

# The Evolution and Future of Diversity at Work

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This article examines the evolution of diversity in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. To begin, we explore foundations of the concept of diversity, including its appearance in both applied contexts and the scholarly literature. We then review the literature on diversity, including the development of its conceptualization and operationalizations over time, in the *Journal* and in the field of applied psychological science at large. We also examine the processes underlying the effects of diversity, and specific outcomes of diversity in organizations. To conclude, we offer a future research agenda that highlights diversity-related topics and issues important for advancing an understanding of diversity and moving the field forward, especially within the *Journal*. This work makes several contributions to research on diversity in organizations. First, we provide a lens for examining change in the study of diversity over time as well as a critical examination of the benefits and challenges associated with these changes. Second, we review the underlying mechanisms and key contextual influences on diversity effects in organizations. Third, our review examines the explanatory power of current diversity research and then uses this to develop a research agenda. By organizing the broad body of literature that exists on diversity, our article offers a sharp picture of what gaps in knowledge exist and where future research should focus.

*Keywords:* demography, dissimilarity, diversity, heterogeneity, intergroup relations

Since the term “workforce diversity” was first coined in the 1990s, the topic has received consistent and increasing attention by organizations, the business media, and the popular press. Given its ubiquity, one might expect that diversity would also be the focus of a rich research literature in the organizational sciences. However, as we discover, although the field has evolved, the field of industrial-organizational psychology has yet to truly understand the mechanisms and full array of outcomes associated with diversity in the workplace. In other words, what do we know about workplace diversity and how has theory and research evolved to inform our thinking on the topic?

This article will examine the evolution of diversity, which we refer to as compositional differences and similarities among individuals in a unit (group, department, organization), both inside and outside of *Journal of Applied Psychology*. We focus on diversity as distinct from topics like discrimination (i.e., prejudicial or biased treatment of individuals based on differences) or culture (attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes a group of people), which

are covered elsewhere in this issue. To begin, we explore foundations of the concept of diversity, including its appearance in both applied contexts and the scholarly literature. We then review the literature on diversity, including the development of its conceptualization and operationalizations, dimensions and units of analysis examined, processes underlying its effects, and associated outcomes examined. Based on this analysis, we highlight what we have learned to-date regarding the meaning, import and operation of diversity in organizations and offer a future research agenda that highlights diversity-related topics and issues important for advancing an understanding of diversity and moving the field forward, especially within the *Journal*.

Our review does have some boundaries. Although the term diversity refers to any basis for difference or variety, our review focuses more heavily on demographic differences (both visible and invisible), given that these are the primary foci of research in this area. As research published in the *Journal* explores the meaning and import of diversity from a psychological perspective, our review has a primary focus on differences between individuals working in groups. Our review also has a U.S.-centric lens given the influence of U.S. social and legal contexts on the evolution of research in this area and the nature of studies published in the *Journal*. Although other recent reviews of the diversity literature (e.g., Hebl & Avery, in press; Joshi & Roh, 2009) cover some of the literature discussed here, our specific focus is on the *Journal of Applied Psychology* content as well as on diversity in terms of similarities and differences in a unit rather than on phenomena at the individual level.

This work makes several contributions to research on diversity in organizations. First, it provides a lens for examining change in

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how diversity has been studied over time, and a critical examination of the benefits and challenges in those advancements. We feel strongly that a review of the conceptual and methodological challenges that have faced diversity researchers provides a deeper understanding of the issues that have stalled, slowed, and redirected diversity research along the way, and gives the field a clearer path forward. Second, we provide a review of the underlying mechanisms and key contextual influences on, diversity effects in organizations, to examine and enhance the explanatory power of current diversity research. Third, we develop a future agenda for contributing new knowledge on the cognitive, motivational, affective and behavioral implications of diversity.

### Preface: The Foundations of Diversity Research

The field of workplace diversity is embedded in a nomological network of theory and research from related fields and disciplines. Within the field of social psychology, social identity and categorization theories (Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1982, 1987), which explore the influence of self-concept and social comparisons, provide insight into interpersonal interactions and intergroup relations. Similarly, sociological theories of stigma (Goffman, 1974) and status characteristics (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972) help to explain the emergence of group hierarchies and intergroup conflict. Other theoretical perspectives, which are reviewed later in this article, have also contributed to the development and conceptual foundation of diversity research. This nomological network for diversity is summarized in Figure 1 and offers a conceptual framing for our review.

The term diversity started to receive widespread use in the early 1990s. This followed U.S. equal employment opportunity laws,

which were initially concentrated on protected classes of sex, race and ethnicity (with a limited focus on disabilities, religion, age and other differences that were added later), and the publication of the Hudson Institute's report on the changing workforce (Johnston & Packer, 1987). The Hudson Report forecasted that White males would, for the first time, become the numerical minority in the workforce and that by the year 2000, women, immigrants, and people of color would represent a larger share of new entrants into the US workforce—a prediction that caught the attention of organizational leaders, human resource practitioners, and organizational researchers. Coincidentally, there was some validity to the Hudson Report's forecasts, labor force participation rates for women and people of color increased more than 5% and 10%, respectively (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015), in the 30 years since its publication.

Prior to the advent of diversity as a specific research focus, organizational researchers had paid some attention to the topics of stereotyping and bias (reviewed elsewhere in this issue). For example, researchers had been studying women in management since the 1970s. While the field of women in management did not become fully established until 10 years later (Ragins & Gonzalez, 2003), such work examined gender differences in personality and behavior. Around the time of the Hudson Report, demographic trends became a topic of interest for those investigating workforce issues and conducting organizational research. Thomas (1991) and Cox and Blake (1991) suggested a need to move from a focus on affirmative action and assimilation to a thoughtful and deliberate focus on managing diversity. Their call was for the creation of environments in which every member of the workforce could perform to his or her potential, and where differences were lever-

