Themes of Failure and Frustration Within an Organizational Diversity Initiative

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Introduction

Diversity management strategies date back to the introduction of equal employment and opportunity laws in the mid 20th century. Legislation that sought to correct for systemic marginalization and discrimination of individuals based on their group identity forced organizations to create policies and programs that, in theory, ensured equal and fair hiring and promoting, reduced occupational segregation based on identity (i.e. gender, class, race, etc.), and eliminated identity-based incivility and harassment (Gatrell & Swan, 2008). The workplace has become more diversified as a result of organizations becoming more global as well as increased worker migration. Because of internationalization and the resulting changes in the work environment, organizations needed to adapt to an altered workforce. In time, the focus for organizational managers shifted away from workplace discrimination to diversification and inclusion (Ferdman, 2013). Further, there has been a recent increase in the number of organizational leaders persuaded by the business case for diversity (that increased and well-managed diversity increases organizational creativity, competitiveness, and profitability) (Hanappi-Egger, Koellen, & Mensi-Klarbach, 2007; Herring, 2009; Kossek, Lobel & Brown, 2006; Litvin, 2006; Mensi-Klarbach, 2012; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). The end result of these changes is a marked increase and focus on diversity management as a necessary and even integral aspect of organizational functioning.

However, diversity management seems to be difficult both to implement and to conduct. As far back as the 1990s researchers and practitioners recognized the inherent challenges of diversity management and were calling for alternative strategies and perspectives (Thomas & Ely, 1996). Managers are uncertain what to do when asked to manage diversity (Citation needed) and diversity initiatives are difficult to make successful (citation needed). One could question whether it is even possible to create perfectly successful diversity management. Acknowledging this limitation, it is clear that there are practices that better assist organizational members to not only make use of their workplace diversity, but create organizations that actually thrive *because* of their diversity (Citation, citation). This paper highlights one of these strategies often mentioned as successful: the use of diversity ambassadors (e.g., Kalev, Kelly, & Dobbin, 2006; Omanović, 2006; Subeliani & Tsogas, 2005).

While many organizations now employ professional diversity managers or directors and may even dedicate resources to even support an entire Diversity Unit or Department, many organizations rely

on their own managers, middle managers, and individual workers to practice diversity management, often on top of their own organizational duties. The study presented in this paper is a key example of this practice. Specifically, we highlight the case of a Swedish municipality's diversity management strategy implantation to describe how and why the use of diversity ambassadors failed to meet the objectives of their strategy. The overall initiative, while successful in small ways, is considered a failure on both a committee and organizational level. As a committee, the diversity ambassadors were not utilized properly and therefore unable to achieve their goals of promoting greater diversity and equality within the organization. The failure of the committee led to the overall lack of change within the organization and failure to achieve their stated diversity goals.

This paper highlights the need for critical analysis of current diversity management practices and strategies. The experiences and voices of lay-diversity practitioners is mainly missing within the literature. We seek to fill this gap within the diversity management literature with a focus on non-professional diversity workers. More specifically, our study considers not only the potential limitations or problems with expecting individual workers to facilitate diversity management alongside their regular organizational duties, but also the organizational and structural failures associated with this organizational change. In doing so, we advocate for a shifting in our research focus from more formal diversity management practices to consider the informational micro-practices, which contribute to significant organizational change.

Literature Review

Diversity management

Diversity is used to describe both organizations and individuals. The term is used to describe organizations or groups when they achieve a high degree of difference within themselves. Diversity is also used to define individuals based on a specific identifying feature (e.g. race, sex, religion, physical and mental ability) as well as link them to larger marginalized groups (e.g. women, elderly, Muslims). Initiatives to hire and/or integrate individuals from marginalized groups are often called diversity initiatives because they bring the marginalizing practices into focus and facilitate ways of initiating organizational change. It is believed that the inclusion of such diverse individuals, then,

will enhance the diversity of the organization (the business case) as well as correct past injustices (the moral case).

While the term diversity is used as an adjective to describe organizations or individuals, it is, as indicated above, often associated with organizational and management strategies, and the association is sometimes codified through the term diversity management. From this vantage point, diversity management is a strategy to "deal with the changing demographic of employees and customers, and inequalities in the workplace" (Gatrell & Swan, 2008, p. 6). An alternative, although not entirely antithetical, perspective defines diversity (management) as a proactive attempt to consider identity characteristics in organizing practices. Thus, it becomes the responsibility of management to seek out and then utilize employee diversity with the aim of releasing the potential benefit to the organization that is contained in this diversity (Cox & Beale, 1997, p. 2).

