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Reaping the Rewards of Diversity: The Role of Identity Integration

Chi-Ying Cheng[1], Melissa Sanders[2], Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks[2], Kristine Molina[2], Fiona Lee[2]*, Emily Darling[2] and Yu Zhao[3]

[1] *Columbia University*
[2] *University of Michigan*
[3] *Eastern Michigan University*

Abstract

How does diversity affect individuals and the groups in which they are embedded? This article examines this question using recent theory and research on Identity Integration (II). II refers to an individual's perceptions about whether two distinct social identities, or social groups to which individuals belong, are viewed as compatible (high II) or not (low II). A review of extant research suggests that individuals with high II are better at simultaneously accessing multiple identities and identity-related knowledge and have improved well-being and social outcomes. Expanding on this work, we argue that individuals who have higher II, and social collectives that foster II within their members, are more likely to reap the benefits of diversity.

In the last few years, much of the public discourse in American society has focused on the advantages or disadvantages of diversity in one manner or another (Schlesinger, 1992; Wolsko, Park, & Judd, 2006). For example, in higher education, there have been several court cases and legal referendums on the legality of using affirmative action as a basis of admissions. In the business world, female and racial minority workers remain under-represented long after federal equal employment opportunity laws were put in place, prohibiting employment discrimination (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). One of the top business news topics over the last 2 years has been Hewlett-Packard's public firing of the high-profile chief executive Carly Fiorina. Many business experts, including Fiorina herself, attributed her fall to being a woman working in an industry highly dominated by male culture (Fiorina, 2006). More recently, the government, the media, and the American public at large have been consumed with issues concerning immigration, specifically on the questions of whether and how undocumented immigrants can be incorporated into American society.

Central in all these issues is whether diversity is beneficial for the individual and the social collective at large. For instance, in the legal

debates around affirmative action in higher education, many argue that having a diverse student body, and thus diverse opinions, perspectives, knowledge, and experiences, is beneficial for the education of all students (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004). Counter-arguments question whether diversity comes at the cost of reducing perceived and actual fairness of the admission process. The benefits of diversity have been more explicitly discussed within the business domain; many companies realize that being competitive means being able to operate in global markets around the world (Gurin, Dey, Gurin, & Hurtado, 2003; Mannix & Neale, 2005). Those in business also point to the development of a diverse workforce essential for building a competitive business in the global market. However, the lack of women and ethnic minorities in higher levels of management suggests that the business world has not been highly effective in implementing these ideas. As the Fiorina case illustrates, women and ethnic minorities are still woefully under-represented at the top levels of the corporate world. Likewise, the immigration debates are primarily discussions about the costs and benefits of diversity. Some argue that undocumented immigrants are costly to the local community (e.g., incurring healthcare costs, or taking jobs away from legal residents and citizens). Others show that undocumented immigrants, both skilled and unskilled, actually make the economy more productive and in turn enhance the prosperity of everyone within the community (Borjas, 1995, 1999). Putting aside whether social collectives have a 'moral' obligation to be diverse, the questions here are whether diversity has pragmatic value, and whether diversity enhances the well-being and effectiveness of both the social collective (such as the university, the corporation, or the community) as a whole and its members.

The psychological literature has much to contribute to this debate. For example, a large literature on stereotyping and tokenism suggests that being a minority member of a social collective can be cognitively taxing (e.g., it takes more effort to manage social relationships) and negatively influences individual performance (e.g., being stereotyped can impair performance; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Steele, 1992, 1997; Thompson & Sekaqueptewa, 2002). In this sense, diversity exacts a psychological toll on the individual, especially the individual who is a 'minority'. An equally extensive literature on teams and group diversity suggests that, compared with homogeneous teams, demographically diverse teams generally experience more conflict without necessarily having better task performance (Mannix, Griffith, & Neale, 2002). It is not within the scope of this paper to review these streams of research, although overall, they present a relatively pessimistic picture about the pragmatic value of diversity for the individual and for the larger social collective.

