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Abstract

Public organizations in the new millennium are tasked with a myriad of human resource management challenges that stem from workforce diversity, but the field of public administration has not produced a body of research that adequately assists them with these struggles. In 2000, Wise and Tschirhart called for “greater contribution from public administration scholars to the body of research focusing on how human diversity can best be managed to produce positive results.” They found that existing research contributed little usable knowledge for diversity management policies and programs. The authors examine whether their call for more rigorous and more practice-oriented research has been heeded by identifying articles on workforce diversity published in a core set of public administration journals since 2000. A broad overview of the literature on diversity is provided, followed by a more focused discussion of empirical research on employment diversity, diversity management, and organizational outputs and outcomes. It is found that although diversity issues remain salient to public administration scholarship, usable knowledge is in short supply. A substantial share of this research can be categorized as focusing on representative bureaucracy issues. Few empirical studies test diversity effects or hypotheses. Some empirical work explains factors beyond the control of human resource policies or practicing managers, which makes findings less useful to practitioners. The research suffers from inadequate data, little innovation in methodology, and insufficient attention to empirical connections between diversity and organizational results.

Keywords

diversity, representation, representative bureaucracy

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The purpose of this article is to examine the landscape of research on workforce diversity in public-sector organizations. Workforce diversity has become one of the most salient management issues in organizations from all sectors. When the *Review of Public Personnel Administration (ROPPIA)* was first published in 1980, White males accounted for 86% of all Senior Executive Service (SES) employees in the U.S. federal government. By 2008, that number had decreased to 65% (Office of Personnel Management, 2008). In addition to more racial/ethnic and gender diversity, globalization has led to increases in cultural and linguistic diversity as well. About 18% of all households in the United States use a language other than English, and about 13% of U.S. residents were born in a different country (Rubaii Barrett & Wise, 2007b). The legal environment for diversity has been altered dramatically by landmark court decisions such as *Bakke*, *Adarand*, and the *Gratz* and *Grutter* cases, as well as legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Civil Rights Act of 1991. Since 1980, 12 states have passed legislation banning employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (Human Rights Campaign, 2007). Given these substantial shifts in the environment of public organizations, the 30th anniversary of *ROPPIA* is an excellent juncture at which to assess the state of research on diversity and its utility to public sector practitioners.

These changes in workforce diversity have required organizations to change how they think about human resources management. Their approach to diversity has historically focused on compliance with the laws and regulations governing recruitment, selection, and separation (for a review, see Riccucci, 2002). However, worldwide government reforms during the 1990s and 2000s elevated the role of performance and strategy in managing public organizations (Kettl, 2000). A focus on strategy and performance requires organizations to tie management processes to larger goals and objectives, which has led to many organizations to consider how workforce diversity can be used to accomplish their missions. Indeed, organizations often highlight that employee diversity is a “strength,” which implies that diversity can be used as a lever to improve performance. This idea has developed over time as the “business case” for diversity (for a review, see Kochan et al., 2003).

Although arguments such as the business case for diversity are intuitively appealing and politically popular, there is little evidence that organizational diversity can be used to boost performance. Whether employee diversity improves organizational performance is an empirical question that has not been adequately tested in the public-sector context. In 2000, Wise and Tschirhart reviewed the evidence on connections between employee diversity and organizational performance, finding very little research in this area that focused on public organizations. Their article concluded with a call for public administration scholars to engage in more empirical research on workforce diversity.

Our primary purpose in this article is to examine the extent to which research in public administration has responded to Wise and Tschirhart’s (2000) push for greater emphasis on diversity scholarship. Our analysis proceeds in two parts. We begin with an overview of the research on workforce diversity that was published in a core set of

public administration journals since 2000. This part of our analysis is purposefully broad and meant to include a general cross-section of approaches to diversity research. For example, we include research focusing on particular *dimensions* of diversity, such as race, ethnicity, or gender; articles focusing on a particular group within a dimension, such as African Americans or women; research on diversity management programs and policies; and analyses and commentary on legal issues related to diversity. Some of the articles are descriptive, whereas others are more analytical. We categorize each article by the dimension of diversity that is examined, the journal in which the article appeared, the methodology used by the authors, and the year of publication.

The second part of our examination is a more targeted analysis of the articles that explore the empirical relationship between workforce diversity and organizational outcomes. For each article, we categorize the dimensions of diversity that are examined, the organizational context, and the authors' empirical strategy for measuring diversity. We argue that the second part of our analysis is particularly important, given the evolution of the business case for diversity and government reforms related to performance.

In the next section, we provide a brief overview of how research on workforce diversity has evolved over time. We outline the data and method that we used to identify workforce diversity research, moving to a discussion based on our initial overview of research published since 2000. We then more closely examine the empirical research on diversity, diversity management, and outcomes.

