From Theory To Practice: Recommending Supportive Diversity Practices

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ABSTRACT

Today, organizations must find effective solutions to the challenges brought by diversity. Research suggests that implementing supportive diversity practices help diverse organizations to adapt and sustain by creating a climate for diversity. Based on research and theory, the paper recommends five categories of supportive diversity practices: (1) Using symbolic management to value diversity, (2) Implementing training programs, (3) Implementing cross-functional teams, (4) Stimulating improved communication flow, and lastly (5) Promoting fairness in human resource practices.

Keywords: diversity practices; diversity management

INTRODUCTION

*P*ractitioners and scientists often come to the conclusion that managing diversity in organizations is not an easy task (Ployhart, 2006; Richard, Kochan, & McMillan-Capehart, 2002). This happens because diversity dynamics are frequently a breeding ground for different types of conflicts, such as misunderstandings, discriminatory behaviors, or antisocial behaviors (Shore, Chung-Herrera, Dean, Ehrhart, Jung, Randel & Singh, 2009; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Diversity refers to differences between individuals on any attributes that may lead to the perception that another person is different from the self (Jackson, 1992; Triandis, Kurowski, & Gelfand, 1994; van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). These attributes of interest may refer to demographic characteristics, informational/functional characteristics, personality traits, personal values, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or mental and physical health and abilities. Being able to integrate and manage diverse people appropriately in the workplace has become more than ever before an important concern for managers.

This paper provides practical guidance to different level of management (i.e., senior managers, HR managers and line managers) about how to effectively manage diversity in order to reveal its full potential. The potential of managing diversity effectively may refer to enhancing organizational performance, by increasing employees' retention, improving corporate image, and enlarging share market, while decreasing legal liability, absenteeism, and employees' turnover. In this paper, we recommend five categories of strategic managerial practices that help, once implemented, to effectively manage diverse organizations. These five categories are: (1) Using symbolic management to value diversity, (2) Implementing training programs, (3) Implementing cross-functional teams, (4) Stimulating improved communication flow, and lastly (5) Promoting fairness and justice in human resource practices.

One major contribution of this paper is to go beyond the previous "prescriptive managerial actions". Previous work identifying managerial practices related to diversity management has not been as fully grounded in theory as it could and should have been (Jamieson & O'Mara, 1991). This paper contributes to the field by explaining how research and theory can be utilized to understand the complexity of diversity management and by recommending the implementation of a combination of strategic managerial practices. The paper proposes five categories of strategic managerial practices that have their foundation in Organizational Behavior, Human Resource

Management and Social Psychology research and theories such as social identity theory (Tajfel, & Turner, 1986), self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reichers, & Wetherell, 1987), self-verification theory (Swann, Polzer, Seyler, & Ko, 2004; Swann, Rentfrow, & Guinn, 2005) and justice theory (Lind, 1998). Another major contribution of this paper is that it illustrates each strategic managerial practice by providing applied examples of organizations that successfully embrace diversity and effectively implement the recommended practices.

THE RECOMMENDED PRACTICES TO MANAGE DIVERSITY EFFECTIVELY

How can managers become more effective at managing diversity in organizations? In order to answer this question, today's organizations must invest the time and efforts to find the best managerial practices they can. According to the 2005 Survey Report about Workplace Diversity Practices conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, 76% of HR professionals reported that their organizations had practice(s) in place that addressed workplace diversity. Almost all large-staff sized organizations (94%) and fewer small (60%) and medium (71%) organizations reported implementing diversity practices.

Even though implementing diversity practices has become popular, organizations must continue to carefully examine their current practices and recognize if they are managing diversity superficially prior to defending themselves of such actions in front of the Court System (James & Wooten, 2006). Facing a discrimination lawsuit is usually extremely costly for the organization and its stakeholders (Selmi, 2003). For example, the overall cost of the Texaco discrimination case exceeded $500 million (Pruitt & Nethercutt, 2002). Thus, managing diversity superficially or cosmetically (Hyde & Hopkins, 2004), as opposed to managing it authentically, might backfire and therefore decrease organizational performance.

Managing diversity effectively in organizations refers to the process of creating and maintaining a workplace free of discrimination where stakeholders (i.e., employees, customers, suppliers, investors, and people from the local or global community), regardless of their differences (i.e., based on gender, culture, religion, expertise, personality etc.), feel included and supported. This process is very complex and delicate, and thus requires managers' full attention toward the implementation of appropriate practices and supportive activities that will, over time, improve organizational performance. Organizations must adopt strategic managerial actions and human resource practices that increase diversity awareness, and prevent or resolve diversity-related conflicts. Research suggests that implementing supportive diversity practices help to create a positive organizational climate for diversity, which, in turn, increase organizational attachment, reduce employees' absenteeism and turnover, and enhance organizational performance (McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2009; Gonzalez & Denisi, 2009). Indeed, strategic managerial and human resource practices are considered important moderators of the relationship between diversity and organizational performance. Research suggests that when organizational strategy and HR practices support diversity related programs and activities, diverse organizations are more likely to lead to positive performance outcomes (Kochan, Bezrukova, Ely, Jackson, Joshi, Jehn, Leonard, Levine and Thomas, 2003).

Table 1 identifies the five recommended strategic managerial practices and their respective supportive diversity activities, and it summarizes the influence of each practice on the psychological processes and performance outcomes.

In the following sections, each of the five recommended strategic managerial practices and their respective supportive diversity activities will be described and their influence on creating a positive climate for diversity will be discussed. Moreover, several applied examples will be provided to illustrate the implementation of each practice in current organizations.

