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# Dealing with diversity in workgroups: Preventing problems and promoting potential

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## Abstract

Diversity is a popular topic among academics and practitioners alike. It is also a topic that is surrounded with controversies and passionate opinions. This makes understanding the ambiguous consequences of diversity a highly interesting and puzzling endeavor. To facilitate understanding of diversity's effects in workgroups, I present an overview of the state-of-the-art in diversity research and discuss the potential problems and benefits that are associated with group diversity. Moreover, I discuss how research on diversity interventions uses this problems versus potential approach to distinguish moderators of diversity's effects. Based on this overview, I argue that similar to the importance of contingencies for predicting diversity's effects, contingencies also play a crucial role in predicting the effectiveness of diversity interventions. As such, the current overview stresses the lack of main effects of both diversity and diversity interventions. Finally, I discuss recent work illustrating these contingencies and conclude that positive diversity mindsets—favorable mental representations of group diversity—are a necessary prerequisite to prevent problems and promote potential of group diversity.

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Globalization, immigration, and other demographic changes in society and the workforce have put diversity at the forefront of the research agenda and stimulated organizational and governmental quests for effective diversity interventions and policies (e.g., Craig, Rucker, & Richeson, 2018; Ferdman, 2017; Mathieu, Hollenbeck, Van Knippenberg, & Ilgen, 2017). In this paper, I review the current state-of-the-art of workgroup diversity research. Workgroup diversity can be defined as the existence and/or perception of any difference between individuals within groups (Van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004). Successful management of workgroup diversity is a complicated challenge. Based on the idea that workgroup diversity can hinder as well as help workgroup functioning (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004), numerous moderators of workgroup diversity effects have been examined (Guillaume, Dawson, Otaye-Ebede, Woods, & West, 2017), which provide opportunities for the development of diversity interventions—planned actions or events intended to help organizations deal effectively with (group) diversity, such as diversity training (e.g., Avery & McKay, 2010; DiversityInc, 2014; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Dobbin, Kalev, & Kelly, 2007; Ely, 2004; Roberson, Kulik, & Tan, 2012).

Here, I limit myself to a focus on diversity's effects on organizational workgroups, which have a shared goal, are characterized by high interdependence, and work on tasks that require problem solving, creativity, and shared decision making. Given this focus, the current overview does not directly speak to perceptions of justice and equality and intergroup status issues that are also associated with diversity management (e.g., Bunderson & Van der Vegt, 2018; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Janssens & Steyaert, in press; Leslie, in press; Nishii, Khattab, Shemla, & Paluch, 2018; Thomas, 1990; Yang & Konrad, 2011).

To understand the possible effectiveness of diversity interventions for workgroups, I first discuss possible negative and positive consequences of diversity (i.e., its problems and potential) in workgroups. Next, I discuss research on moderators of diversity effects, how these feed into possible interventions, and conditions under which these interventions are more or less effective. A comprehensive discussion of all possible moderators studied in previous work is beyond the scope of this article (for such an overview see Guillaume et al., 2017). Instead, I use the processes underlying diversity's effects to provide theoretically based examples of moderators that can be extrapolated to a greater variety of possible interventions. Based on this overview, one emerging conclusion is that diversity mindsets play a crucial role in effectively dealing with workgroup diversity as well as in the development of effective workgroup diversity interventions.

## 2 | GROUP DIVERSITY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

Workgroup diversity can range from visible demographics (e.g., gender, cultural background, ethnicity, and age) to more invisible traits, skills, and attitudes (e.g., personality, educational background, and political preference; Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). One clear conclusion that can be drawn from previous research is that specific types of diversity are not reliably positively or negatively associated with affective and behavioral outcomes such as commitment, satisfaction, conflict, and performance (e.g., Van Dijk, Van Engen, & Van Knippenberg, 2012; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). That is, all types of differences can in principle have negative as well as positive effects in groups. These potential negative and positive effects have been integrated in the Categorization–Elaboration Model (CEM; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004), which elucidates how and when diversity instigates *categorization* processes or stimulates the exchange and processing of divergent perspectives and ideas (i.e., information *elaboration*).

The problems associated with diversity can be explained by categorization processes (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). People categorize themselves and others into easily accessible categories based on similarities and differences (Turner et al., 1987), and they prefer those in their ingroup (those who are like them) to those in their outgroup (those who are not like them; i.e., similarity-attraction; Byrne, 1971).

