Scaling Culture Change With Ally Skills

Valerie Aurora
Frame Shift Consulting

http://frameshiftconsulting.com/

Talk metadata

Slides: https://frameshiftconsulting.com/speaking/#culture

Live-tweeting? Use **@frameshiftllc**

Format

Introduction

What is an ally?

Why should allies take action more than targets?

Some ally skills

Embedding ally skills in your engineering culture

Q&A (20 minutes long, write on index cards)

Who am I?

Founder Frame Shift Consulting

Co-founder and executive director of the Ada Initiative, non-profit for women in open tech/culture

Lead author of a code of conduct used by thousands of conferences

Valerie Aurora

Who am I?

10+ years volunteer work with international feminist groups

Taught ally skills to 2000+ in Spain, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Canada, Mexico, and U.S.

Linux kernel and file systems developer for 10+ years

Valerie Aurora

Most tech companies are biased

Twitter users are diverse but not its staff

Facebook's Diversity Report Shows Gains For Women, But Workforce Remains Very White

Google is still mostly white and male

That's according to the latest diversity report.

Ending bias requires company culture change

"If you always do what you've always done, you always get what you've always gotten."

— *Jessie Potter*

Culture change is faster when powerful people act

Powerful people can change culture faster

When people with more privilege and power act in support of people with less, that's ally actions

Teach people ally skills to help them take more ally actions

Reward ally actions to change culture more quickly

What are ally actions? Some terminology first:

Privilege: an <u>unearned</u> advantage given by society to some people but not all

Oppression: systemic, pervasive inequality that is present throughout society, that benefits people with more privilege and harms those with fewer privileges

More terminology

Target: someone who suffers from oppression (also called "a member of a marginalized group")

Ally: a member of a social group that enjoys some privilege that is **working to end oppression** and **understand their own privilege**

Actions

Example

Privilege: The ability to walk into a convenience store and have the owner assume you are there to buy things and not steal them

Oppression: The self-reinforcing system of stories, TV, news coverage, and legal system stereotyping Black people as criminals, that benefits non-Black people and harms Black people

Example

Target: Any Black person who wants to enter a convenience store

Ally: A non-Black person who donates to legal system reform organizations, actively objects to racist stories, calls their representatives to support police reform, and reads news articles about this privilege

What's wrong with culture change today?

Most work is aimed at changing behavior of **targets**

Less work is aimed at changing behavior of **allies**

Examples of culture change efforts

Volunteer-run affinity groups

Travel scholarships

Advice books aimed at targets

Volunteer-run mentoring programs

Recruiting outreach

Conferences for marginalized groups

AdaCamp Portland
CC BY-SA Jenna Saint Martin Photo

Reasons to focus on changing target behaviors

Targets directly benefit from change and are more self-motivated
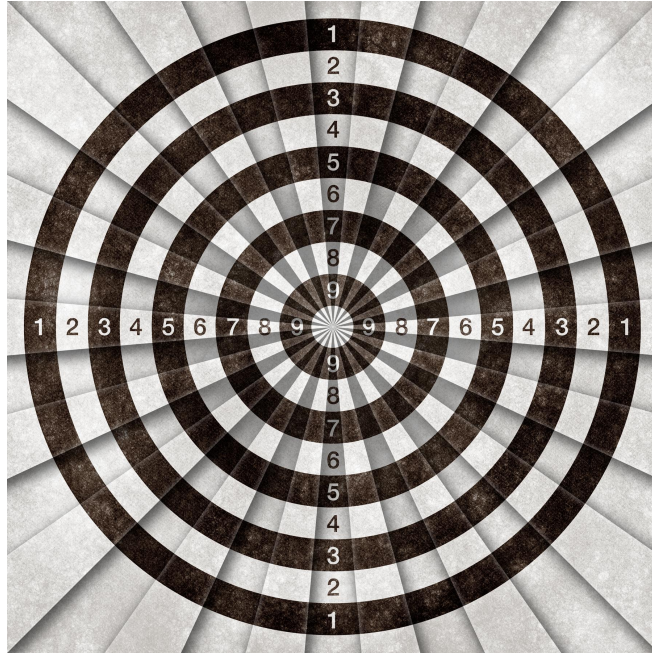
Targets are often more aware of oppression

