Human Resource Development Review

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The Dynamics of Vertical and Horizontal Diversity in Organization and Society

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Diversity focuses on human characteristics that make people either differ-ent from or the same as each other. This article introduces the concepts of vertical and horizontal diversity. Vertical diversity evaluates difference as superior or inferior. Horizontal diversity treats difference as variation. Organizational paradigms of assimilation and separation are based on verti-cal diversity and treat diversity as a problem to be solved. Assimilation solves it by submergence of difference and separation by isolating difference. Often organizations in the United States take a benevolent assimilation approach to diversity. However, research shows that assimilation does not engage diver-sity in ways that promote learning, creativity, and organizational effective-ness. This article argues for a relational re-conceptualization of diversity as horizontal. The discussion integrates diversity paradigms with diversity per-spectives, levels of self-representation, and uncertainty and certainty orienta-tions to create an explanatory framework for the dynamics of diversity.

Keywords: *diversity; gender; race*

The Ongoing Importance of Diversity Management

In spite of evident strides in civil rights, *vertical diversity*, the devaluing of per-sons who differ from an accepted norm or prototype, continues in American society and its organizations. Although hostile discrimination is no longer openly visible in many work settings, a new form of prejudice has emerged throughout the past two decades (James, Brief, Dietz, & Cohen, 2001). Although overt racism and sexism have declined, a more subtle form of prejudice has arisen (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Pettigrew & Martin, 1987; Sears, 1988). Symbolic racism and sexism are marked by a reluctance to admit that inequality still exists, and anger toward people who believe processes are needed to overcome it (Sears, 1988). Covert forms of racism and sexism are harder to identify and address than

overt forms (Duncan, de la Rey, & Braam, 2000). Nevertheless, they can have very real impacts on individual careers and organizational functioning.

According to James (2000), the mechanisms that underlie discrimination differ depending on the unit of analysis: individual, group, or organization. At the *individual level* prejudice can operate through stereotypes. Raphael (2002, p. 1204) described how a "virtual social identity" is developed when assumed negative group characteristics are assigned to an individual. Studies suggest that acting on this virtual social identity, in turn, can create a self-confirming stereotype (Brickson, 2000; Snyder, 1992). For example, despite studies showing that women sometimes meet higher standards for promotion (Gjerde, 2002), male managers continue to describe female managers as "less confident, less analytical, less emotionally stable, less consistent, and possessing poorer leadership abilities than male managers" (Oakley, 2000, p. 326). When women managers are subjected to differential treatment based on this virtual social identity, it can become a persistent, self-fulfilling stereotype. Brickson (2000) noted that visible forms of diversity such as race and gender are especially likely to elicit stereotypes. Similar examples can be identified with regard to race. For example, studies have shown that African Americans receive lower supervisor ratings on performance than Whites and are given lower ratings on task and relationship elements of performance (Miliken & Martins, 1996). Such "virtual" attributions, whether conscious or tacit, can hinder the advancement of minorities and women in organizational settings (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Schein, Mueller, & Jacobson, 1989).

According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), identity is constructed not only from personal characteristics but also from group membership. Category theory extends social identity theory by categorizing the self and others into identity in-groups and out-groups (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Turner, 1987). At the *group level* James (2000, p. 494) described how exclusion or "social closure" creates an organizational environment of discrimination. She noted that members of high-status in-groups often reserve benefits and opportunities, such as promotions, mentoring, and challenging assignments, for members of their own group in the work setting. Research indicates that society assigns differential status to cultural identity groups. Ely and Thomas (2001) wrote:

> Cultural identities are associated in the larger society with certain power positions, such that some cultural identity groups have greater power, prestige, and status than others (e.g., Ridgeway and Berger, 1986; Nkomo, 1992; Ragins, 1997). In Western society, men, as a group, are more powerful – have higher status and hold more positions of formal organizational and political power – than women as a group; similarly whites are more powerful than people of color. (p. 231)

There is contradictory evidence regarding how race and gender affect promotions. Some studies have found progress for African Americans and women (e.g., Cobb-Clark & Dunlop, 1999; Nkomo & Cox, 1990). However, James

(2000) argued that the majority of research indicates that Whites are favored in workplace processes such as promotions even when factors of human capital such as education and training are taken into consideration. Several authors have argued that overrepresentation of White males in positions of authority can be a reflection of low status for women and minorities in junior positions (e.g., Ely, 1994, 1995; Konrad & Gutek, 1987; Pfeffer, 1989; Ridgeway, 1988). In such settings women are encouraged to take on the traits associated with the male prototype because success is measured according to "male referent and historical male norms" (Gibson, 1995, p. 256). In contrast, Ely (1994) argued that observing the advancement of role models that are like one's self has a direct and positive impact on the organizational behavior of lower level employees. Women who perceive that women are able to advance in an organization do not see gender as a liability and have better relationships with other female employees (Ely, 1994).

At the *organizational level* inequality can become institutionalized via conscious and unconscious practices. Lowe, Mills, and Mullen (2002) noted:

> Innumerable organizational studies have revealed the gendered character of seemingly gender-neutral processes such as structure (cf. Kanter, 1977), strategy (cf. Morgan & Knights, 1991), communication (cf. Borisoff & Merrill, 1985), perception (Mills & Wilson, 2001), organizational culture (Morgan, 1988), and sensemaking (Helms-Mills, & Mills, 2000). (p. 426)

Glass ceilings can impair the careers of women and minorities (Auster, 1993; Jones, 1986; Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987; Redwood, 1996). Although significant convergence of the wage differential between men and women occurred during the 1980s, the trend slowed significantly, with the ratio reaching a plateau in the mid-1990s (Blau & Kahn, 2000). Data indicate that, on average, women's compensation is approximately 23.5% less than that of male counterparts in the United States (Blau & Kahn, 2000). This gap widens by more than 1½ times that figure at the managerial and executive levels (Oakley, 2000). Studies have shown that compensation is also lower for minorities in management (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1992; Stroh, Brett, & Reilly, 1992). The gap between compensation received by White males and the compensation received by women and minorities widens with age (Barnum, Liden, & Ditomaso, 1995) and, according to Bertran and Hallock, with advancement (as cited in Blau & Kahn, 2000).

