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Conflict, Diversity, and Faultlines in Workgroups

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A growing body of research in organizational psychology has, in recent years, addressed the interplay between conflict, group composition (social category and informational diversity), and the effectiveness of organizational teams. This chapter will review and compare dispersion theories of group composition (e.g., heterogeneity) and alignment theories (e.g., faultline theory) as they explain group conflict (task conflict, relationship conflict, and process conflict). We do this by reviewing the typology of conflict types and focus, in addition to task and relationship conflict, on process conflict in workgroups. We then distinguish between dispersion theories of group composition (e.g., heterogeneity) and alignment theories (e.g., faultlines). We also delineate between the bases of group composition; that is, we distinguish diversity and alignment based on social category characteristics (e.g., race, gender, and age) and information-based characteristics (e.g., work experience and education). We propose that a better understanding of the various types of group diversity possible in teams

and the links to conflict will help clarify past inconsistencies and provide theoretical guidance to future research. We conclude by discussing three future directions for research: (a) faultline activation within groups; (b) group culture as an important context variable that influences the group composition-conflict relationships; and (c) faultline measurement issues.

Conflict Types

Reviews of group composition research have noted conflict as a main group process that is affected by the diversity of group members (cf., Williams & O'Reilly, 1998; Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Pelled, 1996). Research on organizational conflict has focused mainly on two types of conflict related to group composition, relationship, and task conflict (Amason, 1996; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Kabanoff, 1991; Kramer, 1991; Pelled, 1996). These are based on, and subsume, past typologies of conflict that delineate cognitive/emotional and substantive/affective aspects (for a thorough review of the history and evolution of conflict typologies, see Jehn & Bendersky, 2003).

Relationship conflicts are disagreements and incompatibilities among group members about issues that are *not* task related but that focus on personal issues. Relationship conflicts frequently reported are about social events, gossip, clothing preferences, political views, and hobbies (Jehn, 1997). This type of conflict often is associated with animosity and annoyance among individuals within a group (Amason & Schweiger, 1997; Amason, 1996; Pelled, 1996). Relationship conflicts can cause extreme negative process problems such as lack of coordination, cooperation, and cohesion (Brewer, 1995, 1996; LaBianca, Brass, & Gray, 1998). These conflicts deplete energy and effort that could be expended toward task completion and consolidation around mutual goals (Amason & Mooney, 1999; Northcraft, Polzer, Neale, & Kramer, 1995). It has been shown that relationship conflict has negative effects and is responsible for outcomes such as increased turnover, high rates of absenteeism, decreased satisfaction, low levels of perceived performance, poor objective performance, lack of creativity, and low commitment (Amason, 1996; Baron, 1991; cf., De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995; Jehn, Chadwick, & Thatcher, 1997; Pelled, 1996; Simons & Peterson, 2000).

Task conflicts are disagreements among group members' ideas and opinions about the task being performed, such as disagreements regarding an organization's current strategic position or determining the correct data to include in a report. Task conflict, which is focused on content-related issues, can enhance performance quality (Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999). For example, critical debate among members and open discussion regarding task issues can increase group performance because members are more likely to offer and evaluate various solutions, thus reaching optimal decisions and outcomes (Amason, 1996; Cosier & Rose, 1977; Schweiger, Sandberg, & Rechner, 1989). However, conflict in any form can create an

uncomfortable environment, decreasing individuals' perceptions of teamwork and their satisfaction (Amason & Schweiger, 1997). In fact, a recent review by De Dreu and Weingart (2003) indicated that the positive effects of task conflict are the exception rather than the rule.

There are many group-related activities, some having to do with the actual task and others having to do with the process of doing the task or delegating resources and duties. Therefore, recent works (e.g., Behfar, Mannix, Peterson, & Trochin, 2005; Jehn & Mannix, 2001) examined process conflict as a separate conflict type compared to task conflict. *Process conflicts* are about logistical and delegation issues such as how task accomplishment should proceed in the work unit, who is responsible for what and how things should be delegated (Jehn, 1997; Kramer, 1991). Jehn (1997) delineated between task and process conflict based on findings of an ethnographic study of work groups. While process conflict may seem closely related to task conflict in that the issues are related to task strategy and accomplishment, process conflict operates more like relationship conflict in its connection to performance and satisfaction in groups. *Who* does something often includes discussion about values and abilities that can feel personal, especially when related to material and human resources. Process conflict remains the least examined and understood of the three types of conflict; however, we believe that it is a critical process in workgroups and suggest that more studies on intragroup conflict include process conflict, in addition to task and relationship conflict. We base our main discussion of diversity on these three types of conflict; however, later in the chapter, we propose that future research should examine a more comprehensive typology of conflict as well as different profiles of workgroup conflict that may be influenced by the diversity of group members.

CONTRASTING DISPERSION AND ALIGNMENT THEORIES

We separate theories of group composition into two types, theories of dispersion and theories of alignment. This, we believe, will assist theoreticians and researchers in being able to better specify the differences in conceptualizations of group composition that influence workgroup conflict.

Overview of Dispersion Theories of Group Composition

Group composition research based on dispersion theories focuses on how individual characteristics are distributed within a group (McGrath, 1998; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Moreland & Levine, 1992). For example, heterogeneity (or group diversity) research examines the dispersion of individual demographic characteristics and the influence this has on a number of outcomes. Dispersion models have predicted group processes such as conflict through mechanisms explained by self-categorization theory, social

identity theory, the similarity attraction paradigm, and a cognitive resource perspective. Self-categorization theory posits that individuals classify themselves and others into familiar categories in order to make predictions about subsequent interactions. These categorization groupings (e.g., female or engineer) are also used in defining an individual's social identity (Turner, 1987). Individuals categorize themselves and others into in-groups and out-groups and then base part of their social identity on the characteristics of their in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). These categorization processes are likely to give rise to stereotypes, prejudice, and out-group discrimination that can further lead to conflict (e.g., Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999). The similarity attraction paradigm argues that people are attracted to others who are similar to themselves (Byrne, 1971). Diversity researchers have used the similarity attraction paradigm to describe how demographic characteristics provide a means of determining similarity, leading to communication that is more frequent and a desire to remain in the group (Lincoln & Miller, 1979). In addition, the similarity attraction paradigm also suggests that individuals will apply negative assumptions to those with whom they are dissimilar (Byrne, 1971). Finally, a cognitive resource perspective suggests that diversity facilitates a more complex problem-solving process; that is, a higher quality of decision making from different experiences and perspectives that group members bring to their team (Gruenfeld, Mannix, Williams, & Neale, 1996).

