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David R. Dunaetz
Claremont Graduate University

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Understanding the Effects of Diversity in Missionary Teams: Insights from the Social Sciences

David R. Dunaetz
Azusa Pacific University

Abstract

This study presents an overview of the results of empirical studies concerning diversity in work teams. Although these studies have most often been carried out in secular contexts, they support perspectives of human nature that are consistent with the biblical themes found associated with the Tower of Babel (the Similarity/Attraction Perspective) and Paul's metaphor of the Body of Christ and spiritual gifts (the Information/Decision Making Perspective). Key concepts are explained, including the measurement of diversity and team performance, task and relationship diversity, faultlines, cultural versus non-cultural diversity, and status. When the results of the various diversity studies are combined, it appears that diversity in itself has little effect on team performance. However, under certain conditions, diversity can be very detrimental or very beneficial to team performance. These various conditions are examined in light of situations that missionary teams are likely to encounter.

Understanding the effects of diversity in teams is important because missionaries, by nature of their task, form partnerships and teams with people of different cultures and races. In addition, it appears inevitable that missionary teams (teams composed only of missionaries from sending countries) will also become more diverse. As the demographics of sending countries evolve, a healthy mission that maintains its ranks (or even grows) will most likely be composed of a more racially diverse missionary force. Increased globalization and the mixing of cultures is occurring throughout the world. Christian colleges, seminaries, and mission organizations need to be aware of what the likely effects of this will be in order to plan proactively and provide the appropriate training for the missionary workforce.

Yet diversity is much more than the mixing of cultures. Diversity may also include differences in gender, educational level, age, function within the organization, personality, knowledge, and

experience. Any characteristic or attribute of individuals that can lead to the perception that one person is different from another is a source of diversity (van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007). If mission team members identify each other as either Anglo or Latino, diversity issues will arise. If missionary team members think of each other as either Bible school trained or university trained, diversity plays a role in the group dynamics, even if all the team members are of the same ethnicity and gender.

Diversity has always been a factor in Christ's Church. The Early Church was immediately confronted with an ethnically and culturally diverse membership (Acts 2:5-11; 6:1-7; 15:1-29) that varied in gender, social standing, function, and gifting (1 Cor 1:26-27; 12:12-30; Gal 3:28). The nature of cross-cultural missionary work, whether it be church planting, relief work, or any other task that requires cooperation, leads to the mixing of individuals with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives. For centuries,

missionaries and scholars have been recording experiences with diverse cultures, explaining the difficulties that have been encountered, and proposing solutions to these problems (Carey 1892/2004; Gregory of Tours 591/1974; Taylor 1894/1974). With the advent of modern social science (especially psychology, sociology, anthropology, and the administrative sciences), new sources of information that may be useful to missionaries have become available. The purpose of this review is to summarize what the social sciences have discovered concerning diversity in work groups and to emphasize that which is relevant and potentially beneficial to missionary teams.

The basic problem with diversity of all types is that it very often leads to conflict (Jehn, Northcraft, and Neale 1999) and that conflict, in general, leads to decreased work group performance (de Dreu and Weingart 2003). When a group is composed of diverse members, communication is more difficult because differences between members make misunderstanding and misinterpretation more likely. Cooperation is more difficult because the values of the team members are likely to diverge, and the sources of this divergence might not be comprehensible to the various team members. Unfortunately, Christians do not always want to recognize the difficulties involved with diversity (Dunaetz 2008). As Christians are called to be unified (Phil 2:1-2), a lack of unity indicates some sort of problem. Unfortunately, it often is easier to deny that a problem exists than to find a solution for it. Such a denial in no way lessens our responsibility to resolve the difficulties that diversity brings about.

However, diversity is not always negative; it may lead to increased team performance depending on the context (Joshi and Roh 2009). Diversity can bring to a team a greater range of resources and perspectives. If all missionaries were exactly alike, we'd have difficulty coming up with new strategies and solutions to the problems every generation encounters. In addition, openness to diversity creates a larger pool from which mission organizations may recruit new missionaries and evolve with the churches of sending countries. We will examine here the conditions and the contexts that have

been discovered which either increase or decrease team performance.

