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Diversity in an Organization: A Case Study of how Diversity is Addressed in a Multi-National Organization

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DIVERSITY IN AN ORGANIZATION

A CASE STUDY OF HOW DIVERSITY IS ADDRESSED IN A MULTI-NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

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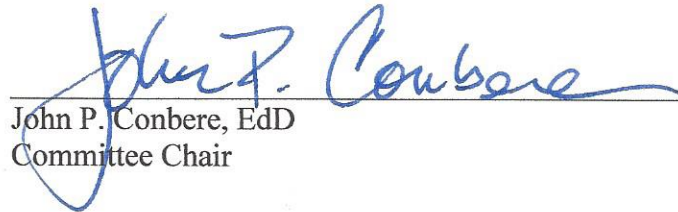
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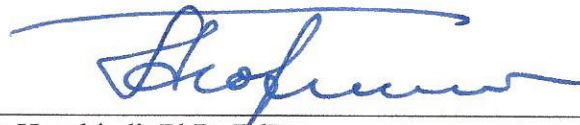
We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that, any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation foremost to my loving wife and partner in life, Jill, who showed me what it means to love unconditionally; to Susie, Mercy, and Rowdy, who have been my source of priceless joy, especially in times when darkness seemed endless; to my father, Mariano, who inst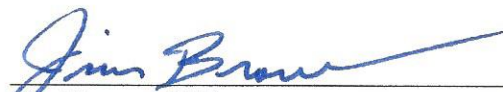illed in me at a very young age the priceless value of education and encouraged me to challenge myself continuously; to my mother, Trinidad, whose hard discipline taught me tenacity and self-reliance; to my brothers and sister: Napoleon, Ferdinand, and Julius, for their moral and material support; to Emma and Frederick, for being my sounding board; and, to my late grandmother, Petronila, whose tireless and ceaseless loving care sustained me throughout my growing years and well into my adulthood.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Diversity discourse has revolved around the business case argument for having a heterogeneous workforce. As the argument goes, an organization with a diverse workforce performs better than one with homogenous employees. While the advantages of task-relevant diversity – education, experience, and functional expertise – is not being disputed, the link between bio-demographic diversity – race, ethnicity, culture, and gender – and superior group performance could not be consistently supported. This case study of a multi-national humanitarian organization demonstrates a situation in which bio-demographic diversity was employed to accomplish a specific business objective of gaining entry to new markets. However, the efficacy of such business tactics was very much dependent on the operational context. Moreover, such pragmatic or utilitarian use of diversity raises moral and ethical questions when applied in the American context. A utilitarian view of diversity assumes that there are bio-demographic characteristics that are task-relevant – a dubious assumption that flies in the face of American values of justice and fairness. This type of discourse treats diversity as a phenomenon external to the organization that needs to be controlled and managed – "managing diversity." I argue that attempts to establish a link between bio-demographic diversity and superior group performance is rather pointless. Diversity is a fundamental characteristic of nature. Just as bio-diversity contributes to a stable ecosystem, the same principle applies to our social world. Hence, diversity is neither a constraint to be managed, nor an issue to be solved. It is a natural condition of a world we live in. It is when we are able to adapt to and match our increasingly diverse environment that we are able to thrive – the real business case of diversity.

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Chapter 1: Changing Demographic Landscape – An Impetus for Diversity Management

One summer day in 1977, my younger brother and I were at a bus stop on our way home, when a group of teenagers drove by yelling, "Get a [expletive] job!" and "Go back to your [expletive] country!" My brother and I just looked away pretending we did not hear. From the corner of my eye, I glanced at my little brother. I could not tell what he was thinking, but I could see in his face the same pain that I was feeling at that moment: "We did not belong here".

That brief encounter left an indelible mark in my mind and formed a part of how I would later perceive myself relative to others in America. I am Asian, specifically a Filipino immigrant, and I am a "minority" – a new term that I later learned very well when completing employment forms or college applications. It denoted an ethnic group or a community with less population. But for me, it came to connote a group of people "of lesser status or standing" – lower class citizens, not deserving of full respect or recognition.

Researcher's interest

I was born and raised in the Philippines, an archipelago comprised of 7,107 islands (2,000 inhabited), 183 ethnic groups, and 152 ethnic languages. My parents were of different ethnic groups with different cultural idiosyncrasies and ethnic languages. I grew up in a culturally diverse environment, with children of different ethnicities and nationalities – Chinese, Chinese-Filipinos, Korean-Filipinos, Filipino-Americans, White and Black American expatriates, Europeans, Australians, Africans, and other Southeast Asian and various Middle Eastern peoples. Diversity and multi-culturalism were as natural as the air I breathed. Diversity was neither a moral nor an economic issue; it just was. I did not understand what racism meant until I came to United States, took a college course on American History, and witnessed racial prejudices and biases first hand. It was quite puzzling to me that, in a nation built by immigrants on the premise that all human beings are created equal with inalienable rights, there were many

who harbored and perpetuated antagonism and antipathy toward what were considered minority groups; or that there was even such a thing as "minorities." As one first generation Asian-American university student shared with me: "I did not know I was a minority until a White student pointed out I was one. I was born in the US, went to school with kids of different backgrounds, and was never aware I was a minority until I got into college."

With the changing ethno-cultural composition of the US population, I have been curious about how race relations play out in organizations. My interest lies in ways shifting demographics affect organizations and, more importantly how organizations respond to these changes.

Demographic trends

In the past 38 years from the time I arrived in United States as a young adult, I witnessed the morphing of the face of America. I noticed a fast growing number of Asians, Africans, Middle Eastern, and people from European and former Warsaw Pact countries. The rapid demographic shifts have altered the American ethno-cultural landscape redefining what an American looks like while adding a new set of social and policy challenges to the already volatile race relations.

Census of 2010 recorded US population at 309 million people, an increase of 27.3 million (or 9.7%) from 2000 (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). The majority of increase came from groups who self-reported as "other than White". By ethnic origin, Hispanic population grew by 43% compared to non-Hispanic or non-Latino, which grew by 5%, and White by 1%. As a proportion to the total population, those who self-reported as White alone accounted for 64% in 2010, a decrease from 69% in 2000. Among the different races, Asians grew the fastest at the rate of 43%, largely due to high levels of immigration among this group. White population grew the slowest at 6%. Black or African American population, which represents 12.6% of the total,

grew by 12.3%. American Indian and Alaska Native, which represent less than 1% of the population, grew by 18%; Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, by 35%; and, Some Other Race, by 24%.

Immigration has played a major role in the population growth and increasing ethno-cultural diversity. Total immigrant population in 2010 reached 40 million with 14 million new immigrants arriving during the period between 2000 and 2010, accounting for 13% of the total U.S. population (Camarota, 2011). At the current rate, it is projected that by year 2050, U.S. will have a completely different ethnic and racial makeup. US population is expected to reach 438 million with over 80% of the increase will be immigrants and their U.S.-born descendants – that is, nearly one in five Americans will be an immigrant (Passel & Cohn, 2008).

Globalization and the growth of multinational corporations further added to the increasing racial and ethnic heterogeneity of the American social landscape, especially in the work place. Foreign investments by US firms have increased steadily in an effort to access new markets, talent and resources (Rosenzweig, 1998). In the period between 2010 and 2011, U.S. direct investment in foreign subsidiaries increased by 27% from $328 billion to $419 billion (Jackson, 2012). On the other side of the equation, foreign direct investment (FDI) – i.e., foreign companies investing in the U.S. – totaled $2.8 trillion by 2013, about 16.5% of U.S. gross domestic product ("Foreign direct investment in the United States 2014 Report," 2014).

Globalization, effectively, has torn down national or state boundaries. Today, with the combined effect of immigration and globalization, one has a 1:6 chance of finding one's self working next to or for a person born and raised outside United States – that is, if we assume that the workplace is a close approximation of the external environment.

Problem overview

Rapid demographic change in U.S. population in the past three decades has presented a new set of challenges to business enterprises in a couple of ways. One, demographic composition of markets has evolved with greater diversity of consumers. Business success depends in many ways on a firm's ability to understand and connect with consumers. This requires a broader knowledge and understanding of "tastes, behaviors, and assumptions [that] are not only different but are often in conflict with one another" (Livermore, 2010, p. 15). Secondly, the demographic shift brought a change in the workforce composition. Building and sustaining cohesive teams from a diverse workforce with different communication patterns, working styles, and learning styles present an organizational challenge. The extent to which an organization is able to build cohesive teams from a diverse workforce affects business performance (Livermore, 2010; Lopez-Fernandez & Sanches-Gardey, 2010).

Effects of diversity on organizational performance have led to various efforts and practices in order to address the reality of an increasingly diverse population. Starting as an issue of discrimination based on race, color, nationality, and religion, age, diversity efforts have evolved from its legal and ethical foundations into a business imperative (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Kochan, et al., 2003; Von Bergen, Soper, & Parnell, 2005). "Diversity management" gained prominence as a means to systematize diversity-related activities into a coherent program (Gilbert, Stead, & Ivancevich, 1999, p. 61) and "create greater inclusion of all individuals" (p. 61). It can be defined as "a complete organizational cultural change designed to foster demographic, ethnic and individual differences" (p. 66). In contrast to its predecessor, Affirmative Action, which was intended to redress past discriminations, diversity management is premised on the value of diversity to business performance: improved bottom line, competitive advantage, and superior business performance (McCuiston & Wooldridge, 2004).

In a 2001 survey of human resource professionals by the Society for Human Resource Management and Fortune magazine, "almost all respondents (91%) believe that diversity initiatives help organizations keep a competitive advantage" ("Impact of diversity initiatives on the bottom line," p. 16). U.S. businesses spend in excess of $200 million annually in various forms of diversity programs (Vedantam, 2008) in order to leverage the value of diversity. However, literature shows that diversity programs have yielded inconsistent results (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Whitelaw, 2010); or they largely ineffective (Vedantam, 2008). For instance, diversity trainings showed little impact as a type of prejudice reduction and an approach to social inclusion (Paluck, 2006). As a business imperative, "empirical literature does not support the simple notion that more diverse groups, teams, or business units necessarily perform better" (Kochan, et al., 2003, p. 5). Yet, one study of firms in the same industry showed that companies with diverse workforce "significantly outperformed the market" (Von Bergen, Soper, & Parnell, 2005, p. 1). These inconsistencies indicate the link between diversity and business success are "more complex than is implied by the popular rhetoric" (Kochan, et al., 2003, p. 5).

Could there be other factors that might explain the inconsistencies in diversity outcomes? Herdman and McMillan-Capehart (2010) contend that there are intermediary factors that bridge diversity and group performance, and it is the failure to consider these factors that leads to the inconsistencies in results.

Problem statement. Organizations have invested substantial resources on diversity management initiatives and have not seen the desired outcomes. The link between diversity and superior business performance has yet to be realized. Also, diversity work as a prejudice reduction has had little effect in changing peoples' attitudes and behavior toward ethno-cultural differences.

Purpose

Diversity was defined as the extent to which people of different social affiliations are represented in the organization (Cox, 1994). It refers to both numerical compositions of an organization and inclusive behavior of its members (Rozenzweig, 1998). The purpose of this study was to describe diversity practices of an organization that appears to have been successful in addressing diversity. It explored an organization's principles, beliefs, and assumptions that guided its diversity practices, and its internal and external environments in which diversity was practiced.

Research question

This interpretive case study focused on the question, "What has an organization done to address diversity?" I examined one organization with demographically and ethnically diverse members to understand its diversity management, and the underlying beliefs and assumptions that drove its diversity practice. This study further explored the organization's various contexts and challenges associated its diverse workforce.

Significance

Diversity management proponents maintain that beyond equal employment opportunity and remediation of past injustices, diversity is an essential success factor (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998) – competitive advantage, increased productivity, better quality of output, and, ultimately, improved performance. Although there are a number of experimental studies on the relationship of diversity with workgroup performance, studies of actual organizations in their natural environment are very limited (Kochan, et al., 2003). One reason is reluctance to open the organization to scrutiny. This study contributes to understanding the link between diversity and organizational performance.

Definitions

For this study, I used the following terms and definitions.

Bio-demographic diversity: Group classification based on innate characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, culture, age, and gender (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007).

Bio-diversity: Diversity among and within plant and animal species in an environment.

Deep-level diversity: Group characteristics not easily visible, such as cognitive skills, experience, education, etc. (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998).

Diversity: A term used to describe a composition of different groups of individuals classified based on shared demographic characteristics; e.g., generational (millennials, baby boomers), gender, occupation, nationality, religion, etc. Also, the extent to which people of different social affiliations are represented in the organization (Cox, 1994).

Diversity management: An integrated set of practices that deal with diversity in the workplace.

Diversity perspective: A view of or theory about diversity that guides diversity practice.

Diversity practice: An approach or a method of dealing with diverse employees.

Surface-level diversity: Visible or surface-level dimensions of race/ethnicity, nationality/culture, and gender (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998). Used synonymously with bio-demographic diversity.

Task-relevant diversity: Group classification based on acquired attributes, such as education, skill, knowledge, aptitude, experience, etc. (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The core issue of "race" relations undergirds diversity discourse as it relates to a healthy functioning organization. Work on diversity hails back to the summer of 1946 when, at the request of Connecticut State Inter-Racial Commission, Kurt Lewin (recognized as the "father of organization development") facilitated a training workshop to improve inter-racial relationships (Burke, 2006). His work spawned what became known as "sensitivity training", a label still in use to this day by human resource and diversity training professionals.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy signed Executive Order (EO) 10925 mandating all contractors receiving funds from the Federal government to "take 'affirmative action' to ensure employment practices are free of racial bias" ("Milestone in the history of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission"). Three years later, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Title VII Civil Rights Act prohibiting all kinds of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, and national origin. Job recruitment and selection would be based on job-related criteria.

The scope of discrimination and employment laws later expanded to include other categories: Equal Pay Act of 1963; Age Discrimination Employment Act of 1967; Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1973; Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and, American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Mondy, 2012). Statutory laws and legal precedents further expanded anti-discrimination laws. Legal compliance became the normative organizational response, and human resource management functions expanded to support compliance: formalized grievance procedures and systems for hiring and promotion.

In 1965, President Johnson signed EO 11246 setting Affirmative Action (AA) requirements as a condition for Federal government contracts. This was further bolstered by the Philadelphia Order ratified by President Richard Nixon requiring federal contractors to show

affirmative action plans to increase minority employment as a requirement for doing business with the federal government.

Over the ensuing years, AA was repeatedly challenged in courts mainly on the ground that providing opportunities to minority groups came at the expense of others, namely, Whites – a form of reverse discrimination. Implementation of Affirmative Action opened a Pandora's box – from the use of quotas to arguments of compelling interest.

During the Reagan administration (1981-1989), enforcement of AA and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws waned. This was followed with further weakening of support for AA in the 1990s. A series of contravening federal courts decisions underscored the intractability of the law. The tone of the discourse was set when President Clinton "called for the elimination of any program that creates quotas, preferences, [or] reverse discrimination" (Brunner & Rowen). In the late 1990s, California, Washington, and Florida enacted laws banning all forms of affirmative action.

