Identity patterns in diverse workgroups
Vos, Menno Wouter

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2009

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):
Chapter 4
Patterns of social identification in diverse work groups

Diversity has increasingly been an issue for organizations, due to migration and international competition. Many organizations are now recognizing that a diverse workforce, in which employees from different functional and demographic backgrounds (e.g. gender, age, and ethnicity) are working together, can be a valuable resource. It is not, however, one that is easy to manage. Working in a diverse team can be a challenge for individuals as they have to deal with a complex interplay between their own and other team members’ demographic backgrounds and at the same time bring the team’s goals in concordance to operate as a unified entity. Not surprisingly, diversity has been associated with negative outcomes such as communication problems, conflict, intergroup bias and stereotyping (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Van Knippenberg, De Dreu & Homan, 2004). These problems seem, among other factors, to originate from perceptions of discrepancies among team member’s identities. More specifically, an individual’s identity based on his specific background may be perceived as being in conflict with other team members’ identities or the superordinate team identity. How individuals form these perceptions in a diverse work context seems to be determined by the extent to which these different identities are salient (e.g. Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Thatcher, Jehn & Zanutto, 2003). In practice, this identity salience will largely be dependent on structural characteristics of the team, such as the amount of diversity and group composition – in particular the presence of strong faultlines (Lau & Murnighan, 1998).

The present research aims to compare the influence of the salience of different relevant identities in diverse work groups on well-being in the team. More specifically, we examined satisfaction in diverse work groups in relation to the salience of identification with the team and relevant subgroups within the team. In addition, we were interested in individual differences between team members in the way they deal with these different identities. Recently, it has been argued that a tendency to frame diverse groups in terms of “us” and “them” can be overcome when individuals have a relational identity orientation – that is, they frame the social context in terms of relationships with others rather than in terms of category memberships. We will argue that a strong relational identity orientation may have a positive impact on well-being in a diverse work context and may provide a buffer to dysfunctional patterns of identification. Insight in the effects of these different patterns of

---

5 This chapter is based on Vos, Van der Zee & Huisman (2009).
identities and the moderating role of individual differences in this regard will lead to a better understanding of how problems associated with diversity can be overcome.

Collective identities in diverse work groups

Negative outcomes of diversity have predominantly been approached from a social identity and self categorization perspective (e.g., Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Self Categorization Theory and Social Identity Theory predict 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 identify ourselves with, people who have similar attitudes, because they confirm our norms and values and because they facilitate communication (similarity-attraction hypothesis, cf. Newcomb, 1956). Being a member of a diverse workgroup will likely trigger awareness of differences between members, especially when individuals vary on visible demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age or ethnicity). Awareness of these differences does not necessarily lead to categorizing similar and dissimilar team members into subgroups. However, 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). Consequently, 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. In addition, 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 (Messick & Mackie, 1989). In other words, the presence of a strong subgroup identity may negatively affect the subjective well-being of team members, as conflicts between subgroups within the team may arise due to these divergent norms and values.

Interventions aimed at reducing negative effects of subgroup formation mostly have focused on shifting the focus on subgroup identities to an overarching team identity (e.g., Gaertner & Dovido, 2000; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). In other words, negative affective outcomes of diversity may be reduced if members of different subgroups are able to identify to a reasonable degree with the team. In this regard, the common ingroup identity model
(Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) predicts that identification with the team can be facilitated by creating a common ingroup identity, which encompasses changing the nature of categorical representation from “us” and “them” to a more inclusive “we”. The assumption 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 the team’s 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), resulting in higher well-being in the team.

