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Experiencing Diversity, Conflict and Emotions in Teams

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Garcia-Prieto, Patricia; Bellard, Erwan; Schneider, Susan Carol

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Patricia Garcia-Prieto[*], Erwan Bellard and Susan C. Schneider
University of Geneva, Switzerland

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[*] Address correspondence to Patricia Garcia-Prieto, HEC - Management Studies, 40 Blvd Pont d'Arve, 1211, Geneva 4, Switzerland. Email: Patricia.GarciaPrieto@hec.unige.ch

EXPERIENCING

DIVERSITY, CONFLICT AND EMOTIONS IN TEAMS

Diversity in teams has been previously defined in terms of the nominal categories into which team members "fall". The core argument of this paper is that diversity is a subjective experience of social categories to which members "feel" they belong. These categories, or social identities, may become more or less salient in different contexts and at different times. We propose a model of diversity in teams that explains under what conditions these social identities become salient and how these social identities may influence appraisals of issues and events. These appraisals, in turn, can influence conflict and emotion. This dynamic view of diversity provides us with a better understanding of the "black box" -- the cognitive and affective processes that may help to explain behavior and subsequently team performance.

Key words: diversity, conflict, emotions

INTRODUCTION

Diversity in work team composition presents a paradox. On the one hand, diversity of team members' perspectives promises higher quality decisions, greater creativity and more innovation, on the other, it also leads to a greater probability of tensions and conflicts (Cox, 1993; Jackson & Ruderman, 1995; Jackson, May & Whitney, 1995). Not surprisingly, research linking diversity to team performance offers contradictory results (see Milliken & Martins, 1996 for a review). How can we explain this paradox?

Perhaps, in part, this "diversity paradox" can be explained by how diversity is defined. One of the major difficulties in empirically assessing the impact of diversity on team performance is that the definitions of diversity are too broad and varied, ranging from discrete categories such as age and sex to the more general attitudes and preferences (Nkomo & Cox, 1995). However, diversity of team composition alone is not the key to performance. Performance would seem to depend more on the way in which diversity influences team processes and in how these processes are managed (Knight, Pearce, Smith, Olian, Sims, Smith & Flood, 1999).

In this paper we review some of the current approaches to this paradox and their underlying epistemological assumptions. Traditionally, diversity in teams has been conceptualized in terms of categories into which team members objectively fall, and researchers have demonstrated the impact on these categories on team processes such as conflict. Several authors (e.g., Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Randel, 2002; Thatcher, 2000) have criticized this definition of diversity and have emphasized the need to take into account the subjective experience of diversity. Building on these criticisms, we propose a theoretical model that examines *individual* experiences of diversity, conflicts and emotions in teams. In this dynamic model we outline individual level psychological processes that may help explain how team members' subjective experience of diversity

influences their cognitive appraisals of events and issues, and in turn, their experience of conflicts and emotions. By better understanding how the salience of different identities may influence the appraisal of issues and events and thus conflict and emotions, we can draw implications for behavior and performance in teams.

Defining Diversity: Falling (into a category) versus Feeling (to belong to a category)

In the literature on diversity there are two approaches which are more or less explicit as depicted in table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

The traditional one, supported by substantial empirical evidence, assigns team members to categories (e.g., race, age) and then demonstrates the impact of these categories on team processes such as conflict (Jackson, et al., 1995; Pelled, 1996; Pelled, Eisenhardt & Xin, 1999; Knight et al., 1999). These researchers make a distinction between diversity categories that are "visible" (age, gender, race, ethnic background) and those that are "underlying" (education, technical abilities, functional background, tenure)[1] (Jackson, et al., 1995; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Pelled, 1996; Pelled, et al., 1999). "Visible" diversity categories refer to characteristics that we are born with and that are assumed to be, in essence, immutable. "Underlying" diversity categories refer to those characteristics that we acquire and that can therefore be changed. An important assumption is that these different types of diversity are inherent to the individual and relatively stable. Team members can thus be assigned to, i.e.

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[1] Throughout the article the term "diversity categories" refers to the whole range of social categories commonly used to describe people (age, race, gender, function, education, etc…)."Diversity types" refers to the distinction made in the literature between social categories that are visible (e.g., age) and those that are underlying (e.g., education).

"falling" into, specific categories using demographic data. Diversity can then be measured quantitatively (i.e., via nominal scores and ratios).

Furthermore, according to this approach, these different types of diversity are supposed to lead to different team processes. For example, "visible" diversity may lead to stereotyping, to affective processes that are assumed to be negative, and thus to more person-oriented conflict which hinders effective team performance. On the other hand, "underlying" diversity is believed to contribute to cognitive processes focusing on the task and its resolution. This type of diversity may enhance task-related conflict which is considered to be "good" as it helps promote effective team performance. Most researchers have attempted to demonstrate empirically a causal relationship between type of diversity, type of conflict, and team performance (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Pelled, 1996; Pelled, Eisenhardt & Xin, 1999; Knight, et al., 1999).

In recent years, another albeit more theoretical approach to diversity has been gaining recognition. Here, diversity is considered to be subjectively experienced. What is important is not the nominal category into which people **"fall"** but rather the category to which they **"feel"** they belong. Researchers cannot presume that the diversity categories they are studying necessarily represent the categories that are subjectively experienced as important by team members (Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Randel, 2000; 2002; Thatcher, 2000).