The Evolution of Research on Workforce Diversity

There is general consensus that the roots of public administration research on workforce diversity are in representative bureaucracy. Representative bureaucracy research explores the demographic profile of government employees and how it compares to characteristics of citizens and service recipients. The earliest research in this area focused on social class (Kingsley, 1944), but most of the research since that time has focused on women and people of color (for a review, see Dolan & Rosenbloom, 2003). Research has typically found that women and people of color are underrepresented in government organizations, with steady improvements over time despite persistent shortfalls at the highest ranks (Kellough, 1990; Lewis, 1992; Riccucci & Saidel, 1997, 2001; Wise, 1990). Some have expanded on this work to find that shared social and cultural experiences lead to other results, such as improved services or advancement of policies that benefit women and minorities (Hindera, 1993; Keiser, Wilkins, Meier, & Holland, 2002; Meier, 1993; Selden, 1997; Wilkins & Keiser, 2006). Other studies focus on employee outcomes in lieu of citizen outcomes and find that advancement and pay gaps tend to exist between men and women (Guy, 1994; Lewis, 1992; Wise, 1994) and between Whites and people of color (Naff, 2001; Naff & Kellough, 2003).

The framework of laws that protect employment equity has been crucial in promoting representation, and this is the focus of another vital stream of diversity research in public administration. The past 30 years have seen a series of landmark cases that have

worked to both expand and contract Affirmative Action (AA) programs, notably *Regents v. Bakke*, *Adarand v. Peña*, *Grutz v. Bollinger*, and *Grutter v. Bollinger*. Analysis and commentary on these cases have provided practitioners with the appropriate tools for understanding the rights and responsibilities associated with public employment (see, e.g., Bradbury, in press; Carcieri, 2004; Naff, 2004; Naylor & Rosenbloom, 2004; Sisneros, 2004). Although many legal cases and the research that results from them focus on women and people of color, legal changes that affect other dimensions of diversity have been examined in this stream of research as well, most notably as they relate to age (Wilkins, 2006), disability status (Bradbury, 2007), and sexual orientation (Colvin, 2000, 2007; Riccucci & Gossett, 1996).

Although research on representation and AA/Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) has continued, some scholars have shifted their focus to the impact of employee diversity on work-related outcomes. Theory suggests that employee diversity benefits organizations by increasing the number of perspectives and solutions to problems, but that it can also make organizations more likely to experience employee conflict, miscommunication, and mistrust (Adler, 2003; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Limited empirical research has examined the extent to which these process-oriented problems outweigh the benefits accrued from greater diversity in employee perspectives, with mixed results (for a review, see Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Knowledge is limited on diversity effects in for-profit firms (Kochran et al., 2003), and we know even less about the relationship between diversity and results in public agencies (Pitts, 2005; Pitts & Jarry, 2007; Wise & Tschirhart, 2000). This is a challenging area of research, because the relationship between diversity and performance is often nonlinear and contingent on other factors, requiring strong data and often complex modeling strategies (Choi, in press; Pitts & Jarry, in press).

Much of the research on workforce diversity has instead chosen to focus on the diversity management programs that became popular in the early 1990s. Management researchers had begun to observe that AA made it possible for a wider variety of employees to gain entry into firms, but the organizational cultures often remained the same, which prevented organizations from realizing any benefits from diversity (Konrad, 2003). Firms responded by adopting values-based diversity programs in an attempt to modify organizational culture, but research found that these initiatives were often unsuccessful (Bezrukova & Jehn, 2001). Thomas (1990) was one of the first to make the argument that neither the AA/EEO nor the "valuing diversity" paradigm was effective, advocating for a third approach: managing *for* diversity. This approach was more pragmatic and permitted organizations to create strategic policies and programs for managing diversity. By emphasizing the potential bottom line benefits, Thomas made diversity initiatives more palatable to majority employees whose interest was on the bottom line. Organizations that managed *for* diversity would be more likely to recruit and retain diverse and effective employees, which would in turn lead to performance benefits. Public-sector organizations were quick to adopt this philosophy because it was politically defensible in ways that AA/EEO never was and fit in with the performance-based reforms of the 1990s (Kellough & Naff, 2004; Rangarajan & Black, 2007; Riccucci, 2002).

By 1999, 90% of U.S. federal government agencies had established a diversity management program, though some did not deviate much from earlier AA/EEO initiatives, and the actual impact on advancement and pay equity for women and people of color was limited (Kellough & Naff, 2004; Naff & Kellough, 2003). Research on whether these programs are effective is limited. Evidence suggests that diversity management programs can boost job satisfaction and perceptions of performance among people of color (Pitts, 2009). However, the causal path between diversity management and organizational performance is complex, with research demands that are frequently unmet by existing data (Choi, in press). Much of the existing research on diversity management tends to be prescriptive and based on anecdotal data, limited case studies, or theories from other fields of study (see, e.g., Arai, Wanca-Thibault, & Shockley-Zalabak, 2001; Pitts, 2007; Von Bergen, Soper, & Foster, 2002).

Data and Method

The purpose of our analysis is to provide an overview of public administration research on workforce diversity published since Wise and Tschirhart's (2000) call for greater attention to public-sector diversity issues. We examined all articles published in a core set of 12 public administration journals since 2000 (Table 1). To draw a sample of research that was comprised of units that could be compared with one another and across years, we did not consider books, book chapters, or book reviews. We aimed to include a broad representation of journals based in the United States that publish research on public-sector workforce issues, drawing heavily from journals used in similar earlier studies (Brewer, Douglas, Facer, & O'Toole, 1999). This included some journals focused almost exclusively on workforce issues (e.g., *Public Personnel Management* and *Review of Public Personnel Administration*); some focused on public management more broadly (e.g., *Public Performance and Management Review* or *International Public Management Journal*); and some with a primary focus on public policy but occasional interest in management (e.g., *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*). Interestingly, the Wise and Tschirhart (2000) 1961-1998 sample that was based on hypothesis-testing journal articles focusing on the relationship between heterogeneity and performance did not capture any of these journals.

