RESEARCH ON MANAGING GROUPS AND TEAMS

Series Editors: Elizabeth A. Mannix and
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RESEARCH IN MANAGING GROUPS AND TEAMS
VOLUME 11

DIVERSITY AND GROUPS

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CAPSTONE CHAPTER FOR THE VOLUME: INTEGRATING THEMES AND FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES IN WORK GROUP DIVERSITY

Jennifer A. Chatman

Research on diversity in work teams is flourishing. The chapters in this collection represent some of the very best of that work and collectively, reveal important trends. My objectives in this capstone chapter are to discuss some of the themes across the 12 chapters and consider both the future research and advice to practicing managers that they inspire.

Managing diversity in work organizations remains a complex challenge. One thing is clear, however; as predictions of a major influx of women and minorities into the U.S. workforce become reality, managers' attempts to capitalize on the purported advantages of diversity in work teams have met with mixed success (e.g., Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003; Lyness & Thompson, 1997). As we can see from this collection, the effects of diversity in a variety of laboratory and field settings has also been characterized by mixed findings in that heterogeneity appears to be beneficial in some circumstances but detrimental in others (see Mannix & Neale, 2005; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998 for excellent reviews of past research). Further, the effects of diversity seem to have lagged behind our expectations because

cognitive and behavioral biases that emerge in work groups can lead people to rely on immediately apparent demographic characteristics to categorize others and predict their behavior within work groups (e.g., Allport, 1954; Chatman & Spataro, 2005; Messick & Mackie, 1989) rather than on characteristics that are more relevant to the actual work.

Though scholars have amassed a significant body of research to understand how demographic diversity influences organizations and their members and how diversity influences various work processes and outcomes, these conclusions remain somewhat equivocal and, in some cases, contradictory. For example, as many of the authors in this collection point out, it is unclear whether greater diversity promotes or constrains individual and group effectiveness or influences minority members differently than majority members.

So, what clarity does this collection of chapters provide? Three broad, probably not comprehensive, and probably overlapping themes stand out as potentially useful for gaining a deeper understanding of how diverse teams work. Below I discuss the chapters that are relevant to each of these three themes, first, that diversity affects everyone in the work group; second, that minority members are subject to unique challenges in addition to those that majority members face; and finally, that diverse groups operate differently than do homogeneous groups. A caveat is that I discuss each chapter under only the one section that seemed most relevant to me, but many of the chapters are relevant to all three themes.

THEME 1: DIVERSITY AFFECTS EVERYONE IN THE WORK GROUP

One interesting and unequivocal theme across the chapters is that everyone in teams, not just minority members, is affected by the group's composition – whites and blacks, men and women, and those who are experienced as well as inexperienced. Further, though there is evidence that minority members may be more affected than majority members (both positively and negatively – see, e.g., Chatman, Boisnier, Spataro, Anderson & Berdahl, in press), it is clear that majority members are influenced by group composition as well.

In perhaps the most direct example of this, Samuel Sommers shows how membership in racially diverse groups influences societally defined majority (White) members. In his chapter, Sommers describes a study that he conducted in which he found that White jurors who knew that they would

be serving on a jury with Black jurors were less likely to believe that Black defendants were guilty – even before they began deliberating with the jury. Anticipating their interaction with Blacks, White jurors made sure that they were well prepared on the case and had developed justifiable positions. Further, members of diverse groups perceived their colleagues as representing a broader range of opinions and perspectives than did members of homogeneous groups even if, in objective terms, the range was the same.

These findings echo the well-known minority influence literature (e.g., Moscovici, 1994) which shows that minority members significantly influence group members' positions. Sommers offers, perhaps, a more precise demonstration of the underlying mechanism by which this influence occurs, increased effort in anticipation of defending one's position.

The concern people feel about appearing unbiased or unprejudiced may, as Sommers suggests, actually lead to less biased positions. But, he is also left with a conclusion that Eden King, Seth Kaplan, and Steve Zaccaro focus on; that the pre-occupation with whether one appears prejudiced to others constitutes a significant distraction. King and her colleagues describe a three-part process for how a team's diversity influences its effectiveness through meta-perceptions, or people's perceptions about others' perceptions of them. One part of the process is that people are pre-occupied by monitoring their own behavior to avoid appearing prejudiced. A second is that the focal individual scrutinizes others' behaviors, using them as reference points to detect his or her own prejudice. Finally, the focal individual also monitors his or her own behavior to avoid conforming to negative stereotypes of the demographic groups he or she represents. This confluence of perceptions has some interesting similarities to the asymmetry characterizing the fundamental attribution error (e.g., Heider, 1958) in that members of homogeneous work groups assume that others individuate them and see them for who they are (accurately) but in diverse groups, people believe that others perceive them stereotypically, that is, as part of their identity group. The net effect of all of this mental work, of course, is that valuable cognitive effort which could otherwise be devoted to the task at hand is instead devoted to these interpersonal considerations. As a result, task performance is impaired in diverse groups.

