Identity patterns in diverse workgroups
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During the preliminary elections in 2008 for the candidacy for the next president of the United States, the Democratic Party put forward two candidates who both had the potency and were eager to represent the democrats as a candidate running for presidency: Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Although both candidates shared democratic views, they differed in opinion on certain key matters, such as the military presence of US troops in Iraq and the health care system. This difference of opinion and vision on these key matters created a division within the Democratic Party, but also among democratic voters. Obama held the majority of the black votes and also appealed to the younger voters. Clinton on the other hand, had close ties to the Hispanic community and could count on strong support of the working class and (elder) women. Both candidates put much effort and resources in their political campaign to reach the majority of delegates needed to win the pre-elections. Eventually, Obama had gained enough delegates to become the presumptive nominee. In a speech before her supporters on June 7th 2008, Clinton ended her campaign and endorsed Obama. Although they had been rivals during the preliminary elections and had different views on political matters, both were strongly inclined to re-establish their relationship to reunite the Democratic Party. According to the Obama’s chief strategist: “They both had an interest in working closely together despite their different opinion on certain matters” (Nagourney & Zeleny, 2008).

The previous example shows that individuals from a shared collective – in this case the Democratic Party - with different views and opinions may come into conflict with each other, resulting in a division within the collective. In this case, a successful reunion seemed to depend on the candidates’ strong orientation to (re-)establish positive relationships with each other. The present dissertation will focus on such a relational orientation as a strategy to reduce problems in groups which are characterized by dissension of views, values and identities. More specifically, we will argue that an identity which encompasses a strong focus on interpersonal bonds is beneficial in work teams in which people from different backgrounds (e.g. ethnicity, gender, and age) have to work together.

Diversity in organizations

Many organizations are now recognizing that a diverse workforce can be a valuable resource to gain competitive advantage. Also in academia the interest in diversity is increasing. Over
the last decades many researchers from different domains have examined effects of diversity on group processes and performance (for an overview see Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). These scholars have conducted laboratory and field studies examining performance and social integration outcomes such as identification processes and well-being as a function of group composition in terms of ethnicity, gender, age, personality or functional background. The literature on diversity predominantly distinguishes between social category diversity –i.e. differences between individuals based on readily detectable (social) demographics, such as ethnicity, gender and age - and task related/informational diversity - i.e. diversity based on acquired, less visible individual attributes, such as functional expertise or education (Jehn, Northcraft & Neale, 1999; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992; Van Knippenberg, de Dreu & Homan, 2004). Although it sometimes may be difficult to separate this distinction strictly in a diverse work context, as employees may differ from each other on a combination of characteristics on both dimensions, it seems warranted to make this distinction, as previous research has shown that outcomes differ dependent on the type of diversity dimension (e.g. Van Knippenberg et al., 2004).

Many authors have claimed that diversity can be beneficial for organizations. Cox and Blake (1991) pointed out several competitive advantages of diversity among employees in organizations. The cognitive diversity hypothesis predicts that team diversity has a positive impact on performance because of unique cognitive attributes that members bring to the team (Cox & Blake, 1991; Hambrick, Cho, & Chen, 1996). Ultimately, cognitive diversity among heterogeneous members may promote creativity, innovation, and problem solving, and eventually results in superior performance relative to cognitively homogeneous teams. Studies from this perspective have indeed shown that diversity based on functional expertise or education promotes team performance (for an overview, see Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007).

However, with regard to differences between individuals on social category dimensions, positive outcomes of diversity do not seem to be so evident (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007). On the contrary, workplace diversity may sometimes to be difficult to manage as it goes along with different values, views, opinions and identities among employees which may not be compatible with each other. Subgroups may easily emerge with team members from the same background or with the same values, views and opinions sticking together, resulting in tensions within the team (Van Knippenberg et al. 2004). Potential benefits of diversity in terms of improved innovation, creativity and performance may be reduced due to internal conflict, dissatisfaction and lack of identification (Jehn, Chatwick, & Thatcher, 1997; Jehn et al., 1999). To preserve potential benefits of working in a
diverse work context, it seems important to tackle these problems of social integration, especially since a socially well integrated team seems to be an important prerequisite to accomplish tasks effectively (e.g. Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Tuckman, 1965).