Sometimes rooted in egalitarian discourse and motivated by changes to equal opportunity laws, many organizations find themselves required to create diversity management strategies or initiatives to either heighten the organizational diversity, or at the very least, record the organizational practices that prevent systemic discrimination based on diversity characteristics such as sex, gender, race, or religion. Organizations are also motivated by what is sometimes called the 'business case' for diversity, which suggests that employing and utilizing a more diverse workforce will increase profitability, facilitate innovation and creativity, and even improve efficiency. These initiatives function like most other intentional organizational changes and can encounter the same pitfalls and challenges. We examine some of those challenges in the next section.

Organizational change

Most organizational scholars agree that organizational change is omnipresent and ongoing – it is the very stuff of organizing (Moran & Brightman, 2001; Rieley and Clarkson,2001; Todnem By, 2005). Dating back to 1947, Lewin's model of organizational change: unfreezing – changing—refreezing describes the fluid nature of organizational life. Scholars go further to differentiate organizational change that is "episodic, discontinuous, and intermittent and change that is continuous, evolving, and incremental" (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 362). Organizational change is both an internally driven force that facilitates the intentional moving of a particular direction as well as a reactionary

response to unforeseen actions (Nelson, 2003). As such, change can be understood from a variety of perspectives, including from a strategy, culture, and even interpretive perspective.

Weick and Quinn (1999) rightly point out that how we define organizational change stems from our own position within the organization. A macro-level of analysis reveals more intentional and strategic changes that appear as "repetitive action, routine, and inertia dotted with occasional episodes of revolutionary change" (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 362). However, from a micro-level, change is ongoing and small, better described as "adaptation and adjustment" rather than substantial and overarching (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 362). That said, the continuous nature of micro-level change suggests that their cumulative impact may, in fact, change organizational structure and strategy.

Organizational change as a result of failure

Some scholars suggest that organizational change is a result of failed attempts to properly manage the organization. If the organization was "continuously adaptive" the organization would not need the type of intentional and strategic changes such as the ones described in this case (c.f. Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 362; see also Dunphy, 1996). However, there are occasions when organizations embark on strategic and intentional change in an effort to move beyond adaptive actions. Diversity strategies are keen examples of this type of change as many are implemented to correct past lapses and failures. Even with the best intentions and need, all organizational change is challenging, unpredictable, and demanding. Because change rests on not just the quality of the prescribed change but the ability of individuals to implement and then others to accept, even the most well planned organizational change strategy can be met with keen resistance.

Resistance to organizational change

Even with the most prescribed and controlled organizational change strategies, there is variance in how the various organizational members and stakeholders understand and make sense of the change. It is naive to proceed as if the organizational members will adopt change in a unified and similar way. Further, change is not often openly accepted, or at least accepted in full.

Organizational members fluctuate between accepting and resisting and devise strategies to coopt the planned changes to further their personal agenda and objectives (Barge et.al., 2008; Lewis, & Seibold, 1996). Diversity related changes, especially, are often openly and covertly resisted by organizational members (Friday & Friday, 2003), in part because diversity strategies and initiatives often require organizational cultural changes that speak to the very identity of not only the organization, but the members of that organization (Herdman & McMillan-Capehart, 2010).

Even intentional change such as that described in this case must account for the ways in which the change is socially constructive and interpretive by the various organizational members and stakeholders. The ways in which the specific changes become meaningful vary depending on the context, individuals involved, and organizational objective or goal for that moment (Barrett, Thomas, Hocevar, 1995). Because diversity signals a much more significant change –more than merely reorganizing of the organizational structures, it signifies significant changes in attitude, behaviors, and feelings that run very deep and are tied to ideological and social constructs.

One reason change is rarely happily embraced by most organizational members is because they feel disconnected from the change. Strategy talk and description often remains abstract, theoretical, and unclear. Top-down decisions and processes can appear rigid, impractical, and even misguided. Noting that those who must manage change "deal with experiences that are without explanation, such as when the unexpected occurs, when close attention reveals the need to alter the speed of ongoing change or when changing itself generates moments of senselessness," Weick (2011, p. 8) suggests a more literary approach to understanding this complex task. Highlighting the interpretive nature of organizational life, Weick (2011) positions the change poet, as he calls her, as the chief sensemaker and giver for other organizational members. Poets, in this telling, fill in for what is missing – what is lost in the abstract words of description. Change poets introduce flux into organizational change and tie it to personal first-hand experience:

> What is crucial for change is that ordinary words are recombined to lend substance to absent tings. What is often 'absent' in change management is a vivid picture of the flux associated with first-hand experience. Also missing are concepts and hunches that preserve small, subtle details whose foregrounding can produce large scale consequences (Weick, 2011, p. 8)

Weick's concept of the change poet is especially useful for this study because it highlights the ways in which the change agent needs to translate concepts into tangible organizational practices.

