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Diversity in organizations: Where are we now and where are we going?

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ABSTRACT

A great deal of research has focused on workforce diversity. Despite an increasing number of studies, few consistent conclusions have yet to be reached about the antecedents and outcomes of diversity. Likewise, research on different dimensions of diversity (e.g., age, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and culture) has mostly evolved independently. Therefore, the purpose of this review is to examine each of these dimensions of diversity to describe common themes across dimensions and to develop an integrative model of diversity.

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While the term “workforce diversity” is commonly used in scholarly articles as well as in the popular press, the focus and scope of the research is both varied and broad. Until recently, most studies have focused on a single dimension of diversity (e.g., age, sex, race) in a domestic, typically U.S. context. In a world of globalization populated by boundaryless and virtual organizations, it is time to revisit the old theories of diversity and to create a new set of paradigms. Therefore, in this article we examine multiple dimensions of diversity to assess the current status of the literature, and to make some suggestions going forward.

As a starting point, we examine six dimensions of diversity (race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, and national origin) to determine how these literatures have evolved. The purpose of this review is to provide a basis on which to focus on similarities and differences in these separate literatures, in order to determine the extent to which an integrative framework of diversity is meaningful and appropriate. To move toward identifying areas of similarity as a basis for integration, for each diversity dimension included in this article we first briefly review theoretical paradigms and the extent to which associated predictions for the diversity dimensions are positive, negative, or neutral. Since theories guide our research streams, we deem it important to evaluate the extent to which present-day theories adequately represent the potential array of outcomes from negative to positive that may exist for individuals, groups, and organizations. We also review literature on antecedents and outcomes studied within each diversity dimension. Subsequently, we examine themes by reviewing current theoretical paradigms and then limitations across different dimensions of diversity, with the goal of identifying points of integration and needed development for moving the literature forward. Finally, we present a broad model of diversity that integrates key variables and suggestions for the diversity literature going forward.

1. Race and ethnicity diversity

A number of theories have been used for studying race/ethnicity as a central variable of interest.¹ Most of these theories come from a micro-theoretical perspective and attempt to explain behavior from an individual, or within work group perspective.

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¹ Some of the more frequently cited theories include social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981), racial identity theory (Phinney, 1992), intergroup theory (Alderfer, 1986; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), social- and self-categorization theories (Pettigrew, 1986; Tajfel, 1981), the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971), relational demography (Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992), aversive racism theory (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986), rational bias theory (Larwood, Gutek, & Gattiker, 1984), homophily (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954), tokenism and proportionality theories (Kanter, 1977), and stereotype and prototype theories (Davis & Watson, 1982; Schein, 1973).

A majority of these theories come from the fields of social psychology or cognitive psychology and stem from our cognitive and social need to categorize ourselves and others based on surface-level or readily perceivable characteristics such as race. These theories often have been used to introduce or justify hypotheses that have focused on negative outcomes or predictions as a result of race/ethnicity differences.

Some of the basic assumptions made about people and human nature contained in many of these theories are that: 1) humans judge each other on surface-level characteristics, such as race or gender, in the absence of additional information, 2) group membership based on these characteristics implies true similarities or differences between people which then creates the formation of in-group and out-group distinctions, and 3) these judgments ultimately result in outcomes that may have negative effects for minority or out-group members (e.g., lack of mentors, stalled careers, lower performance evaluations) or group productivity.

Within the literature on race and ethnic diversity, there also are some theories that focus on positive predictions or possible positive outcomes of racial/ethnic diversity. This comes from a “value in diversity” perspective (Cox, 1993; Cox, Lobel & McLeod, 1991) which argues that diversity creates value and benefit for team outcomes.² The general assumption that underlies these theories is that an increase in racial/ethnic diversity means that a work group will experience possible positive outcomes such as: increased information, enhanced problem solving ability, constructive conflict and debate, increased creativity, higher quality decisions, and increased understanding of different ethnicities/cultures. Another underlying assumption is that surface-level diversity such as race is indicative of deeper-level differences, such as cognitive processes/schemas, differential knowledge base, different sets of experiences, and different views of the world.

1.1. Antecedents and outcomes of racial/ethnic diversity

Earlier research (1960s–1980s), motivated by the passage of the Civil Rights Act in the U.S., focused on whether there was discrimination and bias present in selection, training, performance evaluations, promotions, and other important human resource functions (c.f., Cox & Nkomo, 1990). There also has been some research conducted on differences between subgroups in terms of job satisfaction and other attitudes, motivation, and leadership. According to Kraiger and Ford's (1985) meta-analysis, race/ethnicity explained 3.7% of the variance in job performance ratings. Ratees tended to receive higher ratings from raters of the same race. However, Sackett and DuBois (1991) found that Black ratees consistently received lower ratings than White ratees from both White and Black raters. Recent meta-analyses show that the Black–White mean difference in job performance is approximately .27 (McKay & McDaniel, 2006) to one-third of a standard deviation (Roth, Huffcutt, & Bobko, 2003) and that group differences were similar to, if not larger, for objective versus subjective measures (Roth et al., 2003). Further, McKay and McDaniel (2006) found that effect sizes were strongly moderated by criterion type and the cognitive loading of criteria. Other findings for race/ethnicity effects suggest that those individuals who are different from the majority in an organization tend to be more likely to leave, to be less satisfied and less psychologically committed (Moch 1980; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998).

Leadership differences between Black and White leaders were reviewed by both Bartol, Evans, and Stith (1978) and Cox and Nkomo (1990), who concluded that there is disparity in the nature of the effect of race/ethnicity on leader behavior and subordinate reactions (e.g., Hill & Fox, 1973; Richards & Jaffee, 1972). There was some support for the contention that Black supervisors are less directive and less likely to initiate interactions than White supervisors when working with predominantly White subordinates. Further, they determined that Black leaders may initiate more leader behavior when dealing with mixed subordinate groups. A more recent review of leadership and race/ethnicity diversity (Chung-Herrera & Lankau, 2007) suggested that similarities and differences both exist depending on the specific dimension on which leaders are being compared (e.g., behaviors, prototypes, styles, conflict management).

By the 1990s, research on diversity begun to focus on work teams, or the business case for managing and utilizing an increasingly diverse workforce (Johnston & Packer, 1987; see reviews in Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003; Mannix & Neale, 2005; Ragins & Gonzalez, 2003; Van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004). Two opposing views emerged (Milliken & Martins, 1996). The optimistic perspective is that there are benefits to the team by having increased diversity. Group performance is thought to be enhanced by having broader resources and multiple perspectives (Hoffman, 1959). Particular to race, some studies (McLeod, Lobel & Cox, 1996; Watson, Kumar & Michaelsen, 1993) have found that ethnically diverse work teams make better decisions than homogeneous teams. The pessimistic perspective is that increased ethnic diversity (as well as age and tenure diversity) typically has shown negative effects on social integration and communication, and increased conflict (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Regarding race/ethnicity diversity and performance, the evidence predominantly shows either non-significant results (Jehn & Bezrukova, 2004) or negative effects (e.g., Jackson & Joshi, 2004; Kirkman, Tesluk, & Rosen, 2004). Regarding relational race/ethnicity, it appears that Whites have lower work attitudes when in minority groups while being different from others in a work group regarding race does not have an effect on the work attitudes of minorities (Riordan, 2000).

In the most recent review to date, Joshi and Roh (2007) found a fairly equal number of studies reporting positive or negative effects for race/ethnicity diversity across three outcomes types (performance, process and affect/attitude). The most interesting finding, however, was that there were more null findings than positive and negative effects put together. For example, race/ethnicity diversity effects in relation to performance yielded seven positive, eight negative and 20 null findings. Similar to Joshi and Roh's review, Webber and Donahue (2001) in their meta-analysis of 24 studies found that demographic diversity (including race/ethnicity) had no relationship with team cohesion or performance.

