5-21-2020

Working Around Political Divides: a Multidisciplinary Examination of Political Identity as a Factor of Organizational Diversity

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Organizational Diversity

by

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An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts

in University Honors

and

Human Resource Management

and

Management and Leadership

Thesis Advisor

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2020

Abstract

In an age of targeted rhetoric and extreme polarization, the political has trespassed into the personal. As a result of this obtrusive integration, disagreements in the workplace are on the rise. Friction caused by inter-employee political diversity has been shown to cause several harmful organizational outcomes including job dissatisfaction, turnover, burnout, and psychological distress. Although this issue is common and harmful, few studies have been published on the subject. In this literature review, I attempt to contribute to the scholarly knowledge on this under-researched concept of workplace political diversity by employing a multidisciplinary approach. To illustrate the components of this issue and provide structural elements for a future theoretical review, I synthesize knowledge from political science, psychology, diversity, inclusion, and workplace mistreatment studies. Using a political identity conceptual framework, I propose the concept of political identity diversity, explain its connection to workplace incivility, and share how organizations can employ diversity management and inclusion strategies to mitigate this process. Finally, I discuss findings, limitations, and directions for future research associated with this review.

In a political environment marked by dramatically increased polarization (Iyengar & Westwood, 2014), the prevalence of political disagreement at work is escalating. A recent survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (2019) revealed that most US employees believe that political discussion in the workplace has become more common since the 2016 presidential election. Further, 42% of employees reported experiences of political disagreements at work, and 12% indicated they had experienced bias due to their political affiliation.

Recently, this increased prominence of workplace political disagreement has been found to be related to several negative organizational outcomes. Through a 2019 four-wave survey study, He et al. revealed that employees who exhibited a dissimilar political identity were more likely to experience incivility behaviors at work. Additionally, it was found that the experience of these behaviors led to employees' feelings of psychological distress, turnover intention, job burnout, and job dissatisfaction. Although these findings show that political disagreement can function as a serious threat to organizational outcomes, this paper is one of only a few pieces of research related to this specific topic.

Due to the combination of this phenomenon's increased prevalence, proven insidious effects, and lack of topic-specific research, it is essential to better understand this concept to learn how to avoid its associated negative outcomes. In this review, I attempt to embed the topic of workplace political disagreement into an already-established framework of research by recruiting key findings from related fields, including diversity and inclusion, political science, psychology, and workplace mistreatment. I will introduce definitions and correlates of several salient topics and theories to determine how current scholarship can contribute to our understanding of workplace political diversity. After this, I will provide recommendations to

organizations for managing political diversity and mitigating its potential negative effects. Finally, I will discuss the findings, limitations, and directions for future research associated with this review.

Literature Review Methodology

To conduct this literature review, I utilized findings from studies across multiple disciplines for the focal constructs of political identity, diversity, and mistreatment. When conducting my literature search, I utilized targeted search features in Google Scholar, using the following keywords: *political identity, political orientation, diversity, diversity management, diversity training, workplace inclusion, political polarization, political discrimination workplace, workplace mistreatment, incivility,* and *workplace aggression.* To refine my pool of potentially relevant articles and book chapters for the construct of political identity, I included only those that focused on the United States workplace. I also performed targeted searches for articles published in 2010 or more recently to ensure that new concepts and the latest empirical research were fully considered.

In Table 1, I provide the final pool of academic articles, book chapters, and other sources that I reviewed. For each source, in the table, I included the author(s), journal, field of study, and type of study. I have also included a column to indicate if a source follows an academic peer-review process, which indicates that articles published in a particular journal were refereed. The studies I reviewed are multi-disciplinary but are primarily published in management and psychology journals such as the *Journal of Management, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, Political Psychology, Psychological Bulletin,* and *Journal of Human Resource Management.* In this list of sources, 50% are theoretical reviews, 46% are empirical studies, and 4% are surveys. These studies have been extracted from several

different fields, including diversity and inclusion (37%), workplace mistreatment (17%), labor

statistics (4%), psychology (17%), political science (10%), and psychology/political science

(15%).

Table 1. Literature Overview

Author(s)	Source	Field of Study	Study Type	Peer-Reviewed
Alford et al. (2005)	American Political Science Review	Political Science	Empirical Study	Yes
Allison (1999)	Journal of Leisure Research	Diversity and Inclusion	Theoretical Review	Yes
Andersson & Pearson (1999)	Academy of Management Review	Workplace Mistreatment	Empirical Study	Yes
Bezrukova et al. (2016)	Psychological Bulletin	Diversity and Inclusion	Theoretical Review	Yes
Block & Block (2006)	Journal of Research in Personality	Psychology/ Political Science	Empirical Study	Yes
Boehm et al. (2014)	Personnel Psychology	Psychology	Empirical Study	Yes
Boekhorst (2015)	Human Resource Management	Diversity and Inclusion	Theoretical Review	Yes
Bordia et al. (2014).	Group & Organization Management	Psychology	Empirical Study	Yes
Brewer (1991)	Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin	Psychology	Theoretical Review	Yes
Carney et al. (2008)	Political Psychology	Psychology/ Political Science	Empirical Study	Yes
Cox et al. (1991)	Academy of Management Journal	Diversity and Inclusion	Empirical Study	Yes
Difonzo & Bordia (2007)	Book Published by American Psychological Association	Psychology	Theoretical Review	No
Flynn et al. (2017)	Political Psychology	Political Science	Theoretical Review	Yes
Goyal & Shrivastava (2013)	Journal of Business Management & Social Sciences Research	Diversity and Inclusion	Theoretical Review	Yes
Harrison et al. (1998)	Academy of Management Journal	Diversity and Inclusion	Empirical Study	Yes
Harrison et al. (2002)	Academy of Management Journal	Diversity and Inclusion	Empirical Study	Yes
He et al. (2019)	Stress and Health	Psychology	Empirical Study	Yes
Hershcovis & Barling (2010)	Journal of Applied Psychology	Psychology	Empirical Study	Yes
Huddy (2001)	Political Psychology	Psychology/ Political Science	Theoretical Review	Yes
Huddy (2002)	Political Psychology	Psychology/ Political Science	Theoretical Review	Yes
Iyengar & Westwood (2015)	American Journal of Political Science	Political Science	Empirical Study	Yes