Beyond the personal impact on employees, why should these findings be of concern to human resource development (HRD) professionals and organizations? First, the U.S. workforce is becoming more diverse and at the same time getting smaller (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2000). To compete in a global economy organizations need to "attract, develop, and retain men and women of diverse race and ethnic backgrounds" (Landau, 1995, p. 391). Second, managing diversity has economic, legal, and social implications for the organization

(Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991). Milliken and Martins (1996) noted that diversity must be managed or organizations "act systematically to drive out individuals who are different" (p. 420).

A third reason that such findings are of interest is the lack of knowledge about the impact of diversity on group performance. Heterogeneous work environments that include differing cultural identities such as race and gender, and differing underlying attributes, add a dimension of complexity to the organizational setting. Brickson (2000) argued that there is insufficient knowledge about the processes that contribute to positive and negative diversity outcomes. Research on the impact of diversity on performance in organizations has yielded mixed results (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Ng & Tung, 1998; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). The link between diversity and organizational performance is not well understood. Several studies show that diversity in work groups is related to increased creativity and innovation (Amabile, 1994), that it positively affects problem solving by providing multiple perspectives and stimulating novel solutions (Cox, 1993; McLeod & Lobel, 1992; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Nemeth, 1986; Sessa, Jackson, & Rapini, 1995; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993), that it may lead to the creation of new knowledge and insight (Garton, 1992; Levine & Resnick, 1993; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), and that it may lead to higher level performance if the workgroup is able to handle conflict (Cox et al., 1991; McGrath, 1984). Nevertheless, diversity in workgroups is also associated with lower group integration, communication problems, conflict, and lower retention (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Jehn et al., 1999; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Sessa et al., 1995). Recent research has explored moderators of group performance in diverse work teams (Chatman & Flynn, 2001; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Jehn et al., 1999). The conflicting results from diversity studies have led some researchers and theorists to suggest that the complex dynamics of diversity are not being captured by existing theories (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998).

At the firm level, current research does not provide clear evidence that diversity is unequivocally good or bad for business and several studies appear to support the belief that organizational context is crucial in determining the impact of diversity on performance (Kochan, Bezrukova, Jackson, Joshi et al., 2003). One element of context is strategic stance. According to Miles and Snow (1978), strategic stance refers to the orientation that an organization takes toward improving performance. Miles and Snow's (1978) typology classifies organizations as having prospector, defender, analyzer, or reactor stances. In organizations taking a growth-oriented prospector stance, where employee involvement is central, Andrews, Boyne, Meier, O'Toole, and Walker (2005) found that managers are more likely to take advantage of the talents of a diverse workforce. In organizations with a defender stance that focuses on efficiency and consolidation, Andrews et al. (2005) reported that diversity does not appear to enhance productivity. A study by Richard (2000) also demonstrates that diversity enhances performance in organizations with a growth strategy whereas, for organizations focused on efficiency during downsizing, racial diversity seems less likely to

enhance performance. Richard, Barnett, Dwyer, and Chadwick (2004) further suggested that, rather than a simple linear relationship, management diversity and firm performance may have a curvilinear relationship moderated by elements of strategic stance. Scholars from leading universities partnered with industry practitioners on the Diversity Research Network (DRN) project to study four large, well-known *Fortune* 500 firms that have reputations for a strong commitment to diverse workforces. Based on these studies, Kochan et al. (2003) reported that it is not possible to make a simple assertion that diversity does or does not improve performance. They call for a more nuanced view in which organizational context is critical. Results of the four DRN studies show that diversity has negative effects on teams in highly competitive environments, that diversity has positive effects when the organization promotes learning from diversity, that group leadership and process skills enhance functioning in heterogeneous groups, and that training can mitigate negative effects of diversity. Kochan et al. (2003) concluded that the ability of organizations to reap the benefits of diversity depends on their capacity to "inculcate cultures of mutual learning and cooperation" (p. 19), and reconsider the policies and practices that structure the organizational context.

Understanding the dynamics that underlie the impact of diversity in the work setting can assist HRD professionals to address what Ivancevich and Gilbert (2000) called the dilemmas of diversity management, including: "backlash against a commitment to diversity, the disappointment and anger of women and minorities, and systematic resistance within organizations to value diversity" (p. 75). Attendees of a recent future search conference jointly sponsored by American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) and the Academy of Human Resource Development identified "embracing globalization" and "embracing multiculturalism" as key beliefs about what is important for the future of the HRD profession (Dewey & Carter, 2003, p. 253). Nevertheless, although diversity management has become a major concern among practitioners, Ross-Gordon and Brooks (2004) maintained that diversity "research and theory-building endeavors have been few" (p. 74) among HRD scholars. They conclude that all areas of diversity in HRD need more research and attention. Bierema and Cseh (2003) also noted a limited focus on diversity research in HRD.

