed and accepted, but that was a challenge for the guys.

**Mario:** Would you say there was some hierarchy of privilege based on whether or not you were a transman versus a transwoman?

**Shane:** I believe that was the perception. I don't believe it was accurate, but it was a perception. There's a learning curve that we all have to be on about how we embrace and accept. I think there were things that the space needed to learn and grow into, but maybe we didn't give them the appropriate time to make all of those adjustments. I tell guys that when you transition, you must remember that everyone in your life is transitioning. You're transitioning. Your siblings are transitioning. People that knew you as whomever you were before are transitioning because they've known you all your life as this. Right? And now, you're becoming someone else, and it's going [sic] to take them a while to make the adjustments. Sometimes, I don't think we give people enough grace and space to grow and mature.

Though less often discussed and touching on the awkwardness expressed by Lamar above, Shane spoke about how difficult it can be for those close to a transgender person to undergo a period of transitional acceptance themselves. Shane's view was that it was important for transgender people to extend "grace" and "space" for other people to "grow" and "mature" in the relational dynamic, bearing in mind, of course, that despite the best of intentions, there is no guarantee of mutual understanding:

**Shane:** People need to call me by my right name now. You need to use the right pronoun now, but your mother - because she's known you as [Rose] all of your life - it's going to [sic] take her a minute to call you Shane. So, you've got to give people time. I think that may have been some of the other struggle, that we didn't give folks enough time. I think some of the trans community didn't give City of Refuge enough grace to grow and evolve into what we would have wanted to see.

**Mario:** When you say, 'we weren't flexible enough,' you mean 'we' as in the trans community was not flexible enough for the City of Refuge community to catch up?

**Shane:** Yeah. I mean, even now, we live in this instant gratification. Right? We want everything, if not today, yesterday, but it doesn't happen like that. It doesn't happen that way. Yeah, all the [trans] guys were gone, and it was like, okay, well, maybe this is not the space for me right now. I'll get it all together, and I'll come back. And that's what happened. I left, and part of me left angry, just like everybody else did.

In an interesting turn, Shane talked about how his transition, while still a member of COR, began to affect his ministerial opportunities adversely and was a turning point for him in his relationship with the organization:



**Mario:** What was the anger from?

**Shane:** Well, part of it was not that they didn't get the pronouns and the name right. I think I felt like who I was was wrapped up in my ministry. Right? Because, yeah, I'll just say it like that. I just sort of believed that who Rose was - facilitator of prayer, on the minister's board, just sort of visible and active in the ministry [...] and then as I became Shane, some of that stuff started being pulled back [sic], and it was like, 'well, the hell with y'all too.'

**Mario:** The calls within the church started to [...]

**Shane:** Not so much the calls, but the opportunities for ministry. So, again, what I've learned is that when you don't know what is true, you make stuff up. Right? Because I didn't have the language to say, 'Well, why is this happening?' I made assumptions as to why they were happening. [My] assumptions were, oh, okay, so now that I'm becoming a man and no longer a female, this is how y'all [sic] treat me. Okay, well, beat it. You know? But that could have all been resolved through conversation. For me, it was, okay, well, this is how y'all [sic] going to act, then I got something for you. I'll leave just like everybody else left, and this is probably the reason why they did because y'all [sic] crazy. You know? You make assumptions if you don't ask questions. So, I made my own stuff up, and I left.

For Shane, there was certainly the challenge of being misgendered by other members at COR. More alarming, however, was a noticeable decline in ministerial opportunities that coincided with his transition. Although Shane was careful to note that he had left COR based largely on assumptions he was making at the time, he did mention the importance of having conversations with other people in the organization to combat misperception and misunderstanding. Unfortunately, as a transman, Shane did not feel entirely included at COR. I should note that when Shane returned to COR several years later, at the invitation of another transman of color, he described feeling reluctant initially but eventually began to feel more welcomed, included, and integrated with the community, much like he did before his transition.

## AN IMPERFECT EXPERIENCE OF RADICAL INCLUSIVITY | EBMC

*"Radical inclusivity is the intention and deliberate action to do better." - Dylan*

Among EBMC respondents, ORI is a relatively new phenomenon still being figured out in theory and practice. According to EBMC's Strategic Plan (2018:15), "The practice of radical inclusivity is complex to realize and requires consistent care and attention." It is a deliberate practice often beset with challenges. Because ORI is an aspiration that is never fully realized or perfected, there is always room for the organization, and its members, to grow and evolve.

At EBMC, a core tenet of radical inclusion is creating an environment where people with varying abilities can easily access the space and the resources it offers. While EBMC is arguably one of the most access-centered organizations in the Bay Area, the needs of different communities have clashed in the past. Larry Yang (2017:230-231) wrote about one such incident when EBMC was preparing to move to a larger space:

Five years after opening its doors, EBMC had outgrown the small storefront space rented in downtown Oakland. Many events, including the weekly sitting group for people of color, were over capacity. Nearing the end of its lease, EBMC began the process of progressively moving upstairs into a larger space in the same building. Unfortunately, this process began without close consultation

with EBMC's many communities. In particular, EBMC members with disabilities expressed resistance to moving above the ground floor, which presented a greater evacuation risk in case of fire, earthquake, or other significant emergencies. In addition, the ambient air in the space triggered reactions in some community members with environmental illnesses. The Leadership Sangha, faced with no apparent other appropriate spaces for rent in downtown Oakland, grappled with the competing demands of those wanting to move upstairs quickly and those demanding that another space be found. In the end, the Leadership Sangha chose to discontinue the process of the move upstairs and committed to finding a space suitable for all EBMC's communities - even if that meant closing the doors for some time after its current lease expired.

A major misstep occurred when the Leadership Sangha initiated a consequential organization-wide process without closely consulting the communities most impacted by the final decision. Simply put, the leadership was initially proceeding in a unilateral manner, which is antithetical to the practice of radical inclusion. Fortunately, after hearing from people whom the move would have most severely impacted, the Leadership Sangha chose to ensure that the new location, wherever and whenever it might be available, would be as inclusive and accessible to as many communities as possible. The East Bay Meditation Center eventually moved to its current, much more accommodating, location on 17th Street in downtown Oakland in October 2012. As discussed below, EBMC's commitment to a harm reduction framework is helpful when weighing conflicting needs across groups. Here, I note a longtime access-related challenge concerning the center's controversial fragrance-free policy.<sup>26</sup>

*"If you smell, go home and come back later!" - Centro*

Otis, a 46-year-old same-gender loving cis-man of African descent and a former member of the Leadership Sangha, explained the center's fragrance-free policy: "We ask people to come without fragrance, and if you're wearing something that has a fragrance, we ask you to leave." Interestingly, this policy, designed to create greater access for, and protect people with multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS) and other environmental-based illnesses, has received mixed reviews throughout the years and has even elicited cross-group tensions. Centro, a 51-year-old gay cis-man from South America and a former Visiting Teacher at EBMC, spoke not only about the impossibility of any one organization being perfectly radically inclusive but, more pointedly, about how the institutionalization of the fragrance-free policy was a "big turnoff" for him:

**Centro:** No organization can include everybody for the most part. I go to church here, two blocks [away], and there are homeless people that come in, and they're very smelly, and they get really welcomed [sic]. Well, there are other spaces where homeless, smelly people are not going to be welcomed. You know? There are places where somebody in the [Ku Klux Klan] would be welcomed as long as you're respectful. You know? I think organizations get these boundaries that define them. So radical inclusivity, in my mind, still doesn't mean everybody because people have a sense of who belongs and who doesn't.

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<sup>26</sup> The East Bay Meditation Center states on its website why it is fragrance-free: "Part of EBMC's mission is that we are rooted in diversity and committed to building an inclusive community. This is an ongoing invitation to a practice of openness, compassion, and constant learning. An increasing number of people in our community are harmed by a variety of common chemicals and fragrances, including 'natural' fragrances and aromatherapy products, such as fragranced essential oils. Due to allergies, asthma, or other chemical sensitivity, they may have difficulty breathing, migraine headaches, flu-like symptoms, and more. When we come to EBMC having used products on our bodies or clothing that include fragrances or chemicals, those who are allergic or sensitive are faced with the choice to stay and get sick or leave and be excluded. Please practice with this awareness at EBMC, and help us make EBMC accessible to all by coming to EBMC fragrance-free. May we all be healthy and free from harm."

**Mario:** Interesting that even this notion of radical inclusion has its boundaries.

**Centro:** Well, I would think so. I mean, if you're radically inclusive, you would welcome a Nazi and a transgender person of color at the same time. You know? Is that the definition that you really include where people are at? I just have a feeling that if somebody comes to EBMC wearing a KKK jacket, they would not be radically included. I just think they would be kicked out because they would be considered somebody who is causing harm in the community. [EBMC also has] a sign saying, 'If you smell, go home and come back later.' You know? That's when it got really ridiculous to me [sic] when they would be like, okay, no natural products. Well, in some people, because they're not wearing deodorant, they might have natural odors. So, go home and shower.

**Mario:** What if you don't have a shower?

**Centro:** Or, what if you're coming from work and you have body odor because you're trying not to use deodorant with artificial things? That's not radically inclusive. I mean, I get not having incense, and I also get [that] people have these chemical [sensitivities], but to verbally say it, to put signs [up] and say it more than once? To me, it was a big turnoff. You know? This saying it [sic] more than once and the signs and the products, and then on top of [that] saying, 'Oh, and now if you have BO, then you're not welcome here.' So, there was this kind of disconnect for me.

Centro makes a noteworthy point that echoes Jimmy's views above. There may be occasions, much like the example I detailed at the beginning of this chapter when self-proclaimed radically inclusive organizations need to "exclude" or escort out certain individuals if they are deemed harmful to others. This action is complicated concerning the fragrance-free policy because those asked to "go home" may not necessarily intend to harm others; they may simply be unaware that their choice to use scented products could do just that.

Another concern is the possible tension if, for one community, scented products are a core part of their spiritual practice or cultural expression. Otis became aware of this tension while a member of EBMC's Coordinating Committee. "I'm aware that many people of color wear fragrances and oils and things that are a part of their practice, whether to make them feel good or smell good or part of a spiritual practice. There are many ways people of color show up with scents." Otis emphasized that people have written letters to the center stating, "I'm not going to not wear my stuff, so if you don't want fragrance, then you don't want me." These people did not feel welcome at the center. Marcos, a 43-year-old queer cis-man of Latin descent - and a longtime volunteer at EBMC - noticed a similar tension: "There is a high correlation among people of color wearing fragrances, and there are many people across the ethnic spectrum that have multiple chemical sensitivities and can get sick from fragrances. So, that's a big way that the needs of one community clashes with the needs of another." Adhering to a core value of harm reduction, and despite these cross-group tensions, EBMC decided to keep the fragrance-free policy in place (Oppenheimer 2015).

EBMC has sought to mitigate cross-group tensions by utilizing a harm reduction model. Reina, a 53-year-old pansexual transman of Latin descent, discussed this model at length during our conversation:

**Reina:** It just recognizes that in our community, different people have different needs. Some folks have multiple chemical sensitivities and are made sick by chemical fragrances. For other people raised in a culture where fragrances or scents have cultural meaning, have meaning around identity and healing [...] healing substances. So, right there, you have a conflict where the same substance is poison for one person and medicine for someone else. How do you navigate that?

**Mario:** How did EBMC navigate that?

**Reina:** We're always thinking in a framework of harm reduction [sic]. How do we do the least harm? In that framework, prioritizing those who are physically ill by the substance is a harm-reduction strategy, knowing there's no way to not harm anybody. There's no solution that will harm no one. So, how do we do the least harm? In that sense, making sure that the space is safe for those who have a physical illness is a harm reduction. Knowing that those who use scent as medicine and as part of their identity will still have a lot of other spheres to be able to do that, but not at EBMC. And that will cause harm, but it's a lesser harm than the harm caused to someone who might be physically sick for a day, a couple of days, or a week from having [exposure].

**Mario:** So, it's the approach of the least harm done?

**Reina:** Right, and we might have different opinions about that. In the ten years I've been a part of East Bay Meditation Center, this conversation about the fragrance-free policy has been a conversation the whole time. I would've thought ten years ago [we'd] figure this out. We'll get it worked out [sic], and it won't be a conversation anymore. That's not the case, nor do I think that will be the case in the future.

As a longtime volunteer at EBMC and a former member of the Leadership Sangha, Reina was privy to the challenges that cross-group conflict posed at the center. He spoke to a concern that Larry's accessibility-related example above pointed to - any decision EBMC makes, however well intended, could adversely impact certain community members. As such, a strategy was needed to help mitigate risk and ensure that the least harm was done to the least amount of people. Ultimately, the center chose to view organization-wide decision-making processes through a harm reduction framework. This approach is not only tethered to Buddhist ethics of non-harm but also provides a sound rationale for people committed to the core values of EBMC. Still, people might feel like the center is prioritizing the needs of one group over their own and thus feel excluded, which alludes to the notion that no one radically inclusive organization can meet the needs of everybody all of the time.

## CONCLUSION

I began this chapter by asking how RIROs articulate and actualize radical inclusion and how those involved with these spaces experience it. While COR and EBMC are committed to ORI, there is more overlap in terms of articulation and less overlap in terms of actualization. As an aspect of identity work, COR and EBMC articulate their vision, values, mission, and goals to the public via their websites, social media platforms, email announcements, newsletters, and within their brick-and-mortar locations. The qualitative data show that whereas COR respondents view ORI through a Christian-informed, faith-based lens, EBMC respondents view it as a deliberate practice yet to be fully realized or perfected. The mechanisms presented in Table 4 reflect these distinct views. Further, COR's twelve-step model foregrounds the aspirational aspects of ORI, while EBMC provides a practical list of organization-wide practices designed to actualize it.

### *Articulation and Interactive Pluralism*

I argue that while COR and EBMC articulate an ORI model that aligns with Hartmann and Gerteis's (2005:218-232) notion of *interactive pluralism*, in terms of actualization, on-the-ground challenges, especially concerning vulnerable members of the community, situate these RIROs

more realistically within the framework of *fragmented pluralism*. The former vision not only realizes the existence of distinct groups and cultures but also posits the need to cultivate common understanding across differences through mutual recognition and interaction. Cross-cultural dialogue and exchange become a defining feature and value for adherents of this view.

Recognizing the existence of distinct groups and cultures is central to how COR and EBMC present their organizational identity to the public. Recall the inclusive messaging of both organizations. In a more general sense, COR proclaims to be radically inclusive and welcomes all people regardless of identity. While EBMC echoes this sentiment, the messaging is more specific regarding which communities they aim to provide a welcoming environment for (e.g., people of color, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and people with disabilities). Additionally, both organizations claim to welcome people from different “faith paths” (COR) and “spiritual traditions” (EBMC), which adds an element of religio-spiritual inclusion. The City of Refuge’s *Radical Inclusivity Model*, shown in Figure 5 above, hints at an effort to cultivate cross-group recognition and interaction. For example, the model encourages members to recognize, reach out to, value, love, and celebrate those on the margins of society, speaking to Jimmy and Darnell’s Christian-informed view that “everyone has a seat at the table.” Additionally, publications by influential leaders at COR and EBMC strongly advocate for cross-group understanding, such as Bishop Flunder’s (2005:25-31) discussion on how to make COR a safer place for the transgender community or Larry Yang’s (2017:227-233) “Learning Points from East Bay Meditation Center” aimed at transforming “cultural unconsciousness.”

Finally, as an aspect of inclusive in-house messaging, EBMC incorporates signs (e.g., *Agreements for Multicultural Interactions*), symbols, and other forms of identity-based representation (e.g., Black Lives Matter and LGBTQ+ paraphernalia) to foster cross-cultural dialogue and exchange. Importantly, EBMC actively utilizes programming to disrupt bias, challenge notions of group dominance, educate the community about individual and social differences, and mitigate cross-group conflict. The center also provides online resources for more privileged groups to learn how their presence impacts other community members.

### *Actualization and Fragmented Pluralism*

Despite their best intentions, COR and EBMC have struggled to actualize interactive pluralism and have instead embodied elements of fragmented pluralism, which “focuses on the existence of a variety of distinctive and relatively self-contained mediating communities as a social reality, [...] necessity and strength” (Hartmann and Gerteis 2005:229-231). This view acknowledges the importance of maintaining group culture and self-determination. Unlike assimilationism, wherein social groups get absorbed into the macro-social order, in this view, the individual gets subsumed by the group rather than the larger whole.

In practice, EBMC prioritizes the safety and support of historically marginalized groups. For example, before the center opened its doors, the founders held strategic “listening sessions” for communities of color to get input on what the center could do to acknowledge and address their needs. As an outgrowth of this effort, Larry Yang (2017:228) wrote: “Many people of color, in mixed [race] environments, feel the need to ‘keep their guard up,’ to protect themselves from the effects of unconscious bias and racism from other, usually white, community members. Events reserved for people of color,” he continues, “can offer the possibility of ‘letting down one’s guard’ and enhance learning at different times during or as part of a student of color’s path.” From the get-go, EBMC founded and supported affinity-based practice groups (e.g., for BIPOC and

LGBTQ+ communities), not to mention offering one-day retreats, class series, and peer-led deep refuge groups. Moreover, EBMC's *Radical Inclusivity Practices*, shown in Figure 6 above, reveal the center's attempt to create "spaces reserved for specific communities," encourage people to participate in a supportive "fragrance-free practice," and adhere to "EBMC's accessibility policy." These examples reflect the center's efforts to maintain distinctive group cultures.

Despite these pluses, the process of group self-determination can sometimes be messy, as Centro, Otis, Marcos, and Reina note about the controversial fragrance-free policy. For one group, scents and fragrances can have spiritual and cultural significance; for another, they can result in sickness and death. What is essential for one group may be in direct conflict with another. Centro was unequivocal that instituting the fragrance-free policy was a "big turnoff" for him; I interviewed others who felt similarly. Another example of conflicting needs across groups is EBMC's intention to move to a larger, more accommodating space to support the growing needs of the People of Color Sangha. While this sangha and the larger organization would have benefited from such a move, doing so would have caused harm to those with disabilities and environmental illnesses. When the Leadership Sangha unilaterally initiated an organization-wide move without closely consulting these communities, they were confronted and ended the motion. Ultimately, in keeping with the founding values of inclusivity, the Leadership Sangha chose to ensure that the new location, wherever and whenever available, would be as inclusive and accessible to as many communities as possible.

Finally, a strong sign that COR struggles to embody elements of interactive pluralism concerns the transgender experience of inclusion and exclusion. A few examples are worth noting: Lamar and others feeling uncomfortable around the transgender community; Shane not only having a hard time with his female-to-male transition as a member of COR but also seeing a decline in his ministerial opportunities as the process unfolded; and many transmen leaving the organization for what Shane believed was due to a gender-based bias. Shane's experience aligns with fragmented pluralism in that group self-determination is considered crucial for one's identity. Shane mentioned that although he did leave the church for identity-based reasons, he later returned and had a more positive experience. To provide a meaningful refuge for transmen, and with the support of Bishop Flunder, Shane co-founded Brother's Rising in 2015, which continues to this day. During my ethnographic fieldwork, I saw further evidence of COR working to recognize and integrate the transgender community. For example, I attended a Sunday worship service that devoted most of the service to honoring transwomen of color who had been victims of hate crimes. I also occasionally saw transgender people deliver sermons at the church, which suggests an effort to have visible transgender leadership.

## CENTERING COMMUNITY CONFLICT

For Rodney, attending the People of Color (POC) Sangha at the East Bay Meditation Center (EBMC) had become a weekly priority. As a 38-year-old cis-woman of Black and mixed-race ancestry, it was a safe place to gather with other like-minded people of color. As a curiously spiritual person, it was an opportunity to learn more about the teachings of the Buddha and deepen her already well-developed mindfulness and meditation practice. As a busy professional, it allowed her to slow down and tend to her wellness overall. For years, Rodney felt that the POC Sangha provided a refuge from the burdensome stresses and isms of society at large, that is, until one summer evening in 2014, when things suddenly fell apart.

It could have been an evening of calming meditation, nourishing fellowship, and insightful reflection; however, Rodney ended up having a problematic encounter with a more junior Dharma teacher named Eli, a queer-identified cis-man presenting a talk that evening on forgiveness.<sup>27</sup> “He told a detailed story,” Rodney recalled, “of a woman being alone in her house [...] someone breaking into the house, taunting her, raping her, and then killing her.” Ivory, a 55-year-old, queer, cis-woman of Asian descent, was also in attendance that evening and, like Rodney, troubled by the story. “This was a story of violence against a woman,” Ivory shared, “and it had centered the experience of a man [...] the woman’s father.” Eduardo, a 57-year-old biracial cis-man and an active member of the POC Coordinating Committee at the time, recalled that the talk was about “how the father of this woman forgave the assailant” and that even though Eli meant to use this rather graphic story as an example of forgiveness, it ended up “triggering” people in the audience. Regardless of intent, this episode set in motion a series of events that Ivory would later describe as “harm upon harm.” The first harm was the content of the Dharma talk, and the second was the messy “resolution” process that followed. Incidents like this raise important questions: How do radically inclusive religio-spiritual organizations (RIROs) address and, if possible, resolve interpersonal conflict, and how do such processes influence individuals’ experiences of organizational radical inclusion (ORI)?

### AWARE OF THE “UNITY” IN COMMUNITY WORK

This chapter focuses on how the City of Refuge (COR) and EBMC engage in *community work*, which, in RIROs, involves interpersonal, intergroup, and organization-wide relational management and care; it prioritizes inclusion, safety, collective responsibility and accountability, and community-building efforts. Though not exhaustive, these parameters point us in a meaningful direction of inquiry. Utilizing a mixed methods approach (see Appendix A) and drawing on sociological theories of community, I explore how COR and EBMC address and, if possible, resolve conflict as an aspect of interpersonal relational management and care.<sup>28</sup> How RIROs manage conflict matters in the study of ORI not only because resolution processes protect the

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<sup>27</sup> Names and other identifying information were changed to maintain subject anonymity.

<sup>28</sup> Interpersonal relational management and care can include creating and maintaining identity-based “safer spaces.” Intergroup relational management and care can include educational programming (e.g., EBMC’s six-session program, *White and Awakening in Sangha*). Organization-wide relational management and care can include internal- and external-facing community outreach efforts (see Chapter 3).

valued aspects of community work mentioned above (e.g., inclusion and safety), but also because conflict can be a direct consequence of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) efforts (e.g., when the needs of different communities collide).

Though COR and EBMC are self-proclaimed RIRs, their approach to conflict resolution differs. The City of Refuge embodies a more traditional-leaning approach (see Table 5). Two reasons, among others, account for this: (1) Bishop Flunder is the core founder and matriarchal head of the organization, and (2) COR promotes and practices a family-like ethos. In terms of process, in most cases, Bishop Flunder and other members of The Shephard’s Table (Board) will actively communicate with the affected person(s); a spiritual-based element, such as the invocation of the Holy Spirit, is interwoven throughout the process; and an executive decision will be made by or among the core leadership team. This top-down approach has reportedly not worked well for some members and has resulted in people leaving the organization for good.

TABLE 5. Conflict Resolution Processes

	City of Refuge	East Bay Meditation Center
Paradigm	Traditional-leaning	Postmodern-leaning
Organizational Characteristics	<p>Hierarchical structure</p> <p>Decision-making concentrated at the top</p> <p>Religious leaders hold power and authority</p> <p>Executive and “family-style” ethos</p>	<p>Flatter structure</p> <p>Decision-making authority is distributed</p> <p>Power and authority are decentralized</p> <p>Democratic and “committee-style” ethos</p>
Explanatory Factors	<p>Bishop Flunder as founder and matriarch</p> <p>Promotion and practice of family-like ethos</p>	<p>Commitment to shared leadership</p> <p>Experimentation with resolution processes</p>
Resolution Process	<p>Relatively stable three-step</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Member(s) meet with leadership</li> <li>2. Inclusion of spiritual-based element</li> <li>3. Executive decision making</li> </ol>	<p>Evolving and resource-informed</p> <p>Mindfulness-Based Principles for Handling Tension</p> <p>Ethics, Restoration, and Resolution Council</p> <p>Restorative Practices</p>

The East Bay Meditation Center embodies a more postmodern-leaning approach to conflict resolution. Two reasons, among others, account for this: (1) the center’s commitment to shared leadership, which emphasizes decentralized decision-making, shared accountability, and collective stewardship, and (2) the center’s experimentation with different resolution processes. For example, EBMC utilized restorative justice, non-violent communication, insight dialogue, and Indigenous talking circle practices early on. Though helpful, these efforts reportedly lacked the organizational infrastructure to effectively stabilize and resolve conflict among affected person(s). Consequently, and drawing on some of the practices that worked well from these methods, EBMC developed the *Mindfulness-Based Operating Principles for Handling Tension* protocol in 2016 and the *Ethics, Restoration, and Resolution Council (ER&R)* in 2017. The latter aims to restore



relationships within the organization challenged by conflict, difference, and harm.<sup>29</sup> Given the changing nature of interpersonal relational management and care, EBMC has continued to evolve its policies, practices, and processes (3Ps) (see Appendices F1-F3).

While COR is traditional-leaning in its conflict resolution processes, in terms of organizational processes, there are hints of postmodern tendencies (e.g., collaborative efforts between leadership and members to launch values-aligned ministries). Similarly, while EBMC is postmodern-leaning in its resolution processes, in terms of organizational processes, there are hints of modernist tendencies (e.g., encouraging social mobility by training practitioners to become community teachers and leaders). Moreover, as I discuss below, Rodney and Ivory, frustrated with their complicated and drawn-out resolution process at EBMC, felt that modernist qualities like rationality, efficiency, bureaucracy, and role clarity would have better facilitated resolve. Both COR and EBMC address and resolve conflict in different ways, thus reaffirming the core argument of this project that there is more than one way to be a radically inclusive organization.

## COMMUNITY WORK IS A VERB

Beyond conflict resolution processes, COR and EBMC have engaged in other forms of community work (see Table 7). For example, recalling organizational context as a factor that shapes 3Ps (see Introduction), COR and EBMC were established in racially mixed districts in the San Francisco Bay Area to ensure greater access for - and sustained connection with - communities of color (Gleig 2014; Yang 2017); they developed an inclusive institutional identity early on (Becker 1998); they work to foster cross-racial fellowship, networks, and education (Gleig 2014); and driven by founders who experienced harm and exclusion at other mainstream organizations, they have supported identity- and affinity-based groups (Edward, Christerson, and Emerson 2013). To this last point, EBMC has sought to prioritize the creation of “safer spaces” for historically marginalized members via practice groups, one-day retreats, durational class series, and peer-led Deep Refuge groups. Larry Yang (2017) suggests that such spaces are made possible by creating communication and interaction-based agreements, developing conflict resolution processes, and designing pathways to restore relationships. Finally, informed by a religio-spiritual blend of Methodist, Baptist, and Pentecostal traditions embraced by the Black Church, COR embodies a charismatic worship style with Bishop Flunder as the exemplar (Dougherty and Huyser 2008). These examples illustrate that religio-spiritual and ethical frameworks and historical and organizational contexts inform COR’s and EBMC’s community work.

## ORIENTING THEORIES OF COMMUNITY

Because this chapter focuses on how COR and EBMC engage in community work, it is helpful to understand how scholars have discussed notions of *community*. Here, I provide an abridged summary, beginning with the traditional perspective and ending with the postmodern perspective (see Table 6). I then link some of COR’s and EBMC’s community work presented above to some of these views (see Table 7).

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<sup>29</sup> The ER&R Council evolved from EBMC’s *Grievance Policy*, which was initially adopted in April 2010 and updated again in September 2013. The *Restoration and Resolution Process, Policies and Procedures* document was drafted in 2016 with input from Spirit Rock Meditation Center, San Francisco Zen Center, Berkeley Zen Center, and Rochester Zen Center documents.

Perhaps the most famous work on community, as characterized by traditional cultural values, is Ferdinand Tönnies's (2002) groundbreaking book *Community and Society*, first published in German in 1887 (Delanty 2018:36).<sup>30</sup> Tönnies's notion of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) helped frame how we think about complex and ever-changing human associations. Even more, it distinguished between traditional communities and modern forms of society. In *Gemeinschaft*, Bell and Newby (1979:24) note, "Human relationships are intimate, enduring, and based on a clear understanding of where each person stands in society." They add that status is ascriptive, members are relatively immobile physically and socially, culture is relatively homogenous, and the moral custodians hold significant power and authority. Delanty (2018:37) observes, "Community as *Gemeinschaft* is expressed [...] in family life in concord, in rural village life in folkways, and in town life in religion." Alternatively, *Gesellschaft* describes a system in which relationships are not necessarily intimate and closely tied. Self-interest is primary, and associations lack shared mores, beliefs, and values. "Society as *Gesellschaft*," Delanty continues, "is expressed in city life in convention, in national life in legislation, and in cosmopolitan life in public opinion."

