FINDING LEVERS FOR INNOVATION IN DIVERSE TEAMS

How do diverse teams come into existence? Are they allocated to the right kind of tasks? How do elderly stereotypes influence age diverse groups? How can different pathways towards creativity be switched on or off? What makes diversity training effective? And what role do different creativity dimensions, such as fluency, originality, flexibility, depth or nationality related and nationality unrelated creativity, play in assessing all the above? The theoretical and empirical work presented in this dissertation addresses the above questions and shows that team creativity is a complex issue, even more so if coupled with team diversity.

First, this dissertation investigates age-related differences with regard to team staffing decisions. Accordingly, older individuals were better able to match task type (e.g. simple or complex/creative tasks) and team diversity level (homogeneous or heterogeneous).

Second, in four-person groups consisting of two younger and two older adults, elderly stereotypes were manipulated. This thesis finds that the creative fluency and depth of highly conscientious age-diverse teams was higher when elderly stereotypes were positive, and respectively lower for the control group and the negative age-stereotype condition.

Third, this thesis finds that a team's actual nationality diversity (i.e., the possibility to apply the training) as well as the diversity beliefs of the team members (i.e., the personal need for the training) interact in determining group creativity following a diversity training. Accordingly, teams with relatively low levels of diversity beliefs benefitted most from a diversity training, provided that they could actually use the training in their nationality diverse team.

In sum, many factors including personality, age, and beliefs have to be taken into account. The path to achieving creativity in diverse teams is more difficult and paved with more obstacles than it is the case for homogeneous teams, but at the same time team diversity is the much more promising route to take.