However, a strong focus on an overarching team identity may have its downsides as well. 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 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 group members are able to reach a balance between both needs in the context of the group. 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 gender, age or ethnicity (e.g. Gaertner, Rust, Dovidio, Bachman, & Anastasio, 1994; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). The advantage of combining the two identities is that people 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). Team members’ well-being may therefore be preserved because they have the feeling that they belong to the team and at the same time have the opportunity to be distinct.
From the previous discussion it becomes clear that different patterns of identity with the subgroup and team are likely to have different effects on well-being in diverse teams. The first aim of the present study is to compare the effects of these different patterns of identity on well-being in diverse teams. Based on the previous reasoning, we expected that a superordinate identity may promote higher well-being among members in diverse workgroups compared to a subgroup identity, since the focus will be shifted from “us” and “them” to a more inclusive “we”. However, when team members are able to combine their subgroup membership with team membership, obstruction of optimal distinctiveness between the two identities is less likely to occur, which will likely enhance well-being in the team even more. In sum, we expected an effect of identity salience on well-being in diverse workgroups (hypothesis 1). More specifically, satisfaction with the team will be higher under conditions of a salient team identity than under conditions of a salient subgroup identity and satisfaction with the team will be even higher under conditions of a salient dual identity than under conditions of a salient team identity.

**Individual differences in relational identity orientation**

Individuals differ in the way they react to diversity. Recent research has pointed at the relevance of individual difference variables, such as social initiative, emotional stability and attitudes towards diversity to effective functioning in a diverse work context (e.g., Van der Zee & Van der Gang, 2007; Luijters & Van der Zee, 2007; Van der Zee, Paulus, Vos & Parthasarathy, 2009). More specifically, these traits have been linked to positive affective reactions in a diverse work context as well as to favorable evaluations of minority members displaying dual identification. In the previous chapter we showed that individual differences in how people define themselves – i.e. identity orientation – may also influence outcomes in a diverse workgroup context. In this regard, people can have three different self foci – i.e. personal, relational and collective identity orientation - which guide their cognitions, emotions and behavior (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). The personal identity orientation refers to an individual’s conception of oneself primarily in terms of his/her individual traits and characteristics, in which a positive view about the self is derived from a sense of uniqueness compared to others. The relational identity orientation refers to an individual’s conception of their relatedness to other individuals. Positive feelings about the self will derive from developing and maintaining close relationships with other individuals. Finally, the collective identity orientation refers to an individual’s conception of oneself in terms of group
memberships. Collectively oriented individuals describe themselves in terms of characteristics that are connected to the group and are likely to judge their worth by how their group compares to other groups.

In line with earlier findings (Vos & Van der Zee, 2009), we propose that a relational identity orientation among individuals provides positive affective outcomes in diverse workgroups. Relationally oriented individuals include representations of (close) relationships with others into their mental representations of themselves (cf. Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992) and therefore have the tendency to frame the situation in terms of mutual relations rather than in terms of group memberships. This does not necessarily mean that these individuals do not acknowledge or experience their memberships of groups, but they will likely frame a collective interaction situation in a relational, interpersonal way. More specifically applied to a work group context, this entails that for these individuals identification with the work team is based on the perception and experience of interpersonal bonds within the team rather than on the perception of the team as a collective depersonalized ‘we’.

Studies indicate 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). Applied to a diverse work group context this implies that individuals with a relational identity orientation are less inclined to ‘think in categories’ and perceive others who are different from themselves as individuals instead of members of an outgroup. High trait relationally oriented individuals will less likely have the tendency to contrast themselves from members of other subgroups and thus the perception of tensions and conflicts associated with ingroup-outgroup distinctions will be less prevalent. As a result, an individual’s concern for others may extend the borders of their own subgroup, resulting in more positive feelings towards team members who do not share the same norms, beliefs and characteristics. In earlier studies (Vos & Van der Zee, 2005), we indeed showed that individuals with a relational identity orientation identified themselves more with team members from other subgroups. Consequently, a relational identity orientation may facilitate well-being in teams, even when the situation enforces the salience of subgroup identities.

In sum, the second aim of the present study was to examine to what extent individual differences in relational identity orientation affect well-being in diverse workgroups. Due to their tendency to approach social situations in terms of relations rather than category memberships that are potentially threatening and conflicting with the self-concept, individuals with a relational identity orientation may experience fewer problems with
We therefore expected that individuals that score high on relational identity orientation will be more satisfied in a diverse team context than individuals who score low on relational identity orientation (hypothesis 2). Because problems in diverse workgroups are especially likely to occur when subgroup identities are salient, we expected that the difference in satisfaction level between individuals with a low or high relational identity orientation will be most pronounced under conditions of a subgroup identity, as high trait relationally oriented individuals are less susceptible to the strong ingroup - outgroup categorization processes associated with a strong subgroup identity. This implies that a relational identity orientation as a strategy to preserve well-being in a diverse work team will thus have its strongest effect under conditions of a strong subgroup identity (hypothesis 3).

