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Minority status, access to information, and individual performance

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Abstract

With growing nationality diversity in organizations, the question under which circumstances differences in nationality background between team members affect individual performance increases in importance. Research showed that dissimilarity may negatively affect individual performance and that the status difference between nationality majority and nationality minority moderates this effect. We take this analysis an important step further by recognizing that not all nationality minorities are low status and propose that status differences among nationality minority groups influence the extent to which nationality minority background affects individual performance. We identify the elaboration of distributed information in the team as a mediator and process accountability as a moderator in this effect. Results of a multilevel team experiment in which we manipulated team nationality composition and process accountability supported our hypotheses, testifying to the value of status-based distinctions between minority groups in the study of relational demography effects. The mediating role of the elaboration of distributed information also provides an important bridge to team diversity research inviting further conceptual integration.

KEYWORDS
accountability, diversity, nationality, relational demography, status, team

1 | INTRODUCTION

Demographic diversity is increasing in organizations (Jackson & Joshi, 2010), and with growing globalization, especially differences in nationality demand attention in this respect. Nationality dissimilarity encompasses differences in cultural background, and to some degree ethnicity, and compared to other types of demographic dissimilarity, nationality dissimilarity has high potential to affect individual performance because such differences typically represent the most salient dissimilarity in organizations (cf. Riordan, 2000). Because of its salience, nationality dissimilarity may relatively easily invite intergroup biases (van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Tajfel &

Turner, 1986) that negatively affect the performance of individuals that are dissimilar to their team (Guillaume et al., 2012).

Research on relational demography (demographic dissimilarity) showed how nationality dissimilarity affects individuals' work-related outcomes such as individual performance (Guillaume et al., 2012). Whereas this research is valuable, it is also noteworthy that research in relational demography has by and large neglected the team interaction processes that drive the influence of demographic dissimilarity on such individual outcomes (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004; Guillaume et al., 2012). Team diversity research, in contrast, has a strong focus on team interaction processes and how these affect team performance (van Knippenberg et al., 2004), including the effects of nationality diversity (for reviews, see Guillaume et al., 2017;

van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). This research identified team information elaboration—the exchange, discussion, and integration of distributed information (van Knippenberg et al., 2004)—as the key team process underlying the performance effects of diversity, both because team performance benefits from the integration of diverse insights and because diversity can invite interpersonal tensions that disrupt information elaboration (van Knippenberg & Mell, 2016). Importantly, however, this team process perspective has not been extended to capture the influence of individual dissimilarity or effects on individual performance or other individual-level outcomes.

The insight that team diversity may disrupt team information elaboration and team performance, and that individual demographic dissimilarity may be associated with lower performance begs the question of how these team-level and individual-level streams of research may be integrated. Relational demography has so far not been empirically linked to the possibility to benefit from distributed information in diverse teams (George & Chattopadhyay, 2008). Bridging relational demography research and team diversity research through a focus on the role of distributed information would be an important step toward the integration of these fields of research. A focus on nationality dissimilarity is particularly useful in this respect because of its growing prevalence as well as its salience in inviting responses to dissimilarity. The focus of the current study, therefore, is on how nationality dissimilarity affects access to the team's distributed information—as reflected in individual-level differences in information elaboration—and thus individual performance. Our study thus contributes to both the relational demography and the team diversity literature by making a step toward their integration.

In developing our analysis, we work from the observation that nationality dissimilarity is associated with status differences. In most countries, and particularly in Western countries, the country's nationality is not only the majority group within the country, but also the higher status group, with nationality minority groups holding lower status. Relational demography research has shown that such status differences are important. We extend this research by recognizing that even when the nationality majority is the higher status group, not all nationality minorities have equally low status—some nationality minorities have higher status than others. This recognition is unique to both relational demography research and team diversity research and enriches our analysis and its contribution.

Research on relational demography showed that the status associated with one's nationality moderates the effects of nationality dissimilarity on work-related outcomes (Guillaume et al., 2014) and established similar effects for within-country cultural dissimilarity (Tsui et al., 1992). Whether the dissimilar individual in question is a member of the nationality majority or a nationality minority affects the outcomes of the dissimilar individual because of the status differences associated with nationality majority (high status) and nationality minority (low status) (Guillaume et al., 2014; cf. Tsui et al., 1992).