**Table 1. Five Categories Of Supportive Diversity Programs And Activities And Their
Related Effects On Psychological Processes And Performance Outcomes.**

Managerial Practices	Programs And Activities	Individual And Group Psychological Processes	Organizational Process	Performance Outcomes
Using symbolic management	- Expressing the value of diversity in the mission statement. - Explaining why diversity must be valued. - Redefining the group boundaries "US" rather the "WE" versus "THEM".	Fostering a common identity and pro-diversity beliefs.	Positive climate for diversity.	Increases individual performance (i.e., reduce absenteeism, and employees' turnover).
Training programs and activities	- Socialization training. - Cross-training. - Team building.	Developing diversity awareness and trust. Supporting self-disclosure & Intergroup communication.		
Stimulating communication flow	- Celebrating diversity. - Brainstorming. - Benchmarking.			
Implementing cross-cutting groups	- Implementing multidisciplinary teams. - Social groups (meetings) across the organization.	Promoting cross-functional collaboration.		Increases Organizational Performance (i.e., improve corporate image, Enlarge share market, Decrease legal liability).
Promoting fair and just HR practices	- Aligning HR to support diversity: - Recruitment. - Selection. - Performance evaluation.	Improving perceptions of justice.		

1.   Using Symbolic Management

Symbolic management has been defined as the way management frames and portrays the organization to its members and other stakeholders (Fiss & Zajac, 2006). Managers use symbolic language to focus on what is central, distinctive, and relatively enduring about the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). According to the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), self-categorization theory (Turner et al. 1987) as well as research on "groupthink" (Janis, 1982), emphasizing commonalities among diverse group members is a key condition to increase the likelihood that diversity will lead to positive outcomes (Brewer, & Brown, 1998; Brewer & Gaertner, 2004). More precisely, research has proposed that by restructuring or redefining group boundaries at a higher level of category inclusiveness [also called a super-ordinate category], these actions create a common ingroup identity which may reduce the negative consequences of diversity (Allport, 1954). Consistently, the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; Gaertner, Dovidio, Nier, Ward, & Banker, 1999) proposes that intergroup biases can be reduced by implementing practices that transform people' representations of memberships from multiple groups to one group, a more inclusive group (i.e. "us" instead of "we" and "they") (Brewer & Gaertner, 2004). Thus, research suggests that managers may minimize or overcome conflicts and negative outcomes in diverse organizations, by framing a collective identity or an organizational identity through the usage of symbolic management that embodies the principle of believing in the value of diversity (Cox, 1993; Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991; Roberge & van Dick, forthcoming). Believing in the value of diversity can also refer to pro-diversity beliefs (van Dick, van Knippenberg, Hägele, Guillaume, & Brodbeck, 2008), openness to diversity (Hobman, Bordia, & Gallois, 2004), or diversity perspectives (Ely & Thomas, 2001). For example, currently Chief Diversity Officer at Deloitte, John Zamora believes that diversity is "a competitive business advantage that will pave the way to achieving Deloitte's vision of becoming the standard of excellence" (Deloitte Development LLC, 2010). By valuing diversity and inclusiveness, managers frame a collective

identity that welcomes and values stakeholders' (i.e., employees, customers, suppliers, investors, and people from the local or global community) different identities. Research suggests that it is through their patterns of inclusion that managers and leaders can positively influence the relationship between diversity and performance (Nishii & Mayer, 2009).

Valuing diversity begins by incorporating a diversity statement into the organizational mission statement, and promoting consistent organizational values. For example, Chatman and Spataro (2005) have shown that people with different demographic characteristics behave more cooperatively when the organizational culture emphasizes collectivistic values (i.e., benevolence, tradition, conformity) rather than individualistic values (i.e., power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction). Collectivistic values are motivated by serving the interests of others and especially the group as a whole such as understanding, appreciating, and tolerating all people with no regard to their rank. Alternatively, individualistic values are motivated by self-interests, such as possessing social status and prestige, controlling and dominating people and their resources or being considered successful and demonstrating competences based on social standard (Schwartz, 1992). Moreover, based on their study, Chatman and Spataro (2005) suggest that when organizational culture emphasizes collectivistic values and interchangeable interests (Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998), people are more likely to perceive that they share a common identity with different people, and as a result, group performance will increase.

The establishment of organizational mission statements and organizational values that support pro-diversity beliefs has increased in volunteer and not-for-profit organizations, as well as other types of organizations (Childs, 2005). For example, the DiversityBusiness.com has identified fifty Top Organizations for Multicultural Business Opportunities. Table 2 presents the mission statements of the ten first listed companies.

Emphasizing the value of diversity into their mission statement has also become especially common practice in universities (Meacham & Barrett, 2003). For example, Cornell University has a commitment to diversity that states that:

Cornell is committed to extending its legacy of recruiting a heterogeneous faculty, student body and staff; fostering a climate that doesn't just tolerate differences but treasures them; and providing rich opportunities for learning from those differences. To that end, each of Cornell's constituent assemblies endorsed the Statement on Diversity and Inclusiveness, "Open Doors, Open Hearts, and Open Minds."[1]

Northeastern Illinois University, recognized as one of the most diversity university in the Midwest of the US, emphasizes the value of diversity into its strategic plan:

Diversity—NEIU values the inclusion of a broad spectrum of students, staff, and faculty in the life of the University. We celebrate and foster global perspectives. We encourage the open and respectful expression of ideas and differences in thoughts, experiences, and opinions.[2]

Making diversity a part of the organizational mission statement increases the likelihood that stakeholders will themselves embrace diversity. When the stakeholder's pro-diversity beliefs are aggregated, they become an important component of an organizational climate for diversity (Pugh, Dietz, Brief & Wiley, 2008). Moreover, research suggests that when stakeholders are committed to embracing diversity, their commitment enhances the likelihood to increase the perform of diverse groups (c.f. van Dick, et al., 2008; van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004).