We used three criteria in selecting articles for inclusion in our analysis. As a starting point, the research had to focus on workforce diversity as a central theme. Diversity is a tough concept to define. Perhaps the most restrictive definition is held by organizational behavior scholars, who consider diversity to be a concept of variation or heterogeneity. Greater heterogeneity reflects greater variation among parts of a whole, meaning that the highest workforce heterogeneity is achieved when employees are split evenly among all categories and groups. This approach measures heterogeneity as it exists on particular dimensions, which in the context of the workforce would include race, ethnicity, gender, and others. The heterogeneity construct is agnostic to historical representation patterns and discrimination—an organization that is 95% African American and 5% White is *less* heterogeneous and diverse than one that is 50% White and 50% Asian American. Heterogeneity is typically measured independently for each

Table 1. Journal and Year of Publication

Journal	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total	Percentage
<i>Review of Public Personnel Administration</i>	3	0	1	2	4	2	5	6	5	28	31.5
<i>Public Administration Review</i>	2	0	1	2	4	3	5	0	1	18	20.2
<i>Public Personnel Management</i>	3	1	1	4	1	0	0	2	1	13	14.6
<i>International Journal of Public Administration</i>	0	1	2	2	1	0	0	5	0	11	12.4
<i>Journal of Public Administration Research & Theory</i>	2	0	0	1	1	3	1	2	1	11	12.4
<i>Administration & Society</i>	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	4	4.5
<i>American Review of Public Administration</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2.3
<i>International Public Management Journal</i>	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.1
<i>Public Administration Quarterly</i>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1.1
<i>Public Organization Review</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	—
<i>Administrative Theory & Praxis</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	—
<i>Journal of Policy Analysis & Management</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	—
<i>Public Performance & Management Review</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	—
Total	10	3	5	12	12	9	11	19	8	89	

dimension using an index that reflects dispersion across all groups, such as a Blau or Herfindahl Index. Quantitative variables that reflect the aggregate percentage of employees who are non-White or from a particular minority group are *not* measures of heterogeneity—they are simply indicators of the share of the organization or workforce held by a particular group.

Research on workforce heterogeneity is an important component of diversity research, but unlike the Wise and Tschirhart review we do not limit our analysis to those studies here. We also included articles that consider the term diversity more

loosely to apply to a particular minority group (e.g., African Americans, women, persons with disabilities) by itself and not in relation to other minority or majority group members. Studies that hone in on the issues related to one group can benefit the larger research agenda on diversity, though differently than research on workgroup or organizational heterogeneity. For this issue, we were most concerned with whether workforce diversity—however measured—was a central component of the piece, not just a control variable in analyses that primarily explored other topics. If the article did not discuss workforce diversity or one of its dimensions in the title or abstract, we assumed the contribution would be limited enough to warrant exclusion. Similarly, we did not consider articles that focused only on diversity among clients or the target population, although important they are beyond our scope. A number of articles considered how diversity among service recipients affected policy outcomes, but these were included in our analysis only if *workforce* diversity was also a primary component of the article. Because workforce diversity is an inherent component of representative bureaucracy research and thus important for public administration, we included work in that area in our sample. Thus, our sample differs in important ways from the one drawn by Wise and Tschirhart (2000) and should have greater potential for capturing diversity-related scholarship focusing on the public sector.

Our search resulted in a sample of 89 research articles that appeared from 2000 to 2008. We evaluated each article using several criteria. We determined whether an article focused on one or more specific dimensions of diversity: (a) race or ethnicity, (b) sex or gender, (c) disability status, (d) social class, (e) age, (f) education or function, (g) sexual orientation, (h) religion, and (i) nationality/language. This assists us in evaluating whether workforce diversity research is focused primarily on dimensions of diversity that have historically been considered relevant (e.g., race, ethnicity, sex, and gender) or whether it is moving into other areas in response to new workforce demands (e.g., sexual orientation, age, nationality/language). This is a particularly relevant question for diversity researchers, given that Thomas' (1990) early definition of the diversity management concept was that it be multidimensional and inclusive of all differences.

Second, we evaluated the methodology of each article and determined whether it used (a) quantitative methods only, (b) qualitative methods only, (c) mixed methods, (d) used empirical methods to analyze legal issues, or (e) was not empirical. Third, we identified whether each article aimed to understand diversity or diversity management empirically. This could take one of two forms. On one hand, the study could use diversity or diversity management as a key independent variable, with the corresponding dependent variable being an organization-level result or outcome. In principle, we would include individual, group, and organizational outcomes. A study could also use diversity or diversity management as a dependent variable, with a series of organizational and/or environmental factors as predictors. The key issue is whether research aims to understand diversity or diversity management as it is linked empirically to other factors, an approach that we argue is the most likely to result in gains for both theory and practice—regardless of whether diversity is on the left or right side of the

equation. The articles that meet these criteria are then extracted for more comprehensive analysis in the second part of our study.

