Introduction

In this chapter, I will provide a brief overview of the original work in the diversity management literature to provide a backdrop for the framework we developed in Fink and Pastore (1999). From there, I will discuss the reasons for my initial interest in the topic and the process I utilised in the development of the framework. I will explain how I have used the framework in my own work and highlight a sample of others’ applications and extensions of the framework. I will conclude the chapter with an examination of possible directions for future research.

When I began to research it, the topic of managing diversity was relatively new to the field of sport management. Some of the earliest work utilising the term ‘managing diversity’ tackled the problem of corporate divisional relationships as firms began to diversify their industrial composition (e.g., Hall, 1987). The movement away from single industry corporations to conglomerates brought a variety of challenges for management relative to the different industries, structures, operations and policies the various enterprises brought to the firm (Farr, 1973; Nystrom, 1976). The perspective of this diversity management had little to do with employees beyond the industry or unit to which they belonged.

However, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, recognition of the rapidly changing personal characteristics of the workforce and marketplace manifested in a focus on managing employee diversity to obtain a competitive advantage for organisations (Cox, 1993; Loden and Rosener, 1991; Morrison, 1992; Thomas, 1991). Thomas defined managing diversity as ‘a comprehensive managerial process for developing an environment that works for all employees’ (p. 10). Though the topic of managing employee diversity was spurred by the changing demographics of the workplace, Thomas (1990) positioned the managerial practice as dissimilar to affirmative action policy. He argued that affirmative action was meant to be a temporary, corrective process that was artificial in nature and, therefore, unable to substantially alter the fundamental work environment to produce the opportunity for success for all employees. In contrast, those advocating for the management of diversity envisioned the process as a comprehensive overhaul of typical work environments, not merely the addition of ancillary practices/policies aimed to counteract the current work environment’s negative outcomes for certain employees (e.g., Cox, 1991; Thomas, 1990). As Thomas (1991) noted, managing diversity ‘begins with taking a look at the system and asking the questions that were not asked: Why doesn’t the system work naturally for everyone? What has to be done to allow it to do so?’ (p. 26).
Admittedly, implementing the answers to these questions would require an incredible amount of change for most organisations. To sell the idea to industry leaders, scholars argued that diversity, if managed well, substantially improves organisational performance (Robinson and Dechant, 1997). While many advocates for diversity agreed with the social justice argument that organisations should be obligated to treat all employees fairly (e.g., Cox, 1991; DeSensi, 1995; Morrison, 1992), it was recognised that establishing a business case for diversity would likely resonate more strongly with organisational leaders (Robinson and Dechant, 1997; Thomas, 1991). That is, if the organisational changes necessary to effectively manage diversity could be directly tied to positive organisational outcomes and a true competitive advantage, organisational leaders would be more likely to provide the commitment necessary for such changes to occur.

However, research regarding the benefits of a diverse workforce was somewhat ambiguous. There was clear evidence that a diverse workforce would not automatically result in positive work outcomes; in fact, many studies found that heterogeneity in workgroups often led to poorer group functioning and negative work outcomes (e.g., Milliken and Martens, 1996). Conversely, other research demonstrated that the effective management of diversity resulted in many positive organisational outcomes including: reduced discrimination lawsuits (Robinson and Dechant, 1997); increased worker satisfaction and reduced employee turnover (Morrison, 1992); a more diverse customer base (Johnson and O’Mara, 1992); and increased organisational productivity and stock returns (Morrison, 1992; Wright, Ferris, Hiller and Kroll, 1995). Thus, in my mind, it seemed imperative to understand the characteristics of organisations that most effectively managed diversity. Below I describe why I felt this was so important.

**Origin of interest**

The origin of my interest in managing diversity began long before I entered the doctoral programme at the Ohio State University. And, truthfully, my attraction to the concept was driven less by the positive organisational outcomes that could be derived, and much more from how people of colour and women in intercollegiate athletics could benefit from such practices. My venture into the development of our diversity framework was the result of a combination of lived experiences, exposure to key literature and my inner perspectives at that time.