While dispersion theories of group composition base predictions of group processes and outcomes on the degree to which members are different based on demographic characteristics (e.g., race, gender, and tenure), they fall short of taking into account the interdependence among multiple forms of diversity. The heterogeneity concept captures the degree to which a group differs on only one demographic characteristic (e.g., male) while often ignoring other demographic characteristics (e.g., Asian; McGrath, 1998). Even when dispersion researchers take into account more than one demographic characteristic by examining social category diversity, thus combining the effects of age, gender, and race diversity, for instance, they use an additive model and aggregate the effects of the single-characteristic dispersion model (for an exception, see Alexander, Nuchols, Bloom, & Lee, 1995). Although these aggregate dispersion models are able to tell you the degree to which a group is demographically different on race *and* gender *and* age, these models are not able to reflect adequately the degree of interdependence between these characteristics. For example, we are unable to tell if all the Asians in a group are also women. This limitation is overcome in alignment-based theories.

Overview of Alignment Theories of Group Composition

In contrast to dispersion theories, alignment theories of group composition take into account the simultaneous alignment of multiple demographic

characteristics across members. One such alignment theory is faultline theory. Faultlines are defined as hypothetical dividing lines that split a group into relatively homogeneous subgroups based on the group members' demographic alignment along one or more attributes (adapted from Lau & Murnighan, 1998). While the original theory specifically discusses demographic alignments made up of characteristics such as age, sex, race, and job tenure or status (Lau & Murnighan, 1998, p. 326), other non-demographic characteristics (e.g., personality and values) can also contribute to active subgroup formation within a larger group. Alignment theories base predictions of group processes on the reasoning that the compositional dynamics of multiple attributes (e.g., alignment and coalition formation) has a greater effect on process than separate demographic characteristics (e.g., Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Thatcher, Jehn, & Zanutto, 2003). For example, Hambrick, Li, Xin, and Tsui (2001) argued that "compositional gaps" that occur along *multiple demographic dimensions* (e.g., age and education) may accentuate distinct managerial coalitions and influence group functioning of international joint ventures. Thus, the effects of diversity are likely to be a complex function of aligned demographic characteristics and we need a more sophisticated consideration of demographic alignment to understand its potential effects (Lau & Murnighan, 1998).

In Table 6.1, we present four theoretical sources of work that we consider the main set of alignment theories from organizational, sociological, and social psychological literatures: group faultlines (e.g., Lau & Murnighan, 1998), factional groups (Hambrick et al., 2001; Li & Hambrick, 2005), multiform heterogeneity (Blau, 1977; Kanter, 1977), and cross-categorization (e.g., Brewer, 2000; Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002). For each of these theories we discuss the focal unit regarding composition (e.g., demographics and identity) and the forms of group composition discussed by the theory that relate to dispersion or alignment.

Alignment theories in organizational and sociological research. Faultline theory proposes that the compositional dynamics of multiple attributes and their alignment has a greater effect on group processes and outcomes than separate demographic characteristics (e.g., Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Thatcher et al., 2003). For instance, Cramton and Hinds (2004) theorized about how the alignment of compositional diversity and geographic distribution creates tension between subgroups emerging from faultlines. In a study of the formation of breakaway organizations, Dyck and Starke (1999) found that faultlines were strengthened with increased competition between the breakaway group and the status quo supporters.

In the second perspective (factional groups; Table 6.1), Hambrick et al. (2001; Li & Hambrick, 2005) argued that "compositional gaps" that occur along multiple demographic dimensions (e.g., age and values) in factional groups may accentuate managerial coalitions and influence group functioning and effectiveness of international joint ventures. A compositional

[AQ1]

TABLE 1
Comparing Theoretical Bases of Dispersion and Alignment

Theoretical basis	Group faultlines	Factional groups	Multiform heterogeneity	Cross-categorization
Disciplinary Foundation Focal unit	Organizational Behavior "Demographic characteristics"	Organizational Behavior "Demographic dimensions"	Sociology "Parameters of social structure"	Social Psychological "Social identity"
Group Composition				
Dispersion: similarity	Homogeneous	Demographically similar	Inclusive: all parameters same	Inclusive
Dispersion: difference	Heterogeneous	Demographically dissimilar	Exclusive: all parameters different	Exclusive
Alignment: high	Faultlines	Factional groups/compositional gaps	Consolidated: high correlation	Convergent
Alignment: low	Weak/medium faultlines	Weak factional groups/homogeneous factions	Low correlation	Cross-categorization

gap is the difference between managerial coalitions on one or more dimensions that are of potential importance to the group's functioning. It separates a group into two distinctly different factions where a faction is relatively homogeneous, or tightly clustered around its own central tendency (Hambrick et al., 2001; Li & Hambrick, 2005). Studies of international joint venture (IJV) management groups showed that subgroups forming within groups based on demographics are inherently coalitional and are likely to reduce identification with the whole team and negatively impact group functioning and IJV effectiveness (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Hambrick et al., 2001).

Thirdly, the multiform heterogeneity literature is deeply rooted in sociological tradition and has stressed the importance of focusing on the multiple parameters of social structure (e.g., sex and race; Table 6.1). Multiform heterogeneity refers to overlapping groups and subgroups generated by differences in sex, race, national background, and religion (Blau, 1977). Highly correlated parameters strengthen in-group bonds and reinforce group barriers, whereas low correlation between them indicates the intersection of parameters, which promotes group integration. We now contrast these approaches with the main social psychological approach.