Tangential to the legal battleground, established AA practices gradually found a new life. AA/EEO practices and related human resource management activities – e.g., recruitment, selection, and promotion systems – found new grounding on the business case for a diverse workforce. "Diversity" was gradually decoupled from its historical and legal roots (McDonald, 2010) and presented as a strategic business response to globalization, growth of the service sector, advances in technology, and demographic shifts (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998). The transition from EEO/AA to diversity as a business imperative led to retooling of EEO/AA programs and practices to be more relevant to the new paradigm (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998).

Business case for diversity

Aside from moral, social, and legal imperatives of having a diverse workforce, proponents contend that diversity makes business sense. In this age of globalization and

increased business competition, diversity is a competitive advantage. It opens greater access to new markets, greater access to talents, improved organizational performance, and ultimately increase revenue and profits (Bagshaw, 2004; Bleijenbergh, Peters, & Poutsma, 2010; Lockwood, 2005; McCuiston & Wooldridge, 2004; Ollapally & Ghatnagar, 2009). A diverse organization representative of its market would have a better understanding of the diverse needs, tastes, and preferences of consumers leading to better products and services to meet diverse consumer demands. A diverse organization would have a wider access to different perspectives leading to more innovative ideas and better decision-making (McCuiston & Wooldridge, 2004; Ollapally & Ghatnagar, 2009).

Potential benefits of diverse workforce diversity to organizational performance have gained wide acceptance in the Human Resource Management (HRM) community. In a 2005 SHRM Survey Report of human resource professionals, 76% of organizations surveyed have organizational practices dealing with workplace diversity. Ninety-four percent of large organizations ($\geq$ 500 employees), 71% of medium-sized (100-499 employees), and 60% of small-sized companies ($\leq$ 99 employees) have some form of diversity initiatives that address gender, ethnicity, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and language (Esen, 2005).

Managing diversity

Approaches to diversity center on addressing social process issues. Diversity practices are aimed at reducing biases (Kalev, Kelly, & Dobbin, 2006), valuing differences (awareness and appreciation), and building an inclusive culture to utilize diversity at all levels of the organization (Douglas, 2008; Mor-Barak, 1999; Shore, et al., 2011). Survey report by Esen (2005) showed diversity training as the main approach to diversity. Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported having training on diversity issues, and a majority of the organizations made diversity training mandatory for the top-level executive (60%) and non-executive

managerial-level employees (70%). In addition to diversity training, over 50% of organizations surveyed employed other diversity practices, such as unpaid leave for observance of religious or cultural holiday, recruitment strategies to increase diversity within the organization, and career development to increase diversity in higher-level positions. Other practices employed to a lesser degree were awareness/observance of cultural events, employee affinity groups (groups formed around a diversity aspect – e.g., African-American Network, Latino Professional Alliance), and English language training (Esen, 2005). Other diversity experts offered a more comprehensive approach to diversity management that included top-level leadership commitment and support, diversity as a part of strategic plan, and linking diversity with specific needs and performance ("Diversity management: Expert-identified leading practices and agency examples"; Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1998).

Linking diversity to performance

After all the efforts and resources invested on diversity management, its impact on business performance remains obscure and inconsistent (Kalev, Kelly, & Dobbin, 2006; Ely & Thomas, 2001). For example, an experimental study showed that culturally homogeneous groups performed better than the culturally diverse groups. Cultural heterogeneity led to process losses that negatively affected the groups' performance. However, in cases where diversity was task-related, the culturally heterogeneous groups performed better (Thomas, 1999).

A study of over 500 for-profit companies conducted by Herring (2009) showed a strong relationship of gender and race diversity to business performance, measured in terms of increased revenue, increased number of customers, greater market share, and greater profits. Similarly, Von Bergen's (2005) study showed that based on return-on-sales (ROS), return-on-equity (ROE), return-on-assets (ROA), and return-on-investments (ROI), minority-friendly firms outperformed the market. This promising outlook is at best a correlation of diversity to

performance; it does not establish a causal relationship (Giovannini, 2004). Evidence of effectiveness of diversity programs has been based largely on testimonials (Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2000). Esen's (2005) survey of human resource professionals lends support to this gap. While there is a general belief that diversity practices have a positive effect on performance, organizations do not feel the need to track the outcomes of diversity programs (Giovannini). For example, 74% of the 304 survey participants asserted the importance of diversity practices on organizational performance, such as improved bottom line and reduced costs of employee turnover; yet, a mere 14% of those surveyed indicated that they measured the return-on-investment (ROI) of their diversity practices. When asked about the effectiveness of their diversity practices, only 17% of HR professionals believed they are "very effective", compared to 66% "somewhat effective" and 18% "not at all effective". Difficulty of gathering data on diversity initiatives exacerbates the problem of linking diversity programs to performance (Esen). There is a reluctance among organizations to open their programs to evaluation and scrutiny (Giovannini).

Diversity dimensions and mediating variables

Perhaps the difficulty in establishing causal link between diversity and performance lies in the dimension of diversity in question. Diversity can be discussed in terms race or ethnicity, nationality (culture), gender, age, disability, and sexual orientation (Shore, et al., 2009; Salomon & Schork, 2003). It could also refer to religion, education, political affiliation, and work experience (Salomon & Schork). To gain understanding of causal relationship of diversity to organizational performance, it is critical to consider each diversity dimension and its effect on group performance. There is an erroneous presumption in the current diversity rhetoric that diversity translates into knowledge, skill, perspective, and experience needed for a particular task and desired performance level. Diversity does not necessarily translate to performance factors

(Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998). It is the case that cultural diversity allows for a wider range of perspectives (cognitive heterogeneity); however, multiple perspectives or cognitive heterogeneity could lead to knowledge creation if there is open-mindedness that allows for debate among the group members (Mitchell, Boyle, & Nicholas, 2011).

To date, a majority of diversity literature about impact of diversity on organizational performance has been dedicated to the visible or surface-level dimensions of race/ethnicity, nationality/culture, and gender. Shore, et al. (2011) found no relationship between race/ethnicity or nationality/culture and group performance and that, there were more negative than positive effects. Impact of gender diversity on group performance has been, so far, inconclusive. And research on age, disability, and sexual orientation has been limited to discrimination in the workplace.

Other literature contends that an organization's perspective on diversity would have an impact on performance (Ely & Thomas, 2001). The degree of effectiveness of diversity initiatives are mediated by the organization's diversity perspective. Diversity perspectives can be grouped into three types: a) compliance (legal/ethical) perspectives, b) process-related diversity perspectives, and c) task- or mission-related diversity perspectives.

Compliance perspectives. Compliance-related diversity initiatives are directed at satisfying legal edicts – Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity Act – and ethical norms – recognition and appreciation of human differences, and social justice (Bleijenbergh, Peters, & Poutsma, 2010; Brazzel, 2003; Jones, King, Nelson, Geller, & Bowes-Sperry, 2013; Von Bergen, 2005). *Discrimination-and-fairness perspective* treats "culturally diverse workforce as a moral imperative to ensure justice and fair treatment of all members of society" (Ely & Thomas, 2001). *Values-and-virtues* perspective uses values and virtues as a

criterion in the selection of employees to eliminate the risk of excluding candidates based on demographic characteristics (van Dijk, van Engen, & Paauwe, 2012).

Process-related perspectives. Process-related diversity programs address the negative effects of diversity, such as social integration and conflicts. *Color-blind* strategy is an approach that de-emphasizes differences in favor of "requirements and competencies" (Podsiadlowski, Groschke, Kogler, Springer, & van der Zee, 2013a, p. 170). Similarly, *reinforcing-homogeneity* perspective minimizes differences and emphasizes similarities. Organizations with this perspective associate workforce diversity with costs not benefits. Hence, diversity efforts are directed toward assimilation (Brazzel, 2003; Lockwood, 2005). Jones, et al., (2013) proposed ethical perspective of diversity (justice and fairness) to address social process issues, and Kersten (2000) argued for using critical theory of race to develop "a theoretical, analytical, and processual awareness of … race relations in organizations" (p. 237).

Other studies focused on individual perspectives about diversity as moderating factors of effects of diversity initiatives on group performance (van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2007). An individual's intercultural development (Bennett, 2004), and the ability to recognize and experience "otherness" (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006) determined the quality of communication and relationships across cultures.

Task-related perspectives. Task-related approaches highlight diversity dimensions that are directly material to effective task performance. *Business necessity* perspective recognizes the need for a culturally diverse workforce to access needed knowledge, skills, and abilities to reach new markets. Diversity is recognized as an opportunity for learning (Brazzel, 2003). It can take the form of *integration-and-learning* which treats cultural differences as valuable assets that an organization "can use to rethink its primary tasks and redefine its markets, products, strategies, and business practices in ways that will advance its mission" (Ely & Thomas, 2001, p. 240). An

organization can leverage a wider range of knowledge, skills, and competencies from different cultural experiences. *Access-and-legitimacy* perspective leverages diversity to connect with culturally diverse markets and achieve legitimacy. An organization that adopts this perspective would attempt to mirror the cultural, racial, and class composition of the target market. This approach often leads an organization structured along ethnic or racial lines – e.g., a bank serving a predominantly Somali community may have a largely Somali customer service staff, while maintaining a largely White managerial staff (Ely & Thomas, 2001).

Summary

The business case argument for a diverse workforce has been the central tenet of diversity management. Further, an organization's perspective on diversity has been shown to mediate diversity outcomes. This interpretive case study examined a multi-national organization to understand the connection between having diverse employees and organizational performance.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Since the nature of diversity discourse around the role of diversity in an organization's performance has been focused largely on national, racial, ethnic and gender diversity (Shore, et al., 2011), I delimited my inquiry to these diversity dimensions. I grouped nationality, race, and ethnicity to represent one diversity dimension, cultural diversity, because of their interrelatedness. Implicit in the diversity discourse about nationality, race, and ethnicity as they pertain to group performance are the differences in the individuals' perspectives, particularly of how they relate to work performance, relationships, and time.

In this research, I employed an interpretive case study methodology to learn about one organization's diversity perspective and practice. My goal was to gain a deeper understanding of how the organization views, experiences, and deals with a diverse workforce. Differing views about the positive effects of diversity in organizational performance underscored the complexity of diversity issue. Learning about a diverse organization could shed some light into other factors that might moderate the effects of diversity on organizational performance.

Site/case selection

Site selection for this study was on the basis of a potential to "purposefully inform an understanding" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125) of how staff diversity was managed in the organization. The ideal candidate would be an organization with the following characteristics.

1. *Diversity of staff*: Participant organization would show national/cultural diversity.
2. *Customer/client diversity*: Products or services of the participant organization would have a wide market or diverse groups of customers.
3. *Active diversity initiative*: The organization would have some form of diversity management or practice.

4. *Accessibility*: For convenience, I limited my search of participant organizations to companies in Minneapolis-St. Paul area in Minnesota.

5. *Participant willingness*: The organization would be willing allow access to its employees and records.

An initial list of potential organizations for this study was taken from DiversityInc's *Top 50 Companies for Diversity* published annually. Two of the companies listed in the Top 50 for 2015 were located in Minnesota. The Top 50 list was based on evaluations of firms in four areas: talent pipeline, equitable talent development, leadership commitment, and supplier diversity (DiversityInc). However, gaining access to the two Minnesota companies proved to be problematic. Perception of being scrutinized and evaluated dissuaded the companies from accepting my request to use the organizations as a case study. Likewise, a Fortune 500 company in the Twin Cities, not on the Top 50 list, turned down my research proposal.

I, then, expanded my search for a suitable site to include organizations that did not necessarily have a diversity program but had diverse employees. The rationale behind this modification of my original criteria was twofold: 1) it would expand the list of potential sites for study; and 2) diversity-related issues were not confined to big companies with diversity-related programs. One international humanitarian non-governmental organization that I had worked for in the past expressed willingness to be a case study for this research. Except for the absence of a diversity program, the organization met the rest of my original criteria.

1. *Diversity of staff*: The organization had a culturally diverse workforce representing over a dozen nationalities.

2. *Customer/client diversity*: The organization had operational presence in 11 countries providing life-saving services to populations in crisis.

3. *Accessibility*: The organization was located in Minnesota.

4. *Participant willingness*: The organization was willing to grants access to staff and relevant documents.

Access and permissions

Initial contact was established with the Vice-President of Human Resources and Administration through email. This was followed by a face-to-face meeting in which I presented my research proposal detailing the nature and purpose of the study, related activities, collection methods, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation. A verbal agreement was reached with conditions that the name of the organization would not be mentioned in the research, and a summary of results would be provided to the executive leadership. The verbal agreement was followed by a formal request and approval to conduct the study. To honor the request for anonymity, the organization would be referred to in this study as "Red Ocean International." The fictitious name of "Red Ocean" was chosen because it was descriptive of the organization's crisis-oriented humanitarian mission.

Data collection and analysis

Information about the organization's diversity practices were collected through individual interviews and review of human resource-related documents. An initial email introducing the study was disseminated by the Vice-President of HR and Administration to field managers and headquarters staff. Requests for audio-recorded interviews were sent to 97 employees (Appendix A) by email (Appendix B) with attached copies of consent form (Appendix C). Because of language barrier, national (or local) staff were not included in the list. Of the ninety-seven invitations, thirty-six responded and were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix D). The following tables show the breakdown of respondents by posting, gender, nationality, and race.

Table 1

Breakdown of respondents by posting

Category	Total
Field staff	13
Headquarter staff	23
Total	36

Table 2

Breakdown of respondents by gender

Gender	Total
Female	12
Male	24
Total	36

Table 3

Breakdown of respondents by nationality

Nationality	Total
Australia	1
Cameroon	2
Costa Rica	1
Ethiopia	1
Guinea	2
Kenya	2
Serbia-Montenegro	1
Pakistan	3
Somalia	1
Sweden	1
Uganda	1
United States	20
Total	36

Table 4

Breakdown of respondents by race

Race	Total
African	10
Caucasian	19
Hispanic	1
South Asian	4
Southeast Asian	2
Total	36

Document review was conducted on relevant internal and external documents that guide the organization's mission. The following was a breakdown of the archives reviewed.

- Internal documents
    - Organization's Mission, Vision, and Operating Principles
    - Standards and Values
    - 2014 Annual Report
    - Employee Handbook for International Expatriate Employees (2014)
    - Global HR & Administration Operations Manual (2009)
    - Learning, Education, and Development System (LEADS)
- External documents
    - Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948
    - International Humanitarian Law
    - Humanitarian charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response

    o   Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent

          Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster

          Relief

    o   Private Volunteer Organization Standards of Accountability,

          Transparency, and Effectiveness

For analysis, I used interpretive method as outlined by Stake (1995) to draw meanings from instances of diversity practices, activities, and related behaviors. I employed direct interpretation and iterative process of categorical aggregation using thematic groupings (Appendix D) to understand what the organization was saying and doing about diversity. Analysis included a comparison between the organization's espoused theory (espoused values) of diversity and its theory-in-use (actual values reflected in members' behaviors or actions). Argyris (1976) defined espoused theory of action as those reported by people as the "basis for [their] action", and theories-in-use as "theories of action inferred from how people actually behave" (p. 367).