Jones et al. (2018)	Political Psychology	Psychology/ Political Science	Empirical Study	Yes
Lau & Murnighan (1998)	Academy of Management Review	Diversity and Inclusion	Theoretical Review	Yes
Lauring & Selmer (2011)	European Management Review	Diversity and Inclusion	Theoretical Review	Yes
Layman & Carsey (2006)	Annual Review of Political Science	Political Science	Theoretical Review	Yes
Mutz & Mondak (2006)	The Journal of Politics	Political Science	Empirical Study	Yes
N/A	Society for Human Resource Management	Workplace Mistreatment	Empirical Study	Yes
N/A	Gallup	Political Science	Empirical Study	No
N/A	Bureau of Labor Statistics	Labor Statistics	Survey	No
N/A	Bureau of Labor Statistics	Labor Statistics	Survey	No
Neuman & Baron (1998)	Journal of Management	Workplace Mistreatment	Theoretical Review	Yes
O'Reilly et al. (1991)	Academy of Management Journal	Diversity and Inclusion	Empirical Study	Yes
Oakes (2002)	Political Psychology	Psychology/ Political Science	Theoretical Review	Yes
Pelled et al. (1999)	Administrative Science Quarterly	Diversity and Inclusion	Empirical Study	Yes
Pendry et al. (2007)	Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology	Diversity and Inclusion	Theoretical Review	Yes
Pietersen (2005)	Journal of Human Resource Management	Workplace Mistreatment	Theoretical Review	Yes
Porath & Pearson (2013)	Harvard Business Review	Workplace Mistreatment	Theoretical Review	No
Schat et al. (2006)	Handbook of Workplace Violence	Workplace Mistreatment	Empirical Study	Yes
Schilpzand et al. (2016)	Journal of Organizational Behavior	Workplace Mistreatment	Theoretical Review	Yes
Shen et al. (2009)	The International Journal of Human Resource Management	Diversity and Inclusion	Theoretical Review	Yes
Sherbin & Rashid (2017)	Harvard Business Review	Diversity and Inclusion	Theoretical Review	No
Shore et al. (2011)	Journal of Management	Diversity and Inclusion	Theoretical Review	Yes
Slater et al. (2008)	Business Horizons	Diversity and Inclusion	Empirical Study	Yes
Smith & Turner (2015)	Deloitte	Diversity and Inclusion	Empirical Study	No
Tajfel & Turner (1979)	The Social Psychology of Inter-Group Relations	Psychology	Theoretical Review	No
Tomkins (1963)	The Study of Lives	Psychology/ Political Science	Theoretical Review	No
Welbourne et al. (2017)	Personnel Review	Diversity and Inclusion	Theoretical Review	Yes
Yang & Caughlin (2017)	Journal of Occupational Health Psychology	Workplace Mistreatment	Empirical Study	Yes

Literature Review

In the following review, I will integrate the concept of political disagreement at work into established academic literature. To do this, I will first leverage Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory as a framework for examining why and how political ingroup bias in the workplace may lead to workplace mistreatment. I will then look to the study of political science to view political orientation as an individual-level construct, followed by describing its manifestation as a group-level construct that I refer to as political identity. After this, I will employ findings from diversity studies to posit that political identity operates similarly to other forms of diversity. Recruiting information from workplace mistreatment literature, I will then reveal how individuals holding a minority political identity may be similarly impacted by diversity-resistance behaviors such as workplace aggression and incivility. Finally, I will mobilize key findings from inclusion research to provide recommendations for how organizations and managers can work to mitigate the negative impacts of political diversity resistance in the future. To further clarify my findings from this review, I will use the Political Identity Conceptual Framework (Figure 1), which illustrates the process of managing political diversity within the workplace.
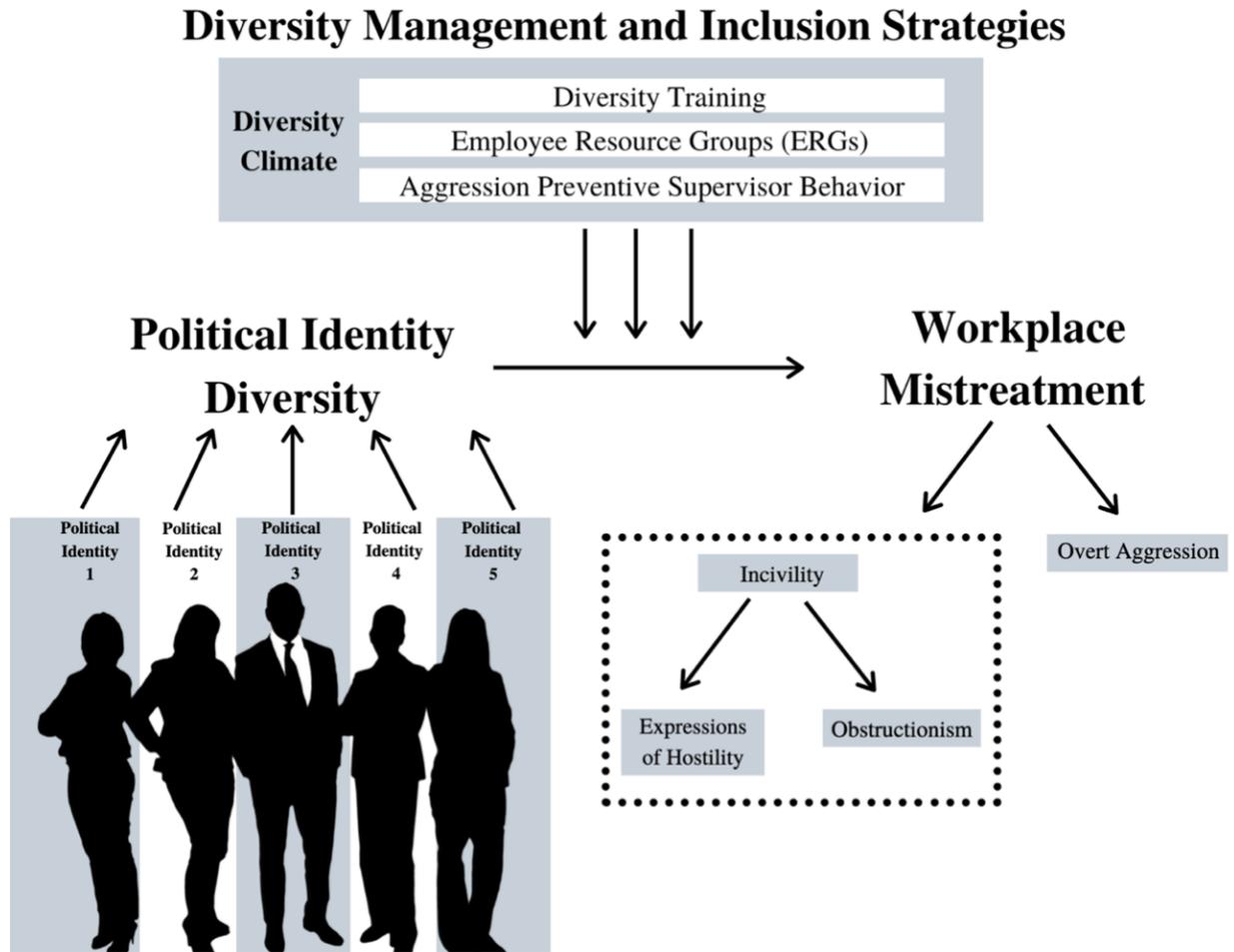
Figure 1. Political Identity Conceptual Framework