During one of my practicum experiences prior to entering the doctoral programme, I worked in an intercollegiate athletic department. I was thrilled to be assigned to work under a very established and high-ranking female administrator who served as my supervisor. Overall, I had a fantastic experience – she gave me meaningful assignments, a great deal of independence and support when I needed it. She was incredibly good at her job. However, it became clear to me that, in many ways, she was suppressed in her work environment. The mostly (White) male administrative team failed to interact with her much, although they often interacted with one another both formally and informally. They were not overtly uncivil, but they were not at all inclusive. They would often ask each other (and some younger female workers) to join them for lunch, but never stopped in to ask my supervisor. This exclusion went beyond lunch, it was as though she mainly operated in a separate sphere – she got a great deal accomplished, but for the most part, she did it on her own. Admittedly, I do not know the history of personnel interactions within the department before I arrived; perhaps she behaved in ways to create this isolation. However, from my vantage point, it appeared that she was treated this way because she was deemed different. Those differences went beyond demographics (gender, age, marital status), as she often harboured thoughts about priorities, strategies or assessments within the department that were dissimilar to the majority of other administrators’.
This experience stayed with me as I entered my doctoral programme and was exposed to a wide variety of popular press and academic articles regarding the lack of women and people of colour employed in intercollegiate athletics, particularly in positions of leadership. I was appalled by the statistics; however, many of my friends and colleagues did not have the same sense of urgency to remedy the problem. They felt that progress was just a matter of time, as indeed, the ideal of meritocracy is firmly entrenched in the world of sport (Smith, 2000). I lacked their optimism as I was keenly aware of the disparity in power, status and access for these groups. That is, I had much less faith in the ideal of meritocracy and thought such disparities often rendered an unfair playing field that definitely impaired progress for women and people of colour. Consequently, I strongly believed in the social justice argument that sport organisations should sense an ethical obligation to provide opportunities for qualified people of colour and women. However, I was also quite cognizant of the criticisms of government-mandated or voluntary affirmative action programmes aimed towards social justice and witnessed how qualified candidates often endured unfair stigmas that their hiring and/or promotions were merely the result of a quota system.

Thus, I was very interested in the working environments of sport organisations, particularly (at the time) Division IA intercollegiate athletic programmes and, more specifically, the lack of women and people of colour in leadership positions. I read a great deal of literature that was sociologically based, described the problems and offered various explanations for why women and people of colour did not advance (e.g., Knoppers, 1987; Lapchick, 1984; Lovett and Lowrey, 1994; Stangl and Kane, 1991). However, these offered few suggestions for how to bring about change. After consulting some of my general exam committee members, I undertook an independent study project on the topics of organisational culture and change and how they related to my interest. I spent the entire summer after my first year of doctoral work reading about organisational culture and change from a variety of perspectives, but I never felt comfortable with those theoretical paradigms relative to my interests. (Several years later, Doherty and Chelladurai (1999) expertly wove the organisational culture and diversity management literature together and developed a model for the management of cultural diversity in sport organisations.) It was after that failed summer project that I took a human resource management class as an elective. In the course, I was exposed to the concept of managing diversity for the first time. I remember thinking to myself, ‘finally, something that gets at the research ideas that have been percolating in my mind’.

So, you see, I was not interested in managing employee diversity to enhance organisational outcomes as an end in and of itself – I saw it as a managerial strategy that could positively impact the work environment for women and people of colour. Furthermore, because the effective management of diversity was tied to advantageous business outcomes, I thought it offered the best probability of activating real social change and the greatest likelihood for progress for women and people of colour in intercollegiate athletics. My thought at the time was that, given the research regarding the positive organisational benefits stemming from effective diversity management, how could those in positions of power not want to transform their management tactics?

Developing the framework

Thus, I wanted to learn everything there was to know about the effective management of diversity. What strategies did this require, what did organisations that effectively managed diversity look like, and how did they function? This became the topic of my dissertation. At the time, there was very little in the sport management literature that related to the topic. However,
I was greatly influenced by DeSensi’s Dr. Earle F. Zeigler lecture (1994) as well as her 1995 publication in *Quest*. While she was focused on changes to education and curricula to spur individual appreciation for multiculturalism, and I was more interested in strategies for organisational transformation, we shared an interest in the same end goal – a desire for ‘a true multicultural understanding within sport’ (DeSensi, 1994, p. 73).

