

# Inclusion and Diversity in Work Groups: A Review and Model for Future Research

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*A great deal of research has focused on work group diversity, but management scholars have only recently focused on inclusion. As a result, the inclusion literature is still under development, with limited agreement on the conceptual underpinnings of this construct. In this article, the authors first use Brewer's optimal distinctiveness theory to develop a definition of employee inclusion in the work group as involving the satisfaction of the needs of both belongingness and uniqueness. Building on their definition, the authors then present a framework of inclusion. Their framework is subsequently used as a basis for reviewing the inclusion and diversity literature. Potential contextual factors and outcomes associated with inclusion are suggested in order to guide future research.*

**Keywords:** *inclusion; diversity; work group; exclusion; optimal distinctiveness theory*

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Diversity research in the past was dominated by a focus on the “problems” associated with diversity, such as discrimination, bias, affirmative action, and tokenism (Shore et al., 2009). This body of research has generated many meaningful and informative theories and empirical studies, and continues to do so (Jackson & Joshi, 2011). However, as the diversity

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field has evolved, scholars have increasingly focused on ways in which diversity may enhance work processes and organizational mechanisms that promote the potential value in diversity (Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009; Homan, Hollenbeck, Humphrey, van Knippenberg, Ilgen, & Van Kleef, 2008). Consistent with the views set forth by Cox (1991) in his discussion of the multicultural organization, researchers are searching for ways to *integrate* diverse individuals in organizations (Thomas & Ely, 1996). One research stream that is evolving in this area is that of creating work environments where diverse individuals feel included (Bilimoria, Joy, & Liang, 2008; Roberson, 2006).

The concept of inclusion has been nascent in the organizational literature for the past decade (Roberson, 2006), with comparable streams of research occurring earlier in social work (cf. Mor Barak, 2000) and social psychology (cf. Brewer, 1991). Although this concept has garnered increased attention in recent years, as yet, inclusion remains a new concept without consensus on the nature of this construct or its theoretical underpinnings. This lack of consensus hampers the utility of inclusion, both theoretically and practically. Thus, in this review, we first use Brewer's optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT) to develop a definition of inclusion and then present a framework of inclusion that we use as a lens for reviewing the inclusion and diversity literatures. Subsequently, we discuss the implications of our framework as a guide for future research and practice. In our theoretical development of inclusion, we choose to focus on the individual within the group. Specifically, we are interested in employee perceptions of work group inclusion. This focus is consistent with many diversity studies that have established the importance of group referents for the experience of diverse people in work organizations (cf. Parks-Stamm, Heilman, & Hearn, 2008) and aligns with ODT's focus on an individual's satisfaction of needs within a group setting.

Our article is organized as follows. In the next section, we explain the key tenets of ODT. Then, we describe our inclusion definition and framework, and following, we outline the emerging literature on inclusion with a focus on how there are themes present in this literature that are consistent with our definition. The subsequent section consists of a discussion of how our framework is similar to and distinct from existing models and theories within the diversity literature. Lastly, we propose possible contextual factors and outcomes associated with inclusion in order to guide future research and thinking in the areas of diversity and inclusion.

### **Optimal Distinctiveness Theory as an Organizing Framework for the Inclusion Literature**

There has been a great deal of discussion in the diversity literature about the role of identification in creating in-groups and out-groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Identification with social categories, such as those in the diversity literature, is "based on symbolic attachment to the group as a whole" (Roccas & Brewer, 2002: 89). As a result of social identification, people become attached to one another through their common connection to the social group. In addition to this social component, identity also contains a personal component that involves defining oneself as an individual (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Therefore, social identities contribute to less individuation as people incorporate group aspects into their self-concepts (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

ODT (Brewer, 1991: 477) explains tensions associated with “human needs for validation and similarity to others (on the one hand) and a countervailing need for uniqueness and individuation (on the other).” Brewer argued that individuals seek to balance these two needs through an optimal level of inclusion in groups to which they belong. To fulfill a fundamental human need for belongingness (defined as the need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships; Baumeister & Leary, 1995), people choose social identities with particular groups and seek acceptance into those groups. Acceptance, and the sense of connection with others that it creates, prevents the isolation that may occur if one becomes highly individuated (Pickett, Silver, & Brewer, 2002).

There are many advantages associated with being an accepted member of a group. Individuals attribute positive characteristics to other members of their in-groups and display in-group favoritism (Turner, 1975). The loyalty, cooperation, and trustworthiness among group members function to enhance the security of individual members (Brewer, 2007). However, if members of groups are perceived as too similar, then individuals become interchangeable and the need for uniqueness (defined as the need to maintain a distinctive and differentiated sense of self) is unfulfilled (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). When this need becomes activated, individuals define themselves in terms of category memberships that distinguish themselves from others by making comparisons within their group (e.g., I am different than others) or to others outside their group (e.g., our group is different than others).

According to Pickett, Bonner, and Coleman (2002), individuals opt to socially identify with a particular group when it allows for the satisfaction of needs for both belongingness and uniqueness. Tests of ODT suggest that while both needs are important, situations arise in which one or the other need becomes salient (Correll & Park, 2005; Pickett & Brewer, 2001). Thus, the importance of the need for belongingness or for uniqueness can vary depending on the context in which an individual is situated. If one of these needs is activated as a result of contextual circumstances associated with a particular social identity, that social identity may become more salient in that situation. For example, if a sole Asian American is working in a team of Caucasians, her need for belongingness may be activated when her ideas are publicly rejected and she associates the rejection with her race (Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999).

When belongingness and uniqueness needs are placed in jeopardy, ODT studies show that individuals will engage in efforts to achieve the balance that they seek. In situations in which individuals’ needs for belongingness or uniqueness are activated, efforts to restore the balance include self-stereotyping, intergroup differentiation, and placing greater value on a particular social identity (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1998; Pickett, Bonner, et al., 2002; Pickett, Silver, et al., 2002). These studies highlight how strong individuals’ motivations are to keep an optimal satisfaction level of both needs.

We believe this tension between belongingness and uniqueness is an underlying theme in the inclusion literature as well as in some of the diversity literature that is focused on the individual within the group. Specifically, both literatures pose that some demographic groups (e.g., women, racial minorities) have fewer opportunities to belong to valued groups, such as groups that tend to occupy higher level positions in the firm, due to their unique features relative to the individuals (e.g., Caucasian men) who hold those positions (Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008). The ongoing struggle for women and minorities to achieve success has increasingly inspired diversity scholars to argue for the importance of organizational environments where

“diversity is pervasive and part of an overall perspective and strategy that is inclusive of all employee differences, and these differences themselves are considered opportunities for both individual and organizational learning” (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002: 324).