Social Identity Theory

To understand the mechanisms by which political identity diversity leads to conflict and mistreatment, I will utilize Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory. **Social identity theory** posits that people are keenly aware of factors that differentiate themselves from others and that they often mobilize these perceived differences to establish social categories. I propose that individuals use political identity as a differentiating factor when establishing these mental barriers.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that a group can be defined as broadly as "a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some

emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves, and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership of it" (p. 15) Political identity, which can be socially identified, publicly evaluated, and encompasses personal values that employ emotional involvement, falls under this definition of a group. However, it is worthwhile to mention that social identity theory's application to political identity may not track completely due to several complicating factors including preexisting identities and group norms (Huddy, 2002). Still, identity group categorization has been shown to generally reflect group behavior outlined in social identity theory (Oakes, 2002; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). From this, I maintain this theory's utilization to unpack intergroup dynamics associated with opposing political ideologies.

Social identity theory states that people strive to exist within a social group that can be positively distinguished from relevant outgroups. When people feel dissatisfied with their group's status in comparison to its outgroups, they will either choose to leave or will work to positively distinguish their ingroup. For social groups such as political parties in which pressure exists to remain loyal to one's ingroup, people who feel dissatisfied with the position of their ingroup may opt instead to "double down" and attempt to achieve superiority over their outgroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 40). These processes of social identity can help form strong bonds within one's ingroup but can also lead to harmful outcomes when tasked with collaborating with an outgroup member. This tendency for individuals to double-down and discriminate against outgroup members may spell bad news for organizations looking for employees who can work well together.

According to social identity theory, intergroup dynamics exist on a continuum between the extremes of "social mobility" and "social change." In a system of social mobility, individuals

are free to act autonomously to improve their social status. On the opposite end of the spectrum, "social change" involves individuals who act solely as members of their respective social groups. In times of intergroup conflict, group members under the social change belief experience pressure to not "betray" their social ingroup by moving to the outgroup.

Due to the inherently competitive and adversarial nature of politics, antagonistic political groups closely trace the model of social change. Although individuals are technically free to choose their own political identity, there exists a significant amount of social pressure that bonds people to their political ingroup (Flynn et al., 2017). In the US, ingroup political pressure is particularly intense due to the country's two-party political system, in which distinct opposing forces compete over the scarce resources of political power. Consistent with social identity theory, these conditions increase the likelihood of ingroup preference and outgroup discrimination based on political differences. In understanding the potential for politically based group formation in the workplace, organizations must look at political identity as a dimension of diversity to avoid issues of bias and discrimination.

Political Identity

As outlined by social identity theory, ingroup and outgroup dynamics can account for minority political identity holders' experience of bias and discrimination. From this, political identity may be considered as a salient identification to be protected by an organization's diversity strategy. Before exploring political identity as a factor of organizational diversity, I will introduce the concept by proposing its definition. Then, I will explain common differences between political identities in the US and provide a review of the correlates associated with this concept.

Proposed Definition

In this paper, I will refer to **political identity** as one's political self-categorization or affiliation and is associated with one's values, beliefs, and actions as they relate to political parties, ideologies, and ideas. In US political discourse, political identity is typically dictated by an individual's (or politically homogenous group's) perceived position on the political left-right continuum, or what is also referred to as the democrat-republican spectrum or the liberal-conservative spectrum (Layman & Carsey, 2006). Individuals who identify more strongly with the right-wing, republican, or conservatism end of the spectrum generally hold beliefs and ideas that reflect values associated with tradition, security, and conformity; in contrast, those who identify more strongly with the left-wing, democratic, or liberalism end of the spectrum generally hold beliefs and ideas that reflect values associated with benevolence, universalism, and hedonism (Jones et al., 2018).

In a Gallup poll on US political affiliation as of January 2020, democrat and republican party affiliation is evenly distributed, both making up 27% of the citizenry's political identity. The independent party affiliation, which refers to a political identity that is independent of the republican-democrat binary, made up 45% of respondents' political identities. This prevalence of independent voters is noteworthy, as it suggests an aversion to the republican-democrat binary and a desire to avoid all-or-nothing political identifiers (Huddy, 2001). Although it is likely that political thought can and should expand past partisanship and toward a more complex and accurate understanding of political action, I will still utilize the political left-right spectrum to define political identity for this paper's purpose. I retain this bipartisan understanding of political identity because interpersonal conflict and polarization on the basis of political identity in the US is commonly fueled by social categorizations defined by this two-party system (Layman &

Carsey, 2006; Huddy, 2001), and because it has been shown that independent voters frequently

"lean" toward their preferred party and behave similarly to partisan voters (Iyengar &

Westwood, 2015).

In the workplace, political identity diversity occurs naturally, as this environment hosts a

wide range of individuals with different experiences and backgrounds. Although the workplace

is often seen as taboo for political discussion, it represents fertile ground for individuals to test

their political ideas with large groups of people who hold unique perspectives (Mutz & Mondak,

2006). Since many occupations require the recruitment of employee beliefs, opinions, and

values, it can be incredibly difficult to separate one's political identity from one's workplace

identity. For example, due to the historical relationship between labor unions and left-leaning

political action, employees who share pro-union thought at work may perceive their peers as

having a leftist political identity. Even if an employee is able to avoid politically charged

scenarios at work, one's political identity can still be detected and introduced to the workplace

setting. Due to the universalization of social media use, one's personal (and oftentimes political)

views can potentially be viewed by coworkers online. Once this information is uncovered,

political identity can trespass from one's personal life into the professional setting.

Review of Correlates

Although some may consider political identity to be a simple matter of opinion, one's

political identity dissimilarity can actually be linked to differences in psychology. According to

Silvan Tomkins (1963) theory of ideological polarity, people assume postures linked to left-wing

or right-wing ideas that reflect their inbuilt values and psychological needs. Tomkins argued that

left-wing individuals avoid control and embrace openness and tolerance, whereas right-wing

individuals seek control through norm-setting. Other studies have revealed that liberals often

score higher on the Big Five personality dimension of openness (to experience), whereas

conservatives score higher on conscientiousness (Carney et al., 2008). These fundamental

psychological desires for orderliness or for openness influence the policies, politicians, and

values that individuals are prone to endorse or disavow.

Alongside Tomkins' theory of ideological polarity, further research has supported the

idea that political identity is inbuilt. One study found evidence to show that genetics play an

important role in the formation of political ideology and attitudes (Alford et al., 2005). Block and

Block (2006) observed preschool students' behavior associated with right- or left-wing postures,

such as rigidness and creativity respectively, and later compared these behaviors their adulthood

political identities. Students who reflected typical left- or right-wing traits in preschool

eventually identified with the ideologies that their childhood behavior reflected (Carney et al.,

2008).