Targets are often lower status and easier to tell what to do

Targets as seen as the cause of the problem

Avoids confronting feelings of guilt in privileged people
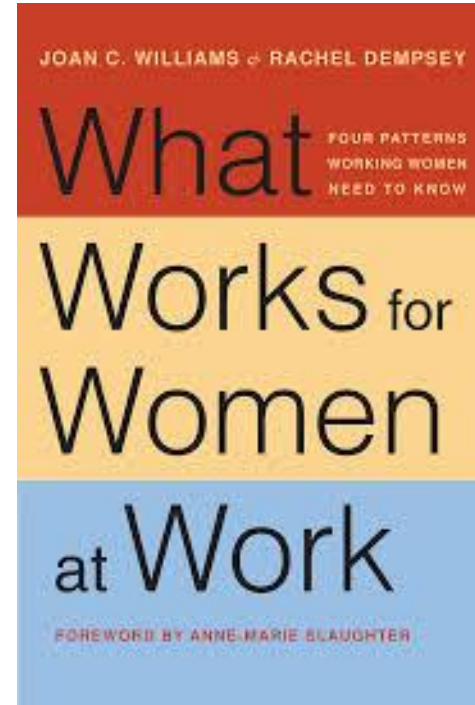
What's wrong with focusing on targets?

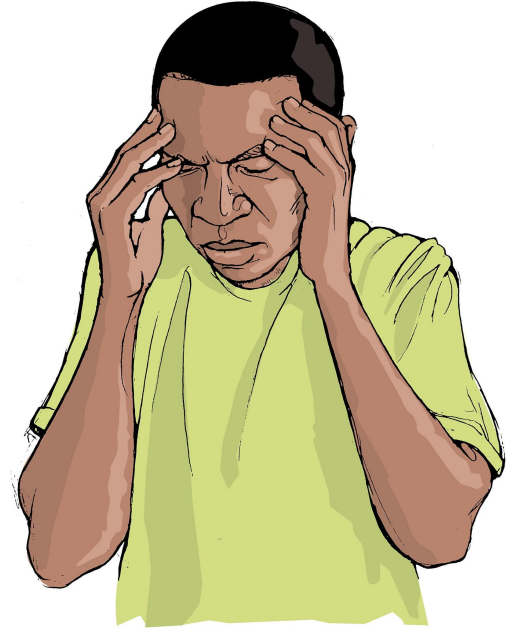# Targets are overworked

© RKO Pictures

Targets are under more stress

Discrimination

Harassment

Abuse and assault

PTSD

Targets have less money

87%: Asian women vs. white men

79%: Lesbian couples vs. men married to women

78%: white women vs. white men

73%: Black men vs. white men

73%: mothers vs. fathers

66%: trans women vs. their pre-transition income

65%: Black women vs. white men

63%: people with disabilities vs. those without

58%: Latinas vs. white men

More likely to have unpaid caregiver responsibilities

CC BY Tax Credits
https://flic.kr/p/bZwHv5

Targets are more likely to suffer retaliation

"[...] Ethnic minority or female leaders who engage in diversity-valuing behavior are penalized with worse performance ratings; whereas [ethnic majority] or male leaders who engage in diversity-valuing behavior are not penalized for doing so."
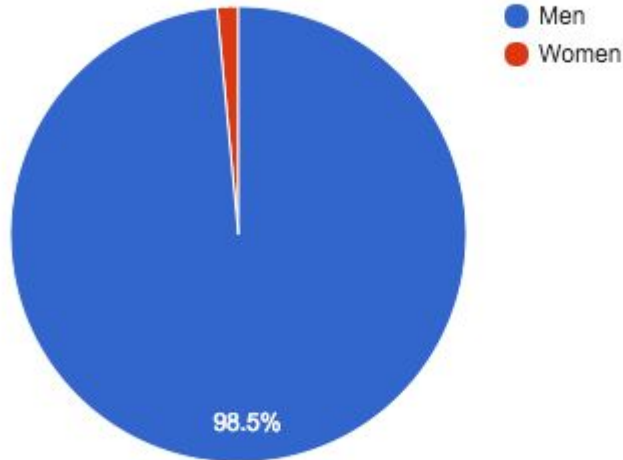
David Hekman, Stefanie Johnson, Wei Yang & Maw Der Foo, 2016