### **Conceptualizing Inclusion as Involving Belongingness and Uniqueness**

We define inclusion as the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness. Building on ODT, this definition departs from existing inclusion research by explicitly focusing on both belongingness and uniqueness. In particular, we argue that even though the themes of belongingness and uniqueness are apparent in the diversity and inclusion literature, as yet, research has not focused on the necessity of balancing these two needs in order to foster inclusion.

#### *Inclusion Framework*

In Figure 1, we present a  $2 \times 2$  framework of inclusion in which we propose that uniqueness and belongingness work together to create feelings of inclusion. Specifically, we 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 (“Inclusion” cell in Figure 1). For example, an employee who is older than other work group members may have knowledge of the company and its industry that is potentially valuable to the group. If treated as an insider with highly valued knowledge, then the older employee will have a strong sense of inclusion and the group will be able to benefit through improved performance. There is support in the diversity literature for the advantages of experiencing belongingness and uniqueness simultaneously. For example, minority members (who are unique) with developed networks (and thus a sense of belongingness) report a high level of career optimism (Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998). At the group level, diverse work groups that adopt an integration-and-learning perspective incorporate both uniqueness (through viewing diversity as a resource) and belongingness (through members feeling valued and respected; Ely & Thomas, 2001). Work groups that adopt an integration-and-learning perspective demonstrate high-quality analyses, are able to facilitate effective cross-organizational collaboration, and allow individuals within the group to enhance their skills (Ely & Thomas, 2001).

On the other end of the spectrum is the low-belongingness/low-uniqueness combination that we have labeled *exclusion*. This is where the individual is not treated as an organizational insider with unique value in the work group, but there are other employees or groups who are considered insiders. When the need for belongingness is thwarted, there can be harmful cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and health outcomes (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005; Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles, & Baumeister, 2009; DeWall, Maner, & Rouby, 2009). Hitlan, Clifton, and DeSoto (2006) found that workplace exclusion (rejection by

**Figure 1**  
**Inclusion Framework**

	Low Belongingness	High Belongingness
Low Value in Uniqueness	<b>Exclusion</b> Individual is not treated as an organizational insider with unique value in the work group but there are other employees or groups who are insiders.	<b>Assimilation</b> Individual is treated as an insider in the work group when they conform to organizational/dominant culture norms and downplay uniqueness.
High Value in Uniqueness	<b>Differentiation</b> Individual is not treated as an organizational insider in the work group but their unique characteristics are seen as valuable and required for group/ organization success.	<b>Inclusion</b> Individual is treated as an insider and also allowed/encouraged to retain uniqueness within the work group.

coworkers and the supervisor) was particularly detrimental to the work attitudes and psychological health of men as compared with women. While prior exclusion research has focused on social rejection, thus emphasizing belongingness needs, we argue that working with colleagues who treat unique characteristics (e.g., perspectives, knowledge, or information) as unimportant or irrelevant should contribute likewise to feelings of exclusion. Consistent with this perspective, recent research on women executives in top management teams suggests that, while women have a positive impact on firm performance (Krishnan & Park, 2005), they leave their firms at a higher rate than male executives do. This is due partially to their relatively lower power in the top management team but also to the greater recognition of their unique human capital in the marketplace (Krishnan, 2009). Such findings suggest the value of considering both belongingness and uniqueness in studies of exclusion.

The *assimilation* cell, with high belongingness and low value in uniqueness, reflects situations in which an individual who is unique is treated as an insider when he or she conforms to the dominant norms of the culture. Goffman's (1963) classic work on stigma suggests that people may choose not to disclose information that highlights a stigmatized characteristic they possess in efforts to be accepted by others. When individuals have an "undesirable" characteristic that is not readily apparent (an invisible stigma such as religion, disability, or sexual orientation; Bell, Ozbilgin, Beauregard, & Surgevil, in press; Ragins, 2008), they have the choice as to whether or not to reveal their uniqueness and associated knowledge, experience, or perceptions.

Even when a unique characteristic is readily apparent (more likely the case for race, gender, or age), some individuals opt to downplay the ways that they may differ from the

group. Phillips, Rothbard, and Dumas (2009) argued that this happens most commonly in diverse environments involving individuals who differ with respect to status. For instance, Ely (1995) found that women attorneys adopt more masculine behaviors in order to fit the mold of a successful attorney. An executive in Anderson's (1999) work on African American executives remarked that to get promoted it was essential for African Americans on a management track to start dressing in the expected way so that their values and attitudes would be assumed to be similar. Such behavior may increase the satisfaction of belongingness needs but concurrently decrease the satisfaction of uniqueness needs. In support of this view, a recent study by Hewlin (2009) focused on the façade of conformity, which occurs when an individual suppresses personal values and pretends to embrace organizational values. She found that perceived nonparticipative environments, perceived minority status, self-monitoring, and collectivism were significantly related to façades of conformity. Emotional exhaustion then mediated the relation between façades of conformity and turnover intentions, suggesting negative consequences for individuals who opt to assimilate to the extent that the unique aspects that they personally value are kept hidden or, in fact, that they act in a manner counter to those personal values.

We place individuals low on belongingness but highly valued for their uniqueness in the cell in Figure 1 corresponding to *differentiation*. Snyder and Fromkin (1980) observed that most people have a need to be moderately unique but that people differ in this motive. For example, Dollinger (2003) showed that people with high needs for uniqueness tend to be more creative. Likewise, people who put higher value on their uniqueness are more likely to publicly display those unique elements (Imhoff & Erb, 2008). Furthermore, organizations have increasingly emphasized the unique capabilities of their employees as a form of human capital (Lepak & Snell, 1999) and a source of competitive advantage. In some organizational settings, there may be employees who offer unique and rare capabilities who are not considered or treated as organizational insiders. This scenario is reflected in the access-and-legitimacy perspective found in Ely and Thomas's (2001) qualitative study of racially diverse work groups. Work groups adopting this perspective acknowledged the value of diversity as a way of reaching particular markets, but minority members were not considered to be part of the larger culture of the organization and were subject to isolation and race-based stereotypes (Ely & Thomas, 2001). One way that organizations have put differentiation into practice is through free agency, whereby organizations purchase the services of highly talented and unique people to solve organizational problems, but without making permanent employment offers (Riley & Buckley, 2008).

