Anne Susann Bachmann

Melting Pot or Tossed Salad? Implications for Designing Effective Multicultural Workgroups

Abstract and Key Results

- The literature on the functioning and effectiveness of diversity-based workgroups tends to take the single perspective of exploring the effects of cultural or demographic or functional diversity on workgroup performance.

- This conceptual article develops a coupling framework for the analysis of the functioning of multicultural workgroups by integrating several lines of research and by reformulating their traditional conceptualization, outlining implications for their design.

- Applying the concept of loosely coupled systems to multicultural workgroup functioning provides the conceptual link necessary for a solution of the dilemma of multicultural workgroups.

Key Words

Workgroups, Multiculturality, Cultural Diversity

Author

Anne Susann Bachmann, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Chair of Organization Theory and Design, Institute of Business Administration, Christian-Albrechts-University of Kiel, Kiel, Germany.

Anne Susann Bachmann

Introduction

The increase in the internationalization of companies has increased the complexity these companies face. As organizations expand their activities across borders, the number of institutions influencing their operations or claiming jurisdiction over their activities has increased and their corporate environments have become increasingly multifaceted and diverse. International companies face global competitors, multiple countries and governments, different cultures and languages, all placing heightened demands on coordination and control of international business activities (e.g., Lane/Maznevski/Mendenhall 2004).

One way for organizations to cope with this complexity is to establish workgroups or teams that are composed of people differing in relevant dimensions such as culture to match the diversity of the environment the organizations try to deal with (e.g., Weick/Van Orden 1990, Webber/Donahue 2001, Gluesing/Gibson 2004). Workgroups composed of people with different cultural backgrounds hold a great potential for more innovative and higher quality solutions to international business problems, yet it is these same cultural differences that pose the greatest challenges for organizations.

In diversity-based workgroups, culturally imprinted differing perspectives, interpretations and approaches to work have to be integrated, a process that requires some degree of consensus on workable solutions. This is a result multicultural workgroups often fail to reach (e.g., Maznevski/Peterson 1997, Adler 2002). Multicultural workgroups are thus confronted with the so-called "diversity/consensus dilemma" (Argote/McGrath 1993, p. 336) or "accuracy-cohesion-trade off" (Weick 1987, p. 23), the contradictory outcomes demanded of such groups. In addition, the scope of international business problems requiring multicultural workgroups to focus on complex analyses and decisions containing high risk and having a wide spectrum of consequences (e.g., Elron 1997, Hambrick et al. 1998, DiStefano/Maznevski 2000) is increasing. Establishing a thorough conceptual understanding of the implications of the multicultural composition of such workgroups and developing a group design that accommodates the contradictory demands such groups are supposed to meet seems increasingly necessary.

The findings of previous research on the direct effects of cultural diversity on workgroup functioning are mixed. Research has shown that group situation attributes such as types of tasks (e.g., Jackson 1996, Gluesing/Gibson 2004), or group management characteristics (e.g., Hambrick et al. 1998) exert substantial but differing influences on group processes and outcomes. In addition, there exists a lack of systematic theoretical and empirical evaluations of multicultural group work in multinational companies (e.g., Williams/O'Reilly 1998, Smith 1999). Such evaluations would outline factors or mechanisms with which a solution or at least a successful approach to the "diversity/consensus dilemma" could be achieved. This

article proposes a conceptual framework based on a contingency perspective as a contribution to the resolution of this "diversity/consensus dilemma." Here the theoretical concept of loosely-tightly coupled systems – a concept specifying the quality of interactions among system elements, and showing how these interactions should be modeled to lead to desired outcomes (e.g., Weick 1976, Weick 1982, Orton/Weick 1990) – is applied to explain how the dilemma inherent in multicultural group work could be solved and to explore the resulting implications for designing effective multicultural workgroups.

Basic Issues

Because the multicultural workgroup is the central unit of analysis, the essential characteristics of workgroups have to be determined first. According to the relevant literature, workgroups are generally defined as 1) containing two or more members, 2) being intact social systems with clear boundaries, meaning that group members perceive themselves as a group and are recognized as such by others, 3) executing one or more measurable tasks, and 4) operating within an organization (e.g., Hackman 1987, Guzzo/Dickson 1996). Sometimes a distinction is made between the words "workgroup" and "team" relating to the degree of "groupness" or member interdependence a collective possesses (e.g., Cohen/Bailey 1997, Earley/Gibson 2002). Teams are described as having more groupness than workgroups. This distinction is a rather artificial one, with the term "team" being used more often in the popular management literature and the term "group" being used more often in the academic literature (e.g., Cohen/Bailey, 1997). The term "workgroup" will be used in this paper.

Workgroups can be characterized along many dimensions, each having its own distinct implications for group functioning. For instance, workgroups can be characterized according to the nature of the task they have to perform, e.g., manual labor vs. mental work (e.g., Guzzo/Dickson 1996). Further, workgroups can vary according to their degree of integration into the regular employment system, e.g., quality circles vs. fully integrated workgroups (e.g., Cohen/Bailey 1997), or according to their temporal duration, e.g. short-term vs. ongoing workgroups (e.g., Devine et al. 1999). Also, workgroups can be characterized according to the degree of spatial proximity between group members, e.g. co-located vs. virtual workgroups (e.g., Maznevski/Chudoba 2000, Kayworth/Leidner 2002). Since this article focuses on multicultural workgroups, special attention is given the implications of a multicultural workgroup composition. This is not, of course, to deny the importance of other dimensions. Here, multicultural workgroups are treated as fully integrated, ongoing, and co-located, composed of people performing mental work and having different cultural origins.

This additional dimension of group members varying in their cultural backgrounds warrants special attention since the cultural background of people influences not only what they perceive in their surrounding world and how they interpret it, but also how individual group members behave in response to task/work characteristics and social situations (e.g., Maznevski/Peterson 1997, Hambrick et al. 1998). The different cultural backgrounds of workgroup members determine to a great degree what they expect from their group leaders and their peers, what they expect about the group communication and about appropriate task processes. Culture influences literally all aspects of cooperation in workgroups (e.g., Maznevski/ Peterson 1997, Gluesing/Gibson 2004).

The Concept of Culture and Cultural Diversity

Culture is generally defined as a pattern of deep level values and assumptions concerning societal functioning, which is shared by an interacting group of people (e.g., Schwartz/Bilsky 1990, Adler 2002, Maznevski et al. 2002). A deep level, personal value is"a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others" (Hofstede 1980, p. 19), and expresses explicitly or implicitly desirable states or conditions to an individual (Kluckhohn/Strodtbeck 1961). Deep level values influence the selection of available activity modes, means, and ends, specify general preferences, and reflect the generally held beliefs about what is considered "right" and "wrong" (e.g., Rokeach 1973, Schwartz 1999). Hence, value systems, comprised of beliefs, assumptions, and norms, are the core elements of culture (e.g., Kluckhohn/Strodtbeck 1961, Schwartz/Bilsky 1990, Hofstede 2001). Cultural values are learned very early in life as people are socialized into their respective environments within particular societies, and are very difficult to relearn or change (e.g., Hofstede 2001). Therefore culture, as manifested in value systems, presents a deep, inner, usually unconscious influence on individual mentalities and social behaviors (e.g., Maznevski/Peterson 1997, Schwartz 1999, Adler 2002).

All conceptions of cultural value systems share the premise that different cultures propose many distinct answers to essentially the same questions posed by the generalities of the human situation (e.g., Kluckhohn/Strodbeck 1961, Trompenaars 1993, Schwartz 1999, Hofstede 2001). The culture – shared pattern of deep level values – of an interacting group of people is then accordingly represented in the consciously or unconsciously agreed upon solutions or answers to these general questions. Several dimensional concepts that capture the specific content of these culture solutions have been proposed. Very prominent ones are the cultural value orientations framework of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), the cultural dimensions concept of Hofstede (1980, 2001), Trompenaars (1993), the cultural dimensions of Schwartz (1999), and of

Hall and Hall (1990). Though this list is not exhaustive, common matters within the dimensions pertain to the nature of the relationships between people, the use of time, the dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity, and the nature of the relationships with the greater environment and context. Since this article's purpose is to explore potential mechanisms to deal with cultural differences in workgroups rather than to explain different concepts of culture, these shall not be discussed here further.