Like Tönnies's view of community and society, the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1997) forwarded different notions of group solidarity. Durkheim viewed society as a structure with interrelated parts and identified two forms of normative control: *mechanical solidarity* and *organic solidarity*. The former is akin to *Gemeinschaft*, consisting of a largely homogenous group connected through similar work, lifestyles, education, or religio-spiritual training. This solidarity is usually based on familial kinship and operates in "traditional" and small-scale societies. On the other hand, organic solidarity refers to more "modern" complex and advanced societies. In this case, group solidarity is achieved through the interdependence of constituent parts. Much like *Gesellschaft*, relationships are not necessarily intimate or closely tied, and individual self-interest trumps group loyalty. Moreover, mores, beliefs, and values become generalized and not rooted in the commonly shared daily experiences that might occur in the family or rural community setting.

It is important to note that while scholars have neatly distinguished between traditional communities and modern societies, neither paradigm is entirely mutually exclusive. As Delanty (2018:34) observes, community cannot be defined exclusively in terms of premodern tradition "for the simple reason that community also exists within modernity."

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<sup>30</sup> Charles Galpin (1915) provided the first sociological definition of community. According to Smith (1941:391), Galpin's definition involved a "definite geographical area, social institutions, and social interaction between the people living in the area." The later works of McClenahan (1992), Hollingshead (1948), and Hillery (1955) provided an early description and categorization of community. McClenahan classified community according to six points of view: (1) as a social unit in a local territory; (2) as an ecological unit; (3) as a legal, administrative, or political unit; (4) as the equivalent of society; (5) as an ideal or mental unity; and (6) as a process. Hillery later argued that this classification system was problematic because some categories were not mutually exclusive. For example, the notion of community as a "political unit" infers the possible presence of "mental unity." Therefore, these classifications needed to be more distinct or organized so that subcategories could be listed. Hollingshead took a more simplistic approach and grouped definitions of the community into three categories: (1) group solidarity; (2) geographic area; and (3) socio-geographic structure. Hollingshead ultimately concluded that community could not be all three. Perhaps in frustration, Hillery (1955:115) asserted that Hollingshead "was simply presenting a summary description, and his only purpose in advancing the 'classification' was to indicate that areas of disagreement must logically exist. Thus, he [gave] no picture of the extent of similarities and differences." From these and other early works, Hillery analyzed roughly ninety-four definitions of community and created a classification system that distinguished several different and characteristic elements. These include, but are not limited to, social interaction, geographic area, self-sufficiency, everyday life, and more (Hillery 1955:122). According to these scholars, a community consists of a shared geographic space or locality, a group of people and their social relations, and various social systems, whether in the form of a family or some other organizing framework.

TABLE 6. The Traditional, Modern, and Postmodern Community

	Traditional Perspective	Modern Perspective	Postmodern Perspective
Values	<p>Strong adherence to customs, rituals, beliefs</p> <p>Well-defined social hierarchies and roles</p> <p>Expectation to conform to established norms</p>	<p>Shift towards rationality, individualism, and secularization</p> <p>Science, technology, and reason are highly valued</p> <p>Religious beliefs are less central in shaping societal norms</p>	<p>Challenge absolute truths and narratives of modernity</p> <p>Increased awareness of diversity of perspectives</p> <p>Emphasis on inclusivity, tolerance, and multiculturalism</p>
Structure	<p>Hierarchical structure</p> <p>Authority, elders, religious leaders hold significant power and authority</p> <p>Family and kinship ties play key role</p>	<p>Formalized and bureaucratic structure</p> <p>Governments and institutions play key roles in decision-making</p>	<p>Flatter structure</p> <p>Power and authority are decentralized</p> <p>Networks and virtual connections play key role in fostering communities</p>
Function	<p>Emphasizes stability, continuity, and preservation of cultural heritage</p> <p>Change is slow and conservative</p> <p>Focus is on maintaining the status quo and wisdom of the ancestors</p>	<p>Progress and innovation are central to modern communities</p> <p>Prioritize economic growth, industrialization, and technology</p> <p>Emphasizes rights and freedoms</p> <p>Social mobility is encouraged</p>	<p>Embraces fluidity and change</p> <p>Values creativity, self-expression, and individual autonomy</p> <p>Open to questioning established norms</p> <p>Seek to deconstruct existing power structures</p>
Organizational Characteristics	<p>Hierarchical top-down management</p> <p>Decision-making concentrated at the top</p> <p>Clear chain of command</p> <p>Presence of specialized roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Communication flows vertically</p>	<p>Increased specialization</p> <p>More dynamic approach to management</p> <p>Evolution from rigid hierarchical structures to more flexible and decentralized systems</p>	<p>Challenge rigid structures of traditional and modern models</p> <p>Tend to be more decentralized</p> <p>Focus on teamwork, collaboration, and inclusivity</p> <p>Decision-making authority is distributed</p> <p>Roles and responsibilities may be blurred</p>

Note: See Delanty 2018.

With the emergence of community studies in the mid and latter half of the twentieth century, the notion of community began to take on a more postmodern shape. According to Delanty (2018:156), in the postmodern society, “group membership is more fluid and porous than in modern society.” Indeed, the old certainties of class, race, nation, and gender that were the basis of industrialized society have become contested categories in what is now an age of multiple belongings. “The quest for belonging,” Delanty (2018:156-157) asserts, “has occurred precisely because insecurity has become the main experience for many people.”

The features of postmodern community can be characterized variously as a shift from identity to difference, from certainty to contingency, from closed to open communities; it is a community beyond unity and an embracing of liminality, which is to be found less on the margins of society than in its urban centres [sic]. However, postmodern community is also fragile and less rooted in stable social relations that were a feature of traditional occupational groups, urban migration communities, or rural communities.

This postmodern age of fluidity, insecurity, and fragility motivated scholars to consider other meaningful factors of group cohesion. For example, Frazer (1999) viewed community as a *value* bringing together elements of solidarity, commitment, mutuality, and trust. Willmott (1989), Lee and Newby (1983), and Crow and Allen (2014) framed community in terms of *place* (e.g., shared locality), *interest* (e.g., political affiliation), and *communion* (e.g., an attachment to something that entails a profound encounter), and Cohen (1982, 1985) posited that people construct community *symbolically* (e.g., ritual, worship, or the presence of meaningful objects). In these perspectives, some impersonal anchor has significance (see Ghaziani and Baldassarri 2011).

TABLE 7. Community Work and the Postmodern Perspective

	City of Refuge	East Bay Meditation Center
Value + Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of inclusive institutional identity</li> <li>Commitment to radical inclusion</li> <li>Social justice oriented</li> <li>Christian religio-spiritual framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of inclusive institutional identity</li> <li>Commitment to radical inclusion</li> <li>Social justice oriented</li> <li>Buddhist religio-spiritual framework</li> </ul>
Place	Established in racially mixed districts (San Francisco and Oakland)	Established in racially mixed district (Oakland)
Communion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embodies a charismatic worship style</li> <li>Supports identity- and affinity-based groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation and support of “safer spaces”</li> <li>Supports identity- and affinity-based groups</li> </ul>

*Note:* I joined “value” and “interest” because some of the points listed align with both categories.

The postmodern perspective is helpful when reflecting on the community work presented above that COR and EBMC have engaged in. Both organizations evince *value* and *interest* exemplified by their inclusive institutional identity and commitment to radical inclusion, social justice, and religio-spiritual frameworks. Regarding the notion of *place*, COR and EBMC were established in racially mixed districts; notably, COR started a worship service in the famously gritty Tenderloin neighborhood in downtown San Francisco (see Chapter 3), and most of EBMC’s founders were adamant about opening in downtown Oakland so that communities of color, in particular, could easily access the center. Regarding *communion* as something that entails a profound encounter, COR embodies a charismatic worship style drawn from Methodist, Baptist, and Pentecostal traditions; and COR and EBMC support identity- and affinity-based groups, with EBMC actively prioritizing the creation of “safer spaces” for historically marginalized members. While these organizational processes map onto postmodern notions of community, as we will see,

regarding conflict resolution, COR is traditional-leaning with hints of postmodern tendencies, and EBMC is postmodern-leaning with hints of modernist tendencies.

## THE UNEASY PROCESS OF CONFLICT (RESOLUTION?) | COR

Indicative of the need for ongoing community work, COR and EBMC, like other RIROs, have had to reevaluate and develop their conflict resolution processes over time. While COR's traditional-leaning *executive* decision-making style can be helpful in terms of resolving conflicts quickly, as Drew's experience highlights below, this approach can also foster tension.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, adopting a *"family-style"* ethos encourages interpersonal closeness and connection. According to Andre, this style inspires a family-like "love ethic" that prompts leadership outreach and care, especially for those tempted to leave the organization or who have already left. Though hoped for, reintegration does not always occur. Kay's story reveals that COR leadership may lack impartiality when navigating conflicts between partners/spouses, thus resulting in potential gossip, fragmentation, and separation between partners and from the church.

*"Let me act the fuck up!" - Drew*

At COR, in most cases, there is a threefold conflict resolution process: Bishop Flunder and other members of The Shephard's Table (Board) will actively communicate with the affected person(s); a spiritual-based element, such as the invocation of the Holy Spirit, is interwoven throughout the process; and an executive decision is made by or among the core leadership team. While well-intentioned, COR's executive "family-style" approach has reportedly not worked well for some members. For Drew, a 21-year-old paid drummer at COR, this process left them both offended and limited. For perspective, Drew spoke glowingly about their overall experience of radical inclusion at COR; however, when I asked Drew why they thought this was the case, I gained some insight into their struggles with said process.

I only say that this is a real ministry and that this is an inclusive ministry because I am 21, and there is a side of the 21 me that the music team - Pastor Glen or someone - may deal with, and that is me being a child, me still learning, and for her to take on that responsibility [...] I've tested her.<sup>32</sup> I've tested them. I've tested all of them to see if they really are about this holy 'We love you.' Oh, let's see. Let me act the fuck up, and I did just that.

I asked if they had passed the test, Drew said they did. When I asked how, Drew elaborated, "When I say they passed the test [...] this was just a let's see if y'all really like me, if y'all really love me [sic]. You know? They passed it because I misunderstood a statement. I immediately left and didn't show up for church." Concerned, the COR leadership sought Drew out, thinking something bad might have happened. This gesture meant a lot to Drew in that they were neither shunned nor forgotten among church leadership despite their "testing" and immature behavior.

When I communicated with Pastor Glen about what took place and how I felt about it, we sat down, and we talked. The way the Holy Spirit dealt with the situation was that that following Sunday when

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<sup>31</sup> "Drew" (a pseudonym used for this study) did not complete the survey questionnaire. Consequently, I do not have their self-reported gender and race/ethnicity information. I will use "they/them" pronouns when referring to them.

<sup>32</sup> Names and other identifying information were changed to maintain subject anonymity.

I came in - they already had a drummer to play for that Sunday - and they had altar call, and [we prayed with] the same person that I felt so offended with.

Curious, I asked Drew what had prompted their departure: “I am paid as a drummer, not a singer.” Drew shared matter-of-factly. “I wanted to sing, and they wanted me to be on the drums, and so they were just like, ‘Baby, get back on the drums,’ and I’m like, ‘I want to sing!’ I was offended. I felt limited. I felt like Ringo Starr, and I wanted to be Paul McCartney too!” Drew acknowledged that they were “kind of in the wrong” while “storming” out of the center, but they still left. “It was just me being 21. With all of this feel-good energy and stuff like that, it can flip, and I can feel some type of way, and I can act up, and they all got to fucking deal with it, and they know how to deal with it.” I made a brief remark that COR had “been around the block,” and Drew concurred. “They’ve been around the block multiple times, still circling the damn block. Bishop will confess it, and she’ll say, ‘I still go around my block and check on my people.’”

*“We’re going to go looking for you because we love you.” - Andre*

Whereas COR’s executive style approach to conflict resolution left Drew feeling limited and inclined to leave the church - granted, Drew was stubbornly contesting the leadership’s decision-making process - it is perhaps the “family-style” approach that best reflects COR’s commitment to internally focused community work; that is, making a concerted effort to reach out to those who have either left or are tempted to leave, the organization.

Andre, a longtime COR member who had struggled for years with a costly gambling addiction - and drawing on their path to recovery with the support of COR leadership - discussed the family-like “love ethic” that often prompts leadership outreach and care.<sup>33</sup> “The thing about Refuge is, if you’re missing in action, The Refugees are going to find you.” When asked to elaborate, Andre was direct.

That means that we’re going to go looking for you because we love you. You got caught up in addiction, and you’re in hiding, or you’re hurting, or you’re in an abusive relationship, and you can’t get to family; The Refugees are going to go on a hunt for you, as a love response, to bring you back to a safe place.

As I mentioned above, outreach and follow-up efforts meant a lot to Drew in that they were neither shunned for “acting up” nor forgotten while away. Despite an imperfect and potentially harmful decision-making process, reintegration was possible for Drew. This “love response” prompted COR leadership to “go hunt for” Drew and steer them back into the organizational fold. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. For example, romantic partnerships within the church have resulted in painful separations.

*“I joined Bedside Baptist Church of Couch and Christ.” - Kay*

Bishop Flunder has had an enormous influence on the COR community. Her reputation precedes her. She is a visionary co-founder of the organization and “walks the talk” as a Christian leader. Despite her inspiring charisma and tremendous service to the COR community and beyond, there

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<sup>33</sup> “Andre” (a pseudonym used for this study) did not complete the survey questionnaire. Consequently, I do not have their self-reported gender and race/ethnicity information. I will use “they/them” pronouns when referring to them.

have been reported cases, albeit rare, of Bishop Flunder's, and other COR leadership's, problematic involvement with relational disputes.

Kay, a longtime member of COR, spoke frankly about COR's problematic approach to interpersonal relational management and care.<sup>34</sup> From 1994 until their abrupt departure in 2005, Kay juggled multiple leadership roles within the organization. As an ordained deacon, youth department leader, choir secretary, and even a driving force behind the local food pantry service, Kay felt that COR was such an all-consuming part of their social and spiritual life. "Everything is centered around the church," they shared. "I can remember wanting to go back to school, but I couldn't get a schedule that didn't conflict with some church responsibility." Even Kay's dating happened within the church, which would seem ideal in an organization that values a "family-style" approach to relational management and care; however, the problem occurred when relationships were on the rocks or ended. "When relationships ended," Kay continued, "it was bad. Everybody was in your business, like family." It was their messy breakup that ultimately led Kay to leave COR.

It got to the point where one relationship ended, and this person went to Bishop and was crying and said I hurt her. I didn't get the benefit of having my say about it. People got pulled into it, and it got really ugly and really hurtful, and I left. I didn't just leave. I wrote a letter saying I am going to take a leave from all of my leadership responsibilities. I did that. I left.

Though challenging, Kay's departure from COR made it possible for them to make major life choices without the pressure of unrelenting church responsibilities and accountability. Kay finally pursued the educational goals they had repeatedly shelved in years past and eventually earned advanced Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Kay also bought a house for the first time. "I did all this other stuff. I lived a life where I didn't join a church." Kay would occasionally attend COR events but not the Sunday worship service. "I say I joined Bedside Baptist Church of Couch and Christ," Kay quipped. Ultimately, they did not reintegrate into the organizational fold.

I asked Kay to talk about how the fallout of their relationship could have been handled differently among COR leadership. Kay warned that harm happens when community leaders end up "choosing sides" during a breakup.

**Kay:** What I've learned, and that I don't do, is that if people break up, I don't choose sides. If I have a relationship with both of you, I would try to maintain that relationship with both of you or step back until the dust settles and you guys figure out what you want to do and try to be there, but not talk about the other one with the other one, especially if you're in leadership. Be careful how you handle breakups or disputes or whatever. I think that has changed a lot over the years, but it used to be that a lot of people left the church because people didn't know how to deal when people get all up in your business. What they don't know, they make up.

**Mario:** I imagine it's got to be challenging for Bishop, who has a relationship with all of these people, to deal with breakups.

**Kay:** She's gotten better, but during our breakup, she was a huge part of why I left and how it was handled. She's gotten much better.

**Mario:** We're all human.

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<sup>34</sup> "Kay" (a pseudonym used for this study) did not complete the survey questionnaire. Consequently, I do not have their self-reported gender and race/ethnicity information. I will use "they/them" pronouns when referring to them.

**Kay:** I say all the time, ‘I love the God in her, but it’s the human that I struggle with.’

Though Kay felt uncomfortable disclosing specific details about how Bishop Flunder and other COR leadership were a “huge part” of why they left the organization, they were nonetheless troubled by what they perceived as hurtful partiality among leadership. Any inclination among church leaders to “choose sides” in a relational dispute is particularly challenging within a hierarchical organizational structure because it can make some people feel included and others excluded. Unlike EBMC’s more experimental processes, COR attempts to resolve conflicts internally rather than enlist professional mediation services. Such services have the advantage of addressing conflict from a more objective standpoint.

In addition to top-down governance, COR embodies a “family-style” approach to relational management and care. Though intimate and informed connections among church leaders and members can be beneficial, Kay’s experience illustrates the harm that can occur when leadership is partial during, and perhaps even after, a complex and painful separation. As with Drew, and in step with the “love response” Andre mentioned above, COR leadership reached out to Kay after their separation from the church. Unlike Drew, however, Kay was firm in their decision to move on and preferred separation rather than reintegration.

Above, I presented aspects of COR’s community work that align with postmodernism; however, factors like hierarchical governance, charismatic leadership, and the familialism that Drew, Andre, and Kay spoke of situate COR as a more traditional-leaning organization. As discussed below, this is a marked shift from EBMC, which I identify as a more postmodern-leaning organization with hints of modernist tendencies.

## GRASPING AT STRAWS OF RESOLUTION | EBMC

Little evidence suggests that COR’s conflict resolution processes have fundamentally changed since its founding in the early 90s.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, EBMC’s postmodern-leaning *democratic “committee style”* approach has necessarily evolved despite its later founding in the early 2000s. Informed by Buddhist ethics, democratic governance, and social justice values, EBMC has utilized restorative justice, non-violent communication, insight dialogue, and Indigenous talking circle practices to stabilize and resolve interpersonal conflict.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, these efforts have not always been successful.

Here, I return to Rodney’s story above to discuss the complicated resolution process that unfolded after Eli’s Dharma talk triggered her. Rodney was adamant that the organization’s infrastructure was ill-equipped to handle conflict effectively. For Rodney and Ivory, the

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<sup>35</sup> It is worth noting that change could be harder to realize at COR because a core group of leaders - Bishop Flunder as the charismatic founder and matriarchal head, and The Shephard’s Table (Board) - make organization-wide decisions, which could result in continuity and stability (see Olson 1982). Conversely, EBMC leadership and committee structures are often in flux, and people move in and out of various groups, which could result in evolving and unstable processes.

<sup>36</sup> According to the Strategic Plan (2018:18), EBMC’s shared leadership model underlies the democratic “committee-style” conflict resolution processes. The center defines shared leadership as “a collaborative governance system based on mutual accountability and a culture of respect and inclusion rooted in Dharmic society values. [This] approach stewards the mission and vision of the organization through role clarity, transparency, compassionate confrontation, and timely attention to areas of tension.” When discussing the shared leadership model, Dylan, a longtime member of EBMC, said, “We at EBMC, historically, have developed as a center from a collective of people. No one person is the guru or the lead teacher [...] We were held as a community by a community model.” See Pearce and Conger 2003.



“committee style” approach was a slow, drawn-out process with adverse implications; they claimed there was no key person to contact, no straightforward and transparent process, and no clear timeline. Even more, those involved seemed overworked and stretched in their capacities. For Ivory and Kaylee, piecemeal efforts and top-down decisions made without parties’ input (an expedient pivot to traditionalism) resulted in “harm upon harm.” I conclude this section by discussing the emergence and perceived strengths and weaknesses of the *Ethics, Restoration, and Resolution Council* (ER&R) in 2017.

*“We need to say something.” - Ivory*

As Eli continued his rather explicit Dharma talk on forgiveness, Rodney, deeply unsettled at this point, got up and entered another room at the center to calm herself. After a few moments, she reached out to her friend Ivory. “She and I talked about it,” Ivory recalled, “and we were like, ‘This is not okay. We need to say something.’” In resolution mode, Rodney and Ivory considered several approaches: (1) speak with Eli directly; (2) reach out to more senior EBMC teachers and leadership for support, direction, and accountability measures; and (3) reach out to the POC Coordinating Committee for similar purposes. Initially, Rodney emailed Eli about a week and a half after the incident to offer constructive, low-key feedback. She noted that she was concerned about some of the content of the Dharma talk and sought to arrange a time to meet in person if possible. Though well intended, the email exchanges eventually petered out due to scheduling conflicts, the inability to secure a mutually safe meeting space, and a sense of distrust that emerged between the two. With a one-on-one meeting a bust, Rodney and Ivory decided to email and later meet with two senior EBMC teachers for support. In October 2014, they even reached out to the POC Coordinating Committee and discovered, as Rodney put it, that “the organization did not have the infrastructure to manage any clear process around this.”

**Rodney:** It was one thing that this Dharma talk happened, but then it just couldn’t get resolved. There was no clear person to contact. There was no clear process. A process was laid out at some point, but then it wasn’t followed with a timeline. When me or my friend would email to follow up, a month could go by. We would email again cc’ing a well-known teacher, and then we would get a response. It just felt very insufficient. I also recognized that the individuals we were dealing with were totally overworked. Basically, the organization didn’t have the resources to have enough people to really get a system in place. They have a Board, but decision-making appears to be slow and difficult.

**Mario:** It sounds like the organization was under-resourced in many ways and could not address your concerns efficiently.

**Rodney:** Right, and so that meant all of us were hanging. Me and my friend, and also this teacher whose identity as a Dharma teacher meant a lot to him. It was my strong sense that he felt very threatened, maybe, or challenged in his role as a Dharma teacher, which was really important to him. So, for him, too, the timeline and process were unclear. We had a restorative justice circle.

Ivory shared a similar dissatisfaction. “I don’t remember all the details of the process,” she reflected, “but, long story short, the process was very slow. So slow that we felt dropped like we weren’t being held in this process.” Early on, Rodney and Ivory did not feel their grievance was an organizational priority. “Eventually, there was a harm circle,” Ivory continued, “they were trying to do this restorative practice thing. Both my friend and I had very unsatisfactory experiences of that circle.” Even Eduardo, a longtime friend of the offending teacher, felt stunned

by the initial process. “There was this big rage that came at us as a Coordinating Committee. There was no format at EBMC to have [Rodney] and [Eli] really communicate. We had to have a restorative circle.”

*“Why are we choosing this Native American circle thing?” - Ivory*

With little effect, Rodney and Ivory met with two senior EBMC teachers for direction and with the POC Coordinating Committee. Ultimately, EBMC leadership determined that the matter be dealt with via restorative practices. Informed by Indigenous culture and traditions, and according to the *Restorative Practices at East Bay Meditation Center* document (see Appendix F3), “Community Building and Healing Circles create a space in which all people, regardless of their role and identity, can reach out to one another as equals and recognize their mutual interdependence.” The document further states, “Healing circles provide a process and a structure to talk about challenging issues and/or situations and to address and repair harm in an atmosphere of respect and concern for everyone. The intention is to provide a supportive environment to restore and build healthy communities.” Trained Circle Keepers ideally lead such processes, and voluntary participation is encouraged.

Initially, Rodney and Ivory were critical of EBMC’s “restorative” process. “I still don’t really get why, of all the different ways to resolve conflict,” Ivory bemused, “we are choosing this Native American circle thing that, as far as I know, has nothing to do with Buddhism and is not rooted in the Dharma. It feels random.” When I asked Ivory what the name of the process was and what it involved, she did not hold back.

I think it’s called restorative justice, and my understanding is that it is based on Native tradition. The main person who was facilitating our circle was a Native American teacher. She made lots of references to how it’s done in Indigenous cultures. I completely respect Indigenous practices, *and* it felt really random. This is a Buddhist organization. I expect Asian practices, maybe. It just felt random. Recently, someone said to me, in the context of a different circle, ‘Your first circle should not be a harm circle,’ and I was like, ‘Well, it was.’ So, something didn’t work there. It was just kind of like, ‘This is how we are going to resolve this.’ My friend and I were not really given a choice of format. It was just like, ‘Here! This is how we’re doing this. You’re allowed to do this, and you’re not allowed to do that. Plug yourselves in here. This is how it’s going to get resolved.’ As far as I was concerned, there was no resolution. It was just like a sort of airing of things, and then time was up, and we left.

*“How can I ask you to hear my experience when you can’t?” - Rodney*

The East Bay Meditation Center’s Executive Director at the time was an Indigenous person, which might have influenced the decision to utilize restorative and healing circle practices. That EBMC leadership made a top-down decision without Rodney or Ivory’s input about the format of the resolution process illustrates the organization’s departure from a more inclusive and democratic decision-making process. Of course, this was before the resolution processes, policies, and procedures were developed, voted on, and passed years later. Regrettably, for Ivory and Rodney, this restorative approach left them wanting. “The person who harmed us,” Ivory shared, “was given a lot of time to talk about how he was harmed. I believe that he was harmed in the process. I think the process was harmful to all involved, honestly.”

I think what happened was we met with [the committee], and they asked [Eli] not to teach but didn’t explain why, and so that was harmful to him. It just dragged out for literally over a year. It might’ve

been almost two years. It just dragged out. Nothing happened for months at a time. He was hanging out there and not allowed to teach and not knowing why for months. We were hanging out like nothing is happening. Nobody cares. [The Executive Director], at different points, said she would do things to follow up and didn't. There was just harm upon harm upon harm. When we finally got to the circle, the way it was run didn't really make any sense to me. He got a lot of airtime to talk about how he was harmed and to basically disavow having really done anything wrong. He just couldn't be accountable.

When I asked Rodney to explain what “restorative justice” meant, she was puzzled and then talked about the disorganized nature of the overall process and her perception of Eli's lack of accountability.

I don't really know what it means, but what happened was another meditation teacher tried to guide me, my friend, and this teacher through a process of hearing each other's experiences. A staff member at the center also invited someone else who had inappropriate experiences with this teacher, which was sort of like thrown in there without [Eli's] knowledge. So, it was really me and my friend's concern, but then also this other person was included at the last minute. That doesn't make sense. It was not well organized. There were guidelines given like please don't read from prepared texts, and he had this whole written thing that he read from basically saying he could never be sexist. It was useful because I perceived that he did not have the capacity to handle this. I thought, ‘How can I ask you to hear my experience when you can't?’ On a personal level, it was like, okay, but it was still deeply disappointing because there was no clear resolution. The organization never said what conclusions it made based on the circle. That teacher de-friended me on Facebook right after the circle, which felt a little aggressive. I saw him one time in public after that, and he glared at me, so I still didn't really feel comfortable with him. Me and my friend were later asked to comment on a document for hammering out a potential process, but then there was never any follow-up.

*“Wrap this shit up!” - Ivory*

Rodney later disclosed that she and Ivory participated in one restorative justice meeting. At that meeting, six people were present: Rodney, Ivory, EBMC's Executive Director, a respected member of the POC Coordinating Committee, an Indigenous Circle Keeper (facilitator), and one other community member. Given their experience, I asked Rodney and Ivory to share their thoughts about how this process could have been improved. In addition to her view that involved members of EBMC could have been less defensive throughout the process, Rodney felt that it was important for EBMC to develop an infrastructure that supports promises it makes to the public.

If I were totally honest, I would say that you need to start from the ground up. What you have is an organization organized around a set of promises that you do not have the infrastructure to keep, and you're getting funding based on these promises. You're bringing all of these strangers in and inviting them to trust what is going on, but when it comes down to it, you don't have clear standards for the people you are putting in positions of power. If it weren't for EBMC, I would be a much less happy, functioning, kind, considerate, okay, person, so I deeply appreciate many of the individuals I've talked about, but I do think that there is something fundamentally concerning. I was obviously immature. I placed a lot of uninformed faith in people and structures that did not check out. I didn't wait for people in structures to earn my trust. I just realized that the Dharma was so powerful and assumed that all of this was perfect, like the Dharma. But at the same time, I was not encouraged to develop that critical perspective. I was encouraged to trust in many small and big ways.

