
Ethnic diversity and team performance

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Ethnic diversity and team performance

Background

Striving to increase workplace diversity is considered good business. A 2015 McKinsey report summarizing the results of a global survey of 366 public companies found a positive relationship between the presence of ethnically diverse teams and performance. The companies in the top quartile for ethnic diversity in management teams were 35% more likely to have financial returns above their industry mean (Hunt, Layton, & Prince, 2015). In addition, a recent article in the Harvard Business Review points out that enriching teams with representatives of different races and nationalities is key for boosting a company's intellectual potential (Rock & Grant, 2016). Finally, an article in Forbes states that "study after study has shown that diversity leads to more creative teams and increases a company's bottom line" (Zalis, 2017). Due to these claims in the popular management literature, ethnic diversity has become a business imperative. A quick consultation of the research literature on this topic, however, shows a more nuanced picture. For example, a 2011 meta-analysis of 92 studies including 274 independent correlations found that race diversity had small *negative* associations with team performance (Bell, Villado, Lukasik, Belau, & riggs, 2011). This finding was confirmed by a meta-analysis of 108 empirical studies on performance in 10,632 teams, demonstrating cultural diversity leads to process losses through task conflict and decreased social integration, but to process gains through increased creativity and satisfaction (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & onsen, 2010). Given these mixed outcomes a systematic review of the scientific literature on the association between ethnic diversity and team performance will help managers and organisations make better decisions regarding the composition of teams.

Objectives

This systematic review will aim to answer the following two questions:

- 1) Is there an association between ethnic diversity in teams and team performance?
- 2) Are there contextual mediators and/or moderators that affect this association?

Possible moderators are team tenure, team size, type of team, type of task, task interdependence, task complexity, hierarchy of the team within the organisation, educational background of team members, geographic location of the teams, diversity of target audience and study design.

Existing reviews

To identify existing reviews the following three databases were consulted: ABI/INFORM Global, Business Source Premier, and PsycINFO. A search was conducted using combinations of different search terms, such as 'diversity', 'team', 'work group' and 'performance'. We conducted 6 different search queries and screened the titles and abstracts of 79 studies. After screening the abstracts and full text for relevance we identified 8 meta-analyses and 4 systematic reviews.

ABI/Inform Global, Business Source Elite, PsycINFO peer reviewed, scholarly journals, April 2018			
Search terms	ABI	BSP	PSY
S1: ti(divers*) OR ab(divers*)	48,237	64,304	77,940
S2: ti(team*) OR ab(team*) OR ti(group*) OR ab(group*)	178,998	208,484	679,348
S3: ti(perform*) OR ab(perform*)	248,802	378,400	408,712
S4: S1 AND S2 AND S3	1,477	1,769	2,276
S5: ti(meta-analy*) OR ab(meta-analy*) OR ti("systematic review") OR ab("systematic review")	6,725	7,322	n.a.
S6: S4 AND S5	24	25	63
Duplicates removed	79		
Relevant	12		

Meta-analyses

1. Bell, S. T., Villado, A. J., Lukasik, M. A., Belau, L., & Briggs, A. L. (2011). Getting Specific about Demographic Diversity Variable and Team Performance Relationships: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Management*, 37(3), 709-743.
2. Horwitz, S. K., & Horwitz, I. B. (2007). The Effects of Team Diversity on Team Outcomes: A Meta-Analytic Review of Team Demography. *Journal of Management*, 33(6), 987-986
3. Joshi, A., & Roh, H. (2009). The Role of Context In Work Team Diversity Research: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(3), 599.
4. Stahl, G. K., Maznevski, M. L., Voigt, A., & Jonsen, K. (2010). Unraveling the effects of cultural diversity in teams: A meta-analysis of research on multicultural work groups. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 41(4), 690-709

5. Thatcher, S. M. B., & Patel, P. C. (2011). Demographic faultlines: A meta-analysis of the literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 96*(6), 1119.
6. van Dijk, H., van Engen, M. L., & van Knippenberg, D. (2012). Defying conventional wisdom: A meta-analytical examination of the differences between demographic and job-related diversity relationships with performance. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 119*(1), 38.
7. Webber, S. S., & Donahue, L. (2001). Impact of highly and less job-related diversity on work group cohesion and performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management, 27*(2), 141-162.
8. Wei, X., Liu, Y., & Chen, S. (2015). A meta-analysis of the relationship between team demographic diversity and team performance. *Acta Psychologica Sinica, 47*(9), 1172-1187.

