

## Diversity Climates in Human Service Agencies

Cheryl A. Hyde PhD & Aren Hopkins PhD

To cite this article: Cheryl A. Hyde PhD & Aren Hopkins PhD (2004) Diversity Climates in Human Service Agencies, Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 13:2, 25-43, DOI: [10.1300/J051v13n02\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1300/J051v13n02_02)

To link to this article: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J051v13n02\\_02](http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J051v13n02_02)



Published online: 11 Oct 2008.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 582



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 5 View citing articles [↗](#)

# Diversity Climates in Human Service Agencies: An Exploratory Assessment

Cheryl A. Hyde  
Karen Hopkins

**ABSTRACT.** This article focuses on “diversity climates” of human service agencies. An organization’s diversity climate is comprised of both the degree of member heterogeneity and efforts to promote and sustain an environment conducive to maximizing the benefits of that heterogeneity. Data are from diversity audits conducted in 161 nonprofit and public human service agencies that provide health/mental health, welfare, child/adolescent, educational, and community programs. Findings indicate racial and gender segregation in that most organizations have management and staff that are overwhelmingly White and female. Strategies for the promotion of diversity tend to be basic and limited and are not likely to result in substantial or long-lasting change that would embed diversity into an organization’s culture. Public welfare agencies appear to have the weakest diversity climates. Discussion addresses concerns regarding the absence of robust diversity climates in human service agencies. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

---

Cheryl Hyde, PhD, is Associate Professor and Karen Hopkins, PhD, is Associate Professor at the University of Maryland, School of Social Work, 525 West Redwood Street, Baltimore, MD 21201.

The authors thank Liz Clever for her research assistance and the journal’s reviewers for their feedback.

Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, Vol. 13(2) 2004  
<http://www.haworthpress.com/web/ECDSW>

© 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.  
Digital Object Identifier: 10.1300/J051v13n02\_02

**KEYWORDS.** Organizational diversity, organizational change, organizational assessment, human service agency development

### ***INTRODUCTION***

The professional social work code of ethics clearly articulates a commitment to the value of multiculturalism. Social work practitioners need to demonstrate a “sensitivity to and knowledge about oppression and ethnic diversity . . . [and] strive to ensure access to needed information, services and resources, equality of opportunity and meaningful participation in decision making for all people” (NASW, 1996, p. 5). As part of their ethical commitment to multiculturalism, social workers are expected to create and maintain human service agencies that promote cultural sensitivity, dignity, and diversity.

This ethical commitment is partially in response to critical demographic shifts that affect agency practice. Two significant trends with which human service agency members must contend are greater diversity in client and staff populations. Demographically, human service sector clients are increasingly likely to be people of color, elderly, and people with disabilities (Gutierrez & Nagda, 1996; Hasenfeld, 1996; Iglehart, 2000; Nagda, Harding, & Holley, 1999). Similarly, it is predicted that human service staff will continue to become more diverse, particularly in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and age (Asamoah, 1995; Brody, 1993; Iglehart, 2000; Shin & McClomb, 1998). Creating an agency culture that optimizes this organizational heterogeneity is considered to be a major challenge facing human service administrators and staff (Brody, 1993; Hasenfeld, 1996; Menefee, 1997).

Myriad interventions for fostering organizational diversity are found in the literature, including managing diversity, cross cultural competency, valuing differences, affirmative action/anti-discrimination, and anti-oppression models (Cox, 2001; DeRosa, 1994; Jackson & Holvino, 1988; Loden, 1996; Norton & Fox, 1997). Much of the discussion concerning these approaches focuses on the reasons for, conceptual models of, and challenges to initiatives that promote and sustain organizational diversity (Gutierrez & Nagda, 1996; Hyde, 2003, 2004; Iglehart, 2000; Nagda, Harding, & Holley, 1999). There is, however, relatively little empirical evidence regarding the degree of heterogeneity in human service agencies, the extent to which agencies engage in diversity-related efforts and the relationships between member heterogeneity and diversity efforts. There is also a dearth of data on what organizational factors

encourage, enhance, and maintain organizational diversity in the various types of human service agencies (see Nagda, Harding, & Holley, 1999).

This article presents findings from an exploratory study that examines what the authors term the “diversity climate” in human service agencies. Briefly, an organization’s diversity climate is intended to capture the breadth and depth of organizational diversity and is gauged by both the degree of member heterogeneity and the efforts to promote and further an environment conducive to maximizing the benefits of that heterogeneity. Data are from diversity audits completed in 161 agencies in a mid-Atlantic region. The audit collected information on the demographic composition of the agency and on mission, goals, policies, programs, training, evaluation, and outreach efforts as related to diversity. The primary purpose of this article is to assess the diversity climates in this sample of human service agencies, as well as to understand what organizational characteristics (e.g., size, location) facilitate or hinder the cultivation of relatively robust diversity climates.