Following the definition of majority and minority, however, nationality minority members are more likely to find themselves in a dissimilar position within a team than nationality majority members, and the primary concern thus is with understanding how nationality dissimilarity affects individuals with a nationality minority background.

Addressing this issue, we extend earlier research by shifting the focus from the comparison of minority and majority group members to the comparison of members of different minority groups, recognizing that there are not only status differences between majority and minority but also between different minority groups (Charles, 2006). The overarching principle here is that the attributes of the high-status majority group form a reference point against which minority groups are judged: the more similar a minority group is to the high-status majority, the higher its status—and conversely, the more dissimilar the minority group is to the majority, the lower its status—because similarity to the high-status group captures how much the group is perceived to possess status-inducing attributes (Charles, 2006; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Turner et al., 1987). For example, in the US, Mexicans have lower status than Canadians, and this can be understood from the perspective that Canadians are seen as more similar to Americans than Mexicans are.

We propose that such status differences impact the performance of nationality minority members in nationality dissimilar positions. Status is important in this respect because people are less inclined to identify, collaborate, and share information with low-status than with high-status people (Berger et al., 1985; Chattopadhyay, Tluchowska, et al., 2004; George & Chattopadhyay, 2008). We argue that one of the consequences of this is particularly performance-relevant in team contexts: lower willingness to collaborate and share information leads to reduced access to distributed information—information for which one is depended on others in the team context. Because individuals are increasingly engaged in knowledge work or at least perform work that increasingly has knowledge of work components—individuals increasingly rely on their team as a source of information. As a result, individual performance benefits from being able to engage others in discussions that give one access to distributed information (Burt, 2004; Hirst et al., 2015; Richter et al., 2012; Rodan & Galunic, 2004). We propose that low-status nationality minority members in a nationally dissimilar position within their team tend to have less access to distributed information (as reflected in the extent to which they engage in information elaboration with team members of their team) than nationality majority members and high-status nationality minority members, and as a consequence tend to show worse performance.

At the basis of these adverse effects lies social categorization—perceiving a person in terms of social category membership and associated stereotypes and status connotations. We develop the present analysis further to propose that situational factors that stimulate team members to consider their actions more carefully and thus to look beyond category-based perceptions (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990), moderate the effect of minority group status. We identify the extent to which team members can be held accountable for work processes (specifically, a situation in which interactions between team members are monitored by a third party such as managers or clients) as an important situational factor in this respect. Such process

accountability is associated with a greater concern with judgment accuracy, more careful information processing, and greater awareness of how one performs one's tasks (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Scholten et al., 2007). Process accountability thus shapes team interactions and alleviates the negative effects of low nationality minority status. As a result of this focus on accurate judgment and process, members of teams diverse in nationality can be expected to display less intergroup bias (cf. Kearney et al., 2009; Nederveen Pieterse et al., 2013). Accordingly, we expected process accountability to attenuate the effects of nationality status on access to distributed information and performance. Our research model is summarized in Figure 1. We put these hypotheses to the test in a multilevel team experiment manipulating team composition and process accountability.

2 | THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 | Nationality dissimilarity and nationality status

Nationality cannot be equated to cultural background or ethnicity, but the three covary and cultural and ethnic differences can be understood to give subjective meaning to nationality dissimilarity (Turner et al., 1987). This has two important implications. First, in reviewing evidence in relational demography research we may not just draw on studies of nationality dissimilarity but also on studies of cultural and ethnic dissimilarity that can be seen as speaking to highly overlapping issues. Second, we need to realize that nationality is intertwined with culture and ethnicity, and nationalities that are perceived to be more different will be perceived to be so in substantial part because of cultural and ethnic differences. This not an issue of "confounding" study variables, but a reality in studying demographic variables (cf. gender dissimilarity, which does not just capture physical differences but also differences that in many ways can be called cultural; Ely & Thomas, 2001); culture and ethnicity often lie at the historic roots of nationality, and national boundaries have allowed cultural differences to evolve. In a very real sense, there is no nationality without these covarying differences, and it is a dead-end to attempt to isolate the influence of nationality dissimilarity from dissimilarity on these other counts.

