



From Diversity to Inclusion to Equity: A Theory of Generative Interactions

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Abstract

This paper develops a practice-based Theory of Generative Interactions across diversity that builds on empirical findings and conceptual frameworks from multiple fields of study. This transdisciplinary review (Montuori in *World Futures* 69:200–230, 2013) draws on the disciplines of sociology, social psychology, organization studies, and communications. The Theory of Generative Interactions suggests that in order to facilitate inclusion, multiple types of exclusionary dynamics (self-segregation, communication apprehension, and stereotyping and stigmatizing) must be overcome through adaptive cognitive processing and skill development, and engagement in positive interactions must occur in order to facilitate inclusion that is created and sustained by contextually relevant sets of organizational practices. The organizational practices provide the following conditions for generative interactions: pursuing an important, shared organizational purpose, mixing diverse members frequently over protracted periods of time, enabling differing groups to have equal standing and insider status in contributing to success, and providing collaborative interdependence, interpersonal comfort, and self-efficacy. These interactions are generative in that they help to challenge the guiding assumptions of the organizational culture, reconsider taken-for-granted aspects, and raise fundamental questions about organizations (Gergen in *Person Soc Psychol* 36:1344–1360, 1978). We assert that such interactions, properly structured, can help organizations more fully address all stakeholders in creating value ethically, and ultimately creating equity for individuals and groups in the organization.

Keywords Diversity · Inclusion · Equity · Generative interaction

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Introduction

Despite decades of research and concerted effort from organizational leaders and policy makers alike, tensions and inequity concerning diversity and inclusion persist in many types of U.S. organizations, industries, and sectors. Some of these tensions stem from a lack of fruitful interactions across diverse individuals and groups. The need for additional managerial options and theory to guide these efforts is evident as creating inclusive practices and organizational cultures remains elusive and problems frequent.

Research results in the diversity field remain contradictory:

Although a significant amount of research has been conducted to try to understand whether these [diversity management] practices help reduce discrimination, increase managerial diversity, and enhance performance, the pattern of results is filled with inconsistencies that severely limit our understanding of which diversity practices should be used, how they should

be implemented, for what purpose, and to what effect. When it comes to understanding how to achieve valued outcomes, there is little theory that helps scholars and practitioners integrate disparate research results (Nishii et al. 2018, p. 38)

Further, according to Dobbin and Kalev (2016) on the effectiveness of diversity training: “Companies are just doubling down on the same approaches they’ve used since the 1960s—which often made things worse, not better.” (p. 54). These authors go on to state that diversity training activates bias, rather than impeding it and that “some of the most effective solutions aren’t even designed with diversity in mind” (p. 54.) The shortcomings of contemporary approaches to diversity and inclusion and the inconsistencies found in extant research call for new theory. In this article we review key research findings and emergent concepts across a number of fields to develop theory that provides insights into how organizations might improve diversity interactions and generate more inclusive and productive outcomes. The literature reviewed indicates that we already possess a sizeable amount of knowledge from sociological, social psychological, and psychological research about phenomena involving the interaction of diverse individuals. It is our contention that this research has not been heretofore leveraged and synthesized in the way that we present it here, to explain the inconsistent findings on organizational diversity efforts and to offer an alternative approach that can guide future inquiry and ethical organizational action.

This integrative review leads to a new Theory of Generative Interactions that outlines conditions for enhancing inclusion through the promotion of inclusive practices and culture, and that stimulates new avenues for research and for managerial strategy around inclusion. We draw particularly on systematic reviews of findings and studies that offer concepts to explain various phenomena associated with diversity and inclusion. Our theory is a multi-level synthesis of these findings and concepts that shed light on dynamic phenomena that impede or foster inclusion. We find that there is not so much a dearth of relevant research but, more so, that various bodies of knowledge on diversity and inclusion have not been appropriately synthesized to offer a better understanding of forces that foster exclusion and of organizational practices that can counter those exclusionary forces.

We are interested in theory that can guide ‘ethical action’ by organizations to produce benefits to various stakeholders in the form of equity and social justice, personal development of organizational members, and improved organizational performance. The ethical stakes for success with diversity and inclusion are high. Organizations that fail to adapt to global and local trends toward greater diversity and inclusion will suffer in many ways, while those that do adapt will achieve individual and collective benefits. Becker

(2013) is clear on the economic costs of discrimination and the gains from inclusion: the optimal allocation of human capital will result in improved economic performance and higher effectiveness and efficiency. Optimal allocation also provides equity, serving the ends of social justice and good business ethics, and producing effective incentives for personal development. Further, according to stakeholder theory (Freeman 1984), “the task of executives is to create as much value as possible for stakeholders without resorting to tradeoffs. Great companies endure because they manage to get stakeholder interests aligned in the same direction” (Freeman 2014). Aligning stakeholder interests requires collaboration and coordination across individuals and groups in an organization. Thus, effective managerial diversity practice from a stakeholder theory perspective involves inclusive decision-making and organizational action to create value for various stakeholders *together*, i.e., “without resorting to tradeoffs.” Attending to stakeholders in this way not only benefits internal participants who are included in the decision-making process, but also external stakeholders (e.g., customers, owners, community members) who may benefit from stronger organizational performance resulting from inclusive practices that generate positive outcomes. However, as demonstrated by reviews of diversity efforts, ‘achieving diversity’ in terms of numerical representation is not enough to ensure these benefits.

To clarify our discussion, it is helpful to define the terminology of diversity, inclusion, and equity, as well as discuss the relationship between the three concepts. Diversity or representational diversity (Weisinger and Salipante 2005) has been defined as “the representation, in one social system, of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance” (Cox 1993, p. 5). Inclusion differs from diversity in focusing not only on the compositional mix of people, but also on every employee’s incorporation into organizational processes and culture. Inclusion is “the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organizational processes such as access to information and resources, involvement in work groups, and ability to influence the decision-making process” (Mor-Barak and Cherin 1998, p. 48). Finally, equity, refers to “the absence of systematic disparities ... between groups with different levels of underlying social advantage/disadvantage—that is, wealth, power, or prestige” (Chin and Chien 2006, p. 79). Equity differentiates from inclusion in that it places the outcome at the system or organizational rather than the group or individual level. Equity calls for the righting of systemic and structural injustices. To achieve equity and other benefits of inclusion, it is important to discuss and elevate practices that can move us from diversity to equity.

Our theory posits that *generative interactions* are the key to that movement. The term refers to interactions across diversity that generate social connection and the deeper

understanding needed to facilitate equity at the organizational level. Diversity interactions can be considered generative if they have the “capacity to challenge the guiding assumptions of the culture, to raise fundamental questions regarding contemporary social life, to foster reconsideration of that which is ‘taken for granted’ and thereby furnish new alternatives for social actions” (Gergen 1978, p. 1346). Under this framing, superficial interactions are insufficient to effect change—only substantial and meaningful interactions will move organizations from diversity to inclusion and equity, and to the organizational performance benefits associated with improved allocation of human capital.