## ***LITERATURE REVIEW***

### ***Diversity Climates in Human Service Agencies***

An organization’s diversity climate reflects the degree to which a primary goal of most diversity intervention models is achieved: the creation a culturally pluralistic setting in which all workers perform at their optimal level (Asamoah, 1995; Cox, 2001; Iglehart, 2000; Norton & Fox, 1997). A robust diversity climate means that an organization has considerable demographic diversity, integrated throughout the organization, and that the benefits of diversity are supported or nourished through various organizational practices embedded in the organization’s culture. An example of this would be an organization that had several trained interpreters to meet the needs of client populations, funding for continual staff training on cultural competencies, and incorporation of cultural sensitivity in program and staff evaluations. In contrast, a weak diversity climate would exhibit homogeneous organizational membership and few or superficial activities that promoted and sustained diversity efforts. An agency with an all-White staff, little community outreach, and restrictive service hours would typify this climate.

A developmental approach to creating and sustaining diversity has garnered considerable attention in the field of multicultural organiza-

tional transformation. Proponents of this approach underscore the importance of incremental changes that result in a deepening of diversity (Cox, 2001; Hayles & Russell, 1997; Hyde, 2003, 2004; Jackson & Holvino, 1988; Loden, 1996; Norton & Fox, 1997). Through an examination of missions, goals, output, and internal processes, organizations are initially assessed in terms of their relative level of diversity. Interventions are then designed to “move” the organization towards greater diversity. As an organization pursues strategic initiatives to foster diversity, the interventions become more complex. As a result, the diversity climate becomes more robust. Organizations err when incremental steps are viewed as ends in themselves, perhaps due to a desire to bring quick relief to a crisis or problem (e.g., a one day training with no follow-up). Instead, these incremental efforts need to be viewed as building blocks for greater diversity (Hyde, 2003, 2004).

In keeping with this developmental approach, the authors propose a diversity climate continuum. As illustrated in Figure 1, an organization’s diversity climate may range from weak, to moderate, to robust depending on organizational membership and diversity related efforts or activities. Agency composition focuses attention on the degree of heterogeneity and integration within and across key groups (e.g., management, staff, and clients). The continuum extends from tokenism, in which a few individuals from under-represented groups are in the organization, to increasing pluralism, to full integration between and within organizational groupings. Diversity-related efforts are also arrayed on a continuum based on the degree to which a given activity embeds diversity principles and practices into the organizational culture. The more frequently employed interventions in human services tend to be cultural sensitivity and communication trainings and nondiscriminatory policies; efforts that usually result in weak to moderate diversity climates (Asamoah, 1995; Brody, 1993; Iglehart, 2000; Rauch, 1993). An organization with a more robust diversity climate will engage in efforts that reflect a long term orientation through outreach, accountability (e.g., evaluations), resource commitment, and planning, and will reconstitute its core values (e.g., mission) to reflect a commitment to diversity (Cox, 2001; Hyde, 2003, 2004; Iglehart, 2000; Jackson & Holvino, 1988; Norton & Fox, 1997).

Developing a robust diversity climate does not occur in a vacuum. The characteristics of an agency shape its ability to engage in change. In general, the very nature of human service agencies (e.g., value laden missions, ambiguous and conflicting goals, unspecified outcomes) makes transformation difficult to initiate or manage (Hasenfeld, 1996; Menefee,

FIGURE 1. Organizational Diversity Climate Continuum

DIVERSITY CLIMATE		Weak		Moderate		Robust	
AGENCY COMPOSITION	Tokenism	Segregated Cultural Groups	Staff Pluralism	Management Pluralism	Integration		
	Few staff and/or managers from under-represented groups	Staff and clients from different cultural groups (e.g., White staff and minority clients)	Staff, but not management, heterogeneous	Management is heterogeneous	Representation and participation of all cultural groups throughout the organization		
DIVERSITY-RELATED EFFORTS	Cosmetic	Nuts & Bolts	Engagement/Investment	Embedded			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal compliance with mandated policies</li> <li>• Publicity changes (e.g., brochures)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goals are diversity oriented</li> <li>• Programs/services culturally sensitive</li> <li>• Staff training</li> <li>• Personnel procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community outreach</li> <li>• Funding for training</li> <li>• Staff development (e.g., mentoring)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission/vision reflect commitment to diversity</li> <li>• Accountability mechanisms</li> <li>• Long range planning/problem solving</li> </ul>			
DIVERSITY CLIMATE		Weak		Moderate		Robust	

2000). Difficulties are exacerbated when the agency is in a state of crisis, as is often the case regarding diversity efforts (Hyde, 2003, 2004). Agency personnel are often risk or change averse at the very time that innovation is needed (Asamoah, 1995; Bocage, Homonoff, & Riley, 1995; Perlmutter, 2000). There is evidence to suggest that public and/or highly bureaucratic agencies may be more change resistant than non-profit and/or less formalized agencies (Brager & Holloway, 1978; Hasenfeld, 1996; Iglehart, 2000). Diversity initiatives, in particular, are sabotaged by a lack of leadership, high workload demands, staff resistance, lack of accountability, and failure to engage the community (Hayles & Russell, 1997; Hyde, 2003, 2004; Iglehart, 2000).