Inbuilt postures that define political identity oftentimes translate past the ballot and into

seemingly apolitical settings such as the workplace. For example, right-wing employees who

experience the psychological desire for structure and tradition may be disproportionately

opposed to diversity and inclusion initiatives. Introducing a new cast of unfamiliar coworkers

will likely require the right-wing employee to experience fundamental, unpredictable change that

may cause the individual psychological discomfort (Carney et al., 2008). Similar psychological

discomfort may be experienced by left-wing individuals who value openness. If an organization

begins to enforce new rules that restrict their creative activities, left-wing employees may resist

these new policies in an effort to maintain a state of psychological comfort.

In organizations that host a large variety of employees, political differences will naturally

occur. Similar to the acknowledgment of differences in employees' race, age, or gender, it is

important to research and understand deep-level diversity factors such as political identity as other valuable aspects of an organization's overall diversity strategy.

Workplace Diversity

As the workplace has come to host individuals with different backgrounds, orientations, and identities, including different political identities, it is more important than ever to explore the nuances of diversity and how it impacts the workplace environment. In the following section, I define diversity, explain two primary types of diversity (surface-level and deep-level), and review correlates of workplace diversity.

Definition

The modern workplace consists of a vast array of employees with identities that often differ from their peers. Traditionally, an organization is considered "diverse" when it employs individuals who represent various demographic factors such as gender, race, and age (Smith & Turner, 2015). However, it is unclear whether this traditional representation-focused assessment of what makes a diverse organization could include the representation of mutable characteristics such as political identity. In this review, I will refer to **diversity** in general as the existence of interindividual and intergroup differences and uniquenesses, whereas **workplace diversity** refers to the existence of such differences and uniquenesses between employees and groups at work.

In diversity studies, scholars often make a distinction between two types of diversity: deep level and surface level. **Surface-level diversity** includes overt demographic differences between individuals, such as by sex, age, or race (Harrison et al., 2002). These observable differences can be measured and understood with relative ease, which is why they are categorized as surface-level factors. In contrast, **deep-level diversity** involves psychological differences between individuals, which tend to be more difficult to observe or infer based on

outward appearance. These differences can include one's attitudes, beliefs, and values (Harrison et al., 1998, 2002). In this paper, I will focus on political identity as a deep-level diversity factor, as political identity can encompass one's attitudes, beliefs, and values.

Bias resulting from deep-level diversity, such as political identity differences, is common practice in many settings, including the professional environment. Deep-level bias occurs because people are generally attracted to others who share similar deep-level characteristics, which can be shown in displays of personality and affect (Harrison et al., 2002). This commonly acknowledged phenomenon, although rarely identified as an issue of diversity, can create impactful effects in the workplace. For example, deep-level similarities found between subordinates and managers can create advantageous relationships, and can lead to higher performance ratings, satisfaction, and pay (Harrison et al., 1998). Over time, the importance of these deep-level diversity factors only strengthens as gained information about group members neutralizes initial categorizations generated by surface-level differences (Harrison et al., 1998). As groups develop and deep-level differences present themselves, coworkers who fundamentally differ in regard to their attitudes, beliefs, and values may create psychological barriers between each other.

The effects of deep-level divides based on political partisanship are particularly concerning. One study revealed that compared to race, "partisanship elicits more extreme evaluations and behavioral responses to ingroups and outgroups" (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015, p. 18). Iyengar and Westwood suggest that this phenomenon results from the fact that party affiliation is not tempered by social norms that disincentivize hostility and discrimination. From this, organizations must identify diversity on a broader scale that includes deep-level factors to protect its employees from the experience of bias and other negative behaviors. Organizations

can attempt to mitigate these effects through the implementation of diversity management programs.

Of note, diversity management programs primarily focus on surface-level diversity rather than deep-level diversity, as traditional diversity management concepts originated from the study of surface-level diversity factors such as gender or race. Business academics first realized the necessity of diversity management after the Hudson Institute published a report in 1987 titled Workplace 2000 (Allison, 1999). This report revealed that the presence of greater demographic diversity in the workplace would become increasingly prevalent in the 21st century. These trends have proven to ring generally true, as today, people of color make up about a third and women around half of today's workforce (US Department of Labor Statistics, 2019). As the business world globalizes and expands, it has become competitively necessary to study and manage the impending impacts of an evolving workforce.

Diversity management, referred to by Harrison et al. as "one of the most difficult and pressing challenges in modern organizations," (2002, p. 1029) is the practice of effectively navigating the impacts of workplace diversity, in order to enjoy the benefits of diversity and to mitigate potential negative effects. Traditionally, organizations practice diversity management by applying an equity lens to their recruitment and selection, training and development, and pay and appraisal practices (Shen, et al., 2009). However, to receive the most optimal benefits from their diverse workforce, organizations should integrate diversity management goals into operational, tactical, and strategic (Shen, et al., 2009). Unfortunately, many companies instead view diversity management as an issue of legal compliance. As a result, they may miss out on the full benefits of the diversity of their workforce (Shen, et al., 2009). Effective diversity management strategies

synergize all aspects of an organization toward creating an environment that is conducive to a productive yet diverse workforce.

Review of Correlates

Although diversity management typically takes the form of preemptively applying a diversity lens to HR practices, it is also critical that organizations universally utilize diversity management to address diversity's consequences. In general, diversity in the workplace was associated with two main types of work conflict: task conflict and emotional conflict (Pelled, et al., 1999). Specifically, the authors found that workplace diversity was positively correlated with task conflict, which refers to disagreements on work-related subjects such as roles, goals, and decisions. Such conflict stemming from diversity is likely due to the wide array of unique belief structures introduced by members of a diverse workforce. When coworkers utilize incongruent thought structures and backgrounds to make decisions, they may experience confusion and frustration as a result.

Leveraging social identity theory, Pelled et al. (1999) hypothesized that categorization on the basis of identifiable diversity factors, such as the creation of social ingroups and outgroups, would lead to emotional conflict. Emotional conflict stems from the tensions that occur during interactions between ingroup and outgroup members. These tensions are heightened when individuals must consistently interact within a diverse environment. In alignment with their hypothesis, Pelled et al. discovered that diversity factors such as race and tenure are positively associated with emotional conflict. However, although emotional conflict may be linked to negative individual outcomes, this study did not find evidence that performance decreased in response to experiences of emotional conflict resulting from greater diversity.