Tracy Dumas, Nancy Rothbard, and Kathy Phillips' chapter on self-disclosure also points out some fascinating ways in which members of diverse groups process, or rather, fail to process information. The common knowledge effect, or the tendency for all groups to focus on information that they have in common rather than distinct information held by individual members, contributes to the incredible robustness of demographic differences.

People's willingness to articulate and share unique perspectives and information, one of the primary rationales for convening diverse groups, is likely reduced even further by demographic differences among members. Dumas and her colleagues make a keen observation – perhaps managers will eventually learn how to create norms in which people will feel comfortable and motivated to more easily share their less politically charged differences (e.g., functional background, organizational background). Then, we would be in a better position to tackle situations in which more sensitive differences like race and sex are preventing people from expressing their views.

From these chapters, it is clear that group diversity affects not just those who are in the minority with regard to the group or societal level status hierarchy, but also it affects majority members in interesting and complex ways. That said, it is also true that minority members bear more of the burden of diversity, a point made by a number of the chapters in the collection which I discuss next.

THEME 2: MINORITY MEMBERS ARE SUBJECT TO UNIQUE CHALLENGES

A second fascinating trend, one that became apparent to me only after reading these chapters, is the importance of understanding not only what is going on in the larger work group but also the pressures and opportunities playing out among sub-group members. Here, it would be difficult to say that agreement exists about the role of subgroups. For example Denise Loyd, Judith White, and Mary Kern lay out a fascinating model of "duo status" which is a homogeneous minority of two members in a larger group. They draw on social identity and self categorization theories to explain how minorities experience pressure from both the majority outgroup and the minority ingroup. Minority individuals in diverse groups experience both inter- and intra-group pressure. Inter-group pressure emerges from out-group members because people believe that they will be seen as stereotypical and treated less favorably by them. This confirms much of what we already know about minority's experiences in work groups.

But the key insight from this chapter is the intra-group pressure that minority members experience – not only do duo's experience social pressure from the majority, they may also feel that they have to somehow "choose" between either loyalty to their small ingroup or assimilation with the larger outgroup. And, either way, they lose. For example, two women in a larger group of men may positively support each other but then, as a result, be

excluded by the men. In contrast, in the negative dynamic, the women can try to assimilate with the men but then the women may compete with and undercut one another to gain acceptance into the larger male group (e.g., Chatman & O'Reilly, 2004).

Indeed the irony is that, rather than increased numbers of minorities resulting in greater work group success, comfort, and clarity among minority members, two minorities may be "lonelier," that is, less supported, than one! In this way, Loyd and her colleagues offer an explanation of the experience of first movers – minorities out on the forefront of a new occupation, role, or task, and how difficult this might be. Indeed, work groups are probably more likely to have two minorities than one to avoid the appearance of tokenism and to reap the benefits of diversity. And yet, this duo status may be more problematic for those minorities than being a solo representative of their category.

There are even broader implications of this model. First, and most obviously, the model offers yet further confirmation of the importance of taking societal level minority status into account when considering a group's composition. Further, the duo model may be the two-person version of what Mahzarin Banaji and John Jost have called "system justification" (e.g., Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004) and even has some similarities to the very early work on what was popularly referred to as the "Queen Bee Syndrome" in which women who were successful were reluctant to support and promote other women (e.g., Tavis & Jayaratne, 1973). But, Lau and Murnighan's (1998) faultline theory is perhaps the most closely related concept to duo status – a fact that Lisa Nishii and Jack Goncalo expand upon in their chapter.

Faultlines are characterized by the alignment of certain demographic categories such that stronger faultlines result from correlated demographic attributes – more highly correlated demographic attributes result in fewer subgroups and greater sub-group homogeneity. Nishii and Goncalo propose that smaller homogeneous subgroups should help minorities rather than hinder them as Loyd and her colleagues suggest, at least with regard to encouraging minority members to express creative ideas within the group. Nishii and Goncalo suggest that fewer and smaller homogeneous groups provide ingroup members with greater psychological safety. That is, other similar individuals will offer support and reduce the fear of embarrassment that can make people unwilling to risk articulating creative ideas. Further, they suggest that this configuration may, in contrast to prior research and speculation, actually mitigate some of the most serious barriers to creativity in groups. Most intriguing, they argue persuasively that faultlines may, under certain conditions, promote creativity rather than constrain it.

