

Racial Diversity in the Workplace

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Abstract

❖ The U.S. Census Bureau has predicted the number of racial minorities to increase 19% by 2050 which makes workplace diversity a central challenge for businesses in the 21st century (Hostager & Meuse, 2008). Diversity in the workplace has been shown to increase creativity, innovation, and performance (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). However, these benefits are only enjoyed when employees are competent in dealing with diverse others (Holladay, 2008). While diversity awareness is generally perceived to be beneficial, recent studies have shown that an information overload can cause employees to be apathetic toward diversity (Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly, 2006). However, little is known about how diversity-related messages are received based on the perceived communication variables of the recipient. This study will examine diversity-related messages to determine possible links between these messages and the communication variables of apprehension and competence. Participants from a variety of organizations responded to a survey asking about type and frequency of diversity messages received and completed the communication apprehension survey (Ayres, Booth-Butterfield, McCroskey, & Spielberger, 1986) and the intercultural communication competence scale (Amundson, Anderson, Finley, George, Michalski, Sweeney, 2011). Results showed that organizations should consider communicator variables when designing diversity-related messages.

Theoretical Perspective

❖ Uncertainty reduction theory (URT) (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) posits that people work to reduce uncertainty through gaining information about others. In addition, different types of information and the way it is revealed influence the level of uncertainty individuals feel toward particular situations (Kramer, 1999). URT guides the present study in its quest to determine possible associations between information and apprehension related to communicating with racially diverse people in the workplace.

Variables Under Study

- ❖ Communication Apprehension (CA, Ayres, Booth-Butterfield, McCroskey, & Spielberger, 1986) ($\alpha = .87$, $M = 25.90$, $SD = 6.39$)
- ❖ Diversity information received in the workplace defined by:
 - a. Type
 - b. Receipt
 - c. Channel
- ❖ Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC, Amundson, Anderson, Finley, George, Michalski, Sweeney, 2011). ($\alpha = .86$, $M = 12.33$, $SD = 3.57$)

Method

Convenience and snowball sampling among employees through a Qualtrics online survey

Non-random sampling through network sampling via e-mail and the use of Facebook

Reminders about the survey were distributed via Facebook and e-mail

Research Questions

- ❖ Is Intercultural Communication Competence associated with:
 - a. Type of diversity information received in the workplace?
 - b. Receipt of diversity information in the workplace?
 - c. Channel in which diversity information is received in the workplace?
- ❖ Is Intercultural Communication Competence associated with Communication Apprehension in the workplace?

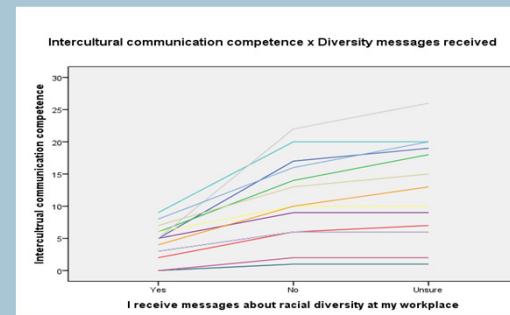
Results

RQ1a

❖ Analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed no statistical significance among types of diversity information received in the workplace in regards to ICC.

RQ1b

❖ Independent samples t-test showed no statistical significant difference exists between those who receive racial diversity information in the workplace and those who do not in regards to ICC.



RQ1c

❖ Paired Samples T-Test showed those who receive racial diversity messages by *e-mail* ($t = 9.07$, $df = 45$, $p < .001$, $M = 1.65$, $SD = .49$) differ significantly in regards to ICC than those who receive diversity information by *training* ($t = 10.91$, $df = 42$, $P < .001$, $M = 1.73$, $SD = .44$).

RQ2

❖ A Pearson correlation showed ICC and CA are significantly correlated ($r = .40$, $p < .001$).

Implications

- ❖ Receipt of diversity information in the workplace may not increase employees' competence in speaking with or about racially diverse others.
- ❖ Diversity training may have less of an impact on ICC than receipt of diversity information via e-mail
- ❖ Before diversity training is implemented in the workplace, employers need to investigate the value of diversity training as opposed to informing employees through a medium such as email.
- ❖ Finding an association between a new ICC measure and an existing communication measure (CA) demonstrates the utility of further study of the construct of ICC.