Although emotional conflict stemming from diversity may not be linked to performance decrements, the establishment of faultlines within a diverse group does present negative implications for work performance. As Lau and Murnighan described, faultlines are created when a diverse workgroup splits into subgroups based on a diversity factor, such as race, gender, or ideology (1998). For example, if a workgroup contains three individuals who identify as men and three individuals who identify as women, a faultline may emerge, such that the men associate with one subgroup and the women with another subgroup. These faultlines become more salient as the subgroups' attributes become more similar and closely aligned. For example, a stronger faultline would exist between a subgroup with three White republicans and a subgroup split with three Black democrats than between a subgroup with two White republicans and Black republican and a subgroup with two Black democrats and a White democrat. The formation of these distinct subgroups can lead to increased polarization, conflict, and miscommunication (Lau & Murnighan, 1998), which can lead to poorer decision making and poorer performance. This effect can be minimized if a group is either completely homogenized or completely heterogeneous, both of which make it more difficult for subgroups to form based on subsets of shared differences. Moreover, effective diversity management becomes especially critical when the make-up of a workgroup suggests a propensity for developing faultlines.

Despite the challenges unmanaged diversity can pose to an organization, diversity can also function as a way for an organization to gain a competitive advantage. In a study comparing the financial performance of companies with a high commitment to diversity to a matched sample, the diversity-driven organizations were generally more profitable than the firms to which they were compared (Slater, 2008). Diversity drives profits for several reasons, one of which includes its ability to align organizations with their customers' needs. When an organization

employs a diverse cast of people who are reflective of the demographics of their customer base,

they will be more equipped to meet the needs of their customers, as demographic similarities

may be related to forming closer customer relationships (Slater, 2008). In addition, diversity in

an organization can function as a resource when engaging in creative and innovative activities.

For example, there is evidence to suggest that individuals who engage in problem-solving

activities in heterogeneous groups develop more effective and feasible solutions to business

problems than if they had worked in a homogenous group (Cox et al., 1991). This is likely a

result of heterogeneous groups' access to a wider breadth of unique perspectives and ideas that

can be highly valuable assets when developing business solutions. When diversity presents itself

as political differences within a workgroup, employees with these disparate values and opinions

may be able to offer a wider variety of perspectives.

Political Identity Diversity

Leveraging findings in the fields of political identity and diversity, I have posited that

political identity functions as a deep-level diversity factor in interindividual intergroup dynamics.

Here, I will propose a definition of political identity diversity and suggest correlates associated

with its existence within the workplace.

Proposed Definition

The concept of diversity can encapsulate many types of individual differences when

defined by both its surface-level and deep-level components. **Political identity diversity** refers

to the presence of political viewpoint dissimilarity between members of a social group, and when

considered in the workplace, it can be considered an important aspect of deep-level diversity that

has, to date, received relatively little attention by organizational researchers.
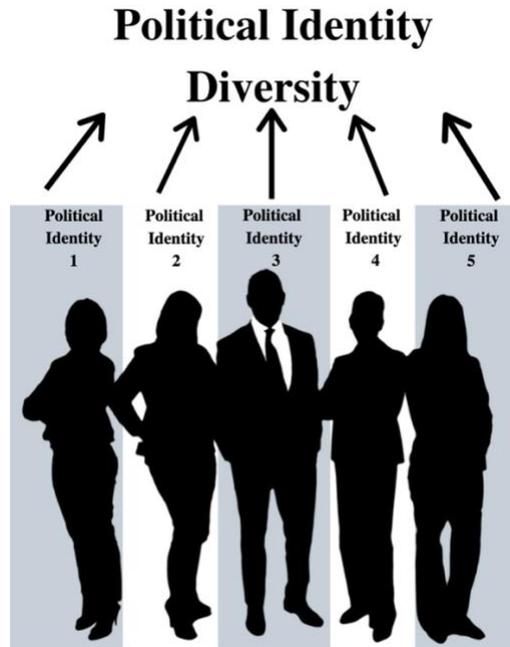
Political Identity Diversity

Figure 2. Political Identity Diversity Conceptualization

Today, the concept of diversity is evolving alongside the changing demographics of the workplace. Millennial workers, who are expected to comprise of 75% of the workforce in just five years, tend to define diversity in terms of perspectives, ideas, and backgrounds (Smith & Turner, 2015). This conceptualization of diversity is often referred to as intellectual diversity. In response to this changing definition of diversity that includes the diversity of ideas, it has become relevant to consider nontraditional diversity factors, including factors that make a group intellectually diverse such as political identity. If political identity diversity contributes to the overall diversity of an organization, it may be subject to the aforementioned mechanisms that lead to organizational conflict in response to increased differences between employees. Namely, employees with political differences may form subgroups along political identity faultlines, and consistent with social identity theory, ingroup and outgroup biases may emerge based on differences in political affiliations and beliefs, which could lead to conflict and mistreatment. As an example, imagine a work team consisting of four outspoken and staunch democrats and four

outspoken and staunch republicans. Based on political ideologies and beliefs, a democratic subgroup and a republican subgroup emerge. To the extent that these informal subgroups hinder or inhibit between-subgroup work-related information sharing and communication, the work team's overall performance may suffer, and conflict may occur.

Proposed Correlates

When conceptualized as a deep-level form of diversity, political identity may be a salient category for ingroup bias and outgroup discrimination (Huddy, 2001). From this, I propose that the consequences of political identity differences may be comparable to the impacts of other forms of deep-level diversity in the workplace. Studies have demonstrated that deep-level diversity can cause rifts within work teams. O'Reilly et al. (1991) found that individuals who hold minority values within their workgroups feel less satisfied, feel less committed to their organization, and are more prone to quitting. Since politics are deeply entrenched in one's values, these negative outcomes may occur in employees with a minority political viewpoint. In addition to differences in values, differences in attitude due in politically diverse workgroups may also pose issues. Attitudinal similarities have shown to increase cohesion between teammates (Harrison et al., 2002). Since political differences have been linked to personality and dispositional differences (Carney et al., 2008), a lack of attitudinal similarity in politically diverse workgroups may generate divides between employees.

Workplace Mistreatment

As a specific manifestation of conflict, workplace mistreatment is an unfortunate yet ubiquitous phenomenon that can result from social identity differences and, specifically, differences based on political identities. In this section, I define and describe workplace mistreatment and ultimately examine a specific type of mistreatment called incivility that I

propose might be especially relevant when considering the potential consequences of unmanaged

political identity diversity at work.

Definition

Workplace mistreatment broadly refers to destructive behaviors that occur at work with the

intention to harm others, and specific forms of workplace mistreatment include bullying,

incivility, undermining, mobbing, aggression, emotional abuse, interpersonal conflict, and

abusive supervision (Hershcovis, 2011). Although the exact definition of workplace

mistreatment is not always agreed upon, the concept generally involves the occurrence of the

aforementioned behaviors. The study of workplace mistreatment has gained a large amount of

traction in the past twenty years, as its impacts have been found to potentially cost organizations

millions (Porath & Peterson, 2013). This issue becomes magnified in the face of political

differences, as employees who are politically dissimilar from their coworkers have been found to

be more likely to experience incivility (He et al., 2019), where incivility is a specific and

relatively prevalent type of mistreatment. In understanding how to mitigate these behaviors, it is

initially necessary to understand how these behaviors manifest themselves.