An important and entirely testable question is whether small groups (any subgroup from duo's on up) of similar others support or undermine one another's creativity and contribution to the larger group. Perhaps there is even a tipping point such that the actual number of subgroup members depends on the size and composition of the overall group.

Similarly, Quinetta Roberson, Bradford Bell, and Shanette Porter astutely observe that both minority and majority members' language is affected by the group's composition. They define linguistic intergroup bias as people's tendency to describe negative outgroup behavior and positive ingroup behavior abstractly and positive outgroup behavior and negative ingroup behavior concretely. The bias likely reflects a person's tendency to perceive positive ingroup behavior and negative outgroup behavior as enduring and regular – as though it has occurred for a long time and will likely be stable and predictable going forward. In contrast, describing positive outgroup member and negative ingroup behavior more concretely reflects people's beliefs that such behaviors are restricted to the specific situation and are unusual, atypical, and unlikely to occur regularly.

Even more dramatic, however, is that people with lower status are likely to express categories using greater abstraction generally, reflecting the permanence or impenetrability of those categories that they feel based on their greater experiences as targets of prejudice. Once again, low status work group members, likely those who represent societal minority groups, experience greater bias than do their majority member counterparts.

Finally, offering a critical distinction, Ray Reagans highlights the importance of avoiding the temptation (and tendency) for researchers to treat various demographic categories as though they are equivalent. As one example, he discusses the implications of our tendency to accept a person in a role as based on the distance between their expectations for typical incumbents of the role and beliefs they associate with members of the focal individual's demographic category. This explains why it is difficult for people from previously under-represented demographic categories to be accepted by others – which may or may not be related to their actual capabilities in the role – they are simply too atypical. For example, as Reagans notes, people are less likely to notice leadership behavior when the leader is female.

Reagans' constructs can, perhaps be characterized as distinctions between typicality of the person in the role according to his or her demographic typicality. This likely explains why beliefs are so persistent since at some point it may become numerically rare or common for members of a particular social category to work on a certain task or in a certain domain, respectively. Over time, this low or high base rate of participation may

eventually lead to the formation of stereotypes associating frequency of participation with expectations.

Demographic shifts in professional basketball in the U.S. illustrate this possibility: White players dominated the National Basketball Association (NBA) until the early 1950s. As other sports up until that time, African Americans were not allowed to play. But, African American players have now numerically dominated White players in the NBA for over 20 years. Historical analyses could track the point in time in which it became considered "typical" for African Americans to play basketball and "atypical" for Whites, and distinguish this from the numeric composition of White and African American players in the NBA. Examining a profession in which the profile of the typical incumbent has changed radically in a relatively short period would allow greater understanding of the origination and evolution of social category based stereotypes (e.g., numeric status may eventually give rise to perceptions of task typicality), and also of the correspondence between changes in numeric composition and the consequences of perceptions of task typicality. In particular, we might predict that changes in numeric composition occur far sooner than do stereotyped expectations. The challenge would be to find jobs or professions in which being in the numeric minority is not also historically atypical. Ongoing changes in the demographic composition of the U.S. workforce will undoubtedly offer such opportunities, and, at the same time, increase the importance of under-standing the separate and powerful effects of numeric status and task stereotypicality on perceptions, social interaction, and performance.

THEME 3: DIVERSE GROUPS OPERATE DIFFERENTLY THAN DO HOMOGENEOUS GROUPS

We have known for some time that demographically homogeneous and heterogeneous groups operate differently (e.g., O'Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989), but the chapters in this volume do a nice job of uncovering some previously unexplored differences. Two chapters focus on contextual considerations and three chapters focus on identity considerations.

Contextual Considerations

Aparna Joshi and Hyuntak Roh develop a comprehensive theoretical model to address the contextual differences among diverse teams. They focus,

interestingly, on issues such as the group's task-based context (e.g., interdependence), and emergent context (e.g., leadership and climate) as the key to understanding how diverse groups are likely to differ from homogeneous groups. Joshi and Roh describe an interesting study by Kirkman, Tesluk, and Rosen (2004) in which the fit between leaders' and members' demographic characteristics influenced group performance. This juxtaposition of hierarchical position and demographic composition, the subject of their chapter, leads to a variety of different work group processes and outcomes. For example, when leaders' demographic attributes did not match with the group, members experienced lower levels of trust, perceived their leader as more biased, and saw themselves as outgroup members with lesser access to resources. In contrast, when leaders and members came from the same demographic groups, members felt more empowered and effective. Thus, not only can members of different demographic categories within larger groups cause variance in groups, but also different hierarchical arrangements cause people to relate within subgroups differently.