A core thesis underlying our analysis is that nationality differences exert their influence because they are associated with status differences. This is not to reduce nationality differences to status differences, but to argue that an understanding in terms of status differences allows for a focused and parsimonious account of the effects of nationality dissimilarity. Because nationality and the

associated cultural and ethnic background tend to be such a salient demographic attribute (Riordan, 2000), nationality differences may invite social categorization-based perceptions; perceptions that are rooted in stereotypes about nationality groups rather than in more person-specific information about the individual (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). Such stereotypes often reflect intergroup bias, an evaluation favoring the own group over the other group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). As a result, perceptions based on nationality stereotypes often lead to more favorable perceptions of individuals who are similar (as opposed to dissimilar) in their nationality. This notion of biases rooted in nationality (or more generally demographic) dissimilarity is a cornerstone of research in relational demography, the study of the effects of demographic dissimilarity at work. Research in relational demography suggests that such biases are important because they make individuals form more negative impressions of dissimilar colleagues (Flynn et al., 2001). They render people less willing to interact (Chatman et al., 1998), integrate (O'Reilly et al., 1989), and collaborate (Chatman & Flynn, 2001) with dissimilar others, and thus create a situation in which individuals face greater challenges functioning effectively the more dissimilar they are to their fellow team members in terms of their nationality (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004; Guillaume et al., 2012).

Based on the notion of a bias in favor of members of the own demographic group, empirical research in relational demography has documented how nationality dissimilarity and cultural/ethnic dissimilarity are associated with such undesirable outcomes as shorter tenure and less likelihood for promotion (Zhu et al., 2014), lower psychological attachment (Tsui et al., 1992), less citizenship behavior (Chattopadhyay, 1999), lower performance (Brodbeck et al., 2011; Guillaume et al., 2014), and lower salary (Joshi et al., 2006) (also see the meta-analysis by Guillaume et al., 2012).

Research in relational demography also shows that the effects of nationality dissimilarity are not independent of one's nationality background. This research identifies an important role for whether one is a member of the nationality majority or of a nationality minority, such that the negative outcomes of being dissimilar are more pronounced for nationality majority members than for nationality minority members (Guillaume et al., 2014; cf. Tsui et al., 1992). This can be explained by taking the status associated with different majority and minority nationality into account. By virtue of their dominant position in society, the nationality majority generally has higher status than nationality minority groups (cf. Chattopadhyay, Tluchowska, et al., 2004; Khattab et al., 2020). For example, in China, Han Chinese people have higher status than Uyghurs; in India, Indo-Aryan people have higher status than

FIGURE 1 Research model with the interaction between nationality status and process accountability, the mediating process elaboration of distributed information, and the outcome variable individual performance
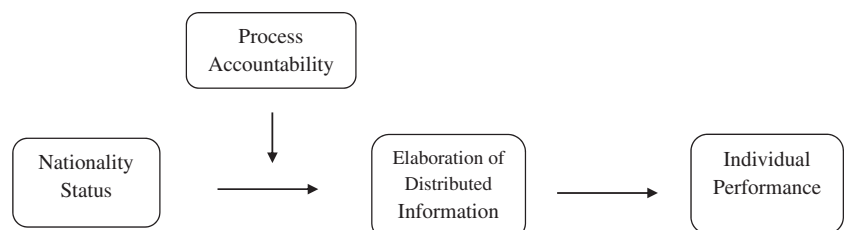
people who belong to various indigenous tribes in the region; in the Netherlands, Caucasians have higher status than non-Caucasian minority groups such as Surinamese, Antillian, and Chinese. It is not universally the case that nationality majority is always the highest status group—Caucasians in countries with a colonial history for instance seem to enjoy relatively high or even higher status even when the local nationality is non-Caucasian—at least in Western countries, it seems to hold as a rule that the nationality majority is also the highest-status nationality. In these contexts, for a nationality majority member (i.e., societal majority) being nationality dissimilar to the team means being in a team of mostly lower-status others (i.e., nationality minority members). In contrast, for nationality minority members, being nationally dissimilar to the team would typically mean being surrounded by mostly higher-status others. Group status is also shaped by the status of its members, and higher-status groups are more attractive targets of identification because group status reflects on the self through social identification (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Nationality dissimilarity may thus discourage identification and engagement with the group for (high-status) nationality majority members more than for (low-status) nationality minority members.