We tested our hypotheses in a field experiment among gender diverse workgroups. We decided to focus on this diversity dimension as gender has been identified as one of the features that perceivers spontaneously use to categorize people (see Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Stangor, Lynch, Duan and Glass, 1992). In the experiment, individual differences in relational identity orientation were measured among workgroup members and a subgroup, team or dual identity was induced. Well-being in these diverse work groups was established after team members completed an interactive decision-making task.

**Method**

*Sample and procedure*

A sample of 272 high school students participated in the study as part of a regular class activity. Mean age of the students was 15.1 years ($\bar{X} = 1.13$) and the sample consisted of 136 males and 136 females. In all cases, the management and teachers of the school agreed to participate in the study and gave permission to use lecture time for filling out questionnaires and performing the study task in the classroom. Students were randomly assigned to 3 identity salience conditions: subgroup vs. team vs. dual. At the beginning of the experimental session, students filled out a short questionnaire containing demographics and the measure of relational identity orientation. Next, they were grouped in gender diverse groups consisting of two males and two females and received priming of the different identities dependent upon the assigned condition. Priming was followed by a group task. Upon task completion, students again filled out a questionnaire, containing an indicator of well-being. Participating students could win a small reward as a sign of appreciation for their participation in the study. It took students approximately one hour to complete all study components.
**Study materials**

**Trait relational identity orientation.** Before the experimental session, all participants filled out the relational identity orientation subscale of the Identity Orientation Scale (IOS; Vos, Van der Zee and Buunk, 2009). This 7 item scale has items such as “For my identity it is important to have relationships with others” and “I like to be absorbed in relationships’ (Cronbach's alpha = .82). Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) not at all to (7) extreme and aggregated into one mean relational identity orientation score.

**Identity manipulations.** The different identities were made salient by means of priming. In the subgroup identity condition, subgroup identity was made salient by distributing blue scarves among the male and pink scarves among the female workgroup members which they had to wear during the experimental session. Furthermore, a writing assignment was added in which male participants were asked to describe which typical male characteristics they would attribute to themselves. Female participants were asked to describe which typical female characteristics they would attribute to themselves. In the team identity condition, team identity was manipulated by assigning animal names to each team and let all workgroup members wear buttons which depicted the animal assigned to that specific team. In addition, they were asked to describe the differences between their workgroup and other workgroups in the same classroom, and why their team was the best compared to the other teams in the class. In the dual identity condition, participants received both treatments. The priming method was derived from Van der Zee, Paulus & Vos (2008), and was slightly modified for the purpose of this study.

**Group Task.** The group assignment involved a decision-making task that required interaction and communication among team members to finish the task. Johnson and Johnson's (1991) Desert Survival Task, which has been used frequently in small group research, was chosen for this purpose (Bottger & Yetton, 1987; Haslam et al., 1998; Rogelberg & O'Connor, 1998; Staples & Zhao, 2006; Straus, 1996) and has similarities to problems dealt with by temporary teams in a work context (Thompson & Coover, 2003). In this task, participants first read a short document, placing them in an airplane crash scenario in a desert with the rest of their team mates. Team members had to discuss and resolve differing opinions regarding survival strategies.

---

6 The present study focused on affective outcomes of diversity. However, performance data based on the desert survival task were obtained as well, but not reported here.
Dependent measures

Satisfaction. After the group task, we measured the extent to which group members felt satisfied with their team. We relied on a four item team satisfaction scale developed by Van der Vegt (Van der Vegt, Emans, & van de Vliert, 1998; e.g., “I enjoy being part of this group” (+)). For this scale, students could indicate their scores on a five point scale ranging from I totally disagree (1) to I totally agree (5). Reliability was sufficient (Cronbach’s alpha = .88).

MANIPULATION CHECK. As a manipulation check, a four-item scale was included for identification with the (gender) subgroup (e.g., “I regard myself as a member of my own gender group”, a = .72). Items were adapted from Doosje et al. (1995). Participants answered on a five point scale ranging from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5). For identification with the team the same items were used, in this case referring to the team (e.g., “I regard myself as a member of my own team”, Cronbach’s alpha = .84).