With the cultural value dimensions, an individual's profile of cultural values can be developed and the similarity or dissimilarity of individual cultural values can be assessed. The extent of similarity or dissimilarity of the respective cultural profiles within a workgroup then determines its prevailing degree of cultural diversity. According to Cox (1993, p. 6) cultural diversity refers to a representation of people within a social system with explicitly different group affiliations of cultural meaning, that is, "they collectively share certain norms, values or traditions that are different from those of other groups." Often the term "cultural diversity" is applied to ethnic or national diversity in workgroups as well (e.g., Kirchmeyer/ Cohen 1992, Watson/Kumar/Michaelsen 1993). And in fact, since differences attributed to different national or ethnic heritages often strongly coincide with cultural value differences (e.g., Hambrick et al. 1998, Earley/Gibson 2002), in this article the term "cultural diversity" – albeit stressing differences in cultural values – includes national or ethnic diversity as well.

In the literature sometimes the level of (cultural) diversity is discussed as an important issue differentially impacting workgroup dynamics. Usually three possible levels are distinguished (e.g., Jackson 1996, Hambrick et al. 1998, Adler 2002). In so-called *token* groups all but one member share the same cultural background (e.g., Adler 2002, Earley/Gibson 2002) or there is a small cultural minority in an otherwise culturally homogenous workgroup. In *bicultural* workgroups, members represent two distinct cultures in fairly equal proportions. And in genuine diverse or *multicultural* workgroups, members either represent at least three cultures or there are no two members who share the same cultural background (e.g., Jackson 1996, Hambrick et al. 1998, Adler 2002). In this article multicultural workgroups are understood as organizational workgroups in which members represent at least three cultures so that they can be called truly multicultural workgroups.

Summary of the Consequences of Diversity for Workgroup Functioning

The basic theoretical assumption of diversity research asserts that diversity with respect to the group composition influences group processes and that these processes in turn affect group performance (e.g., Williams/O'Reilly 1998, Chatman et al. 1998,

Jehn/Northcraft/Neale 1999). Whereas the term "diversity" in general pertains to "any mixture of items characterized by differences and similarities" (Thomas 1996, p. 5), in the context of social groups, "diversity" simply means variety or difference between individuals with respect to certain characteristics or attributes (e.g., Milliken/Martins 1996, Ely/Thomas 2001, Jackson/Joshi/Erhardt 2003). Since throughout the literature the terms "heterogeneity," "variety" and "diversity" are used to depict the same underlying principle of differences, they will be treated here as synonyms, even though the term "diversity" is used predominantly.

The field of diversity research has generated a wealth of findings regarding the effects of different types of diversity. Please see the excellent reviews of Milliken/Martins (1996), Williams/O'Reilly (1998), Jackson/Joshi/Erhardt (2003). Since all findings cannot be exhaustively presented here, only a short summary is given. Diversity research has established that diversity offers both a great opportunity for companies as well as major challenges (e.g., Hambrick et al. 1998, Adler 2002). In general, the *positive effects* of diversity result from an increment in the cognitive and behavioral variety a group possesses. These effects are related almost exclusively to an *objective or factual level* concerning task execution (e.g., Maznevski 1994, Jackson 1996, Williams/O'Reilly 1998). This finding holds true for multicultural workgroups, since differing cultural values (some of the strongest determinants of human perception, interpretation, evaluation, and behavior) provide these groups with an enormous amount of material from which they can draw innovative problem solution approaches for complex organizational tasks (e.g., Maznevski/Peterson 1997). Research also has shown that diversity minimizes the danger of groupthink – the danger of decision failures due to behavior conformity and group pressure (Janis 1972). On the other hand, the *negative effects* of diversity relate almost exclusively to *the interpersonal or affective level* of group work concerning social group interaction processes. Diverse workgroups experience strong conflicts (e.g., Pelled et al. 1999), communication between group members becomes more difficult (e.g., Ancona/Caldwell 1992), the willingness to cooperate with fellow group members diminishes (e.g., Thomas 1999), and group cohesion decreases (i.e. Harrison et al. 2002). All of these process losses often result in higher turnover and absenteeism rates (e.g., O'Reilly et al. 1989) and lower work satisfaction (e.g., Tsui/Egan/O'Reilly 1992).

Cultural Diversity in Workgroups

Following common classification schemes (e.g., Tsui et al. 1992, Maznevski 1994, Pelled 1996, Williams/O'Reilly 1998), cultural diversity can be classified either in the dimension of diversity in personality characteristics (Milliken/Martins 1996) or

in the category of non-observable and relations-oriented attributes in which people might differ (e.g., Jackson/May/Whitney 1995, Bowers/Pharmer/Salas 2000, Harrison et al. 2002, Mohammed/Angell 2003).

Even though values as such have not been investigated as frequently as demographic attributes in the context of workgroups, existing research strongly suggests that values should have great relevance to understanding workgroup composition effects on workgroups in general and on workgroup problem-solving in particular (e.g., Dose/Klimoski 1999). The main assumption underlying the effectiveness of workgroups composed of culturally diverse members is that value diversity leads to cognitive outcomes such as decisions having a higher quality and problem solutions containing a wider range of perspectives. But as Jehn, Northcraft and Neale (1999, p. 758) have stated: "It is the diversity associated with values that causes the biggest problems in and has the greatest potential for enhancing both workgroup performance and morale."

Cultural value diversity research has generated inconsistent and even opposing results. These results can be broadly divided into four categories based on the consequences of cultural diversity: social, cognitive, and affective consequences, and conflicts.

So, looking at the diversity consequences regarding conflicts, both Pelled and Eisenhardt and Xin (1999) and Jehn, Northcraft and Neale (1999) could demonstrate that ethnic and value diversity in workgroups led to severe relationship conflicts between members. But these conflicts didn't show any consequences for group performance in Pelled et al.'s study, whereas in Jehn et al., the relationship conflicts caused by the value diversity almost completely accounted for the lowered group satisfaction, the lowered group commitment and the lowered perceived and actual group performance.

A similar discrepancy emerges in the work on social and cooperative behaviors in multicultural workgroups. Whereas both Cox, Lobel and McLeod (1991) and Randel (2003) showed that culturally diverse workgroups displayed more cooperative behaviors than did non-diverse groups, the reverse result was obtained in the studies of Watson and Kumar (1992), Ruigrok and Wagner (2001) and Martins et al. (2003). In these three studies, social interaction problems between group members are reported. The ethnically diverse workgroups in Watson and Kumar's study displayed less supportive interaction behaviors particularly with regard to solving problems. The culturally diverse top management teams in the study of Ruigrok and Wagner exhibited a generally lower capability to directly interact with internal and external stakeholders.

Findings on cognitive consequences of cultural diversity in workgroups are not completely consistent, either. While it is agreed that multicultural workgroups produce ideas, solutions and decisions of higher quality (e.g., McLeod et al. 1991, Ruigrok/Wagner 2001), various studies obtained different findings regarding the quantity of generated ideas and perspectives. Watson et al. (1993) and Punnett and Clemens (1999) both demonstrated that culturally diverse workgroups produce

more perspectives, problem solutions and decision alternatives than do non-diverse groups. In contrast, the diverse workgroups studied by McLeod et al. (1991) did not generate more ideas than the homogeneous groups, and in the study of Thomas (1999), the culturally diverse workgroups generated even fewer ideas than did the culturally homogeneous ones. But the findings regarding efficiency and speed of problem-solving or decision-making in multicultural workgroups correspond with each other. Multicultural workgroups need more time to solve problems and decide upon matters (e.g., Punnett/Clemens 1999, Ruigrok/Wagner 2001, Podsiadlowski 2002).

Findings on the affective consequences of cultural diversity in workgroups present the greatest inconsistencies. Here the whole spectrum of possible results is represented. O'Reilly et al. (1991), as well as Tsui et al. (1992), Jehn et al. (1999) and Martins et al. (2003) impressively demonstrated negative affective consequences of cultural diversity. The members of diverse workgroups showed less satisfaction with and commitment to their respective workgroups, and also experienced more stress, less mutual trust, and greater uncertainty in dealing with each other. They also evidenced higher absenteeism rates and a higher propensity to leave their work-groups. These results are in contrast to the findings of Elron (1997) and Thomas (1999), who both expected to find negative affective consequences of cultural diversity in their studies, but actually didn't. Elron (1997) also found that the cultural diversity in her top management teams led to higher self-reported satisfaction with the team's performance. And Posdiadlowski (2002) came up with a finding from the other end of the spectrum, showing that the cultural diversity in her studied workgroups was associated with a higher individual satisfaction with the job and the workgroup.