### *Inclusion Literature*

Looking at the existing literature on inclusion, it is clear that there is considerable disparity among researchers with respect to its definition. Pelled, Ledford, and Mohrman (1999: 1014) defined inclusion as "the degree to which an employee is accepted and treated as an insider by others in a work system." Roberson (2006: 217) argued that inclusion refers to "the removal of obstacles to the full participation and contribution of employees in organizations,"

and Miller (1998: 151) similarly described inclusion as the extent to which diverse individuals "are allowed to participate and are enabled to contribute fully." Likewise, Lirio, Lee, Williams, Haugen, and Kossek (2008: 443) referred to inclusion as "when individuals feel a sense of belonging, and inclusive behaviors such as eliciting and valuing contributions from all employees are part of the daily life in the organization." Furthermore, Avery, McKay, Wilson, and Volpone (2008: 6) stated that inclusion is "the extent to which employees believe their organizations engage in efforts to involve all employees in the mission and operation of the organization with respect to their individual talents." Wasserman, Gallegos, and Ferdman (2008: 176) define a culture of inclusion as existing when "people of all social identity groups [have] the opportunity to be present, to have their voices heard and appreciated, and to engage in core activities on behalf of the collective." Finally, Holvino, Ferdman, and Merrill-Sands (2004: 249) define a multicultural, inclusive organization as "one in which the diversity of knowledge and perspectives that members of different groups bring to the organization has shaped its strategy, its work, its management and operating systems, and its core values and norms for success."

Two general themes are apparent in these definitions that are consistent with ODT. First, there is a theme of belongingness, as indicated by some key words and phrases in the above definitions such as "accepted," "insider," and "sense of belonging." The second theme of uniqueness is indicated by key phrases such as "valuing contributions from all employees," "contribute fully," "individual talents," and "to have their voices heard and appreciated."

The uniqueness theme reflects value in uniqueness rather than uniqueness defined strictly in a numerical sense. Although focusing on value in uniqueness departs from empirical work in the diversity literature where uniqueness is defined numerically (e.g., Hornsey & Hogg, 1999), conceptual work on ODT has acknowledged a link between being valued and uniqueness; for instance, Correll and Park (2005) discuss how a group is valuable if it validates an individual's existing (unique) beliefs, and Shepherd and Haynie (2009) argue that entrepreneurs' distinctiveness stems from the requirement that they are valued within the competitive marketplace. On the other end of the spectrum, the failure to recognize the worth of unique identities is discussed in the literature on stigmas. Stigmas are "attributes, characteristics, or experiences that convey an identity that is devalued in some social settings," and choosing to keep them private has the potential to "take a toll on these individuals through psychological strain, emotional stress, and stress-related illnesses" (Ragins, 2008: 194). Thus, our framework and the second half of our definition of work group inclusion argues for value in uniqueness, consistent with (1) the optimal distinctiveness model's focus on satisfaction of uniqueness needs, (2) the emphasis in existing inclusion literature on individuals being valued for their unique perspectives, and (3) evidence from the stigma literature that devalued identities are hidden so as to avoid rejection by work groups.

Since the inclusion literature is still in its infancy, it is important to note that there is not yet much literature that reflects inclusion as we define it. There is literature that separately reflects the belongingness and uniqueness themes, but there is little research that encompasses both themes together. In the remainder of this section, we review the small but growing literature on inclusion, with an emphasis on the presence of the themes of belongingness and uniqueness.



While inclusion has started to gain popularity among diversity scholars, most of the research has lacked adequate theoretical grounding and there is limited empirical testing of ideas. A notable exception is the work of Mor Barak, whose research is primarily in the social work field. Mor Barak (2000: 52) stated that “employee perception of inclusion-exclusion is conceptualized as a continuum of the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organizational processes. These processes include access to information and resources, connectedness to supervisor and co-workers, and ability to participate in and influence the decision making process.” Mor Barak developed a theoretical model of inclusion in which she posed that diversity and organizational culture would contribute to perceptions of inclusion-exclusion, which would then lead to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, individual well-being, and task effectiveness.

A few studies have tested elements of Mor Barak’s model. Mor Barak, Cherin, and Berkman (1998) showed that among a group of electronics employees, men and Caucasians were more likely than other groups to feel included. Findler, Wind, and Mor Barak (2005) found that support for a link between inclusion and diversity was somewhat mixed, with gender showing the only consistent link to information networks and decision making (such that women reported lower levels of inclusion than men did). However, inclusion did not lead to commitment and satisfaction. In an expansion of the original model to include turnover intentions, Mor Barak, Levin, Nissly, and Lane (2006) found that exclusion from decision making was a predictor of intention to leave among child welfare workers. Younger workers and those with lower tenure also experienced higher rates of exclusion from information networks and decision making. Lastly, Acquavita, Pittman, Gibbons, and Castellanos-Brown (2009) showed in a study of social workers that inclusion-exclusion was associated with job satisfaction.

Following Mor Barak’s lead, other empirical studies have been conducted on inclusion practices. Pelled and colleagues (1999) focused on three practices as indicators of inclusion: decision-making influence, access to sensitive work information, and job security. Their results indicated that dissimilarity in race and gender were negatively associated and dissimilarity in tenure and education were positively associated with these three indicators of inclusion. Roberson (2006) developed scales that distinguished between diversity and inclusion practices and reported that the latter consisted of collaborative work arrangements and conflict resolution procedures that were created to involve diverse employees in decision-making processes. Using a qualitative methodology, Janssens and Zanoni (2007) concluded that inclusive work contexts tend to involve practices encouraging the same treatment of employees while simultaneously acknowledging individual differences, for example, recruitment of ethnic minorities based on individual capabilities rather than on ethnic membership; teams composed of different ethnicities performing jobs of the same status; and high task interdependence allowing for frequent, substantive communication among team members.

Three studies explored employee perceptions of inclusion. Stamper and Masterson (2002) investigated perceived insider status and reported that perceived organizational support functioned as an antecedent of this construct. Further, perceived insider status was positively related to altruism and negatively related to production deviance. While this study did not include diversity variables, it highlights the importance of treatment (perceived organizational support) that creates feelings of belongingness (insider status). Nembhard and Edmondson



(2006) examined employee perceptions of leader inclusiveness, consisting of an invitation and appreciation of others' contributions to the team. Their focus was on professional status differences (rather than demographic differences) involving doctor leaders and other health care professionals working as a team. They found that leader inclusiveness was associated with psychological safety, which then contributed to team engagement. Avery et al. (2008) examined the role of perceived inclusion in moderating the positive relation between seniority and intent to remain. Across three samples, there were fewer differences between low- and high-seniority employees in intent to remain when perceived inclusion was high.