Within diverse groups, these categorization processes can result in the formation of subgroups based on these differences (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For instance, subgroups can develop based on gender (men vs. women), educational background (economists vs. psychologists vs. sociologists), or political preferences (Democrats vs. Republicans). The existence of such subgroups can instigate intergroup bias, a systematic tendency to evaluate one's ingroup (or its members) more favorably than an outgroup (or its members; Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002). Intergroup bias is often characterized by distrust and conflicts (Brewer, 1979), which can stand in the way of effective collaboration in the overarching group (Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004).

The potential in diversity can be explained by the information/decision-making perspective (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Diverse groups possess a greater pool of information, perspectives, and ideas than groups in which everyone is similar (Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991; Phillips, Duguid, Thomas-Hunt, & Upama, 2012; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). If workgroups are able to effectively exchange, process, and integrate this information, they can perform better than more homogeneous groups (Hinsz, Tindale, & Vollrath, 1997; Homan, Van Knippenberg, Van Kleef, & De Dreu, 2007a; Homan et al., 2008; Kearney & Gebert, 2009; Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2009). Indeed, workgroup diversity has been found to be positively associated with creativity, problem-solving, and decision making (e.g., Dahlin, Weingart, & Hinds, 2005; Galinsky et al., 2015).

Diversity's problems thus arise from subgroup categorization, whereas its potential is explained by information elaboration. These processes are not necessarily mutually exclusive (although they are negatively correlated), but one of the two processes is likely to be dominant at a given point in time (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). That is, groups that are characterized by interpersonal conflicts and distrust are less likely to experience effective information elaboration, and, conversely, groups that are characterized by group-level information elaboration are less likely to experience distrust and interpersonal conflicts. These ideas underline the puzzle surrounding group diversity, and set the stage for a focus on moderating variables that can explain when diversity is more likely to stimulate negative or positive intragroup processes and outcomes. A quest for such moderators has been motivated by CEM (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004), and insights and research on such moderators (often examined in experimental studies employing manipulations of the variable of interest) provide useful input for diversity interventions in workgroups.

### 3 | DIVERSITY: MANAGING ITS PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

In this section, I provide a brief overview of moderators of diversity's effects, organized according to the two processes that workgroup diversity can instigate, and connect them to the most proximal outcomes. In understanding the contingencies of effective diversity management, it is important to define what one is trying to manage. When examining the effects of diversity on groups, performance is often a core behavioral outcome variable, but more affective outcomes such as satisfaction, identification, conflict, and well-being have been a focus of research as well (Guillaume et al., 2017). Research on affective outcomes of diversity tends to zoom in on factors that may increase or decrease cohesion and liking within diverse groups (i.e., influencing subgroup categorization and concomitant intergroup bias). In contrast, research focusing on performance outcomes tends to consider factors that make group members more or less able or willing to use each other's diverse perspective and ideas. As such, research on moderators has focused mostly either on preventing problems or promoting potential.

#### 3.1 | Preventing diversity's problems

Managing the possible negative processes associated with diversity requires the limitation of subgroup formation and/or avoiding the negative consequences of such categorization by avoiding intergroup bias. Using a social categorization approach (e.g., social identity theory and self-categorization theory; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987), it has been argued that factors that de-emphasize or bridge subgroup identities can stimulate liking, cohesiveness, and belongingness in diverse groups (e.g., Mohammed & Angell, 2004). Previous research has shown that the

possible negative processes associated with diversity can be mitigated by moderators like group composition, re-categorization (in favor of an overarching identity), inclusion, and individual characteristics, which I will elaborate upon below.

First, on the group level, a compositional design approach to diversity has shown that the way in which diversity characteristics within groups are distributed or accentuated matters in predicting diversity's effects. For instance, when diversity characteristics are aligned within workgroups (e.g., because all men in the workgroup are from Japan and all women are from Canada), forming so-called diversity faultlines (Lau & Murnighan, 1998, 2005), subgroups become very salient, and workgroups are more likely to experience diversity's problems. However, when diversity characteristics cross-cut each other (e.g., because the group consists of a mix of Japanese and Canadian men and women), the group is less likely to split up in obvious, salient subgroups, resulting in less conflict and more trust between the team members (Homan, Van Knippenberg, Van Kleef, & De Dreu, 2007b; Sawyer, Houlette, & Yeagley, 2006; Toosi, Sommers, & Ambady, 2012). Similarly, a focus on the overarching group (e.g., a superordinate identity), for instance, by installing a group-based reward system or by increasing interdependence, can bring subgroups within workgroups together and stimulate social integration (Gaertner et al., 1999; Hobman & Bordia, 2006; Rico, Molleman, Sánchez-Manzanares, & Van der Vegt, 2007).

