Chapter 1
Towards Understanding Multicultural Teams

S. Aqeel Tirmizi

> *We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospection.*
> –Anais Nin

Introduction

Consider the following two anecdotes:

A French-Senegalese manufacturing organization in Senegal was struggling with ways to increase production. The company's leadership was mostly comprised of French and Italian expatriates. Following some initial efforts and calculations, the French production manager concluded that it was impossible to increase the production levels by 25%. Coincidentally, he fell ill during this time and his assistant, a Senegalese national, took over the negotiation and decision making temporarily. A Senegalese worker approached the assistant with a proposal that workers were willing to increase the daily production by 30% or more in return for two hours' additional pay. The Senegalese assistant did some calculations and consulted some influential people and accepted the proposal. The daily production increased between 30 to 40%. Upon his return, the French production manager did not fully support the agreement since he thought that his authority had been undermined, which led to worker dissatisfaction and low morale. It was clear that both the Senegalese staff and expatriate managers were equally interested in increasing performance. However, they did not manage their cultural differences well and thus were not able to work effectively as a team.

The tragic earthquake in Northern Pakistan and India, in the autumn of 2005, killed around 75,000 people, and left thousands injured and sick and about three million people homeless and at the mercy of harsh mountain winter weather. The urgent relief work included acquiring and supplying tents and food for the homeless and medical aid to the sick. Among several organizations, a major U.S.-based international relief organization mobilized its human and organizational resources to respond to this tragedy. Successful planning and delivery of relief service, in a large part, depended

on the effective working of individuals from the international, national, and local offices of the agency and its partner organizations. While the organization was able to act quickly, the highly dedicated individuals from different nationalities found it difficult to understand and work with each other.

The individuals represented in the two anecdotes represent different backgrounds and were working in formal and informal teams to achieve the organizational objectives within multicultural settings. They exemplify the trends, possibilities, and challenges that surround teamwork in the various sectors of our society, including the for-profit, not-for-profit, and relief and development contexts.

According to Young (1998), some of the key challenges of managing multicultural teams are related to how people relate to each other, how they communicate with each other, and differences in their cultural orientations. Iles (1995) observes that misunderstanding, stereotyping, lack of competence and contribution, and mutual blaming create conflict and tension in teams. He goes on to add that such issues are likely to be multiplied when working with people who are culturally different and when working with gender, racial, ethnic, and ability diversity (Iles 1995). The work of Shenker and Zeira (1992) highlights the fact that cultural differences can contribute to increased conflict and misperceptions, which results in poor performance. Brett et al. (2006) sum up the major challenge in multicultural teams as follows:

> The challenge in managing multicultural teams effectively is to recognize the underlying cultural causes of conflict, and to intervene in ways that both get the team back on track and empower its members to deal with future challenges themselves (p. 1).

Management and leadership of multicultural teams involves effectively and creatively dealing with a variety of challenges that emerge as people from different cultural backgrounds interact with each other to accomplish the team task.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce what is known about multicultural teams and the factors that play a role in understanding and making these teams effective, using research and practice-based knowledge. The chapter begins with a broad overview of the emergence and importance of multicultural teams, the different forms these teams may take, and the role of diversity in multicultural team dynamics and effectiveness. Additionally, the chapter systematically identifies numerous factors embedded in the individual, team, organizational, and societal levels that impact multicultural team effectiveness.

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

- Discuss the discipline of teams as an emerging area of study and practice
- Define the concept of teams and discuss some differences between teams and groups
- Discuss different types and categories of teams
- Discuss the importance and relevance of multicultural teams

- Discuss some key effects of multicultural teams on organizational performance
- Describe an overall model for articulating and highlighting the different factors that contribute to effective teamwork

The Emergence and Study of Multicultural Teams as a Discipline

Why do teams emerge, or why do we create teams? Human beings have been working together and learning to cooperate since the dawn of time. Cooperation and working together are considered valuable in and of themselves. However, there is more here. Cooperation and working together result in efficiency and satisfaction that may not be possible otherwise. In addition to efficiency there is a bigger consideration that leads to the emergence and creation of teams. This consideration has to do with the sense of individual and collective satisfaction, achievement, and learning that occurs as individuals combine their efforts to achieve team and organizational goals. These variables directly and indirectly strengthen team processes and outcomes.

The successful completion of tasks, projects, and missions in community, organizational, and larger arenas of human interactions requires a certain degree of interdependence and relationship building among a group of individuals. In that sense one can argue that when a number of people in some kind of an informal or formal organization regularly interact and depend upon each other to accomplish desired outcomes, they are working as a team. An example of this is a core group of half a dozen individuals comprised of indigenous farmers from Mexico and a young couple from the US working under the Fair Trade umbrella to sell their products in the USA In order to work effectively, the members of the group interact with each other formally and informally on a regular basis; they depend upon each other for completion of significant tasks (e.g., timely preparation of shipments).