Generative diversity interactions ultimately serve to enhance members’ understanding of key stakeholders, internal as well as external, which in turn helps the organization to create value for all stakeholders together. As Harrison et al. (2015) state, “Stakeholder theory advocates for treating all stakeholders with fairness, honesty, and even generosity” (p. 859). Thus, with an eye toward equitable outcomes, we posit that our Theory of Generative Interactions provides a fresh, ethical, and alternative approach to diversity and inclusion in organizations—that is, to the ethical managing of human differences in organizations.

Our theory posits that particular organizational practices—embedded practices of organizational members engaging with each other—foster generative interactions that, in turn, mitigate phenomena known to hamper diversity and inclusion. Thus, the research question that our theory aims to address is: What organizational practices counter exclusionary phenomena and promote generative interactions across representational diversity, leading to inclusion and equity?

Inclusion, Exclusion, and Generative Practices

Inclusion represents a potent perspective on diversity, with an expanding body of research. In an extensive meta-analysis of studies published over the last two decades on diversity and inclusion in human service organizations, Barak et al. (2016) found that management efforts promoting inclusion were consistently related to positive outcomes, whereas diversity alone was associated with both positive and negative outcomes. Nishii (2013) notes that diverse representation is limited to producing assimilation to the dominant culture, while inclusion characterizes the multicultural organization. Nishii introduces the concept of *climate for inclusion*, seeing inclusion as a culture, an environment, where “individuals of all backgrounds—not just members of historically powerful identity groups—are fairly treated, valued for who they are, and included in core decision making” (2013, p. 1754).

To produce a theory that can guide research on effective managerial action, we argue that a climate or culture for inclusion implies a set of sustained practices at the group and organizational levels. Following the notion of organizations as *organizing*, and as dynamic and evolving, practice theory (Nicolini 2013) places importance both on individuals as active agents and on structural and systemic factors as shaping lives and cultures (Ortner 1984; Reckwitz 2002). Within organizations Feldman and Pentland (2003) similarly describe organizational routines as both a source of perpetuation and as a source of change. As conceptualized by Reckwitz (2002), practices are multi-dimensional, involving habitual, routine, everyday action that has bodily, cognitive, and emotional aspects. Most relevant for the study of inclusion is the notion that “practice theory argues that everyday actions are consequential in producing the structural contours of social life” (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011, p. 4). Thus, inclusion (or exclusion) can be favored by particular practices. Investigating practices in organizations allows us to study the ways in which everyday interactions can counter exclusionary phenomena.

Focusing on generative diversity interactions, this article is intended to be distinctive in two ways. First, it is an integrative, transdisciplinary review (Montuori 2013), drawing from social science bodies of knowledge known to us as management researchers from our differing fields of research. As a creative enterprise, the review makes no claim to being comprehensive. Rather, the contribution of this work is a *cross-disciplinary process of theory generation*. Second, to produce an evidence-based, actionable theory, it seeks to determine the nature of organizational practices that produce and sustain diversity interactions that are generative. Following specifications for strong theory (Sutton and Staw 1995), the theory draws on the reviewed bodies of knowledge to provide explanations and boundary conditions for its posited connections between organizational practices, diversity interactions, and the outcomes of those interactions.

Literature Review

Our Theory of Generative Interactions specifies organizational practices that produce and sustain generative diversity interactions, leading to inclusion and equity. We posit that dynamics such as self-segregation, communication apprehension, stereotyping, and stigmatizing will predominate by default if not countered by other forces, thereby hampering diversity and inclusion efforts. On the other hand, we assert that particular organizational practices can mitigate these phenomena, facilitating the creation of generative diversity interactions that enhance both diversity and inclusion. In effect, the issue is one of boundary

conditions—organizational practices—that are critical to whether exclusion or inclusion occurs among diverse individuals. The conceptual foundations for our theory are discussed in the literature review below. We draw from multiple disciplines and contexts to explain how we derived our theory. Following our transdisciplinary approach, we begin by emphasizing systematic reviews and meta-analysis articles on diversity and inclusion in the research contexts of business, higher education institutions and mixed-income communities.

Contemporary Diversity and Inclusion Efforts

The inconsistent findings of diversity efforts identified by Nishii et al.'s (2018) review and the reasons for diversity efforts' inadequacies provided by Dobbin and Kalev (2016) make clear that organizations face daunting challenges in their diversity and inclusion efforts. These reviews indicate that problems exist with diversity training, particularly its periodic, short-term nature (Kravitz 2007), with diversity evaluations, with mentoring and networking programs, and, as is discussed below, with formal specification of affirmative action programs (Leslie et al. 2014). However, programs that establish responsibility for diversity, such as diversity committees and staffs, increase representation in managerial positions for underrepresented groups (Kalev et al. 2006), indicating that “managing *for* diversity” (Chavez and Weisinger 2008) involves understanding diversity and inclusion as a cultural change process in organizations.

Two reviews of another area of organizational research—the impacts of diversity on work group performance—also revealed findings to be highly inconsistent (van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007; Williams and O'Reilly 1998). Williams and O'Reilly (1998) found a negative effect of social categorization processes that engender negative affect, such as distrust, and a positive effect from informational/decision-making processes that benefit from differences in perspectives. Van Knippenberg and Schippers' (2007) reported that the inconsistencies in their findings suggest that more complex understandings of mediating processes and moderating factors are required. The consistent discovery of inconsistent findings suggest that theory must incorporate mediating processes and moderating factors. For theory development here, we identify social and cognitive processes that mediate between representational diversity and inclusion, with these processes influencing whether and how diversity leads to inclusion or exclusion. The theory also identifies moderators as the boundary conditions, at a level of analysis above that of the particular mediating process, that influence the strength of the mediating process. We intend that, together the theory's specified mediating processes and boundary conditions explain why representational diversity alone, and the programs that center on them, are insufficient to

produce inclusion and generative interactions and why other programs and practices foster inclusion.

Research on diversity interactions among college students and among residents in mixed-income housing communities provide an entry point for identifying such mediators and moderators. Within higher education, McNair-Brown (2016) concludes that inequities are worsening, citing the following example: the widening and persistence of the attainment gap for low-income students and students of color; compared to white students, a higher likelihood of students of color at two-year colleges taking three or more developmental education courses; and students of color experiencing fewer high-impact educational practices. On U.S. campuses, despite high representational diversity in some, students uncomfortable with cultures different from their own typically have only limited experience interacting with diverse others. Their interaction is superficial, usually limited to engagement in the classroom, with a lack of cross-ethnic socializing elsewhere (Halualani 2007). These limited engagements inhibit the development of meaningful diversity interactions and the formation of interracial friendships (Stearns et al. 2009). Investigation of mixed-income housing communities (Brophy and Smith 1997) produced similar discoveries. While a primary objective of these communities is to address problems of social exclusion (Joseph et al. 2007), many mixed-income communities are coming up short (Ellickson 2010). Social interactions between individuals of different income groups tend to be infrequent, short, and superficial (Rosenbaum et al. 1998) leaving low-income residents of mixed-income housing communities feeling socially isolated and excluded (Chaskin et al. 2012; Fraser et al. 2012; Lucio and Wolfersteig 2012).