Overview of Discussion

The discussion that follows begins with background on the evolution of the prevalent diversity paradigms of assimilation and separatism in the United States. The historical contexts of the African American Civil Rights Movement and of women's liberation serve as background to illustrate how the elements of difference, pride, and potential space have influenced the unfolding of vertical paradigms of assimilation and separatism in the United States. Limitations of the prevailing paradigms are detailed, and an alternative horizontal paradigm that focuses on interpersonal relations is presented. This background is followed by

a discussion of how diversity paradigms that evolve in society become a part of the workplace. The discussion integrates underlying diversity paradigms with research on diversity perspectives (Ely & Thomas, 2001), levels of self-representation (Brewer & Gardner, 1996), and orientations to certainty and uncertainty (Roney & Sorrentino,1995) to create a framework for understanding how diversity operates in organizational settings. Theories currently used to describe and explain diversity are explored, and the need for an expanded toolbox of theories that allows for a relational conceptualization of diversity is discussed. Research implications are identified.

Important Elements in the Evolution of Diversity Paradigms

Three elements—difference, pride, and potential space—have significantly affected the unfolding of diversity relations in the United States.

Difference

As we have been drawn deeper into a pluralistic world, scholars have become more aware that gender and racial discrimination arise from the underlying, fundamental fear and rejection of difference that drives all prejudice (Young, 1990). This view is not intended to diminish the injustice done to people of color or the effects of gender discrimination. It points out that the reasons given to justify such treatment are often rationalizations for a deeper cause, and that all of these people suffered because difference was equated with inferiority.

Two types of human difference can be identified in the literature: readily detected, visible characteristics and underlying attributes (Peltokorpi, 2003). Because studies suggest that readily detected differences are used as the primary source for categorizing people (Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992) and that they are more likely to elicit stereotypes (Peltokorpi, 2003), this article focuses on the visible characteristics of gender and race and subsequently explores how a relational view of diversity can lead to deeper inquiry into underlying, nonvisible attributes.

Pride

According to LaMothe (2003) pride is "part of a social, hierarchical system of estimating, recognizing, assigning, and securing a subjective and intersubjective sense of validation and worth" (pp. 9-10). This definition uses a special sense of the word *pride* that will be termed *reactive pride* in our discussion. Reactive pride has two faces. For those who are part of the in-group, who view themselves as superior, reactive pride generates a sense of solidarity and cohesion. Organizational studies support the similarity attraction theory that argues that

individuals are most comfortable with people similar to themselves (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Byrne, 1971). However, reactive pride can also have a negative side:

> Culturally or religiously based pride systems, which instruct members to believe in their own elevated sense of worth, *may* intentionally or unintentionally contribute to the trauma and suffering of those considered to be inferior…we have examples in U.S. history of the psychological harm to Native, Japanese, and African-Americans that resulted from … excessive estimations of white Western European "superior" worth. (LaMothe, 2003, pp. 9-10)

Potential Space

D. W. Winnicott (1971) termed the "intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute" the *potential space* (p. 2). According to LaMothe (2003), others in psychology have attributed playing, creativity, reflective functioning (Bram & Gabbard, 2001), genuine dialogue (Harris, 1992), and development of shared meaning (Ogden, 1985) to potential space. Ogden (1985) understood the concept as the space where there is play "between fantasy and reality, me and not-me, symbol and symbolized" leading to the creation of new shared meaning (p. 139). Carr (2003) supported this view by noting that the theoretical discourse within fields such as HRD is itself a form of play that allows new creative ideas to surface.

LaMothe (2003) explained that potential space owes its creative nature to "the dialectic of generating and surrendering to experience, objects, and other subjects" (p. 18). It is the flexibility to engage in relationship with the "other" that makes the space creative. The creative use of potential space involves people in "crafting experience while encountering and surrendering to the constraints of reality and of the other person" while being open "to being moved and transformed by the other *qua* other" (p. 19). This space collapses when prideful people do not allow the other's subjectivity to touch them. "Between the person of pride and the demeaned other, there is simply a collapse and a deletion of potential space" (p. 21) and shared meaning becomes imposed meaning.

Historical Context for the Evolution of Diversity Paradigms

Lowe et al. (2002, p. 427) argued that studies of organizational behavior are too often based on "ahistorical assumptions" that fail to take into consideration the personal context that underlies the processes involved. The histories of women's liberation and of the American Civil Rights Movement provide context for understanding the roles that difference, reactive pride, and potential space have played in the evolution of prevailing diversity paradigms in the United States. This background is important to understanding the limitations of assimilation and separatism and the need for a relational paradigm.

Assimilation: The Submergence of Difference

Assimilation has been defined as the ongoing process of absorption into a new culture and development of a new social identity (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). Assimilation is commonly used as a global term to encompass acculturation. Acculturation is similar to assimilation except that an individual's visible characteristics continue to mark the person as a member of a minority culture even after assimilation (LaFromboise et al., 1993).

According to Ibarra (as cited in Corsun & Costen 2001, p. 17), gender and race share many commonalities with regard to inequality, such as underrepresentation in positions of power, negative stereotypes, and visible genetic characteristics associated with lower status. Thibault (1987) noted that women began their struggle for equality within the framework of conventional society. Nineteenth-century women took it for granted that the public and private spheres of life were well partitioned and accepted this as natural (Thibault, 1987). She maintained that it was natural for women to consider their life project as biologically determined to be the private world of family and children. Thus, women of the 1800s in the United States accepted the need to assimilate to a male-constructed world when they entered the public space of the workforce. She argued that the first wave of the women's movement did not attempt to change the conventional social paradigm but to find place within it. Early reformers hoped that emerging theories of science and organization would lead to equality by creating an ordered "social symmetry" (Thibault, 1987, p. 15). They believed that voting rights and institutional change would be the keys that opened the public sphere.