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[1] http://www.cornell.edu/diversity/
[2] http://strategicplan.neiu.edu/diversity_NEIU.html

Table 2. "Ten Top Organizations For Multicultural Business Opportunities" According To DiversityBusiness.com

Company Name	Source	Diversity Statement
1. Dell	http://content.dell.com/us/en/corp/d/corp-comm/commitment.aspx	"Diversity is at the core of Dell's values and winning culture. It helps define the kind of company we are and aspire to be. Diversity initiatives tap additional talent, retain employees, strengthen relationships, improve our operating results and further our global citizenship efforts in the many communities we call home. Dell defines diversity in its broadest sense."
2. AT & T Inc.	http://www.att.com/gen/corporate-citizenship?pid=7752	"Diversity is what we do and who we are. AT&T realizes that diverse, talented and dedicated people are key to a company's success. The company's philosophy is to provide employees with continued opportunities to grow and develop their careers. Management is charged with successful implementation of various diversity initiatives as part of this philosophy. AT&T leaders are expected to understand the importance of cultural competency."
3. The Coca-Cola Company	http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/citizenship/diversity.html	"The Coca-Cola Company is a model employer for diversity and inclusion within its own work force and as a member of the larger business community. Its leadership on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality in the workplace is not only reflected in its long-standing achievement of 100 percent on the Corporate Equality Index, but in its principled support of anti-discrimination legislation that would protect every worker in the United States from being judged on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity."
4. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.	http://walmartstores.com/Diversity/	"We make diversity part of our business plan, ensuring we can continue to be a global leader in all aspects of Diversity and Inclusion."
5. Office Depot Inc.	http://www.officedepot.com/specialLinks.do;jsessionid=0000MgV8tI6n-BaLaCc8KXqVxVm:13ddpq5n2?file=/companyinfo/companyfacts/diversitymissionstatement.jsp&template=companyInfo	"At Office Depot, we are committed to creating an inclusive environment where all people are valued and respected. Diversity is an important dimension of Inclusion, Innovation, and Customer Focus -- three of our core values -- and keys to our success in a global marketplace."
6. Raytheon Company	http://www.raytheon.com/diversity/	"Diversity at Raytheon is about inclusiveness — providing an atmosphere where everyone feels valued and empowered to perform at a peak level, regardless of the many ways people are different, including but not limited to age, race, gender, sexual orientation, family history or physical ability."
7. Time Warner Inc./ Turner Broadcasting System, Inc.	http://www.turner.com/about/diversity.html	"Turner Broadcasting's commitment to fairness and inclusion is reflected in the fundamental components of our success. We strive for a professional environment that values divergent voices, encourages innovative thinking and expression and rewards individual and collective accomplishment. Our global workforce of men and women with wide-ranging interests and experience is empowered by leaders who respect diversity as a business advantage."

Company Name	Source	Diversity Statement
8. Lockheed Martin	http://www.lockheedmartin.com/aboutus/diversity/diversity.html	"We are committed to creating one company, one team, all-inclusive, where diversity contributes to the Lockheed Martin vision. Diversity at Lockheed Martin is an inclusive team that values and leverages each person's individuality. It's about living our values of doing what's right, respecting others and performing with excellence. We recognize that our success depends on the talent, skills and expertise of our people and our ability to function as an integrated team."
9. Cisco Systems, Inc.	http://www.cisco.com/web/about/ac49/ac55/index.html	"Our inclusive culture promotes a creative, innovative, and collaborative environment that helps fuel our globalization strategy." "Who you are shapes who we are: Cisco's employees not only come from different countries, but also have different backgrounds, genders, ages, ethnicities, and abilities. In fact, each of us has our own unique approach to life."
10. Verizon	http://newscenter.verizon.com/kit/diversity/business.html	"At Verizon, Diversity means embracing differences and variety including age, ethnicity, education, sexual orientation, work style, race, gender and more. When diversity is a part of a company's culture, as it is at Verizon, everyone benefits – customers, suppliers and employees. Diversity isn't just a concept at Verizon. It's an integral part of our business."

To use symbolic management effectively and influence people's positive beliefs in valuing diversity, it is crucial to provide to the stakeholders clear explanations about the reasons why valuing diversity is important to the organization (Sitkin & Bies, 1993). One way to present this information to the stakeholders is via the organizational mission statement or in organizational reports. For example, Gandz (2001) reminds us that in an era of critical skills shortages, organizations are finding that they must attract, retain, motivate and utilize their valuable human assets effectively if they are to be competitive. Diversity management can reduce turnover, absenteeism and be a powerful magnet in recruitment. Moreover, anticipating and responding to customer needs and being able to maintain a good relationship with suppliers located all around the world remains a priority. Indeed, as pointed out by Gandz (2001), "whether buying fashions in China, beef in Argentina, or machine tools in Germany, the ability to deal with suppliers in their own language, in appropriate behavioral manners, and to conduct successful negotiations may be critical dimensions of competitive advantage*"*. From a globalization perspective, Gandz recognizes that today's *"*businesses are created through partnerships, joint ventures and strategic alliances. This ability to relate to other cultures becomes a key organizational requirement. It is almost inconceivable today to imagine organizations seeking to become global players without achieving high levels of diversity in their workforces*"*. There is also the motivation of maintaining the image of a good corporate citizen that may influence the importance of valuing diversity. "There are both tangible and intangible benefits and costs associated with being a good corporate citizen and an organization's performance in developing a diverse workforce is one key element in obtaining such a profile*"*. Reducing legal cost is another reason: "The United States and often other countries have to face the very real possibility of legal pressure and sanctions for non-compliance to jurisdictions. Finally, and none the least, managing diversity efficiently may rely on moral principle". Legality and competitive advantage are, however, not the ultimate reasons why diversity should be promoted in organizations.