² Examples of these types of theories and perspectives include intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954), heterogeneity in small groups (Hoffman, 1959), information and decision making theories (Levine & Resnick, 1993), and creative problem solving (Triandis, Hall, & Ewen, 1965).

1.1.1. Summary

Some observations can be made about the body of work on race and ethnicity in organizations. First, in contrast to a popular belief on ethnic diversity, the positive effect of ethnic diversity on work group performance has not been supported conclusively. Instead, null and negative results have been more common. Therefore, more research is certainly needed to specify different contingencies such as length of time together as a group, task characteristics, and various combinations of ethnicity in which ethnic diversity may have differential effects on performance. Second, it seems that there has been a neglect of the White or Caucasian category as a race (Ragins & Gonzalez, 2003). Most often, the Caucasian category serves as merely the control or reference group. In other words, other than research findings that report lower work attitudes for Whites in diverse settings (e.g., Riordan, 2000), there is little research that provides empirical evidence explaining the reasons for these findings or that sheds light on the characteristics associated with being White or the White experience of diversity. This may reflect the primarily negative theoretical focus on discrimination, stereotyping, and the harmful consequences of being in the minority group. Another assumption in most of the research thus far is that the majority group in organizations is Caucasian and that most managers are Caucasian. This is often presumed or taken for granted without knowledge or discussion of the proportional context of the organization and thus results are broadly generalized despite other possible configurations. This assumption, along with the fact that most research participants have been Caucasian, has obviously shaped the results that have been found; consequently, we still have a very rudimentary understanding of diversity that involves different combinations of multiple races/ethnicities in a work setting.

2. Gender diversity

Similar to early research on race/ethnicity, research on gender diversity prior to the 1990s focused largely on discrimination and bias resulting from being different from the majority. Research reporting negative effects for women regarding performance ratings (e.g., Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989) and pay discrimination (e.g., Bielby & Baron, 1986) built on the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971) and on the work of Kanter (1977), who posited that women experienced isolation and stereotyping. Gender diversity has also been found to have more negative effects on men than women in regards to outcomes, such as attachment to the organization (Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992).

Our review of recent gender diversity literature (since 2000) suggests that most of the published research incorporates theoretical perspectives that hold negative predictions. Many of these articles build on theories that are traditionally associated with diversity, such as similarity-attraction (Byrne, 1971), social identity (Tajfel, 1981), or discrimination (Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). However, research in the last half decade has included other theoretical perspectives with negative predictions, such as theory on status hierarchy (Chattopadhyay, 2003; Graves & Elsass, 2005), gender reproduction theory (which seeks to explain why masculine and feminine behaviors occur in different contexts; Young & Hurlic, 2007), and theories of stereotypes and social roles (Duehr & Bono, 2006).

Fewer studies have included either theoretical perspectives with positive predictions or perspectives that were not clearly positive or negative. Among the former group of studies, Lee and Farh (2004) build on Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory to predict that gender diversity would moderate the relationship between group efficacy and group outcomes. They found that the group efficacy-performance relationship was stronger in mixed gender groups than in same gender groups. Other examples of theoretical perspectives with positive predictions are person-organization fit (e.g., Kristof, 1996) which was used to predict applicant attraction to the organization based on Equal Employment Opportunity statements in recruitment brochures (Rau & Hyland, 2003), Schwartz's (1992) value framework which was used as the basis for a study that showed that positive attitudes towards diverse others increases the likelihood of successful diversity management (Sawyer, Strauss, & Yan, 2005), and the value-in-diversity framework which posits that diversity is associated with benefits resulting from a variety of perspectives (Frink et al., 2005; Richard, Barnett, Dwyer, & Chadwick, 2004; Singh & Point, 2006).

Additional theoretical perspectives have been offered in this literature that are not entirely positive or negative, such as structural hole theory (Balkundi, Kilduff, Barsness, & Michael, 2006) and configurational theory (Dwyer, Richard, & Chadwick, 2003). Dwyer et al. assessed interactions between gender diversity in top management teams and firm's growth orientation and between gender diversity and organizational culture types with findings mostly supporting their approach, which suggests that studying the effects of variables in isolation is not as fruitful as a more holistic view in which interactions among variables are examined. Balkundi and colleagues found that moderate levels of structural holes (defined as occurring when an individual occupying a structural hole is friends with two individuals who do not otherwise know each other) within teams was more beneficial for team performance than low or high levels of structural holes. Interestingly, in their social network application of structural holes to diverse teams, they found structural hole diversity within teams to have more of an impact on team performance than demographic (gender, age, or ethnic) diversity.

2.1. Antecedents and consequences of gender diversity

Most research in this area focuses on the effects of gender diversity on outcomes. Antecedents that have been examined include personality characteristics (as they relate to diversity attitudes), the number of women corporate directors, task gender orientation, group efficacy, corporate statements about diversity on websites, and a firm's commitment to diversity as reflected in recruitment materials (Bilimoria, 2006; Karakowsky, McBey, & Chuang, 2004; Lee & Farh, 2004; Rau & Hyland, 2003; Sawyer et al., 2005; Singh & Point, 2006). With the exception of Karakowsky et al. (2004) who considered the effect of societal gender roles on perceptions of performance, no other recent gender diversity articles considered antecedents that were external to the individual or firm.

While Wood's (1987) meta-analysis of small group research found that mixed gender groups perform better overall than same-gender groups, more recent reviews of the gender diversity literature (Jackson et al., 2003; Mannix & Neale, 2005) have concluded that there are generally inconsistent effects of gender on performance or group processes. The same conclusion could be made on the basis of more recent literature as well as evidence for both negative and insignificant relationships regarding cohesion (Shapcott, Carron, Burke, Bradshaw, & Estabrooks, 2006; Vecchio & Brazil, 2007). Within the same study of mixed-sex groups, for example, there was evidence that women experienced polarization and group-boundary tightening but no visibility or isolation (Hewstone et al., 2006). Further, there have been many non-significant findings reported with respect to outcomes such as group performance, task conflict, relationship conflict, turnover, cohesion, attachment in teams, experiences in teams, comfort with differences, structural holes, and organizational attractiveness (Balkundi et al., 2006; Ely, 2004; Graves & Elsass, 2005; Hobman & Bordia, 2006; Leonard & Levine, 2006; Leonard, Levine, & Joshi, 2004; Martins & Parsons, 2007; Strauss & Connerley, 2003; Vecchio & Brazil, 2007).

Numerous researchers have attempted to gain greater clarity into what otherwise may yield inconsistent relationships between gender diversity and outcomes. For instance, the effect of gender diversity on outcomes was found to be moderated by growth orientation, team identification, and team orientation (Dwyer et al., 2003; Hobman & Bordia, 2006; Mohammed & Angell, 2004). Inverted U-shaped relationships were found between organizational-level gender composition and firm performance (Frink et al., 2005) and between management group gender heterogeneity and productivity for firms with high levels of risk taking (Richard et al., 2004). Somech (2003) only found differences between opposite-sex pairs and same-sex pairs with respect to participative leadership when the duration of the acquaintance was longer. Other recent works examined outcome variables that have been understudied in the gender diversity literature, such as interpersonal deviance (Liao, Joshi, & Chuang, 2004), supervisor-focused impression management behaviors (Barsness, Diekmann, & Seidel, 2005), and union attachment (Bacharach & Bamberger, 2004).