In addition to the organizational properties discussed above, an agency's membership composition (e.g., management, staff, clients) is a determinant in furthering multicultural development (as well as being an indicator of an agency's diversity climate) (Iglehart, 2000; Nagda, Harding, & Holley, 1999). A heterogeneous staff not only suggests a moderate to strong diversity climate, it is also believed to help sustain and deepen that climate. For example, having both men and women in leadership positions could model new gender-based models of authority for staff and clients. Or, having a racially diverse staff that has learned

to engage in teamwork will likely enhance the agency's abilities to pursue increasingly complex diversity strategies. This is due, in part, to a "snowball" effect of success, particularly collaboration; staff feel able to take the necessary risks because they have already experienced the "pay-offs" of engaging in diversity work. There is an organizational culture that supports diversity efforts (Hyde, 2003, 2004; Nagda, Harding, & Holley, 1999). In contrast, segregated membership composition (e.g., staff is White and clients are People of Color) may lead to heightened criticism, defensiveness, disengagement, and the message that the agency is not seriously committed to diversity (Hyde, 2003, 2004; Rauch et al., 1993).

This article seeks to assess the current state of development of diversity climates in human service agencies, and also to place this development in context with an examination of how select agency characteristics affect these diversity climates. To that end, the authors consider three related research questions:

1. What is the relative level of robustness of the diversity climates in this sample of human service agencies as determined by agency composition and the pursuit of diversity-related efforts?
2. What is the relationship between agency composition and diversity-related efforts?
3. What is the relationship between agency characteristics (e.g., size, location, type, or specialization) and the robustness of diversity climates?

## **METHODS**

Diversity audits were conducted as part of broader organizational assessments of human service agencies in a mid-Atlantic region (see Hopkins & Hyde, 2002). These assessments addressed agency mission and goals, governance, programs and services, fiscal matters, staff and client relations, and overall climate. The diversity audit was designed specifically for this study, although it included components from other audits (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1994; Hayes & Russell, 1997; Norton & Fox, 1997; Rasmussen, 1996; Roizner, 1996) and relevant literature (Cox, 2001; Hyde, 2003, 2004; Iglehart, 2000; Jackson & Holvino, 1988; Nagda, Harding, & Holley, 1999). It addressed staff and client demographics, agency missions, goals, policies, programs, training and development, and outreach as related to organizational diversity.

## Sample

The sampling frame was all human service agencies (N = 250) that serve as foundation year social work graduate student field placements for a large, urban university. These agencies included a mix of public and private/non-profit organizations in urban, suburban, and rural locations that serve racially and ethnically diverse populations. A stratified random sample technique was employed in order to garner a sample that was representative of the original agency pool. A total of 175 agencies were selected. Of those, 161 agencies had usable audits.

A descriptive profile of these 161 agencies is presented in Figure 2. A slight majority of the agencies were private, non-profit (58.6%). With respect to size, the largest group of agencies had less than 50 employees (57.1%). There were almost equal numbers of urban (47.1%) and suburban (44.9%) agencies, with only 8.1% of the agencies located in rural areas. Agencies that focused on health, mental health, or substance abuse comprised 28.6% of the sample, while public welfare agencies were the next largest group at 21.2%. Other types of agencies included child/adolescent (16.1%), community (9.9%), and education (7.5%).

## Data Collection Procedures and Measures

Graduate research assistants conducted the organizational assessments. Information was obtained through interviews with key agency

FIGURE 2. Select Characteristics of Sample Agencies (N = 161)

- Agency Type
  - Public: 41.4%
  - Private, non-profit: 58.6%
- Size\*
  - Less than 50 employees: 57.1%
  - Between 51 and 100 employees: 13.5%
  - Between 101 and 200 employees: 15.1%
  - Over 200 employees: 14.3%
- Location
  - Urban: 47.1%
  - Suburban: 44.9%
  - Rural: 8.1%
- Specialization:\*\*
  - Health/mental health/substance abuse: 28.6%
  - Public welfare: 21.2%
  - Child/adolescent counseling and residential care: 16.1%
  - Community (e.g., rape crisis centers): 9.9%
  - Education: 7.5%
  - Other (e.g., aging, EAP): 16.8%

personnel (usually directors and supervisors) and examination of organizational documents and then entered into the audit. The diversity audit consisted of close-ended questions. Research assistants were trained in how to collect, review, and verify information regarding agency efforts, and as part of that training, were instructed to rely on more than one data source in determining whether or not a diversity-effort occurred. The authors and a research assistant (not involved in data collection) reviewed and coded all audits. Audit findings were entered into a database for statistical analysis.