Limitations

As the focus of this study was on one organization's diversity practices, this study cannot make any propositional generalization. Because "the real business of case study is particularization not generalization" (Stake, 1995, p. 8), the emphasis was on the uniqueness of Red Ocean International – appreciation of the complexity and variability of the issue of diversity and the ways Red Ocean operationalized and practiced diversity management.

Researcher's bias

My life experiences as a member of a minority group in Midwest America have shaped my beliefs and perceptions about diversity issues in the U.S. My main bias that I had to be fully aware of and guard against related to my belief and perception about the treatment of cultural

and ethnic differences. Minimization of differences and the heavy emphasis on similarities or commonalities was a common default approach to diversity. While, on the surface this demonstrated acceptance and inclusion, and might have reduced conflicts arising from differences, what were considered similarities and commonalities were normatively defined by the majority, or "dominant" group; hence, approach to diversity unwittingly resulted in assimilation of minority populations into the dominant culture, in which the minority groups' ways of thinking and behaving were set aside in favor of what the dominant group's consider as the norm. Consequently, the burden of intercultural or "racial" relations were placed more often on the shoulders of the minority populations. Minorities more often had to adjust to the majority (e.g., they have to learn "proper" English, adopt "acceptable" behaviors); members of dominant group did not. Similar dynamics could be observed when it came to leadership and gender. For decades, we accepted the masculinized leadership qualities as the model of effective leadership.

Upward mobility within an organization remained elusive to minorities and women. Surveys of companies frequently showed a biased distribution in leadership and management positions toward the white male population. Despite the demographic profile of U.S. population, minorities and women remained underrepresented in the upper echelons of management. With all the advances in leadership theories, prevailing perceptions of an effective leader remained biased toward the characteristics of a white male. These lent some support to my perception that members of the dominant culture did not have to work as hard as minority members or women did to move up the corporate ladder.

Implications. Because of the participative nature of interpretive study in which, as the researcher, I was a part of sense making, there were potential risks that my biases might have influenced the study. One risk might be in the data collection. There was a potential for selective collection of information that would support my worldview of diversity issue. The second risk

might have come from my direct interpretation of the data. There was a risk that my strong biases could skew sense making. And finally, because of racial undertones of diversity, interviews could trigger negative emotions in me that could cloud my objectivity. To guard against these pitfalls, I employed the following measures in order to ensure data integrity.

- Comprehensive data collection from multiple sources and, where permitted, use of more than one means of collection – in this case, audio-recording – to gather pertinent information;

- Use of memos – a reflective process of recording what I was learning about the data (Groenewald, 2008);

- Triangulation – use of different independent sources (interview participants and documents) to clarify different interpretations (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995); and,

- Bracketing – a process by which an interpretive researcher identifies and suspends preconceptions, beliefs, assumptions, and biases that may distort data collection and analysis (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Ethical issues

Diversity could be a sensitive issue. Rooted in a long history of U.S. race relations, discussions about diversity and inclusion could trigger strong emotions about race issues within an organization. This could result in reluctance of research participants to share information that might reflect negatively on the participant, a certain group, or the organization. To guard against a potential backlash, the voluntary and confidential nature of the interviews were emphasized. Each interview participant received, in writing and at the start of the interview, full disclosure of the nature and purpose of this study. Participants were given the option to stop the interview at any point, as they deemed necessary. No member from the vulnerable populations, as outlined in

the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45, Part 46 – Protection of Human Subjects (Revised

January 15 2009), was included in the study.

Chapter 4: Diversity in Red Ocean International

Red Ocean was an American international non-governmental organization (INGO) founded in the late 1970s initially to assist in the resettlement of refugees from Southeast Asia to United States. Red Ocean had since shifted its focus from refugee resettlement to providing humanitarian assistance *in situ* to people and communities affected by natural disasters and civil wars.

Red Ocean's humanitarian operations (or country programs) covered 11 countries (Figure 1). The organization's programs were built on four organizational competencies: health care, shelter and water/sanitation, gender-based violence prevention and response, and livelihoods. Additional programs, such as education and youth development, were often designed around these four competencies and were based on the needs of the affected populations. Hence, no two country programs were identical. Program funding came largely from US government, complemented with grants from various United Nations agencies and other foreign governments – European nations, for example.

Figure 1. Locations of Red Ocean's current humanitarian programs. In 2014, Red Ocean helped three million people in 12 countries affected by conflict and disaster.

Red Ocean's mission and operations were a part of a larger system of humanitarian response and international development effort encompassing United Nations agencies, governments, inter-governmental organizations, and a host of quasi-governmental and non-governmental organizations. As a member of a collective international humanitarian effort, Red Ocean personnel and programs were under the protection of the International Humanitarian Law

with regard to treatment of non-combatants. By the nature of its humanitarian work, Red Ocean's mission was bound and guided by humanitarian principles as outlined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted by United Nations General Assembly on December 10th, 1948, the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief*, and accountability standards for private voluntary organizations ratified by InterAction member organizations. (InterAction is an alliance of American NGOs).

Red Ocean's workforce diversity

Red Ocean's workforce was comprised of over 2,000 employees in a dozen countries, including United States. Its employees were broadly classified into headquarters personnel and field or country program staff (Figure 2). Approximately 98% of Red Ocean employees were posted at the field or country program level (Table 5). The rest were assigned at its headquarters in United States, where the executive leadership, senior management, technical advisors, and enterprise-wide program support functions were located. Employee classification was based on the nature of assignment. While all Red Ocean staff members were "at will" employees, field staff positions were program-dependent and contingent on the availability of continued funding for the country program, unlike the headquarter staff positions, which formed the nucleus of the organization and were relatively more permanent.
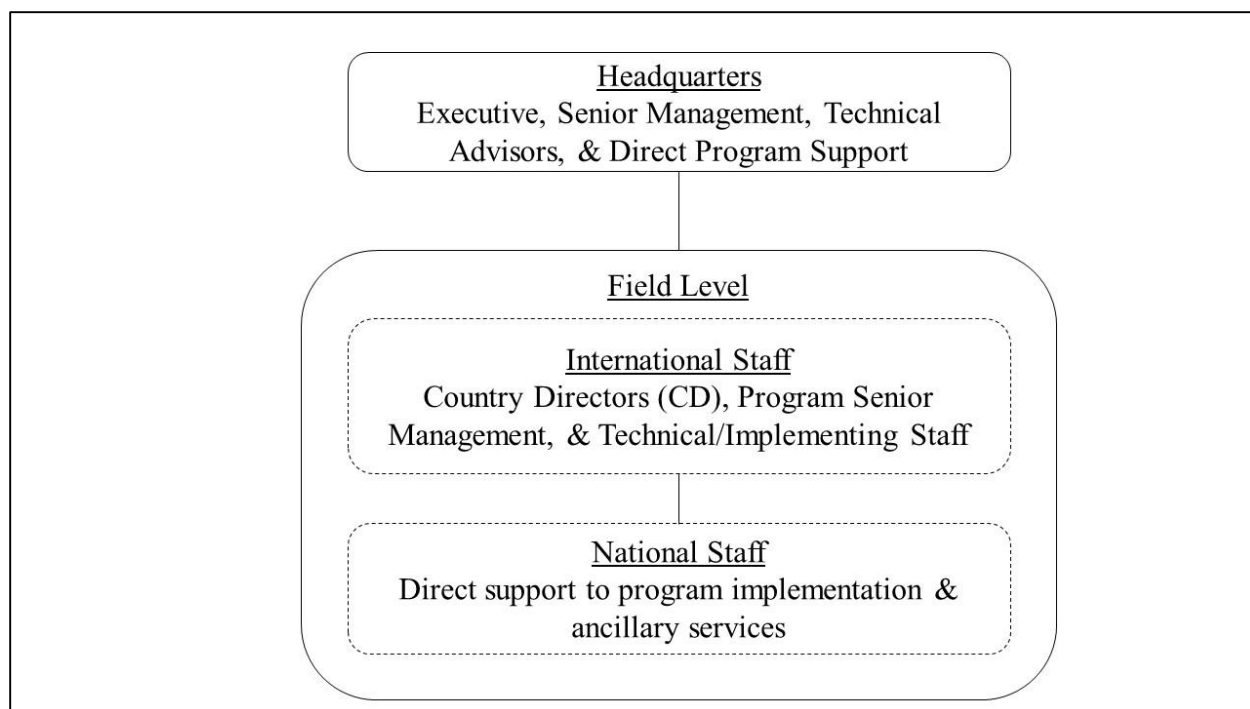
Figure 2. Categories of Red Ocean's employees. Field staff positions (international and national) were linked to specific country programs. Employment for field level positions was dependent on the project or program duration and funding availability.

Table 5

Breakdown by employee category

Category	Total	Proportion
Headquarters	51	2.5%
Field		97.5%
International	76	(3.8%)
National	1881	(93.7%)
Total	2008	100%

Field staff were further classified into international (or expatriate) and national (or local) employees. International staff were recruited and selected by headquarters to serve as country program senior management teams. National staff were recruited at the country program level to provide requisite skills, manpower, and ancillary services for program implementation (Figures 3 and 4). Each country program was led by a Country Director (CD) or a Senior Program Manager (SPM), depending on the program size and maturity.

Figure 3. Field staff members inspecting a source of drinking water. International and national staff brought complementary skill sets. The international staff provided advanced technical skills. The national staff served a critical role in navigating host country's socio-political

structure and in connecting with beneficiary communities. Copyright 2005 by Alexander A.

Erolin.

Figure 4. Headquarter staff member assessing humanitarian needs. Headquarter staff positions

formed the nucleus of the organization. First response to a disaster was normally performed by a

headquarter staff member who would coordinate delivery of life-saving humanitarian aid and lay

down the initial foundation of a longer-term intervention. Copyright 2005 by Alexander A.

Erolin.

The distinction between international and national staff was based on three fundamental issues: level of responsibility, skill sets, and salary/wage structure. International staff had a fiduciary duty to the organization that were often problematic for a national staff to fulfill, because of the potential for incompatible or conflicting interests between the host government and the international organization. Secondly, the scope of humanitarian response required management skills, technical expertise, and educational requirements not normally found in less-developed countries – for example, public health and advanced international development experience. Lastly, humanitarian imperative to "do no harm" compelled foreign organizations to be especially sensitive to the impact of their presence on host countries' economic and financial structure. During large-scale disasters, there would be a sudden and massive inflow of international organizations providing life-saving assistance. This rapid increase of entities needing goods, services, and labor would stress the market structure driving up prices and wages – classic economic principle of supply and demand. In order to minimize the adverse impact on the market caused by rapid increase in demand, it was imperative for international organizations to take steps not to upset a country's economic structure, particularly with regard to salary and wage scales. Wages not adjusted to the local labor market would make jobs with international organizations more attractive in comparison to local jobs causing a shock to the business and government sectors.

Diversity at the field level. With operations in multiple countries, Red Ocean International was structured as a multi-national corporation (MNC). Hence, cultural heterogeneity of its workforce was a fundamental characteristic, primarily because of the host nations' legal requirements. Host governments often imposed limits on the number of expatriate employees a foreign company would be allowed to bring into a host country (Rozenzweig, 1998), thereby requiring foreign organizations to hire staff from the local workforce. As shown

in Table 5, over 90% of the total Red Ocean employees were host country nationals. Hence, cultural or national diversity of Red Ocean's employees in the field was primarily an outcome of host countries' legal requirements.

Likewise, the demographic composition of Red Ocean's international staff showed a culturally diverse group. Approximately 90% of the total expatriates were non-Western, and of the eleven country directors or heads of mission, only two were Americans (Table 6). But, unlike the cadre of national staff, diversity of the expatriate staff was a direct outcome of Red Ocean's practice of recruiting from the international pool of candidates.

Table 6

Nationality and gender of country program directors and heads of mission

Program	Nationality	Gender
Dem. Rep. of Congo	Congolese	M
Jordan	Jordanian	M
Liberia	Irish	M
Myanmar	Burmese	F
Pakistan	Pakistani-American	M
Rwanda	Canadian	M
Somalia	Somali	M
South Sudan	Indonesian-Swedish	F
Sudan	American	F
Thailand	American	M
Uganda	Bangladeshi	M

Gender diversity at the field level painted a different picture. Slightly over one-third of the national staff were women (Table 7). It was likely that culture, social norms, and traditions of the host countries, such as cultural perceptions and social expectations about the role of women in the society, influenced gender diversity at the field level.

Work conditions might have had an impact on gender diversity among the expatriates. Since the majority, if not all, of Red Ocean's programs were in disaster or conflict areas, the difficult work environment, austere living conditions, and safety risks could have restricted field postings to certain demographic groups.

Table 7

Gender diversity by employee category

Category	Female	Male	Total
Headquarters	33	18	51
	65%	35%	
Field			
International	24	52	76
	32%	68%	
National	699	1182	1881
	37%	63%	
Total			2008

Diversity at the headquarters. In contrast to the demographic composition at the field level, headquarter staff consisted predominantly of Caucasians (82%), which, according to some of the staff members, might have been a reflection of the geographic area – Upper Midwestern United States. However, unlike at the field level, dominated by male staff members, there was a preponderance of women (approximately 2:1 ratio to men) at the headquarters; a positive direction, except that, the women were concentrated at the lower ranks. A majority of the senior leadership positions were held by men (Table 8).

Table 8

Demographic profiles of the senior management

HQ Leadership Position	Race	Nationality	Gender
President/CEO	Caucasian	AUS	M
VP, International Programs	Caucasian	USA	M
Chief Financial Officer	Caucasian	USA	M
VP, HR & Administration	Caucasian	USA	F
VP, Development & Communications	Caucasian	USA	F
Director, Program Development	Asian	USA	M
Director, Government Affairs	Caucasian	USA	M
Director, Security	Caucasian	USA	M
Regional Manager	Caucasian	USA	F

Diversity perspective - what was said about diversity?

As a multi-national organization, Red Ocean started from a position of a relatively diverse workforce. Over 90% of its employees were host country nationals. The international nature of its humanitarian work, located entirely overseas, made cultural diversity an inherent feature of the organization. With relative cultural heterogeneity, workforce diversity was not considered an organizational issue. Red Ocean viewed diversity more through the lens of legal compliance and instrumentality.

Participants' quotes:

"The nature of the job lends to a diverse staff. Except in certain cases, certain US government funding would require an American chief of the party."

"By the nature of our work we're inclusive, just because of the number of areas that we are [present]."

"Diversity is incidental to the organization. It is due to the nature of [its] work."

"In the US, we deal with diversity in relation to our [American] cultural identity. We are dealing with different issues in the field… staff consists of 95% not working in the US."

Regulatory compliance. Because the organization as a whole was inherently diverse, Red Ocean leadership did not see any need to further address diversity beyond compliance with US and host governments' employment laws. Affirmative Action was regarded as unnecessary because of felt absence of structural or systemic barriers to employment at Red Ocean. The CEO

described the organization's position on workforce diversity as "neutral" and "defensive" – i.e., making sure their hiring practices and processes were not in violation of the law.

Participants' quotes:

"We are neutral when it comes to diversity. We use a defensive posture… we make sure we are not doing the wrong thing."

"We can afford to be neutral with regard to diversity because the nature of work is to foster diversity."

"We just don't discriminate. We don't believe in seeking numerical diversity."

"In terms of compliance… yes, [the organization] is in compliance."