2.1.1. Summary

Most research on gender diversity in organizations is premised on the assumption that diversity is fraught with difficulties, such as in-group bias, or that diversity is a double-edged sword with challenges accompanying the potential benefits. Since most work in this area is either based upon or acknowledges theories such as social identity theory and the similarity-attraction perspective, there is a tendency to consider uniformity positively in theoretical predictions. Therefore, more research is needed that incorporates recent theoretical frameworks such as status characteristics theory and person-organization fit. In particular, research based on theoretical perspectives, like structural hole theory (e.g., Balkundi et al., 2006) and Schwartz's value framework (e.g., Sawyerr et al., 2005) that focus on neutral or positive predictions, would be a valuable addition to the literature on gender in organizations. In addition, research should go beyond examining the effect of gender composition on outcomes and instead consider such variables as effective leadership of mixed gender groups and contextual characteristics that reduce the effects of stereotyping in mixed gender settings.

3. Age diversity

A review of the literature on age and work shows a clear theoretical emphasis on negative predictions. The predominant theoretical models are older worker stereotypes (DeArmond et al., 2006; Maurer & Rafuse, 2001), social identity and relational demography (Ostroff, Atwater, & Feinberg, 2004), age discrimination (Perry, Simpson, NicDomhnaill, & Siegel, 2003), career timetables (Perry, Kulik, & Zhou, 1999; Shore, Cleveland, & Goldberg, 2003), and prototype matching (Perry & Finkelstein, 1999). Some studies examined the role of age perceptions (rather than chronological age), including self-perceptions of age or perceived age relative to the work group or manager (Barnes-Farrell, Rumery, & Swody, 2002; Maurer, Weiss, & Barbeite, 2003; Shore et al., 2003). An underlying theme in these studies is that age discrimination or at least unfair treatment is likely to occur for older workers. The inherent assumption seems to be that when decisions are made about individuals (e.g., performance ratings, hiring decisions, and salary decisions), young employees are preferred over middle-aged or older employees. These effects are especially likely when employees are relatively older than other employees in their group, organizational level, or manager. Such ageism is predicted for both observers (individuals in the work environment whose age is not the focal point) and focal employees (via self-perceptions of age) (Shore & Goldberg, 2004).

An important issue in the age diversity literature is the role of stereotypes. Stereotypes about older workers have been primarily negative, including such views as older people are less productive, flexible, creative, and harder to train (Kulik, Perry, & Bourhis, 2000; Ringenbach & Jacobs, 1994), more rigid and resistant to change and less comfortable with technology (Rosen & Jerdee, 1976, 1977). However, more recent research suggests that some of these stereotypes may no longer be as strong or impactful (Weiss & Maurer, 2004). Related to the issue of stereotypes, assumptions about age-related declines may influence treatment of older workers relative to younger workers. However, Shore and Goldberg (2004) concluded that most age-related declines in skills and capacities that might substantially affect performance did not occur during normal working ages.

The remaining research uses theoretical paradigms that yield mixed (neutral and negative), neutral, or positive (only one paper) theoretical predictions. These include social identity and relational demography (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007; Ostroff et al., 2004), organizational demography (Zenger & Lawrence, 1989), social categorization, information and decision making (Ely, 2004), career development (Finkelstein, Allen, & Rhoton, 2003), uncertainty reduction theory (Finkelstein, Kulas, & Dages, 2003), and social support (Niessen, 2006). These studies focus primarily on work processes (e.g., communication, socialization, mentoring), rather than decision-making outcomes (which is the focus of much of the "negative predictions" research described above). Another theme in this category is the potential for positive social relations within work groups to increase the positive effects of age

diversity or prevent negative effects. For example, older employees are likely to have knowledge and experience that is useful within groups, but such human capital may only be utilized in an environment in which positive relations among members are conducive to appreciating different types of contributions.

3.1. Antecedents and outcomes of age diversity

Very little research has examined antecedents of age diversity in the work setting. Unlike race or gender diversity, organizations rarely undertake initiatives to increase age diversity. Traditional age distributions within organizational structures (younger at the bottom and older in the middle and top) were derived from hiring employees at a young age and retaining them through most of their working lives. Such age distributions were aligned with societal expectations of orderly career progression, similarly aged work groups, and “appropriate” age differences between employees and managers. The last twenty years have seen an erosion of such traditions as increased competition and expansion of the global economy has contributed to a trend for organizations to become flatter and leaner. These environmental forces have undermined traditional career paths and associated age norms in organizations, contributing to more potential for age diversity effects. Another societal trend that relates to age composition in organizations is the impending retirement of the baby boom generation. There is increasing concern that the loss of baby boomers will lead to critical labor shortages. Thus, organizational leaders are beginning to focus on retention of older workers. As yet, however, there does not seem to be much evidence that organizations are proactively addressing these issues (Armstrong-Stassen & Templer, 2005). At the same time, there has been a recent trend of these baby boomers coming out of their retirement and such a trend represents an additional complicating factor in understanding age-related diversity in organizations.

Much of the research on age has focused on outcomes such as selection, performance appraisal, training and development, and career opportunities. One theme that seems to predominate is that older employees are disadvantaged when they are in the minority and when compared with younger employees. For selection, the evidence suggests that when older and younger applicants are in the same applicant pool, younger applicants are preferred over older applicants (Finkelstein et al., 1995). In the same vein, while age is not generally associated with lower performance ratings (Avolio, Waldman, & McDaniel, 1990), there is evidence that employees who are older than the age norm for their career stage receive lower performance ratings (Lawrence, 1988), as do employees who are older than their work group (Cleveland & Shore, 1992). Furthermore, older employees receive more severe consequences for poor performance than their younger counterparts (Rupp, Vodanovich, & Crede, 2006).

For training and development opportunities, older workers tend to receive fewer opportunities than younger employees (Maurer & Rafuse, 2001), especially when they are older than their work group (Cleveland & Shore, 1992) or manager (Shore et al., 2003). Similarly, research on promotion opportunities has shown a decrease in upward mobility with age (Cox & Nkomo, 1992; Lawrence, 1984) due in part to age norms associated with career progression (Lawrence, 1990). This is especially likely when the employee is older than his or her manager (Shore et al., 2003) or work group (Cleveland & Shore, 1992). Research associating age with work processes is much more equivocal. Studies of mentoring suggest that both younger and older protégés consider such activities beneficial, with the younger group reporting more frequent career-related mentoring and older reporting higher relationship quality with their mentors and more mutual learning (Finkelstein, Allen, & Rhoton, 2000, 2003). Research on age in socialization suggests that older workers are less likely to use covert forms of information seeking, and that this was associated with higher levels of role clarity and job satisfaction (Finkelstein et al., 2003).

3.1.1. Summary

The research on age diversity is much less developed than that on race and gender, suggesting the need for new paradigms and new approaches to studying age in the work setting. The majority of research has been conducted in a Western setting, and as pointed out by Joshi and Roh (2007), cultural views of aging may influence age effects such that different theories and effects may be posed based on cultural norms and perspectives. Unlike other social categories of diversity, aging is an experience that most human beings will have, in light of current predicted life spans. Given the emphasis in American society on youth that is reflected in the media and sought-after lifestyles (e.g., active, fit, and retaining youthfulness), attributes associated with aging are often considered less desirable (e.g., slower, less able to work long hours, less attractive). In addition, most individuals include people of a variety of ages in their non-work in-groups (e.g., family, community, churches and temples). In these settings, there are norms and expectations that guide relationships; for example, parents and grandparents serve as mentors and sources of advice due to their greater life experience. In the work setting where organizational roles are not necessarily aligned with age norms (e.g., a “twenty-something” manager with a “fifty-something” subordinate), potential for discomfort or conflicts may occur. These types of normative misalignments are reflected in many of the theories that examine age diversity (e.g., prototype matching, career timetables).

