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Organizational diversity learning framework: going beyond diversity training programs

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Abstract

Purpose – To overcome the shortcomings of diversity training programs, the purpose of this paper is to conceptualize an organizational diversity-learning framework, which features an organizational intervention for employees' joint decision-making process with other employees from different statuses, functions, and identities. Borrowing key principles from the diversity learning (Rainey and Kolb, 1995); integration and learning perspective (Ely and Thomas, 2001; Thomas and Ely, 1996), and the key practices informed by deliberative democratic theories (Thompson, 2008), the authors develop a new organizational diversity learning framework for behavioral, attitudinal, and cognitive learning at workplaces. They conclude with directions for future research.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper first presents an overview of key shortcomings of diversity training programs in relation to their group composition, design, content and evaluation. Second, it borrows the key principles of diversity learning (Rainey and Kolb, 1995); integration and learning perspectives (Ely and Thomas, 2001; Thomas and Ely, 1996), and the key practices informed by deliberative democratic theories (Thompson, 2008) to delineate the organizational diversity learning framework. Third, it presents a table of the approach contrasted with the shortcomings of diversity training programs and discusses practical and theoretical contributions, along with directions for future research.

Findings – This paper conceptualizes an organizational diversity-learning framework, which features an organizational intervention for employees' joint decision-making process with other employees from different statuses, functions, and identities.

Research limitations/implications – The organizational diversity learning framework developed in this paper provides an inclusive diversity learning paradigm in which diversity learning rests in the experience of the learner. As stated by experiential learning theory, this framework encourages workers to heuristically learn about diverse perspectives in a psychologically safe environment, to reflect on different perspectives, and to create a new awareness about learning from others. As the participants learn to apply new repertoires for interacting with others in their daily work interactions (e.g. listening to different perspectives shared by unfamiliar social group members), it proposes that their behaviors may create a ripple effect, changing other colleagues' attitudes, behaviors, and thinking patterns on working with diverse coworkers.

Practical implications – This paper provides detailed instructions for practitioners to facilitate diversity learning. It highlights a few key practical implications. First, the framework provides a method of organization-wide diversity learning through intersecting networks within the workplace, which is designed to reduce the elitist organizational decision making that mainly occurs at the upper echelon. Second, unlike other stand-alone diversity initiatives, the framework is embedded in the organizational decision-making process, which makes employees' learning applicable to core organizational activities, contributing to both employees' diversity learning and organizational growth. Third, the framework provides a preliminary model for transferring employees' diversity learning in daily work operations, nurturing their behavioral learning to interact with different social groups more frequently at work and inclusive of their colleagues' perspectives, feelings, and attitudes.

Social implications – Workforces across nations are becoming increasingly diverse, and, simultaneously, the gap and tension between demographic representation in the upper and lower echelons is widening. By joining with other scholars who have advocated for the need to move beyond diversity training programs, the authors developed the organizational diversity learning framework for meaningful co-participation of employees with different statuses, functions, and identities. By inviting minority perspectives into the organizational decision-making process, top managers can explicitly send a message to minority groups that their perspectives matter and that their contributions are highly valued by the organization.

Originality/value – There has not been a conceptual paper that delineates the diversity inclusive decision-making process within a workplace. The authors established the organizational diversity learning framework based on the diversity learning, organizational diversity integration and learning perspectives, and deliberative democracy practices. The proposed framework guides organizations in structural interventions to educate employees on how to learn from multiple perspectives for better organizational decision making.

Keywords Equality, Diversity and inclusion, Critical, Diversity management, Diversity learning, Diversity training

Paper type Conceptual paper

Growing concern about the shortcomings of diversity training programs has prompted calls from a number of scholars for an alternative approach, one which encourages employees to learn about and from the different perspectives in their workplace (e.g. Anard and Winters, 2008; Chavez and Weisinger, 2008; Moss-Racusin *et al.*, 2014). We respond to this call by developing an integrative framework that leverages the range of ideas, information, knowledge and perspectives present in a diverse workforce, and we do so with the aim of simultaneously promoting respectful relationships and improved organizational actions.

By integrating the diversity learning (Rainey and Kolb, 1995); organizational diversity integration and learning perspective (Ely and Thomas, 2001; Thomas and Ely, 1996) and deliberative democracy theories (Thompson, 2008) into our framework, we propose the following criteria for effective diversity learning to take place in the workplace: inclusion of minority group members in the organizational decision-making process; organizational random and stratified sampling to establish multiple teams that reflect the heterogeneous composition of an organization; equal opportunity and equal turn-taking to speak in each team; enlarging and challenging participants' perspectives through interpersonal interaction with different employees; and the final decision is reached in a form of common agreement or positive dissensus (i.e. disagreement while preserving diversity).

Over the last three decades, diversity training has become a cornerstone of organizations' diversity initiatives to reduce employees' prejudices, stereotypes, and biases toward different employees (Bezrukova *et al.*, 2012). In the USA, an online survey conducted by Virtcom Consulting revealed that over 80 percent of 265 HR professionals and diversity specialists from organizations with 5,000 to 10,000 employees reported that they had either mandatory or voluntary training for all levels of employees, with average budgets of \$500,000 to 750,000 per year (*The New York Times*, 2007). In total, US businesses spend approximately \$200 million to 300 million a year on diversity training programs (Vedantam, 2008). Although the importance of diversity training for changing employees' attitudes and improving working relationships has been acknowledged (Bezrukova *et al.*, 2012; Ehrke *et al.*, 2014), it has received criticism for its tendency to reinforce the differences between social groups and thus potentially promote prejudices in the workforce (e.g. Anard and Winters, 2008; Bregman, 2012; Chavez and Weisinger, 2008; Dobbin *et al.*, 2007; Kalev *et al.*, 2006; Kalinoski *et al.*, 2013; Rynes and Rosen, 1995). Despite diversity training initiatives over decades, pervasive employment discrimination continues worldwide based on employees' minority social status (International Labour Organization, 2011). In the USA, Anglo-Americans still hold a much larger proportion of management and professional positions (83.6 percent) than do other racial minority group members, notably African-Americans (8.4 percent), Asian-Americans (6.1 percent), and Hispanics (7.5 percent) (US Department of Labor, 2014).

