Social inclusion in diverse work settings
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“Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god.”

Aristotle, Politics

This famous quotation from Aristotle is at the heart of this dissertation. It reflects that groups are essential to humans. We depend on others for our food, housing, and safety. Hence, most of us are unable to survive without the help of others (Caporael & Baron, 1997). Yet, inclusion into groups does not only serve our material interests, but also has important psychological benefits (Correll & Park, 2005). Being part of a group enhances our self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), reduces our uncertainties (Hogg & Abrams, 1993), and makes us feel distinct from others (Brewer, 1991).

Considering that inclusion into groups is so vital to our well-being, researchers have devoted substantial effort to investigate how inclusion is established, and, more specifically, in which type of groups we tend to seek inclusion in. In this regard, a well-established insight is that we generally prefer to be part of groups whose members are similar to ourselves (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). For example, consider our group(s) of friends. Our friends usually share our opinions and values. In addition, it is highly likely that they are similar to us in terms of demographic attributes, such as gender, age, and ethnicity. This is no coincidence. There are many good reasons for why we prefer to seek inclusion into homogeneous groups. Similarity eases interactions and facilitates communication. It provides a common ground from which we can build relationships with others (D. Byrne, 1971). In addition, similarity is attractive for intrapersonal reasons. Interacting with similar others helps us to establish a sense of who we are and reinforces our own attitudes, opinions, and worldviews (Hogg & Abrams, 1993).

However, we cannot always freely choose our fellow group members. One context in which this is particularly true is the work domain. We usually have little control over who we work with. Accordingly, despite our general preference for homogeneity, we often need to collaborate with people that have different opinions and values or are different from us in terms of demographic group memberships. In fact, this has become a particular pressing issue as organizations have increasingly diversified over the past decades (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Moreover,
research indicates that feeling included in a diverse work setting\(^1\) is by no means straightforward. For instance, a highly consistent finding is that people who are different from their coworkers in terms of demographic attributes tend to experience less work satisfaction and feel less attached to their organization than those who are demographically similar to their peers (Guillaume, Brodbeck, & Riketta, 2012).

While securing inclusion into diverse work settings is certainly a challenge for individuals, it is just as much a concern for organizations. In fact, social-psychological theories suggest that diversity may have detrimental consequences for effective group functioning. According to self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), people use observable differences, such as demographic attributes, to place themselves and similar others into in-groups and dissimilar others into out-groups. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) further posits that in order to enhance and maintain a positive social identity, people like and trust in-group members more than out-group members. As a result, workforce diversity may create us-them distinctions which undermines the unity of the organization (Van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004).

Yet, diversity is not just bad news. It potentially has important benefits to both individuals and organizations. Being included in diverse work groups and organizations may enlarge one’s social network, which in turn increases one’s access to material resources and information (Granovetter, 1973). In addition, diversity in our immediate work environment may lead to the development of a more complex social identity, which expands our worldview (Roccas & Brewer, 2002) and enhances our well-being (Van Dick & Haslam, 2012). Likewise, for organizations, diversity may be a source of strength, rather than a necessary evil. Having a diverse workforce can improve internal work processes, may enlarge the organization’s external network, and can improve the moral image of the organization (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Jackson & Joshi, 2011; Joshi & Roh, 2009).

Developing an understanding of how inclusion in diverse work settings can be fostered is therefore essential. This is the central aim of this dissertation. In the remainder of this introduction we\(^2\) will first define the concepts of inclusion and diversity. Next, we turn to which strategies organizations may use to create work environments in which employees from diverse backgrounds feel included. Finally, we present an overview of the empirical chapters of this dissertation.

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\(^1\) The term *work setting* is deliberately used to indicate that this dissertation is not only directed at *work groups* that are embedded within a larger organization, but also focuses on the *organization* as a whole.

