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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Influencing diversity beliefs through a personal testimonial, promotion-focused approach

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Abstract

Although researchers have highlighted the importance of diversity beliefs (i.e., team members' perceived value of diversity) for the elaboration of information in teams, little attention has been paid to whether and how diversity beliefs can be shaped. Drawing on theory and research on team diversity beliefs, we propose that diversity beliefs are more effectively influenced by interventions using a promotion (compared with a prevention) focus toward diversity and personal testimonial (compared with factual) knowledge. Results from an experiment conducted with 175 teams revealed that both a promotion focus and personal testimonial knowledge independently contributed to more positive diversity beliefs and consequently increased team elaboration of task-relevant information as well as integration of different perspectives. Our results reveal key factors that can influence diversity beliefs and underscore the pivotal role of diversity beliefs in improving the extent to which team members elaborate information and integrate diverse perspectives.

KEYWORDS
diversity beliefs, experiential learning, regulatory focus, team information elaboration, team integrative complexity

1 | INTRODUCTION

Prior research has argued that diversity beliefs are an important means to harvest the benefits of diverse teams (Nishii & Leroy, 2022; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; van Knippenberg & van Ginkel, 2022). Diversity beliefs are mental representations about the value of diversity, particularly for group functioning (Homan et al., 2007). Diversity beliefs have the potential to enhance team functioning in diverse workgroups because individuals with strong diversity beliefs are more willing to cooperate by openly sharing and integrating the ideas of diverse others that may benefit the team. In confirmation of these ideas, diversity beliefs have been shown to be key in enabling teams to capitalize on their differences and thereby positively influence team functioning and outcomes, such as team information elaboration (Homan et al., 2007), team identification (van Knippenberg et al., 2007), team creativity (Homan et al., 2015), and buffering against relationship conflict (Hentschel et al., 2013).

Although there is a wealth of evidence of the benefits of diversity beliefs, less research has investigated how diversity beliefs can be influenced (Leslie & Flynn, in press). Understanding how such beliefs can be altered stands to benefit organizations by helping them design impactful interventions (Devine & Ash, 2022; Nishii et al., 2018). One of the first studies in this area was an empirical study by Homan et al. (2007), which manipulated diversity beliefs by presenting scientific

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evidence about the value of working in either a homogenous or heterogeneous team. They found that teams performed better under pro-diversity than pro-similarity beliefs because teams in the former condition elaborated more on task-relevant information. This suggests that diversity beliefs are malleable (Phillips & Lount, 2007) and highlights the need to further examine how diversity beliefs can be influenced.

In this paper, we seek to extend research on the drivers of diversity beliefs. We draw from two broad themes emerging from the literature on managing diversity in organizations and test two key factors that could be conducive to promoting diversity beliefs. In examining the first driver, we draw from the work of van Knippenberg et al. (2013), which suggests that one key factor that can influence positive attitudes toward diversity is regulatory focus. Team regulatory focus refers to a collective motivational state representing team members' shared understanding of their team focus (Faddegon et al., 2009; Li et al., 2019). In this paper, we examine the role of team regulatory focus toward diversity and predict that diversity beliefs will be more affirmed in teams that hold a promotion (i.e., a motivational focus on realizing the positive outcomes of diversity) rather than a prevention orientation (i.e., a motivational focus on preventing the negative outcomes of diversity).

The second driver of diversity beliefs relates to the degree of personalization as the response to diversity and diversity initiatives is defined by personal relevance (e.g., Harrison et al., 2006). Whereas Homan et al. (2007) focused on declarative or factual knowledge (i.e., by providing scientific evidence for the participants to read), it can be argued that information based on facts and external data may be less effective than personalized information in activating people's beliefs. Indeed, some scholars have argued that these beliefs operate at the level of a mindset that consists of the individual's fundamental assumptions about diversity (van Knippenberg et al., 2013), which are often rooted in their past experiences dealing with diverse others. Therefore, information about the value of diversity should have a greater effect on diversity beliefs when it is personal and context-specific. The focus on personalized information is also supported by learning theories (Kolb, 1984; Petty et al., 1995), which suggest that linking learning material to the learner's prior personal experiences is a prototypical and effective cognitive learning strategy. In sum, we expect that diversity beliefs will be more positively affected when team members reappreciate their past diversity experiences compared with when they process factual information and, in particular, when these experiences reinforce how to maximize the potential gains from diversity (promotion focus) rather than how to minimize the potential costs (prevention focus). In doing so, our study contributes to the field of diversity beliefs and diversity training by answering the call for theoretically and empirically driven research on the sources of diversity beliefs (Leslie & Flynn, in press; van Knippenberg et al., 2007).

Lastly, beyond providing a better understanding of the drivers of diversity beliefs, we highlight how diversity beliefs can serve as a powerful mechanism to understand and predict team dynamics and outcomes. Specifically, we demonstrate the downstream effects of diversity beliefs on team information elaboration and team integrative complexity. Team information elaboration refers to group members' exchange, discussion, and integration of ideas, knowledge, and insights relevant to the group's task (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). We build on earlier research on diversity beliefs that focused on team elaboration in decision-making tasks such as hidden profiles (Hoever et al., 2012; Lam & Schaubroeck, 2000) or team survival exercises (Homan et al., 2007; Tarakci et al., 2016). Beyond demonstrating the effect of diversity beliefs on team information elaboration, we also examine team integrative complexity—defined as a constructive resolution of diverse perspectives about how teams should work together (Brodbeck et al., 2021; Gruenfeld & Hollingshead, 1993)—as an important team outcome. In investigating these two different team outcomes, our study demonstrates that not only are diversity beliefs conducive to the sharing of *task-focused* information (team information elaboration) but they are also instrumental to the integration of *team-focused* perspectives (team integrative complexity) that may benefit the team's performance in future tasks (Eisenhardt et al., 1997; Rapp et al., 2021). Figure 1 summarizes our conceptual model, highlighting how regulatory focus toward diversity and type of knowledge affect team diversity beliefs, team information elaboration, and team integrative complexity.

2 | THEORY AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 | Team diversity beliefs: Individual differences shared within a group

Initially, diversity beliefs were conceptualized as an individual difference variable that could be influenced through training (Homan et al., 2015; van Knippenberg et al., 2007). Beyond individual differences in diversity beliefs, teams can also develop diversity beliefs when group members share similar beliefs regarding diversity. This is important, as a shared mental model of how diversity is going to be treated will likely affect the strength of these diversity beliefs' effect on group outcomes (van Knippenberg et al., 2013). Therefore, in formulating our hypotheses, we deliberately develop an intervention that includes mechanisms to promote the sharedness of such beliefs and theorize about how these beliefs are formed at the team level.