In summary, using symbolic management may reduce the likelihood for diverse organizations to lead to negative consequences by framing to stakeholders a collective identity, as well as by identifying common goals and values related to believing in diversity. Moreover, by providing clear explanations about the reasons why shareholders should believe in valuing diversity, symbolic management may enhances the likelihood for diverse organizations to increase their performance. By learning to value diversity, over time, stakeholders may incorporate this value into their own personal beliefs which will then reduce biases due to stereotyping and categorization and increase the occurrence of a psychological safety climate (Ho, 2010; Roberge & Van Dick). Thus, using symbolic management to value diversity is a powerful managerial tool that facilitates the achievement of organizational success in diverse organizations.

2.　　Implementing Training Programs And Activities

Implementing diversity training programs in business and governmental organizations has become a popular strategy, ever since Laws, such as The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the American Disability Act (ADA) of 1990 passed in the United States, have encouraged the integration of diverse people in the workplace (Naff & Kellough, 2003; Roberson, Kulik, & Pepper, 2003). Often diversity trainings in organizations are delivered thought the usage of software such the one offer by Velsoftcourseware.com.[3]

Despite its popularity, researchers have only recently begun examining the impact of such diversity training programs. For example, Peterson and Quarstein (2001) examine the effects of the disability sensitive training conducted at the Virginia School of the Deaf and Blind in Hampton, Virginia, USA. According to their findings, all participants reported that the diversity training program helped them to gain in sensitivity and disability awareness, and each participant left the training with a positive attitude and a new vision of how they might better meet the needs of their student population. Another example is a study conducted by Spanierman, Neville, Liao, Hammer, & Wang (2008) that explores whether diversity training can successfully become an intervention to meet the organizational challenges face by a culturally diverse student population. The participation in formal campus diversity experiences throughout the first year of college was associated with higher levels of openness to diversity. Moreover, participation in formal diversity experiences also mediated the link between entrance attitudes and beliefs toward different minority groups and follow-up racial color-blind ideology among White, Black, and Latino students. Participation in formal diversity experiences is also important for White, Black, and Latino students in

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[3] https://velsoftcourseware.com/diversity-training-celebrating-diversity-in-the-workplace/

predicting critical awareness of racial issues and diversity appreciation, whereas informal diversity training was important only for Whites in predicting these outcomes. Thus, implementing diversity training programs is now a common and valuable practice used to address the challenges brought by a diverse workforce. Research suggests that implementing diversity training programs may provide to employees the opportunities to acquire the necessary, awareness, knowledge, skills, and abilities to overcome diversity-related conflicts and therefore increase individual and group performance (Plummer, 1998).

Diversity training programs are part of a vast portfolio of training activities perform by most leading organizations. (Pendry, Driscoll, & Field, 2007). In the following section, we will describe three different forms of formal training programs that are specifically effective for dealing with a diverse workforce: (1) Socialization programs, (2) Cross-training programs, and (3) Team building programs.

Socialization program is defined as the process by which an individual acquires the attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge needed to participate as an organizational member (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Socialization programs are usually offered to the new employees, at the beginning of their employment term. The goal of this kind of program is to help the new employees become familiar with the values, norms, policies and procedures of the organization. This type of program also helps the new employee understand how the organization defines its identity (mission, vision, values, etc). In a socialization process, the employer's role is to frame the organizational identity in such a way that the new employees can feel welcome, enthusiastic and proud of becoming a member of the organization. An example, of such type of training program was implemented by the National Academy of Engineering's Committee on Diversity in the Engineering Workforce in October 2001 (Layne, 2002).

Bauer, Morrison and Callister (1998) identified several reasons why organizations should consider implementing formal socialization training programs. First, it helps the organization transmit and maintain its organizational culture, thus resulting in considerable saving for the organization because employees learn at the outset what is expected of them, and can act in ways that are consistent with the organization's core values and beliefs. Second, it helps organizations retain valuable employees, and, over time, it may positively impact employees' organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and behavioral performance.