Systematic reviews

1. Haas, H. (2010). How can we explain mixed effects of diversity on team performance? A review with emphasis on context. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 29*(5), 458-490.
2. Han, S. J., & Beyerlein, M. (2016). Framing the Effects of Multinational Cultural Diversity on Virtual Team Processes. *Small Group Research, 47*(4), 351-383.
3. Homberg, F., & Bui, H. T. M. (2013). Top Management Team Diversity: A Systematic Review. *Group & Organization Management, 38*(4), 455.
4. Zhou, W., & Rosini, E. (2015). Entrepreneurial Team Diversity and Performance: Toward an Integrated Model. *Entrepreneurship Research Journal, 5*(1), 31-60.

The meta-analyses and systematic reviews listed above are based on a total number of more than 800 studies representing 1000+ effect sizes. These numbers demonstrate that over the past decades, a substantial body of research on ethnic diversity and team performance has emerged. This research, however, has produced mixed, and sometimes contradictory, outcomes. In addition, all meta-analyses and systematic reviews identified have serious limitations: often no attempt was made to identify unpublished studies, the process to select studies was often unclear and not reproducible, and, finally, in almost all reviews the methodological quality of the primary studies included was not assessed.

Intervention

This review focusses on ethnic diversity. In the literature, this is often described as diversity related to cultural factors, including nationality, regional culture, ancestry, religion, and language. Although race is different from ethnicity (race refers to a person's physical characteristics – such as eye or skin colour – whereas ethnicity refers to cultural factors), racial diversity will be included. Other types of diversity that are commonly studied such as age, gender, education, or job-related diversity are not the focus of this review.

Population

Teams and work groups within both profit and non-profit organisations will be the subjects of this review, including (but not limited to)

- Temporary (project) teams
- Virtual or non-located teams
- Self-managed teams
- Cross-functional teams
- Task forces, steering groups, and committees

We will exclude teams that operate outside a workplace setting, such as sport teams or volunteer search and rescue teams.

Outcomes

Research on workforce diversity will be included only when performance is measured on the team level. Primary outcomes will be team task performance: the extent to which a team accomplishes its objectives and produces the intended results, without consideration of the costs or inputs needed for achieving these results. Thus, we will include empirical studies that quantitatively measure one of the following types of outcomes:

- Production or output
- Attainment of goals or objectives
- Decision making
- Creativity/innovation
- Problem solving

Measurement of performance outcomes may be conducted using standardized as well as unstandardized instruments. In addition, studies in which performance outcomes are based on objective measures (e.g., financial performance, number of correct answers) and studies in which performance is measured subjectively (e.g. through ratings by individuals) will be included. Studies that use qualitative measurement methods or studies that measure only attitudinal outcomes (e.g. satisfaction, commitment) will be excluded.

Study designs

To answer above objectives, the review will include all quantitative research designs that can establish correlational relationships between ethnic diversity and team performance, including (but not limited to) randomized controlled trials, non-randomized controlled trials, before-after studies, longitudinal studies, and cross-sectional studies.

Review authors

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Roles and responsibilities

Eric Barends and Barbara Janssen hold basic methodological expertise in systematic reviews. In addition, Eric Barends and Barbara Janssen have experience in statistical analysis to perform the needed analyses for this review.

As frequent authors of evidence-summaries, both Eric Barends and Barbara Janssen are experienced in information retrieval. To develop relevant search strings and perform searches in specific databases a librarian can be consulted.

An advisory team consisting of content experts will be installed to provide the team with feedback and support. In addition, if needed, experts in the area of information retrieval, systematic review methods or statistical analysis can be consulted.

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Potential conflicts of interest

None to disclose

Preliminary timeframe

- Date we plan to submit a draft protocol: May 2018
- Date we plan to submit a draft review: July 2019