Furthermore, within this perspective categories are not considered to be discrete but rather as continuous and interdependent. For example, Tsui and Gutek (1999) have suggested that so-called "underlying" types of diversity such as attitudes, beliefs and values are possible outcomes of "visible" types of diversity such as gender. In fact several authors have highlighted the interactions between underlying and visible diversity types (e.g., function and gender—female HR manager), but also within these

types of diversity (e.g., race and gender – Asian male) (Cox, 1996; Ferdman, 1995; Nkomo, 1996; Tsui, Egan & Xin, 1995). Furthermore, researchers need to take into account the dynamic nature of diversity throughout team interactions, and how diversity can evolve over time (Nkomo, 1996). Recent work by Harrison, Price and Bell (1998) has shown that over time underlying types of diversity may become more important than visible types of diversity.

Other authors have also questioned the underlying assumptions of conceptualizing and measuring diversity as nominal discrete categories, particularly when it comes to the notion of "race" (Litvin, 1997; Marks, 1997). From a biological and a genetic point of view, the meaning of the concept of "race" remains arbitrary as scientific evidence has shown that there is more variation within a "racial" group than between (Lewontin, 1974). Research on race and ethnicity has generally relied on a fallacy of homogeneity (all individuals are the same with a racial group), and a fallacy of monolithic identity (all individuals share the same identity within a racial group) (Stanfield & Rutledge, 1993). Betancourt and Lopez (1993) have argued that studies need to identify "what" about the diversity category (whether it be culture, race, ethnicity, or social) is expected to be related to the psychological phenomena of interest.

From a social point of view, the meaning of the concept of "race", just like "age" and "gender" or any other diversity category, needs to be defined by taking into account the historical context and the evolution of these concepts across time (Rodriguez, 1998), as well as the status and the valence that those categories carry in for the individual in those contexts (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000). For example,

"…An American manager might perceive race and gender to be important auxiliary status-determining traits, whereas an Israeli manager might see religion as critical. Further, the American might view race and gender as somewhat more important, whereas the Israeli might perceive religion as extremely important" (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000: p.46).

Thus, as Triandis (1996) argues, diversity is socially constructed and the salience of diversity categories is culturally bounded: a category that is defined as very important in one context may be defined as less important in another context.

As can be seen from the above discussion, this second approach draws a very different picture of diversity. Here, it may be more important to determine to which categories team members subjectively "feel" they belong rather than to determine into which categories team members objectively "fall". According to this approach, diversity can be defined as continuous, interdependent categories, which are dynamic and context dependent. Thus diversity needs to be measured by examining the individual's subjective experience of different categories, in different contexts, and at different times. In this paper we present a model that describes how diversity may be "felt" (experienced) by team members, rather than taking for granted the category into which they might objectively "fall". Adopting the "feeling" approach to diversity, we argue that different categories of diversity are more or less salient given different contexts and at different times. Furthermore, we demonstrate how the salience of different diversity categories can influence the appraisal of events and issues which, in turn, can lead to emotions and conflict in teams. By better understanding this process, by opening up the "black box" of diversity (Lawrence, 1997), we hope to shed light on the paradox of diversity and team performance.

OVERVIEW OF THE MODEL

In every team, each team member has a repertoire of multiple diversity categories (or identities) that are more or less important not only to how they define themselves in different situations, but also in how they define the situation. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) can help us to understand some of the motivational and contextual conditions that may render a team member's diversity category, i.e. social identity, salient. We argue that this salient social identity may influence cognitive appraisals of events and issues in diverse teams.

Cognitive appraisals serve as the basis for both the emotions and conflicts experienced. Conflicts are expected to emerge when team members have different cognitive appraisals of an issue (Fischer, 1998; Pinkley & Northcraft, 1994; Thomas, 1976). We argue that for each team member the experience of conflicts will also be related to the emotion felt about the issue or event in question. We assume that conflict, whether task and people oriented, has both cognitive and emotional causes and consequences that interact to influence the choice of behavioral strategies to deal with that conflict. Conflict behavioral strategies may in turn reinforce salient social identities or make other social identities become salient.

Emotions in diverse teams occur whenever a team member is confronted with issues that are highly relevant to him. The type of emotion felt and its intensity will depend on how the eliciting issue gets cognitively appraised by an individual in a given situation (cognitive appraisal theory of emotions, see Frijda, 1986; Ortony, Clore & Collins, 1988; Scherer, 1988; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Emotions in diverse teams are not seen as dysfunctional interruptions that should be "managed", but rather as highly functional relevance detection mechanisms. In other words, as described by Scherer and Tran (2001), emotions

"…alert the individual to important changes in the environment, focus attention on these situations, prepare the appropriate response strategies, and anchor events of great importance in the individual's long-term memory" (p. 371).

Therefore, emotions may have both functional and dysfunctional behavioral consequences for teams, which in turn may then reinforce salient social identities or make other social identities become salient as shown in Figure 1. In the following sections we describe in more depth the different processes involved.

Insert figure 1 about here

Experiencing Diversity as Multiple Social Identities

In a team the experience of "diversity" may be different for each team member, as each team member belongs to multiple social identity groups that are more or less important to him/her and to others in different situations. Social identity is,

"that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his memberships of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p.63).

