

BSC Recording _ Tracy Dumas _ Final

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SPEAKERS

Dr. Thomas, Dr. Tracy Dumas, Dr. Fowles

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- D** Dr. Thomas 00:00
Hey, are you rolling your eyes right now because yet another talented student is questioning their abilities
- D** Dr. Fowles 00:06
Well turn a negative into a positive with a No Deficit Model or No Imposter Syndrome tee. Check out all of our Black Social Capital swag and stay motivated by going to staymotivatedandrisetogether.com/shop
- D** Dr. Thomas 00:21
Black Social Capital. Today's guest is Dr. Tracy L. Dumas. Dr. Tracy has taught and conducted research in the area of organizational behavior for over 15 years. Before she entered academia, Dr. Tracy managed client projects for a Chicago based consulting and research firm that specialized in workforce issues. Now she is an associate professor at The Ohio State University, where she teaches MBA courses on negotiation and management. She earned her PhD from Northwestern University, and her research is published in some of the leading academic journals. Dr. Tracy has also written articles for the Harvard Business Review. And she has had her work profiled in media outlets like forbes.com, The Economist, Fast Company, the Bloomberg Business BNA Workforce Report, Harvard Business School Working Knowledge, as well as the HBR Women at Work

podcast. Welcome, Dr. Tracy.

D Dr. Tracy Dumas 01:40
Thank you very much. I'm happy to be here.

D Dr. Fowles 01:43
I'm really excited to have you here today. I feel like this conversation is a long time coming.

D Dr. Tracy Dumas 01:49
Yeah, definitely definitely. And like I was telling you guys before, this is a really, this is a really great initiative. So it's a really, really great idea. And I'm very happy to be able to be involved in some small way. So again, thank you for having me.

D Dr. Thomas 02:05
Well, this is going to be a great conversation. And we are going to go ahead and jump into our Intellectual Capital Segment. This is a reminder of a Black scholar's research academic journey or current events in the professional world. And today, we are here to hear all about your research. Dr. Tracy? So first question is what is the topic of your research? And how did you become interested in it?

D Dr. Tracy Dumas 02:31
Yeah, so the big picture of my research is that I'm very interested in understanding how people's lives outside of work, whether it's their roles that they hold, such as being parents, or as part of their lives outside of work, maybe their roles in organizations, so your roles in your church, or maybe you're active in your Alumni Association, or your child's school, or you have artistic interests. So maybe you play in a band outside of work, or you're actively involved in social justice work. So whatever it is that you do, that you're not being paid for, outside of your paid, paid gig, your regular job, how does that have an impact? Or how does it relate to your experiences at work? And I will say I will add to that. So what I just described, when I described people's non work lives, I described a bunch of roles, so roles in organizations where you have some duties, but included in that I also included in that people's non work identities, so something like a social category. So the fact that you are African American, and maybe one of a few or the only one that is a non work identity, and how does that also relate to your experiences in the workplace? So basically, anything