While Rodney was able to express her gratitude for EBMC, she was still concerned about the organization's infrastructure and the trustworthiness of individuals with authority and

influence. On the other hand, Ivory was critical of issues like timing, communication, and expertise.

**Ivory:** It would have had to all happen a lot faster, like, you know, wrap this shit up within three months, especially if you're going to ask a teacher not to teach for a while. You can't just tell someone, 'You don't get to teach anymore,' and then not tell them why or give them any information. That is not good, especially if it's someone who has so much ego attached to being a teacher. Of course, he's going to go and try to figure it out elsewhere with indirect methods. You're just letting this person spin out and cause additional harm. Me and my friend felt like we stepped up to protect the sangha to say what's wrong, and we were just left hanging out here.

**Mario:** What approach might you recommend if you could give feedback to the organization?

**Ivory:** Actually, following up when you say you're going to follow up when something is clearly unresolved. That would be good. I also heard later on from [a core teacher] that people who are experienced in holding these circles, who really have a lot of expertise in them, specifically caution against less experienced people trying to do them, which we were. There are two teachers I won't sit with: the teacher who caused the original harm and the teacher who facilitated this circle. I won't sit with her either. I don't know what her background is as far as facilitating these circles. I know that she is Native American. I was not impressed with how she handled it. I had never sat with her before that. This was my only experience with her, and I was like, 'I'm not going to sit with her.' Organizational stuff is not my field. I don't really know what a better way to do it would be, but definitely much shorter timeline, much better communication, follow through, follow-up.

Overall, Ivory thought that the situation could have been handled more skillfully, in particular, by swiftly addressing the harm caused by Eli and prioritizing follow-up measures. Ivory also recommended that the organization be more cautious about having less experienced people facilitate circles, which could lead to adverse outcomes. Finally, Ivory suggested that better communication, follow-up, and a shorter timeline would be beneficial overall.

Two observations are worth noting here. First, although EBMC is postmodern-leaning in its organizational and resolution processes, the center was willing to adopt Indigenous practices that could be perceived as more traditional where leaders or elders in that community (e.g., Circle Keepers) hold significant power and authority. Of course, EBMC's utilization of Indigenous practices emerged from the center's more postmodern (e.g., experimental and collaborative) approach to interpersonal relational management and care. Second, and perhaps most importantly, for Rodney and Ivory, the postmodern approach, whether in terms of decentralizing decision-making or blurring roles and responsibilities, did not work for them during their complicated resolution process; instead, out of frustration, they desired more modernist qualities like rationality, efficiency, bureaucracy, and role clarity.

## BREATHING IN ETHICS, RESTORATION, AND RESOLUTION

*"Our humanity brings out the best opportunity for practice." - Dylan*

Though flawed, this episode between Rodney, Ivory, and the Dharma teacher catalyzed the now-existent ER&R Council (see Appendix F2). Reflecting on the origins of the Council, Leila, a member of the POC Coordinating Committee and later EBMC's Leadership Sangha, said, "It started because [this] whole episode triggered people wanting to apply restorative justice. With restorative justice, you have to have an ongoing community that meets. The [ER&R] committee

was supposed to be that [and] continue to meet even when there's [sic] no conflict."<sup>37</sup> Dylan, a 41-year-old, queer, cis-woman of African descent and a liaison to the Program Committee, spoke frankly about interpersonal conflict being opportunities for learning and growth.

Like any other place where humans are involved, despite the highest ideals and the highest intentions, our humanity brings out the best opportunity for practice no matter what. That practice includes when we sort of rub up against each other the wrong way or make mistakes. Those are opportunities for lessons and learning and growth, and opportunities for deeper practice and creating a reflection on how those conflicts, and sometimes agents of conflict, can be the teachers. As someone who's experienced conflict with EBMC sangha members and who embraces my humanity, I feel like disagreeing or having varying points of view is a point of friction where growth will arise, and not only growth but reflection too. That is really important. It would [...] be against our own values of diversity if we all have a hegemonic view, so conflict will absolutely be present.

For clarification, I asked Dylan what the ER&R Council was. She explained that it is EBMC's approach to restorative justice. "It's looking at [how] we can grow as a sangha in ways that hold us accountable, ethical, and in wise relationship with each other through not just Buddhist values around wise speech, but also holding clear, interactive, and interpersonal dynamics in an ethical and restorative way." Dylan also mentioned that the ER&R Council is more than simply a strategy to mitigate conflict; notably, it includes reconciliation as a core objective.

*"It's kind of been piecemeal how we address conflict." - Kaylee*

Kaylee, a 43-year-old, heterosexual cis-woman of Asian descent and former Programs and Finance Director at EBMC explained that the ER&R Council was developed by the leadership team, with input from Larry Yang and a lawyer. The purpose of the Council was to address interpersonal conflict in a more skillful and structured way rather than relying on piecemeal solutions such as restorative circle processes and mediation.

I think any community with different types of people has conflict, and they want to be an organization that's not conflict-averse. In the past, we've had conflict come up between sangha members, between teachers and sangha members, between the teachers themselves, and it's kind of been piecemeal how we address it. For some, we pay for an outside mediator.<sup>38</sup> For some, they've gone through a restorative circle process. For some, they're never addressed because of different power dynamics. This was an attempt to have something that's more structured, like, these are the steps to follow so we're all clear, so it's not up to whoever needs the information to try to figure out how to address it.

Kaylee views conflict resolution processes as learning opportunities. Even still, while some people can resolve challenges on their own or through some structured process like the ER&R Council, sometimes conflicts do not get resolved. There have been cases, Kaylee recalled, when people left the community altogether. Rodney is one such example. Kaylee also mentioned that

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<sup>37</sup> "Leila" (a pseudonym used for this study) did not complete the survey questionnaire. Consequently, I do not have their self-reported gender and race/ethnicity information. I will use "they/them" pronouns when referring to them.

<sup>38</sup> In the Appendices of *Awakening Together: The Spiritual Practice of Inclusivity and Community*, Larry Yang (2017:232) writes: "The process of resolving the difficult issues that arise in diversity efforts at EBMC has sometimes been rocky. A skilled, neutral, third-party facilitator has sometimes been needed to facilitate challenging conversations. It is critical that such individuals are familiar with the dynamics of racism and white privilege and comfortable with addressing race-based conflict and tension. The organization demonstrates that it places value on the services of such facilitators by budgeting to include their professional fees."

more education is needed to help people understand that conflict is not separate from spiritual practice and that skillfully surfacing tensions can foster resolution.

A huge challenge with conflict is surfacing tensions and recognizing that as a good thing. For the wider community, it can be really challenging because it's a space where people come for refuge, and if there's tension or conflict, it's like, 'Oh, I'm out of here.' You know? 'This is not what I signed up for.' Or, people don't want to address it because they might think that to bring it to the surface is somehow causing stress within different parts of the community, or it just doesn't feel comfortable because they view it as not in alignment with our practices. The thing that I think we still have a lot of education to do is that this *is* a part of our practice. A huge part of our practice is surfacing tensions, welcoming tensions and conflicts.

Interestingly, the postmodern (e.g., experimental) approach, which resulted in complicated and harmful resolution processes, eventually resulted in a more modern (e.g., structured) turn via the establishment of the *Mindfulness-Based Operating Principles for Handling Tension* protocol and the *Ethics, Restoration, and Resolution Council* (ER&R) (see Appendices F1-F3).

*"We want to be conflict-able." - Petunia*

Petunia, a 63-year-old heterosexual cis-woman of European descent and former member of the Leadership Sangha, discussed the notion of surfacing tensions and how EBMC staff play an exemplary role in modeling its effectiveness.

**Petunia:** The staff plays a really important leadership role in this. Every two months, they have a so-called 'tensions meeting' where they talk with each other about whatever tensions have arisen, you know, like, 'I didn't appreciate it when you did X, Y, Z' or 'I don't feel like we're on the right track in this area.' I've never been to one of them, so I don't know exactly what they talk about, but they love the process. They went into it with a little bit of anxiety, but they love it. It really works for them. It's a very cohesive staff. That's our inspiration. So, now [the Board is] trying to develop that kind of process, and we're starting with trying to name our commitment to engaging in conflict resolution rather than just disappearing, which people often do. The various practice groups, the Coordinating Committees, to a greater or lesser extent, are also working to kind of develop their own conflict practices. We want to be conflict able.

**Mario:** What does that mean?

**Petunia:** That so-called conflict can be approached as something that's arising in a group, and it can be engaged with and investigated, and we can notice our own clinging that's contributing to a conflict, and with our practice, let go and reaffirm our commitment to the group and with each other. The powerful thing about resolving tensions is it brings you into contact. The problem with blind spots is that it separates you from yourself and from other people. We all have those barriers to contact that we hang on to because we think it's safe. It turns out it's not that safe.

Petunia also mentioned that EBMC leadership had hired a consultant to help them better understand and address conflicts within the organization. The consultant pointed out that the community is generally conflict-averse and that this issue needed to be addressed for the center to function more effectively.

We are trying to come at the tension from our most healed selves rather than our most injured selves. Because we have a high level of trauma in our community, we have to be very mindful of that. It's not a sort of tough love, say whatever you think kind of thing. You need to be attentive to the impact and people's capacity to take something in. Offering skillful feedback is really important. There are

some people who can tell you, ‘Oh, you really messed up,’ and you’re like, ‘Oh, I know,’ and then you can go on. And then there are some people who tell you you really messed up, and it just crushes you. We’re trying to provide feedback with love and compassion that fosters connection. The thing about not dealing with the tensions is it’s alienating because I carry around these resentments, and I have to pretend that I’m not mad at you because that wouldn’t be Buddhist, but in the meantime, we’re not really in contact because I’m not telling you what’s on my mind.

Here, Petunia points to something important in Buddhist communities more generally and EBMC more precisely: the emotional work of dealing with conflict as a Buddhist practitioner. Above, I mentioned that COR’s and EBMC’s religio-spiritual and ethical frameworks, among other factors, inform how these organizations embody ORI. Buddhist ethics and precepts remain central when managing conflict; however, the problem is that people striving to be “good Buddhists” might adopt an aversion to conflict, which only sweeps difficult interpersonal dynamics under the rug. Therefore, it could be helpful for organizations like EBMC to bring in a skilled, neutral (non-Buddhist) third party to help facilitate such challenging conversations.

*“Hold people in all of their complexities with as much compassion as possible.” - Sandy*

Like Leila and Kaylee, Sandy, a 51-year-old lesbian of European descent and a fundraising and development staff person at EBMC, explained the evolution and purpose of the ER&R Council.

**Sandy:** There actually is in place a committee that deals with harms that are done within the community, whether that’s between practitioners, or teacher to practitioner, or board and staff, or staff. It’s about addressing harm and restoring balance to the extent possible. The committee at EBMC is called Ethics, Restoration, and Resolution. The idea is that if people have a conflict, or a harm has occurred, there would be an ethical dispute conflict resolution process that people could participate in. It’s a council of people that present a cross-section of the organization.

**Mario:** Did the ER&R process emerge over time?

**Sandy:** It definitely developed over time in response to the need for responding in moments where harms occurred.

Interestingly, I asked Sandy whether or not the Council, in her view, had been effective since its founding and her response was telling.

I think it’s been both/and. I think for some people it has felt like it provided the kind of resolution they needed. I think for other people it has felt like it’s gone on too long. One of the things that’s definitely one of our strengths and weaknesses is that we are very process oriented at EBMC, so rather than there being a kind of top-down decision-making model where some one person decides something, there is a lot of process that happens at EBMC. I think in some of the issues that have been brought to the ER&R, or the committee that kind of existed to hold these things before that, the amount of time it took and the process involved often has felt frustrating for everybody in all aspects of it. It has also felt like it’s part of what it takes to create a new response to harm in the world and to not have a kind of knee-jerk or authoritarian or top-down response. A response that does try to hold everyone in an ethical and compassionate way. That does end up taking time. So, I think it’s both. I think there are ways in which we could improve that process so that things could get resolved more quickly, and because it’s so much volunteer driven, that’s a part of it. I think it’s also just the reality of doing this in new ways where the hope is to, as much as possible, hold people in all of their complexities with as much compassion as possible. It takes time

According to Sandy, EBMC’s process-oriented approach to conflict resolution has strengths and weaknesses. While it is a departure from more authoritarian, top-down decision-making models and aims to create a new response to harm that is ethical and compassionate, some people have found the process frustratingly slow. Being mainly volunteer-driven also contributes to the drag, which speaks to earlier criticisms that the center did not have the infrastructure to support an effective resolution process. Unfortunately, for Rodney and Ivory, the weaknesses associated with this style outweighed the aspirational strengths Sandy mentioned.

## CONCLUSION

I began this chapter by asking how RIROs address and, if possible, resolve interpersonal conflict and how such processes influence individuals’ experiences of ORI. I mentioned that community work involves interpersonal, intergroup, and organization-wide relational management and care and prioritizes inclusion, safety, collective responsibility and accountability, and community-building efforts. Considering the organizational 3Ps presented in Table 7, COR and EBMC work to embody, however imperfectly, inclusion and safety. For example, both organizations developed an inclusive institutional identity early on and, to be accessible to historically marginalized groups, were established in racially mixed districts in the San Francisco Bay Area. Regarding safety, while COR and EBMC have supported identity- and affinity-based groups, EBMC has actively created “safer spaces” for marginalized communities via practice groups, one-day retreats, durational class series, and peer-led Deep Refuge groups. Of course, the harm Rodney experienced at the People of Color (POC) Sangha and the complicated resolution process that followed point to some of the organizational and social challenges associated with these aspirations.

As an aspect of interpersonal relational management and care, I focused on COR’s and EBMC’s conflict resolution processes. Though both are self-proclaimed RIROs, their styles differ considerably. Table 8 presents some of the pluses and minuses of each organizational approach.

TABLE 8. Conflict Resolution Pluses, Guesses, and Minuses

	City of Refuge	East Bay Meditation Center
Paradigm	Traditional-leaning	Postmodern-leaning
Approach	Executive and “family-style” ethos	Democratic and “committee-style” ethos
Pluses	Executive-style approach results in quicker resolution processes “Family-style” approach encourages family-like “love ethic” Leadership will reach out to missing persons	Democratic-style approach departs from top-down decision-making Shared leadership process rooted in framework of inclusion, collaboration, compassion, accountability Creation of the ER&R Council
Guesses	Reintegration is possible but not guaranteed	Learning and creating as process unfolds Being conflict-able via surfacing tensions
Minuses	Leadership may lack impartiality in conflicts between partners/spouses	“Committee-style” approach results in slower resolution processes



Gossip can lead to fragmentation and separation	Infrastructure ill-equipped to handle conflict resulting in piecemeal solutions
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*Note:* “Guesses” refers to something that can be perceived as a plus or a minus. Regarding COR’s “Minuses,” I do not have data to suggest leadership partiality beyond partner/spouse conflict.

A core observation advanced here is that while COR is traditional-leaning in its conflict resolution processes, EBMC is more postmodern-leaning. The City of Refuge’s executive-style approach can be helpful in terms of resolving conflicts quickly; however, for some members like Drew, this top-down approach can elicit tensions that threaten membership withdrawal. On the other hand, the “family-style” approach encourages interpersonal intimacy marked by closeness, connection, and care. As Andre mentioned, this style inspires a palpable family-like “love ethic” that prompts leadership outreach and care, especially for those who have either left or are tempted to leave the organization. I experienced this caring outreach firsthand when Draymond, a 55-year-old same-gender-loving cis-man of African descent, continued to text me encouraging and faith-based messages long after I discontinued my ethnographic fieldwork at COR. Whereas reintegration was possible for Drew, the opposite was true for Kay. The “family-style” approach is beneficial in terms of creating an intimate community; however, as Kay’s experience revealed, in terms of conflict between partners/spouses, COR leadership may lack impartiality, thus resulting in the potential for gossip, fragmentation, and even separation among partners and the church.

The East Bay Meditation Center’s democratic-style approach is a departure from many organizations’ top-down decision-making processes. Informed by the shared leadership model, EBMC aims to anchor its resolution processes in an aspirational framework centering on inclusion, collaboration, compassion, and mutual accountability. A significant plus is that despite conflict-related challenges within the center, EBMC ultimately produced the *Mindfulness-Based Operating Principles for Handling Tension* protocol in 2016 and the *Ethics, Restoration, and Resolution Council (ER&R)* in 2017. Given the changing nature of interpersonal relational management and care and aligned with postmodern tendencies, EBMC has continued to evolve its 3Ps. Regarding minuses, as Rodney, Ivory, and Sandy noted above, the “committee-style” approach tends to be a slow, drawn-out process with adverse implications, which is incredibly challenging if there is no formal timeline for resolution. Another challenge, according to Rodney, was that the organization’s infrastructure was ill-equipped to handle the conflict in question. Some critiques were that there was no key person to contact, no straightforward and transparent process, and no clear timeline. Even more, those voluntarily involved seemed overworked and stretched in their capacities. As Ivory and Kaylee mentioned above, piecemeal efforts and top-down decisions made without all parties’ input resulted in “harm upon harm.” Of course, this speaks of an expedient pivot to traditionalism when postmodern methods are deemed ineffective by those with ultimate decision-making power. Interestingly, Rodney and Ivory felt that modernist qualities like rationality, efficiency, bureaucracy, and role clarity would have better-facilitated resolve.

In ethically driven RIROs like COR and EBMC, members might cultivate what postmodern theorists view as community-based values: solidarity, commitment, mutuality, and trust (Frazer 1999). Resolution processes are consequential in these spaces because they mitigate the risk of interpersonal and intergroup conflict, which can erode said values. Unsurprisingly, ineffective efforts may sometimes indicate failed community work *if* the organization does not learn from its mistakes and improve. Returning to Rodney’s example above, the breakdown in trust was not because of Eli’s “triggering” Dharma talk but rather the ineffective resolution processes that followed. Had EBMC’s efforts been more transparent and skillfully managed, the trust

between Rodney, Eli, and the center might have been preserved. Further, Rodney might have remained committed to and active within the community. Though Rodney's process resulted in personal and organizational "scar tissue," it was a significant catalyst for the *Mindfulness-Based Operating Principles for Handling Tension* and the ER&R Council. Since their implementation, which relies on some of the modernist qualities Rodney and Ivory recommended, these guidelines have sought to mitigate conflict more skillfully and uphold EBMC's core organizational values. Both COR and EBMC, however imperfectly, continue to do the work.

## CENTERING COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In February 2021, the East Bay Meditation Center (EBMC) launched the Spiritual Teacher and Leadership (STL) training program, an innovative and comprehensive two-year training for serious Buddhist practitioners committed to assuming leadership roles within EBMC's infrastructure and partnering organizations (see Appendix G). The program - envisioned and led by three lesbian teachers of color and one transgender, non-binary teacher - managed to recruit an exceptionally diverse cohort. For example, of the thirty participants admitted into the program, twenty-two identified as BIPOC and twenty-one identified as LGBTQ+. <sup>39</sup> Characteristics such as ability, age, gender, and sex also varied. Among an extensive list of prerequisites, every participant had to be nominated by a Buddhist teacher from EBMC or other Buddhist organizations, be an active member of the EBMC community, and have a minimum of five years of Dharma practice. <sup>40</sup> After intensive training that included nineteen visiting teachers from various Buddhist and non-Buddhist lineages, more than two dozen mentors, two seven-day residential retreats, four five-day retreats, one three-day retreat, and fifteen daylong retreats, twenty-six trainees, including myself, successfully graduated from the program on Sunday, February 5, 2023.

The STL program (pronounced *still*) developed with the vision and mission of EBMC as a guiding framework, that is, to “foster liberation for diverse communities by advancing personal and interpersonal healing, social engagement and transformation, and radically inclusive community building.” Further, it highlights an organizational effort to care for the diversity present within EBMC, from whence all of the trainees were selected, *and* influence and potentially structurally shift institutions elsewhere to do the same. The STL program is unique not only because it is one of the most diverse Buddhist teacher and leadership training platforms available but also because the cohort of trainees will impact practice communities beyond EBMC's ecosystem. Programs like STL elicit important questions: What constitutes community outreach efforts at radically inclusive religio-spiritual organizations (RIROs), and how do such efforts influence individuals' experiences of organizational radical inclusion (ORI)?

### FACETS OF RELATIONAL CARE

This chapter focuses on how the City of Refuge (COR) and EBMC engage in *community work*, which, in RIROs, involves interpersonal, intergroup, and organization-wide relational management and care; it prioritizes inclusion, safety, collective responsibility and accountability, and community-building efforts. Though not exhaustive, these parameters point us in a meaningful

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<sup>39</sup> The STL leadership team admitted thirty applicants into the program; however, twenty-six participants graduated.

<sup>40</sup> The complete list of prerequisites for STL nomination requires the applicant to be an active member of the EBMC community; have a minimum of five years of dedicated Dharma practice; have a daily meditation practice based on foundational elements of Buddhist teachings; have at least forty nights of residential retreat practice; commit to embodying the core elements of EBMC's principles of gift economics, radical inclusivity, Buddhism and mindfulness, shared leadership, and social justice; have an embodied practice of the five precepts; have an understanding of the importance of environmental/climate justice and human/animal rights as it relates to ethical integrity; complete EBMC's White Awakening in Sangha (WAS) or an equivalent anti-racist training if they identify as white; have strong communication and leadership skills; embody a personal and interpersonal maturity that includes an understanding of power and privilege; and commit to fully participating in the training.

direction of inquiry. Utilizing a mixed methods approach (see Appendix A) and drawing on organizational theory, I explore how COR and EBMC engage in internal and external community outreach efforts as an aspect of organization-wide relational management and care. How RIROs engage with communities in-house and at large matters in the study of organizational radical inclusion (ORI) because such efforts can either protect or diminish the valued aspects of community work mentioned above (e.g., collective responsibility and accountability) and either shape or be shaped by diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) efforts (e.g., like STL, develop teachers and leaders that are more reflective of the communities they serve).

TABLE 9. Religio-Spiritual and Ethical Frameworks | ORI Mechanisms

	City of Refuge	East Bay Meditation Center
Ideal	The Christian Community	The Beloved Community
Religio-Spiritual and Ethical Frameworks	<p><u>Christian-Informed</u></p> <p>Love, inclusion, justice, service</p> <p><u>Ministry of Restoration</u></p> <p>Love of God and Christ Intentional radical inclusion Unconditional welcome Celebration of diversity Social justice</p> <p><u>Village Ethics</u></p> <p>Balance of openness and privacy Inclusivity, accountability, boundaries Everyone has a seat at the table</p>	<p><u>Buddhist-Informed</u></p> <p>Non-harm, inclusion, justice, liberation</p> <p><u>Five Buddhist Precepts</u></p> <p>Abstain from killing Abstain from stealing Abstain from sexual misconduct Abstain from lying Abstain from intoxicants</p> <p><u>Five Core Elements of EBMC</u></p> <p>Buddhism and mindfulness teaching programs Gift economics Radical inclusivity Shared leadership Social justice and healing</p>
ORI Mechanisms	<p><u>The Refuge Radical Inclusivity Model   Figure 5</u></p> <p>Aspirational, individual-level</p> <p><u>Community work-related steps</u></p> <p>Reach out to the most marginalized Recognize, value, love, and celebrate marginalized Intentionally create ministry on the margins Do not hide and undo shame and fear Recognize diversity on the margin Provide real hospitality Ensure responsibility and accountability</p> <p><u>Identity work-related steps</u></p> <p>Recognize harm done in the name of God The goal is not to imitate mainline church Requires a new way of seeing and being</p> <p><u>Programming work-related steps</u></p> <p>Foster awareness, information, and understanding Link to preaching and teaching</p>	<p><u>Radical Inclusivity Practices   Figure 6</u></p> <p>Practical, organizational-level (3Ps)</p> <p><u>Community work-related practices</u></p> <p>Center location Spaces reserved for specific communities Demographics tracking Event publicity and registration practices Fragrance-free practice Accessibility policy Operating Principles for Handling Tension</p> <p><u>Resource work-related practices</u></p> <p>Generosity-based economics</p>

Distinct ethical frameworks inform COR’s and EBMC’s community outreach efforts (see Table 9). Inspired by an idealized notion of “The Christian Community” - from biblical influences, a ministry rooted in restoration, and the Village Ethics of indigenous tribes of Africa - COR tends to be more ministry-focused (i.e., external-facing). While COR is responsive to internal matters and open to supporting members interested in launching values-aligned ministries, the organization has historically focused on serving communities outside the church with practical and time-sensitive needs, often in partnership with other organizations, thus aligning with the *open systems perspective*. Comparatively, EBMC, inspired by an idealized notion of “The Beloved Community” - interweaving insights from philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with the Five Buddhist Precepts and Five Core Elements of EBMC, tends to be more *sangha*-focused (i.e., internal-facing) (see Table 10).<sup>41</sup> While EBMC has influenced other mainstream religio-spiritual organizations to institute diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) initiatives, to protect these qualities in-house, EBMC reaches out to its community members to assess needs, ensure representation, generate investment and engagement, and collaborate on organizational practices, thus aligning with the *natural systems perspective*.

### *Indicators of Community Outreach Efforts*

I define radical inclusion, in an organizational sense, as an intentional and action-oriented value system whereby those historically and systematically excluded, marginalized, and oppressed in society at large - whether based on ability, age, disease, ethnicity, gender, illness, race, sex, sexuality, or some other factor - are recognized, welcomed, accepted, valued, loved, and even celebrated (Anderson 2007; Flunder 2005; Hope Pelled, Ledford Jr., and Mohrman 1999; Spellers [2006] 2021; Yang 2017). Ideally, these members could access information and resources, be involved in work groups, influence decision-making, and feel a part of critical organizational processes (Mor Barak and Cherin 1998).

While more research is needed to elucidate critical indicators of successful Organizational Radical Inclusion (ORI), we can point to internal- and external-facing 3Ps that likely increase success based on data retrieved for this study. Indicators of internal outreach efforts include *member responsiveness*, *member support*, *inquiry*, *collaboration*, and *(re)design*. Indicators of external outreach efforts include *provisional service work*, often in cooperation with other community organizations, and *institutional transformation* that aligns with DEIB initiatives. Based on these metrics, COR and EBMC succeed in certain areas and are a work in progress in others. Regarding internal-facing efforts, COR and EBMC demonstrate moderate levels of member responsiveness and support, but EBMC demonstrates high levels of inquiry, collaboration, and (re)design. Regarding external-facing efforts, COR demonstrates high levels of practical and time-sensitive provisional service work, while EBMC demonstrates moderate levels of institutional transformation. Each organization’s ethical framework informs the 3Ps that drive these outcomes.

TABLE 10. Internal and External Community Outreach Efforts

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<sup>41</sup> “The Beloved Community” was first coined by philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce and then popularized by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For Dr. King, “The Beloved Community” upheld the belief that an all-inclusive spirit of siblinghood would one day replace racism, bigotry, and prejudice (Henderson and Bertin 2017:58). Larry Yang (2017:69) added, “Beloved Communities are envisioned as those that embody the values of love and justice in every aspect of their being, even when circumstances are difficult or oppressive. A Beloved Community assumes that all our lives are interrelated and the social nature of our humanity is not secondary to any other aspect of life.”