Research on diversity suggests that in order to increase employees' pro-diversity beliefs and the likelihood to create a positive organizational climate for diversity, the appropriate policies and practices must be promoted early in the employment term (Gelfand, Nishii, Raver, & Schneider, 2005). Indeed, these policies and practices must be implemented and conveyed from the beginning of the employment term, during a socialization training program, in order to observe the return that a diverse workforce can bring to the organization. During a socialization training program, the employer must emphasize its beliefs in valuing a diverse workforce and creating a workplace that promote equal employment opportunity to everyone. This informs newcomers about the organization's values and norms related to creating employee perceptions that the organization implements fair policies and practices that seek to create a psychologically safe climate for the firm's stakeholders. McMillan-Capehart (2005) suggests that socialization training programs should result in mutual respect, empathy and trust for one another and acknowledgement of the benefits associated with workforce diversity. It should also prevent employees from stereotyping and getting involved in the categorization process. When people feel welcome and accepted for being who they are, and believe that everyone from this organization is valued equally from the beginning of their employment, employees' perceptions of justice become salient and over time those perceptions created by the socialization process may provide an enormous return in investment for diverse organizations (Lind, 1998). Studies have shown how likely individual productivity and organizational performance will increase when employees' perceive fairness (Simons & Roberson, 2003). Considering all of the above reasons, it is important to implement socialization programs in diverse organizations, particularly as these programs may lead to an increased in individual and work group, and organizational performance. These programs can be offered by the company itself, or independently by consulting and training organizations (Plummer, 1998). For example, the EADA Management Institute in Finland offers a 2-day program on 'diversity management and intercultural communications:

The aim of the program is to strengthen one's abilities to work and operate in a multicultural environment…. The overall focus of the program is not only on nationalities and cultures but on the diversity of people and international networks in working life. This is done with background and reading material, a personal written learning

assignment, the 2-day seminar in Finland and a week's education program in Barcelona.....the main focus is on interpersonal communication in order to both show diversity potential, and provide tools for action. [4]

Cross-training program is another type of training that we believe may have value for managers who deal with a diverse workforce. The purpose of cross-training is to broaden trainees' exposure to, and practice on, other teammates' tasks, roles and responsibilities (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004). Cross-training is a concrete example of the expression "put yourself in someone else's shoes". Implementing this type of training in a multifunctional environment can be extremely useful to decrease employees' biases caused by the perceptions of being different based on educational or professional backgrounds, or based on holding a different hierarchical status. Cross training programs help members to better understand one another and their respective function within the team. It is known by research from social psychology that valuing empathy and perspective taking within a team reduces stereotypic biases (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Research also shows that cross-training programs in which job are rotated among employees enhance the development of shared team-interaction models (Marks, Sabella, Burke, & Zaccaro, 2002). Moreover, research specifies that implementing such type of training programs may positively impact organizational performance especially when the team members work on interdependent or complex tasks (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Mitchell & Silver, 1990; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999).

There are two different types of cross-training. First, in *direct* cross-training, the employees execute other group members' jobs for a short period of time (i.e., few hours, a day or possibly a week); in *indirect* cross-training, the group member observes someone else doing while he/she is performing his/her job.

Numerous training programs that feature cross-training are available. For example, a training organization in the pharmaceutical industry is promoting a report, *Managing Cross-Functional Teams for Pharmaceutical Product Commercial Excellence*, that summarizes the best practices for developing and utilizing cross-functional teams in new product launch initiatives[5]. Similarly, an online training organization promotes a process for improving the process of selecting cross-functional team members, including mechanisms for identifying team members, team leaders and assuring team success, and clearly specifies diversity criteria. [6]

Team Building. Implementing *team building* activities has become increasingly popular in organizations. The purpose of such activities is to establish trust and communication among different people. Team building activities help employees to become acquainted with one another on a personal level. Conducting these types of activities at the beginning of an employment term may increase the likelihood for collaborative relationships among group members and the success of future work team assignments. Furthermore, conducting the activity outside the work environment can increase the efficiency of such an activity because it removes the performance anxiety that some employees may experience when they are in a traditional working environment.

For example, Adventure Education is a team building activity program oriented toward identifying the strengths and weaknesses of individuals who participate in these groups. It creates opportunities for groups, and individuals within the groups, to resolve conflicts and communication issues and diminish stress. This experiential learning helps individuals to become more familiar with the concepts of competition and collaboration, and reinforces the value they place on respect for themselves and others (Attarian, 2001). The new knowledge they gain via this experiential learning can be utilized in the work environment as well as in the extended community.

In order for a training program to be effective, many pedagogical techniques must be implemented during the training program. It is not enough to only teach the theoretical concepts related to diversity. Investing money in a diversity training program that will only emphasize "book knowledge" is a waste of time and money. While knowledge is important, it alone will not make people better employees in diverse environment; much experiential and discussion work is required. Making the effort to perceive the world from another's perspective, for example, increases empathy and understanding of others' viewpoints. Employees can be encouraged to do so via job rotation programs (Baxter, 2001). It also leads to more tolerance and acceptance among different individuals. For example,

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[4] http://www.cec.jyu.fi/avance/koulutusohjelmat/dm/
[5] http://www3.best-in-class.com/bestp/domrep.nsf/Content/E1D6C99F92FB4148852572C7006CFDFD!OpenDocument
[6] http://www.training-classes.com/programs/00/33/3324_cross-functional_teams_selecting_cross_functional_team_membe.php

conducting role plays and scenarios during a diversity training program can be an especially useful technique to increase awareness of challenges faced by people living with differences. Role plays may be used to develop the necessary skills needed for individuals to successfully resolve conflicts that may occur among those holding opposing beliefs or interests. In summary, these training techniques might be relevant to increase people's awareness of the issues related to diversity, but especially to help them find solutions that allow potential diversity related conflicts to be resolved.