Does valuing diversity result in worse performance ratings for minority and female leaders?
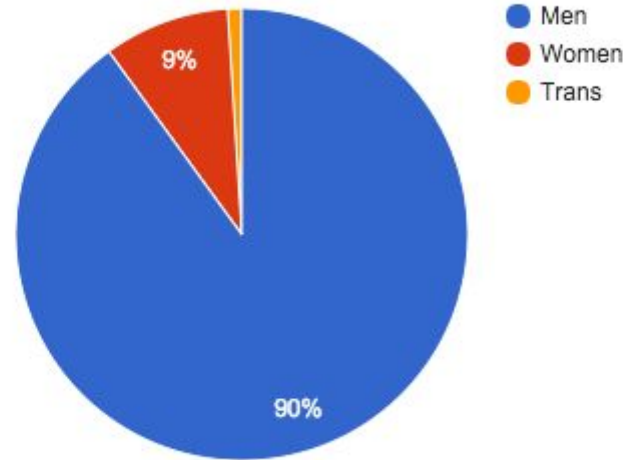http://amj.aom.org/content/early/2016/03/03/amj.2014.0538.abstract

Targets are often in the minority

Gender of open source contributors (2006)

- ● Men
- ● Women

98.5%

Gender of Wikipedia editors (2011)

- ● Men
- ● Women
- ● Trans

9%

90%

Sources: Second 2011 Wikipedia Editor Survey, FLOSSPOLS report

Targets have less power and influence

< 2% of Fortune 500 CEOs are Black

< 7% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women

Smurfette Principle (Katha Pollitt)

"The probability that a woman occupies a top management team position is 51 percent lower if another woman holds a position on the same team."

http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/smj.2461/full

Targets are seen as whiny, complaining, jealous

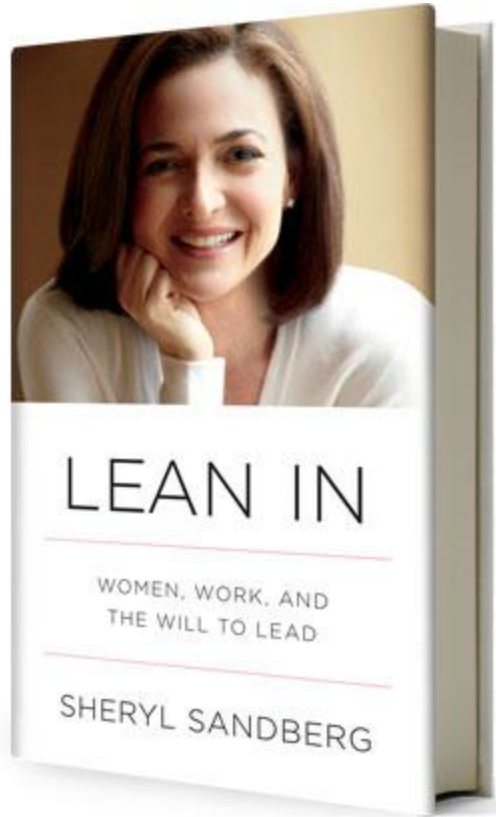A response to my publication of the example conference code of conduct:

Question...
2010/12/06 at 2:39 pm

So... do you actually code anything or contribute to the open source software / hardware community in any tangible way or do you just bitch and moan about having a period and write conference conduct policies?