In the present article, we take a slightly different perspective to probe the benefits of diversity for the individual and the social collective. In prior research, writers have assumed that diversity is defined through the

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objective composition of group members' various social identities. Thus, when we see a single Asian American in a team of Caucasian Americans, we assume that the Asian-American person is a minority, and that the team is culturally diverse (compared with a group of all Caucasian Americans). In this article, we add a layer of complexity to this definition of diversity by incorporating the ways individual group members' subjectively represent and understand the multiple social identities they hold (e.g., identifying with the cultural identities of Asian and Anglo) or the various social groups they belong to simultaneously. We propose that individual differences in how people manage and integrate their multiple social identities lead to different outcomes for individuals and social collectives.

For example, the single Asian American in the group of Caucasian Americans may not interpret her cultural social identity in terms of having a minority status that distinguishes her in a negative way in the group. Rather, she may interpret her cultural identity as an asset to her group and is similar to her group identity. We argue that, in this case, diversity can be beneficial for both the individual and the team because she will be more likely to activate and utilize knowledge sets associated with her cultural identity. However, if this Asian-American person perceives her cultural identity as a drawback and prefers to downplay her cultural identity in the group because of the perceived incompatibility between her cultural identity and her group identity, it may be more difficult to reap the benefits of diversity. In short, diversity can be considered as an intra-personal phenomenon, and individuals' *perceptions of compatibility* between identities affect how diversity shapes outcomes for the individual and the collective. In this paper, we focus our discussion on demographic diversity such as culture, gender, class, or race, although similar trends can be observed when we consider other types of diversity, such as profession or ideology.

Diversity and Social Identity Theory

Issues of diversity are inextricably tied to social identity. Social identities refer to aspects of an individual's self-concept that derives from one's membership in a social group (Tajfel, 1981). Diversity essentially means introducing a different social identity into a collective or a group. Returning to the earlier example of a new person joining a social collective such as a work team, if the new member is Asian American and the rest of the work team is comprised of Caucasian Americans, then the new member is thought to add cultural diversity to the team because she identifies with a different cultural group than those currently in the team. However, if the new member is a woman and all the other team members are also women, then the new member does not add any gender diversity to the team. The gender identity of the new member is already well represented in the team.

As such, social identity theory has important implications for how we conceptualize diversity. First, the level of diversity in a social collective

depends on the specific social identities being considered. Therefore, a team can be diverse culturally, but not diverse based on gender. Or teams that seem highly diverse on the surface, say, different gender, race, and age groups are represented, might not be diverse on other dimensions; for example, only a single religion, nationality, sexual orientation, or political affiliation is represented. Second, diversity is not only a matter of an individual's group memberships (i.e., an individual's cultural or gender category) but is also partly defined by their subjective social identification. If the new Asian-American member does not identify herself as an Asian – that is, belonging in an Asian group is not substantial and meaningful to her – then her socially ascribed Asian membership may add cultural diversity to the team only superficially and not in terms of content or ideas.

Managing Multiple Social Identities

Individuals have many social identities – social groups to which they belong and are important to them. For example, an individual may be simultaneously a woman, an Asian, and an engineer, and belonging to these social groups is an important way in which the individual sees herself. Having multiple social identities is not necessarily problematic. However, there are times when the values, norms, and expectations of one identity might contradict those of another group. Consider an individual who identifies with being a New Yorker and a Red Sox fan, an individual who identifies with being a homosexual and a Catholic, an individual who identifies with being a Republican and pro-choice, or an individual who identifies with being a man and a nurse. In these cases where the social identities are seemingly in conflict with one another, it may be very difficult to simultaneously embrace both social identities at the same time.

There are several theoretical perspectives in the psychological literature that address how individuals might juggle potentially conflicting social identities. Berry (1990) found that bicultural immigrants use four distinct strategies to manage their multiple cultural identities: *assimilation* (identification with the dominant culture), *separation* (identification with the ethnic culture), *integration* (identification with both cultures), or *marginalization* (low identification with both). In this conceptualization, only the integrators truly identify with both the ethnic and dominant cultures; the other strategies all involve disclaiming membership or dis-identification in one or both social groups. Roccas and Brewer (2002) proposed three methods whereby integrators, or individuals who remain identified with both social groups, manage this tension – *intersection* (e.g., a Latino executive will identify only with other Latino executives), *compartmentalization* (e.g., a Latino executive identifies with either his professional or ethnic group depending on external cues), and *merger* (e.g., a Latino executive identities with Latinos and with executives).