As such, these more general societal views likely influence workplace dynamics, and may account for some of the negative outcomes that relatively older employees experience. Research on cultural and societal views of aging are needed, especially in a global economy where age norms and expectations may differ based on nationality and culture.

4. Disability diversity

Theories related to disability in the workplace include medical, moral, social, and post-modernist perspectives (Jaeger & Bowman, 2005; Mason, Pratt, Patel, Greydanus, & Yahya, 2004). In particular, social psychology theories (e.g., social identity and self-categorization, Tajfel, 1981) have served as a foundation for work on disability. Several theories do not explicitly portray disability as positive or negative, but rather propose variability in how people with disabilities deal with workplace situations and

how coworkers respond. For instance, Stone and Colella's (1996) seminal theoretical model discusses the role of organization, environment, and person factors in contributing to how people with disabilities are treated in the workplace. As another example, response amplification theory indicates that individuals' feelings of aversion or hostility clash with feelings of sympathy or compassion, and this conflict is resolved by defending one and denying the other, which results in extreme behavior toward the target, in this case the person with a disability (Colella & Varma, 2001).

Theories involving prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, and stigma typically portray disability as negative or problematic. Nevertheless, some have identified differences among types of disability. Weiner, Perry, and Magnusson's (1988) work related to attribution theory found physical stigmas to be perceived as onset-uncontrollable and stable, which elicited pity and desire to help. Mental-behavioral stigmas, however, were perceived as onset-controllable and unstable (reversible), which elicited anger and desire to neglect. Similarly, Jones and Stone (1995) found that different disabilities evoked different attributions or stereotypes, which may also apply to organizational treatment and outcomes (e.g., hiring practices; Lee, 1996). Other work has discussed dimensions of stigma, including disruptiveness, origin, aesthetic qualities, course, concealability, and peril (Jones et al., 1984; McLaughlin, Bell, & Stringer, 2004).

Additional theoretical perspectives portray disability in a negative light. According to the just world hypothesis (Lerner, 1980), a person is blamed for having a disability and viewed as deserving the disability. Thus, an observer does not feel obligated to help with or accommodate the disability, since it is the fault of that person. Leader-member exchange theory (e.g., Graen & Cashman, 1975) would predict that if a leader does not have a disability, then a subordinate with a disability would likely experience a poorer exchange than a subordinate without a disability (Colella, DeNisi, & Varma, 1997). The similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971) would also predict negative treatment and outcomes for people who have disabilities compared to coworkers who do not.

A few theories view disability more positively. The norm to be kind suggests a bias toward people with disabilities such that they should not receive negative treatment or outcomes (Colella, 1996; Colella et al., 1997; Colella, De Nisi, & Varma, 1998; Colella & Stone, 2005), even if they have poor performance. In addition, individuals may hold lower expectations of a person with a disability, such that the person would be rewarded for performing better than expectations rather than for his or her level of performance (e.g., Colella et al., 1997). However, if people recognize the impact of their lower expectations, they may overcompensate by failing to provide rewards to the person with a disability in favor of a coworker, even a coworker with lower performance.

4.1. Antecedents and outcomes of disability diversity

Theoretical work on disability has increased since the passage of the ADA, but empirical research is somewhat sparse. Perhaps the most commonly studied antecedent involves expectations or perceptions of workers with disabilities. Colella's (1996) review of this topic identified 12 laboratory studies, three surveys of employers, and one set of field experiments. Since then, several laboratory studies have investigated rater perceptions of a hypothetical ratee with a disability (Bell & Klein, 2001; Colella et al., 1998; Colella & Varma, 1999; Jones & Stone, 1995). For example, in line with the norm to be kind, Miller and Werner (2005) found inflated task performance ratings of a ratee with a disability, particularly when the ratee is perceived as not responsible for the disability. In turn, performance expectations predicted raters' attitudes toward the ratee, perceived fairness of accommodations, and employment judgments (e.g., hiring; McLaughlin et al., 2004). Other research has investigated the timing of disclosing a disability (Hebl & Skorinko, 2005) and the role of personal characteristics such as personality (García, Paetzold, & Colella, 2005) and ethnicity (Saetermoe, Scattone, & Kim, 2001) in evaluating individuals with disabilities.

Several studies of antecedents have employed workplace samples, including studies of ingratiation (Colella & Varma, 2001), individuals' experiences with coworkers who had a disability (Scherbaum, Scherbaum, & Popovich, 2005), comfort when interacting with people with disabilities (Nordstrom, Huffaker, & Williams, 1998), and concerns with cost minimization and perceived legitimacy in the eyes of key stakeholders (Harcourt, Lam, & Harcourt, 2005). A few studies have involved legal issues, including reactions to accommodation requests (Florey & Harrison, 2000), and organizational resources and procedures for providing accommodation (Unger & Kregel, 2003). Employers with coercive (fear of a lawsuit) as opposed to normative (belief that it is the right thing to do) rationales for compliance were more likely to hold stigmatized attitudes (Scheid, 2005). Finally, diversity climate was found to be the biggest and most consistent predictor of workplace discrimination against those with disabilities (Nelson & Probst, 2004).

4.1.1. Summary

As a whole, the literature tends to view disability as negative. However, work in vocational or rehabilitation journals, while more practical than theoretical, is increasingly taking a positive perspective (e.g., Franche Baril, Shaw, Nicholas, & Loisel, 2005, recommended a collaborative problem solving approach to return-to-work issues). Also encouraging is a recent study of diversity policies of the top 100 companies in the 2003 Fortune 500, which found that of organizations with diversity policies, 42% included people with disabilities in the definition of a diverse workforce, and 15% had supplier diversity policies that include disability in the definition of diversity (Ball, Monaco, Schmeling, Scharitz, & Blanck, 2005). The authors concluded that management is realizing the importance of having an atmosphere of integration, attracting a diverse workforce, and promoting tolerance in the workplace. Nevertheless, Schur, Kruse, and Blanck (2005) and Spataro (2005) have cautioned that corporate culture is crucial in encouraging or discouraging attitudes and practices incorporating people with disabilities.

5. Sexual orientation diversity

In the organizational behavior and applied psychology literatures, theories related to sexual orientation involve relational demography, stereotyping, and stigma. Although these perspectives assume that co-workers' sexual orientation is apparent to all,

this assumption may not be correct given that sexual orientation is an “invisible” characteristic and some homosexual individuals may hide their sexual orientation (Ragins & Wiethoff, 2005).

Relational demography suggests that work group and superior-subordinate demographic composition impact employees' work-related attitudes and behaviors (Riordan, 2000; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989), but Ragins and Wiethoff (2005) noted that it may be the case that gay men do not find themselves to be similar to heterosexual men; likewise, lesbian women may not necessarily identify with heterosexual women. Ragins, Cornwell, and Miller (2003) also used the relational demography perspective to examine the impact of multiple group memberships (race and gender) on sexual orientation discrimination and disclosure of sexual orientation at work.

The notion of stereotyping has been used to explain how gay men and lesbians are perceived in the workplace. According to implicit inversion theory, homosexual individuals do not conform to traditional gender roles; specifically, gay men are seen as more feminine than heterosexual men, whereas lesbian women are seen as more masculine than their female heterosexual counterparts (Kite & Deaux, 1987).