\(^2\) Throughout this dissertation “we” is used instead of “I” to reflect that the research described is a product of my collaboration with my advisors – Sabine Otten and Karen Van der Zee – and others.
Defining Inclusion

The concept of inclusion has received considerable attention in the organizational diversity literature (e.g., Lirio, Lee, Williams, Haugen, & Kossek, 2008; Miller, 1998; Pelled, Lefford, & Mohrman, 1999; Pless & Maak, 2004; Roberson, 2006; Shore et al., 2011), but also in related disciplines such as social work (Mor-Barak, 2000), social psychology (Brewer, 1991; Ellemers & Jetten, 2013), educational research (Koster, Nakken, Pijl, & Van Houten, 2009), and sports psychology (Allen, 2006). Research across these disciplines has yielded a vast amount of definitions and conceptualizations of inclusion. In this dissertation (chapter 2), we attempt to integrate these existing notions about inclusion by formulating our own definition. We define inclusion as the degree to which an individual perceives that the group provides him or her with a sense of belonging and authenticity (Jansen et al., 2014).

As becomes apparent from our definition, we consider inclusion to be a two-dimensional concept, consisting of perceptions of belonging and authenticity. That is, an individual experiences inclusion to the extent that he or she perceives to be an accepted group member that is allowed to be him- or herself within the group. Herewith, inclusion is thought to satisfy two fundamental human needs: the need for belonging and the need for authenticity. The need for belonging, on the one hand, is the motivation to form and maintain strong and stable relationships with other people. Satisfying this need requires having frequent and affectively pleasant interactions in a temporally stable group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Research suggest that when the need for belonging is thwarted, individuals may experience cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and health problems (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005; DeWall, Deckman, Pond, & Bonser, 2011). The need for authenticity, on the other hand, is the desire to feel and act in accordance with one’s true self. Satisfying this need requires that group members perceive to be allowed and encouraged to be themselves in a group. That is, they should perceive that their idiosyncratic personality, opinions, and skills are recognized and appreciated by the group. Similar to the need for belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), satisfying one’s need for authenticity has been shown to be positively associated with individual well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ito & Kodama, 2005; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008) and organizational performance (Sheldon et al., 1997).

Another important feature of our inclusion definition is that it explicates that individual perceptions of inclusion are based on signals sent out from the group. Inclusion is thereby qualitatively different from another important psychological
concept: social identification (Edwards & Peccei, 2007; Leach et al., 2008; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Social identification reflects the extent to which an individual connects to and values the group, and is assumed to be largely under one’s own control (Edwards & Peccei, 2007; Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Leach et al., 2008; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Postmes, Haslam, & Jans, 2013). In contrast, in the process of inclusion it is the group that primarily determines whether an individual is included or not. This conceptualization of inclusion is in line with sociometer theory (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), which poses that people constantly monitor their social environment for cues or signals that pertain to one’s inclusionary status, and fits with experimental manipulations of inclusion (and exclusion) in which it is the group that includes (or excludes) the individual (e.g., Baumeister et al., 2005; DeWall et al., 2011). Figure 1.1 portrays these different foci of identification and inclusion schematically.

![Figure 1.1 The Individual-Group Relationship in Social Identification and Inclusion](image)

Defining inclusion as a two-dimensional construct, consisting of perceptions of belonging and authenticity, implies that individual group members potentially can find themselves in one of four different situations. Figure 1.2 graphically depicts this framework.

An individual perceives exclusion to the extent that he or she is treated as an outsider and also receives signals from the group that he or she is not allowed to be him- or herself. An individual facing exclusion is neither able to satisfy the need for belongingness nor the need for authenticity. This is likely to reduce work satisfaction and well-being, but most probably also the productivity of group members.

The assimilation cell reflects situations in which an individual perceives to be an accepted group member, but at the same time experiences difficulty with fully disclosing his or her true self. In diverse groups, this usually implies that minority members should conform to the norms of the majority group. Majority members, conversely, are less likely to experience assimilation pressure. Their majority status
implies that – at least psychologically - there is a large overlap between the perception of who they are, and of what is typical and normative for the group as a whole (Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2007).

The differentiation cell, with low belonging and high authenticity, reflects cases in which the individual is treated as a marginal member by the group, but at the same time is allowed and encouraged to be authentic. Although marginal members who can remain themselves within the group may potentially offer the group the opportunity of enlarging their external social capital, there is the risk that they are not motivated to do so, because they lack a sense of belonging to the group (Ellemers & Jetten, 2013; Granovetter, 1973).