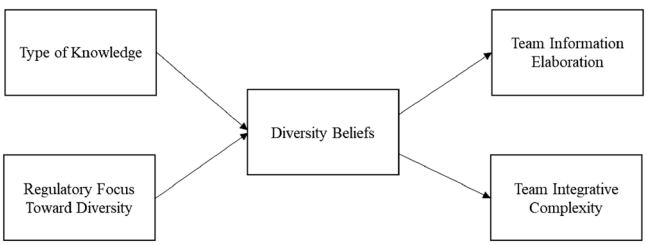

FIGURE 1 Hypothesized model

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2.2 | Influencing diversity beliefs

People typically have memories of prior experiences in their lives where they encountered someone different from them and, due to social categorization and social identification processes (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), developed a reluctant or even negative attitude toward dissimilar others (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). This set of personal experiences may form the basis for an individual's assumption that diversity is undesirable (Hewstone et al., 2002; van Knippenberg et al., 2007).

This nature of diversity beliefs suggests that two important factors might be necessary to promote strong diversity beliefs. First, individuals' initial suspicion regarding diversity could be addressed through a stance that promotes eagerness toward diversity and encourages people to pursue its benefits. Such a stance would provide an important counterpoint to the natural prevention tendency that reacts to differences with vigilance against the associated risks (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994; Mueller et al., 2012). Following this rationale, we employ regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1998) and suggest that while the prevention of negative outcomes of diversity can also be a useful strategy, prioritizing a promotion focus is likely to be more effective than a prevention focus in helping individuals to value diversity because it draws the individual's attention to the positive outcomes of diversity and therefore positions diversity as a desirable goal to strive for. We test this hypothesis by comparing a promotion versus a prevention framing of diversity in shaping diversity beliefs.

Second, prior research has shown that presenting scientific evidence about the benefits of working in a diverse team can activate diversity beliefs (Homan et al., 2007). However, because diversity beliefs may be deep-seated and are often based on personal experiences, influencing these beliefs requires an intervention that is personalized (Chrobot-Mason & Quinones, 2002; Roberson et al., 2001). Here, we draw from previous research that demonstrates the importance of active involvement and direct experience in changing teams' mental models (Marks et al., 2001; Moreland & Myaskovsky, 2000). We argue that knowledge about the impact of diversity that is based on personal experience has a stronger effect on diversity beliefs than similar information that is derived from external sources (Gebert et al., 2017). We test this hypothesis by comparing a fact-based exercise (i.e., presenting scientific evidence about how to reap the benefits or prevent the challenges of diversity) with a personal testimony-driven exercise that encourages team members to reevaluate their prior diversity experiences and share these insights within their teams.

2.3 | A promotion versus prevention focus toward diversity as a driver of diversity beliefs

Regulatory focus theory proposes that people can engage in two regulatory systems: prevention and promotion (Higgins, 1998). In group settings, a team promotion focus can be understood as a collective motivational state that drives members to focus on striving for ideals through advancement and accomplishment, whereas a team prevention focus leads members to focus on fulfilling obligations through vigilant behaviors in order to avoid loss or failure (Ferris et al., 2013; Li et al., 2019). Notably, research has shown that a regulatory focus can be defined as a chronic disposition and a state that can be manipulated by situational cues and features (Crowe & Higgins, 1997). Although any manipulation of regulatory focus might include, to some extent, a focus on the positive (pleasure, gain) or the negative (pain, loss), the major distinction between regulatory focus and a mere focus on the positive or negative aspects of a phenomenon is the motivational component linked to regulatory focus, where teams adopt an approach or avoidance motivational strategy (Higgins, 1998; van Knippenberg et al., 2013) that guides future behavior (rather than momentary gains or losses). In other words, a collective regulatory focus leads to shared beliefs that regulate behaviors toward collective goals (Johnson et al., 2015). Previous research has suggested that prevention-focused teams are characterized by vigilance and maintenance of the status quo. In contrast, promotion-focused teams exhibit eagerness, characterized by exploration and the search for alternative options and diverse perspectives (Faddegon et al., 2009; Florack & Hartmann, 2007; Förster & Higgins, 2005; Levine et al., 2000). We argue that the regulatory orientation of diversity framing may also be important in influencing beliefs about the value of diversity in teams.

van Knippenberg et al. (2013) propose that an understanding of diversity that focuses on the prevention of negative outcomes versus one that focuses on the promotion of positive outcomes will significantly influence how team members engage with diversity. A promotion focus toward diversity involves greater salience of the cues relating diversity to advancement, aspiration, and accomplishment (and, more generally, the eagerness to obtain positive outcomes). Because it is oriented toward the potential benefits of diversity, a promotion-focused framing highlights the opportunity for the team to leverage the diverse perspectives of the team members. In contrast, a prevention-focused strategy involves sensitivity to the indicators of diversity's implications for safety and protection and entails responsibilities that team members must fulfill. When team members are motivated by these concerns about diversity, they will focus on potential reasons to not engage with diversity and will be sensitized to the ways in which diversity can go awry (Ferris et al., 2013; Friedman & Förster, 2001; Liberman et al., 2001). It stands to reason, then, that a promotion focus can increase a team's motivation to seek out alternatives and pursue the benefits of diversity, whereas a prevention focus may motivate a team to avoid the potential challenges of diversity and impede the belief that diversity can make a positive difference to the team.

> **Hypothesis 1.** Teams that are subjected to a promotion-focused (compared with a prevention-focused) intervention will exhibit more positive diversity beliefs.

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2.4 | Personal testimonial versus factual knowledge as a driver of diversity beliefs

In addition to regulatory focus toward diversity, we also expect the type of knowledge that individuals access to shape diversity beliefs. Previous research, however, has mainly focused on promoting diversity beliefs via the provision of knowledge from an external source without considering the prior personal experiences of individuals in the team. Homan et al. (2007), for example, successfully primed team members' diversity beliefs by having participants read an article reporting on evidence of the benefits of diversity for team processes and outcomes. We argue that using knowledge based on the individual's personal experience might be a more effective way to influence diversity beliefs.

van Knippenberg et al. (2007) propose that knowledge drawn from personal experience could be a source of these beliefs. This proposal is in line with prior research on the value of experiential learning, which posits that changes in beliefs and cognition occur through active involvement and direct experience (Anderson & Lindsay, 1998; Greene, 2013; Kolb, 1984; Petty et al., 1995). Building on this body of work, we infer that diversity beliefs can be developed through deliberate reflection about past experiences with diversity. Past experiences can become implicit and deeply embedded in an individual schema (McAdams, 2001). Previous research on reducing prejudice has shown that systematic reflection on the discrepancies between an individual's actual and desired behavior in past diversity experiences can change the individual's beliefs and behavior (Lindh & Thorgren, 2016; Lindsey et al., 2015; Monteith et al., 2010). When people intentionally reflect on their experiences with diversity, they can increase their awareness of diversity and improve their understanding of and attitudes toward it.