about who you are, that originates outside of the workspace, how does that affect? Or how does that relate to your experiences at work? So that's the big picture of what I study. And then there of course, there are multiple little buckets in that big picture, but that that's the big picture of what I studied. So I got interested in it was a long, I guess, a long time coming. So I didn't go straight through school. So as you mentioned in your introduction, I worked in corporate America before I decided to leave and go back and get my doctorate and enter into the, you know, professoriate I guess. And what I found, in my experiences working is that it was really difficult to to manage all of the things I wanted to do and to balance those with my responsibilities at work-- especially working for a consulting firm, having clients where you know, your time is not your own. It doesn't matter that the workday is over, it doesn't matter that it's the weekend, if the client needs something or the client calls, then you know, basically, your plans might have to get set to the side. And but even even when that wasn't the case, I have always had a lot of different interests. So, you know, so my job my day job, I'm a professor, I'm a business school professor, but I have always had artistic interests. So you know, so I love dancing and choreography, when when I have the opportunity, I dance I have danced in local productions, I here in Columbus, but you know, I don't know if anybody would pay me to dance, but when I get an opportunity, right? And, and I've also always been interested in music, so I play the piano of I grew up very involved in my church, my parents very involved in my church, my family, very involved in my church. So I grew up having lots of different interests. And it really hit me when I got my first real nine to five job, how difficult it was to remain the level of involvement in all of the things that really feed into who I am. So that was kind of step one, the kernel, in the back of my mind, that's kind of where the seed was planted. And also, in my work experiences, especially my very last job, my very last job before graduate school. It was, it was a firm owned by a husband and wife. And so the company was like their baby, and which is great for them. But they really seemed to have an expectation that everybody who worked there also treated the organization like it was their baby. And that we treated the organization as if it came first before everything else, you know, so they their expectation and the way the organization was managed, it really was managed with the expectation that you are there all the time, if they need you to be. That you whatever your personal interests are, your personal life is, it's going to be secondary to contributing to their organization. And unfortunately, what I know from from my research is that that is not rare. In fact, that is a default in many professional organizations. So so it was the combination of those experiences that when I came back to school to study organizational behavior, I really was interested in this question of how do we help people manage their multiple roles and identities? And then in particular, as an organization, from that, from a management standpoint, you know, how can we help people to be excellent at work, but recognize that that doesn't have to come at the expense of their personal identities, their personal roles, their lives outside of work? So so it was it was the combination of the fact that I was somebody who I have always had

multiple interests, and then working in an organization and really experiencing firsthand what it's like to work for people and work for an organization that has no regard for people's lives outside of work. So I would say it was the combination of those things together that that drove my research interest once I got to grad school.

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Dr. Fowles 08:30

That's a really interesting, um, two things came to mind while while you were speaking. I wrote them down. One, what did your initial research look like? Was it quantitative? Was it qualitative? The other the other question, centered around what have you found people have have done with your work? Yeah, your research and your findings.

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Dr. Tracy Dumas 08:54

Okay. All right. So, so I was trained in a business school, right? So my doctoral program was in the Kellogg School of Management. And, and so my training was quantitative. So my training was primarily lab research. So doing laboratory experiments similar to what you would do in a psychology department, and also doing surveys, so surveying employees in organizations, so the vast majority of so certainly my dissertation, my dissertation was a combination of a laboratory experiment, and a survey of people in organizations and my work now as a professor, the vast majority of it is quantitative research.

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Dr. Fowles 09:41

But But continuing that that thought process so what what have you seen people do with your, with your research?

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Dr. Tracy Dumas 09:49

So really, that that question kind of speaks to this, this constant angst or constant questioning of those of us At least for me, I'll speak for myself even even though I know from talking to some of my friends that we ask these questions all the time. Short answer is, I don't completely know exactly what people do with, with my research, at this stage in my career, you know, I am having more engagement with people outside of academia, you know, so I like to, like you've said, in my intro, I've done podcasts, I've, you know, been invited to, you know, do workshops. And I now also do Exec Ed, where I am leading sessions for people who are on the ground managers right now. And so I'm getting a little bit more of a sense of the connection between the work I do, and what I see people doing, or at the very least, people are interested and other people see relevance in the work that

I'm doing and their experiences. I can just tell you that at the very least, I get the opportunity to, you know, to talk to people. And the overwhelming response that I get to my work is people find that it resonates with them. And they they find that it speaks to an experience that they've had at work and maybe helps them think a little bit differently about how to approach that experience. So it definitely feels good to hear from people who are on the ground working every day who say, you know, I heard about some of your research, and it helped me, if nothing else to-- it kind of validated my experiences, or gave me some new ways of thinking about what I'm experiencing. So

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Dr. Fowles 11:39

It has to be a interesting time to be in, like workforce development, as the whole workplace is now in people's living rooms and kitchens. How do you think that is shifting the idea of what people call work? And why the blurred line? All of that?