Recent developments around the world have affected all sectors in which society is tightly and loosely organized (private, public, civil society, etc.). Accordingly, the nature of work in each of these sectors has been affected by globalization and technology. Changes in the workforce composition resulting from globalization, combined with the rising popularity of team-based management techniques, have led to a practical concern with the management of multicultural teams (Thomas 1999). Technological advances have changed the way work is done and the way people communicate. Globalization and technology have added layers of complexity to the organization of work, which makes it necessary for people to depend upon one other to develop their goals and missions successfully and effectively. In that sense, teams and teamwork are integral to the way work in different organizations, sectors, and cultural settings gets done. From the above discussion we can infer that the notion of interdependence is central to defining and understanding teams in a complex and diverse world. The section of this chapter explaining different types of teams highlights how the degree of interdependence determines the nature of a team.

The academic and popular literature of the 1990s fully embraced the notion that multicultural teams were becoming a way of organizational life in the USA and other parts of the world, and therefore, it was important to understand how such teams could be managed and led effectively (e.g., Iles 1995). Equally important has been the concern with preparing individuals so that they can be effective in their roles as team members. This trend continues in the new millennium (e.g., Laroche 2001; Matveev and Milter 2004). As a result of this recognition, the theory and practice of effective multicultural teams started emerging. While this was a much needed and important start, our knowledge of different factors that contribute to building effective, especially high-performance multicultural teams, remains somewhat scattered and not fully integrated.

Harnessing the synergy or potential for high performance that is present in a multicultural team can lead to more creative approaches to problem solving and decision making (Marquardt and Horvath 2001), and this in turn means that we need to refine our understanding of the factors and processes that contribute to creating synergy and making the team effective. The remaining sections of this chapter introduce the basic ideas and a conceptual framework to define and contextualize the theory and practice of multicultural teams. The additional chapters offer comprehensive explanations, ideas, and suggestions for both understanding and working effectively with multicultural teams.

Teams Defined

The academic and popular literature offers many ways of defining teams. In their extensive review, Bailey and Cohen (1997) examined a large set of team definitions. Following this comprehensive review, they proposed the following definition of teams:

> A team is a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and are seen by others as an intact social entity, embedded in one or more larger social systems and who manage their relationships across organizational boundaries (p. 241).

Offermann and Spiros (2001) observe that an important issue in linking theory and practice of teams is the proper use of the term *team*. From a theoretical perspective, the interdependent nature of teams differentiates them from other collectives. On the other hand, groups are broadly constituted, their members consider themselves as social entities and are perceived by others this way, and they may have shared goals but are loosely connected (Offermann and Spiros 2001).

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) differentiate between teams and groups. Looking at their list in the table below we see possible differences in the areas of leadership, accountability, meeting processes, and output. However, looking closely at some of these differences—for example, the focus on purpose and goals—one

Teams	Groups
• Shared leadership roles	• Strong, clearly focused leader
• Individual and mutual accountability	• Individual accountability
• A specific purpose that the team itself delivers	• Purpose is the same as the larger organizational mission
• Collective work products	• Individual work products
• Open-ended discussion and active problem solving in meetings	• Focus on efficiency in meetings

can easily argue that any collective is concerned with the overall purpose that may be rooted in the larger organization or community. In that sense, teams and groups share a purpose that cannot be separated from the mission of the larger organization, since members are part of, and identify with, the organization or community.

While some writers have attempted to differentiate between *teams* and *groups* by attaching different conceptual meanings to them, others, such as Bailey and Cohen (1997), do not agree with this differentiation and approach these two concepts interchangeably. Bailey and Cohen (1997) observe that the popular management literature has tended to use the word *teams* more often, and the academic writing has used the word *groups* more regularly. While we lean towards defining team as entities characterized by a high degree of task interdependency, we do not see this as a major issue one way or the other.

Since we are concerned here with understanding and defining not just teams but teams that are diverse and multicultural, we need to take that into consideration in our definition. Marquardt and Horvath (2001) define multicultural teams as task-oriented groups comprising people of different cultural backgrounds. Following Marquardt and Horvath (2001) and Bailey and Cohen (1997), we define multicultural teams as a collection of individuals with different cultural backgrounds, who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems, and who manage their relationships across organizational boundaries and beyond.

