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ABSTRACT

Three papers comprise this symposium on diversity in the workplace. "Factors That Assist and Barriers That Hinder the Success of Diversity Initiatives in Multinational Corporations" (Rose Mary Wentling) reports that factors that assisted in the success were classified under diversity department, human, and work environment; barriers were those of the work environment, of people in corporations, and of diversity initiatives. "Developing Organizational Awareness: Gaining a Distributed View of Organization-Level Change in Workforce Diversity Awareness" (Martin B. Kormanik) shows that using the cycle of awareness development model to examine individual employees' awareness development regarding workforce diversity may serve as a measure for assessing organization-level outcome. "Diversity Dialogues in the Workplace: A Study of Implementation Issues" (Martin B. Kormanik, Kim S. Apperson) focuses on a study whose results show that an organization's management can increase participation in a structured diversity dialogue initiative by increasing the status of the initiative. (One way to accomplish this is by directive change--making dialogue participation mandatory.) All papers include substantial references. (YLB)

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Factors that Assist and Barriers that Hinder the Success of Diversity Initiatives in Multinational Corporations

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The purpose of this study was to identify and provide information on the factors that assist and barriers that hinder the success of diversity initiatives in multinational corporations. Eight multinational corporations headquartered in the United States were selected for this study. Two methods of data collection were used: semi-structured face-to-face interviews, and document analysis.

Keywords: Diversity Initiatives, Multinational Corporations, Organizational Barriers

The populations of the United States and other countries around the world are becoming more diverse, causing organizations to become more diverse as well (Fernandez, 1993; Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2000; Norton & Fox, 1997). Demographers have reported that the workforce population will include an increased number of women, more minorities, varieties of ethnic backgrounds, more aging workers, and people with different life styles (Schraeder, 1999). People from many diverse groups will be working together to keep businesses running competitively throughout the world (Dutton, 1998). It is expected that the extent to which these demographic workforce shifts are effectively and efficiently managed will have an important impact on the competitive and economic outcome of organizations (Dass & Parker, 1996; Gasorek, 1998). Only companies that have cultures which support diversity will be able to retain the best talent necessary to remain competitive (Morosini, 1998).

Increases in competition and demographic changes have convinced many business leaders that diversity should be an essential part of their business strategy (Cox, 1993; Pollar, 1998). Demographic changes, the shift from a manufacturing based economy to a service economy, and global competition are some factors that have forced US corporations to reexamine their policies, programs, and practices to remain competitive. One of the most cited reports on the dramatic demographic changes in US society is *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the Twenty-First Century* (Johnston & Parker, 1987). This report and others (Judy & D'Amico, 1997; US Bureau of the Census, 1994; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1998) indicate that workforce demographics are expected to change dramatically. Managers who want their organizations to remain competitive are concerned about how to implement different initiatives and programs in order incorporate and retain diverse body of employees (Gasorek, 1998; Rosner, 1999).

There are numerous ways in which different individuals have defined diversity. Definitions of the term range from narrow to very broad. Narrow definitions tend to define diversity in terms of race, gender, and ethnicity (Kossek & Lobel, 1996). Broad definitions may also include age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, values, ethnic culture, education, language, life style, beliefs, physical appearance, and economic status (Norton & Fox, 1997). Each of these characteristics can affect an employee's attitudes and behaviors in the workplace, as well as influence their ability to work well with other employees. For the purpose of this study, diversity is defined as all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued (Hayles & Russell, 1997; Kossek & Lobel, 1996).

An important force influencing workforce diversity is the globalization of the marketplace. As global competition is increasingly becoming more important, it has become apparent that American competitiveness in the global marketplace will depend on effective human resource development and management (Fernandez, 1993; Poole, 1997). Wentling and Palma-Rivas (1998) interviewed diversity experts throughout the United States and found that the globalization of many American corporations has raised the need for a multicultural perspective to compete successfully abroad. These companies need to deal with diverse employees, customers, and suppliers around the world. Therefore, many companies are providing skills and cultural awareness training to help their employees be more knowledgeable, understanding, and sensitive to the differences which may exist between themselves and people from other countries. According to Fernandez (1993), US companies will continue to expand through acquisitions, mergers, the transfer of facilities overseas, and will be faced with increasing diversity in the workforce.

During the last decade, many organizations have responded to the increase in diversity with initiatives and

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programs designed to manage diversity in the workplace (Arredondo, 1996). For example, Cox (1993) identified work arrangements, education and training, career management, and mentoring relationships as specific diversity initiatives in American corporations. Morrison (1992) found diversity initiatives related to accountability, career development, and recruitment. Although there is a wide range of initiatives and strategies for managing diversity and organizations are scrambling to develop diversity programs, very little is known about factors that assist and barriers that hinder the success of diversity initiatives in multinational corporations (Fernandez, 1993; Florkowski, 1996; Hayles & Russell, 1997).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that assist and barriers that hinder the success of diversity initiatives in multinational corporations. Diversity initiatives for the purpose of this study are defined as specific activities, programs, policies and any other formal processes or efforts designed for promoting organizational culture change related to diversity (Arredondo, 1996). This study examined the following major research questions:

1. What factors have assisted in the success of diversity initiatives in corporations?
2. What barriers have hindered the implementation of diversity initiatives in corporations?
3. What can be done to prevent failure of diversity initiatives in corporations?

Methodology

This was a descriptive and exploratory study. Two major methods of data collection were used: semi-structured face-to-face interviews and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with workforce diversity manager/directors who are responsible for diversity initiatives in multinational corporations headquartered in the United States. The data obtained through the interviews consisted of words in the form of rich verbal descriptions (qualitative data), as well as quantitative data. Essentially, this study used a qualitative approach to answer the research questions. A quantitative method in the form of frequencies and percentages were also used to support the qualitative data. The second major method of data collection used was document analysis. Documents related to the organizational diversity initiatives in the multinational corporations were collected from primary and secondary sources. Documents were solicited from the corporations and from standard literature sources, such as, annual reports, community relations reports, journals, magazines, world-wide-web, newspaper articles, research reports, and diversity-related books. The data obtained from these documents provided insightful and enriched information that was used to confirm and verify the information provided by the study participants during the face-to-face interviews.

The population for this study was composed of the 30 multinational corporations in a mid-west state in the US listed in the book entitled, *Directory of Diversity in Corporate America* (1994). From those 30 corporations, a sample of eight was randomly selected to participate in the study. The population and sample that was selected for this study was ideal because in order for a corporation to be included in the *Directory of Diversity in Corporate America* (1994), it must meet the following criteria: (a) have extensive experience with workforce diversity, (b) be multinational corporations, (c) be allocating resources to diversity initiatives, and (d) have launched successful corporate diversity initiatives.

The data were collected through interviews and document analysis. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with eight workforce diversity manager/directors in charge of diversity initiatives in eight multinational corporations in a mid-west state in the United States. The researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide to assist in collecting the data from the interviews. The interviews were conducted on-site at each participant's corporate office. All interviews were tape recorded and extensive notes were also taken during each interview. The interviews lasted from one and a half to three hours, with an overall average of two hours.

In addition, the researcher conducted a document analysis of written and printed materials related to the organizational diversity initiatives in the multinational corporations. These documents were solicited, collected, and included the most current corporate annual reports, newsletter articles, newspaper articles, and profiles from general business directories, research reports, journal articles, magazine articles, and chapters from diversity books.

The data from the interviews were content-analyzed. Content analysis is a research technique for systematically examining the content of communications—in this instance, the interview data. The researcher and a research associate independently analyzed the participants' responses and the related issues that arised during the interview process. No major discrepancies were found when the analyses from both researchers were compared. The researchers read the responses, put them together as complete quotations, and filed them according to the topic or

issue addressed. Responses were analyzed thematically. Emergent themes were ranked by their frequency of mention and finally categorized. Data obtained through the interviews were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitative data were used to provide the basic research evidence, while qualitative data were used to round out the picture and provide examples.

Documents were collected and analyzed prior to, during, and after the interviews. All together there was a total of 47 related documents analyzed. Related documents obtained from the world-wide-web, corporate sources, books, journals, newspapers, newsletters, reports, and so forth were all included in individual files for each of the corporations in the study. The researcher coded the related documents by relevant topic as they related to the major research questions. To further assist in ensuring the reliability of the data analysis, the researcher invited a diversity manager from a multinational corporation in the west coast to review four of the interviews. The ratings (frequencies of emergent themes) of the diversity manager matched the researcher's ratings in all of the four interviews reviewed. The same procedure was followed for the related documents analysis, which produced similar results.

Results

The results of this study are summarized in three major sections that parallel the research questions: (a) Factors that assist in the success of diversity initiatives in multinational corporations, (b) Barriers that hinder the success of diversity initiatives in multinational corporations; and (c) Preventing failure of diversity initiatives in multinational corporations.