Representational diversity efforts ignore the relational realities of cross-group interaction. Representation provides the opportunity for inclusion (Smith et al. 2014), but it is an aggregated concept, one typically measured at the level of an entire organization or a geographical unit. When these numbers are disaggregated, as into smaller organizational units, occupational groupings or residential neighborhoods, interaction is found to be superficial and primarily intra-rather than intergroup, and therefore, not inclusive. Social phenomena that produce superficial interactions, then, represent mediating processes that inhibit inclusion in the presence of diversity. Although seemingly ignored in organizational diversity efforts, research has provided insights on these processes, as we discuss next.

Exclusionary Dynamics: Self-Segregation, Communication Apprehension, and Stereotyping

The persistence of problems in achieving inclusion supports the view that impediments are complex and rooted in basic social phenomena. As reviewed below, the concepts

of self-segregation, cross-cultural communication apprehension, and especially stereotyping and stigmatizing help to explain why diversity interactions are sparse and superficial. These phenomena often lead to homogeneous groupings, overemphasis on differing identities, and negative assessments of other groups. In the absence of counter-vailing organizational practices, the phenomena produce dynamics that represent default social behavior impeding inclusion.

Self-Segregation

Literature on mixed-income housing and diversity in higher education make clear the phenomenon of diverse individuals differentiating and distancing themselves socially even when in physical proximity. The ubiquitous process of ‘birds of a feather flocking together’, individuals being attracted to others they perceive as similar, is termed homophily in sociological literature (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954; McPherson et al. 2001; Stark and Flache 2012; Stearns et al. 2009). Homophily can contribute to identity formation useful to a multicultural society but also to distancing between racial and ethnic groups. Racial homophily has been stable over several decades in the U.S. (Smith et al. 2014). Consistent with diversity’s impact on work group performance, homophily has mixed effects on attempts to achieve collective action (Centola 2013). In teams that founded new businesses, homophily was a strong determinant of teams’ gender and ethnicity composition (Ruef et al. 2003). In an MBA program, racial homophily was found in friendship networks. Its causes were not only personal preferences but also exclusionary pressures from majority group members (Mehra et al. 1998), implying that if even one racial or ethnic group is uncomfortable with difference, patterns of social segregation will emerge.

Cross-Cultural Communication Apprehension

Self-segregation can also be attributed to intercultural communication apprehension (Neuliep and McCroskey 1997), with apprehension reducing the willingness to communicate with diverse others (Kim 2012; Lin and Rancer, 2003) and hampering the reduction in uncertainty after cross-cultural interactions (Neuliep and Ryan 1998). Related to communication apprehension are increased uncertainty and risk in cross-cultural interactions produced by norms of political correctness and propriety (Ely et al. 2006). Such civil norms are commonly pursued by organizations seeking to promote diversity and inclusion, but they can often lead to a detached and harmful stance of “color-blind” organizations where it is difficult to discuss or apply a racial equity lens (Forman 2006). Organizational practices that help individuals become more skilled in cross-cultural interactions should

aid in reducing anxieties and distancing, producing greater comfort in interactions.

Stereotyping and Stigmatizing

The above dynamics that sustain self-segregation undermine inclusion by minimizing opportunities for meaningful interactions. These dynamics are relatively benign in comparison with the more negative forces of stereotyping, which erode inclusion when diverse individuals engage in interactions. Leslie et al.’s (2014) recent meta-analyses reviewed studies investigating diversity programs’ effects on target groups’ job performance and identified several negative effects. Their analyses indicated that affirmative action programs produce an unintended negative impact on target groups’ performance. Drawing on stereotype theory, these effects were explained by others sensing competitiveness and threat from program beneficiaries, then stigmatizing those beneficiaries by labeling them as emotionally cold and attributing their job outcomes to the programs rather than to their competence. In addition, Leslie et al.’s meta-analyses found that the presence of an affirmative action program leads to reduced *self*-assessments of performance by target groups, the latter mediated by lowered self-assessments of competence, perceptions of being stereotyped by others, and negative personal affect (e.g., increased anxiety).

These dynamics pose a major challenge for organizations. They imply that publicized or otherwise known attempts to increase diversity can engender negative stereotyping of underrepresented groups, even by the groups’ members themselves. The stereotyping involves negative affect for both target groups and others, discouraging and hampering diversity interactions. In sum, these three psychological and social psychological phenomena—homophily, cross-cultural communication apprehension, and stereotyping and stigmatizing—can be seen as key exclusionary dynamics in the pursuit of generative interactions across diversity. Underlying all three of these exclusionary dynamics are implicit biases which cause individuals, who often insist that they are not prejudiced, to unconsciously act in discriminatory ways toward others (Greenwald and Banaji 1995). The three exclusionary dynamics represent *default dynamics*, ones that can be expected to occur in the absence of other social forces. In the following section, we discuss evidence-based concepts for countering these default dynamics.

Overcoming Exclusionary Dynamics: Adaptive Cognitive Processing and Skill Development

Research indicates that the default dynamics impeding inclusion can, potentially, be avoided or overcome by organizational practices that promote relational positives. Here we look at concepts associated with producing generative

interactions, moving past anxiety and stress to contact that involves adaptive cognitive processing and skill development—that is, *adaptive contact*—and to organizational practices for positive interactions.

Indirect Approaches to Generative Interactions

Relatively slight attention has been given to the impact of organizational diversity and inclusion policies that are not explicitly and formally focused on promoting diversity. However, a study of organizational change programs (Kalev 2009) confirms the promise of cross-functional job restructuring. Kalev's study examined the diversity impacts of creating cross-functional work teams that were not implemented to improve diversity but to enhance organizational effectiveness. Given that one source of workplace inequality is job segregation, with minorities and women over-represented in job functions with lower status and fewer upward mobility opportunities, Kalev proposed that change efforts in the form of cross-functional collaboration can counter job segregation, thereby improving outcomes for these groups. She found that (1) cross-functional teams, but not within-function teams, and (2) cross-training but not within-job training, are associated with increased odds of managerial positions being held by white and black women and black men. The positive outcomes are attributed to relational processes that restructure interaction from segregated to collaborative relations, eroding stereotypes and group boundaries, and increasing positive assessments of women's and minorities' capabilities, as well as their networking opportunities. Ultimately, these outcomes lead to improved chances for job transfer and upward mobility.