More recent research regarding cultural diversity approaches the equivocality of the issue from yet other perspectives. Attempts have been made to more clearly identify the consequences that specific individual cultural values or value profiles of workgroup members have for certain task types, especially in the context of new product development or entrepreneurship (e.g., Sivakumar/Nakata 2003, Bouncken 2004). Sivakumar/Nakata (2003), with the aid of mathematical models, developed a solution to identify those workgroup compositions that would optimize the effects of specific national cultural values on several new product development outcomes. Bouncken (2004) found from case-study research that members of entrepreneurial teams with a monochronic/low-context/high-space cultural profile tended to strong-ly structure tasks and to deny positive effects of cultural diversity, whereas mem-bers with a polychronic/high-context/low-space cultural profile tended to supply external contacts to the workgroup and showed a greater propensity to stimulate communication procedures. So, the authors were able to show what specific cultural profiles might be best suited for specific kinds of activities. But since studies as these focus more on the effects of cultural values per se, insights regarding effects of cultural diversity and accordingly, implications on how to deal with differences

in cultural values cannot be derived. What is missing in these approaches is a hint as to what happens when people with different cultural profiles have to work together.

The Dilemma of Multicultural Workgroups

So, diverse workgroups, and especially multicultural workgroups, are still confronted with the yet unsolved "diversity/consensus dilemma" (Argote/McGrath 1993, p. 336). This dilemma emerges whenever workgroups that have to deal with difficult tasks or critical decisions need members who are supposed to both bring into the group a variety of skills, perspectives, and experiences and at the same time to integrate differing positions, agree upon developed solutions, and jointly execute task strategies. Diversity among and consensus between members are simultaneously required, a demand, as research has shown, such groups are often unable to meet.

A slightly different conceptualization of this dilemma has been termed "accuracy-cohesion trade-off" (Weick 1987, p. 23) and fits the situation of multicultural workgroups a bit better. Since cultural values influence strongly what parts of the surroundings or problems are perceived, how they are perceived, and how the perceived information is interpreted, leading to specific actions or reactions, collectively, members of multicultural workgroups perceive more aspects of their direct environment. The inherent cultural diversity makes the collective perception more accurate in terms of information amount and richness and also reveals a multitude of action modes or problem solutions potentially available to the workgroup. This is where the trade-off comes in. For a workgroup to realize the potential inherent in its cultural diversity, members first and foremost need to stay together to establish a basis for the exchange of their differing perceptions. Such workgroups need some degree of cohesion, otherwise they fall apart. Workgroup cohesion, the degree to which members feel attracted to each other (e.g., O'Reilly et al. 1989), is seen throughout the literature as an important determinant of group performance (e.g., Webber/Donahue 2001), and it develops when group members perceive each other as similar to themselves in personally important dimensions (e.g., Williams/O'Reilly 1998). If congruence in perceptions can be established – for the sake of cohesion – this can lead to congruence in interpretations and easily achieved agreements, too. If there is congruence in interpretation, there might also be a sufficient overlap in proactive or reactive replies in the communicative process of exploring potential solutions and strategies for situations, problems and tasks.

This more homogeneous interpretation of the group's situation, though, also implies a less diverse or multifaceted pool of strategies and solutions available for the group. If members of a workgroup align their frames of reference or interpre-

tations, their perception and interpretation modes become more similar to each other over time, and their collective observations and evaluations of the environment start to be less distinguishable from the individual observations and evaluations (e.g., Weick/Van Orden 1990, Weick 1987, Weick/Roberts 1993). Thus, the original potential of multicultural workgroups is reduced. Or, as Adler (2002, p. 148) stated: "Diversity becomes most valuable when the need for the team to reach agreement (cohesion) remains low relative to the need to invent creative solutions."

So the first important question with the composition of diverse teams becomes where to put the priority. Shall multicultural teams be designed so to facilitate collective consensus and strong group cohesion? Or is the goal of designing multicultural workgroups to realize the potential of diverse and thus, more accurate perceptions, interpretations and behaviors? Subsequently, the second important question is: How can the potential of multicultural workgroups be realized?

Answers to these questions imply different approaches to effective multicultural workgroup functioning. If the answer to the first question is to have consensus and cohesion (smoother interaction processes) in workgroups rather than to deal with the issue of diversity, the problem, at least from this perspective, seems easy to solve: no diversity in the group's composition. If, however, the priority goes to cultural diversity, with its potential, the answer is more difficult. Given the mixed findings regarding the effects of cultural diversity, with no unequivocal conclusions to draw, the need for a contingency approach emerges. Such an approach, specifying the conditions under which the potential of multicultural workgroups can be realized without severe process losses, has started to be explored (e.g., Hambrick et al. 1998, Jehn et al. 1999).

The dilemma of multicultural workgroups presents two seemingly contradicting demands. On the one hand, such workgroups have to maintain their cultural diversity in order to accurately perceive and interpret the multiple facets of their environment in order to have a greater and more diversified pool of potential ideas, perspectives and strategies available. On the other hand, their respective organizations expect effective task performance, which is quite dependent on agreement and consensus within workgroups. Members must interact with each other, but the more diverse the group is in terms of cultural values, the greater is the risk of process losses.

The basic design question this dilemma presents is nicely captured by two competing metaphors that have been used to describe heterogeneous societies. Should a multicultural workgroup be designed to resemble a melting pot or a tossed salad? The melting pot is a metaphor for the development of heterogeneous societies whose ingredients are processed until they loose their discrete identities and yield a final product of uniform consistency and flavor. In contrast, the tossed salad metaphor, although it also signifies diversity, stresses that each diverse ingredient maintains its originally distinct and unique quality, resulting in a composite but diversified flavor. Which design is preferable for effective multicultural workgroups?

Workgroup Effectiveness and Processes

In order to address this design question, the general mechanisms of workgroup functioning have to be reviewed briefly. Models of workgroup effectiveness usually follow the traditional Input-Process-Output classification first introduced by McGrath (1964). On the input side, the organizational context (e.g., information or support systems) and group design features (e.g., group composition, task structure) are proposed. They influence the group's interaction processes (e.g., communication, cooperation, conflict) and are directly or indirectly related to the group's output (e.g., performance, satisfaction) (e.g., Gladstein 1984, Hackman 1987, McGrath 1991, Guzzo/Dickson 1996).

According to Hackman (1987), workgroup effectiveness can be defined by three criteria: 1) the outcomes of group efforts must meet or exceed the standards for quality and quantity the organization has set (= economical dimension), 2) the social processes used in carrying out the work should maintain or enhance the capability of group members to work together on subsequent group tasks (= social dimension) and 3) the experience of being in a workgroup should satisfy rather than frustrate the personal needs of individual group members (= individual dimension). These effectiveness criteria coincide with McGrath's (1991) workgroup functions, the production function, the member-support function, and the group well-being function respectively.

On the other hand, group interaction processes as the means through which workgroups produce their outcomes (e.g., Williams/O'Reilly 1998, Hackman 1987) can be distinguished according to the content of the interactions. Workgroup processes are usually differentiated in task processes that relate directly to a group's work on its tasks and in social processes that relate to the interpersonal or social aspects of transactions taking place between individual group members (e.g., Gladstein 1984, Hackman 1987, Guzzo/Dickson 1996, Canney Davison/Ekelund 2004). Both types of processes usually are closely linked and take place simultaneously. Whereas task processes influence group performance directly and quickly, social processes influence workgroup outcomes rather indirectly through their influence on task processes. The ways workgroup processes are managed in reaction to group and task characteristics influence strongly the quality of outcomes that can be achieved.

There is general agreement that an essential key dynamic for effective group functioning resides in the creation of a shared or common workgroup reality (e.g., Bettenhausen 1991). It is argued that a workgroup needs to establish a shared understanding about what information of the respective environments is important and relevant for the group work, and which behaviors are adequate for specific situations. Through interactions, people learn how to perceive and interpret the surrounding world and, especially in workgroups, ambiguous events, leadership directives or

changes in the task or social environment are clarified and made "real" (e.g., Betten-hausen/Murnighan 1991).

Closely related to establishing a shared workgroup reality, and also presumed to be an underlying mechanism for effective group processes and performance, the concept of shared "mental models" has been proposed as an essential ingredient for effective workgroup functioning. A mental model represents an organized knowl-edge structure that allows an understanding of a system and secure expectations about how the system operates (e.g., Klimoski/Mohammed 1994, Marks/Zaccaro/Mathieu 2002). If group members share their mental models and hence create group mental models, this provides them with a common frame of reference to perceive, interpret and react to their particular environment. Shared mental models of task domains, the group's situation, task-related and/or social interaction processes positively influence effective group functioning (e.g., Weick/Roberts 1993, Earley/Mosakowski 2000). Shared mental models facilitate coordination and cooperation among members, ease communication between them, prevent greater misunder-standings and increase the likelihood of mutual trust and respect (e.g., Katz et al. 2004, Ng 2004, Raijamampianina/Carmichael 2005).