Alignment theories in social psychological research. The question of multiple group membership has been a long-standing and pervasive problem in social psychology and much research has been done within the cross-categorization paradigm. Cross-categorization typically refers to the crossing of two dichotomous social dimensions, resulting in four groups (double in-group, two mixed groups, and double out-groups; Migdal, Hewstone, & Mullen, 1998). In other words, cross-categorization is based on horizontal crosscutting categories, where "others" can be simultaneously classified as in-group or out-group members on multiple dimensions (Hewstone et al., 2002). When categories are cross cut, they partially overlap. Take, for example, gender and age; instead of considering only females versus males or young versus elderly, in crossed categorization situations perceivers attend to both of these dimensions and respond to composite groups such as young females, young males, elderly females and elderly males. In terms of in-group/out-group relations, we have four groups that are similar and different from the perceiver in distinct ways. If our perceiver is a young female, then other young females are *double in-group members*, young males and elderly females are *partial group members* and elderly males are *double out-group members*" (Crisp, Hewstone, & Rubin, 2001, p. 76). *Crosscutting identities* are like multiple identities that can be either formal (e.g., committees and work groups) or informal (e.g., common-interest groups and demographic characteristics).

[AQ2]

[AQ3]

Within the group context, the effects of cross-categorization depend on the extent to which categories are inclusive (all members are similar) or exclusive (all members are different) and convergent or crosscutting (Brewer, 2000). The two later possibilities perhaps, are the most interesting for our discussion of alignment and we compare the faultline and cross-categorization approaches in the following text and Table 6.2. According to the cross-categorization paradigm, the more the two bases of categorization are *convergent* (e.g., in-group/out-group distinctions on

[AQ4]

TABLE 2.
Comparing faultline and cross-categorization approaches

	Faultlines	Cross-categorization
Focal unit	Demographic characteristics	Identities
Social dimension	Potential and active identities	Active identities
Nature of categories	Social-category Informational	Not considered
Number of characteristics considered	Numerous	Two
Outcomes	Individual and team-level outcomes	Individual outcomes

one category overlap perfectly with in-group/out-group distinction on a second category, e.g., as if gender and nationality perfectly align) the stronger the intergroup bias will be. Brewer (2000) provided an example of convergence for a first two-group categorization (A and B) and a second two-group categorization (1 and 2). If these groups converge, then all members of group A are also members of group 1, while all members of group B are also members of group 2 (a strong faultline), and strong intergroup differentiation and intergroup bias will be expected. In the *crosscutting categorization*, membership in A versus B and membership in 1 versus 2 is orthogonal (Brewer, 2000). Individuals may fall into any one of four classifications based on the overlapping categories: A1, A2, B1, B2 (a moderate or weak faultline condition). The basic assumption of cross-categorization is that overlapping memberships reduce the psychological distance between in-groups and out-groups. Overall, cross-cutting social identities contribute to cooperative intergroup contact by increasing intra-category differentiation and decreasing perceived intergroup differences (Ensari & Miller, 2001; Major, Quinton, McCoy, & Schmader, 2000).

Demographic attributes are often correlated with nested identities (e.g., White male senior executives) and with each other (e.g., female and ethnic minority maids), thus reinforcing the salience of attributes (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001). While faultline literature has considered both potential (focusing on objective characteristics of alignment) and active identities (perceived differences across subgroups formed by faultlines), cross-categorization literature often considers only active identities (see Table 6.2). For instance, Haslam and Ellemers (2005) suggested that group members who share a certain identity perceive themselves less differently than members who do not share the identity do. In general, alignment theories in social psychology have focused more on identity salience and paid less emphasis to objective demographic categories.

Another difference between alignment theories in organizational and social psychology is that while both cross-categorization and faultline hypotheses predict increased intergroup bias when multiple categories perfectly align, cross-categorization falls short in taking into account the *nature* of these categories (Table 6.2; Eurich-Fulcer & Schofield, 1995). In contrast, some research on faultlines delineated between social category and informational characteristics and predicted either positive or negative effects based on the nature of the faultlines (see the next section). Furthermore, social psychological studies that have gone beyond single in-group/out-group categorization have still used individual-level attitudes and behaviors to test intergroup-level theory. Faultlines studies, in contrast, consider not only individual but also group-level outcomes in an intergroup context (Table 6.2). Thus, although the ideas of the multiple identity complexity and alignment have entered the theoretical realm in social psychology (e.g., Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Roccas & Brewer, 2002), conceptualizations and operationalizations to understand such alignments, and how they relate to conflict in groups has been limited. This is what we

specifically address in the model presented in the remainder of this chapter by incorporating aspects of the dispersion and alignment theories reviewed to predict the various types of conflict. We now consider specifically the nature of the dispersed or aligned characteristics of group members; that is, the social category or informational diversity within the group.

Social Category Diversity and Informational Diversity

Research on the implications of diversity has been mixed. Negative effects of diversity have been attributed to conflict that arises from perceived differences amongst team members (e.g., Tsui, Egan, & Xin, 1995), which interferes with performance (e.g., Pelled, 1996). Positive effects of diversity have been explained using the argument of cognitive resource diversity suggesting that the breadth of perspectives that diverse group members embrace enhances performance (e.g., Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Gruenfeld et al., 1996). These competing theoretical arguments, along with inconsistent empirical results, have led to a lack of consensus regarding a valid conceptual framework for understanding diversity.

One response to this has been for researchers to classify diversity variables based on similar attributes, such as social category diversity and informational diversity (Jehn, Chadwick, et al., 1997; Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Polzer, Milton, & Swann, 2002). *Social category characteristics* (also described as “relations oriented;” Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003) are observable attributes, such as racial/ethnic background, nationality, sex, and age, that are likely to induce responses such as in-group biases and conflict (Cummings, Zhou, & Oldham, 1993; Jehn, Chadwick, et al., 1997; Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999). *Informational characteristics* are underlying attributes of individuals (e.g., work experience and education) which, although not immediately detectable, are important in the completion of a task (Jehn, Chadwick, et al., 1997; Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999; Thatcher & Jehn, 1998; Tsui, Egan, & O’Reilly, 1992). Researchers suggested that these two types of diversity may differentially impact group processes due to their job relatedness (Pelled et al., 1999; Webber & Donahue, 2001). Jehn and colleagues (Jehn, Chadwick, et al., 1997; Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999) found empirical evidence that social category heterogeneity resulted in increased relationship conflict and informational heterogeneity was positively associated with task conflict. As other researchers argued (Rink & Ellemers, 2006; Van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004), we believe that the distinction between social category and information diversity incorporates previous distinctions of visible versus nonvisible diversity (Tsui & Gutek, 1999) and surface-level diversity versus deep-level diversity (Phillips & Loyd, 2005; Mohammed & Angell, 2004; Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002). Social category diversity (or heterogeneity) is dispersion across members of a group on social category characteristics that are easily observed by others and used

for categorization purposes. While social category heterogeneity may not be relevant to a given task, it does shape people's perceptions and behaviors through mechanisms of categorization and prejudice (Pelled, 1996).