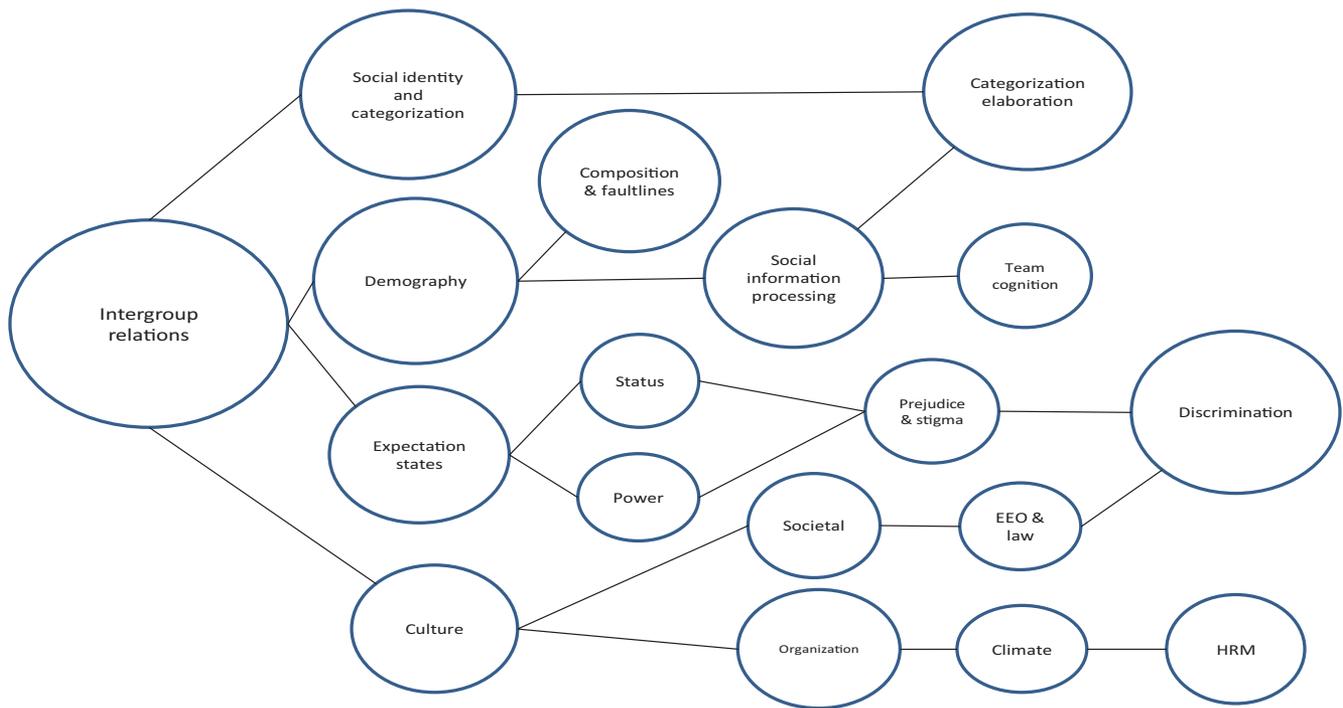


Figure 1. Nomological network of the diversity research domain. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

aged as contributions to organizational competitiveness. Similarly, Cox (1993) viewed diversity as the representation “of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance” within the organizational contexts in which it is situated (p. 6), and called for research to understand the concept from individual, group and organizational perspectives. Such early work laid the groundwork for future research on diversity as a unique phenomenon and in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*.

### Prologue: Early Diversity Work in *Journal of Applied Psychology*

Although early mentions of “diversity” in *Journal of Applied Psychology* referred to variety in individuals’ interests or occupations, rather than to individual differences or demographic categories, the topic actually appeared in its inaugural issue. Published in March, 1917, “A Comparative Study of White and Negro Children” examined similarities and differences in grade school performance based on scores across demographic groups (Sunne, 1917). Although the language used in the article is indicative of race relations at the time of the *Journal*’s inception, the author concluded that variability in performance was due to differences in race, sex, and individual capacities. Another early mention of the topic of diversity in the *Journal* was a 1927 book review (Rowles, 1927), which focused on an examination of temperament and race in Hawaii. While the review also reflected the prejudice and discrimination of the times by comparing the “cranial capacity” of groups and highlighting “the importance of classifying children into the proper social groups,” it qualified such viewpoints by noting that “we are beginning to see that there are few bases for our exalted opinion of the white races” (p. 248).

For the next 50 years, diversity-related research appearing in *Journal of Applied Psychology* primarily focused on the investigation of group differences in general intelligence and performance as well as on intergroup relations, such as stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination (reviewed elsewhere in this issue). Interestingly, however, most of this work appeared in the *Journal* in relation to occupational stereotypes until its first mention in connection with sex and race in the 1970s (see Rosen & Jerdee, 1973). As applied psychology research advanced, diversity became the focus of organizational researchers who were primarily interested in group differences in job performance and specific practice areas. Researchers also focused on differences as individual dissimilarity, acknowledging the impact of personal variables, such as sex and ethnicity, on people’s employment experiences and incorporating these factors into their research designs (Gitter, Altavela, & Mostofsky, 1974; Rosenbaum, 1973). Following these studies, research published in *Journal of Applied Psychology* increasingly considered the effects of demographic characteristics on work phenomena, such as personnel selection, training, performance evaluation, and job attitudes.

Consistent with increased attention given to changing workforce demographics and the subsequent impact on the workplace, researchers in the *Journal* recognized a need to examine demographic similarities and differences between employees as a unique phenomenon. For example, Jackson and her colleagues (1991) integrated psychological and sociological perspectives on demography to explore the influence individual dissimilarity from groups and group heterogeneity on patterns of recruitment, pro-

motion and turnover. Notably, this study was one of the first in *Journal of Applied Psychology* to consider demographic composition as a unique, situational variable that influences career outcomes. A comparable study by Riordan and Shore (1997) investigated the effects of individuals’ gender, racial–ethnic, and tenure similarities to the composition of their work groups on individual attitudes. Markedly, this was the earliest published article in the *Journal* to formally note the study of “demographic diversity” within an organization and along with Jackson et al. (1991), reflected a shift in thinking regarding differences between people in work organizations and an upwelling of diversity research in the decades that followed.

### Narrative: The Evolution of Diversity in *Journal of Applied Psychology*

To review the study of diversity within the *Journal of Applied Psychology* over the last 100 years, we searched for articles using a coding scheme derived from the diversity literature. Given the absence of established taxonomies of diversity, we developed a list of diversity-related terms based on existing reviews of the literature (e.g., Harrison & Klein, 2007; Mannix & Neale, 2005; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Ragins & Gonzalez, 2003; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998) and meta-analytic studies of diversity effects (e.g., Bell, Villado, Lukasik, Belau, & Briggs, 2011; Bowers, Pharmed, & Salas, 2000; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Webber & Donahue, 2001). Although more than 150 articles published in the *Journal* have examined the main and moderating effects of demographic attributes on cognitive, motivational, affective, and behavioral phenomena, most of them focus on such attributes as an individual characteristic. Our inquiry showed that although a variety of terms have been used interchangeably to refer to diversity, researchers have primarily relied upon 12 keywords to refer to demographic composition as a contextual property—diverse, diversity, demographic, demography, dissimilarity, similarity, dispersion, heterogeneity, homogeneity, heterogeneous, homogeneous, and inequality. Accordingly, we use these terms to search *Journal of Applied Psychology* and identify prior empirical research that examined diversity as a structural property of organizational work units. As discussed earlier, our review focuses on differences between people at the group level of analysis rather than on specific demographic categories, dyadic similarity, or individual differences, as such research is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. Based on these criteria, we identified 27 empirical diversity studies published in the *Journal*. To organize this body of work and understand key contributions to date, we coded the studies according to their focal unit of analysis, conceptualization and type of diversity, operationalization of diversity, theoretical foundations, and outcomes (see Table 1). In the sections below, we trace the evolution of diversity research along these aspects, highlighting influential findings and conclusions from studies published both in and outside of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*.

### Diversity Conceptualizations and Dimensions

**In the field.** As researchers have attempted to understand the construct of diversity, several conceptualizations of diversity have emerged. For example, two-factor conceptualizations that differ-