Change agents

Accounting for the oft-experienced resistance to change, organizations frequently use change agents to help facilitate and implement the change. Change agents are a widely used method for creating and facilitating organizational change. Change agents "develop a climate for planned change by overcoming resistances and rallying forces for positive growth" (Westover, 2010, p. 45). In addition, change agents are responsible for creating interest in and legitimizing the need/rationale for change as well as the new model or program being put into place. As expected, not all change is well received or even equally understood by organizational members. As such, it is also the change agent's responsibility to help the other organizational members understand or make sense of the change as well as reduce potential resistance towards the change.

The role of the change agent is not always clear. Nordqvist and Melin (2008) use the phrase strategic planning champions (SPCs) to describe the change agent who "understands, respects, and leverages upon the specific social interactions and organizational characteristics in which strategic planning is embedded as he or she performs other roles in addition to the traditional role of strategic thinker and analytical planner" (p. 327). Like change agents, the SPC Notice, the change agent or SPC is not only responsible for facilitating the intentional organizational change, but for many other organizational duties as well. The change agent is embedded in the organization with situational responsibilities and role-based expectations. Nordqvist and Melin (2008) further highlight three key roles that strategic planning champions must fulfill in order to fully facilitate strategic change: the social craftsperson, the artful interpreter, and the known stranger. In brief, the social craftsperson is skilled at navigating between conflicting concerns, interests, and even individuals to arrive at a mutually agreeable and necessary alignment of the strategies overall goals and objectives. This role requires political and social savvy as well as sensitivity towards the specific needs of others. Building on the patchwork of cooperation and collaboration created by the social craftsperson, the artful interpreter seizes opportunities of adaptability and flexibility to increase the applicability of the strategy to individual members of the organization. Finally, the role of the known stranger highlights the importance of balancing familiarity with appropriate and necessary distance when it

comes to implementing strategic changes. Based in trust, but with a discerning eye, the known stranger is able to remain close enough to the organizational members to solicit support, but not close enough to threaten.

Diversity ambassadors

The use of diversity ambassadors is relatively common within diversity management strategies and can be a useful tool to help facilitate organizational change. Diversity ambassadors (Omanović, 2006) or diversity champions (Kirton & Green, 2009; Subeliani & Tsogas, 2005), as they are often called, are organizational member who represent different departments and units. They usually work together as a committee or collective in order to implement diversity initiatives across organizational levels on behalf of senior management. Such committees, which ideally should include representatives from different hierarchical levels of the organization, are typically charged with overseeing diversity initiatives, identifying potential remedies and monitoring progress (Kalev, Kelly, & Dobbin, 2006). Some committees are comprised of specially selected members, while others are open to all staff members (Subeliani & Tsogas, 2005). The committees range in size and form and may even function more like a network rather than a formal committee. Regardless of its shape or size of the committee, diversity ambassadors play an important role in the diversity management of the organization. They can, for example, help relieve some of the tension or confusion that exists between the local individual organizational members and the macro-level organizational changes strategies (Lewis, & Seibold, 1993).

That said, research tells us that a diversity committee and its ambassadors cannot make substantial organizational changes for a more inclusive and equal organisation on its own. Diversity work should be an integral part of all organizational activities (whether group or individual tasks) at all levels, i.e. from 'top to bottom'. In addition, adequate resources must be made available: 'If managers are to be expected to be responsible for a new function – managing diversity – then they should be given time and resources to make that effort useful'(Pitts, 2007, p. 1581). Managing diversity should not just be one more task penciled onto an existing 'to do' list. If that happens it is likely that diversity work will not be taken seriously.

<center>**Methodology**</center>

Ethnographic data collection

This paper is based on data collected during an ethnographic study of the diversity management initiatives in a Swedish municipality governing organization. Data used in the analysis of this paper comes from ethnographic observation and interviews performed by the first author beginning in May 2008 and concluding December 2010. In total, 41 meetings and events were observed and 13 interviews conducted. A large number of texts, such as Diversity and Equality Plans, Annual Reports, Personnel Surveys were also included in the data.

Organization: The City

The municipality, hereby called The City, is a city situated on the south-west coast of Sweden. Approximately 38% of City residents have a foreign background[i]. This research project focusses on the approximately 20,000 workers employed by The City Governing Organization. Roughly 28% of all City employees and 11% of all managers identify as having a foreign background. In addition, 73% of all City employees and 65% of all managers are female. Of the 11% of managers with a foreign background, 70% were women. As these figures suggest, there are fewer non-ethnic Swedes in managerial positions. In addition, occupational gender segregation remains a problem with women overrepresented in certain fields such as child and elder care and education (annual report from The City2009).