"[In cases where] there are structural issues in the society that creates social exclusion, there is a need to introduce an alternative structure to mitigate against that… to favor those who were not favored. In the workplace, I don't believe [Red Ocean] is statistically significant. It's not structural here, as long as we take into account laws that were put in place to mitigate that structure… for example, accommodation for disabled, laws against discrimination."

Instrumental role of diversity. If diversity was ever addressed, it was not for diversity's sake. Red Ocean International acknowledged the importance of diversity as a means to an end. Diversity was an essential element to the organization's ability to implement its humanitarian initiatives. Access to communities in need of assistance was often facilitated by the national

staff, who served as guides in navigating the host country's socio-political and economic structure. As cultural informants, national staff contributed in the design, development, and delivery of culturally appropriate humanitarian aid (Figures 5 and 6). For instance, there were tribal communities in Africa that placed greater confidence on the healing powers of a shaman than on medical science. Similarly, there were communities where it was taboo for a male medical doctor to perform certain types of physical examination on female patients. Failure to take such factors into account would render medical intervention futile.

Figure 5. Female national staff providing medical treatment to children. Adapting to the host community's socio-cultural norms was crucial to the effectiveness of Red Ocean's humanitarian programs. The type of program and the communities' social norms dictated to a large extent the

demographic profile of employees – e.g., female medical providers for maternal and women's health. Copyright 2005 by Alexander A. Erolin.

Figure 6. Women and children waiting in line for medical treatment. Acceptance and legitimacy of Red Ocean's humanitarian services often depended on the appropriate gender and ethnicity of the staff members providing the services, especially in areas rife with ethnic conflicts. Copyright 2005 by Alexander A. Erolin.

In many cases, having the right ethnic and gender mix of staff was vital to Red Ocean's legitimacy both in terms of acceptance by beneficiary and host communities, and operational security especially in areas of ethnic tensions or conflicts (Figure 7). Sending a staff member to a

community of different tribe or ethnic group could be, at the very least, an issue of acceptance, and in the worst case, a matter of life and death.

Figure 7. Distribution of non-food items (NFI). Decisions on the ethnicity or tribal membership of national staff members working in communities was a matter of acceptance and legitimacy, and, in conflict areas, a matter of staff members' safety and security. Copyright 2005 by Alexander A. Erolin.

Participants' quotes:

"Diversity is hugely important in the kind of work we do. It is important to have diversity in perspectives, from cultural diversity, especially from the community we serve. Gender-wise, it is important, again because of our work… ensuring gender balance."

"We are not waving diversity because it is a policy. It is a means in getting our work done, not an end in itself. It is more of an unconscious thing… diversity helps us to do our jobs.

"Diversity is important to [the organization] because of our international programs. We bring in people with diverse experiences, language skills, perspectives they bring."

"We don't discount diversity. But we don't look at diversity as a benchmark or assessment tool."

"By the nature of our work we're inclusive, just because of the number of areas in the world that we are in."

Diversity practice – what was done about diversity?

A standard EEO policy statement on non-discrimination on the basis of protected classes was the extent diversity was formally addressed by the organization. Red Ocean's diversity practices were confined mainly to hiring and program implementation.

Hiring practices. Red Ocean ensured that employee recruitment and selection practices were in accordance with US EEO laws and with host nations' policies and labor laws. Diversity

was incidental in the recruitment and selection of international staff because of the organization's

practice of worldwide recruitment. Selection of international and headquarter employees was

based on the policy of "the best person for the job" – i.e., one who has the right combination of

technical qualifications and international experience, which was defined as having the

knowledge or familiarity with the country or region the position would be located, or a

demonstrated ability to work cross-culturally. The requirement for international experience was

reflected in the demographic distribution of the interview participants in this study. All, except

one, had extensive international exposure through Peace Corps, study abroad, international work,

multi-cultural family background, or a combination thereof.

Red Ocean HR and Administration Operations Manual:

"In order to provide equal employment and advancement opportunities to all individuals,

employment decisions at [Red Ocean International] will be based on merit,

qualifications, and abilities. [Red Ocean International] does not discriminate in

employment opportunities or practices on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual

orientation, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by

law."

"[Red Ocean International] will make reasonable accommodations for qualified

individuals with known disabilities unless doing so would result in an undue hardship."

"It is the policy of [Red Ocean International] to provide equal employment opportunity

for everyone in connection with all employment practices. [Red Ocean] will comply with

all applicable federal, state and local equal employment opportunity/affirmative action

laws."

"We will insure that all employment practices and conditions of employment such as compensation, benefits, training, and testing will be administered without regard to race, color, religion, creed, ancestry, sex, national origin, affectional preference, disability, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, or status as a disabled or covered veteran."

[Red Ocean] is committed to gender equity and ethnic and racial diversity in programs and organizational policy. [Red Ocean's] employment policy provides for the equality of opportunity, regardless of race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, citizenship status, physical or mental disability, or past, present, or future service in the uniformed services of the United States

"The law and the policies of [Red Ocean] prohibit disparate treatment on the basis of sex or any other protected characteristic, with regard to terms, conditions, privileges and perquisites of employment."

Participants' quotes:

"One way [the organization] pursues diversity is advertising positions worldwide. So we get a variety of nationalities applying for the positions."

"The challenge is looking for people who are differently qualified… not lowering the standards to hire people in order to meet diversity standards – that's not the point of

having a diverse organization. I never supported a policy that compromises standards to make an organization diverse.”

“Diversity is considered in recruitment. We look at the cultural information candidates would bring.”

“Diversity for its own sake is not the policy/philosophy. We consider candidates for other relevant experiences, even if they don't meet the job profile.”

“I feel we've promoted our values [of diversity] ... by making job postings available worldwide. Everybody starts at an equal footing – [getting] through the portals based on resumes.”

“Ultimately, it is the best person who would get the job… regardless of race, gender, etc. In general, we focus on finding the best person for the job. I realize there are biases so we have structure in place to prevent biases, [such as] putting the right persons in leadership positions.”

“HR manuals address non-discriminatory policies. I'm not aware of any document that articulates [the organization's] approach to diversity.”

“[Red Ocean] has EEO policies, policy on gender equality and non-discrimination.”

“Experience in international setting is part of recruitment and selection.”

Program implementation and service delivery. Program implementation and service delivery were areas where Red Ocean staff were expected to exercise more intentionality and greater sensitivity to the different demographic groups in order to ensure that the most vulnerable of the population – women, children, the disabled, and the aged – were not marginalized, and that humanitarian aid was provided regardless of nationality, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, or membership in warring factions. In the hiring of national (or local) staff, achieving a satisfactory ethnic mix was paramount to demonstrate equitable treatment of members of local ethnic tribes and interest groups – another way of gaining community acceptance and establishing legitimacy.

A more recent innovation in program development was the employment of Diasporas in planning, designing, implementing, and managing humanitarian programs in their respective home countries. The use of Diasporas not only would facilitate access to beneficiaries and ensure culturally appropriate humanitarian interventions, but would bolster positive relationships with host governments. Prime examples of this approach were the launching of Somalia and Liberia programs, which were led by the Somali and Liberian Diasporas, respectively.

Participants' quotes:

"The organization itself is very aware of diversity and makes conscious decisions that different opinions are brought to the table; for example, use of Diaspora in getting diverse perspectives."

"In places where [Red Ocean] is located… the communities are represented."

"For example in the Balkans, we hired from both sides of the conflict."

"Ninety-one percent of our staff come from the communities we serve."

"Leveraging diversity is not easy. Just because you have a diverse team does not guarantee an effective functioning. The Somali Diaspora, the Liberian Diaspora: the challenge is how to unlock the opportunities and strengths of diversity."

In some cases, the types of programs and cultural sensitivity determined which demographic profile was deemed most fit to hire. Prime examples were gender-based violence (GBV) and women's reproductive health programs, which tended to have greater acceptance and efficacy when led and managed by female staff members. Geo-political considerations also affected staff selection decisions – for instance, having an Indian country director or program manager in a refugee camp inside Pakistan could pose safety and security risks, not only to the Indian staff member, but to the Red Ocean's humanitarian programs as well.

Diversity considerations in program implementation and service delivery were codified in various sets of standards shared among international humanitarian organizations. One such set of standards that Red Ocean subscribed to was the InterAction Private Voluntary Organizations (PVO) Standards, commonly referred to as PVO Standards. InterAction was an alliance of US non-governmental organizations with over 180 members. The alliance served as a vehicle for a unified advocacy, a forum for shared best practices, and a mechanism for establishing common standards for accountability and transparency. InterAction PVO Standards "define the financial, operational, and ethical code of conduct for InterAction and its member agencies" ("InterAction PVO standards"). Regular member organizations were required every other year to self-certify their compliance with the PVO Standards.

Relevant InterAction PVO standards:

"A member's fundamental concern shall be the well-being of those affected; its programs shall assist those who are at risk without political, religious, gender, or other discrimination; and a high priority shall be given to strengthening the capacities of the most vulnerable groups, typically women, children, minorities, disabled, and very poor."

"Programs shall promote the advancement of the status of women and their empowerment."

"A member shall give priority to working with or through local and national institutions and groups, encouraging their creation where they do not already exist, or strengthening them where they do."

"In its program activities, members shall respect and foster human rights, both socio-economic and civil-political."

"A member's programs shall respect the dignity, values, history, religion, and culture of the people served."

Participants' quotes:

"Diversity is being treated as an asset. Because of diversity, [the organization] is able to achieve things that would not have happened otherwise."

"Because we work in different countries, we recruit individuals with different backgrounds."

"Ethnic diversity [at the program level] is for safety reasons."

"With the trend in the industry to use more locals, we started looking at Diaspora communities as a vehicle to get programs going."

"[Red Ocean] involves communities such as Diasporas; for example, the Somalis [in our Somalia program]… and people with stake in the program."

Other diversity practices. Other Red Ocean's diversity practices included allowing field staff to observe the host nations' national and religious holidays, such as Ramadan in Muslim countries. Red Ocean also had a policy of providing employee orientation that covered cultural norms and standards of behavior in countries where the staff would be assigned. This policy had yet to be formally implemented.

Leveraging the diverse perspectives that culturally heterogeneous teams bring gained heightened interest from Red Ocean's leadership, and led to the introduction of Changemaker's Award – an experimental initiative to engage staff members and capitalize on the rich diversity. Staff members at all levels of the organization were empowered and encouraged to develop innovative ways to help the beneficiaries. The winning idea would receive seed money for further program development and implementation.

Diversity outcomes and issues

In the aggregate, Red Ocean could boast a very diverse workforce with representation from a dozen countries in four continents. However, diversity was confined to international staff which was culturally heterogeneous as a result of worldwide recruitment. A closer look at the field or country program staff revealed Red Ocean's diversity as collection of monocultural country programs (Figure 8). Headquarter staff remained monocultural with predominantly white employees. Costs (time and money) of securing US work permits or visas for international candidates not authorized to work in the US might explain why headquarters had not benefitted from the diversity afforded by worldwide recruitment.

Similarly, gender diversity did not benefit from Red Ocean's hiring practices. International and senior leadership positions were held predominantly by men. Although there was a greater number of women at the headquarters, female staff were largely concentrated in the lower ranks.

Participants' quotes:

"Culturally, [headquarter staff] is mostly Caucasian."

"In terms of results, I would say that the ethnic minorities are still not represented. To really enrich the organization, you need to diversify more."

"At the headquarters, it is mostly White Americans."

"Here at the headquarters, we are quite white… but that is kind of a reflection of [the state]. Organizations are struggling with that… hiring that reflects the population."

"Gender diversity is an area we can work on. Not enough gender diversity. We don't hire equally. Not entirely sure why."

"The place where I'm challenged at times is gender diversity, especially in leadership. It seems there is a ceiling; to me, senior leadership is still male dominated."

"[Red Ocean] been trying to get more women in leadership. It is a struggle. Kind of funny because this industry is dominated by women, yet most leadership positions are held by men. In this sense, diversity is not being promoted."

"My observation that although we have a couple women VPs, it is not commensurate to the ratio of male-female staff."

"I find it interesting that at the headquarters, it is mostly women… while in the field it is the reverse."

"I did see that we needed to have more females in our program leadership."
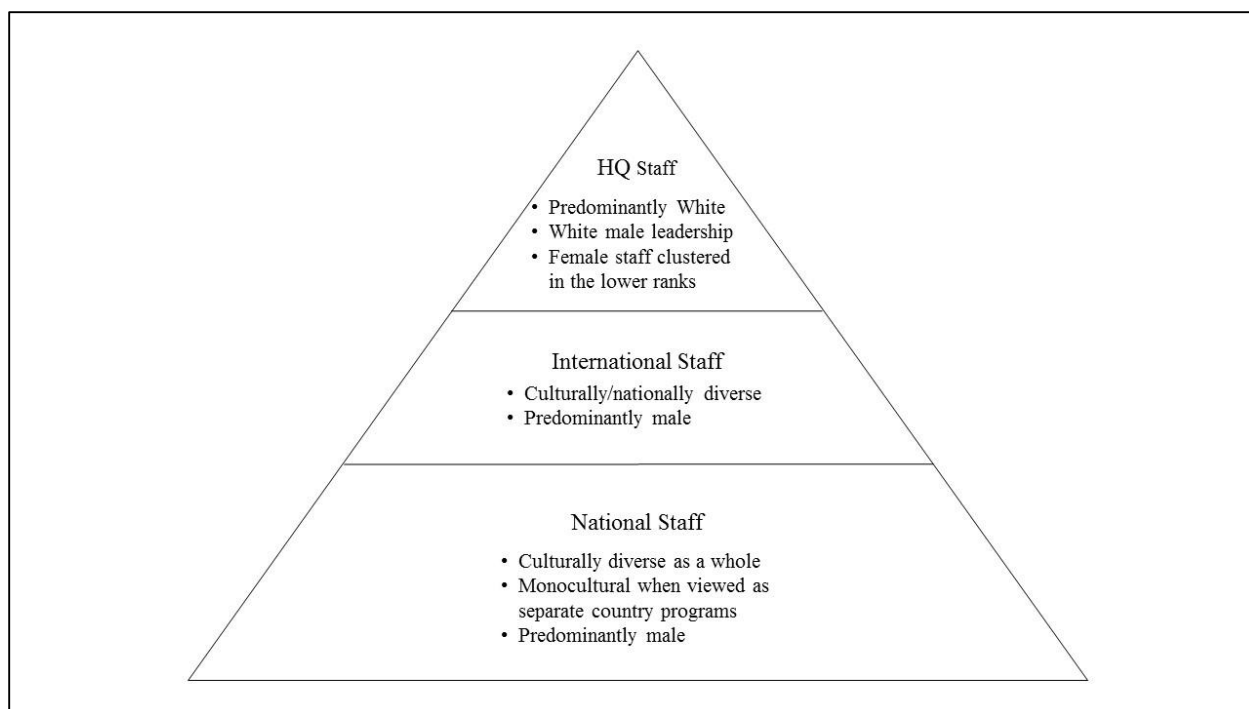
Figure 8. Diversity concentration. Viewed as a whole organization, Red Ocean was culturally

diverse with over 12 nationalities represented. However, diversity was confined to a limited area

or aspects of the organization, resulting in a collection of different nationally and culturally

defined country programs.