Results

MULTILEVEL ANALYSIS. All of our measures as well as our manipulations were measured at the individual level. However, subjects were nested within teams, each with their own characteristics, and variation at the individual level. The level of satisfaction, as well as our manipulation check variables at the individual level may for this reason not only be affected by the influence of our experimental manipulation and individual differences in identity orientation but also by influences of the team. If one level is ignored in the analysis, the within and between slopes are mixed, resulting in a misleading estimate of the relationship between predictor variables and the outcome measures (see Bosker & Snijders, 1990; Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998). Therefore, in the data analysis both the team level and the individual level had to be taken into account. Therefore, we performed multilevel analyses, making use of the Multilevel application for Windows (MLWiN 2.00; Rasbash, Healy, Browne, & Cameron, 1998). A two level model was estimated in which the levels were formed by the team (level 2) and the individual (level 1). The Multilevel application for Windows allows for performing ordinary multiple regression analysis, taking the multilevel structure of the data into account. The experimental conditions were entered as 2 dummy-coded variables with the team identity
prime as a reference category. The standardized measure of relational identity orientation was included as a continuous variable.

When predictors have significant effects in predicting the dependent variable, a decrease in deviance is the result. This decrease in deviance indicates an increase in model fit, which indicates the importance of the independent variables for the prediction. Differences in deviances between the empty models and subsequent models approximate a chi-square distribution, with the number of added parameters as degrees of freedom. Therefore, the significance of the decrease in deviance between the models follows the chi-square distribution. This chi-square distribution can be replaced by a standard normal distribution when sample sizes exceed 40 (Snijders & Bosker, 1999, p. 86). Significance levels in the present study are therefore reported according to this distribution. In the prediction, the independent variables have weights comparable to the regression weights in regular regression analysis and approximate a T distribution. Specific contrasts were tested by comparing the confidence intervals for the computed means. We used the non-overlap criterion of these confidence intervals to establish statistically significant differences between the means (see Goldstein & Healey, 1995).

To test whether our hypotheses could be confirmed and whether our manipulation of the different identities was successful, we started with an empty model in which the random effects of team and individual on the dependent variables were modelled. With this empty model, an intra-class correlation can be computed. This intra-class correlation indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is accounted for by the team level. Intra-class correlations were computed for ‘satisfaction’ ($\rho = .26$) and the manipulation check variables ‘identification with the subgroup’ ($\rho = .12$) and ‘identification with the team’ ($\rho = .34$). The intra-class correlations pointed at the usefulness of taking the nested structure of the data into account.

**Manipulation check**

In order to check whether both identity manipulations had been successful, regression analysis was performed with our experimental manipulation (subgroup vs. team vs. dual identity) as independent factors and identification with the subgroup and identification with the team as dependent variables. With regard to the measure of subgroup identification, adding the dummy coded variables of identity salience to the empty model resulted in a

---

7 We used the team identity prime as a reference category because we expected this condition to differ from both the subgroup and dual identity prime condition in terms of satisfaction level (hypothesis 1).
significant improvement of model fit compared to the empty model ($\Delta \chi^2 = 6.30, p < .05$). Subgroup identification appeared to be significantly lower in the team identity condition compared to the subgroup identity condition ($M = 3.09; 95\%$ confidence interval between 2.99 and 3.21 versus $M = 3.44, 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.30 and 3.58) and dual identity condition ($M = 3.09, 95\%$ confidence interval between 2.99 and 3.21 versus $M = 3.34; 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.20 and 3.48). With regard to the measure of team identification, adding the dummy coded variables of identity salience to the empty model resulted in a significant improvement of model fit compared to the empty model as well ($\Delta \chi^2 = 6.91, p < .05$). Team identification appeared to be significantly higher in the team identity condition compared to the subgroup identity condition ($M = 3.86; 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.71 and 4.01 versus $M = 3.50; 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.32 and 3.68). Unexpectedly, team identification appeared also to be significantly higher in the team identity condition compared to the dual identity condition ($M = 3.86; 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.71 and 4.01 versus $M = 3.48, 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.34 and 3.62).