Participants: The Diversity Ambassadors – Members of the D&EC

This paper focuses on one of these committees - a diversity and equality committee (D&EC). The members of the D&EC are all City employees from various departments, units, and from different organizational levels. The members of the committee are called the Diversity Ambassadors (DAs) –

Established in 2001, the D&EC has a vital role for the diversity work in the city district. The diversity plan for 2008/2009 declares:

The diversity committee is responsible for coordinating all diversity work. The committee shall function as a source of inspiration and as an engine for change. It shall also be responsible for the follow-up and evaluation of diversity work. It shall propose goals and measures to be taken in cooperation with each department. The representatives in the committee shall act as their department's diversity expert, contributing to the initiation and execution of active diversity work.'

Although the DAs meet as a committee meet several times per year, the work is not considered part of their regular work assignment. Instead, the DAs are permitted time off from their usual tasks to participate in the D&EC and other diversity related activities. As such, this paper focuses on the data collected observing the DAs and other D&EC related activities. The DAs, who represent different departments and units of the city district, are responsible for creating diversity and inclusion programs to better integrate current employees and attract more diverse applicants. Field notes were taken during the observation of 16 meetings of the DAs and three D&EC-sponsored diversity events. The first author also observed two Introduction Days for new The City employees. In addition, transcripts of interviews with DAs involved with the diversity events, two HR employees of The City, and the city district manager were included in the analysis.

The diversity initiative

Guided by three significant and interrelated organizational objectives set by local and state politicians, the D&EC was charged with the task of promoting diversity within the city governing organization. The first objective requires that the diversity of The City workers should mirror that of the local population. The second objective seeks to establish gender and sex equality within its workforce. The third object requires The City to follow mandates established in the new Swedish discrimination bill[ii]. In accordance with the third objective, the Swedish law requires all organizations with more than 25 employees have an equality plan which shall be updated every third year. In compliance with the law, The City council charged the D&EC with the responsibility for the creation and implementation of a diversity management plan, which will be updated every year, instead of every third year. All diversity and equality plans much clarify the organizational diversity and equality goals as well as measures to be used to achieve stated goals. The D&EC bases its final strategy on the results of employee surveys on different topics related to equality and

diversity as well as feedback provided by the managers of The City. This allowed the committee to create a strategy that considers both macro (city-wide goals and expectations) as well as the micro (departmental or local concerns and need). Further, the strategy includes specific assignments and responsibilities for goal achievement. The City council has final approval of the D&EC's strategic recommendations.

While grounded in strategy and organizational procedures, the D&EC realized that much of its work centres on creating positive attitudes towards diversity amongst The City employees. With this in mind, the D&EC created a number of events to not only educate but also encourage reflection and consideration for diversity and equality amongst The City employees. For example, the D&EC arranged a series of lectures with diversity and equality themes, which were open to all employees to attend. In addition, the D&EC created a diversity awareness board game that was to be played by all employees.

Findings and Discussion

There are three key themes that we learn from this case: a lack of support, ambiguous objectives, and failed structure. The first theme is lack of support, which includes insufficient support from key members of senior management as well as financial and administrative resources. There was a lack of support for both the D&EC as well as the programs they sponsored. For example, some workers refused to volunteer as a DA because they felt that the diversity work done by the committee was not acknowledged and appreciated by the organizational leaders. Those who did volunteer to serve as DAs, they were told they would be given time to participate in the diversity initiatives, but many faced schedule and resource restrictions that limited their ability to follow through on aspects of the initiative's program.

The second highlights the ambiguity that permeated the diversity initiative. The objectives of the initiative were ambiguous and unclear to both organizational members as well as the DAs. Further, the DAs were given limited and ambiguous authority to implement and facilitate the diversity initiative.

Finally, the third theme focusses on the structural failures of the diversity initiative, namely, that the DAs were not evenly distributed nor incorporated into the organization and therefore unable to facilitate any significant change. There is some evidence to suggest that the call for volunteers was not communicated equally to all employees, and DAs were selected from only a handful of different departments and units of the city district and various organizational hierarchical levels. The inability to recruit or select representatives from all departments meant that certain departments were unfairly burdened while others were under-represented. What follows is a more detailed description of these themes. .

The lack of support

Situated within a politically mandated context, the D&EC created and implemented diversity management strategies without the support of senior management. The D&EC operated independently of the organizational structure, and the initiative failed to garner the personal endorsements from the Administrative Director nor the Human Resources Director. Further, The City leadership neglected needed input and administrative support to help facilitate the DAs plans. For example, the HR Director refused to approve the proposed schedule for the diversity board game. In another situation, the Administrative Director took more than his allotted time to speak during the New Employee Introduction Day, which meant that the DAs were unable to introduce their diversity initiatives and goals to the new employees. The blatant disregard for the talking schedule was a clear indication that the Administrative Director did not value or appreciate the work of the DAs and the D&EC as a whole.