A recent study by Nishii and Mayer (2009) also has important implications for inclusion. They examined the role of leader-member exchange (LMX) in lowering turnover in diverse work groups (in terms of race, age, gender, and tenure). They argued that inclusive leaders have generally high-quality relations with their subordinates (a high mean LMX score in the work group) and have low differentiation among those same subordinates (little variability in LMX in the work group). In support of this view, when the manager had high LMX relations and low differentiation with subordinates within a diverse work group, there was lower turnover in those groups. However, having a high level of LMX in a diverse work group contributed to the greatest amount of turnover when the manager had good relations with most, but not all, followers. The finding for differentiation is consistent with the view that "LMX variability runs counter to principles of equality and consistency, which are important for maintaining social harmony in groups" (Hooper & Martin, 2008: 20). A study by Sherony and Green (2002) showing that similar levels of LMX among coworkers were associated with positive relations among coworkers suggests further support for the importance of the manager for creating an environment in which diverse subordinates feel they belong. Likewise, Hooper and Martin (2008) found in two samples that LMX variability in the team was negatively related to job satisfaction and well-being and that relational team conflict mediated these relationships.

Wasserman et al. (2008) more generally theorize on the importance of leaders in creating an organizational culture of inclusion. Likewise, recent research on diversity and leadership suggests the importance of considering the different approaches and styles of leadership that are reflected among diverse people and how these different ways of leading can create inclusion experiences for followers (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Chin, 2010; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

In sum, two conclusions can be made regarding the literature on inclusion. First, practices that are associated with insider status, including sharing information, participation in decision making, and having voice, are reflected in measures of inclusion. While these practices are assumed to enhance employee perceptions of inclusion, more explicit theorizing about the psychological mechanisms that underlie this link is needed. Second, there is a clear theme that inclusion has positive consequences for individuals and organizations, but as yet, little is known about how or why this occurs. This last point suggests that, fundamentally, the inclusion construct and its underlying theoretical basis need greater development. Our inclusion framework highlights how explicitly focusing on inclusion as involving both belongingness and uniqueness is one way that a better understanding of the effects of inclusion can be achieved.

In this section, we have explained our inclusion framework and reviewed the existing literature on inclusion. In the next section, we explain how our conceptualization differs from

theories and models in the diversity literature, with an emphasis on how our framework builds on and promises to advance the diversity literature.

## **Our Inclusion Framework and the Diversity Literature**

### *Differences Between Our Inclusion Framework and Diversity Theories and Models*

One of the distinguishing characteristics of our framework of inclusion is the notion that individuals want to feel a sense of belonging, as well as feeling valued, for their unique attributes. By contrast, some diversity theories and the constructs (e.g., demographic similarity) associated with them place more emphasis on the benefits of similarity, thus focusing on the belongingness theme and not the uniqueness theme. For instance, theoretical perspectives most commonly relied upon in the diversity literature (relational demography, social identity theory, and the similarity-attraction paradigm) argue that people seek to belong to groups and tend to treat people in their in-groups more favorably than those in out-groups (Byrne, 1971; Lemyre & Smith, 1985; Riordan & Weatherly, 1999). Empirical findings premised on these diversity theories often are offered in support of the argument that individuals who are similar to their work groups report positive attitudes largely as a result of this feeling of belonging. For example, racial similarity has been associated with greater liking and satisfaction, higher interview ratings, and better communication behavior and with reduced relationship conflict, intention to leave, and turnover (Buckley, Jackson, Bolino, Veres, & Feild, 2007; Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998; Chattopadhyay, 1999; Godthelp & Glunk, 2003; Riordan & Shore, 1997; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992; Wiersema & Bird, 1993). In addition, gender similarity has been found to be positively related to trust, LMX, group cohesion, feelings of competence, psychological attachment, and intent to stay (Mellor, 1995; Pelled & Xin, 2000; Shapcott, Carron, Burke, Bradshaw, & Estabrooks, 2006; Tsui et al., 1992). However, research findings resulting from this focus on similarity (belongingness) often have been mixed (e.g., Mannix & Neale, 2005; Riordan, 2000), which suggests the possibility that demographic similarity may not always promote a sense of belongingness on its own and also that it may not be sufficient to ensure positive outcomes (cf. Riordan & Wayne, 2008). As our framework suggests, we argue that belongingness should be accompanied by being valued for uniqueness in order for work groups to promote perceptions of employee inclusion. Through satisfying human needs for belongingness and uniqueness, such perceptions should have more consistent effects on outcomes pertinent to individuals in work groups, such as pro-organizational attitudes and behaviors.

Other theories within the diversity literature on individuals in groups describe the experience of diverse individuals as being negative as a result of their dissimilarity from other group members. Tokens (i.e., people with characteristics that are held by 15% or fewer group members) have been characterized as experiencing difficulties, such as suffering from performance pressures and feeling discomfort from being visible within the group (Kanter, 1977; Pollak & Niemann, 1998). Being unique from others can activate stereotypes, feelings of exclusion, or the fear of being treated on the basis of negative stereotypes that can

further the experience of feeling different from others (Pelled et al., 1999; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002).

Likewise, research building on the attraction-selection-attrition model and theories regarding organizational fit has reported that African American managers achieve less fit with their organizations, relative to White managers (Lovelace & Rosen, 1996). However, tokenism effects have not always been unequivocal. For instance, women in male-skewed departments (men composed 92% of department members) versus male-tilted academic departments (men composed 73% of department members) did not feel more visible or have lower job satisfaction (Hewstone et al., 2006), and women in male-dominated groups have reported a high likelihood of staying in those work groups (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2004). This may be due to the higher status afforded these women and the greater opportunities such status may create (Mor Barak, 2005). These findings also point to a possibility consistent with our inclusion framework that being a token is not necessarily a negative experience; tokens could be valued for their uniqueness and feel a sense of belonging. Our definition of inclusion depicts diverse individuals' experience as having the *potential* to be positive when they feel a sense of belonging and feel valued for the characteristics on which they are unique.

While many diversity theories and empirical studies focus on the benefits of similarity, there is an assumption of symmetrical effects such that dissimilarity creates dislike and negative effects. However, several authors point out that this assumption is not consistently supported in the literature. Brewer (2007: 729) argues that in-group positivity does not imply out-group derogation (the "out-group hostility principle") and provides evidence supporting this view. Similarly, Pittinsky and Simon (2007) assert in their two-dimensional model of intergroup attitudes that group members may view an out-group positively and also that bases for positive attitudes toward an out-group and negative attitudes toward the same out-group are different and serve distinct functions. Furthermore, according to the concept of mutual intergroup differentiation (Hewstone & Brown, 1986), groups can retain their valued identities but still engage in social cooperation with other groups. When distinct groups work interdependently, members will retain positive views of their own group but can also perceive out-groups as holding both distinct and positive attributes.