A stigmatized group is viewed as non-normal by those who are in the majority (Goffman, 1963). When a stigmatized characteristic is less visible, which is often the case with sexual orientation, the individual possessing that characteristic may choose not to disclose this fact to others (Ragins, 2008). Some heterosexuals may actively avoid associations with gay and lesbian colleagues out of fear of being perceived as gay, which Goffman referred to as a “courtesy” stigma. Heterosexism is the term used to refer to negative attitudes toward individuals with a homosexual orientation (Deitch, Butz, & Brief, 2004).

Stigma is also discussed in the labor economics literature (Allegretto & Arthur, 2001; Badgett, 1995; Clain & Leppel, 2001), but the empirical focus of this literature with respect to sexual orientation in the workplace has been on comparing the average compensation of gay and lesbian employees with their heterosexual counterparts. Becker's (1971) taste for discrimination model suggested that if an employer has a “taste” for discrimination against a minority group, then they will hire members of that group but only at lower wages relative to non-minorities. This discriminatory practice drives minorities such as gays and lesbians to seek employment with non-discriminating employers, and wage differences occur when the number of minorities seeking employment exceeds the number of positions available at non-discriminating employers.

The household specialization model (Allegretto & Arthur, 2001; Badgett, 1995; Becker, 1993; Black, Makar, Sanders, & Taylor, 2003; Carpenter, 2005; Clain & Leppel, 2001; Klawitter & Flatt, 1998) is based on the premise that the lower the skill level one has, the less compensation one is likely to earn. This suggests that compared to heterosexual women, lesbian women may accumulate more marketable skills and human capital while they are young, because they know from an early age that they are unlikely to marry into traditional households where males are the primary breadwinner. On a similar note, gay men are less likely to accumulate marketable skills and human capital, as they assume that they will be in a relationship with another (breadwinning) man.

Another perspective offered to explain sexual orientation wage differentials is that of occupational sorting or clustering (Blandford, 2003; Klawitter & Flatt, 1998). Gay men and lesbians may consider the ability to be open in the workplace as a non-monetary reward and may factor this into their total compensation equation to mentally justify working in a lower paying occupation. Accordingly, Ellis and Riggle (1995) found that lesbians and gay men were more likely to work in an occupation in which they would be able to be open about their sexual orientation in the workplace and that they would forego higher paying jobs in occupations where sexual orientation would have to be masked. They also found that gay men were more likely to choose occupations that were female-identified, which could play a role in having lower wages due to the gender wage gap.

5.1. Antecedents and consequences of heterosexism and discrimination in the workplace

Societal-level antecedents of sexual orientation discrimination include state legislation prohibiting sexual orientation, and similar proposed national legislation (Employment Non-Discrimination Act; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Organizational-level antecedents include company policies, gay-friendly culture, offering same-sex partner benefits, inviting same-sex partners to social events, work climate, group-level dynamics, and work group composition (Button, 2001; Driscoll, Kelley, & Fassinger, 1996; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Ragins et al., 2003).

Employee-level antecedents of sexual orientation discrimination include religiosity, beliefs in traditional gender roles, beliefs regarding the controllability of sexual orientation, and personal contact with gay men and lesbians (Horvath & Ryan, 2003). Consequences of heterosexism include fewer promotions (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001), higher stress (Waldo, 1999), and lower compensation in the case of gay men (Badgett, 1995; Berg & Lien, 2002; Black et al., 2003; Blandford, 2003; Brown, 1998; Clain & Leppel, 2001).

5.1.1. Summary

The literature on sexual orientation diversity in organizations has been shaped by a heterosexism and discrimination focus. Although these issues are important, more work is needed that focuses on sexual orientation from an inclusiveness perspective. Deitch et al. (2004) noted that the gay employee's workgroup has the most impact on that employee's workplace experience and that more research should be directed at understanding these interpersonal relationships at work. Horvath and Ryan (2003) suggested that more research be done on reactions to gay and lesbian employees in general, rather than on simply gathering data from gay and lesbian employees. In addition to including a broader diversity and inclusiveness perspective, these suggestions may be useful in providing greater understanding of the relationships among variables in this literature.

6. Cultural and national origin diversity

Culture is “broadly defined as characteristic ways of thinking, feeling and behaving shared among members of an identifiable group” (Gibson & Gibbs, 2006, p. 460). While some elements of culture are visible and observable (e.g., accent, religious apparel), others are subtle due to varying degrees of acculturation (e.g., a second or third generation Italian immigrant who holds cultural attributes from his or her family along with attributes acquired from a variety of cultures while dwelling in the United States). In the U.S., for example, it would seem that understanding cultural diversity in organizations should account for three groups at a minimum: U.S.-born employees working in a U.S. workgroup, non-U.S. born employees working in a U.S. workgroup, and U.S. and non-U.S. born employees working in a multinational workgroup. Many studies focus on culture as the basis for racial and ethnic differences, but often without thorough conceptual development. Likewise, it is not always clear which sources of cultural effects may be influential (e.g., race and ethnicity, region of the U.S., religion). Our review of the literature on cultural/national diversity shows few empirical studies, almost all simplifying the measurement of culture (e.g., Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991).

A central tenet of culture is the movement and adjustment of a group of people from one nation to another. Cross-cultural psychologists have relied on acculturation theories to examine this movement (Berry, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1997; Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Berry & Sam, 1997). According to this body of research, an immigrant (or migrant) group can (1) reject its own culture and that of the host society (marginalization), (2) reject its own culture and accept that of the host society (assimilation), (3) maintain its own culture and reject that of the host society (separation), or (4) maintain its own culture and accept that of the host society (integration). Assumptions of the integration approach are that immigrants can assimilate the values, beliefs, and ideologies of both the dominant, mainstream group and their own cultural group, and that such an integration has positive outcomes. However, Bhatia and Ram (2001) argued that immigrants had to face a constant process of conflict while developing hybrid identities. As such, we need to take into account the constant tension that immigrants might have to deal with regarding different identities, which represent varying degrees of cultural integration. As employees in a workgroup, immigrants can draw on these identities to influence social, organizational, group, and individual outcomes (Cox et al., 1991).

Cultural and national diversity in organizations can be seen from a pessimistic view or an optimistic view (c.f., Mannix & Neale, 2005). The pessimistic view is derived from social identity (Tajfel, 1981) and similarity-attraction (Byrne, 1971) paradigms, which postulate that individuals have a preference for their own group. Cultural diversity generates in-group allegiance (Pelled, 1996) and distractions (Thomas, 1999) that are detrimental to group performance. An alternative optimistic view contends that cultural diversity facilitates information processing, learning, and problem solving capacity (Cox et al., 1991; Ely & Thomas, 2001) and reduces groupthink (Janis, 1982). Under this optimistic view, cultural diversity is conceived to be beneficial to group performance. While the logic for the positive and negative effects of cultural diversity is clear, the definition, measurement, and empirical examination of the effects of cultural diversity in organizations have been a real challenge (Barinaga, 2007).

Similar to the mixed research findings we discussed earlier regarding racial/ethnic diversity and work outcomes, past research has found that the effect of cultural homogeneity (or heterogeneity) on individual effectiveness and group performance was not consistent and inconclusive (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Kirchmeyer & Cohen, 1992; Maznevski, 1994; Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Thomas, 1999; Watson et al., 1993). While cultural differences influence organizational outcomes, there is some debate on whether the effects are negative or positive (Barinaga, 2007; Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007).