Another example came in the form of a meeting held with the Administrative Director and the D&EC. During the meeting the DAs voiced their concerns regarding the diversity of The City employees, the objectives of the diversity initiative, and the D&EC's role in creative the new diversity strategy. The Administrative Director did not offer any direct answers. Instead he pointed out how well the district was dealing with diversity in terms of the numbers of employees with an immigrant background. After about an hour's discussion the Director ended the meeting by urging the DAs to write down their questions regarding the future of the committee and their ideas regarding diversity work, and send them to the senior management team. The Administrative Director promptly left the meeting.

The committee members were naturally rather disappointed, being left with the feeling that they had not received any answers to their questions nor response to their demands. Nonetheless, it was decided that (as suggested) they would use their next meeting to write down some questions and demands to be sent to the management team. A couple of weeks after the September meeting the group received an e-mail from the convening HR representative. The e-mail read:

> *Dear all*
>
> *I have now received an answer from the administrative director. The decision is that due to the current heavy work load at the HR department, the diversity committee and the development of the diversity work in the city district must wait until after the New Year. This means that the three meetings planned for the autumn are cancelled.*
>
> *Kind regards*
>
> *HR rep.*

Not only did the Administrative Director dismiss the DAs concerns during the meeting, but he then, via an HR representative, cancelled the following three meetings, leaving the D&EC to carry on with little to no guidance for another four months. This dismissal is a clear indication of the lack of importance the diversity initiative holds for the Administrative Director. Further, his lack of support significantly delayed the D&EC's ability to move forward towards meeting their goals and completing their tasks.

This lack of support was felt in other ways, including the restricting of resources such as financial support and time. This restricted what the DAs were able to do as a committee and for the diversity initiative. For example, some managers would not allow DAs to take time away from their day-to-day responsibilities to help plan and execute the diversity initiative. Their unit or department managers all agreed the DAs could take time for the committee meetings, but did not schedule extra time for the performance of other diversity-related tasks. Indeed, one DA was forced to quit the D&EC because her manager said the diversity committee work was a low priority. For these reasons, many committee members were forced to work on diversity issues in their spare time, which resulted in growing uncertainty about their own objectives and the point of their committee work.

The lack of support also impacted the attendance and awareness of the diversity initiative. Sadly, diversity lectures, which the committee arranged, were poorly attended due to, in part, a lack of publicity from The City administration. Further, managers of several units did not allow their staff to take part in the lectures and other diversity initiative activities. Occupational restrictions also limited the success of some of the initiatives. For example, arranging a time for all employees to play the diversity awareness game proved challenging. Whereas office employees could play during office hours, teachers, healthcare providers and caregivers were unable to leave their students, clients, and patients unattended while they completed the game. This mean that meetings and activities that were to include all employees had to be scheduled during off-work hours, mostly in the evening. This is problematic as most workers have responsibilities and time-demands that require them to be off work during the evening. Further, the employees were not compensated for their time outside of work spent contributing to the diversity strategy. This sends a clear signal that the initiative is not important or a priority.

Another scarce resource for the committee was money. The D&EC received an overly modest budget of approximately 2500 Euros to support the lectures, diversity game, and other initiative related expenses. Additional costs had to be approved by The City administrators in advance.

The senior management, including the HR and Administrative Directors should have manifest their commitment to diversity and the diversity initiatives by allocating sufficient resources and participating in the activities (Kirby & Krone, 2002; Pitts, 2007). This refers not only to financial support, but also to time and decision-making powers. If senior management has decided that a diversity programme should be implemented, then it must also allocate a portion of the annual budget to attain the stipulated goals. The diversity manager or the diversity committee will soon lose enthusiasm and commitment if forced to make a formal application for funds for each individual initiative. Moreover, any employee who is asked to take part in the diversity program must be allowed to arrange their work schedule accordingly. If staff are invited to participate in a diversity committee, senior management must give clear directives to the units and middle managers that these employees should be permitted to take time off from their regular duties for attendance. Likewise, all staff members should be given the time to participate in diversity training measures.

It is clear that the DAs were not provided sufficient resources, neither in terms of money nor time. They experienced pressure from their ordinary jobs when spending time on the diversity work, and they felt guilty for not contributing enough to the diversity work. Although it was stated at a political as well as top managerial level that one should be allowed time to participate in the D&EC work, this was apparently not clearly communicated to the unit managers who did not allow time for the committee's diversity work outside the meetings. The result was that the committee members became more and more uncertain of their mission as well as felt frustration from not being able to do the job better.