Types of Teams

Several typologies have been offered to categorize teams (e.g., Katzenbach and Smith 1993; Mohrman et al. 1995; Bailey and Cohen 1997). These typologies include formal and informal teams, task forces, committees, self-managed team and virtual teams. While the conceptual characteristics that differentiate these typologies are useful and important, in many cases the features attributed to a certain type of team may overlap with another team type. For example, a task force may be self-managed, and an on-going work group may be formal or informal. Each of these categories is briefly discussed below.

Based on the works cited above and similar sources, the following categorization of teams may be useful in understanding the different forms that teams take and some of their important features.

Formal teams are the building blocks of organizations. The formal team has a high level of boundary spanning in that it may operate across departments within organizations. The formal team has a more rigid organizational structure, as team members tend to have distinct roles and the workload is distributed accordingly. Formal teams may be set up to address particular tasks that the organization seeks to accomplish within a specific time period. The members have a high degree of interdependence and both the process and performance are integral to the success of the formal team. A product development team consisting of members from the engineering, marketing, and production departments of an air conditioning manufacturing plant would be considered a formal team.

Informal teams meet to solve specific problems, and their membership may change with the task that the team seeks to accomplish. Informal teams thus have a high level of boundary spanning, similar to that of formal teams. However, members of informal teams have a lower level of interdependence than formal teams, consistent with a less-rigid organizational structure. An informal group might be formed in a micro-credit organization, for example, to understand and offer some suggestions about motivational and turnover issues among its loan officers. Members of the group might primarily be loan officers.

Task forces are teams organized for a specific project, and they are generally managed by the organization that initiated them. The task force has a great deal of interdependence between members and a strong emphasis on performance and timetables.

A *committee* is similar to a task force in that it is focused on a specific project for a discrete period of time. A committee can be a group of people who are formally delegated to perform a task, such as a search process or a decision-making process. Committees can also be formed to take action on a matter without the explicit involvement of the organization the committee members belong to. In other words, a committee can have different levels of member interdependence and varying degrees of autonomy from the members' organizations. Along the spectrum of team autonomy, committees can have more autonomy than task forces.

Self-managed teams have the greatest degree of autonomy from the organization, and have a strong emphasis on performance. Self-managed teams combine aspects of formal and informal teams, since they are inaugurated by the organization's management but take on the responsibility for their own management. In self-managed teams, most decision-making authority is turned over to a group that works interdependently in order to accomplish an assigned task (Katzenbach and Smith 1993).

Virtual teams are formed and joined electronically, with negligible face-to-face contact. Although virtual teams are not necessarily as autonomous as self-managed teams, team members have a high degree of autonomy. In contrast to formal and self-managed teams, virtual teams are less interdependent due to the nature of virtual communications and the multiplicity of organizations that can be involved.

Virtual teams are characterized by a permeable boundary between organizations, facilitated by networking. Globalization and widespread access to communication and collaboration technologies has caused virtual teams and networked organizations to proliferate (Mohrman et al. 1995). Virtual teams have the advantage of spreading the workload among long-distance players. However, the challenges present for non-virtual teams can be enhanced for virtual teams (Mohrman et al. 1995). These challenges are likely to be overcome with increased experience and the use of continually improved technologies. Both self-managed and virtual teams are increasingly common team types for organizations, and ongoing research that examines the complexities of these team types can help us learn how to make them more effective.

Multicultural Teams and Team Performance

To assess the impact of multiculturalism on team performance, it is important to consider the organizational context of the team, the nature of the team's diversity, and the relationship between these factors and the team's task. Organizational cultures derive from the history and experience shared by members of an organization and individual behaviors formed by the national culture. Because of this, many organizational cultures with a wide range of differences co-exist in a national culture (Brannen 1994). Team members might be more homogeneous than the national cultures they are part of, because they belong to similar educational, occupational, and socioeconomic subgroups. On the other hand, team members might differ in age, religion, race, locality, or other subgroup affiliations within a national culture. Membership in diverse subgroups and social identity help explain why individuals from the same national culture bring different behavioral expectations to a team (Brannen 1994). In other words, members of a team represent both the national cultures that they come from and quite possibly many other subcultures and identities. Thus, multicultural teams must be seen as having many facets that are not limited to diversity in national cultures.