The literature suggests several means to support workgroups in their develop-ment of shared mental models. One approach addresses the formal or structural side of the issue by establishing task-related workgroup conditions that facilitate the development of group mental models for task domains (e.g., Marks et al. 2002). Examples of this approach include clarifying the workgroup's overall purpose, its mission and goals, designing interdependent subtasks, assigning concrete task roles, and determining task-related responsibilities and interaction norms (e.g., Guzzo/Dickson 1996, Gluesing/Gibson 2004). Such conditions frame the work environ-ment and align the workgroup members' structural representations of their task-related requirements and expectations, and their distribution of skills, knowledge, and task-related interaction norms, thereby facilitating task processes and successful task execution.

Another way to support workgroups in developing shared mental models addresses the social side of group work by creating a sense of community and belonging and establishing a common social group identity. This can be achieved by creating social rituals and ceremonies (e.g., Gluesing/Gibson 2004), by using non-task related storytelling and metaphors (e.g., Orton/Weick, Weick 1990, Gibson/Zellmer-Bruhn 2001), and by establishing agreed upon shared social group values (e.g., Orton/Weick 1990, Earley/Mosakowski 2000, Beekun/Glick 2001). In fact, these practices represent symbolic interactions that model the social side of group working. A shared mental model regarding the group's non-task-related, social domain contains group members' representations of each other's personalities, so-cial lives, privately held world views and norms pertaining to the social or affective manner in group interactions. These shared perceptions promote consideration and mutual personal understanding between members, and strengthen positive affect

group members might feel for one another. This overall supports a high level of group satisfaction or commitment.

Multicultural Workgroup Functioning from a Loose-Tight Coupling Perspective

Now, addressing the design question of multicultural workgroups against the just presented mechanisms of workgroup functioning, the theoretical perspective of loosely coupled systems is applied. This perspective is chosen since it could provide the missing link necessary for an integration of the described antithetical demands. Namely, on closer inspection of the dilemma of multicultural workgroups it can be noticed that it is captured in the definition of a loosely coupled system. When the elements of a system show responsiveness as integrated parts of the overall system while still retaining their distinctiveness as individual elements, the system is loosely coupled (Weick 1976, Orton/Weick 1990). The idea of loose coupling allows the explanation of the simultaneous existence of rationality and predictability of a system on the one hand, and creative spontaneity of the same system on the other hand. The concept suggests that any location at any level within a system (be it an organization or a workgroup) contains connected elements that vary in number and strength of their interdependencies. The term "coupling" implies that elements are connected, which means that a certain rationality or determinacy is maintained. Coupling produces stability. The term "loosely" means a modification of that connectedness and implies a weak, or a slow connection, or one in which the elements are connected to each other with only minimal interdependence so interaction outcomes are fairly unpredictable, leaving room for creative or innovative events to take place. Loose coupling produces flexibility. Since a loosely coupled system usually contains loosely *and* tightly connected elements (e.g., Weick 1976, Orton/ Weick 1990), what results is a system that is simultaneously open *and* closed, flexible *and* stable, diverse *and* cohesive.

A loosely coupled system is a sensitively perceiving mechanism since it consists of elements that independently of each other attend to their respective environments. For this reason, such a system is able to know its environment better, which in turn allows the system to adapt better to its environment. Every single element of a loosely coupled system is able to adapt individually to and modify its local and unique sub-environment without simultaneously changing the structure of the whole system (e.g., Weick 1982). Now, what can be inferred from this concept for the case of multicultural workgroups?

Since couplings within a certain system can occur between any types of system elements, in any quality and in any content area, in a first step, the coupling ele-

ments have to be distinguished. According to Weick (1976, p.5), coupling elements refer to "*anythings* that can be tied together." In the case of multicultural workgroups these are the group members. Second, the quality of the interaction between system elements needs to be characterized. Three coupling dimensions are therewith often studied: strength, directness, and interdependence of interactions or couplings. According to Weick (1982), a coupling between elements is strong if they interact often, significantly and with predictable outcomes. A strong coupling is a tight coupling. If elements interact directly, they are tightly coupled as well. And finally, if there is a strong interdependence between elements, they are again tightly coupled. To characterize couplings this way they need to be localized. So third, their respective domains have to be specified. Coupling domains describe the content area of the relation between coupling elements and are usually categorized as either structural or cultural (e.g., Beekun/Glick 2001). The structural domains are formal, relate to the task, and contain, for instance, workflow related or structuring activities. In contrast, the institutional or cultural domains primarily focus on informal and social activities such as non-task-related communication and non-task-related socializing (e.g., Beekun/Glick 2001). In the case of multicultural workgroups in organizations, the group's tasks, its structure and its resources for task completion belong to the structural domain and determine the task-induced activities. On the other side, common social, non-task-related activities or non-task-related communication between group members have a strong bearing on the institutional or cultural domain, thus shaping the social processes and interactions in the group.

Fourth, within every coupling domain there are coupling mechanisms that represent practices or processes which allow the elements to operate together (e.g., Weick 1976, Beekun/Glick 2001). Following the distinction of structural and cultural coupling domains, structural and cultural coupling mechanisms also can be described. Structural coupling mechanisms are found only in task-related, that is, structural domains. They relate to the formal arrangements within systems that can be modified only through formal decisions (e.g., Weick 1976). Examples of structural coupling mechanisms are rules, decision and formal interaction norms. In contrast, cultural coupling mechanisms mirror the rather subjective side of a system and can be modified only through symbolic interactions. Examples of cultural coupling mechanisms include non-task-related rituals and ceremonies and non-task-related metaphors and values (e.g., Beekun/Glick 2001). Cultural coupling is likely to be loose in multicultural workgroups where members don't rely on the same values for thinking and acting, probably very often considering quite different approaches to tasks and social relations.

Returning to the basic design issue concerning multicultural workgroup functioning, the questions remain: within which domains should members of multicultural workgroups be coupled and moreover, how should they be coupled to one another, given that the goal is to realize the potential of cultural value diversity without diminishing it by consensus pressure, homogenization or process losses.

By definition, a loosely coupled system is one in which the elements are unique, meaning distinctive of each other, but at same time the system is responsive as a whole. All kinds of workgroups– understood as social systems – are established to accomplish tasks any single individual could not accomplish alone. Therefore the whole system is supposed to be able to act and react on given objectives. Generally, workgroups are expected to reliably produce desired outcomes. As has been described above, one mechanism by which workgroup task effectiveness can be facilitated is to establish a shared, structural, group mental model of the task-domain. This suggests that members should be tightly coupled in the structural, that is, task-related domain. Tight coupling of workgroup members in the task-related domain can be seen as a way to establish a structural mental model of the group's task work. Well planned, structured work flows that are established by formal decisions and rules provide a basic reliability that workgroups will fulfill their tasks with predictable achievement. Hence, tight structural coupling can be seen a necessary precondition for effective group work.

At the same time, the members of multicultural workgroups are supposed maintain their individual cultural uniqueness and identities to preserve their high levels of sensing and perception diversity. But then, sustaining the unique cultural and social identities of work group members implies rather distinct, non-overlapping mental models in the non-task-related, social domain. This however can only be achieved if group members keep being loosely coupled to one another at the interpersonal level in the cultural domain. In the context of multicultural workgroups, loose coupling within the cultural domain implies an extensive retention of diversity in the cultural value make-up of the workgroup. Since the individual cultural values significantly affect individual perceptions and behavior, cultural diversity means that group members perceive their particular (sub)environments through their particular cultural lenses relatively independent of each other and that they construct culturally differing social realities, and accordingly, differing reactions or solutions to the social quests of the environment. If a multicultural workgroup is loosely coupled within the cultural domain, it preserves at least to some degree the ability for a rich and accurate perception, for localized adaptation, and for the storage of a greater number of innovative ideas.

Merging these two streams of arguments and integrating both sides of the dilemma of multicultural workgroups, the major proposition of this article can be stated:

Basic Proposition. Multicultural workgroups that are simultaneously tightly coupled within the structural domain and loosely coupled within the cultural domain are the most effective.