As noted above, the audit was designed for this study and should be considered an exploratory protocol. Measures were defined as follows:

- *Agency composition* consisted of the racial and gender composition in management, staff, and client categories.
- *Racial composition* involved the calculation of White and Persons of Color who were managers, line staff, or clients. Balanced racial composition means that the agency had approximately 50% White and 50% People of Color in each category (management, staff, and clients). Once a group represented 60% or more of the individuals in a category, that category was coded as mostly White or mostly People of Color. Based on these categories, dummy variables (yes = 1, no = 0) were created: management mostly White, management mostly People of Color, management racially balanced; staff mostly White, staff mostly People of Color, staff racially balanced; clients mostly White, clients mostly People of Color, and clients racially balanced.
- *Gender composition* involved the calculation of men and women who were managers, line staff, or clients. Balanced gender composition means that the agency had approximately 50% men and 50% women in each category (management, staff, and clients). Once a group represented 60% or more of the individuals in a category, that category was coded as mostly men or mostly women. Based on these categories, dummy variables (yes = 1, no = 0) were created: management mostly men, management mostly women, management gender balanced; staff mostly men, staff mostly women, staff gender balanced; clients mostly men, clients mostly women, and clients gender balanced.
- *Diversity-related efforts* were determined by information gathered through the interview and the review of organizational documents. If the evidence suggested that the agency was serious in its undertakings or activities (e.g., clearly articulated and available anti-dis-

crimination policies, cultural trainings conducted over a period of time, meeting the needs of non-English speaking clients), then “yes” was entered for that audit item along with comments. If agency efforts were sporadic, voluntary, superficial, or suggested a lack of commitment, then “no” was entered for that particular audit item along with comments. Dummy variables (yes = 1, no = 0) were created for each effort (e.g., “the agency had a sexual harassment policy”).

- *Agency characteristics* (see Figure 2):
  - *Agency type* originally consisted of public, private non-profit, and private for-profit. For-profit organizations were eliminated from the analysis because of low numbers ( $n = 7$ ). Dummy variables (yes = 1, no = 0) were created for “agency is public” and “agency is private.”
  - *Size* originally consisted of less than 50 employees, between 51 and 100 employees, between 101 and 200 employees, and over 200 employees. Employees were any paid staff person, full or part time, excluding contractual and subcontractual personnel. Based on the authors’ prior research on the impact of size on agency dynamics (Hopkins & Hyde, 2002), these categories were collapsed into less than 100 employees, “small,” and 100 or more employees, “large.” Dummy variables (yes = 1, no = 0) were created for “agency is small” and “agency is large.”
  - *Location* consisted of urban, suburban, and rural categories and was determined by the interviewee. Dummy variables (yes = 1, no = 0) were created for “agency is urban,” “agency is suburban,” and “agency is rural.”
  - *Specialization* consisted for health, mental health, and substance abuse; public welfare; child/adolescent counseling and residential care; community based; education; and other. This list is derived from prior research by the authors on human service agencies in the same catchment area as those in this sample (Hopkins & Hyde, 2002). Interviewees had to select the one specialization from this list that best fit their agency. The specialization categories were re-coded into dummy variables (yes = 1, no = 2); for example, “agency specializes in public welfare.”

### **Data Analysis**

In order to determine the relative strength of this sample’s agency diversity climate, the authors analyzed the power of the relationships

between agency characteristics, agency composition, and agency diversity-related efforts. Descriptive analysis, chi square analysis, and binary logistic regression were used.

Both composition and efforts determine diversity climate (see Figure 1). Through chi-square analyses, the authors explored potentially significant relationships between racial and gender composition by type of agency (public or nonprofit), size (small or large), location (urban, suburban, or rural), and specialization (health/mental health, public welfare, child/adolescent services, community, education, or other). For those findings that proved significant, binary logistic regression was then used to predict (a) diversity-related efforts by agency composition (race and gender) and (b) overall agency diversity climate indicators (composition and diversity-related efforts) by agency characteristics (specialization, size, type, and location). Only significant results are reported in this article.

Since sample size influences whether or not a statistical significance will be achieved (Weinbach & Grinnell, 1998), and because this sample is relatively small, findings should be viewed as exploratory. Data were examined closely to look for unusual patterns. The data met the assumptions of a logistic model, and the models were significant, passed goodness of fit tests, and show evidence of high predictive accuracy (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 1989).