Finally, an individual will perceive inclusion if the group provides him or her with a sense of belonging and allows and encourages him or her to be authentic. This implies that inclusion is not simply the opposite of exclusion; at least not on a single dimension. Rather, following from the conceptual framework of Figure 1.2, inclusion differs from exclusion on two dimensions: belonging and authenticity. Inclusion appears to be the most beneficial state for both individuals and groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low belongingness</th>
<th>High belongingness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low authenticity</td>
<td>Exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High authenticity</td>
<td>Differentiation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.2 Framework of Inclusion (adapted from Shore et al., 2011)

Diversity and Dissimilarity

As previously mentioned, we focus in this dissertation specifically on how inclusion into diverse groups can be fostered. This raises the question what diversity exactly entails. Diversity, although frequently used in everyday language, seems to be a term that is open to multiple interpretations. Some consider diversity to be a group characteristic that reflects the degree to which differences on a specific attribute exist between group members (Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). This has been labeled the compositional approach to diversity. Research assuming a compositional
approach focuses on how the distribution of differences among group members affects groups (Harrison & Klein, 2007). It attempts to answer questions such as: are mixed gender work groups more creative than same gender work groups? Hence, the implicit assumption in this approach is that diversity affects all individual group members in the same way.

In contrast, others consider diversity to be an individual characteristic indicating the extent to which an individual group member is different from other group members in terms of a specific attribute (Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992). This has been labeled the *relational approach* to diversity. Research conducted in this tradition focuses on how being dissimilar from others affects individual group members. It attempts to answer questions such as: does a male employee feel more included in his work group when a larger share of his colleagues is also male? Thus, this approach assumes that diversity affects individuals differently depending on the extent to which they are dissimilar.

The difference between the compositional and the relational approach is perhaps most clearly illustrated with an example. Figure 1.3 depicts two four-person work groups.

![Figure 1.3 Illustration of the Difference between the Compositional and the Relational Approach towards Diversity](image)

In group 1, one of the group members is female, while the other three are male. In group 2, one member is male, while the other three are female. In the compositional approach, where diversity is seen as a group-level characteristic, the two groups are considered to be equally diverse. In contrast, in the relational approach, where diversity is considered to be an individual measure of dissimilarity, the two groups are clearly different from each other. Take the woman in the dashed oval. She is both a member of group 1 and group 2. While both groups may be equally diverse
at the group level, she belongs to the minority in group 1 and to the majority in group 2. Thus, from her perspective both groups are clearly different from each other. Correspondingly, this example illustrates that while the compositional approach is most suited to study how diversity affects the group as a whole, the relational approach is best equipped to study how diversity influences individual group members.

Besides these two different approaches to diversity, another important feature of diversity is that it in principle may concern any possible dimension of differentiation. Various typologies have been proposed to structure these diversity dimensions. An often made distinction is that between surface- and deep-level diversity (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Jackson & Joshi, 2011). Surface-level diversity refers to differences among group members on attributes that are easily discerned and quickly detected, such as gender, age, and ethnicity. In contrast, deep-level diversity refers to differences among group members on attributes that are less visible and that only become apparent through interaction, such as personality, attitudes, and skills.³

In this dissertation, we take a relational approach to diversity, because we are particularly interested in how diversity affects individual group members. In addition, we specifically focus on surface-level diversity. We choose to do so because differences that are easily observable, such as one’s gender and ethnicity, are in many situations the attributes that are most likely to be used by people as criteria for inclusion (E. R. Smith & Mackie, 2007). Together, this implies that we investigate how individual perceptions of inclusion into demographically diverse work settings can be fostered, and consider whether the same processes apply to majority and minority members. We hereby specifically focus on the role of organizational diversity approaches.

Diversity Approaches

Organizational diversity approaches entail the organization’s normative beliefs and expectations about the reason to diversify, the value of diversity, and the connection to work processes (Stevens et al., 2008). Thus, diversity approaches reflect the organizational stance towards how differences within the organization should be dealt with.