### *Diversity in Groups Literature That Our Framework of Inclusion Builds Upon*

While our inclusion framework diverges from the literature on diversity in groups in some ways, as described above, it also builds on this literature by explicitly highlighting themes that are implicit to some of the work in this area. In particular, the integration-and-learning perspective (also called the learning-and-effectiveness paradigm) involves acknowledging the differences among people and recognizing the value of those differences, which are reflective of the uniqueness theme in our definition of inclusion (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Thomas & Ely, 1996). At the same time, belongingness is a key component of the integration-and-learning perspective since it advocates integrating those differences into the functioning of a work group or organization. Common experiences reported by employees in the firm in which an integration-and-learning perspective was prevalent included

placing a high priority on explaining different points of view so that all employees could learn from one another (suggestive of uniqueness) and feeling valued and respected by colleagues (suggestive of belongingness; Ely & Thomas, 2001). Relative to the other perspectives in Ely and Thomas's study (access-and-legitimacy and discrimination-and-fairness), the integration-and-learning perspective was shown to be particularly effective by producing high-quality work and allowing employees to expand on their capabilities. The integration-and-learning perspective also was drawn upon in a study of gender-diverse teams by Homan and her colleagues (2008). Team performance was enhanced in teams in which diversity was salient when there was a climate within the team characterized by openness to experience.

Another area of the literature on diversity in work groups that our framework builds upon is studies involving moderators of the effect between demographic dissimilarity and outcome variables. Although these studies differ from our framework by viewing dissimilarity as having inherently negative effects that must be counteracted, the counteracting variables reflect the theme of belonging. Team processes (including encouragement of all team members' participation) and team orientation, both which can be thought of as indicators of belonging, were found to weaken the negative effects of gender and deep-level dissimilarity on relationship conflict (Mohammed & Angell, 2004), which in turn predicted performance. Transformational leadership, which creates belongingness among followers by unifying them around goals and values, moderated the relationship between demographic dissimilarity and team performance (Kearney & Gebert, 2009). Even though this fairly recent work views uniqueness differently than our framework of inclusion, it is interesting to note that in general terms there are similar themes of uniqueness and belongingness. By delving explicitly and more deeply into how the themes of uniqueness and belongingness are involved in the effects of diversity on individuals within work groups, there is great potential for us to expand the boundaries of what we know about diversity in groups.

### *How Our Framework Can Advance the Diversity Literature*

Our conceptualization of inclusion promises to advance the diversity literature on several fronts, including moving beyond a frequent assumption that an individual who is not similar to other group members is likely to be viewed unfavorably. The inclusion framework we have proposed posits that, within work groups, members can be valued for their unique attributes and that, in fact, group members endeavor to feel valued for their unique attributes at the same time that they want to belong to the group.

Our view that the treatment of individual uniqueness and belonging in studies of work group diversity needs to be refined is reflected in several recent research streams, including social identity complexity, intersectionality, and faultlines. These literatures suggest that individuals have multiple social identities that can create the basis for both uniqueness and similarity with other group members. Social identity complexity highlights how people subjectively combine multiple social identities, reconciling how individuals may be out-group members on the basis of one social identity (e.g., gender) while they simultaneously are in-group members on another social identity characteristic (e.g., race; Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

Social identity complexity “refers to an individual’s subjective representation of the interrelationships among his or her multiple group identities” (Roccas & Brewer, 2002: 88) and can range from a simple unified identity to a complex and multifaceted identity. Empirical work has shown that social identity complexity is positively related to tolerance toward out-group members (Roccas & Brewer, 2002) and positive attitudes toward racial out-groups (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Miller, Brewer, & Arbuckle, 2009). Another stream of research on multiple social identities focuses on intersectionality, which refers to “the manner in which multiple aspects of identity may combine in different ways to construct social reality” (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). The majority of diversity research has focused on single categories of diversity (e.g., race, age, sex), but research on intersectionality has begun the process of examining how multiple categories concurrently influence the experiences of individuals (e.g., Black women). Finally, diversity research on faultlines (which considers how the multiple identities of group members align to create subgroups) also suggests that the strength of out-group effects may differ depending on group composition (Lau & Murnighan, 1998, 2005; Rico, Molleman, Sanchez-Manzanares, & Van der Vegt, 2007). Note, however, that faultline research typically is conducted at the group level, leaving room for more nuanced models that reflect advances in psychological research on social identification and that take into account the experiences of individuals within groups.

Self-verification theory is another social psychological theory that holds promise for building upon the value for the uniqueness theme present in our inclusion framework. This theory has been included in the empirical diversity literature only at the group level (Polzer, Milton, & Swann, 2002). Self-verification theory, which proposes that individuals join groups in part to verify their personal and social self-views, has been examined empirically at the individual level in the social psychology literature. Gomez, Huici, Seyle, and Swann (2009) found that individuals seek to verify both their negative and positive identities, while Gomez, Huici, and Morales (2004; cited in Gomez et al., 2009) showed that intergroup relations can be improved when out-group members (individuals who do not share the same group membership) verify an individual’s identities. These studies showed that self-verification, even in the face of negative self-views, is preferred, suggesting that self-enhancement may not be as motivating as has often been assumed. Further, these studies suggest that self-verification processes, including feeling verified by others different from oneself (i.e., out-group members), are important to realizing improvements in the interactions among diverse individuals. We hope our conceptualization of inclusion, and our building on recent research on social identity, encourages researchers to delve further into the organizational mechanisms that can promote valuing unique qualities and knowledge associated with an individual’s diverse characteristics.

In general, diversity research on individuals within work groups has relied on long-standing theoretical perspectives, such as social identity theory and self-categorization. Recent theoretical developments in the diversity and work group literature have emphasized the benefits of uniqueness at the group level (e.g., faultlines and the integration-and-learning perspective), which may or may not be relevant to the experience of individuals within diverse work groups. By looking to new developments in social psychology research on optimal distinctiveness, social identity complexity, intersectionality, and self-verification theory, for instance, there are valuable ideas that can be built upon to advance the diversity literature on individuals

within work groups. Our inclusion framework provides a launching point for expanding the diversity literature by developing new ideas pertaining to the experience of individuals within work groups.

### **Insight for Future Work**

Even though the diversity research literature is vast, much research is still needed to understand how organizations can create inclusive environments that provide opportunities for the variety of people who work together in our global economy. As stated by Bell (2007: 3), "After more than two decades of diversity research, four decades of antidiscrimination legislation, and extraordinary media attention to diversity, discrimination and exclusion in organizations persist." Thus, in this article we argue for the importance of developing the construct of inclusion with the goal of inspiring research that enhances both theory and practice. In the next section, we present an early-stage model of antecedents and consequences of inclusion that is intended to guide future research and thinking in the areas of diversity and inclusion, rather than to offer a fully developed model with extensive discussion of its components.