In sum, the manipulation checks confirm that the manipulation have been successful for priming the subgroup and team identities. However, the lower reported team identification in the dual identity condition indicated that we have to be cautious with interpreting results for this condition.

Hypothesis
To test our hypotheses, the predictors were added to the empty model in the equation as fixed effects. Main effects were entered in the regression in the first step, followed by the interaction term in the second step.

With regard to our first two hypotheses, adding the dummy coded variables of identity salience and the standardized measure of relational identity orientation to the equation resulted in a significant improvement of model fit compared to the empty model ($\Delta \chi^2 = 10.17, p < .01$). The first hypothesis predicted lower satisfaction in the subgroup condition and higher satisfaction in the dual identity condition compared to the team identity condition. With the team identity prime as reference category, satisfaction was significantly affected by the dummy coded variable for subgroup identity, ($z = -.27, p < .05$; one sided): subjects reported higher satisfaction in case of a salient team identity than in case of a salient subgroup identity ($M = 3.86; 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.72 and 4.00 vs. $M = 3.59; 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.43 and 3.75); Satisfaction was significantly affected by the dummy coded variable for dual identity as well, ($z = -.30, p < .05$; one sided). However,
contrary to our expectations, satisfaction appeared to be lower for subjects primed with a dual identity than for subjects primed with a team identity ($M = 3.56$; 95% confidence interval between 3.43 and 3.69 vs. $M = 3.86$; 95% confidence interval between 3.72 and 4.00). Hypothesis 1 was thus only partly confirmed. Although the advantage of a team identity over a subgroup identity was supported with regard to level of well-being, the advantage of a dual identity over a team identity could not be established.

Our second hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between individual differences in relational identity orientation and satisfaction with the team. Relational identity orientation appeared to be a significant predictor of team satisfaction ($z = .10, p < .05$; one-sided). Individuals who scored high on relational identity orientation were more satisfied in a diverse team context than individuals who scored low on relational identity orientation. However, this main effect was qualified by the interaction effect of identity salience and relational identity orientation. Adding the interaction term to the equation resulted in a significant improvement of model fit compared to the model with the main effects ($\Delta \chi^2 = 6.29, p < .05$). We interpreted this interaction term by considering individuals with a low relational identity orientation (-1 SD) versus individuals with a high relational identity orientation (+1 SD) separately.

Figure 4.1 - Satisfaction with the team as a function of identity salience and trait relational identity orientation.
Chapter 4

In line with our expectations, Figure 4.1 reveals that the difference in satisfaction level between individuals who scored low or high on relational identity orientation was only prevalent under conditions of a subgroup identity prime ($M = 3.32; 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.11 and 3.53 versus $M = 3.87; 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.66 and 4.08) compared to the team identity prime ($M = 3.71; 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.53 and 3.89 vs. $M = 4.01; 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.84 and 4.18) and dual identity prime ($M = 3.61; 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.45 and 3.77 vs. $M = 3.51; 95\%$ confidence interval between 3.35 and 3.67). Thus, high trait relationally oriented individuals only appeared to report more well-being than low trait relationally oriented individuals in the subgroup condition, which is in line with the expectation that the effect of a relational identity orientation will be most pronounced in the subgroup condition (Hypothesis 3).

Interestingly, although low trait relationally oriented individuals in the subgroup condition clearly scored lower on well-being in comparison to both other conditions, high trait relationally oriented individuals in the subgroup identity condition reported the same level of well-being compared to individuals in the team identity condition. In other words, the advantage of a high team identity salience over a high subgroup identity salience in terms of well-being disappeared for high trait relationally oriented individuals.

In sum, we conclude that a team identity seemed to promote well-being in diverse workgroups over a subgroup identity. However, hypotheses were not confirmed with regard to the dual identity to the extent that the advantage of a dual identity over a team identity was not established. Furthermore, high trait relationally oriented individuals were more satisfied with the team than low trait relationally oriented individuals. However, this was only the case when subgroup identity is emphasized.