3. Implementing Cross-Functional Groups

Cross-functional groups in the workplace usually take the form of multidisciplinary teams in which each individual is from a different functional area (i.e., production, information systems, marketing, finance, and human resources), or has a different educational or professional background. When the group is composed of individuals from different disciplines or backgrounds, it is defined as being cross-functionally diverse. Research suggests that cross-functional teams are more likely to experience task conflicts. Task conflict exists when there are disagreements among group members about the content of the tasks being performed, including differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions (Jehn, 1995). Studies that focus on task conflict within groups have found that such types of conflicts have a positive effect on performance. While this suggests that when people bring their different levels of expertise together, the number of conflicts regarding how to understand or execute a task increases, group performance can ultimately improve. But it is critical to note that research suggests that task conflict can increase group performance in multi-disciplinary groups when it is free of socio-emotional conflicts (i.e., socio-emotional conflicts are relationship-focused and refer to emotional tensions and negative feelings among group members). Managers need to be aware of this aspect when they manage multifunctional teams because studies have often found a positive relationship between task conflict and socio-emotional conflict in the multidisciplinary group (Jehn, 1995).

Gebert, Boerner, and Kearney (2006) have proposed a conceptual model of cross-functionality that can helps managers to understand the role of effective conflicts management. Their primary mechanism is called "synergistic communication", which mediates the relationship between functional/informational diversity and team innovation. Synergistic communication is defined as the extent to which members' divergent positions are specified and recombined to generate new and useful solutions (Gebert, Boerner, & Kearney, 2006). Their model suggests that the innovativeness of a new product development team is a function of synergistic communication, which is influenced by the types of conflicts that arise in that cross-functional team. Basically, the model assumes that cross-functionality engenders interpretive differences that increase task conflict, which in turn serves as a catalyst for synergistic communication. However, task conflicts, closely related to socio-emotional conflicts and value conflicts, impede the members' acceptance of divergent ideas and thus obstruct synergistic communication in the team. Moreover, the model identifies three variables that may determine the conditions under which synergistic communication is more likely to occur when expertise diversity exists: (1) common social identity, (2) regard for personal identity and (3) a generalist perspective. A generalist perspective suggests that in order to increase the likelihood of synergistic communication among team members with different expertise, it is vital to let each team member become acquainted with other thought worlds and knowledge, for instance by introducing job rotation programs (Maruyama, 2004).

By identifying these mediators and moderators, this integrative model helps identify the circumstances and explain the mechanisms that may demonstrate how cross-functionality increases group performance.

4. Stimulating Communication Flow

As we just mentioned, communication can serve as tool for enhancing group and organizational performance. Communication plays an important and complex role in the psychological composition of the group. Indeed, too many conversations or not enough of them may lead to poor group performance, whereas an adequate amount communication can be very beneficial to the team performance, especially when the quality of the communication is high.

Furthermore, the outcome of communication can be observed at the individual or the group level. At an individual level, research reports that positive outcomes in diverse environments are associated with self-disclosure (Phillips, Rothbard, & Dumas, 2009). For example, as pointed out by Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell (2007), the literature on sexual orientation suggests that disclosure of a gay identity at work may be associated with a sense of psychological wholeness and well-being (Reynolds & Hanjorgiris, 2000) and may provide relief from the debilitating strain of secrecy involved with leading a double life (Fassinger, 1995; Griffin, 1992). In the domain of mental and physical disabilities, self-disclosing psychological or physical limitations due to a disability may help the employer to provide adequate accommodations that serve the needs of these individuals living with disability (for a review see Ball, Monaco, Schmeling, Schartz, & Blanck, 2005). Thus, as pointed out by the Personalization Model in diversity management (Ensari & Miller, 2006), when the context allows employees to learn about each others' personal lives and identity, they have a chance not only to discover similarities between themselves and others, but also to develop mutual understanding of differences that increase the likelihood for a diversity climate to sustain.

Communication can also be at a group level. For example, communication within the organization may be stimulated via social events or by celebrating diversity within the organization. The celebration of diversity may take different forms such as dedicating a specific day of the year to celebrate multiculturalism and differences, or it could be a series of events (i.e., conferences, movie projections, panel discussions, and kiosk activity) organize to celebrate and provide relevant information about critical holidays from a multicultural society such as Chinese New Year, Hanukah, Christmas, Women's Day, Martin Luther King Jr.'s Day, etc. During these events, employees have the opportunity to increase their knowledge about others' cultural identity and challenge their stereotypes.

Other practices such as networking, brainstorming, benchmarking, and community involvement activities are examples of positive solutions related to communication and the management of diversity (Litchfield, 2008). Indeed, improving flow of communication within work units, departments or any other group inside or outside of the organization may be essential for the organization to adapt to the new diversity reality.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is an example of organization that practices an open group communication with different cultures. The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity sets out to respond to two major concerns: firstly, to ensure respect for cultural identities with the participation of all peoples in a democratic framework and, secondly, to contribute to the emergence of a favorable climate for the creativity of all, thereby making culture a factor of development (UNESCO, 2002).UNESCO's activities in communication and information worldwide vary by region and country (UNESCO, 2010)

5.   Promoting Fairness In Human Resource Practices

It has been widely recognized that effective diversity management can be achieved through using appropriate human resource policies and practices (Dass, & Parker, 1999; Shen, Chanda, D'Netto & Monga, 2009). A growing number of organizations have already enacted sexual harassment policies, and implemented policies that prohibit discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or disabilities. Implementing such policies in organizations becomes strength to prevent and resolve diversity related conflicts. For example, research on sexual diversity has demonstrated that the more prevalent these policies are, the less likely sexual minority members are to experience discriminatory treatment (Ragins, & Cornwell, 2001). Furthermore, Button's study (2001) shows that more equitable treatment was associated with higher levels of satisfaction and commitment among lesbian and gay employees. Thus, overall, research has suggested that when organizational strategy and HR policies and practices support diversity initiatives, diversity is more likely to lead to positive performance outcomes (Kochan, Bezrukova, Ely, Jackson, Joshi, Jehn, Leonard, Levine and Thomas, 2003).