I read as much as I could relative to the topic of managing diversity, but with a particular eye towards an overall structure, or underlying characteristics, of organisations that effectively managed diversity. As I read, I noted where there seemed to be consistency among authors’ thoughts (although they often used different terminologies), as well as unique concepts that seemed important to effective diversity management. As I analysed all this information, slowly the framework began to take form. Though I had read as much as I could find on the topic, in the end, the framework mainly integrated the ideas of Cox (1991), DeSensi (1995), Golembiewski (1995), Johnson (1992) and Thomas (1991).

To briefly summarise, the framework was conceived as a diamond continuum with non-compliant organisations at the bottom, followed by compliant organisations, reactive organisations and proactive organisations (Fink and Pastore, 1999). The framework also pictured three dimensions along which organisations change as they progress from bottom to top. Organisations at the bottom of the diamond perceive employee diversity to be a liability, while those at the top perceive it to be an asset. Similarly, organisations falling on the bottom of the diamond perceive managing diversity as merely a compliance issue but those at the top envision it as an integrated management issue. Finally, non-compliant organisations exhibit rigid organisational structures and lines of communication, while those at the top display much greater flexibility in these areas.

Originally, only the diamond in its entirety was envisioned as a continuum. That is, we anticipated that the stages of the diamond would be (mostly) successive. For example, if non-compliant, an organisation would first focus on becoming compliant before engaging in reactive strategies. However, we soon realised that organisations probably would not fit nicely into one distinct category. For example, an organisation might comply with most laws, engage in a several reactive strategies, but exhibit no proactive strategies. Thus, we restructured the framework to denote three distinct dimensions (compliance, reactive, proactive) each of which had its own continuum. We envisioned it as a diamond as we suspected organisations would engage in far fewer diversity management strategies at the very top (proactive strategies) and bottom (non-compliance) points of the continuum, with the most diversity efforts falling within compliance and reactive diversity management, the middle portions of the diamond (Golembiewski, 1995; Thomas, 1991).

The defining characteristics of each of these dimensions were thoroughly described and examples of sport organisations, or sport organisations’ practices, were used to highlight each dimension. I provide a brief summary of each dimension here. Non-compliant organisations view diversity as a liability and attempt to keep their workforce as homogeneous as possible. These organisations fail to follow city, state and federal legislation, possess strict hierarchical structures and engage in unilateral (top-down) decision-making. Compliant organisations still view diversity as a liability, but they comply with legislation in order to avoid costly lawsuits. Still, they do nothing beyond this to make the work environment for diverse employees more accommodating. Organisations that reactively manage diversity view employee diversity as an asset, and they recognise that differences can bring advantages to the organisation. However, reactive organisations tend to view diversity in terms of gender and race only and often wait for a problem to arise before implementing piecemeal strategies designed to alleviate the difficulty. Proactive organisations strongly believe in the benefits of a diverse workforce and their
leaders show their commitment through financial and personnel resources. They ‘look at their policies, practices, and procedures and attempt to shape them in order to attain and utilize employee diversity from the start’ (Fink and Pastore, 1999, p. 324). Leaders in these organisations typically view diversity as a social justice issue and supply resources for continuing endeavours aimed towards an appreciation of individual differences among the workforce. These organisations view diversity more broadly (i.e., beyond race and gender) and demonstrate flexibility in organisational structure.

**Extensions and applications**

As the framework began to take shape, it was my hope that it could be utilised to assess a sport organisation’s status relative to its management of employee diversity. Towards that end, we began to operationalise the dimensions via a survey instrument. Thus, my dissertation also included the development of this instrument, which was used to obtain perceptions from Division IA intercollegiate athletic employees regarding how their organisations managed diversity, whether these perceptions differed based on demographic variables, and how the management of diversity related to positive organisational outcomes. This resulted in the Fink, Pastore and Riemer (2001) publication in the *Journal of Sport Management*. Interestingly, the original submission of that piece did not include the demographic difference variable. At the time I was working on the revisions to the original manuscript, Harold Riemer was my colleague at the University of Texas. We were discussing the paper and he suggested that, rather than merely looking at how demographics impact perceptions of diversity management, we should also assess how relational demography (i.e., the level of dissimilarity between an employee and supervisor) impacts these perceptions. It was a substantial addition to the study.

