Employee Expectations of Psychological Safety Within Two Different Norwegian Organizational Settings

**Purpose:** Understanding and integrating diversity in the workplace in optimal ways has become ever more prevalent. The Diversity Icebreaker (DI; Ekelund & Langvik, 2009)) is an organizational development tool intended to increase the appreciation of differences and diversity, build trust, improve communication, social interaction, team development, constructive group dynamics and more. Collectively, these aspects of organizational functioning may be viewed as related to psychological safety. Psychological safety (Edmundson,1999) reflects a culture where employees feel able to express themselves without fear of consequences in the workplace. Some evidence exists, however, suggesting that various occupations differ in preferred organizational culture (Butler et al, 2014). The purpose of this study was to examine whether occupational setting impacted the emphasis employees place on specific aspects of psychological safety.

**Procedure:** The participants were members of two different focus groups that took place following a DI workshop in Norway where participants talked about what lessons learned about inclusivity from the workshop could be applied to their organizational setting. This qualitative study design focused on focus groups from Hospitality and Municipality organizations. Four trained coders developed a codebook for linguistic markers of psychological safety themes from research literature for each focus group transcript for the categories of: Voice, Belongingness, Appreciation, and Authenticity. Voice is the ability to express one’s ideas and opinions without fear of consequences in the workplace. Belongingness is feeling a part of a unified group in the workplace. Appreciation is feeling respected in the workplace. Authenticity is the ability to express one’s true self in the workplace. Three trained coders then applied the finalized codebook to code the manuscripts for the four categories of psychological safety (voice, belongingness, appreciation, authenticity). Frequency analyses were conducted to see which psychological safety categories were mentioned the most in each organizational setting and rank orders were assessed.

**Results:** Voice and Belongingness were the areas of psychological safety most mentioned by members of the focus groups with all coders indicating these themes as mentioned most frequently. The Municipality focus group emphasized belongingness more frequently than voice (100% agreement amongst the coders) as did the Hospitality focus group (67% agreement).

**Conclusion**: Employees from both organizational sectors emphasized belongingness in their discussion of where organizations should focus efforts to create psychological safety for their employees. While voice was important, it was not as prominent in the discussion as was the sense of belonging.