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# Incubating the *Germ* that “Gets Under Our Skin”: The Emotion Work of Equity Leaders in a (Racially) Conflicted Organization

Adderley Positive Research Incubator  
Center for Positive Organizations  
University of Michigan  
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# Part of a Broader Research Agenda



Liberia, Summer 2009  
The Carter Center

## GENERATIVE CONFLICT IN RELATIONAL SYSTEMS

- Uncovering the underlying complexities of conflict processes in organizations (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008) and fields (Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010)
- Raising the value of qualitative and abductive (broadly interpretive) methods in conflict research

# What is the *Germ*?

## **Embodied racialized experience**

(racial suffering triggered by  
new encounters with racial conflict)

See Van der Kolk, 2014; Maitlis, 2020  
re: trauma stored in the body

# Systems Psychodynamics

## *The Role of Conflict*

“People have conflicting wishes, and unconscious efforts to manage those conflicts and fulfill those wishes affect their behavior, relationships, and organizations.” (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020: 413)

### **TRANSFERENCE**

(Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020; Petriglieri & Stein, 2012)

### **SOCIAL DEFENSES**

(Bain, 1998; Fotaki & Hyde, 2015; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020: 418)

# Findings

- Nature of Racial Equity Work
- Bodily Resources
- Emotion Practices
- Emotion Work

# Discussion

- Holding Environments for Racial Suffering
- Racialized Emotion Work of Equity Leaders
- Racial Suffering in Racialized Organizations - Dual Path Model

# **A Final Word About “the Germ”**