The two most commonly described diversity approaches in the literature are colorblindness and multiculturalism (Stevens et al., 2008). The colorblind approach is

³ Note that this distinction does not imply that surface- and deep-level diversity are unrelated. For example, men and women could very well also differ from each other in their underlying attributes (e.g., their personality and educational background).
characterized by the notion that subgroup differences are superficial and mostly irrelevant. Colorblindness involves the belief that subgroup identities (e.g., one’s cultural identity) do not matter and should be ignored. According to this approach, the focus should instead be on individual merits and qualifications. For these reasons, colorblindness is held to be strongly resonated in American and Western European ideals of individualism, meritocracy and equality (Markus & Steele, 2000; Plaut, 2002; K. M. Thomas, Mack, & Montaglioni, 2004). In an organizational setting, a colorblind approach to diversity implies that the organization stresses that people should be treated equally as individuals and that subgroup differences should be ignored when making decisions, such as hiring new employees and promoting sitting organizational members (Stevens et al., 2008).

In contrast, the multicultural approach asserts that differences between subgroups are substantial and should be celebrated because they are valuable to the larger group. This approach holds that people have socialized in the context of their subgroup. As a result, they have legitimately different perspectives, which can be used for the benefit of the larger group or organization (Cox, 1991; Stevens et al., 2008). In an organizational setting, a multicultural approach to diversity implies that the organization emphasizes that subgroup differences should be acknowledged and appreciated because these differences are thought to enhance work outcomes, such as creativity and innovation.

Interestingly, the extent to which colorblindness and multiculturalism is supported differs between majority and minority employees. In general, majority group members show higher levels of endorsement of colorblindness, whereas minority members tend to support multiculturalism to a greater extent (Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011; Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007; Verkuyten, 2005; Wolsko, Park, & Judd, 2006).

A prominent explanation for why colorblindness is more positively received by majority members than by minority members, departs from the notion that majority members are –by definition- more prototypical of the organization than minority members (Chattopadhyay, George, & Lawrence, 2004; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008). As a result, although subgroup differences officially should not matter, in the colorblind approach the norms and values of the majority group may become dominant throughout the entire organization and may be used as criteria for inclusion. While this is certainly comfortable for majority members, this may result in perceptions of exclusion by those who are in the minority (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002; Markus & Steele, 2000; Stevens et al., 2008). Thus, while ignoring subgroup differences and stressing individualism, the colorblind approach is likely to
fail to acknowledge the unequal effects this may have for majority and minority group members.

Conversely, a multicultural approach to diversity is generally more supported by minority members than by majority members. One possible reason for this difference is that majority members perceive multiculturalism to be “only for minorities” (Plaut et al., 2011, p. 338). Valuing diversity, as is typical for the multicultural approach, implies that being different, rather than prototypical, is the requirement for group inclusion. As majority members generally do not consider themselves to be “diverse,” they may refrain from endorsing multicultural views or even feel excluded within organizations that emphasize the value of diversity (Linnehan & Konrad, 1999; K. M. Thomas & Plaut, 2008; Verkuyten, 2005; Wolsko et al., 2000). Thus, while stressing an all-encompassing diversity approach in which differences are valued and seen as a source of learning, the multicultural approach may –unintendedly- be perceived as exclusionary by majority members.

This poses organizations with an important challenge. How to ensure that both majority and minority members feel included in the organization? In response to this, scholars have argued that organizations should move beyond the colorblindness/multiculturalism dichotomy, and develop a new diversity approach that is inclusive of both majority and minority members. Perhaps the most prominent example of such an inclusive approach is the all-inclusive multicultural (AIM) approach as developed by Stevens and colleagues (2008). The main premise of the AIM approach is that majority members’ resistance to a multicultural approach is reduced when their cultural group is included in an organizational conception of diversity (e.g., in mission statements or diversity task forces). Similar to the multicultural approach, the AIM approach acknowledges the importance of an individuals’ demographic group membership, which is essential for gaining minority support. Unlike the multicultural approach, however, the AIM approach explicitly emphasizes that this holds for members of all groups, including majority members. Accordingly, the AIM approach is thought to address the deficiencies in the standard multicultural approach without reverting to colorblindness (Stevens et al., 2008).