This perspective on majority and minority reactions to nationality dissimilarity explains the greater disengagement of the majority than of minority members in response to nationality dissimilarity (cf. Tsui et al., 1992). It does not tell us, however, how members of different nationality minorities function in a team with predominantly nationality majority members (i.e., the notion of team status differences as a function of team nationality composition does not apply here). Arguably, however, the contrast between majority and minority members in positions of nationality dissimilarity partly concerns situations with low frequency of occurrence—members of a society's nationality majority in a nationality dissimilar position. In most organizations, the nationality majority is also the majority in the work context. Because nationality minorities find themselves in a numerical minority position at work more often than nationality majorities, it is particularly relevant to consider how members of different nationality minorities respond to nationality dissimilarity.

2.2 | Nationality minority status and performance in the face of cultural dissimilarity

Relational demography research on nationality dissimilarity focused on a comparison between the nationality majority and nationality minority groups; it did not take into account that nationality minorities differ in societal status. A mechanism explaining differences in status between minority groups is provided by the in-group projection model (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999), which posits that a society's nationality majority sees its own characteristics as the standard to judge other groups. Because of intergroup biases favoring own group, greater similarity to the majority group results in higher social status, and more culturally dissimilar groups are accorded lower status. That is, the cultural distance of nationality minority groups

to the nationality majority group is a strong indicator of the status of nationality minority groups, at least in the Western world (Charles, 2006; Emerson et al., 2001; Verkuyten et al., 1996). Our point here is not to deny the complexity of nationality differences, but rather to argue that the status differences associated with nationality differences offer a parsimonious way to understand the effects of nationality dissimilarity.

In the Western world, the level of dissimilarity to the majority probably is the most important determinant of nationality status for minorities. Because greater cultural dissimilarity and lower status go hand in hand (Charles, 2006; Emerson et al., 2001; Verkuyten et al., 1996), low-status nationality minorities may invite stronger social categorization effects than high-status nationality minorities. Indeed, it is such covariation between cultural dissimilarity and nationality that renders social categorization and associated stereotypes subjectively meaningful and a basis for attitudes and behavior (Turner et al., 1987). Integral to status judgments in the work context is that higher status is associated with greater competence (Berger et al., 1980). Social categorization processes and the associations with competence, in particular, may thus invite stronger biases discouraging collaboration with individuals with a low-status minority background than with individuals with a high-status minority background.

This is not to say that similarity always invites more cooperation. Sometimes greater similarity may mean that individuals have more reason to see each other as competitors for scarce resources, such as in Reagans' (2005) study showing that tenure similarity put individuals in competition for promotions within their company, and Chattopadhyay et al. (2010) theoretical analysis outlining how professional similarity may invite more competition than professional dissimilarity. What these examples of an alternative perspective have in common, is that they concern job-based similarity (i.e., tenure, profession) for which implicit and explicit incentive structures at work may incentivize greater competition among more similar individuals (e.g., competing for scarce promotions). Demographic (dis)similarity, in contrast, can be expected to aligns less with such job-based incentives and to be more strongly associated with the social identity and status dynamics we highlight here. In advancing the argument that nationality dissimilarity reduces cooperation, we thus do not negate this alternative perspective but rather recognize that it concerns job-based similarity and not demographic (dis)similarity.

In the previous, we noted that team diversity research has put the emphasis on job tasks with knowledge work attributes (e.g., decision making, nonroutine problem-solving, creativity, and innovation), because this is where the potential benefits of team diversity may be observed when teams engage in information elaboration—and where team diversity may disrupt team performance by disrupting information elaboration (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). The focus on knowledge work is also particularly relevant in that an increasing number of jobs have shifted more to knowledge work over the years (cf. the notion of the "knowledge economy"). This is not to say that the value of information elaboration is limited to knowledge work; it is only to note that in knowledge work this value is most clearly observed.

We, therefore, also situate our analysis in a knowledge work context. One particularly relevant behavioral expression of social categorization processes in the context of knowledge work is access to distributed information. A key aspect of knowledge work is the reliance on others for information (i.e., distributed information refers to information for which one is dependent on others in the work context; Stasser & Titus, 1985). Access to distributed information has an important influence on performance, decision quality, and creativity and innovation (Burt, 2004; van Knippenberg, 2017; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Richter et al., 2012; Rodan & Galunic, 2004).