Factors Assisting in the Success of Diversity Initiatives

The first major research question in the study attempted to identify the factors assisting in the success of diversity initiatives. To analyze the data on the factors assisting in the success of diversity initiatives, the researcher developed three categories based on what the study participants stated. Factors identified were classified under the following three categories: (a) diversity department, (b) human, and (c) work environment. Factors identified in each of the categories were ranked-ordered according to the frequency of mention by the study participants. The categories are described as follows:

Diversity Department Factors Assisting in the Success of Diversity Initiatives. The study participants cited a variety of factors assisting in the success of diversity initiatives, which the researcher assembled under the category of diversity department. This category had the largest number of factors and also some of the most frequently mentioned. These specific factors fell under the diversity department's responsibility for success. The three most frequently mentioned factors under this category were: (a) have a strategic plan for diversity initiatives, 8 (100%); (b) integrate diversity initiatives into the corporate goals and priorities 8 (100%); (c) implement several initiatives simultaneously, 7 (88%).

The importance of having a strategic plan for the success of diversity initiatives was recognized by all the study participants. They all agreed that strategic planning is an important factor that leads to the success of diversity initiatives because it provides guidance, makes them reactive, and avoids shortsightedness. Since strategic planning emphasizes long-term initiatives, it avoids the danger of having "one-shot" diversity initiatives that are likely to disappear with time. In other words, strategic planning does not allow diversity initiatives to become a fad. Having a diversity strategic plan was also recognized as a primary responsibility of the diversity department or function.

Another factor considered highly influential in the success of diversity initiatives is the integration of diversity initiatives into the corporation's goals and priorities, or the linkage of the diversity initiatives to the corporate strategic plan. All the study participants agreed that diversity initiatives should be integrated in the strategic goals and priorities of corporations. This is also a responsibility of the diversity department or diversity function. If managers and employees in an organization clearly see the relationship between the diversity initiatives and the corporation goals, this can demonstrate that diversity is important and unlikely to fade away. This can also lead people to become supportive, and management to become committed to the initiatives.

Eighty-eight percent of the study participants agreed that in order for diversity initiatives to be successful, diversity departments have to coordinate several initiatives simultaneously. To implement a single initiative is perceived as negative and not likely to be successful. Study participants stated that "diversity initiatives should not stand alone and should be connected to the diversity business case." Some diversity initiatives are perceived as very important but "not a solution in itself." One of the research participants stated, "I think that diversity initiatives

really do work, but they do not stand alone. If you implement just one initiative, you are not going to get the rest of what needs to happen; meaning, you don't have the good foundation in place."

Human Factors Assisting in the Success of Diversity Initiatives. Many factors assisting in the success of diversity initiatives were identified for the category of human factors. The three most frequently mentioned factors under this category were: (a) recognition that diversity is a business imperative 8 (100%); (b) acknowledgment of the benefits of diversity, 7 (88%); (c) people personally committed, 5 (63%).

In order for diversity initiatives to be successful, there must be recognition that diversity is a business imperative. This factor was recognized as a driver of success by all the study participants. Managers and employees alike need to recognize that diversity is a business imperative. One study participant stated, "Diversity initiatives have been successful for us because we have been able to make diversity a business case, a business imperative." Another study participant said, "Recognition by many people in the organization that diversity is a compelling business issue has led us to have successful diversity initiatives." Acknowledging the benefits that diversity brings to corporations, managers, and employees was another factor identified as a driver of success for diversity initiatives by eighty-eight percent of the study participants.

Another human factor associated with the success of diversity initiatives is to have people personally committed to diversity. This factor was recognized as a promoter of success by sixty-three percent of the study participants. The following was stated by one of the participants regarding this aspect, "I think what has been very successful is the energy and the commitment you get from people in the organization. We have people that at different levels wanted to be involved because they are really committed and recognize the importance of respect and inclusion. Because they are committed, they can also connect diversity with its impact on teams, and also can understand how important it is for an organization to utilize everybody. We have people functioning as champions in the workplace and they are really trying to raise issues around diversity whenever they can, and that I think it has been really successful."

Work Environment Factors Assisting in the Success of Diversity Initiatives. Many factors were cited by the study participants under the category of organizational factors. The three most frequently mentioned factors under this category were: (a) have a culture that values diversity, 8 (100%); (b) top management support, endorsement, and commitment, 8 (100%); (c) recognizing that diversity is more than an HR issue, 6 (75%).

All the study participants identified having a culture that values and supports diversity as the most important factor leading to the success of diversity initiatives. One study participant stated, "Our diversity initiatives have been successful because we have a culture that fully supports diversity. Diversity is part of the culture from the highest to the very bottom levels. The value of diversity is something that is communicated throughout the entire organization just as any other business strategy, such as quality management."

All of the research participants also identified top management support as one of the most important factors driving the success of diversity initiatives. According to the study participants the most influential factor that has assisted in the success of diversity initiatives is the commitment and support of top management. One study participant indicated, They (senior management) firmly support the diversity initiatives. We started off with top leadership and pushed it down. Much effort is going on at the senior level of this company. Success is because we have commitment from the executive group in the organization."

Seventy-five percent the study participants also agreed that in order for diversity initiatives to be successful, the top executives and everyone in a corporation should recognize that diversity is a business imperative or a business advantage and much more than an HR issue. Recognizing the advantages that diversity management brings to organizations and individuals can be a strong factor leading to the success of diversity initiatives. One reason is that people's understanding can make the implementation and development processes easy. Another reason is that if people in corporations understand the value of diversity, they can become more receptive and willing to participate.

For some study participants it was difficult to identify major factors assisting in the success of diversity initiatives. For them, various factors complemented each other in supporting successful diversity initiatives. The ideal, for them, would be to have all the factors described above working together to ensure the success of diversity initiatives. The rationale for not mentioning specific factors was that they depended on each other to make diversity initiatives effective. For the study participants who perceived the combination of factors as leading to success, all factors were very important, but success depended on a combined approach. For example, just one factor, such as management commitment, in itself will not lead to success, it has to be complemented by other factors as well.

Barriers to Diversity Initiatives

The second major research question in the study addressed the barriers that have hindered the diversity initiatives in the corporations. The study participants were asked to identify the barriers that have hindered the diversity initiatives in their corporations. To analyze the data, the researcher developed three categories based on the barriers cited by the study participants. Barriers identified were classified under the following categories: (a) Barriers of the work environment; (b) Barriers of people in corporations; and (c) Barriers of diversity initiatives. Barriers identified in each of the categories were ranked-ordered according to the frequency of mention in the interviews. The categories are described below.

Barriers of the Work Environment. The study participants cited many major barriers that the researcher categorized under the category of barriers coming from within the corporations' work environments. The three most frequently mentioned barriers under this category were: (a) competing agendas, 6 (75%); (b) size and complexity of the corporation, 6 (75%); and (c) economic changes, 4 (50%).

Having competing agendas is a corporate barrier that was identified by seventy-five percent of the study participants. These corporations are engaged in many additional projects other than diversity, and all of them are perceived as important by the leaders of their corporations. Most of them are engaged in total quality management, process improvement, strategic planning, team development, and many other types of organizational development interventions. They all require time and resources. Therefore, financial support, human resources, and time have become very scarce for managers and employees. One of the study participants stated that, "There is a constant struggling to get the most urgent done. People set their priorities and diversity issues are left behind because they are easier to put off."

Seventy-five percent of the study participants identified the size and complexity of the corporations as a big barrier hindering the development of diversity initiatives. All the corporations studied are very large with a number of divisions and branches inside and outside the United States. The complexity of their operations and their sizes make it difficult to effectively coordinate the overall process of diversity initiatives. Corporations' large number of units, branches, sub-cultures, and locations are barriers that do not allow diversity initiatives to be implemented easily. The importance each corporate unit gives to diversity also varies. This also leads some units or branches to adapt changes at differing speeds. Size of the organizations was also seen as a barrier because it interferes with conveying the diversity message to many people in a limited amount of time. In addition, corporate size makes it difficult to come to decisions and agreements in a reasonable time frame.

Half of the study participants identified changes in the economy of the corporations as an important barrier hindering the progress of diversity initiatives. These economic changes have forced corporations to decrease financial resources and to reduce the number of people working in corporations, causing excessive overload work schedules. Due to economic changes, corporations have less resources in general. Economic changes have led corporations to reduce, downsize, and flatten. This means that corporations have to function with fewer people, which, in turn, brings more pressure and overload work schedules for everyone in the organizations. Unfortunately, this leads to lack of time and financial resources to devote to diversity initiatives.

Barriers of People in Corporations. The study participants cited a variety of barriers that the researcher categorized under the category of barriers of people in corporations. The three most frequently mentioned barriers under this category were: (a) people not understanding the value of diversity, 7 (88%), (b) people not fully supporting diversity, 6 (75%); and (c) slow involvement, 4 (50%).

The most frequently mentioned barrier was people not understanding the value of diversity. Eighty-eight percent of the study participants cited this as a major barrier. The following phrases are evidence of this barrier: people not understanding why diversity is important; people not seeing its value; lack of awareness of the value of diversity; people not knowing what to expect; people not understanding what impact diversity has on them personally; people with myopic thinking; lack of visionary people; and people not seeing the true value of diversity.