It is a legitimate inquiry.

And yet...

black girls CODE
imagine. build. create.

CALLBACKWOMEN

NATIVES WHOCODE

Lesbians whoTech
Queer Women In Tech

LEAN IN

WOMEN, WORK, AND THE WILL TO LEAD

SHERYL SANDBERG

Trans*H4CK

The Pregnant Scholar

CODE2040

[mothercoders]

Books/non-profits/organizations for allies in tech

This slide intentionally left blank.

Reward ally actions to change culture more quickly

Allies have more time and energy

Allies have more money

CC BY Pictures of Money https://flic.kr/p/s6895e

Allies are often in the majority

Allies have more power and influence

CC BY Chris Brown https://flic.kr/p/6kMMhW

Allies are seen as altruistic, giving, kind

are rewarded

Allies ~~aren't harmed~~ for "diversity-valuing behavior"

What do good ally skills look like?

Calling out the executive making sex jokes

"Wow." "That was awkward." "You just made it weird."

Figure out who has power or influence over the executive: another executive, a friend, the board of directors

If HR won't fix it, take it to the press (see Uber)

Don't make a target take it to the press

Banning white supremacists from your product

The Paradox of Tolerance:

1. A tolerant society should be tolerant by default
2. With one exception: it should not tolerate intolerance itself

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradox_of_tolerance

Start this conversation and don't let it drop

The Intolerable Speech Rule

Ban people from using your products if they are:

1. Advocating for the removal of human rights
2. From people based on an aspect of their identity
3. In the context of systemic oppression primarily harming that group
4. In a way that overall increases the danger to that group

https://bit.ly/intolerablespeech

Reforming the hiring and promotion system

3 step process from UC Hastings WorkLife Law Center

1. Use metrics

2. Implement bias interrupters

3. Repeat as needed

Detailed list of bias interrupters for workplace systems:

http://biasinterrupters.org/

More ally skills in the Ally Skills Workshop

3 hour discussion-oriented workshop

Teaches practical ally skills

https://frameshiftconsulting.com/ally-skills-workshop/

Why reward ally actions?

Employees do what they see co-workers get promoted and paid for

People often do D&I work and get zero reward or punishment

Some people persist, most get burned out, all feel betrayed

Add ally actions to formal promotion criteria

Create formal promotion criteria requiring ally actions

Create method to reward past D&I work in next promotion cycle

At IBM, mentoring is a "heavily weighted performance metric" and required for promotions

http://www.diversityinc.com/mentoring/why-mentoring-is-not-an-option-at-ibm/

Link D&I goals to individual compensation

Intel linked manager compensation to meeting diversity hiring goals - and is ahead of schedule

Microsoft is following suit

http://fortune.com/2017/08/15/intel-ceo-in-new-diversity-report-lets-turn-this-tragedy-into-action/

https://www.theverge.com/2016/11/18/13681738/microsoft-diversity-goals-executive-bonuses-women-in-tech

Push out employees who oppose equality

Some people benefit from discrimination and bias and don't want a shift towards equality

Often employers worry about these employees leaving

You should be thrilled when they quit!

People who want to discriminate against co-workers should be managed out

What about rewarding targets doing D&I work?

Yes! Do it! But you are unlikely to do so until your systems are fixed

Set up incentives for the most powerful to reform the people and systems

Your goal is to create a system where targets are fairly compensated and promoted for all of their work

How to learn ally skills?

Follow **@frameshiftllc** on Twitter for book-related news

I teach an ally skills workshop

Materials freely reusable; train-the-trainers also available

Being taught at Google, Square, Airbnb

In conclusion

Most diversity and inclusion efforts focus on targets

Targets have less time, energy, power, and influence

Allies have more ability to make change

Reward ally actions to change your culture more quickly

Q&A

Valerie Aurora

Frame Shift Consulting

http://frameshiftconsulting.com/ally-skills-workshop/