Senior management as well as the provision of resources has a pivotal role in initiating and legitimizing the diversity work in an organization. In particular, middle managers and the human resource department play a key role in implementing diversity policy and strategies on a day-to-day basis. The commitment of all these actors is essential to successfully establish a culture of diversity and inclusion (Risberg et al., 2012). Ultimately, the initiative had very little support from the senior management. An organization's diversity policy, management and initiatives should issue from the very top in order to be perceived as credible and worthwhile (Müller & Sander, 2005; Pitts, 2007). This struggle is echoed in the second theme, ambiguous authority. In addition, line and middle managers must be directly involved in diversity programs and encouraged to feel that they have something to gain from these initiatives, rather than regarding them as just another obligation (Foster & Harris, 2005; Müller & Sander, 2009). The consequences of this lack of support is recognized in the final theme: structural failure.

Ambiguous objectives and authority

Beyond failing to support the D&EC with organizational and financial resources, in creating the group, the Administrative and HR Directors failed to empower the DAs with authority and legitimacy, which was needed to facilitate the desired organizational change. The ambiguity around their organization, authority, and legitimacy severely hampered their ability to create effective programs that impacted The City employees. The second theme focusses on the ways the objectives of the initiative were ambiguous and unclear to organizational members as well as the DAs, which resulted in ambiguous decision making authority for the D&EC. The committee was given no

orientation or clear objectives regarding their work from the city district management team. Worse yet, even attempts to solicit clarification with the Administrative Director yielded no help.

The first example of ambiguity comes from the actual organization of the D&EC. It was unclear as to whom the committee actually reported to and whether they could operate as an independent committee or if they were under the supervision of senior management. For example, although the DAs as members of the D&EC were responsible for creating and implementing the diversity programs, the HR Director or Administrative Director had final approval of all their proposals. This would not be problematic except that the HR Director, while needing to approve all proposals for the diversity strategy, simultaneously denied being responsible for the D&EC. Therefore, the committee lacked the legitimacy and resources associated with the HR Director and her department, but was constrained by needing her constant approval to create and facilitate programs. The requirement for HR approval of all initiatives also affected the DAs ability to create effective decision making within the committee. The DAs felt trapped between their responsibility for organizing or executing the diversity initiative programs and their constant need for program approval from the HR director. Thus, they had the responsibility for diversity work without the requisite authority. Unsurprisingly, the DAs became more and more frustrated with their situation. They felt that they had been charged with carrying out diversity work without being given the necessary ability to do so.

Research stresses that those with the responsibility for implementing the diversity strategy should also be given the authority to make decisions regarding individual diversity initiatives. If the diversity manager or the diversity committee is required to seek approval from higher ranking managers for each decision, employees will quickly perceive that senior management does not support the initiatives sufficiently to grant decision-making power to the responsible parties. Assigning responsibilities without the requisite authority for implementation is a recipe for disaster. It means frustration for those responsible for a diversity strategy, and in the end failure for the entire diversity initiative itself (Risberg, Beauregard, & Sander, 2012).

While required to seek managerial approval for program decision, as mentioned earlier, the committee lacked strong managerial identification. The need for managerial approval of all activities not only robbed the D&EC of their authority and legitimacy, but clouded the overall objectives of the committee. Except for the overarching goals established in the three objectives set

by the local government, the D&EC was given very little guidance about what they should accomplish. Operating under the rather broad goal of trying to increase diversity awareness, the committee embarked on several initiatives, which were denied by the senior management. Repeated rejection is frustrating for any employee or committee member, and it was for the DAs, but this rejection was coupled with the confusing public praise from the senior management of the D&EC's diversity work. The City's authorities often spoke approvingly of the DAs work while in public. In fact, the D&EC was often used as an example for other city districts during its first years. While the praise and recognition was appreciated, it left a rather schizophrenic feeling amongst the DAs, who often felt abandoned or ill-supported by the senior management.

The consequences of this his schizophrenic position resulted in high levels of frustration. Not only were the DAs often unclear as to their objectives, but when they attempted to propose specific initiatives, they were often rejected. All this while being praised for their insightful and innovative strategies for increasing diversity awareness. Adding to the frustration were the DAs rebuffed attempts to clarify their position, authority, and objectives. The previously mentioned meeting with the HR Director that was eventually cancelled is a typical example of the senior management's refusal to support the D&EC led to ambiguous objectives and authority as well as DA frustration. And yet, these feelings of frustration were not shared with the senior management. As previously mentioned, the district authorities were very proud of the diversity work which had been carried out by the D&EC.

Structural failure

While the D&EC struggled with ambiguous objectives and organizational identity, and was significantly under-resourced, they also had to deal with structural failures on two key levels. The first highlights the structural problems within their own committee. The second structural failure reveals the challenges that surface when trying to implement organizational-wide policies that apply or impact all employees equally and in the same manner.