## ***FINDINGS***

The first research question concerns the relative robustness of diversity climates in human service organizations, as determined by agency membership composition and diversity-related efforts. Table 1 shows the racial and gender composition of agency management, social service staff, and clients. The majority of agencies have mostly White management and staff, and mostly female management and staff. Yet, almost two-thirds of these agencies have client populations that are mostly People of Color and half have mostly men as clients. A minority of agencies exhibit either racial or gender balance in management, staff, or client populations.

Table 2 presents diversity-related efforts. With respect to mission and goals, only one-third of the agencies had missions that included a focus on multiculturalism or diversity. Agencies were more likely to have goals that related to some aspect of diversity, with the most common being "goals that promote working on behalf of members of disenfranchised groups" (90.3%). The other two types of goals, to have

TABLE 1. Racial and Gender Composition of Sample Agencies (N = 161)

	Management	Staff	Clients
Racial Composition			
• Mostly white	71.6%	59.0%	33.9%
• Balanced	9.3%	7.6%	3.6%
• Mostly people of color	16.8%	33.3%	62.5%
Gender Composition			
• Mostly men	14.8%	7.7%	40.7%
• Balanced (50–50)	16.9%	3.5%	14.8%
• Mostly women	68.3%	88.7%	44.4%

“culturally sensitive/appropriate programs” and to develop “culturally competent staff,” were found in 67.1% and 59.1% of the agencies respectively.

Overall, organizational policy initiatives seem to be among the most frequently used efforts to promote or sustain diversity. Just over 80% of the agencies have anti-discrimination policies posted or available. A substantial majority also have policies that prohibit sexual harassment (79.5%) and discrimination based on sexual orientation (79.3%). Yet only 50% of the agencies reported that they had affirmative action plans available, and of those agencies, only 45% had implemented these plans.

Regarding program, training, development, and outreach efforts, a majority of agencies engaged in initiatives such as outreach plans to disenfranchised or underrepresented groups (64.9%), provision of bilingual staff (69%), and bilingual materials (63.9%) when needed, and training sessions on cultural competency/sensitivity (51.7%). In contrast, fewer than half of the agencies included cultural sensitivity or competency in program (44%) or staff (30.6%) evaluations. Only 45.6% of the agencies provided funding for diversity training. Just under half of the agencies engaged in outreach efforts to diversify staff (47.7%).

The second research question looks at the relationship between the agency membership composition and diversity-related efforts. Binary logistic regression analysis was used to determine if race and gender composition predicts diversity audit activities. Table 3 presents the significant logistic regression results for diversity-related efforts by the racial and gender composition of management, staff, and clients. The odds of anti-discrimination policies being posted or available increase

TABLE 2. Diversity-Related Efforts in Sample Agencies (N = 161)

Diversity-related Effort	% yes
<i>Mission and Goals</i>	
Mission includes a focus on multiculturalism/diversity	35.5%
Goals promote working on behalf of members of disenfranchised groups	90.3%
Goals promote culturally sensitive/appropriate programs	67.1%
Goals promote the development of culturally competent staff	59.1%
<i>Policies</i>	
Anti-discrimination policies clearly posted or otherwise available	82.7%
Sexual harassment policies clearly posted or otherwise available	79.5%
Affirmative action plan available for agency	50.0%
If have affirmative action plan, it has been implemented	45.0%
Policies prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation	79.3%
<i>Programs</i>	
Bilingual materials needed	53.5%
If bilingual materials needed, they are available	63.9%
Bilingual staff needed	54.2 %
If bilingual staff needed, they are available	69.0%
Program evaluation includes whether it is culturally sensitive/appropriate	44.0%
<i>Training and Development</i>	
Training sessions on cultural competency/sensitivity offered in past year	51.7%
Funds designated for diversity training	45.6%
Mentoring available for staff from under-represented groups	18.7%
Cultural competency included in staff evaluations/performance appraisals	30.6%
<i>Outreach</i>	
Outreach plans to disenfranchised or underrepresented groups in area	64.9%
Outreach efforts that facilitate staff diversity	47.7%

significantly if the staff is racially balanced and the management is gender balanced. If clients are mostly White, then the odds of anti-discrimination policies being posted or available decrease significantly. The odds of having sexual harassment policies posted or available increase significantly if management is gender balanced or mostly men. If clients are mostly men, then the odds of having policies prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation increase significantly. If management is gender balanced, then the odds of having program evaluations that include cultural sensitivity and outreach efforts that facilitate staff diversity decrease significantly, yet the odds of having funds designated for diversity training increase. If clients are mostly White, then the odds of funds designated for diversity training decrease significantly, but the odds of outreach to disenfranchised groups increase significantly. Fi-

TABLE 3. Summary of Significant Logistic Regression Results for Diversity-Related Efforts by Agency Racial and Gender Composition (N = 161)