Brannen and Salk's (2000) research reveals the effects of multifaceted diversity and suggests that cultural differences do not necessarily have a negative impact on team performance. Differences do not cause team conflicts; rather, the organizational context and individual team members' responses to cultural norms mediate differences. Team members of an increasingly diverse workforce must actively cope with cultural differences in order to bridge cultural boundaries. One such mechanism may be the formation of a hybrid culture within the multicultural team (Kopp 2005). In line with past work on power and influence, Brannen and Salk's (2000) work indicates that uncertainties experienced by teams determine which individual attributes will influence team behavior. Since team members, having many potential identities, do not necessarily exemplify the values of their culture or organization, the organizational context is an important variable in determining which attributes will affect team performance. The work of Brannen and Salk's (2000) highlights the

multiplicity of cultural identities, and shows that organizational context plays a central role in deciding the relative importance of those identities.

Empirical research on the output of multicultural teams has yielded divergent results. Many studies have shown that heterogeneous groups outperform homogenous groups. In contrast, some studies have shown that homogenous teams avoid the "process loss" caused by unpracticed communication and the subsequent conflict of more diverse teams. Recently, Williams and O'Reilly (1998) reviewed 40 years of diversity research and came to the conclusion that diversity does not have any predictable effects on team performance. Their review called for further research incorporating a more complex conceptualization of diversity and inclusion of context (e.g., organizational aspects, task type), types of diversity (informational and demographic), and process variables such as conflict and communication. A study by Jehn et al. (1999) attempts to synthesize these concepts with a model that illustrates how various types of diversity affect performance. The model includes three types of diversity discussed in past team research (informational diversity, social category diversity, value diversity). Informational diversity originates in differences between team members' educational background, work experience, and specialties. Social category diversity, or visible diversity, refers to the differences that people perceive first, such as gender, race, and ethnicity. Value diversity is essentially differences in what team members perceive the team's task and purpose to be.

The Jehn et al. study found that low value diversity and low social category diversity allow a multicultural team to take advantage of its informational diversity. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) affirm that informational diversity is not an advantage unless team members can capitalize on it. Tsui and O'Reilly (1989) have also found that even when teams possess advantageous aspects of diversity, performance will only improve to the degree that team members can overcome conflictual aspects of diversity. The Jehn et al. (1999) study also implies that some similarity in perspective among team members is necessary to facilitate successful group interaction. Their research correlated specific types of diversity with advantageous outcomes. For instance, high information diversity and low value diversity creates a high-performing team and maximizes effectiveness, while low value diversity alone leads to more efficient teamwork. Jehn et al. (1999) also found that value diversity becomes more important for team performance over time while social category diversity becomes less significant over time. This conclusion is supported by a study of R&D teams (Owens and Neale 1999) and by Salk's (1996) research on the relative prominence of national cultural differences in multicultural teams.

In addition to understanding how diversity affects team performance, the relationship between team process and diversity has been the subject of some research. The Jehn et al. (1999) study found that social category diversity led to higher team morale when task interdependence was high. In a study by Trefry and Vaillant (2002) multicultural team members reported enhanced capability to deal with unexpected events and increased self-confidence. Team members also stated that they had re-examined their perspectives when confronted with different perspectives. These individual benefits, including flexibility in response to unanticipated events, give multicultural teams a distinct competitive advantage. The competitive advantage

of multicultural teams can be observed in the team's output, especially when members are able to mediate conflicts caused by value diversity.

Thus, research on multicultural teams has led to three conclusions about team performance. First, certain types of diversity affect team process and performance more than other differences. Second, team members' responses to diversity and conflict are a major factor in determining how teams will be affected, in both process and performance. Third, the type of task the team is responsible for and the level of task interdependence are also important variables in the success of a multicultural team. Accordingly, the nature of a team's diversity can be an advantage or a disadvantage depending on the task involved and how the teamwork is managed.

A Model for Multicultural Team Effectiveness

A number of theorists have put forward models conceptualizing what makes teams effective. It is a difficult task to build a model that captures complex behavioral and psychological phenomena, such as teamwork and team effectiveness, in a comprehensive and meaningful manner. In addition to adequately representing behavioral and psychological dynamics at the team level, such models need to include higher-level variables connected to organizational and societal dynamics. However, despite these difficulties it is important to develop such models to inform theory building and practice. Following a valuable observation by Offermann and Spiros (2001), I see this model as an attempt to integrate the comprehensive existing knowledge about teamwork and processes through a usable framework facilitating transfer to practice. In Fig. 1.1, I propose a model representing the factors that affect team effectiveness. The components of the model are societal/institutional factors, organizational factors, team factors (structure, membership, and processes), team climate, and team effectiveness criteria. Many of the components and relationships presented here have been included in previous models and conceptualizations of team effectiveness (e.g., Ancona 1990; Guzzo 1986; Hackman 1987; Salas et al. 2003). However, I believe that the previous models have not examined all the variables and the relationships among these variables in the manner presented here. Some of the factors, important for our purposes, that have lacked integrated attention are culture and social identity and their impact on the effectiveness of multicultural teams. In addition, previous models have not categorized the team-level factors according to the structure, membership and process dimensions. Offermannand Spiros (2001) list a number of these factors as important to researchers and practitioners alike but do not pinpoint factors at the team level or differentiate between team- and organizational-level factors. These distinctions are important for both conceptual and practical purposes. Additionally, the model includes and builds on the works of Williams and O'Reilly (1998) and Jehn et al. (1999) by including a number of factors at the contextual and team levels.