	City of Refuge	East Bay Meditation Center
Ideal	The Christian Community	The Beloved Community
Internal Outreach	Responsive to internal matters Support member-initiated ministries “Love response” outreach and care (see Chapter 2)	<i>Sangha focused</i> Inquire   collaborate   (re)design
External Outreach	<i>Ministry focused</i> Practical and time-sensitive provisional service work	Potential structural transformation of partnering and sibling organizations
Outcomes	<u>Service-oriented priority</u> Higher external provisional service work Lower internal DEIB strength <u>Visible diversity   race</u> More racially homogenous leadership and membership	<u>DEIB-oriented priority</u> Higher internal DEIB strength Lower external provisional service work <u>Visible diversity   race</u> More racially heterogenous leadership and membership

## ORIENTING ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

This chapter focuses on organization-wide relational management and care as an aspect of community work; therefore, it is fitting to draw on organizational theory to better understand COR’s and EBMC’s internal and external community outreach efforts. Since its emergence in the 1950s, three major perspectives have dominated this field. Classical theory, or the *rational systems perspective*, focuses on the formal and instrumental structures of an organization, such as efficiency and management (Taylor 1919), bureaucracy and the division of labor (Weber 1947), and administration and departmentalization (Fayol 1954). This perspective views the organization as a collective of people working together to pursue specific organizational goals without regard to the interpersonal complexities that may arise in such circumstances. On the other hand, neoclassical theory, or the *natural systems perspective*, advanced the notion that informal and interpersonal relations within an organization are more important and consequential than formal structures alone. This view holds that the people within an organization drive action based on individual motives and interests, patterns of cooperation, shared norms, and even conflicts among actors at all levels (Arensberg 1951; Thompson et al. 2003). Finally, beyond the instrumental structures of and relations among actors within an organization, contemporary theory, referred to as the *open systems perspective*, asserts that organizations must not be viewed merely as isolated entities but as embedded within a larger relational environment. This perspective acknowledges that organizations affect and are affected by other societal processes and systems (Scott 2004). These perspectives allow me to orient and understand the data and provide a “thicker” description of each research site (Ponterotto 2006). Because COR and EBMC are very aware of and often prioritize social and interpersonal dynamics, the rational systems perspective is not a central but more referential focus; however, as discussed below, COR’s external-facing provisional service work aligns with the open systems perspective, and EBMC’s internal-facing inquiry, collaboration, and (re)design efforts align with the natural systems perspective.

## PRIORITIZING MINISTRY-FOCUSED SERVICE WORK | COR & External-Facing Efforts

Regarding internal-facing outreach efforts, COR demonstrates moderate *member responsiveness* and *support*. In Jimmy's view below, COR is indeed responsive to internal matters and especially supportive of member-initiated ministries; however, as I discussed in Chapter 1, at least one member of the transgender community, Shane, struggled with his experience of inclusion at COR. More specifically, he did not feel supported by the leadership during his female-to-male transition. Regarding external-facing outreach efforts, COR has consistently demonstrated high levels of practical and time-sensitive *provisional service work*. Suba, Reggie, Drew, and Maya note how COR, since its founding in the early 1990s, has, often in partnership with other community organizations, served some of the most marginalized members of society, including those impacted by HIV/AIDS, addicts and people in recovery, the poor and unhoused, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, and women and children. The City of Refuge's idealized notion of "The Christian Community," as described above, underlies its internal- and external-facing outreach efforts.

*"You need to put that ministry together." - Jimmy*

Jimmy, a 70-year-old gay cis-man of European descent and former head of COR's Member Services, spoke passionately about the organization's responsive and supportive nature, especially when members were interested in launching values-aligned ministries:<sup>42</sup>

I've heard Bishop [Flunder] say, 'If you come into this church and you feel that something needs to be done in this world and you don't see it here, you were brought in to do it.' So, if you feel like there needs to be a trans ministry here, or there needs to be a ministry to deal with the people that are working on Joe Ho's Row down there, then you need to put that ministry together. Let's talk about what you will do to go down there and help the people in that area. There's no definition of 'This is exactly how it's going to be.' When you walk in there, and you feel something needs to be done, she will put her arms around you and say, 'How do we do that?' If it's a social justice thing or something to help somebody, you're welcome here. Come on in! We're going to make it happen!

According to Jimmy, Bishop Flunder, as the matriarchal head of COR, is responsive to the community's needs and especially supportive of member-initiated and led ministries within and beyond the organization. Interestingly, and perhaps ironically, Jimmy referred to the transgender community when discussing ministry-related needs; however, as I discussed in Chapter 1, Shane, a 57-year-old transman of African descent, distanced himself from COR after, among other things, noticing that his ministry-related callings were declining during his female-to-male transition. Years later, at the invitation of another transman of color, Shane returned to COR and co-founded, with the support of Bishop Flunder, Brother's Rising in 2015, a group exclusively for transmen.

*"We are both the chicken and the egg." - Suba*

If COR is a work in progress concerning internal-facing outreach efforts, its external-facing efforts are worthy of study and emulation. Beyond being responsive to and supportive of members within the COR community, Suba, a same-gender loving woman of African descent and a dedicated volunteer with COR's nursery, hospitality, and camp services, spoke about the organization's commitment to serving vulnerable communities not necessarily affiliated with COR. When I asked

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<sup>42</sup> Names and other identifying information were changed to maintain subject anonymity.

Suba to share her thoughts about how COR embodies radical inclusion, she began by discussing COR's efforts in the early 1990s to care for those living with HIV/AIDS; at the time, this community was often vilified and shunned and consisted mainly of gay men:

When the AIDS epidemic hit in the 1980s, we had a few homes, The Walker House was one of them. There was one in Diamond Heights for people that had HIV and didn't have much income. We had these houses for women and men. [Bishop Flunder] is the founder; it comes under the Yvette Flunder Foundation. These were some of the beginnings that we started, not just [Bishop], and that was to take care of the shut-in, the disenfranchised, those that could not help themselves.

Suba added that COR started a worship service one or two nights a week in the famously gritty Tenderloin neighborhood in downtown San Francisco, a neighborhood long plagued by homelessness, poverty, substance abuse, and crime. "For the folks that couldn't or didn't want to leave the Tenderloin area," Suba shared, "we went to them." Suba also talked about COR's work in Africa caring for orphaned children, some of whom were HIV positive and later, as adults, joined COR worship services. Considering COR's inclusive and nondiscriminatory outreach efforts, especially at the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Suba felt COR was a pioneering organization. "I don't know which came first," she reflected, "the chicken or the egg, but *we* are both the chicken and the egg," I asked Suba what she meant, and she spoke about the importance of taking care of people, especially those in need shunned by society:

**Suba:** When it comes to taking care of people, that is important to us as a church. Let me give you an example. In Tijuana, people that have HIV/AIDS can't go to the hospitals. They can't get medicines [sic]. So, what has City of Refuge done? Pastor Elizardo Martinez started a hospital, so to speak, a hospice-type setting where these people could come.<sup>43</sup> We would make sure that they got medicine. We made sure that they got clothing. We made sure that they had food to eat.

**Mario:** What I hear you saying is that City of Refuge welcomes people into the congregational fold *and* reaches out to hard-hit communities in need of support and care.

**Suba:** Type that! [Laughter]

**Mario:** I'm gonna [sic] quote myself. [Laughter]

Suba's reflections emphasize COR's high external-facing outreach efforts, which emerged during a time of great need. She spoke about the organization's commitment to caring for those unable to help themselves and how it was willing to take the lead when society-wide crises hit. In the 1980s and 1990s, people sick and dying of HIV/AIDS, primarily gay men, were abandoned by people, organizations, and institutions. However, COR has served those impacted by the virus locally and internationally since its founding. Beyond these efforts, Suba highlighted COR's efforts to go into troubled neighborhoods and provide worship services, perhaps to inspire hope among those struggling to find it.

*"If you were getting any help, you were white." - Drew*

Drew, the 21-year-old drummer I introduced in Chapter 2, spoke about COR's early HIV/AIDS outreach and mentioned the importance of that work, especially for Black and Latino communities

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<sup>43</sup> Names and other identifying information were changed to maintain subject anonymity.



disproportionately impacted by the crisis (Sutton et al. 2009).<sup>44</sup> Not only was COR actively addressing a time-sensitive need, but they were also caring for historically marginalized BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities. Drew mentioned they served as the chairman for AIDS Project of the East Bay (APEB), a non-profit organization founded in 1983 by Oakland physician Dr. Robert C. Scott. It was initially a Pacific Center for Human Growth program in Berkeley.<sup>45</sup> Noting the racial disparities of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Drew said the organization was founded “during a time where if you were getting any help, you were white.”

Dr. Scott was a practicing doctor traveling to Africa and multiple places helping those who were [HIV] positive; helping them find ways and medical opportunities to live with the virus. He was among the first to take on this responsibility. His work and the organization he started continue. I serve as the youth chairman of it.

I asked Drew how COR and APEB were connected. “The office is in City of Refuge,” he shared. “I believe Bishop and Dr. Scott go way back.” Drew then mentioned the importance of remembering COR’s critical work to forge a clearer vision of hope for the future. “That’s the blossoming and beautiful thing about our leadership; there are so many tie-ins to many things that happened long ago; we need to remember so that we take on a better focus [sic] for what our vision is and what God is calling our purposes to [sic].”

*“It’s pretty outrageous in a good way.” - Reggie*

Whereas Suba and Drew mentioned some of the important outreach efforts COR has done during its more than three decades of service, Reggie, a 57-year-old queer cis-man of African descent and longtime member of COR, spoke about the connection between COR’s work and values. Before joining COR, Reggie was a member of another self-proclaimed RIRO in San Francisco; when I asked him about his experience of diversity at COR, he echoed much of what Suba and Drew shared and provided a comparative and thoughtful response. “I think it’s pretty huge,” he began:

When you look at SOAR and their outreach to the homeless, them having a clinic, and fundraising, I think that’s a pretty outstanding model.<sup>46</sup> I think COR has authentic principles as far as they say what they mean and mean what they say; as far as outreach to the homeless; empowering the homeless; welcoming people of all faiths; welcoming people with histories of addiction and current addiction; years of experience working with HIV/AIDS; coming in with different branches of TFAM throughout the nation and the world.<sup>47</sup> So, I think the outreach and extensions of the church to different people in the community is pretty real; I think it’s pretty outrageous in a good way. The lovely thing is that they are accepting. If there’s any issue with people needing to limit things that might be problematic, they do it with integrity and respect.

Reggie links COR’s “authentic principles” to external-facing outreach efforts. Upholding an idealized notion of “The Christian Community” - which, as a part of restoration-based ministry, includes the love of God and Christ, intentional radical inclusion, unconditional welcome, the

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<sup>44</sup> See the HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report (2000) and research by Dr. Mary Jo Trepka.

<sup>45</sup> Founded in 1973, the Pacific Center for Human Growth is the oldest LGBTQ+ center in the Bay Area and the third oldest in the nation.

<sup>46</sup> “SOAR” is a pseudonym, and other identifying information has been changed to protect the organization.

<sup>47</sup> The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM) was founded in 2000 by Bishop Yvette Flunder. It is a multi-denominational group of primarily African American Christian leaders and laity representing churches and faith-based organizations from the United States, Africa, and Mexico.

celebration of diversity, and alignment with social justice values - can motivate individuals to carry out some of society's most difficult service work, work that COR has in so many instances taken on. Moreover, Reggie's reflections are a reminder that values like integrity and respect matter, especially when problems arise. The Village Ethics model presented above is meaningful in this regard. While an organizational commitment to inclusive service work is important, accountability and boundary-setting measures must be a priority.

*“As long as they identify as a woman, they can be there.” Maya*

Suba, Drew, and Reggie note that COR has been committed to practical and time-sensitive external-facing outreach efforts. In addition to serving some of society's most historically marginalized members for decades - those impacted by HIV/AIDS, addicts and people in recovery, the poor and unhoused, and members of the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, COR has worked to support women and children. Maya, a 64-year-old lesbian cis-woman of European descent and former member of the Board of Directors, talked about the work COR had done with Pathways Ministry. When I inquired about the ministry, Maya was forthcoming:

Pathways Ministry is a ministry to women in a women's shelter off Howard Street. [It's] right around the corner from where the old church was. It's called *A Woman's Place*, and Pastor Ellis has been doing this ministry for 21 years [sic].<sup>48</sup> I've been helping her with it. We bring food, clothing, and toiletries. We used to go twice a month; now we go once a month. We also bring a word and pray with them too.

I asked if the shelter only served women. “Yes,” Maya responded, “and people who are transsexual [sic] as well. Transgenders [sic] are there. As long as they identify as a woman, they can be there.” Maya mentioned that Pathways Ministry provides transitional shelter for residents waiting for a more permanent housing situation, a minimum three-month program for women in recovery, and a drop-in shelter that can accommodate around 90 people. The City of Refuge's work with Pathways Ministry is another example of how the organization aligns with the open systems perspective above because it is not an isolated entity but rather embedded within a larger relational environment. In this case, *A Woman's Place* is a long-established shelter that COR ministries have aligned with to provide additional services and resources.

## PRIORITIZING SANGHA-FOCUSED INQUIRY | EBMC & Internal-Facing Efforts

Regarding internal-facing outreach efforts, EBMC demonstrates moderate levels of *member responsiveness* and *support* and high levels of *inquiry*, *collaboration*, and *(re)design*. Whereas Larry Yang provides the DEIB basis for community-based inquiry, collaboration, and *(re)design* (i.e., to assess needs, ensure representation, generate investment and engagement, and collaborate on organizational practices), Otis, Dylan, Andy, Tasia, and Ishan discuss how this is done practically at the center via community meetings, formal and informal “listening sessions,” town-hall-style events, and the use of survey questionnaires to gather potentially actionable data. Regarding external-facing outreach efforts, EBMC demonstrates moderate levels of *institutional transformation* in that it has played an emerging role in transforming mainstream religio-spiritual organizations to be more DEIB aligned. While Andy notes some of the challenges associated with

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<sup>48</sup> Names and other identifying information were changed to maintain subject anonymity.

this effort, Larry asserts that this is accomplished, in part, by ushering underrepresented communities into positions of power and ensuring that the next generation of Buddhist teachers and leaders represent the communities they will serve.

INQUIRE | “*Rising tides lift all boats.*” - Otis

The East Bay Meditation Center has advocated for and sought to embody an ethic of community-based inquiry, collaboration, and (re)design. For example, centering BIPOC communities, Larry Yang (2017:227), as a part of the “Learning Points from East Bay Meditation Center,” encourages organizational leadership to inquire with communities of color about their needs. “Then, with people of color,” he continues, “collaborate in creating or altering organizational practices, and design or redesign the organization based on those expressed needs, rather than expecting everyone to fit into the organizational and interpersonal norms of white culture.” Further, he advises readers to avoid questioning whether the expressed needs of said communities are “legitimate” or “reasonable.” Though Larry’s emphasis here is on BIPOC communities, this more inclusive and integrative process to transform what Larry identifies as “cultural unconsciousness” can extend to other historically marginalized groups.

Central to the inquiry process is the creation and maintenance of skillful communication.<sup>49</sup> Otis, a 46-year-old same-gender loving cis-man of mixed-race ancestry and a former member of EBMC’s Board of Directors, mentioned the importance of hearing from community members, especially those with socially targeted identities. “I think there’s a part of, you know, ‘rising tides lift all boats,’” He shared. “Going to the most marginalized community will give the most return on your investment in terms of [DEIB] stuff.”

**Otis:** I think that the people at EBMC are the ones who name and identify the challenges of where we’re missing the mark. I think the great part of our strategy is that people who are experiencing not having access will tell us.

**Mario:** So, EBMC relies on feedback from members who may not be experiencing full access?

**Otis:** Exactly.

According to Otis, EBMC makes an intentional effort to check in with community members to get a sense of their experience at the center, whether positive or otherwise. Those struggling with inclusion and accessibility at the center can let the leadership know what needs to change to improve the situation. I asked Otis if there were mechanisms wherein the organizational leadership reached out to people or if the process relied on people stepping up and making their concerns known without prompting. Otis said there were both explicit and implicit considerations:

I think the *explicit* place it happens is through Community Coordinators. Each of the sanghas are coordinated by a group of people, and they are tasked with letting EBMC know what their sangha’s needs are [sic]. So, if you’re on the Alphabet Sangha Coordinating Committee, you’ll meet with the Program Committee and the LSangha [Board]. You will be asked, ‘What does your sangha need?’ ‘What are you seeing?’ ‘What are you noticing?’ So that’s an explicit place where it happens. I think the *implicit* places - as LSangha members and Program Committee members - is you’re in this space with staff, and I think we hear a lot [sic]. We make ourselves identifiable on daylong [events] and

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<sup>49</sup> At EBMC, skillful communication is informed by, among other things, the Five Buddhist Precepts, in particular, abstaining from harmful speech and the *Agreements for Multicultural Interactions*.

[other] things. If there's anything about the center that you want to know or have a question [about], I think that's one way. It's not as explicit. It's more implicit that we're like, 'Hey, we're accessible, and if you have questions or concerns, please let us know.'

The East Bay Meditation Center's Community Coordinators are, in part, intermediaries between those practicing within specific sanghas and more senior governing committees. As such, there is a communication pathway between members and organizational leadership that can foster goodwill across groups and ensure responsiveness as needed. Additionally, Otis conveyed that EBMC leadership intentionally reaches out to community members, strives to be accessible, and addresses concerns as they arise. In this sense, EBMC demonstrates meaningful levels of member responsiveness and support. When I asked Dylan, a 41-year-old queer cis-woman of African descent, what she thought the center was doing to foster radical inclusion, she pointed to something that aims to enhance communication pathways. "As a sangha, as a center, as a group of teachers, as a group of sangha members, we have open and transparent community meetings."

This practice of "reaching out" and "listening in" began before EBMC opened to the public in 2007.<sup>50</sup> Andy, a 65-year-old heterosexual cis-man of European descent and one of the center's founders said, "The first public 'listening session' we had was for communities of color. To have people give us input before we even open the doors of what we should be doing to address their needs." Andy shared that these were mechanisms Larry Yang had advocated for and worked to create. Interestingly, the focus of these early "listening sessions" was strategically aimed at some of society's most historically marginalized groups: BIPOC and LGBTQ+. From the get-go, EBMC was intentional about hearing the needs of these communities.

In addition to community meetings and "listening sessions" as forms of organizational inquiry, EBMC leadership gathered member feedback by administering survey questionnaires, having town-hall-style meetings, and organizing regular community check-ins. Tasia, a 37-year-old queer cis-woman of Asian descent and a former member of the POC Coordinating Committee shared her experiences with these processes. I asked Tasia what she thought some of EBMC's most effective ways of generating feedback from the community were. "After each event, they do a feedback survey," she said. "We also created a Google Form where we asked the sangha to complete surveys based on their experience at the sangha and to give feedback about the teachers. That was something that we decided to do." These efforts were how the POC Coordinating Committee gathered member input. It is important to note that not all practice group Coordinating Committees operate alike:

I'm not exactly sure how each sangha does it. I know that after events, they send out a survey. I know they have community meetings in general [and] they have those town-hall meetings where they talk about the state of the center. I know they do things like that.

Ishan, a 34-year-old queer cis-man of South Asian descent, talked about how impressed he was that the practice group he had attended one evening at EBMC had an impromptu community check-in. "I remember recently, a teacher came to POC night and ran a community check-in, like,

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<sup>50</sup> Larry Yang (2017:170) writes: "At EBMC, even before we looked for a physical space to call home, we gathered in several community meetings to gauge not only community interest but also what the needs of the interested communities were. The data gathered from those meetings indicated to us that a downtown Oakland location accessible by public transportation was paramount. In addition, a majority of respondents felt the importance and need for culturally specific events to create both safety and community. Even before we found a permanent space, we had pop-up events and classes for communities of color and the LGBTQ+ communities."

‘What’s working for you and what’s not [sic]?’ They spent an evening going over that.” Ishan felt that people being able to voice their concerns within an organizational space and in a relatively public way was a healthy sign of inclusivity.

COLLABORATE | *“We’re looking for voices that aren’t in the conversation.” - Dylan*

Rosa González of Facilitating Power - in partnership with the Oakland-based Movement Strategy Center and Building Healthy Communities East Salinas - developed *The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership* resource, which provides a five-point spectrum ranging from “marginalization” on the one hand to “community ownership” on the other. Concerning the fourth point, collaboration, González (2019:7) writes:

Through the leadership and delegated power of community leaders, structures of participation can be made more accessible and culturally relevant to groups that have been historically excluded. In turn, collaboration requires and makes possible more trusting relationships and the healing of old divides within systems that tend to be more transactional. Collaboration also brings together unique strengths, assets, and capacities essential to enacting needed solutions that unconsciously go untapped.

Informed by EBMC’s Five Core Elements, including a commitment to radical inclusivity, shared leadership, and social justice, the center strives to elicit feedback from communities within the organizational fold and generate community engagement to make meaningful decisions. Dylan, who over the years was a former member of the POC Coordinating Committee, a POC Sangha Teacher Coordinator, a production assistant, and a member of the Programming Committee, discussed this process when reflecting on recruitment efforts:

We are specifically recruiting sangha members, teachers, and practice group coordinators to represent multiple perspectives within the larger sangha. We are looking for a movement teacher to join us, specifically for voices that are not in the conversation as much now - someone who identifies as disabled and others with temporary ability. We also have someone coming up whose gender identity I don't know, so there's a non-cis point of view. That's part of the process. The point in bringing all that up is specifically honoring diversity within our diversity. So, recognizing multiple sanghas in a week - how we have Alphabet, and we have mid-day, and we have POC, and we have Maha, and we have Every Body Every Mind. We also have all the Deep Refuge groups. We're trying to get representation, investment, and engagement from different community members who are sangha members. That way, those voices, ideas, and perspectives are also welcomed when we make programming decisions for the greater center.

In addition to honoring the center’s diversity, Dylan highlights an important effort among EBMC leadership to foster meaningful pathways of community engagement, especially from those who embody historically marginalized identities, and ensure community-informed decision-making processes. Of course, this effort is a constant work in progress and not always successfully practiced. For example, as I discussed in Chapter 1, the growing popularity of EBMC resulted in practice groups, particularly the People of Color Sangha, not only meeting but exceeding capacity. Unfortunately, the Leadership Sangha initiated an organization-wide process of moving to a larger upper-level space without consulting the communities most impacted by the decision, such as those managing accessibility-related challenges. Fortunately, after hearing from these groups, the Leadership Sangha chose to ensure that the new location, wherever and whenever it might be

available, would be as inclusive and accessible to as many communities as possible. Conversely, a good example of EBMC’s collaborative efforts is in the center’s 2018 Strategic Plan:

The East Bay Meditation Center strategic plan is grounded in the learnings of a multi-month engagement of EBMC members via individual interviews, focus groups, community meetings, and conversations among organizational leaders, including teachers, founders, Leadership Sangha or LSangha (board) members and staff, practice group coordinators and members, Program Committee members, and other key volunteers. The process was guided by a team of expert strategic planning consultants and supported by a steering committee comprised of LSangha and staff members.

Drawing on useful methodologies, EBMC leadership collaborated with a range of members within the community to carry out this important multi-year strategic plan. This plan will certainly impact the sangha as a whole. Of course, inquiry and collaboration are most meaningful when translated into meaningful organization-wide transformation. While this sounds reasonable on paper, it is more complicated and often met with opposition in practice.

(RE)DESIGN | “*All of this is coming full circle.*” - Andy

In Chapter 1, I defined *mechanisms* as values-aligned policies, practices, and processes (3Ps) developed at an organization’s founding and in response to DEIB-related challenges present in other organizations. For example, the founders of EBMC recognized the need to create a more radically inclusive Buddhist organization because BIPOC and LGBTQ+ practitioners, among other historically marginalized groups, experienced harmful isms in established mainstream centers. Consequently, EBMC instituted mechanisms prioritizing the inclusion, safety, and integration of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities. The overall success of these efforts has influenced other religio-spiritual organizations to follow suit and thus be more DEIB aligned.

A detailed and fairly comprehensive list of 3Ps that can support meaningful institutional and organizational DEIB efforts comes from the “Learning Points from East Bay Meditation Center” presented by Larry Yang.<sup>51</sup> Among these points, Larry discusses the importance of creating safer spaces, especially for BIPOC communities, developing awareness around ways in which economic structures impact DEIB efforts, adhering to values of inclusivity when the needs of different communities collide, and incorporating skilled, neutral, third-party facilitators to support conflict resolution efforts. Reflecting on EBMC’s external-facing efforts to create broader institutional change, two points are particularly instructive: Learning #4 and Learning #9. “To have a safe enough environment for practice,” Larry (2017:229) writes of the fourth point, “people of color need to see themselves reflected in the teaching teams. At EBMC, this has meant that white

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<sup>51</sup> The complete list of Yang’s (2017:227-233) “Learning Points from East Bay Meditation Center” include: Learning #1 - Inquire with communities of color about their needs. Learning #2 - Start with the mission statement. Learning #3 - Create safety for people of color. 3a - *Events reserved for people of color.* 3b - *A minimum percentage of people of color at mixed events.* Learning #4 - In order to have a safe-enough environment for practice, people of color need to see themselves reflected in the teaching teams. Learning #5 - Economics impacts diversity. 5a - *Building diversity is ‘expensive.’* 5b - *Eliminate financial barriers.* 5c - *Avoid scholarship programs.* 5d - *Don’t make diversity a ‘Program.’* Learning #6 - When the needs of different communities collide, stick with your values of inclusivity. Learning #7 - Diversity is not ‘expedient.’ Learning #8 - Skilled third-party facilitators who are well-versed in the dynamics of racism and white privilege are necessary and invaluable. Learning #9 - For people of color to move into positions of power, white organizations and white people need to move backward into supportive roles. Learning #10 - Don’t ask people of color to do the ‘heavy lifting’ of educating white folks. Learning #11 - This is hard work for white folks. Learning #12 - Many white people seeking the Dharma are drawn to an authentic multicultural community.

teachers are typically paired with teachers of color, even if that was not how the white teachers envisioned their program being presented.” Larry adds, “These pairings provide opportunities for white teachers to learn how to teach from a perspective of cultural humility and openness to learning.” Perhaps unsurprisingly, this effort, Larry acknowledges, has “caused some tension among experienced white teachers who were accustomed to being accommodated due to their experience and popularity” (2017:182).

In order to transform religio-spiritual institutions that privilege whiteness, both in terms of teaching and leadership, it is crucially important to prepare a new generation of teachers and leaders that more accurately reflect the communities they serve. To this end, Larry’s ninth point is instructive: “For People of Color to move into positions of power,” Larry (2017:232) writes, “white organizations and white people need to move [back] into supportive roles.”

At EBMC, this principle is not limited to interpersonal and communication dynamics. It speaks to a commitment to create organizational structures, policies, and practices that allow people of color and other marginalized communities to assume power, by leveling the organizational playing field that has traditionally been tilted in favor of those in the dominant culture with white privilege and other forms of unearned privilege.

Larry (2017:138) argues that the best most mainstream Dharma centers have been able to do is passively accept “diversity” and publicly state that they welcome everyone, which some might describe as disingenuous window dressing. “If the infrastructure of the organization is not a level playing field,” Larry writes, “if the system is supported by racism and white dominance, then the system will need to change in order to become truly inclusive.” Interestingly though unsurprisingly, Larry asserts that “inclusivity as a practice is much more difficult to retrofit into an organization or community already shaped by a mainstream culture,” a culture that is already white-dominated.

Andy discussed how Larry Yang - beginning with EBMC - has been instrumental in transforming mainstream Buddhist spaces. “Larry is the person,” Andy shared, “most responsible for the [...] programmatic infrastructure that was critical to the success of EBMC.”

Things like the People of Color practice group and the first public ‘listening session’ we had, before we even opened, for communities of color to give us input on what we should be doing to address their needs are all things that Larry created. The later renditions of the Community Dharma Leaders cohort were much more diverse because he had created his own training program within EBMC to train meditation students of color to take on the next level of the Community Dharma Leader program. Then he was one of the lead teachers of the Community Dharma Leaders program. People who came through that program are now part of this formal teacher training program to authorize teachers of color to teach intensive, long, overnight retreats. Those are the kind of teachers he is educating right now.

In 2009, Larry created the year-long *Commit2Dharma* (C2D) program through EBMC. Of the twenty-five participants admitted into that first cohort, 75 percent identified as BIPOC, and 75 percent identified as LGBTQ+. According to Andy, C2D was instrumental in getting more “students of color” to apply for and participate in the two-year Community Dharma Leaders (CDL) program offered through Spirit Rock Meditation Center (SRMC). Larry’s efforts were indeed impactful. In 1999, the first three Dharma leaders of color graduated from CDL. In 2010, one year after Larry launched C2D, the fourth iteration of CDL began, with 40 percent of the participants identifying as BIPOC. In 2011, the SRMC Teachers Council invited its first three teachers of color into membership. In 2016, nearly a decade after EBMC’s founding, SRMC’s governing body

passed an organization-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion plan. That same year, after four-plus years of difficult institutional, relational, and political negotiations, SRMC approved and implemented a teacher training program, with 90 percent of the participants identifying as BIPOC and 55 percent identifying as LGBTQ+. It was the most diverse cohort in the program's history (Sharpe and Yang 2018; Yang 2017:237-240).