Not having full support for diversity initiatives was mentioned as another barrier by seventy-five percent of the study participants. Not understanding the value of diversity and what it means for corporations and individuals can lead to this lack of support. However, some people may understand what diversity is and its value and still not

support it. The most serious barrier in this context is when leaders in companies do not fully support diversity. One of the study participants put it this way: "I don't have, nor do I expect complete buy in. We actually do not have total support from everybody in the corporation. However, the person who was the most important for the diversity strategy to work was the CEO."

Half of the study participants identified slow involvement as a barrier. One of the participants described this barrier in the following way: "Some groups of people are much slower in reacting to change than others. That is a barrier that we encounter within the organization. If you have six business units, and two of them are slower than the others in implementing the diversity initiatives, people do observe and that is a double edged sword. It is especially negative when the slower ones represent business units with significant size." Leaders being slow in implementing their diversity initiatives can create other obstacles, such as people within the business units complaining, missing work, becoming dissatisfied, and quitting and leaving the company.

Barriers of Diversity Initiatives. The study participants identified several barriers that the researcher categorized under barriers of diversity initiatives. The three barriers most frequently mentioned under this category were: (a) difficult to evaluate, 6 (75%); (b) difficult to show return-on-investment, 4 (50%); and (c) organizational policies interfering with diversity initiatives, 4 (50%).

Seventy-five of the study participants identified the difficulty to evaluate diversity initiatives as a barrier. According to the study participants, diversity initiatives are difficult to evaluate because many of them are long-term and cannot demonstrate their impact and effectiveness as easily as other types of business initiatives. Half of the study participants identified the difficulty of diversity initiatives to show return-on-investments as a barrier. According to the study participants diversity initiatives may take a long time to show their impact; therefore, it is difficult to measure the financial gain that may have resulted from the money invested on them. They also indicated that it was very difficult to develop methods for measuring the profitability gain that resulted from the money invested in diversity initiatives. Half of the study participants identified organizational policies interfering with diversity initiatives as a barrier. Participants indicated that out-dated organizational policies often do not accommodate the changes taking place in the diverse workplace and may not allow the proper implementation of the diversity initiatives. Participants stated that companies need to revise organizational policies and procedures that support diversity and help the organizational culture continually adapt in response to the changing workforce.

Preventing Failure of Diversity Initiatives

The third major research question in the study addressed what can be done to prevent failure of diversity initiatives. After having identified the barriers that have hindered the progress of diversity initiatives, the study participants were asked to provide information on what they have done to prevent failure of diversity initiatives. The six most frequently mentioned ways that were identified by the study participants were: (a) obtain top management commitment, 7 (88%); (b) treat diversity as a business issue, 6 (75%); (c) conduct diversity initiative planning, 5 (63%); (d) provide diversity training and education, 4 (50%); (e) communicate the value of diversity, 4 (50%); and (f) approach diversity as branches, units or corporations are being created, 3 (38%).

Eighty-eight percent of the study participants indicated that top management commitment was a way to avoid failure of diversity initiatives. Having top management support was seen as a way to prevent many of the corporate and people barriers. For example, a study participant stated, "Having executive leadership support makes a big difference. Having their participation and visual commitment helps avoid failures, such as implementation of policies that can hinder the development of diversity initiatives."

Seventy-five percent of the study participants reported that, to prevent failure, diversity initiatives had to be considered a serious business issue. This meant that diversity initiatives had to be connected to the corporate business strategy. When diversity initiatives were treated as business strategies, then corporate barriers such as competing agendas and economic changes were more likely to be eliminated.

Sixty-three percent of the study participants identified planning as an effective way to prevent failure. According to the study participants it took much time and effort to develop effective diversity plans that were flexible, easy to understand, and linked to corporate strategic plans. Half of the study participants indicated that diversity training and education played an important role in avoiding potential failure of other diversity initiatives. Training and education was considered an effective tool to assist in removing barriers such as people not understanding the value of diversity, slow involvement, resistance to change and unwillingness to participate. Diversity training was a way to communicate the

importance of diversity and its impact on the organization. Communicating the value of diversity was reported by half of the study participants, as a way of preventing failure of diversity initiatives.

Thirty-eight percent of the study participants stated that an effective way to prevent failure and ensure success is by introducing diversity management as units, branches, or corporations are being created, formed, or transformed. One of the study participants put it this way: "The good news is that we are creating a new company. What we are doing at this point is addressing diversity as we are creating this new company, as opposed to going back and trying to change an organizational culture that has already been established. It is the most opportune time to be involved in diversity. Diversity is part of the three new policies and foundations that we are going to operate under. When diversity is integrated into the culture of an organization from the very beginning, people look at it through different eyes, which is really great."

Discussion

This study revealed that a wide range of barriers are likely to hinder the success of diversity initiatives in multinational corporations. The findings of this study indicate that, unfortunately, diversity initiatives are not free from barriers that hinder their progress. Barriers come in different forms and they may appear at any time during the developmental process of diversity initiative--that is planning, implementation, and evaluation. This study specifically found sources of barriers. Barriers to diversity initiatives come from the work environment, people, and even from the diversity initiatives themselves. Diversity leaders, human resource development professionals, managers and anyone else who supports diversity initiatives in corporations should be aware of the specific barriers to diversity initiatives and their sources so that they can be prevented from blocking the successful development and implementation of diversity initiatives. Although the specific barriers to diversity initiatives vary from organization to organization, their effect is the same in the sense that they are detrimental to the progress of diversity initiatives.

Diversity initiative planning was identified as an important way of preventing failure of diversity initiatives in corporation. The importance that planning is essential for having successful diversity initiatives has been reported by many authors (Arredondo, 1996; Poole, 1997). Arredondo (1996) stated that not having a plan may be perceived as giving less value to the diversity initiatives. Corporations that engage in diversity initiative planning show that they take diversity initiatives very seriously because they can then develop well-thought diversity strategic plans.

Furthermore this study revealed the factors that assist in the success of diversity initiatives in multinational corporations. Having a strategic plan for diversity initiatives, senior management commitment and support, diversity linked with strategic business plan, recognizing that diversity is a business imperative, and having an organizational culture that values diversity were all identified as important factors that assist in the success of diversity initiatives in multinational corporations. To be able to implement effective diversity initiatives, HRD professionals and other corporate leaders will need to have a global mindset. According to Florkowski (1996), having a global mindset means that business leaders find creativity in diversity; value diversity that is accomplished through their personal, professional, and organizational objectives; and promote a culture that supports inclusiveness. This global mindset is important when implementing effective diversity initiatives that increase the diversity of employees, products, markets throughout the world, and achieve a competitive advantage.

Diversity training and education was identified as playing an important role in avoiding potential failure of other diversity initiatives. Training and education was considered an effective tool to assist in removing barriers such as people not understanding the value of diversity, slow involvement, resistance to change and unwillingness to participate. Diversity training was a way to communicate the importance of diversity and its impact on the organization. Although organizations are using a broad range of initiatives in their efforts to manage diversity, training is widely used strategies in effectively managing diversity in the workplace (Baytos, 1995; Martino, 1999). Florkowski (1996) found that training and education are considered the most effective international diversity initiative used by multinational corporations. They also found that training as an international diversity initiatives is a growing concern for organizations operating in international settings. Similarly, Littlefield (1995) reported that representatives of over 50 countries identified diversity training as a key intervention to solve diversity problems.

The results of this study seem to indicate that many challenges lay ahead in managing diversity successfully. It seems vitally important for diversity leaders and human resource development professionals to find mechanisms and strategies by which to identify and understand barriers that hinder the success of diversity initiatives on a on-going basis. Diversity leaders and human resource development professionals also need to show their level of commitment to diversity by developing short and long-term strategies to address diversity issues in substantive ways. However,

such change and transformation within organizations is difficult and leadership at all levels must be involved in the process (Johnson, 1996).

Determining the specific barrier that hinders the successful implementation of diversity initiatives in corporations is one of the first steps in developing strategies and initiatives that remove barriers and assist and support the success of diversity initiatives. Barriers that hinder the success of diversity initiatives prevent organizations from developing the full potential of their workforce, which they greatly need today, as they face worldwide competition.

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Developing Organizational Awareness: Gaining a Distributed View of Organization-Level Change in Workforce Diversity Awareness

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Despite the prevalence of diversity programs, few measures have been identified for assessing their effects. This study shows that using the cycle of awareness development (CAD) model to examine individual employees' awareness development regarding workforce diversity may serve as a measure for assessing organization-level outcome. Implications for theory and practice are discussed, along with suggestions for further research.

Keywords: Organizational Change, Awareness Development, Diversity

The work environment has experienced wrenching change in recent years. One factor that has been a compelling force for organizational change is workforce diversity. Studies of U.S. demographic changes indicate that the American workforce will continue to grow more diverse (Tsui & Gutek 1999). Lifestyle and societal attitude changes that impact the workplace are occurring at such a rapid pace that they are difficult to manage (Ingrassia, 1993). The "increasing awareness of how our melting pot society affects business has increased the demand for diversity" programs to help organizations deal with change (Caudron, 1993, p. 51).