Implementing fair policies, procedures and practices is a critical characteristic of a working environment that embraces the integration of diverse employees (Chuang, Church, & Zikic, 2004; Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000; McKay, et al., 2008; Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998; Morbarak, Findler, & Wind, 2003). Because of their perceived differences and related uncertain feelings, employees in diverse organizations are likely to become sensitive to issues related to fairness and trust (van den Boss, 2001). Therefore, it is by emphasizing fair treatment that managers will be able to lessen the level of group conflict in diverse organizations. When different group members share perceptions of justice, research suggests that it becomes easier for them to work together. Justice

climate is therefore considered an important moderator of the relationship between diversity, group processes and group performance (Roberson & Colquitt, 2005).

The process of fair treatment in the workplace is well represented by the literatures on distributive justice (i.e., fairness of the outcomes) (Adams, 1965) and procedural justice (i.e., fairness of the procedures that lead to determine those outcomes) (Leventhal, 1980), and interactional justice (Bies, & Moag, 1986). Research suggests that when employees perceive that the organization violates distributive, procedural justice or interactional justice, they are more likely to have paranoiac reactions to a diversity workforce (Kramer, 2001).

Managing justice in diverse organizations is a very complex process because it requires a certain level of standardization and at the same time it requires some flexibility. For example, in order to embrace diversity and respond to it appropriately, organizations must offer reasonable accommodations to working parents (Shina, Wong, Simlo, & Ortiz-Torres, 1989), people living with disabilities (Steinberg, Iezzoni, Conill, & Stineman, 2002) or people believing in different religions (Cash, & Gray, 2000). Therefore, establishing idiosyncratic deals in a diverse organization may become an appropriate practice in order to enhance fairness perception. Recent research suggests that establishing idiosyncratic deal (i. e., personalized employment arrangements negotiated between individual workers and employers and intended to benefit them both) may indeed increase perception of justice from the eye of the receiver. However, such type of idiosyncratic deal may also increase group members' suspicious and perceptions of unfair treatment unless they believe that comparable opportunity will be offered to them in the future (Greenberg, Roberge, Ho, & Rousseau, 2005; Lai, Rousseau, & Chang, 2009). This area of research about ideals is brand new to the literature; more research is definitely needed in order to further understand the role of i-deals in accommodating people who have with special needs and therefore better respond to a diverse workforce.

To be perceived as a fair organization, diverse organizations must align their human resource functions (i.e., recruitment, selection, performance appraisal and allocation of promotion, compensation etc.) toward the implementation of supportive diversity practices. In the next sections, we will briefly review the literature that addresses supportive diversity practices during three the recruitment process, the selection process and the performance evaluation process.

Recruitment. To conduct a recruitment process that will be perceived as fair, organizations should encourage everyone, including candidates from minority groups to apply on the opening positions. Research suggests that in order to be successful at recruiting a diverse pool of applicants, organizations must convey commitment toward valuing diversity early during the recruitment process (Avery & McKay, 2006; Highhouse, Stierwalt, Bachiochi, Elder, & Fisher, 1999; Kim & Gelfand, 2003; Thomas & Wise, 1999). For example, portraying photographs of people with different race, ethnicity, gender, age, or abilities in recruitment advertisements is now becoming a popular practice reflected in the overwhelming majority (78%) of *Fortune* 100 companies that portray diverse people on their Web sites (Cober, Brown, & Levy, 2004). Websites such ThinkBeyondtheLabel.com, that promotes hiring people living with disabilities, are becoming popular. Research suggests that minority applicants tend to prefer advertisements that portray diversity rather than advertisements that to not portray it (Avery, 2003; Perkins et al., 2000). Research also suggests that promoting policies of equal opportunity enhances female and minority applicants' positive perceptions of the organization (Highhouse et al, 1999; McNab & Jognston, 2002; Slaughter, Sinar, & Bachiochi, 2002). Therefore, implementing advertisements with such characteristics might be fruitful to attract diverse applicants and being perceived as a fair organization early in the recruitment process.

Moreover, research suggests that the extent of discrimination that occurs during the recruiting process depends on the channels that are used to recruit applicants (Gelfand et al., 2005). For example, research suggests that organizations that rely on informal networks to fill open positions may increase the probability of discriminating against group who often do not have equal access to these social networks that are to jobs. Thus, to recruit a diverse pool of applicants, organizations must be proactive in developing partnerships with the community such as school systems, vocational rehabilitation agencies, and minority associations (Heneman, Waldeck, & Cushnie, 1996). Moreover, it is important for organizations to not only rely on informal networks but also to use a variety of communication media (i.e., newspapers, radio advertisements, Internet websites, etc.) to announce job openings.

Finally, other research suggests that embracing diversity requires organizations to recruit people with "extended fit" instead of people with "reinforcing fit" (Powell, 1998). Recruiting people that have complementary instead of similar values, knowledge, skills, abilities and other job relevant characteristics is considered a valuable practice for organizations to show efforts toward valuing diversity.