According to social identity theory, our self-concept consists of aspects of the self that are unique to us, known as personal identity, and aspects of the self linked to our social group memberships, known as social identity (see Lorenzi-Cioldi & Doise, 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Personal identity makes us focus on the ways in which we are unique and thus different from other individuals (e.g. "I am an extrovert") and social identity emphasizes our commonality with a significant social group (e.g., "I am a psychologist") (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; Smith & Henry, 1996). When a particular social identity becomes salient, other social identities as well as aspects of our personal identity, become less salient (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). This theoretical distinction does not exclude the possibility that these two parts of our self-concept are interrelated. The extent to which social and personal

identities are fluid and linked over time is a matter which still needs further research (see Reid & Deaux, 1996).

The application of concepts from social identity theory to study diversity is not new (Brewer, 1995; Chatman, Polzer, Barsade & Neale, 1998; Hernes, 1997; Nkomo & Cox, 1995; Northcraft, Polzer, Neale & Kramer, 1995; Randel, 2000; 2002; Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992). Generally, when social identity researchers are confronted with having to decide which social identities are relevant for actors in their studies, they either assume to know the social identities that are salient (e.g., by ascribing actors to visible social categories), or infer the presence of certain social identities through observation of its attitudinal and behavioral consequences (e.g., in-group favoritism, stereotyping, negative evaluations) (Antaki, Condor & Levine, 1996).

In a similar manner, diversity researchers have been more concerned with the consequences of categorization than with the subjective significance people give to a particular social category (social identity group) in a particular context. In addition, the process of social categorization has been mostly used to explain the negative relational consequences (e.g., stereotypes and ingroup bias) of visible demographic categories (Pelled et al., 1999; Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992; Jehn et al., 1999). Less attention has been given to the role of social identity processes when explaining the impact of underlying diversity categories such as department or professional affiliations (Schneider & Northcraft, 1999). Finally, for most researchers social identity remains a relatively stable aspect of self-perception. However, social identity is highly dynamic, as it can change both in terms of type and content as a function of intergroup relations and other immediate contextual factors (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995).

Our model emphasizes the subjectivity and flexibility of team members' multiple social identities. We define the individual experience of a diversity category as

the subjective importance that a team member gives to a particular social identity, at a particular moment, in a particular context. Social identities are thus conceived as continuous as opposed to discrete, and can be interdependent as opposed to mutually exclusive. Thus team diversity exist not only as objective differences between individuals which are stable over time, but it also exist *within* each team member as a function of his/her multiple social identities that can become more or less salient depending on the context and the issue.

To illustrate the complexity of how an individual may experience multiple identities in a team, consider the example[2] of a 40 year old, black woman from Senegal and some of the other members in her work team. Her team is in charge of development education in the context of a non-profit organization. Her team is composed of 14 people (out of these 2 are Blacks, and 3 are male). In addition, there are 6 executive members (all working full time) and 8 secretaries (all working part-time). The woman in our example is a new executive team member. She is also a member of a religious organization and a teacher by training. In the team, she represents the student exchange program, and is responsible for the Africa and Middle East region. What makes her feel different from others in her team? What makes her see others as different? And how does she think that they see her?

Conditions that Enhance Social Identity Salience

In this section we describe some of the motivational and contextual conditions that make salient different social identities[3]. Most researchers agree with the notion that it is the visibility of physical differences that explains self- and other- categorization in diverse teams (Jehn et al. 1999; Pelled et al. 1999; Tsui et al. 1992). In our example,

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[2] This example is based on a participant observation study conducted by one of the authors

what is visibly different about this team member are her skin color and her sex. Indeed, for this person, her color and her sex, mattered:

> "… I don't know about other people, but generally speaking, when I am in an international setting like this one I am very conscious that I am a woman, and I am very conscious that I am a [black] African. It doesn't have to be the case in the team…"

However, we can see that *she felt* they mattered *in an international context but not necessarily in the context of her team*. In fact, there are other factors beyond "visibility" which we discuss below that can make a member's particular diversity category salient.

Although the mere perception of belonging to a social category (Tajfel, Flament, Billig & Bundy, 1971) may be sufficient to make a social identity salient in a diverse team, we would like to stress that social identity salience is not just awareness of a social category: it is also the result of a basic **motivation** to enhance self-esteem and self-representation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Furthermore, team member identification to a particular category may also influenced by other motivations. For example, it may depend on the extent to which it reduces uncertainties about the ingroup in relation to the out-group (as described by self-categorization theory, Hogg & Abrams, 1993) and on the extent to which it satisfies the fundamental needs of "feeling unique" (distinctiveness) and "feeling similar" (inclusion) (as described by optimal distinctiveness theory, Brewer, 1991).

Recent work comparing the motivational theories of identification has suggested that different motivations (i.e., self-esteem enhancement, uncertainty avoidance, and optimal distinctiveness) may influence different aspects of social identification (i.e., identification strength, self-stereotyping, evaluation of in-group and

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[3] We have outlined here some of the major motivational and contextual factors that may influence

out-groups, and emotional attachment to in-group) (Capozza, Brown, Aharpour & Falvo, 2001). More and more researchers in this area agree that we identify with groups for more than just self-esteem enhancement, and that one important aspect is the **function** that a social identity may play in a particular situation (Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi & Cotting, 1999; Deaux, 2000).