Diversity-Related Effort	Indicator Variable*	B	SE B	p	Exp (B)/ Odds Ratio
Anti-discrimination policies posted/available	Staff racially balanced	3.292	1.164	.005	26.905
	Management gender balanced	1.746	.745	.019	5.734
	Clients mostly White	-1.899	.923	.040	.150
Sexual harassment policies posted/available	Management mostly men	1.392	.693	.045	4.024
	Management gender balanced	1.789	.657	.007	5.984
Policies prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation	Clients mostly men	1.138	.577	.049	3.121
Program evaluation includes cultural sensitivity/appropriateness	Management gender balanced	-1.285	.614	.036	.277
Funds designated for diversity training	Management gender balanced	1.430	.727	.049	4.179
	Clients mostly White	-1.410	.550	.010	.244
Outreach to disenfranchised groups	Clients mostly White	1.060	.528	.045	2.886
Mentoring for staff from under-represented groups	Client gender balanced	-1.681	.730	.021	.186
Outreach efforts that facilitate staff diversity	Management gender balanced	-1.665	.639	.009	.189

nally, if the clients are gender balanced, then the odds of having mentoring for staff from under-represented groups decrease significantly.

The final research question focuses on the relationship between agency characteristics and the robustness of diversity climates. Binary logistic regression was also used to determine the influence of agency characteristics on agency diversity climate, as signified by membership composition and diversity-related efforts. Table 4 presents the significant logistic regression results for race and gender composition of management, staff, and clients by agency characteristics. If the organization is an urban agency, then the odds of having a mostly White staff and mostly White clients increase significantly. Moreover, the odds of having clients who are mostly people of color decrease significantly in urban agencies. If the agency is small, then the odds of having a gender balanced client group increase. If the agency is a public welfare agency, then the odds of having clients who are mostly women decrease.

Table 5 presents the significant logistic regression results for diversity-related efforts by agency characteristics. If the agency primarily provides health or mental health services, then the odds of having anti-discrimination policies posted or available decrease. In public welfare agencies, the odds of having affirmative actions plans, training sessions on cultural competency, funds designated for diversity training, or

TABLE 4. Summary of Significant Logistic Regression Results for Agency Demographic Composition by Agency Specialization, Size, Type, and Location (N = 161)

Agency Demographic	Indicator Variable	B	SE B	p	Exp (B)/ Odds Ratio
Staff is mostly White	Urban agency	2.306	1.147	.044	10.036
Clients mostly White	Urban agency	4.384	1.235	.000	80.176
Clients mostly minority	Urban agency	-3.640	1.103	.001	.026
Clients gender balanced	Small agency (< 100)	1.767	0.896	.049	5.853
Clients mostly women	Public welfare agency	-2.205	1.089	.043	.110

TABLE 5. Summary of Significant Logistic Regression Results for Diversity-Related Efforts by Agency Specialization, Size, Type, and Location (N = 161)

Diversity-related Effort	Indicator Variable	B	SE B	p	Exp (B)/ Odds Ratio
Anti-discrimination policies posted/available	Health/mental health agency	-2.311	1.166	.048	.099
Affirmative action plans available for agency	Public welfare agency	-2.428	.889	.006	.088
Training sessions on cultural competency	Public welfare agency	-1.801	.855	.035	.165
Funds designated for diversity training	Public welfare agency	-1.711	.856	.046	.556
Mentoring for staff from under-represented groups	Education agency	-2.165	1.082	.045	.115
Cultural competency included in staff evaluations	Public welfare agency	-3.243	1.136	.017	.039
	Education agency	-4.521	1.439	.002	.011
	Small agency (<100)	-1.217	0.567	.032	.296

cultural competency included in staff evaluations decrease significantly. The odds of having cultural competency included in staff evaluations also decrease significantly in education agencies and small agencies. The odds of having mentoring for staff from under-represented groups also decrease in education agencies.

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this exploratory study was to assess diversity climates in human service agencies. An "Organization Diversity Climate Continuum" was proposed in order to provide a conceptual tool with which to assess agencies (see Figure 1). Three research questions regarding

the extent of and factors contributing to robust diversity climates were considered. Agency demographics, diversity-related activities, and selected organizational characteristics of 161 agencies were examined in order to provide a profile of current diversity climates.

The first question concerned the relative robustness of diversity climates. Based on agency demographics and diversity related efforts, it appears that the sampled organizations have relatively weak to moderate diversity climates. Agency demographics suggest racial and gender segregation; most organizations have both management and staff that are overwhelming White and female. In contrast, the majority of agencies had client populations that were mostly People of Color, and half had mostly male clients. Using the Organizational Diversity Climate Continuum, this sample seems to be largely in the “segregated cultural group” stage.