Empirical evidence supports the use of these different strategies. The compartmentalization strategy, for example, is consistent with studies that

showed that individuals differentially activate one or the other identity and switch between the identity-related frames of reference, depending on situational cues. Specifically, Asian Americans exhibited different in-group bias tendencies toward either Asian or American groups in response to Asian or American stereotypes (Cheng & Lee, forthcoming). In addition, Asian-American biculturals behaved in more prototypically Asian ways (i.e., focused more on situations as causal agents) after being exposed to Asian pictures (e.g., the Great Wall or chopsticks) and behaved in more prototypically American ways (i.e., focused more on individuals as causal agents) after being exposed to American pictures (e.g., the Statue of Liberty or Mickey Mouse; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). Similar results are also found in samples of Asian women and women who work in male-oriented professions. Specifically, Asian women behaved in stereotypically gendered ways after being primed for gender (i.e., they did worse on math tests and better on verbal tests), but behaved in stereotypically cultured ways after being primed for culture (i.e., they did better on math tests and worse on verbal tests; Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999). Along the same vein, studies of women in male-oriented professions found that they deliberately 'switched off' their gender identity in professional settings by de-emphasizing female attributes at work, such as not carrying a purse or not working with other women (Miller, 2004).

Identity Integration: Diversity at an Intra-individual Level

More recently, psychological theories and empirical evidence have suggested that individuals differ in II, an individual difference measuring the degree to which two social identities are perceived as compatible or in opposition to each other (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Cheng & Lee, forthcoming; Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, & Lee, 2007). Although individuals with both high and low levels of II may strongly identify with both social identities – though not at the same time – the level of II does affect how they negotiate these two competing identities. Individuals high in identity integration (or high IIs) perceive the two identities as largely compatible and complementary and do not find it problematic to identify strongly with two social groups. In contrast, low IIs feel caught between their two social identities and prefer to keep them separate, although they also strongly identify with both groups. Low IIs believe that they can identify with one or the other group at different times or in different contexts, but not both at the same time, so they suppress one identity when the other is being activated or used, altering their behaviors depending on the context (Hall, Lopez, & Bansal, 2001).

Identity integration is typically measured using a self-report instrument that taps two distinct subconstructs: identity conflict and identity distance (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Cheng & Lee, forthcoming). Conflict

refers to perceptions that the two identities represent values and norms that fundamentally contradict one another, whereas distance refers to perceptions that the two identities are separate from one another. In previous research, the reliabilities for the measures of the two subconstructs usually fell between 0.70 and 0.80 (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007). II has been examined in various samples (such as individuals with multiple cultural identities, individuals with conflicting gender and professional identities, and individuals with conflicting professional identities) and has been shown to predict a variety of cognitive, behavioral, and mental health outcomes (Benet-Martinez, Lee, & Leu, 2006; Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, & Lee, 2007; Sacharin & Lee, forthcoming).

Benefits of Diversity for Individuals

There is preliminary evidence showing that individuals with high II, or individuals who are more likely to perceive compatibility and complementarities between different social identities, are better able to reap the benefits of being in a diverse environment. The underlying mechanism seems tied to high II's greater ability to activate and utilize knowledge and skill sets acquired from both identities. Below, we present recent evidence suggesting that high IIs may be better able to bring together different knowledge sets to a problem, better able to access different sources of social support, and achieve more professional success as 'minorities.'

II and innovativeness: Accessibility to diverse knowledge sets

Recent studies suggest that individuals with high II are more likely to bring diverse perspectives, knowledge, opinions, and competencies into a social collective, even if the identities seem contradictory to existing schemas within the collective. Meanwhile, low IIs are more likely to suppress diverse identities, especially if they seem different or contradictory to existing mindsets. As such, the level of identity integration of the individuals within the social collective moderates whether the benefits of diversity can be reaped.

Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, and Lee (2007) examined professional II among interdisciplinary researchers (i.e., those with faculty appointments in a discipline that is different from their doctoral discipline; e.g., a person with a PhD in psychology and a faculty appointment in the school of kinesiology). In their study, interdisciplinary faculty members from a research university responded to a short survey measuring their II, or perceived compatibility/conflict between their two disciplines. Participants' professional achievement was measured using publicly available information about their publications. The study found that II predicted professional achievement; interdisciplinary faculty members with

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high II (or those who viewed their two disciplinary identities as compatible) had significantly more journal publications than interdisciplinary faculty members with low II (or those who viewed their two disciplinary identities as incompatible). It might be the case that interdisciplinary scholars who have high II are better able to simultaneously draw knowledge from two diverse disciplines, whereas those with low II tend to draw from a single disciplinary knowledge set at a time. It is possible that this gave the high II interdisciplinary scholars an edge in their academic work.