Andy discussed the difficult process Larry and other teachers of color faced implementing DEIB initiatives into well-established, predominantly white-led meditation centers. "The process of getting Spirit Rock on the one hand and IMS on the other," Andy shared, "to empower [Larry and Gina] to lead a training cohort of predominantly teachers of color took four years." Even though Spirit Rock eventually made an institutional commitment to support Larry's and Gina's vision, "they still bumped up against issues of baked-in institutional racism and privilege."<sup>52</sup> Despite these frustrations, Andy mentioned how these efforts are bearing fruit:

What's fascinating is that some of this is coming full circle because Larry was in the Community Dharma Leaders program that Jack [Kornfield] created and the Diversity Committee, [from there] creating the East Bay Meditation Center. The teachers of color that Larry trained are now being invited to teach at Spirit Rock. His book, which is all about creating diverse spiritual communities, is being used by Jack - one of the lead trainers of all the other teacher training programs - as one of the foundational texts for the teacher training program he's doing online right now to train teachers all over the world. One of Larry's students, Konda Mason, a former Board member of the East Bay Meditation Center, is one of the three lead teachers of that training program with Jack. So, all of this is coming full circle back to Spirit Rock Meditation Center in interesting ways.

Regarding external-facing outreach efforts, EBMC is a work in progress and will likely remain so for some time. Despite the often frustrating nature of advocating for and implementing DEIB initiatives beyond the EBMC ecosystem, the center and many dedicated individuals are making strides. Andy's description of the institutional pushback that Larry and Gina have faced highlights the difficult process of having a meaningful, transformative, and lasting impact within well-established, white-led institutions; however, this effort is crucial to ensure that historically marginalized communities can find representation, opportunity, inclusion, and integration in spaces that nourish the hope of personal and collective liberation.

### *Toward an Experience of Organizational Radical Inclusion*

How do community outreach efforts influence individuals' experiences of ORI? Among other factors not addressed here, respondents experienced COR as diverse and inclusive based on their perception of its welcoming and accepting nature (e.g., Jimmy's observation that COR leadership is supportive of as-needed member-initiated and led ministries within and beyond the organization) and its commitment to providing an array of services to vulnerable communities (e.g., Suba's noted importance of the center caring for those living with HIV/AIDS and providing worship services in San Francisco's gritty Tenderloin neighborhood), which Reggie described as "outrageously good." Comparatively, EBMC respondents experienced diversity and inclusion based largely on the center's internal-facing outreach efforts. For example, Otis experienced EBMC as an inclusive center partly because of the leadership's efforts to reach out to its various communities, especially

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<sup>52</sup> Spirit Rock Meditation Center (SRMC) was founded in 1988 by Jack Kornfield, and Insight Meditation Society (IMS) was founded in 1976 by Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, and Jack Kornfield. Both are 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations rooted in the Theravada Buddhist tradition; SRMC has 46 members on the Teachers Council, including five emeritus/a. Only seven identify as BIPOC.



the most marginalized, assess needs, and address challenges, a practice Andy echoed about EBMC's early "listening sessions." Otis also mentioned EBMC's efforts to be accessible both in terms of creating access at the actual center and the ease with which community members could access leadership. Dylan's experience of inclusion stemmed from EBMC's open and transparent community meetings and the center's efforts to ensure community representation, investment, engagement, and collaboration.

## CONCLUSION

I began this chapter by asking what constitutes community outreach efforts at RIROs and how such efforts influence individuals' experiences of radical inclusion. Though COR and EBMC are attentive to internal- and external-facing efforts, albeit with different emphases informed by their distinct ethical frameworks, COR tends to be more *ministry*-focused, and EBMC tends to be more *sangha*-focused. Regarding internal-facing efforts, COR and EBMC demonstrate moderate levels of *member responsiveness* and *support*, but EBMC demonstrates high levels of *inquiry*, *collaboration*, and *(re)design*. Regarding external-facing efforts, COR demonstrates high levels of practical and time-sensitive *provisional service work*, while EBMC demonstrates moderate levels of *institutional transformation*.

### *Internal-Facing Outreach and the Natural Systems Perspective*

Within organizational theory, the *natural systems perspective* advanced the notion that informal and interpersonal relations within an organization are more important and consequential than formal structures alone (Scott 2004). This view is relevant to EBMC as a case because it assumes that people within an organization drive action based on individual motives and interests, patterns of cooperation, shared norms, and even conflicts among actors at all levels. The East Bay Meditation Center's internal-facing inquiry, collaboration, and (re)design efforts align with this focus. For example, Larry, Otis, Dylan, Andy, Tasia, and Ishan discussed how EBMC, driven by a commitment to advance and uphold DEIB, actively reached out to members to assess needs, ensure representation, generate investment and engagement, and collaborate on organizational practices. To this end, the center held regular community meetings, formal and informal "listening sessions," town-hall-style events, and administered survey questionnaires to gather potentially actionable data. The center's constant effort to check in with its various communities and adjust the 3Ps accordingly prioritizes its informal and interpersonal dynamics.

### *External-Facing Outreach and the Open Systems Perspective*

The *open systems perspective* advanced the notion that organizations are not merely isolated entities but embedded within a larger relational environment (Scott 2004). This view is relevant to COR as a case because it acknowledges that organizations affect and are affected by other societal processes and systems. The City of Refuge's external-facing provisional service work aligns with this focus. For example, in the early 1990s, COR started a worship service in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood, plagued by homelessness, poverty, substance abuse, and crime. The organization's proximity to such challenges prompted much of its early external-facing service work. Suba, Reggie, Drew, and Maya discussed the numerous ways in which COR, driven by a Ministry of Restoration and Village Ethics, has served some of society's most historically

marginalized members for decades, including those impacted by HIV/AIDS, addicts and people in recovery, the poor and unhoused, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, and women and children. In 1995, COR was accepted into the larger United Church of Christ (UCC) ecosystem - a mainline Protestant Christian denomination founded in 1957 with more than 4,600 churches today - and has actively partnered with other community organizations like The Walker House, AIDS Project of the East Bay (APEB), The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM), and Pathways Ministry to carry out its Christian- and ministry-inspired service work. Whether working directly in the community, adhering to standards set forth by the UCC parent organization, or partnering with other service-oriented organizations, COR is actively engaged with and accountable to entities beyond itself. It is important to note that while EBMC has cultivated a strong internal (sangha-oriented) focus, the center has played an influential role in transforming other mainstream Buddhist organizations to be more DEIB aligned. For example, Larry has strongly advocated (and worked to actualize) ushering underrepresented communities into positions of power to ensure that the next generation of Buddhist teachers and leaders represent the communities they will serve. The East Bay Meditation Center's inaugural STL program, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, a program that stems from the EBMC ecosystem, is an important thread in the larger fabric of Western convert Buddhism. At its most impactful, the program will effectively influence, if not transform, existing Buddhist spaces to be more reflective of DEIB efforts and ensure the radical inclusion of all people.

## CONCLUSION

Otis was burnt out and desperate. After more than a decade of working 60-70 hours a week at a successful non-profit organization in Chicago - a job he described as his “whole life” - and struggling to manage a worsening dependency on drugs and alcohol, a change was needed, and needed fast. That change came in the form of a cross-country move that would ultimately force Otis to face, and heal, some of his deepest internal wounds. In 2010, at age 35, Otis, a same-gender-loving cis-man of mixed-race ancestry, moved to Oakland, hoping to start anew. “When I burned out of the job in Chicago and moved to California,” he explained, “I was pretty desperate and still suffering a lot.” Shortly after his move, and at the encouragement of his now-deceased mother, Otis began looking for a spiritual retreat center that could help alleviate some of his ongoing struggles. He had heard about a multi-day retreat for People of Color at Spirit Rock Meditation Center (SRMC) in Woodacre, California. After learning more about the teaching team and the retreat experience overall, Otis took a leap of faith and signed up.

The retreat was new and unusual for Otis. He had never experienced that kind of communal silence for such a long period. Like many people, Otis could not stop his incessant thinking while on retreat. Attempting to settle himself, meditate for lengthy periods, and gain clarity about his life situation seemed futile, with his mind in constant overdrive. Then, things began to fall apart on the third day of the retreat. “Some really hard questions started to arise about the death of my father,” he confessed, “and about the abuse I had suffered.” Otis’s father was a complicated man. Of African descent, he was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and served in World War II and The Vietnam War as a member of the United States Army Special Forces. Regrettably, in his role as a medic, Otis’s father witnessed a lot of suffering and death. These war casualties resulted in Otis’s father having post-traumatic stress disorder, experiencing recurring night terrors, and engaging in unprovoked violent behavior. Coming from a former football player standing over six feet tall and weighing nearly 300 pounds, such behavior was often directed at Otis and his mother. Otis’s terror of his father was indescribable, and it was all coming to a head on this retreat.

“On the fourth day,” Otis continued, “my whole entire heart cracked open. It was very painful. I actually broke silence [sic] and went to one of the retreat managers and said, ‘You’re going to need to call somebody because I’m getting in touch with this anger and this pain, and I don’t know if it has an end.’” Otis said that whatever was coming to the surface could no longer be buried inside, and he feared how that might unfold. Being a big man, Otis was desperately direct with the retreat manager. “You need to find big guys, three or four of them, with jackets and padded walls. You need to hurry up and go get somebody!” Alarmed, the retreat manager left and returned with one of the core teachers, a small, slender woman of Jamaican descent named Ginitta.<sup>53</sup> Upon her arrival, Otis broke down. He started yelling, screaming, and crying. “All of this suffering just poured out,” he recalled. “This woman, whom I had never seen a day in my life [sic], just sat there and held me, sometimes physically and sometimes just with me. I’m not kidding. It was for two hours without saying ‘hello,’ without saying, ‘what’s your name,’ without knowing each other.” As the storm began to settle, Otis and Ginitta finally introduced themselves to each other and cultivated a friendship that has continued to this day. “I reminded her of this not that long ago,” Otis shared, “and she was like, ‘Oh, I remember. I know exactly [sic] who you are.’”

Otis spent the remaining days of the retreat meeting with two of the core teachers “begging,” as he described, for support to help manage the intense suffering he was experiencing.

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<sup>53</sup> Names and other identifying information were changed to maintain subject anonymity.

Ginitta and others responded generously. “They just gave me tools,” Otis recalled, “and for the rest of that week, I worked with [them]. That was the beginning of the end of my suffering.” On his first day back from the retreat, and at the invitation of one of the core teachers, Otis attended a practice group at the East Bay Meditation Center (EBMC) for self-identified People of Color. “Larry Yang gave a talk [sic] about how People of Color have influenced the dharma, and my entire world changed.” In time, Otis would become a dedicated Buddhist practitioner, teach at EBMC, and join the center’s Leadership Sangha.

Otis’s story illustrates the transformative impact more inclusive organizations *can* have, especially for those who embody historically marginalized identities. Though Otis’s introduction to intensive Buddhist practice was at a center that has struggled with diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), SRMC, he was able to develop his practice and become more established within a self-proclaimed radically inclusive religio-spiritual organization (RIRO), EBMC.<sup>54</sup> Inspired by stories like his and having mixed experiences with various RIROs throughout the United States, I became fascinated with these dynamic social spaces.

This study has sought to understand some of the organizational and social processes associated with two self-proclaimed RIROs in the San Francisco Bay Area: City of Refuge (COR) and EBMC. Descriptively, this study explores how COR and EBMC (1) articulate and attempt to actualize organizational radical inclusion (ORI), (2) address and, if possible, resolve interpersonal conflict, and (3) engage in internal and external community outreach efforts. Analytically, this study elucidates some of the underlying motivations for these processes and how they impact individuals’ experiences of ORI. The argument advanced here is that religio-spiritual and ethical frameworks and historical and organizational contexts shape COR’s and EBMC’s policies, practices, and processes (3Ps), ultimately impacting individuals’ experiences of in-house DEIB.

### *Centering Radical Inclusion*

With *identity work* as an underlying basis, Chapter 1 explored how COR and EBMC articulate and attempt to actualize ORI and how such processes influence individuals’ experiences of ORI. Drawing on theories of multiculturalism, I found that while both organizations are committed to a radically inclusive ethos, there is more overlap in terms of articulation and less overlap in terms of actualization. Different emphases at each site partly explain these divergent on-the-ground outcomes. Oriented more towards the aspirational, COR respondents view ORI through a Christian-informed, faith-based lens. Oriented more towards the practical, EBMC respondents view ORI as an ongoing practice that is never fully realized or perfected. The City of Refuge and EBMC articulate an ORI model that aligns with Hartmann and Gerteis’s (2005:218-232) notion of *interactive pluralism* but, in practice, especially concerning individuals with mental health issues, the transgender experience of inclusion/exclusion and conflicting needs across groups, tends to reflect *fragmented pluralism*.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See Yang 2017:172 for more details.

<sup>55</sup> The City of Refuge and EBMC align with the definition of multiculturalism presented at the beginning of this project. As such, I utilized theories of multiculturalism to discuss how these two organizations articulate and attempt to actualize ORI. Because Chapter 2 focuses on interpersonal relational management and care as an aspect of community work, I utilized theories of community to discuss how COR and EBMC address and, if possible, resolve interpersonal conflict. Finally, because Chapter 3 focuses on organization-wide relational management and care as an aspect of community work, I utilized organizational theory to discuss COR’s and EBMC’s internal and external community outreach efforts. These three theoretical frameworks provide a broader, more nuanced view of ORI.

Regarding the former view, recognizing the existence of distinct groups and cultures is central to how COR and EBMC present their organizational identity to the public. For example, both organizations incorporate inclusive messaging, whether via internal communications (e.g., emails and newsletters), social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and Instagram), major publications (e.g., books and news articles), and in-house at their respective brick-and-mortar locations (e.g., *Agreements for Multicultural Interactions* at EBMC and LGBTQ+ paraphernalia at both sites). Also central to this view, and where COR and EBMC differ in certain respects, is the need to cultivate common understanding across differences through mutual recognition (cross-cultural dialogue) and interaction (exchange). For example, through its weekly Sunday worship service, COR can create an environment for cross-group interaction; however, without organizational 3Ps in effect, there are no guarantees that mutual recognition and common understanding will occur across groups. Conversely, through its identity-based practice groups and programming, EBMC could evince cross-group recognition (e.g., BIPOC communities recognizing LGBTQ+ communities and vice versa); however, this could lead to a siloing effect that reduces opportunities for meaningful cross-group interaction.

Despite their best intentions, COR and EBMC have struggled to actualize interactive pluralism and have often embodied elements of fragmented pluralism, which focuses on the existence of distinctive and self-contained communities as a social reality, necessity, and strength and acknowledges the importance of maintaining group culture and self-determination (Hartmann and Gerteis 2005:229-231). An example of how COR attempts to maintain distinctive group cultures can be found in Bishop Flunder's (2005:134-137) *Refuge Radical Inclusivity Model* presented in Chapter 1. According to this model, ORI "recognizes, values, loves, and celebrates people on the margins" and even attempts to create "ministry on the margin." Moreover, the model encourages individuals to "maintain a presence of cultural familiarity through education and training, which equips the community to understand, actively fight, and overcome oppressive and exclusive theology and practices." Comparatively, EBMC also aligns with fragmented pluralism. For example, EBMC's efforts to support group culture and self-determination include strategic "listening sessions" to get input on what the center could do to recognize and address community needs, the establishment of affinity groups (e.g., BIPOC and LGBTQ+ spaces), programming that educates people about some of the lived experiences of certain groups of people, and some of the organization-wide 3Ps presented in EBMC's *Radical Inclusivity Practices*. Despite these efforts, the process of group self-determination can be messy when the needs of one group directly conflict with the needs of another.

### *Centering Community Conflict*

With *community work* as an underlying basis, specifically concerning *interpersonal* relational management and care, Chapter 2 explored how COR and EBMC address and, if possible, resolve interpersonal conflict and how such processes influence individuals' experiences of ORI. Drawing on theories of community, I found that while both organizations are self-proclaimed RIROs, their approach to conflict resolution differs. The City of Refuge embodies a more *traditional-leaning* approach (with hints of postmodern tendencies). Two reasons account for this: (1) Bishop Flunder is the core founder and matriarchal head of the organization, and (2) COR promotes and practices a family-like ethos. Comparatively, EBMC embodies a more *postmodern-leaning* approach to conflict resolution (with hints of modernist tendencies). Two reasons account for this: (1) the center's commitment to shared leadership, which emphasizes decentralized decision-making,

shared accountability, and collective stewardship, and (2) the center's experimentation with different resolution processes.

The City of Refuge's executive-style approach can be helpful in terms of resolving conflicts quickly; however, it can also elicit tensions that threaten membership withdrawal. On the other hand, the "family-style" approach encourages interpersonal intimacy, which can inspire a palpable family-like "love ethic" that prompts leadership outreach and care, especially for those who have either left or are tempted to leave the organization. The "family-style" approach is beneficial in terms of creating an intimate community; however, as Kay's experience revealed, in terms of conflict between partners/spouses, COR leadership may lack impartiality, thus resulting in the potential for gossip, fragmentation, and even separation among partners and the church.

The East Bay Meditation Center's democratic-style approach is a departure from many organizations' top-down decision-making processes. Informed by the shared leadership model, EBMC aims to anchor its resolution processes in a framework of inclusion, collaboration, compassion, and mutual accountability. Regrettably, for Rodney and Ivory, the "committee-style" approach was a slow, drawn-out process with adverse implications, which is challenging for all parties involved if there is no formal timeline for resolution. Rodney and Ivory also thought EBMC was ill-equipped to handle their resolution process skillfully. Some critiques were that there was no key person to contact, no straightforward and transparent process, and no clear timeline. Those involved seemed overworked and stretched in their capacities. Interestingly, Rodney and Ivory felt that modernist qualities like rationality, efficiency, bureaucracy, and role clarity would have better-facilitated resolve. Given the changing nature of interpersonal relational management and care and aligned with postmodern tendencies, EBMC has continued to evolve its 3Ps.

### *Centering Community Outreach*

With *community work* again as an underlying basis, this time concerning *organization-wide* relational management and care, Chapter 3 explored COR's and EBMC's community outreach efforts and how such actions influence individuals' experiences of ORI. Drawing on organizational theory, specifically the *natural systems* and *open systems* perspectives, I found that COR, inspired by an idealized notion of "The Christian Community," tends to be more ministry-focused (i.e., external-facing).<sup>56</sup> While COR is responsive to internal matters and open to supporting members interested in launching values-aligned ministries, the organization has historically focused on serving communities outside the church with practical and time-sensitive needs, often in partnership with other organizations, thus aligning with the latter perspective. Comparatively, I find that EBMC, inspired by an idealized notion of "The Beloved Community," tends to be more sangha-focused (i.e., internal-facing). While EBMC has influenced other mainstream religio-spiritual organizations to institute DEIB initiatives, to protect these qualities in-house, EBMC reaches out to its community members to assess needs, ensure representation, generate investment and engagement, and collaborate on organizational practices, thus aligning with the natural systems perspective.

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<sup>56</sup> The natural systems and open systems perspectives were a response to the perceived inadequacies of the rational systems model, which focused on the formal and instrumental structures of an organization, such as efficiency and management (Taylor 1919), bureaucracy and the division of labor (Weber 1947), and administration and departmentalization (Fayol 1954). The shortcoming of this perspective is that it views the organization as a collective of people working together to pursue specific organizational goals without regard to the interpersonal complexities that may arise in such circumstances. See also Scott and Davis 2016.

While evidence of the natural systems and open systems perspectives are present to some degree at COR and EBMC, the latter view is especially relevant to COR because it acknowledges that organizations affect and are affected by other societal processes and systems. The City of Refuge's external-facing service work aligns with this focus, whether by offering a worship service in San Francisco's gritty Tenderloin neighborhood in the early 1990s, serving some of society's most historically marginalized members for decades (e.g., those impacted by HIV/AIDS, addicts and people in recovery, the poor and unhoused, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, and women and children), being accepted into the larger United Church of Christ (UCC) ecosystem, or partnering with other community organizations to carry out its Christian- and ministry-inspired service work. The City of Refuge is engaged with and accountable to many entities beyond itself. Notably, EBMC has played an influential role in transforming other mainstream Buddhist organizations to be more DEIB aligned. For example, Larry has strongly advocated (and worked to actualize) ushering underrepresented communities into positions of power to ensure that the next generation of Buddhist teachers and leaders represent the communities they will serve.

Comparatively, the natural systems perspective is especially relevant to EBMC because it assumes that people within an organization drive action based on individual motives and interests, patterns of cooperation, shared norms, and even conflicts among actors at all levels. The East Bay Meditation Center's internal-facing inquiry, collaboration, and (re)design efforts align with this focus. For example, driven by a commitment to advance and uphold DEIB, EBMC actively reaches out to members to assess needs, ensure representation, generate investment and engagement, and collaborate on organizational practices. To this end, the center held regular community meetings, formal and informal "listening sessions," town-hall-style events, and administered survey questionnaires to gather potentially actionable data. The center's efforts to check in with its various communities and adjust the 3Ps accordingly prioritize informal and interpersonal dynamics.

### *Considering Theoretical Implications*

That COR and EBMC sought to embody interactive pluralism but often reflected fragmented pluralism highlights the complex nature of translating organizational values into effective on-the-ground practices. Theories of multiculturalism, and different notions of pluralism, in particular, can shed light on the practical challenges of acknowledging and supporting diverse communities, addressing conflicts between groups, and creating healthy cross-group interactions. Further, aware of the advantages and limitations of traditional, modern, and postmodern notions of community, this study elucidates the dynamic interplay between prized organizational values and the evolving, often complicated, nature of interpersonal conflict. In practice, RIROs might consider a hybrid approach that skillfully utilizes the strengths of each perspective to deal with case-by-case matters. Finally, the natural systems perspective, centering interpersonal relations within an organization, and the open systems perspective, attentive to an organization's larger relational environment, emphasize the multifaceted and ongoing nature of community engagement. Overall, insights from this study contribute to our understanding of how RIROs conceptualize, articulate, and attempt to actualize ORI and navigate the associated organizational and social complexities.

### *Considering Empirical Implications*

This is one of the first sociological studies to examine RIROs critically and thus has important empirical implications. Previous studies within the Sociology of Religion have yet to explore

radical inclusion as a meaningful sociological concept and organizational phenomenon. The literature that does mention radical inclusion is limited to non-academic texts written by and for members of various religio-spiritual organizations. While this literature makes notable conceptual and observational contributions, a critical sociological and theoretical analysis is wanting. This study has sought to bridge the rigors of social science research with the conceptual and observational insights provided by non-academic religio-spiritual communities. As such, this project has advanced an ideal type of *organizational radical inclusion*, which I have defined as an intentional and action-oriented value system whereby those historically and systematically excluded, marginalized, and oppressed in society at large are recognized, welcomed, accepted, valued, loved, and even celebrated.<sup>57</sup> Ideally, these members could access information and resources, be involved in work groups, influence decision-making, and feel a part of critical organizational processes. This notion of ORI acknowledges the emergence of more inclusive social spaces and forces us to investigate the mechanisms that effectively or ineffectively support social differences. Moreover, this study offers an applied quality from which other organizations striving to institute DEIB initiatives might benefit.

Because research on social difference often analyzes variables such as race, gender, and sexuality as discrete categories rather than mutually constitutive aspects of one's complete identity makeup, the experiences of those who embody multiple marginalized identities (e.g., disabled queer women of color) are often underrepresented in the literature. This study is a departure from that trend. Attentive to Crenshaw's (1991) and Collins's (2015) notion of intersectionality, most of the participants interviewed for this study embody multiple historically marginalized identities and have thus brought a more nuanced perspective to our understanding of radically inclusive communities. For example, even though COR is a predominantly Black church, Shane, a 57-year-old member of African descent, spoke frankly about his rocky experience as a transman at the organization. Though he felt included at COR as a Black person, he did not always feel like he belonged when it came to his trans-identity. At EBMC, interviewees of color reported experiencing racism at the Alphabet (LGBTQ+) Sangha, and LGBTQ+ interviewees reported experiencing homophobia at the People of Color Sangha. From these intersectional experiences, we can illuminate the weaknesses and edges of ORI.

### *Considering Future Research*

As a relatively new area of sociological inquiry, the potential for future research on ORI is exciting and expansive. Empirically, future research could explore other (non-religious) organizations and expand the investigative scope to include more than two radically inclusive research sites. Holding the type of organization constant, as I have done for this study, or diversifying cases could yield interesting insights about the nature of ORI. Additionally, future research could explore the three typological work types not centrally focused on in this study. For example, regarding *governance work* - which refers to who and what constitutes leadership, any consequential decision-making processes at the organization-wide level, vertical versus horizontal governing structures, and power dynamics - future research could examine the impact of diverse governing structures on ORI efficacy and hold constant a particular governing method (e.g., shared leadership) to assess strengths and weaknesses. Regarding *programming work* - which refers to the training, curriculum, education, programs, processes, and class series developed to support community-building efforts,

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<sup>57</sup> Kvist (2007:474) writes that in a Weberian sense, "ideal types are analytical constructs for use as yardsticks for measuring the similarity and difference between concrete phenomena." See Weber 1949.



disrupt bias, challenge notions of dominance, educate the community about individual and social differences, and mitigate cross-group conflict - future research could examine ORI content and determine which methods are most effective for ORI success. Finally, regarding *resource work* - which refers to an organization's economic activities, including how resources are acquired, where resources come from, and the distribution of resources within and beyond the organization - future research could assess how modes of funding impact an organization's vision, values, mission, and goals, and determine which economic model best sustains ORI.

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## APPENDIX A. Methodology

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I relied on two primary and two supplementary data sources for this study (Creswell 2014). Primary sources include interview and survey data; supplementary sources include ethnographic observations and content analysis (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011; Neuendorf 2017; Weiss 1995). From January 2019 to June 2020, I conducted 46 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with members (past and present) of two self-proclaimed radically inclusive religious organizations (RIROs) in the San Francisco Bay Area. I recruited 21 participants from the City of Refuge (COR) United Church of Christ (UCC) in the Coliseum Industrial neighborhood of Oakland, and I recruited 25 participants from the East Bay Meditation Center (EBMC) at the west edge of Oakland's historic Lakeside District. During the interview, I gathered information about the participants' backgrounds, organizational involvement, and views on diversity and inclusion. Of the 21 COR participants and 25 EBMC participants, 18 and 24, respectively, completed the survey questionnaire. The survey (Appendix D) gathered information about the participant's background; their education, employment, and income; their relationship and health status; their race and ethnicity; their sex, gender, and sexuality, and their experience and assessment of the organization.

In addition to these methods, I relied on supplementary ethnographic observations and content analysis. From April 2019 to March 2020 (just before California Governor Gavin Newsom issued an executive statewide shelter-in-place order to reduce COVID-19 cases and mortality), I attended CORs Sunday worship service most weeks from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. During each service, I was committed to showing up and participating fully. In April 2019, I agreed to participate in the seven-week New Member Orientation from May to June 2019. The orientation facilitated stronger relationships between new and longtime COR members, educated new members about COR, promoted a more critical reading of the Bible, and fostered a better sense of creating a "Radically Beloved Community." I attended these meetings every Sunday morning from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Finally, I had informal conversations with COR parishioners before and after various events.

At EBMC, I attended two weekly practice groups: The Alphabet Sangha (a meditation group for the LGBTQ+ community), which met most Tuesdays from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., and The People of Color Sangha, which met most Thursdays from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. I also attended daylong events and workshops presented by EBMC and graduated from EBMC's inaugural two-year Spiritual Teacher and Leadership Training (STL). The program began in February 2021 and ended in February 2023. As with the COR community, I had informal conversations with EBMC members before and after various events. The content I referenced for this study includes the websites of each organization, emails, newsletters, social media posts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and various other publications about COR and EBMC.

### RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

I created three interview guides for this study, one for members (Appendix C1), one for informants (Appendix C2), and one for experts (Appendix C3). I refer to individuals who attend events, programs, and other activities offered by COR or EBMC but do not have a designated role within the organization as "members." These individuals may be less invested in and knowledgeable about the organization's dynamic, "behind-the-scenes" operation. Although most of the participants I interviewed for this study were new and longtime members of either COR or EBMC, I did interview a few people who identified as "former" or "returning" members. These individuals provided insights into the factors influencing organizational membership and attrition. I refer to individuals with some designated role within and extensive knowledge of COR or EBMC as "key informants." These individuals are typically more invested in and knowledgeable about the organization's dynamic, "behind-the-scenes" operation. At COR, these individuals include volunteers, pastors, ministry leadership, and members of the Shepherd's Table Pastoral Team (Board). At EBMC, these individuals include volunteers, staff, teachers, practice group leadership, Programming and Coordinating Committees, and Leadership Sangha (Board) members. Finally, I refer to individuals with some training, specialized knowledge of, or expertise in organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion as "independent experts." These individuals often include consultants, strategic planners, and program developers.

### RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE

I had to get permission to interview and survey members from each organization. To do this, I reached out to one of the lay pastors at COR and one of the founding members of EBMC to discuss my project, answer questions, and address their concerns. I followed those initial conversations up with an informative email for gatekeepers within each organization, hoping they would ultimately approve the study. Both emails included several important attachments.

In October 2018, I sent EBMC a document detailing my research agenda; notes about how the organization could help me recruit research participants; my overall timeframe; a copy of my research methodology; a copy of my informed consent materials; a copy of the on-site and online recruitment flyers; and a copy of the in-person recruitment script. In April 2019, I sent COR my Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) approval letter; a copy of the interview guides; a document detailing my research agenda; notes about how the organization could help me recruit research participants; my overall timeframe; a copy of my research methodology; and a copy of the survey questionnaire.

At EBMC, I had to gain permission from three key community members before they could send an organization-wide email detailing my research agenda. One member was the Programs and Finance Director, another was a member of the Leadership Sangha (Board), and another was a professor with expertise in social science research. The founding member I initially contacted, and the Programs and Finance Director approved my study relatively quickly. The Board member and professor had reservations. I spoke with them in early December 2018 to answer their questions and address their concerns. After an hour-and-a-half-long conversation, they were fine with me conducting research at EBMC. On December 17th, 2018, communications people sent an organization-wide email with information about who I was, my relationship with the organization, my research agenda, a note about staff members who supported the project, and informed consent and recruitment materials. The email stated that concerns and objections among the community had to be presented before December 25th, 2018. To my knowledge, there were no objections. At COR, I gained permission to collect data soon after sending my informative email.

I relied on a fourfold recruitment process for this study. First, utilizing convenience and snowball sampling methods, I reached out to known contacts who had experience with COR or EBMC and asked if they would be willing to participate. I then asked interviewed contacts if they would recommend other potential participants from their networks. Second, I met and interacted with community members at both sites. I would mention my project during informal encounters and invite folks to participate. Third, I relied on email and in-person announcements at each organization. For example, COR sent five organization-wide emails about my study between May 2019 and January 2020. The first email, sent on May 14th, 2019, essentially bundled a copy of my recruitment flyer (Appendix E) with the other “City of Refuge UCC Announcements.” On September 9th, 2019 - and again on October 4th, December 8th, and January 14th, 2020 - a more direct organization-wide email was sent. The subject title was “What does Radical Inclusivity mean to you personally?” and included the following message:

Greetings Family,

Our City of Refuge UCC has made a major impact on each of us personally. It also has made a difference in our community. It is time for us to speak out and share our experiences and views about “radical inclusivity” that are personal to each of us.

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Mario D. Castillo examining social patterns, processes, and relations occurring within ‘radically inclusive’ community organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. If you would like to share your experiences, perspectives, and other views related to this topic, please consider participating in this study.

Mario can be reached by email at (X) or by telephone at (X). It is urgent that he be contacted as soon as possible so he can complete his study timely!!

Should you have any questions or concerns, please let us know.

I made in-person public announcements, one time at EBMC’s People of Color Sangha and two different times during COR’s Sunday worship service. I was permitted to post paper copies of my recruitment flyer on visible community bulletin boards within each organization. The flyer included basic information about the study, eligibility requirements, a note about what the participant could expect during the interview and survey process, and my contact information (see Appendix E).

## INTERVIEW AND SURVEY PROCESS

I had to ensure that the participant read through and signed the consent forms for each interview. In most cases, this was in person with paper copies of the materials; however, this was done electronically more frequently during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. I would email the participant a copy of the consent forms; they would then

print a copy, sign it, and send a photo-digital copy for my records. I arranged to meet with consenting participants in person or via Zoom. Before the pandemic, I met most participants in person during the day at safe locations of their choice (e.g., cafés, libraries, and parks). I reminded them that their participation was voluntary and assured them I would handle their information with the highest scholarly ethics and integrity possible.

I audio-recorded all interviews using my iPhone's speech-to-text transcription app Temi. After each interview, I paid to have the audio recording transcribed through the Temi platform. Later, CPHS-approved research assistants reviewed and edited the transcripts as needed. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to more than 3 hours. The average interview length was 1.5 hours. I did not interview anyone under the age of 18. While I did not directly compensate interviewees for their participation, occasionally, I offered to pay for tea or coffee if we were meeting at a café. At the end of each interview, I asked participants if I could send a follow-up email with instructions on accessing the survey questionnaire. The email included a link to the questionnaire (which was accessible online via a UC Berkeley-licensed Qualtrics platform), a note indicating how long it would take to complete, and directions for the participant to include a Participant ID Number (PIN) in the text box at the beginning of the survey (Harris 2014; Lavrakas 2008). The PIN linked the survey data to the interview data. Most participants completed the survey in under 12 minutes (see Appendix D).

## CODING AND ANALYSIS PROCESS

I worked closely with a team of eight undergraduate research assistants (RAs) to complete the data transcription, coding, and analysis process. The RAs were part of UC Berkeley's Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program (URAP). They completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Research Ethics and Compliance Training before handling sensitive data. After we reviewed and edited the interview transcripts, we used Atlas.ti to classify, sort, and code all of the qualitative data. We relied on an inductive coding process informed by the five organizational work types framing this study. Using the code list below, we coded the data from May 2019 to April 2021. Moreover, we met weekly to ensure intercoder reliability.

## IDENTITY WORK

### *Personal Identity*

- 1.1 Career Background
- 1.2 Coming Out
- 1.3 Gender
- 1.4 Healing Experience
- 1.5 Mental Illness
- 1.6 Mixed Identity
- 1.7 Personal Challenge
- 1.8 Privilege
- 1.9 Racial Identity
- 1.10 Schooling
- 1.11 Sexual Orientation
- 1.12 Social Identity
- 1.13 Transgender
- 1.14 Upbringing

### *Organizational Identity*

- 1.15 COR Demographic
- 1.16 EBMC Demographic
- 1.17 Ideals/Core Values
- 1.18 Mission/Values
- 1.19 ODEI From the Start
- 1.20 Organization's Future
- 1.21 Organization's Origin
- 1.22 Organization's Physical Space
- 1.23 Organizational Structure

- 1.24 Position on Social Justice
- 1.25 Prioritize Marginalized Groups
- 1.26 Recruiting for Diversity
- 1.27 Signs, Symbols, Representation
- 1.28 Spread of the Organization

## COMMUNITY WORK

- 2.1 Accessibility (Access Centered)
- 2.2 Accessibility (Center Location)
- 2.3 Affinity Group (Alphabet)
- 2.4 Affinity Group (BIPOC)
- 2.5 Affinity Group (Deep Refuge)
- 2.6 Affinity Group (EBEM)
- 2.7 Affinity Group (Family)
- 2.8 Affinity Group (Maha)
- 2.9 Affinity Group (Recovery)
- 2.10 Allyship
- 2.11 Being Triggered
- 2.12 Belonging
- 2.13 Boundary Maintenance
- 2.14 Church Hurt
- 2.15 Colorism
- 2.16 Community Outreach
- 2.17 Conflict
- 2.18 Conflict Resolution
- 2.19 Conflicting Needs
- 2.20 Discrimination
- 2.21 Diversity
- 2.22 Economic Diversity and Inclusion
- 2.23 Exclusion
- 2.24 Family Dynamics
- 2.25 Fostering Social Ties
- 2.26 Healing and Liberation
- 2.27 Heteropatriarchy
- 2.28 Homophobia
- 2.29 Inclusion
- 2.30 Inequality
- 2.31 Institutional Racism
- 2.32 Invitation/Welcome
- 2.33 Involvement (Volunteering)
- 2.34 Loving Community
- 2.35 Member Dedication
- 2.36 Member Feedback
- 2.37 Microaggressions
- 2.38 ODEI in Practice
- 2.39 Power Dynamics
- 2.40 Racial Dynamics
- 2.41 Radical Inclusion
- 2.42 Respectfulness
- 2.43 Retention
- 2.44 Sense of Community
- 2.45 Small Group Shares
- 2.46 Third-Party Facilitation
- 2.47 Transphobia
- 2.48 White Awareness

## GOVERNANCE WORK

- 3.1 Abuse of Power
- 3.2 COR Organization
- 3.3 Democratic Process
- 3.4 Developing Leadership
- 3.5 Diverse Leadership
- 3.6 EBMC Organization
- 3.7 EBMC Strategic Plan
- 3.8 Emergency Response
- 3.9 Emergent Strategy
- 3.10 Growth of the Organization
- 3.11 Health Concern
- 3.12 Leadership of the Organization
- 3.13 (Non) Hierarchical Structure
- 3.14 Shared Leadership Model
- 3.15 Structural Deficiencies
- 3.16 Successorship
- 3.17 Sustainability
- 3.18 Teachers (Becoming)
- 3.19 Teachers (BIPOC)
- 3.20 Teachers (Charismatic)
- 3.21 Teachers (Diverse)
- 3.22 Teachers (Queer)
- 3.23 Transparency

## PROGRAMMING WORK

- 4.1 BIPOC Training
- 4.2 Daylong Programs
- 4.3 Education and Resources (Workshops)
- 4.4 Fellowship Practice
- 4.5 Illuminating Exercises
- 4.6 Peer Facilitation
- 4.7 Programming
- 4.8 Programs/Trainings for White People
- 4.9 Registration Practices
- 4.10 Resources Provided
- 4.11 Yearlong Programs

## RESOURCE WORK

- 5.1 Economics/Finances
- 5.2 Education and Resources (Library)
- 5.3 Education and Resources for Dominant Groups
- 5.4 Education and Resources for Spiritual Practice
- 5.5 Education and Resources Needed
- 5.6 External Funding
- 5.7 Funding
- 5.8 Internal Funding

## MISCELLANEOUS

- 6.1 Challenges
- 6.2 Covid

- 6.3 Gentrification
- 6.4 Mechanisms
- 6.5 Mitigation
- 6.6 Potential Mitigation
- 6.7 Previous Church
- 6.8 Racial Capitalism
- 6.9 Religio-Spiritual
- 6.10 Spiritual Bypass
- 6.11 Theology (Exclusive)
- 6.12 Theology (Inclusive)
- 6.13 Title Quote
- 6.14 Traumatic Event



APPENDIX B1. Organizational Identification and Age of Participants

Participant <sup>a</sup>	Organization	Age
Alana <sup>b</sup>	East Bay Meditation Center	54
Andre <sup>c</sup>	City of Refuge	--
Andy	East Bay Meditation Center	65
Anthony	City of Refuge	63
Ari	East Bay Meditation Center	67
Armando	East Bay Meditation Center	49
Centro	East Bay Meditation Center	51
Craig	East Bay Meditation Center	58
Cuco	East Bay Meditation Center	47
Curtis	East Bay Meditation Center	34
Dana	East Bay Meditation Center	41
Darnell	City of Refuge	73
Draymond	City of Refuge	55
Drew <sup>c</sup>	City of Refuge	--
Dylan <sup>b</sup>	East Bay Meditation Center	41
Eduardo	East Bay Meditation Center	57
Ishan <sup>b</sup>	East Bay Meditation Center	34
Ivory	East Bay Meditation Center	55
Jimmy	City of Refuge	70
Kay <sup>c</sup>	City of Refuge	--
Kaylee	East Bay Meditation Center	43
Lamar	City of Refuge	62
Leila <sup>c</sup>	East Bay Meditation Center	--
Loretta	City of Refuge	61
Marcos	East Bay Meditation Center	43

Margie	East Bay Meditation Center	71
Mason	City of Refuge	63
Maya	City of Refuge	64
Miranda	City of Refuge	52
Otis	East Bay Meditation Center	46
Petunia	East Bay Meditation Center	63
Reggie	City of Refuge	57
Reina	East Bay Meditation Center	53
Rodney	East Bay Meditation Center	38
Sadhil	East Bay Meditation Center	39
Sandy	East Bay Meditation Center	51
Sché	City of Refuge	42
Shane	City of Refuge	57
Sharon	City of Refuge	47
Shavon	City of Refuge	49
Suba	City of Refuge	--
Tanya	City of Refuge	53
Tarell	City of Refuge	38
Tasia	East Bay Meditation Center	37
Tiger	East Bay Meditation Center	68
Tina	City of Refuge	66

<sup>a</sup> Pseudonyms were allocated to maintain participant anonymity.

<sup>b</sup> Participant was involved in editing the interview transcript.

<sup>c</sup> Participant did not complete the survey questionnaire.

-- Indicates incomplete, missing, or unavailable data.

APPENDIX B2. Education and Income of Participants

Participant <sup>a</sup>	Education	Income
Alana <sup>b</sup>	Professional degree	--
Andre <sup>c</sup>	--	--
Andy	Bachelor's degree	\$80,000 - \$89,999
Anthony	Bachelor's degree	\$100,000 - \$129,000
Ari	Master's degree	\$30,000 - \$39,999
Armando	Doctorate degree	More than \$150,000
Centro	Master's degree	\$90,000 - \$99,999
Craig	Doctorate degree	\$60,000 - \$69,999
Cuco	Master's degree	\$60,000 - \$69,999
Curtis	Master's degree	\$60,000 - \$69,999
Dana	Master's degree	\$100,000 - \$129,000
Darnell	Master's degree	\$100,000 - \$129,000
Draymond	Certificate of ministry	\$60,000 - \$69,999
Drew <sup>c</sup>	--	--
Dylan <sup>b</sup>	Bachelor's degree	\$30,000 - \$39,999
Eduardo	Master's degree	\$60,000 - \$69,999
Ishan <sup>b</sup>	Bachelor's degree	\$20,000 - \$29,999
Ivory	Bachelor's degree	Prefer not to say
Jimmy	Some college	\$50,000 - \$59,999
Kay <sup>c</sup>	--	--
Kaylee	Master's degree	\$70,000 - \$79,999
Lamar	Professional degree	\$70,000 - \$79,999
Leila <sup>c</sup>	--	--
Loretta	Some college	Prefer not to say
Marcos	Master's degree	Prefer not to say

Margie	Professional degree	Prefer not to say
Mason	Professional degree	Prefer not to say
Maya	Master's degree	\$30,000 - \$39,999
Miranda	Master's degree	\$100,000 - \$129,000
Otis	Bachelor's degree	\$100,000 - \$129,000
Petunia	Doctorate degree	\$50,000 - \$59,999
Reggie	Bachelor's degree	More than \$150,000
Reina	Bachelor's degree	Not applicable
Rodney	Master's degree	\$20,000 - \$29,999
Sadhil	Master's degree	\$70,000 - \$79,999
Sandy	Doctorate degree	\$60,000 - \$69,999
Sché	Master's degree	\$90,000 - \$99,999
Shane	Some college	Prefer not to say
Sharon	Master's degree	\$80,000 - \$89,999
Shavon	In graduate school, no undergraduate degree	Prefer not to say
Suba	Some college	Not applicable
Tanya	Doctorate degree	\$60,000 - \$69,999
Tarell	Bachelor's degree	\$50,000 - \$59,999
Tasia	Master's degree	\$80,000 - \$89,999
Tiger	Associate degree	\$30,000 - \$39,999
Tina	Associate degree	Less than \$10,000

<sup>a</sup> Pseudonyms were allocated to maintain participant confidentiality.

<sup>b</sup> Participant was involved in editing the interview transcript.

<sup>c</sup> Participant did not complete the survey questionnaire.

-- Indicates incomplete, missing, or unavailable data.

APPENDIX B3. Relationship Status of Participants

Participant <sup>a</sup>	Relationship Status	Number of Children
Alana <sup>b</sup>	In a registered domestic partnership	Prefer not to say
Andre <sup>c</sup>	--	--
Andy	Married	1
Anthony	Partnered (not married or in a registered civil partnership)	--
Ari	Formerly in a registered civil partnership	1
Armando	Partnered (not married or in a registered civil partnership)	--
Centro	Married	--
Craig	Married	--
Cuco	Single (never married and/or never registered in a civil partnership)	--
Curtis	Partnered (not married or in a registered civil partnership)	--
Dana	Married	2
Darnell	Divorced	2
Draymond	Single (never married and/or never registered in a civil partnership)	--
Drew <sup>c</sup>	--	--
Dylan <sup>b</sup>	Single (never married and/or never registered in a civil partnership)	--
Eduardo	Partnered (not married or in a registered civil partnership)	--
Ishan <sup>b</sup>	Partnered (not married or in a registered civil partnership)	--
Ivory	Divorced	--
Jimmy	Single (never married and/or never registered in a civil partnership)	--
Kay <sup>c</sup>	--	--

Kaylee	Married	2
Lamar	Single (never married and/or never registered in a civil partnership)	1
Leila <sup>c</sup>	--	--
Loretta	Married	3
Marcos	Married	--
Margie	Prefer not to say	1
Mason	Prefer not to say	--
Maya	Married	--
Miranda	Married	--
Otis	Married	--
Petunia	Married	--
Reggie	Single (never married and/or never registered in a civil partnership)	--
Reina	Divorced	--
Rodney	Partnered (not married or in a registered civil partnership)	--
Sadhil	Single (never married and/or never registered in a civil partnership)	--
Sandy	Single (never married and/or never registered in a civil partnership)	1
Sché	Single (never married and/or never registered in a civil partnership)	1
Shane	Partnered (not married or in a registered civil partnership)	1
Sharon	Partnered (not married or in a registered civil partnership)	1
Shavon	Married	4
Suba	Partnered (not married or in a registered civil partnership)	--
Tanya	Single (never married and/or never registered in a civil partnership)	2
Tarell	Married	--

Tasia	Married	--
Tiger	Married	3
Tina	Single (never married and/or never registered in a civil partnership)	1

<sup>a</sup> Pseudonyms were allocated to maintain participant confidentiality.

<sup>b</sup> Participant was involved in editing the interview transcript.

<sup>c</sup> Participant did not complete the survey questionnaire.

-- Indicates incomplete, missing, or unavailable data.

APPENDIX B4. Race and Ethnicity of Participants

Participant <sup>a</sup>	Race and Ethnicity
Alana <sup>b</sup>	White or European descent, Ashkenazi Jewish
Andre <sup>c</sup>	--
Andy	White or European descent
Anthony	White or European descent
Ari	White or European descent
Armando	Hispanic or Latino
Centro	Hispanic or Latino
Craig	White or European descent
Cuco	Native American or Alaskan Native
Curtis	Black or African descent
Dana	Hispanic or Latino, White or European descent
Darnell	Black or African descent
Draymond	Black or African descent
Drew <sup>c</sup>	--
Dylan <sup>b</sup>	Black or African descent
Eduardo	Hispanic or Latino, White or European descent
Ishan <sup>b</sup>	South Asian Indian
Ivory	Asian descent
Jimmy	White or European descent
Kay <sup>c</sup>	--
Kaylee	Asian descent
Lamar	Black or African descent
Leila <sup>c</sup>	--
Loretta	Black or African descent
Marcos	Hispanic or Latino



Margie	Hispanic or Latino
Mason	Black or African descent
Maya	White or European descent
Miranda	Black or African descent
Otis	Black or African descent
Petunia	White or European descent
Reggie	Black or African descent
Reina	Hispanic or Latino
Rodney	Multiracial
Sadhil	South Asian Indian
Sandy	White or European descent
Sché	Black or African descent
Shane	Black or African descent
Sharon	Black or African descent
Shavon	Black or African descent
Suba	Black or African descent
Tanya	Black or African descent
Tarell	Black or African descent
Tasia	Asian descent, White or European descent
Tiger	Asian descent
Tina	Black or African descent

<sup>a</sup> Pseudonyms were allocated to maintain participant confidentiality.

<sup>b</sup> Participant was involved in editing the interview transcript.

<sup>c</sup> Participant did not complete the survey questionnaire.

-- Indicates incomplete, missing, or unavailable data.

APPENDIX B5. Sex, Gender, and Sexuality of Participants

Participant <sup>a</sup>	Sex	Gender	Transgender	Sexuality
Alana <sup>b</sup>	Female	Cis female	No	Pansexual, bisexual, queer
Andre <sup>c</sup>	--	--	--	--
Andy	Male	Cis male	No	Heterosexual
Anthony	Male	Cis male	No	Gay
Ari	Male	Cis male	No	Gay, queer, same-gender loving
Armando	Male	Male	No	Gay, queer
Centro	Male	Cis male	No	Gay
Craig	Male	Cis male	No	Gay, queer
Cuco	Male	Nonbinary	No	Same-gender loving
Curtis	Male	Male	No	Gay, queer, same-gender loving
Dana	Female	Cis female	No	Heterosexual, bisexual
Darnell	Male	Male	No	Same-gender loving
Draymond	Male	Male	No	Gay, same-gender loving
Drew <sup>c</sup>	--	--	--	--
Dylan <sup>b</sup>	Female	Cis female	No	Queer
Eduardo	Male	Cis male	No	Gay
Ishan <sup>b</sup>	Male	Cis male	No	Gay, queer
Ivory	Female	Cis female	No	Pansexual, bisexual, queer, same-gender loving
Jimmy	Male	Cis male	No	Gay
Kay <sup>c</sup>	--	--	--	--
Kaylee	Female	Cis female	No	Heterosexual

Lamar	Male	Male	No	Gay, queer, same-gender loving
Leila <sup>c</sup>	--	--	--	--
Loretta	Female	Female	No	Lesbian, gay, same-gender loving
Marcos	Male	Cis male	No	Gay, queer, same-gender loving
Margie	Female	Cis female	No	Heterosexual
Mason	Male	Cis male	No	Same-gender loving
Maya	Female	Cis female	No	Lesbian
Miranda	Female	Female	Yes <sup>rr</sup>	Prefer not to say
Otis	Male	Cis male	No	Same-gender loving
Petunia	Female	Cis female	No	Heterosexual
Reggie	Male	Cis male	No	Gay, queer, same-gender loving
Reina	Female	Male	Transman	Pansexual
Rodney	Female	Cis female	No	Queer
Sadhil	Male	Cis male	No	Pansexual, queer, questioning
Sandy	Female	Cis female	No	Lesbian
Sché	Female	Genderqueer	Genderqueer	Same-gender loving
Shane	Female	Male	Transman	Heterosexual
Sharon	Female	Cis female	No	Bisexual
Shavon	Female	Cis female	No	Lesbian
Suba	Female	--	No	Same-gender loving
Tanya	Female	Cis female	No	Bisexual
Tarell	Female	Male	Transman	Queer
Tasia	Female	Cis female	No	Queer
Tiger	Male	Cis male	No	Gay
Tina	Female	Female	No	Asexual, heterosexual, bisexual

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<sup>a</sup> Pseudonyms were allocated to maintain participant confidentiality.

<sup>b</sup> Participant was involved in editing the interview transcript.

<sup>c</sup> Participant did not complete the survey questionnaire.

-- Indicates incomplete, missing, or unavailable data.

*Note:* Cisgender refers to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex; genderqueer refers to a person who does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions; pansexual refers to a person not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, gender, or gender identity; transman refers to a transgender person who has transitioned from female to male.

## APPENDIX C1. Interview Guide for Members

---

- Consent
  - PIN Number
  - Date of interview
  - Recruited from
- 

Thank you for your interest in this study exploring radically inclusive community organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. Your participation is completely voluntary. You can decline to answer any question and quit the survey at any time. Do you agree to be interviewed for this study? Do you agree to have this interview recorded?

### PART I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

I would like to begin by asking you a few basic questions about your upbringing and background.

1. Would you prefer to use your actual name or a pseudonym for this study?
2. What is your full name (optional)?
3. What is a name you prefer to use for this study (pseudonym)?
4. Where were you born?
5. Where did you grow up?
6. What was your upbringing like?
  - Relationships (familial, intimate, social, quality, challenges)
  - Neighborhood (location, composition, quality, challenges)
  - Education (schools attended, higher education, training)
  - Occupation (type, salaried, quality, challenges)
  - Income (individual, household, management)
7. Is there anything else you would like to say about your upbringing and background?

### PART II. INVOLVEMENT WITH ORGANIZATION

I would like to ask you a few questions about your involvement with (organization).

8. How did you become aware of (organization)?
9. How did you get involved with (organization)?
10. How long have you been involved with (organization)?
11. Has your involvement been continuous (without interruption)?
12. If applicable, what was the reason for your “break” from (organization)?
13. If applicable, what was the reason for your “return” to (organization)?
14. What keeps you coming back to (organization)?

#### *Member Participation*

15. What activities are you involved with at (organization)?
16. How did you get involved with these activities?
17. How long have you been involved with these activities?
18. What do these activities entail?
19. Why did you get involved with these activities?
20. How does being involved with these activities make you feel?

#### *Current Designated Roles*

21. If applicable, what designated roles do you fulfill at (organization)?
22. How did you get involved with these roles?
23. How long have you been involved with these roles?

24. What do these roles entail?
25. Why did you get involved with these roles?
26. How does being involved with these roles make you feel?

#### *Former Designated Roles*

27. If applicable, what former designated roles did you carry out at (organization)?
28. How did you get involved with these roles?
29. How long had you been involved with these roles?
30. What did those roles entail?
31. Why did you get involved with those roles?
32. How did being involved with those roles make you feel?
33. When did you end your involvement with those roles?
34. Why did you end your involvement with those roles?

#### *Individual Benefits*

35. What services do you take advantage of the most at (organization)?
36. How have you benefitted (or not) from these services?
37. Is there anything else you would like to say about your involvement with (organization)?

### PART III. DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

I would like to ask you a few questions about diversity and inclusion at (organization).

#### *Organizational Diversity*

38. How would you define diversity?
39. What is your experience of diversity at (organization)?
40. What do you think are some of the opportunities associated with diversity?
41. If applicable, how have you personally benefitted from diversity at (organization)?
42. What do you think are some of the challenges associated with diversity?
43. If applicable, how have you been personally challenged by diversity at (organization)?
44. In your view, what is being done to foster diversity at (organization)?
45. In your view, what more can be done to foster diversity at (organization)?
46. In your view, what challenges threaten to undermine diversity at (organization)?
47. In your view, how are these challenges dealt with at (organization)?

#### *Organizational Inclusion*

48. How would you define inclusion?
49. What is your experience of inclusion at (organization)?
50. What do you think are some of the opportunities associated with inclusion?
51. If applicable, how have you personally benefitted from inclusion at (organization)?
52. What do you think are some of the challenges associated with inclusion?
53. If applicable, how have you been personally challenged by inclusion at (organization)?
54. In your view, what is being done to foster inclusion at (organization)?
55. In your view, what more can be done to foster inclusion at (organization)?
56. In your view, what challenges threaten to undermine inclusion at (organization)?
57. In your view, how are these challenges dealt with at (organization)?

#### *Radical Inclusion*

58. How would you define radical inclusion?
59. What is your experience of radical inclusion at (organization)?
60. What do you think are some of the opportunities associated with radical inclusion?

61. If applicable, how have you personally benefitted from radical inclusion at (organization)?
62. What do you think are some of the challenges associated with radical inclusion?
63. If applicable, how have you been personally challenged by radical inclusion at (organ)?
64. In your view, what is being done to foster radical inclusion at (organization)?
65. In your view, what more can be done to foster radical inclusion at (organization)?
66. In your view, what challenges threaten to undermine radical inclusion at (organization)?
67. In your view, how are these challenges dealt with at (organization)?
68. What other organizations do you view as radically inclusive? Why?
69. Is there anything else you would like to say about diversity and inclusion at (organization)?

## CONCLUSION

70. Is there anything else you would like to discuss now?
71. Do you have any questions or concerns about the interview?

## APPENDIX C2. Interview Guide for Informants

---

- Consent
  - PIN Number
  - Date of interview
  - Recruited from
- 

Thank you for your interest in this study exploring radically inclusive community organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. Your participation is completely voluntary. You can decline to answer any question and quit the survey at any time. Do you agree to be interviewed for this study? Do you agree to have this interview recorded?

### PART I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

I would like to begin by asking you a few basic questions about your upbringing and background.