Second, organizational climates, leaders, and practices can structurally improve feelings of inclusion by showing acceptance of all employees and their contributions. Inclusion can be stimulated by, for instance, inclusive mentoring programs, network support groups, diversity training programs, positive and equivalent intergroup contact, stimulating employee involvement, and providing open access to information (Bezrukova, Jehn, & Spell, 2012; Bezrukova, Spell, Perry, & Jehn, 2016; Dobbin et al., 2007; Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Mor Barak et al., 1998; Pelled et al., 1999; Roberson, 2006). Inclusion is proposed to stimulate both feelings of belongingness and uniqueness and as such make individual members feel more secure in, committed to, and satisfied with their workgroup (Brewer, 2007; Mor Barak, 2005; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Nishii, 2013; Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2009), which in turn might result in better group-level outcomes (Boehm, Kunze, & Bruch, 2014).

Third, individual-level variables aggregated to the group-level like openness to experience (a personality trait reflecting curiosity and open-mindedness; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Flynn, 2005) or emotional intelligence (the ability to understand, recognize, and manage one's own and others' emotions; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) can also be useful in limiting subgroup formation and intergroup bias. Openness to experience makes people more open toward and more understanding of diverse others, limiting their motivation to use subgroup categorization (e.g., Homan, Greer, Jehn, & Koning, 2010). Emotional intelligence can limit or counter possible negative responses to interactions with members of other categories by effectively addressing potentially negative affective responses to workgroup diversity (Wang, 2015). As these traits can vary and be developed (e.g., Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019), selection or training of group members could help to mitigate diversity's problems.

### 3.2 | Promoting diversity's potential

Promoting diversity's potential by stimulating information exchange and processing requires that group members have a need and ability to engage in such information elaboration. Based on the idea of groups as information processors (De Dreu, Nijstad, & Van Knippenberg, 2008; Hinsz et al., 1997), it has been argued that a variety of factors at the group and the individual level such as task type, shared task understanding, and individual traits can stimulate elaboration of task-relevant information.

First, the group's task should be conducive to information elaboration. Tasks that require more interdependence and are more complex have been found to stimulate information elaboration and performance in diverse workgroups (e.g., Bowers, Pharmer, & Salas, 2000; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Van der Vegt & Janssen, 2003), because workgroup members are more dependent upon each other to do well on the task. Similarly, making groups more accountable for their task progress can inspire information elaboration by increasing the workgroup's epistemic motivation (i.e., the willingness to spend effort to develop a thorough, deep, and rich understanding of a situation; De

Dreu et al., 2008). Such motivation is related to the discussion of unshared information and the careful processing of task-relevant material (e.g., Scholten, Van Knippenberg, Nijstad, & De Dreu, 2007).

Second, groups that are willing and able to develop a greater shared understanding of the task at hand are better able to effectively exchange and process task-relevant information (Van Ginkel & Van Knippenberg, 2008). This shared task understanding can be facilitated by stimulating a collective understanding of who knows what within the group (i.e., transactive memory system; Heavey & Simsek, 2017) or by stressing shared group goals (e.g., Van Knippenberg, Dawson, West, & Homan, 2011). Additionally, groups obtain a greater task understanding by reflecting upon and modifying their functioning (i.e., team reflexivity; Schippers, Den Hartog, Koopman, & Wienk, 2003; Van Ginkel, Tindale, & Van Knippenberg, 2009), and by building an open and trusting climate for debate and conflict (e.g., Mitchell, Nicholas, & Boyle, 2009; Olson, Parayitam, & Bao, 2007; Simons, Pelled, & Smith, 1999; Valls, González-Romá, & Tomás, 2016).

Finally, individual members also bring traits and skills to the group that may stimulate information elaboration. For instance, diverse groups that are composed of members with a higher tendency to engage in and enjoy thinking (i.e., epistemic motivation) are more likely to experience information elaboration (Kearney, Gebert, & Voelpel, 2009). Similar effects have been found for openness to experience (Homan et al., 2008) and perspective taking (Galinsky et al., 2015; Hoever, Van Knippenberg, Van Ginkel, & Barkema, 2012), because both stimulate the likelihood that group members listen and accept each other's divergent viewpoints and ideas. Training group members in perspective taking, promoting multicultural experiences, or selecting group members who score high on such traits may thus stimulate diversity's potential.