**Diversity and identities**

The general understanding of the underlying processes that lead to positive and negative diversity outcomes remains limited (Brickson, 2000). Although many approaches to understand diversity in an organizational setting have emerged, theorists generally agree that identification processes play a central role in this regard (Nkomo & Cox, 1996). Some authors have even incorporated identities into the very definition of diversity: “… a mixture of people with different (group) identities within the same social system” (Nkomo & Cox, 1996; p. 339). Insights in the specific identities that are existent in diverse workgroups and how they relate to social integration outcomes may broaden theoretical knowledge about underlying processes that predict outcomes of team diversity but may also provide organizations means to manage diversity effectively.

The most influential theory regarding identities in a social context is Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). SIT assumes that people enter social situations with a self-concept that is basically determined by their personal identity and their social identity (see Turner, 1982). Personal identity is regarded as the individuated self – those characteristics that differentiate one individual from others within a given social context. Personal identities are contrasted with social identities, which reflect categorizations of the self into more inclusive social units that depersonalize the self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). When social identities are salient, individuals have a tendency to categorize themselves as members of social groups, and the characteristics that belong to the group will be internalized in the self. More recently, Brewer & Gardner (1996) expanded SIT’s notions on personal and collective identities by introducing an extended model of the self in which a self view based on an individual’s conception of their relatedness to other individuals, was added. When a relational identity orientation is salient, individuals conceive themselves in terms of relationships with other individuals. All three identity orientations seem to be relevant in an organizational context (see Brickson, 2000; Brickson & Brewer, 2001). As a personal identity orientation reflects a strong focus on one’s own unique characteristics and attributes, this identity orientation may promote interpersonal competition, in which an individual’s performance is compared to the performance of his/her fellow co-workers. A collective identity orientation
will likely trigger a sense of belongingness to a social category, for example the work team, department or organization as a whole. A relational identity orientation will likely endorse a sense of connectedness to other individuals, which may for example be prevalent during lunch breaks with colleagues, but could also reflect a situation in which individuals cooperate in small, face-to-face work dyads.

In the following paragraphs I will describe the role of these three identities in a diverse work context. First, I will elaborate on the underlying mechanisms of how subgroup forming and the associated negative effects on social integration outcomes may arise. Second, I will discuss strategies how to reduce potentially negative outcomes in diverse work groups, relying on those three modes of identification. The existing literature has mainly focused on attempting to shift from subgroup identities to more inclusive collective identities or decategorized, personalized identities. I will discuss the role of relational identities as a viable alternative strategy to buffer against negative social integration outcomes in diverse work groups.

Subgroup identities in diverse workgroups

As I argued previously, generally, perceptions of dissimilarity in demographic attributes are negatively associated with social integration outcomes. These negative effects have predominantly been approached from a self categorization perspective (e.g., Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Self Categorization Theory predicts that we tend to categorize our social environment into “us” and “them” (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this regard, similarity is an important basis for categorization (see Abrams & Hogg, 1990). As individuals have the seemingly universal human tendency to respond positively to similarity and negatively to dissimilarity (e.g., Byrne, 1999), we are attracted by, and feel ourselves associated with, people who have similar attitudes, because they confirm our norms and values and facilitate communication (similarity-attraction hypothesis, cf. Newcomb, 1956). As a result, others are perceived either as members of the same category as the self (ingroup) or as members of a different category (outgroup). Individuals tend to trust and identify themselves more with the ingroup than with the outgroup because sharing the same characteristics reduces uncertainty in social interactions (Hogg & Abrams, 1990). Outgroup members are more likely to be perceived as less trustworthy, honest or cooperative than members of the own ingroup (Brewer, 1979).
Being a member of a diverse work group will likely trigger awareness of differences between members, especially when individuals vary on visible demographic characteristics (e.g. ethnicity or gender). If the subgroup identity is strongly emphasized (e.g. being a white male), subgroup membership will likely be used as a frame of reference and other team members will be categorized in terms of belonging to either the ingroup or the outgroup (cf. Lau & Murnighan, 1998). Resultingly, when team members primarily stress their membership in a subcategory, the emphasis in interactions will be on category values and perspectives, which may differ for the other subgroups within the team. Under those circumstances, incompatibility of category specific values may harm constructive group processes and harmony in the team (Messick & Mackie, 1989). In sum, from a Self Categorization Theory perspective, it can be predicted that increasing diversity makes it more difficult to maintain a sense of “we-ness” among workgroup members, resulting in the likelihood of subgroup forming, lack of identification, conflict and lower well-being.