Anne Susann Bachmann

Employing Effective Couplings in Multicultural Workgroups

To design effective workgroups composed of people with differing cultural values requires special consideration of the contingencies under which the workgroups will perform so as to fully realize their potential. Given that diversity, and especially cultural value diversity. in workgroups can be both a blessing and a curse, how can the idea of simultaneous loose and tight coupling be applied? In concrete terms, what should be done to achieve a group design that enables multicultural workgroups to function effectively and to fully utilize the potential provided by their cultural diversity?

Basically, a demanding group task and simultaneous loose and tight coupling place demands on workgroup structure and processes such that the workgroups have to be managed well. Thus, the leadership functions for multicultural workgroups and the member interactions have to be aligned or coordinated so that they lead to an effective use of the cultural diversity's potential. Group interaction processes need to be channeled on the task work, and members' attention and concentration needs to be directed from interpersonal issues and towards task related problems. Therefore the main task of designing such workgroups is directed towards their leadership. Indeed, scholars have repeatedly pointed out that to design effective multicultural workgroups adequately, the organizational context, especially the leadership of these groups, has to be taken into account (e.g., Hambrick et al. 1998, Adler 2002, Gluesing/Gibson 2004). So the main functions of multicultural workgroup leadership within the coupling perspective have been shifted towards achieving tight structural and loose cultural couplings between multicultural workgroup members.

Now, integrating findings and arguments, the following framework for solving the dilemma of multicultural workgroups from a loose-tight coupling perspective is proposed (see Figure 1).

Achieving Tight Structural Couplings

The structural coupling domain is task-induced and contains task-related communications, structuring activities, and resource exchange activities. According to traditional workgroup effectiveness models, the basic group-level structural characteristics are task structure, group structure, group size, and group composition (e.g., Gladstein 1984, Hackman 1987, Guzzo/Dickson 1996). These constitute the design features within the structural coupling domain of multicultural group work.

Task structure refers to the degree of task related interdependence between group members, i.e. the extent to which group members have to exchange information and resources to successfully complete their individual subtasks (e.g., Van der Vegt et

Figure 1. Framework for Designing Effective Multicultural Workgroups from a Loose-tight Coupling Perspective
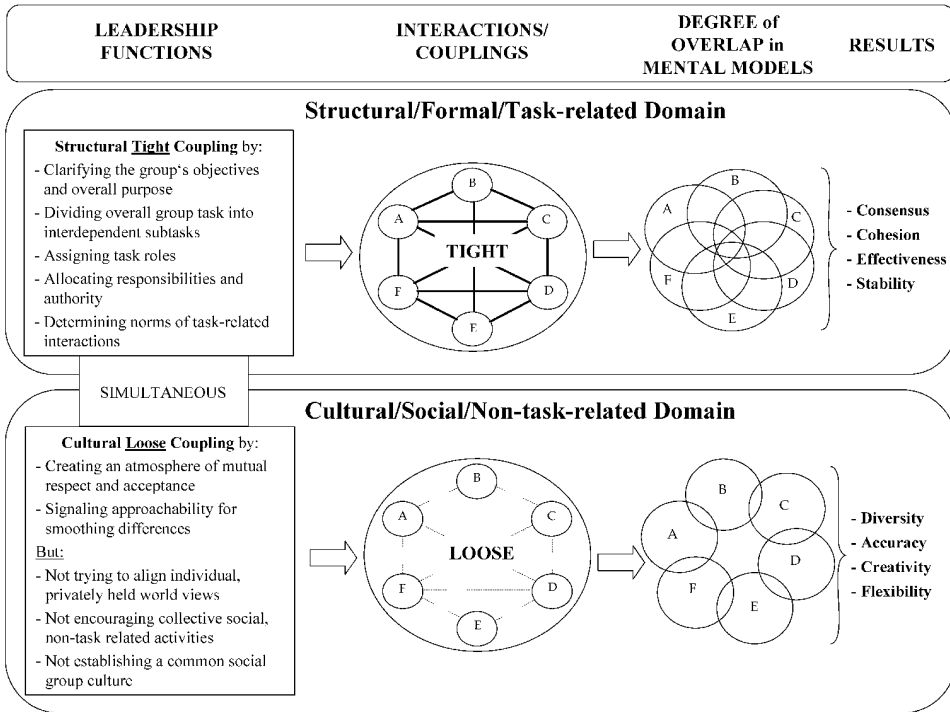
al. 2000). Group structure is understood as the organized relations between group members that determine the allocation of tasks, responsibilities, and authority (e.g., McGrath et al. 1993). Group size refers to the number of people working together in a group, and finally, group composition pertains to attributes and characteristics of group members and covers the degree to which members are alike or bring unique qualities into the group (e.g., Guzzo/Dickson 1996).

If tight coupling between workgroup members means frequent, significant, direct, and interdependent interactions, and if the structural coupling between members is supposed to be tight to provide a certain predictability and reliability in outcomes by means of shared group mental models of the task domain, the above mentioned structural group design features have to be accordingly arranged. This is where group leadership comes in, putting the appropriate coupling mechanisms to work.

Structural coupling mechanisms represent the formal arrangements within a system that allow it to function effectively and that can be modified only by formal decisions. Applied to the case of multicultural workgroups, each of the structural group characteristics has to be formally shaped by the group leadership so as to

tightly couple group members within the structural, task-related domain. Concretely, what has to be done?

To achieve tight structural coupling, first, the group leader should divide the overall task into subtasks whose completion is contingent upon the completion of other subtasks. This implies that group members are required to exchange information and resources extensively to complete individual subtasks, leading to completion of the overall task. Such a highly interdependent task structure requires group members to engage in task-related communications that could reveal diverse perceptions, interpretations and approaches to the problem, probably stimulating task conflicts as well, but which have been shown to improve performance, all taken together, contributing to the quality of developed task solutions.

Second, the workgroup needs to be provided with a clear structure. The relations between group members determining the allocation of tasks, responsibilities, and authority need to be organized so that clarity and direction of the interdependent task work can be established. Concretely, the group's objectives have to be made clear and every group member has to understand the group's purpose. Furthermore, specific task roles and responsibilities should be assigned, and norms of interaction have to be determined.

All these structuring activities require group leaders to know about group members' cultural backgrounds, skills, and occupational and personal identities ahead of time, leading to the next structural characteristics that have to be formally arranged, namely the group's size and its composition. If group members are supposed to interact frequently, significantly and directly with one another to accomplish their tasks, the group's size should not exceed a critical number (e.g., Gladstein 1984, Campion/Medsker/Higgs 1993). But the members that are selected to work in a group should be diverse with regard to their cultural value orientations, if diversity in perceptions, interpretations and approaches to problems is required by the group's task.

In summary, if a multicultural workgroup is given a highly interdependent task, provided with a clear group structure, composed of culturally diverse and interculturally competent members totaling a just manageable group size, then a tight structural coupling between group members has been achieved. That in turn heightens the probabilities for establishing a group structural mental model about the task situation, which in turn heightens chances for finding consensus regarding task-related problems, for establishing some degree of cohesion (since in task-related interaction dimensions, similarities between members can emerge), and finally, for effective multicultural task work. Structural or task-related tight coupling necessitates strong engagement in task related processes that, in turn, have been shown to lead to high group performance (e.g., Ancona/Caldwell 1992).

So, achieving tight structural coupling between multicultural workgroup members by a structurally oriented leadership is the first step in designing effective multicultural workgroups. But this is only one side of the coin. Since tight structural

couplings are necessary for all kinds of workgroups to perform effectively, they do not distinguish design implications. This can only be done by looking at the other side of the coin. To realize the cultural diversity's potential inherent in multicultural workgroups, the tight structural coupling *must* be accompanied by loose cultural coupling.

Achieving Loose Cultural Couplings

The cultural coupling domain refers to the non-task-related, social side of systems and focuses on informal, social and interpersonal activities such as nontask-related communication (i.e. gossiping, personal or private disclosing) and socializing (i.e. going out to after-work parties or joint sightseeing-trips).

Before applying the idea of cultural coupling, several important considerations have to be reviewed. The first one refers to the question as to what actually constitutes the potential of multicultural workgroups. Diversity in perceptions, interpretations and behaviors make multicultural group work so valuable, since the pool of information, strategies, and problem solutions available for the group is dramatically enlarged and chances are heightened that innovative solutions can be developed. This potential is already somewhat diminished by tight structural couplings that align task-related structural frames of references. But if the potential of cultural diversity is to be fully utilized, then the only way to do this is to keep the cultural diversity as high as possible. Since cultural diversity has its major impacts on perceptions and interpretations, it strongly influences the social reality in workgroups and the respective social mental models of its members.