6.1. Antecedents and consequences of cultural diversity

Ely and Thomas (2001) proposed three reasons why an organization would encourage cultural diversity. First, an organization could adopt cultural diversity as a moral end to correct historic discrimination (i.e., discrimination-and-fairness perspective). Second, an organization could embrace cultural diversity to gain access to the markets of a cultural or national group (i.e., access-and-legitimacy perspective). Third, an organization could promote cultural diversity as seen as a resource for learning (integration-and-learning perspective). After examining several cases in order to identify when diversity enhances or hinders work group functioning, Ely and Thomas (2001) concluded that the integration-and-learning paradigm was the superior form of managing cultural diversity.

However, as with other dimensions of diversity we discussed earlier, research on cultural diversity still needs to refine operationalization so as to further improve its construct and predictive validity. For example, Cox et al. (1991) argued that Asian, Hispanic, and Black Americans belong to a collectivist culture, whereas Anglo Americans belong to an individualist culture. Based on this logic, Cox et al. hypothesized and found that Asian, Hispanic, and Black Americans would engage in higher levels of cooperative behavior than Anglo Americans. While the hypothesis was supported, it is important to recognize that such operationalization might create a potential problem of over-generalization and over-simplification. A number of previous studies took the same approach and defined, measured, and examined cultural diversity as individualism-collectivism. Future research on cultural diversity might be benefited by incorporating a multi-dimensional approach when researchers operationalized cultural differences (Hofstede, 1980, 1997). A good example is a recent study conducted by Richard et al. (2004) that focused the definition of cultural diversity on race and gender and then showed that race and gender interact with entrepreneurial orientation to positively affect organizational performance.

6.1.1. Summary

Unlike many other facets of diversity (e.g., age, race, gender), developing the definition of cultural/national diversity and creating coherency in this literature has been and continues to be a challenge. As greater numbers of global organizations utilize

multinational or global teams to manage their international projects, researchers need to shed more light on how people with different nationalities work together to achieve their collective goals. The need to increase our understanding of the effect of nationality on team performance has been magnified due to a heightened level of international mergers and acquisitions over the past decade (Cartwright & Schoenberg, 2006). The number of foreign companies that set up their operations in the US has been increasing in the past decade, which creates a much higher probability for many US workers to work with colleagues with different nationalities. Diversity based on nationality potentially poses greater challenges when compared with ethnicity because cultural differences (e.g., language, degree of acculturation, values, and norms) among team or organizational members tend to be larger (Snow, Snell, Davison, & Hambrick, 1996). While assumed to be potentially beneficial, the cultural differences associated with national diversity can also be fraught with barriers to effective team functioning such as negative stereotyping and social categorization (Dahlin, Weingart, & Hinds, 2005) and different expectations for communication practices (Earley & Gibson, 2002). Research, for example, shows that nationally diverse teams may have problems unless leaders facilitate communication (Ayoko, Hartel, & Callen, 2002).

7. Common themes and future research

In light of the massive body of literature related to diversity, it is important to seek some coherency in this literature to help move it to the next stage of development. One means for doing so is to summarize the literature by focusing on common themes and asking ourselves: (1) what did we learn from looking across all the diversity literatures we reviewed? (2) how can theories in one diversity domain inform us about other dimensions of diversity? (3) are the theories interchangeable? and (4) how does looking across the literatures focused on different dimensions of diversity inform us about what is really going on in organizations? Below, we address these questions in an effort to spur new ideas and a new agenda for diversity research. However, a caveat is in order. That is, each dimension of diversity reviewed above has evolved somewhat independently and often has been motivated by different scholarly goals. Thus, some of the themes described below apply to all dimensions of diversity and others to subsets of the diversity literature.

7.1. Individual-level studies

7.1.1. Negative theoretical paradigms

Very few studies at the individual level suggest that diversity yields positive outcomes for individuals in minority positions (c.f., Chatman & O'Reilly, 2004), raising questions as to why this is the case. One possible explanation is the extensive use of theoretical paradigms that yield negative predictions. The literatures concerning so many dimensions of diversity have relied heavily on relational demography and similarity-attraction as theoretical frameworks (Riordan, 2000), even in more recent years when new perspectives have been included in the literature alongside these more traditional perspectives (e.g., Umphress, Smith-Crowe, Brief, Dietz, & Watkins, 2007). Three important assumptions of these theories are (a) people prefer others like themselves, (b) differences make people uncomfortable which leads to better treatment of similar others, and (c) similar demographics equate to deeper similarity. Assumptions (a) and (b) yield negative predictions, and may even promote the ignoring of neutral or positive results.

Relatedly, there is an over-reliance among scholars on a small sub-set of theories. As pointed out by Pedhazur and Schmelkin (1991) in their discussion of theory, "Being a way of seeing, a theory is also a way of not seeing" (p. 182). When empirical evidence does not support a theoretical view, often authors point to methodological flaws, such as in sampling, measurement, or weak manipulations. While field research is especially easy to criticize methodologically, this also points to the ease with which potential theoretical innovations may be ignored or dismissed. Thus, our scholarly approach to building knowledge may also contribute to the tendency to rely on established theories and reject ideas that may occur serendipitously, perhaps encouraging a limited and negative view of individual-level effects of organizational diversity.

7.1.2. Increasing focus on macro-level theories

A consistent trend in recent diversity research is the application of theories in which power and status play a primary role. Several scholars have noted specifically how a more thorough explanation of their results was afforded by accounting for the status differences or social dominance implied by specific demographic categories (e.g., Chatman & O'Reilly, 2004; Chattopadhyay, 2003; Umphress et al., 2007; Van der Vegt, Van de Vliert, & Huang, 2005). This work highlights how the meaning people ascribe to demographic categories is derived not only from calculations of similarity and difference relative to their immediate surroundings, but also from broader societal-level connotations. For example, what are considered normal or "good" characteristics in one society or country may not be the same in another society or country. In addition, there are strong societal expectations and roles that imply a certain order or norm to be followed. This theme is apparent in a number of diversity domains. For example, in the age literature, it is "expected" that those who are older also hold higher-level positions or age-appropriate positions (Lawrence, 1990); as a result, we may experience significant discomfort when we see an older person working at McDonalds or a young manager with middle-aged direct reports. Similarly, there are strong societal expectations for appropriate role behaviors from men and women. For instance, according to social role theory (Eagly, 1987), women are expected to display communal attributes (sympathetic, nurturing, gentle) while men are expected to display agentic characteristics (independent, aggressive, self-confident). Accordingly, agentic qualities are considered a better fit with being a leader than communal qualities (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

While work on stereotypes (DeArmond et al., 2006), prototype matching (Perry & Finkelstein, 1999), and demographic-based expectations (Colella et al., 1997) also are suggestive of power and status differences, this movement towards more macro-level

explanations has advanced the literature in an encouragingly fruitful direction. In particular, although demographic attributes cannot be readily modified, status and power are human constructions that may be more amenable to change. Other macro-theoretical perspectives that offer promising alternative avenues of research include institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), symbolic interactionism theory (Stryker, 1980), and labor economics theories (Becker, 1962). Each of these theories suggests important macro-level contextual influences related to diversity. Also, according to Joshi and Roh (2007), there is a need to look deeper into aspects of diversity context (discrete, proximal, omnibus and distal omnibus) in order to answer the what, when, where and how questions in addition to “why.” These more nuanced types of theoretical approaches focusing on aspects of the work context have the potential advantage of contributing to deeper and more generalizable conclusions across many dimensions of diversity.