Process-related issues. Red Ocean enjoyed a rich diversity of cultures, but predictably

not without challenges. Overall, intragroup dynamics were positive. The organization was

described as inclusive, and there was a general sense of belonging. The participants' responses

indicated a relatively high level of affinity toward the organization. Despite a considerable

collective international experience, cultural differences presented a number of impediments to

group performance, albeit not to the extent of mission failure. Contrary to Red Ocean's written

policy of providing cultural orientation to staff members, such training did not exist or was not

provided, other than in a form of cursory overview by the Security Director and functional

managers about matters of what would be considered appropriate behaviors and attire in a

particular country. There was an assumption that having an international experience meant having the skills to relate interculturally.

Participants' quotes:

"There is an expectation that candidates are able to work in a cross-cultural environment."

"We act on the assumption that staff we are sending to a multicultural setting have 'already been there and done that'. It's one of the things we look for in the resumes."

"We normally look for candidates who already have the experience in the context they are going into. Because of their experience, there is an assumption that they are able to work effectively in a culturally different context."

"There's no training on diversity. There are discussions with immediate supervisor about what to expect. Maybe that's something to think about."

"I have worked with organizations that have put me through three weeks of cultural emphasis course on how to deal with different cultures. We don't have anything like that at [Red Ocean]."

"I don't think we have formal process of preparing staff of the cultural context of their working environment, but we do have some briefings that barely scratch the surface."

"Everything matters: the way you speak, your behavior, your working style."

"Some of the difficulties working with different backgrounds: it is a challenge that's worth a challenge. When there is homogeneity within a team/organization, certain things are easier. You can assume consistency of response, in background, mutual understanding, speaking the same language. When you're blending [cultural] differences then it becomes more of a challenge ... because you can't always assume that kind of consistency or continuity."

"We just expect people to know what to do. We don't have anything to prepare them [culturally]."

Styles of communication. Besides the common issues presented by having multiple languages, communication patterns, even among English-speaking staff members, presented difficulties in coordination. While the Westerners had a custom of being direct and content-focused, the Africans were inclined to be more relational and indirect in their communication. This profound difference tended to stifle open communication. As one interview participant lamented, *"[Communication] is more than words to me"*.

Participants' quotes:

"This is my first time in Africa… and it is a tough one. Specifically, working in a diverse environment, everything matters… your way of talking, your gestures, and your communication style."

"[Red Ocean] could be more deliberate with regard to diversity. For example, I come from culture where I have to ask permission to speak, to give my opinion. So, many times

I sit in meetings, and even though I have very valid points to make, until that opportunity to speak is presented to me, I have no right to say. This is one of the most significant things that I have noticed."

"For me, the biggest challenge in working in diverse communities is communication. By communication, I mean deep down… more than words to me. It is the understanding of what is said and not being said."

"Communication style may be another challenge. As when a person is very detailed in their responses."

"In Africa, we are outspoken. When something is wrong, we speak it out. But this culture is a polite culture. So management expects you to keep quiet… not to speak it out. It's one thing to embrace the culture… but when something is wrong, it is wrong. We need to speak out."

"The way I was brought up, I am used to telling a story… that's the African way…everything has to have a story, a context. In contrast to my Americans who are more direct, they think it is a waste of time."

"Ninety percent of cross-cultural issues is due to communication; for example, how authority is understood; how a person speaks to a subordinate. How a young staff speaks to persons in authority is often misunderstood."

Attitude toward time. Differences in the way time was treated often caused frustrations among Western staff members who were accustomed to strict adherence to timelines. To many of the non-Western staff, timelines were malleable guides and was secondary to maintaining positive relationships. Balancing these diverging orientations posed a constant challenge to employees, especially to the headquarter staff members.

Participants' quotes:

"It is a challenge when you have different norms in terms of timing. Some cultures where saving face and maintaining relationship are important, [this] can be a problem when things don't go as expected… such as meeting deadlines."

"My biggest challenge is truly understanding the others' perspectives. We have so many assumptions. Understanding that my assumptions my not be the same as others'. The challenge is knowing how to communicate effectively while acknowledging the differences. As an American, I have assumptions about time and timeliness."

"I tried to talk to others about the importance of deadlines."

Values and expectations. Fundamental to the process-related issues were the differences in the employees' values and expectations. Navigating through and integrating these differences often required a constant balancing act. For example, the importance placed on one's family and community (or ethnic/tribal clan) often engendered certain expectations from the national staff members, such as hiring one's family or clan members.

Participants' quotes:

"We don't come from a capitalist country. [Our values] are not cash or money; value is family. An institution seeking to be diverse needs to [understand] the values of [its] members."

"Diversity makes our work better, but not always easier. Trying to develop a shared purpose, shared strategy, and a shared response with people from different history, makeups, and backgrounds require more time and effort."

"There is a need for the organization to learn the different value systems the staff members have."

"There are a lot of assumptions about diversity in [the organization]… for example, expectation that you will fit in."

"There's nothing better than a fully functioning team. If you have a team that works together in a way that is mutually reinforcing, based on shared values, and very clear about what they are trying to achieve, that's very powerful."

"This is my first African country. Most of my experience was in the Middle East and Asian countries. Coming here is a little of a culture shock. People expect praise and I don't like giving praises. I have to be diplomatic… depressing in a way."

"Some of the difficulties I've encountered was not fully understanding where people are coming from mentally… how they have been shaped by their experiences… priorities. For example, attitude toward work."

"Another challenge is the notion of performance such as speed, methods, and quality of work; these would differ. Different expectations are a challenge."

Stereotypes. To a lesser degree, instances of stereotyping negatively affected relationships. This appeared to be limited to the field level.

Participants' quotes:

"I heard about some interpersonal conflicts arising from diverse backgrounds or differences… nothing dangerous… just people not putting up with each other."

"There is a negative impression about Africans. I know that being an African, I won't have a 'red carpet' [treatment]. People want to know what is good that is coming from Africa. I was met with cold reception."

"I think one of the general problems is when people don't know about your background then make assumptions based on what they hear or read in the news."

Compliance-related issues. Red Ocean's narrow focus on EEO compliance left other requirements unnoticed. One set of requirements that had yet to be addressed was the requirements of InterAction PVO Standards relating to workforce diversity.

InterAction PVO Standards:

"A member organization shall have policies and procedures to promote gender and minority equity, pluralism, diversity, and affirmative action in recruitment, hiring, training, professional development, and advancement."

"A member organization shall abide by federal, state, and local employment discrimination, diversity, harassment, gender, and labor law, and as applicable, with affirmative action."

"Gender sensitization will be fully integrated into an organization's human resource development program for staff at all levels to improve organizational effectiveness and to promote non-discriminatory working relationships and respect for diversity in work and management styles."

"Agencies will strive to increase the numbers of women in senior decision-making positions at headquarters and in the field, on Boards of Directors, and on advisory groups where they are currently underrepresented."

"An important criterion in hiring and personnel evaluation policies and practices will be a demonstrated understanding of gender issues and a commitment to gender equity."

"Program and senior staff will be trained in gender analysis for programs planning, implementation, and evaluation."

"Diversity sensitization will be fully integrated into an organization's human resource development program for staff at all levels in order to promote non-discriminatory working relationships, respect for diversity in work and management styles, and an organizational culture which supports diversity."

"Agencies will have policies and practices that support equal pay for equal work."

"Agencies will strive to increase the numbers of people with disabilities, where there is underrepresentation, in senior decision-making positions at headquarters, in the field and on boards of directors."

Areas of emphasis in the InterAction PVO Standards were minority equity, gender diversity at the senior leadership level, and diversity education (sensitization). Interview participants asserted that, beyond EEO policies, Red Ocean had neither a formalize policy or practice of addressing underrepresentation of minorities and women, nor any form of diversity training as outlined in the standards.

Analysis

At the macro-organizational level, Red Ocean International had the appearance of having a culturally diverse workforce. A closer examination showed the organization as largely an aggregate of discrete national and/or cultural homogeneity as opposed to an integrated diverse unit. This contrasting diversity picture was an outcome of Red Ocean's theory in use (or values in action) that differed from the organization's espoused theory (or espoused values). Argyris (2000) described "espoused theory" (or espoused values) as the beliefs that we profess. "Theory in use" is a theory or set of values that, in reality, drives our actions and behavior. Espoused

theory is our conscious belief, e.g., *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"* (US Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776). Theory in use is largely what we subconsciously hold, or keep hidden from public scrutiny, but is the real driver of our actions and behavior – e.g., belief in slavery which treats Blacks as stock to be used, sold, and purchased, rather than as human beings with dignity and inalienable rights. Figure 9 illustrates the ways espoused theory and theory in use are connected to actions and behavior.

Red Ocean's espoused theory of diversity was that having a diverse workforce is a moral and ethical imperative, and that there is an obligation to break the cycle of conscious or unconscious, deliberate or structural, discrimination. Red Ocean's theories in use were based on particular contexts. At the local national level (country program level), diversity was a matter of practicality – government sanctions, access to new opportunities, and safety. The relative mono-culturalism at the local national level was a consequence of business or operational expediency.
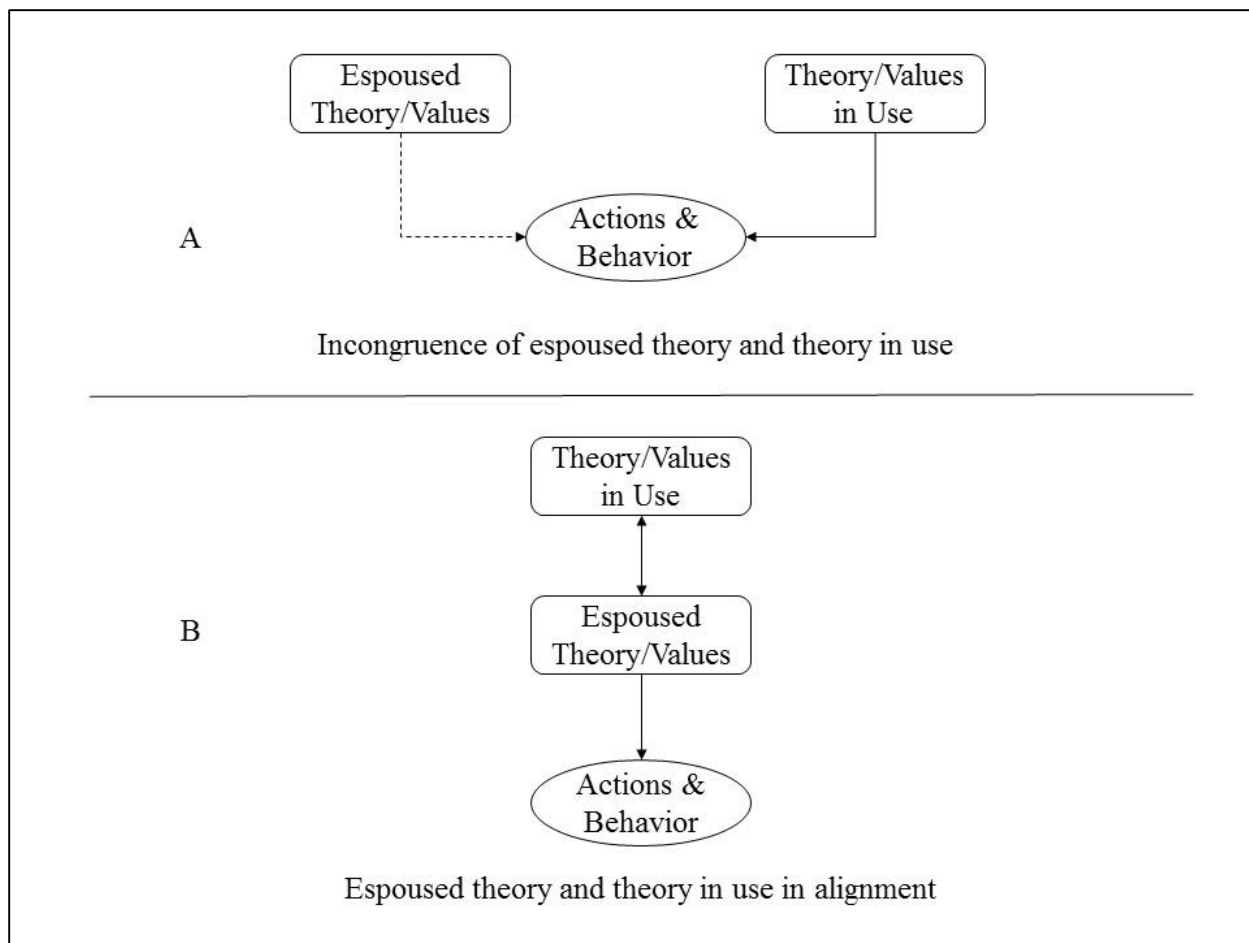
Figure 9. The relationship of espoused theory and theory in use to behavior. Panel A illustrates a misalignment between what is professed as a value (espoused theory) and what is, in practice, driving action or behavior (theory in use). The dotted line symbolizes lack of real connection. Panel B depicts an alignment of espoused theory, theory in use, and actions or behavior. This alignment can be defined as integrity (oneness) or authenticity.

In contrast, the mono-culturalism at the top level of the organization located in the US was a result of a different theory in use. The hesitation to actively and deliberately pursue a more diverse headquarter staff and senior leadership was due to the risk of being perceived as perpetuating preferential treatment of minorities. Hence, Red Ocean's bias toward regulatory compliance and meritocratic hiring practices was to shield the organization from having the

appearance of practicing reverse discrimination. Figure 10 depicts the relationship between Red Ocean's diversity perspectives (moral view and functional application) and the organization's hierarchy and contexts. Diversity, as a balanced representation of different demographic groups (moral and ethical grounding), coincided with the context of the top level of the organization (a). But, the relatively homogeneous headquarter staff indicated that legal compliance and meritocratic hiring practices were not an effective means in achieving diversity. Practical utility (selective use) of diversity – employing demographic groups for specific business or organizational objectives – coincided with the local context and was practiced. But, practical utility of diversity at the top level would be against US moral and ethical values of justice and fairness. Similarly, the moral and ethical argument for diversity at the field level would be less relevant given the context of survival.

I suspect that people's placement in Maslow's hierarchy of needs had an impact on diversity efforts. Red Ocean's mission centered on providing life-saving assistance to people in crisis. Given the situation Red Ocean's beneficiaries were in, it would be reasonable to infer that they were at the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs – physiological and safety needs (Figure 11). At these stages, the primary concern would be survival. Emphasis on having an ethnically diverse staff because it was ethically the right thing to do would be a noble but misguided intention. Practicality in these cases supersedes having a demographically balanced staff. In comparison to the field conditions, Americans are more likely to be in the upper levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs – belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization – where the moral and ethical rationale for diversity would be more relevant.

Notwithstanding the role context, espoused theories, and theories in use, the question of the business case of diversity remains: "Was the lack of diversity at Red Ocean's headquarters a hindrance to the organization's ability to fulfill its mission?" Based on Red Ocean's success, it

appeared that the lack of diversity had no bearing on the organization's ability to fulfill its

mission. Would Red Ocean be more effective if it had greater diversity at the headquarters level?