The idea of loose cultural coupling of workgroup members means that the cultural coupling mechanisms of story-telling, creating rituals or using metaphors every one can agree with should not be employed. The reason is not a straightforward as one could wish, but questioned the other way around, what would happen if these mechanisms were employed? When creating rituals such as going out for dinner together on a regular basis, chances are high that at these occasions the group members talk to each other also about their personal selves, private issues and opinions. Chances are also high that in the course of doing so, they'll find out about fundamental differences between them. For instance, they may find out that for some of their members, physical punishment of relatives is an approved and appropriate way to secure family order. Or they might find out that some of their members see elder care or childcare as a responsibility of the state. Still others might have completely opposing views on politics or other social issues. Now, if workgroup members find out about interpersonal differences that touch personally held values such as cultural ones, and the "rightness" of these values is suddenly questioned, their individual socio-cultural identities become threatened. As research on social identity theory has shown, this can lead to deprecating behaviors, to dislike of the other

group members, to feelings of uneasiness with having to deal with each other or in general to interpersonal tensions (e.g., Tajfel/Turner 1986, Polzer/Milton/Swann 2002, Randel 2003)

A similar point can be made with metaphors. First, the use of metaphors – even metaphors for group- or team work – varies significantly across cultures and organizations (e.g., Gibson/Zellmehr-Bruhn 2001). And second, as has been proposed, metaphors such as food or food preparation (e.g., Gluesing/Gibson 2004), whose meaning can be unifying across contextual boundaries and that can help group members talk about issues such as planning and gathering resources (e.g., checking receipts and determining what ingredients are needed and how or where to get it), executing tasks and presenting results (e.g., the act of cooking and how to serve the food), these metaphors sill can evoke undesired consequences. While the supporting function of such metaphors can be acknowledged, one can further ask in this example, what happens if people then also talk about the specific ingredients or general habits and rules of eating? What happens if group members find out that for some, dog meat or almost hatched bird eggs are delicacies? Or that some of their members not only never eat pork meat, but consider those who do as unclean as the meat? It seems reasonable to assume that cultural practices and habits such as these can create feelings of awkwardness between group members who do not share habits or customs. It might also be that some members experience repulsion or disgust, because they lack complete understanding, when they discover extreme differences in cultural habits. People might infer from such attributes different aesthetic or hygiene conditions or tastes, or certain personality traits that they don't favor. Prejudices might develop or be reinforced, all of which are conditions that won't help the workgroup towards their organizational goals. Disliking and conflicts that arise from the social, interpersonal or affective levels might evolve and hinder workgroup effectiveness (e.g., von Glinow/Shapiro/Brett 2004).

In summary, cultural diversity has to be maintained to the greatest possible degree. To do so, the group leader should be very cautious in employing the cultural coupling mechanisms to establish a shared mental that does not focus on the task-related domain. Since a multicultural workgroup needs shared structural mental models of the task domain and its requirements, the only chance to keep the potential of the cultural diversity within such groups is to leave the social, private, non-task related worlds of group members to themselves. Since group processes (task and social) reciprocally influence each other, the diversity of perceptions, interpretations and behaviors regarding the social and private worlds will function as a source infusing the task-related processes with new and differing ideas and approaches. Inevitably, because task-related processes also influence social processes, some backwards agreement may occur, but nevertheless, at least not the full potential of diversity is lost.

Continuing the argument, to realize the potential inherent in different perception, interpretation, and behavior modes that can be applied to solving group tasks,

members of multicultural workgroups should only be loosely coupled to one another within the cultural domain that is on a social, interpersonal level. Loose coupling here means that workgroup members interact only infrequently, indirectly or negligibly in this domain, thereby reducing the mutual impact they could have on each other on the social level to a minimum (e.g., Weick 1976 1987). A workgroup that is loosely coupled culturally keeps its comprehensive but highly differentiated perceptions, is able to adapt to local contingencies, and very importantly, is able to preserve and store new solutions, innovations and improvisations even if such are not needed momentarily. Cultural loose coupling between workgroup members also reduces non-task-related coordination requirements, since consensus and mutual adjustments are not as necessary (e.g., Weick 1987, Orton/ Weick 1990). On the social level then, the workgroup maintains an accurately perceiving, highly diverse, creative and flexible approach, and the socially-originated diversity can infuse and support the workgroup function to achieve organizational goals.

In concrete terms, then, group leadership should not try to align the individual social and value-based mental models of multicultural workgroup members and perhaps not encourage members to engage in non-task-related social activities and socializing, and not work with the group to establish a common group culture. If there are fewer occasions for social interactions, then multicultural group members do not run such a high risk of finding out about potentially fundamental value and behavior differences, which could result in disliking, decreased interpersonal attractiveness, and mistrust. When communication and interaction are directed towards the task related processes, fundamental differences might not surface that much. In fact, group members, by being focused on a complex task and given a well defined group structure, might even believe that their understandings of the group task work is singular and shared, while they actually retain their multiple understandings (e.g., Weick 1976, Orton/Weick 1990).

To keep a multicultural workgroup loosely coupled on a cultural, interpersonal level might be a provocative suggestion, but if it is seriously intended to enable multicultural workgroups to realize the potential of their cultural diversity, the very ingredients that make up the potential have to be put into perspective. And if it is the diversity in perceptions, interpretations and behaviors that make up the potential, then the strategy could not be to completely blend these differences or align them. Then cultural diversity would be utilized, not assimilated (e.g., Smith/Blanck 2002). This does not mean that leading multicultural workgroups is limited to providing a clear structure, though. In the absence of facilitating social interactions within such workgroups, to create a workgroup atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance becomes an important leadership function (e.g., Weick/Van Orden 1990, Weick/ Roberts 1993). Acceptance is important because group members might not fully understand the perception and interpretations of fellow group members, they might not know where the interpretations and behaviors come from, but they would still

be confident that every single contribution to the task work is valuable. They need to develop respect for the contributions of their group members as well as respect for their own perceptions and interpretations so they can contribute to accomplishing the group's tasks without hesitation or the fear of depreciation (Weick 1982, Weick/Van Orden 1990). A multicultural workgroup that with the support of its leader is able to establish a working atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance, without group members truly knowing each other, but relieving them of the need to perfectly understand the other members, has greater access to its multicultural resources and therefore greater chances to utilize their potential.

Discussion

The proposed model of simultaneous tight structural and loose cultural coupling is by its very conceptualization a rather strict and dichotomous one. For clarifying purposes, the social and the task-related sides of multicultural group work have been analytically separated, even though in practice such separation might not be the actual state of matters. This has been done, though, to point towards what really is hoped for from workgroups composed of members differing in cultural backgrounds. We want to realize the maximum of the group's inherent potential. The model presented here is a theoretical approach, an idea to stimulate new ways of thinking about the whole issue of diverse workgroups.

A clear limitation of the proposed model concerns the practicality of its implementation. The model does not suggest that people should be forbidden to engage in interpersonal interactions, even if this could be done. Since human interactions unrelated to task work will always occur, the model suggests that group members should not be encouraged additionally to do so**.** If members like each other and discover each other over the course of jointly working on a group task, they will probably learn to accept and appreciate cultural differences they beforehand might have disliked. If workgroup members are not forced to get to know each other quickly, after some time mutual personal understanding might develop and that most certainly serves positive group functions. This leads to a second limitation of this article. The temporal perspective has been ignored, the focus was on the initial phase of multicultural group work. How group processes change and adapt over time and whether the proposed design model then still holds, could be a promising research venue.

And finally, maybe for workgroups such as global virtual teams, where members don't interact face-to-face very frequently and hence have fewer occasions to interact on social or private levels, the proposed model could work best. Future research could be directed to finding this out.

Conclusion

This paper has developed a basic framework for designing multicultural workgroups so as to solve their dilemma: realizing their cultural diversity's potential on the one hand and not falling prey to homogenization pressures and process losses on the other hand. This paper's contribution is to suggest that the theoretical perspective of coupling can be applied to solve the described dilemma of multicultural workgroups and to offer possible suggestions for how to design multicultural workgroups so that they will function effectively. Achieving tight coupling within the structural domain and simultaneous loose coupling within the cultural or social domain could lead to effective multicultural group work with realization of the inherent potential in such workgroups.