The general approach we will take is to summarize various empirical (data driven) studies and apply them to missionary contexts. Although most of these studies have been done in a secular context, there is little reason to believe that the problems that non-Christians encounter with diversity are different than those which Christians encounter (1 Cor 3:3). Similarly, the benefits that may come to non-Christians from diversity should also be available to Christians as well (Eph 1:3). Empirical studies are driven by statistical analyses of information provided by the observations of many different individuals and teams. By statistically combining the results of many studies such as Joshi and Roh (2009), we gain the advantage of potentially counterbalancing any biases that might exist in individual studies. It is important to note that statistics only indicate general trends that occur under specific conditions. We cannot use this statistical information to determine with certainty what will happen in any specific context. We can only use statistics to predict what the most likely outcome is, given what we have observed in other similar contexts. So even in teams where success does not seem likely, where diversity is threatening all productive cooperation, by the grace of God, the odds may be overcome and these teams may still accomplish the task to which God has called them (2 Cor 5:7-10; Phil 4:13).

Basic Social Science Concepts

The social sciences have produced a number of concepts that are useful in missionary contexts. In this section, we will define and examine these concepts before going on to explain when and under what conditions diversity may have positive effects.

Diversity

The popular notion of diversity held by many North Americans is often the proportion of blacks, Latinos, and perhaps Asians that are in a group. However, diversity can be much broader than a simple schema of racial categorization from a Caucasian point of view. Van

Knippenberg and Schippers, organizational scholars from the Netherlands, define diversity as “differences between individuals on any attribute that can lead to the perception that another person is different from self” (2007, 517). Diversity can be measured along various *dimensions*. These dimensions can be defined by categories (e.g., race, gender, nationality, or subject studied in college), by different positions on a continuous attitudinal scale (e.g., priority accorded to evangelism vs. social work), or different levels of status or power (e.g., level of education, age, organizational position). It is thus important to identify the dimensions of diversity that are of concern (Harrison and Klein 2007). Once a dimension has been chosen, diversity can be measured in a number of ways. One common measure is an index of heterogeneity (Blau 1977) which is calculated from the proportions of each group identified along the chosen dimension; it represents the probability that any two group members selected at random will be members of different groups. In general, the smaller the largest subgroup is and the more subgroups that are present in a group, the higher will be its diversity.

Team Performance

To measure the effects of diversity on teams, team performance must somehow be measured. Team performance measures to what extent a team accomplishes its mission. If increasing diversity benefits a team, its performance will go up. If diversity is detrimental to a team, its performance will go down. In experimental situations, teams can be told what their mission is (e.g., find the best solution to a problem, earn the most money possible) and their performance can be measured subjectively (by a group of experts, for example) or objectively (as in the case of a multiple choice test that a team works on). In field studies where real teams are observed, the team performance is typically measured by subjective observers (such as team members themselves or their supervisors) or by objective data (such as sales volume or number of parts manufactured).

In a missions context, team performance can be especially hard to measure because the team's mission may not be especially clear, because

there are few clear measures of success, or because any indication of less than optimal results may be detrimental to support raising or contrary to a missionary's theology.

Nevertheless, team performance can be measured according to the context. Examples would include the time it takes to plant a church, the number of street children that were housed during a certain period, or the number of students in a school. Although most missions do not have the resources necessary to measure and standardize team performance data, we assume that, all other things being equal, the same factors that affect team performance in situations that have been studied will also affect team performance in mission contexts.

Task Diversity and Relationship Diversity

Two primary types of diversity have been the subject of team performance studies (Joshi and Roh 2009). Task diversity involves those dimensions that are assumed to be relevant to the team's task or mission. These dimensions include educational background (MBA, M.Div., etc.), role within a team or an organization (pastor, worship leader, youth worker, accountant, etc.), and tenure (years with the team's organization). These dimensions represent differences in skills and knowledge. The more task diversity that is found in a team, the more resources the team has to accomplish its mission.