Indeed, knowledge systems are bundled with various social identities, and depending on which social identity is being activated, different knowledge systems are made accessible at different times (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). To the extent that high IIs can activate multiple social identities at the same time, they may have access to more diverse knowledge sets, leading to higher achievement in tasks where diversity is needed. There is some evidence for this cognitive explanation. In a related set of experiments, Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, and Lee (2007) asked Asian Americans to come up with ideas for new fusion restaurant dishes. In another study, they asked women engineering students to come up with new designs for a cell/PDA device (e.g., iPhone). These ideas were counted and then rated by independent coders for their functional innovativeness and marketability. Results showed that participants with high II showed greater creative fluency (i.e., generated more ideas) and originality in their ideas compared with participants with lower levels of IIs. More important, this effect emerged only when the task required individuals to draw on both identity-related knowledge sets; that is, when the Asian-American participants created dishes out of a mixture of Asian and American ingredients, or when the women engineering students designed cell phones targeted for female consumers. When the Asian-American participants were given only Asian or only American ingredients, or when the women engineering students were designing a cell phone/PDA device for college students in general (i.e., gender non-specific), high IIs and low IIs showed no differences in creative fluency or originality. In short, when the task required knowledge related to both identities – thinking like an Asian *and* an American, or thinking like a woman *and* an engineer – individuals who perceived the two identities as compatible did better. Presumably, they were better at simultaneously gaining access to and applying the two diverse identity-related knowledge sets to the task at hand.

II and social networks: Outreach and social support

There is further evidence that, to the extent that high IIs perceive more compatibility between their multiple social identities, IIs are better at drawing social support from diverse social groups simultaneously. This is

supported by a recent study where biculturals completed a survey listing the key individuals in their social network, their interconnectedness (i.e., who knows whom), and their ethnicity (Mok, Morris, Benet-Martinez, & Karakitapoglu-Aygun, 2007). This study found that high IIs have larger, more culturally diverse, and more richly interconnected social networks. Such network characteristics allow high IIs to leverage their diverse social network to attain individual and group level goals (Ibarra, Kilduff, & Tsai, 2005).

II and achievement: Performance in professional settings

There is evidence that high IIs are better able to reap the benefits of diversity to reach individual goals. This was examined in the context of doctoral education, where ethnic minorities are highly under-represented. Compared with 30% in the general population, ethnic minorities constitute only 15% of people in the academic profession (professors, researchers, etc.; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The under-representation of ethnic minorities is particularly acute in some academic fields. For example, in science and engineering fields, ethnic minorities (African Americans, Native Americans, Chicanos, and Latinos) made up 2% to 2.5% of US doctorates granted in 1980 and 3.4% to 3.6% in 1990 (MacLachlan, 2004). Since 1990, this percentage has decreased, although the total number of doctorates granted has increased (Association of American Universities, 1998).

In a study of 40 ethnic minority students enrolled in doctoral programs, Darling, Molina, Sanders, Lee, and Zhao (2007) measured students' integration of their ethnic identity and professional identity (identity as an academic) using an 8-item scale with the following items [reverse scored items are marked with an (R)]: (i) The ideals as a person of color differ from my ideals as a graduate student (R); (ii) I feel conflicted between my identity as a person of color and my identity as a graduate student (R); (iii) I keep everything about being a person of color separate from being a graduate student (R); (iv) I am someone whose behavior switches from the norms of my race/ethnicity and the norms of my graduate training (R); (v) Succeeding in graduate school involves the same sides of myself as succeeding as a person of color; (vi) I feel torn between the expectations of my race/ethnicity and of my graduate career (R); (vii) My self-concept seamlessly blends my identity as a graduate student and my racial/ethnic identity; and (viii) I do not feel any tension between my goals as a person of color and the goals of my graduate career. Higher scores indicated higher II, or higher levels of perceived compatibility between ethnic and professional identities. The overall reliability for this II measure was 0.75.