Selection Process. Once the organization has obtained a broad and diverse pool of applicants, it may happen during the selection process that more than one candidate are equally qualified for the position. In order to meet the affirmative action or equal opportunity hiring objectives, some firms may assume that it is appropriate to give preferential treatment to women and racioethnic minorities by hiring and promoting them over qualified white men. Indeed, it has been largely recognized by researchers that affirmative action has often come to be seen by the public as involving preferential selection, often in the form of quotas in hiring (Holloway, 1989; Kravitz & Platania, 1993; Northcraft & Martin, 1982). Such practices are illegal and therefore may often be interpreted, especially by Caucasian men, as unfair favoritism and reverse discrimination (Heilman, McCullough, & Gilbert, 1996). Recruiting a broad and diverse pool of applications and selecting the best candidate based on its capacity to performance the task and responsibilities included in the job description are essential conditions to create a positive climate for diversity in which the perceptions of being fairly treated prevail. Also, to be considered fair, the selection process should rely on valid and reliable selection tools. Extensive research has shown that various selection instruments are discriminatory toward minorities (Arvey & Landon, 1992; Brown & Day, 2006). Therefore, as mentioned by Gelfand et al. (2005) "the best way to combat discrimination in selection is to use measures that tap as many aspects of job performance as possible, to utilize different media in terms of the ways in which content is presented and responses are required and to use noncognitive measure such as personality and integrity test when possible" (p. 101).

An example of a hiring practice that is considered fair is Rooney's Rule, used by the National Football League (NFL). This rule was devised to address the issue of the disproportionate number of black coaches compare to black football players in the NFL. Black football players comprised 70% of the NFL's team, whereas 28% (assistant coaches) and 6% (head coaches) were black. Rooney's rule mandates that during the interview process for NFL coaches, an equal number of black and white coaches should have an opportunity to be interviewed; in other words, Ronney proposes that for every white coach interviewed, at least one minority head coach should also be interviewed (Garber, 2007). This practice has now been expanded to the interview process for the position of General Manager (Associated Press, 2009).

Performance Evaluation Process. Existing research on performance appraisal suggests that in order to reduce and eliminate discrimination in the performance evaluation process, organizations must implement performance management systems that involve explicit performance expectations, clear performance criteria, valid and reliable measures, regular performance feedback, and consistent application of these standards across employees (Bernardin, Hagan, Kane & Villanova, 1998; Gelfand et al., 2005; Klimoski & Donahue, 1997; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990).

Moreover, research drawing on self-verification theory (Swann, Rentfrow, & Guinn, 2005) suggests that evaluating and rewarding performance should be done at both, an individual level and a group level. According to self-verification theory, it is crucial for each member to be recognized as a group member, but also as a respected for being an individual with unique characteristics. Both "Who am I, as an individual?" and" Who am I, as a group member?" are crucial questions that different people working together must address and mutually confirm in order for them to be able to enhanced group performance. This argument has also been proposed by optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991; for review see Brewer, 2003). According to optimal distinctiveness theory, the need for inclusion and the need for differentiation are people's basic needs. Social identity derives from a fundamental tension between the human need for inclusion, validation and similarity to others, whereas personal identity comes from this countervailing need for uniqueness and individuality. Both of these needs must be fulfilled in order to motivate group identification and perception of justice which, in turn, increase group performance. Therefore, according to these two social psychology theories, in order to increase perception of justice in diverse environments which, in turn, will increase group performance, evaluating and rewarding performance (i. e., giving a promotion or a compensation) should be done at both levels, the individual and the group level. Empirical research also shows supportive evidence of such a theoretical argument. For example, Milton and Westphal (2005) found that mutual identity confirmation at both levels (the individual and the group level) mediate the relationship between diversity and cooperation.

CONCLUSION

Based on research and theories, from Organizational Behavior, Human Resource Management and Social Psychology, we have identified and discussed five managerial practices that help the employer to manage diverse organizations efficiently. These managerial practices are: (1) Using symbolism management to value diversity, (2) Implementing diversity training programs, (3) Implementing cross-functional teams, (4) Stimulating communication flow, and lastly (5) Promoting fairness and justice in human resource practices.

By specifying and explaining how research and theories can be utilized and applied to understand the complexity of managing a diverse workforce and to propose a combination of strategic managerial practices, this paper contributes to fill the gap that exists between research and practices. As pointed out by Pendry, Driscoll, & Susannah (2007), "when it comes to strategies for tackling diversity issues, there is something of a divide between theory and practice (p., 27). Thus, while one major contribution of this paper was to recommend, based on research and theory, some valuable managerial practices that increase the success of diverse organizations, another contribution was to provide applied examples of these organizations that successfully implement authentic managerial practices to effectively manage diversity and therefore increase their overall performance.

Today, multinational corporations and other organizations are now planning, implementing, and evaluating a large number and variety of diversity initiatives (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2000). This is positive news that must continue. The examples provided in this paper of organizations that have already committed themselves to valuing diversity must pursue their commitment and hopefully will influence other organizations to adopt the appropriate managerial practices that will lead diversity to increase organizational performance.

Managing diversity effectively is a complex and delicate process that requires the implementations of a combination of diversity practices. It is not enough to only refer to the word "diversity" into the organization's mission statement. Organizations must engage themselves in a long-term commitment toward embracing diversity through the implementation of multiple diversity practices and supportive activities that will enhance the organizational performance. Even though each recommended practices may help managers to deal with diversity more effectively, implementing only one or two of these practices would be insufficient to leverage the full potential of diversity. Research suggests that the full potential of diversity will be released only by implementing a combination of strategic managerial practices that support diversity activities.

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