The first failure stems from the actual creation of the D&EC. The members of the committee came from different departments and units of The City, as well as various hierarchical levels. Although the original intention was to find representatives from all departments, members could only be

found to represent a few of the departments. There were several reasons for this. First, given that there was no financial support from the senior management nor compensation for the time spent on the D&EC, some managers would not allow their subordinates to take time off their normal work activities to serve as a DAs. Further, because there was little verbal support for the diversity initiatives some employees felt that serving as a DA was a waste of time and not appreciated by the senior management. It was felt, by some, that service on the D&EC would not advance their careers. In other cases, because of a lack of effective communication, many employees were not aware of the creation nor existence of the D&EC. Despite the numerous reasons, the inability to find representatives from all departments was a significant limitation in the D&EC's ability to create and implement effective and meaningful change for The City's employees.

A key structural failure of the D&EC stems from the senior management's lack of support. Namely, because the senior management failed to dedicate financial resources to the D&EC, the DAs were, essentially, asked to work on their own time. While all members of the committee were dedicated to promoting diversity issues, they were also committed to their full-time employment in The City and all the tasks and responsibilities that accompanied their employment roles. For example, their unit or department managers all agreed to provide time for the committee meetings, but the DAs were not permitted additional time for the performance of other diversity tasks. For this reason many committee members were forced to work on diversity issues in their spare time, which further delegitimizes the importance of the diversity initiative.

There were also structural problems with the actual diversity initiatives. With limited funding and support, the D&EC could only create and host a few programs. Therefore, the programs had to reach as many employees as possible. But, given the diversity of roles, tasks, and types of work performed by The City employees, finding programs that made sense for all employees proved nearly impossible. The DAs had to not only create programs that 'spoke' to the needs, interests, and abilities of the diverse City workers, but also could be accomplished within the constraints of their jobs. For example, the D&EC received a small budget from the senior management to host a series of diversity lectures. While everyone agreed it would be impossible for all 20,000 City employees to attend the lectures (although all were invited), the hope was that those who did attend would be inspired by the message of the lecture and share it with their colleagues in their work unit.

Even acknowledging that not all employees would attend, the attendance rate for the lectures was unexpectedly low. It could be that some workers were simply not interested in attending a lecture on diversity and workplace equality. However, structural issues played a role in prohibiting more employees from attending. For example, some department managers appointed specific workers to attend the lectures on behalf of the larger work unit. While this is not necessarily a bad idea, it may have prevented workers with an interest in diversity from attending. They could have returned to their unit and inspired change with greater enthusiasm than those assigned to attend on behalf of their department or unit. Further, some workers, because of the nature of their jobs, were unable to attend the lectures. Like the challenges the D&EC ran into with the diversity awareness game, workers who are responsible for the care of others, teachers and nurses for example, as well as those who must follow a strict routine such as rubbish collectors were unable to attend the lectures.

Diversity lectures and events are common diversity practices and often utilized by various organizations promoting diversity initiatives and strategies. However, they are limited in what they can accomplish because of some structural constraints. One drawback is that it is hard to provide follow-up after the lectures. Because attendance was so low and sporadic, follow-up programs could not depend on the participants having participated in the lectures. While the D&EC was hopeful it would inspire conversation and sharing amongst The City employees, there was little measureable impact from the lectures. The use of lectures as part of the diversity strategy required modest expectations and there was little ability to control the lasting effects. It was hoped that the messages in the lectures would have a cascading effect whereby attendees would gain knowledge and insight about diversity and equality issues and then share them with their colleagues and especially their immediate supervisors and managers. But, it is impossible for the HR department to assess the specific and immediate impact of the lectures on The City employees. This is not to suggest that these lectures were ineffective nor important. However, given the focus on measureable moves towards the three diversity objectives, the D&EC needed to create events that could demonstrate that The City employees were closer to meeting those objectives.

Conclusion and Contributions

Diversity literature emphasizes that in order for diversity work to be successful a number of basic conditions need to be fulfilled. One basic condition is that if diversity management is to have an

impact on daily organizational life, it must be incorporated into all existing levels and practice (Risberg, 2010). Ideally, an organization's diversity policy, diversity management and diversity initiatives should issue from the very top in order to be perceived as credible and worthwhile (Müller & Sander, 2005; Pitts, 2007). In addition, line and middle managers must be directly involved in diversity programmes and encouraged to feel that they have something to gain from these initiatives, rather than regarding them as just another obligation (Foster & Harris, 2005; Müller & Sander, 2009).