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Dr. Tracy Dumas 11:58

Without question! Because I'm very interested in the boundary between work and home. And that actually, this this concept of the boundary between work and home, or between personal and professional, really is the anchor. So so when you asked me about my research, you know, I talked about it again, very, very broad. But I would say the common thread through much of my work, is this idea of how do people manage this boundary? So to your question, Dr. Theo, what we see right now, of course, as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, is a whole lot of people are working from home, whether they wanted to or not, they are now working from home. And so that boundary between work, and home, is a whole lot more fuzzy than it was for a lot of people. Right, and, and it was forced upon us. And so that is something that there, there's a, there's a plus and minus to it. And even before right, even before COVID-19, there's actually a pretty well established body of literature on the work family boundary or the work home boundary. And so you've got these two dimensions. One is integration where the boundary is incredibly permeable or blurry. So it's not exactly clear where home ends and where work begins and vice versa. And then on the other side, you have a segmented boundary, you have segmentation, where the boundary is impermeable, and people kind of keep a rigid distinction between what is work and what is home. So right now we have a lot of people who are more integrated, or their home and work lives are more integrated, that boundary is gone. So what I can tell you generally, what research says about that is that in general, when people have a more blurred boundary between work at home, that tends to be associated with a greater feeling of conflict, or interference. So one is interfering with the other. So an example is, you know, while I'm trying to get my work done, but my kids keep coming in and stopping me so I don't get to concentrate and focus on my work the way I want to or I

just can't focus because there are all these different cues in this environment because I'm not in the work environment. So I can't focus in the exact same way. So without question there's a pretty strong effect in work across the-- so not just my research but other researchers. It's a pretty common finding across different research studies that segmentation tends to lower conflict between work at home. And integrating tends to increase conflict between work and home. And again, this idea of conflict is, I would say more colloquially, it's about interference, one interferes with the other. And what we-- part of the reason is that when people don't have a boundary, then they don't get to cut work off. What we know is that people benefit from recovery. So there's a large body of research on what's called recovery. And the idea is when you're exerting energy, whether it's cognitive energy or physical energy, doing something, doing your work, you benefit a great deal from you know, stopping that, and setting it aside and doing something totally different, that that totally different might include rest, but it could also just mean doing a completely different activity that draws on a whole different set of cognitive resources, that requires a whole different set of skills, that requires a totally different kind of attention. And that when you take a break from one activity, in this case, we'll say work, you get involved in something completely different. Let's say you leave work and you go play with your band. Right? And that actually adds-- it replenishes all the resources that were depleted. It provides you with a new set of energy, resources, confidence, skills. There's value in stepping away. And so when people don't have a clear boundary, that recovery process is hindered. So in general, what we see are, you know, you have this we have this general finding yet. And still, we also have the fact that integration tends to be associated with flexibility, because let's not, let's not down talk or let's not, you know, put integration down because the reality is, for many of us, this ability to work from home, is incredible during the middle of this pandemic. And even before the pandemic, having the opportunity to telecommute was often seen as a plus as a bonus, or as a perk, because it offers flexibility to us. And flexibility is associated with autonomy, which is incredibly attractive, and it's incredibly motivating for people in their work. So, so we have this, this this tension that we have to manage. And so for me the takeaway, and the takeaway that I would share with anyone is to be intentional, right, and to think about ways to, to benefit from the flexibility that comes with having this blurred boundary, but also think, intentionally or think strategically about how exactly do I want this to happen. And what that might mean is that even though I'm working from home, I need to set up all my meetings and or I need to even establish a work time that the time in and of itself is going to interfere less with what my responsibilities are in the workplace. So, that you still have some type of demarcation is going to be critical. And also something that comes out of my research is that the priority matters, when the priority matters and also the direction matters. So, thinking about what is the most important factor or what is the most important set of duties or what is the most important role I have and sometimes and this is one of the exceptions, even if we even if we step away from COVID-19 one of the