**Table 1**  
*Narrative: The Evolution of Diversity Theory and Research*

Study	Conceptualization	Dimension(s)	Theory	Unit of analysis	Operationalization	Outcomes
Avery (2003)	Diversity cues	Gender, race	Relational demography	Website advertisements	Demographic composition of pictures	Organizational attractiveness
Avery, McKay, & Wilson (2007)	Similarity with supervisor, coworkers, and community	Gender, race	Relational demography, prototypes of prejudice, social identity	Individuals	Coded (e.g., similar, dissimilar, balanced)	Prevalence of perceived discrimination
Bezrukova, Thatcher, Jehn, & Spell (2012)	Faultlines, or alignment in individual group member attributes that create subgroups	Education, functional background, tenure	Faultlines, organizational culture	Middle-management groups and departments	Strength (i.e., % of total variation accounted for by the strongest group split) and distance (i.e., between subgroup centroids)	Performance
Bhave, Kramer, & Glomb (2010)	Demographic dissimilarity in work groups	Gender, tenure, marital status, number of dependents	Social information processing theory	University departmental or functional workgroups	Euclidean distance measure	Work-family conflict
Chattopadhyay, George, & Lawrence (2004)	Proportion of dissimilar peers in a work group	Gender, national origin	Relational demography, self-categorization theory	Student work groups	Proportion (%)	Prototype clarity, self-prototypicality
Carton & Cummings (2013)	Faultlines	Gender, age, business unit, reporting channel	Faultlines, categorization-elaboration model	Work teams	Algorithm of number and balance of subgroups within the team	Performance
Chen, Liu, & Portnoy (2012)	Employees' shared perceptions of a firm's value for diversity	N/A	Climate, trait activation, Cultural intelligence	Diversity climate	Aggregated employee perceptions	Cross-cultural sales
Ellis, Mai, & Christian (2013)	Faultlines	Task goals	Faultlines, categorization-elaboration model	Experimental student groups	Manipulated composition (i.e., homogeneous or heterogeneous teams)	Performance
Fisher, Bell, Dierdorff, & Belohlav (2012)	Variety, or qualitative categorical differences among members of a team	Gender, race, personality	Team mental models, Multilevel theory	Experimental student groups	Blau's index of heterogeneity	Team mental models, implicit coordination, performance
Glomb & Welsh (2005)	Dissimilarity on certain characteristics	Personality	Interpersonal interaction theory	Supervisor-subordinate dyads	Pattern of results of polynomial regression equations of progressively higher order	Satisfaction with supervisor, organizational citizenship behavior, work withdrawal

Table 1 (continued)

Study	Conceptualization	Dimension(s)	Theory	Unit of analysis	Operationalization	Outcomes
Hoever, van Knippenberg, van Ginkel, & Barkema (2012)	Team characteristic denoting the extent to which members differ with regard to a given attribute	Perspectives (i.e., functional roles)	Categorization-elaboration model	Experimental student groups	Manipulated composition (i.e., homogeneous or heterogeneous groups)	Information elaboration, creativity
Homan, van Knippenberg, van Kleef, & De Dreu (2007)	Faultlines and differences in knowledge bases and perspectives that members bring to the group	Gender, bogus personality feedback	Categorization-elaboration model, faultlines	Experimental student groups	Subgroup alignment and manipulated distribution of information across group members	Performance, group information elaboration
Jackson, Brett, Sessa, Cooper, Julin, & Peyronnin (1991)	Individual dissimilarity from a group and group heterogeneity	Age, tenure, gender, education, experience (work & military), function, status	Attraction-selection-attribution, organizational demography	Top management teams	Euclidean distance measure and coefficient of variation	Promotion, turnover
Kearney & Gebert (2009)	A characteristic of a social grouping that reflects the degree to which there are differences among people within the group	Age, nationality, education	Categorization-elaboration model	R&D teams	Blau's index of heterogeneity	Team identification, information elaboration, performance
Martins & Parsons (2007)	Programs focused on increasing representation in senior management and providing career development opportunities	Gender	Signaling, social identity theory	Diversity programs	Manipulated composition and diversity programs	Organizational attractiveness
Mohammed & Nadkarni (2014)	Dispersion of task-related, individual differences within a team	Polychronicity	Similarity-attraction, team cognition, person-organization fit	Cross-functional work teams	Within-group standard deviation	Performance
Nishii & Mayer (2009)	Dissimilarity in member attributes within a unit	Gender, race, age	Relational demography, LMX, social categorization, expectation states	Work departments	Blau's index of heterogeneity, standard deviation	Turnover
Pearsall, Ellis, & Evans (2008)	Faultlines	Gender	Faultlines	Experimental student teams	Manipulated composition (i.e., homogeneous or heterogeneous teams)	Creativity, emotional conflict
Pugh, Dietz, Brief, & Wiley (2008)	Proportion of demographic heterogeneity in a group or organization; employee perceptions of practices, policies and procedures	Race	Climate	Customer service units	Proportion (%)	Diversity climate

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Study	Conceptualization	Dimension(s)	Theory	Unit of analysis	Operationalization	Outcomes
Rico, Sanchez-Manzanares, Antino, & Lau (2012)	Faultlines	Gender, education major	Faultlines, intergroup relations, status characteristics and expectation states; social categorization	Experimental student teams	Manipulated composition (i.e., subgroup alignment)	Information elaboration, performance
Riordan & Shore (1997)	Individual dissimilarity in demographic attributes to the composition of a social unit	Gender, race, tenure	Relational demography	Work groups	Interaction term (individual demographic characteristic x workgroup demographic composition)	Commitment, cohesion, perceived opportunities for advancement, productivity
Roberson & Stevens (2006)	Conditions, events, and situations involving people who are demographically similar or dissimilar	Gender, race	Climate, sensemaking	Experiences at work	Natural language accounts of incidents or events	Justice, language bias
Sacco & Schmitt (2005)	Demographic variability within business units	Gender, race, age	Relational demography, multilevel theory, social identity & categorization, person-organization fit, attraction-selection-attrition	Individuals and business units of quick-service restaurants	Blau's index of heterogeneity	Turnover, controllable profit
Shim & Zhou (2007)	Heterogeneity on knowledge-based characteristics among members of a team	Educational specialization	Value-in-diversity, social information processing, relational demography, social identity, multilevel theory	R&D teams	Blau's index of heterogeneity	Creativity
Thatcher & Patel (2011)	Faultlines	Gender, race, age, function, education level, tenure	Faultlines, categorization-elaboration model	Meta-analysis	Strength (e.g., latent class analysis, ratio measures, clustering algorithms)	Conflict, cohesion, satisfaction, performance
Walker, Feild, Bernerth, & Becton (2012)	Website cues	Race, diversity goals & initiatives	Elaboration likelihood model, social identity	Websites	Manipulated composition and company information	Viewing time, recall, organizational attractiveness
Wegge, Roth, Neubach, Schmidt, & Kanfer (2008)	Distribution of differences among members of a unit with respect to a common attribute	Gender, age	Similarity-attraction, information processing, social identity, multilevel theory	Work unit teams	Heterogeneity index, standard deviation	Performance, health disorders

Note. This table includes studies published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* using the following search terms: diverse, diversity, demographic, demography, dissimilarity, similarity, dispersion, heterogeneity, homogeneity, heterogeneous, homogeneous, and inequality. In addition, it focuses on empirical diversity studies examining diversity as a structural property of organizational work units.

entiate between observable diversity attributes, such as gender and age, and less salient or deep-level characteristics, such as attitudes and values, have been proposed (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Jackson, May, & Whitney, 1995). Researchers have also bifurcated diversity attributes according to their level of job-relatedness, or the degree to which each attribute captures the knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to the performance of cognitive tasks in groups (Pelled, 1996; Simons, Pelled, & Smith, 1999). Other conceptualizations have adopted a more compositional perspective, focusing on the amount of diversity within groups as the variable of interest. Inspired by Blau's (1977) and Kanter's (1977) work on the influence of proportions on interactions between demographically dissimilar groups, such approaches presuppose that the percentage of any minority within a group will influence the quality of relations between group members. Accordingly, this conceptualization centers on relative differences, or the distribution of differences within a work unit, and examines its effects on outcomes across levels of analysis (see Williams & O'Reilly, 1998).