Diversity Programs in Contemporary Organizations

As of 1997, approximately one-third of the 500 largest companies in the United States (U.S.) had developed programs addressing workforce diversity, and another one-third had programs in the planning stages (Blackmon, 1997). The primary objective for diversity programs is enhanced organizational, work group, and individual effectiveness (Lobel, 1999). Diversity programs are expected to impact attitudes, individual and team performance, human resource management, and strategic organizational goals.

Diversity programs frequently use a systems approach, initiated by some sort of organizational culture audit addressing the organization's informal culture, policies, and management practices (Wilson, 1997). This serves as an organizational needs assessment, establishing a measure of the current status of the organization. From this baseline, management develops a comprehensive diversity strategy, including: the vision/mission for the diversity effort; specific objectives the effort is to achieve; specific initiatives to undertake in support of the diversity vision; and, a plan for implementation. Part of any diversity program strategy is the expectation for continuous improvement, requiring constant assessment of progress on diversity program objectives. The diversity program strategy should include an annual or follow-on cultural audit, demonstrating the extent that change has occurred, or is occurring, around the management of workforce diversity.

Some diversity programs focus primarily on race and gender, while others include the broad spectrum of diversity factors such as age, socio-economic status, and occupational differences (Tsui & Gutek 1999). The majority of diversity awareness training programs focus on appropriate workplace behaviors, emphasizing sensitivity and understanding of difference. Increasingly, diversity programs look beyond legislating employee behaviors to changing attitudes. Fundamentally, any diversity program must create awareness of workforce diversity, its impact on the workplace, and its impact on the organization's bottom-line (Wilson, 1997).

Problem Statement

Measuring progress in accomplishing the desired outcomes is critical to diversity program effectiveness and longevity (Lobel, 1999; Wilson, 1997). Tsui and Gutek (1999) focus on two broad categories of desired diversity program outcomes: *task* and *social*. Although assessing program outcomes has consistently been an area of focus, the lack of appropriate diagnostic tools and measures for assessing program outcomes is problematic. Commonly used measures focus on *task* outcomes such as organizational performance (e.g., increased profit, fewer customer complaints) and demographic indicators (e.g., increased representation of underrepresented groups, reduced turnover). There is a need for additional measures for assessing the efficacy of diversity programs regarding *social* outcome dimensions, such as increased awareness or awareness development.

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The cycle of awareness development (CAD) model is helpful for analyzing awareness development regarding a transitional issue, understanding differences in reaction to the same transitional issue, and planning interventions that support awareness development through the cycle (Kormanik, 1999). The effective management of workforce diversity is one such transitional issue. Kormanik and Sturdevant (2001) demonstrate the practical utility of using the CAD model for analyzing change at the organizational level by showing that the examination of individual employees' awareness development around the transition issue of planned organizational change provides a distributed view of organizational-level awareness development. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the practical utility of using the CAD model to take a distributed view of organization-level awareness of workforce diversity issues and assess the change in awareness over time (i.e., social outcome). Data collection and analysis from a diversity training initiative provides empirical evidence.

Research Question

Two research questions guide the study: What is the practical utility of using the CAD model for analyzing the level of awareness of workforce diversity issues at both the individual and organizational levels? Can longitudinal analysis using the CAD model provide a social outcome measure of diversity program effectiveness through a distributed view of organizational change in awareness of workforce diversity issues?

Theoretical Framework

Awareness development is a construct for describing the changes that occur in an individual as he or she goes through life transitions (Kormanik, 1999). The transitional issue inducing awareness development may be anticipated (e.g., marriage) or unanticipated (e.g., job layoff). It may be positive (e.g., adopting a child, starting a new job) or negative (e.g., death of a loved one). Regardless of the issue, the transitional change and its associated awareness development is an integral part of every adult's experience, yielding cognitive, psychosocial, and behavioral effects. Kormanik describes the CAD as a five-stage model drawing from multiple disciplines, including adult development and learning. The model is helpful in the analysis of an individual's awareness development in relation to a transitional issue, understanding variance in different individual's reaction to the same transitional issue, and planning interventions that support an individual's awareness development through the cycle.

Through the course of any organization's existence it also experiences transitional issues that effect development and learning. Bridges (1991) describes an organizational transition as "the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation" (p.3). Transitional issues include planned change initiatives (e.g., reorganization) as well as unanticipated events (e.g., workplace violence). The issue may be obvious and discrete (e.g., merger with another organization) or subtle and chronic (e.g., process improvement). As with individuals, the CAD model may be helpful for analyzing organizational awareness of the transitional issue, understanding changes in reaction to the issue, and planning organizational interventions that support awareness development.

Application of the process of awareness development at the organizational level emerges from the concept of organizations as social systems (Parsons, 1951), where making meaning tends to be done through the social interaction of individuals (Mezirow, 1985). Awareness development parallels the process of making meaning, with the process yielding cognitive, psychosocial, and behavioral effects. The management literature provides examples specifically linking the individual and organizational levels of analysis. Robbins (2000) makes a fundamental case by defining organizational behavior as the study of individuals' attitudes and actions so as to understand, predict, and control individuals' behaviors in the organizational context. Huber (1991) provides a thorough discussion of the contributing processes and the literatures linking adult learning theory with organizational learning. In particular, Callahan (2000) demonstrates a linkage similar to that described in this paper in a study using emotion work actions by individuals to take a distributed view of organization-level phenomena.

Awareness Development as a Construct

Awareness development is grounded in the adult development and psychology literature, particularly life transitions (Kormanik, 1999). Life transitions occur when "an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 5). Two individuals confronted by a transitional issue will likely differ in their perception of the issue based on their perspective or meaning schema (Schon, 1987). Central to the construct of awareness development is

change in perspective or meaning schema. Awareness development reflects making new meaning or sense out of the transition experience because old mental models no longer apply.

Awareness development comes from knowledge of (i.e., cognitive learning) and experience with (i.e., change) a transitional issue. Depending on the specific issue, however, some individuals may progress rapidly in their awareness development and some might stagnate at an early stage. Schlossberg (1981) shows a life transition as a form of crisis and the concept of adaptation to the crisis is central to the transitions' theoretical framework. "Every crisis presents both an opportunity for psychological growth and a danger of psychological deterioration" (Moos & Tsu, 1976, p. 13). Unless the crisis issue is addressed, awareness development may stagnate. Growth may be impeded. Deterioration may result.

The CAD model helps describe the transitional change process of awareness development through five stages: pre-encounter, intellectualization, encounter, empowerment, and integration. The cycle repeats for each transitional issue. Individuals generally progress through the stages of awareness in sequence, but progression may vary substantially from individual to individual even when both are confronted with the same transitional issue. Movement to the fifth stage in the CAD model does not mean the individual's cognitive and psychosocial development are complete. The process of awareness development is not static. It is a dynamic, repeating cycle. The individual will remain at integration only until the next issue comes along. The individual may have already reentered the CAD model around another transitional issue. The ideal is that progression through successive iterations would benefit from the cognitive and psychosocial effects gained in earlier awareness development cycles.

The construct of awareness development is grounded in *both* change and learning. Organizational learning means "acquiring, sustaining, or changing of intersubjective meanings through the artificial vehicles of their expression and transmission and the collective actions of the group" (Cook & Yanow, 1996, p. 449). Huber (1991) qualifies that behaviors do not have to change to have organizational learning. Instead, a change in the *range of potential* behaviors represents learning. There is also much debate in the literature distinguishing between individual and organizational learning. The author adopts Schwandt and Marquardt's (2000) distinction that organizational learning is different than the sum of individual learning, given this study's focus on both individual and organizational levels in the application of the CAD model.

Five Stages of the CAD Model

When the individual has no cognitive, affective, or behavioral experience with the transitional issue, the individual is at the pre-encounter stage of awareness development. The individual has no attitude or perception of the issue in terms of self or others. The individual has not actually experienced it or recognized it in relation to others. From an epistemological perspective, the issue is not a part of the individual's world view. Given this stage of development, the individual would not be cognizant of the transitional issue even though it may be quite evident to others. An organization in the pre-encounter stage similarly has no awareness of, or experience with, the transitional issue.

Cognitive development starts as the individual's situation begins reflecting the issue. He or she moves from the pre-encounter stage into intellectualization, the second stage of awareness development. The individual begins to recognize the issue, yet there is little or no emotional involvement. The individual in the intellectualization stage spends a great deal of time on mental gymnastics, repeating a pattern of single loop learning and enjoying the intellectual discourse on an issue that does not really affect them. Argyris' (1982) description of single loop learning focuses on cognitive development using existing routines and mental models, causing self-reinforcing patterns rather than developing new solutions for presenting issues. Single-loop learning also plays out at the organizational level, in tandem with first-order organizational change. "First-order change is incremental and convergent. It helps firms maintain reliability; it may involve adjustments in systems, processes, or structures, but it does not involve fundamental change" (Newman, 2000, p. 604). Existing mental schema and organizational routines remain unchallenged. This echoes Cook and Yanow's (1996) view of change without learning. Organizational inertia impedes development (Newman, 2000). The intellectualization stage is evident in the rational cognitive approach to organizational learning. Intellectualization at the organization level reflects Huber's (1991) stipulation that gaining knowledge does not necessarily imply learning.