exceptions of this integration rule in that integration leads to more conflict is is with this idea of identities that are important to you, and taking those identities with you everywhere so you know we we are often told sometimes even from from well meaning people that well you have to downplay this part of who you are and well you know, you want to dress in this way so that you fit in more in the organization and you don't want to highlight the fact that you're different. But I've even seen articles and they make perfect sense about about minorities, being really intentional. Okay, now that I am working from home because of COVID-19 And I have a meeting with my boss, or we have a departmental meeting. And wow. So you know, thinking about how to position the camera, because I have all this Afrocentric art or whatever. And I don't know, necessarily that I want to highlight that in my conversation with my boss, because we've been taught to downplay that, or, or any number of things in our home environment that might highlight or spotlight our racial identity. A lot of people don't feel so comfortable with that, which, and I'd be really interested that that's one thing that I see that changing to some degree, just as younger people come into the work workforce, I see the culture around that changing and I would really, I'm really interested in seeing how that changes now in this moment that we have with, you know, with a different racial reckoning that and racial conversations that we're seeing, and that we're seeing incorporations that are truly unprecedented. So it's funny, because a 2018, I have I have a Harvard Business Review article, I think it was in the April 2018 issue. And that article is all about why minorities-- in particular, African Americans sometimes feel uncomfortable sharing a lot of personal information in the workplace. And so the article, you know, kind of talked through some of the different reasons you might need to. Or, or, frankly, the the article opens with an interview with a finance executive who found that he was stalling in his advancement. And he finally was able, and even though his numbers were great, right, His performance was great. He was one of the top performers hands down in the organization. And yet he saw people advancing beyond him. And so he finally had a conversation with a courageous manager or a superior in his organization said, look, you know, folks feel like they just don't know who you are, know, they don't feel comfortable with you, they don't really feel like they don't, they don't have a read on you. They don't know who you are. And he said that he had been intentional in leaving that type of information out because he just wanted to put his head down and perform, and he thought that that would advance him. And that is a very common practice among African Americans.

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Dr. Fowles 22:35

Cuz we hear a lot of times, you know, that's our business, right? And they don't need to know our business.

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Dr. Tracy Dumas 22:41

Right. And the reality is that there can be there can be some real, some real downsides, some real disadvantages of disclosing the wrong information. And there could be there are career detriments to highlighting characteristics that are not seen as fitting with the workplace. Even though if we're all honest, that information has nothing to do with your ability to perform well on the job.

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Dr. Thomas 23:12

Or get along with with the others that work there. I was wondering when you were originally talking about your dissertation topic, if you found a lot of literature on your on your topic, right? Because it just seems like I have not heard much other than, like, make sure you have the work life balance. But other than that, I have not heard anything about someone doing actual research on non work activities, and integrating that with your actual job and how that is for employees from an organizational perspective.

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Dr. Tracy Dumas 23:56

So I love that question. I don't know. I don't know if I feel happy about that question or if I feel depressed about that question. So let me tell you why. So my so I did my dissertation. And like I said, I can't believe it. Like when I start talking to people about how long ago this was. Wow. So I wrote my dissertation in 2003. So that was when I finished that part of the journey. And in 2003, there were some papers on boundaries, but there were not a lot. And it specifically on boundaries. There were a lot-- there was a very well established body of research on work, family issues, and it was primarily about helping working parents manage the responsibility of children. But this question specifically of the boundary. There were just a handful of papers. Now in 2020, there is definitely a lot of research and I can you know, if you're really interested I actually I wrote a review article, it's time for another one. So in 2015, I published a review article, and it was specifically reviewing the research on the work home boundary. And again, though, that was 2015. So there have been even more papers since then. But so it has been a growing area of research. And now with COVID-19, because the reality is, even after this is resolved, however, is going to be resolved, which, frankly, is not gonna be anytime soon. If we're watching the news, this is not going to be resolved anytime soon. But what plenty of people are saying is that the work place is gonna be forever changed, because you have people who went to remote work, that never would have thought of remote work before. And now they're doing it, and it doesn't work too bad. And there are some benefits of doing work this way. So what I expect is that there's going to be even more research about, okay, now that we do have this remote work, there's going to be more research on the boundary, because the boundary issues are still there. And, you know, there are lots of