The findings indicate that the DAs demonstrated a strong willingness to work to increase diversity and equality in the organization. However, instead of viewing the DAs as an essential resource for the organization, the senior management failed to support and legitimize their efforts, which contributed to less-than-desirable results. The reasons for the senior management's actions are plentiful. It is clear that they do not prioritize the diversity strategies over other organizational concerns. To that end, our findings suggest that they are unwilling or unable to dedicate resources towards the diversity strategy. This is contradictory given that the management of The City are obligated by the State government to adhere to new diversity and equality law. It could be that The City senior managers feel that the creation of the D&EC is sufficient to please the State, regardless of the committee's effectiveness.

To that end, it is also quite possible, especially given the lack of diversity within The City senior management, that they do not understand the importance of supporting the D&EC. Research suggests that leaders often relegate diversity work to diversity committees or departments, failing to acknowledge the importance of their full participation in the strategy. The City senior management may not feel responsible for the success of the diversity initiative, nor the overall diversity within the organization, now that the D&ED was created. Ironically, it is the act of creating of the under-supported diversity committee – a positive action that should lead to change -- that contributes to the further de-legitimatization of the overall diversity strategy. Ultimately, The City senior management is responsible not for the success of the specific D&EC and the DAs who work for the committee, but for the overall diversity and equality of The City workers. In delegating this responsibility, they pass along their culpability for failing to meet the legal objectives and organizational goals.

Finally, and perhaps more optimistically, some City managers indicated in their interviews, that they felt the diversity and equality within The City employees was quite good. While this perhaps reeks of ignorance and a lack of reflexivity, this serves as a good reminder that perspective is important. Before organizational change can be implemented, one must first persuade the organizational members, especially the management, of the need for change. If no need is perceived, than the organizational members are less likely to participate in the change activities and could even engage with counter-productive efforts to derail the change.

This study confirms several things we know about diversity management: diversity strategies and initiatives must be supported not only by senior management, but also middle and line managers (Hunter & Renwick, 2009). The support of the senior and middle management is an important signal of the diversity management's importance and legitimacy. Establishing personal responsibility for the diversity of the organization with individual workers contributes to stronger commitment and, therefore, long-term success (Kalev, Kelly, & Dobbin, 2006). Further, if diversity management is to have an impact on daily organizational life, it must be incorporated into all existing levels and practices within the organization (Just & Remke, 2012; Risberg, 2010; Risberg, Beauregard, & Sander, 2012). Not surprisingly, diversity programs that are afforded the proper amount of financial and organizational resources to support the specific programs tend to be more successful (Pitts, 2007).

That said, support from management and sufficient funds do not guarantee program achievement and organizational change. Even well-funded programs can fail to facilitate change and/or understanding. This is where the use of a diversity committee such as the D&EC and Diversity Ambassadors can be useful tools in creating and managing greater appreciation and acceptance of diversity policies. As such, this case is not only a cautionary tale on the importance of supporting diversity initiatives, providing unambiguous objectives, and structural foundations, this case highlights the often-missed resource found in the Das. Situated within all parts of the organization and with an unique perspective different from that of senior and even middle management, the DAs provide the valuable insight, learning, and connections to organizational members that is necessary to manage a successful organizational change. This case highlights what can happen when the DAs are not given the opportunity to work to their potential.

In light of this organizational mistake, we conclude our paper by recommending that organizations not only better use DAs to facilitate better diversity management. But we build on Meyerson and Scully's notion of tempered radicals (1995) to highlight the potential benefits of using selected individuals to advocate for alternative realities within an organizational setting. Tempered Radicals are organizational members whose

> values and beliefs associated with a professional or organizational identity violate values and beliefs associated with personal, extra-organizational, and political sources of identity. In the tempered radical, both the professional and personal identities are strong and salient; they do not appear alternately for special situations. In most stations, the pull of each identity only makes the opposite identity all the more apparent, threatened and painful. (Meyerson & Scully, 1995, pg. 587)

Their dual-sided identity uniquely positions the organizational member to both contribute to the overarching organizational goals, while also resisting status-quo practices that hamper advances in diversity management change. Unlike the Diversity Ambassadors in our study, these individuals are not merely assigned diversity management as another organizational task. These radicals are internally driven to pursue change because of their own personal values and attitudes. Because of their commitment to particular values, the tempered radicals may intentionally situate themselves within HR or diversity management committees, but they also initiate and facilitate change within their own specific positioning within the organization, focussing not necessarily on macro-level organizational change, but mico-level, incremental adjustment.

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[i] Having a foreign background is in this case an individual born in Sweden with two parents born outside Sweden.

[ii] The discrimination bill, 1 January 2009 aims at preventing discrimination based on gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. The bill can be found at http://www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/LAG/20080567.htm and http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/11043/a/111986