Heather Caruso and Anita Woolley are also concerned with contextual features and discuss the concept of emergent interdependence which they define as members' desire and expectation to work interdependently for the benefit of the group. Marked contrasts on emergent interdependence arise from differently composed groups. Interestingly, when diverse teams were able to achieve congruence, here defined in terms of assigning roles eliciting differing cognitive expertise, they outperformed all other types of groups – both those with diverse cognitive approaches but lacking congruence, and those with homogeneous cognitive approaches. Further, they found that collaboration was most beneficial in diverse teams in which the diversity was ambiguous or hard for members to understand; that is, collaboration was a proxy for deep understanding of the potential contributions of members with different cognitive approaches. Finally, and convincingly, they found that emergent interdependence interventions enhanced diverse teams' performance but had no such effect on homogeneous teams.

Identity Considerations

Chi-Ying Cheng, Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks, and Fiona Lee zero in on the concept of identity integration suggesting that when a person perceives multiple disparate social identities as compatible he or she is better able to contribute to a diverse team's ability to produce innovative output. They astutely propose that people both need to activate disparate social identities

to improve their ability to be creative and then, once activated, they also need a way to perceive these identities as compatible.

Margaret Ormiston and Elaine Wong also focus on how the context of diversity influences identity motives in groups and make a compelling argument for how homogeneous and heterogeneous groups differ in terms of the motives that are satisfied among members. They offer an insightfully variegated view of an array of identity motives that may be in play simultaneously. They focus on another aspect of the emergent context, the social context and group composition specifically, and suggest that identity motives may be more or less likely to be satisfied in diverse compared to homogeneously composed groups. For example, distinctiveness motives are more likely to be satisfied in diverse than homogeneous groups, but self-enhancement, self-verification, and belonging motives are less likely to be satisfied in such groups. Knowing this, of course, enables members to prepare for the diverse group experience.

They also identify a key insight about the value of promoting a superordinate identity within diverse groups. While some have argued that such overarching identities simply homogenize members and destroy the very differences that can lead to more creativity. Ormiston and Wong suggest that superordinate identities allow members to "retain their individuality while also feeling that they share a common identity" (p. 14). In some ways, this line of reasoning is similar to what Nishii and Gonclo are suggesting – developing ways for people to be the same and different from others – and feel comfortable with both – simultaneously. Considering the full array of identity motives is critical to understanding how this can be accomplished. Integrating these ideas with Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, and Lee's perspective suggests that though people will probably be required to get comfortable with their motive to differentiate from others externally, if they can integrate their multiple identities *internally*, they will be in a great position to be innovative.

Floor Rink and Naomi Ellemers carry the theme of identities to the group level of analysis focusing on activating the group's overall identity rather than individual members' identities. In contrast to Ormiston and Wong they suggest that focusing on differences among members (to gain variance in perspective) will not preclude the development of a common group identity under certain circumstances. The key here is that the salience of a common group identity is not based on the cognitive perceptions of similarity alone (p. 5). They suggest instead, that something akin to meta-norms (e.g., Axelrod, 1984), such as a diverse group that emphasizes the value of diversity and mobility, will determine the content of shared identity. One

parallel is to work that suggests that organizations can combat the negative homogenizing effect of strong cultures (and, ostensibly reap the performance benefits) by emphasizing a norm of uniformity rather than conformity. This entails adhering to the organization's objectives but encourages each member to do so differently (Flynn & Chatman, 2001). Rink and Ellemers go on to describe a persuasive set of studies they conducted that reveal the norms that are likely to become the basis for a common identity in diverse work groups such as task-related and work style differences.

HOW CAN WE ADVISE MANAGERS ABOUT WORK GROUP DIVERSITY?

We can draw a number of conclusions from this collection of chapters and, in a somewhat important test of the increasing development of the diversity research paradigm and confidence in our findings we can discern some suggestions for managers. First, if it weren't obvious before it should be now – diversity is not uniformly wonderful, and unleashing its potential advantages is very complicated indeed. That said, diverse work groups clearly have the potential to accomplish amazing, and often superior, outcomes. Compared to homogeneous work groups, diverse groups have a higher performance upside, particularly with respect to generating creative ideas, but face greater risk and higher variance in performance. Given this, what can managers do to encourage diverse teams to be effective? Though this is a research-based collection, it is critical that the insights from diversity research, perhaps more than other domains of organizational research, make their way into management practice. I conclude this chapter by offering a few thoughts, inspired by the collection of chapters here, on what managers can do to increase the chances that diverse groups are maximally effective.