Darling et al. (2007) found that II was negatively related to fear of professional failure (e.g., 'I frequently worry about employment after graduation'), positively related to professional acceptance (e.g., 'My cohort accepts me as

a competent professional'), and positively related to professional satisfaction (e.g., 'I am satisfied with my level of career attainment up to this point'). Those high in II were also higher in persistence (e.g., 'Even when things get really tough, I never lose sight of my goals') than those with low II. In addition, II was significantly negatively related to the experience of mental health symptoms such as stress.

Similar findings were replicated among two other 'minority' samples – women undergraduates who majored in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (in engineering, for example, only 20% of undergraduate students, 9% of professional engineers, and 4% of engineering professors are women; National Science Foundation, 2002) and college students from low socio-economic backgrounds (only 3% of students enrolled in higher education are from the lowest SES quartile; Carnevale & Rose, 2004).

Summary

The research above suggests that II moderates whether diversity is beneficial for the individual. Individuals with high II seem to be more adept at taking advantages of the benefits of diversity (i.e., exposure to a varied set of ideas, knowledge, values, perspectives, and relationships). Low IIs, in contrast, seem to deal with diversity by 'switching off' conflicting identities and identity-related resources (e.g., competencies and relationships), which undermines their ability to take advantage of the benefits diversity has to offer. Indeed, as minority members in a diverse setting (such as being an ethnic minority in a doctoral program, a woman in science, or a low SES college student), high IIs seem to fare better than low IIs.

Diversity and the Social Collective

As mentioned earlier, one of the most common arguments supporting diversity is that having varied perspectives and opinions benefits the social collective or the group at large. For example, a diverse student body enhances the learning environment and richness of the entire university; a diverse workforce improves the global competitiveness of the business corporation; or a diverse population supports the productivity of an economy. Is there empirical evidence supporting this idea that having a diverse social collective or group makes the collective better?

This question has been extensively discussed in the literature on teams. Teams, or bounded groups of individuals with specific task-related goals, are ubiquitous. One of the widely espoused benefits of having teams is that team members have a diverse set of knowledge, perspectives, skills, and backgrounds (Jackson, May, & Whitney, 1995; Milliken & Martins, 1996). Especially for complex tasks that require original and innovative solutions, it is commonly assumed that no one individual has all the expertise and know-how to be successful, and thus, only through putting together diverse

knowledge sets can the task be completed (Bond, Walker, Hutt, & Reingen, 2004; Brown & Eisenhardt, 1995; Sicotte & Langley, 2000).

Imagine trying to start a new 'fusion' restaurant with broad appeal in a large, metropolitan city. A team with diverse members – members from different age groups, different cultural backgrounds, and different functional training (cooking, accounting, marketing, restaurant management, etc.) – is essential for the development of a successful plan that can be implemented. The chef may come up with interesting dishes but may be less competent in balancing the books. Or a Caucasian American might have a better handle on the tastes and preferences of other Caucasian Americans than of specific ethnic minorities. An older person might have more and better ideas about menu choices that would appeal to baby boomers than a younger counterpart. In essence, diversity allows group members to bring in unique opinions and perspectives, combine different ideas through discussion, and thereby facilitate the performance and success of the team (e.g., Amabile, 1983; Amason, 1996; Kickul & Gundry, 2001; Northcraft, Polzer, Neal, & Kramer, 1995). For complex tasks, presumably, diverse teams are thought to outperform individuals as well as homogeneous teams.

However, the evidence supporting the idea that diverse teams do better than individuals and homogeneous teams is highly equivocal. The empirical literature has found positive, non-significant, and even negative relationships between diversity and team performance (Gerbert, Boerner, & Kearney, 2006). Several reasons have been proposed to explain the mixed results. For example, social categorization leads to devaluation and negative stereotyping of individuals who seem different from us based on age, culture, or functional background (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Caldwell & O'Reilly, 2003; Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004). As a result, diverse teams are prone to increased levels of communication problems and relationship conflict, thus hampering the exchange of diverse information and skill sets (Bassett-Jones, 2005; De Drue & Weingart, 2003; Ferlie, Fitzgerald, Wood, & Hawkins, 2005). Background differences and in-group bias lead to segregation between young and old members, men and women, Asians and Americans, and chefs and accountants. Even when each of these social identities and their identity-related knowledge is needed for successful team performance, the juxtaposition of these diverse social identities within a team can do more harm than good.

