Chapter 17
Theoretical Frameworks and Models Supporting the Practice of Leveraging Workforce Diversity

Aileen G. Zaballero
Pennsylvania State University, USA

Yeonsoo Kim
University of Nevada Las Vegas, USA

ABSTRACT
This chapter will include a brief description of the history of diversity; advantages of being culturally competent; paradigms/perspectives of diversity management; and a summary of the business case for diversity. In addition, theories and models of organization development and change management are further explained as a way to understand the organizational context surrounding diversity interventions.

INTRODUCTION
Generally defined, diversity is multidimensional, but the key to diversity is the “valuing and managing of differences in such a way that the results lead to inclusion” (Plummer, 2003, p. 10). The term diversity refers to the presence of a wide variety of cultures, ethnic groups, languages, physical features, socio-economic backgrounds, opinions, religious beliefs, gender identity, and neurology within one population. Diversity, in this chapter, will be defined as it is above, but within an organizational context.

When organizations became aware of the demographic changes in the workforce and customer base, organizational diversity became a key topic for success. As a result of legislation mandating Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action, leaders and managers began to examine the minority representation within their own companies’ (Plummer, 2003) organizational

Thomas (1991) shifted anti-discrimination initiatives from compliance to one that promoted diversity as a business imperative. He also argued that managing diversity went beyond race and gender and includes the primary and secondary dimensions of the individual (1991). On the organizational level, diversity management addresses issues such as business rationale, diversity strategic planning, recruiting, and retaining a diverse workforce (Plummer, 2003). According to Cox (1993), “a potential benefit of diversity will be to promote organizational effectiveness in creativity, marketing, problem-solving, and quality of decision making by being conscious of individual identities” (p. 251).

When identifying individual diversity, it is suggested one distinguishes between the primary and secondary dimensions. Loden and Rosener (1991) defined “primary dimensions of diversity as those immutable human differences that are inborn and/or that exert an important impact on our early socialization and ongoing impact throughout our lives” (p. 18) such as age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, and sexual orientation. Secondary dimensions contain elements of control and are things that can be changed such as: educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious belief and work experience. Both are extremely important because they influence people’s identity, how they define themselves in the world, and how others react to them (1991). Figure 1 shows both primary and secondary dimensions of diversity. The inner circle represents the primary dimensions and the outer circle represents the secondary dimensions.

Historical Background

Diversity can be one of the most controversial and least understood business topics because of the issues regarding quality, leadership, and ethics (Anand & Winters, 2008). Although its effectiveness has been questioned over the past 30 years,