In this dissertation we investigate how each of these diversity approaches affects individual group members. Consistent with the relational approach to diversity, we hereby distinguish between employees belonging to the demographic majority and those belonging to the demographic minority.
CHAPTER 1

Dissertation Overview

The empirical part of this dissertation consists of four chapters (chapters 2-5). In chapter 2, we introduce a conceptual framework of inclusion and subsequently use this as a starting point to develop and validate a scale to measure perceptions of inclusion. Departing from existing work on inclusion and complementing this with theoretical insights from optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991) and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), we derive two components of perceived inclusion: belonging and authenticity. In addition, we pose that in the process of inclusion, it is the group rather than the individual that has primary agency. From this conceptualization, we develop and validate a scale to measure perceptions of inclusion. We use data from two samples to determine whether our proposed configuration of inclusion is empirically supported and to assess the psychometric properties of our newly developed scale.

In chapter 3 we examine how and under which conditions perceived diversity approaches relate to employees’ work satisfaction and perceived innovation. Corresponding with our reasoning in the previous section, we anticipate that perceptions of a colorblind diversity approach will be most strongly related to these (positive) outcomes for cultural majority employees, whereas perceptions of a multicultural diversity approach will be most beneficial to cultural minority employees. In addition, we predict that perceptions of inclusion within the organization will mediate these effects.

While chapter 3 clarifies how organizational diversity approaches are associated with employees’ perceptions of inclusions and work outcomes, the cross-sectional nature of our data prohibits us from drawing any reliable conclusions about the causality of these relationships. In addition, chapter 3 does not yet assess whether majority members indeed consider the AIM approach to be an improvement to the “standard” multicultural approach in which the majority group is not explicitly made part of organizational diversity. In chapter 4 we address these issues. We present two field experiments in which we test whether the explicit mentioning of the cultural majority group in an organization’s diversity philosophy indeed results in higher levels of perceived inclusion among majority group members. Participants of Experiment 1 are prospective employees (i.e., job-seekers) belonging to the cultural majority. Here, we specifically test whether the AIM approach, compared with the standard

4 It should be noted that the empirical chapters of this dissertation were deliberately written such that they could be read independently from each other. As a result, they may partially overlap with this introduction and with each other.
multicultural approach, results in higher levels of anticipated inclusion. Participants of Experiment 2 are sitting organizational members. This enables us to assess whether the beneficial effects of the AIM approach extend to those who are already part of an organization. In addition, Experiment 2 allows us to test whether an AIM approach to diversity enhances majority members’ support for organizational diversity efforts.

While chapters 3 and 4 consider how perceptions of inclusion into culturally diverse work settings can be fostered, in chapter 5 we attempt to answer the same question for gender diverse work groups. In addition, whereas in chapter 3 and 4 we make a dichotomous, and arguably rather unsophisticated, distinction between majority and minority members, in chapter 5 we operationalize dissimilarity in a more refined manner. By combining responses to a survey administered among employees from a university of applied sciences with data from the organization’s personnel administration, we calculate for each respondent how much he or she is different from his or her direct colleagues in terms of gender. To illustrate, consider a female worker that either has three or four male colleagues. While in both cases she is in the minority, she is more dissimilar when she has four rather than three male coworkers. Thus, by operationalizing dissimilarity as a continuous rather than a dichotomous variable, we are able to test our hypotheses in a more refined manner in chapter 5. Specifically, we investigate how and under which conditions gender dissimilarity relates to perceptions of inclusion. In addition, we assess how perceived inclusion, in turn, is associated with the number of days that people are absent from work.

Finally, in chapter 6 we provide a short summary of our research findings and reflect on the theoretical and practical implications of this dissertation. Furthermore, we identify the main strengths and weaknesses of our investigations and provide suggestions for how future research may build upon our findings.