pieces. So there are a ton of pieces now out about women, and how this has really been problematic for women, a big part of it is because of COVID-19. They don't have childcare, right? Because of COVID-19. And so again, work family is one bucket. So again, my big umbrella is how does life outside of work affect work. But then under that umbrella are different pieces. And one of those pieces is work family. And so we've got a lot of women now who, you know, they were sending children to daycare, or maybe they had childcare workers come into the home. And that is not an option now, because we're all under quarantine and not supposed to be in gatherings. And so it's really highlighted an issue in a new way



Dr. Thomas 27:10

Right? It affects men now.



Dr. Tracy Dumas 27:11

So yeah, I'm working from home.



Dr. Thomas 27:13

Yep.



Dr. Tracy Dumas 27:13

And it affects men now in which, frankly,



Dr. Thomas 27:17

Oh no! Not the patriarchy.



Dr. Tracy Dumas 27:19

Right? Well, frankly, the reality is, it affected men, once women started coming into the workplace in larger numbers. Because so I don't know if you've heard of the ideal worker concept, right. But so the ideal worker norm is an idea. It was a concept coined by a by a legal professor. And basically, the idea is that the workplace, the modern workplace, but what we call the modern workplace place, really, is still set up, like a 1950s workplace with the expectation that your employees are men who have unemployed wives at home, or wives who are not employed for pay, because they are most certainly working. Right? If

they're at home with children and managing the household they are working, they're just not getting paid for it. And so and so the workplace was designed, that is how organizations were designed in mind. So that's the ideal worker, right? So the ideal worker concept is this person who can work full steam full time devoted to the organization, because there is somebody else full time taking care of their life outside of work. But once women started entering the workplace in masse, even though work family research focused on women, really, and how do women have careers with these children. But the reality is that if you are a man with a wife, who works or if you are a man with a spouse, who works outside of the home full time, is really an issue for you, too. Now, granted, I must acknowledge that in those situations, what research would show is that women still bear the brunt of it. And COVID-19 has shone the spotlight on it.

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Dr. Thomas 27:41

I think that organizations really need to take a look at take a hard look at how they're doing things. Because inclusion is a big thing right now. And if you're going to truly include everyone, right, we absolutely should be talking about the racial inclusion pieces. But also, you know, women have been, you know, struggling in the workforce for a long time.

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Dr. Fowles 29:36

So, I have a question. I think that'll help, at least in my mind, kind of summarize and encapsulate a lot of what we talked about here today.

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Dr. Tracy Dumas 29:45

Okay.

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Dr. Fowles 29:46

We talked about work workplace flow, you know, whether it's working from home, whether working in an office what would you say? You know, our show is called Black Social Capital, right? It's about, it's about networking, it's about building a community around you that can champion you. Help you go to the next level. But what would you say to individuals who are at the beginning stages, the mid stages of their career, and they're looking to pinpoint one or two concepts, or one or two ideas that can put them on the right track for that, for that key job position, or to set up to have a successful career? You know, you're studying workplace and workforce, what are those one or two things you think, can set someone up for future success?