The salience of a social identity may be influenced by the **relevance, importance and significance** that is attached to that social identity in a particular context by the person and by others. In our example, when asked why she felt so conscious of being a woman and being an African, she said:

> "Because, it has been two categories that have been undermined…not valued. So it's my choice, I don't want being a woman or an African to determine how I function. At the same time, I am very conscious of how the two are viewed in society and specially because I am living in Europe, maybe that makes me more conscious."

Awareness of a social identity group may be increased if that identity group has distinctive (visible) characteristics in relation to others in the team as noted below; if there is an **unequal ratio of members** from that identity group compared with other social identity groups (Randel, 2002); or if there are **perceived status and power differences** between the different social identity groups represented in the team (see Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brewer & Miller, 1984; Randel, 2000; Tsui et al., 1992; Vannman & Miller, 1993).

A particular social identity may also become more salient because of **how other members react to and their expectations** regarding that team member. For example, research on the treatment of disabled individuals (Stone & Colella, 1996) has highlighted that when an observer categorizes a disabled person, this categorization

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salience. However we do not pretend this list to be exhaustive.

also carries expectancies based on stereotypes about that group. Thus when the "other" communicates expectations to a team member (verbally, nonverbal, explicitly or implicitly) about one of the social identity groups to which he or she belongs, that identity might become salient.

Roles offer a clear illustration of how expectations may influence identity salience. Some social identities may become "chronically salient" for team members as they may correspond to very well defined role expectancies that "others" inside of the team, or outside of team (their department, the organization, family, etc) may have (Earley & Laubach, 2001; Stryker, 1987). In our example, there are some very clear role expectations for members who come from administration (like secretaries) and for members who are executives. In this bureaucratic organization, secretaries have to manage the day to day administrative duties locally, have little or no travelling, and are expected to execute instructions. Executives, are involved in interdisciplinary and international decision-making around educational projects, and travel most of their time. Thus not surprisingly, when discussing administrative issues in this team, executives often don't understand why secretaries complain all the time. Clearly, these discussions make the "executive identity" and "secretary identity" highly salient for team members. As expressed by the woman in our example :

> "the secretaries always express how overwhelmed they are with ….the expectations we have of them".

A social identity may also become salient due to **existing intergroup competition** between identity groups represented in the team (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Turner, 1982). Moreover, social identity salience is likely to be influenced by the ongoing interactions between team members, and thus by changes in intergroup relations between the social identity groups represented in the team.

Finally, it is possible that multiple social identities in interaction can become salient (e.g., black woman). Lau and Murnigham (1998) have described the potential alignments of multiple demographic identity groups in diverse teams as "faultlines". They have proposed that identifying faultlines in diverse teams may help us understand the formation of subgroups (e.g., "old women") as well as the emergence of subgroup conflict within a team (e.g., "old women versus young men"). In our example, we know that all the secretaries work all part-time and are not religious. The executives are all working full-time and are all religious. When we asked one of the secretaries in which ways she felt different to others in the team she said:

> "I would even say in general, there is maybe a gap between the executives and the secretaries: executives are always at a philosophical level…I would say it's typical of ministers, of the church…and because of that they neglect maybe a little the practical and rational aspects. We, the secretaries, have to struggle with very practical things and it is sometimes difficult."

The Influence of Social Identity on Interpretation

Extensive research on social identity has shown that when a specific social identity becomes salient, we may become more like our in-group "stereotype" and less like the out-group "stereotype" in terms of attitudes and beliefs, affective reactions and emotions, norms and behaviors (Turner, 1982). More importantly, social identities have also been found to influence interpretation of issues. In a study of librarians' responses to various social issues, Pratt and Dutton (1998) found that once issues were noticed, they were interpreted in the light of salient social identities and emotions, which in turn lead to issue ownership and potentially to action.

> "Instead of acting simply as initiators of sense-making by serving to signal an "interruption" in continuing organization action…. emotions also facilitate the ongoing sense-making process by becoming linked to the interpretation of issues via identities" (Pratt & Dutton, 1998, p.34).

In our model we try to identify "how" diversity categories, as subjectively experienced by individuals, are related to differences in cognition and behavior. The influence of social identity salience on interpretation is key to understanding how issues and events are subjectively experienced.

When a social identity becomes salient it may influence cognitive appraisal of issues in terms of four cognitive dimensions: **perception of goals; causal attributions; control/power; and norms**. First, social identity salience can determine which goals are perceived as important. When a social identity is salient, the goals of the "ingroup" become more important than personal (or any other group's) goals (Brewer, 1991). Second, social identity can influence how we attribute causality of events or issues. When a social identity is salient, people have a tendency to attribute positive events to in-groups and negative events to out-groups (Deschamps, 1983; Hewstone, 1983; 1990; Taylor & Jaggi, 1974). Third, social identity can influence our perception of control and power. The amount of control and power the ingroup is perceived to have can be influenced by the ingroup/outgroup ratio (Vanman & Miller, 1993) and the perceived status differences with the out-group (Brewer & Miller, 1984). Finally, social identity can influence which norms are perceived as important. When a social identity becomes salient, people learn, adopt and conform to the norms of that social identity group (Hogg & Turner, 1987)

We argue that in diverse teams, team members' social identities can influence their appraisal of issues in terms of the four cognitive dimensions as discussed above (perception of goals, of causal attributions, of control and power, and of norms). In the next sections we discuss how these four cognitive dimensions are crucial in determining individual experiences of conflict and emotions.