Researchers have also proposed multifaceted conceptualizations of diversity that reconcile categorical approaches and consider interactions between demographic attributes. Lau and Murnighan (1998) offered a theory of faultlines, which are assumed lines of demarcation based on group member attributes that divide a group into smaller, identity subgroups. Faultline strength is considered to be dependent upon the number of observable attributes and the relationship between these attributes, such that more and highly correlated attributes will cause group members to identify more strongly with their subgroups than with the larger groups. Such divisions are also likely to result in status differences, which negatively impact group processes and functioning (Lau & Murnighan, 2005).

To reconcile these conceptualizations of diversity, Harrison and Klein (2007) proposed a typology that distinguishes between three forms of dispersion within work units—separation, variety and disparity. Separation represents differences in members' position along a single continuous attribute, such as values or attitudes. Accordingly, diversity characterizes disagreement or opposition between work unit members on that attribute. In contrast, variety captures qualitative differences on categorical attributes, such as functional background or other sources of knowledge and experience, and reflects diversity in unit members' unique or distinctive information. Beyond personal attributes, Harrison and Klein (2007) also conceptualize diversity as disparity, or differences in access to, or ownership of, socially valued resources, such as privilege or status. Diversity, in this case, represents inequality or the relative concentration of desired resources within a work unit. Overall, by both distinguishing and articulating differences in the forms and meanings of diversity types, Harrison and Klein's (2007) article offered a more precise specification of diversity as a construct and was influential to advancing its conceptualization.

Although most diversity research has focused on the meaning and import of diversity as an objective construct, researchers have also considered psychological conceptualizations of diversity. Such work focuses cognitions about diversity, its value in organizations, and the nature of the social world in general. For example, van Knippenberg and his colleagues (van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003; van Knippenberg, Haslam, & Platow, 2007) developed the concept of diversity beliefs, described as attitudes toward demo-

graphically dissimilar others or toward diversity as a group characteristic. Similarly, researchers have explored ideological beliefs, or social shared knowledge structures regarding intergroup relations (see Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009; Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004), as an important dimension of diversity that influences individuals' attitudes toward, and evaluations of, others. Whereas diversity and ideological beliefs focus on individuals' own attitudes toward diversity, other research has focused on the perceived perspective of the work-group or organization. Specifically, diversity climate research has considered employees' shared perceptions of an organization's value for diversity and its related policies and practices (Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; McKay et al., 2007; Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998).

**In the Journal.** Columns 2 and 3 of Table 1 summarize how the conceptualization of diversity and diversity type varied across studies in the *Journal*. Much of the diversity research in *Journal of Applied Psychology* has utilized a proportional approach to study the phenomenon. Specifically, approximately half of the studies we reviewed for this article conceptualize diversity as categorical differences among members of work units or the proportion of dissimilarity on certain attributes within work groups. For example, Chattopadhyay, George, and Lawrence (2004) investigated whether demographic dissimilarity, conceptualized as the proportion of students working in groups in which they are dissimilar from their peers on key demographic characteristics, influences self-categorization processes. Similarly, arguing that categorical differences, such as age, nationality and academic field, expand the range of task-related information and experience within R&D teams, Kearney and Gebert (2009) conceptualized diversity as variety as a characteristic of teams that reflects the degree to which there are differences between members on task-relevant categories. Other research published in *Journal of Applied Psychology* has analogously utilized a compositional conceptualization of diversity, focusing on the distribution of difference on a common attribute within a work unit (Wegge et al., 2008) or attribute similarity among members across levels of analysis (e.g., Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007). By considering the dispersion of differences within units as well as cross-level effects of demographic proportions, such research has been important for highlighting diversity as an important contextual variable that drives intergroup relations and subsequently, employee attitudes and behavior.

Consistent with research outside of the *Journal*, a growing number of studies published in *Journal of Applied Psychology* have conceptualized diversity in terms of faultlines (e.g., Bezrukova, Thatcher, Jehn, & Spell, 2012; Rico, Sanchez-Manzanares, Antino, & Lau, 2012; Thatcher & Patel, 2011). Focused on the alignment of member attributes that create subgroups, such research examines differences in demographic attributes, such as gender (Pearsall, Ellis, & Evans, 2008), and the knowledge bases that members bring to the work unit, such as task goals (Ellis, Mai, & Christian, 2013). However, studies have also explored the alignment of both categorical and continuous attributes (Carton & Cummings, 2013; Homan, van Knippenberg, Van Kleef, & De Dreu, 2007), thereby capturing diversity in members' attitudes and knowledge.

Although research on variation in culture has traditionally been subsumed by the literature on international and cross-cultural issues (see Gelfand, Erez, Aycan & Leung article in this issue), an

article published in *Journal of Applied Psychology* offered a multidimensional conceptualization of diversity as culture. Considering the embeddedness of values in the social identity of individuals, Chao and Moon (2005) put forth a taxonomy for capturing the complexity of multiculturalism in organizations. Specifically, they proposed demographic, geographic and associative features of culture that represent physical characteristics, natural features of a region or group affiliations, respectively and shape interactions between individuals. By offering a nonlinear and dynamic conceptualization of diversity, Chao and Moon's (2005) "cultural mosaic" perspective provides researchers with an approach to better identify and predict patterns of behavior in multicultural organizations.

Although the majority of diversity studies published in *Journal of Applied Psychology* have examined diversity from an objective perspective, some researchers have employed a perceptual conceptualization. Consistent with external diversity climate studies, researchers have focused on employees' shared perceptions of the extent to which their organization values diversity (e.g., Chen, Liu, & Portnoy, 2012; Pugh, Dietz, Brief, & Wiley, 2008). Similarly, a study by Roberson and Stevens (2006) investigated employee recollections of diversity incidents at work—specifically, conditions, events, and situations involving people who are demographically similar or dissimilar. As scholars also suggest that organizations proactively manage diversity perceptions through information given to potential employees, research has observed the effects of diversity signals or cues (e.g., Avery, 2003; Walker, Feild, Bernerth, & Becton, 2012). Despite variation in the form of the diversity construct, these studies in combination demonstrate the theoretical meaningfulness of perceptual conceptualizations of diversity.

## Diversity Theoretical Foundations

**Outside the Journal.** Diversity research has historically drawn from a number of social-psychological theories of intergroup relations. Social identity (Tajfel, 1978) and self-categorization theories (Turner, 1982), which articulate processes through which individuals make sense of, and locate themselves within their social environments, help to explain the mechanisms through which individuals relate to others via their group memberships. The theories propose that because individuals' self-definitions are shaped by their group memberships, they are motivated to enhance their self-concept by seeking a positively valued distinctiveness for those groups. Accordingly, they engage in social comparisons to differentiate between their in-groups and relevant out-groups, which accentuate similarities among individuals sharing group memberships and differences among those belonging to different identity groups. Self-categorization theory also suggests that demographic characteristics may be used to classify individuals into social categories, and therefore may serve as the basis on which individuals define themselves as members of a social group and engage in intergroup behavior (Turner, 1987). The similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971) offers a related conceptual justification for diversity effects within social units, as individuals are posited to be attracted to those with whom they possess similar characteristics and attitudes, which subsequently influences social interactions and intergroup relations.

These theories provide the conceptual foundation for relational demography (Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989), which predicts that individuals' attitudes and behavior will

be influenced by the amount of demographic similarity within work units. More specifically, based on those demographic attributes that are relevant components of an individual's self-definition, work units will become more attractive to the degree that such attributes are shared by others in a work unit. Further, as people are motivated to maintain positive self-evaluations, greater demographic similarity within groups will generate more positive attitudes and work relations. On the other hand, as demographic attributes are a basis for intergroup differentiation, dissimilarity on key dimensions of identity is likely to impair social processes, such as communication and cohesion, within work units (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998).