Encounter, the third stage of awareness development, begins when the individual has the primary experience with the issue. This may be sudden, due to a critical incident, or it might be a gradual slide after an extended, low-level exposure to the issue. The individual in the encounter stage has total and extended immersion in the issues, resulting in intense emotional involvement. The individual often perceives his or her social power has been threatened, eroded, or taken away. The feeling of powerlessness and loss of control are paramount in the "rage stage" or "valley of despair" of the encounter stage of awareness development. Gurin and Brim (1984) suggest the need for control is basic to self and describe research showing depressed individuals as hyper-realistic about their

lack of personal efficacy. Personal efficacy means "judging the self as capable, as a person able to produce acts that should lead to desirable outcomes" (p. 283). Individuals in the encounter stage perceive their capability is substantially diminished, with the total immersion in the transitional issue creating a blindness that inhibits further progression in awareness development and growth. Similarly, the organization might move into the encounter stage due to a crisis or critical incident, or it might slide into the encounter stage due to performance below aspiration level. In both instances, the encounter stage of the CAD model represents a substantial restraining factor (Lewin, 1951), impeding organizational growth and development.

The fourth stage of awareness development is empowerment. This stage includes seeking and finding strategies for securing enough power to make necessary changes while managing risks. The empowerment stage requires reflection, where negative judgment is suspended. The individual begins to use his or her discretion in a more rational manner. During the empowerment stage, the feelings of powerlessness and loss of control generated during the encounter stage are reconciled. Individuals begin to recognize the extent of power they have within their span of control and, even if that power is limited, use that power to regain a sense of control. A critical aspect of the empowerment stage involves enlisting the aid of others through the development and maintenance of support systems (e.g., mentors, confidants, networks). The feedback learning loop that support systems provide fulfills the need for coaching the individual in the empowerment stage. Feedback as a strategy to use in the empowerment stage requires a discourse or dialogue. It serves as the making-meaning piece, enabling the individual to move beyond the frustration, anger, and misperception of the encounter stage. Mezirow (1985) suggests making meaning tends to be done socially. Gurin and Brim (1984) identify "attention and processing of social information as the first step in change" (p. 312). For the organization, Kram (1988) notes the importance of workplace social systems for supporting individual development and reconnecting an individual, such as one experiencing the isolation of the encounter stage.

Integration, the fifth stage of awareness development, represents "being whole." The individual has regained his or her sense of control. The effects of the issue that precipitated the encounter stage dissipate. The individual knows "what" they do and "why" they do it as a result of the cognitive and psychosocial development during the preceding stages. The individual is capable of helping himself or herself, as well as others, be effective and successful in their coping and adaptation efforts. For the individual, the cognitive and psychosocial development represented by moving through the empowerment stage into the integration stage represents the growth piece. As the individual moves into the integration stage, he or she has in place new and more effective ways to resolve or at least cope with the issue that precipitated the encounter stage. In the integration stage there is practical application of strategies for moving beyond the crisis of the encounter stage. Sternberg (1985) defines pragmatic intelligence that emphasizes experience and real-world context, where problem solving in everyday life occurs naturally. Awareness development through the integration stage is also similar to the double loop learning suggested by Argyris (1982). Perspective transformation is a fundamental change in the way the individual views the world (Mezirow, 1985; Schon 1987). Movement to the integration stage around a particular transitional issue embodies the concept of perspective transformation. The integration stage at the organization level represents ongoing adaptive organizational change (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1998) and organizational transformation (Newman, 2000), where awareness development leaves the organization better able to compete in its changing environment. Strategies put in place during the empowerment stage enable the integration stage focus on second-order learning (Lant & Mezirow, 1996) or double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978) involving the search for new routines and schemas. Argyris and Schon suggest double-loop learning is most likely when existing routines become ineffective or when new information cannot be understood within the currently accepted schema. A consistent overarching theme has been the movement toward organizational learning to promote successful navigation of change (Schwandt & Marquardt, 2000). Second-order learning facilitates second-order organizational change (Newman, 2000).

Methods

Empirical application of the CAD model at the organizational level was demonstrated through study of a single entity bounded by time and activity. The site was a U.S. Government agency with a technical mission. Personnel included engineers, technologists, and tradesmen, along with administrative and clerical support employees. As part of the organization's diversity program, it undertook a training initiative focused on increasing diversity awareness and skills-building for effectively working with and through others, in an increasingly diverse workforce. The multi-day training was mandatory for all employees, including managers, supervisors, and nonsupervisory personnel. The organization conducted 43 training sessions between December 1994 and February 1997, with 886 employees participating in the training. To maximize diversity, each training session included a representative mix of employment levels and occupations, as well as other demographic diversity factors, such as race and gender.

The fieldwork for this study was completed in conjunction with the training initiative. Subjects were the training participants. As part of each training session, the trainers provided an overview of the CAD model, applying it to workplace issues. Quantitative data came from a survey instrument included in the training materials asking each participant to identify where he or she perceived the organization in its awareness development of workforce diversity issues and where each participant perceived his or her own individual awareness development around workforce diversity issues. After the overview, each participant completed the instrument during the training. Frequencies for response sets from all participants were tabulated using statistical software. Additionally, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the means between the first three and last three training sessions. Qualitative data augmenting the quantitative data came from participants' discussion of the agency's awareness development around diversity, as compared to their own individual awareness development. Qualitative data also came from conversations with the Diversity Program Manager, the organization's Board of Directors, and the employees' Workforce Effectiveness Advisory Council. The qualitative data included first-hand observations from the author's meetings and telephone conversations with agency representatives. Other data came from the organization's strategic business plan, diversity program plan, internal memoranda, and related documents.

Limitations

This study is limited in several ways. It is an analysis of one organization. The self-reported data came from asking members of the organization about their perceptions. Although the responses were anonymous, the survey instrument was completed as part of a mandatory training initiative. This study did not take into consideration the organization's other previous and concurrent diversity program initiatives. There were no assumptions about the benefits of workforce diversity programs, or workforce diversity itself. There was no attempt to evaluate the agency's diversity program. Lastly, although organizational diversity programs are often multi-focused, with initiatives on career development and planning, employee involvement, legal and governmental mandates, culture change, organizational and interpersonal communication, training and education, and community outreach (Lobel, 1999), there is no distinction among discrete diversity program initiatives.

Results

Usable data was obtained from 837 subjects. In relation to the first research question regarding the practical utility of using the CAD model for analyzing the level of awareness of workforce diversity issues, participants recognized that the organization exhibits all levels of awareness development around the issue of workforce diversity. Participant responses indicate that in some regards the agency does not understand the need for managing diversity (i.e., pre-encounter); that the majority of the agency "talks a good game" but really isn't serious about addressing workforce diversity issues (i.e., intellectualization); that in many regards the organization is struggling in encounter around the impact of workforce diversity; that in some instances the agency is trying to develop strategies for adapting and coping with diversity (i.e., empowerment); and, that in a few ways the agency is effectively managing workforce diversity without any problem (i.e., integration). Frequencies for responses are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Frequencies of participants' responses in the CAD analysis of workforce diversity.*

| Stage of Awareness | Organizational | Individual |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Pre-encounter | 2.0% (16)* | 1.0% (12) |
| Intellectualization | 35.0% (289) | 17.0% (144) |
| Encounter | 28.0% (236) | 24.0% (199) |
| Empowerment | 33.0% (279) | 46.0% (383) |
| Integration | 2.0% (17) | 12.0% (99) |

* Percentages do not total 100% because some respondents identified more than one stage.

Participants also recognized that agency employees exhibit all levels of awareness development around workforce diversity. Participant responses indicate that there are those who are not aware of workforce diversity issues; those who can intellectualize and understand workforce diversity issues on an impersonal level; those who are struggling in their personal encounter with workforce diversity; those who are developing strategies for adaptation and coping with workforce diversity; and, those who have developed their awareness level to where they can deal effectively with workforce diversity. Participants perceived themselves as further along in their own awareness development than they perceived the organization. This finding was consistent with Kormanik and Sturdevant's (2001) findings on awareness development around the transitional issue of planned workplace change.

Regarding the second research question, longitudinal analysis using the CAD model provided a measure of diversity program social outcome through a distributed view of organizational-level change in awareness of workforce diversity issues. Although not statistically significant, ANOVA comparison between the data from the first three and last three training sessions showed a discrete overall shift in the means for each level of analysis. The data indicate that individuals and the total organization moved through the CAD; there was change in awareness development around workforce diversity. This finding also echoes Kormanik and Sturdevant's (2001) findings, yet the findings differ in the stage of awareness development. The majority of participants in this study saw themselves individually at the empowerment stage regarding workforce diversity awareness development (46%) and placed the majority of the organization at the intellectualization stage (35%). Kormanik and Sturdevant's (2001) findings show the majority of participants saw themselves at the integration stage around the issue of planned organizational change (48%), yet placed the majority of the organization at the encounter stage (37%).