Relationship diversity involves dimensions that are not directly relevant to the team's mission, such as gender, race, and age. These dimensions all have in common that they are easily observable by others, that all team members possess them, and that they are unchangeable. They form the basis of social categorization processes. They influence relationships between individuals because cultural norms often dictate how members of these categories should interact with each other. For example, a culture may say that women can say some things to other women that they cannot say to men or that people of one race can say things to each other that they should not say to people outside their race.

Theoretical Frameworks

Human behavior is so complicated that social scientists have little hope of completely understanding it. However, models of behavior are useful to explain what people do “on the average.” By looking at trends among large numbers of individuals and situations, generalizations can be made about human behavior. Some of these generalizations, models, or frameworks are better than others. Those which most accurately describe how large numbers of people behave in the given context are superior to those that describe human behavior less accurately. Currently there are two competing theoretical frameworks concerning diversity that have been found to accurately describe human behavior (van Knippenberg et al. 2004; van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007). Both appear to be true under certain conditions.

The *Information/Decision Making Perspective* posits that diverse groups have more access to task relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities. Diversity is thus beneficial to teams. When teams are faced with a new problem, the greater resources of a group will promote the likelihood of the creation of an innovative and effective solution. For this to occur, the team members must be willing to share their perspectives, expend the effort necessary to understand the perspectives of others, and be able to work toward integrating these perspectives to come up with an optimal solution. If the perspectives of all the team members are not considered, premature decision-making will occur and the best solution may not be found. This can occur because of authoritarian leadership (Adorno 1950; Lipman-Blumen and Funder 2005), beliefs in a false consensus (Ross, Greene, and House 1977), or groupthink (Janis 1982). To prevent these premature decisions, the constructive expression of conflicting ideas must be allowed and even encouraged (Turner and Pratkanis 1997).

This perspective corresponds to Paul's theology of spiritual gifts (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:1-31). Individual Christians are different and complementary. Proper functioning of the Body of Christ requires the input of all members and no one is considered superior to another. Diversity, according to this theoretical framework, is thus necessary for the proper functioning of a team.

The other principle theoretical framework is the *Similarity/Attraction Perspective* (Rajfel and

Turner 1986; Tsui, Egan, and O'Reilly 1992). People have a tendency to prefer being with people who are similar to themselves. Ingroup members are considered more attractive than outgroup members. Interpersonal similarity leads to interpersonal attraction (Berscheid and Reis 1998). So the greater similarity people have to each other in a team, the more effectively the team will function. People will be more committed to and enjoy working in teams of people that are similar to them. Because similar team members can readily understand each other, communication is easier and finding solutions requires less effort. Diversity, according to this theoretical framework, is thus detrimental to team performance.

This perspective corresponds to the view presented in the story of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9). Differences among individuals make communication strained and coordination of efforts more difficult, if not impossible. The proper response to these differences is humility before God and the recognition of our human limitations.

Under certain conditions the *Information/Decision Making Perspective* (i.e., diversity leads to better team performance) is the best model. Under other conditions, the *Similarity/Attraction Perspective* (i.e., diversity leads to worse team performance) is the best model. The focus of much research has been upon determining what these conditions are. In general, the *Information/Decision Making Perspective* describes the effects of task diversity and the *Similarity/Attraction Perspective* describes the effects of relationship diversity (Joshi and Roh 2009). However, these effects are relatively small. We will examine the conditions that amplify these effects in more depth later once we have finished defining the basic concepts.