7.1.3. Leveraging domain-specific theories

Using status-based theories or traditional theoretical perspectives (e.g., social identity/self-categorization theories, Tajfel, 1981; the similarity-attraction paradigm, Byrne, 1971) provides a basis of commonality across diversity dimensions, but using domain-specific theories offers a potential for deeper insights. For instance, similarity-attraction and social identity theory are not able to explain why race/ethnic minorities would judge the overall quality of interracial interactions during job interviews to be lower than race/ethnic majority members, but aversive racism theory suggests that such minorities observe subtle non-verbal gestures that indicate a subconscious aversion to minorities (McKay & Avery, 2006). Such domain-specific theories may also provide a basis for insights into other select diversity domains. Building on the example above, aversive racism theory may have relevance to perceptions of aversion in the disabilities domain. That is, applicants with disabilities may experience subtle gestures that have similar effects as for racioethnic minority job candidates.

Other examples of domain-specific theoretical paradigms that would seem to apply to other diversity domains include visible and invisible characteristics (Ragins & Wiethoff, 2005), stigma theory (Goffman, 1963), taste for discrimination theory (Becker, 1971), implicit inversion theory (Kite & Deaux, 1987), and response amplification theory (Colella & Varma, 2001). Further, seeing where these theories intersect could help to promote development of the diversity literature. For example, there could be some interesting insights garnered from looking at the intersection of the visibility/invisibility dimension and stigma theory, since together they inform us of why we stigmatize and under what conditions. If we tend to stigmatize those attributes about a person that are most visible to us, this cuts across many attributes that are not always visible to others: sexual orientation, mix of races (especially if more dominant features prevail), or mental disability. This visibility/invisibility dimension may be a factor that causes significant discomfort for the person who may be “hiding” his or her stigmatized status. A challenge for the person with an invisible stigma is determining if and when to disclose their status (Ragins, 2008). Likewise, it may create embarrassment for other individuals who have made and acted upon assumptions about an individual's majority group membership without realizing that he or she may belong to a stigmatized group.

We also posit that theories from one domain may apply to some, but not all diversity domains. Examining which theories apply across particular domains may help to create new theories of diversity by facilitating deeper understanding of how diversity effects operate both within and across domains. Thus, considering a wide array of theories across the social sciences as well as developing new theories to explain diversity phenomena promises to facilitate enrichment of this body of scholarship.

7.2. Group-level studies

7.2.1. Surface-to-deep level diversity

Theories focusing on diversity effects on groups are much more likely than individual-level studies to propose neutral or positive outcomes. Although the assumption of these theories seems to be that deep-level differences underlie surface-level differences, research has concluded that demographic characteristics do not consistently relate in a meaningful way with knowledge, skills, attitudes, or values (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998). An important question that needs empirical testing is which dimensions of deep-level diversity might improve group success. Given the evidence supporting the potentially positive effects of educational and expertise diversity (Dahlin et al., 2005; Van der Vegt, Bunderson, & Oosterhof, 2006), more research is clearly needed on this issue. Likewise, strategic management theories such as the resource-based view of the firm (Barney, 1991) have potential for helping to develop the basis for predicting value in diversity (Richard, 2000). Most importantly, theories that develop the role of context seem to have a great deal of potential, as there may be multiple aspects of situations that interact with when and how surface- and deep-level diversity serve to improve group and organization success. The firm's strategy (Richard, 2000), organizational culture (Chatman & Barsade, 1995), and job design (Kossek, Zonia, & Young, 1996) are just a few of the situational characteristics found to be influential in diverse groups and organizations. In sum, the value-in-diversity model (e.g., Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991) has been applied to multiple dimensions of diversity with mixed success (Richard, Ford, & Ismail, 2006). This further points to the need for research that explores what dimensions of diversity are valuable for group effectiveness, and the roles that managers and organizational leaders may play in creating contexts in which such positive diversity effects may be found.

7.2.2. Antecedents of diversity

Antecedents to diversity seem to be most developed at the group and organizational levels. A consistent pattern across dimensions of diversity is to consider how group composition, group or organizational climate, group-level dynamics, or a firm's commitment to diversity relate to outcomes (Avery, McKay, Wilson, & Tonidandel, 2007; Karakowsky et al., 2004; Nelson & Probst, 2004; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Rau & Hyland, 2003). Implicit in many of these antecedents is the perceived managerial philosophy

regarding diversity that underlies diversity in the group or firm. For example, [Scheid \(2005\)](#) found that employers with a coercive (fear of lawsuit) as opposed to normative (belief that it is the right thing to do) rationale for compliance were more likely to hold stigmatized attitudes toward those with disabilities. The range of philosophies towards diversity at these levels of analysis is captured well by [Ely and Thomas's \(2001\)](#) qualitative study highlighting customer/market, compliance, and learning perspectives towards diversity in groups. In addition, a large body of research on affirmative action in relation to race and gender suggests the importance of understanding antecedents to diversity efforts and the potential unintended consequences of such efforts if not managed carefully ([Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006](#); [Heilman, 1994](#)). Consideration of fairness and merit in decisions pertaining to workforce diversity were found to be particularly important, and suggest the necessity of understanding antecedents that contribute to successful organizational diversity efforts.

7.2.3. Multiple dimensions of diversity

We have focused on themes by considering patterns within and across the specific diversity dimensions we covered, but a promising trend that extends beyond how we organized this review is the increased attention to including multiple dimensions of diversity in the same study. Faultline research, for example, investigates the way in which individuals' multiple diversity characteristics align with those of other work group members. This work has yielded interesting findings, including how faultlines (or subgroups based on the alignment of group member's demographic characteristics) hold more explanatory power in regards to satisfaction, expected performance, and team learning than considering single-attribute heterogeneity within groups ([Lau & Murnighan, 2005](#)).

Other studies that include multiple dimensions of diversity within the same study allow for theoretical insights about which types of diversity attributes relate to outcomes and when they do so ([Dahlin et al., 2005](#); [Van der Vegt et al., 2005](#)). For example, [Goldberg, Finkelstein, Perry, and Konrad \(2004\)](#) found that younger men receive more promotions in old-typed industries, while younger women received more promotions in young-typed ones. In addition, [Barnum and Liden \(1995\)](#) found disparity in pay rates of women and minority group members compared to white men, increased with age. Such studies imply that age compositions and age norms may interact with other dimensions of diversity to influence opportunities of individuals and groups. Likewise, using race and disability as an example, [Kulik, Roberson, and Perry \(2007\)](#) proposed a model explaining how situational and individual difference variables influence decision makers' reactions to candidates that display multiple types of diversity. Such research requires deeper understanding of the meaning of diversity and how it aids or hinders individual, group, and organizational goals, than is often the case in current conceptualizations. One possible avenue for future research is greater use of qualitative studies (c.f., [Janssens & Zanon, 2007](#)), which may aid in the development of new diversity paradigms that inform scholarly thinking on how organizations successfully manage diverse workforces. Such research approaches may encourage the development of new insights and perspectives that incorporate the influence of task, job, organization, and industry contexts.

8. Conclusions

Diversity research has progressed a great deal in the last 40 years. However, there are still noteworthy gaps that need to be filled. Scholars have spent a significant amount of time studying diversity from a reactive stance. Such a stance has historical and present-day merit as prejudice and discrimination are still serious problems in society. However, this approach does not seem to have yielded positive results for individuals or organizations. Diversity is typically viewed as something to deal with or manage. In fact, in both practice and research, communications about diversity have been inundated with negative wording such as “abide by,” “accommodate,” and “tolerate.” Choice of phrases and terms in language can signify how people interpret their diversity-related experiences ([Roberson & Stevens, 2006](#)). Thus, diversity terminology can have a direct positive or negative influence on people ([Pati & Bailey, 1995](#)) as well as having other more subtle, perhaps less conscious effects. Citing examples from the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, [Pati and Bailey \(1995\)](#) suggested that we use words that emphasize the person rather than the disabling condition: “people with disabilities” versus “the disabled,” or “non-disabled person” rather than “normal person” (which implies that a person with a disability is not normal). While changing diversity terminology to reflect more positive views is a starting point, there is much more to be done.