The Subjective Experience of Conflict

A central argument in the diverse team literature has been that different types of diversity, visible and underlying, lead to different types of conflict, task- versus person-related conflict (Jehn et al., 1999; Knight et al., 1999; Pelled, 1996). Task-related conflict is assumed to involve cognitive processes and person-related conflict is assumed to involve affective process. Increasing attention has been paid to the interactions between task- and person-related conflicts, and the dynamic nature of conflict over time by which task-related conflict may become person-related conflict (or vice-versa) (Eisenhardt, Kahwajy & Bourgeois, 1997; Janssen, Van De Vliert & Veenstra, 1999; Jehn & Mannix, 2001).

Traditionally, conflict was thought to be due to the competition over scarce resources (Coser, 1956; Sheriff, 1966). In this struggle, where different interests or goals are confronted (Pondy, 1967), it was often assumed that opposite parties had the same perception of the situation. Although some organizational conflict can be the result of truly incompatible objectives or scarcity of resources, most conflict arises from different interpretation of the same situation (Fischer, 1998; Bartunek, Kolb & Lewicki, 1992). In fact, Thomas (1976) argues that the most important component of the conflict process is the appraisals of the conflict issues involved as the parties involved can appraise the same conflict situation and conflict issues in very different ways (Pinkley, 1990).

Different appraisals of conflict issues may be due to: the perceived size or importance of the issue (Fischer, 1964); the extent to which goals are perceived as interdependent (Deutsch, 1973; Tjosvold, 1998); the perceived cause(s) of conflict and the perceived responsibility of the other party (Gayle & Preiss, 1998; Pinkley, 1990); the perceived differences in power and status of the parties involved (Gayle & Preiss,

1998; Gladwin & Walter, 1980); and the extent to which one party considers the needs, goals and norms of the other party (Thomas, 1976).

Pinkley and Northcraft (1994) have shown that the interpretation of a conflict issue may be at least in part a function of context and therefore susceptible to change. Therefore we cannot talk about conflict as something objective and static (Freund, 1983).

> "Conflict is not a static reflection of fixed-self interest (…) rather conflict reflects a continuously evolving understanding of the world that is gained through interaction with other around alternative viewpoints" (Eisenhardt et al., 1997, p.60).

Conflict can thus be seen as subjective, dynamic, and multi-determined, wherein two people at least, perceive that they hold discrepant views about their goals, aims and values.

Unfortunately, few explanations have been put forward as to why, and when and under which conditions people have different appraisals of conflict issues, and interpretation of conflict issues changes. We propose that in diverse teams, team members' social identities can influence their appraisal of conflict issues in terms of the four cognitive dimensions as discussed above (perception of goals, of causal attributions, of control and power and of norms) and thus influence their individual experiences of conflict. We suggest some of the ways in which social identity salience may influence these cognitive appraisals of conflict issues.

Northcraft and associates (1995) have suggested that in diverse teams, social identification may lead members to perceive themselves as different from other team members, and to misconstrue team members' goals and interests as being distributive rather than congruent. When a team member's social identity becomes salient, the size and importance of a conflict issue are likely to be perceived to be greater when the

issue is pertinent to the ingroups' goals. We also expect that social identity salience to influence how members' make attributions of causality and responsibility of conflict. When a team member identifies with an "ingroup" and there is a clear "outgroup", they are much more likely to perceive the outgroup to cause conflict, and to be responsible for conflict. Moreover, conflict issues are likely to be appraised as more controllable and thus less threatening when we perceive our social identity group to have more status, power and representation in the team that the other party. Furthermore, values and norms of the other party may be taken into consideration more if the other party also belongs to the "ingroup". Finally, conflict issues are likely to be perceived as more important and more threatening when they break ingroup norms than when they break other social or outgroup norms.

Social identity is linked to cognitive appraisals in conflict situations, but also to emotion as will be shown in the next section. Thus, distinctions between task-oriented conflict as cognitive, and people-oriented conflict as emotional become arbitrary.

Emotions

Although emotion has been identified as an important variable in diverse teams it has rarely been explicitly studied, and the processes by which emotions occur have not been explained. In fact, most references to "emotion" in the team diversity literature hardly ever rely on a theoretical position. In general, researchers have only dealt with negative emotions (for example anger, fear, frustration) and have measured them as a proxy of negative team processes such as relational conflict (Jehn et al., 1999; Pelled, 1996).

We argue, in line with cognitive appraisal theory of emotions, that different emotional responses to the same issue or event can be explained by the different "appraisals" or cognitive evaluations that people can have of that same issue (Frijda,

1986; Ortony et al., 1988; Scherer, 1988; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). This approach allows for individual emotion responses that are flexible, dynamic and continuously interactive, thus acknowledging an unlimited range of appraisals and emotional responses to a complex and changing environment. In this approach, the emotion process cannot be considered as separate from perception, interpretation and evaluation. Thus cognitive and affective processes are considered to be synchronic (i.e., both/and) rather than alternative (i.e., either/or) (Ellsworth, 1991). Therefore, the emotion process includes both the cognitive appraisal of an issue *and* the corresponding felt emotion[4].