1. Would you prefer to use your actual name or a pseudonym for this study?
2. What is your full name (optional)?
3. What is a name you prefer to use for this study (pseudonym)?
4. Where were you born?
5. Where did you grow up?
6. What was your upbringing like?
  - Relationships (familial, intimate, social, quality, challenges)
  - Neighborhood (location, composition, quality, challenges)
  - Education (schools attended, higher education, training)
  - Occupation (type, salaried, quality, challenges)
  - Income (individual, household, management)
7. Is there anything else you would like to say about your upbringing and background?

### PART II. INVOLVEMENT WITH ORGANIZATION

I would like to ask you a few questions about your involvement with (organization).

8. How did you become aware of (organization)?
9. How did you get involved with (organization)?
10. How long have you been involved with (organization)?
11. Has your involvement been continuous (without interruption)?
12. If applicable, what was the reason for your “break” from (organization)?
13. If applicable, what was the reason for your “return” to (organization)?
14. What keeps you coming back to (organization)?

#### *Member Participation*

15. What activities are you involved with at (organization)?
16. How did you get involved with these activities?
17. How long have you been involved with these activities?
18. What do these activities entail?
19. Why did you get involved with these activities?
20. How does being involved with these activities make you feel?

#### *Current Designated Roles*

21. If applicable, what designated roles do you fulfill at (organization)?
22. How did you get involved with these roles?
23. How long have you been involved with these roles?



24. What do these roles entail?
25. Why did you get involved with these roles?
26. How does being involved with these roles make you feel?

#### *Former Designated Roles*

27. If applicable, what former designated roles did you carry out at (organization)?
28. How did you get involved with these roles?
29. How long had you been involved with these roles?
30. What did those roles entail?
31. Why did you get involved with those roles?
32. How did being involved with those roles make you feel?
33. When did you end your involvement with those roles?
34. Why did you end your involvement with those roles?

#### *Individual Benefits*

35. What services do you take advantage of the most at (organization)?
36. How have you benefitted (or not) from these services?
37. Is there anything else you would like to say about your involvement with (organization)?

### PART III. QUESTIONS FOR INFORMANTS

The following questions are for those who fulfill designated roles at (organization).

#### *Organizational Diversity*

38. How is diversity defined at (organization)?
39. What does diversity look like at (organization)?
40. What are some of the opportunities associated with diversity?
41. What are some of the challenges associated with diversity?
42. What is being done to foster diversity at (organization)?
43. What more can be done to foster diversity at (organization)?
44. What challenges threaten to undermine diversity at (organization)?
45. How are these challenges dealt with at (organization)?

#### *Radical Inclusion*

46. How is radical inclusion defined at (organization)?
47. What does radical inclusion look like at (organization)?
48. What are some of the opportunities associated with radical inclusion?
49. What are some of the challenges associated with radical inclusion?
50. What is being done to foster radical inclusion at (organization)?
51. What more can be done to foster radical inclusion at (organization)?
52. What challenges threaten to undermine radical inclusion at (organization)?
53. How are these challenges dealt with at (organization)?
54. What other organizations do you view as radically inclusive? Why?

#### *Demographic Makeup*

55. What is the demographic makeup of (organization)?
56. Which groups are well represented at (organization)?
57. Why are these groups well represented at (organization)?
58. Which groups are least represented at (organization)?
59. Why are these groups underrepresented at (organization)?
60. What is done to create maximum representation of groups at (organization)?

61. What challenges compromise the representation of groups at (organization)?

#### CONCLUSION

62. Is there anything else you would like to discuss now?

63. Do you have any questions or concerns about the interview?

## APPENDIX C3. Interview Guide for Experts

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- Consent
  - PIN Number
  - Date of interview
  - Recruited from
- 

Thank you for your interest in this study exploring radically inclusive community organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. Your participation is completely voluntary. You can decline to answer any question and quit the survey at any time. Do you agree to be interviewed for this study? Do you agree to have this interview recorded?

### PART I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

I would like to begin by asking you a few basic questions about your upbringing and background.

1. Would you prefer to use your actual name or a pseudonym for this study?
2. What is your full name (optional)?
3. What is a name you prefer to use for this study (pseudonym)?
4. Where were you born?
5. Where did you grow up?
6. What was your upbringing like?
  - Relationships (familial, intimate, social, quality, challenges)
  - Neighborhood (location, composition, quality, challenges)
  - Education (schools attended, higher education, training)
  - Occupation (type, salaried, quality, challenges)
  - Income (individual, household, management)
7. Is there anything else you would like to say about your upbringing and background?

### PART II. QUESTIONS FOR INDEPENDENT EXPERTS

The following questions are for individuals with expertise in organizational diversity and inclusion.

#### *Organizational Diversity*

8. How is organizational diversity typically defined?
9. What does organizational diversity look like?
10. What are some of the opportunities associated with organizational diversity?
11. What are some of the challenges associated with organizational diversity?
12. What have organizations done to foster diversity?
13. What more can organizations do to foster diversity?
14. What challenges threaten to undermine organizational diversity?
15. How have organizations addressed these challenges?

#### *Organizational Inclusion*

16. How is organizational inclusion typically defined?
17. What does organizational inclusion look like?
18. What are some of the opportunities associated with organizational inclusion?
19. What are some of the challenges associated with organizational inclusion?
20. What have organizations done to foster inclusion?
21. What more can organizations do to foster inclusion?
22. What challenges threaten to undermine organizational inclusion?
23. How have organizations addressed these challenges?

*Radical Inclusion*

24. How is radical inclusion typically defined?
25. What does radical inclusion look like?
26. What are some of the opportunities associated with radical inclusion?
27. What are some of the challenges associated with radical inclusion?
28. What have organizations done to foster radical inclusion?
29. What more can organizations do to foster radical inclusion?
30. What challenges threaten to undermine radical inclusion?
31. How have organizations addressed these challenges?
32. What organizations do you view as radically inclusive? Why?

CONCLUSION

33. Is there anything else you would like to discuss now?
34. Do you have any questions or concerns about the interview?

## APPENDIX D. Survey Questionnaire

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### CONSENT

Thank you for your interest in this study exploring "radically inclusive" community organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. Your participation would entail answering a number of questions about your experiences, attitudes, perspectives, and opinions on this topic.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You can decline to answer any question and quit the survey at any time for any reason. All of the information you provide will remain strictly confidential unless you have given explicit, documented consent otherwise as detailed in the consent form provided prior to the in-person interview. This survey will require about 10-15 minutes to complete and you will not receive any compensation for your participation. We ask that you complete this survey in a quiet location free from distractions, read each question carefully, and respond naturally.

To ensure your rights and treatment as a participant, this study has been reviewed and approved by UC Berkeley's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS). If you would like to contact the Principle Investigator of this study, please email Mario Castillo at [mdcastillo@berkeley.edu](mailto:mdcastillo@berkeley.edu).

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in this study is voluntary, you are 18 years of age or older, and you may quit the survey at any time for any reason.

- I consent to participate in the study.
  - I do not consent to participate in the study.
- 

### IDENTIFICATION

- Q1. What is your Participant ID Number? If you do not have one, write "NA" below.  
Q2. What organization were you recruited from (choose one)?

- East Bay Meditation Center
  - City of Refuge United Church of Christ
  - Not listed above (please specify)
- 

### PART I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following questions are designed to gather some background information about you. Please read each question carefully and respond naturally. If a question is not applicable to you, please select or write "NA" and move on.

- Q3. What year were you born?

- 1900
- 1901
- 1902
- Etcetera to 2049

- Q4. In which country were you born?

- Afghanistan
- Albania
- Algeria
- Etcetera to Zimbabwe

- Prefer not to say
- Q5. In which state were you born? If not applicable, select “NA” below.
- Alabama
  - Alaska
  - Arizona
  - Etcetera to Wyoming
  - NA
- Q6. In which city were you born? If not applicable, write “NA” below.
- Q7. In which country do you currently reside?
- Afghanistan
  - Albania
  - Algeria
  - Etcetera to Zimbabwe
  - Prefer not to say
- Q8. In which state do you currently reside? If not applicable, select “NA” below.
- Alabama
  - Alaska
  - Arizona
  - Etcetera to Wyoming
  - I do not reside in the United States
  - NA
- Q9. In which city do you currently reside? If not applicable, write “NA” below.
- Q10. How long have you been living at your current residence?
- Less than one year
  - 1 year
  - 2 years
  - Etcetera to 19 years
  - 20 plus years
  - Prefer not to say
- 

PART I. EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND INCOME

- Q11. What is the highest level of education you have completed (choose one)?
- Less than high school
  - Some high school
  - High school graduate (GED)
  - High school graduate (diploma)
  - Some college
  - Associate degree
  - Bachelor’s degree
  - Master’s degree
  - Professional degree (M.D., J.D.)
  - Doctorate degree (Ph.D.)
  - Unknown

- Prefer not to say
- Not listed above (please specify)

Q12. Are you currently working for an income?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say
- Not listed above (please specify)

Q13. If you are currently working for an income, what type of work do you do? If not applicable, write "NA" below.

Q14. If you are not currently working for an income, please list your most recent occupation(s). If not applicable, write "NA" below.

Q15. What is your gross annual income (before taxes), not including the income of other members of your family or household?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$69,999
- \$70,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$89,999
- \$90,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$129,999
- \$130,000 - \$149,999
- More than \$150,000
- Unknown
- Not applicable
- Prefer not to say

Q16. How many people, including yourself, live at your current residence?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 plus
- Prefer not to say

Q17. What is the combined annual income of everyone in your household?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999

- \$40,000 - \$49,999
  - \$50,000 - \$59,999
  - \$60,000 - \$69,999
  - \$70,000 - \$79,999
  - \$80,000 - \$89,999
  - \$90,000 - \$99,999
  - \$100,000 - \$129,999
  - \$130,000 - \$149,999
  - More than \$150,000
  - Unknown
  - Not applicable
  - Prefer not to say
- 

#### PART I. RELATIONSHIP AND HEALTH STATUS

Q18. What is your relationship status?

- Single (never married and/or never registered in a civil partnership)
- Partnered (not married or in a registered civil partnership)
- Married
- Separated (but still legally married)
- Divorced
- Widowed
- In a registered civil partnership
- Separated (but still in a registered civil partnership)
- Formerly in a registered civil partnership
- Surviving partner from a registered civil partnership
- Unknown
- Prefer not to say
- Not listed above (please specify)

Q19. How many children do you have?

- NA
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 plus
- Prefer not to say

Q20. What are the ages of your children?

Q21. Do you have experience with psychological difficulties?

- Yes
- No
- Unknown
- Prefer not to say
- Not listed above (please specify)



- Q22. Please list the psychological difficulties you have experienced in the past and/or currently experience. If you prefer not to address this prompt, write “Pass” below.
- Q23. Do you identify as a person with a disability or disabilities?
- Yes
  - No
  - Unknown
  - Prefer not to say
  - Not listed above (please specify)
- Q24. Please list the disabilities you have experienced in the past and/or currently experience. If you prefer not to address this prompt, write “Pass” below.
- 

#### PART I. RACE AND ETHNICITY

- Q25. What categories describe you (select all that apply)?
- Asian descent
  - Black or African descent
  - Hispanic or Latino
  - Middle Eastern or North African descent
  - Native American or Alaskan Native
  - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - White or European descent
  - Unknown
  - Prefer not to say
  - Not listed above (please specify)
  - If preferred, please provide your specific race and ethnicity here
- 

#### PART I. SEX, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY

- Q26. What was your assigned sex at birth (as listed on your birth certificate)?
- Female
  - Male
  - Intersex
  - Unknown
  - Prefer not to say
  - Not listed above (please specify)
- Q27. What is your gender identity?
- Cis female
  - Cis male
  - Female
  - Male
  - Nonbinary
  - Unknown
  - Prefer not to say
  - Not listed above (please specify)
- Q28. Do you identify as transgender?

- Yes
- No
- Unknown
- Prefer not to say
- Not listed above (please specify)

Q29. If you identify as transgender, which of the following describes you?

- Trans woman (male-to-female)
- Trans man (female-to-male)
- Trans person (female-to-x)
- Trans person (male-to-x)
- Trans person (x-to-female)
- Trans person (x-to-male)
- Unknown
- Prefer not to say
- Not listed above (please specify)

Q30. What is your gender pronoun (select all that apply)?

- She, her, hers
- He, him, his
- They, them, theirs
- Ze or xe, hir, hirs
- Ze or xe, zir, zirs
- Use of your name
- Unknown
- Prefer not to say
- Not listed above (please specify)

Q31. How would you define your sexual orientation (select all that apply)?

- Asexual
- Heterosexual
- Pansexual
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Queer
- Questioning
- Same-gender loving
- Unknown
- Prefer not to say
- Not listed above (please specify)

Q32. In what additional ways, not previously disclosed, do you self-identify? If you prefer not to state, write "Pass" below.

## PART II. EXPERIENCE OF ORGANIZATION

The following questions are designed to assess your experience of ORG. Please read each question carefully and respond naturally.

Q33. In what ways does ORG provide support for you (select all that apply)?

- Emotional support (please specify)
- Physical support (please specify)
- Psychological support (please specify)
- Social support (please specify)
- Spiritual support (please specify)
- Unknown
- Not applicable
- Prefer not to say
- Not listed above (please specify)

Q34. Do you regard ORG as your primary spiritual refuge?

- Yes
- No
- Unknown
- Prefer not to say
- Not listed above (please specify)

Q35. Please list any other places you regard as spiritual refuges.

---

PART II. LIKERT SCALE

Q35. Please respond using a scale ranging from “Never” to “Always.”

I feel welcome at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I support ORG’s organizational goals.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

My contributions matter at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I work well with others at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

My ideas are implemented at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

Q36. Please provide additional comments here or move on.

Q37. Please respond using a scale ranging from “Never” to “Always.”

I feel excluded at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I have access to important information at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I am concerned about my safety at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I connect well with others at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I feel marginalized at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

Q38. Please provide additional comments here or move on.

Q39. Please respond using a scale ranging from “Never” to “Always.”

My social identities are valued at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I have access to important resources at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I feel a sense of belonging at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

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My presence is valued at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I have the ability to influence decision-making processes at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

Q40. Please provide additional comments here or move on.

Q41. Please respond using a scale ranging from “Never” to “Always.”

I am uncomfortable at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I am able to be myself with others at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

My ideas are valued at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I am welcome to participate in important organizational processes at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I can be honest with others at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

I am concerned about what others think of me at ORG.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

Q42. Please provide additional comments here or move on.

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PART III. ASSESSMENT OF ORGANIZATION

The following statements are designed to learn more about your assessment of ORG. Please read each statement carefully and respond naturally using a scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.”

Q43. Please respond using a scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.”

ORG is a diverse organization.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	----------------	---------	-------------------	-------------------

ORG can do more to increase membership diversity.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	----------------	---------	-------------------	-------------------

ORG is struggling to be a diverse organization.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	----------------	---------	-------------------	-------------------

ORG is an inclusive organization.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	----------------	---------	-------------------	-------------------

People seem to convey a sense of belonging at ORG.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	----------------	---------	-------------------	-------------------

Q44. Please provide additional comments here or move on.

Q45. Please respond using a scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.”

ORG can do more to be more inclusive.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	----------------	---------	-------------------	-------------------

ORG is a radically inclusive organization.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	----------------	---------	-------------------	-------------------

ORG is not doing enough to support marginalized communities.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	----------------	---------	-------------------	-------------------

ORG can do more to support marginalized communities.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	----------------	---------	-------------------	-------------------

People seem to convey a sense of ease at ORG.

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	----------------	---------	-------------------	-------------------

Q46. Please provide additional comments here or move on.

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#### CONCLUSION

If there is anything else you would like to add, please do so now.

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#### CONTACT

May we contact you at a later date if necessary?

- Yes
- No

Please provide an email address.

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#### END OF SURVEY

Thank you for completing this survey. Your responses will be used to learn more about “radically inclusive” organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. Please direct all communication to Mario Castillo at [mdcastillo@berkeley.edu](mailto:mdcastillo@berkeley.edu).

RESEARCH STUDY

University of California, Berkeley

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Mario D. Castillo, in consultation with Dr. David J. Harding, examining social patterns, processes, and relations occurring within “radically inclusive” community organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. If you would like to share your experiences, perspectives, and other views related to this topic, please consider participating in this study.

ELIGIBILITY

- Persons 18 years of age or older
- Have some experience with “radically inclusive” community organizations
- Persons with historically marginalized identities are encouraged to participate

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO

- Voluntarily undergo a 45-90-minute face-to-face interview
- Share your experiences, perspectives, and other views on this topic
- Voluntarily complete a short 10-15-minute online survey
- Share your experience with and assessment of “radically inclusive” organizations

If you have any questions or would like to participate, please contact Mario D. Castillo by phone (X) or e-mail (X).



## APPENDIX F1. Mindfulness-Based Operating Principles for Handling Tension

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From *Evolving a Shared Leadership Process at EBMC* - fall 2016 with consultant Amy Vito

- We foster a culture where respectful disagreement is okay and enriching
- We value constructive feedback that is not blaming or shaming, but in support of the community and the mission of EBMC
- We get curious about our own experience first\*
- We practice deep listening, to ourselves and each other\*
- We work together to identify the structural component of where a tension originates from, and try to find a solution that aligns with the mission and values of EBMC
- We effort to interact from our most healed selves, rather than reverting back to our most wounded selves. It is from this place that we raise tensions for the benefit of the whole.

\* Instead of assuming that our individual and culturally-based collective ways of knowing are the norm, we can choose to mindfully engage with others in culturally humble ways that might help us to learn, grow, respect, and better understand the reasons for their actions and behaviors, while we also become increasingly aware of what motivates our own actions and behaviors.

EBMC operates through an evolving model of Shared Leadership, one of the five elements of the EBMC 10-year strategic plan. A key part of Shared Leadership is creating an organizational cultural in which conflict avoidance is reduced, and commitment to recognizing and raising tensions before they escalate into conflict is increased. Mindfulness meditation helps us to recognize tensions in our bodies and in our minds, and to use these observations to interact more honestly and skillfully with others.

Shared Leadership at EBMC is both a collaborative governance system based on mutual accountability and a culture of respect and inclusion rooted in Dharmic society values. Our Shared Leadership approach stewards the mission and vision of the organization through role clarity, transparency, compassionate confrontation and timely attention to areas of tension.

## EBMC MISSION STATEMENT

Founded in a celebration of diversity, the East Bay Meditation Center welcomes everyone seeking to end suffering and cultivate happiness. Our mission is to foster liberation, personal and interpersonal healing, social action, and inclusive community building. We offer mindfulness practices and teachings on wisdom and compassion from Buddhist and other spiritual traditions. Rooted in our commitment to diversity, we operate with transparent democratic governance, generosity-based economics, and environmental sustainability.

Pursuant with our mission of providing transparent governance and sustainability in all facets of our community building, the Leadership of East Bay Meditation Center offers the following Restoration and Resolution Process, Policies, and Procedures to our spiritual community/Sangha and teachers.

## ESTABLISHING AN EBMC ETHICS, RESTORATION AND RESOLUTION PROCESS (ER&R)

The Programs and Finance Director is the initial entry point for ethical concerns made to EBMC by community members. The concerns may be sent electronically to [ethicscouncil@eastbaymeditation.org](mailto:ethicscouncil@eastbaymeditation.org). When an ethical concern comes in, the Programs and Finance Director will communicate the concern to Restoration and Resolution Council Chair and other Council members (see descriptions and definitions below). That group will decide next steps for how best to resolve the issue(s). This procedure is primarily designed for community members who have a breach of ethics with the EBMC organization or representatives of the EBMC organization. If there are internal conflicts within the organization, procedures may need to be tailored to accommodate personnel and human resource considerations.

These Ethics, Restoration and Resolution Processes are not intended to be a jury or court of law, even while there may be actions taken subsequent to the outcomes of the R&R process. This is not a legal document. We vision that these processes will restore relationships despite any conflict, difference, or harm that has occurred and that complex issues will become more resolved and understood through transparent sharing and respect.

## ETHICS, RESTORATION AND RESOLUTION POLICY

East Bay Meditation Center is committed to earnestly resolving ethical breaches and problems fairly and promptly. Our aim is to follow appropriate steps of inquiry, investigation, written acknowledgment and resolution. An additional purpose is to provide the opportunity to restore relationships despite the occurring events. This is the intention in renaming the process from one of Grievance to one of Ethics, Restoration and Resolution.

As a responsible leadership team, we are aware of not only the spiritual relationships developed with meditation practice between teacher and community, but are also aware of the challenges and benefits faced by the intimacy of those relationships. The conduct exhibited by our leaders, our teachers, our staff, and our volunteers has a profound impact on the perceived safety, trust, and respect of our community and Sangha. With the Dharma as our guiding voice, EBMC leaders, teachers, staff, and volunteers are committed to the ethical practice of appropriate dialogue, discussion and wise action.

We also acknowledge that the intention of “resolution” can imply a specific destination can be reached. While there might not be a definitive “resolution” that will satisfy all parties involved, “resolution” in this process is defined as investigating, exploring, and hearing the experiences of all parties involved, and the EBMC organization doing its best to settle and conclude what actions are appropriate responses to any determined, not just perceived, breaches of ethical conduct.

## ETHICS, RESTORATION AND RESOLUTION COUNCIL

In recognition of the wisdom of community groups, and that no individual has all perspectives of any complicated situation, especially in the complex and nuanced areas of ethics and conflicts, there is a council to support the Ethics, Restoration and Resolution process. Six members are selected for their integrity and objectivity. Membership on the ER&R Council will have representation from the Practice Groups, the L Sangha, the Staff and the Program Committee.

- The Programs and Finance Director or staff who holds primary accountability for programming, is a standing member of the Council.
- The Program Committee will submit 1-2 names of committee members who are not serving on the LSangha or the Teacher Sangha for consideration to the LSangha.
- The LSangha will request 2-5 nominations from the Practice Group Coordinating Committees who are not members of the Teacher Sangha, LSangha or the Program Committee and will appoint two people to serve on ER&R.
- The LSangha determine two selections from each of the above groups and also will appoint two members from the LSangha. Six members in total.
- Note: for all members except staff (teachers, committee members, and LSangha), all time involved is regarded as service to the larger community and is not compensated.

For the first iteration of the Ethics, Restoration and Resolution Council, 2 members will serve for 2 years, 3 members will serve for 3 years. All subsequent terms will be 3 years in length. The LSangha will determine which members of the first iteration of the ER&R Council will serve how many years. The LSangha will also determine a timeline for implementing this process. Efforts will be made to have the Council membership represent the diversity of the EBMC communities. Members may serve only 2 consecutive terms. If members are unable to fulfill their role and need to step down, the LSangha will determine replacement members.

Prior to the beginning term, each member will sign an Agreement and Acknowledgment Form.

#### PURPOSE OF THE ETHICS, RESTORATION AND RESOLUTION COUNCIL

The functions of the Council are to:

1. provide advice and consultation to anyone with concerns about the ethics of their own or another's conduct (see ethics section below). The Council will maintain confidentiality concerning such consultations except when mandated by law.
2. advise and consult on independent resolution process of conflicts or disputes.
3. decide appropriate actions in response when ethical breaches or violations have been determined.
4. administer and oversee the formal Restoration and Resolution process (described later in this document).
5. review from time to time and, to the extent it is deemed appropriate, propose to the LSangha changes to the Restoration and Resolution Process, Policies, and Procedures.
6. decision-making processes will be defined by the group as it is formed. These decision-making processes may change over time as the process evolves in the growth of the organization. Acknowledging that there is no decision-making process that is universally effective in all conditions, the R&R Council will self-determine whether that process will be by consensus, majority-vote, modified consensus with gradient of agreement, or other decision-making model.

#### CODE OF ETHICS FOR TEACHERS, STAFF, AND VOLUNTEERS

EBMC recognizes that the foundation of spiritual life rests upon our mindful and caring relationship to the life around us. We acknowledge that without the support of monastic vows, we have a need for clear guidelines. In keeping with this understanding and for the long-term benefit of ourselves and the community at large, we, as lay teachers, staff and volunteers agree to uphold the five lay training precepts. EBMC's teachers, staff and volunteers agree to adhere to ethical guidelines as specified in EBMC's documents: *Ethical Conduct by Teacher in the EBMC Teacher Agreement* and the *EBMC Volunteer Ethics Agreement*. Furthermore, we have expanded the scope of the five training precepts to make them explicitly appropriate to our specific roles at EBMC and in our diverse cultural settings.

1. *We undertake the precept of refraining from killing or causing violence/harm intentionally.*

This precept expresses the intent to live compassionately and harmlessly, arising from the acknowledgment of the inherent unity of all existence. When understood in its broadest context, not killing can also be understood as not harming, especially not harming the body or psyche of another. Physical violence and abusive behavior (which includes physical threats and extreme displays of anger and maliciousness) are understood as a kind of "killing." It is understood that the actions of individual teachers may be different in

difficult areas such as abortion, euthanasia, the humane killing of pets, and vegetarianism. However, we all commit ourselves to fulfilling this precept to the best of our abilities in the spirit of reverence for life. When harm has been caused unintentionally, we will consciously undertake the practice to learn from our mistakes and unconsciousness to prevent future occurrences.

2. *We undertake the precept of refraining from stealing, or taking that which is not freely offered or given.*

This precept expresses the commitment to live from a generous heart rather than from a grasping mind. We agree to not take that which does not belong to us and to respect the property of others. We agree to bring consciousness to the use of all of the earth's resources in a respectful and ecological way. We agree to be honest in our dealing with money and not to misappropriate money committed to Dharma projects. We agree to offer teachings without favoritism in regard to a student's financial circumstances. At a personal level, covetous behavior harms the person who steals as well as the one who is stolen from. On a community level, stealing can undermine or even destroy the trusting environment for dharma practice. Those who handle Sangha funds, Dana collection, or other assets have a special responsibility to take care of them and avoid their deliberate misuse or misappropriation, both of which are institutional forms of stealing. In addition, we recognize that the misuse of authority and status is a form of taking what is not given. Within the complex life of the Sangha, various hierarchical levels of authority and seniority play a role in many situations. It is particularly important that individuals in positions of trust not misuse their authority as a way to obtain special privileges, or otherwise to seek to inappropriately control or influence others. Encompassed in this training is: (1) refraining from the taking of creative words and works of others without attribution or acknowledgment for administrative, marketing, or teaching purposes, and (2) refraining from the taking of information (i.e. those who work with our database, or teachers who take sign-up information for students) that is not explicitly permitted or offered.

3. *We undertake the precept of refraining from sexual misconduct.*

We agree to avoid creating harm through sexuality. We agree to honor our relationship to our committed relationships. We agree to respect the committed relationships of others. Volunteers and Staff should not: (1) act in a way that would reasonably be construed as sexual harassment, (2) use their position within the organization to benefit their partners, or (3) abuse the personal relationship using their agency or influence within the organization. Because teachers have a great deal of authority in the community, the below is specifically outlined: Teachers with vows of celibacy will live according to their vows. Teachers in committed relationships will honor their vows and refrain from breaking those vows. All teachers agree not to use their teaching role to exploit their authority and position in order to engage in a sexual relationship with a student. Because teachers in our spiritual communities have developed partnerships - monogamous, open, or polyamorous - with former students, we acknowledge that such relationships can be possible, but that great care and sensitivity are needed. We agree that in this case the following guidelines, which are the current guidelines for all Western Vipassana/Theravadan teachers, are crucial.

- a. A sexual relationship is never appropriate between teachers and students.
- b. During retreats or formal teaching, any intimation of future student-teacher romantic or sexual relationship is inappropriate.
- c. If interest in a genuine and committed relationship develops over time between a teacher and a student, the student-teacher relationship must clearly and consciously have ended before any further development toward a romantic relationship. Such a relationship must be approached with restraint and sensitivity - in no case should it occur immediately after a retreat or teaching event. A minimum time period of four months or preferably longer from the last formal teaching between them, and a clear understanding from both parties that the student-teacher relationship has ended must be coupled with a conscious commitment to enter into a relationship that brings no harm to either party.
- d. It is strongly suggested to have this process witnessed or acknowledged with someone who is considered to be senior in experience by the teacher.

Teachers agree that, during any teaching, the Teacher will not behave in a manner that might be reasonably construed as sexual harassment. Teachers further agree that, during the Event, Teachers will not behave in a manner that might be reasonably construed as initiating, inviting, or reciprocating sexual or romantic contact with an Event attendee.