Overall, the model proposes that team structure, membership, and processes determine team effectiveness. The model further asserts that the relationship
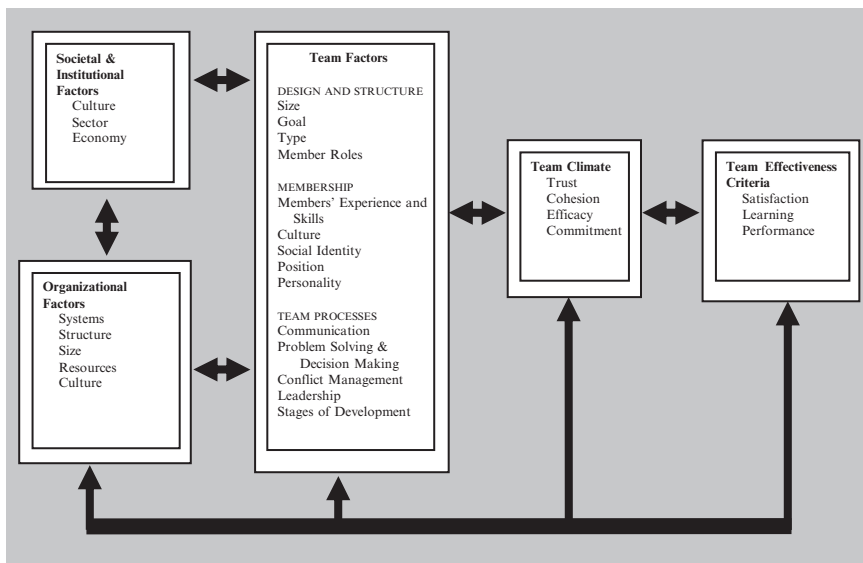
Fig. 1.1 Multicultural team effectiveness model
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between team effectiveness and team-level factors is mediated by the level of trust, cohesion, efficacy, and commitment that are present in a team, labeled as team climate in the model. In addition, team effectiveness and its team-level determinants are impacted by variables in the organizational and societal contexts.

Many of the relationships presented in the model have been studied and accepted by some of the existing conceptualizations and models of team effectiveness. For example, Hackman (1987) was one of the major initial works on this subject, which included a number of variables such as team size, norms, satisfaction and task accomplishment. However, neither Hackman nor many of the subsequent works on the subject fully dealt with some of the other relevant factors that impact the working and effectiveness of multicultural teams. Therefore, in the model presented below, I attempt to link several of these factors and provide an integrated approach to understanding and working with multicultural teams effectively. Some of the linkages and dynamics presented in the model have already been discussed in previous sections. For example, the sections on Types of Teams and Multicultural Teams and Performance relate team effectiveness to team design.

Societal and Institutional Factors

The above definition of multicultural teams stated that teams are embedded in one or more larger social systems. One such system is culture or national culture.

For our immediate purposes I use Schein's (1985) definition of culture as the assumptions, values, and artifacts that are shared by the members of a group (society). Since the major focus of our work is to understand multicultural teams, it is important to examine culture and how it impacts teams and individual team members. Some of the cultural dynamics and their impact on multicultural teams have been discussed above. Chapter 2 includes an overview of the major cultural frameworks and their implications for team processes and dynamics.

In addition to culture, other macro-level variables such as the sector of work (development, education), industry (high technology, manufacturing), etc., may play some role in impacting the nature and effectiveness of teams in a certain context.

Organizational Factors

Team achievement, to a large extent, depends upon the resources and authority required to complete the assignment successfully. A number of organizational arrangements play a key role in this area. These arrangements include systems such as compensation, performance management, and training and development; structural arrangements that help create and maintain teams; and organizational culture that promotes and encourages teamwork.

Tata and Prasad (2004) studied the impact of organizational formalization and centralization on self-managed teams and their effectiveness. They concluded that self-managed teams may be more effective in organizational settings with limited explicit rules, procedures, and polices. In addition, they found that these teams were effective in organizational environments that were characterized by distributed authority and decision making. Thomas et al. (2000) reported that the organization in their study that had comprehensively transferred power successfully created a feeling among its workforce that it valued employee involvement. In the same study, the authors report that most effective teams obtained a substantial part of their rewards based on team efforts. Such organizational systems support and encourage teamwork.