Trends in Workforce Diversity Research

In contrast to Wise and Tschirhart's findings, we did not find a clear trajectory in the number of articles published over time. The number ranged from only 3 in 2001 to 19 in 2007, with dips and increases in between and only 8 pieces in 2008. We found a stronger pattern in the venues that published diversity research (Table 1). Almost one-third of the articles appeared in *ROPPA*, a total of 28 articles across the 9 years of research. Four other journals were frequent sources of diversity research: *Public Administration Review* (18 articles), *Public Personnel Management* (13 articles), and *International Journal of Public Administration* and *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, with 11 articles each. Although broad dissemination of diversity scholarship across the major journals of the field would be preferable in some respects, it is also valuable for specific journals to develop ongoing streams of research on diversity issues. That appears to be the case with both *ROPPA* and *Public Personnel Management*—two key sources of scholarship on public-sector workforce topics.

Attention to specific dimensions of diversity varied widely, with a predictable emphasis on women and people of color (Table 2). From 2000 to 2008, we identified 44 articles that addressed sex and gender issues in the workforce, with wide ranging foci that included employment trends (e.g., Kim, 2003; Llorens, Wenger, & Kellough, 2008; Pynes, 2000), active representation by gender (e.g., Wilkins & Keiser, 2006; Wilkins, 2007), and differences between men and women in the workplace (e.g., DeHart-Davis, Marlowe, & Pandey, 2006; Guy & Newman, 2004; Stackman, Connor, & Becker, 2005). We found 33 articles that addressed issues of race and ethnicity. The bulk of this research focused on workforce trends (e.g., Charles, 2003; McCabe & Stream, 2000), active representation (e.g., Brudney, Herbert, & Wright, 2000; Riccucci & Meyers, 2004; Sowa & Selden, 2003), and affirmative action issues (e.g., Gest & Maranto, 2000; Naylor & Rosenbloom, 2004). Consistent with Wise and Tschirhart (2000), we find that studies in our sample are primarily focused on sex/gender and race/ethnicity.

Our analysis identified only nine articles that addressed age in the workplace, despite growing concerns in the 1990s about retirements and the graying of the workforce (West & Berman, 1996). Some of this research addressed links between age and employee outcomes and behaviors, such as job satisfaction (Jung, Moon, & Hahm, 2007), turnover intention (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008), and response to online recruitment (Rubaii-Barrett & Wise, 2007a). Other articles focused more on developments in antidiscrimination laws protecting older workers (e.g., Riccucci, 2003; Wilkins, 2006). Six articles from 2000 to 2008 addressed disability issues, including analysis of court decisions limiting the Americans with Disabilities Act (Riccucci, 2003) and workplace issues for managing employees with disabilities (e.g., Balser, 2007; Bradbury, 2007). An additional five articles considered issues of sexual

Table 2. Dimension of Diversity by Year of Publication

Dimension	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total	Percentage
Sex/gender	7	1	2	5	8	5	6	5	5	44	49.4
Race/ethnicity	6	0	0	5	7	4	1	7	3	33	37.1
Age	1	0	0	2	1	1	1	2	1	9	10.1
Disability	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	4	0	6	6.7
Sexual orientation	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	5	5.6
Religion	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	4	4.5
Social class	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1.1
Education/ function	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.1
Nationality/ language	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1.1

orientation, primarily as it is included in antidiscrimination policies (e.g., Colvin, 2000, 2007; Colvin & Riccucci, 2002).

Only four articles addressed religion in the workplace and only two of these considered the managerial challenges of religious diversity (Ball & Haque, 2003; Garcia-Zamor, 2003). We identified only one article each that addressed education/functional diversity, social class diversity, and diversity of nationality or language.

More than half of the articles in our study (55.1%, $N = 49$) used quantitative, empirical research methods to test their questions (Table 3). Roughly 11% ($N = 10$) of the articles used mixed methods, whereas qualitative methods were used in only 3 articles (3.4%). We identified 15 articles (16.9%) that used empirical methods to examine legal issues, typically an analysis of recent court decisions (e.g., Naylor & Rosenbloom, 2004; Riccucci, 2003), legislation (e.g., Zeigler, 2006), or state-level adoption of diversity-focused discrimination policies (e.g., Colvin, 2007). A total of 12 of the articles (13.5%) explored diversity without using empirical methods. Some of these focused on developing conceptual or theoretical frameworks for diversity (e.g., Foldy, 2004; Pitts, 2006; Selden & Selden, 2001), whereas some used research from other fields to develop best practices for diversity management implementation (e.g., Arai et al., 2001; Pitts, 2007).

Finally, we found that articles were most likely to focus on the federal or state government context (Table 4). Roughly, 42% ($N = 33$) considered diversity in the context of federal agencies, and an additional 30.8% ($N = 49$) focused on state government agencies. Only 14.1% ($N = 11$) addressed diversity issues in local government organizations, and 11.5% ($N = 9$) considered diversity issues in special districts or public schools. The context for the analysis is dependent on a number of factors, chief among them being data availability. Federal-level data are widely available, making those agencies a prime context for research on diversity. In our sample, only one article explicitly addressed nonprofit organizations, but this is not surprising,

Table 3. Methodological Approach by Year of Publication

Methodology	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total	Percentage
Quantitative only	6	1	2	6	4	7	5	12	6	49	55.1
Qualitative only	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	3	3.4
Both/mixed methods	2	0	1	2	3	1	0	1	0	10	11.2
Empirical approaches to legal issues	1	0	0	1	4	0	3	4	2	15	16.9
Nonempirical	1	2	2	2	1	0	3	1	0	12	13.5
Total	10	3	5	12	12	9	11	19	8	89	

given that our sample of journals did not include some of the primary venues for nonprofit research.