Promoting People Who are Atypical for the Task

No matter how skilled someone is, if he or she is a member of a group that is in the minority within the workplace – whether it is women, African Americans, or another group that has historically been underrepresented – he or she will perform worse on tasks that are atypical for his or her sex or ethnic group. As Reagans and Roberson and her colleagues suggest, years,

even generations, of prejudice weigh too heavily on minorities, even if they haven't faced any explicit prejudice within the workplace. But, as some of the chapters imply (e.g., Nishii & Goncalo, Sommers) when the other members of the group are made aware of that person's expertise, the person's work no longer suffers. In fact, he or she excels, as does the rest of the group.

There are two main ways that this awareness can arise. First, the minority member can step up and advertise his or her own talents so that other members of the group are prevented from falling back on stereotypes and can see the relevance and appropriateness of that person's expertise for the team. This may also lead to greater identity integration, as suggested by Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, and Lee. But this puts the onus on the victim, and some people just aren't that outgoing and willing to promote their talents – a fact made clear by Ormiston and Wong who suggest that differentiating often requires sacrificing other identity motives. An effective alternative is for his or her manager to sell his or her skills, explicitly telling his or her co-workers how skilled he or she is – this was implicit in considering some of the perceptual and contextual challenges in diverse groups (Joshi & Roh; King, Kaplan, & Zaccaro). Can this seem patronizing? Perhaps; but research suggests that it has a strong and positive impact on work performance – not just this single person's work performance, but the performance of the entire group (e.g., Flynn, Chatman, & Spataro, 2001).

Recategorizing to Find Superordinate Goals

Another way that leaders can approach this problem is by encouraging people to categorize one another by their common organizational affiliation rather than by their apparent or visible differences to enable them to make the critical translation from demographic heterogeneity to informational heterogeneity suggested by Sommers. For example, when organizational cultures emphasized cooperation and shared fate, diverse employees were more productive and creative (e.g., Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998). Organizational leaders can highlight the importance of shared fate among members by emphasizing common goals in value statements and acting in accordance with these principles, for example, rewarding teams rather than only individual members for their work. And, as Rink and Ellemers point out, by being careful, they can do so without worrying that we will somehow stamp out valuable differences among members. Linking compensation to collective outcomes is also important as well as collecting

performance feedback from a variety of people who work with each employee. While not profound, surprisingly few organizations practice these approaches consistently.

Setting Specific Norms

Leaders can also play a pivotal role in combating the negative impact of prejudice by setting two types of norms in diverse work groups. Norms are simply stable behavior patterns that people expect and agree on. Diverse teams that quickly form the collaborative norms that Caruso and Woolley identify – right when the project starts – are more likely to succeed than those who do not (e.g., Chatman & Flynn, 2001). Cooperative norms reflect the importance groups place on shared objectives, mutual interests, and commonalities among members and they should, as Loyd, White, and Kern advise, be broadly applicable across the entire group, especially among groups with duo status members. These norms can be cultivated by simple behaviors such as self disclosure, as Dumas, Rothbard, and Phillips point out, meeting and interacting frequently, sharing information, and collaborating especially early in the group's work together. Once these norms are established in diverse groups – which because of its very diversity typically requires deliberate and intentional action – the norms themselves should eclipse the otherwise negative impact of group members' differences in race, sex, and nationality (e.g., Chatman & Flynn, 2001).

The second type of norm that is helpful in diverse teams are those that increase what is often disdainfully called "politically correct" norms, which are defined as censoring language that might be offensive to members of other demographic groups (Goncalo, Chatman, & Duguid, 2008). Contrary to the popularly held notion that political correctness stifles the free exchange of ideas our research showed that political correctness actually boosted creativity in diverse work groups (but interestingly constrained such creativity in groups in which people were from similar or homogeneous demographic groups).

These constitute just a few of the suggestions for managers faced with the challenge of unleashing the potential of diverse teams. As workplaces get more diverse, we'd like to think that prejudice evaporates once people across groups get to know each other better or the numbers of minority members begins to approach the number of majority members. Unfortunately, as these chapters confirm, it is not so simple. Once organizations have achieved a diverse workplace, managers still need to take deliberate and consistent

steps to address prejudice, fostering the conditions that reduce prejudice rather than reinforce them. But on the positive side, we have good reason to believe that these efforts will pay off in more just, harmonious, and productive workplaces.

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