The answer to this question would require a study comparing between a culturally (racially)

homogeneous and heterogeneous Red Ocean. Such an empirical study would be unrealistic and

replete with ethical issues.

The utilitarian use of diversity worked for Red Ocean at the field (national) level.

Applying the same in the US context would fly against espoused American moral and ethical

values.
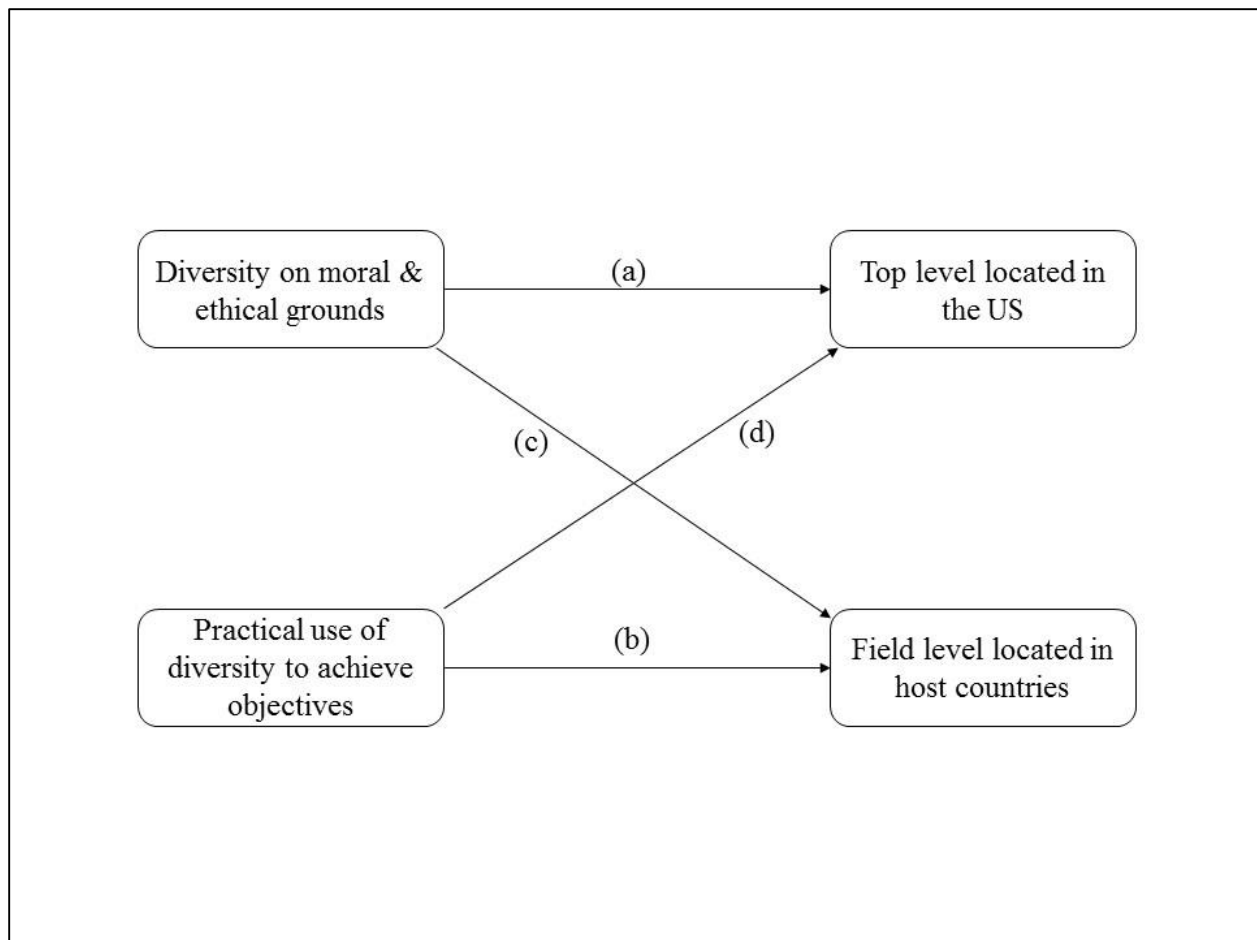
Figure 10. Red Ocean's reasons for diversity and organizational hierarchy. The organization's

varying diversity outcomes highlighted the differences between its espoused theory and theory in

use. The moral argument for a diverse workforce would be relevant to the top level of the

organization (a) and less relevant at the field level where the priority was survival (c). The

practical use of diversity would be more applicable at the field level (b) and would be considered

unethical at the top level (d).
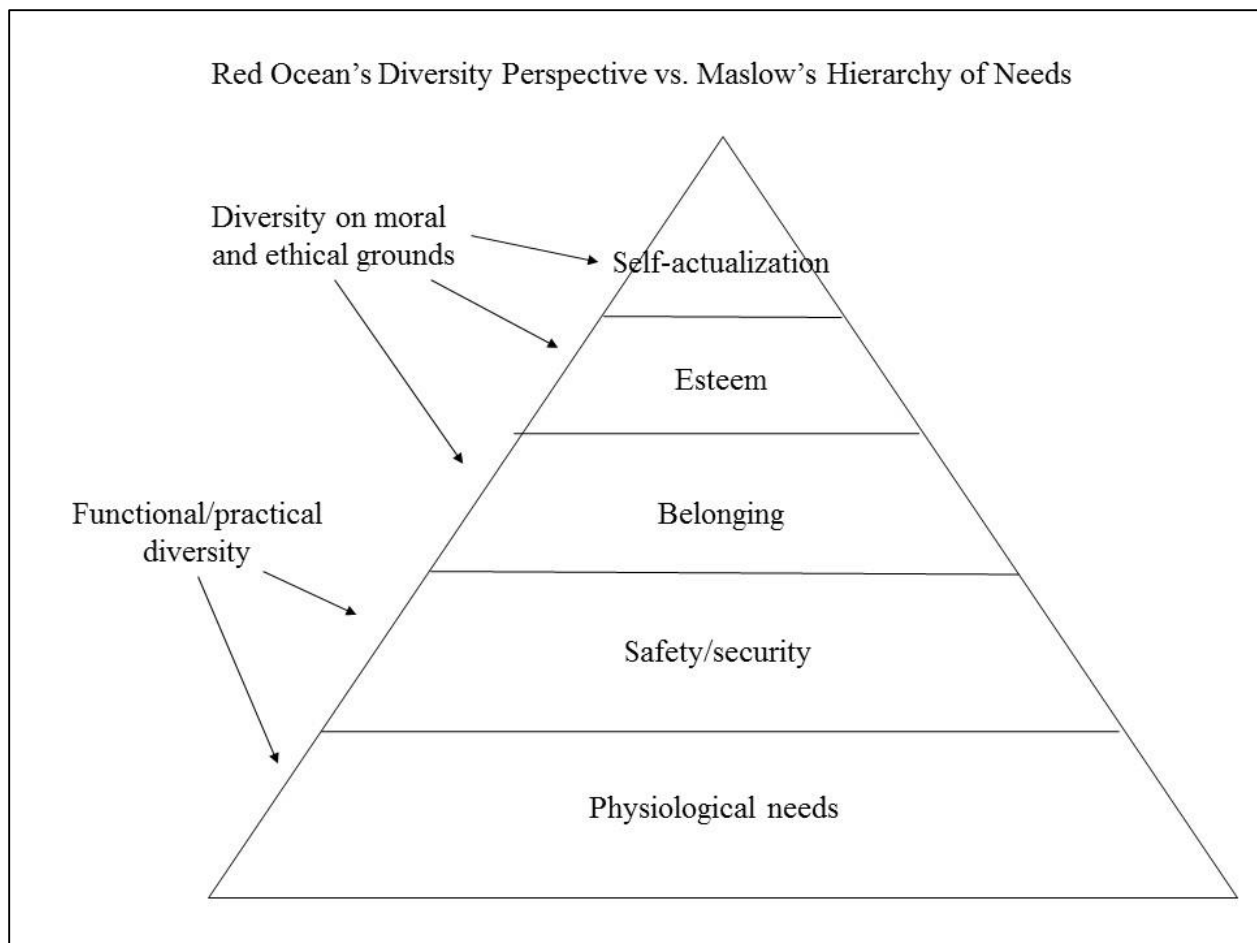
Figure 11. Diversity perspective and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The relationship between

diversity perspectives and Maslow's hierarchy of needs highlights the non-universality of

American moral/ethical view (espoused theory) of diversity.

Chapter 5: Language Shaping our Thoughts – Reframing the Diversity Question

Red Ocean International was a paradox. The organization was founded on a noble principle of humanity. In its 37 years of existence, Red Ocean served hundreds of millions of people caught in crisis. In 2014 alone, Red Ocean's humanitarian programs helped three million people in 12 countries that were affected by disaster and conflict. However, Red Ocean's approach to diversity showed incongruence between its professed beliefs about humanity and its diversity practice – on one hand, a solemn belief in the human dignity; on the other, an unwitting demographic disparity and underrepresentation in the organization's workforce.

Moral/ethical vs. business case arguments for diversity

The case of Red Ocean highlighted the dilemma an organization may face when implementing diversity initiatives. For one, translating moral and ethical ideals into action and practice is not as clean and direct as people would like it to be. While ideals are often conceived in the abstract, it is in practice where the "rubber meets the road." In practice, the moral and ethical perspective on diversity is not universally accepted even within the context of the American social norms and values. The reaction to Affirmative Action, which was a way to uphold the values of justice and fairness, and rectify past injustices attests to the difficulty of turning ideals into practice – "two wrongs don't make a right." It becomes more problematic when American values are applied in different cultural contexts, which define how ideals are interpreted and applied (Figure 12).
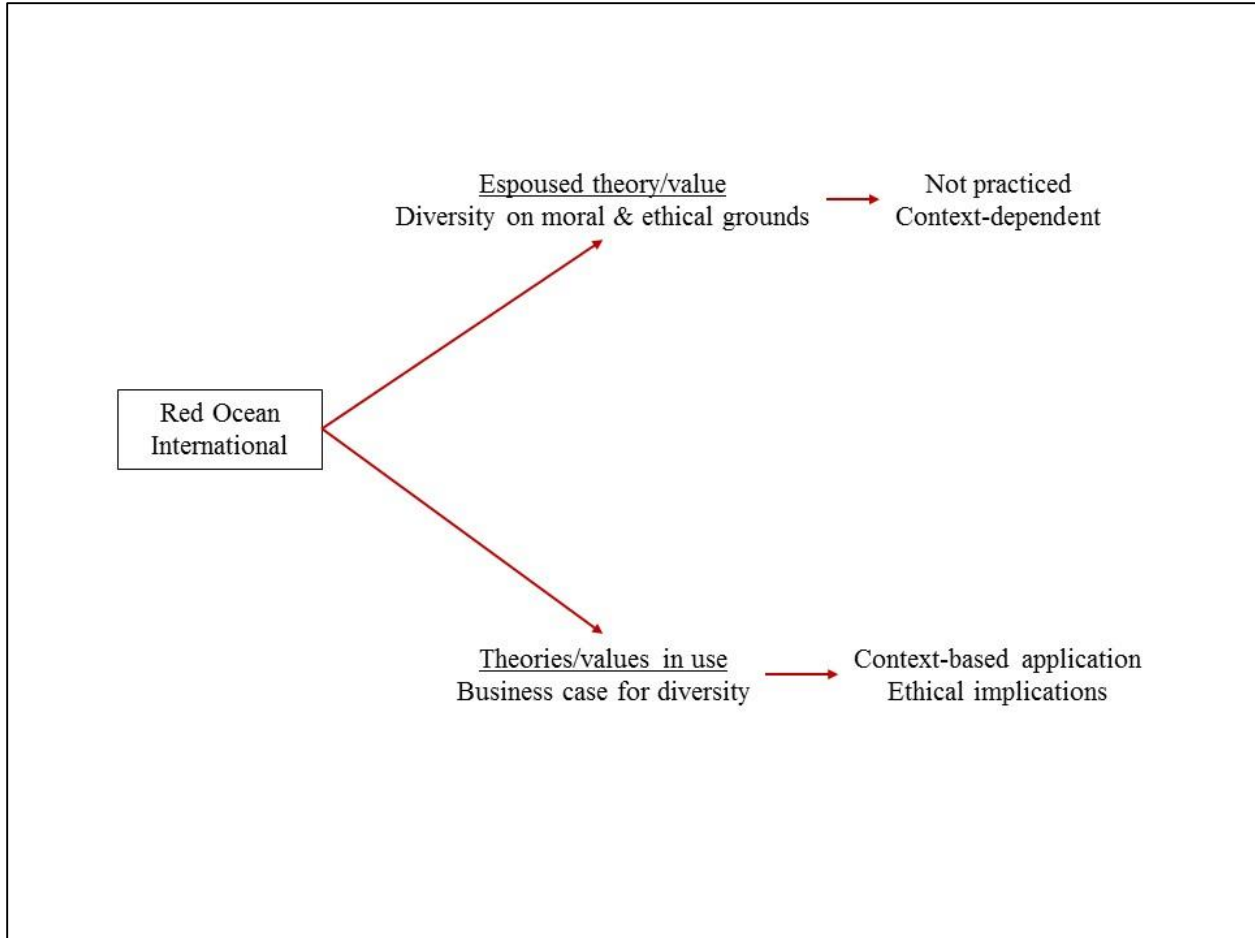
Figure 12. Moral/ethical case vs. business case for diversity. The moral/ethical argument is based on ideals that can be difficult to apply consistently in practice. Context presents situations often with competing priorities and values. The business case would be adaptable to the contexts and may work in a short run to achieve immediate or short term business objectives. It would not be sustainable in a long run due to moral and ethical implications.

"A rose by any other name." Similarly, the utilitarian or instrumental perspective of diversity as a business imperative has its own moral/ethical and practical dilemma. In the American context, diversity programs are viewed as repackaged Affirmative Action which is, as already noted, replete with moral/ethical and legal challenges. In practice, the business case argument might work in a short run as in the case of Red Ocean employment of Diasporas to

access new opportunities and to initially respond to crisis. In a long run, the utilitarian diversity perspective would be difficult to sustain and defend. The use of bio-demographic diversity to achieve a desired business objective would invite the question, "Could an outsider (e.g., an American), who had lived and worked extensively in the target community, do an equally effective job in establishing trust and gaining acceptance from the community members?" If so, the view of bio-demographic diversity as task-relevant has no logical or moral/ethical basis. If not, then one would have to assume that certain skillsets and competencies are unique only to specific demographic groups by virtue of their innate characteristics. This claim would be tantamount to saying, *"This author is great in mathematics because he is Asian"* – an indefensible position, again on moral and ethical grounds. In addition, a utilitarian diversity approach would inevitably lead to clustering and segregation of demographic groups along functions or areas of the organization – e.g., female staff in health-related programs, Somalis in Somali country program, male staff members in operations, etc. – which would unwittingly result in a diversity as a simple collection of different and segregated demographic groups that, when applied in the US context, would violate our moral, ethical, and legal principles.