Interventions aimed at reducing the salience of subgroup identities

Previous research has distinguished a number of potential ways to decrease the salience of subgroups in a diverse work group (Brewer & Brown, 1998). These strategies are generally adapted from intergroup interventions theories from the (fundamental) social psychology literature and are largely focused on intervening on the level of collective and personal identities. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the three major strategies that are described in the literature as useful to reduce intersubgroup tensions within a diverse work group.

The *recategorization* approach assumes that intergroup tensions can be resolved by replacing subgroup identities by a common ingroup identity (Gaertner et al., 1990), thus changing the nature of categorical representation from “us” and “them” to a more inclusive “we”. Recategorization interventions often involve introducing superordinate goals that promote cooperative interdependence among group members. The basic idea is that if members of a diverse work group are stimulated to conceive of themselves more as a single, superordinate group rather than as separate subgroups, team members are more inclined to interpret the world and their own place in it in a manner that is consistent with its values, ideology and culture (Kramer, Brewer, & Hanna, 1996; Mael & Ashforth, 1992), and become more strongly focused and willing to put effort in achieving shared goals. Furthermore, creating a superordinate team identity can reduce negative attitudes and may facilitate more
positive affective responses towards other team members (Gaertner & Dovidio 2000; Cunningham, 2005).

However, a strong focus on an overarching team identity may have its downsides. According to Brewer (1991), individuals enter social groups with a need to belong and a need to be distinctive. That is, they strive for a sense of belongingness to and unitedness with important social groups while at the same time searching for ways of being distinctive and unique. Whereas the need to belong may be satisfied by identification with groups that are highly inclusive, such as the work team, the need to be distinct may be primarily served by identification with less inclusive minority groups within the work team. In this regard, Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (Brewer, 1991) predicts that group loyalty will be strongest when groups provide its group members a balance between both needs. Some researchers have therefore argued that in the context of diversity the positive impact of team identification on affective outcomes is strengthened when group members are able to combine identification with an overarching category with identification with self-relevant dimensions such as ethnicity, gender and age (e.g. Gaertner et al., 1994; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). The advantage of combining the two identities is that individuals become full members of a self-relevant overarching category, without having to abandon identification with a self-relevant subgroup; thus creating a balance between a sense of belongingness to and unitedness with important social groups while at the same time searching for ways of being distinctive and unique. Patterns of identification with both the team and self relevant subgroups are usually referred to as dual identities. Empirical findings support the positive outcomes of a dual identity in terms of more harmonious intergroup relationships in an intergroup context (Gaertner et al., 1994). It must be noted that more recent research has shown that intergroup bias and conflict may not be reduced by a dual identity intervention in every intergroup context. Crisp, Walsh & Hewstone (2006) showed that individuals who identified themselves strongly with the own ingroup were less inclined to accept the superordinate team identity and even showed an increase in intergroup bias. In sum, both approaches seem to have advantages in reducing intrateam tensions, but do not seem to be fully successful in every inter(sub)group context.

As an alternative to the previous described interventions, in which existing subgroup identities in the team are rearranged in more inclusive collective identities, another approach recommends replacing social identities with identities in which the uniqueness of individuals is central. The essential idea of this decategorization strategy is that intergroup contact will be more effective if interactions are person based rather than category based.
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(Brewer & Miller, 1984). This implies that individual characteristics rather than characteristics associated with the social categories to which they belong, are used as a basis when individuals engage each other in social interactions. This individuating of the self and others will lead to lower ingroup-outgroup distinctions, as social categories will be less salient. However, decategorization carries the threat of being deprived from valued and desired social identities and may not meet human needs of inclusion and uncertainty reduction (Brewer, 2001; Hogg & Abrams, 1993). Therefore, this strategy may not always be effective as team members are likely to lack the feeling of belonging to a cohesive entity, which may lower the effectiveness on fulfilling tasks in which team members are supposed to cooperate with each other.