Situating the issue of diversity in terms of personal experience will render the issue more salient and, therefore, increase the likelihood of cognitive and emotional engagement with the issue (Norris & Epstein, 2011; Trope & Liberman, 2003). Because there is a higher degree of personal relevance associated with reflecting on personal experience, personal testimonial knowledge can increase an individual's motivation to process information about diversity and increase their engagement in this process. This motivation should subsequently result in a more elaborate understanding of the value of diversity for teams with personal testimonial knowledge (cf. the elaboration likelihood model [ELM], Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

In contrast, teams are expected to be less motivated to thoroughly process information about diversity that is presented in the form of factual knowledge. The ELM literature (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) has demonstrated that for individuals to be persuaded by an argument, they have to be sufficiently engaged in the task in order to process the information. Individuals who process information superficially are not differentially affected by the different arguments. Therefore, an individual's motivation to process information is higher when the information's personal relevance is clear. In sum, the articulation and exchange of personal testimony about diversity experiences can foster a shared understanding that ultimately helps to improve team-specific diversity beliefs. In this situation, teams can leverage the insights obtained from each individual team member's unique experience.

> **Hypothesis 2.** Teams that are subjected to a personal testimonial knowledge (compared with a factual knowledge) intervention will exhibit more positive diversity beliefs.

2.5 | Information elaboration and the mediating role of team diversity beliefs

We further hypothesize that encouraging teams to have a promotion orientation toward diversity and generate and share insights based on their past interactions with diverse others will enhance team diversity beliefs and increase the extent to which team members engage in information elaboration processes. In this paper, we highlight two important conditions needed for information elaboration to occur. Our argument for the proposed mediating mechanism builds on previous studies that have found that when people believe that diversity benefits group functioning and performance, they respond more favorably to diverse others. For example, the qualitative case study of Ely and Thomas (2001) found that when organizations emphasize the belief that diversity is a valuable resource, people report more positive intergroup relations. In an experimental study, van Dick et al. (2008) found that diversity beliefs trigger team members to actively solicit new information from their teammates. A promotion focus toward diversity will enable team members to focus on the value of diversity and motivate them to derive information from different perspectives (Li et al., 2019). It is thus expected that teams whose members hold stronger diversity beliefs resulting from a promotion (vs. prevention) focus toward diversity or knowledge based on personal testimony (vs. factual evidence) will be more likely to engage in information elaboration.

> **Hypothesis 3a.** Diversity beliefs mediate the relationship between type of regulatory focus (promotion vs. prevention) intervention and team information elaboration.

> **Hypothesis 3b.** Diversity beliefs mediate the relationship between type of knowledge (personal testimonial vs. factual) intervention and team information elaboration.

2.6 | The effects on team integrative complexity

Team integrative complexity reflects the extent to which a group as a whole has adopted or explored the differences in members' perspectives and the way in which the diversity among these perspectives has (or has not) been reconciled (Gruenfeld & Hollingshead, 1993). Whereas team information elaboration indicates team members'

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sharing of task-focused information, team integrative complexity points to team's ability to solicit alternative (or even opposing) preferences among their members, thus surfacing the tensions and conflicts between personally endorsed values. Moreover, while team information elaboration focuses on the process through which a team can improve its current performance, team integrative complexity can be considered, in our study's context, as an emergent team perspective where members use their discussions and interactions to develop shared team norms and values, which have implications for the team's future performance (Rapp et al., 2021). The ability to deliberate and integrate competing perspectives has been shown to improve social relations and decision-making quality and facilitate performance in a wide range of domains (Park & Deshon, 2018; Tadmor et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2011).

Gruenfeld and Hollingshead (1993) argued that team integrative complexity might arise from the diverse perspectives that different group members bring to a team. They proposed that when a team faces a problem, the independent perspectives of each team member serve as potential sources of group differentiation. Team integration can be viewed as the approach by which members' perspectives are reconciled. This reconciliation is not merely the addition of different ideas or the discarding of some ideas. Rather, it is a process in which group members actively generate new conceptual links, such as integrative solutions, overarching rules, and novel representations.

Previous work has identified factors that can engender higher integrative complexity in teams. Team integrative complexity can stem from integratively complex individuals, who increase the group's ability to recognize divergent perspectives and formulate integrative solutions (Wong et al., 2011). Past studies have also examined the role of group discussion in influencing integrative complexity. For example, Gruenfeld et al. (1998) investigated the effects of minority dissent. Their study found that members of the majority group scored higher on integrative complexity when they were confronted with minority dissent. In addition to dissent, Brodbeck et al. (2021) showed that integration could be enhanced by an interactive discussion structure in the form of stepwise recapitulation.

Germane to our study, research has found that diversity of experiences (Benet-Martínez et al., 2006) and environmental cues such as value conflict (Tetlock et al., 1996) are determinants of the level of integrative complexity. This paper builds on the premise that diversity beliefs are crucial in helping teams to integrate potential differences in teamwork values. Values can be understood as cognitive representations of basic motivations such as goals or desired end states to be pursued (Rokeach, 1973). Values govern how individuals behave and reflect what is important in their lives (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). In our study, team integrative complexity, as measured by the extent to which teams are able to integrate their diverse values about the rules for interpersonal interactions, will be useful for guiding effective teamwork (Park & DeShon, 2018) by encouraging information elaboration in future tasks (Loyd et al., 2013) and preventing dysfunctional conflict (Mathieu & Rapp, 2009).

In sum, we argue that integrative complexity requires team members to actively seek out competing perspectives and thus override the natural tendency to avoid value conflicts. Whether a group as a whole engages with the tension between and variation among members' values and perspectives and whether they reconcile the differences among these perspectives would be influenced by the extent to which the members believe in the value of diverse perspectives. It is thus expected that teams whose members have diversity beliefs resulting from a promotion (vs. prevention) focus or knowledge based on personal testimony (vs. factual evidence) will have higher integrative complexity.

> **Hypothesis 4a.** Diversity beliefs mediate the relationship between type of regulatory focus (promotion vs. prevention) intervention and team integrative complexity.

> **Hypothesis 4b.** Diversity beliefs mediate the relationship between type of knowledge (personal testimonial vs. factual) intervention and team integrative complexity.

Apart from the hypothesized main effects of regulatory focus and type of knowledge on diversity beliefs, it is possible that the main effects will be qualified with an interaction between the two factors. Therefore, we also examine the interaction between regulatory focus and type of knowledge. Yet based on prior research and theorizing, one can predict this interaction to take on different forms. One scenario could be that, based on the higher degree of personal relevance associated with reflecting on personal experience, personal testimonial knowledge will lead to greater motivation to process information about diversity and greater engagement in this process. In other words, personal testimonial knowledge could amplify regulatory focus, such that the positive effect of a promotion focus toward diversity would be enhanced when personal testimonial knowledge is utilized. An alternative prediction would be that personal testimonial knowledge may interact with regulatory focus in such a way that it elicits the positive impact of prevention focus on diversity beliefs. This prediction would be based on the notion that personal experience which is prevention-oriented in nature tends to be construed as threat and is accompanied with feelings of negative emotions and vigilance (Idson et al., 2000). This might make the experience more salient in memory (Baumeister et al., 2001) and lead to a stronger recognition that ways of dealing with the situation need to be altered. Therefore, it could provide the teams with more motivation and information to reflect on and reappraise such experience, allowing for more nuanced beliefs about diversity to emerge. Given these competing expectations, we propose the following research question:

> RQ: Is there an interaction between regulatory focus and type of knowledge? If so, which regulatory focus (promotion vs. prevention) is more effective in improving diversity beliefs when it is provided via either type of knowledge (personal testimonial versus factual)?