Trends in Empirical Research on Diversity and Outcomes

Of the 89 articles that we identified, only 24 examined diversity empirically at the organizational level. For ease of discussion, we split them into two groups: those that predict diversity as a dependent variable and those that use diversity as an independent variable to explain one or more organizational outcomes. We proceed with our discussion in four sections: (a) the dimensions of diversity covered in these studies, (b) analysis of research using diversity as a dependent variable, (c) analysis of research using diversity as an independent variable explaining organizational outcomes, and (d) data and context issues across studies.

Dimensions of Diversity

The dimensions of diversity explored in this cluster of studies were limited. None of the studies in our sample examined interactive effects of different diversity dimensions, but rather appear to make an implicit assumption that all diversity dimensions are of equal importance, regardless of context. The overwhelming majority focused on race/ethnicity (16 articles) and sex/gender (14 articles). One article each addressed age, disability status, and job function. We find no evidence that diversity research is moving away from race/ethnicity and gender/sex but there are some negative consequences to this attachment. Findings from one dimension of diversity do not necessarily apply to another dimension of diversity (Wise & Tschirhart, 2000), which means that evidence about racial/ethnic and sex/gender diversity does not improve our understanding of other dimensions. For example, there is nothing about how government agencies and work groups are affected by the presence of non-native speakers of

Table 4. Context of Research by Year of Publication

Context	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total	Percentage
Federal government	3	0	2	5	6	3	4	6	4	33	42.3
State government	4	1	1	3	4	2	2	5	2	24	30.8
Local government	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	3	2	11	14.1
Public schools/special districts	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	4	0	9	11.5
Nonprofit organizations	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.3
Total	9	1	4	10	11	9	8	18	8	78	

English. The business case for diversity might suggest that language diversity leads to broader cultural perspectives that benefit performance, but does it cause communication breakdowns that make performance suffer? Some research suggests that it would, particularly in complex tasks that require explanation and discussion (Hambrick et al., 1998). Are diversity management programs that address language issues effective? If so, on what do they focus? If not, on what *should* they focus?

These same questions could be posed for other dimensions of diversity, such as language, sexual orientation, and religion. The issues here are not simply symbolic. The workforce is seeing increases in the percentage of employees who speak a language other than English at home (Rubaii-Barrett & Wise, 2007b); greater willingness of employees to publicly identify themselves as lesbian or gay (Griffith & Hebl, 2002); and a larger variety of religious and spiritual practices among employees (Hicks, 2002). If research is to inform the practice of human resources management, it must identify the consequences of those shifts and understand the management initiatives that are in place to affect them.

Diversity as a Dependent Variable

A total of 16 articles were concerned with diversity as a dependent variable—an organizational outcome or result—using varying levels of analytical sophistication (Table 5). In almost all of these cases, diversity was not measured as heterogeneity, but rather as the percentage of the workforce/organization that was comprised of particular groups. Two notable exceptions were Kim (2005) and Llorens et al. (2008), both of which used representation ratios that partially reflect heterogeneity. Most of the research used data at the organizational level, an approach that may be useful in understanding diversity for symbolic purposes, but less helpful in understanding how it relates to outcomes. The business case for diversity is based on benefits that accrue from the interaction of diverse employees, so it is important to discern whether diversity exists in different *parts* of the organization. For example, if an organization employs equal

Table 5. Empirical Research using Diversity as Outcome of Interest

Study	Research Question	Context	Measure of Diversity	Dimensions of Diversity Examined
Naff and Crum (2000)	Do Presidential views of Affirmative Action affect the representation of women and people of color in bureaucracy?	Sample of employees in U.S. federal government agencies	Percentage of employees at different levels who were non-White or female	Sex/gender, race/ethnicity
McCabe and Stream (2000)	How has the representation of women and people of color changed in government from 1980 to 1995?	Aggregate data on federal and state government employees, 1980-1995	Percentage of employees by race/ethnicity and sex/gender	Sex/gender, race/ethnicity
Pynes (2000)	Are women underrepresented as leaders in nonprofit organizations?	Sample of 200 nonprofit organizations in St. Louis	Number of organizations with female leaders	Sex/gender
Kim (2003)	What affects the representation of women in Korean civil service positions?	Employment data on all Korean agencies	Percentage employees who are women	Sex/gender
Charles (2003)	Is the representation of older workers and people of color improving in state government?	Aggregate data on New Jersey state government employees, 1993-1999	Percentage of employees who were older than 65 or non-White	Age, race/ethnicity
Naff and Kellough (2003)	Do diversity management programs lead to better employment outcomes for women and people of color?	Aggregate data on U.S. federal government employees; survey data from 137 agencies	Index measure including the Percentage of GS 9-12 positions held by women and people of color	Sex/gender, race/ethnicity
Kellough and Naff (2004)	What are the components of diversity management programs, and what causes agencies to adopt them?	Survey data from a sample of 137 U.S. federal agencies	Components of diversity management program	Multiple
Kim (2004)	What affects the percentages of women and people of color in state government agencies?	Sample of 55 state government agencies in Michigan and Pennsylvania	Percentage of employees who were female or non-White	Sex/gender, race/ethnicity