Faultlines

In most groups, some dimensions of diversity are only slightly correlated. For example, within a mission organization, a person's gender may only be slightly (or not at all) correlated to his or her ethnic origin. In other groups, some dimensions of diversity may be highly correlated. One's level of education may be strongly related to ethnic

origin. Or a group may consist mainly of older men and younger women. This type of group is characterized by *faultlines* (Lau and Murnighan 1998), which can be defined as “combinations of correlated dimensions of diversity that yield a clear basis for distinction” (van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007, 523). When faultlines exist, teams easily divide into subgroups because there are many dimensions that clearly separate the subgroups, not just one. When subgroups are present, team members are likely to be affected by similarity/attraction processes that favor their own ingroup and team performance is likely to decrease. Diversity that is not characterized by faultlines is far less disruptive than diversity that has strong faultlines.

Cultural vs. Non-Cultural Diversity

Culture is an especially important concept in diversity research. Although a very wide range of definitions exist, culture is usually associated with beliefs/assumptions/values that are shared within a group. A definition of culture which is broad enough to cover groups as large as nations and as small as work teams is provided by Schein: “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (2004, 17). Viewing culture this way underlines the special nature of the dimension of cultural diversity. Whereas few people would think that it is right or wrong to be male or female, to be white or black, to be a business or a Bible major, we all have a tendency to believe that our cultural approaches to problem solving are the right way to deal with the issues and that those approaches that go against what our culture values are wrong ways.

This makes cultural diversity the most difficult dimension of diversity to deal with. As missionaries, we are expected to adapt to our host culture, at least on a superficial level, but our task has as a goal changing people's beliefs (John 3:16) and hence their culture at some level. Within missionary teams it is unlikely that we can abandon our home cultures (which may be

very diverse) and adopt our host culture's approach to problem solving. We may also have difficulty in recognizing the cultural differences that exist among team members. It's easy for missionaries to think that they are only dealing with two cultures: their home culture and their host culture, both of which they may highly respect. However, many missionaries may not pay attention to or be aware of the cultural differences that exist among themselves. It can become very complicated when one missionary's perception of the host culture differs from another missionary's perception of the host culture because the two missionaries themselves are from different cultures. Difficult situations like that easily disintegrate into “I'm right and you're wrong” conflicts that are not dealt with constructively.

Status

Another concept that is related to both diversity and culture is *status*, which may be defined as culturally held beliefs concerning performance expectations for an individual, either on a specific task or on all tasks in general (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1972; Berger, Fisek, Norman, and Zelditch 1977; Dunaetz 2009). These culturally held beliefs define who receives status regardless of whether the beliefs conform to reality or not. In North American culture, higher status, whether it is merited or not, is often ascribed to white educated males because it is generally believed that whites, males, and the educated are more task competent in most situations (Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch 1980). In other cultures, status will be given according to the dictates of that culture.

If a person demonstrates within a group his or her competence in a task, his or her status will go up. People accorded status within a group are given more resources and opportunities to lead the group toward the accomplishment of its mission. If the high status person successfully leads the group, his or her status will be maintained and will continue to be able to influence the group. Similarly, if low status members contribute significantly to the achievement of the group's goals (beyond what is expected of them and in spite of the leadership opportunities given them), their status will also

go up. But if a high status person consistently performs below expectations, his or her status will go down. Numerous experiments and observational studies have confirmed these phenomena (Ridgeway 2001).

Status is an important concept for understanding the effect of diversity because diversity may not affect all people along a diversity dimension equally. If higher status is associated with members at one end of a dimension and lower status with members at the other end, diversity may impact members of the group differently.

When Will Diversity Most Likely Have Positive Effects on Team Performance?

We'll now address in more detail the conditions under which diversity is most likely to have positive effects on team performance. This is an important question because, as missionaries, our job is to accomplish the mission we have been given (Matt 28:19-20). We want to seek to accomplish this task using the most effective ways possible, and in the ways that bring the most glory to God. Understanding the effects of diversity allows us to anticipate its effects and make the necessary changes to be the most effective in ministry.