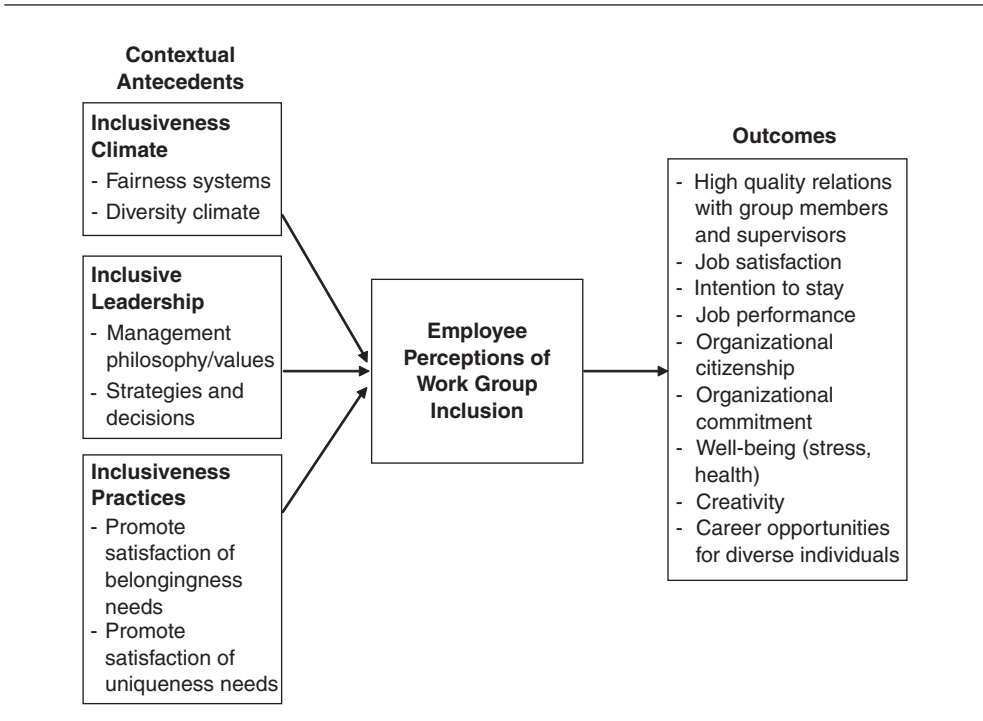
#### *Contextual Factors Contributing to Inclusion*

As shown in Figure 2, we propose contextual factors that may contribute to perceptions of inclusion. While this is not an exhaustive list of possible directions for future research, we believe that these topics will serve as a launching point for stimulating research in this promising area. Contextual factors are part of the environment that provide stimuli to individuals and are used to interpret information at work (Mowday & Sutton, 1993; Weick, 1979). Antecedents, such as climate, leadership, and human resources practices, contribute to the group processes that build the work environment for the individual's perceptions of inclusion (Bilimoria et al., 2008).

*Inclusive climate.* Diversity researchers have argued that a diversity climate contributes to perceptions that the organization values the contributions of all employees (Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Leslie & Gelfand, 2008; McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2009; Mor Barak et al., 1998; Thomas & Ely, 1996). According to Gonzalez and DeNisi (2009: 25), "Diversity climate is related to the inclusion or exclusion of people from diverse backgrounds (Mor Barak et al., 1998), and . . . to the justice-related events pertinent to the balance of power and relations across social groups (Kossek & Zonia, 1993)." Recent research suggests the significance of aggregated justice perceptions at the work group level for predicting such important outcomes as commitment, customer service, organizational citizenship behaviors, and turnover intentions (Ehrhart, 2004; Simons & Roberson, 2003). Aspects of justice pertaining to fair treatment of diverse employees are particularly relevant to inclusion. System justice, or "the broader organizational context in which procedures are embedded—including, for example, aspects of the authority system, or how information is



**Figure 2**  
**Antecedents and Outcomes of Inclusion**



generated, processed, and received,” is an important element of an inclusion climate, by creating a context in which fair treatment may occur at multiple levels, including to individuals and to groups (Sheppard, Lewicki, & Minton, 1992: 13).

Relatedly, Hayes, Bartle, and Major (2002: 450) suggested a “climate for opportunity” model as a framework for managing diversity. They defined climate for opportunity as “an individual’s overall perception of the fairness of the organization in terms of the management processes used to allocate opportunities, including interpersonal treatment, and the distribution of opportunities in the organizational context.” Chrobot-Mason and Thomas (2002) proposed that both individuals and organizations have a racial identity and that four different types of employer–employee relationships can result from these identities. An organization’s racial identity moves from being monocultural, in which racial differences are minimized and/or ignored, to one that values differences and deals openly with racial conflict and diversity issues. These varied organizational identities create different environments that may enhance or inhibit minority employee retention. Finally, Nishii (2010) provides evidence that a climate of inclusion involves fair employment practices, interpersonal integration of diverse employees, and involvement in decision making. Future research could test specific components of climate, such as those involved in justice-related events, in opportunity and

interpersonal integration, or in an organization's racial identity, as they relate specifically to employees' perceptions of inclusion.

A climate of inclusion is one in which policies, procedures, and actions of organizational agents are consistent with fair treatment of *all* social groups, with particular attention to groups that have had fewer opportunities historically and that are stigmatized in the societies in which they live. The latter groups are especially likely to pay attention to the degree of inclusion that appears to be present in the organization. However, broader fairness systems are also likely to be noted by those traditionally in the majority (e.g., men and Caucasians), who may have concerns pertaining to "reverse discrimination" (Heilman, Block, & Lucas, 1992; Morrison, 1992). Such concerns can create conflict among group members and undermine the satisfaction of belongingness and uniqueness needs. Davidson and Proudford (2008) suggested that there are patterns of resistance to diversity by majority and minority members and that these patterns feed one another to hinder inclusiveness efforts. Friedman and Davidson (2001) made the distinction between first-order diversity conflict (e.g., discrimination and bias) and second-order diversity conflict (disputes over or caused by the remedies designed to eliminate discrimination such as backlash and resentment caused by, for example, affirmative action or diversity training). They also noted that first-order conflict is felt only by minorities, whereas second-order conflict will be felt by both minority and majority members. In a climate of inclusion, both minority and majority members feel that they belong and feel respected such that resistance and conflict are minimized. It is essential that future research on inclusion take into account the experiences of both majority and minority members to capture the effects of an inclusive climate on all employees.