Kalev's (2009) sociological study points to the potential for inclusive relational processes to be stimulated by particular intentional organizational change efforts that are not labeled by organizations as diversity initiatives. Further, they are seen by employees, including white men, as offering improved personal opportunities. Consequently, they have a lower likelihood of engendering the competitive threat perceptions and negative stereotyping and stigmatizing dynamics reviewed above.

Adaptive Cognitive Processing Through Repeated Contact

For development of a theory of generative interactions, the findings on cross-functional teams suggest the importance of three relational elements being combined: bringing diverse members into frequent, repeated interaction, equal status among work group members, and collaborative interaction. However, even while diverse members may be engaged in frequent, collaborative interactions, a measure of cross-cultural adaptation and skill is important to overcome exclusionary forces such as communication apprehension.

An integrative review by Crisp and Turner (2011) draws on many conceptual and empirical streams within social psychology to develop a theory of cross-cultural adaptation. The review synthesizes literature on acculturation, cognitive development, social categorization, stereotype threat, and creativity. Individuals are seen as responding to various sources of cross-cultural stress using strategies that differ in their degree of adaptation. Adaptation is framed as involving emotional and psychological well-being—affective elements—and the development of sociocultural skills. Crisp and Turner's Categorization—Processing—Adaptation—Generalization model emphasizes conditions that give rise to greater tolerance and improved intergroup relationships. Adaptive learning and attitude change depend on individuals' first experiencing stereotype inconsistency—an inconsistency between a stereotype of a culture and the actual experiencing of particular members of that culture—then working through such inconsistencies by being in conditions that make them willing and able to interact repeatedly with diverse others. Without motivation, ability, and repetition, the adaptation will not occur. The central component of the adaptive cognitive processing is suppression of stereotypes, with consequent reduction in prejudice. However, the processing requires use of cognitive resources that the individual may choose, instead, not to expend, thus halting the adaptive process.

Some discomfort appears necessary for cross-cultural adaptation. Individuals may experience cognitive stress in the form of inconsistency between a stereotype they hold of a group and the observed behavior of one of its members. This stress can lead to distancing and hardening of the stereotype, or it can lead to the diminishing of the stereotype through further interaction. For the latter, adaptive process to occur, Crisp and Turner hold that individuals must be willing and able to interact repeatedly with members of the other group. Particular organizational practices, illustrated in an example below, can increase willingness and ability by enhancing individuals' comfort in diversity interactions. Noble (2005) indicated that individual comfort results in an ability to accommodate oneself and produce appropriate responses with people different from themselves. The transition from feelings of discomfort and fear to comfort and safety with diverse others is an important aspect of perceptions of similarity (Honneth 1995; Noble 2002; Rodriguez 1982), enabling individuals to challenge their self-identity (Zaharna 1989) and adapt culturally.

Crisp and Turner's review suggests that adaptation, when achieved, confers benefits that extend beyond cross-cultural interaction contexts to other judgmental situations that involve dissonance, for example, creativity and attention to alternative or minority viewpoints. Being willing and able to persist with cultural adaptation—that is, with adaptive contact—produces a generalized cognitive flexibility that

becomes automated, reducing its demands on cognitive resources and allowing those resources to be devoted instead to generative thinking. Under the proper conditions of motivation and repetition, cross-cultural stress can be overcome to produce gains in generalized judgmental benefits.

Skill Development and Generative Diversity Experiences

Research in higher education contexts provides additional empirical support for the types of adaptive processes and beneficial outcomes modeled by Crisp and Turner. Bowman and Brandenberger (2012) emphasize the importance of facilitating diversity experiences in conjunction with an individual's willingness and ability to interact repetitively, in order to challenge students' previously held beliefs and drive attitude change. Students experiencing positive meaningful interethnic interactions and openness to diversity in their freshman year engaged in more positive diversity interactions during their senior year and were less likely to report negative interactions (Bowman 2012). The interactions occurring during senior year were more likely to be informal interactions with cross-ethnic peers. On campuses with representational diversity, students were found to have increased cross-ethnic interactions, but interethnic friendships formed only when students had positive interethnic attitudes and were not racist (Bowman and Park 2014). Frequency of diversity interactions matters, with frequency having a curvilinear relationship with outcomes: moderate frequency has little impact and high frequency much greater impact (Bowman 2013). Quality of interaction matters even more, with positive interactions having a greater impact on outcomes than high frequency interactions. High-frequency, high-quality diversity interactions lead not only to interethnic competence but also to broader skills of critical thinking and effective leadership (Denson and Bowman 2013).

Specifications for Positive Interactions

The above literatures point to the importance of three concepts—adaptive contact, interaction frequency, and interaction quality—as leading to beneficial outcomes. These concepts, in turn, raise the following questions: Under what boundary conditions are adaptive, high-frequency, high-quality diversity interactions achieved? What organizational conditions stimulate ongoing willingness, ability, and comfort to interact? Several sociological concepts provide necessary insights on these questions.

Contact Theory

One long-standing social science theory on inclusion, supported by a continuing stream of research in sociology and social psychology (Hewstone and Swart 2011), has been

underutilized in management research. Contact theory was synthesized by Allport (1954) from early research on racial and ethnic intergroup interactions focusing on the conditions that affect prejudice reduction. Contact theory anticipated and now refines many of the above-presented theories and findings. Across all studies reviewed, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found that many types of intergroup contact can reduce prejudice. The default dynamics reviewed above suggest that the challenge lies in maintaining the contact. Relevant to that, Pettigrew and Tropp's meta-analysis points to the particular conditions of equal status, shared goals, cooperation, and leader support as more powerful in reducing prejudices. The authors suggest that these conditions should be seen as “an interrelated bundle rather than as independent factors” (p. 751), a view that we adopt for our theory.

Avoiding Unfavorable Conditions

Further findings suggest not only that favorable conditions should be pursued but also that unfavorable conditions should be avoided. As with Leslie et al.'s (2014) more recent meta-analyses of the stereotyping effects of affirmative action programs, Pettigrew et al. (2011) point to negative contact as involving “situations where the participants feel threatened and did not choose to have the contact. These situations frequently occur in work environments ...” (p. 277). While intergroup contact in general, without the specified favorable conditions, is associated with prejudice reduction, in work organizations the phenomena of self-segregation and communication apprehension are likely to lead to low levels of intergroup contact, allowing persistence of stereotypes. This is particularly so when perceptions of competitiveness and threat hamper prejudice reduction and inclusion by producing negative affect. On the one hand, then, perceived threat is a strong impediment to inclusion but on the other, if intergroup contact can be achieved and sustained, affect will move in a positive direction. Placing these findings on contact theory next to those reviewed above for communication apprehension, cross-cultural adaptation, and stereotyping and stigmatizing suggests the importance of avoiding conditions that stimulate competitiveness and favoring a bundle of conditions that lead to extended contact and personal comfort.