Whereas tight structural coupling within multicultural workgroup provides group members with structural knowledge concerning task completion and allows them to develop a shared structural mental model of its task domain, loose cultural coupling provides them with cognitive, affective and behavioral discretion and autonomy, preserving a sense of uniqueness and appreciation. The tight structural couplings provide such groups with information about the group's objectives, guidelines and rules for interaction, clear responsibilities and roles, and thereby allow for predictable and reliable task work. Further, by tight structural coupling, member's communications and interactions are strongly occupied with task-related issues, which leaves less room for socio-emotional concerns. If members at the same time are allowed to keep their own cultural identities as well, are encouraged to contribute their uniqueness to the task work, and are not forced to align their individual social constructions with those of their fellow group members, they experience appreciation, respect and acceptance. This makes it equally comfortable for them to accept and respect the group's other members. As a result, loose cultural and tight structural couplings may reinforce themselves, enabling multicultural workgroups to achieve effective performance and to access and utilize their potential of differing cultural backgrounds for innovative and special solutions of complex problems.

The image that emerges from these considerations should resemble both the idea of a melting pot and of a tossed salad. In a melting pot the ingredients are processed until they share their identities and yield a final product of uniform consistency and flavor. In contrast, a tossed salad is made of different vegetables that each provides a unique taste and texture being arranged and dressed so as to create a delicious overall sensation. A multicultural workgroup can be both, and perhaps should be.

Anne Susann Bachmann

References

Adler, N. J., *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*, 4th edition, Cincinnati: South-Western 2002.

Ancona, D. G./Caldwell, D. F., Demography and Design: Predictors of New Product Team Performance, *Organization Science*, 3, 3, 1992, pp. 321–341.

Argote, L./McGrath, J. E., Group Process in Organizations: Continuity and Change, in Cooper, C. L./IRobertson, I. T. (eds.), *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, New York: Wiley 1993, pp. 333–389.

Beekun, R. I./Glick, W. H., Development and Test of a Contingency Framework of Coupling: Assessing the Covariation Between Structure and Culture, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 37, 4, 2001, pp. 385–407.

Bettenhausen, K./Murnighan, J. K., The Development of an Intragroup Norm and the Effects of Interpersonal and Structural Challenges, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36, 1, 1991, pp. 20–35.

Bettenhausen, K. L., Five Years of Group Research: What We Have Learned and What Needs to be Addressed, *Journal of Management*, 17, 2, 1991, pp. 345–381.

Bouncken, R. B., Cultural Diversity in Entrepreneurial Teams: Findings of New Ventures in Germany, *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 13, 4, 2004, pp. 240–253.

Bowers, C. A./Pharmer, J. A./Salas, E., When Member Homogeneity Is Needed in Work Teams: A Meta-Analysis, *Small Group Research*, 31, 3, 2000, pp. 305–327.

Campion, M. A./Medsker, G. J./Higgs, A. C., Relations between Work Group Characteristics and Effectiveness: Implications for Designing Effective Work Groups, *Personnel Psychology*, 46, 4, 1993, pp. 823–850.

Canney Davison, S./Ekelund, B. Z., Effective Team Processes for Global Teams, in Lane, H. W. et al. (eds.), *The Blackwell Handbook of Global Management: A Guide to Managing Complexity*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2004, pp. 227–249.

Chatman, J. A./Polzer, J. T./Barsade, S. G./Neale, M. A., Being Different yet Feeling Similar: The Influence of Demographic Composition and Organizational Culture on Work Processes and Outcomes, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 43, 4, 1998, pp. 749–780.

Cohen, S. G./Bailey, D. E., What Makes Teams Work: Group Effectiveness Research from the Shop Floor to the Executive Suite, *Journal of Management*, 23, 3, 1997, pp. 239–290.

Cox, T. H., *Cultural Diversity in Organizations: Theory, Research and Practice*, San Francisco, California: Berret-Koehler 1993.

Cox, T. H./Lobel, S. A./McLeod, P. L., Effects of Ethnic Group Cultural Differences on Cooperative and Competitive Behaviour on a Group Task, *Academy of Management Journal*, 34, 4, 1991, pp. 827–847.

Devine, D. J./Clayton, L. D./Philips, J. L./Dunford, B. B./Melner, S. B., Teams in Organizations: Prevalence, Characteristics, and Effectiveness, *Small Group Research*, 30, 6, 1999, pp. 678–711.

DiStefano, J. J./Maznevski, M. L., Creating Value with Diverse Teams in Global Management, *Organizational Dynamics*, 29, 1, 2000, pp. 45–63.

Dose, J. J./Klimoski, R. J., The Diversity of Diversity: Work Values Effects on Formative Team Processes, *Human Resource Management Review*, 9, 1, 1999, pp. 83–108.

Earley, P. C./Gibson, C. B., *Multinational Work Teams: A New Perspective*, Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates 2002.

Earley, P. C./Mosakowski, E., Creating Hybrid Team Cultures: An Empirical Test of Transnational Team Functioning, *Academy of Management Journal*, 43, 1, 2000, pp. 26–49.

Elron, E., Top Management Teams within Multinational Corporations: Effects of Cultural Heterogeneity, *Leadership Quarterly*, 8, 4, 1997, pp. 393–412.

Ely, R. J./Thomas, D. A., Cultural Diversity at Work: The Effects of Diversity Perspectives on Work Group Processes and Outcomes, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 46, 2, 2001, pp. 229–273.

Gibson, C. B./Zellmer-Bruhn, M. E., Metaphors and Meaning: An Intercultural Analysis of the Concept of Teamwork, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 46, 2, 2001, pp. 274-303.

Gladstein, D. L., Groups in Context: A Model of Task Group Effectiveness, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 29, 4, 1984, pp. 499–517.

Glinow, M. A. von/Shapiro, D. L./Brett, J. M., Can We Talk and Should We? Managing Emotional Conflict in Multicultural Teams, *Academy of Management Review*, 29, 4, 2004, pp. 578–592.

Gluesing, J. C./Gibson, C. B., Designing and Forming Global Teams, in Lane, H. W. et al. (eds.), *The Blackwell Handbook of Global Management: A Guide to Managing Complexity*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2004, pp. 199–226.

Guzzo, R. A./Dickson, M. W., Teams in Organizations: Recent Research on Performance and Effectiveness, *Annual Review of Psychology*, 47, 1996, pp. 307–338.

Hackman, J. R., The Design of Work Teams, in Lorsch, J. W. (ed.), *Handbook of Organizational Behavior*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall 1987, pp. 315–342.

Hall, E. T./Hall, M., *Understanding Cultural Differences*, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press 1990.

Hambrick, D. C./Canney Davison, S./Snell, S. A./Snow, C. C.,When Groups Consist of Multiple Nationalities: Towards a New Understanding of the Implications, *Organization Studies*, 19, 2, 1998, pp. 181–205.

Harrison, D. A./Price, K. H./Gavin, J. H./Florey, A. T., Time, Teams and Task Performance: Changing Effects of Surface- and Deep-Level Diversity on Group Functioning, *Academy of Management Journal*, 45, 5, 2002, pp. 1029–1045.

Hofstede, G., *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work Related Values,* Beverly Hills – London: Sage 1980.

Hofstede, G., *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations*, 2nd edition, Thousand Oaks – London: Sage 2001.

Jackson, S. E., The Consequences of Diversity in Multidisciplinary Work Teams, in West, M. A. (ed.), *Handbook of Work Group Psychology*, New York: John Wiley & Sons 1996, pp. 53–75.

Jackson, S. E./Joshi, A./Erhardt, N. L., Recent Research on Team and Organizational Diversity: SWOT Analysis and Implications, *Journal of Management*, 29, 6, 2003, pp. 801–830.

Jackson, S. E./May, K. E./Whitney, K., Understanding the Dynamic of Diversity in Decision-Making Teams, in Guzzo, R. A./Salas E. (eds.), *Team Effectiveness and Decision-Making in Organizations*, San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass 1995, pp. 204–261.

Janis, I. L., *Victims of Groupthin: A Psychological Study of Foreign Policy Decisions and Fiascos*, Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin 1972.

Jehn, K. A./Northcraft, G. B./Neale, M. A., Why Differences Make a Difference: A Field Study of Diversity, Conflict, and Performance in Workgroups, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44, 4, 1999, pp. 741–763.

Katz, N./Lazer, D./Arrow, H./Contractor, N., Network Theory and Small Groups, *Small Group Research*, 35, 3, 2004, pp. 307–332.

Kayworth, T. R./Leidner, D. E., Leadership Effectiveness in Global Virtual Teams, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 18, 3, 2002, pp. 7–40.

Kirchmeyer, C./Cohen, A., Multicultural Groups: Their Performance and Reactions with Constructive Conflict, *Group & Organization Management*, 17, 2, 1992, pp. 153–170.