Task Diversity vs. Relationship Diversity

As mentioned previously, task diversity generally helps teams accomplish their task while relationship diversity slows the team down. In a meta-analysis combining thirty-nine empirical studies involving over 8000 teams, Joshi and Roh (2009) found that among the dimensions of relationship diversity, age diversity had the least negative affect while gender and race/ethnicity diversity had stronger negative effects. As for the effects of task dimensions, they found that functional and seniority diversity had positive effects, while educational diversity (different levels or types of education) had negative effects. However, all of these effects were small (accounting for less than 1% of the variation in team performance) by themselves, except for the benefits that came from functional diversity (which accounted for nearly 2% of the variation in team performance). Having team members that

have different roles and responsibilities (functional diversity) had a very significant positive effect on teams.

However, these effects, in themselves, are small compared to the influence that other factors have on team performance. A meta-analysis of ninety-three studies involving more than 3000 teams (Stewart 2006) has demonstrated that the average level of cognitive ability and the personality traits of the team members have a far greater influence on team performance than diversity. The average level of cognitive ability (measured typically by IQ related tests, SAT scores, or GRE scores), accounts for 16% of the variation in team performance. Groups with brighter people perform better, on the average, than less bright groups. Two personality traits that are especially valuable are what is known as *conscientiousness* (a measure that predicts how responsible, consistent, and reliable a team member will be) and *agreeableness* (a measure that predicts sensitive team members are to the concerns of other team members). Average levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness account for over 6% of the variation in team performance. This means that in terms of team effectiveness, the influence of personality and cognitive ability of the team members is far more influential than either task or relationship diversity. Bright, conscientious, agreeable people contribute to team performance regardless of the task and relational diversity of the team.

It should also be noted that task and relationship diversity interact with each other. Task diversity is, in general, beneficial, but this relationship is especially true when relationship diversity is low (van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007). When relationship diversity is high, there is little or no benefit from task diversity. But when relationship diversity is low, the benefits from task diversity multiply. Apparently the more people are similar along the relationship diversity dimensions, the greater the trust and the ability to communicate effectively, enabling the group to better deal with difficult situations. This implies that, as mission teams become more diverse in general, mission organizations will need to provide more training in communication and conflict resolution in order to adjust to the new team dynamics they will encounter.

Faultlines

When diversity occurs along several dimensions that are strongly correlated (strong faultlines), the effects on team performance can be especially negative (van Knippenberg et al. 2004). For example, a team that consists of only middle aged adults and older teens would not have a faultline if both the adults and the teens were evenly split between males and females. A team that consists uniquely of middle-aged males and teen females would have a strong faultline and would likely function much less effectively. Faultlines accentuate a sense of identity with subgroups and thus similarity/attraction principles come into play, lowering the group's ability to communicate and to achieve their goals. This is an especially important issue in missions because culture is strongly associated with many dimensions of diversity, increasing the likelihood of faultlines. To avoid these problems, organizations may try to recruit members from different cultural backgrounds while seeking to make sure that average educational background, gender mix, age, and ministry experience for each cultural group is approximately the same.

Beliefs about Diversity

A *diversity mind-set*, the belief that diversity is good, has been shown to increase the team performance, at least for task diversity and gender diversity (van Knippenberg et al. 2004). The effects of a diversity mind-set are less clear for other forms of relationship diversity. Nevertheless, the more people believe that some forms of diversity are good, the more likely they are to make the necessary changes in their relationships with others. This may be because people with a diversity mind-set tend to be more open-minded. The benefits of open-mindedness will be discussed a little later.

Status of Team Members

Team satisfaction, the degree to which one is satisfied with the team, and team commitment, the degree to which one is committed to a team, are both associated with better team performance. When the average level of team satisfaction or team commitment rises, team performance improves when all other factors are held constant.

This is because committed and satisfied team members are more motivated to give themselves to the team and sacrifice their own personal goals for the good of the team. The effects of diversity on team commitment and satisfaction depend on the status of the team members. If a team is composed of high status members, the introduction of low status members (i.e., greater diversity) leads to lower team satisfaction and commitment; if a team consists of low status members, the introduction of high status members (i.e., greater diversity) leads to greater team satisfaction and commitment (Chatman and O'Reilly 2004; Tsui et al. 1992); van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007). The effects of diversity are thus not symmetrical. Low status groups stand to benefit more from diversity than high status groups.