Common Ingroup Identity

The Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner and Dovidio 2014) points to the possibilities for an individual to identify with a recategorized group on a basis other than their primary social identity. This model proposes that intergroup bias “can be reduced by factors that transform members' perceptions of group boundaries from ‘us’ and ‘them’ to a more inclusive ‘we’ (Gaertner et al. 1993, p. 1). Attachment

to the group as a whole ('we') often results when individuals become attached to one another through their common connections to social groups. This phenomenon is elaborated in social identity theory (Roccas and Brewer 2002), which suggests that individual identity is "based on symbolic attachment to the group as a whole" (p. 89). Yet, social identities also contain a personal component that involves defining oneself and building individual-level self-esteem (Brewer and Gardner 1996). According to Brewer (1991) social identities enable individuals to balance assimilation and differentiation, building both a sense of belongingness and uniqueness (Pickett et al. 2002). This tension between belongingness and uniqueness is an underlying theme in inclusion literature (Shore et al. 2011). Shore et al. argue that "uniqueness will provide opportunities for improved group performance when a unique individual is an accepted member of the group *and* the group values the particular unique characteristic" (p. 1265, italics in original). Shore et al. suggest that for inclusion to be fostered we need (1) practices that are associated with insider status, including sharing information, participation in decision making, and having voice and, (2) inclusion has positive consequences for individuals and organizations. These two requirements align with Kalev's (2009) attributing equity gains for minorities and women to these types of processes in cross-functional teams, with team members feeling that all stood to gain from cross-functional teamwork. Under proper organizational conditions, then, common ingroup identity enables individuals to adopt a work group identity that transcends, but still recognizes and utilizes, the differences among members.

A Theory of Generative Interactions

The literature reviewed above suggests to us a progression of evidence and theorizing in the field that implies the need for more complex theory on diversity, equity, and inclusion. For instance, according to van Knippenberg and Schippers' (2007) review of research on the performance of diverse work groups, researchers first theorized that diverse groups performed better, then revised that theory based upon mixed empirical findings to conclude that these groups performed better on *creative* tasks. Subsequently, even this revision failed to be supported. Van Knippenberg and Schippers (2007) then suggested that moderators and mediators involving re-categorization and cross-categorization might explain the failure of extant theories.

We argue here that theory must cross levels of analysis in order to identify moderators and mediating processes that affect the development of inclusion. The review above emphasizes mediating processes that intervene between diversity and inclusion—namely, self-segregation, communication apprehension, and stereotyping and stigmatizing.

The review also identifies organizational level factors that represent particular boundary conditions for the production of these problematic mediating processes. Leslie et al. (2014) found that organizational programs designed to increase equity for underrepresented groups induce stereotyping and stigmatizing, with the stigmatizing even being internalized by minority group members themselves. And, the social conditions identified in contact theory represent additional boundary conditions for exclusionary and inclusionary processes. The review also identifies an important process mediating between diversity and inclusion at the individual level, adaptive cognitive processing. We posit below that this phenomenon also depends on boundary conditions at higher—group and organizational—levels. Accordingly, the theory presented here proposes important interactions among three levels—organizational, interpersonal and individual. It proposes that particular organizational practices can overcome the problematic mediating processes, fostering instead sustained generative interactions that produce cognitive and skill adaptation in individuals. In effect, the issue is one of boundary conditions (or, as alternatively termed, moderators) found in sociological research influencing social psychological and psychological processes that push individuals toward or away from adaptive contact. These boundary conditions can be expected to occur in some circumstances and not others, either by design or organically, producing variations in research findings.

For a theory to be useful for research and practice at the organizational level, the boundary conditions must be translated into elements that can be influenced by managerial action. And, the central product of action should be identified and its effects specified, so that its attainment can be gauged. Accordingly, we specify here a theory that identifies particular organizational practices as the boundary conditions and generative interactions as their product. We argue that specified practices structure diversity interactions into ones of high frequency and high quality, providing a continued pattern of adaptive, cross-differences contact that, sufficiently repeated, produces inclusion and its associated benefits for organizational stakeholders.

Drawing on the various literatures presented earlier, the proposed theory emphasizes generative interactions and the conditions noted in the literature review as supportive of them. The theory does not attempt to propose specific best practices for all situations. Rather, it is contextual and composed of three precepts:

1. That inclusion is created and sustained by organizational *practices of generative interaction* that provide group and organizational conditions for prejudice-reducing, adaptive contact among diverse individuals.
2. That organizational practices that sustain adaptive contact operate in combination, *as a set*.

3. That particular *organizational practices* of generative interaction serve as inter-related criteria for predicting the outcomes of representational diversity in a particular context. The practices are identifiable in research and practice by diverse members experiencing the following, cognitively, emotionally, and habitually:
 - a. Pursuing an important organizational purpose supported by leaders and shared among members; preferably, the purpose will be perceived by organizational members as other than diversity;
 - b. Mixing repeatedly using intentional community building activities. This may include, as necessary, physical and virtual space design that enables interaction across diversity;
 - c. Repeating interaction opportunities with high frequency and over extended time;
 - d. Giving diverse members equal standing in decision making processes and insider status in contributing to organizational success;
 - e. Being collaborative, with member interdependence and valuing of an individual member’s uniqueness and belonging;
 - f. Feeling interpersonal comfort and self-efficacy.

Together, these precepts represent the centerpiece of the Theory of Generative Interactions. They are stated at a level of abstraction that allows variation across organizations and organizational units in the programs and

procedures that sustain them—such as cross-functional teams that address (a) through (e) above.

For the Theory of Generative Interactions to be strong, it should specify explanations of how and why its elements produce effects (Sutton and Staw 1995). Figure 1 depicts in an outline form some of the complexities of inclusion dynamics, portraying various mediators and boundary conditions that provide such explanations and have an evidentiary basis in the literatures reviewed above. The processes and conditions specified in Fig. 1 (with individual, group and organizational levels of analysis indicated, respectively, by ovals, rhombohedrals, and rectangles) responds to calls in the diversity assessment and work group performance literatures for identification of mediating and moderating processes. When discussing these specifications, some of which are not depicted in Fig. 1 for simplicity’s sake, we cite below pieces of literature that we consider most primary, understanding that associated pieces reviewed above amplify and extend knowledge of the processes and boundary conditions we outline here only concisely.