Conclusions

Diversity initiatives in the workplace take careful forethought, and with a similarly thoughtful implementation yield positive results when there is organizational commitment and awareness of the impact of diversity. Identifying organizational needs, choosing a diversity strategy that includes rather than alienates employees, and integrating diversity into the business strategy are key steps in making sure that any diversity program starts off on the road to success. Commitment to diversity programs, however, is wavering (Lobel, 1999). Identification of adequate measures for assessing the task and social outcomes of diversity programs is essential. Measures of effectiveness enable comparison between the current state and the desired state, providing indications of individual and organizational change. The empirical results of this study demonstrate the practical utility of using the CAD model as a social outcome measure of effectiveness for analyzing awareness of workforce diversity issues at the organizational level. Longitudinal examination of individual employees' awareness development around the transition issue of diversity provides a distributed view of organizational-level change in diversity awareness.

Contribution to New Knowledge in HRD

In application at both the individual and organizational levels, CAD provides a useful theoretical framework that helps predict, explain, and interpret attitudes and behaviors associated with workforce diversity. The framework provided by the CAD model may be helpful in a variety of organizational settings to analyze both discrete perceptions about workforce diversity issues, as well as progress made in transforming an organization toward a desired state. The CAD model may suffice as a diagnostic tool and measure for assessing organizational change.

Implications for Practice

The CAD model has utility for application as a diagnostic measure for practitioners. Wilson (1997) stresses the importance of measuring progress in accomplishing diversity program objectives. Linking CAD data to program objectives may be helpful for assessing current diversity program initiatives and for planning subsequent initiatives. The validity of CAD as a measure of effectiveness should be determined directly from stakeholder expectations. Once CAD is linked to program objectives and validated as an appropriate measure of effectiveness, specific metrics for assessing change should be determined (e.g., a 5% increase in awareness development). It is worth noting that the literature shows a trend toward diversity programs that provide employees with awareness and tools for transforming the organizational culture over time. Unfortunately many stakeholders look for significant and immediate organizational change. Assessment should be longitudinal; multiple readings over time with appropriate metrics that benchmark incremental change.

The data from this study indicate employees' differing levels of awareness development around workforce diversity; some understand it while others do not. Much of the inequity in organizations occurs because employees are treated the same and differences are ignored (Wilson, 1997). Effectively managing diversity means acknowledging differences, including "acknowledging individual employee needs and then accommodating these needs" (p. 18). Treating all employees as if they have the same awareness of workforce diversity may prove problematic. Instead, practitioners should ensure that diversity programs plan for addressing differing levels of diversity awareness development. The diversity strategy should include provisions for helping employees move through the CAD model. Those who are in the pre-encounter stage of awareness development need help in understanding that workforce diversity is a legitimate issue. Those in the intellectualization stage need learning opportunities to move beyond only cognitive to psycho-social and emotional learning. Those in the encounter stage

need a safe harbor for constructively venting their frustration, anxiety, anger, and fears regarding the changing workplace. These individuals need help in making sense of the changed workplace and in regaining their sense of personal control, so they can move out of the encounter stage to the empowerment stage. Communicative learning through social support systems can foster movement through the empowerment stage to the integration stage.

Much of the research on organizational learning and change focuses on strategies that would be useful for facilitating movement out of encounter into the empowerment stage of the CAD model. These include critical reflection (Brooks, 1999), informal learning (Volpe, 1999), preserving morale (Mishra et al., 1998), using the manager-as-trainer approach (Watkins, Ellinger, & Valentine, 1999), developing emotional capability (Huy, 1999), and encouraging extrarole efforts (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Hedberg (1981) highlights the need for the unlearning of existing cognitive maps and frames of reference that affect organizational routines before new learning can occur.

Practitioners must be ready to assist employees and management in moving through the cycle, while recognizing that some work groups and individual employees will need additional help in moving beyond the encounter stage. Diversity training programs, for instance, should focus on moving employees out of the pre-encounter stage to enhance their understanding of what one of their coworkers might be going through as a result of his or her individual diversity. Practitioners must recognize that confrontational diversity training forces people into the encounter stage. While this training method may be appropriate, the training design must also move the participant out of the encounter stage, through the empowerment stage, to the integration stage via skills building and development of support systems and networks.

Areas for Further Study

Any number of questions remain regarding awareness development and the variety of dimensions of diversity. Are there awareness development implications in cross group comparisons? Can a male fully understand the encounter stage precipitated by gender inequities experienced by a female coworker? Would the dynamic be similar between two minority employees? How can a clerical employee who has regained his or her sense of worth and contribution to the organizational mission by moving into the empowerment stage, effectively interact with the core occupation employee who has no concept of his or her careless dismissal of support personnel? How can the single employee move beyond the rage stage of encounter when, yet again, he or she is expected to go on travel or work late because other colleagues need to get home to their families? Can generalized expectancies for diversity awareness development be discerned regarding ingroup/outgroup members?

The construct of awareness development is ripe for further empirical study demonstrating transition through the cycle at the individual, group, and organizational levels of analysis. While this paper has shown that the CAD model provides practitioners with an organizational assessment tool, its utility should be explored further. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses of where the organization is in the CAD model can be determined through the collection of discrete and longitudinal data examining change in awareness development over time in a variety of other organizations. Cause/effect of awareness development should be explored. We need more compelling arguments regarding the cycle, particularly the variables that affect progression through the cycle. Much remains to be done before the practical utility of the concepts presented in this paper can be realized.

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Diversity Dialogues in the Workplace: A Study of Implementation Issues

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The structured process of dialogue encourages self-reflective conversation and inquiry that breaks through tension and conflict created by difference. The process has primarily been used in a social or civic context. Some organizations have begun exploring dialogue as a discrete initiative in diversity programming efforts. This study provides empirical data examining the workplace implementation of a structured dialogue on diversity. Discussion highlights strategies for maximizing participation and effectiveness in a workplace implementation. Implications for practitioners and suggestions for further research are noted.

Keywords: Dialogue, Diversity, Training

Studies of United States (U.S.) demographic changes indicate that the American workforce will continue to grow more diverse (Tsui & Gutek 1999). Lifestyle and societal attitude changes that impact the workplace are occurring at such a rapid pace that they are difficult to manage (Ingrassia, 1993). Workforce diversity has become a major area of focus in the contemporary organizational environment, with many organizations striving to increase the understanding and effective management of a diverse workforce through formalized diversity programs (Wilson, 1997). The "increasing awareness of how our melting pot society affects business has increased the demand for diversity" programs to help organizations deal with change (Caudron, 1993, p. 51). Organizational effectiveness requires viewing broad diversity issues (e.g., communication, teambuilding, interpersonal relations) as systemic in nature (Beer & Eisenstat, 1996). A diversity program, therefore, represents a long-term change process, not an isolated event (Caudron, 1993; Johnson & O'Mara, 1992).

Formalized diversity program objectives generally focus on three areas of change: increasing representation of underrepresented groups, increasing awareness and sensitivity, and developing an organization culture that supports change (Washington, 1995). Each of these foci have implications for planning specific diversity program initiatives. Consequently, programs generally include multiple initiatives (Wilson, 1997). A training course may be only one of several initiatives sponsored under an organization's diversity program. Other initiatives may include a "diversities day," formal recruitment programs, poster campaigns, seminars on legal issues, brown bag discussions, guest speaker series, focus groups, and teambuilding retreats.

Recently, some organizations have begun exploring structured dialogues on diversity (Kormanik, Krieger, & Tilghman, 2000). The theory and practice of dialogue provides a process for opening up conversation that enhances awareness and understanding of controversial and divisive subjects (Roth, Herzig, Chasin, Chasin, & Becker, 1995). The structured dialogue process is now being applied as a model for enhancing awareness and understanding of workforce diversity issues (Todd, 1994). In these instances, the dialogue process is primarily designed to enhance individual growth through personal development and understanding, rather than focusing on diversity programs' traditional objective of organizational or work group effectiveness.

Problem Statement

Embarking upon a diversity program initiative without having clear goals in mind can often create more problems and tension than if nothing had been done at all (Rynes & Rosen, 1995). Careful planning is needed to ensure alignment with the organization's diversity program strategy and to optimize the success of each program initiative, including diversity dialogues. Also problematic is the lack of information on optimal strategies for conducting structured diversity dialogues in a workplace context, given the amount of resources (e.g., time, money) that would be allocated to the implementation of a large-scale diversity dialogues initiative. For example, Kormanik, Krieger, and Tilghman (2000) show that drawing dialogue participation from an intact work group may be problematic due to mission priority. The organizational culture may not support pulling a critical mass of employees away from doing "real work" so they can have a "rap session." Fear of reprisal is an additional deterrent to using the dialogue process in a workplace setting with a group of participants from an intact work group. This

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differs from Karp & Sutton's (1993) recommendation that effective diversity program initiatives include intact work groups to maximize the likelihood of cultural change.