Types of Workplace Mistreatment

Specific types of workplace mistreatment include bullying, incivility, undermining,

mobbing, aggression, emotional abuse, interpersonal conflict, and abusive supervision

(Hershcovis, 2011). As suggested by Hershcovis, different manifestations of workplace

mistreatment can be understood by considering the perceived intent, intensity, frequency,

invisibility, and perpetrator-victim relationship associated with harmful behavior. For example,

on the one hand, overt physical forms of aggression, such as hitting a subordinate once during an

argument, might be described as having clear intent to cause harm; being of high intensity, low

perceived invisibility of the behavior, and low frequency of engaging in the behavior; and the

perpetrator-victim relationship is that of a supervisor and subordinate, signaling a power

distance. On the other hand, more covert nonphysical forms of mistreatment, such as regularly

making condescending remarks to a fellow team member, may be described as having

ambiguous intent to cause harm; being of low intensity, high perceived invisibility, and high

frequency; and the perpetrator-victim relationship is that of two team members, which indicates a

low power distance. Following Neuman and Baron's 1998 model, I separate instances of

workplace mistreatment into the categories of overt aggression, expressions of hostility, and

obstructionism, wherein hostility and obstructionism represent incivility behaviors.
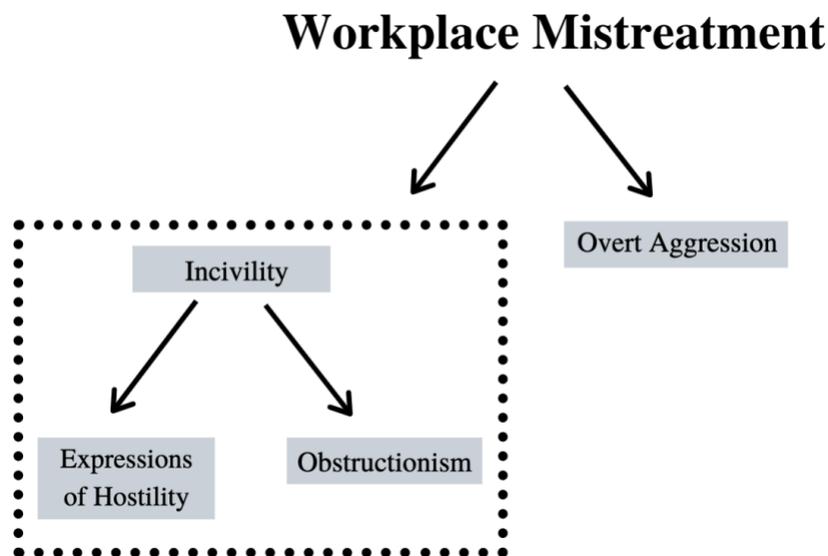

Figure 3. Workplace Mistreatment Conceptualization

   Even though instances of overt physical and nonphysical assault (e.g., yelling, punching,

spitting) are often come to mind first when considering the concept of workplace mistreatment,

these are among the least likely behaviors within the aggression spectrum to manifest at work

(Schat, et al., 2006). Although consequential for the perpetrators, victims, and the organization,

overt forms of workplace mistreatment will not be considered in this paper in the context of

workplace political identity diversity. Instead, I will focus on subtler demonstrations of workplace mistreatment, namely incivility, which tend to occur more frequently than more overt forms of harmful behaviors.

Incivility

Incivility, defined as "low-intensity deviant behavior with an ambiguous intent to harm" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457) is the most common type of workplace mistreatment, as an estimated half of all employees experience incivility on a weekly basis (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Organizations pay a considerable price for incivility, as productivity losses due to this type of workplace mistreatment have been shown to cost organizations an estimated $14,000 annually (Schilpzand et al., 2016).

One way that individuals express incivility behavior is through expressions of hostility. The most common manifestation of hostility at work is the spreading of rumors, or "information statements that circulate among people, are instrumentally relevant, and are unverified" (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007, p. 16). Employees often use rumors as a way to make sense of unknown situations, but employees also utilize rumors as a form of retribution against an organization or employee (Bordia et al., 2014). In this way, rumors function as a way to express aggression toward a workplace target. Workplace hostility is also often displayed through negative eye-contact. Glares, eye rolls, and other forms of negative eye contact can efficiently send a targeted message with minimal risk of others observing the harmful behavior.

Obstructionism, or intentionally impeding an individual's work or an organization's objectives, is another way for an employee to covertly enact mistreatment. Instances of obstructionism include slow responsiveness, failure to meet deadlines, and anti-citizenship behavior. Obstructionist behavior works to sabotage individuals' work environment by

decreasing the value of the aggressor's contributions and impeding others' ability to work productively (Neuman & Baron, 1998). When acting in an obstructionist way, aggressors can easily deny their malicious intent, and they can remain covert as they inflict damaging actions against their peers and organization (Neuman & Baron, 1998).

The two main commonalities between the incivility behaviors "expressions of hostility" and "obstructionism" are their relative frequency as well as their usefulness in keeping perpetrators covert. These instances of hostility and obstructionism occur regularly at work, but employees convey these messages between the lines: in the implied, impressed, and inferred. Employees more frequently experience covert incivility behaviors than overt aggression (Pietersen, 2005). The covert nature of uncivil behaviors helps employees bypass workplace norms that disincentivize apparent negative behavior and allow aggressors to discriminate against their victims while remaining facially neutral (He et al., 2019). When these discriminatory actions remain covert, workplace policies and culture may not be sufficient to prevent further mistreatment.

In addition, the adversarial game of politics, in which individuals may choose to act out incivility behaviors to defend their political ingroup and exclude outgroups, makes the practice of incivility become gamified. This particular nature of political conflict may contribute to what Andersson and Pearson term the "spiraling effect of incivility," in which one act of incivility can initiate desires for reciprocation that lead to further uncivil behaviors (1999). This process can escalate seemingly minor uncivil behaviors into workplace conflict that is impossible to ignore. As a result, politically motivated workplace incivility behaviors such as expressions of hostility and obstructionism present costly implications.