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3 | METHODS

3.1 | Participants

We collected data on 175 teams, composed of 724 students, who were randomly assigned to teams and participated in a team-building workshop that aimed to improve their team relationships as part of the Organizational Behavior course requirement. The participants were business students who were enrolled in a bachelor's program at a large Dutch university. In the sample, 49.7% were male, 42% were female, and data were missing from 8.3%. Regarding the nationalities of the sample, 55.6% of the participants were Dutch, 35.8% had other nationalities (e.g., American, Belgian, and Colombian), and data were missing from 8.6%. The teams were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. A total of 47 teams participated in the promotion focus–personal testimonial knowledge condition, 39 teams in the prevention focus–personal testimonial knowledge condition, 40 teams in the prevention focus–factual knowledge condition, and 49 teams in the promotion focus–factual knowledge condition.

3.2 | Experimental task

For this study, we designed a team decision-making task inspired by a well-known team-building exercise, namely, the team charter task. A team charter represents a consensus among members as to how the team will work together (Mathieu & Rapp, 2009). It can be viewed as a set of guidelines for future behavior and is usually produced in the initial teamwork planning stage (Marks et al., 2002). In our adapted version of the team charter task, each member first individually stated whether they agreed or disagreed with 10 controversial statements concerning teamwork values (e.g., "Everyone gets an equal say in a decision, no matter their expertise," "Only make a decision when there is consensus in the team") (see Appendix A for team charter task materials). After the individuals had finished reflecting and responding to each statement, the teams were instructed to pay attention to the statements with the most divergent responses among the team members (i.e., statements to which there were roughly equal numbers of "agree" and "disagree" responses). Subsequently, the teams were asked to discuss their perspectives on the issue and to formulate a revised version of each statement that integrated the differences in team members' opinions. These revised statements were positioned as the rules of interaction for their teamwork going forward. In the final stage, the teams were asked to write about how they managed to solve the disagreements that emerged in discussing the statements.

Our version of the team charter task is suitable for use as an instrument to capture integrative complexity because the controversial statements about group dynamics are meant to highlight divergent teamwork preferences within the team. Chartering involves identifying group members' work style preferences and how the team will uncover diverse perspectives, resolve disagreements, and make decisions. In creating a typical team charter from scratch, members might be tempted to identify common values and perspectives too early in the process. Our version of the team charter task, on the other hand, highlights contrasting or opposing opinions (as triggered by these 10 controversial statements). However, the extent of integration, as indicated by the complexity of the team's revised statements, may vary across teams.

3.3 | Procedure

In this experiment, the participants were instructed to complete the first part of an online questionnaire individually, which included the demographic measures, followed by the experimental manipulations and a manipulation check. In the second part, the teams engaged in the team charter task. In the final part, the participants responded to the rest of the questionnaire, which was intended to capture the team processes resulting from the team charter task.

3.4 | Manipulations

The 2 × 2 experimental design, which aimed to influence participants' diversity beliefs, manipulated a promotion (vs. prevention) focus toward diversity and factual (vs. personal testimonial) knowledge. It should be noted that our study differs from previous studies with regard to the regulatory focus manipulation because past manipulations have usually been incentive-based (i.e., involving potential gains vs. losses associated with team rewards; e.g., Levine et al., 2000), while our manipulation embeds a regulatory focus (Higgins, 1998) within the context of diversity (i.e., the motivation to approach the potential benefits or avoid the potential costs of diversity). In the factual knowledge condition, participants were instructed to read a fictitious scientific article about the effect of diversity on teams and individuals and strategies for managing diversity in teams. In the personalized knowledge condition, participants were asked to think of a person with whom they had interacted in the past who differed from them in some way, to describe their relationship with that person in detail, and to reflect on how they would manage a similar relationship in the future. In the prevention focus condition, participants focused on how to prevent the negative outcomes of diversity, either by focusing on how to avoid the difficulties they had in interacting with that person and describing how they could avoid similar challenges in the future (in the prevention focus/personal testimonial knowledge condition) or by reading an article about the potential negative effects of diversity on teams and individuals, which included research-based recommendations on how these negative effects can be avoided (in the prevention focus/factual knowledge condition). In the promotion focus condition, participants focused on how to realize the positive outcomes of diversity, and they were asked either to define one learning point from the interaction with their diverse other (in the promotion focus/personal testimonial knowledge condition) or to read about research-based recommendations on how to reap the benefits of diversity for teams and individuals (in the promotion focus/factual knowledge condition).

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In all conditions, participants were asked to first engage in the manipulation (reflecting on their past experiences or reading the article) individually, after which each team member shared their insights with each other about the relevance for their team. The rationale for this two-step manipulation is based on the idea that, like other team cognitions, diversity beliefs are primarily an individual construct but can also be shared within the team (van Knippenberg et al., 2013). Because of this nature of diversity beliefs, we surmise that an intervention should first target the individual's own beliefs before the beliefs of each member emerge as a collective property of the team. Accordingly, in specifying our interventions, we start at the individual level but include a team discussion component that can help to extrapolate the sharedness of diversity beliefs to the team level (see Appendix B for more details on the manipulations). In the team discussion, team members could help one another to achieve the peer effect of exposing information and reflecting on divergent experiences that induce active and complex styles of thinking that could lead them to change their beliefs (Gurin et al., 2002; Ragins & Ehrhardt, 2021).

3.5 | Measures

3.5.1 | Diversity beliefs

Diversity beliefs were measured with four items adapted from Homan et al. (2010). The scale was adapted to be specific to the team context and included four items: "Diversity is an asset for teams," "Diversity is a good thing for teams", "I enjoy working together with diverse people in a team," and "I feel enthusiastic about diversity in a team." The four items measured individuals' diversity beliefs after the manipulation ($\alpha = .82$). Responses were given on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In support of aggregating the measure to the team level (Bliese, 2000), the intraclass correlation ICC (1), ICC(2), and mean Rwg values were .18, .47, and .91, respectively.

3.5.2 | Team information elaboration

This measure was based on a previously developed scale from Homan et al. (2007). The four items measured the extent to which team members shared and elaborated on information to complete the task ($\alpha = .75$). An example of an item is "The group members complemented each other by openly sharing knowledge during the group task." Responses were given on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In support of aggregating the measure to the team level, the ICC(1), ICC(2), and mean Rwg values were .21, .53, and .94, respectively.