4. *We undertake the precept of refraining from false speech.*

We agree to speak that which is true and useful and to refrain from gossip in our community. We agree to hold in confidence what is explicitly told to us in confidence. We agree to cultivate conscious and clear communication and to cultivate the quality of loving-kindness and honesty as the basis of our speech. This includes a commitment to awareness of how speech can be consciously and unconsciously evoke dynamics of power, unearned privilege and oppression. We dedicate ourselves to expanding our awareness of these dynamics and our receptivity to feedback and learning.

5. *We undertake the precept of refraining from intoxicants that cause heedlessness or loss of awareness.*

It is clear that substance abuse is the cause of tremendous suffering. We agree that there should be no use of intoxicants during meditation groups, retreats or any EBMC program or event. We agree not to abuse or misuse intoxicants at any time. We agree that if any teacher has an active drug or alcohol addiction problem, it should be immediately addressed by the Programs and Finance Director of EBMC who will refer to the Restoration and Resolution Council and LSangha, if necessary.

As stated above, EBMC's teachers and volunteers agree to adhere to ethical guidelines as specified in EBMC's ethical documents. If there is an alleged breach of these ethical agreements, EBMC provides the following procedures for resolution.

#### CAUTIONARY STATEMENT AROUND DUAL RELATIONSHIPS

For the purposes of this document, a dual relationship exists when a person in leadership engages with a community member in one or more kinds of relationship. These include, but are not limited to, relationships of employer/employee (outside the Center), therapist/client, counselor/counselee, and intimate sexual relationships. Although some dual relationships may be appropriate, dual relationships which involve a disparity of power and authority can carry potentially serious impacts for the practitioner. Such impacts may include the violation of personal boundaries, increased emotional and psychological vulnerability, exploitation in various forms, loss of autonomy, and confusion of roles. In addition, certain dual relationships can undermine the teacher/student relationship and the value of the student's dharma practice. Accordingly, such dual relationships are, to the extent practical, either to be avoided or, at the least, undertaken with serious mindfulness and consideration as to the best interests of the practitioner. While each of the parties may have some responsibility for the dual relationship, it is the person in the leadership or teacher role, as the more powerful party, who bears the primary responsibility for the protection of the practitioner through keeping the relationship within appropriate bounds.

#### *Appropriate Dual Relationships*

We acknowledge that certain dual relationships may be appropriate as well as unavoidable. For example, teachers can both be supervisors of work at a meditation center, or be supervised by others in a type of employer/employee relationship. Additionally, social relationships on the part of the leadership or teaching roles with practitioners are generally natural and healthy, as are friendships between the leaders/teachers among themselves. Such dual relationships are not prohibited or discouraged. Close personal friendships between the teachers and their students may, however, interfere with the teacher/student relationship and should be undertaken as a mindfulness practice with caution and with serious consideration as to the best interests of the student.

We also acknowledge that it is impossible to, and not our intention to, pre-determine, "legislate," or provide hard-and-fast rules for interpersonal relationships. We are indicating that this area of interpersonal friendships is a complex area of practice for anyone in leadership position.

It is also a complex practice for communities to develop and hold, as individual leadership can also emerge from the community itself. There may be close, existing friendships that have developed over time, even before the development of an individual's leadership potential. Thus, it might be that, while people are in positions of leadership, these friendships and relationships shift in certain boundaries and qualities during the period that individual is in leadership. As stated previously, there are no exacting guidelines for this. It is the responsibility of the person with

leadership, power, and authority to self-monitor their impact of their leadership on their friendships and their friendships upon their leadership. One safeguard is transparency. It is often supportive and helpful to discuss this openly with one's relationships and friends in order to get input and feedback. Processing the complexity with peers is also helpful, as is discussing with mentors or more experienced leadership, if that is available.

### *Spiritual Counseling*

From time to time the leader or teacher may appropriately be called upon to provide spiritual counseling to a community member or practitioner. While spiritual counseling may often involve consideration of emotional, psychological, and social issues, it differs from psychotherapy in a number of respects: it is usually more short term in nature, it does not purport to deal with emotional or psychological issues in as much depth as does psychotherapy, it often deals with the problems of an immediate crisis, and the counselor is not necessarily professionally qualified to offer psychotherapy. When longer term counseling or psychotherapy is needed or the student appears to be in immediate physical or psychological danger because of the acuity of a crisis, the person providing counseling should quickly recommend that the student seek psychotherapy or other appropriate help and, if possible, aid the student in obtaining a referral for such services. It is the intent to dedicate a portion of the Teacher Sangha meeting at a minimum annually to discuss issues including but not exclusive to, mandatory reporting of child and elder abuse, suicidal ideation, harm-to-others, acute mental health issues, and risk of domestic violence.

## RESTORATION AND RESOLUTION PROCEDURES

### *Basic Guidelines for Resolving Conflicts and Disagreements*

There are two paths outlined below to resolve conflicts: *independent conflict resolution* and *council conflict resolution*.

1. Independent conflict resolution is encouraged whenever possible and appropriate. The guidelines below offer a framework and tools for independent conflict resolution. Please note that EBMC cannot offer organizational support for independent conflict resolution but may be able to suggest sangha members or community resources if support is needed.
2. We recognize that there are instances in which independent conflict resolution may not be desired or appropriate. In these instances, EBMC offers an alternative path, council conflict resolution.

### *Introduction*

We wish our life within our diverse communities to be expressed through our spiritual practice and wisdom teachings. As our practice is our heartfelt response to suffering, turning away from suffering through silence, rationalization, assigning blame, minimizing, feeling self-deprecating guilt, or not attending seriously to its causes and conditions are all steps directed away from the path itself. Avoidance often acts as a condition for additional suffering and further oppression.

Accordingly, when a conflict, breach, or violation of the precepts or ethics arises in an interpersonal or institutional relationship, it is essential to attend to it as fully as possible. While the outcomes might not be ideal or perfect from any perspective, it is our highest intention to do the best we can given the situation, the available resources, and the level of clarity that is possible.

On an *individual* level, this involves waking up to our own contribution to the suffering in these situations through understanding our reactions, emotions, and attachments. *Interpersonally*, this involves taking the time to discuss the conflict with the other parties involved in an attempt to clarify the actual causes, conditions, feelings, and responses that come together in the situation. *Organizationally*, this involves being aware of the group dynamics, the cultural context and conditions, and the possibility of structural harm to individuals or groups that is possible.

What follows are guidelines for resolving conflicts and transgressions within our communities. We intend them to support all of us in promoting learning, forgiveness and restoration with oneself and with others. Whenever possible, disputes should be resolved independently and directly between the people involved. We recognize that for certain conflicts independent resolution may not be possible. Accordingly, we also offer a formal Restoration and Resolution procedure for such situations.

### *Principles of Restoration and Resolution for both Independent and Council R&R Methods*

Although no fixed procedures are mandated for independent conflict resolution, the framework that follow are intended to give all persons involved in a dispute a chance to be fully heard in an environment of respect, compassion, and kindness - one that is based in the understanding that the Sangha is an interdependent whole, and that everyone wishes to live in safety and in peace.

1. *Stating the Actual.* A crucial aspect of conflict resolution, as of Buddhist practice itself, is discriminating between our interpretations and opinions of an event and how the event was or is personally experienced. In part, this means not making general statements but rather sticking to the particulars of the actual situation and the emotions experienced. It is extremely difficult to achieve mutual understanding when discussion remains at the level of interpretation and generalization. A classic Organizational Development formula for giving feedback is (a) describe the situation as you see it; (b) describe specific behaviors; (c) describe the impact of those behaviors; and (d) make a request.
2. *Being Heard.* It is important that everyone involved be given an opportunity to be fully heard. This means that all participants be given a chance to recount how they remember the history of a conflict, to state their feelings regarding the conflict, and to explain the goals they have for its resolution. Such statements should be neither defensive nor critical, since both stances tend to preclude deeper mutual understanding. Much conflict arises and is perpetuated through a lack of mutual understanding. Taking calm, deliberate, and adequate time to listen to each other is often what is needed for the process of restoration to begin.
3. *Restating what was Heard.* To ensure that everyone understands one another, it is useful for each party to briefly restate what the other has said, highlighting the main points. The other party then says whether they believe the restatement is complete and accurate, and makes any appropriate corrections.
4. *Acknowledgment.* Resolution and restoration are greatly facilitated if each party involved reflects on how they may have contributed to the conflict and then describes this to the other party. Even when one person is primarily responsible, self-reflection, acknowledgment, and apology on everyone's part can provide a safer, more trusting, and more understanding environment for everyone to be truthful. To support a respectful and safe process, the party that the concern is being raised about is asked to hold the commitment to awareness of how speech can consciously and unconsciously evoke dynamics of power, unearned privilege and oppression and to mindfully refrain from actions that can be perceived as retaliation against the party initiating the concern.
5. *Facilitation.* It is often useful to invite one or more neutral witnesses or mediators to take part in a session of conflict resolution. Such a person may simply be a silent witness providing a sense of calm and presence or may be an active mediator who helps ensure that each person is given uninterrupted opportunities to speak. This person may also point out the difference between statements of opinion and interpretation and direct statements of how an event or feeling was or is actually experienced. Invited facilitators can be anyone whom both parties respect; e.g., friends, neutral acquaintances, dharma teachers or spiritual leaders, or people from within or outside the Center who are trained in mediation. EBMC can offer sangha or community referrals.
6. *Seeking Advice.* In addition to or instead of inviting a facilitator to participate, it can be useful to seek advice from others for working independently to resolve a conflict. Such advice can come from friends, teachers, elders, or the EBMC Restoration and Resolution Council.
7. *Support.* It may be useful for some processes for the participants to have one ally who supports them through any meetings or discussions. If one party has an ally, then all parties should have one ally to balance the process. In addition, allies should be as peer-oriented as possible. For example, teachers should not have students as allies, and vice versa.

## METHOD ONE - INDEPENDENT CONFLICT RESOLUTION

When individuals have ethical concerns or conflicts they are strongly encouraged to first address their concerns directly to the person in question, provided they feel reasonably comfortable and safe doing so. We acknowledge that there may be power differentials in the relationships that make this difficult. Part of the collective practice as a

community is to level the power playing field so that power differentials do not influence positively or negatively the intentions of resolving the difficulty or harm and restoring the relationships involved. EBMC encourages the individuals directly involved in a conflict or disagreement to resolve it independently. The independent discussion attempts to bring clarity and an open engagement to the difficulty. Resolution and Restoration may be forged from the open-hearted listening of all parties.

Suggestions for the independent approach include the following:

1. Meeting each other one-on-one
2. Meeting with one mediator who is agreed upon by both parties
3. Meeting with two mediators, one for each party
4. If appropriate, seek restorative justice or comparable circles
5. Skills such as restorative justice, non-violent communication, and insight dialogue can be helpful.

Restoration and Resolution Council members will not serve as mediators in this stage of independent process.

Parties involved in conflict are encouraged to remember the following teachings about mindful speech as stated in the *Ethical Conduct of Teachers* in the *EBMC Teacher Agreement* and the *EBMC Volunteer Ethics Agreement*.

#### *EBMC Volunteer Ethics Agreement*

We agree to speak that which is true and useful and to refrain from gossip in our community. We agree to hold in confidence what is explicitly told to us in confidence. We agree to cultivate conscious and clear communication and to cultivate the quality of loving-kindness and honesty as the basis of our speech. This includes a commitment to awareness of how speech can consciously and unconsciously evoke dynamics of power, unearned privilege and oppression. We dedicate ourselves to expanding our awareness of these dynamics and our receptivity to feedback and learning.

In that light, we also offer Thich Nhat Hanh's wording of the fourth precept, regarding speech and listening:

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I vow to cultivate loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I vow to learn to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the community to break. (Note: this last sentence is not intended to be a prohibition against or pressure not to speak uncomfortable truths.)

#### *Questions to Support the Independent Restoration and Resolution Process*

Please be aware that not all of these questions are universally applicable to every situation or set of circumstances. Please be invited to use them as skillful means and to take what is needed, and leave the rest behind.

1. What did the different parties contribute to making this conflict happen?
2. With hindsight, how could all parties have handled it better?
3. How would one evaluate all the responses so far? What has been done that has been effective? What hasn't been effective?
4. What is the impact of this process on me? What is the impact upon others?
5. What is the learning that is arising?
6. How would it be possible for both of our versions of what happened to be feasible?
7. What skills or characteristics could this conflict improve or support?
8. After hearing other perspectives, has anything changed in your experience with your own story?
9. Have the communications been effective in creating understanding in all the parties concerned? What could be done to improve them?
10. What is the most optimal outcome that can be visioned to emerge from this conflict? What can be done to make it happen?



In the event of ethical transgressions or other violations of precepts that cannot be resolved using the independent approach (often this cannot be fully known until the independent approach is attempted), EBMC offers a formal Ethics, Restoration and Resolution procedure.

#### METHOD TWO - COUNCIL APPROACH: 4-STEP PROCESS

1. *Formal Written Notification*: The facts and expressions requested for the initiation of a formal written process are essential for an open flow of communication resulting from perceived misconduct within the Center. The ER&R Council will be responsible for all documentation and record keeping of the formal ER&R Process. Records will be kept at EBMC in a locked file, with access permissible only by the current ER&R Council.
  - a. When independent resolution(s) has failed or is not practicable, individuals are encouraged to complete a written report on any such conflicts to the Programs and Finance Director of EBMC. In order to support effective and timely conflict resolution, it is most helpful to submit notifications as soon as possible after the occurrence. In the event of a sensitive and/or disturbing incident, sangha members are encouraged to seek confidential consultation with the Programs and Finance Director for support with initiating a notification. There is an overall intention of submitting the initial report within 60 days of the occurrence. The 60 days is allowed to permit the development of independent restoration and resolution efforts to be made. In the event of a sensitive and/or disturbing incident, sangha members are encouraged to seek confidential consultation with the Programs and Finance Director for support with initiating a notification within this timeframe. The Programs and Finance Director will forward the report to the Chair of the EBMC Restoration and Resolution Council within 3 days of receipt of the written report.
  - b. The formal written form needs to address these issues:
    - A written statement sent to [ethicscouncil@eastbaymeditation.org](mailto:ethicscouncil@eastbaymeditation.org) that the intention is to file or request a formal Restoration and Resolution process,
    - The name(s) of the person(s) whose actions/behavior/decisions the issue or event concerns,
    - Sufficient description of the alleged behavior to allow a decision by the Council as to whether the issue is appropriate for beginning a formal Restoration and Resolution procedure,
    - Was there any attempt(s) to independently resolve the matter? If so what was the outcome from concerned party's perspective?
    - A general statement about the optimal resolution,
    - Provision of contact information and the other party's if you have it. The other party will be asked to submit a similar form for their perspective.
  - c. In order to support timely and thorough investigations into notifications, names attached to notifications are strongly encouraged. However, anonymous or confidential submissions will be accepted, with the understanding that the organizational response may not be feasible.
  - d. Once a written form is submitted by the Council, all information related to the issue will remain confidential within the Council except for any disclosure mandated by law.
  - e. When written forms and documentation are received, the EBMC Programs and Finance Director has 7 days to forward to other Council members (barring any personal exigencies).
2. *Acceptance of a Request for R&R process*: Upon Council receiving the completed Restoration and Resolution written information, EBMC's Restoration and Resolution Council will convene, with a quorum of at least 4 out of 5 members, to review all the information set forth in the written form.
  - a. The Council will respond in writing to the Restoration and Resolution process within 21 days of receiving the Restoration and Resolution form as to whether a formal Restoration and Resolution process is warranted or whether independent or additional independent channels should be attempted.
  - b. Members of the Council will self-determine if they have conflicts of interest or are unable to be impartial and will recuse themselves. Recused members will be replaced by the LSangha as soon as possible, so as not to impede the process. If this takes additional time, all parties will be notified immediately.

- c. When at least four members of the Council agree that independent channels are exhausted or inappropriate, then a formal R&R process is initiated.
  - d. If needed, the Council can request additional information from the person initiating the process and whether the person has any immediate temporary requests or needs, such as sharing space with the person(s) named in the document during Sangha or another EBMC event.
  - e. Once the Council has accepted a formal request, the Chair must convey in writing its acceptance, within 4 days, to both the person filing the written request and the person(s) named in the written document. As part of the notification, the Council will state its understanding of the issue under inquiry.
  - f. One Council member will be assigned as a liaison to each of the sides involved in the formal R&R process, for the purpose of facilitating communications.
3. *Investigation of a R&R request:* If the Council deems it necessary, it will initiate appropriate follow-up action so that all parties will be allowed an opportunity to present their individual understanding of the incidents or occurrence from their perspective. If additional investigative support is needed, the Council has the authority and choice to convene additional, appropriately objective sangha members to form a specific Restoration and Resolution Response Team to aid/support this work and find a resolution to the case. If necessary, there may be further inquiry and investigation. Other external parties may make statements for additional support and clarity.
- a. The Council and the Restoration and Resolution Response Team will review and listen to all submitted information with a spirit of openness to obtain a thorough understanding of facts and information required for determining and rendering a decision.
  - b. The Council and Restoration and Resolution Response Team members will recuse themselves from involvement in the ER&R process, if they perceive a conflict of interest.
  - c. The Council will endeavor to accomplish this investigation within sixty (60) days of the acceptance of the ER&R request, but cannot guarantee that this timeline will always be appropriate - the timeline may be shorter or longer depending upon the conditions of the issue, the number and conduct of the parties throughout the process. If the timeline is longer, all parties will be notified of a new timeline, as soon as this becomes apparent.
4. *Determinations/Findings:* The Council will convene after a thorough review of all facts and information presented during the investigation.
- a. The Council will aim to provide a written conclusion and resolution within thirty (30) days of the completion of the investigation delivered in a confidential manner. The conclusion will be provided to the individual who initiated the Ethics, Restoration and Resolution process and to any other relevant parties. The Council will strongly request but cannot guarantee, confidentiality to be held by all the parties. A copy of the resolution will be kept in a locked file at EBMC.
  - b. It remains the responsibility and duty of the ER&R Council to issue whatever forms of action are required to bring the matter to an appropriate resolution.
  - c. The Council recognizes its own limitations of resources and energies and the need to conclude involvement while acknowledging that the resolution of complex cases may feel unsatisfactory to individuals involved.

## APPEAL PROCESS

Appeal of Ethics, Restoration and Resolution Council decisions may be made to the LSangha within 14 days of receipt of the Ethic, Restoration and Resolution Council's written decision. Appeals will only be granted if there is evidence of bias and/or procedural irregularities, or if new information not previously available comes to light. Appeals should be addressed to the Chair of the Restoration and Resolution Council, the Chair of the LSangha, and the Programs and Finance Chair. If the grievance is with one of these three individuals, the appeal will be addressed to the other two individuals.

A new Appeals Council will be formed and decided upon by the Chair of the Restoration and Resolution Council, the Chair of the LSangha, and the Executive Director. If the grievance is with one of these three individuals, that individual will recuse themselves from this process. Members of the original R&R group will not participate in the new Appeals process. The Appeals Council will review the findings and the new appeal arguments to decide whether or not the

original decisions should be upheld or not. Every attempt will be made to resolve appeals within sixty (60) days of the receipt of written notification. The decision of this Appeals Council will be final.

#### PARTIAL LIST OF POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS (not intended to be fully comprehensive)

1. Mediated resolution of the matter assuming that all parties involved are willing.
2. A conclusion of no ethical breach while acknowledging the existence of a problem or conflict that needs resolution elsewhere, for example inter-personal conflicts/personality differences.
3. Private and mediated apology and/or statement of accountability and responsibility.
4. Follow up meetings to restore interpersonal relationships. EBMC bears no financial responsibility to provide or pay for any of these meetings but will offer referrals as appropriate.
5. Recommendations for counseling or participation in support or recovery processes as specified by the Council. EBMC bears no financial responsibility to provide or pay for any of these recommendations but will offer referrals as appropriate.
6. Recommended training, education, or mentoring in certain skills or issues. EBMC bears no financial responsibility to provide or pay for any of these recommendations but will offer referrals as appropriate.
7. Private reprimand by appropriate organizational groups or individuals.
8. Apology to the community impacted.
9. Probationary period for those in leadership, if harm has been caused.
10. Suspension or dismissal (time length to be specified) from certain positions of responsibility.
11. Limiting the Council decision simply to whether or not an ethical breach has occurred and then forwarding this decision to the appropriate administrative or leadership roles for further action (if any is needed).

#### OPTIMAL TIMELINE OF FORMAL RESTORATION AND RESOLUTION PROCESS

Timeline is not guaranteed. If any member of the Council's tenure is up, they may be requested to stay on the Council until the process is complete.

#### EBMC TIMELINE FOR ER&R PROCESS

Occurrence of the Event

Within 60 days: File written report with EBMC Director of Programs and Finance

Within 7 days: Director of Programs and Finance forwards report to R&R Council Members

Within 21 days: Council decides whether a formal process is justified

Within 4 days: R&R Council will select two member liaisons to convey acceptance or decline to individuals involved

Within 60 days of acceptance: Investigation period

Within 30 days of investigation completion: Council produces a written decision, including any implementation plans, timeframes, associated costs and responsibility of payment, if required.

Within 14 days of receipt of decision: Appeals can be initiated, if criteria is met

Within 60 days: final decision on final appeals

#### *Closing Intention*

In closing, there is acknowledgment that there is not exacting clarity on every detail of these processes, policies, and procedures. Exactitude might be a strong preference, but also can create inflexibility as to how a very unique and human process unfolds and operates. The intention of any process, policy, or procedure is to set a framework that is beneficial enough to exploring difficult, complex and messy experiences that often have multiple truths. Practically,

it cannot be ideal. Singular ideals can often diminish the very diversity and difference of life experiences that we are intending to support at EBMC.

There are many areas of grey which cannot be defined in advance of anyone's experience. Even the phrase "causing harm" can have an ambiguous meaning in regards to this document. This document is intended to articulate the complexity of the landscape, so that each unique process can deal with the complexity as it uniquely applies that situation. Each case will be a learning experience, rather than a cause of "right" and "wrong."

*Note from Leadership Sangha: The LSangha is grateful for the creation and evolution of these guiding documents which acknowledge and honor the unique and multi-faceted history of the organization. We view these as living documents; with EBMC's ten year anniversary approaching, we make a commitment to an ongoing review process of these guiding documents that fosters increased organizational cohesion to best support EBMC's mission.*

The ER&R Process, Policy and Procedures were developed from the following:

EBMC Grievance Policy  
(Version 1, adopted April 26, 2010)  
(Version 2, adopted September 5, 2013)

Restoration and Resolution Process, Policies and Procedures  
(Version 3, drafted February 25, 2016, with compiled input from documents of Spirit Rock, San Francisco Zen Center, Berkeley Zen Center, and Rochester Zen Center)

This document outlining the EBMC ER&R Process, Policy and Procedures was approved and adopted by the LSangha, June 28, 2017.

Updated Spring 2018 as articulated by Restorative Practices for Dharma Practitioners Sangha at EBMC

Peacemaking circles can include those that celebrate, support, and heal. At EBMC, Community Building and Healing Circles create a space in which all people, regardless of their role and/or identity, can reach out to one another as equals and recognize their mutual inter-dependence. Healing Circles provide a process and a structure to talk about challenging issues and/or situations and to address and repair harm in an atmosphere of respect and concern for everyone. The intention is to provide a supportive environment to restore and build healthy communities. The circle process is led by trained circle keepers and everyone participating chooses to be present.

#### THE STRUCTURE AND PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING AND HEALING CIRCLES

1. *Center set-up* - the four elements, talking pieces, as well as objects/offerings from participants' cultures and traditions. Participants are encouraged to bring these and it is also optional.
2. *Introduction and opening ceremony*
  - a. Welcome and appreciation for showing up
  - b. Overview describing the purpose and plan for the circle
  - c. An inspirational sharing - poem, quote, song
  - d. Role of circle keepers
  - e. Describe the center
  - f. Describe the importance of the talking piece and mindfulness bell (*see below*)
3. *Short meditation*
4. *Brief self-introductions and/or checking-in*
5. *Sharing values* - values you want to bring to the circle and values you want the group to hold (*see below*)
6. *Core assumptions* - reading and agreeing to them
  - a. Our essence is Buddha-nature
  - b. All beings are in interdependent relationships and have vital gifts that support our community
  - c. The deepest desire of all human beings is to be peaceful, content, and free
  - d. The Four Noble Truths including the Eightfold Path
  - e. Practicing loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity with ourselves and with one another strengthens our sangha. Cultivating and nourishing the sangha strengthens our Dharma practice.
7. *Precepts* - one or more precepts may be introduced based on the purpose or challenge of the circle
8. *Circle guidelines*
9. *Focus of the circle* - exploring a question, concern, issue
10. *Outcome is named including whatever agreements have been reached*
11. *Next steps*
12. *Closing* - meditation, each person checks out, dedication of merit

#### *Circles and Circle Keepers*

Sitting in circle symbolizes shared leadership, equality, connection and inclusion. Circles are guided by the values and commitments participants make to one another. They also promote focus, accountability and participation. Circle keepers are responsible for holding the circle and setting a respectful tone that supports and honors every participant.

Suggested guidelines for circle keepers include:

1. Speak to the circle as a whole for the good of the whole
2. Pause and ask for all in the circle to return to the breath when needed
3. Skillfully use what comes up in the group to deepen the circle process, rather than being run by "an agenda"
4. Name what is happening in the circle. Name the experience and/or behavior, not the person. Be transparent.
5. Step into love; create awareness and shift the energy in your body to hold the circle in love
6. When making an offering to a group that is holding some tension, always start with appreciation and/or a positive affirmation

### *Circles use a Talking Piece*

1. A talking piece is a special object that is significant, sacred, and has a story
2. Everyone in the circle is invited to listen mindfully to themselves and to others
3. Only the person holding the talking piece may speak. Participants are invited to share and have the right to pass.
4. The talking piece starts with first person and goes around the circle from person to person in order. The talking piece is sent around a second time for those who passed the first time. Others in the circle may have more to share.
5. The talking piece allows thoughtful reflection at an unhurried pace.
6. The talking piece provides equal access for each person in the circle and is recommended to be kept in use if there are significant differences in authority
7. The talking piece can be suspended for clarifications, brainstorming activities, and next steps... and reinstated when the group gets stuck or experiences conflict

The mindfulness bell may be rung by anyone in the circle after anyone's share to bring a moment of silence into the circle so that all participants may take a moment to reflect on what has just been said.

### *Circle Guidelines*

1. Speak only when you have the talking piece. You can say, "I pass" if you do not wish to speak
2. Speak and listen from the heart
3. Attend to and speak from your own experience. Do not speak for a whole group or express assumptions about the experience of others.
4. Practice wise speech. Remember that we are about collective as well as individual liberation and healing. Speak only what is necessary and most important to share. Leave space for others and for the collective healing.
5. Remain in the circle. Engage in breaking open together rather than breaking apart. If you need to take care of personal needs, if possible, go after someone finishes speaking or when there is some sort of transition.
6. Honor confidentiality. What is said here stays here. What is learned here, leaves here. Don't identify anyone other than yourself, now or later. You can mention circle keepers and what they have shared. If you want to follow-up with anyone regarding something they said in the circle, ask first and respect their wishes.

### *Sharing Values*

Circles are founded and based on sharing values and build a shared intention of how we want to hold the circle. They can also serve as a sacred check-in. The two questions that each person is invited to respond to include: When you bring your best self to the group, what quality do you embody? What value do you request from the group?

Steps include:

1. Meditate (*1-2 minutes*) on the values you are bringing and want to request from the group
2. Write your values silently on folded construction paper
3. State your name and share your values, placing the value you are bringing facing yourself and the value you are requesting facing the group. Place around the center/altar.
4. Ask: Are there any clarifications and/or understanding needed? Can everyone honor the values requested of the group?
5. Establish that there is agreement of shared values, which is the purpose of this exercise

### *Handling Conflict in the Moment*

As the circle keeper, you need to make a decision about whether to intervene in the moment or let the talking piece come around to you and speak to what happened.

1. Thank the person or people who named or mentioned the experience

2. Depending on the time, decide if you will explore it and if so, acknowledge time constraints
3. Ask the parties involved if they want to address the issue. Have a time limit and give a 5-minute reminder to wrap up.
4. Acknowledge the issue may not get resolved in the allotted time. Offer alternatives: mediation, a follow-up for all parties, a harm circle process, or a process to which everyone agrees.

APPENDIX G. Spiritual Teacher and Leadership Training Resource