Based on data gathered from 708 organizations over 31 years of diversity training programs in the USA (Kalev *et al.*, 2006), the programs reduced minority representation in managerial positions, whereas the opposite effect was found for organizational interventions that held managers accountable for enhancing minority participation and providing minorities with a voice to prove their worth in high-profile roles. Another study in

the UK found that most diversity managers gained their diversity expertise through work experience and external training rather than in-house training programs and formal diversity education (Tatli *et al.*, 2007). In order to deal with negative reporting of diversity training programs, some scholars propose alternative approaches such as taking an ethical perspective (Jones *et al.*, 2013), integrating multiple perspectives on social justice, learning and the business case (Alheiji *et al.*, 2015) and complementing training with other diversity initiatives (Bezrukova *et al.*, 2014).

Corporations spend billions of dollars to attract and manage diversity both internally and externally, yet they still face discrimination lawsuits, and the leadership ranks of the business world remain predominantly white and male.

One notable oversight in current diversity training programs is including an organizational wide initiative that promotes the willingness of managers and employees to learn from different perspectives by crossing demographical and hierarchical boundaries in organizations. The notion of organizational wide learning to leverage diversity was promoted in the 1990s (e.g. Cox and Blake, 1991; Dass and Parker, 1999), however, it somewhat lost its currency in recent research and practice. In particular, we argue that business needs to move beyond the rhetoric of people in power promoting diversity (Words, 2015). This paper emphasizes its importance by promoting the organizational diversity learning framework which encourages employees to learn to value and integrate diverse perspectives by cutting across identities, functions and statuses of workers in organizational decision-making processes. In accordance with the organizational culture model of Edgar Schein (1984), we attempt to delve deeper by going beyond the short-lived diversity initiatives and develop an organizational framework that challenges organizational assumptions by changing workers' perspectives, attitudes and behaviors in relation to relating with others who are different from themselves.

Our framework joins with the emerging paradigm for diversity training, which suggests that the diversity learning of employees should become more relational (e.g. taking perspective of others), interdependent, applicable, and on-going to integrate diverse employees' contributions for improving organizational performance (Anard and Winters, 2008; Chavez and Weisinger, 2008; Kalinoski *et al.*, 2013; Kulik and Roberson, 2008; Lindsey *et al.*, 2015; Paluck, 2006).

In this paper, we first present an overview of the key shortcomings of diversity training programs in relation to their group composition, design, content and evaluation. Second, we borrow the key principles of diversity learning (Raine and Kolb, 1995); integration and learning perspectives (Ely and Thomas, 2001; Thomas and Ely, 1996), and the key practices informed by deliberative democratic theories (Thompson, 2008) to delineate the organizational diversity learning framework. Third, we present a table of our approach contrasted with the shortcomings of diversity training programs and discuss our practical and theoretical contributions, along with directions for future research.

Diversity training and its limitations

The multiple benefits of diversity training programs are identified in relation to affective, cognitive, and skill-based outcomes, however, they also receive considerable criticisms for their shortcomings, particularly in regard to not producing real behavioral change in the workplace (Anard and Winters, 2008; Bezrukova *et al.*, 2012; Chavez and Weisinger, 2008; Kalinoski *et al.*, 2013; Kulik and Roberson, 2008; Paluck, 2006). In this section, we underscore major shortcomings of current diversity training programs in relation to their: group composition, design, content, and evaluation.

Group composition

Current training programs lack participants' specification to ensure that different social groups across hierarchies and functions are included (Paluck, 2006). Conventional training

programs do not promote crosscutting participation by those in the different hierarchical statuses, roles, and social groups, therefore potentially attracting only certain employees who are already open and inclusive of different employees (cf. Roberson *et al.*, 2001). Research confirms that employees who do not have diversity skills tend to overestimate their skills and are therefore not likely to attend a voluntary diversity training program, whereas those with the least need for diversity training are more likely to participate in the training (Kulik *et al.*, 2007). We argue that diversity programs that do not deliberately attract or select diverse participants are unlikely to produce systemic organizational change, inhibiting organization-wide employees' attitudinal and behavioral change in improving work relationships among different employees (Linnehan and Konrad, 1999; Schneider and Northcraft, 1999).

Design

Furthermore, organizations' diversity training programs are often based on one-off or regular seminars, periodic interventions over weeks or months, workshop interventions, and/or self-paced e-learning, not providing work-based, participatory learning to work with different employees (Anard and Winters, 2008; Homan *et al.*, 2015; Kulik and Roberson, 2008; Paluck, 2006). By implementing short-lived training programs, organizations tend to neglect an organizational or strategic approach to integrating diversity learning and leveraging multiple perspectives of different employees for work purposes (Chavez and Weisinger, 2008). This design also reflects an organization's assumption that diverse employees who were trained will continue to learn about different perspectives during work activities (Roberson, 2006). Implying the importance of work-based diversity learning, a meta-analytic evaluation of diversity training outcomes found that best training outcomes were produced in active and interdependent task programs rather than passive (e.g. lecture or video); non-laboratory setting; and were face-to-face rather than computer-based trainings (Kalinowski *et al.*, 2013).

Content

Current training programs include training on employees' understanding to make use of different perspectives, acquiring cultural competence, knowledge and communication skills, and diversity-specific trainings (e.g. sexual orientation awareness, gender, disability), as well as knowledge of equal employment opportunity laws and other legislation (Paluck, 2006). By emphasizing the differences between social groups and how to bridge those differences, diversity training programs tend to reinforce social group categorizations and may enhance prejudices (Bregman, 2012; Chavez and Weisinger, 2008; Kalev *et al.*, 2006). For some organizations, extensive coverage of differences in the training (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, personality, and working styles) further reinforces dissimilarities amongst employees and dilutes the effectiveness of diversity training (Paluck, 2006).