(continued)

Table 5. (continued)

Study	Research Question	Context	Measure of Diversity	Dimensions of Diversity Examined
Kim (2005)	How do Asian American employment patterns differ from those of other agencies?	Aggregate data on U.S. federal government employees	Representation ratio by race/ethnicity	Race/ethnicity
Goode and Baldwin (2005)	What influences African American representation in municipal government?	Sample of 114 municipal workforces	Percentage of employees who were African American	Race
Bowling, Kelleher, Jones, and Wright (2006)	What are the trends in the representation of women in executive-level posts in state agencies?	Aggregate data on women in executive management positions in all 50 states, 1970-2000	Percentage of executive employees who were female	Sex/gender
Hsieh and Winslow (2006)	Why does gender diversity vary among racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. federal workforce?	Aggregate data on U.S. federal employees and citizens	Percentage of employees who were women or people of color	Sex/gender, race/ethnicity
Alozie and Moore (2007)	What affects the hiring of African American and Latino city managers?	Sample of municipalities in the United States	Race/ethnicity of city manager	Race/ethnicity
Llorens, Wenger, and Kellough (2008)	What predicts representation of women and people of color in state government?	Workforce data on all 50 states from 1987 to 2002	Representation ratio by sex/gender and race/ethnicity	Sex/gender, race/ethnicity
Kogut and Short (2007)	Has Affirmative Action led to overrepresentation of people of color in U.S. federal government?	Aggregate data on U.S. federal employees and citizens	Representation ratio by race/ethnicity	Race/ethnicity
Kim (2007)	Are people with disabilities represented in U.S. federal government positions?	Aggregate data on U.S. federal government employees	Percentage of government employees with disabilities, disaggregated by race/ethnicity and sex/gender	Disability, sex/gender, race/ethnicity

numbers of men and women—perfect diversity by gender—but women make up 10% of managers and 90% of administrative support staff, there would be little reason to expect performance gains. Toward this end, the most useful studies that we identified in our analysis disaggregated workforce diversity statistics by policy area, job function, or level of responsibility (e.g., Naff & Crum, 2000; Naff & Kellough, 2003; Pynes, 2000).

Some of the research that examined diversity as an outcome focused on explaining the longitudinal trends in the employment of different groups, primarily women and people of color (e.g., Charles, 2003; Kim, 2005; McCabe & Stream, 2000; Pynes, 2000). Such studies are certainly useful in understanding workforce diversity trends and social progress, but their utility is limited to conjecture about why they found representational differences between groups. Other studies took the analysis a large step further to test propositions about *why* different groups achieved representation in some organizations but not others. Some of the determinants explored included issues in the labor market and political environment (e.g., Goode & Baldwin, 2005; Kim, 2003, 2004; Llorens et al., 2008; Naff & Crum, 2000); diversity management programs and Affirmative Action policies (e.g., Kellough & Naff, 2004; Kogut & Short, 2007; Naff & Kellough, 2003); and how racial/ethnic identity can affect the representation of women (e.g., Hsieh & Winslow, 2006). Data on different organizational and environmental factors were used to test which issues tended to promote (and detract) from workforce diversity, an approach that is arguably much more useful to both scholars and practicing managers. These articles help scholars build on common means of predicting representation and diversity, which will promote a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand. On the practical side, such studies assist managers in understanding the levers they may use to recruit more effectively from groups that are believed to be underrepresented. If public administration is an applied field of study that aims to produce prescriptions for public managers, it should go beyond descriptive analyses of workforce trends to give public managers something concrete to act on.

Diversity as an Independent Variable

Perhaps the largest unresolved issue in workforce diversity research is whether the business case for diversity stands up to empirical scrutiny. An answer to that question can be formulated only through testing diversity as an independent variable that affects organizational outcomes, but only eight articles in our sample that did so (Table 6). These studies were more likely than others to focus on workforce heterogeneity, either through an index of dissimilarity (e.g., Pitts, 2005; Pitts & Jarry, 2007) or representation ratio (e.g., Andrews, Boyne, Meier, O'Toole, & Walker, 2005; Pitts, 2007). The usefulness of the outcome measures tested in these articles varied. Three of the studies tested how diversity affected perceptions of organizational outcomes or results that some may consider “performance” but are probably more accurately *antecedents* of performance. For example, Antonova (2002) examined how gender affected employee

Table 6. Empirical Research linking Diversity and Organizational Outcomes

Study	Research Question	Context	Measure of Diversity	Outcome(s) of Interest	Dimensions of Diversity Examined
Gilbert (2000)	Do employee perceptions of organizational resources vary by sex, race, and management level?	Sample of 83 federal government employees in a Southwestern U.S. field office	Sex/gender, race/ethnicity, function of individual employee respondent	Employee perceptions of organizational resources	Sex/gender, race/ethnicity, function
Antonova (2002)	What issues do women face in public service careers in Russia?	Sample of 365 Russian public servants	Sex/gender of individual employee respondent	Perceptions of equity in the organizational culture	Sex/gender
Pitts (2005)	How does teacher racial/ethnic diversity affect organizational performance?	Sample of 4,014 Texas public school districts	Blau Index of racial/ethnic diversity	Student dropout rate, percentage of students passing a standardized graduation exam, average SAT score	Race/ethnicity
Andrews, Boyne, Meier, O'Toole, and Walker (2005)	How does racial/ethnic diversity interact with management strategy to influence organizational performance?	Sample of 365 English local government authorities	Representation ratio by race/ethnicity	Citizen satisfaction	Race/ethnicity
Meier, O'Toole, and Goerdel (2006)	Do differences between male and female management strategies affect organizational performance?	Sample of 1,485 Texas public school districts	Gender of school district superintendent	Nine measures of student outcomes	Sex/gender
Pitts (2007)	Does racial/ethnic representation benefit organizational performance?	Sample of 6,994 Texas public school districts	Representation ratio by race/ethnicity	Six measures of student outcomes, broken down by racial/ethnic group	Race/ethnicity