Most appraisal theorists have agreed on a range of basic cognitive dimensions that people use when they are confronted with, and "appraise" an emotion inducing event. According to Scherer's theory of emotion (1984), people evaluate events in terms of: perceived changes in the environment (i.e., "novelty"); perceived valence of the event (i.e., "pleasantness"); perceived importance of the event for goals (i.e., "goal conduciveness"); perceived cause of the event and perceived control over the event (i.e., "agency/control"); and perceived compatibility with self-standards and social norms (i.e., "self/norms compatibility")(see also Frijda, 1986; Ortony et al., 1988; Scherer, 1988; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985).

The first two cognitive evaluation criteria, novelty and pleasantness, are concerned with the level of attention required by the event and with an intrinsic or primitive sense of pleasure and aversion. These represent a fast and quasi-automatic evaluation which establishes the meaning of the event for the person's general well-

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[4] In fact, current cognitive appraisal theories offer a way to overcome the often cited debate between Lazarus (1982,1984) who insisted on cognition or "meaning analysis" as requirement for emotion and Zajonc (1980, 1984) who presented experimental evidence showing that affective reactions could be elicited through very subtle cortical processes, and thus without "cognition" which he used to mean higher mental processes. Leventhal and Scherer (1987) pointed out that this debate was mostly about the definition of cognition and the level of cognitive processing, as both Lazarus and Zajonc assumed "some" type of stimulus processing was necessary. Thus, emotions can be elicited by appraisal processing occurring very rapidly and automatically at low levels of the central nervous system and by appraisal occurring in a more controlled conscious way involving the cortical regions (Scherer, 1984).

being. The three following criteria are more cognitively complex. They determine whether the event helps or hinders the person's goals ("goal conduciveness"), what or who is the causal agent of the event and whether the person is capable of dealing with the event and its consequences ("causal agency/control"), and whether the event is compatible with social norms and personal standards ("norms compatibility"). It has been suggested that these evaluation criteria are particularly likely to be influenced by socio-cultural contextual factors (Ellsworth, 1994; Scherer, 1997).

Different appraisals of an event lead to different emotions. For example, if a team member evaluates an event as obstructing the achievement of her goals, as being caused by someone else, to be under her control, and as breaking social norms, she may feel anger. If another team member confronted with the same event makes a similar evaluation but perceives that the event is beyond her control, she may feel anxiety or worry rather than anger.

In intergroup contexts, such as diverse teams, the appraisal process by which an emotion occurs is more likely to be influenced by a team member's social identity than by a team member's personal identity (see Smith, 1993). When we identify strongly with that social identity group or ingroup (e.g. "women") and there is a target outgroup (e.g., "men"), and when we evaluate an event linked to our social identity, we may experience emotions linked to prejudice (Mackie & Smith, 1998; Smith, 1993). We propose that in a diverse team, team members' salient social identities are likely to influence the four cognitive evaluation criteria previously discussed (perception of goals, of causal attributions, of control and power, and of norms) when appraising and responding emotionally to events or issues.

When a particular diversity social identity becomes salient for a team member, events and issues are more likely to be appraised in terms of their conduciveness (or

obstructiveness) to the goals of that social identity group. In addition, when a social identity is salient people have an ingroup bias when making attributions of causality of positive and negative events: People tend to attribute the responsibility positive events to ingroups and negative events to outgroups (Deschamps, 1983; Hewstone, 1983; 1990; Taylor & Jaggi, 1974). According to appraisal theories when a negative event is caused by others we should feel anger. However, when a negative event is caused by an ingroup we are more likely to feel remorse rather than anger (Vannman & Miller, 1993).

We have also seen that social identity salience can influence our perception of control and power. For instance, in a diverse team where there is unequal ingroup/outgroup ratio, members representing the minority might feel that their social identities are threatened, that they have little control over the situation and consequently feel anxiety (Vannman & Miller, 1993). This may be further complicated if there are perceived ingroup/outgroup status differences (Brewer & Miller, 1984). For example, high status groups may feel resentment working with low status groups, and more fear and anxiety when they are in the minority (Vanman & Miller, 1993).

Finally, we have also seen that when a social identity is salient ingroup norms will be considered more important than other norms. Therefore, when a particular social identity becomes salient, events and issues are likely to be appraised in terms of their compatibility with the norms of that social identity group.

In our example, when we asked a team member to describe if she had ever experienced irritation or anger in her team, she said:

> "Irritation…when I am upset, but anger it's stronger, often when there is an injustice. I was really angry once, it was about financial issues. I talked about financial problems and one of the executives got really mad saying that "we, the secretaries" were always concerned by our salaries. It was the only time where I was saying what I really thought. I am very Spanish therefore I wasn't gonna let

him get away with it. When I am angry it influences me, but in a healthy way. My anger got misinterpreted by the others as they thought I was David vs Goliath"

This quote helps us illustrate how when a social identity may become salient, ("secretary"), due to remarks made by another member (who is an "executive"), it seems to influence her cognitive appraisals of a conflict issue (especially in terms of perceived importance of the issue, perception of power, and injustice), and that these appraisals were accompanied by strong anger. We can see how she also felt that her expression of anger, which she saw as healthy, may have been influenced by her "Spanish" social identity. Furthermore, she felt that others might have misattributed her anger as associated to a power struggle between the secretaries and the executives: "David versus Goliath". This quote reminds us of the *real* complexity of the experience of diversity, multiple identities, conflict and emotions in teams for each individual.