Dr. Tracy Dumas 30:47

Wow, talking about putting me on the spot. Okay, one or two things. So the first one, I would say, is to be clear on your priorities and your goals. Because whatever career you pursue. That field, that organization has values and priorities that they will impose on you. And if those values and priorities are out of step with, what is important to you, then one of a couple of things are going to happen. One is you will take on those values and act according to them, you will take on the values and priorities that they are imposing, and you will earn some degree of success. But you will perhaps be unhappy or unfulfilled, or burned out. Because it takes effort to work against your grain, it takes a different kind of effort. I mean, all work takes effort, but it takes a different kind of effort to work against your grain. And, and, but it's easy to get sucked in to what the broader organization or what the field wants you to do. And especially it gets easy to suck down when that's where all the rewards are, or when you are rewarded for doing so. So I would say be very clear with yourself on your goals and your motives. And even if you have to deviate to some degree, because we all have to pay our dues, we all have to work our way up. And sometimes that means Okay, you don't get to do what you want to do your first year in the organization or in the field. But I think always asking yourself the question and checking in with yourself, say, Okay, I'm doing this right now. But let me remember that X, Y, Z is my goal. And I have to, you know, constantly ask myself, okay, what am I doing, even though I have to do ABC for now for this company? What am I doing to advance the goal that's important to me, or if I'm not doing it right now, and if I can't, let me set a timeline for myself, so I'm going to do this for a year, I'm going to do this for six months. So first thing I would say is really just be clear on what your goal is. And constantly check in with yourself about how you're engaging in behaviors that push you towards that goal. That's, that's the one first, and of course, like I said, either one or one of two things is going to happen is you're gonna buy into what the people are telling you to do, you'll gain some success, but you won't necessarily be happy, you'll get burned out. Or you'll, you know, you will lose sight of who you are, and not be successful and not be happy. Because it's too hard to, you know, to try to work against your grain and work against what's important to you. So that's one. The second I would say is plug into people who are, who have the same goals, right? You got to get plugged in, you got to have some people running in front of you that you can look at what they're doing and follow behind them and they can they can help you help you you know, traverse the terrain and let you know about the curves that are coming ahead. So you know, you got to get connected and without and then you get your people that are running beside you because having your peers and your people that can go the journey with you are incredibly important. And then of course, having connection with the people who are coming behind you is also critical. But I would say without question, there's no way I could have had my career. There's no way I would be where I am today and even In moving forward, because I still, I still feel like I got a long way to go, I still got a lot of stuff to do. There's no way I could have it without the people,

all of those people without the people who, you know, helped me and supported me and guided me and taught me. I would be nowhere. Without them, I would be nowhere, I was really fortunate to have a great group of people in grad school with me. And also, I was really fortunate to be part of the Ph. D Project. So shout out to the PhD Project, which put me in touch with other minority doctoral students, there's no way I would have been here would have finished would have gotten those papers done would have gotten tenure, I just see all of those people as central. So number one, be clear on your goals, and your goals and your values and check in with them all the time. And number two really get connected with people who are on the same path as you. To me. I think those are the most important things anybody can do.

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Dr. Thomas 36:03

Okay.

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Dr. Fowles 36:03

So thank you, Dr. Tracy, for for being on our show today. We really enjoyed you. We are excited to see what's next for you. And I know that you are making a difference with your students but also making the workplace better. So with that, see everyone on the next episode, and we out. We hope you enjoy today's show. Remember, the way we build social capital is to build self and build others. Be sure you got some notes on your tablet, computer or even using a pen and paper. Leave us a review. Continue the conversation on social media @BlackSocialCap and share the show with someone you know. Until the next episode. Stay motivated and rise together.

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Dr. Thomas 36:54

Are you tired of bland, Eurocentric fashion accessories? Do you want to feel seen when you step out? Well then Huey's Sons is the brand for you. Huey's Sons is a pro-Black accessories company that focuses on Millennial style and Afrocentric values. They have a variety of products like lapel pins, buttons, hats, Apple watch bands and more. I bought some stickers and put them on my laptop and I have a few pins and the quality is great. You will definitely find something for yourself and all your friends and family. Check out HueysSons.com for the latest drop today. This is Black Social Capital.