3.5.3 | Team integrative complexity

Team integrative complexity was measured using content analysis of the teams' open-ended responses from the team charter task. As mentioned before, once team members had reflected individually on each of the 10 controversial statements about group dynamics, they came together as a team to discuss and identify the rules of interaction for their future teamwork. Each team's written response was used to assess the extent to which they had elaborated and integrated their perspectives. The coding scheme was adapted from Baker-Brown et al. (1992); see Appendix C for more details of the coding scheme.

Given that participants were randomly assigned to teams and conditions, we expected that there would be no meaningful differences in value diversity across the conditions. We checked this by using Blau's index (1977) to create a measure of value diversity based on each team's response to the team charter's initial statements ($M = .18$, $SD = .13$) and found that there were no significant differences between the conditions. Moreover, given that previous studies of team diversity have found that levels of diversity influence team outcomes (Harrison & Klein, 2007; Homan et al., 2007; Shemla & Wegge, 2019), we tested for this potential effect. However, we found that value diversity was not a significant predictor in our data. Moreover, to ensure that our results go above and beyond surface-level characteristics, we constructed measures of gender diversity ($M = .41$, $SD = .30$) and nationality diversity ($M = .29$, $SD = .40$) using Blau's index, adjusted for group size (Biemann & Kearney, 2010). Including these measures as control variables did not change the results (Becker, 2005). We report the results of the analyses without the control variables. Results including the control variables are available upon request.

4 | RESULTS

Table 1 provides summary statistics of the measures used in the study.

4.1 | Manipulation checks

Participants completed the manipulation checks by responding to two statements: "The previous exercise helped me understand how to leverage the potential benefits of diversity" (for the promotion focus manipulation) and "The previous exercise helped me reflect on my past experience in which I interacted with diverse others" (for the personal testimonial knowledge manipulation). Responses were given on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). As expected, participants in the promotion focus conditions reported a higher promotion focus ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .77$) than participants in the prevention focus conditions ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 1.10$), $F(1, 722) = 136.98$, $p < .001$. Similarly, participants in the personal testimonial knowledge conditions reported higher personal testimonial knowledge ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.00$) than those in the factual knowledge conditions ($M = 3.03$, $SD = .93$), $F(1, 722) = 57.69$, $p < .001$. Table 2 reports the means and standard deviations of the two manipulation check items across the four conditions.

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TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. Regulatory focus toward diversity	0.50	0.50				
2. Type of knowledge	0.50	0.50	.00			
3. Diversity beliefs	3.88	0.39	.24**	.20**		
4. Information elaboration	4.03	0.30	−.08	.05	.47**	
5. Integrative complexity	3.08	1.24	−.07	.10	.20**	.36**

Note: Regulatory focus and type of knowledge are dummy coded (0 = prevention focus toward diversity, 0 = factual knowledge). All correlations are repeated at team level.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

TABLE 2 Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) of the two manipulation check items across the four conditions

	Promotion focus check	Personalized testimonial knowledge check
Prevention focus/factual knowledge	2.60 (.99)	2.76 (.99)
Promotion focus/personalized testimonial knowledge	3.73 (.87)	3.62 (.94)
Prevention focus/personalized testimonial knowledge	3.58 (.96)	3.53 (.93)
Promotion focus/factual knowledge	4.06 (.62)	3.28 (.97)

4.2 | The effects of a promotion focus and personalized knowledge on team diversity beliefs

A 2 × 2 ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of a promotion (vs. prevention) focus and personal testimonial (vs. factual) knowledge on teams' diversity beliefs. In line with Hypothesis 1, we found a significant main effect of regulatory focus, showing that teams in the promotion focus conditions ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .32$) had significantly higher diversity beliefs than teams in the prevention focus conditions ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .44$), $F(1,173) = 13.30$, $p = .002$. Hypothesis 2 was also supported by the analysis, as teams in the personal testimonial knowledge conditions had significantly higher diversity beliefs ($M = 3.96$, $SD = .37$) than those in the factual knowledge conditions ($M = 3.81$, $SD = .39$), $F(1,173) = 7.05$, $p < .001$. The exploratory test of the interaction between a promotion focus and personal testimonial knowledge indicated that this interaction did not have a statistically significant effect on diversity beliefs, $F(1,171) = 2.15$, $p = .14$. Table 3 reports the means and standard deviations of diversity beliefs across the four conditions. Overall, the results show an additive effect of a promotion focus and personal testimonial knowledge, in which teams in the personal testimonial knowledge conditions had greater diversity beliefs than those in the factual knowledge conditions. Similarly, the conditions inducing a promotion focus were shown to be superior to those that adopted a prevention focus.

TABLE 3 Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) of diversity beliefs across the four conditions

	Diversity beliefs
Prevention focus/factual knowledge	3.66 (.47)
Promotion focus/personalized testimonial knowledge	4.01 (.35)
Prevention focus/personalized testimonial knowledge	3.91 (.38)
Promotion focus/factual knowledge	3.93 (.27)

4.3 | Mediation analyses

In this section, we report the results of the mediation analyses of the two main effects on team information elaboration through diversity beliefs, followed by the indirect effects on team integrative complexity through diversity beliefs. As recommended by Hayes (2013), we used bootstrapping analyses to test a process model in which diversity beliefs mediate the relationship between a promotion focus and personal testimonial knowledge. Separate analyses were conducted to test the effects of the two independent variables (i.e., promotion focus and personal testimonial knowledge). Following the recommendation of Hayes (2013) for the estimation of a model with multiple independent variables, one independent variable was controlled while testing the mediation model of the other.

Results based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples indicated that teams had more positive diversity belief scores in the promotion focus conditions than the prevention focus conditions ($b = .18$). Diversity beliefs, in turn, positively predicted information elaboration in the team ($b = .40$). The indirect effect of a promotion focus on information elaboration mediated by diversity beliefs was significant (*estimate* = .07, 95% CI [.03, .12]). The same analysis was used to test the meditation model of diversity beliefs as a mediator of the relationship between personal testimonial knowledge and information elaboration. Results based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples indicated that teams in the personal testimonial knowledge conditions had higher diversity beliefs than teams in the factual knowledge conditions ($b = .15$) and, thus, engaged in more information elaboration ($b = .38$). The indirect effect of personal testimonial knowledge on information

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elaboration mediated by diversity beliefs was significant (*estimate* = .06, 95% CI [.02, .11]). Therefore, Hypotheses 3a and 3b were supported.

Results based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples indicated that teams in the promotion focus conditions had more positive diversity beliefs than teams in the prevention focus conditions ($b = .18$). Diversity beliefs, in turn, positively predicted integrative complexity in the team ($b = .75$). The indirect effect of a promotion focus on team integrative complexity mediated by diversity beliefs was significant (*estimate* = .14, 95% CI [.04, .27]). The same analysis was used to test the mediation model of diversity beliefs as a mediator of the relationship between personal testimonial knowledge and integrative complexity. Results based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples indicated that teams in the personal testimonial knowledge conditions had higher diversity beliefs than teams in the factual knowledge conditions ($b = .15$) and, thus, engaged in more integrative complexity ($b = .75$). The indirect effect of personal testimonial knowledge on integrative complexity mediated by diversity beliefs was significant (*estimate* = .11, 95% CI [.02, .25]). Therefore, Hypotheses 4a and 4b were supported.

