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Guest Editorial: Progressing Diversity in HRD Theory and Practice

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We were delighted to accept the invitation from Professor Callahan to provide the editorial for this issue which addresses an important concern for HRD: the impact of multidisciplinarity on understandings of diversity and implications for HRD. It has been widely recognized that the field of HRD, which is embedded in the broader management and organization studies (MOS) field, is established on multidisciplinary foundations (McLean, 1998; Kuchinke, 2001). Subsequently, HRD, like MOS, may be seen as rhizomatic (Jackson and Carter ,2007) incorporating further disciplinary influences, including the contestation of concepts and theories and a critique of how and for whom knowledge is constructed (Calás and Smircich, 1999; Ferguson, 1994; Willmott, 1995). The papers in this issue draw upon a range of disciplines to outline how HRD scholarship and practice relating to disability, diversity, and gender, immigration, socioeconomic and career can be further developed.

The papers in this issue contribute extensions to areas of HRD theory and practice to address concerns with the experiences of a wider diversity of organizational members. This is an important subject, as this journal has recently called for more reflexivity, sensitivity to, and avoidance of, reifying power dynamics in the field (Callahan, 2013a). Whilst theoretical and empirical work that engages with all organizational stakeholders is needed to address this call and to develop the field, Callahan (2007) suggests that work drawing on critical theory is also required. This would shift the emphasis within the field of HRD from a dominant concern with performativity to include, and draw upon, critical theory as a way of engaging in a questioning of the values and assumptions underpinning theoretical development, organizational priorities and subsequent HRD practices. It has been well argued (Callahan, 2007; 2013a/b) that both HRD scholarship and practice should reflect wider calls in MOS for the inclusion of employer and employee interests in the construction of democratic organizing spaces and progressive forms of practice (Spicer et al., 2009). Being creative in the application of critical theory to HRD is needed to manifest such aims (Callahan, 2007), and work towards positive social change whilst also effectively engaging with the 'contexts and constraints of management' (Spicer et al., 2009:545).

The authors in this mini-special issue engage with diversity in different ways. We contribute to the agendas they set out by offering additional suggestions on how the topics raised can be extended through an engagement with critical constructionist perspectives to further enhance the theory and practice of HRD, noting where appropriate additional disciplinary areas that could enhance HRD theory and practice.

Qin , Muenjohn and Chhetri's (2014) paper outlines varying conceptualizations of diversity, and identifies key shifts in how over a period of forty years a concern for equality became a focus on diversity and then subsequently a business case for diversity. Drawing on recent developments in conceptualizations of diversity, the debates over individual attribute, attributes within/between a group, or the relations constructed between individual similarities or differences within a group are outlined, and a mapping of the many ways in which personal attributes have been configured and measured is constructed. The framework offered is premised on two key trends in the literature; diversity as a two-dimensional construct (social diversity and informational diversity) and as a social construct of perceived dissimilarity. A multilevel-construct framework is offered and the implications of the framework for research and for practice are suggested.

To progress the debate on the social construction of diversity this paper addresses, the current terrain mapped here can be extended to incorporate critical diversity studies which pay attention to mechanisms and relations of unequal power relations and constructions of diversity (e.g. Ahonen and Tienari, 2009; Zanoni et al. 2010). Alternative meta-theoretical or philosophical lenses can bring macro and meso level analysis of social structure and context into focus. Such future work in HRD could contribute to understanding how organizing norms construct and categorize 'differences' as diversity, and move beyond the attribute focus that is typical of much diversity literature. Zanoni et al. (2010) suggest the emergent critical diversity studies literature has moved diversity debates from a dominant social psychology foundation to make a range of contributions which contest an instrumental conceptualization of diversity through critical theories such as post-structuralism, discourse analysis and post-colonialism. Future research drawing on such critical theories could further extend the theorizing of diversity for HRD scholarship and practice.

Kullarni and Lengnick-Hall (2014) draw upon management, rehabilitation psychology and social psychology, and HRD to explore workplace obstacles for disabled people. With a focus on people with physical impairments the paper considers barriers to entry and progression specifically around accommodations, socialization and inclusion, and career advancement. The paper argues it is important to recognise the organizationally constructed barriers to disabled people's participation in work organizations and the need to move from laboratory based studies which offer limited insights to organizationally focused studies. Rather we should explore multiple stakeholder perspectives, including those of disabled organizational members, managers, HRD professionals and co-workers.