A first issue for the theory: Why are generative interactions consequential for organizations? The introduction to this article argued that inclusion is relevant for various stakeholders, helping to avoid trade-offs through inclusion’s impact on the development and allocation of human capital. The research reviewed on college student interaction (Denson and Bowman 2013) and adaptive cognitive processing (Crisp and Turner 2011) supports the value of high-frequency, high-quality diversity interactions for personal development (as depicted on the right side of Fig. 1),

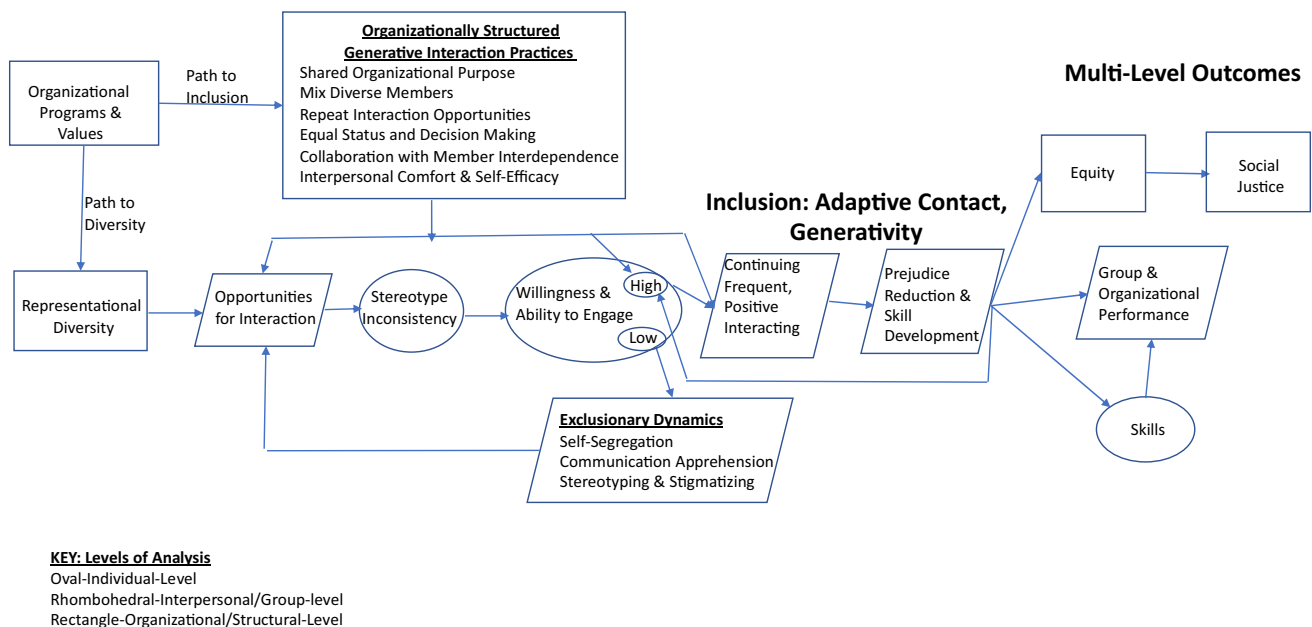


Fig. 1 Theory of Generative Interactions

augmenting human capital. Inclusion is depicted in the figure as adaptive contact, contact that stimulates generativity for group members through continued interacting leading to prejudice reduction and skill development. Such inclusion represents respected involvement of diverse members in the group's work, improving recognition and equity for organizational members, as in Kalev's (2009) study of cross-functional teamwork programs. Inclusion augments the group's economic performance through improved allocation of human capital, per Becker (2013), aggregating across groups to increase overall organizational performance. The benefits of high frequency, positive, generative interactions, then, can be expected to be multiple, occurring at individual, group, and organizational levels, with improved equity contributing further to social justice.

A second issue for the theory: How are generative interactions fostered in organizations? What boundary conditions and mediating processes operate to produce generative interactions? Figure 1 depicts a struggle between two sets of boundary conditions influencing the processes that mediate adaption and generativity. One set of conditions are exclusionary dynamics that can be expected to be present by default, due to pre-existing social distance and self-segregation (Smith et al. 2014) among group members. These exclusionary dynamics hamper generative processes. The other set of boundary conditions, those supporting a path to inclusion, are organizational programs and values, and the practices for generative interactions specified in Precept 3, above. Organizational action leading to inclusion starts, then, with managerially promoted organizational programs and the underlying purposes and values that guide their enactment. Relevant programs and values are those that structure the presence or absence of the specified practices. Programs can be labeled as diversity-related, such as short-term diversity training that has proved to have null or negative effects (Wentling and Palma-Rivas 1999). Such diversity training is counter-indicated by the last-listed organizational practice (f) above, since such training provides little in the way of skill development and, as discussed in one of the examples below, often leads to more rather than less communication apprehension (Neuliep and Ryan 1998), strengthening exclusionary rather than inclusionary processes. Other relevant programs can have purposes formally unrelated to diversity, such as cross-functional teamwork and, as we describe in an example below, programs that enact values of fellowship. Yet such programs can powerfully structure practices for generative interaction. The lack of diversity labeling can be functional, since member perception of a program as aimed at helping a target group engenders stereotyping and stigmatizing of and by that group (Leslie et al. 2014), strengthening exclusionary processes.

Through the social structuring practices they produce, organizational programs and values influence

representational diversity through human capital outflows. Labor market features enable talented individuals who are dissatisfied from lack of inclusion and equity to most easily find alternative employment, decreasing the organization's stock of diverse human capital. If the organization succeeds in increasing representational diversity, as depicted on the left side of the figure, there are increased *opportunities* for group-level interaction across diverse members. However, those opportunities are not necessarily spontaneously leveraged since 'birds of a feather tend to flock together' (McPherson et al. 2001); self-segregation processes moderate in a negative way the realized opportunities for diversity interactions. When diversity opportunities are realized, mediating processes with the potential to lead from representational diversity to inclusion are activated. When people interact with those from social identity groups with which they have little experience, they can confront stereotype inconsistency—that is, individuals from the other identity group do not behave in ways that are consistent with previously held stereotypes (Crisp and Turner 2011). An individual experiencing stereotype inconsistency and its associated discomfort has options for dealing with the cognitive dissonance between what they experience directly in an interaction and their stereotyped attitudes. According to Crisp and Turner's evidence-based theory, the option chosen depends on the individual's willingness and ability to engage with those diverse others. If they have a *low* willingness and ability to engage, then that will lead to withdrawal, specified here as self-segregation and persistence in stereotyping and stigmatizing (Leslie et al. 2014). Willingness and ability to engage depend on the strength of the boundary condition, the specified organizational practices. If these practices are weak, willingness and ability to engage will be low, favoring the maintenance of the default dynamics of exclusion. In contrast, the experiencing of the specified practices fosters higher willingness and ability to engage, leading to more frequent interacting.

A third issue for the theory is: How do interactions become generative? We propose that, if the organizational practices specified by our theory are sufficiently strong, the resulting high willingness and ability to engage leads to contact shaped by the organizational practices—that is, habitual, routine, emotionally positive (Reckwitz 2002), frequent interacting. Recursive effects, represented by the feedback path in Fig. 1 between adaptive contact and willingness to engage, are critically important. A continuing high frequency of positive interactions, reinforced by the organization's generative interaction practices, leads to personal comfort due to interpersonal skill development. That development overcomes anxieties such as communication apprehension, dampening an exclusionary dynamic and feeding back into increased willingness and ability to engage. Over time the result is a process of repeated,

increasingly skillful and comfortable interacting. Over time, through adaptive cognitive processing (Crisp and Turner 2011) the interactions become generative, involving prejudice reduction and contact that is developmental rather than superficial (Halualani 2007) for the individual. By including skill development, the concept of adaptive contact extends Crisp and Turner's notion of adaptive learning and stereotype suppression.