Overall, the results indicated that diversity beliefs mediated the relationship between regulatory focus and team information elaboration. Furthermore, diversity beliefs mediated the relationship between type of knowledge and team information elaboration. We observed similar indirect effects for team integrative complexity.

4.4 | Supplementary analyses

While our results treat team information elaboration and team integrative complexity as separate outcomes of diversity beliefs, it is possible that the two outcomes are reciprocally or causally related. To better understand the relationship between the two outcomes, we conducted additional analyses. Specifically, we ran a serial mediation model in which team information elaboration served as a second mediator leading to team integrative complexity and compared the results with those of another serial mediation model in which team integrative complexity served as a second mediator leading to team information elaboration.

A serial mediation test (Hayes, 2013) supported the first serial model: The indirect effect of a promotion focus on team integrative complexity via team diversity beliefs and team information elaboration was significant (*estimate* =.10, 95% CI [.03, .19]). Similarly, the indirect effect of personal testimonial knowledge on team integrative complexity via team diversity beliefs and team information elaboration was significant (*estimate* =.08, 95% CI [.02, .16]). The second serial model was also supported: The indirect effect of a promotion focus on team information elaboration via team diversity beliefs and team integrative complexity was significant (*estimate* = .01, 95% CI [.00, .02]). Moreover, the indirect effect of personal testimonial knowledge on team information elaboration via team diversity beliefs and team integrative complexity was significant (*estimate* = .08, 95% CI [.02, .16]). In sum, the indirect effect is different from zero in both models, although it is stronger when team information elaboration mediates the effect on team integrative complexity than vice versa. We elaborate on the possible explanations and implications of these findings in the discussion section.

5 | DISCUSSION

The main aim of the present study was to examine how diversity beliefs can be influenced and how that can improve information elaboration and the integration of perspectives in teams. Specifically, we assessed whether regulatory focus and the type of knowledge regarding diversity provided in an intervention affected diversity beliefs. Moreover, we tested a mediation effect of diversity beliefs in the relationship between regulatory focus and type of knowledge and team information elaboration. We found that both a promotion focus and personal testimonial knowledge had additive effects in contributing to more positive team diversity beliefs, which in turn predicted team information elaboration. Furthermore, we found similar indirect relationships for the two predictors via diversity beliefs with team integrative complexity.

Teams who were exposed to a promotion-focused intervention had higher diversity beliefs than those exposed to a prevention-focused intervention. The motivational approach of highlighting the potential benefits of working with diverse others thus helps individuals and teams recognize the importance of diversity more than a motivational approach focused on avoiding the potential challenges of diversity. Furthermore, we found support for the relevance of personal testimonial knowledge and its value in motivating participants to reexamine their diversity beliefs. This finding builds on the previous argument that reflections on personal experience may be an important tool for teams to develop their mental representation of their teamwork and ultimately improve team processes and performance (van Knippenberg et al., 2013). The present study also extends prior work (Homan et al., 2007) by showing that team members' reflection on their experiences with diverse others within the team is more effective in stimulating diversity beliefs than exposure to factual knowledge about the value of diversity.

Together, the results of the present study demonstrate that involving team members' past experiences interacting with diverse others and guiding them to focus on what they gained from these experiences is an effective way to influence team diversity beliefs. Our study, therefore, makes a theoretical contribution to the literature on diversity beliefs by shedding light on the antecedents of diversity beliefs and thus answers the call for research on the sources of diversity beliefs (Leslie & Flynn, in press; van Knippenberg et al., 2007). Specifically, we identify a promotion focus toward diversity and personal testimonial knowledge as two antecedents that can positively influence a team's beliefs about the value of diversity. This finding adds to the diversity literature, which to date has predominantly focused on establishing how and why diversity beliefs matter rather than examining the factors that contribute to these beliefs. The results

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of this study can encourage scholars to explore other ways in which diversity beliefs can be influenced.

This study also contributes to diversity training research by identifying the characteristics of diversity training and intervention that are associated with positive outcomes (Bezrukova et al., 2016; Kulik & Roberson, 2008). Diversity training is diverse in its designs and techniques (Pendry et al., 2007), but the extent of its effectiveness is still unclear. Our findings point to certain practices that are more impactful than others. In particular, we provide initial evidence of the effectiveness of a simple intervention that incorporates a promotion orientation toward diversity and the personal experiences of participants. Training that ignores these elements might thus be less successful in achieving its goals, explain in part the inconsistent results and lack of effectiveness of many diversity training programs (Bezrukova et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2019; Devine & Ash, 2022). More specifically, our findings challenge the existing diversity training practices in organizations that predominantly adopt a preventative focus (Leslie, 2019). Organizations should aim to shift from a harm-avoidance culture to one that promotes diversity and inclusivity from a perspective of shared human experiences (Graso et al., 2020). Moreover, our findings point to the importance of personalization in the form of leveraging people's past experiences with diversity as lessons from which they can learn. Such a practice stands in contrast to a lecture-based, dogmatic form of communication with few opportunities for participants to share their own personal experiences dealing with diversity (Gebert et al., 2017).

In the context of a workgroup, team members with different values and proclivities might have different assumptions and expectations about various issues, including how their teams should operate. As diverse viewpoints are omnipresent, it is important to understand how to achieve a high level of integrative complexity in such situations. Integrative complexity adds to information elaboration in highlighting not only the extent to which diverse information was shared during a specific task but also the extent to which potentially conflicting preferences regarding how team members should work together could be integrated into a shared approach to teamwork. While diversity beliefs have been shown to be important to the successful integration of task-specific information, this study highlights their relevance to a construct such as team integrative complexity, which is team-specific and can have implications for the team's prospective performance. This is important as a promotion-oriented approach to diversity grounded in experience may be especially relevant when faced with the potential tensions and conflict inherent to differences in how teamwork should be conducted (Aggarwal & Woolley, 2019; Pelled et al., 1999; van Knippenberg et al., 2013). As such, our focus on how differences in values and perspectives within teams can be effectively integrated also contributes to the call to pay greater attention to the deep-level aspects of diversity, such as values and attitudes (Harrison & Klein, 2007; Martins & Sohn, 2022; Triana et al., 2021). Relatedly, we employed an adapted team charter task, which includes controversial statements about teamwork that are intended to trigger opposing values and viewpoints regarding how team members should work together. This approach deviates from previous studies, which used tasks that manipulated different distributions of unique information (Homan et al., 2007). In doing so, we also provide initial empirical support for the emerging theory regarding this type of integrative behavior at the team level (Brodbeck et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2011). Practically, our team charter task presents a way for team members to storm and norm themselves in the team early on, which is something that teams usually take for granted (Mathieu & Rapp, 2009). Specifically, our team charter task, which highlights differences within a team, suggests that early-stage conflict may benefit the team in the long run (Thiel et al., 2019) because it can improve the team's ability to tackle future tasks (Eisenhardt et al., 1997; Rapp et al., 2021). Such a focus is likely to be more effective than the team-building activities commonly seen in organizations that are more lighthearted and similarity-focused or that simply increase the time team members spend together, for example, icebreaker activities (Lacerenza et al., 2018).

