

Current views on Cultural Diversity in Organizations: An interdisciplinary symposium

11 February 2015, 13:00 – 17:30, Room TZ 002 (Tias Building)

Abstracts

A dual model of diversity: Applications in South Africa

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Since the abolishment of Apartheid in 1994 in South Africa, both commercial and not-for-profit organizations have become more multicultural. The background of diversity studies will be briefly described, followed by a description of a still ongoing set of studies of diversity in various organizations. We test a dual model of diversity. There is a facilitating stream, with multiculturalism climate as antecedent, integration, as mediator and productivity as outcome. There is also an encumbering stream, with discrimination as antecedent, segregation as mediator, and ill-health as outcome. We propose that the two streams are rather independent. Empirical tests of the model are described and implications are discussed.

Introducing new academic paradigms in welfare work: The case of superdiversity

Jef Van der Aa & Jan Blommaert (Tilburg University)

In this presentation, we investigate local care providers working with immigrant and asylum youth, translating a particular institutional social-religious-linguistic policy into concrete interactional instances with their clients. On the one hand, superdiversity as a means of explaining post-multicultural social life (by means of an increased mobility and a technological explosion), became a frame of reference for some local authorities (City of Ghent, Belgium municipality council), on the other hand, many institutions still work from within older frames of reference and are therefore bound to encounter numerous obstacles in accommodating their clients. Hesitant attempts have been made to integrate heuristics of superdiversity in social work (see, e.g., Geldof, 2013, Van der Aa & Blommaert, frth.), yet the concrete operationalization of its basic premises remains to be done.

We ethnographically investigate diversity policies in an Antwerp center for special youth care with many immigrant and asylum clients. Here, we analyze four key interviews with care providers, two of which are central to the creation of 'diversity' policy in their center, two of which are mostly involved with implementation. These interviews shed a light on the attitudes towards a somewhat dated policy but also open new perspectives towards working with superdiversity. Next to this, we analyze a few interactional instances between a care provider and a young immigrant woman, in which translating institutional diversity policy simply does not work and during which both intuitively adapt to superdiverse reality. These analyses were later discussed with the care provider, offering more pathways to operationalize superdiverse heuristics in social work.

References

- Geldof, D. (2013). Superdiversiteit. Hoe migratie onze samenleving verandert. [Superdiversity, How migration changes society]. Leuven: Acco.
- Van der Aa, J. & J. Blommaert (frth.). Ethnographic monitoring and the study of complexity. In: Martin-Jones, M. & D. Martin. Researching Multilingualism. London: Routledge.

Making use of the difference: The joint effect of diversity and goals in group decision-making

Claudia Toma (Tilburg University)

Diversity has been proposed to improve information sharing and processing in group decision making. The current research revises this view by hypothesizing that diversity is beneficial when group members have cooperative goals, but is detrimental when group members have competitive goals. Three-person groups were confronted with a decision-making task. Members were either assigned different expertise domains or not and were instructed to either cooperate or compete with other members. The results of three studies confirmed that diversity decreased information sharing and enhanced confirmatory tendencies when members were in competition, while the reverse was found when members were in cooperation. Thus, diversity favors or hinders information processing in group decision making as a function of members' goals. Implications for diversity policies are discussed.

Gender cultures: Sexism at the workplace

Julia C. Becker (University of Osnabrueck)

Many women and men believe sexism is a thing of the past. Others think that while women might be still discriminated in the private contexts (e.g., by being made responsible for household work and child care), relations between women and men in the work context are totally egalitarian. In this talk, I review empirical literature showing that individuals are still affected by gender bias and that sexism is still prevalent at the workplace. In the first part of the presentation, I am going to focus on a dilemma women are often faced with: When they behave nicely, they are perceived as less competent. When they behave competently, however, they are not liked. I present consequences of this effect and explain why men do not face this dilemma. In the second part of my talk, I introduce and discuss the phenomenon of glass cliff (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). I present recent research showing how women are more likely than men to receive leadership positions during periods of crisis and economic downturn, when the chance of failure is highest.

System based perspectives on organizational culture and its implications for diversity

Regina Kempen & Karsten Müller, (University of Osnabrueck)

Organizations become increasingly diverse in regards to their workforce. Therefore, the successful management of diversity is an important strategic challenge for organizations. The talk first addresses different approaches for the management of diversity in organizations such as legitimacy, access and integration/learning. Based on this distinction, the second part of the talk especially focuses on the role of organizational culture as an important factor in the successful capitalization of diversity in organizations. In particular, a model of organizational culture is introduced that provides a conceptual framework for the systematic management and measurement of organizational culture value dimensions. This model is subsequently used to systematically describe how organizational culture can contribute as an important factor in the successful management of diversity in organizations.