(continued)

Table 6. (continued)

Study	Research Question	Context	Measure of Diversity	Outcome(s) of Interest	Dimensions of Diversity Examined
Pitts and Jarry (2007)	Does the impact of racial/ethnic diversity on performance vary by level of authority?	Sample of 6,691 Texas public school districts	Blau Index of racial/ethnic diversity	Student dropout rate, percentage of students passing a standardized graduation exam, average SAT score	Race/ethnicity
Johansen (2007)	How do differences between male and female management strategies affect performance?	Sample of Texas public school districts	Gender of school district managers	Student achievement outcomes	Sex/gender

perceptions of different characteristics of organizational culture, and Ivancevich and Gilbert (2000) considered links between diversity and perceptions of resource availability. Andrews et al. (2005) tested the relationship between racial/ethnic representation and citizen satisfaction with local government services. Given recent emphasis on treating citizens as clients or customers, subjective measures such as the one used in Andrews et al. (2005) have become increasingly relevant as outcome metrics.

The other studies in this area were drawn from the public education policy setting, and these five cases all used data from Texas public schools. This is a policy context with unambiguous outcome measures, the most common being student test scores. Test scores arguably do not reflect true student competency or the quality of instruction, but they are nonetheless crucial to the assessment of performance by elected officials, particularly in Texas. Other results used in this area included dropout rates (Pitts, 2005; Pitts & Jarry, 2007) and college readiness (Meier, O'Toole, & Goerdel, 2006). Overall, these studies can be taken as indirectly supporting expectations based on the anticipated linkage between diversity and performance. These metrics are politically salient and easy to measure, but it is difficult to formulate a strong causal story about why they are likely to be influenced by employee diversity. The measures are true outcomes that are largely influenced by external factors that may not reflect organizational diversity at all. Proper specification and the inclusion of control variables become vital to ensure that bias does not lead one to find diversity effects that actually reflect something else.

Data and Policy Context

The 24 empirical studies that we have identified here reflect the lack of data available for use in public administration research on workforce diversity. Many of these articles use U.S. federal government data, either from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's (OPM, 2008) Federal Human Capital Survey or Central Personnel Data File (e.g., Hsieh & Winslow, 2006; McCabe & Stream, 2000; Naff & Crum, 2000;). These archival data are good options for diversity research. They typically include multiple years of data, allowing for longitudinal research, and survey sampling strategies are rigorous. They also span multiple policy areas, making it easier to generalize these results than those in a single policy context. On the other hand, federal agencies are enormous organizations, and it is difficult to be sure that diversity measured at the organizational level actually filters down to work groups. Studies that disaggregate diversity figures by policy area or supervisory status ameliorate this to some extent, but there is no way to know the extent to which dissimilar individuals are interacting on the job.

Five of the articles use data from Texas public schools, a source used in a number of other public administration research areas. It is arguably difficult to generalize these findings to many other policy contexts, given that education organizations are very professionalized, highly decentralized, and draw on funding sources different from

many other government agencies (see, e.g., Pitts, 2005). Perhaps more consequential is the fact that these represent five of the eight articles testing the link between diversity and performance. It is problematic that we have so little evidence accumulating in public administration on the business case for diversity, but it is even more of an issue when five of the eight pieces come from the same data source. A theory base cannot develop from a single data set in one policy setting. Although there are scholarly advantages in multiple studies drawing from the same database, a disadvantage in this case is the age of the survey data on which the studies are based, particularly given the rapid changes in acceptance of diversity in recent decades (Wise & Tschirhart, 2000).

The lack of data sources stems from several practical problems that thus far have eluded solution. A number of factors limit collection of individual-level data to answer specific research questions and unacceptably low survey response rates often compromise collected data. Public organizations in the United States typically collect extensive data on employee demographics facilitating straightforward tests of some diversity effects. But diversity effects cannot be generalized from one dimension of diversity to another (Wise & Tschirhart, 2000) and given the array of salient diversity dimensions, the possibilities for replication are weakened.

More confusion comes in figuring out how to measure outcomes. Performance measurement is a persistent problem in public administration that is complicated by the political environment and goal ambiguity that many public agencies face (Boyne et al., 2007). As diversity research in the for-profit arena identifies contingencies, interactions, and nonlinearities in relationships between diversity and outcomes, a host of other variables become necessary for empirical tests, and those are typically hard to come by without an original survey (Choi, in press; Pitts & Jarry, in press). Bringing diversity *management* into the equation most certainly requires survey data, archival research, and/or content analysis (Kellough & Naff, 2004).