*Inclusive leadership.* The traditional approach to addressing diversity and inclusion goals has been to recruit and hire diverse employees (Jackson, 1992; Shore et al., 2009). However, until recently, very little research has investigated the internal organizational processes that create inclusion rather than mere numerical representations of diversity. Researchers have begun to establish the importance of top management philosophy and values pertaining to diversity and equal employment opportunity (Avery, McKay, Wilson, & Tonidandel, 2007; Gelfand, Nishii, Raver, & Schneider, 2005; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Scheid, 2005; Wasserman et al., 2008). Such values can directly affect the types of practices that are enacted in work groups that promote or undermine inclusion (Reskin, 2000). Showing appreciation for others' contributions and inviting group members to provide input are other leader behaviors that convey inclusion (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). The group value model of procedural justice may provide additional guidance to future research on inclusive leadership (Lind & Tyler, 1988). The model proposes that leaders' procedurally fair treatment conveys to individual members that they have a respected position in the group. When fair procedures are used consistently in the group, then members can take pride in group membership. Unfair treatment, by contrast, communicates to group members that they and/or their group are disrespected, which has been found to result in psychological withdrawal and low identification with the group or organization (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004).

Direct supervisors can have a strong impact on the experience of employees in a work group, especially a diverse work group in which different values and perspectives may coexist. As shown by Nishii and Mayer (2009), high levels of LMX in a work group with little

differentiation are associated with lower turnover in diverse groups. Such treatment implies that all employees within the work group are highly valued by the manager. Furthermore, since the direct supervisor is often the key organizational agent determining access to rewards and opportunities for subordinates, it is critical that the supervisor behave in ways that create a sense of inclusion (Douglas, Ferris, Buckley, & Gundlach, 2003). Douglas et al. argued that leaders of diverse groups need to display behaviors consistent with group values that create a dual focus on acceptance of diverse members and appropriate modes of conduct necessary to accomplish group goals. Such leader behaviors contribute to a group setting in which all members can develop high-quality LMX relationships. Similarly, Wasserman et al. (2008) noted the importance of leaders in creating an organizational culture of inclusion, suggesting that leaders establish a meta-narrative, or story, that supports the culture of inclusion and actively engage resistance to diversity efforts. Such engagement can create a learning opportunity for the leader so that inclusion efforts can be more successful. Overall, as these scholars highlight, investigating the processes and behaviors involved in the area of inclusive leadership seems to be an area ripe for future research.

*Inclusive practices.* While there has been quite a bit of speculation and research about the practices that promote discrimination in the workplace (Dipboye & Colella, 2005), much less attention has been given to practices that facilitate inclusion in work groups. In this review, several types of practices have emerged as likely to enhance inclusion, such as information access and participation in decision making (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998; Nishii, 2010), conflict resolution procedures (Roberson, 2006), communication facilitation (Janssens & Zanoni, 2007), and freedom from stereotyping (Bilimoria et al., 2008). While these studies provide a meaningful starting point for understanding the role of work group practices for promoting perceptions of inclusion, clearly much more work is needed, especially that which is theoretically grounded.

We suggest that future research could be enhanced by focusing on practices that promote the satisfaction of belongingness and uniqueness needs. As an example, research on practices that promote cohesiveness in groups, which is reflective of belongingness, suggests that giving groups difficult tasks and greater autonomy enhances cohesiveness (Man & Lam, 2003) and that smaller group size and greater group interdependence lead to stronger associations between cohesion and performance (Beal, Cohen, Burke, & McLendon, 2003). Likewise, research on creativity, which relates to the development of unique ideas (Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004), shows that environments with high job complexity (Tierney & Farmer, 2002) and supportive supervisors and coworkers (Shalley et al., 2004) promote creativity.

### *Outcomes Resulting From Inclusion*

As indicated in our review of the inclusion literature, there is a somewhat small body of existing work on outcomes resulting from inclusion. With the exception of empirical evidence suggesting that inclusion is positively related to job satisfaction (Acquavita et al., 2009) and that exclusion from decision making is a predictor of intention to leave (Mor Barak et al.,

2006), most other work in this area has been theoretical or has produced results that did not consistently support the hypotheses (Findler et al., 2005; Mor Barak, 2000). However, we suspect that this is due to a less complete development of the concept of inclusion than what has been presented in the current review. In this section, we highlight several of the many potential outcomes of inclusion that seem to hold promise in future research. These outcomes (shown in Figure 2) are suggested for the purpose of stimulating future research.

Individuals have status characteristics that are associated with their social categories arising from the broader culture (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation; Turner, Stets, Cook, & Massey, 2006). When there are status differences within a group, high-status group members have been found to exert considerable influence over low-status group members. Unless additional information is introduced that contradicts status expectations, low-status group members often withhold opinions, conform to the opinions of high-status group members, and refrain from directive behavior such that the value of their membership in the group is never fully realized (e.g., Asch, 1955; Earley, 1999; Freese & Cohen, 1973; Johnson, Funk, & Clay-Warner, 1998). Inclusion could involve the removal of perceived status differences such that group members feel free to be themselves and to express their opinions. In addition, building on status characteristics theory (which posits that high-status group members are considered to be more competent than low-status group members), inclusion may level the playing field with respect to perceptions of competence among group members (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972). Some support for the possibility that inclusion minimizes status differences is offered by Nembhard and Edmonson's (2006) findings that leader inclusiveness was positively associated with psychological safety in health care teams of professionals with varied status, which in turn was positively related to group member engagement.

There is some evidence to suggest that inclusion is related to both job satisfaction and turnover intentions. In terms of job satisfaction, a study by Acquavita et al. (2009) demonstrated that perceptions of inclusion and exclusion were significant in predicting social workers' job satisfaction. This result is supported by prior studies on inclusion and job satisfaction by Mor Barak and Levin (2002) and Mor Barak et al. (2006). In terms of turnover intentions, a study by Avery et al. (2008) found that perceived inclusiveness related positively to intent to remain. Further, they suggested that employees who feel more socially integrated are likely to exhibit higher levels of organizational identification and attachment and are less likely to leave. Using a more indirect path, Mor Barak et al.'s (2006) study on child welfare workers suggested that inclusiveness was related to job satisfaction, which, in turn, was related to turnover intentions. In sum, it seems that although there is not a substantial amount of literature on these two outcomes, there is some evidence to show that both job satisfaction and turnover intentions are viable outcomes of perceived inclusion.

Interpersonal models of justice, such as social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), provide a basis for making predictions about the effects of inclusion. Justice is associated with high-quality social exchange relationships (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Moorman, Blakely, & Niehoff, 1998; Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002) that involve mutual investment by both parties and concern for the interests of the other party in the relationship (Shore, Tetrick, Lynch, & Barksdale, 2006). These types of relationships create an obligation to reciprocate favorable treatment and avoid harmful actions consistent with the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) and are associated with enhanced job performance and

higher levels of organizational citizenship behavior (cf. Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Likewise, trust is an important underlying mechanism of social exchange (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994; Shore et al., 2006), facilitating self-sacrifice and commitment in relation to the work group and organization. In addition, recent research by Cho and Mor Barak (2008) showed that perceptions of inclusion predicted both organizational commitment and job performance. Other research also supports the connection between employees' perceptions of their acceptance by the organization and commitment levels (Lawler, 1994; Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2001) and between their perceptions of belongingness and organizational citizenship behaviors (Den Hartog, De Hoogh, & Keegan, 2007). In sum, the fair treatment of groups and individuals associated with inclusion should facilitate the development of feelings of obligation and trust, which encourage the reciprocation of inclusive treatment to the work group and supervisor in the form of organizational citizenship behaviors, organizational commitment, and work performance.