Research in distributed information established that sharing distributed information in and of itself is only part of the story; distributed information is often ignored in task performance even when it is shared (Scholten et al., 2007; Winquist & Larson, 1998). It is important that distributed information is not only shared, but also discussed and integrated with other task-relevant information (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Discussion and integration of distributed information have been shown to be more predictive of performance than information sharing in and of itself (van Ginkel & van Knippenberg, 2008; Hoever et al., 2012). We, therefore, understand access to distributed information to involve more than just information sharing, but to be captured by information elaboration—the exchange, discussion, and integration of distributed information (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Note that for distributed information, exchange, discussion, and integration are definitionally intertwined; one can only discuss and integrate what is shared, and discussion would be the basis for integration.

In contrast to earlier work that conceptualizes the elaboration of distributed information as a team-level concept and as a predictor of team performance (van Knippenberg et al., 2004), we focus on an individual-level extension of the concept in the recognition of the fact that individuals in teams may differ in the extent to which they are involved in the elaboration of distributed information. That is, some members may exchange, discuss, and integrate more distributed information than others. As a consequence, individual performance may differ as a function of these different levels of access to distributed information.

As George and Chattopadhyay (2008) note in their conceptual analysis, intergroup biases inspired by nationality dissimilarity discourage nationality majority members from sharing information with others who are dissimilar in nationality. We propose that this tendency to withhold access to distributed information from others who are dissimilar in terms of their nationalities will hold more strongly in interaction with low-status minority members than in interaction with high-status minority members, because of the stronger stereotyping and intergroup biases against members of nationality groups with lower status. In addition, people who have low status are often aware of the prejudice directed toward them and this may invite them to disengage from the task at hand and put in less effort (Major & O'Brien, 2005). This would include less actively pursuing distributed information, thus contributing to lower elaboration of distributed information for low-status minority members than for high-status minority members.

Our analysis implies an asymmetry in the elaboration of distributed information as a function of nationality status. Working together in the same team, individuals with a low-status nationality background as well as individuals with a high-status nationality background are more inclined to identify with those with a high-status nationality background rather than those with a low-status nationality background (Chattopadhyay, George, et al., 2004). Therefore, both parties are more likely to share distributed information with individuals with a high-status nationality background than those with a low-status nationality background (George & Chattopadhyay, 2008). That is, even when low-status individuals working with high-status individuals may suffer in their access to distributed information, high-status members do not similarly suffer from working with low-status members. Because the elaboration of distributed information is an important driver of performance in knowledge work, we propose that these information access asymmetries translate into performance differences (cf. evidence that in teams with distributed information, information elaboration drives performance; van Ginkel & van Knippenberg, 2008, 2009, 2012).

Hypothesis 1 *Low-status nationality minority members engage in the less elaboration of distributed information than nationality majority and high-status nationality minority members.*

Hypothesis 2 *Low-status nationality minority members perform worse than nationality majority and high-status minority members.*

Hypothesis 3 *Elaboration of distributed information mediates the performance difference between low-status nationality minority members and nationality majority and high-status minority members.*

2.3 | Process accountability and nationality status effects

Intergroup biases inspired by nationality dissimilarity in teams are not inevitable (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Factors that invite more careful consideration of one's perceptions, attitudes, and actions may reduce such biases (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Kearney et al., 2009; Nederveen Pieterse et al., 2013). We develop our analysis of the effects of nationality minority status on individuals' access to distributed information and performance by proposing the moderating role of one instance of such a bias-reducing factor: process accountability.

A well-supported perspective in research in social information processing is that individuals differ in their epistemic motivation, their motivation to form accurate judgments, and carefully consider their decisions and actions (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). The motivated information processing in groups model (De Dreu et al., 2008) outlines how these notions of epistemic motivation driving in-depth information processing also apply to group knowledge work (cf. van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Scholten et al., 2007). Epistemic motivation may depend on not only individual

traits but also circumstances (De Dreu et al., 2008; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). One of these circumstances is process accountability, the sense that one is held accountable for the process used to arrive at an outcome (e.g., a decision, task performance; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Tetlock, 1992). Process accountability is a particularly relevant influence to consider because workplaces and jobs differ in the extent to which the way people perform their job is monitored by others such as managers or clients that may hold one accountable for one's work.