These concerns are compounded by the problem of organizational access. To collect the necessary data, researchers must convince organizations to "let them in," a proposition that is particularly shaky in an area such as diversity that is fraught with such important normative issues. Few organizations want to run the risk of being exposed as having a subpar diversity management program or discriminatory organizational culture.

There are reasons to be optimistic, however, given efforts by diversity researchers to collect new data that can be used in research. For example, Ed Kellough and Katherine Naff conducted a comprehensive survey of federal government agencies on diversity management programs, producing data that supplemented existing demographic information available through other means (Kellough & Naff, 2004; Naff & Kellough, 2003). Other studies reflect original data collection in a variety of other contexts, including nonprofit organizations (e.g., Pynes, 2000), municipal governments (e.g., Alozie & Moore, 2007; Goode & Baldwin, 2005), and agencies in other countries (e.g., Antonova, 2002; Kim, 2003). Some research took advantage of existing archival data produced by the U.S. Census in creative new ways (e.g., Hsieh & Winslow, 2006; Llorens et al., 2008).

As researchers collect more data, they should be mindful to include qualitative methods. All of the articles included in this analysis used quantitative methods, which limits our ability to understand the nuanced relationships that are at work. Of course, many issues in the diversity sphere are best discussed in terms of numbers. For example, to measure workforce heterogeneity, it is probably better to start with the numbers of employees in each racial/ethnic group than with a verbal description of the mix. The causal mechanisms underlying the relationships between diversity, diversity management, and organizational outcomes are contingent and very complex (Foldy, 2004). Quantitative data are not likely to fully capture the dynamics. Comprehensive case studies using mixed methods have the potential both to solve this problem and to assist quantitative researchers in identifying the variables that should be included in large-*N* models.

Conclusion

Using a relatively broad definition of “diversity” we found evidence that interest in diversity scholarship has continued since 2000. Examination indicates that publication of diversity-related studies tends to be limited to a subset of public administration journals, a couple of diversity dimensions, and a few organizational frameworks. A number of key journals in our field published no research on diversity during the study period that fell within our guidelines. About half of the studies we found focused on issues of sex or gender and more than a third focused on race and ethnicity. Research on other diversity dimensions such as disability, age, or sexual orientation was rare, consistent with Wise and Tschirhart’s earlier meta-analysis.

Workforce diversity research among scholars of public administration is populated primarily with studies of representative bureaucracy, with only a small portion of current research providing practical, action-based findings for public managers and human resource practitioners. There is little research that would allow public sector managers to step beyond best guesses for what does and does not work for managing diversity. The large body of work focusing on issues related to equitable employment outcomes is delivered with little information about which approaches have the best results for promoting equitable employment practices and integrating diverse others into the public workforce. With a few exceptions, public sector scholars are focusing on factors that managers cannot manipulate. Future research might address this shortcoming by comparing employment outcomes at the organizational level based on comparing the relative successes of different approaches with managing workforce diversity such as training programs to reduce bias or change attitudes, workplace diversity committees, formulation of affirmative action strategies and strategic plans related to diversity, or efforts to promote inclusion through mentoring and networking. These findings need to be replicated by other scholars; a single study reporting a finding for or against a particular management strategy for enhancing representativeness or employee diversity is not a sufficient basis for action and may lead to the implementation of programs that will ultimately fail in many organizations.

We did find some empirical research on diversity and organization-level results that has some potential for informing practice, but we argue this research can only be viewed as indirectly supporting the assumed positive relationship between diversity and outcomes. Performance is often measured with antecedents and proxies that may or may not translate into better performance or an organization's level of efficiency or effectiveness. In these studies, we know little about what was happening inside the black box of organizational context. This highlights two empirical questions that warrant further investigation: Can we confirm that diversity leads to certain favorable organizational outcomes? What are the contextual characteristics and diversity management strategies in place when favored outcomes were or were not attained?

Our main conclusion echoes that of Wise and Tschirhart (2000) nearly 10 years ago: Diversity research has limited utility for public sector managers. Human resource managers should be cautious about the extent to which they rely on research findings in deciding how to address to diversity issues and which programs or policies to implement. The pool of research is too shallow to use the results with confidence, and existing research is not designed to answer the question "What works?" Similarly, studies investigating the linkage between workforce diversity and organizational performance for several reasons fall short of being able to offer sound advice to human resource managers about how their organizations might leverage diversity for greater efficiency or effectiveness.

One path scholars might pursue in the future to help inform practitioners about what works for managing diversity would be the area of cultural competencies (Rice, 2007). Empirical studies on this topic are relatively limited but squarely focused on the health care sector, which can be seen as an advantage for interpreting the reliability of findings. These studies suggest some promising effects for public service delivery and citizen satisfaction in that culturally competent public officials can provide services within the context of different social systems that better meet citizens' needs and preferences (Weech-Maldonado, 2002). Confirming this assumption for health care workers and applying this research to other sectors of government would advance the utility of diversity-related research.

We argue that public administration research can play a vital role by producing better information about the impacts of workforce diversity on organizational outcomes. Only through empirical research can the relationships among diversity, diversity management, and organizational outcomes become clear. More data are necessary, particularly from new policy contexts and types of organizations, and performance outcomes to advance our knowledge about the consequences of workplace heterogeneity and diversity programs and policies. By understanding these complex relationships, research can provide more effective assistance to public-sector HR managers who are charged with the task of balancing demands for equity and performance.

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