Informational heterogeneity refers to the differences in knowledge bases and perspectives that members of a group possess (Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999). A cognitive resource perspective suggests that diversity will have positive implications on workgroup outcomes, since the group will have access to a wider array of views, skills, and information (Gruenfeld et al., 1996). Educational background, functional background, and industry experience are linked to the set of skills one employs when undertaking a task. For example, different functional backgrounds suggest that an extended resource pool exists based on nonoverlapping knowledge and expertise from which a team can draw to solve problems (Bunderson, 2003; Lovelace, Shapiro, & Weingart, 2001). However, various backgrounds can also lead to a fundamentally different understanding of what is to be completed for the task. For example, an individual with a philosophy background may perceive the format of a memo very differently than someone with an engineering background. Integrating these skill differences is important if members are to work together effectively as a unit. In addition, they are less visible and, therefore, less prone to interpersonal prejudice and stereotyping than social category demographic characteristics.

Social Category Versus Informational Faultlines

The rationale described for distinguishing between social category and informational heterogeneity can be applied to faultlines as well. In fact, we believe this is necessary given the inconsistencies found in the few studies that have examined faultlines and conflict. For instance, all of the published empirical papers to date examining the effect of faultiness on conflict (Lau & Murnighan, 2005; Li & Hambrick, 2005; Thatcher et al., 2003) predicted that faultlines will increase conflict per Lau and Murnighan's (1998) original theory. However, the results are mixed. In fact, both Thatcher et al. (2003) and Lau and Murnighan (2005) found that faultlines actually *decreased* relationship conflict. Only Li and Hambrick (2005) found the proposed positive relationship between faultlines and relationship conflict; and none of these articles found an association with task conflict. We propose that distinguishing between the bases of faultlines will result in more accurate predictions of group processes such as conflict and will therefore improve the explanatory power of models of group diversity. Thus, social category faultlines are hypothetical dividing lines that split a group into subgroups based on social category demographic characteristics (e.g., age, race, and gender). Informational faultlines are hypothetical dividing lines that create subgroups based on informational demographic characteristics (e.g., work experience or tenure).

This extended Lau and Murnighan's (1998) original conceptualization of faultlines as it differentiated between the effects of different bases for subgroup formation (alignments along informational or social category characteristics) on group processes.

Whereas Lau and Murnighan (1998) based the idea of faultlines on social identity, self-categorization, and coalition theories, we feel that a cognitive resource perspective should be added when conceptualizing informational-based faultlines. A cognitive resource perspective suggests that diversity in job related or informational characteristics (e.g., tenure or education) offers greater cognitive resources to the group than others (Tziner & Eden, 1985). We believe that the *nature* of the faultline subgroups is crucial to the future functioning of groups. Subgroups formed along social category characteristics such as race, gender, or age may set in motion mechanisms such as stereotyping and prejudice (Messick & Mackie, 1989). Subgroups that form based on informational faultlines, on the other hand, are more likely to result in a detached information perspective, which increases flexibility of group members' thoughts (De Dreu & West, 2001; Nemeth, 1986) and facilitates effective pooling of information and integrating of alternative perspectives (Gruenfeld et al., 1996). Such informational splits can operate in workgroups as "healthy divides" that stimulate effective decision-making processes (Gibson & Vermeulen, 2003) effectively utilizing the teams' cognitive resources. In the following section, we further explain the differences that social category and informational diversity and faultlines have on the various types of workgroup conflict.

A MODEL COMPARING THE EFFECTS OF HETEROGENEITY AND FAULTLINES ON CONFLICT

To show the differences between dispersion and alignment theories of group composition, we present a model delineating the mechanisms by which social category and informational heterogeneity and faultlines influence the various types of conflict. Table 6.3 provides a summary of our propositions presented in the following section. [AQ5]

Social Category Heterogeneity, Faultlines, and Relationship Conflict

Dispersion theories predict that groups heterogeneous on social category characteristics are likely to experience frustration, discomfort, hostility, and anxiety that can result in higher levels of relationship conflict (Jehn, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For example, studies have shown that diverse social category characteristics increase relationship conflict within groups (Alagna, Reddy, & Collins, 1982; Jehn, Chadwick, et al., 1997; Pelled, 1996). Specifically, Jehn, Chadwick, et al. (1997), in a study of project teams,

TABLE 3.
Summary of Propositions

Group Composition	Conflict
Proposition 1: Social Category Heterogeneity Social Category Faultline	high RC ¹ high RC²
Proposition 2: Social Category Heterogeneity	low TC
Proposition 3: Social Category Faultline	high TC
Proposition 4: Social Category Heterogeneity Social Category Faultline	high PC high PC
Proposition 5: Informational Heterogeneity	high RC
Proposition 6: Informational Faultline	low RC
Proposition 7: Informational Heterogeneity Informational Faultline	high TC high TC
Proposition 8: Informational Heterogeneity	high PC
Proposition 9: Informational Faultline	low PC

¹RC = Relationship conflict; TC = Task Conflict; PC = Process Conflict.

²Variables in bold reflect that the effects of Faultlines will be stronger than the effects of Heterogeneity.

examined individual demographic differences and found that members in visibly diverse groups experienced more relationship conflicts than members in groups that were visibly similar. Moreover, messages may suffer distortion (Asante & Davis, 1985; Cox, 1993) with the potential to cause conflict because attempts to share viewpoints across demographic boundaries may be thwarted. Heterogeneity on the dimensions of sex and ethnicity has also been found to be related to more interpersonal tension, lower levels of friendliness, and lower levels of satisfaction (Alagna et al., 1982; O'Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989; Pfeffer & O'Reilly, 1987; Riordan & Shore, 1997; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992; Wagner, Pfeffer, & O'Reilly, 1984; Wharton & Baron, 1987; Wiersema & Bird, 1993).