In contrast to identity-related theories of diversity, research has postulated that the positive potential of diversity is in its informational benefits. Referred to as the "value-in-diversity" hypothesis (Cox & Blake, 1991), or the informational/decision-making perspective (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), this viewpoint establishes that dissimilarity in work units broadens the range of perspectives and other cognitive resources at their disposal. Research suggests that such dissimilarity exposes members of work units to minority opinions and more creative alternatives and solutions, while providing access to a larger and more varied social network (see Mannix & Neale, 2005). Thus, with greater access to task-relevant information and expertise, groups have greater ability to engage in quality problem-solving and decision-making. Put simply, this perspective reasons that diversity as an informational resource can lead to performance benefits in work units.

Beyond the value-in-diversity perspective, diversity research has drawn upon a social information processing perspective. According to this perspective, social interactions are organizational events that offer shared meaning, and thus can be interpreted to resolve ambiguity and form impressions of individuals and organizations (Weick, 1995). Consistent with social psychological theories of identity construction and maintenance, people are believed to use such interactions to categorize self and others, and form impressions of their work environments. Further, as posited by climate theorists, employees garner information from workplace conditions and other salient stimuli to describe, interpret and attach meaning to their work environments (Schneider & Reichers, 1983). Therefore, demographic dissimilarity and other psychologically relevant occurrences involving diversity may be used to do sensemaking and form perceptions about their workplace and those with whom they work. In other words, diversity and related experiences may shape diversity climate perceptions.

**Inside the Journal.** Column 4 of Table 1 provides a listing of the primary theories that informed studies in the *Journal*. Several of the diversity studies we reviewed drew upon either social psychological theories of intergroup relations (including relational demography) or the value-in-diversity hypothesis, dependent upon the type of diversity examined. However, researchers adopted a more integrative theoretical perspective after the introduction of the Categorization-Elaboration Model (CEM; van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004), published in *Journal of Applied Psychology*. In an effort to unify and reconcile the influences of social categorization and information processing in diverse groups, van Knippenberg and his colleagues (2004) put forth a model to articulate how intergroup biases engendered by diversity may disrupt information exchange and integration processes that are core to realizing the synergetic benefits of diversity as an infor-

mational resource. The authors argue that although preventing such biases is important to realizing the potential benefits of diversity, doing so is not enough to stimulate the processes that require active engagement with diversity. Instead, the exchange and integration of perspectives and cognitive resources within the group, or information elaboration, is critical for experiencing the positive effects of diversity on group performance. Consistent with their call for more process-oriented approaches to the study of diversity in organizational work units, research published within the *Journal* has increasingly explored how and why social categorization processes affects elaboration processes, and mechanisms for mitigating disruptive effects while enhancing information processing (e.g., Carton & Cummings, 2013; Ellis, Mai, & Christian, 2013; Hoever, van Knippenberg, van Ginkel, & Barkema, 2012; Homan et al., 2007; Kearney & Gebert, 2009; Thatcher & Patel, 2011).

Other studies reviewed for this article draw upon social information processing theories. Roberson and Stevens (2006) relied upon sensemaking as a theoretical foundation to uncover patterns in employee accounts of diversity-related incidents at work. Specifically, they analyzed situations involving demographic similarity and dissimilarity for issues of fairness and attributions about, and expectations for, ingroup/outgroup behavior. Within a recruitment context, research published in *Journal of Applied Psychology* has also examined how individuals do sensemaking about company diversity information and the subsequent effects on organizational attraction (Avery, 2003; Martins & Parsons, 2007; Walker et al., 2012). The results of these studies revealed group differences in viewing times, information recall and/or perceptions of organizational attractiveness, thus suggesting differential processing of diversity cues. As other research published in the *Journal* explores and provides evidence of diversity climate (e.g., Chen et al., 2012; Pugh et al., 2008), or the shared meanings that employees attach to an organization's diversity-related policies and practices, there is further empirical support for diversity sensemaking processes in organizations.

### Diversity Units of Analysis and Operationalizations

**Outside the *Journal*.** Although employees may differ from others in an organization along innumerable dimensions, diversity is considered to be a given attribute within an organizational unit. Specifically, diversity describes the composition of the unit as a whole rather than differences between unit members. Accordingly, diversity research has primarily focused on its operation within work groups and teams, departments, and other business units. Various measures have been used to represent diversity within work units. Following a dispersion composition model (Chan, 1998), which uses data from a lower level of analysis to establish a higher level construct and treat within-group variance in individual responses as a focal construct, research considers attribute dissimilarity to be a meaningful phenomenon. Specifically, within-group variance is expected to vary across groups and to be associated with important employee and organizational outcomes. To capture the compositional pattern of differences within a unit, Harrison and Klein (2007) explain the appropriate operationalization for each form of diversity in their typology. Because separation represents differences in values, beliefs and attitudes, and signals perceptual disagreement between work unit members, di-

versity as separation is assumed to be assessed on interval scales and the authors recommend measurement using the within-unit standard deviation or average Euclidean distance of each member's attribute from all other members. In contrast, Blau's (1977) index or Teachman's (1980) entropy index are considered to be appropriate operationalizations of diversity as variety, which is assumed to be measured via categorical scales. To capture the asymmetry in socially valued resources that is fundamental to conceptualizations of diversity as disparity, the authors propose using coefficients of variation or a Gini index to appropriately capture such dispersion. In general, Harrison and Klein (2007) suggest that establishing a match between the conceptualization and operationalization of diversity is critical for achieving greater sensitivity of measurement and subsequently, insight into the operation and effects of diversity.

**Inside the *Journal*.** Columns 5 and 6 of Table 1 provide a summary of diversity units of analysis and operationalizations in the *Journal*. Although one study focused on dissimilarity within supervisor-subordinate dyads (see Glomb & Welsh, 2005), most of the research reviewed was conducted using work groups in laboratory and field settings, although most were done in the latter context. Specifically, such research focused on the demographic composition of intact work teams, departments and business units. In contrast, the experimental studies reviewed manipulated diversity within groups (particularly, in student work groups and recruitment advertisements) based on the presence/absence of differences (e.g., Ellis et al., 2013; Hoever et al., 2012; Pearsall et al., 2008) or on varying distributions of differences (e.g., Avery, 2003; Homan et al., 2007; Martins & Parsons, 2007; Rico et al., 2012; Walker et al., 2012). Research design notwithstanding, it is important to note that we identified several papers (18) in our review that have used Harrison and Klein's (2007) typology since its introduction to the literature, thus indicating that recent research between different forms of diversity within organizational work units and their subsequent influence on unit-level outcomes.

Although most of the work reviewed here has focused on diversity as a compositional construct, a few exceptions have examined more perceptual representations of diversity. For example, Chen et al. (2012) assessed sales agents' diversity climate perceptions and the subsequent influence on employees' interactions with culturally diverse consumers. Similarly, Roberson and Stevens (2006) analyzed employees' natural language accounts of diversity-related incidents in the workplace to gain insight into how such experiences are interpreted and stored in memory. Although these studies offer only a couple of examples of methodologies for gaining insight into employees' diversity experiences, they highlight the value of psychological representations of diversity phenomena.