Managing diversity by focusing on relational identities

As an alternative to approaches in which individuals are strongly individuated or in which identification with a more inclusive collective or dual identity is stimulated, it has also been suggested that positive outcomes in diverse organizations may be expected if team members are able to define themselves in terms of their interpersonal bonds with other individuals (e.g., Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brickson, 2000).

In the previous outlined extended model of the self, Brewer and Gardner (1996) expand SIT’s notions on personal and collective identities with a self view based on an individual’s conception of his/her relatedness to other individuals. Relationally oriented individuals include representations of (close) relationships with others into their mental representations of themselves (cf. Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992). Positive feelings about the self will derive from developing and maintaining relationships with other individuals (Cross, Bacon & Morris, 2000).

Brickson (2000) argued that mutual cognitive understanding and concern among members of different subgroups are most likely to arise from a relational identity orientation. Such an orientation is likely to emerge from dyadic relationships for example organised in small face to face groups or dense and integrated networks. The situation is framed in terms of mutual relations rather than in terms of group membership and the norms that go along with it. Referring back to example of the division within the Democratic Party during the pre-elections, both Obama and Clinton called upon their friendship in speeches after the elections to re-establish positive bonds between them, and both stated that they were focused on joining hands together to reunite the party, despite their different opinions on certain
matters. Thus, the reunion of the Democratic Party seemed to be partly dependent on both candidates' tendency to frame the situation in terms of interpersonal bonds rather than in terms of personal interest or interests of the subgroups they represented.

The advantage of a relational identity orientation over the previously described interventions based on promoting collective identities seems to lie in the fact that individuals are no longer regarded as depersonalized exemplars of social groups. In addition, in a relational identity orientation context, individuals' belongingness needs are better preserved in contrast to the decategorization approach which reflects strong individuating of individuals. This implies that a potential threat to exclusion of the self from the collective or the distinctiveness of the self or will likely be less prevalent when individuals frame the situation in terms of interpersonal relationships. Several studies have indicated that a relational identity orientation promotes the extension of empathy and positive affect, even beyond the interactants to other targets and perceivers (Brickson, 1998, Pettigrew, 1997).

Although the positive influence of a relational identity orientation on outcomes in diverse workgroups has theoretically been pointed out (see Brickson, 2000; Brickson & Brewer, 2001), empirical evidence supporting this claim is still scarce (for an exception, see Brickson, 1998). Building on the extended model of the self model of Brewer and Gardner (1996), the present dissertation's central question concerns whether a relational identity orientation can undermine potential negative social integration outcomes in diverse work groups.

Context and personality based identities

SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the extended model of the self (Brewer and Gardner, 1996) recognize that an individual's identity is multifaceted; different levels of identities may coexist within the same individual. Dependent on the context, one level of the self may be activated and dominant over the other levels of the self. On the other hand, cross-cultural psychologists approach an individual's identity from a slightly different perspective by assuming that how an individual's identity is defined, varies between cultures (e.g. Triandis, 1989; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Members of western cultures tend to think of themselves as independent of relationships and as autonomous or separated from others while members of more collectivistic cultures tend to think of themselves as interdependent with close others as defined by important roles.
Recent work has indicated that cultures are more complex than the basic individualism/independent self – collectivism/interdependent self distinction suggests. Therefore, several researchers have argued that there also may be variations within cultures with respect to how the self is defined (e.g. Matsumoto, Kudoh & Tekeuchi, 1996; Cross et al., 2000). In this regard, the dominant perspective in western societies of the self as independent and separate from others has been challenged (see Cross et al., 2000). These authors argue that women in western societies have a strong focus on interpersonal relationships and thus are more likely to view themselves as being relationally oriented rather than being distinct from others. Even more interestingly, individual differences within the sexes with regard to relational interdependent self views have also been acknowledged (Cross et al., 2000). Some individuals are more inclined than others to perceive their social context in terms of interpersonal relationships. Applied to a work context, individual differences in identity orientation may shape individuals’ perceptions, tendencies and behavior differently in the same situation. For example, entering a diverse work team may for collectively oriented individuals immediately trigger categorization processes and differentiations will be made between team members that are similar and dissimilar to the self. For personally oriented individuals, fellow work team member will be contrasted to the self, which in turn enhances competition tendencies. Finally, for relationally oriented individuals this situation may be perceived as an opportunity to establish interpersonal bonds with other individuals in the team.