Alignment theories suggest that strong subgroupings can lead to political issues and covert relationship conflict within the group (Lau & Murnighan, 1998). Based on coalition theory (Caplow, 1956; Komorita & Kravitz,

1983; Murnighan, 1978), we suggest that if social category demographic attributes align, similar members will interact with each other more often and therefore, will be likely to form coalitions (Pool, 1976; Stevenson, Pearce, & Porter, 1985). Furthermore, the existence of coalitions based on social categories is likely to amplify the salience of in-group/out-group membership causing strain and polarization between subgroups (Hogg, Turner, & Davidson, 1990). The “us versus them” mentality of subgroups formed based on social category faultlines makes it easy for one subgroup to blame the other subgroup for mistakes (Hogg, 1996). It also leads to power differentials allowing a subgroup to dominate discussion and prevent the participation of others (Gillespie, Brett, & Weingart, 2000; Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, F. P., 1994). Tension and personal attacks within a group resulting from these processes can cause further frustration among group members (e.g., Amason & Schweiger, 1994; Jehn, 1994). These group processes are likely to intensify relationship conflict.

- Based on the preceding discussion, both social category heterogeneity and social category faultlines will likely result in high levels of relationship conflict; however, we expect that social category faultlines will have stronger effects on relationship conflict than will social category heterogeneity. From the cross-categorization perspective (e.g., Brewer, 2000; Hewstone et al., 2002; Vanbeselaere, 2000), we suggest that members in such heterogeneous groups may possess crosscutting social identities which contribute to cooperative contact by reducing bias toward out-group members, whereas members in groups with strong social category faultlines will have no overlap between in-group and out-group membership and, thus, no bias reduction (Ensari & Miller, 2001). We believe that members in groups with social category faultlines may exhibit stronger intra-group bias due to additional identification with subgroups. This intergroup bias may encourage more negative stereotyping and animosity among individuals in groups with social category faultlines than among those in groups heterogeneous on social category characteristics. Thus,
- *Proposition 1:* While individuals in groups with high levels of social category heterogeneity and social category faultlines will both experience high levels of intragroup relationship conflict, social category faultlines will have a stronger effect on relationship conflict than will social category heterogeneity.

Social Category Heterogeneity, Faultlines, and Task Conflict

Social category membership provides a particularly salient basis for categorizing members into in-groups and out-groups based on personal characteristics that may promote hostile interactions among members of

heterogeneous groups (Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999; Pelled et al., 1999)—this is the personal-based relationship conflict discussed in proposition 1. However, we propose that the process as it relates to task conflict is less direct, given that the characteristics that people differ on are not obviously task related (Pelled, 1996; Jackson et al., 2003). Rather than open and direct hostilities based on prejudices and stereotypes, we believe the effect on task conflict is more passive. Members of social categorically diverse groups may dislike and distance members who belong to other social categories (Byrne, 1971). Individuals who feel that they are distant may also feel alienated and withhold task-related contributions to the group (Milliken & Martins, 1996), or they may not take seriously task-related comments of group members who belong to other social categories. For example, researchers found that members of diverse groups in age and race communicated less frequently and more formally than members of homogeneous groups regarding the task (Hoffman, 1985; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989). Moreover, the processes through which people seek and attain confirmation of their thoughts and feelings about the self (self-verification; Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004) may be impaired when members feel alienated and isolated. Swann et al. (2004) further proposed that divergent thinking, a precondition for task conflict to arise, may not occur when members cannot verify their personal views. We suggest that members of groups that are heterogeneous on social category characteristics, therefore, will experience low levels of task conflict.

- *Proposition 2:* Individuals in groups with high levels of social category heterogeneity will experience low levels of intragroup task conflict.

When groups have *social category faultlines*, on the other hand, members of emerging subgroups might more freely express the divergent opinions as they feel support from their subgroup members (Lau & Murnighan, 1998) and verification of their self-views (Swann et al., 2004). Also, they may have a strong tendency toward conformity to the opinion, idea, or perspective favored by their own subgroup (Baron, Kerr, & Miller, 1993) and a need to distinguish their views from the other subgroup (Brewer, 2000; Hogg et al., 1990). These processes may cause group members to exhibit intense polarization around ideas and thoughts across subgroups (Ancona, 1990). We further argue that in common-goal groups with social category faultlines, subgroup members are likely to voice support for their particular position or opinion as they strive to integrate these opinions into their view of the group tasks. Thus, in groups with strong social category faultlines, we propose that there will be high levels of task conflict due to polarization around divergent opinions.

- *Proposition 3:* Individuals in groups with strong social category faultlines will experience high levels of intragroup task conflict.

Social Category Heterogeneity, Faultlines and Process Conflict

Dispersion theories suggest that members of groups that are heterogeneous on social category characteristics may face “interpretive barriers” resulting from members’ different language systems, life experiences, or values acquired from varying socialization experiences (Dougherty, 1992). These differences are likely to emphasize the differences in conventions for social interaction and shape views about how one should approach a task (Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999). For example, female members may rely on conventions that are typical to their particular networks of relationships to interpret actions needed to proceed with work, whereas male members may use interpretations representative of their own conventions (Von Glinow, Shapiro, & Brett, 2004). The two interpretive systems may not necessarily coincide, and differing interpretations of what actions to take to get work done may affect a group’s ability to coordinate task progress (Behfar et al., 2005). This is likely to promote disagreements over procedural and administrative features of the task and result in process conflict (Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999; Jehn & Chatman, 2000).

[AQ6]

Similarly, alignment theories propose that members across subgroups formed by social category faultlines might also have different “thought worlds” (Dougherty, 1987) and different interpretations about how work should be done in a group. Members of such groups may further feel that their priorities and work approaches are not aligned within a group, and thus, they may spend more time “staking out” territory and viciously arguing who does what, when, and how (Behfar et al., 2005). A faultline that breaks a group into subgroups may inhibit boundary-spanning activities, creating distinct subgroup networks and leading to less coordination of interdependent but differentiated subgroups within a group (e.g., Edmondson, 1999; Miles & Perreault, 1976). Under these circumstances, developing a shared approach to task accomplishment in groups with strong social category faultlines will be difficult and process conflict will be likely to surface.