### Diversity Outcomes

**Outside the *Journal*.** Several meta-analytic studies provide evidence of the effects of heterogeneity within work units on unit-level outcomes. Bowers et al. (2000) integrated effect sizes from 13 studies to examine the effects of team member similarity (or dissimilarity) across different attributes on team performance. With a focus on gender, ability level, and personality diversity, the results showed the combined effect sizes to be small and not statistically significant, although supportive of

the performance benefits of heterogeneous teams. Considering the significance and size of the effects reported in the studies included in their meta-analysis, the authors conclude that the influence of diversity on performance can be attributed to task type and difficulty. Similarly, Webber and Donahue (2001) meta-analyzed effect sizes from 24 studies and did not find statistically significant relationships between diversity attributes of varying degrees of job relatedness and work group cohesion and performance. Accordingly, the authors offered explanations regarding the potential moderating effects of organizational context, measurement and time. As these and similar studies demonstrated equivocal findings regarding the effects of diversity based on the types of diversity and team outcome examined (e.g., Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007), researchers began meta-analyzing the findings of diversity-performance work with a greater level of specification and attention to context (e.g., Bell, Villado, Lukasik, Belau, & Briggs, 2011; Joshi & Roh, 2009; van Dijk, van Engen, & van Knippenberg, 2012). Accordingly, extant research suggests that the conceptualization of diversity and contextual factors at the occupational, industry, team, and rater levels of analysis may explain differences in the performance effects of demographic and job-related diversity. Such work highlights the importance of accounting for the influence of study setting, team type, the conceptualization and measurement of diversity, and performance criteria in research examining the effects of work group diversity.

Broad reviews of the diversity literature also highlight a relationship between diversity and business performance. For example, Reis, Castillo, and Dobon (2007) explore relationships between relations- and task-oriented diversity attributes and performance at the individual, group, and organizational levels of analysis across the fields of psychology, sociology, and management. Incorporating both experimental and field research as well as quantitative and qualitative research, their review of 50 years of research draws attention to complexities in the diversity-performance relationship. McMahon (2010) conducted a more focused review of the literature on diversity and firm performance, and developed a model highlighting different types of workplace diversity and indicators of firm performance, mediating, and moderating factors in the relationship, and relevant contextual factors. Overall, these reviews summarize findings linking workplace diversity and firm performance, and identify directions for future research in this area.

**Inside the *Journal*.** Column 7 of Table 1 indicates the outcomes evaluated in each study. Research published in *Journal of Applied Psychology* has primarily investigated the effects of diversity on four categories of outcomes: reactions to diversity, work attitudes and behavior, team processes, and performance. For example, in a study examining race and ethnicity, and similarity on these demographic dimensions across different groups (e.g., employee-coworker, employee-supervisor, employee-community), the results revealed influences on employee perceptions of workplace discrimination (Avery et al., 2007). Similarly, Pugh and his colleagues (2008) found evidence of the moderating effects of racial composition of the community in which an organization is located on the relationship between workforce diversity and employees' diversity climate perceptions. As research has also shown perceptions of fairness and linguistic bias to emerge in

the recollection of diversity-related incidents at work (see Roberson & Stevens, 2006), research published in the *Journal* highlights the impact of work unit composition and interactions between unit members on diversity-related cognitions and attitudes.

Research published in the *Journal* also provides evidence of the effects of diversity on more general attitudes and behavior. For example, studies have established a relationship between dissimilarity on certain characteristics among members of a work unit and individual attitudes, such as satisfaction and commitment, and behavior, such as work withdrawal and turnover (e.g., Glomb & Welsh, 2005; Jackson et al., 1991; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Riordan & Shore, 1997). Research also provides evidence of diversity effects on more personal outcomes, such as work-family conflict and health disorders (Bhave, Kramer, & Glomb, 2010; Wegge et al., 2008). Beyond these demonstrated effects on current employees, diversity effects on potential employees have also been suggested by the findings of research examining the influence of demographic heterogeneity and other diversity-related information in company websites and recruitment materials on organizational attraction (Avery, 2003; Martins & Parsons, 2007; Walker et al., 2012).

Much of the research published in *Journal of Applied Psychology* on diversity effects has focused on group-level outcomes—specifically, the influence of heterogeneity in member attributes on process and performance variables. Some studies have explored the impact of diversity on team processes, such as creativity, cohesion, conflict, coordination and team mental models (e.g., Fisher, Bell, Dierdorff, & Belohlav, 2012; Pearsall et al., 2008; Shin & Zhou, 2007; Thatcher & Patel, 2011), whereas others, particularly faultline studies, have focused on performance outcomes (e.g., Bezrukova et al., 2012; Carton & Cummings, 2013; Ellis et al., 2013; Mohammed & Nadkarni, 2014). Jointly exploring these outcomes, several studies have also shown effects of diversity, particularly on task-related dimensions, on information elaboration and performance (Homan et al., 2007; Hoever et al., 2012; Kearney & Gebert, 2009; Rico et al., 2012), offering support for the categorization-elaboration model of work group diversity and performance (van Knippenberg et al., 2004).

Two studies published in *Journal of Applied Psychology* examine and provide evidence of the effects of diversity on business outcomes. Sacco and Schmitt (2005) proposed and tested a multilevel model of demographic diversity that linked racial diversity to firm performance. Using a large sample of quick-service restaurants, the authors found racial diversity to be negatively associated with restaurant profitability, although there were no significant effects of a match between the racial composition of restaurants and their communities. In another multilevel diversity study, Chen et al. (2012) explored how cultural intelligence and organizational diversity climate interact to influence cultural sales among real estate agents, and found positive diversity climates to have a moderating influence on the relationship between motivational cultural intelligence sales to culturally diverse clients. Although the findings across these studies are not directly comparable, they add to the body of research on diversity and business performance.

**Conclusions: What Have We Learned?**

Our review provides some insights as to how applied psychological research has evolved on the topic of diversity. Figure 2 provides a timeline that shows some milestones in this evolution both outside and in *Journal of Applied Psychology*, from the advent of diversity-related research to the current state of research in this area. Accordingly, we can draw some key conclusions regarding what we know or have learned to date about the meaning and import of diversity in organizations. Whereas early research considered the role of demographic categories on individual outcomes, diversity became recognized as an important contextual variable, or unit-level characteristic, which influences employee attitudes and behavior. Following sociological traditions, such work conceptualized and examined the effects of diversity in terms of the relative proportions of certain demographic attributes within work groups. A number of studies also focused on its operationalization, moving from categorical to multidimensional measures of diversity. Researchers also contemplated the value for diversity in organizations based on what benefits accrue when cultural differences are managed and how employees perceive such environments. Although various advantages may accrue through diversity, a large body of research investigated the associated performance benefits in groups and teams, and concluded that such gains happen through enhanced information exchange and decision-making. As this stream of research progressed, some meta-analytic studies provided evidence to challenge this conclusion, highlighting the intervening role of group processes and subsequently, the complexity of the diversity-performance relationship. The need to understand and ac-

count for the complexity of diversity as a construct has been further emphasized via research which explores the social categorization and information exchange mechanisms through which it operates as well as its effects from multilevel and/or dynamic perspectives. Along these lines, we can also draw conclusions about the importance of context in understanding the meaning of diversity as either an objective or subjective construct, and its consequences for individuals and organizations.

Although the field has evolved substantively over the last 25 years, a number of conceptual and empirical questions remain. Our review suggests that we are at a critical juncture where innovative and more nuanced approaches to understanding diversity are needed. In the next section, we expound upon these gaps in setting a research agenda for the future. We offer suggestions for moving the field forward, and highlight topics and issues that are especially important for diversity scholars to address. Our future research agenda is organized into six areas: capturing the complexity of identity, diversifying outcomes, employing diverse methodologies, broadening diversity contexts, adopting a practice perspective, and integrating theoretical perspectives.