The women's suffrage movement modeled many of its strategies on the efforts to win voting rights for African American males. The Civil Rights Movement, from the period just after the Civil War through the campaign led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., demonstrates interesting parallels to the women's experience. According to African American scholar Cornel West (1993, p. 273), one of Dr. King's greatest strengths was his ability to draw together the African American community including its churches, the trade unionists and professionals, the Black working class and poor, and to build bridges to progressive non-Black people. However, West (1993) noted, despite its truly heroic efforts and great achievements, one drawback of the early freedom movement was its foundation in assimilation. The movement sought equality through the submergence of differences into the mainstream and unification in terms of conventional norms.

Problems of Assimilation

Iris Marion Young (1990, pp. 164-165) identified three consequences of the belief equality can be achieved by ignoring difference and assimilating to the norms of the prevalent group. First, enacting this belief means that groups who differ from the conventional culture cannot participate in defining the rules and

standards used to make meaning in society. Second, assimilation allows the dominant in-group to ignore its own specificity, to assume and act as if its perspectives are neutral, given, and universal—as if they are the prototype against which all else is judged. Sociologists refer to the process of singling out certain phenomena for attention while treating other phenomena as background as "social marking" (Brekhus, 1998, p. 35). Social marking creates a power dynamic that makes issues of race and gender problems of those marked, that is, women and minorities. Brekhus (1998, p. 36) noted that turning the "unmarked" into unexamined background can lead to research that reinforces cultural stereotypes. Young's (1990) third consequence of assimilation is that it creates a sense of self-alienation by engendering self-disparagement within groups that deviate from the allegedly neutral, unmarked standard.

A fourth consequence of assimilation is more subtle. It is the breakdown of the values, customs, and culture of the group that is assimilated. As women first tried to assimilate into male-constructed organizations, they lost the momentum and the networks that made the suffrage movement possible (Thibault, 1987). The female reformists and the organizations that accepted them believed that the status quo was a given and that women should abandon or mask their own perspectives. Bell (1990) noted a similar phenomenon in the lives of modern-day African American professional women who compartmentalize their work and community environments. She noted that an African American woman "may be forced to choose one of the cultural contexts and disassociate herself from the other" (p. 472). She went on to note "socio-emotional distancing from supportive networks located in either cultural context can trigger feelings of isolation and alienation, wherein a woman experiences powerful estrangement from one or both cultural contexts" (p. 472).

A fifth consequence of assimilation is the potential development of the "false self" (Winnicott, 1971, p. 14). Although all employees manage aspects of their image, wholesale masking of beliefs can create a dual identity or false self. Karen Horney (as cited in Lowe et al., 2002, p. 429) suggested that women are driven to a "flight from womanhood" and a "flight into the male role" as they develop and learn about the powerlessness of the female role. W. E. B. Du Bois (as cited in Rawls, 2000) also depicted the sense of "double consciousness" brought on by living in two worlds—"the internalization of structural constraints and negative attitudes and values about the 'raced' self present in the general culture" (p. 243). Research supports the idea of dual consciousness, showing that African Americans and other minorities in the United States have absorbed the norms of the culture of their roots and that of Anglo America (Cox et al., 1991). DuBois noted that, "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (as cited in Bell, 1990, p. 461). Yet he acknowledged that duality of personality, in itself, is not necessarily dysfunctional. According to DuBois (as cited in Gaines & Reed, 1995), it is the message delivered to African Americans by the dominant culture that they must "chose between

White or Black—a choice they cannot win" (p. 102) that makes duality problematic. Under pressure from the dominant society to "choose," dual identity can lead to the use of a false self in organizational life. For those who form false selves, this flight from the true self involves more than just giving up a socialized role. It means giving up voice—giving up realization of a critical, creative self.

Gaines and Reed (1995), argued that "African American dividedness and duality are not merely additions to, or specific variations of, some general structure of personality and identification" (p. 99) but the result of exploitation. As Dubois observed above, it is the choice between cultures that causes distress for a person undergoing second-culture acquisition. The term *biculturalism* refers to a model of second-culture acquisition that assumes it is possible to effectively operate within two cultures by switching modes of functioning "without having to choose between them" (LaFromboise et al., 1993, p. 399)—without judging either culture as inferior or superior. To achieve a bicultural stance requires the individual be resilient in the face of external messages about cultural inferiority and superiority. The idea of bicultural competence shows promise; however, biculturalism continues to be a difficult task for those who live in a society that functions with tacit discrimination (Bell, 1990) and with a vertical view of diversity.

In summary, encountering difference can threaten the certainty of one's worldview. The perceived potential for threat is greater when that worldview has been treated as a given. This threat can lead to reactive pride that categorizes difference as inferior and devalues the perspective of the other person. If it is a relationship of dominance, this devaluing can cause the development of a false self in the "other" who seeks recognition from the dominant person through assimilation. This process causes the collapse of the potential space, the interplay between the self and the other. The potential space becomes filled by the dominant person and leaves no room for the other (Szollosy, 1998; Winnicott, 1971). This shuts down the creative flow between them. As Winnicott (1971) said:

> It is creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living. Contrasted with this is a relationship to external reality that is one of compliance, the world and its details being recognized but only as something to be fitted in with or demanding adaptation. (p. 65)

Separation: Reclaiming Identity Through Transitional Reactive Pride

During the second wave of the women's movement, women began to drop their desire to assimilate into a male-constructed public world. Women sought to be valued for their own unique contributions and viewpoints. As more women entered the work world and became educated, the tension between the

private "feminine" world and the public "masculine" world increased. Women recognized that "while the private and public spheres have distinctive features, they cannot be intellectually separated" (Thibault, 1987, p. 93). "Because personal life itself, concretely, reinforces and strengthens social relations of domination," they concluded that the "personal is political" and the second wave of the women's movement was born (p. 92).