The fact that organizational culture is a key determinant of organizational behavior and performance is now well recognized. It is important to emphasize here that within the same national culture, organizational and group cultures may take many different forms (Brannen 1994). When understanding team effectiveness, organizational culture becomes an important variable to consider.

Team-Level Factors

The team-level factors have been divided into three subcategories: team design and structure, membership, and team processes. I briefly discuss each of these below.

Team design and structure elements include team size, goal, type, and member composition. Team size is an important variable as it plays a role in management of

team dynamics and if not managed properly could negatively affect the team's performance. The size is defined by the nature and complexity of the task to be performed. It also depends upon the resources available. In some teams the size may not be constant, but depend upon the progress of the task and the available resources.

The quality of a team's output and the efficiency with which it is achieved, in some ways, are sensitively linked to a team's size. While it is obvious that the higher the size, the more resources a team will have, it is important to consider that with increased size comes a more complex web of intra-team dynamics. Specifically, a five-person team has ten two-person relationships, but when the size is doubled a ten-person team will have about 44 dyadic relationships, an almost exponential increase in the number of relationships to be managed (Jones and Bearley 2001). Jones and Bearley (2001) argue that it is difficult to sustain high levels of performance in teams of people with more than about 15 members (p. 57).

According to Gardenswartz and Rowe (2003), team goals are the means to articulate and translate the overall mission. Collective understanding and clarity around team goals is crucial for a team's success. In our experience with both monocultural and multicultural teams, we recall many instances when there was no discussion of the team's overall goal. In such cases, the individual members assume that the goal is understood and clear to everyone, which is not always the case. In such cases, there is potential for frustration, lack of timely progress, and unmet or incomplete goals. This potential is even greater in multicultural teams due to the variety in expectations, individual goals, and backgrounds that members bring to the team. Therefore, it is very important for multicultural teams to develop collective understanding of their goals and link them to the members' individual expectations and aspirations to the extent possible.

The type or form of a multicultural team is another important element of team design. These forms may include a task force, self-managed team, committee, or virtual team, which were explained in the section on team types.

Team membership variables include team members' experiences and skills, cultural background, social identity (issues such as class, race, gender, ethnicity) and individual aspects of personality and intelligence. At the team level the variable of social identity, personality, and culture intersect in complex ways. These intersections may be seen as a tri-lens, which may exist as overlapping personal, social, and collective identities that members bring to a multicultural team. The role of culture will be discussed in Chapter 2, and the role of social identity and personality will be explored in detail in Chapter 3.

Team processes include a number of important areas such as communication, problem solving and decision making, conflict management, stages of development, and leadership. All of these processes play an extremely important role in the working and effectiveness of multicultural teams. For example, norm setting and clarification is an important team development process. A norm in the context of multicultural teams is a behavior, a way of doing, which the team practices on an ongoing basis, and it serves as a ground rule. Kopp (2005) talks about the notion of *hybrid culture* as a set of communication norms that are designed by the group. She goes on to observe that such norms may be explicitly agreed upon or emerge over a period of

time. This notion and team roles that contribute to effective group process are explored further in Chapter 5. Chapters 6 and 7 provide comprehensive discussions on leadership and intercultural communication. Conflict processes are discussed in Chapter 8 and problem-solving and decision-making processes in Chapter 9.

In many ways the major focus of our examination in the book will be the team-level factors. While we consider other larger variables at organizational and societal levels as important and integral to understanding teams and their effectiveness, what happens within a team and how team processes and dynamics are managed play a central role in a team's success.

Team Climate

The areas of trust, commitment, cohesion, and efficacy have received some much-deserved attention in the organizational and behavioral literature. I consider them as mediating variables linking the team-level factors and the effectiveness criteria. Druskat and Wolff (2001), while examining the emotional intelligence of teams, argued that team trust, identity, and efficacy play a key role in determining a team's effectiveness as they form a foundation for collaboration and cooperation. They further asserted that team processes of appropriate norm building contribute to the team trust and efficacy building. The model indicates that the team and higher-level factors determine the team climate. The resulting climate not only plays a role in team effectiveness, but could also impact team processes and higher-level variables. In other words, a synergistic relationship between team climate and team process exists. For example, increased trust among team members may strengthen the communication and decision-making processes.