Evaluation

Diversity training is often limited to short-term affective evaluation or self-reported behavioral change with little evidence of objective behavioral change that results in improving work relationships among different employees (e.g. Bezrukova *et al.*, 2012; Curtis and Dreachslin, 2008; Hite and McDonald, 2006; Kalinoski *et al.*, 2013; Kulik and Roberson, 2008; Paluck and Green, 2009; Rynes and Rosen, 1995). Paluck (2006) proposed that training programs need to focus more on behavioral measurement by: establishing the causal effect of the program; using a measure that goes beyond self-reporting; and conducting research in relevant populations and settings (e.g. work activities).

Overall, extant diversity training programs have shortcomings, particularly in relation to their group composition, design, content, and evaluation. In order to overcome their current shortcomings, the organizational diversity learning framework is proposed to develop more diversity-inclusive work behaviors, attitudes, and thinking patterns in a workplace.

Organizational diversity learning framework

Diversity learning in the workplace may include utilizing, questioning, and integrating multiple perspectives for organizational development (cf. Anard and Winters, 2008; Bezrukova *et al.*, 2012; Chavez and Weisinger, 2008) and thus the principles of diversity learning (Rainey and Kolb, 1995); integration and learning (Ely and Thomas, 2001; Thomas and Ely, 1996), and deliberative democratic theories (Thompson, 2008) are relevant. We integrate these perspectives to develop an organizational diversity learning framework to assist practitioners in developing the organizational context and processes required to foster diversity learning. Organizational issues provide the diversity learning opportunities, which are then exploited by a process designed to facilitate employees' behavioral, attitudinal, and cognitive learning through the integration of the perspectives of different social groups at the organizational level (cf. Abelson *et al.*, 2003; Mor-Barak and Cherin, 1998).

In order to reap the benefit of diverse perspectives, some scholars suggest organizations need to provide plenty of opportunities for employees to reflect, respect, value, and communicate different perspectives with each other during business activities (Ely and Thomas, 2001; Ferdman and Davidson, 2002; Mor-Barak and Cherin, 1998; Prasad *et al.*, 2006). The organizational mindset advocated in Ely and Thomas' (2001) integration and learning perspective sees diversity as a valuable resource for rethinking primary organizational activities, thus multiplying organizational insights, skills, and experiences for the main work of an organization (Thomas and Ely, 1996). Ely and Thomas' (2001) approach to diversity learning promotes organization-wide learning between minority group members (who often hold lower hierarchical status) and majority group members (who often hold higher hierarchical status) by challenging "normative assumptions about organizational strategies, functions, operations, practices, and procedures" (Lorbiecki, 2001, p. 353).

We build on Thomas and Ely's diversity learning perspective by including in our organizational diversity learning framework a method to promote the willingness of managers/employees to learn from others by crossing boundaries of demographics, hierarchies and divisions in a workplace in order to achieve common organizational purposes (cf. Hauser and Benoit-Barne, 2002). The intervention may include direct communication from top management on the importance of learning from different perspectives to achieve organizational goals through various mediums such as company intranet sites, newspapers, posters and leaflets. Research on the institutionalization of deliberative democracy indicates that successful collective decision making often depends on organizational/institutional commitment to devote "time, energy, funds and patience to its process and be prepared to learn from one another to grow" (Hartz-Karp and Briand, 2009, p. 135). In order to generate effective diversity learning at the organizational level, social capital based on trust needs to be built through continuous reciprocal interactions amongst workers from different backgrounds, hierarchies and functions (cf. Pretty, 2003). Therefore, the organizational diversity learning approach presented in this paper requires an on-going organizational invitation to workers from different backgrounds, status, and hierarchies to jointly make decisions at the organizational level. Although this process requires time, energy, funds and patience in materializing new perspectives for business growth, it may in turn prove be a more effective utilization of organizational resources as a whole (Hauser and Benoit-Barne, 2002).

With these perspectives as our foundational framework, we incorporate key deliberative democracy practices (Thompson, 2008) for minority and majority group members to jointly

make organizational decisions. Deliberative democracy's practical implementations and empirical studies have proliferated in the political realm, providing a useful insight as to how perspectives of minority group members can be integrated into an organizational decision-making process (Fishkin, 2011; Thompson, 2008). In particular, we emphasize the organization's practical interventions to enhance minority voices and coordinate constructive learning about multiple perspectives in a non-threatening environment for every learner (cf. Lorbiecki, 2001).

The framework is organized into three phases: before, during, and after participation, laying key conditions for participants' behavioral, cognitive, and attitudinal learning about differences in each phase. Based upon the diversity learning concepts of Rainey and Kolb (1995), we define the behavioral learning of diversity as different social groups learning the utility of an equal opportunity to develop and utilize multiple perspectives; the cognitive learning of diversity as different social groups learning to obtain multiple perspectives and rethinking their own perspectives; and the attitudinal learning of diversity as different social groups learning to enhance appreciation of different perspectives. Figure 1 indicates the overview of our framework.

The before-participation phase

This phase provides the pre-context for participants to acquire: behavioral, cognitive, and attitudinal diversity learning.

Behavioral learning pre-context. Before selecting participants, employees and managers need to be informed about the organizational learning initiatives through company newsletters, e-mails and intranet sites through selected organizational topics such as "Work-Life Balance for All" and "Inclusive Workplace." The message can be accompanied by an explicit clause, stating that anyone in the organization is invited to make contributions to making organizational decisions (Hartz-Karp and Briand, 2009). In order to minimize the feeling of discrimination through perceptions and biases of tokenism by

Figure 1.
Organizational
diversity learning
framework

majority and minority members, this open invitation is deemed as a critical first step. Subsequently, applicants are invited to write to top management or the human resource department stating the reason for their interest in participating (Einsiedel and Eastlick, 2000). Their justification will be used to narrow down a list of potential participants. Third, a final list is produced based upon the following deliberative democratic principles to minimize the context of minority-majority setting and threat/hierarchical effects during participation.