Managing diverse teams by managing identities

Ironically, one approach to minimize the negative effects of diverse teams is to reduce the salience of differences between members (Gaertner, Dovidio, Mann, Murrell, & Pomare, 1990; van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003). Supporting this claim, there is evidence that making salient a common superordinate collective identity increased knowledge transfer across smaller organizational units (Darr, Argote, & Epple, 1995; Kane, Argote, & Levine,

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2005). For instance, one way to reduce miscommunication, conflict, and stereotyping in a diverse team is to emphasize the common identity of the team (i.e., 'the fusion restaurant team') rather than the individuals' unique social identities based on their age, culture, or functional background. In essence, diversity makes working together difficult, and one way to reduce these difficulties is to *reduce* diversity or, at least, individuals' perceptions of diversity. Recent research showed that emphasizing group identity inhibits the unique ideas from the diverse subgroups and reduces group creativity (Adarves-Yorno, Postmes, & Haslam, 2007).

In contrast to this view, we suggest that *enhancing* diversity also can increase the benefits of diversity to the social collective. We extend current theory and research on II to suggest that the key to reaping the benefits of team diversity is retaining the unique identities of individual members while fostering perceptions about the compatibility between these different identities. Just like individuals may perceive different levels of compatibility between two different social identities *within the self* (e.g., biculturals who identify with being Asian and American at the same time), team members also can perceive different levels of compatibility between two different social identities *within the team* (e.g., team members believe that although the R&D people and the marketing people have different and non-overlapping goals, values, and expertise, these differences are compatible and complementary in light of the team's goals). The critical idea here is that keeping the different individual identities distinct within a diverse team could improve team effectiveness because team members can better access multiple but disparate knowledge sets. Below, we describe how identity integration can facilitate the effectiveness, performance, and general well-being of diverse teams (Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, & Lee, in press).

Increasing individual-level identity integration within diverse teams

In previous research, identity integration is primarily conceptualized as an individual difference. That is, individuals differ in their beliefs and perceptions about the compatibility of two disparate social identities, or social groups to which they belong. We suggest several specific pathways where the individual team member's level of identity integration may influence the well being of the social collective or the team.

Diverse teams may be a setting where individuals are exposed to team members who have different social identities than their own and through working together integrate these multiple identities within the self. Being exposed to multiple social identities can engender various psychological processes essential to identity integration. Through engagement and participation in behaviors typical of identities other than one's own, individuals develop identification with multiple social groups (Berry, 1990). Consider the fusion restaurant team where an Asian and an American chef work together to create new 'fusion' recipes. As the Asian chef gains expertise in

American-style cooking and the American chef gains expertise in Asian-style cooking, both begin to identify beyond their own cultural group to the other's cultural group as well. Furthermore, both members begin to see compatibilities between their respective cultural identities. For example, the Asian chef comes to realize that the process and principles of American-style cooking, though different from her own, can be applied to enhance her own cooking. In essence, thinking like an American chef can be perceived as making one a creative Asian chef who is able to generate fusion cuisines.

In contrast, team cultures that blur different social identities within the team can create barriers to using multiple identity-related knowledge sets. For example, in teams where it is 'taboo' to talk about cultural differences, unique cultural expertise will be less likely voiced and applied to the team's task, inhibiting the team's performance (Sanchez-Burks & Lee, 2007). Often, a common and unified team identity is made at the expense of diverse social identities. Team members believe that, as a team, they should focus on their similarities, and thus differences become an unacceptable topic of discussion. Unfortunately, this sends the message that implicit and explicit knowledge, expertise, routines, and networks associated with individual members' diverse social identities are irrelevant. Again, this undermines the underlying rationale for creating a team, which is bringing together disparate expertise and knowledge sets (not abandoning prior expertise and knowledge). Thus, the ability of diverse teams to do well may hinge on the team's ability to create a culture that nurtures rather than suppresses the distinct and unique identities within the team.