Black Nationalists who rejected the dominant culture in an effort to build identity within the African American community changed the Civil Rights Movement in a similar manner (West, 1993). The second phases of the women's movement and the Black freedom movement were oppositional movements based on separation from the dominant culture and the building of new identity. Although reactive pride alienates those who are viewed as inferior (out-group), the other side of reactive pride is the development of cohesion within the group that views its perspective as superior (in-group). The second wave of women's liberation and the Black Nationalist movement allowed the emergence of repressed anger. This anger led to *transitional reactive pride* and attempts to translate released anger into new in-group identities. Although the anger was unwelcome and threatening to the dominant society, reclaiming identity through transitional pride signaled an awareness of and an attempt to heal self-alienation. These stressful times in the history of the women's liberation and civil rights movements brought awareness of inequality based on gender and race squarely into public view.

Problems of Separation

New in-group identities among women and African Americans became the basis for political action that continued the changes started by earlier freedom movements. Nevertheless, the sense of pride instilled by these movements left behind segments of their own populations whose values they did not embrace and led in some cases to new exclusionary norms, as well as separation from dominant American culture. The middle-class career values of the second wave of the women's movement alienated many poor and working-class White women. Unfortunately, as West (1993, p. 286) noted, the efforts of Black Nationalists also centered predominantly on the interests of the "new" Black middle class, leaving the larger African American working-class and poor community behind and losing meaningful connections to the Black community. African American women felt marginalized by both movements. Deborah King (1988, p. 46) argued that African American women were not only placed in "double jeopardy" by virtue of their status as women and Blacks but also in "multiple jeopardy" because sexism and racism are not simply additive—their interrelationship multiplies the impact of discrimination. King noted that many Black women felt invisible in the women's liberation movement because their perspectives were not reflected in a movement that held the values of middle-class White women as a prototype.

A Relational Alternative to Assimilation or Separation

Iris Marion Young (1990) wrote that it is our definitions of difference and identity that have brought us this dilemma between assimilation and separatism. She argued that, if difference means absolute otherness, mutual exclusion, and categorical opposition, then one group, be they African American, White, male, or female, will be viewed as occupying the position of a norm or a prototype, against which all others are measured. It is the basis of exclusion. However, if we define difference to mean "specificity, variation, heterogeneity," then difference names relations (pp. 170-171).

Difference in this sense is not based on characteristics or "essences" but on relationships. It recognizes that individuals belong to several groups at once, and it is unrealistic to expect a person to choose between segments of his or her own being. This variation of differences can be termed *horizontal diversity*. It allows the development of self-esteem that is based on all one is rather than forcing disparagement of parts of the self in an attempt to emulate an idealized norm. "To identify oneself with a one-dimensional view is always to deny a part of one's humanity" (Greene, 1973, p. 9).

If one views "female" as an identity with characteristics separating that identity from the male-constructed dominant identity in the United States, one understands it as the basis for collective action and a community to which one owes allegiance (Rawls, 2000). This is the view of many women of the second wave of the women's movement.

However, some third-wave feminists began to worry that the terms female or gender homogenize the differences between women and create another attempt to define the unitary quality that describes women (Nicholson, 1998). These ideas caused a rift between second- and third-wave feminists with the latter arguing that "difference and gender difference do not exist as things in themselves: they are created relationally, and we cannot understand difference apart from this relational construction" (Chodorow, 1987, p. 250). The relational view is echoed in the works of Carrim (2000) and Miles (1989) on racism. This view permits "a conceptualization of racisms in the plural as historically situated and shifting, and as necessarily relational" (Duncan et al., 2000, p. 16).

Dynamics of Diversity

Reactive pride that leads to prejudice, and even necessary transitional reactive pride if it becomes frozen in separation, can inhibit the ability to see the other as a separate center of consciousness rather than a stereotype. Figure 1 illustrates the dynamics of the diversity paradigms whose histories have been discussed. The critical stage in the diagram is the decision of the individual to view difference as inferior or superior. This vertical view constrains options and creates barriers to a learning relationship.
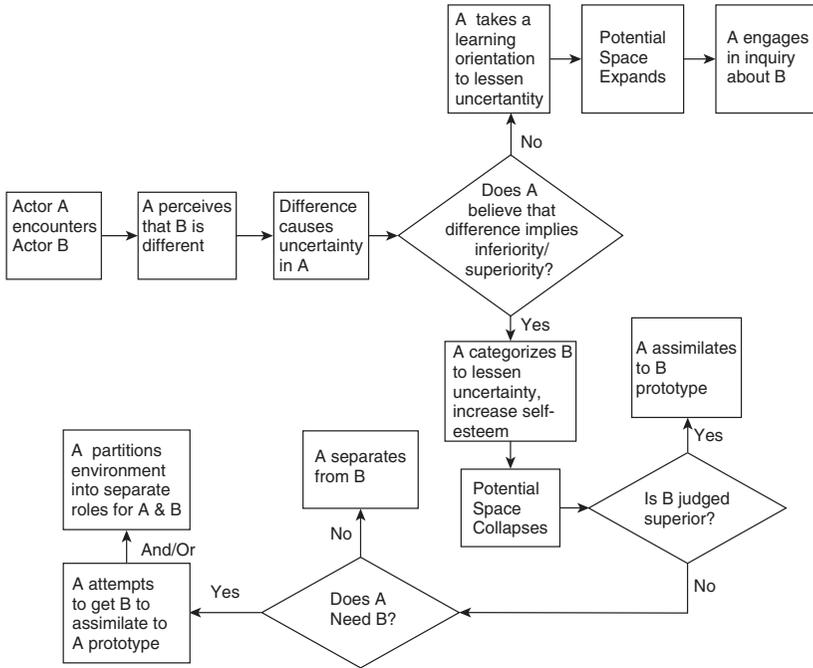
FIGURE 1:   Diversity Dynamics

Diversity Paradigms in the Organizational Setting

The diversity paradigms that evolve in society are carried into the workplace. Ely and Thomas (2001, p. 248) found that employee beliefs about self and other lead to three diversity perspectives: discrimination-and-fairness, access-and-legitimacy, and integration-and-learning. It can be argued that the discrimination-and-fairness perspective and the access-and-legitimacy perspective stem from an underlying vertical view of diversity. The first takes an assimilation approach and the second a separation approach. Only the integration-and-learning perspective is founded on a horizontal relational paradigm of diversity that values difference and incorporates it into the functioning of the organization.