Role of Inclusion Strategy

Faced with the troubling presence of workplace mistreatment and incivility, organizations have developed mitigation plans that often take the form of an inclusion strategy. To be effective, inclusion strategies must analyze both organizational and employee needs to address their shortcomings in fostering a climate that supports diversity in all forms. Here, I posit some inclusion strategies can be effective in managing political identity diversity.
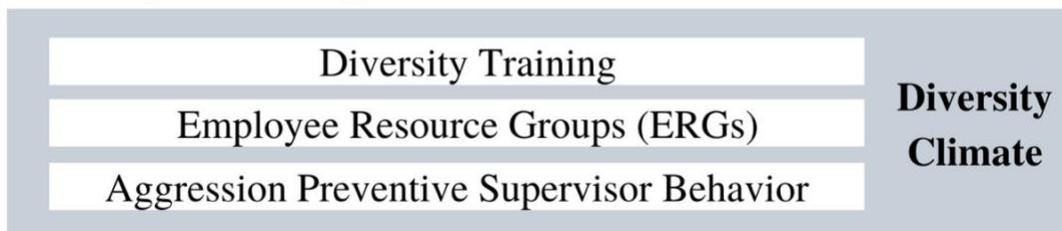

Figure 4. Diversity Management and Inclusion Strategies Conceptualization

Review of Inclusion

Although the presence of diversity in an organization can ultimately lead to positive outcomes, initiatives promoting diversity (and consequently involving change) are often unwelcomed and can lead employees to behave counterproductively. For example, hiring policies that enforce diversity can open up a new, diverse cast of employees to backlash (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). Therefore, the practice of **inclusion**, or creating an environment in which diverse employees can feel accepted and integrated into the workforce, is necessary to support the longevity and effectiveness of workplace initiatives. Today, the study of inclusion involves conceptualizations of how a diverse array of individuals can work with each other and become fully integrated within the larger group (Shore et al., 2011). Since inclusion strategies focus the general acceptance of a diverse workforce, it stands to reason that tolerance of political identity diversity, as a deep-level diversity factor, may improve as a result of these initiatives.

Workplace inclusion studies are often designed to understand employees' complex and often context-dependent social needs better. For instance, Brewer's optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT), has provided a framework to understand better how people prefer to experience inclusion (Boekhorst 2015; Brewer, 1991). According to ODT, people avoid becoming integrated within their social group to the point of being indistinguishable. Instead, individuals generally prefer a balance between having a membership to an ingroup while also retaining their unique qualities (Brewer, 1991). In situations in which an individual sees themselves as too similar to their peers, they may act out behaviors to establish their uniqueness.

On the other hand, people who do not feel secure connections within their social group may feel the need to enhance these ties. This balance between uniqueness and integration is at the forefront of inclusive practices, in which employees are encouraged to celebrate their individuality within their peers. To manage politically diverse employees following ODT theory, it would be advisable to allow individuals to identify as members of political groups without ostracizing them for their group membership. Ideally, organizations would establish a climate that promotes tolerance and recognizes deep-level diversity as a valued aspect of the organization's workforce.

Diversity Climate

Organizations can promote inclusion within a diverse workforce by establishing a climate that supports diversity. Goyal and Shrivastava (2013) define a diversity climate as the "culture of diversity and inclusion of an organization" (p. 1). This type of climate includes general organization practices such as institutional commitment to diversity, fairness, respect, and acceptance. For example, some organizations exhibit an age diversity climate by establishing age-inclusive practices such as demonstrating age diversity in hiring and actively preventing age

discrimination in promotions (Boehm et al., 2014). Lauring and Selmer (2011) argue that

maintenance of a diversity climate could counteract the negative impacts of social categorization

described by social identity theory, as diversity climates can facilitate positive, reciprocal

relationships between diverse individuals. In their review of diversity climate studies, Lauring

and Selmer found a positive association between diversity climate and perceived group

satisfaction and performance. From these findings, it follows that organizations that establish a

climate tolerant of political identity diversity may see similar positive effects on employee

satisfaction and performance. If this is true, creating a political diversity climate could be the key

to managing political diversity and mitigating its negative effects. In the following section, I will

discuss three potential avenues that organizations can take to implement a political diversity

climate: diversity training, employee resource groups and aggression preventive supervisor

behavior.

Diversity Training

One of the most common paths organizations take toward building a diversity climate is

through formal training. In a diversity training course, employees are often asked to participate in

a series of didactic and interactive modules, in which they watch lectures and videos and

participate in role-playing and discussion activities (Pendry et al., 2007). These courses are

designed to help equip employees with the knowledge and tools necessary to work within a

diverse workforce.

One study evaluating the effectiveness of 260 independently sampled diversity trainings

revealed that diversity trainings are moderately effective (Bezrukova, et al., 2016). This effect

was found to be stronger and more stable for cognitive learning outcomes, whereas attitudinal

and affective effects were found to decay over time. Bezrukova, et al. identified that longer,

integrated diversity trainings are significantly more effective than standalone, one-time trainings. From this, it follows that organizations may be more successful at creating a diversity climate by implementing diversity training integrated into an organization's long-term practices. Bezrukova, et al. suggest that organizations can sustain integrated diversity training initiatives by establishing programs that openly communicate their dedication to diversity as well as using supervisors to help enforce a diversity culture.

Employee Resource Groups

One way that organizations can openly communicate their dedication to diversity is through the establishment of Employee Resource Groups, or ERGs. In these groups, employees are encouraged to engage with a group of coworkers who belong to their particular subgroup. These subgroups often involve the celebration of surface-level identity factors such as race, sexuality, and gender. ERGs can help support a diversity climate by addressing both individuation and inclusion needs. Employees can feel supported as an individual by participating in an ERG that celebrates the identity factor that renders them unique in relation to their larger organization. Employees also experience feelings of inclusion when participating in an ERG by gaining access to a community of employees with similar identity factors and gaining corporate support of their identity factor. Business's increased utilization of ERGs (Welbourne et al., 2017) illustrates current trends within diversity and inclusion that take both psychological needs of individuation and inclusion into account. Although ERGs currently focus on celebrating surface-level identity factors, this strategy may also present an opportunity to include deep-level diversity factors such as political identity. However, since political identity is not always discreet (Huddy, 2001), employees may be reticent to join an ERG that is directly affiliated with a particular political party.

Aggression Preventive Supervisor Behavior

Another potential way that organizations can manage political diversity is through gaining supervisor support. This can be achieved when supervisors create a general climate of mistreatment prevention by encouraging supervisors to deploy aggression-preventive supervisor behavior. Aggression-preventive supervisor behavior, or APSB, involves behaviors exhibited by supervisors to reduce their employees' exposure to aggression. This can include managers becoming involved in disputes before they escalate and overtly outlining policies that directly relate to workplace aggression. For a manager to successfully perform APSB, they must be receptive to the organizational environment and the social cues that indicate aggressive behavior. When supervisors signal their awareness of aggressive behaviors and communicate their intolerance for aggression, they may be successful in preventing these interpersonal conflicts to occur in the first place. Managers who display APSB have been found to strengthen perceptions of a violence prevention climate (VPC) and generate positive attitudinal, motivational, and behavioral outcomes (Yang & Caughlin, 2017). In relation to managing political diversity, supervisors may be able to signal their intolerance for discriminatory behaviors against politically diverse employees through displaying APSB. In this case, APSB may take the form of addressing instances of covert incivility and outwardly acknowledging their acceptance of viewpoint diversity.