The first pre-context is the random and stratified representative sampling of participants in order to gain greater collective intelligence by having “a more diverse and inclusive pool of representatives” (Landemore, 2013, p. 1209). Its main objective is to deliberately cuts across participants from hierarchical, divisional, and demographic boundaries by assigning diverse participants to multiple decision-making teams (Fishkin, 2011). This deliberate mix of participants from different functions, backgrounds and hierarchies into each team allows participants to interact with those who are not similar in their social identities or categories (Schneider and Northcraft, 1999; Tomlinson and Egan, 2002; van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007). This structural intervention, therefore, preconditions the minority members to participate in the organizational decision-making process and ensures participants from different functional backgrounds to interact with each other (Allport, 1954; Avery and Thomas, 2004; Linnehan and Konrad, 1999; Schneider and Northcraft, 1999). Furthermore, the diversified team composition reduces the likelihood of participants’ in-group and out-group categorization in teams and reduces the domineering effects of conventional work teams that are influenced by majority voices (Avery and Thomas, 2004; Brewer, 1995; Earley and Mosakowski, 2000; Schneider and Northcraft, 1999; Thompson, 2008).

The small team size (e.g. less than ten members) is the second context to facilitate proximate information exchange and reduce relational conflicts among diverse participants (Allport, 1954; Fisher and Ellis, 1990; Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; Rainey and Kolb, 1995). Third, random and stratified sampling of participants need to ensure that the selected participants within each team are not related as immediate supervisors, subordinates, or colleagues in daily work activities in order to facilitate the equalization of the status of participants for mutual exchange of ideas and perspectives (Berger *et al.*, 2002).

At this stage, to implement the framework, facilitators such as human resource department staff who have no political association to employees’ work activities, need to be appointed by organizational leaders. As Figure 1 shows, deliberative democracy proposes the appointment of a facilitator (*F*) who has no political association to the organization to enhance balanced information exchange between diverse participants (Fishkin, 1995). Some deliberative democracy scholars contend that the facilitator should be well-trained in the area of group dynamics and facilitative skills and be knowledgeable about the topic under discussion (Sfeir-Younis, 1995), while others consider it adequate for the facilitator to be, for instance, a school teacher who has been trained not to show their point of view during participation but to facilitate discussion (Fishkin *et al.*, 2006). Drawing upon the literature of diversity work teams and diversity education, we suggest that the potential facilitators be staff in the human resource department who are trained as discussion facilitators (cf. Cox, 1994; Fishkin *et al.*, 2006; Rainey and Kolb, 1995). Table I summarizes the selection criteria and roles of facilitators.

Cognitive learning pre-context. Diversity learning becomes more self-directed for participants when clear goals and agendas are laid down within a given boundary (Rainey and Kolb, 1995). Adopting Ely and Thomas’ (2001) integration and learning perspective, we propose that participants to be briefed about specific organizational goal(s) and be encouraged to exchange perspectives and knowledge with one another to achieve those goal(s). Organizational goals may include: solving organizational problems, such as

Table I.
The selection criteria
and roles of
facilitators

The before participation phase	The during-participation phase	The post-participation phase
<p>Selection criteria</p> <p>No political association to the organization to enhance balanced information exchange between diverse participants such as staff in the human resource department who are trained as discussion facilitators</p> <p>Desirable criteria</p> <p>A process consultant who is trained in the area of group dynamics and facilitative skills and be knowledgeable about the topic under discussion or</p> <p>A certified professional facilitator who is trained to objectively facilitate the discussion in both process and content</p> <p>Roles</p> <p>Gather participants' perspectives anonymously to reduce their bias toward perspectives shared by members for different status, functions and identities during the participation</p> <p>In order to enhance psychological safety for participants, privacy/confidentiality is assured by a written document signed by top management</p>	<p>Roles</p> <p>Ensures an equal amount of time is allowed for each participant to speak out, and that domination of the discussion by a few is prevented</p> <p>The minority group members must be given an equal opportunity</p> <p>Addresses participants by their first name plants the seed for relationship building and good interpersonal dialogue</p> <p>Encourages participants to step back and learn from multiple/opposing perspectives and to seek similarities, differences, and cross-connections between members' contributions</p> <p>For example, use a white board to write down pros and cons, similarities and dissimilarities, and cross-connections of perspectives</p> <p>Affirmation of freedom to openly share personal stories or feelings</p>	<p>Roles</p> <p>Assists in organizing constructive discussions between senior managers and team representatives and seek common decision(s) across teams</p> <p>Facilitates behavioral, cognitive, and affective post-learning evaluations</p> <p>Offers a third party/objective evaluation whether or not the participation fulfilled behavioral, cognitive and affective criteria as well as offer suggestions for future improvement</p>

improving the quality and speed of service and product delivery; evaluating and making suggestions regarding business goals, strategies, products, and services; providing solutions to work discrimination or suggesting fair employment practices; and improving employment matters, such as work-life balance and employee well-being. By emphasizing organizational goals, participants will deviate their focus from identity differences (e.g. race, age, or gender) to superordinate organizational identity, which may result in better learning about different perspectives and problem solving for organizational growth (cf. Allport, 1954; Avery and Thomas, 2004; Brickson, 2000; Fishkin and Luskin, 2005; Gastil, 2006). Depending on the magnitude of the goals to be achieved, the participation process may require a couple of sessions across months. For example, if the goal is to provide solutions for work discrimination reported by a number of employees, participants may be asked to generate solutions by having a couple of sessions within one month. Whereas, if the goal is to make suggestions regarding business strategies, products and services, participants may require more time with less sense of urgency. Therefore, they may spend a longer period of time (e.g. 12 months across multiple sessions).