**Continuation: Roadmaps, Agendas, and Recommendations for Future Research**

**Capturing the Complexity of Identity**

Employees may have different workplace experiences (e.g., perceptions, expectations, reactions) based on their specific affil-

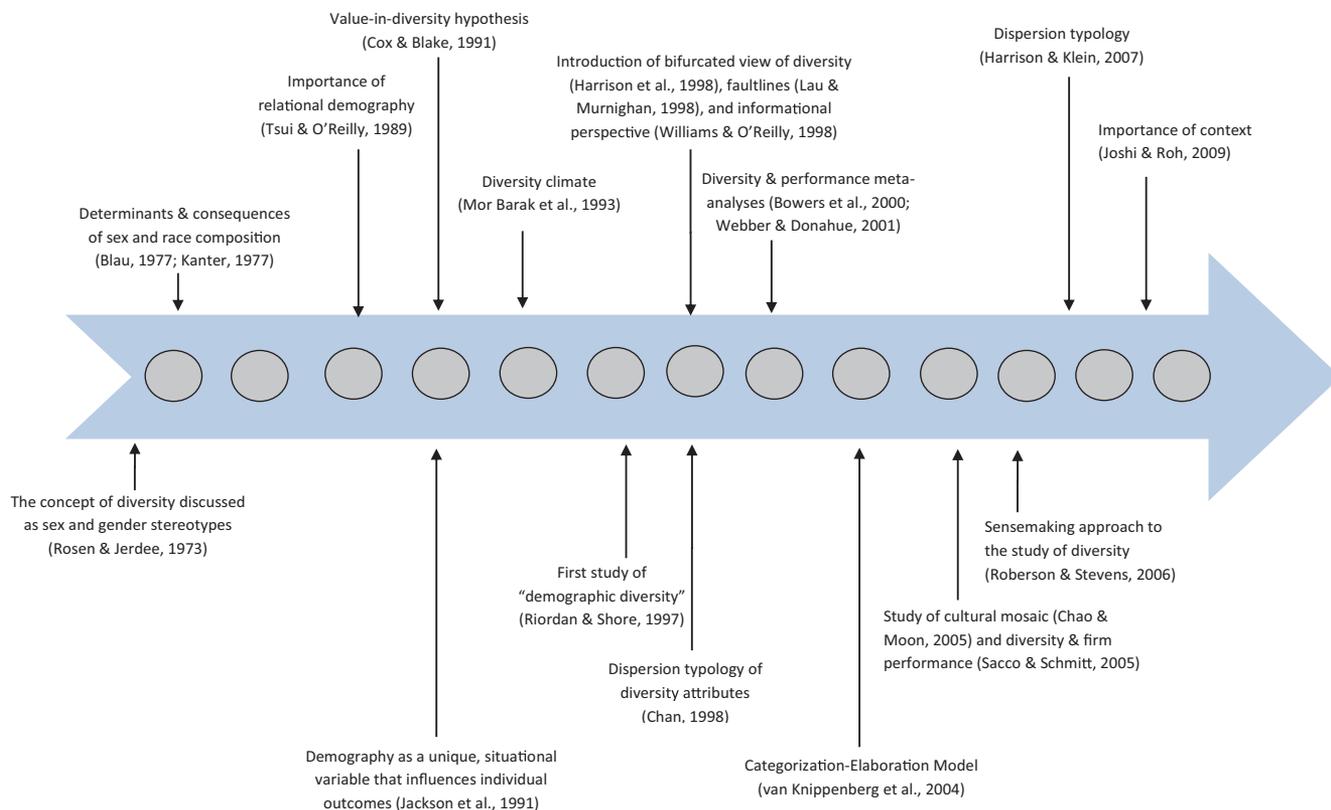


Figure 2. The evolution of diversity research. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

iations and the salience of such affiliations in the workplace. Although it is often a challenge to collect large and/or diverse samples, the practice of aggregating groups under umbrella classifications (e.g., “minorities,” “the disabled,” etc.) limits our knowledge, fosters inaccurate assumptions about individuals and groups, and fails to uncover their unique experiences, resources and challenges in the workplace. Further, as all individuals belong to multiple social categories, focusing on one category or viewing them independently constrains our understanding of the meaning, consequences and unique experiences of the intersections of various identities (e.g., the experiences of a Black man may differ from that of a White man or Black woman in ways that are unique and not clearly predicted by looking at just main effects of gender and race). As individuals’ identities are a complex interaction of meanings that derive from their group memberships, self-appraisals, and interpersonal encounters, research accounting for such multidimensionality of their intrapersonal identities is needed. For example, how might our conclusions about diversity in teams change if we were to consider how views of others (e.g., as a woman, I expect her to be cooperative) might interact with self-views (e.g., I am the only woman here and need to make sure my voice is heard) to dynamically influence how demographic diversity affects group functioning? Multifaceted conceptualizations of diversity, which simultaneously incorporate both demographic and task-related diversity attributes or both objective and subjective aspects of identity, may be useful for more accurately capturing the full range of differences that exists in global organizations.

In practice, the question often comes up as to what differences make a difference. While diversity scholars seek to make generalizable propositions about all forms of difference, we also need more systematic ways of exploring and understanding the *meanings associated with differences* that are the source of diversity effects. For example, assessing not only categories to which individuals belong, but their salience and/or weight across contexts may enable us to more practically and programmatically address the concern that “not all differences are equal”. Similarly, as people’s cultural profiles consist of multilayered value structures derived from the various social environments in which they work, capturing the complexity of such profiles via their relative significance or value to people’s self-identities may be useful for advancing the explanatory power of diversity as a construct and providing insight into interactions between diverse individuals.

Although much of the research-to-date has assumed that diversity is perceptible and/or task-related, some employees may, either intentionally or unintentionally, hide their differences or present cues about their group membership to some but not all members of their work group. Thus, because disclosure and awareness of invisible differences fall along a continuum (Ragins, 2008), and the meaning and manifestation of invisible differences depends on the context and consequences of disclosure (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007), future research should incorporate such organizational experiences into the conceptualization and measurement of diversity. In general, a greater awareness of the ways and reasons why individuals manage social identities in the workplace, such as concealing or advocating, can lead to a richer understanding of diversity effects on organizational life for those individuals (cf., Jones & King, 2014).

## Diversifying Outcomes

Although a large body of research provides evidence of the effects of diversity on group attitudes and behavior, some findings suggest that diversity and diversity-related experiences also have implications for individuals. For example, given social categorization processes which facilitate differentiation between work unit members (see van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998), research has demonstrated the influence of diversity and the experience of social exclusion on a variety of somatic outcomes, including anxiety, stress, distress and even pain responses (Baumeister & Tice, 1990; Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003; Rudmin, 2003). Accordingly, future research examining different effects on a broader range of outcomes that include individuals’ physical responses to diversity may provide insight into subsequent effects on group processes and performance. In addition, the identification and understanding of such responses may also facilitate the design of interventions to help individuals to personally manage diversity-related experiences in organizations.

Despite discourses illustrating its positive aspects, diversity tends all too often to be associated with negative challenges stemming from workplace discrimination. Accordingly, future research could examine positive outcomes of diversity, and the organizational, interpersonal, and individual factors that predict these outcomes. For example, the experience of working in a diverse workplace that values and leverages diversity may be a driver of attitude change that is carried across life domains. Positive workplace climates and interactions may compensate for experiences of discrimination and stigma outside the workplace, such that an employee who faces isolation and alienation in his community because of his group membership may be better able to cope with stress when he has a workgroup that supports, validates, and understands him. Positive work environments could therefore affect such quality-of-life outcomes as psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and physical health.