Taken together, identity orientations seem to be defined and shaped by both the context and by individual differences. The present thesis aims to combine both contextual and individual approaches to the construct of identity orientation to predict social integration outcomes in a diverse work context. More specifically, both personality based relational identity orientation and a relational identity orientation triggered by the situation and the interplay between these two are being examined as a strategy to buffer negative social integration outcomes in diverse work groups.

Overview of the chapters

The present dissertation focused on the effects of identification patterns on social integration outcomes in diverse work groups. Both context based identities and individual differences in identity orientation are examined with regard to prosocial tendencies towards fellow work group members and well-being in diverse work groups.
Chapter 1

In chapter 2, I will describe the development and validation of an individual differences measure of identity orientation. Up till now, attempts to construct scales that distinguish between individual, relational, and collective self representations have not yielded clear results with regard to reasonable independent operationalizations of the three different self foci. The present thesis aims to develop a new instrument for measuring these three identity orientations. Several samples are examined to establish the psychometric properties and factor structure of the Identity Orientation Scale (IOS) and its relation with theoretically related constructs.

In chapter 3, I will link identity orientation with social integration outcomes in diverse work groups. More specifically, I examine whether a relational identity orientation can promote prosocial tendencies towards members from other subgroups within the same workgroup. In Study 3.1, the focus is on how individual differences in relational identity orientation, measured by the IOS, may affect cooperation tendencies in culturally diverse workgroups. In Study 3.2, outcomes of the contextual salience of different identity orientations on the willingness to help own or other subgroup members will be examined. A priming method is used to make specific identity orientations salient. Effects of the salience of a relational identity orientation on helping will be contrasted with the effects of a personal and a collective identity orientation. Finally, in Study 3.3, I will examine the combined effects of both personality-based and situation-based identity orientations. More specifically, the focus will be on the moderating influence of individual differences in relational identity orientation on the relationship between identity orientation primes and cooperation tendencies towards fellow work group members.

Finally, Chapter 4 aims to provide insight into the role of a relational identity orientation as an alternative to contemporary strategies to reduce negative social integration outcomes in diverse work groups due to group members’ strong identification with self relevant dimensions such as gender, ethnicity and age. As previously was described, interventions aimed at reducing negative effects of this subgroup forming mostly focused on shifting the focus from subgroup identities to an overarching team identity or a combination of both a team and subgroup identity (dual identity). The central aim of this chapter was to examine whether a relational identity orientation could preserve well-being in gender diverse work groups, under conditions of a strong subgroup identity salience. To test this proposition I conducted a field experiment, in which male and female participants worked together on a task and a gender identity, superordinate team identity or dual identity was made salient.
Together, these empirical chapters aim to reveal the important role of identity orientation for diversity research. The central proposition of this thesis is that a relational identity orientation can buffer against the negative effects of diversity on social integration outcomes. Hence, in chapter 5, I will discuss the general conclusions with regard to this proposition, and its implications for research on the self and diversity management. It should be noted in advance that the empirical chapters of this dissertation are based on research that was conducted with several others. Therefore, the term ‘we’ (instead of ‘I’) is being used in the empirical chapters of this dissertation when any reference is being made to the authors. In addition, the chapters of this dissertation are submitted or under revision as independent articles. As a result, mainly in the introduction sections, there is some overlap between the chapters.