We found that compliance was the most used diversity management strategy in intercollegiate athletics at the time, followed by proactive strategies. Reactive strategies obtained the lowest mean score (Fink *et al.*, 2001). While we were pleasantly surprised that sport organisations engaged in some proactive strategies, we were concerned that the focus on issues of gender and race was primarily reactive. As we stated, ‘while a broad definition of diversity is certainly the terminal goal of effective diversity management, women and minorities have been disadvantaged throughout history’ (p. 41), and we warned against failing to create progress for some (i.e., women and people of colour) by utilising limited resources on too broad a range of diverse characteristics.

We also found that people of colour and lesbian, gay and bisexual employees perceived that their organisations engaged in less reactive diversity management relative to other employees, and people of colour perceived that less proactive strategies were employed. Thus, it appeared that employees different from the status quo perceived organisational efforts to managing diversity as less effective than majority members. However, relational demography predicted a greater amount of variance in diversity management perceptions than demographic variables alone; further, we found that the more similar the athletic director (AD) was to the employee in terms of race and gender, the greater the perceptions of effective diversity management. As we stated, ‘This is a disturbing finding and one which intimates that current efforts to manage diversity have done little to nudge people toward greater understanding and appreciation of differences’ (Fink *et al.*, 2001, p. 42).

Proactive diversity management strategies were the most predictive of the majority of positive work outcomes, while compliance strategies predicted some positive outcomes as well. However, reactive diversity management strategies did not contribute a significant amount of variance to any of the measured outcomes. Though we did not discuss this (non) finding in
the manuscript, we speculated that this could be a combination of two factors: (a) reactive diversity strategies may be seen by majority members as similar to affirmative action programmes, thus leading to negative perceptions; and (b) too few of these strategies were utilised to make a significant impact.

Because there are substantial differences between Division I and Division III intercollegiate athletic environments, we decided to replicate aspects of the initial study with Division III employees (Fink, Pastore and Riemer, 2003). The findings were similar to Fink et al. (2001) in that employees perceived compliance strategies to be the most utilised, followed by proactive strategies, while reactive strategies were the least utilised (with a mean score below the midpoint of the scale). Further, proactive diversity management strategies predicted the greatest amount of variance in all of the organisational outcome measures. Compliance strategies also contributed significantly to several outcome measures; however, as in Fink et al. (2001), reactive strategies did not contribute to positive organisational outcomes, which led us to question the value of reactive diversity management strategies. As we noted, ‘majority group members may perceive these types of strategies as non-inclusive and advantageous only for minority members. On the other hand, minority groups may see them as “quick fixes” or “window dressings” to long-term problems’ (Fink et al., 2003, p. 162).

Soon after the publication of that manuscript, I became aware of a wave of research utilising a more critical lens relative to managing diversity. It questioned the diversity management discourse and its utility relative to improving workplace conditions for those groups that have been historically discriminated against (Prasad, Pringle and Konrad, 2006). Such researchers argued that diversity had been appropriated by those in positions of power in order to resist true change and maintain the status quo. As Embrick (2011) noted:

Specifically, corporations have systematically and strategically co-opted the notions of diversity that were established by the civil rights movement and helped to perpetuate a diversity ideology that has enabled them to advocate racial and gender equality, yet maintain highly inequitable work environments and an even more inequitable chain of command [. . .] By increasing the number of categories of people that fall under the umbrella of diversity, companies are able to effectively escape close examination of racial and gender inequalities that might occur in their workplaces. As long as no one brings it up, it can be ignored.

(pp. 544–7)

Given my initial reason for the study of diversity management, I found this contention interesting. Our ideal of proactive diversity management certainly embodied the notion that managing diversity was an issue of social justice and that an organisation exemplifying such strategies would inherently help employees who have been historically discriminated against. However, while proactive diversity management was predictive of positive organisational outcomes, demographic and relational differences (race, gender, sexual orientation) led to differences in perceptions of the extent to which diversity was being managed. If proactive diversity management worked as we envisioned, all employees would have relatively similar assessments of the strategies utilised. Still, it must be kept in mind that while athletic departments did engage in some proactive strategies, the mean scores in both studies indicated they could be doing much more in terms of proactive diversity management. Thus, perhaps the proactive diversity management practised by these organisations was not robust enough to work entirely as we envisioned.
Interestingly, Cunningham (2009, 2011) provided evidence that it is important to foster both demographic diversity and proactive diversity management. In a study of Division 1A athletic departments, he discovered that race diversity positively impacted organisational performance directly; however, when high racial diversity was coupled with an environment high in proactive diversity management, performance was improved even further (Cunningham, 2009). In another study that included all Division 1 athletic departments, he found that sexual orientation diversity was not directly related to organisational performance, but once again found an interaction effect with proactive diversity management (Cunningham, 2011). As Cunningham (2011, p. 458) stated:

when the department did not follow a proactive diversity strategy, sexual orientation diversity did not influence NACDA points earned [an indicator of organisational performance]. However, when the department did follow a proactive diversity strategy, there was a strong, positive association between sexual orientation diversity and NACDA points earned. In fact, departments with high sexual orientation diversity and a high proactive diversity strategy accrued nearly 7 times the NACDA points than did departments that had low sexual orientation diversity and a high proactive diversity strategy.

While employees’ perceptions of the work experience were not directly examined in these studies, it seems unlikely that such positive organisational outcomes would occur if the work environments were highly inequitable. Further, it is obvious that organisations’ management of diversity must be twofold: there must be efforts made to recruit and retain demographically diverse employees while also engaging in proactive diversity management.

**Further applications**

We have been pleased to see our framework referenced throughout the years in studies of various diversity issues in sport. It is incredibly rewarding to realise that future generations of sport management scholars are committed to improving the work experiences for diverse employees, and it is my hope that the continued scholarly scrutiny will result in more equitable sport environments. I am particularly honoured that it was utilised to produce measures for the Diversity in Athletics Award established in 2005 and offered for several years by the Laboratory for Diversity in Sport at Texas A&M University. The award was developed to recognise athletic departments with exemplary diversity practices across eight categories: diversity strategy (measured based on our framework); sex diversity; race diversity; attitudes and values diversity; graduation rate of African American male athletes; graduation rate of African American female athletes; Title IX compliance; and overall diversity excellence. In 2006, the Laboratory for Diversity in Sport partnered with NCAA’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion to expand the award to all three intercollegiate athletic divisions. It was a highly imaginative and effective way to bring attention to diversity management practices in intercollegiate athletic departments. Each year the award was announced in a variety of media outlets and winning schools widely publicised the results. It served to publicly illustrate that diverse and equitable work environments are possible within intercollegiate athletics. The establishment of the award is a great exemplar of bridging scholarship and practice. Indeed, as Dan Dutcher, NCAA vice president for Division III remarked:
This award is significant because it demonstrates that diversity is more than a theoretical concept. These institutions have demonstrated that diversity can be achieved on a very practical and personal level, further enhancing the educational experience of our student-athletes. These institutions can serve as a model and guide for the rest of our membership.

(NCAA News Release, 2009, para. 5)

Directions for future research

My initial interest in studying the management of diversity stemmed in large part from the lack of women and people of colour in leadership positions in sport. The 2012 Racial and Gender Report Card confirms that this remains a problem. Only 18.6 per cent of all head coaches were African American, the lowest percentage since 1995–6, and women held only 36.8 per cent of head coaching jobs in Division 1. Only fifteen people of colour and only four women held athletic director positions in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS, N = 127). Further, all FBS conference commissioners were White men (Lapchick, 2012). Given this lack of progress, it seems imperative to conduct in-depth examinations of the recruitment, development and retention practices of university athletic departments (and other sport organisations) relative to women and people of colour, a call previously identified by Cunningham (2009, 2011). Indeed, athletic administrators may claim to value diversity and purport to have diversity practices in place, but it is important to critically examine such claims, particularly in light of evidence that demographic differences impact perceptions of how diversity is managed (Fink et al., 2001). Prasad et al. (2006) warned that diversity researchers have failed to provide adequate attention to employees’ experiences related to diversity and have relied too heavily on top management’s views. Relatedly, Embrick (2011) studied upper-level managers in Fortune 1000 companies. Seventy-five percent of the participants revealed that their company had a formal diversity policy, yet 70 per cent could not explain or elaborate on the policy when queried. Further, when asked about their personal definitions of diversity, less than a quarter of them mentioned race or gender in their definitions. Thus, it appears that in order to truly understand an organisation’s diversity practices and their impact, we must seek out all employees’ assessments of their environments and engage in more critical analyses of purported diversity management practices.