### 3.3 | Simultaneously preventing problems and promoting potential

Even though previous research has often focused on either preventing problems or promoting potential of diversity, the integration between these two strategies seems a fruitful approach to dealing with diversity. However, few studies have examined moderating factors that simultaneously stimulate information elaboration and positive intragroup relational processes. One exception is a study by Kearney and Gebert (2009), which illustrated that transformational leaders both improve collective identification by showing consideration and stressing a superordinate identity as well as stimulate information elaboration by intellectually stimulating their followers and creating clear shared task goals. Additionally, there is some suggestive evidence that leader emotional intelligence can stimulate both cohesion and information elaboration in diverse groups (Homan, Van Kleef, & Côté, 2018), because leaders high on emotional intelligence stimulate both positive interpersonal relationships and constructive task-related conflicts (cf. De Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012; Wilderom, Hur, Wiersma, Berg, & Lee, 2015). In sum, even though there is some evidence for moderators that influence both intergroup bias and information elaboration at the same time, the empirical evidence is limited and additional research is warranted.

## 4 | BUILDING EFFECTIVE DIVERSITY INTERVENTIONS: THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF WORKGROUP DIVERSITY MINDSETS

Even though these previously examined moderators should provide clear guidelines for the development of effective organizational workgroup diversity interventions, this endeavor seems far from straightforward. Given the two relatively separate approaches to workgroup diversity management, one might wonder which moderators and interventions are effective at both preventing problems and promoting potential. In this respect, it is important to note that even if diversity interventions are effective in bringing group members of diverse backgrounds closer together, they might also limit the possibility to make use of the potential in diversity. That is, even if group members experience positive intragroup relations, this does not imply that they will make effective use of their differences. For instance, interventions focusing on creating a superordinate identity have as potential downside

that the usefulness of diversity is leveled out as well, because groups that focus too much on the superordinate identity might not perceive useful differences anymore (e.g., Homan et al., 2008) and may be more likely to experience conformity pressures (De Dreu et al., 2008; Janis, 1982). Similarly, leaders who are very effective in crafting an attractive vision that can bring group members together might hamper effective communication in diverse groups when such leaders stress rather than obfuscate subgroup formation in their visionary communiqués (Greer, Homan, De Hoogh, & Den Hartog, 2012).

Where does this leave the field of workgroup diversity's effects and its interventions? Based on current insights, I propose that diversity mindsets are a crucial factor in understanding effects of diversity and the effectiveness of diversity interventions. Suggestive evidence for this conclusion is provided by the fact that openness to experience (i.e., essentially, a mindset open to different ideas and experiences) stimulated both positive intragroup processes and information elaboration. Additionally, recent research suggests that the interaction between diversity and diversity interventions is contingent upon diversity mindsets.

Van Knippenberg, Van Ginkel, and Homan (2013) define diversity mindsets as “mental representations of team diversity” (p. 183). Diversity mindsets capture knowledge of a group's diversity, how group diversity might affect group processes and performance, and how one should handle this diversity. Inherently, this construct assumes an open mind to the potential informational benefits of diversity (i.e., positive diversity beliefs) as well as the necessary skills and behaviors needed to deal with diversity. Diversity mindsets can help workgroups to prevent diversity's problems and stimulate diversity's potential by setting into motion an active pursuit of the synergetic benefits of diversity. Workgroups with positive diversity mindsets have a shared understanding of how their diverse informational resources can be used and integrated to aid task execution (Van Knippenberg et al., 2013). This understanding is not only conducive to information elaboration, it is also likely to limit intergroup bias as a workgroup that is aware of diversity's potential is less likely to experience distrust and miscommunication between different subgroups. It is important to note that although all types of diversity can instigate intergroup bias and information elaboration in workgroups, diversity mindsets can be type-specific (that is, being aware of educational differences and how these can be conducive to outcomes does not automatically imply that a workgroup knows how to make use of their nationality differences). However, not much is known yet about the degree of specificity of diversity mindsets, so future research should aim to further our understanding on whether diversity mindsets may be more or less specific to certain types of diversity.