With respect to diversity efforts, these organizations seemed to prefer “Nuts and Bolts” strategies (see Fig. 1), such as goals, policies, and training. These agencies tended not to engage in efforts that would result in a robust diversity climate. Relatively few agencies had missions that would guide their efforts. There appears to be little or inadequate resource commitment to diversity. Evaluation and monitoring, essential to cultivating an integrative and high-functioning staff that is accountable to diversity-related goals, is lacking. The choices of diversity activities are worrisome given the racial and gender differences between staff and client populations. Cross-cultural competencies are clearly needed, particularly since the clients tended to be People of Color while the staff tended to be White. Yet, it is not apparent that such staff development is occurring, at least in systematic and purposeful ways. Furthermore, the dearth of activities that signal engagement, investment, or embeddedness suggests the lack of a long-range perspective necessary for the development of a robust diversity climate (Cox, 2001; Jackson & Holvino, 1988; Norton & Fox, 1997; Hyde, 2003, 2004).

The second research question focused on the relationship between organizational membership and choices in diversity-related efforts. Few patterns emerged with respect to demographic factors that influenced diversity efforts. For example, a gender balanced management seemed to have somewhat contradictory effects. On the one hand, agencies with this management composition were more likely to have anti-discrimination and sexual harassment policies, and funds for diversity training. Yet these agencies were less likely to have program evaluation that included cultural sensitivity and outreach efforts that facilitated staff diversity. Another contradictory pattern emerges in agencies that have mostly White

clients. These agencies are less likely to have anti-discrimination policies or funds for diversity training. Yet these agencies are more likely to engage in outreach to disenfranchised groups, perhaps signaling the desire to serve a more heterogeneous clientele. There is little evidence to indicate that demographic integration of organizational membership, as suggested in some of the literature, is likely to result in those activities that would lead to more robust diversity climates. As Iglehart (2000) cautions, agencies may hire underrepresented group members in management positions and believe that this fulfills a commitment to diversity, but it does not.

The final research question looked at the relationship between agency characteristics and the relative strength of diversity climates. Some of the results regarding this line of inquiry were unexpected. That urban agencies were more likely to have mostly White staffs and clients, and less likely to have mostly clients of Color, belies the stereotypical view that these agencies serve mostly People of Color. Also contradicting “conventional wisdom” is the finding that public agencies are less likely to have mostly female clients. These findings serve as a warning to not assume organizational profiles. Becoming fully acquainted with organizational membership is a necessary planning component in diversity efforts (Cox, 2001; Hyde, 2004; Hayles & Russell, 1997; Norton & Fox, 1997).

The clearest pattern concerned public welfare agencies. These agencies were less likely to have affirmative action plans, hold training sessions, provide funds for training, and incorporate cultural sensitivity in staff evaluations. These findings seem to support research that indicates that public agencies have greater difficulty engaging in innovation or change (Brager & Holloway, 1978; Iglehart, 2000). These agencies also serve welfare clients, and thus are in a particularly politically contentious (even vulnerable) environment. Organizations in such environments are more likely to be change averse (Asamoah, 1995; Bocage, Homonoff, & Riley, 1995; Perlmutter, 2000). There was no evidence, however, that indicated that certain organizational characteristics have a significant positive impact on the development of diversity climates.

### ***CONCLUSION***

Though exploratory, this research should raise concerns regarding current diversity climates in human service agencies. There appears to be a gap between the need for robust diversity climates, given client and staff demographic trends, and what is being done in agencies to create

and maintain settings that pursue and embrace diversity. Research needs to focus on why agencies seem unable to develop robust diversity climates, and instead remain largely segregated with more nuts and bolts efforts. In addition, research that highlights successful organizations is needed, so that these agencies can serve as models for others in the development of their diversity climates.

Practitioners, particularly those in management positions, might also profit from considering the results presented here. Clearly, much work needs to be done in order to develop an organizational culture that fosters the pursuit of robust diversity climates. Agency managers have to be responsible for developing and supporting attitudes and behaviors toward transforming weak or moderate diversity climates to robust climates. Underlying this effort involves managers, first, wanting to change the existing climate and then convincing the rest of the agency that there will be more advantages than disadvantages in the change process (Asamoah, 1995; Menefee, 1997). Thus, managers who want to change the organizational culture in favor of a more robust diversity climate need to develop and incorporate a distinctive set of new ideologies, cultural forms, and behavior changes that will fit their circumstances and membership (Trice & Beyer, 1993).

### *LIMITATIONS*

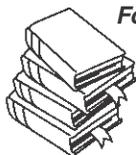
Generalizability is circumscribed because the study was conducted in one regional location and should be replicated in other human service communities to determine similarity in outcomes. Another limitation of this study is that diversity of organizational membership is only designated as race and gender; yet, diversity encompasses a range of differences including education, religion, age, language, ethnic heritage, and sexual orientation (Loden, 1996).