Ely and Thomas (2001) note that in the discrimination-and-fairness perspective employees view diversity as an end in itself and a moral imperative that insures justice. The problem with this perspective is that everyone is viewed as the same, and in practice group members suppress differences and assimilate to the dominant cultural standard or prototype. According to Ely and Thomas' work (2001), groups that embrace the discrimination-and-fairness perspective can view

membership in underrepresented groups as a "source of powerlessness and dis-enfranchisement" (p. 259).

In Ely and Thomas' second diversity perspective, access-and-legitimacy, the organization partitions its workforce and uses minority members to interrelate with diverse markets and constituencies as a way of gaining access and credibility with minority customers. The access-and-legitimacy perspective uses diversity at the margins. It separates and partitions the workforce to reflect markets. Although diversity is used in a limited way, it is not seen as integral to organizational functioning or as the identity of upper level management. Ely and Thomas (2001) quote one worker in an organization characterized by access-and-legitimacy, "if you perform and exceed expectations, regardless of color, you are acknowledged and recognized…the problem is that what is expected of senior management here has a cultural bias towards whites" (p. 245).

Only the third perspective, integration-and-learning, "links diversity to work processes—the way people do and experience the work—in a manner that makes diversity a resource for learning and adaptive change" (Ely & Thomas, 2001, p. 240). In this perspective, diversity is used to rethink primary tasks, to redefine strategies and practices, and to shape work processes—to think critically about how work is done and the *relations* between the people doing it. Ely and Thomas concluded from research that only when employees hold an integration-and-learning perspective is diversity seen as a "source of insight and skill" that contributes to and enhances the work of the organization (p. 241). They indicated that other perspectives are not wrong, but that they are insufficient. According to Thomas and Ely (1996), organizations usually take one of two traditional approaches to diversity. Either they encourage minority and female employees to blend in and assimilate or they set them apart. In these two paradigms "the staff . . . gets diversified, but the work does not" (p. 81). In their research Ely and Thomas (2001) found that "only the integration-and-learning perspective provided the kind of rationale and guidance people needed to achieve sustained benefits from diversity" (p. 260).

Implications for Practice

If, as Ely and Thomas (2001) proposed, an integration-and-learning perspective can lead to better organizational outcomes, what factors can promote such a perspective in practice? Davidson and James (2005) argued "to realize the breadth of benefits that high-quality relationships across difference can produce, individuals must confidently and fearlessly remain present and engaged when difference-related conflict tests the resiliency of the relationship" (p. 20). In other words, individuals must learn how to embrace uncertainty rather than avoiding it through stereotypes.

Davidson and James (2005) identified two factors that are important to whether employees take a learning approach to diversity. They are: (a) commitment to the

relationship and (b) relationship competency. Relationship competency, according to Davidson and James (2005, pp. 16-18), involves the core skills of awareness of negative emotions, ability to reframe conflict, ability to foster and maintain openness to the other, ability to engage in inquiry, and skill in giving and receiving feedback.

Davidson and James (2005) indicated that high-quality relationships require positive regard, continuous learning, resilience, endurance over time, and positive outcomes. Winnicott (1971) referred to such relationships as "good enough" environments that underlie growth, learning, and the expansion of potential space. Other authors concur (Child & Rodrigues, 2003; Edmondson, 1999). Foldy (2003) indicated that such environments allow the individual to release attachment to one particular way of thinking and experiment with new views and ways of acting. Davidson and James (2005) cited research showing that environments based on high-quality relationships lead to positive organizational outcomes such as collaboration (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992), sharing of information (Gersick, Bartunek, & Dutton, 2000) and mental, physical, and emotional well-being (Totterdell, Spelten, Smith & Barton, 1995).

Creating such environments also requires new roles for managers. These emerging roles include encouraging new employees to maintain unique qualities and perspectives rather than socializing them into conformity, involving diverse voices in decision making, and recognizing that newcomers and insiders will need training in the types of relational skills needed to produce effective organizational outcomes in complex organization. Such roles are designed to create environments where potential conflict can be turned into creative tension (McDaniel & Walls, 1997, p. 371).

Significance of Horizontal Diversity

Difference creates uncertainty. A horizontal view of diversity as variation is significant because it expands the potential space (Winnicott, 1971) between people. This allows the person to engage in inquiry to lessen uncertainty rather than making snap judgments and using stereotypes to categorize the other. Horizontal diversity fosters a relational paradigm of diversity and leads to an integration-and-learning perspective (Ely & Thomas, 2001) that engages diversity and allows employees to fully contribute their talent and motivation in the workplace. This discussion argues that a horizontal view of diversity is needed—to create an environment for learning and to help employees tolerate uncertainty, engage in inquiry, and think critically about their own assumptions. A relational paradigm based on a horizontal view of diversity can assist in addressing problems of integration, communications, and conflict that lead to lower employee retention and satisfaction.