Groups with high levels of social category heterogeneity and groups with strong social category faultlines are both predicted to experience high levels of process conflict; however, we expect faultlines to have stronger effects than heterogeneity. Members of groups with strong social category faultlines may support certain ways of doing work favored by their respective subgroups, at the same time displaying prejudice and intolerance toward opinions of members of another subgroup. Heterogeneous groups, in turn, may have a number of divergent viewpoints but without support from others, individuals may not vigorously compete and argue their points of view. Thus, while heterogeneous groups and groups with strong social category faultlines will both experience challenges in coordinating their tasks, groups with strong faultlines will disagree over process-related issues in a more competitive way than will heterogeneous groups. This leads us to propose that

- *Proposition 4:* While individuals in groups with high levels of social category heterogeneity and social category faultlines will both experience high levels of intragroup process conflict, social category faultlines will have a stronger effect on process conflict than will social category heterogeneity.

Informational Heterogeneity, Faultlines, and Relationship Conflict

We propose that informational heterogeneity will increase relationship conflict. In groups with a high dispersion of informational characteristics, it is necessary to communicate with people different from yourself. As with social category characteristics, different experiences and socialization backgrounds can elicit stereotypes (Pelled, 1996). For example, you often hear of people saying, “All accountants are picky.” In Strauss’ (1964) classic case study of cross-functional interactions, resentment and annoyance characterized communication between engineers and purchasing agents. Just as social category (or visible) types of heterogeneity such as gender and race can trigger relationship conflict, group heterogeneity with respect to functional background, tenure, and other less visible characteristics can also incite relationship conflict (Pelled, 1996).

- *Proposition 5:* Individuals in groups with high levels of informational heterogeneity will experience high levels of intragroup relationship conflict.

However, given expectancy effects emerging from alignment we propose the opposite relationship between *informational faultlines* and relationship conflict (informational faultlines will decrease relationship conflict—see Table 6.3). Unlike social category characteristics, attributes that make up information-based heterogeneity and faultlines are less visible and less prone to interpersonal prejudice and stereotyping. However, since they are directly applicable to the work context, they play an important role in developing expectations about behaviors of others in the workplace. Expectancy-violation theory, in part, suggests that the violations of category-based expectations (or the experience of unexpectedness) may influence affective reactions and promote negative evaluations of out-group members (Bettencourt, Dill, Greathouse, Charlton, & Mulholland, 1997). Therefore, because members of informationally *heterogeneous* groups can be simultaneously classified as in-group or out-group members based on multiple dimensions (Hewstone et al., 2002), they may construct inconsistent expectations leading to violations and thus, negative affect. In contrast, in groups with informational *faultlines*, the fact that members of another subgroup have *different* functional backgrounds would be consistent with the fact that they also have *different* levels of education and work experiences. Because of subgroup formation, members are aware of

their differences and *expect* to be different along informational lines. This elicits less uncertain and ambiguous environments in which members are more likely to accept their informational differences and cooperate (Rink & Ellemers, 2006). As such, they may exert more effort toward regulating task-focused group processes rather than fighting over relationship-related issues.

- *Proposition 6:* Individual in groups with strong informational faultlines will experience low levels of intragroup relationship conflict.

Informational Heterogeneity, Faultlines, and Task Conflict

Members of *informationally heterogeneous* groups are assumed to have different training and socialization experiences (Lovelace et al., 2001; Mortensen & Hinds, 2001). Research further suggested that debates and disagreements about group tasks often arise from differences in knowledge and experiences (Tziner & Eden, 1985; Wittenbaum & Stasser, 1996). The presence of different perspectives is likely to manifest itself as intragroup task conflict (Pelled et al., 1999). As such, group members in informationally heterogeneous groups will engage in debate about divergent viewpoints and discuss their disagreements over group tasks (Jehn, Chadwick, et al., 1997). For example, Pelled (1996) found that functional background and educational diversity were related to conflicts that focused on the task or content of ideas.

In the case of *informational faultlines*, subgroup members align along informational characteristics and tend to exhibit similar viewpoints within each subgroup and display different opinions across subgroups. This is due to different approaches to problem solving caused by differences in training and experiences (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Pelled, 1996; Gruenfeld et al., 1996). Literature on minority influence suggests that information sharing in diverse groups depends on the extent to which group members are provided with social support (cf., Allen & Levine, 1971; Bragg & Allen, 1972). When a group has strong informational faultlines, its members may find support and validation for their knowledge (e.g., opinions, assumptions, and information) in their subgroups due to mutual liking, shared experiences, and perceived similarity of aligned members (Phillips, Mannix, Neale, & Gruenfeld, 2004). In groups with strong informational faultlines, members may freely express their ideas and actively engage in open discussion of divergent perspectives across subgroups because they have support from within their own subgroup (Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Phillips, 2003; Swann et al., 2004). We therefore argue that individuals in such groups will experience high levels of conflict over task-related issues.

We expect informational faultlines to be a better predictor of intragroup task conflict than informational heterogeneity. Based on interindividual-intergroup discontinuity research (e.g., Insko et al., 1998; Schopler, Insko,

Graetz, Drigotas, & Smith, 1991; Wildschut, Insko, & Gaertner, 2002), we argue that members in groups with informational faultlines may disagree over various ideas or perspectives in a more confident and convincing way than do individuals in informationally heterogeneous groups. Interindividual-intergroup discontinuity is the tendency of intergroup relations to be more competitive and less cooperative than interindividual relations (Insko et al., 1998; Schopler et al., 1991). Heterogeneous groups may have a number of divergent viewpoints but without support from others, individuals may not actively share their point of view (Wit & Kerr, 2002). This is consistent with past work showing that individual (minority) influence can be attributed to the individual's personality and easily disregarded while influence from more than one person (even if deviant) is seen as more credible and reliable (Wood, Lundgren, Ouellette, Busceme, & Blackstone, 1996). Thus, we propose that these subgroup-supported divergent opinions enter into the discussion and are strongly supported by the subgroup and just as strongly opposed by the opposing subgroup. Groups with strong informational faultlines may have more intense conflicts over tasks because each subgroup rallies around one particular point of view (Lau & Murnighan, 2003). These subgroup differences and intrasubgroup alignment may encourage more intense discussion and debate over task-related issues in groups with informational faultlines than in informationally heterogeneous groups.