For the present argument, I will first discuss a broad set of factors—individual traits and characteristics like openness to experience, cultural intelligence, and multicultural experiences, workgroup diversity beliefs, and organizational diversity ideologies—that will be linked to the development of such diversity mindsets. Second, I will explain how previous research illustrates how these factors (and the associated diversity mindsets) constitute an important contingency for reaping the potential in diversity and, when research is available, the effectiveness of diversity interventions.

People differ in the degree to which they have traits and beliefs that are associated with a greater knowledge about diversity and better skills in dealing with diversity (i.e., a positive diversity mindset). In this area, openness to experience has received significant research attention (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006). As explained above, openness to experience has been found to make people perceive diversity in groups as the existence of unique individuals rather than as subgroups (Homan et al., 2010). Additionally, workgroups have been found to make better use of their differences when they have higher mean levels of openness to experience (Homan et al., 2008). Similarly, research on the closely related (more proximal) construct of diversity beliefs has shown that diversity is related to greater identification, information elaboration, and performance when beliefs about diversity are positive rather than negative (e.g., Ely & Thomas, 2001; Hentschel, Shemla, Wegge, & Kearney, 2013; Hobman, Bordia, & Gallois, 2004; Homan et al., 2007a; Nakui, Paulus, & Van der Zee, 2011; Van Dick, Van Knippenberg, Hägele, Guillaume, & Brodbeck, 2008; Van Knippenberg, Haslam, & Platow, 2007).

Moreover, openness has been found to determine the effectiveness of diversity interventions. In a study focusing on reward structure as a means of limiting subgroup formation (i.e., by crossing rather than aligning existing gender



subgroups), it was found that openness to experience stimulated the further use of differences (Homan et al., 2008). In other words, the intervention to limit subgroup formation was only conducive to increased performance when the group members had a positive rather than negative outlook on diversity. In a study by Meyer and Schermuly (2012), the positive effect of task motivation (which is supposed to increase the motivation to elaborate task-relevant information) was only present when groups had positive rather than negative diversity beliefs. Interestingly, however, in a study on diversity training effectiveness, diversity training only stimulated performance of diverse groups when their pre-training diversity mindset was relatively *negative* rather than positive (Homan, Buengeler, Eckhoff, Van Ginkel, & Voelpel, 2015). I return to this seemingly inconsistent finding below.

Second, another individual characteristic associated with diversity mindsets, cultural intelligence—the awareness of cultural differences and the ability to take these into consideration when making judgments about people or situations (Ang et al., 2007; Triandis, 2006)—has also been found to moderate the effects of diversity and the influence of diversity-related interventions. Cultural intelligence entails cognitive, motivational, and behavioral capabilities that stimulate understanding of diversity, attention, and energy toward learning about diversity and from diverse others, and appropriate behavioral responses when interacting with diverse others (Ang et al., 2007), which are all ingredients of diversity mindsets. Research has illustrated that diverse groups develop more shared values and trust when they are more culturally intelligent (Adair, Hideg, & Spence, 2013; Rockstuhl & Ng, 2008). Likewise, culturally intelligent leaders have been found to be able to stimulate the performance of diverse groups (Groves & Feyerherm, 2011).

Even though research on the moderating influence of cultural intelligence on the effectiveness of diversity initiatives is limited, one study showed that culturally intelligent leaders determine the effectiveness of task interdependence, a factor stimulating information elaboration in diverse groups, such that diversity is only conducive to performance in highly interdependent groups if the leader scores relatively high rather than low on cultural intelligence (Rosenauer, Homan, Horstmeier, & Voelpel, 2016).

Third, organizations can also instigate positive diversity mindsets by stimulating a value-in-diversity climate within the organization (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Organizations might launch a variety of initiatives that stress the value in diversity (Kossek & Zonia, 1993). In this paper, I specifically refer to those initiatives that emphasize the potential in diversity (e.g., Dwertmann, Nishii, & Van Knippenberg, 2016; Groggins & Ryan, 2013; Van Knippenberg et al., 2013) rather than diversity ideologies capturing perceptions of different groups (e.g., colorblindness and multiculturalism; Apfelbaum, Stephens, & Reagans, 2016; Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009; Rattan & Ambady, 2013) or climates focused on fairness, equality, or discrimination (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Workgroup diversity mindsets are stimulated by such value-in-diversity climates because these climates stress that diverse members learn from each other and develop within each other a range of cultural competencies (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Empirical research on the moderating role of diversity climates has been limited to the relationship between workgroup diversity and workgroup functioning. In this respect, value-in-diversity climates have been found to positively influence the effect of diversity on a variety of outcomes such as effective knowledge exchange, commitment and identification with the group and organization, and performance and customer satisfaction (Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009; Hajro, Gibson, & Pudenko, 2017; Hofhuis, Van der Zee, & Otten, 2012; McKay, Avery, Liao, & Morris, 2011). Up-to-date, there is no empirical evidence that value-in-diversity climates also moderate the effectiveness of other diversity initiatives, but given their association with effective approaches to diversity, it is likely that the implementation of diversity initiatives will be more effective in organizations with a stronger value-in-diversity climate (cf. Nishii et al., 2018).