More than an organizational issue

The current political climate revealed a different aspect of the diversity rhetoric that is so far removed from the moral/ethical and economic/business case arguments. The 2016 presidential campaign rhetoric and the violence perpetrated against minority groups (e.g., against blacks in Ferguson and against Muslim communities) exposed a deeper issue of what a culturally and racially diverse America could mean – a threat to the "American identity" and the "American way of life." As a work colleague bemoaned about the changing American demographics: "It is scary!"

You look at what's happening in terms of this migration and in terms of what's coming. We have no idea. Will they assimilate, are they [going to] be able to assimilate? I don't know if they even [want to] assimilate. And yet we take everybody. If they come into this country, they're going out. If I win, they're going out.
(Donald Trump on refugees in an interview with Sean Hannity, The Fox News, November 18, 2015).

"We should not have a multicultural society. America is so much better than every other county because of the values that people share -- it defines our national identity. Not race or ethnicity, not where you come from."
(Jeb Bush, as quoted in The Washington Post, September 23, 2015)

"If there's a rabid dog running around in your neighborhood, you're probably not going to assume something good about that dog. It doesn't mean you hate all dogs, but you're putting your intellect into motion."
(Ben Carson about Muslim refugees in an interview with The Guardian, November 19, 2015)

Is there a class of cultures if you grew up in a country with Sharia law where women can't drive and must cover themselves…? How do we ascertain whether they buy into the culture they came from or want to assimilate here?
(Sean Hannity in an interview with Donald Trump, The Fox News, November 18, 2015)

There is a widespread belief (at least from the sounds of the loudest voices in the public rhetoric) that the increasing cultural plurality is endangering American identity and values. Yet, the same American values urge individuals to be open and welcoming to peoples yearning for freedom and a better life; especially since America was founded by peoples who similarly hungered for the same freedom.

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,

With conquering limbs astride from land to land;

Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand

A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame

Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name

Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand

Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command

The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she

With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,

I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

(Emma Lazarus as inscribed on the Statue of Liberty).

American values and common humanity compel people to treat everyone justly and fairly. However, due to a long US history of racial discrimination and the ensuing civil rights

movement, EEO laws, and Affirmative Action policy – all grounded on moral and ethical grounds – the subject of diversity has become a very sensitive and, lately, a volatile issue in the United States. Diversity discourse often evokes strong negative reactions, not only because it is often perceived as reinvented Affirmative Action, but because it calls for a change in people's values and attitudes. And moral argument is rarely a sufficient reason for people to change. It is far safer to justify diversity as "an asset to improve productivity that can be managed to gain competitive edge" (Kirby & Harter, 2003b, p. 41).

Attempts to highlight the benefits of diversity and multi-culturalism so far have not been convincing enough for many people to change their perspectives and attitudes about diversity. Conflicting outcomes of diversity initiatives have only bolstered the widespread cynicism about the advantages of a multicultural population. Initiatives to improve workforce diversity are more likely to be perceived as another form of preferential treatment toward minority groups. Diversity training designed to improve interpersonal relations among diverse group members tend to be viewed as "accommodating the foreigners." Such is the context in which Red Ocean International Headquarters and other organizations in the US find themselves.

From my observations, it is likely that the stigma and controversy (preferential treatment and reverse discrimination) associated with the diversity discourse are one reason many companies avoid discussing workforce diversity beyond EEO requirements. Compliance with US employment laws on discrimination provides a safety net when it comes to workforce diversity. Many employers reason that they are in compliance as long as they are not in violation of the letter of the law.

Flawed assumptions about the business case for diversity

Diversity as a business imperative was an outgrowth in response to the weakening of Affirmative Action, which was aimed at remediating the effects of decades-long discrimination

but was viewed as another form of discrimination – reverse discrimination – by giving minorities

certain preference in the selection process (Figure 13). The business case argument replaced the

moral and ethical basis of having a workforce representative of the population demographic

profile. The business case was used to retain Affirmative Action programs without the legal

baggage. Having a diverse employee population was presented as a business necessity,

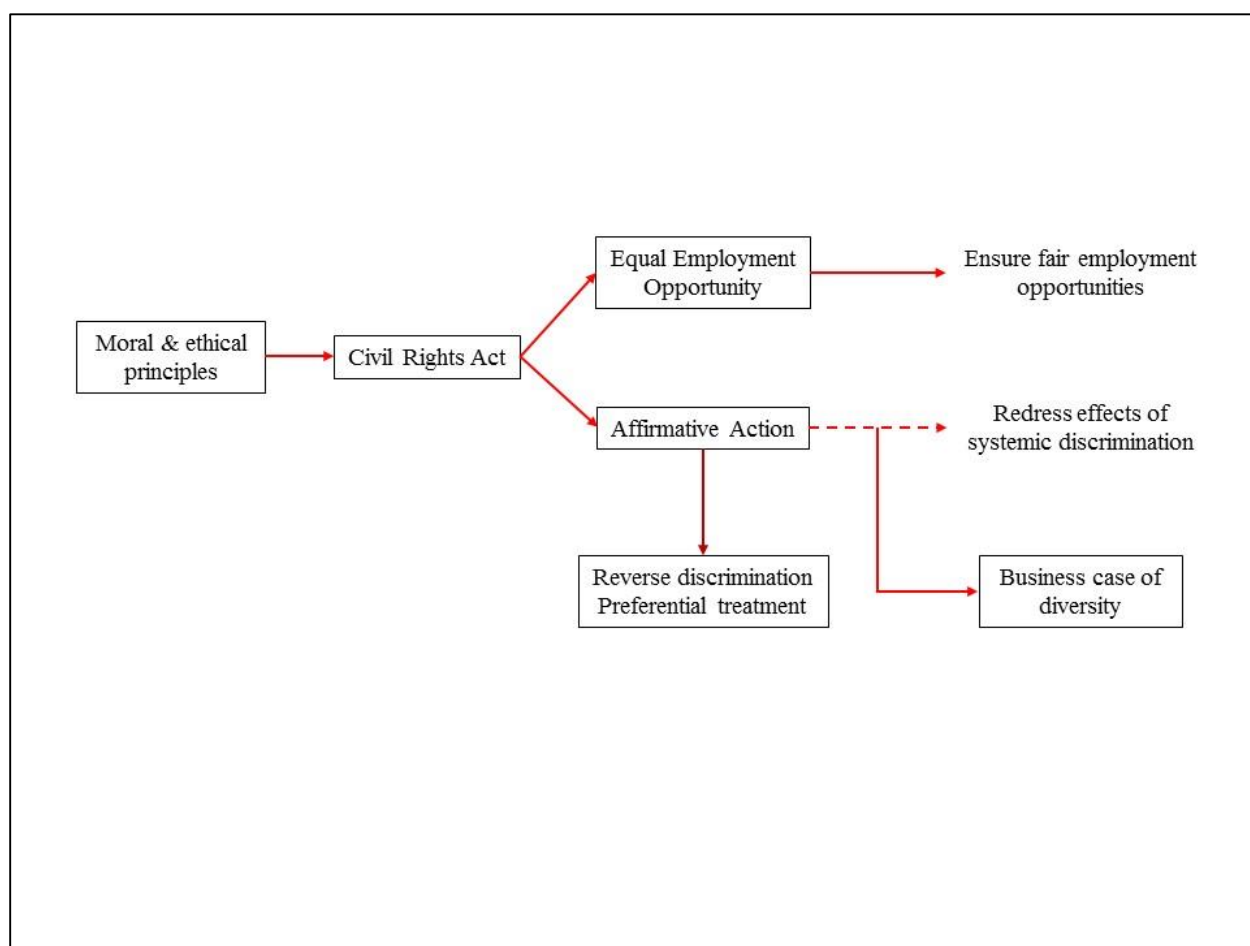presumably to maintain or gain competitive advantage in a highly competitive global economy.

Figure 13. Diversity from moral/ethical case to business case. The business case of diversity

grew out of the weakening of Affirmative Action, which was repeatedly challenged in courts on

the grounds that it was a form of discrimination to give preference to minority employment.

As already pointed out, the business case has not been consistently supported. Diversity positively affected group performance when the type of diversity was directly relevant to the functions or tasks of the group. In order to understand the link between diversity and performance, distinctions have to be made between the task-related and the maintenance-related functions of the group and between bio-demographic and task-relevant diversity (Figure 14).

Task-related functions are group activities directed at accomplishing the goals that the group seeks to accomplish, and *maintenance-related functions* are activities meant to "build, strengthen, and regulate the group life" (Philip & Dunphy, 1959, p. 162). *Bio-demographic diversity* refers to innate characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, culture, age, and gender). *Task-relevant diversity* is associated with "acquired individual attributes (e.g., functional expertise, education, and organizational tenure)… more germane to accomplishing tasks" (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007, p. 990). While *task-relevant diversity* is directly linked to *task-related group functions*, hence to group performance (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007), the relationship of *bio-demographic diversity* (e.g., cultural diversity) to group performance has not been supported. Bio-demographic diversity, specifically cultural heterogeneity, more often resulted in maintenance- or process-related issues that negatively affected group functions (Shore, et al., 2011). But, focusing solely on task-relevant diversity or regulatory compliance does not lead to a diverse workforce.

Red Ocean's largely mono-cultural headquarter staff and predominantly male international employees pointed to the inadequacy of simple regulatory compliance and meritocratic hiring practices to address workforce diversity. The absence of "prima facie" disparate treatment was not a reliable indicator of the absence of structural or systemic barriers to employment. On the contrary, the paucity of cultural or ethnic diversity at Red Ocean's headquarters, the concentration of women employees in the lower ranks, and the dominance of

men in the senior leadership and international field positions, would be symptomatic of structural and systemic flaws in the organization's meritocratic employment policy and practice. For example, the influence of cultural programming on perceptions and judgments about others cannot be ignored. Yet, the lack of diversity in Red Ocean did not appear to have impaired the organization's effectiveness which puts into question the business case argument for diversity.
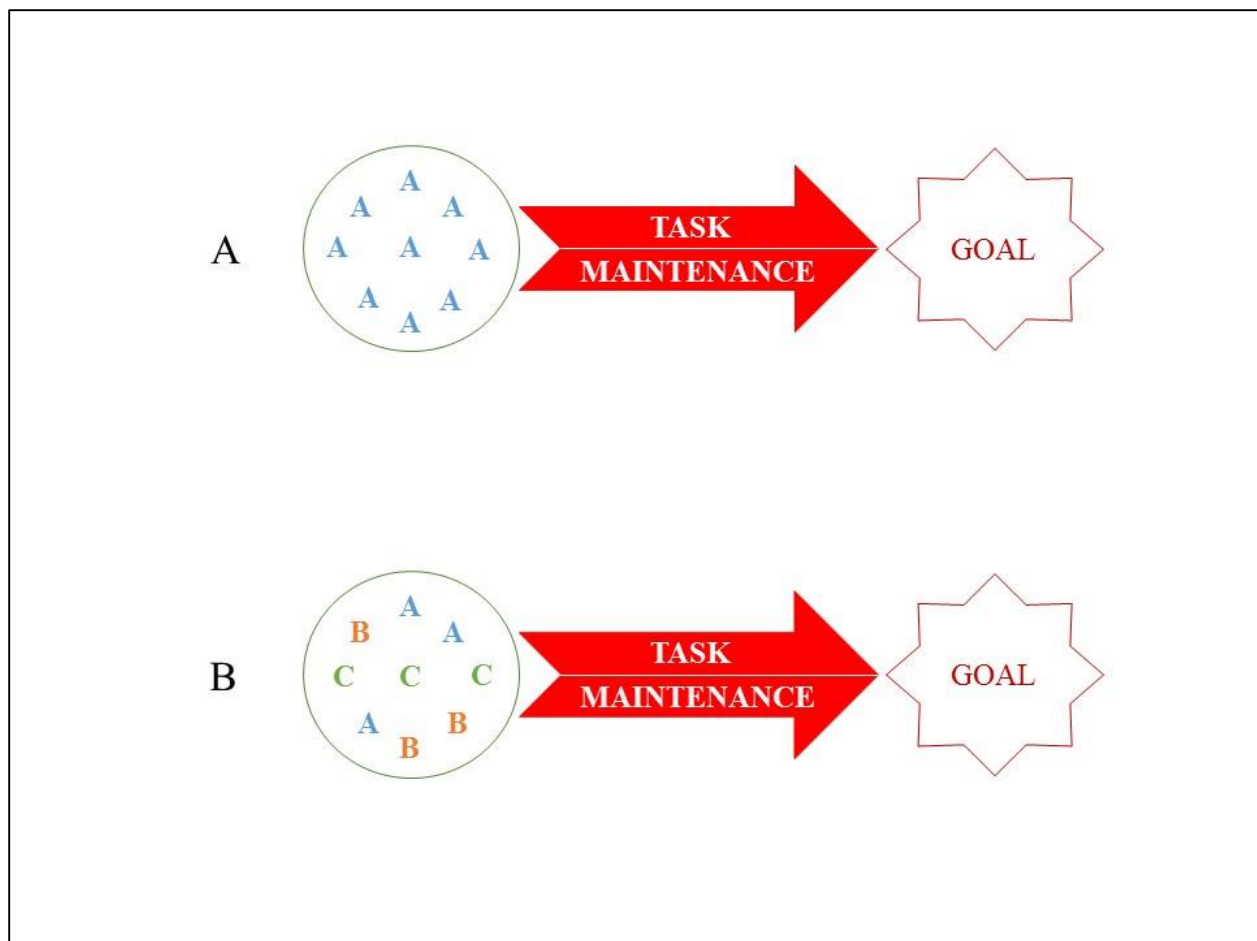

Figure 14. Culturally homogeneous vs. heterogeneous workgroups. A culturally homogeneous group (Group A) has less maintenance-related or process issues than a heterogeneous group (Group B). The greater the perceived bio-demographic differences, such as cultural distance, among group members the greater the social separation and higher likelihood of relationship-related conflicts.

The moral/ethical justification for diversity did not always lead to the desired outcomes. Instead, diversity efforts often aroused suspicions about the real intent and engendered negative reactions. Similarly, the shift to the business case for diversity did not produce the desired outcomes. As seen in Red Ocean, the business case did not lead to a diverse organization; rather, the business case resulted in an aggregate of culturally/racially homogeneous units. Yet, Red Ocean was a very successful organization.

Reframing the diversity question

Perhaps, in overemphasizing group performance and financial outcomes of diversity, we are missing the real issue. Presenting diversity as a competitive advantage to improve a company's bottom line implies certain assumptions about the nature of organizations and the essence of diversity. Firstly, the business case perspective suggests a view of organizations as rational and mechanistic systems designed to achieve specific objectives. With this view, organizations "defined in a narrow technical or functional sense" (Blaschke, 2008, p. 8) treat workforce diversity as a tool for goal implementation. Secondly, the business case argument treats diversity as an external phenomenon and a problem for organizations to deal with; hence, the prevailing view of "managing diversity." This limited view treats people (employees) as objects whose utility to the organization is limited to their intended purpose.

> *The seeming [sic] unavoidable consequence of treating people as objects is that it becomes easier to group humans with other organizational assets, and in so doing ignoring the very special and unique need humans have and organizational obligations to meet these needs.* (Kirby & Harter, 2003, p. 41).