This paper presents a study of the workplace implementation of a structured diversity dialogues initiative. The purpose of the study is to provide a narrative of the process and provide empirical data collected from dialogue participants regarding participation, implementation, and effectiveness issues.

Research Question

One question drove the research process: What strategies should be used for implementing structured diversity dialogues in an organization whose culture places priority on mission accomplishment to the detriment of attention to workplace diversity issues?

Theoretical Framework

The theory and practice of structured dialogue focus on opening up conversations to enhance awareness and understanding of controversial and divisive subjects (Roth, et al, 1995). The dialogue process is often applied to discussions of polarizing societal issues like abortion, capital punishment, and gay marriage (Study Circles Resource Center [SCRC], 1993). Dialogues as a workplace diversity program initiative most directly address the diversity program objective of increasing employee awareness and sensitivity.

Dialogue, however, is different from sensitivity training, active listening, debate, and other such communication processes in that it is collaborative, with two or more individuals working toward finding common ground (SCRC, 1993). Dialogue "emphasizes the idea of a 'meaning' that flows between people from which emerges a greater understanding—possibly even a shared meaning" (Weinstein, 1995). Dialogue requires temporary suspension of one's beliefs, opening up to critical reflection, and reevaluation of underlying assumptions (SCRC, 1999). The open-ended nature of dialogue suggests that there are no "right" answers, nor is there a need to find a solution. It is the process of engaging individuals in the dialogue that is most important to the learning process.

One of the distinctions of adult learning is that adults have a life of experiences to draw from. An adult's "frames of reference" represents the assumptions through which they understand their life experiences (Mezirow, 1997). Frames of reference define the adult's life world and shape the adult's mental and behavioral activity. Adults tend to reject factors (e.g., ideas, values, associations, feelings, responses) which are not in sync with their frames of reference. Mezirow identifies "point of view" and "habits of mind" as two dimensions of frame of reference.

"Habits of mind are broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes. These codes may be cultural, social, educational, economic, political, or psychological. Habits of mind become articulated in a specific point of view—the constellation of belief, value judgment, attitude, and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation" (p. 5).

Mezirow (1997) identifies four processes of learning: elaborating on one's existing view, identifying new points of view without changing one's own, transforming one's point of view, and transforming one's habit of mind. A diversity dialogue focuses on the transformative learning processes identified by Mezirow.

"We can have an experience in another culture that results in our critically reflecting on our misconceptions of this particular group. The result may be a change in point of view toward the group involved. As a result, we may become more tolerant or more accepting of members of that group. If this happens over and over again with a number of different groups, it can lead to a transformation by accretion in our governing habit of mind" (p. 7).

The dialogue process is designed to transform point of view, reveal assumptions for reevaluation, and cause introspection on one's own position (i.e., challenge habit of mind) (SCRC, 1993).

The dialogue process is structured to encourage the active involvement of all participants (Roth et al, 1995). Abella (1986) shows that getting people involved and showing application to day-to-day life, versus didactic presentation of theoretical or legal information, is the more effective methodology for a diversity program initiative. The dialogue structure also entails a dialogue group meeting at regular intervals to continue the questioning, listening, and reflection processes (SCRC, 1993). Part of the structure comes from a prepared package of materials comprised of a statement of the purpose of the dialogue, ground rules for participation in the dialogue, and an array of articles on the dialogue topic that provide a diversity of perspectives (SCRC, 1999).

Individual and Organizational Change

The dialogue process indirectly addresses the diversity program objective of systemic culture change. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) identify knowledge (i.e., facts, information), individual attitude (i.e., mindsets, values, biases, stereotypes), individual behavior (i.e., actions), and group behavior (i.e., mores, norms) as four building blocks of change. Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) individual attitude construct is emblematic of Mezirow's (1997) habits of mind and point of view. Group behavior in this context corresponds to Hofstede's (1980) collective mental programming and Schein's (1992) organizational culture. Hersey and Blanchard suggest that change occurs in one of two cycles. Change is either participative, based on personal power (e.g., personality, education, experience, expertise), or directive, based on position power (e.g., law, regulations, guidelines, rank, title).

Optimally, a diversity program includes initiatives that entail participative and directive change cycles. Management has the power to mandate that all employees participate in diversity program initiatives (i.e., directive change). The structured dialogue process, however, is traditionally oriented toward participative change, rather than directive. Participation in the process increases the individual's knowledge base, providing motivation for the individual to change (Abella, 1986). Knowledge gained from participation leads to individual attitude change, which theoretically leads to individual behavior change. Using Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) model for change, once a critical mass of individuals change their behavior, group behavior change occurs (i.e., organizational culture change).

Although dialogue is primarily oriented to the individual level of analysis, the process is also applicable to the organizational setting as a way of cutting through the communication barriers separating organizational subcultures (Schein, 1995). Over time, individuals within the same organization who engage in dialogue will develop shared mental models (i.e., frames of reference), including assumptions about the world, the way the things gets done, and the way things should get done (Boyett, 1995). Organizational learning occurs through the development of these shared mental models. Without shared mental models, organizational learning may be stifled because individual efforts might not be directed towards group or organizational goals.

Many authors suggest that a structured dialogue process involving critical reflection should be the foundation of effective action within any organization (Marquardt, 1999; Schein, 1995; Weinstein, 1995). Schein (1993) argues that "dialogue is necessary as a vehicle for understanding cultures and subcultures, and that organizational learning will ultimately depend upon such cultural understanding. Dialogue thus becomes a central element of any model of organizational transformation" (p. 40). Unlike many diversity initiatives, diversity dialogues move beyond shaping behaviors to changing personal attitudes and challenging prejudice and stereotypes. This change process is ideally suited to a diversity program initiative.

Methods

This was a study of a single entity bounded by time and activity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that such a study be conducted in a natural setting, noting that phenomena "take their meaning as much from their contexts as they do from themselves" (p. 189). The organizational context provided the natural setting.

The Site

The site for the study (the Agency) is a 3,200-employee U.S. Government agency. The Agency's mission is scientific and extremely technical in nature. Primary focus and priority is given to technical issues. Technical proficiency is highly valued, and the Agency has enjoyed a history of leading in technical competence. The high focus on technical competence has greatly de-emphasized the importance of "people" issues, leaving the perception that mediocrity on people issues is acceptable. As a result, the Agency has faced difficulty in recruiting and retaining employees. This compounds the issue of not having a representative workforce, and has brought the larger issue of workforce diversity to the forefront. A 1997 employee opinion survey and focus groups conducted in 1998 and 1999 also increased attention to diversity issues.

Since 1987, the Agency has conducted many diversity program initiatives, addressing all three areas of diversity program objectives (e.g., demographic representation, awareness and sensitivity, systemic culture change). Specific initiatives have included training programs; the establishment of a multi-cultural advisory team; the initial development and timely revision of a Diversity Management Plan; diversity "celebrations" with educational speakers, ethnic food, and entertainment representing different cultures; and, several seminars that dealt with specific aspects of diversity in the workplace.

Diversity Dialogue Groups

Diversity dialogue sessions were envisioned as a follow-on training initiative that could have implications in various workplace settings. One such application was for intact work units to come together and engage in dialogue about diversity and related topics that affect the local work climate. Another was for "change agents" from across the organization to have a forum to discuss their experiences at the organization from a personal perspective and to be able to work together to make the organization more inclusive and effective in the future. These two perspectives resulted in two pilot diversity dialogues groups. The pilot diversity dialogues were conducted in 1999, with the finding that cross-organizational participation was preferred (Kormanik, Krieger, & Tilghman, 2000). The purposefully-chosen sample for the pilot groups was small, with a total of 25 selected to participate, 16 completing the pilot dialogue series, and only 13 completing the survey at the completion of the pilot dialogue series.

Seventy-five dialogue participants were invited to participate in the new dialogue series. Participants were assigned to one of five groups, maximizing the diversity in each, using such diversity factors as gender, age, race, national origin, and occupation. The same OD approach used in planning the pilot initiative was used for the new groups. Discussions with Agency representatives helped to assess the current state of the organization, clarify the desired state, identify the barriers to attaining the desired state, and a plan of action for implementation of the new dialogue groups. The initiative was intended to enhance personal growth and development, provide an opportunity for surfacing diversity issues, foster individual perspective and behavior change, and help participants understand and model appropriate work place behaviors. The initiative was intended to provide an organizational solution to diversity issues, remedy the past, or replace other diversity program efforts.

Using a structured framework to guide discussion, the diversity dialogues included 10, two-hour sessions scheduled every other week at the same time. All dialogue sessions were conducted on-site, at various buildings in the Agency's campus-like setting. The first session was an orientation for all dialogue participants. Participants were given a dialogues package which included the initiative purpose and objectives, expectations, framework, schedule, excerpts from the Agency's Management Plan and values statement, and articles illustrating differing perspectives on diversity. Before each subsequent session, a summary of the previous session was e-mailed to each dialogue participant. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback on the summaries. The facilitators opened each session by reviewing the summary and the expectations for the current session. The articles were used to stimulate thought and discussion. Several management models were also used to examine the individual's approach to change surrounding diversity in the Agency's work environment.

Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data was collected from multiple sources. The summaries of each of the dialogue sessions, developed by the dialogue participants and dialogue facilitators, were the primary source of data. The qualitative data also includes first-hand observations from the facilitators' journaling during the duration of the study. Data came from other stakeholders, including the equal employment opportunity (EEO) Program Office, human resources, and management representatives. Physical artifacts were examined, including the organization's strategic plan, employee opinion surveys, diversity statement, and other documents. Data analysis included description and identification of themes in the findings and assertions. This study used a highly participatory mode of research, involving dialogue participants in every phase of the study.

The qualitative data was augmented with descriptive statistics. Quantitative data was collected after the last dialogue session, using the same instrument administered at the conclusion of the pilot dialogues. The instrument asked for participants' reaction to the diversity dialogues initiative, as well as their perceptions on the dialogue process, its applicability to the organizational context, and whether the stated objectives for the diversity dialogues were met. The body of the instrument consisted of 32 statements. Participants responded to the statements by indicating "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Undecided," "Disagree," or "Strongly Disagree." Frequencies for response sets from all participants were tabulated using statistical software. Additionally, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for cross-group comparisons.

Results

The findings show that the culture of the Agency gives priority to the technical mission, almost to the exclusion of all other activities. Participants' data show that managers and employees do not see diversity as an integral part of mission accomplishment. Participant comments indicate that in this scientific environment diversity is seen as amorphous, without easily calculated metrics or solutions. Participant observations of management reaction to

diversity issues have included denial, disregard, and avoidance. Discussion of diversity detracts from mission accomplishment and should be avoided. Diversity issues are ignored unless there is an associated problem with the task at hand. When data indicates a diversity problem, there follows a request for more data for analysis rather than any attempt to understand and address the issue.

Given the Agency's culture, employees are quick to use the scientific method, collecting and analyzing data to solve a technical problem. When faced with a diversity issue, they take a different, more cautious approach. Discussion of diversity in the workplace is difficult, takes time, and involves risk, making it hard to do in a risk-averse environment where time is a highly-guarded resource. The Agency's culture leaves employees doubtful of the importance of diversity to the overall business strategy and to mission accomplishment. Dialogue participants continually talked about mixed signals when examining the Agency's response to diversity issues. The value of the diversity dialogues initiative was questioned. One participant summed it up with, "I have to get my job done, so my interest in coming to the sessions doesn't matter, just like my diversity doesn't matter."

Several participants noted that the dialogues were the only option for open discussion of diversity issues in their workplace. Even though participants may have perceived the need to participate in the diversity dialogues, they opted for work-related meetings when given a choice. The data indicate that individuals want to talk about diversity issues but, at work, they see the emphasis on mission accomplishment; they think they'll be rewarded more for, and would rather spend time on, work directly related to "mission essential" activities.

Survey Responses

There were no significant differences between the data from the pilot dialogue groups and the new dialogue groups. This enabled combining the data to increase sample size ($n = 87$). The survey covered three areas: participation, implementation, and effectiveness. In terms of participation, three statements received a high level of agreement: participants in a diversity dialogues group should be drawn from across the Agency (85.7%), be representative of the diversity of the Agency (91.1%), and participants thought their supervisor should participate in a diversity dialogues group (73.2%).

Participants responded to statements regarding the implementation of the initiative. In terms of scheduling, participants agreed that two hours was sufficient time for dialogue (87.5%) and that diversity dialogues sessions should be scheduled at regular intervals (80.3%). Participants agreed that the examples shared by the facilitators were helpful in providing a deeper understanding of diversity issues (87.5%). They also agreed that diversity dialogues should continue as a vehicle to allow employees to share perspectives on work force diversity issues at the Agency (96.4%).

There was a substantial amount of agreement that diversity dialogues was effective. Over three-quarters (78.6%) of participants agreed that the stated purpose and objectives of the diversity dialogues were met. Participants felt that there was a mood of openness among the participants (91.1%) and that diversity dialogues made discussing diversity issues less risky (85.7%). Also, participants said they heard different perspectives on work force diversity (92.8%) and now have a deeper understanding of diversity issues among Agency employees (92.8%). The diversity dialogues sessions also helped participants examine the role of individual employees in creating positive change (87.5%). Finally, diversity dialogues helped participants identify behaviors that promote mutual respect for divergent perspectives in their work environment (91.1%) and to confront assumptions, perceptions, and stereotypes that impede their effectiveness (73.2%).

Cross-Group Comparison

Cross-group comparison included demographic categories of age, race, gender, occupation, and tenure. Surprisingly, there were no statistically significant differences in survey responses based on gender, occupation, or tenure. ANOVA results indicated that significant differences were found in mean ratings of certain items based on race. Specifically, Black participants rated higher than all other racial categories the desire to have their supervisor present at the diversity dialogues sessions ($F=3.87, p<.01$). Also in terms of race, Hispanic participants rated higher than all other racial categories that the diversity dialogues sessions should be limited to one hour ($F=2.76, p<.01$). ANOVA results also indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in survey responses based on age. Participants over the age of 60 rated higher than all other age groups that two hours was sufficient time for dialogue ($F=6.95, p<.01$). They also indicated in their responses that they were now more aware of the impact of diversity in the workplace ($F=3.58, p<.01$).

Conclusions

This study looked at the issues of implementing diversity dialogues in an organizational setting. It could be inferred that the Agency's culture was not conducive to the diversity dialogues process. The workplace focus on task to the exclusion of other activities, the de-emphasis on discussing non-work issues, the limited communication skills of employees and managers, and the inability to see the nexus between diversity and mission accomplishment surfaced as challenges to effective dialogue implementation in a workplace setting.

Fundamentally, a diversity initiative must create awareness of diversity, its impact on the workplace, and its impact on the bottom-line (Johnson & O'Mara, 1992). Diversity initiatives generally must link the diversity program to the corporate culture and business objectives of the organization to be successful (Wilson, 1997). The dialogue process represents a major shift from this philosophy. It also represents a major change for an organization's task-oriented employees. Clearly, organizational learning was impeded by the lack of shared mental models linking diversity program initiatives and mission accomplishment. In this study, the Agency's focus on task was detrimental to dialogue attendance.

Dialogue participants wanted tools and the "right answers" to questions about diversity issues. This expectation is anathema to the dialogue process. Studies show failure of diversity initiatives is often due to unclear expectations (Delatte & Baytos, 1993; Karp & Sutton, 1993). Even though participants understood the purpose, they sometimes viewed the dialogues as "training" and were frustrated at times when there were no "right answers" available. Despite the occasional frustration, participants commented that they learned about self and had a greater appreciation for other participants, as well as a better understanding of the multitude of diversity issues through the dialogue.

The data from this study show that an organization's management can increase participation in a structured diversity dialogue initiative by increasing the status of the initiative. One way to accomplish this is by directive change, making dialogue participation mandatory. Alternative options, such as showing visible support and personal participation from management may prove more beneficial to changing the culture through a participative change cycle, similar to that described by Hersey and Blanchard (1982). Mezirow (1997) suggests that in attempting a transformative learning process, an individual's "points of view are more accessible to awareness and to feedback from others" (p. 6). Transforming habit of mind requires heightened awareness and critical reflection of generalized bias. This commonly indicates the need for participative change. While mandating the program for all employees may improve attendance, the quality of that participation may not support transformative learning.

Contribution to New Knowledge in HRD

This study contributes new knowledge in HRD by addressing the issues for implementing structured dialogue in a workplace setting. Arguably, there are numerous reasons for the failure of diversity program initiatives. Kormanik and Geffner (1995) show three primary restraining factors: a lack of personal responsibility and accountability, a lack of positive leadership at all levels, and a lack of visible management commitment. All three of these barriers surfaced in this study, and must be strategically addressed in any workplace implementation of diversity dialogues. Specific strategies, however, may enhance the success of dialogue implementation. Strategies include visible management endorsement making diversity an integral part of the "real work;" senior management participation, direct involvement, and scheduling flexibility; increased positive communications throughout the workplace to give the activity greater status and priority; and an increased premium on developing "soft" skills (e.g., communication, interpersonal relations, teambuilding). All of these may promote systemic organizational culture change.

Limitations and Areas for Further Research

The purpose of the study was to provide an explanatory narrative of the implementation of diversity dialogues. It was not intended to examine the effectiveness of diversity dialogues as a specific diversity program initiative. Rather, this is a study of the implementation process, and a discussion of the lessons learned from that process. Also, this was not a study of the trends which may emerge from a structured dialogic process (see Kormanik, Krieger, & Tilghman, 2000). Further research is needed to address the larger issues of diversity program effectiveness and the linkage between diversity programs and organizational performance. A comprehensive analysis of the efficacy of a diversity program or a discrete program initiative would require a long-term, posttest evaluation to ensure validity (Dixon, 1990). Because this study was limited to one organizational context and the

dialogue focus limited to the issue of workforce diversity, comparison of these results with research in other organizational contexts and focusing on other dialogue topics is warranted.

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