This phenomenon is partially explained by one's sense of social identity which is determined by one's perception of the groups to which one belongs (Hogg and Terry 2000). People tend to be more committed to and satisfied with groups that enhance their social identity, that is, groups that are more attractive or have higher status members. So mission leaders need to be aware of the difficulties that teams consisting of higher status members (for example, white males in North America) might have in integrating members of lower status and the loss that they may feel. A way to make their integration more successful is not to emphasize that the team is becoming more diverse, but to emphasize the skills and the abilities that the new individuals are bringing to the team. If the emphasis is on what the new person can bring rather than on how the new person is different, team members will be able focus on integrating the new member into the team because of the contributions that he or she can bring. What the new person can bring to the team will be salient, rather than what the team will lose.

Interdependence

Teams vary in the level of interdependence of their members. Interdependence measures the degree to which team members depend on one another for accomplishing their goals. A missionary team that meets together several times a week and decides by consensus all missionary

activity is characterized by high interdependence. A missionary team that meets twice a year for sharing and praying but has no discussion of strategy has low interdependence.

In the meta-analysis of over 8,000 teams previously mentioned (Joshi and Roh, 2009), it was found that medium and high interdependence teams were influenced by diversity in the usual ways: task diversity was beneficial but relationship diversity was a hindrance in accomplishing the team's goals. However, in low interdependence teams, a very surprising result was found: relationship diversity was positively correlated to team performance (while task diversity was not significantly correlated to team performance). Apparently, when there is little interdependence, relationship diversity (including cultural diversity) acts like task diversity by enabling individuals to see other ways of accomplishing the task without having to spend the effort necessary to fully coordinate their work with people that are different from them. Teams low in interdependence can receive the benefits of diversity without the negative consequences of diversity.

The implications of this phenomenon for missions teams are important. If teams consisting of culturally diverse members encourage members to function independently (or interdependently only with others with whom they have a natural affinity), team members from one culture may benefit from the perspectives brought by team members of other cultures. However, if teams consisting of culturally diverse members are expected to work together very closely, it is likely that the cultural diversity will be a source of tension rather than enrichment. Missionaries need to be taught about team dynamics, including interdependence, and be encouraged to structure their teams in ways that will allow them to function most effectively.

Team Duration

A similar effect is found with team duration (Joshi and Roh 2009). Long term teams, teams that are formed to work together more or less permanently, are helped by task diversity and hindered by relationship diversity. The negative effects of relationship diversity on long-term teams are relatively strong, accounting for 2% of

the variation in team performance. However, in short-term teams, teams that are only formed for a certain period (as would be the case in summer missions) improve their performance with increased diversity (task diversity has no significant effect).

The reason (or reasons) for this effect is not clear. It is possible that belonging to a relationally diverse, short-term team keeps everyone on their guard so that everyone remains polite and respectful during their time together which enhances communication processes and team contentment. Or perhaps many short-term teams are organized in a context where team members are especially open to learning and the presence of relationally diverse people provides opportunity to learn and benefit from others. In either case, the beneficial effects of relational diversity disappear with time in long-term teams. The differences between the team members are real and cannot be ignored. Communication is more difficult and mutual comprehension is less likely, both of which are detrimental to team performance.

The Need for Cognition and Open-mindedness

Two personality traits are especially relevant in understanding when diversity can have positive and negative effects. Need for cognition is the "tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive activity" (Cacioppo et al. 1996, 197). Some people are highly motivated to think deeply and solve problems creatively; others are more motivated to participate in activities that require less mental effort. The need for cognition is different from, but related to, cognitive ability. People high in cognitive ability tend to encounter success more often in cognitive activity and may be more motivated to expend further effort. However, some people low in cognitive ability may still enjoy thinking deeply about problems to find new solutions while some people high in cognitive ability are perfectly happy with popular and traditional approaches to dealing with problems (Cacioppo et al. 1996).