In our supplementary analyses, in which we explored the relationships between team information elaboration and team integrative complexity, there did not appear to be notable differences between the two models. However, the findings suggested a stronger effect in the first model, where team information elaboration preceded team integrative complexity rather than the reverse. This result might indicate that these two outcomes are different, as we had initially theorized, but that their development may not be as linear and sequential as expected, as we did not find one serial mediation model to be significantly better than the other. Rather, the two outcomes likely codevelop in a more iterative manner, such that information elaboration begets greater integrative complexity, which paves the way for more effective information elaboration in the future. Furthermore, it also seems likely that the relative order of influence among these two constructs might shift with team tenure: In newly formed teams, initial experiences of information elaboration might be more formative of team integrative complexity than would be the case in more long-running teams, where a well-developed integrative complexity capacity may be a stronger driver of team information elaboration. In our study, which was conducted with newly formed teams, we might expect integrative complexity to still be in the formative stages and therefore feed off information elaboration to a larger extent. This is a theoretical postulation that we cannot test fully with our current design. Therefore, future research using a longitudinal design could explore this more intricate procedural picture to better understand the potentially recursive nature of the relationship between information elaboration and integrative complexity.

The implications of our findings may also extend to other societally relevant phenomena where information is crucial in knowledge acquisition and belief updating. For example, while prior research has established that the credibility of information sources (i.e., expert evidence) can influence belief change in a variety of domains, recent events surrounding COVID-19 and vaccinations suggest that some people are less sensitive to factual scientific information delivered by experts and more convinced by anecdotal evidence obtained from

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peers (Vlasceanu & Coman, 2022). The dominance of anecdotal information in decision-making has also been observed in evidence-based fields such as healthcare (Fagerlin et al., 2005) and climate change (Lewandowsky & Oberauer, 2016), where anecdotes, specifically those that are consistent with the individual's prior experiences and beliefs, can promote the rejection of scientific evidence that is widely accepted by experts. These studies reinforce our idea and findings that personally relevant messages articulated by the individual themselves or proximal actors are more impactful than scientific facts delivered by expert authorities in changing beliefs about diversity and other issues. This finding may inform practitioners and policymakers in designing their interventions.

5.1 | Limitations and suggestions for future research

Although the present study provides constructive evidence of the potential for the antecedents of team members' diversity beliefs and these beliefs' role in driving information elaboration and integrative complexity, some limitations have to be acknowledged. First, our manipulation of regulatory focus involved inducing people to read about or reflect on how to maximize the potential benefits or minimize the potential costs of working in diverse teams. Future research could further examine other framing approaches, for example, by comparing use of the business case for diversity with use of the moral case for diversity. For the other factor manipulated in our study (type of knowledge), an obvious extension for future research would be to examine the effects of other types of personalized knowledge. In our study, we focused on and demonstrated the impact of personal testimony, that is, simply having people reflect on their past diversity experiences. However, there are other ways to make the intervention personally relevant. For example, it would be possible to conduct a field experiment in which people are asked to seek out a new experience where they have to engage in a conversation with someone different from them or, alternatively, to design a behavioral simulation in the laboratory in which a similar interaction occurs. Furthermore, our focus on the role of past experiences in increasing personal learning raises the question of whether fact-based interventions might also benefit from highlighting the personal relevance of the information provided. For instance, organizations may also benefit from promoting diversity beliefs through factual knowledge that uses personally relevant data, such as information that is derived from the organization in question or the team's people analytics. Although it is beyond the scope of our paper, our findings highlight the potential value of exploring which elements of personalization are most impactful.

Broadly speaking, future work should also tease out the influence of the source and content of information. In our manipulation, the factual knowledge took the form of an evidence-based article citing scientific research conducted by an academic expert. An alternative presentation might entail an expert citing their own experiences dealing with diversity (so that the focus would be on their personal experience rather than research evidence) as a way to demonstrate the value of diversity. On the one hand, it is possible that it is more effective when experts use factual evidence because there is congruence between the source (scientific expert) and the content (scientific information). On the other hand, the message might be more convincing if the expert uses anecdotal information, specifically their personal experience, because people might believe in the expert's legitimacy and their ability to filter and present the best and most relevant practices to share with the public.

Another valuable recommendation for future research is to include a different measure of diversity beliefs. In this study, we measured diversity beliefs with a self-report scale administered via a survey. While this approach was suitable for our experiment, a case could be made for the use of a more objective measure of diversity beliefs. Particularly, future research could aim to tap into the implicit elements of diversity beliefs that may operate outside of conscious awareness (Becker & Menges, 2013). It is possible that our manipulations may have different effects on implicit and explicit measures of diversity beliefs. Furthermore, future research could also examine whether implicit and explicit measures of diversity beliefs interact with one another to influence relevant outcomes (Uhlmann et al., 2012).

Lastly, future research should attempt to establish whether the effects of diversity beliefs on important team processes are long-lasting. No studies have yet investigated the relatively enduring effect of diversity beliefs. Our study and one of the few studies that primed diversity beliefs (Homan et al., 2007) assessed the effect of these beliefs on team dynamics within the lab setting. Thus, there is currently little or no data on whether manipulated diversity beliefs have more than a temporary effect on behavior. Such research can build on the growing body of research focusing on a brief intervention that can produce significant benefits for attitudes and behaviors over time (Walton, 2014). Future work might also explore the distinction and potential relationship between information elaboration and integrative complexity and, in doing so, clarify the function of diversity beliefs at these different stages of team development.

5.2 | Conclusion

In conclusion, the increasing interest in diversity beliefs stems from the ever more concrete possibility that they can be managed from an organizational perspective; that is, that managers and organizations can influence team members' beliefs about diversity to reap the benefits that heterogeneity can offer. However, research on the drivers of diversity beliefs is underdeveloped. Our paper found that team diversity beliefs can be cultivated by having teams reappreciate and derive lessons from their past experiences dealing with diverse others. In turn, these pro-diversity beliefs predict team information elaboration and team integrative complexity. The results suggest that this intervention can be used for effective diversity training and will hopefully encourage further research on the ways in which diversity beliefs can be influenced.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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APPENDIX A

Team charter task

Please indicate with numbers how many of your team members rated each statement. For example, two members in "agree" and three members in "disagree." Then, discuss in your team if there is any disagreement in order to find a middle ground. You may start with the statement that causes the most disagreement.