Attitudinal learning pre-context. The context of psychological safety maximizes diversity learning by allowing different members to openly share their perspectives, values, and feelings (Allport, 1954; Rainey and Kolb, 1995). The central theme in psychological safety is a context that minimizes interpersonal risks in which people are encouraged to contribute their ideas and suggestions for organizational improvement through effective teams and organizational learning (Bunderson and Boumgarden, 2010; Edmondson and Lei, 2014; Liang *et al.*, 2012). Notably, psychological safety empowers individuals to “express

themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694) within a context of trust and respect. In order to achieve the condition of psychological safety in the next participation phase, we first apply the anonymous voice principle of Rawls (1971) to deliberately disregard participants’ differences in status, identities, and affiliations to allow for unbiased decisions to be reached. For example, all participants may be given an anonymous opportunity to write down or transmit their perspectives to the facilitator before the participation phase. Their perspectives can then be presented by the facilitator at the beginning of participants’ dialogue. We expect that the presentation of “anonymous voices” before the face-to-face contact will reduce participants’ bias toward perspectives shared by members from different statuses, functions, and identities (cf. Pellizzoni, 2001; Ryfe, 2005). Before participation, selected participants are reminded of their privacy/confidentiality. For example, a written document signed by top management is distributed to each participant stating that information collected from participation will be used only for organizational purposes and that their personal identification and data obtained previously (e.g. EEO survey data and organizational level data) will not be disclosed nor linked with information collected from this participation. The matter of privacy is also communicated to all leaders and facilitators who are involved in this process. The assurance of privacy in this manner enhances feelings of psychological safety as a sign of respect and trust between participants and their employers, thereby empowering authentic participation (Samra *et al.*, 2009).

The during-participation phase

In the following section, we identify the conditions that are necessary for participants’ behavioral, cognitive, and attitudinal learning of diversity during the joint participation process. The following conditions are applied, toward effective diversity learning particularly by promoting psychological safety amongst diverse participants.

Behavioral learning conditions

In order to reduce tokenism in demographically diverse teams, facilitators’ intervention is necessary to create equal communication power among participants (Pellizzoni, 2001; cf. Schneider and Northcraft, 1999). The deliberative democracy scholars suggest the following in order to produce well-informed decisions: equal turn-taking in speaking and listening among participants during public reasoning, so that they can reach the goal of common agreement (Elster, 1997; Habermas, 1984; Rosenberg, 2003); and facilitators’ assertion that all individuals have the freedom to challenge other participants’ norms and assumptions (Benhabib, 2002; Cohen, 1996). Facilitator needs to ensure that an equal amount of time is allowed for each participant to speak out, and that domination of the discussion by a few is prevented. In particular, the minority group members must be given an equal opportunity and communicative power to present their viewpoint (He and Leib, 2006). This process is also termed the rule of inclusion, that “no-one can be involuntarily excluded from the process of deliberation” (Benhabib, 1994, cited in Thompson and Hoggett, 2001). According to the diversity education literature, addressing participants by their name plants the seed for relationship building and good interpersonal dialogue (Rainey and Kolb, 1995). In turn, this equips participants to speak and listen to different social group members and to provide a platform for cognitive and attitudinal diversity learning.

Cognitive learning conditions

In diverse teams, there is a natural tendency for participants to eliminate unusual perspectives shared by different social groups (Schneider and Northcraft, 1999). However, unique information and diverse opinions are recognized as a crucial source of task conflicts, thus leading to a wider range of alternative solutions to make a quality

decision (Jehn *et al.*, 1999; Watson *et al.*, 1993). Therefore, the challenge is to attain a balance between convergence and divergence of meanings during discussion (Mohammed and Ringseis, 2001). To promote members' cognitive learning about diverse perspectives, a facilitator may systematically encourage participants to step back and learn from multiple/opposing perspectives and to seek similarities, differences, and cross-connections between members' contributions (Hewstone, 1996; Rainey and Kolb, 1995; Reykowski, 2006; Tomlinson and Egan, 2002). In order to monitor this process, a facilitator may use a white board to write down pros and cons, similarities and dissimilarities, and cross-connections of perspectives presented by participants (Fishkin and Luskin, 2005). By emphasizing various perspectives (rather than different social identities) as a focal point of discussion, we argue that this process may enhance greater objectivity of members to reason varieties of perspective and therefore avoid their common information bias and to engage in a reciprocal dialogue toward solving the subject matters (Avery and Thomas, 2004; Hewstone, 1996). In agreement with recent virtue ethics work on deliberative democracy (Barker, 2015), discussion requires development of participants' capacities to engage in communication across their differences toward mutual understanding of differences.

The facilitator's objective presentation of multiple perspectives is crucial for participants' diversity learning as their perspectives can remain contradictory, unchallenged, or insular without the external stimulus that encourages rethinking of personal perspectives (Kim, Wyatt and Katz, 1999a, b). Contrary to diversity training which tends to focus on group specific differences or inclusiveness of multiple groups (Bezrukova *et al.*, 2012), this approach focuses on different perspectives of multiple groups in order to achieve an organizational goal (cf. Allport, 1954). This approach, therefore, takes a relational case of managing for diversity by empowering different social groups to leverage each other's unique perspectives rather than magnifying identity differences in their thinking process. The relational case of managing for diversity promotes "attitudinal and cultural transformation" by organizations actively capitalizing on unique viewpoints of a diverse workforce (Chavez and Weisinger, 2008).

Attitudinal learning conditions

Decision making in the midst of diverse identities, perspectives, and interpretations is often intersected by participants' emotions, values, beliefs, and experiences (Fishkin *et al.*, 2004; Thompson and Hoggett, 2001). Thus, participants' affective appeals and personal testimony are expected to be an important aspect of candid and authentic discussions, especially for topics such as the fair employment practices (Rawls, 1971; Thompson, 2008). The facilitators' affirmation of freedom to openly share personal stories or feelings becomes critical to foster candid diversity learning from different perspectives (Rainey and Kolb, 1995). In so doing, more opportunities are offered to deepen participants' attitudinal learning, not only in the sense of overcoming certain stereotypes and prejudices, but also in valuing and empathizing other perspectives on the discussion topic.