Traditional management theory views organizations as operating in predictable, deterministic ways (McDaniel & Walls, 1997). However, this view is

changing and organizations are increasingly being seen as dynamic, complex systems of relationships that adapt to their environment (Thietart & Forgues as cited in McDaniel & Walls, 1997). Such organizations require a rich array of diverse people who are a key element for the "frame-breaking" learning that is needed to become and remain competitive (McDaniel & Walls, 1997, p. 371). The shift from a deterministic to a complexity perspective on organization also leads to recognition of the importance of effective interpersonal relationships for organizational sense making and even for organizational survival (Weick, 1995).

Theory and Diversity

Social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and self-categorization (Hogg & Abrams, 1988) theories, taken together, are currently the major theories used to describe human reactions to difference. Social identity theory, although acknowledging the personal level of identity, focuses primarily on the aggregate or group level (Brickson, 2000). Self-categorization theory (Hogg & Terry, 2000) is based on simplifying decisions about identity and categorizing individuals into groups. According to Klein, Dansereau, and Hall, any theory identifies a particular level that it intends to describe and explain (as cited in Peltokorpi, 2003, p. 27). Social identity theory and category theory focus on the aggregate or group as a main source of identity. Although these theories have proved very powerful in analysis of group behavior and its impact on individuals, the lack of attention to other levels of identity leads to limitations.

First, simplification in the way people categorize others is not always a neutral process. Hogg and Terry (2000) noted that in social identity theory and self-categorization theory individuals categorize the identity of the self and others based on the groups to which they belong and people are categorized into in-groups and out-groups, with the in-group being viewed as superior. The purpose of categorization, according to Hogg and Terry (2000), is to attain positive social identity and to reduce uncertainty about "perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors and ultimately, one's self-concept and place within the social world" (p. 124). Social identity theory and self-categorization theory acknowledge that people seek the reduction of uncertainty, and Hogg and Terry argued that uncertainty is better reduced by prototypes that are simple and clear. Unfortunately, when a history of discrimination is involved, simplifications instead of being neutral can lead to stereotypes (Feddes, Otten, Van der Zee, & Wright, 2004), and social identity theory and category theory do little to explain how context and values impact the development of stereotypes.

A second limitation stems from the fact that not all individuals are certainty oriented. According to social identity and categorization theories, people faced with new or uncertain situations act to reduce uncertainty through the use of simplification. Roney and Sorrentino (1995) studied individual differences in people's desire to learn about themselves and their environment. They found that people have different orientations to new knowledge. According to Roney

and Sorrentino (1987), certainty-oriented people avoid ambiguity, orient toward the known, and are motivated to see the world as clearly defined into categories to reduce uncertainty, just as social identity theory and categorization theory would predict. They note that certainty-oriented people are not as interested in acquiring new information. However, Roney and Sorrentino's (1995) research indicates that, although less common, other people are uncertainty oriented. These people seek new information and engage in inquiry about themselves and their environment to lessen uncertainty rather than leaping to stereotypes. Uncertainty-oriented people take a learning approach to new situations. Although social identity theory explains the prevalent behavior of certainty orientation, it does less to help researchers understand uncertainty orientation and how to enhance the probability that individuals will take a learning perspective on difference.

Argyris (1996) also studied the phenomenon. He referred to it as "Pattern A" and "Pattern B" behavior. Pattern B aligns with Roney and Sorrentino's (1995) uncertainty orientation. Argyris (1996, pp. 351-352) argued that there are four reasons why researchers should study Pattern B even though it is less common: (a) Pattern B behavior exists and, as such, needs to be accounted for in theories of human behavior; (b) through studying Pattern B, existing social psychological theory can be reexamined and refined; (c) there is an apparent "pervasive blindness" to recognizing the impact individuals have on others and a pervasive reticence to express important feelings; and (d) through study of Pattern B, generalizations can be found regarding how to create environments in the "'real' world that encourage openness, trust, risk-taking, concern, and individuality" (pp. 351-352). Argyris went on to warn that not studying Pattern B can lead to "a conception of man in which the 'natural' behavior is hiding feelings, not taking risks, showing little concern, individuality, and trust" and that pattern A represents a "low interpersonal competence state of affairs"(p. 352). Furthermore, he noted that studying Pattern B, even though it is less prevalent, can lead to understanding how individuals tolerate and adapt to uncertainty in ways that allows them to learn from situations.

A third limitation of using only collective theories to study diversity is that they tend to leave psychological, and even many interpersonal processes, as a "black box" (Lawrence, 1997, p. 2). Organizational demography is "the study of the composition of a social entity in terms of its members' attributes" (Lawrence, 1997, p. 2). It focuses on attributes at the aggregate level (Pfeffer, 1983). Organizational demography suggests that concepts such as attitudes, cognitions, and values are too difficult to measure and that measurement is unnecessary because there is congruence between demographic predictors and such concepts (Lawrence, 1997). The weaknesses of this congruence assumption have been the subject of criticism (Lawrence, 1997). Peltokorpi (2003) noted that theories focused on the collective or group level, such as social identity theory and category theory, do not explain how values influence categorization or why the impact of visible differences lessens as group members become more familiar

with each other and focus more on underlying differences rather than visible attributes such as skin color.

Such limitations have led some theorists to argue that social identity and category theories *alone* are not sufficient to allow for the reconceptualization of difference as relational (Brickson, 2000) or to fully explain the impact of diversity (Jackson, 1996). As noted earlier, social identity theory (Hogg & Terry, 2000) identifies two sources of identity. These include information from the personal level and the collective level with primary focus on collective self-definition through group membership. Brewer and Gardner's (1996) work led them to expand the social identity model by identifying three distinct loci of self-representation. These include "the self as an individual, as an interpersonal being, and as a group member" (Brickson, 2000, p. 84). The addition of an interpersonal or relational level as a source of identity and greater focus on the personal level opens possibilities of interpersonal inquiry, a relational view of diversity, and new learning (Brickson, 2000). A reconceptualization of diversity as relational requires expansion of the toolbox of theories used to describe and explain diversity beyond those focused on the group level. It requires the inclusion of theories that focus on personal and interpersonal levels. For example, social network theory (Hatala, 2006; Mayo & Pastor, 2005) can help reveal the underlying processes involved in relations within heterogeneous teams.