The paper highlights a key gap in the disability literatures within the chosen fields, which is an over emphasis on experimental studies rather than empirically based organizational studies of multiple stakeholders. To progress the critical agenda in light of the contributions of this paper we suggest broadening the fields informing future research to include disability studies (e.g. Campbell, 2009; Roulstone et al, 2003; Shakespeare 2006; Thomas, 2007) which may offer insights to contribute to this refocus. This would also offer conceptual and theoretical concerns that can extend HRD research and practice as part of the shift to more critical and reflexive research in the field as Callahan (2007) has called for. Further we have argued elsewhere that a conceptual distinction between the terms disability and impairment (reflecting disability studies use) is conceptually and theoretically useful and appropriate (Williams and Mavin, 2012). Future papers which draw upon critical disability studies (e.g. Goodley, 2012) would further extend the insights gained, as would studies which broadened the focus from physical to other impairments. A further development in this area which would address the call for more critical HRD scholarship would be to explore the potential of ableism, the assumption of non-disability as an organizing norm, to challenge how disability is often perceived as a negated difference from the norms around which organizational practices are constructed (Williams and Mavin, 2012).

The third paper from Lyons, Ng, and Schweitzer (2014) offers a framework addressing gaps which the authors suggest the interdisciplinary nature of career research has failed to explore adequately: the integration of career expectations and experiences with demographic factors to understand career outcomes. The paper outlines the changing nature of careers, suggesting a broader shift amongst younger generations of workers from organizationally focused to boundaryless careers which span organizations. HRD scholars and practitioners are encouraged to engage with a more nuanced understanding of the differences between workers to better explore and understand how

to adapt and develop HRD interventions to meet this challenge. Further, demographic heterogeneity is built into such endeavours to recognise the differences within, as well as between, generations. Lyons, Ng, and Schweitzer (2014) argue gender, immigration and socioeconomic status are particularly salient moderating factors to be addressed in research and practice around career interventions, and build these into the conceptual framework outlined in the paper. Focusing on Canada as an illustrative example, the interactive effects of gender, immigration and socio-economic status demographics are contextualised to highlight the pertinence of taking a heterogeneous approach to HRD and careers and pose a number of interesting questions for future research.

Building upon Lyons, Ng, and Schweitzer (2014), the final directions we would like to see developed in future HRD research and practice relate to intersubjectively negotiated career boundaries (Williams and Mavin, 2013) and intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989, 1997; Holvino 2010; McCall, 2005). As Lyons, Ng and Schweitzer (2014) contend, the career literature suggests there is insufficient empirical evidence to suggest a general move to boundaryless careers. It has been argued that further research on the boundaries which shape careers (Inkson et al., 2012) should be of greater concern, focusing upon how career contexts (Brooklyn Derr and Briscoe 2007; Pringle and Mallon, 2003) and career gatekeepers (Gunz, Peiperl and Tzabbar 2007) shape career outcomes. Intersubjectively negotiated career boundaries (Williams and Mavin, 2013) may illuminate the varying ways in which organizational members' career expectations and experiences are co-constructed through interaction with others, with implications for career outcomes. This is particularly important given that Lyons, Ng and Scheitzer's (2014) paper is based on the lower mobility of generations other than millennials. Secondly, researchers could consider drawing upon the growing literature on intersectionality; a concern with how social categories such as gender and disability intersect to shape experience for people located in particular social spaces. Following our emphasis on interdisciplinarity, we suggest future research draw upon constructionist orientated frameworks such as McCall (2005) which outlines three paradigmatically informed approaches to researching intersectionality; Hancock (2007) who identifies six key assumptions which inform and shape intersectional research and; Holvino (2010) who brings an identity/institutional and social practice focus to intersectional studies within MOS. Intersectional studies can contribute to understanding the processes of social and organizing practices (Calás and Smircich, 1999), and returns our attention to the issue of power to understand how particular sets of social relations shape organizational members career experiences. Such attention contributes to better understanding and meeting the development needs of a wider range of organizational members, particularly those who might otherwise be marginalized.

Progressing these agendas, we suggest future research considers the implications of a decentered managerially driven imperative of performativity (Spicer et al., 2009) in favor of improving experiences of the social world of work beyond a concern for organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Harding (2013, p.2) suggests that the possibilities of bringing into focus a "utopia in which people constitute confident, fulfilled workplace selves through the work they do and the people they do it with" is as important a consideration for our field as a critique of managerialist dominance and maximized productivity. We suggest this is also a positive perspective for practitioners to adopt in the development of HRD interventions to engage with critical constructionist conceptualizations of HRD in theory and in practice.

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Invited Editorial Submitted to
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