The post-participation phase

Our main goal for the organizational diversity learning framework is, first and foremost, diversity learning (i.e. equal opportunity to acquire, integrate, and appreciate multiple perspectives and a shared sense of belonging to each other), followed by high-quality organizational decisions (Pellizzoni, 2001; Ryfe, 2005). Therefore, even if the final organizational decision is not implemented due to members' disagreement, organizational and/or contextual reasons, we consider that participants' behavioral, attitudinal, and cognitive diversity learning itself achieves the most important goal of this organizational intervention. Recent work in deliberative democracy theories promotes the idea of "positive dissensus," which refers to disagreement resulting "from a deliberation in which people

exchanged reasons preserving their diversity” (Landemore and Page, 2015, p. 243). Similarly, a virtue ethics perspective on deliberative democracy presents the importance of developing “a shared and habitual civic culture of mutual understanding of differences” (Barker, 2015, p. 3). Therefore, positive disagreement or mutual understanding of differences for the purpose of diversity learning is valued although an organizational decision reached based on common agreement would be an ideal outcome in the setting of organizational decision making (Landemore and Page, 2015).

With this premise in mind, the post-participation phase entails an organizational intervention in consolidating all the main suggestions generated across multiple teams, in order to generate organizational decision(s). Considering the amount of time required to deliver the final decision, this phase may take a whole day to complete.

With the help of the human resource management department, senior managers holding key decision-making responsibility may conduct discussions with team representatives and seek common decision(s) across teams as depicted in Figure 1 (Abelson *et al.*, 2003; Fishkin, 2011). Utilizing a conference room or equivalent, a series of round table discussion may take place followed by a meeting amongst senior management members to discuss the series of suggestions generated. Subsequently, all participants are asked to return to the room to listen to the final decision(s) reached by the senior management. Managerial accountability is embedded in this process, thus requiring top management to collate all suggestions and openly communicate how the final decisions are reached to all participants (cf. Abelson *et al.*, 2003).

The organizational decision-making process along with behavioral, cognitive, and affective post-learning evaluations follow outline evaluation options. In alignment with the key principles of deliberative democracy scholarship, integration and learning perspective and diversity learning, along with our main objective of diversity learning, the decision criteria are as follows: participation included the minority group members within the organizational context; the participation process ensured equal opportunity and equal turns in speaking among different social groups within teams; participation enabled minority and majority group members to widen their perspectives, knowledge, and understanding about a given organizational inquiry; participation influenced the members to question their own assumptions and perspectives rather than just reaching conformity; and the final decision was reached in a form of common agreement or positive dissent (Abelson *et al.*, 2003; Fishkin *et al.*, 2004; Landemore and Page, 2015; Thompson, 2008). Furthermore, the third-party reports created by facilitators may also provide objective assessment of whether or not the participation fulfilled these criteria (Hewstone, 1996). We delineate the evaluation options below.

Behavioral post-learning evaluation

Our framework combines both objective and subjective evaluations of diversity learning. The behavioral learning of participants may be assessed, for example, by anonymous self-reported and third party questionnaires that indicate the extent to which different perspectives were shared and the joint decision-making processes took place in each team (Reykowski, 2006). For instance, items may include “I shared my perspectives about the given inquiry to other members and each member in this team took an equal turn in listening and speaking and jointly made a group decision.” An open-ended question such as “What aspects of this participation facilitated or hindered your sharing?” may also reveal positive and negative aspects of behavioral learning of diversity for continuous improvement of this framework.

Cognitive post-learning evaluation

Evaluation of cognitive change may also be included in the anonymous self-reported questionnaire. Relevant questions may include participants’ understanding of multiple

perspectives presented in the team and change(s) in their perspectives on issues (Reykowski, 2006). For example, items might include “I gained more knowledge and information about the given issue from other members and I learned a new way of thinking from other members.” An open-ended question such as “How did your participation facilitate or hinder your learning about different perspectives from other members?” may also reveal positive and negative aspects of cognitive learning of diversity from this framework.

Attitudinal post-learning evaluation

Some deliberative democracy scholars suggest that pre- and post-participation attitudinal surveys (e.g. regarding working with employees from different social backgrounds) may strengthen the validity of evaluation (e.g. Ryfe, 2005). Attitudinal questions may focus on subjective evaluations of diverse perspectives, attitudes toward working in a diverse team, and feelings of inclusion. For example, items might include “I feel more connected with employees from different hierarchies and social groups and I feel personally empowered by being able to contribute to organizational decision-making processes.” An open-ended question such as “How did you feel about your participation in this program?” or “Is there anything that could have been done better to make you feel more included during the participation?” may also reveal positive and negative aspects of affective learning about diversity from this framework. The evaluations proposed in this phase also overcome the shortcomings of diversity training evaluations, which tend to focus on attitudinal learning and subjective rating of participants.