When teams have a high average level of need for cognition, both task and relational diversity predict better team performance (Kearney et al. 2009). However, when teams have a low average level of need for cognition, both task and

relational diversity predict worse team performance. Thus diversity is most likely to benefit teams where the members like thinking deeply about issues and working to solve problems by considering various options. Teams composed of members who prefer to do things traditionally or in ways that they've seen previously and who do not enjoy spending the cognitive effort necessary to work through complex problems will likely suffer with increased diversity.

A similar personality trait is openness to experience or open-mindedness (McCrae 1996). People high in open-mindedness tend to seek new information, be creative, have a preference for variety, and have a high level of intellectual curiosity. People low in open-mindedness tend to be conventional and traditional. This trait is closely related to need for cognition; people that are high in need for cognition tend to be more open-minded. Both open-mindedness and need for cognition appear to interact with diversity in similar ways. For example, both blacks and whites who are low in open-mindedness tend to prefer supervisors who are white. The preferences for people high in open-mindedness tend not to be determined by race. Thus more open-minded people are likely to benefit more from diversity than are less open-minded people, as in the case for need for cognition (Goldberg et al. 2008).

This is important because evangelical Christians tend to be low in open-mindedness (Saroglou 2002; Streyffeler and McNally 1998). It is not clear if people low in open-mindedness are attracted to the traditions and conservatism of evangelical Christianity, or if evangelical Christianity with its emphasis on correct doctrine and biblical authority promotes closed-mindedness, or both. This is not to say that all evangelical Christians are closed-minded; many, indeed, are very open-minded. But we need to be aware that closed-mindedness is a trait that characterizes evangelicals more than the population in general. There is little reason to believe that missionaries are much less closed minded than evangelicals as a whole. Closed-mindedness might actually be useful for persistence and remaining in mission service. In any case, a lack of open-mindedness is likely to interact with diversity to have negative effects in teams.

However, there are a number of things that mission leaders can do to reduce the negative effects of diversity and to promote its benefits when teams have members low in openness (Kearney et al. 2009). They can encourage in-depth processing of new information by stressing the need to be open-minded. They can promote open-mindedness, lifting it up as a virtue, so that when missionaries think creatively they do not risk being labeled as mavericks or rebels. Team leaders may be held accountable, not for assuring the unity of their team, but for leading their team in a manner in which all points of view are expressed, respected, and understood by each member. Mission leaders may also promote open-mindedness by making learning more attractive. Educational and scholarly pursuits can be encouraged and promoted. In addition, open-mindedness is encouraged when leaders have a clear and compelling vision for the team; if the team's goals are lofty enough and honestly sought after, people are more likely to realize that traditional thinking is not sufficient and that creative thinking is necessary to achieve them. This will encourage new ideas to be expressed, rather than be suppressed by those who value tradition and conventional methods.

Conclusions

We have looked at various forms of diversity and their effects on team effectiveness in missionary contexts. Task diversity (function within a team, educational background, etc.) tends to be beneficial for teams because each individual has something to contribute. Relationship diversity (race, culture, gender, etc.) tends to decrease team performance because communication and coordination is more difficult. However, these effects are small compared to the effects of other team characteristics such as average level of cognitive ability and the personality traits of the team members.

A number of factors have been found which reduce the negative effects of diversity and increase the positive effects. When there are few faultlines, diversity has fewer negative effects. When team members believe diversity is good, increased diversity along some dimensions is associated with better team functioning. Teams

that are composed of low status members are especially open to increased diversity and reap many benefits from it. Teams with low levels of interdependence are also likely to benefit from increased relational diversity, as well as short-term teams. Teams where open-mindedness and the need for cognition are high and promoted are also more likely to benefit from diversity.

Although increased diversity may require many changes in some mission organizations, these organizations can adapt to and profit from diversity. These organizations will likely be the most effective ones in reaching a diverse world as they reflect the incarnational adaptation that Jesus Christ himself modeled.

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