In addition, individuals with high II can directly boost the team's performance by contributing positively to both the task and the relational dynamics of the team. As mentioned previously, Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, and Lee (2007) recently showed that individuals who have high levels of II are more likely to have access to the disparate knowledge sets, thereby increasing their own levels of performance; for instance, Asian Americans who perceived their cultural identities as compatible had more innovative ideas for fusion cuisine. Given that individuals with high II are more effective as individuals, teams that have more members with high II also may be more effective. Furthermore, because individuals with high II perceive lower levels of conflict between their multiple social identities, they may be able to alleviate the team conflict that is so prevalent in diverse teams (Bassett-Jones, 2005). For example, high II team members may serve as an ambassador and facilitate the communications between other members with single social identity and also show them how to perceive their different social identities as compatible and complementary. Furthermore, high II team members may serve as a model of how integrating two identities can create synergy and contribute to the effectiveness of the team.

This suggests that, when putting together a team, one should consider not only the social identities of the members (i.e. their gender, their culture, their age, their functional background, etc.) but also the level of II of the

members; that is, the extent to which members identify with multiple social groups and view these social identities as compatible.

Summary

Based on the literature on teams, diversity has yet to live up to its potential as an essential ingredient of well-functioning, high-performing teams. Although identity integration has only been empirically studied at the individual level, we believe that it plays a role in understanding how diverse teams function. Particularly, creating perceptions that diverse social identities are different yet compatible, rather than creating a unified, common identity among diverse team members, may be important for realizing the potential for diverse teams. Extending identity integration research beyond individuals to team-level dynamics and outcomes is a critical direction for future research.

Conclusion

Diversity has always been a double-edged sword. On one hand, diversity brings a richness and variety to existing perspectives, which is essential for individual learning, team performance, organizational competitiveness, and economic strength. On the other hand, the problems associated with diversity are difficult and costly: Negative stereotypes, miscommunication, and conflict are common issues when people with diverse backgrounds and expertise come together. It is of little wonder that diversity has not consistently been beneficial to individuals or social groups.

We suggest that II plays an important role in whether and how diversity translates into improved outcomes for individuals and groups. We present research showing that individuals who have high II, or those who see compatibilities between disparate social identities, are more able to draw from different ideas and perspectives, and thus more likely to reap the benefits of diversity. We also argue that teams that have more high II members, or teams that foster perceptions of compatibility between distinct identities through their tasks and cultures are also more likely to reap the benefits of diversity. For these reasons, diversity may be fruitfully conceptualized beyond objective demographic categories such as race or gender to include subjective representations of social identification and, more important, perceived integration between social identities.

Short Biographies

Chi-Ying Cheng's research focuses on how individuals negotiate and manage conflicting social identities. She received her PhD in Organizational Psychology at the University of Michigan and a BS and MS in Psychology

from the National Taiwan University. She is currently a post-doctoral research fellow at Columbia Business School.

Melissa Sanders' research focuses on issues of identity and social power. Her current research involves both theoretical and empirical research on identity integration, cultural perceptions of power, and social class identity formation. She holds a BA in Psychology and Law and Society from Oberlin College and is a doctoral candidate in Psychology at the University of Michigan.

Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks is Assistant Professor of Management and Organizations at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. He received his PhD in Social Psychology from the University of Michigan. His research investigates the implications of identity and emotional processes for innovation, communication, conflict, and rapport at work.

Kristine Molina's research lies at the intersection of ethnicity, class, and gender. Her work examines inequality, discrimination, and academic achievement among Latina/os. She is presently a doctoral candidate in the joint PhD program in Psychology & Women's Studies at the University of Michigan. She holds a BA in Psychology from Smith College.

Fiona Lee's research examines identity, power, and culture in organizations. She is Professor of Psychology and Associate Professor of Management and Organizations at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. She obtained her PhD in Social Psychology at Harvard University.

Emily Darling is a doctoral candidate in the Management and Organizations Department at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses upon the experiences of stigma and identity conflict at work. She has a BA in Psychology from the California State University, Bakersfield.

Yu Zhao's research focuses on the influence of teacher efficacy, teacher expectation, and students' sociocultural background on students' academic motivation. She holds an MA in Educational Psychology from the Eastern Michigan University and is currently working on her PhD in Educational Psychology at Pennsylvania State University.

Endnote

* Correspondence address: Fiona Lee, Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, 530 Church St., Ann Arbor, MI 48109, USA. Email: fionalee@umich.edu.

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