Klimoski, R./Mohammed, S., Team Mental Model: Construct or Metaphor?, *Journal of Management*, 20, 2, 1994, pp. 403–437.

Kluckhohn, F. R./Strodtbeck, F. L., *Variations in Value Orientations*, Westport: Greenwood Press 1961.

Lane, H. W./Maznevski, M. L./Mendenhall, M. E., Globalization: Hercules Meets Buddha, in Lane, H. W. et al. (eds.), *The Blackwell Handbook of Global Management: A Guide to Managing Complexity*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2004, pp. 3–25.

Marks, M. A./Zaccaro, S. J./Mathieu, J. E., Performance Implications of Leader Briefings and Team-Interaction Training for Team Adaptation to Novel Environments, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85, 6, 2000, pp. 971–986.

Martins, L. L./Milliken, F. J./Wiesenfeld, B. M./Salgado, S. R., Racioethnic Diversity and Group Members' Experiences: The Role of the Racioethnic Diversity of the Organizational Context, *Group & Organization Management*, 28, 1, 2003, pp. 75–106.

Maznevski, M. L./Chudoba, K. M., Bridging Space over Time: Global Virtual Team Dynamics and Effectiveness, *Organization Science*, 11, 5, 2000, pp. 473–492.

Maznevski, M. L./Peterson, M. F., Societal Values, Social Interpretation and Multinational Executive Teams, in Granrose, C. S./Oskamp, S. (eds.), *Cross-Cultural Work Groups,* Thousand Oaks – London: Sage 1997, pp. 61–89.

Maznevski, M. L., Understanding Our Differences: Performance in Decision-Making Groups With Diverse Members, *Human Relations*, 47, 5, 1994, pp. 531–551.

Maznevski, M. L./DiStefano, J. J./Gomez, C. B./Noorderhaven, N. G./Wu, P. C.,Cultural Dimensions at the Individual Level of Analysis: The Cultural Orientations Framework, *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 2, 3, 2002, pp. 275–295.

McGrath, J. E., *Social Psychology: A Brief Introduction*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1964.

McGrath, J. E., Time, Interaction, and Performance: A Theory of Groups, *Small Group Research*, 22, 2, 1991, pp. 147–174.

McGrath, J. E./Arrow, H./Gruenfeld, D. H./Hollingshead, A. B./O'Connor, K. M., Groups, Tasks, and Technology: The Effects of Experience and Change, *Small Group Research*, 24, 3, 1993, pp. 406–420.

McLeod, P. L./Lobel, S. A./Cox, T. H., Ethnic Diversity and Creativity in Small Groups, *Small Group Research*, 27, 2, 1996, pp. 248–264.

Milliken, F. J./Martins, L. L., Searching For Common Threads: Understanding the Multiple Effects of Diversity in Organizational Groups, *Academy of Management Review*, 21, 2, 1996, pp. 402–433.

Mohammed, S./Angell, L. C., Personality Heterogeneity in Teams: Which Differences Make a Difference for Team Performance? *Small Group Research*, 34, 6, 2003, pp. 651–677.

Ng, D., The Social Dynamics of Diverse and Closed Networks, *Human Systems Management*, 23, 2, 2004, pp. 111–122.

O'Reilly III, C. A./Chatman, J./Caldwell, D. F., People and Organizational Culture: A Profile Comparison Approach to Assessing Person-Organization Fit, *Academy of Management Journal*, 34, 3, 1991, pp. 487–516.

O'Reilly III, C. A./Caldwell, D. F./Barnett, W. P., Work Group Demography, Social Integration and Turnover, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 34, 1, 1989, pp. 21–37.

Orton, J. D./Weick, K. E., Loosely Coupled Systems: A Reconceptualization, *Academy of Management Review*, 15, 2, 1990, pp. 203–223.

Pelled, L. H., Demographic Diversity, Conflict, and Work Group Outcomes: An Intervening Process Theory, *Organization Science*, 7, 6, 1996, pp. 615–631.

Pelled, L. H./Eisenhardt, K. M./Xin, K. R., Exploring the Black Box: An Analysis of Work Group Diversity, Conflict and Performance, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44, 1, 1999, pp. 1–28.

Podsiadlowski, A., *Multikulturelle Arbeitsgruppen in Unternehmen: Bedingungen für eine erfolgreiche Zusammenarbeit am Beispiel deutscher Unternehmen in Südostasien,* Münster: Waxman 2002.

Polzer, J. T./Milton, L. P./Swann, Jr., W. B., Capitalizing on Diversity: Interpersonal Congruence in Small Work Groups, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47, 2, 2002, pp. 296–324.

Punnett, B. J./Clemens, J., Cross-National Diversity: Implications for International Expansion Decisions, *Journal of World Business*, 34, 2, 1999, pp. 128–138.

Randel, A., The Salience of Culture in Multinational Teams and Its Relation to Team Citizenship Behavior, *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 3, 1, 2003, pp. 27–44.

Rijamampianina, R./Carmichael, T., A Pragmatic and Holistic Approach to Managing Diversity, *Problems and Perspectives in Management,* 1, 2005, pp. 109–117.

Rokeach, M., *The Nature of Human Values*, New York: Free Press 1973.

Ruigrok, W./Wagner, H., *Matching Managers to Strategies: Do Multinational Companies Need Multicultural Top Management Teams?*, paper presented at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting, Washington, DC 2001.

Schwartz, S. H./Bilsky, W., Toward a Theory of the Universal Content and Structure of Values: Extensions and Cross-Cultural Replications, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58, 5, 1990, pp. 878–891.

Schwartz, S. H., A Theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work, *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 48, 1, 1999, pp. 23–47.

Sivakumar, K./Nakata, C., Designing Global New Product Teams: Optimizing the Effects of National Culture on New Product Development, *International Marketing Review*, 20, 4, 2003, pp. 397–445.

Smith, P. B., Predicting Process Difficulties in Multicultural Teams, *Psychologische Beiträge*, 41, 3, 1999, pp. 356–367.

Smith, P. G./Blanck, E. L., From Experience: Leading Dispersed Teams, *The Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 19, 4, 2002, pp. 294–304.

Tajfel, H./Turner, J. C., The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior, in Worchel, S./Austin, W.G. (eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall 1986, pp. 7–24.

Thomas, D.C., Cultural Diversity and Work Group Effectiveness: An Experimental Study, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 30, 2, 1999, pp. 242–263.

Trompenaars, F., *Riding the Waves of Culture, Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business*, London: Nicholas Brealey 1993.

Tsui, A./Egan, T./O'Reilly III, C. A., Being Different: Relational Demography and Organizational Attachment, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 37, 4, 1992, pp. 549–579.

Van der Vegt, G./Emans, B./Van de Vliert, E., Team Member's Affective Responses to Patterns of Intragroup Interdependence and Job Complexity, *Journal of Management*, 26, 4, 2000, pp. 633–655.

Watson, W. E./Kumar, K., Differences in Decision Making Regarding Risk Taking: A Comparison of Culturally Diverse and Culturally Homogeneous Task Groups, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 16, 1, 1992, pp. 53–65.

Watson, W. E./Kumar, K./Michaelsen, L. K., Cultural Diversity's Impact on Interaction Process and Performance: Comparing Homogeneous and Diverse Task Groups, *Academy of Management Journal*, 36, 3, 1993, pp. 590–602.

Webber, S. S./Donahue, L. M., Impact of Highly and Less Job-Related Diversity on Work Group Cohesion and Performance: A Meta-Analysis, *Journal of Management*, 27, 2, 2001, pp. 141–162.

Weick, K. E., Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21, 1, 1976, pp. 1–19.

Weick, K. E., Management of Organizational Change Among Loosely Coupled Elements, in Goodman, P. (ed.), *Change in Organizations*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 1982, pp. 375–408.

Weick, K. E., Perspectives on Action in Organizations, in Lorsch, J. W. (ed.), *Handbook of Organizational Behavior*, Englewood Cliffs – New Jersey: Prentice Hall 1987, pp. 10–28.

Weick, K. E./Roberts, K. H., Collective Mind in Organizations: Heedful Interrelating on Flight Decks, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38, 3, 1993, pp. 357–381.

Weick, K. E./Van Orden, P. W., Organizing on a Global Scale: A Research and Teaching Agenda, *Human Resource Management*, 29, 1, 1990, pp. 49–61.

Williams, K. Y./O'Reilly III, C. A., Demography and Diversity in Organizations: A Review of 40 Years of Research, *Research in Organizational Behavior,* 20, 1, 1998, pp. 77–140.