Finally, multicultural experiences influence diversity mindsets, because such experiences afford opportunities to develop higher cognitive complexity as well as the ability to recognize and integrate alternative viewpoints from other cultures (Benet-Martinez, Lee, & Leu, 2006; Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). Even though only one published paper directly connects workgroup diversity and multicultural experiences (Tadmor, Satterstrom, Jang, & Polzer, 2012), there is quite some circumstantial evidence that extensive contact with and exposure to foreign cultures is useful in developing diversity mindsets. First, multicultural experiences reduce subgroup categorization by lowering need

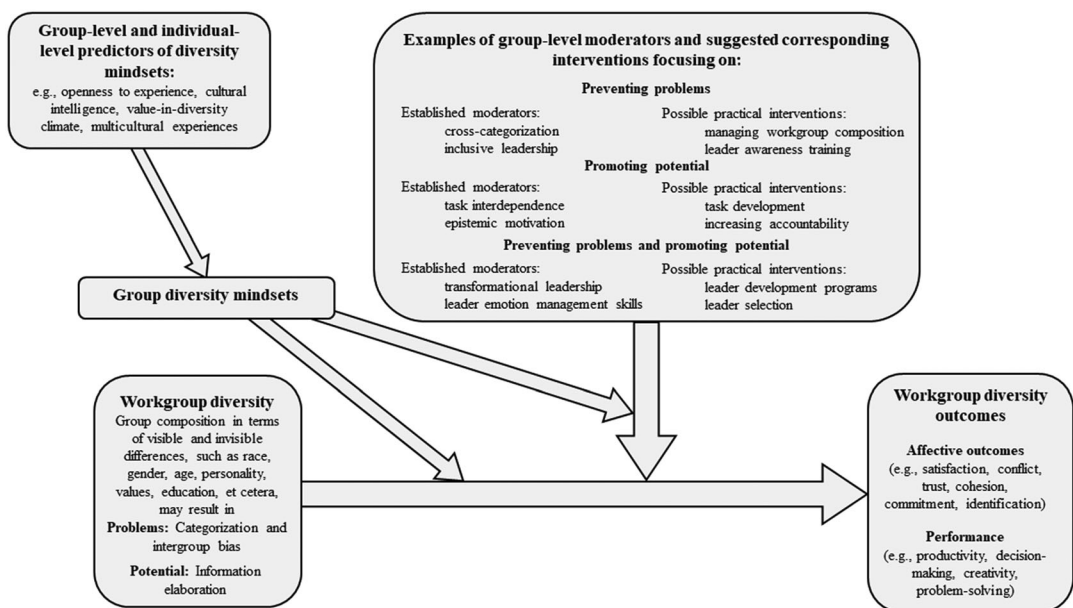


for cognitive closure (Tadmor, Hong, Chao, Wiruchnipawan, & Wang, 2012). Being exposed to different cultures is associated with exposure to a greater variety of information, behaviors, norms, and values, which may be inconsistent with those of one's ingroup. These experiences are likely to move people's static perceptions and categorizations about "others" to more fluent and dynamic perceptions. As a result, intergroup biases are reduced as people make less use of their automatic categorizations. Second, it has been found that multicultural experiences make people more open to a variety of viewpoints and ideas (Leung & Chiu, 2010) as well as more cognitively flexible (Benet-Martinez et al., 2006), which in turn stimulates their use and integration of different ideas (Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008). Linking this to workgroup diversity effects, Tadmor, Satterstrom et al. (2012) showed that higher levels of multicultural experiences made culturally diverse dyads more creative.

Practically, many of the traits and skills associated with diversity mindsets could be developed in group members, managers, and organizations. For instance, one could send employees abroad for longer periods of time or hire employees who have had multicultural experiences, provide cultural intelligence training (e.g., Rehg, Gundlach, & Grigorian, 2012), and actively develop value-in-diversity climates within the organization.