## Employing Diverse Methodologies

Researchers should employ more innovative and sensitive methods that allow insight into the nuanced operation and influence of diversity. For example, implicit measures to assess cognitions and attitudes that cannot be measured through self-report methods may offer a greater understanding of unconscious or uncontrollable reactions to diversity experiences. Similarly, qualitative or social network analysis methods may tap into more latent and recurring patterns of sensemaking and behavior, and reveal qualities of interrelationships and group interactions in a way that quantitative methods cannot.

Researchers should also adopt more dynamic or temporal approaches to studying diversity, as extant work has primarily assumed the characteristics of groups and their members to be immutable. Although some dimensions of diversity generally do not change, other dimensions have the capacity to vary or transform over time. For example, gender identity is a fluid construct, disabilities can be acquired, affiliations can be adopted or abandoned, and employees can move across social and economic classes. Therefore, research is needed to capture mutability in member and group identities and subsequently, the impact on shared value systems, such as ideology and climate. Latent growth and other dynamic modeling techniques might be used to study

how changes in group composition affect contextual variables and vice versa. Likewise, individual trajectories in perceptions, attitudes and behavior may be modeled to assess intraindividual changes in social cognition and interindividual differences in reactions to diversity.

Cross- and multilevel approaches to studying diversity are also needed. By conceptualizing diversity as a structural property of work units, it reflects the aggregation of lower-level attributes and influences higher level processes and outcomes. Accordingly, research that explores relations between individual characteristics and team-level process and outcomes as well as between (dis)similarity in work units and organizational processes and outcomes would offer an alternate perspective on contextual influences on diversity effects. Multilevel models of diversity would help to better understand the interrelationships between diversity at the individual, group and organizational levels of analysis, highlighting generalizations that can be made about the operation of diversity across levels.

### Broadening Diversity Contexts

As much diversity research has been conducted within the U.S., cultural influences on diversity processes and outcomes have not been widely considered. This is not to suggest that research in general has ignored cultural contexts, as evidenced by the body of literature reviewed in this issue by Gelfand et al. However, research should at least consider the boundary conditions created by the cultural context in which studies are conducted. For example, in a study to examine employee reactions toward diversity training programs within different national cultures, the results showed trainees residing in individualistic cultures to respond more favorably to training in terms of instructor effectiveness than did trainees from collectivistic cultures, although a cultural match between trainer and trainees led to more positive reactions to trainees from collectivistic cultures (Holladay & Quiñones, 2005). Research has also shown effects of gender egalitarianism, or motivation to reduce gender role differences, to influence stereotypes of women and the value for charismatic or participative leadership (Emrich, Denmark, & Den Hartog, 2004). Thus, as studies reveal the moderating influence of national culture, future research is needed to examine how diversity processes and outcomes may differ across cultural contexts. Diversity research could also benefit from an understanding of the role of historical context in their research, as employees not only bring their own personal experiences with them to work, but generational and historical experiences from their families and social groups.

Critical theorists point to cultural factors that establish the meaning, manifestation, and repercussion of diversity, as differences are assigned different values across historical, social and ideological contexts (Jones & Stablein, 2006). For example, whereas color blindness, or an ideology which emphasizes the minimization of group differences, is assumed to facilitate intergroup relations, research has shown such beliefs to reinforce minority group marginalization and less inclusive cultures (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009). Power perspectives on diversity also hold that it is not the difference itself that matters, but what that difference means within social and political contexts that exert influence (Ragins, 1997). Therefore, diversity research that incorporates status characteristics, such as power and privilege, is

needed to accurately represent social stratification and hierarchies in work units. Perspectives that account for dominance, marginalization, and other social distancing phenomena may generate research that is more predictive of differentiation and competition within work units, and provide greater insight into intergroup relations in organizations.

### Adopting a Practice Perspective

As inclusion extends the concept of diversity to account for all culturally relevant differences within a given context, research on climates for inclusion has explored shared employee perceptions of the extent to which organizational policies and practices encourage and reward acceptance of employees of diverse backgrounds, recognize their unique attributes, and encourage their involvement within the organization (Mor Barak, 2013; Nishii, 2013; Roberson, 2006). However, because diversity and inclusion are often used interchangeably, insight into the distinctiveness of the constructs and their interrelationship is limited. Consequently, research to further distinguish the constructs, practices to support each, and their effects on employees and organizations is needed.

Although a large body of research has explored effects of differences among members of work units, there has been relatively scant attention given to the organizational impacts of programs to manage such differences. Research has controlled for, and examined moderating influences of, demographic differences in different human resource management practice areas (e.g., selection, performance evaluation, training, etc.); however, few studies published in *Journal of Applied Psychology* have examined the design, operation and effects of practices specifically intended to facilitate more inclusive work environments (for an exception, see Homan et al., 2015). For example, what are best practices for employee resource groups? What characteristics of diversity training programs are more likely to produce desired outcomes? When do programs and policies lead to backlash and why? Considering the exhaustive list of programmatic questions that could be posed, more research on diversity and inclusion practices and programs is needed to not only enhancing the external validity of findings within the scholarly literature, but to understand and address the challenges of implementation in organizations.

### Integrating Theoretical Perspectives

Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of diversity are also needed to advance the field. For example, although the applied psychological and legal sciences differ in the definition and treatment of racial bias, the integration of such approaches may be useful for identifying individual- and group-based methodologies for detecting such bias as well as ideological and institutional approaches to counteracting it in organizations. Similarly, as neuropsychological studies of neural responses to diversity experiences have shown associated changes in cognitive activity (Eisenberger et al., 2003), research integrating applied and cognitive psychology perspectives to investigate diversity phenomenon would facilitate an understanding of the reinforcing relationship between employees' diversity-related experiences, brain functioning, individual behavior, and intergroup interactions.

Future research that integrates sociological and public policy approaches to diversity would be useful for identifying the impact

of community diversity and its iterative spillover effects are needed. Future diversity research could apply the life spillover model (Ragins, Lyness, Williams, & Winkel, 2014), which holds that people encounter a range of personally meaningful life experiences that unfold through events, activities or relationships in work and nonwork domains, and fundamentally influence or change people's perceptions, cognitions, values or emotions. Applying this framework, diversity scholars could examine whether community diversity shocks (e.g., police shootings, community hate crimes) change employee's perceptions, values and attitudes, and how these changes manifest in the workplace. The key point is that because community experiences may change employees, and these changes can be carried into the workplace in complex and often unacknowledged ways, we need to consider the interplay between organizational and community experiences.

### Epilogue

Research published in *Journal of Applied Psychology* over the past 100 years has evolved from studies that simply look at group differences to research that examines the meaning and value of diversity in organizations. Researchers have explored the "what" and "who" of diversity through a consideration of its conceptualization and measurement. In addition, studies of its effects at different levels of analysis have provided some insight into the "where" of diversity. However, questions about the conditions under which diversity has positive versus negative effects in organizations ("when") and the processes through which such effects occur ("why") still remain. Thus, going forward, we expect that the study of diversity will continue to evolve in ways that reflect its complexity as a phenomenon. For example, we expect greater examination of diversity as a subjective construct, at different levels, and across different work settings. We expect greater inductive research to understand the underlying mechanisms and the development of new theory that specifically explains diversity phenomena in organizations. We also expect a stronger link to be drawn between diversity theory and practice to enhance its value in applied contexts. Overall, while this is the epilogue of this review article, it is not the conclusion of the story of diversity at work, and we look forward to what the next 100 years brings.

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