In order to move forward, we need to change our originating paradigms which are primarily negative, emphasizing discrimination and victimization, to explore diversity from a more positive and proactive standpoint. Questions, such as when and in what ways diversity aids in organizational success, move the focus from management and control to opportunity and possibility. A number of new questions come to mind from this more positive, proactive stance. Examples include asking subgroups to describe how they would like to be treated, what they want others to know about them, and what aspects of their work environment would need to change to create a highly functional organizational context with diverse employees.

There is some evidence to suggest that positive attitudes toward diverse others increase the likelihood of successful diversity management ([Sawyer et al., 2005](#)). Researchers have already begun to develop ideas that move in a more proactive and positive direction such as diversity climate ([McKay et al., 2007](#)) and inclusiveness ([Janssens & Zanon, 2007](#); [Roberson, 2006](#)). We believe that future diversity research should continue in these and other new directions that can contribute to the ability of employers of diverse people to promote individual, group, and organizational success.

Based on our review, we conclude that it is challenging, but possible, to develop an integrative theory of diversity. Such an effort will require meta-concepts that reflect the human experience. It is clear from our review that there are core human issues and concerns embedded in the diversity literature that could form the basis for such a theory. Some of these core human elements consist of organizational and managerial messages of respect, dignity, and clear value to the organization that are not tied to

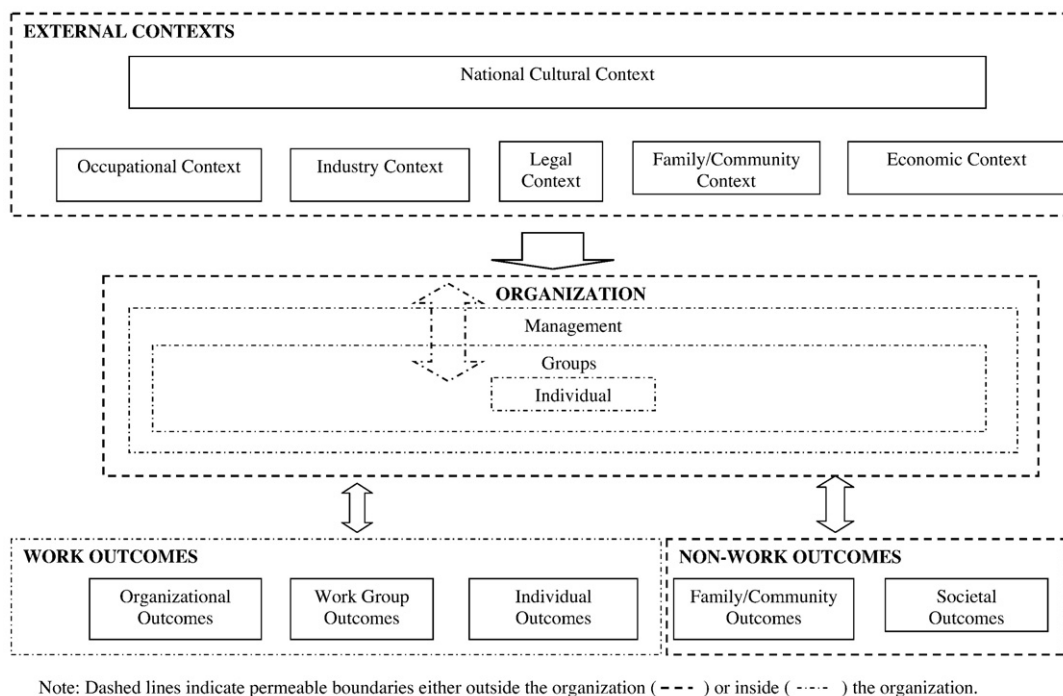


Fig. 1. An integrative model of diversity in organizations.

demographic or cultural attributes. While many companies have put in place formal policies, procedures, and statements of organizational values to ensure such elements, the evidence is unambiguous that these types of actions are only starting points for creating positive organizational environments for diverse people. There are many potential structural and process variables at multiple organizational levels that need careful reflection and consideration in order for a unified diversity framework to be of explanatory value for organizations.

In our review of the literature, we note several significant themes that should be reflected in the integrative model of diversity presented in Fig. 1. First, it is important to clarify aspects of context that affect diversity in organizations. Based on our review, there appear to be contextual elements both outside the organization and inside the organization that may influence the prevalence and impact of diversity. Some external aspects of context are the national culture (Stone-Romero & Stone, 2007), occupation (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007), industry (Blum, Fields, & Goodman, 1994; Goodman, Fields, & Blum, 2003; Kochan et al., 2003), legal context (e.g., a Title VII lawsuit; Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006), economy (e.g., labor market; Fields, Goodman, & Blum, 2005), and family and community in which the organization and its employees are embedded (Ragins, 2008). Each of these aspects of the context may have separable effects with broad (e.g., the economy) or narrow (e.g., the employee's family) implications for individuals, groups, and organizations. Likewise, internal organizational contextual effects include organizational culture, strategy, and human resource practices (Kochan et al., 2003). In addition, depending on the size of the organization, there may be many different groups and individuals that determine the extent to which the workforce is diverse, and whether diversity has positive, negative, or neutral effects. The large number of contextual variables that affect organizations and their employees may well explain the inconsistent results that are found pertaining to the effects of diversity (Jackson et al., 2003; Kochan et al., 2003; Webber & Donahue, 2001).

A second theme in the literature is that diversity has been conceptualized and measured in a variety of ways, contributing to conceptual confusion as well as detrimental effects on knowledge building (Harrison & Klein, 2007). Diversity has also been studied at multiple levels, including the individual, the individual within the work group, the individual relative to the manager, the work group, the management team, and the organization. In Fig. 1, the dashed double-headed arrow signifies the variety of potential ways to assess diversity within organizations, including across levels and within levels. As described in this review, different theories have been applied and different effects shown across levels. For example, research has found that diversity at the top management level can attract women and minorities to the organization (Kalev et al., 2006), and that race similarity between managers and employees contributes to expectations that diversity is valued (Avery et al., 2007). More careful theorizing is clearly necessary about the potential for influence across (e.g., downward and upward effects) as well as within levels (e.g. between employees or units).

A third theme in the literature is that diversity has been linked to a variety of outcomes. Most commonly, diversity effects have been examined in relation to equal employment opportunities at the individual level (c.f., Cox & Nkomo, 1990), work group performance and conflict at the unit level (c.f., Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007), and firm performance at the organizational

level (c.f., Richard et al., 2006). Our model in Fig. 1 includes other types of important outcomes that are understudied in the workplace diversity literature, including family and community outcomes and societal outcomes. For example, opportunities for diverse people may enhance communities through both economic and social enrichment. Societies may also change as the result of increased contact among diverse people provided in work settings and associated learning opportunities. There are double-headed arrows between the two types of outcomes (work and non-work) and the organization to signify potential influences from the organization to outcomes, and from outcomes to the organization.

At present, the diversity literature is as diverse as the individuals, groups and organizations that are the subjects of study. Much work is needed, both theoretically and empirically, to develop a body of knowledge related to diversity in organizations. Most importantly, scholars need to move beyond old paradigms and limited ways of thinking to develop integrative and practical diversity theories that help organizational leaders create systems in which diverse human beings are able to thrive, and to help their organizations do likewise.

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