Team Effectiveness Criteria

Over the years, the theory of multicultural teams has recognized the importance of multiple effectiveness criteria when considering team success. In addition to productivity and performance, team members' satisfaction and learning are now considered integral to understanding the team's effectiveness. The team effectiveness model explicitly recognizes that in addition to performance and productivity, individual and collective sense of satisfaction and learning is integral to judging a team's success. The model further asserts that factors of learning and satisfaction may contribute to strengthening teamwork. For example, on-going learning may strengthen a shared sense of efficacy or unlock new means of communicating and decision making. Further, team member satisfaction creates positive feedback that boosts the effectiveness of multicultural teams.

As we attempt to understand what makes for appropriate effectiveness criteria for multicultural teams, it is again important to consider how these criteria may be

influenced by culture as well. Cultural norms influence team members' perceptions of team process and performance. In other words, as observed by Thomas et al. (2000), what is considered "going nowhere" in some cultures may be seen as "getting there" in other cultures. In their two-year study of multicultural teams in the Australasian region, Thomas and Ravlin (1995) found that members' effectiveness criteria related to both task and interpersonal factors. Their findings revealed that a majority of team members from different cultural backgrounds felt that both task achievement and how well members worked together were important. The study also reiterates the importance of organizational context. Thomas and Ravlin (1995) found that team performance was positively correlated with management support for teams, diversity support and training, team status, and team rewards. Team rewards were not material, but again related to members' satisfaction with task accomplishment and feelings of positive self-esteem. Thus, team members' effectiveness criteria relate to their satisfaction with team process, or the "getting there," as well as task accomplishment.

Application of the Model

Now that we have examined the components of the model, it would be useful to look at how it can be applied, highlighting the factors that play an important role in determining team effectiveness, and the complex ways in which these factors can be linked. Let's take the example of a team responsible for organizing and implementing executive development programs for the Executive Development Unit (EDU) in a university setting in Thailand. The core team has three Thai, one Indian, and one British national on it. Two Thai support and administrative staff assist the team. The team has two female members. The overall mandate of the team is to plan, market, and implement highly reputable portfolios of open-enrollment short training programs on leadership and management for professionals across the South East Asia region. The team works closely with the management school faculty from the university, which provides the conceptual leadership and human resources for the actual program design and delivery.

The societal factors in this case include the opportunities and constraints that come with the emerging market economy and the educational and training sectors in Thailand and the neighboring countries. These factors will partly determine the nature of marketing and success of these programs. The organizational factors in this case will include the university faculty resources whose availability and competence will impact the timely planning and delivery quality. Financial resources, information technology, and support from the organization will play a role in the success of the marketing efforts.

At the team level, clarity of goals and member roles in terms of structural factors are clearly important. In terms of membership factors, the member's relevant experience and skills, social identity and personality will have a critical impact on the team's working, its overall climate and subsequent performance. The British female has been hired as the Program Director a few months ago. Though she is coming to this job with four years relevant managerial experience from a university

in Singapore, there are important questions about how she is perceived by the Thai team members as a foreigner.

The team processes of communication, decision making, management of developmental stages, and leadership are key determinants of how this multicultural team will manage its dynamics and meet its goals and mandate. There may be a leadership challenge here as the Indian team member, who grew up in a hierarchal and male-dominated society, may have to adjust to a female leader. This team's climate and effectiveness will be determined by how the team-level factors will be managed and the impact of the organizational and societal factors.

Relevant Competencies

- Articulate the contextual factors that impact the work of multicultural teams
- Understand the team-level factors and the overall role they play in determining the effectiveness of multicultural teams
- Identify the variables that determine the team climate
- Understand the nature and relevance of multiple criteria for team effectiveness
- Observe connections among various factors that determine the effectiveness of multicultural teams

Summary

The purpose of the chapter was to introduce what is known about multicultural teams and the factors that play a role in understanding and making these teams effective, using research and practice-based knowledge.

The model proposed in this chapter provides a conceptual framework for the discussions to follow in subsequent chapters. It lists the most relevant factors that play an important role at different levels in determining the effectiveness of multicultural teams. In addition, the model articulates some of the key causal linkages among the different factors and variables.

While all the factors listed in the framework are important and relevant for understanding how multicultural teams work, our major focus in this book is on exploring and discussing the team-level factors. However, several of the other factors, particularly culture and effectiveness criteria, will be examined and linked to various team processes and dynamics.

The discussions in the next chapters will explore cultural frameworks and operationalization of culture most relevant to teams, individual factors with particular attention to personality and identity, team development, group process, leadership dynamics, communication dynamics, conflict management, and problem solving and decision making.