Discussion

The organizational diversity learning framework developed in this paper provides an inclusive diversity learning paradigm in which diversity learning “rests in the experience of the learner” (Rainey and Kolb, 1995, p. 131). As stated by experiential learning theory, this framework encourages workers to heuristically learn about diverse perspectives in a psychologically safe environment, to reflect on different perspectives, and to create new awareness about learning from others (cf. Rainey and Kolb, 1995). Instead of short lived diversity initiatives such as a diversity training programs and recruitment of minority members, this paper delved deeper by promoting multi-dimensional diversity learning at a level that may alter the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of employees toward different individuals in a positive way, and at the same time, may produce noble organizational approaches toward its growth. As participants learn to apply new repertoires for interacting with others in their daily work interactions (e.g. listening to different perspectives shared by unfamiliar social group members), we propose that their behaviors may create a ripple effect, changing other colleagues’ attitudes, behaviors, and thinking patterns on working with diverse coworkers. We also propose that, over time, organization-wide implementation of the proposed framework can foster “organizational environmental virtuousness” that reduces discriminatory attitudes and behaviors in a workplace (Sadler-Smith, 2013, p. 124). “The long-term success of any business calls for a corporate mindset that values fresh ideas, perspectives and views” (Lindenberger, 2016). Through on-going diversity learning exchanges at the individual, the group and the organizational levels, as proposed in this paper, diversity in the workplace may produce more connectedness and collegiality amongst workers and strengthen organizational creativity and innovation. Senior management that lauds and promotes diversity learning of individuals plays a critical role in making the organizational diversity learning framework a successful intervention. The framework will be useful for developing an organizational culture of diversity learning as well as organizational learning as a whole in “improving organizational actions through better knowledge and understanding” pertaining to diverse perspectives and integration of those perspectives (Chadwick and Raver, 2015, p. 957).

Table II summarizes the major differences between a diversity training program and an organizational diversity learning approach in relation to group composition, design, content, and evaluation. Our intention here is not to devalue the contribution that diversity training makes. We acknowledge that diversity training plays an essential role in educating employees about the importance of creating inclusive workplaces (Roberson *et al.*, 2001). Our aim is to convey the benefits of taking an integrative approach, which may be complementary to other diversity learning initiatives (e.g. diversity training, mentoring, and networking) in developing a more inclusive organization.

Theoretical and practical contributions

Reaching beyond the business case of managing diversity, this framework supports the relational case of managing for diversity, where different social group members are given more opportunities to learn from each other's perspectives and to find new solutions to organizational problems (Chavez and Weisinger, 2008). In the era of continuing social stratification between privileged and less privileged groups within workplaces, this framework proposes an organizational intervention that allows minority group members to speak up within a psychologically safe and non-threatening context. By borrowing key principles from diversity learning (Rainey and Kolb, 1995); integration and learning perspectives (Ely and Thomas, 2001; Thomas and Ely, 1996), and the key practices informed by deliberative democratic theories (Thompson, 2008), we provide a normative organizational framework that allows diverse employees to learn from each other's identities, perspectives, values, attitudes, and interpretations. As demographic minority members are often excluded from mainstream informal and formal networks and meaningful ties (Ibarra, 1993), we suggest that deliberative organizational intervention is beneficial for workers, regardless of group memberships, to internalize the benefits of workforce diversity (Schneider and Northcraft, 1999). In essence, this framework advances theory and practice in the area of diversity learning and the organizational development studies so as to move beyond conventional concepts of diversity training programs.

The framework extends diversity learning literature in the following ways. Different social groups are given more opportunities to: participate in learning and integration of diverse knowledge, perspectives, and ideas for making organizational decisions; learn about inclusive behaviors, attitudes, and thinking patterns by interacting with those from different statuses, divisions, and social groups in more personal ways; acquire diversity skills, such as diversity-sensitive communication, diverse teamwork abilities, and conflict resolution skills, by engaging in the minority and majority joint decision-making process; and enhance cognitive ability to comprehend and reflect on diverse perspectives, attitudes, and emotions to rethink their own perspectives.

Furthermore, this paper provides detailed instructions for practitioners to facilitate diversity learning, which is designed to strengthen organizational learning as a whole through leveraging and integrating diverse perspectives for improving organizational actions. We highlight a few key practical implications. First, the framework provides a method of organization-wide diversity learning through intersecting networks within the workplace, which is designed to reduce the elitist organizational decision making that mainly occurs at the upper echelon (Brewer and Miller, 1996). In particular, the framework offers deliberative managerial intervention to overcome employees' natural dynamics of homogeneous participation (e.g. women, racial minorities) toward heterogeneous participation. Second, unlike other stand-alone diversity initiatives (e.g. diversity training programs, mentoring programs, and diversity committees), the framework is embedded in the organizational decision-making process, which makes employees' learning applicable to core organizational activities, contributing to both employees' diversity learning and organizational growth. We propose that making organizational decisions by cutting across

Key features	Diversity training	Limitations	Key features	Organizational diversity learning	Strengths
Content (e.g. Bregman, 2012; Kalev <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Paluck, 2006)	Cross-cultural knowledge, cultural competence, cultural awareness, multicultural skills; cross-cultural communication skills, other diversity type coverage (e.g. sexual orientation awareness; gender, disability, religious tolerance) attitude test, equal employment opportunity laws, and other legislation	Minimum transfer of behavioral change; too much emphasis on attitude and knowledge toward social groups and highlighting social identities which potentially reinforce social group categorization and prejudices	Content (e.g. Avery and Thomas, 2004; Paluck and Green, 2009)	Organizational work-related topics such as pivotal business topics (e.g. strategies, product and service development); diversity topics (e.g. workforce discrimination); employment matters (e.g. work-life balance; employee health)	Inherent learning of different perspectives and attitudes amongst diverse employees from different hierarchical statuses and divisions, who engage in organizational problem solving that seeks to improve organizational processes and activities that matter to all employees
Design (e.g. Anard and Winters, 2008; Carnevale and Stone, 1994)	Training and education programs based on one-off or regular seminars, workshop interventions and/or self-paced e-learning (e.g. lectures, videos, role-plays, group discussion)	Short-lived intervention and absence of work-based participative learning	Design (e.g. Habermas, 1984; Thompson, 2008)	On-going, organization-wide participation program; purposefully integrates minority and majority group members to provide organizational solutions	On-going, work-based participatory learning that integrates minority knowledge and perspectives into organizational decision-making process
Group composition (e.g. Roberson <i>et al.</i> , 2001)	Potentially homogeneous group since conventional trainings do not promote crosscutting task assignments and hierarchical status/roles	Lack of specification to ensure that all social groups across hierarchies and roles are included to interact and learn from each other	Group composition (e.g. Avery and Thomas, 2004; Fishkin, 2011)	Heterogeneous group from crosscutting group memberships from different hierarchical status/roles	All social groups across hierarchies and roles are randomly included to interact and learn from each other; by reducing concentration of few social groups in the discussion, it reduces social categorization and inter-group discriminations within the work team

(continued)

Table II.
Major differences
between diversity
training and
organizational
diversity learning
approach

Table II.