Issues of diversity are complex and messy – they are impacted by the historical and socio-political contexts of organisations, as well as the interplay among multiple identities and inequities in organisations. As such, I encourage more multi-level (e.g., Cunningham, 2010; Melton and Cunningham, 2014) examinations of diversity issues in order to more fully tease out the complexity of mechanisms related to these topics. Similarly, multiple dimensions of diversity undoubtedly interact to form even more nuanced forms of oppression (e.g., gendered racism; gendered, racist homophobia) and thus, more research needs to account for such intersectionality (e.g., Borland and Bruening, 2010; Melton and Cunningham, 2014; Walker and Sartore-Baldwin, 2013). Given this complexity, we must incorporate a variety of research methods and investigative paradigms to produce a robust collective flow of research aimed to positively transform the working environment of sport organisations (Cunningham and Fink, 2006).

Note

1 This chapter is a reflection on Fink and Pastore (1999) and the work related to it.
Managing diversity

References


Applying the theory of managing diversity

George B. Cunningham

I first became aware of Fink and Pastore’s (1999) model during graduate school. My dissertation work focused on ways managers could reduce the biases, such as stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination, that sometimes accompany people working in diverse groups, so Fink and Pastore’s model was attractive to me. I also had the good fortune of studying at the Ohio State University, and both of the authors served on my committee. Thus, my understanding of their work was enhanced through personal interactions and debates with them. The theoretical grounding of the work, coupled with the real-world applications, were appealing to me, and given the work’s continued citation rate, I suspect others concur. In fact, even now, fifteen years after its publication, I still re-read the original publication, drawing new insights. While I ultimately focused my dissertation efforts on the group level of analysis and social psychological approaches to reducing bias (see Cunningham, 2004, 2006; Cunningham and Chelladurai, 2004), I continued to draw from Fink and Pastore’s writing in other work and in my research since that time.

My application of Fink and Pastore’s framework largely began with service projects I undertook at my current institution as part of our research laboratory, the Laboratory for Diversity. For several years, we awarded the Diversity in Athletics Award, which recognised National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athletic departments for their diversity and inclusion efforts. We collected archival and survey data to determine the recipients. One category included diversity strategy, and in drawing from Fink and Pastore’s model, we developed vignettes representing departments that followed a compliance, reactive or proactive strategy. Survey respondents then rated how characteristic each vignette was of their athletic department. We found the framework useful in differentiating between those departments following inclusive strategies from those that did not.

In addition to facilitating the award decisions, the data collected during that process allowed us to examine how diversity strategies affected organisational outcomes. Specifically, we drew from Fink and Pastore’s writings, as well as those of Doherty and Chelladurai (1999), to underscore the importance of having an inclusive culture when the sport organisation had a diverse workforce. We theorised that employee diversity interacted with an inclusive work culture to predict subsequent outcomes. Our results largely supported this premise. Sport organisations that couple employee diversity with an inclusive culture outpace their counterparts across various outcomes, including creativity, human resource outcomes and objective measures of performance (Cunningham, 2008, 2009, 2011a, 2011b; Singer and Cunningham, 2012). Inclusive organisations
also signal a commitment to diversity that is attractive to prospective customers and employees (Cunningham and Melton, 2014; Melton and Cunningham, 2012).

Finally, I have used Fink and Pastore’s framework in my teaching. I discuss their work in my textbook (Cunningham, in press) and students are frequently drawn to it when seeking to understand how organisations develop strategies to create inclusive workplaces.

Moving forward, I suspect researchers will continue to draw from the principles undergirding Fink and Pastore’s framework to understand the influence of strategy in the work environment. I am particularly interested in understanding how inclusive workplaces impact people who have traditionally been in the minority, such as women, religious minorities, sexual minorities, racial minorities and so on. How does inclusiveness allow them to express unique identities important to them while still feeling the sense of connectedness to the workplace? Further, how do inclusive sport organisations differentiate themselves from their competitors to attract and retain talented athletes, coaches and administrators? Diving further into the why components of their framework will further strengthen the understanding of diverse and inclusive workplace cultures.

**Note**

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