These recent insights converge to support the emerging conclusion that even though a great variety of moderators could potentially provide useful starting points for workgroup diversity management, diversity mindsets are crucial elements to incorporate in research models as well as diversity interventions. These ideas are visualized in Figure 1. An interesting conclusion is that the influence of moderators that impinge on intergroup bias (e.g., awareness training) or information elaboration (e.g., task type, task interdependence) is contingent upon the diversity mindsets of the members of a group or organization (e.g., Gebert, Buengeler, & Heinitz, 2017; Sanchez & Medkik, 2004). If positive diversity mindsets exist, interventions based on such moderators have a greater likelihood of success.

One notable exception applies to interventions aimed at building such diversity mindsets in employees. In the study on diversity training by Homan et al. (2008) mentioned above, it became evident that groups of which members had favorable diversity beliefs before the training did not benefit from diversity training, whereas diversity training had positive effects for those groups with relatively negative diversity beliefs (provided that the group was diverse). This implies that depending on the type of intervention that is intended (e.g., building cohesive teams,



**FIGURE 1** A schematic overview of how the effects of workgroup diversity and diversity moderators on workgroup outcomes are contingent upon diversity mindsets

promoting information elaboration, or developing diversity mindsets), existing diversity mindsets might play a slightly different role.

## 5 | CONCLUSIONS

Diversity is a hot topic, not only in society and organizations, but also in academic research. Based on the current overview, two important overarching conclusions can be drawn about the effects of group diversity and diversity interventions. First, a simple focus on main effects ignores the complexities associated with diversity. Already in 1996, Milliken and Martins dubbed diversity a “double-edged sword” because of its potential to both help and hurt group functioning. Initially, researchers believed that diversity outcomes depended on the type of diversity present within the group, with more visible (e.g., demographic) differences presumably being associated with diversity's problems and more invisible (e.g., informational) differences being associated with diversity's potential. However, meta-analytical evidence shows that inconsistent outcomes cannot be explained by types of diversity, and that all types of diversity can help or hurt group functioning (Van Dijk et al., 2012). The main-effects approach has therefore been replaced by a moderators-of-diversity-effects approach inspired by CEM (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004).

Even though most researchers have built on CEM when examining moderators, the investigated variables are quite scattered and not well integrated into an overarching framework. In this respect, it is interesting to note that Guillaume et al. (2017) in their review report almost 40 possible moderating variables in six overarching categories. This unstructured approach to diversity moderators is also evident in the lack of research testing both paths in one model. The great majority of articles focused on either categorization-related mediators or on elaboration-related mediators. It would be advisable to measure and report both processes in future research so as to inform a more complete understanding of interventions that may prevent intergroup bias as well as stimulate information elaboration. Given the dispersion of the field and the lack of clear theorizing, it seems difficult to determine what the core theoretical characteristics of an effective diversity intervention are and what type of intervention is effective under which circumstances and for what type of outcomes (cf. Moss-Racusin et al., 2014).

Additionally, the current paper fits in the elaborate research stream trying to explain the effects of heterogeneity in workgroups. However, it has been argued that understanding the unique effects of homogeneity is also an important research endeavor (Apfelbaum, Phillips, & Richeson, 2014). Examining how diversity interventions and diversity mindsets influence the interactions and outcomes of homogeneous workgroups might provide a broader understanding of working with dissimilar as well as similar others.

Second, diversity mindsets emerge as a key moderator of the effects of diversity as well as the effects of diversity interventions. The mental representation of diversity held by group members, group leaders, and organizations determines the degree to which the potential in diversity can be obtained. Importantly, recent research shows that the effectiveness of diversity interventions also depends on diversity mindsets, which illustrates the double complexity of diversity management. As such, both research and practice need to take these diversity mindsets into account when trying to predict and understand diversity effects and the effectiveness of diversity interventions. Future research could also illuminate under which level of diversity mindsets, diversity interventions might be more or less useful. That is, interventions that focus on the development of positive beliefs about and skills to work with diversity (i.e., diversity mindsets) are likely to be more effective in groups and organizations whose members start out with more negative views about diversity and/or lack the skills needed to deal with diversity. Conversely, favorable diversity mindsets are a pre-condition for interventions focused on stimulating information elaboration and/or counteracting intergroup bias, as diversity mindsets can set the stage for group members to reach the potential in diversity and overcome its problems.

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