Discussion

Working in a diverse team can be a challenge for individuals as one has to deal with a complex interplay between one’s own and other team members’ demographic backgrounds and at the same time bring the team’s goals in concordance to operate as a unified entity. Not surprisingly, positive benefits associated with diversity may be overshadowed by lack of cohesion and subgroup forming due to clashing of different identities within the team. The present study aimed to examine how different patterns of identity associated with working in a diverse work group determine well-being in the team.
From a social identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), negative outcomes of diversity are particularly likely to occur when group members adopt a subgroup identity, in which they contrast themselves with members of other subgroups. The current study supports this notion: the salience of a subgroup identity was associated with lower levels of well-being in diverse work teams compared to salience of a team identity. Levels of satisfaction appeared to be highest when work group members were primed with a strong team identity. These positive outcomes of team identification on well-being are consistent with earlier work showing positives outcomes of identification (Doosje et al., 1995; Ellemers et al., 1997; Haslam, 2001; Karawasa, 1991; Kelly, 1989; Spears, Doosje & Ellemers, 1997) and group cohesion (Christian, Porter, & Moffitt, 2006) on affective and relational group outcomes.

In addition, we found support that a relational identity orientation was in general associated with higher well-being in the team. This was particularly the case when the emphasis was on identities based on subgroup membership. Apparently, under this condition, high trait relationally oriented individuals are able to preserve well-being within the team as opposed to low trait relationally oriented individuals. As high trait relationally individuals in the subgroup condition reported equal levels of satisfaction compared to individuals in the team identity condition, a relational identity orientation seems to function as a buffer against negative outcomes in diverse work groups that are characterized by strong boundaries between subgroups. These results are consistent with theoretical notions that relationally oriented individuals have a lower tendency to contrast themselves with members of other subgroups, which in turn weaken potential conflicts associated with ingroup-outgroup distinctions (e.g. Brickson, 2000). In addition, these finding are in line with earlier studies that show that a relational identity orientation can have positive outcomes for diverse workgroups in terms of more positive attitudes (Brickson & Brewer, 2001) and prosocial tendencies (Vos & Van der Zee, 2009) towards team members from a different background. In a broader perspective, the results of this study suggest that relatively stable individual differences provide a resource for managing with the downsides of diversity, which are consistent with earlier findings showing traits such as openmindedness (Van der Zee, Van Oudenhoven & De Grijis, 2004) social initiative (Van der Zee & Van der Gang, 2007) and emotional stability (Luijters et al., 2006; Van der Zee, Atsma & Brodbeck, 2004) to be associated with positive outcomes in diverse work groups.

The present data argue against the idea of a dual identity as a solution to diversity related problems in work groups. Contrary to what we expected, individuals reported lower levels of satisfaction in the dual identity condition compared to the team identity condition.
Although this result may seem counterintuitive at first glance, some recent research has reported similar patterns of outcomes with regard to dual identity interventions (e.g. Stone & Crisp, 2007; Crisp, Stone & Hall, 2006). These authors have questioned whether intergroup bias and conflict can be reduced by a dual identity in every intergroup context. When individuals feel strongly connected to their own subgroup, creating a common ingroup identity based on the superordinate category may not lead to beneficial outcomes, as individual’s subgroup membership is a valued identity and the merging of ingroup and out-group representations is perceived as threatening to their sense of group distinctiveness. Crisp et al. (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. Applied to the present study this means that under conditions of a strong subgroup identity, promoting a strong superordinate identity may not work because work group members strongly valued their just induced subgroup identity and were reluctant to adopt a team identity as it threatened their sense of distinctiveness. Support for this argument can be derived from the lower reported identification with the team for individuals primed with a dual identity. The perception of threat to subgroup distinctiveness may also explain why we failed to find support for effects of the relational identity orientation in the dual identity condition.

It is interesting to note that subgroup identity was made salient prior to the induction of a team identity. The question is whether effects of a dual identity on well-being would yield different outcomes when a team identity is induced prior to a subgroup identity. Individuals who create a subgroup in an already established larger collective may feel less threatened in their distinction needs, and thus may be more satisfied with the collective, than individuals who have to integrate an established subgroup into a larger collective. This line of reasoning may reflect the idea of several (theoretical) contributions aimed at solving problems associated with an increasing diverse workforce. These solutions revolve around creating opportunities for diversity in the existing collective work units – i.e. “in our organization/department/team there is room for differences between individuals” (cf. ‘value in diversity hypothesis’; Harquail and Cox, 1993; Van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003).