Building on research that has found health benefits due to connections with others and feeling valued and included (e.g., Firth-Cozens & Hardy, 1992; Mor Barak & Levin, 2002; Reynolds & Kaplan, 1990), more extensive research testing the effects of inclusion on an individual's well-being (e.g., stress, health) is likely to be a fruitful endeavor. There is some evidence to support the relationship between one's feeling of inclusion by others in the organization and psychological well-being (Mor Barak et al., 1998; Shaufeli, van Dierendonck, & van Gorp, 1996). A study by Nishii (2010) showing that highly inclusive climates lowered relationship and task conflict in gender-diverse groups may point to the stress-reducing benefits of inclusion. Even when inclusive practices and climates are present in organizations, it is critical to examine other contextual factors that may undermine such potential benefits as lowering employee stress. Supervisor support is of particular importance in the implementation of inclusive policies and practices. As Den Hartog et al.'s (2007) study showed, charismatic leadership behaviors were important for employees who felt more isolated from and less connected to the group. Further, as pointed out by Ryan and Kossek (2008: 299) in their discussion of work-life balance policies designed to promote inclusion, "A lack of supervisor support can lead to nonwork roles serving as barriers to full contributions and engagement and to nonsupported employees feeling excluded."

Future research should examine whether creativity (especially involving individuals with a high degree of uniqueness) is facilitated in work environments in which diverse views and perceptions may be shared and encouraged. Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, and Chiu (2008) pointed out that multicultural experience can enhance creativity through cognitive processes that focus on encoding information in multiple ways and creating many associations between concepts. They cited research showing that bilinguals are more creative than monolinguals (Simonton, 1999) and that first- or second-generation immigrants and ethnically diverse individuals display high levels of creativity (Simonton, 1997). Building on this research, it would be interesting to consider how providing conditions of belongingness enhances the uniqueness offered by individuals. Evidence pointing to this possibility includes findings showing that creativity is enhanced through diverse groups that engage in collaboration (Levine & Moreland, 2004) and in groups where heterogeneous views are shared (Simonton, 2003).

Another important potential outcome of inclusion is career opportunities for diverse people. A great deal of research has been conducted that has focused on the careers of women

and people of color (e.g., Luzzo & McWhirter, 2001; Yap & Konrad, 2009). For women, being in a male-traditional occupation, working in environments in which women are rare, and being subject to stereotypes of women's characteristics have been shown to affect perceived fit with jobs and occupations (Heilman, 1983, 1995, 2001), which can create an environment in which women are given fewer opportunities. Likewise, compared to White men, Black men must work longer after leaving school and Latinos must accrue more years with their current employers in order to receive equivalent promotion opportunities (Smith, 2005). It has been argued that these results may reflect that lower status individuals (i.e., women, minorities) are held to stricter standards and necessitate more evidence of competence than do higher status individuals (i.e., men; Lyness & Heilman, 2006). The problem of not being afforded opportunities to advance is particularly acute for White and visibly minority women at low hierarchical levels (the "sticky floor effect"; Bihagen & Ohls, 2006; Yap & Konrad, 2009). We believe that inclusive work groups and their antecedent conditions would create greater equality and opportunities in the workplace for diverse people by affirming the unique contributions they offer and encouraging full participation in work group activities.

## Conclusion

Despite the increasingly diverse workforce, there is still evidence that success is often equated with diversity characteristics, such as sex and race/ethnicity. Weinberg (2007) used U.S. Census Bureau data to compare the earnings of men and women and found the ratio was .77 in 2005 for full-time workers. A recent study (Hansen, 2008) presented evidence that even when women and minorities have the same starting salaries and comparable performance ratings, their merit increases are smaller than those awarded to their White male counterparts. Likewise, heterosexism results in fewer promotions (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001) and is associated with lower compensation in the case of gay men (Badgett, 1995; Berg & Lien, 2002; Black, Makar, Sanders, & Taylor, 2003; Blandford, 2003; Brown, 1998; Clain & Leppel, 2001). Furthermore, Hersch (2008) found that immigrants to the United States with the lightest skin color earned on average 17% more and that taller immigrants garnered higher wages as well. Such data continue to underscore the differential opportunities afforded to employees with diverse characteristics.

In light of the extensive research on diversity and the many articles arguing for the value-in-diversity perspective (Ely & Thomas, 2001), it is surprising that more progress has not been made in understanding and promoting inclusion in the workplace. However, we believe that our inclusion framework provides a basis for stimulating research on diversity that is focused on capitalizing on the unique value of diverse individuals. Such research has the potential to provide important benefits to individuals, groups, and organizations.

We noted in our review that it is not clear from past research on inclusion how and why inclusion has beneficial consequences. We therefore advocate more theoretical development of mediating mechanisms between inclusion and outcomes. In a sense, diversity research has progressed from a deeper understanding of the black box that Lawrence (1997) identified as occurring between relational demography and outcomes to a need for more research on a black box of a different kind: that between inclusion and outcomes. We argue that the kind



of treatment that creates perceptions of inclusion is the type that is afforded to valued members of the group. Such value and the associated status it affords provide a platform for greater employee contributions.

Building on ODT (Brewer, 1991) and associated reviews of the inclusion and diversity literatures, our primary goal has been to propose a conceptualization of inclusion that will guide future research on diversity in work groups. Examining the relevant diversity literature through the lens of our inclusion framework suggests that the mixed results of diversity on performance (e.g., Mannix & Neale, 2005) may be due to the lack of consideration of the joint roles of belongingness and uniqueness across many studies. Although the relevant diversity literature to date has tended to focus on exclusion (involving low levels of both belongingness and uniqueness), this does not suggest that a stronger emphasis on either belongingness or uniqueness will advance diversity research and practice. A singular focus on belongingness (e.g., assimilation) holds the danger of encouraging individuals to suppress the backgrounds, experiences, and opinions that make them who they are (Hewlin, 2009). In a similar vein, solely highlighting the value of individuals' uniqueness (e.g., differentiation) can lead to interpersonal interactions involving segregation and an overreliance on stereotypes (Ely & Thomas, 2001). We propose that jointly considering both belongingness and uniqueness through inclusion promises to advance research and practice in the area of diversity.

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