Returning full circle to the first issue above of consequences, our theory proposes that generative effects of prejudice reduction and adaptive contact allow individuals, groups, and organizations to experience the benefits of diversity and inclusion that have been long-postulated: equity and organizational performance, including agile work groups, deriving from unprejudiced utilization of diverse human capital (Becker 2013), and personal skill development resulting from high-frequency, high-quality diversity interactions (Denson and Bowman 2013).

The inclusion-favoring organizational practices of frequent and collaborative interaction are significant for organizations since they may occur organically in many team-oriented situations and since time has been found to be associated with stronger relationships of diversity to performance at the organizational (Richard et al. 2007) and group levels (Harrison et al. 2002). Practices of frequent, collaborative interaction represents an organizing opportunity for organizations. If we know the nature of organizational practices that encourage diverse individuals to repeatedly, willingly, and skillfully interact with each other, value will be added to organizations and individuals in terms, respectively, of a superior stock of skills (that is, human capital) in diverse groups and an augmenting of individuals' skills.

The essence of the Theory of Generative Interactions is its synthesis of phenomena that interact across levels of analysis in the form of boundary conditions that moderate adaptive processes. The theory holds that only under particular boundary conditions, conditions specified as a set of embedded organizational practices deriving from organizational programs and values, will the claimed organizational benefits of inclusion be achieved. The underlying reasoning is that generative interactions at the interpersonal level are the key to achieving these benefits and that, without the specified practices, exclusionary dynamics will stifle the frequency and quality of interpersonal interactions among diverse individuals. Being multi-level, the theory explicitly incorporates the boundary conditions for high-quality, high-frequency diversity interactions. At the interpersonal level, if willingness and ability to engage are low, diversity interactions will be sparse and discomforting. The boundary conditions for interpersonal behavior reside at the organizational level, in terms of the specified organizational practices. The theory thereby provides an explanation for the inconsistency of findings on the outcomes of diversity initiatives, since that

body of research has failed to inquire into the organizational conditions, the six practices, specified here.

In order to demonstrate how the practices listed in precept 3 as fostering generative interactions actually operate, we present and analyze four examples that illustrate the presence or absence of the practices.

Examples of Organizational Practices

Implicit in the Theory of Generative Interactions, above, is that a single organizational program may reflect several of the practices for generative diversity interactions. More explicit is that a full set of the practices are necessary to satisfactorily meet the conditions for high-frequency, high-quality diversity interactions. Weakness on any one practice in the third precept is posited to be detrimental to generative interactions. The following examples from our own research illustrate the particular forms that the practices can take in different settings, and how their presence or absence affects generative interactions.

Mixed-Income Communities

The National Initiative on Mixed-Income Communities (2013) found that while most mixed-income communities studied included rules for representation of varying income levels, only few included intentional physical space design to allow resident interaction between income groups and fewer still included either intentional community building programming, or inclusive managerial practices. Few communities, then, met any of the conditions specified in the theory. However, the low-income residents of the properties that did include physical and social opportunities for community building reported stronger social relationships and lower social isolation when compared to low-income residents of the properties lacking these additional opportunities for interpersonal interaction. Similarly, Fraser et al. (2013) recommend that all mixed-income housing facilities work to include intentional programming, space design, resources, and management to promote the development of interpersonal relationships across income groups. These space and community building recommendations and the emphasis on relationship development correspond to some of the practices specified in the theory, such as mixing and continuing interaction (b and c), explaining the reports of higher inclusion. However, depending on the nature of the programming implemented, they may fall short on other practices, such as an important shared purpose and equal standing (a and d), limiting the level of inclusion achieved. Our theory would predict that when the programming includes a significant role in governing the housing complex, shared purpose would be more strongly realized. In such a case, equal

standing would then become a critical factor in determining whether inclusion is practiced or not.

Youth Organization

In a study of the Girl Scouts of the USA, an organization that had made major strides toward representational diversity at the aggregated level of its geographic councils, staff identified situations and practices where inclusion was best achieved (Weisinger and Salipante 2007). Since the vast majority of troops were ethnically homogeneous, inter-troop activities were the only opportunities for inclusion. Some inter-troop activities structured interactions that mixed the troops (b) in ways that provided equal standing for success (d), such as jump-rope competitions. These activities were common to all the organization's members and, combined with shared commitment to the organization's purpose of youth development (a), resulted in activating the common ingroup identity of Girl Scouts temporarily in place of their primary social identity group differences. That is, they went from "us and them" to "we". Members with less experience in the organization, and with less equal standing, failed to achieve that common identity. While some of the Theory of Generative Interactions' conditions for inclusion were met, the main failing was lack of frequency, of repetition. Multi-troop gatherings were only periodic, and in many of those meetings most troops did not engage with other troops. As with mixed-income communities, opportunities existed for groups to be proximate, but inclusion occurred only when particular programming practices were followed, and that inclusion was only temporary.

Nonprofit Governing Boards

The Fredette et al. (2016) examination of boards of Canadian nonprofit organizations demonstrated that ethno-racial inclusion powerfully influenced board performance. However, this effect was largely contingent on the board's commitment to inclusion through the designing and implementing of practices that drive engagement and participation in governing, addressing practices c, d, and e. Similarly, other studies of nonprofit boards find that, after diversifying a board representationally, achieving an inclusive environment requires additional policies, practices, and behaviors (Bernstein and Bilimoria 2013; Buse et al. 2016; Weisinger et al. 2016). In particular, Bernstein and Bilimoria (2013) found that board members of color experienced increased feelings of inclusion when the board encouraged majority group members to engage in inclusive behaviors such that all members shared power, geared communications toward all, and treated members equally. These practices address the equal standing, insider status criterion of practice (d). A further practice was discussing and acting on inclusivity,

addressing the multiple conditions of collaboration and self-efficacy (e and f, respectively). When combined with processes typical of nonprofit boards—frequent cross-member mixing (b and c) of a small group that is legally charged with a shared responsibility for governing the organization (a)—these particular practices meet well the full set of conditions of the Theory of Generative Interactions.