Discussion

Workplace mistreatment poses an overlooked yet dire threat to organizations, as the impacts of workplace mistreatment can cost organizations around $14,000 per employee annually (Schilpzand, 2014). Mistreatment at work is also incredibly pernicious, as around 98% of employees report experiencing incivility in the workplace (Porath & Pearson, 2013). The

concept of incivility includes overt aggression, but more frequently manifests as covert expressions of hostility and obstructionism. Instances of incivility often spread, as incivility behaviors can generate spiraling effects that lead to the creation of a destructive culture of mistreatment. Social identity theory shows that people are more likely to exhibit mistreatment behaviors toward those who do not belong to their social ingroup. Individuals distinguish between ingroup and outgroup members based upon both surface-level identity differences such as race or gender as well as deep-level identity differences such as culture or background. Although not as thoroughly researched as surface-level diversity, deep-level differences often account for the basis of many harmful divides between employees.

In this paper, I have proposed the consideration of a new deep-level diversity dimension: political identity diversity. Political identity diversity poses implications for organizational unity, as it can hinder social cohesion and spur expressions of incivility. A 2019 Society for Human Resources Management study found that 42% of employees have experienced political disagreements at work, and 12% have experienced bias due to their political affiliation. Since deep-level identity factors such as political identity are not often legally protected, workplace mistreatment on this basis can hide in plain sight. As a result, the fallout from political discrimination is often left unaddressed, even by those organizations that thoroughly address surface-level diversity discrimination. Managers may work to mitigate the impacts of political identity discrimination by creating a diversity culture that acknowledges deep-level diversity factors. This culture may be spread through the enforcement diversity training, the formation of employee resource groups, or through the deployment of aggression-preventive supervisor behavior.

Theoretical Implications

In this review, I have discussed political identity diversity and its implications for workplace mistreatment. I have utilized social identity theory as a lens to view how social groups are formed and how discrimination and mistreatment can result from the creation of these groups. I have also shared a comparison between deep-level versus surface-level diversity to demonstrate how social identity groups can potentially be formed on the basis of deep-level identity factors that are not traditionally studied, such as political identity. Although social identity theory has served as a useful framework when conceptualizing this issue, some theoretical limitations have come into play. For instance, social identity theory does not detail the differences in group behavior when social boundaries are constructed on the basis of surface level versus deep level diversity factors. It is still unclear if social identity groups formed based on a surface-level diversity factor such as gender would be more resistant to diversity acceptance than social identity groups formed based on a deep-level diversity factor such as political identity. An additional framework that builds on social identity theory and accounts for the varied categories of social identity factors may be helpful in understanding this issue.

Practical Implications

The findings outlined in this review have revealed several implications for practical implementation. This review mainly demonstrates the pressing need for organizations to examine diversity and mistreatment at a deeper level. Although surface-level diversity factors and overt aggressive behaviors are often comprehensively addressed by organizations, deep-level diversity factors and covert incivility behaviors are rarely discussed. In this paper, I have shared how covert incivility and discrimination based on deep-level diversity factors, can significantly impact productivity, satisfaction, and profitability. In response to this costly threat, organizations

should ensure that their diversity initiatives account for the many, varied forms of diversity and

mistreatment.

Since traditional diversity training programs are not always successful in creating cultural

changes, organizations may find more success affecting culture through managerial influence. It

stands to reason that the creation of a diversity climate through the application of aggression-

preventive supervisor behaviors may foster acceptance of political diversity and combat

instances of covert incivility. The direct discussion of political identity on a work team may

introduce conflict and highlight differences, but managers can avoid this issue and work to

prevent bias and mistreatment stemming from political identity dissimilarity through the

implementation of a more generalized, integrated, and long-term diversity strategy. These

strategies may involve the creation of inclusive employee resource groups that account for

political identity or could also simply involve a manager continually discussing the importance

of all forms of diversity, including viewpoint diversity, with their team.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

In this review, I have linked political diversity management to several different

psychological, organizational, and diversity-related frameworks and have suggested that theories

of ideological polarity, social identity, and optimal distinctiveness theory can function in tandem.

As a result, this paper presents the foundations for a future theoretical integration study that

examines the relationship between these ideas and theories in practice.

In addition, there exists an opportunity to further examine the individual novel concepts

presented in this paper. For example, the subject of deep-level diversity is considerably under-

researched, and the lack of examination into this topic provides a unique opportunity for

academics to explore diversity's nuances. This subject is particularly relevant to the study of

workplace mistreatment, as there is evidence to suggest that the negative impacts of deep-level discrimination generally outlast those of surface-level discrimination. With a robust understanding of how people respond to deep-level diversity, the field of organizational behavior stands to insight on how to avoid faultlines and create unity. Fortunately, due to the recent trend of studying political identity diversity in the workplace, it is likely that additional research that focuses on the confluence of deep-level diversity, political identity, and organizational behavior will soon become available.

Several of the propositions I have suggested in this review could benefit from an empirical examination. Since this paper takes the format of a literature review, I have not introduced any new empirical data or research. Instead, I have leveraged findings from different fields to support several propositions. For example, I have shared that the effects of deep-level diversity behave similarly to the effects of surface-level diversity. A future empirical examination of this claim could describe how deep-level diversity operates in practice and may help refine known best practices in addressing its effects.

Future research may also account for global changes to the workforce that will inevitably impact how political identity diversity manifests in the workplace. In the age of telecommuting, some dimensions of diversity may begin to have more bearing than others. It is not yet clear if deep-level dimensions of diversity, such as political identity, will become more or less relevant to workplace dynamics as people shift away from face-to-face interaction when working. Further research on telecommuting and its impacts on interpersonal connections between coworkers may inform the future use of the information provided in this review. Additionally, as people become more interconnected due to the onslaught of technological development and the democratization of social media, employees' ways of learning about others' political identities may change. An

employee's right to maintain personal distance from their work lives may become a popular topic of discussion as the ethics surrounding data privacy becomes more complex.

Conclusion

This literature review synthesizes several fields of study to examine how political identity dissimilarity impacts workplace dynamics and influences incivility behaviors. Using social identity theory as a framework, I have argued that employees' political identity should be identified as a legitimate component of diversity and that allowing for exclusion on this basis may encourage the enactment of incivility behaviors against employees who belong to political outgroups. To support this claim, I detailed how deep-level diversity factors can be used as the basis for similar ingroup and outgroup biases as other, surface-level dimensions of diversity such as race or gender. To provide context to my argument, I recruited studies on diversity, inclusion, and incivility. Finally, I reviewed theoretical and practical implications for my research, shared its limitations, and provided suggestions for future studies.

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