- *Proposition 7:* While individuals in groups with high levels of informational heterogeneity and informational faultlines will both experience high levels of intragroup task conflict, informational faultlines will have a stronger effect on task conflict than will informational heterogeneity.

Informational Heterogeneity, Faultlines, and Process Conflict

Dispersion theories suggest that members of informationally heterogeneous groups tend to rely on working methods particular to their backgrounds (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Gruenfeld et al., 1996) and display different views about how one should approach a task (Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999). Members' differing expertise and a broad array of information, knowledge, and skills add to the variety of opinions about how to do the work. This affects a group's ability to coordinate task progress (Behfar et al., 2005) and often results in disagreements over procedural issues (Jehn, Northcraft, et al., 1999). For instance, research has demonstrated that heterogeneous groups on informational characteristics experienced more difficulty defining how to proceed with their task than did homogeneous groups (Jehn, 1997; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelson, 1993).

- *Proposition 8:* Individuals in groups with high levels of informational heterogeneity will experience high levels of intragroup process conflict.

We propose the opposite relationship between informational faultlines and process conflict (informational faultlines will decrease process conflict—see Table 6.3). Alignment theories suggest that members across subgroups formed by informational faultlines are aware of their differences and *expect* to be different along informational lines. Although they might have different beliefs about how work should be done in a group, members of such groups are likely to be effective in dealing with logistical problems. When there are consistent expectations, there is less confusion about who is responsible for what and how task accomplishment should proceed in the work unit. This certainty allows members to accept their expected informational differences (Rink & Ellemers, 2006) and exert more effort toward coordinating task accomplishment.

- *Proposition 9:* Individual in groups with strong informational faultlines will experience low levels of intragroup process conflict.

In sum, we again refer you to Table 6.3, which summarizes our propositions about social category and informational heterogeneity and faultlines on task, relationship and process conflict. However, it is not as straightforward as this table suggests given that both demographic dispersion and alignment can occur simultaneously. In addition, informational and social category characteristics co-occur in individuals and thus in groups. To integrate the dispersion and alignment concepts in groups, for instance, we must consider the effects of having a social categorically diverse (dispersed) yet informationally aligned group such that subgroups occur along educational and functional lines but may crosscut across gender and race (social category). Will this type of group experience high levels of both task conflict (attributed to informationally based faultlines) and relationship conflict (attributed to social-categorical dispersion) or will one type of group composition dominate the other with regard to its effects on group conflict? For example, the group may capitalize on informationally based faultlines and experience high levels of task conflict and low levels of relationship conflict. To make it even more complicated, different demographic characteristics *within* a type of faultline may *differentially* contribute to group dynamics as group context may lead to reliance on one faultline base. For example, group norms about competence and recognition may encourage seniority-salient faultlines, whereas norms supporting diversity may be more likely to promote gender- or race-salient faultlines. We discuss this and other future research directions below.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The ways that faultlines affect various types of conflict within groups and organizations are only beginning to be investigated. There are a number of future research directions that can be pursued to further our knowledge of this relationship. Future research on faultlines should investigate

issues of faultline measurement such as whether faultline distance (the level of divergence between two subgroups) should be evaluated in addition to faultline strength (the degree to which each subgroup is relatively homogeneous), potential moderators such as group identity and task type, and issues of context such as virtual teams. This work may also be extended by considering additional conflict types (e.g., creative conflict and political conflict; Jehn & Conlon, 1999) and examining conflict profiles (e.g., proportional composition of conflict types within a group; see Jehn & Chatman, 2000). Rather than try to describe all of our thoughts for future research for the faultlines-conflict relationships, we will focus on describing three such promising areas in detail: faultline activation, group/organizational culture, and measurement challenges.

Faultline Activation

Similar to the geological concept of faults in the Earth's crust, faultlines in groups can be inactive and go unnoticed without any changes in group processes for years (Lau & Murnighan, 1998). Although faultlines are dormant, they can become active, causing the group to split into subgroups. While potential faultlines are often based on the objective demographics of group members, active faultlines exist when the members perceive and behave as if they are two separate groups. Current research on faultlines has generally focused on potential faultlines by assuming that demographic (e.g., gender and race) or contextual (e.g., physical distance and organizational member) characteristics represent sources of identification for individuals in groups (e.g., Li & Hambrick, 2005; Thatcher et al., 2003). There are two potential areas for future investigation. One is to determine whether the demographic and contextual characteristics used in previous research are relevant attributes that trigger faultline activation. A second potential area is to determine whether other attributes are more likely to trigger faultlines (e.g., parental status or love of baseball). Finally, we might examine the extent to which faultline activation is more likely to occur over time rather than in a single moment of time.

The degree to which demographic characteristics act as triggers for faultline activation is related to research on identity saliency. According to Lau and Murnighan (1998), faultlines can lead to salient subgroups that then become a basis for social identification and categorization. Once group members start identifying themselves with a particular subgroup, the negative outcomes of categorization (e.g. negative stereotyping and prejudice) are likely to lead to coalition formation and conflict (Thatcher & Jehn, 1998). However, because individuals have multiple identities, the salience of a particular identity depends on the context where individuals operate (Hogg & Terry, 2000). For example, a group of three men and three women has a potential faultline based on gender. If all six individuals view their genders as salient identities, then there is an active faultline.

However, not all potential faultline situations are activated; that is, while the demographics of the group members suggest the potential for faultlines, the members may never actually feel or behave as separate groups leading to little or no animosity across subgroups.

When individuals have salient identities, they are more likely to think of themselves along the lines of that particular identity. For example, if gender is a salient identity to a female worker, then she is more likely to perceive workplace issues from the point of view of a female. Thus, one possible approach to understanding faultline activation is to examine identity saliency as a moderator of potential faultiness and conflict. However, even if the salience of gender is not initially important to the group members, the potential faultline may develop into an active faultline. For instance, if this group is tasked to review a sexual harassment initiative, the potential faultline may become activated as the male subgroup and female subgroup view this initiative from opposing angles.

Another approach to investigating faultlines would be to ask group members if any issues or identities are the cause of faultline activation. For example, something as trivial as the love for baseball could create a perceived in-group and out-group within the larger group. All problems or issues that this group then faces could then be perceived through the in-group/out-group lens. It will be interesting to see whether the nature of faultline activation is more often a result of demographic/contextual characteristics or whether it is based on relatively innocuous differences. If, in fact, trivial differences are important in activating faultlines, then managers may be able to counteract this by proactively engaging in some group identification efforts.