Voluntary Association

Kalev's (2009) research, reviewed above, indicates that cross-functional training and teamwork, promoted not as diversity- but as performance-based organizational change, produces beneficial cross-group interactions in business settings, interactions otherwise commonly missing in many occupationally segregated workplaces. Similarly, a study of a formal voluntary association on college campuses, one whose stated goals did not include diversity, found members reporting meaningful, inclusive cross-cultural interactions there, but contrasting those diversity interactions with superficial ones elsewhere (Bernstein and Salipante 2015). Students were drawn to the association to engage in community service, a mission shared among members (a). The protracted, frequent mixing specified by Practices b and c was produced by welcoming and interaction structuring practices, such as the requirement for each new member to interview all existing members. Students reported these practices as supporting the organization's ethic of fellowship. Practices used to sign up for collaborative efforts (e) in the community produced continually differing groupings (b) from one week to the next. The frequent, continual collaborating at mission activities, and at weekly organizational meetings, sustained Crisp and Turner's (2011) adaptive cognitive processing conditions of motivation, ability, and repetition.

The practice of equal standing (d) was supported through another element of the organization's mission, leadership development. Leadership positions rotated every term, with no member running for a leadership position twice until all members had the opportunity to be leaders. No one group became dominant and cliques were actively discouraged. Student members reported that the welcoming climate and the "forced", frequent, repeated interactions led to feeling a sense of belonging and comfort with diverse others (f). Taken together, the association's practices produced a shared superordinate purpose and a common ingroup identity that transcended other identities. Members reported changed interethnic attitudes, enhanced skill development, and a comfortable environment for expressing divergent opinions.

The four cases above, plus Kalev's (2009) findings on cross-functional teams, illustrate that specific sets of organizational practices, in specific types of situations, can succeed or fail in producing inclusion, depending on whether

or not the set sustains particular relational conditions across groups. The examples of bundles of practices demonstrate not only the operation of the six practices but also that their exact nature can differ according to organizational mission, values, and context. For instance, mixing members repeatedly could be achieved through cross-functional team projects, or through random assignment, as indicated by the service fraternity example, or through properly scheduled, composed and structured virtual meetings as found in some global engineering teams. Managers will need to select the best options for achieving the theory's six practices in ways that fit a particular organization's characteristics.

Implications for Research and Practice

In an effort to develop new theory on inclusion, we have attempted to synthesize major ideas found in research from different disciplines. As such, this integrative review is subject to important limitations. It may have missed some significant nuances in particular bodies of knowledge. Remediating this problem calls for experts thoroughly steeped in each discipline to engage in a creative enterprise of revising and refining this Theory of Generative Interactions. Similarly, the review is limited to particular literatures. Its model and theory should be contested, revised, and expanded by incorporating concepts and findings from other diversity literatures, including health care, disability, gender in STEM fields, and global virtual engineering teams. It is our hope that this article has provided a proof-of-concept, the value of drawing together multiple bodies of knowledge on diversity and inclusion in order to better comprehend the complexities and develop theory that addresses those complexities.

The main purpose of the review is to develop theory that moves the management field beyond representational diversity to inclusion and equity by focusing on the nature of generative diversity interactions, and specifically to the boundary conditions and mediating processes that support or hamper those interactions. It thereby provides an alternative roadmap for diversity research and practice. The theory is actionable. It facilitates—and through its examples, illustrates—management intentionality in structuring practices that create particular conditions within which effective diversity interactions can occur, that support adaptive, generative contact leading to more inclusive, equitable outcomes and better alignment of stakeholder interests, both of which reflect increased ethical management practice.

The theory presented above was developed from research on diversity and inclusion mainly in terms of ethnicity and gender. However, echoing statements in Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) critical review of contact theory, the theory here has the potential to apply to other types of intergroup differences, including generational, sexual orientation,

gender identity, and disabilities, and perhaps political and ideological. The key claim would be the need for frequent, extended, generative interactions.

The theory provides an explanation for the persistent and contradictory findings in the extant diversity literature by identifying a number of common social psychological phenomena—termed default dynamics—that produce and sustain exclusion, then specifying practices that mitigate them. In organizational circumstances where the dynamic phenomena of exclusion predominate by default rather than being countered by other forces, diversity efforts will be found to be compromised, but in cases where organizational practices mitigate these phenomena, both representational diversity and inclusion will be found to be enhanced through diverse individuals' willingness and ability to engage repeatedly. The theory frames its core precepts in a fashion that offers researchers the opportunity to empirically investigate variance on the specified organizational practices as explanations for the production of inclusion and exclusion by a wide range of organizational programs, including programs that do and do not identify themselves as diversity efforts.

Future research in several disciplines should devote increased attention to affective components that appear to underlie limitations of current organizational diversity efforts, and to actionable practices that can overcome them. This research can investigate how interpersonal stresses are mitigated in practice, to provide comfort and skills for generative interactions. Our theory also suggests that managerial research should go beyond the investigation of general impacts of broad practices. Instead, managerial research can be more cognizant of contextual variations, as is seen in social psychology and sociological research, identifying the mediating processes by which particular combinations of particular conditions achieve or fall short of producing generative interactions in particular types of organizational contexts. For instance, diversity training, though generally shown to be ineffective, may be appropriate in certain forms in certain situations, if it is used in combination with practices specified in the theory. Once individuals have committed to an important shared purpose and experienced several initial interactions, training that helps individuals develop cross-group skill and comfort might be found to be effective. A more refined version of the theory could identify additional social process dynamics to guide inquiry on such timing issues. Finally, future study is needed to examine whether the specified practices are sufficient to lead to equity or whether additional organizational practices are needed to achieve this important goal.

In efforts to resolve inconsistent findings, researchers focused on explicitly labeled diversity efforts or other organizational programs could apply, test, and refine this theory. Research could be cross-sectional or, preferably, longitudinal, even quasi-experimental. It would have multiple

components. One would be a critical assessment of a range of potential benefits. Was organizational effectiveness enhanced? Did members believe they developed personally? Did they feel better able to work effectively in diverse groups? Where job outcomes more equitable? More importantly, researchers could examine whether the conditions for generative interactions were met through the theory's specified organizational practices: Did members have a shared purpose with leader support? Did diverse members mix repeatedly and have frequent opportunities for interactions? Did they feel equal in status and equally involved in decision making? Were some of the theory's specified practices experienced but not the entire set? A key challenge with this approach would be identifying in these field studies the strength of exclusionary processes and whether and how they were overcome by adaptive, inclusionary processes. Was there self-segregation, communication apprehension and/or stereotyping and stigmatizing that served to exclude particular members? On this countervailing side, did members adapt to diverse others, experience skill development as a result of these interactions, and experience positive interactions that served to overcome the forces of exclusion? The theory would argue that where there are positive benefits from diversity and inclusion efforts, one will find the boundary conditions we outlined at play, along with minimal exclusionary forces and more adaptation, skill development and overall positive interactions by members. Such research projects would necessarily be more complex than most prior studies, requiring attention to multiple processes, conditions, and outcomes. The challenge going forward is to delve more deeply into the conditions and processes surrounding diversity efforts and identifying other organizational programs that enhance inclusion.

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