The present study focused on gender diversity. Although gender is regarded as a social categorization dimension in the same line as for example ethnicity or age (see Millikin & Martins, 1996; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998), one could argue that the dynamics between male and female members of a diverse work group are fundamentally different compared to members of age and ethnic diverse workgroups. From an evolutionary perspective, men and
Patterns of social identification in diverse work groups 77

women share an implicit mutual dependency which may influence the way they interact with each other in a different way than, for example, Dutch and Turkish work group members will interact. Moreover, perceptions and experiences in diverse workgroups based on gender may vary across the sexes (see Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992; Wharton & Baron, 1989). Experiences in diverse work groups may be more favorable for females, as women are more attuned towards affiliation and harmony than men (e.g., Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001; Feingold, 1994; Hofstede, 1984) and tend to have more positive perceptions of others (Winquist, Mohr, & Kenny, 1998). However, additional analyses on the data revealed no significant differences between men and women with regard to well-being. Thus, support for differential experiences and perceptions of the gender diverse context for both sexes was not found. In addition, previous research has shown that effects for gender diversity on social integration outcomes do not differ compared to other social category dimensions, such as ethnicity and age (for an overview, see Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Nevertheless, it may be interesting to attempt to extend the findings presented in this study to other diversity dimensions.

Reports of experimental research tend to elicit questions whether results can be generalized to a real life context. On the one hand, the task chosen in the current experiment reflected problems dealt with by temporary teams in a work context (Thompson & Coover, 2003) and participants seemed engaged during the process of fulfilling the task, thus supporting sufficient psychological realism (e.g. Berkowitz & Donnerstein, 1982). However, confidence in the conclusions reported here may be strengthened when the current results were replicated in a study of teams in actual organizations.

The findings reported in this study have important implications for practical notions on how to improve positive affective outcomes in a diverse work context. The outcomes of this study suggest that potential negative outcomes of diversity could be managed by changing the context as well as looking at individual differences when dealing with diversity. In line with earlier suggestions how to deal effectively with diversity (e.g. Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), creating a superordinate team identity may decrease inter-subgroup tensions within the team because norms and goals will be aligned at a higher team unit level. Interventions in an organizational context which emphasize the promotion of superordinate identities include team building sessions in which shared norms and goals are promoted rather than differences between team members. However, when subgroup identities are highly salient in the workgroup, creating a superordinate team identity may probably be less effective as the promotion of the team identity possess a threat to the self. In
addition, there is some evidence that a strong focus on team identities may increase affective outcomes but may at the same time hinder team performance in diverse work groups (e.g. Van der Zee et al., 2008). Therefore, in these cases, potential negative effects of diversity may be reduced by shifting the focus from identities stemming from (sub)group memberships to identities based on interpersonal connections with other individuals in the work group. The results of this study indeed suggest that high relationally oriented individuals are able to work more adequately in a diverse work team. The assessment of an individual’s relational identity orientation may thus be useful in the context of recruitment and selection of employees who are required to operate in a diverse work context. From a more contextual perspective, organizations could attempt to create conditions under which relational identities are formed. This can, for example, be achieved by emphasizing on dyadic task structures, in which employees have different and interdependent roles, and rewarding dyadic performance, such as mentoring of others (see also Brickson, 2000). Under such circumstances, the situation is framed in terms of mutual relations rather than in terms of group memberships, which makes team members more accountable for each other, and reduces depersonalization of others.

To conclude, the present research attempted to compare different patterns of identification in diverse work groups and its effect on well-being. We showed that lower well-being in diverse work groups may be facilitated by creating a super ordinate team identity. Satisfaction with the team can also be preserved when individuals are relationally oriented, even when team members had a strong focus on their own subgroup. Future studies may try to replicate the present results among in a real organization setting among employees and including diversity variables other than gender (e.g., ethnic background, age, or professional background). The results of this study imply that in order to profit from diversity and cope with its problematic sides, organizations may work on a shared team identity and emphasize a workforce consisting of individuals who use a relational identity orientation frame.