1. It is more important to get the job done than to make the team happy
2. Always give it 100% even if it comes at the expense of your social life
3. Get things done well ahead of schedule
4. Everyone gets an equal say in a decision, no matter their expertise
5. You spend so much time with colleagues—best treat them as friends
6. Only make a decision when there is consensus in the team
7. Take risks, even if that means having a lot to lose
8. Stick with your opinion, even if it does not make you popular
9. One should always be humble, allowing the team to take credit
10. Place others' well-being before your own interest

Based on the above discussion, what are the behavioral rules that will guide your interaction with your team in the future?

How did you and your team solve the disagreements that emerged from the discussions of the statements? Be specific.

APPENDIX B

Manipulations

Promotion focus–personalized knowledge condition

1. Think of one person who was significantly different (e.g., culture, personality, values, or background) from you. Please describe your relationship with that person **in detail**, mentioning in which ways this person was different from you. Do not only name the difference but also how the difference contributed to your relationship.
2. Describe **one thing** you learned from interacting with this person and how you can use this for future interactions. Please be as elaborate as you can.
3. Discuss the insights in your group.

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Prevention focus–personalized knowledge condition

1. Think of one person who was different from you in some way (e.g., culture, personality, values, or background). Please describe your relationship with that person **in detail**, mentioning one way in which this person was different from you. Do not only name the difference but also how the difference affected your relationship.
2. Describe **the difficulties** you had in interacting with this person and how you can **avoid similar challenges** in the future. Please be as elaborate as you can.
3. Discuss the insights in your group.

Promotion focus–factual knowledge condition

Team diversity and performance

We encounter diversity in our everyday lives, and it gets more and more common for organizations to work with diverse teams. Some studies have shown that more diversity can lead to increased performance in a team, so how can you make sure you get the most out of your team?

By William Anas,
December 10, 2019



To be successful in the organization, working well as a team is a must. Here we focus on diversity in teams that refers to teams being composed of people with different values and perspectives, which could come from their different life experiences and background.

Diverse teams are believed to outperform homogenous teams in terms of productivity and performance. While diversity in teams could be a challenge because of the opposing views and perspectives that different people bring, those differences more often cause teams to do better because people from all walks of life come together to share new ideas.

So…Can diversity be beneficial?

Well, the potential benefits of diversity are more likely to outweigh the costs. Research by Professor John Davis and colleagues showed that if managed well, workplace diversity can generate a huge boost in organizational productivity. Even if different members of the group will have a conflict of perspectives, by discussing and integrating these perspectives, team members will be able to generate a fusion of novel solutions.

For example, Professor Davis's research finds that differences in attitudes towards risk-taking can significantly increase the success of the team project. Some people are willing to take more risks than others. Those are the ones who push the team to try new things, to experiment, and not rule out anything until it blew up in their hands. Others are very careful and assure that the final product is safe for the team's objective. Such differences within the team resulted in the initial more out-of-the-box, ground-breaking ideas, and later an optimal solution that ensure a suitable product ready for delivery. In the end, the different strengths among team members resulted in better performance in the project for such a team.

How to facilitate benefits created by the diversity of perspectives?

How should a diverse team be managed in order to increase the productivity and creativity of in teams? Research from Professor Davis suggests a few practical tips to promote the positive outcomes of diversity:

- If you are a part of a diverse team, freely express your ideas and make sure that your teammates are comfortable to do so as well
- Foster an open culture of communication and encourage constructive criticism: do not take the initial consensus as a final answer;
- Focus on the strengths and talents of your fellow team members and think on how you can combine them to achieve your goals;
- Facilitate open communication and trustworthy relationships with your team.

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Prevention focus–factual knowledge condition

Team diversity and performance

We encounter diversity in our everyday lives, and it gets more and more common for people in organizations to work with diverse teams. However, some studies have shown that more diversity often means more conflict in a team, so how can you effectively prevent team conflict?

By William Anas,
December 10, 2019



To be successful in the organization, working well as a team is a must. Here we focus on diversity in teams that refers to teams being composed of people with different values and perspectives, which could come from their different life experiences and background.

We should admit that when people with different perspectives working together, finding a common platform can be a challenge. While diversity in teams could be a strength because of all the views and perspectives that different people bring, those differences more often cause gaps, frustrations, and conflict.

So…Can diversity be harmful?

Well, the potential benefits are most likely to be outweighed by the costs. Research by Professor John Davis and colleagues showed that if not managed well, team diversity can lead to a productivity disaster. So, the notion that increased diversity automatically results in higher performance has some real potential dangers. Instead, if not managed correctly, diversity is more likely to cause problems, including team members' dissatisfaction, counterproductive behavior, a lack of innovation, and reduced performance.

For example, Professor Davis's research finds that differences in attitudes towards work-life balance can completely sabotage the team project. Someone with an attitude that values "work over pleasure" would be happy to work late into the night or the weekend; and, always is reachable by their work colleagues. These people would be frustrated to work with a team member who values more work-life balance and refuses to work or be on call beyond appropriate office hours. Such differences resulted in clashes over when and how long the team would work on the task together on a given day. In the end, the arguments and frustrations among team members resulted in poor performance in the project for such a team.

How to prevent conflicts caused by the diversity of values and perspectives?

How to overcome these challenges and minimize the possibilities of the team conflict occurring? Research from Professor Davis suggests a few practical tips to prevent the negative outcomes of diversity:

- If you are a part of a diverse team, try to follow the line of being polite and preserve the peace within the team;
- Be careful of what your team members might deem problematic: consider the personal differences, and try to avoid ''heated'' topics;
- Be careful not to get stuck in your judgements and do not automatically think someone has a bad intention;
- Be aware that mistrust can breakdown communication and communication is essential.

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APPENDIX C

Coding scheme for integrative complexity

Score	Critical indicator	Content flags	Example
0 No integration	No change in the statement	-	-
1 Low integration	Only one way of looking at the world or takes a dominant position to one extreme	Absolutely, all, always, certainly, definitely, impossible, unconditionally, never, certainly, should	*Everyone gets an equal voice no matter their expertise.*
2 Low-moderate integration	An indication of the potential for different perspectives/dimensions (or conditional acceptance thereof)	-However, if, nevertheless, but, probably, almost, usually	*Work should come before pleasure if there's an impending deadline.*
3 Moderate integration	Recognition of alternative perspectives/dimensions as relevant or legitimate	-Meanwhile, on the other hand, alternatively, either-or	*Maximize utility while getting the job done.*
4 Moderate-high integration	Multiple perspectives/dimensions exist and they can interact	-Recognition of tension -Propose new ways of doing things at the behavioral level	*Trust people to ask for help. And, in addition, be observant and offer to help if you see they need it.*
5 High integration	Alternative perspectives/dimensions are legitimate, considered simultaneously and used to produce a result that neither of the perspectives could have produced on its own	-Formulate new ways of seeing the problem (at a mindset/perspective/principle level). -Change relationships between variables	*Expertise matters, but it is necessary to incorporate a diversity of perspectives.*
6 Very high integration	Working across multiple levels of "schemata"	-Redefining the meaning of the issue at hand -Compare outcomes with regard to long-term implications	*This is a safe space to give feedback to get better at things. We trust the feedback is coming from a positive place.*

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