Key features	Diversity training	Limitations	Key features	Organizational diversity learning	Strengths
Approach (e.g. Kulik and Roberson, 2008; Hanover and Cellar, 1998)	Within classroom learning and/or online learning; instruction, discussion or non-work related experiential methods	Does not provide employees with bottom-up learning, and organizations exert control over employees' attendance. It does not develop a common identity among diverse employees	Approach (e.g. Bregman, 2012; Paluck and Green, 2009)	Work-based cooperative learning through employees from various roles and hierarchies to engage in problem solving and brainstorming for organizational solutions	Inclusive, team-based decision-making process that empowers minority and majority group members to co-create new ideas and solutions. It enhances diverse employees' superordinate organizational identity in solving organizational problems together. It takes a relational approach to managing for diversity, in which different social group members are given opportunities to jointly make work decisions
Evaluation (e.g. Kulik and Roberson, 2008; Paluck and Green, 2009; Foster and Dreachslin, 2008; Rynes and Rosen, 1995; Carnevale and Stone, 1994)	Non-systematic evaluation; often limited to affective evaluation and minimum objective behavioral evaluation; self-reported behavioral change	Lack of evidence for work-related behavioral change	Evaluation (e.g. Cohen, 1996; Habermas, 1996)	Systematic evaluation based on the decision-making process; objective behavioral evaluation of whether or not there was equal participation of majority and minority participants; their group decision is taken up by top management	Work-related behavioral change is the focal evaluation (i.e. whether or not employees developed diversity-sensitive communication, diverse teamwork abilities, and conflict resolution skills)

social identity groups will promote diverse employees' superordinate identity, thereby encouraging closer relationships between diverse social groups, and produce a quality decision (cf. Brickson, 2000). Third, the framework provides a preliminary model for transferring employees' diversity learning in daily work operations, nurturing their behavioral learning to interact with different social groups more frequently at work and to be more attentive and inclusive of their colleagues' perspectives, feelings, and attitudes. The principles that are provided in the framework can also be applied to making the respective workgroup's (e.g. department or division) decision-making process inclusive of minority contributions in reaching its goals. Managerial accountability in applying the decision criteria at the departmental level can also be applied to ensure equality in departmental decision-making processes.

Holistically, individual employees who participate in this framework may become more attuned to the perspectives of others and exhibit more cooperative behaviors in their everyday work (Warren, 2006). We expect that the participants' diversity learning will contribute to creating an inclusive climate of workgroups, thereby spilling over to nurturing inclusive attitudes, behaviors, and thinking pattern. Over time, an ongoing organizational learning framework may gradually reverse employees' assumptions of incompatible or conflicting perspectives with other social groups, helping the employees to jointly produce novel ideas and better work decisions at the group and organizational levels (Schneider and Northcraft, 1999).

Directions for empirical studies

We suggest future research using a variety of quantitative and qualitative techniques to examine the effect of an organizational diversity learning framework. For example, a quasi-experimental design may be suitable for conducting a comparative study of participants' responses to the reference team without the organizational intervention (control group); the pre-participation-only teams (condition 1) and the pre-, during-, and post-participation teams (condition 2). By comparing these conditions, the effectiveness of the organizational diversity learning framework can be examined. Qualitative techniques, such as observations and interviews, would also be useful to explore the effectiveness of interventions in conjunction with pre- and post-participation surveys.

The following propositions are offered to inform future studies:

- P1. The fulfillment of a before-and after-participation phases will enhance the participants' appreciation of multiple perspectives, enlargement of their own perspectives, and acknowledgment of better decision-making outcomes than the non-fulfillment of pre-participation-phase principles in a work team decision-making process.
- P2. The fulfillment of all principles in the before-, during-, and after-participation phases will enhance the participants' appreciation of multiple perspectives, enlargement of their own perspectives, and acknowledgment of better decision-making outcomes than the non-fulfillment of the principles in an organizational decision-making process.

Conclusion

Organizations that support and encourage employees to effectively interact with dissimilar colleagues are critical for success in today's diverse workplaces for ensuring work harmony, productivity and innovations. Yet, the question of how organizations can integrate minority contributions has remained only nascent in the workforce diversity literature (Bell *et al.*, 2011; DiTomaso *et al.*, 2007; Prasad *et al.*, 2006). Workforces across nations are becoming increasingly diverse, and, simultaneously, the gap and tension between demographic representation in the upper and lower echelons is widening (Bell *et al.*, 2008; Pearce *et al.*, 2005).

By joining with other scholars who have advocated for the need to move beyond diversity training programs, we developed the organizational diversity learning framework for meaningful co-participation of employees with different statuses, functions, and identities. By inviting minority perspectives into the organizational decision-making process, top managers can explicitly send a message to minority groups that their perspectives matter and that their contributions are highly valued by the organization.

We established the organizational diversity learning framework based on the diversity learning, organizational diversity integration and learning perspectives, and deliberative democracy practices. The framework guides organizations in structural interventions to educate employees on how to learn from multiple perspectives for better organizational decision making. We hope that the organizational diversity learning framework proposed in this paper will encourage top managers, HR managers, trainers, and educators to facilitate more inclusive diversity learning, in which all workers, regardless of their status or background, can speak up on organizational matters, and their perspectives are respected and leveraged. Organizational diversity learning efforts within workplaces can represent a crucial channel for lessening intergroup discriminations and for promoting minority groups with an equal opportunity to prove what they can offer for making better organizational decisions. The diversity learning research will need to continue making trajectories to maximize employees' learning about others' perspectives in ways that are free from social categorizations, prejudices, and stereotypes.

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