Interactions Between Conflicts and Emotions and Consequences for Behavior

In view of the complexity of real situations of conflict and emotions in diverse teams, our model offers a modest attempt to try to untangle the different individual psychological processes involved. In addition, it allows us to speculate about some of the ways in which conflict and emotion processes may interact, and with what behavioral consequences. Traditionally, negotiation and conflict have been explained using rational models (Allred, Mallozzi, Matsui & Raia, 1997) that limit the role of emotions to a negative consequence of relational types of conflict. But, intuitively, we expect emotions to *always* play an important role (Forgas, 1998; Thomas, 1992). Some authors have argued that conflict is a highly emotional process because a strong motivation is required to engage in a conflict situation (Eisenhardt et al., 1997). In fact, we think that the experience of diversity, conflict and emotion are intricately related

because the cognitive appraisal dimensions that have been identified to be important in determining conflict are very similar to those involved in determining the nature of emotions. From this perspective, emotions can occur in a whole range of team situations apart from just conflict resulting from visible differences, i.e., not only person-related.

In our model, cognitive appraisals of a conflict issue will be influenced by the social identity that is salient to that person. These cognitive appraisals of a conflict issue may result in different behavioral strategies (compete, collaborate, avoid, accommodate, and compromise) that have been well-established in the literature (Thomas, 1976; Gladwin & Walter, 1980). Based on our model we would argue that such behavioral strategies will be influenced not only by cognitive appraisals and the accompanying emotion but also by the social identity made salient. In the example of emotional responses quoted above, we can see clearly that the team member chose a competitive strategy ("I wasn't gonna let him get away with it"), when normally she wouldn't have confronted the other ("It was the only time where I was saying what I really thought"). Based on our model, we would suggest that this strategy was a result of her appraisal of that conflict issue, of her resulting anger and of both her "secretary" (at first) and (then) "Spanish" identities.

In a diverse team there will be as many different emotional responses to the same event or issue (or person) as there will be cognitive appraisals, and therefore different behavioral responses are also possible. Recently, Scherer and Tran (2001) proposed a classification of emotions into five major classes: approach, achievement, deterrence, withdrawal, and antagonistic emotions[5]. These authors have discussed some

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[5] Note that this classification of emotions is quite similar to the behavioral strategies described by conflict management literature: collaborating, accommodating, avoiding, competing and compromising (Thomas, 1976).

of the potential consequences, both functional and dysfunctional, of these emotion classes for learning behavior in organizations. They propose that, approach emotions (such as interest, hope, joyful, and anticipation) may "foster exploration and development, provide motivational underpinning for sustained goal-directed activity" (p. 388). Such behaviors may represent an important resource for a diverse team as they may allow an open discussion and encourage the sharing and exchange of innovative ideas. In addition they may give the necessary drive to carry through team projects. Achievement emotions (such as relief, satisfaction, contentment, joy, pride and elation) may "positively reinforce achievement, are responses to positive chance outcomes, but may imply over-attribution of personal merit and encourage stagnation" (p.388). These behaviors may provide team members with a sense of efficacy but may also lead them to become complacent or overconfident. Deterrence emotions (such as anxiety, fear, distress, pessimism) may "serve as warnings of imminent danger or negative consequences…but may prevent further development, block exploration, and generally inhibit learning" (p.388). These behaviors may be usefully channeled by team members during phases of planning and preparing for anticipated negative events. Withdrawal emotions (such as sadness, resignation, shame, guilt) "serve to facilitate restoration of forces and internal adaptation after an uncontrollable loss…..but may deprive organisms of energy and drive….." (p.388). These behaviors may reduce team members' energy and drive, but may sometimes be necessary to allow them to mourn (learn from) failures and to go on (e.g., situation of downsizing or acquisition). Finally, antagonistic emotions (such as irritation, anger, hate, aggressiveness) may "serve to forcefully overcome obstacles to goal achievement and assert individual or organizational interest and status; but may lead …to conflict hampering or permanently damaging normal relations and interactions" (p.388). These behaviors directed away

from the team (e.g., toward a common "enemy") may help team members overcome obstacles, help them assert their interests and status. However, if directed within the team, they may damage group relations and cohesiveness. This classification of emotions allows us to describe some of the potential team member behaviors that may emerge and to recognize the potential functional or dysfunctional consequences for diverse teams. However caution is advised such that to fully understand the link between team members' emotions, their behaviors and team performance we need to take into account the context and object of the emotion (Frijda, 1993) and the behaviors that accurately indicate the effectiveness for a particular team (Sudstrom, De Meuse & Futrell, 1990).

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have proposed a dynamic model of diversity, conflict and emotion as experienced by people in teams. We argue that the paradox of the impact of diversity on team performance (i.e., sometimes detrimental, sometimes beneficial) can perhaps be better understood if we consider team members' to have multiple social identities which are subjective, dynamic and context-dependent and that these identities influence appraisal of issues and events. Different appraisals of the same issue or event can lead to conflict and emotions which may have behavioral consequences that can impact team performance.

First, we argue that diversity is subjectively experienced as social identities, that are multiple and context dependent. The salience of these different identities depends upon certain motivational and contextual factors. Researchers need to examine more systematically the contextual and situational factors in work teams that determine team members' identity salience.