Case Study: Evaluation Mission[1]

As you read the case study below, consider the following questions:

- *What is the evaluation team's goal?*
- *What are key contextual variables at the societal and organizational levels that may impact the team's work?*
- *What aspects of the team members' social identity are important in this context, if any?*
- *What are your thoughts on the experience and skills of the team for conducting this mission?*
- *What would be your recommendations to the team to facilitate their work?*

Rada International Development Agency (RIDA) sponsors development initiatives around the world. As part of its learning and monitoring activities, it regularly organizes evaluation missions. Let's assume that RIDA is forming an evaluation mission to assess the five-year impact of a major regional development program in Indonesia. This particular mission is aimed at evaluating a project focusing on strengthening local governance. The team will pay close attention to gender equity, policy reforms, and participation and strengthening of civil society organizations.

The evaluation team will consist of four members representing different nationalities, which will initiate and complete the assessment in a three-month period. The work will include a detailed review of program documentation, extensive meetings with stakeholders, analysis, and report writing. Two of the team members are from Canada and the remaining two members are from Indonesia. The team leader is a Canadian male of European descent. The other Canadian team member is a male of Ugandan origin. Both Canadians work for a small consulting firm in Ottawa that specializes in the monitoring and evaluation of international development programs. One of the Indonesians is a female who has just returned to Indonesia with a degree in public administration. Her previous work in Indonesia and her recent degree research focused on issues of local governance. The other Indonesian is a professor at a national university who regularly consults with international organizations.

RIDA considers Indonesia as an important partner in its development efforts and is assisting the country in a number of areas. Until the late 1990's, Indonesia had limited experience with democracy. The country is still recovering from the financial and political crises of 1997–98 and the tsunami disaster of 2004. Indonesia is predominantly a Muslim country. During the mission's work, Indonesia will celebrate the month of Ramadan (the Muslim month of fasting).

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[1] This case study is based on a hypothetical scenario. However, the context, complexities, and dynamics summarized here are representative of situations experienced during evaluation of international development projects.

> *During the mission, the team will work closely with the Development Section of the relevant Embassy and the staff of local government and leading civil society organizations. The team will have about three months to complete the project. The project deliverables include a major presentation to the stakeholders to discuss findings and receive feedback, report writing, and debriefing at the RIDA headquarters.*

Multicultural Team Effectiveness Inventory

The Multicultural Team Effectiveness Inventory (MTEI) allows a team to perform an overall assessment of its working and performance with attention to larger organizational and societal factors. Think of a formal or informal team that you have been a part of and assess your experience along the following dimensions.

How clear was the goal or purpose of teamwork? (Consider most members' shared understanding of the goal and purpose)	Not clear	Very clear
	1 2 3	4
How appropriate was the team size? (Consider the task complexity and member interdependence)	Not appropriate	Very appropriate
	1 2 3	4
Was the team type appropriate for the task? (Formal, informal, self-managed)	Not appropriate	Very appropriate
	1 2 3	4
How clear were the member roles and responsibilities? (Roles, deadlines, reporting)	Not clear	Very clear
	1 2 3	4
How do you characterize the team's understanding and managing of the following team processes?	Not effective (inappropriate, weak)	Highly effective (appropriate, strong)
	1 2 3	4
Communication		
Decision making and problem solving		
Conflict management		
Leadership		
Stages of development		

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(continued)

Did the following aspects of team membership get appropriate attention?	Did not receive appropriate attention			Received appropriate attention
	1	2	3	4
Experience				
Skills				
Social identity				
Personality				

What kind of role did the following societal and institutional factors play in influencing the team's work?	Not significant			Very significant
	1	2	3	4
Economy (consider the overall economic conditions at a national or regional level)	Not significant			Very significant
Culture (think about the norms, traditions, and values at the national and/or regional levels)				
Sector (not-for-profit, private, health, etc.)				

What kind of role did the following organizational factors play in influencing the team's work?				
	1	2	3	4
Systems (performance management, information technology, monitoring and evaluation, etc.)				
Structure (simple, matrix, flat, hierarchical, etc.)				
Size				
Resources (human, financial, technological)				
Culture				

Assess the overall level of team climate along the following dimensions	Low			High
	1	2	3	4
Trust				
Cohesion				
Efficacy				
Commitment				

Assess the overall level of team effectiveness on the following dimensions	Not effective			Highly effective
	1	2	3	4
Satisfaction				
Learning				
Performance				

Scores of 3 or more on the individual dimensions of this instrument indicate these areas of team dynamics are satisfactory to strong.

Scores of 2 or less on the individual dimensions of this instrument suggest these areas of team dynamics are weak and need appropriate attention.

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