A third approach is to view faultline activation as a longitudinal process. Characteristics that are visible and have had historic social implications for role behavior (e.g., gender) may be the impetus for initial faultline development. Based on evolutionary psychology, gender is the most influential difference between humans because it appeared earliest in human society (Kurzban, Tooby, & Cosmides, 2001). People easily registered the differences in gender and developed cognitive adaptations to encode the gender dimension preferentially. As members get to know one another, other characteristics (e.g., race and age) may solidify the faultlines if the characteristics align with gender faultlines. Finally, we would expect that nonvisible groupings (e.g., organizational tenure and educational background), where aligned would continue to support subgroup alignment. Viewing faultline activation as a longitudinal process suggests that interventions may occur at various points in time to reduce the strength of faultline alignment.

Group and Organizational Culture

Another future direction we discuss is the role that group and organizational cultures play on the relationship between faultlines and conflict.

Understanding group and organizational culture is an important avenue for future research because these cultures may determine whether faultlines become active as well as influencing the dimensions on which faultlines may become activated. The essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas, their attached values, and the extent to which a group accepts these ideas and values (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963). There are different levels of analysis from which to study culture, as culture can exist at societal, national, and regional levels (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Within organizations, culture can exist at an organizational, business unit, department, or group level (Chatman & Jehn, 1994; Mannix, Thatcher, & Jehn, 2001).

Group culture is defined as the extent to which group members have consensus on values, norms, and appropriate behaviors related to work (adapted from Chatman & Jehn, 1994; Mannix et al., 2001; Rousseau, 1990). Group culture can reflect preferred ways to perform individual and group tasks such as being innovative, task oriented, or career oriented (Jehn, 1994; Jehn, et al., 1997; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). Two primary concerns become relevant when researchers conceptualize group culture: (a) the extent to which members care about the group culture (culture strength), and (b) the extent to which these cultures differ across content (culture content; Flynn & Chatman, 2001; Mannix et al., 2001). The norms and behaviors supported by group cultures vary widely across groups in an organization (Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1991; Jehn, 1994). Thus, it would be interesting to examine how different group cultures (e.g., values about career advancement or diversity initiatives) shape the way in which group faultlines affect performance. In fact, past research on diversity suggests that strong group cultures may be "a powerful way for managers to use informational and social influence processes to encourage solidarity rather than divisiveness" (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Similarly, we might expect that group cultures that value career advancement and diversity might suppress faultline activation.

Organizational culture can be defined as a common set of shared meanings or understandings about an organization (Reichers & Schneider, 1990). As in our discussion of group culture, the impact of organizational culture comes from the content and the strength of the shared meanings. Previous research has found that organizational culture affects group-level actions (O'Reilly, Williams, & Barsade, 1998; Thomas & Ely, 1996). O'Reilly, Williams, et al. (1998) found that organizational cultures that supported ethnic diversity reported positive effects on performance. Similarly, Thomas and Ely (1996) found that organizations that have cultures in which diversity is viewed as an opportunity to learn rather than as a legal requirement tend to perform better. Thus, as in the case with group cultures, we might expect that organizational cultures supporting career advancement and diversity might suppress faultline activation. Finally, we argue that it is not merely the content or strength of the organizational culture that influences group-level relationships; it is the resulting impact

of shared group culture *and* organizational culture (cultural consistency) that influences the relationship between group faultlines and conflict. We believe that cultural consistency is important because it can create extremely positive effects (in the case where the group and organizational cultures align) or extremely negative effects (in the case where group and organizational cultures do not align). Thus, we would expect that in culturally consistent environments, faultline activation would be suppressed whereas in culturally inconsistent environments, faultlines are not only more likely to be activated but the resulting activation will create more negative types of conflict.

Measurement Challenges

Recently, a few attempts to measure faultlines have been made. Shaw (2004) developed an SPSS-based program to measure internal and cross-subgroup alignments along categorical attributes for up to six-member groups. Gibson and Vermeulen (2003) proposed a measure of subgroup strength to capture overlapping demographics among members of a group. Thatcher et al. (2003) and Bezrukova, Jehn, Zanutto, and Thatcher (2005) described the measures of faultline strength and distance that have a number of advantages: They simultaneously allow continuous and categorical variables, can fit unlimited number of attributes, can handle groups of unlimited size, and are flexible enough to allow for different weights of the attributes. Zanutto, Bezrukova, and Jehn (2005) described a SAS-based code, which should make faultline calculations accessible and facilitate more empirical research. However, there continue to be challenges in developing the faultline measure.

One of the first challenges is being able to measure actual faultlines as well as potential faultlines. One solution is to develop a measure that asks group members to report on the dimensions on which subgroups exist. The potential dimensions may differ for every group subjecting this form of measurement to bias and error. In addition, it may be more meaningful to then focus on the strength of the faultline (is the split very strong) rather than the nature of the faultline (e.g., gender or race). A second challenge is determining the best approach for rescaling faultline dimensions so that they have the same meaning. For example, what does one difference in race equal to in terms of years? Past measurements have looked at the standard deviation of continuous variables in order to calculate "equal difference," but other approaches may be equally compelling.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter was intended to uncover the nuances of group composition that play a critical role in influencing intragroup conflict in organizational

workgroups by contrasting group composition theories of dispersion and alignment. We proposed that a particular alignment across group members and the resulting demographically motivated subgroups is what makes a difference in predicting the various types of conflict, more so than the dispersion, or heterogeneity, of demographic characteristics. This alignment may not necessarily cause dysfunctional processes, as has been suggested (e.g., Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Thatcher, et al., 2003), but rather it may promote effective decision-making processes via the various types of conflict. Consequently, we theorized about the *nature* of alignment, and specifically about the type of diversity responsible for the alignment (social category vs. information based), which determines to what degree members of a group will experience task, relationship, or process conflict (or a combination of the three). The delineation of the processes behind social category and information-based splits as related to conflict should help managers to handle effectively the dynamics of diverse groups and researchers to further the specification of the complex processes resulting from various profiles of group composition.

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[AQ1]Table cite: Table 6.1

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