We also argue that diversity is subjectively experienced and cannot be objectively assigned. Researchers should be wary of assigning categories to team members without verifying if these categories are subjectively experienced as important. They might have to re-consider the use of nominal methods to measure diversity in teams and give more weight to methods that offer a better reflection of team members' own interpretation of their diversity. Questionnaire measures typically used to measure perceptions of social identity salience can be complemented by the use of more qualitative measures such as discourse analysis which give a better reflection of their dynamic nature (Antaki et al., 1996).

We then draw upon social identity theory to provide us with an understanding of how the salience of a social identity can influence appraisals of issues and events. Cognitive appraisal involves evaluations of the importance of goals, attributions of causality, perceptions of control and power, and norms. This same appraisal process leads to different experiences of conflict and emotion and explains how emotions and conflict may interact, and even reinforce the salience of social identities in diverse teams. As such, a straightforward relationship between diversity and performance where certain types of diversity (visible versus underlying) lead to specific team processes (cognitive versus emotional), and outcomes (task versus person related conflict) is unlikely.

Future studies could examine how status differences in a team (e.g., managers vs administrators), or existing intergroup competition between groups represented in a team (e.g., men and women) influence the salience of these identities in different teams. In addition, we need to clarify the interactions between multiple social identities (e.g., sex and nationality). This could be done by studying how the interactions between

certain social identities (e.g., foreign woman secretary) are perceived by team members in different situations.

Furthermore, the valence that social identities can have for team members' in different situations/contexts or when confronted to different issues needs to be taken into account. Researchers could study the strategies that team members' use to deal with a social identity (e.g., age) that becomes negative in a particular situation (e.g., an upcoming merger that leads to the early retirement of older employees and the recruitment of younger employees) (see research of Blanz, Mummendey, Mielke & Klink, 1998).

Another key argument is that social identification has more subtle consequences for teams than just categorization, stereotyping, and ingroup bias. Social identity may shape not only how we perceive and react to others but also how we appraise and respond to issues and events. As put by Pratt and Dutton (1998),

> "The organizational context nurtures certain social identities that individuals use (…) to assess the value and significance of certain issues, as well as the degree to which members can envision taking action on them" (p.36).

In our framework we make a clear link between the diversity of people's group membership and their cognitive appraisals of an issue. In agreement with Priem, Lyon and Dess (1999) we think that this link is crucial in understanding *why* diversity may be beneficial or detrimental to team outcomes such creativity and innovation.

Researchers need also to consider multiple levels of analysis. Emotions have been conceptualized as an individual level process, conflict has been situated at an interpersonal level, and social identity has been discussed in term of intergroup dynamics (Brewer, 1995; Cox, 1993). In future theory development we need to better

specify the different levels of theory and their interactions, which also need to be better reflected in methodology and statistical analyses used (Klein, Dansereau & Hall, 1994).

Further research needs to explain how a team member's experience of diversity is perceived by others. To what extent will other members be sensitive to the identity that I feel is salient to me? What is the impact of the discrepancy or misfit between the diversity category that is important to me and the category that others attribute as being important to me? A promising new concept "identity fit" captures the degree to which identities are important to an individual, their ability to accurately express their identity, and the extent to which others know the identities that are important to that individual (Thatcher, 2000). Her research shows that in diverse work teams, strong "identity fit" was positively associated to individual creative performance, while "identity misfit" was associated to absenteeism and individual perceptions of stress caused by the team.

Our model has direct implications for practitioners. Diversity in teams is no longer a pre-determined condition where little can be done. From this perspective, the potential benefits of diversity exists in all work teams, even those which are "visibly" homogeneous. Managers should guard against altering team composition of visible categories to reduce demographic heterogeneity: in some contexts identification to the function, the team and the company or other informal group may override identification to demographic social groups.

Concretely, team managers and facilitators may use contextual information about visible and underlying composition (e.g., organizational chart, demographic composition reports, sociograms based on networks analysis, etc...) as a base to anticipate which *latent* social identities may become salient. However, it is essential that managers find the time to confront their perceptions with team members' subjective experiences of diversity in their team. This information may help managers

better predict and understand team processes like conflict and emotions. In addition, managers may rely on self-reported and observed conflict behaviors and emotions as indicators of different appraisals of issues and of the identities that are salient.

In this view, emotional responses during conflict may also tell us about the extent to which team members identify with the team, the company or any other supra-ordinate identity group. It may also signal the extent to which the interpretation of a conflict issue is shared by team members. By making the effort to understand how the other party appraises and emotionally responds to a conflict issue, we can better see points of disagreement (Bartunek et al. 1992).

Our model may help managers stop from thinking about diversity as something that either "is" or "isn't", that is either "cognitive" or "emotional", that is either "good" or "bad". Managers may play a bigger role in shaping how issues are perceived by team members. As a function of the situation, they may encourage the different identities to emerge thus fostering different perspectives, or they may play down different identities to develop a common team identity fostering a shared perspective of the team or the company goals and objectives. In these ways, team performance may be improved.

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TABLE 1

The concept of diversity

Diversity as nominal categories *"falling"*	*Diversity as subjective experience* *"feeling"*
Discrete	Continuous
Mutually exclusive	Interdependent
Objective	Subjective
Stable	Dynamic
Inherent to person	Context (and issue) dependent
Measured by ratios, dispersion or aggregation of categories between individuals	Measured by subjective salience of multiple identities within individuals

FIGURE 1