### *REFERENCES*

- Asamoah, Y. (1995). Managing the new multicultural workplace. In L. Ginsberg & P. Keys (Eds.), *New management in the human services*, pp. 115-127. Silver Spring: NASW Press.
- Bocage, M., Homonoff, E. & Riley, P. (1995). Measuring the impact of the fiscal crisis in human service agencies and social work training. *Social Work, 40*, pp. 701-705.

- Brager, G. & Holloway, S. (1978). *Changing human service organizations*. New York: Free Press.
- Brody, R. (1993). *Effectively managing human service organizations*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Cox, T. (2001). *Creating the multicultural organization*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- DeRosa, P. (1994). Diversity training: In search of anti-racism. *Peacework*, Issue 240, pp. 1-4.
- Gardenswartz, L. & Rowe, A. (1994). *The managing diversity survival guide*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Gutierrez, L. & Nagda, B. (1996). The multicultural imperative in human service organizations. In P. Raffoul & C. McNeece (Eds.), *Future issues in social work practice*, pp. 203-213. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hasenfeld, Y. (1996). The administration of human services. In P. Raffoul & C. McNeece (Eds.), *Future issues in social work practice*, pp. 191-202. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hayles, R. & Russell, A. (1997). *The diversity directive: Why some initiatives fail & what to do about it*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Hopkins, K. & Hyde, C. (2002). The human service management dilemma: New expectations, chronic challenges, and old solutions. *Administration in Social Work*, 26, pp. 1-16.
- Hosmer, D. & Lemeshow, S. (1989). *Applied logistic regression*. New York: Wiley.
- Hyde, C. (2003). More harm than good?: Multicultural initiatives in human service agencies. *Social Thought*, 8, pp. 23-43.
- Hyde, C. (2004). Multicultural development in human services: Challenges and solutions. *Social Work*, 49, pp. 7-16.
- Iglehart, A. (2000). Managing for diversity and empowerment in social services. In R. Patti (Ed.), *The handbook of social welfare administration*, pp. 425-444. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Jackson, B. & Holvino, E. (1988). Multicultural organizational development. PCMA Working Paper Series #11. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Program on Conflict Management Alternatives.
- Loden, M. (1996). *Implementing diversity*. Chicago: Irwin Publishing.
- Menefee, D. (1997). Strategic administration of nonprofit human service organizations: A model for executive success in turbulent times. *Administration in Social Work*, 21, 1-19.
- Nagda, B., Harding, S. & Holley, L. (1999). Social work and multicultural organization development: Toward empowerment and empowered organizations. In W. Shera & L. Wells (Eds.), *Empowerment practice in social work: Developing richer conceptual foundations*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (1996). *Code of ethics*. Washington, D.C.: Author.
- Norton, J. & Fox, R. (1997). *The change equation: Capitalizing on diversity for effective organizational change*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Perlmutter, F. (2000). Initiating and implementing change. In R. Patti (Eds.), *The handbook of social welfare management*, pp. 445-458. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rassmusen, T. (1996). *The ASTD trainer's sourcebook: Diversity*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Rauch, J. et al. (1993). *Diversity competence: A learning guide*. Baltimore: University of Maryland, School of Social Work.

- Roizner, M. (1996). *A practical guide for the assessment of cultural competence in children's mental health organizations*. Boston: Judge Baker Children's Center.
- Shin, J. & McClomb, G. (1998). Top executive leadership and organizational innovation: An empirical investigation of nonprofit human service organizations. *Administration in Social Work*, 22, pp. 1-21.
- Trice, H. & Beyer, J. (1993). *The culture of work organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Weinbach, R. & Grinnell, R. (1998). *Statistics for social workers*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.



**For FACULTY/PROFESSIONALS with journal subscription recommendation authority for their institutional library . . .**

If you have read a reprint or photocopy of this article, would you like to make sure that your library also subscribes to this journal? If you have the authority to recommend subscriptions to your library, we will send you a free complete (print edition) sample copy for review with your librarian.

1. Fill out the form below and make sure that you type or write out clearly both the name of the journal and your own name and address. Or send your request via e-mail to [doddelivery@haworthpress.com](mailto:doddelivery@haworthpress.com) including in the subject line "Sample Copy Request" and the title of this journal.
2. Make sure to include your name and complete postal mailing address as well as your institutional/agency library name in the text of your e-mail.

[Please note: we cannot mail specific journal samples, such as the issue in which a specific article appears. Sample issues are provided with the hope that you might review a possible subscription/e-subscription with your institution's librarian. There is no charge for an institution/campus-wide electronic subscription concurrent with the archival print edition subscription.]

**YES!** Please send me a complimentary sample of this journal:

\_\_\_\_\_ (please write complete journal title here—do not leave blank)

I will show this journal to our institutional or agency library for a possible subscription.

Institution/Agency Library: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: Sample Copy Department, The Haworth Press, Inc.,  
10 Alice Street, Binghamton, NY 13904-1580