Organizations as human and open systems. An alternative view to organizations as rational systems is the perspective that organizations are *open systems*; that is, organizations are "systems exhibiting a self-maintaining structure, based on a throughput of resources from their environment" (Blaschke, 2008, p. 37). A key feature of open systems is their openness to and interconnectedness with the environment. Consequently, "organizations whose internal features best match external (i.e., environmental) opportunities and constraints (i.e., contingencies) entail superior performance" (p. 41). At the same time, as human systems, organizations shape, and are shaped by, the environment (Fu, Plaut, Treadway, & Hazel Rose Markus, 2014). According to this theory, an organization that more closely reflects its operating environment is more likely to continue to survive.

Diversity as an environmental imperative. Bio-diversity is a fundamental characteristic of nature. Bio-diversity stabilizes the ecosystem (Tilman, 1996). I propose that the same principle applies to our social world. Much like organic matter exists in a diverse natural environment, organizations operate in a social environment (Anderson, 2010) made up of diverse peoples. The rich cultural tapestry of our world is a necessary feature of a stable social ecosystem. With this existential view, diversity is an environmental imperative that cannot be and must not be ignored if we and organizations hope to continue living/operating. Reflecting the diversity of the environment is both a moral and an existential imperative. This proposition supported the monocultural outcomes of Red Ocean's staff in client countries. Red Ocean's workforce demographics in its country programs were in harmony with the environmental opportunities and constraints. The same could not be said about the top level (headquarter staff) which had a different context – a demographically diverse American society.

From "managing diversity" to "managing in diversity." As language shapes our thoughts (Boroditsky, 2011), the metaphors that we use form the way we see and respond to our

environment. I further propose that, in order to effectively address diversity, it is necessary to change our metaphor for diversity management from "managing diversity" to "managing in diversity." This shift in our thinking would allow us to move from "controlling" to "adapting to" our environment, and would facilitate a change in the organizational culture, in which diversity is perceived as a natural condition and not an issue or problem to resolve or manage. Adaptation implies change, and change involves learning. Hence, "managing in diversity" calls for an approach that emphasizes learning, understanding, and integrating differences (Day, 2007). This, I believe, is the more accurate "business case" of diversity: organizational health and survival. Much like an organism adapts to its dynamic environment in order to survive and thrive, organizations, and people for that matter, need to recognize that diversity is a fact of life. Managing in diversity requires an organization to adapt to and evolve with its constantly changing environment, or face obsolescence and extinction.

Limitations of the study

This study was aimed at exploring one organization's approach to diversity in order to understand how current diversity literature might be supported. It would be erroneous to apply the findings and conclusions from this study to other organizations regardless of similarities in mission and structure. While this case study demonstrated examples of how workforce diversity was employed to achieve organizational objectives, Red Ocean differs from other American organizations in several areas.

The humanitarian mission of the subject organization necessitates a set of performance measures different from that of a for-profit business firm. Business firms' performances are normally measured in terms of market share, profit margins, and, in the case of publicly traded companies, quarterly earnings. Red Ocean's performance and that of similar humanitarian

organizations are normally evaluated on the number of beneficiaries or aid recipients they are able to reach with a given resource.

Red Ocean International operated in multiple national and cultural contexts; hence, diversity was experienced in different ways based on the contexts. Other organizations may or may not have the same contexts. And if they do, diversity may still be experienced differently based on the organizations' members' perspectives of and attitudes toward diversity.

Unlike for-profit firms that get their revenue from the customers they serve, non-profit organizations, such as Red Ocean International, serve two classes of customers/clients: 1) the donors who provide the revenue or funding needed to support humanitarian assistance programs, and 2) the beneficiary communities. Red Ocean's work was guided and constrained by both the donors' funding requirements – e.g., where and how to use the funds – and the needs of the client communities, which at times were at odds with each other.

Suggestions for further research

This study highlighted two factors that moderated the outcomes of different diversity perspectives: the context in which diversity is experienced, and the organizations' and its members' perspectives about and attitudes toward diversity. This study could be expanded to investigate diversity correlates of different contexts, and how contexts define the manner diversity is understood and experienced with the aim of discovering contextual factors conducive to a positive diversity outcome. Secondly, perspectives and attitudes toward diversity are critical to the success of diversity initiatives. Research on determinants of diversity perspectives and attitudes would provide a deeper understanding of the formation of racial/cultural prejudices and biases that would be of practical value in developing an effective diversity education. Similarly, research on the possible intersection between context and diversity perspectives/attitudes would aid professionals in formulating effective diversity initiatives. And finally, more research is

needed to build and test a theory that there is a difference between the diversity outcomes from a perspective of diversity as an external phenomenon that needs to be managed, and the outcomes from a view of diversity as an environmental or contextual imperative to which organization would need to adapt.

Implications for organization development (OD)

Jamieson & Worley (2008) defined OD as "a process of planned intervention(s) utilizing behavioral science principles to change a system and improve its effectiveness, conducted in accordance with values of humanism, participation, choice and development so that the organization and its members learn and develop" (p. 104). Largely an American invention, OD is grounded on the principles of humanism, democracy, development, and effectiveness. Since the inception of OD, the American social context has substantially evolved presenting new challenges to American organizations. The rapid and continuous growth of multi-culturalism in the American society necessitates that we adapt our approaches to organizational health in order to be effective and relevant. The fundamental challenge of multiculturalism to OD lies in the differences of cognitive frameworks, attitudes, behavioral responses, assumptions, and values of organizational members. For example, OD practitioners might find it difficult to promote the principle of democracy – which emphasizes participation and openness – to employees who were raised in a culture of high power distance (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Similarly, with the principle of humanism – defined in terms of fairness, justice, equality, diversity, and respect – how could an OD practitioner effectively address integration of the different members' cultural orientations and still maintain consistency in the organization?

As organizations need to adapt to the changing context (or environmental imperative), OD practitioners need to adapt OD applications to match the new opportunities and constraints presented by a diverse multi-cultural workforce. At the current demographic trajectory, 21st

century American organizations will become more culturally heterogeneous, challenging the traditional "American" notions of and metaphors for work ethic, organizational or group effectiveness, leadership and management, and reward systems, just to name a few. To remain relevant, OD practitioners would have to gain a deeper understanding of the different cultural dimensions and their implications for organizations (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012). The growing cultural diversity demands a new type of intelligence – cultural intelligence, or CQ (Livermore, 2010).

Conclusion

Current diversity discourse has revolved around the business case argument. While there was some evidence of the validity of this argument (despite contradictory outcomes) – e.g., access-and-legitimacy – preoccupation with the business case might not be the right direction. Diversity is not a new or foreign phenomenon. On the contrary, diversity is a natural feature of our world. Just as bio-diversity stabilizes of the ecosystem, socio-demographic diversity serves a similar purpose in the social world. As language forms peoples' thoughts that guide their actions, the current metaphor of "managing diversity" needs to give way in favor of "managing in diversity." The latter implies adaptability to a changing environment, which is key to survival. Diversity is not a problem to be solved, but a natural condition of a world in which we live. I contend that, it is when we (and organizations) are in tune with our environment that we continue to thrive.

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Appendix A – List of Potential Participants

Class	Position
DRC-E	Country Director
DRC-E	Research & Communications Analyst
DRC-E	Business Analyst Intern
DV	Roving Correspondent
DV	Operations Assistant
DV	Partnerships Officer
DV	Communications and Events Coordinator
DV	Engagement Officer - Growth
DV	Development Operations Manager
DV	Marketing Manager
DV	Engagement Coordinator - Events
DV	Supporter Experience Officer
DV	Director of Development & Communications
DV	Gifts Administrator
EX	Director of Security
EX	President
FN	Treasury Analyst
FN	Grants Administration Manager
FN	Grant Analyst
FN	AP & Payroll Accountant
FN	Controller
FN	General Ledger Accountant
FN	Financial Planning & Analysis Manager
FN	Chief Financial Officer
HR	Human Resources Assistant - Ebola Response
HR	International Recruiter
HR	Director of Human Resources & Administration
HR	Administration & Human Resources Assistant
HR	Guest Services Assistant
HR	On-call International Recruiter
HR	Human Resources Associate

Class	Position
HR	Deputy Director of Human Resources
HR	International Recruiter & Volunteer Coordinator
HR	Human Resources & Benefits Assistant
IP	Program Development Advisor
IP	Program Development Advisor
IP	Interim Regional Manager
IP	Health Technical Advisor
IP	Senior Program Development and Quality Manager
IP	Program Associate
IP	Interim M&E Technical Advisor
IP	Director of International Programs
IP	Program Assistant
IP	Program Associate
PAK-E	Country Representative
ROV	WASH Technical Advisor
ROV	Regional Finance Controller
ROV	Strategic Partnerships Developer
RWD-E	Finance Controller
RWD-E	Operations and Logistics Manager
RWD-E	Country Director
RWD-E	Intern from Laval University
RWD-E	Sr. Program Coordinator
SOM-E	Program Officer
SOM-E	Country Director
SOM-E	GBV/Protection Manager
SOM-E	Finance Controller
SOM-E	Sr. Grants Manager and Donor Liaison
SOM-E	WASH Coordinator
SOM-N	(unspecified job title)
SSUD-E	Hospital Project Manager
SSUD-E	Country Director

Class	Position
SSUD-E	Hospital Project Coordinator
SSUD-E	Organizational development specialist
SSUD-E	Logistics & Procurement Manager
SSUD-E	County Coordinator (Kapoeta East)
SSUD-E	Field Doctor Surgeon
SSUD-E	Hospital Management Technical Advisor
SSUD-E	Medical Doctor Specialist
SSUD-E	GBV/Protection Manager
SSUD-E	County Coordinator (Kapoeta East)
SSUD-E	Nurse Anesthetist
SSUD-E	Kajo Keji County Coordinator
SSUD-E	County Coordinator (Kapoeta South)
SSUD-E	Senior Nurse
SSUD-E	Health System Strengthening Manager (Magwi)
SSUD-E	Head of Programs
SSUD-E	Expert Supply Chain Consultant
SSUD-E	Senior Registered Nurse
SSUD-E	Anaesthetist
SSUD-E	Finance Controller
SUD-E	Operations Coordinator
SUD-E	County M&E Coordinator
SUD-E	(unspecified job title)
SUD-E	State Program Manager - East Darfur
SUD-E	County Program Manager
SUD-E	Country Director
SUD-E	Nutrition Coordinator
THAI-E	Field Coordinator
THAI-E	GBV Program Coordinator
THAI-E	(unspecified job title)
THAI-E	MED Lead Coordinator
UGD-E	Controller
UGD-E	Country Director
UGD-E	Senior Program Coordinator

Appendix B – Request for an Interview

Subject: Request for an Interview (Alex Erolin's Research Project on Diversity)

Dear ____,

I'm reaching out to ask for your help in my research project.

As you may have heard, I am working towards my doctorate degree in Organization Development at St. Thomas, and I am in the process of completing my research. I chose to do a case study about diversity in an organization. I selected [this organization] because of its international presence and its apparent success in working with diverse workforce and client population.

May I request a maximum of 1 hour of your time to discuss how diversity is addressed in [your organization]?

The interview questions are focused on shedding light on the question: "What has the organization done (or been doing) to address diversity? The interview will be audio-recorded for the sole purpose of capturing the information for analysis and synthesis. Information about your identity will be kept confidential. Notes and audio-recordings will be purged after successful presentation and defense of my dissertation.

I have attached a copy of consent form for you to review and sign, should you decide to participate in this study. I will have a backup copy for your signature at the time of the interview.

Should you have any question about the study, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you very much for your help.

Alex A. Erolin
Doctoral Candidate
University of St. Thomas
Minneapolis, MN
Email: erol2549@stthomas.edu
Mobile: (US) 952.686.8454
Skype: alex.erolin

Appendix C – Consent Form

CONSENT FORM
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

Diversity in an Organization
IRB #647148-1

I am conducting a study about ***what an organization has done to address diversity***. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a member of the organization selected for this study. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by:
- Alexander A. Erolin, Ed. D. candidate and principal investigator, University of St. Thomas, Department of Organizational Learning and Development

Background Information
The purpose of this study is to describe diversity practices of an organization that appears to have been successful in addressing diversity. It explores the principles, beliefs and assumptions that guide the organization's diversity practices, and the organization's internal and external environments in which diversity is practiced. This study will use individual interviews to answer the question, "What has an organization done to address diversity?"

Procedures
If you agree to be in this study, you will be participating in a one-to-one interview with me. In this 60-minute interview, I will be asking about and taking notes on your understanding, observations and perspectives of the organization's diversity practice. The interview will be audio-recorded.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study
Participation is strictly voluntary and participants have the option to stop the interview at any time. Your identity and the information you share will be kept confidential. No one except the researcher will have access to the participant information. However, because of the small size of the organization, there is likelihood that others may find out about your participation in the project and that they may be able to figure out what was said in interview.

Confidentiality
The records of this study will be kept confidential. The types of records I will create include interview notes, participants' demographic information, participants' lists and written policies shared by the participants. All hardcopy records created during this research will be kept in a locked storage safe that can be accessed only by the researcher. Electronic records will be kept in a password-protected computer. All records will be destroyed and purged upon successful completion of my dissertation.

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with American Refugee Committee (ARC) or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. Should you decide to

withdraw any data collected about you will be retained as a part of information on the participant population. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Alexander A. Erolin. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 952.686.8454 or Dr. John Conbere at 612.387.6057. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-6038 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I consent to having my interview audio-recorded. I am at least 18 years of age.

_____   _____
Signature of Study Participant   **Date**

_____
Print Name of Study Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   **Date**

Appendix D – Semi-structured Interview Questions

Diversity in an Organization

Interview Questions

Date: _____

1. Demographic questions

- Name:

- Nationality/Ethic Background:

- Job Title:

- Posting:

- Gender:

- Education:

- Length of Employment with [the organization]:

2. Would you describe your experience in working with (or dealing with) people cultural

background different from yours?

3. How would you describe [the organization's] culture towards diversity and inclusion?

4. What is [the organization's] policy on diversity and inclusion?

5. How important is diversity to [the organization]?

6. In what ways does [the organization] pursue/promote diversity and inclusion?

7. How effective is [the organization] in achieving diversity?

8. What are some of the difficulties you've encountered dealing with individuals of different cultural backgrounds?

9. In what ways have your dealt with the difficulties? What were the outcomes?

10. How would you assess your ability to work with individuals with different [cultural] backgrounds?

11. Additional questions

12. Participant's questions/additional comments

Appendix E: Thematic grouping

A. Individual's diversity experience

    1. Extent of exposure to people from diverse backgrounds

    2. Challenges encountered when interacting with people of diverse backgrounds

    3. Ways of dealing with challenges arising from interaction with people of diverse backgrounds

    4. Ability and/or comfort level in interacting with people of diverse backgrounds

    5. Individual's diversity focus

B. Organization's diversity perspective

    1. Role of diversity in the organization

    2. Diversity focus

C. Organization's diversity policy

    1. Areas of diversity addressed

    2. Areas of diversity not addressed adequately

D. Organization's diversity practices

    1. Consideration of diversity in staff recruit and selection

    2. Ways diversity is capitalized

    3. Staff professional opportunities

    4. Staff diversity training

    5. Organizational challenges arising from a diverse workforce

    6. Outcomes of diversity practices

Blank