Table 1 provides a framework for understanding the relations among the diversity dimensions and paradigms that have been discussed. Note that a horizontal view of diversity leads to a paradigm based on interpersonal relations that engages difference and opens the possibility of a learning orientation.

Implications for Research

A horizontal view of diversity as variation and a paradigm of diversity based on interpersonal relations opens many avenues for inquiry. Two lines of research immediately present themselves. First, a more aggressive research agenda focused on the role of interpersonal relationships in diverse work teams is warranted. According to Jehn et al. (1999) relationship and process conflict are negatively linked to group performance in diverse teams. Feddes et al. (2004) indicated that although it has been argued that improving relationships leads to positive diversity outcomes (e.g., Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brickson & Brewer, 2001) "hardly any research has been done thus far to study the impact of close interpersonal relations on cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of ethnically diverse work teams" (p. 4).

The work of Davidson and James (2005) suggests the need for research focused on the skills that lead to quality relationships in work-group settings as a way to enhance heterogeneous work group performance. Several questions relevant to the work of HRD professionals present themselves based on this work. What is the impact of training interventions on relational competencies? Does

TABLE 1: Diversity Framework

Diversity Dimension	Locus of Social Identity Definition[a]	Diversity Paradigm	Lead to:	Diversity Mechanism	Learning Orientation[b]	Diversity Perspective[c]
Vertical: Views difference as inferior or superior	In-group prototype	Assimilation	⬆	Submerge difference	Certainty orientation	Discrimination-and-fairness (Treat everyone the same)
Vertical: Views differences as inferior or superior	In-group prototype	Separatism	⬆	Isolate difference	Certainty orientation	Access-and-legitimacy (Separate out and use diverse members)
Horizontal: Views difference as variation	Interpersonal relations	Relation	⬆	Engage difference	Uncertainty orientation	Integration-and-learning (Learn from the "other")

a. Adapted from Brewer and Gardner (1996).
b. Adapted from Roney and Sorrentino (1995).
c. Adapted from Ely and Thomas (2001).

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the development of relational competencies lower employee resistance to acknowledging relational conflict and engaging in positive conflict resolution in heterogeneous work groups? Does engagement and management of relational conflict lead to better organizational outcomes and group member satisfaction?

A second line of research is needed on the enhancement of uncertainty orientation and development of a learning perspective toward diversity. The idea underlying social identity theory that human beings quest for certainty is not new (e.g., Dewey, 1929). The issue is how initial judgments can be suspended long enough to engage in inquiry so that learning can take place. This leads to several research questions. When and under what conditions is uncertainty orientation triggered in a way that leads to inquiry? Are there cultural differences that lead to certainty or uncertainty orientation? Does uncertainty orientation delay categorization and allow workers to reach the stage where there is attenuation of focus on visible differences? How is an uncertainty orientation learned? Can training affect certainty–uncertainty orientation?

Having a theoretical framework that allows exploration on the personal, interpersonal, and group levels can promote research that provides better understanding of the processes that underlie interactions in diverse groups, as well as an understanding of how to enhance learning from diversity in the workplace.

Conclusion

This article introduces the concepts of vertical and horizontal diversity. Vertical diversity paradigms of assimilation and separatism are the dominant approaches to diversity in U.S. organizations—and they are not working. They are not working for organizations because assimilation and separatism do not engage diversity in ways that allow employees to fully contribute their talents, and they are not working for women and minorities because assimilation and separatism lead to environments of subtle discrimination and "underlying" conflict. This article argues that a relational paradigm that leads to a learning perspective on diversity requires movement away from a vertical view that sees difference as inferior or superior to a horizontal view that sees difference as variation. A horizontal view of diversity fosters a learning perspective on diversity by expanding the potential space (Winnicott, 1971) that allows interpersonal inquiry to take place between people. A learning perspective uses inquiry rather than stereotypes to lessen the uncertainty that arises in the presence of difference. Research shows that an integration-and-learning perspective (Ely & Thomas, 2001) allows employees to more fully contribute their talents and abilities within the organizational setting.

Human resource professionals can provide leadership in moving organizations from vertical assimilation models that tolerate diversity to horizontal relational models that engage diversity and integrate it into the work of the organization. They can do so through research and through practice. This discussion presented a new framework for diversity and called for an expansion

of the set of theories used to research and describe diversity so that underlying psychological and social processes that affect diversity in work settings can be better understood. Understanding the type of organizational environments that encourage workers to take a learning perspective on diversity, how such a perspective affects performance, and how it can lead to organizational improvement and greater employee satisfaction are key research questions for HRD professionals. In practice, the unpredictability of today's complex organizational environments makes "learning in preparation for action" less effective, and it is being replaced by the concept of learning in action (Vaill as cited in McDaniel & Walls, 1997, p. 370). To promote a learning perspective on diversity, HRD practitioners need to go beyond just "training about" topics such as diversity to helping employees develop underlying skills such as relational competence that allow them to learn during and from team interactions.

We have not yet moved beyond the need to "open doors" through affirmative action or to "open minds" through the celebration and valuing of diversity; however, the time has come to focus on "opening systems" through diversity management (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993, p. 405). Managing diversity should not necessitate a choice between achieving organizational goals and achieving human potential and dignity.

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