We propose that process accountability affects the extent to which individuals let their responses to nationality dissimilarity be stereotype-driven. Stereotype-based perceptions reflect low cognitive effort in forming an accurate impression of someone (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). Epistemic motivation invites greater effort in forming judgments and thus also reduces the reliance on stereotypes and group-based biases (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Petty et al., 2009; Pierro et al., 2005). By inviting more careful consideration of the job at hand and the people they work with, process accountability would thus reduce stereotype-based biases. An additional reason to expect this is that in more carefully considering their actions, people may realize that acting on stereotypes and prejudice is not socially acceptable (Crandall et al., 2002; Evans et al., 2003). Evidence suggest that people do not want to be perceived as prejudiced (Carver et al., 1978; Crosby et al., 1980), and more careful consideration of actions inspired by process accountability thus may also consciously discourage acting on stereotypes and prejudice. When people consider their actions more carefully and use individuating information, they become more attentive to the needs of their fellow team members (LePine et al., 2008; Marks & Panzer, 2004), which may also concern informational needs that invite information integration.

We propose that the social categorization-reducing influence of process accountability more strongly affects those individuals whose performance is most compromised by stereotyping and intergroup biases: low-status nationality minority individuals. As per the analysis we presented earlier, social categorization processes that can lead to reduced information elaboration and performance can be expected to play out stronger for individuals with a low-status nationality minority background than for individuals with a nationality majority or high-status nationality minority background. Accordingly, when team members consider their perceptions, attitudes, and actions more carefully under higher process accountability, this categorization-reducing influence should be more beneficial for low-status nationality minorities. Elaboration of distributed information under higher process accountability should thus improve more for low-status minority members with no or negligible effects for high-status minority and majority members, who are less prone to suffer from categorization-based reduced access to distributed information under low process accountability. As we argued in the previous section, better elaboration of distributed information should result in better performance.

Hypothesis 4 *The relationship between nationality status and elaboration of distributed information is moderated by process accountability such that low-status nationality minorities have less access to distributed information than nationality majorities and high-status nationality minorities under low process accountability, whereas this effect is reduced under high process accountability.*

Hypothesis 5 *The relationship between nationality status and performance is moderated by process accountability such that low-status nationality minorities perform worse than nationality majorities and high-status nationality minorities under low process accountability, whereas this effect is reduced under high process accountability.*

Hypothesis 6 *Elaboration of distributed information mediates the interaction effect of nationality status and process accountability on performance.*

3 | METHOD

For two reasons, we tested our hypotheses in an experiment. First, it allowed us to draw conclusions about causality that are critical to strong theory tests. Second, field research is not well-suited to distinguish the discussion of distributed information from the discussion of information already known to all (i.e., because people remain unaware of distributed information when it is not shared and thus cannot report about information not being shared). An experimental set-up is uniquely suited to assess the integration of distributed information with high validity because the distribution of information is under experimental control and its processing can be assessed through behavioral coding rather than through subjective and retrospective ratings (van Ginkel & van Knippenberg, 2008; Stasser & Titus, 1985).

3.1 | Pilot study

In the main study, we manipulated team nationality composition such that a high-status nationality majority of two worked with either a low-status or a high-status nationality minority member. For practical purposes—team experiments can only be viably conducted with designs of modest size—this set-up thus induced fixed values of nationality dissimilarity. This is not to deny to the continuous nature that the dissimilarity variable in principle has, but simply to be able to arrive at a viable set-up—and note that the focus is on the comparison of low-status versus high-status minority group members in nationality dissimilar positions, not on the effect of varying levels of nationality dissimilarity.

The group composition manipulation was based on status differences associated with nationality background. We, therefore, deemed it important to establish in a pilot study that the nationalities we based our design on were perceived to differ in status as we expected. The study was conducted in the Netherlands, and our focus was on the Dutch as the nationality majority. From the Dutch

perspective, Germans are an obvious high-status minority group, because the cultural distance between Germans and Dutch is small (Chhokar et al., 2007). Following the same analysis, we focused on the considerably more culturally distant Chinese as a low-status minority group. Questions about the status of Germans and Chinese were embedded in a survey assessing judgment of four nationality minority groups (German, Chinese, Moroccan, and Turkish; the latter two added as fillers) as well as judgments of the broader categories of Western European and East Asian (to cross-validate the more general principle of cultural distance and status perceptions).

Forty-five Dutch students (27 women, 17 men, 1 unknown, $M_{age} = 22.51$ years, $SD_{age} = 1.87$ years) participated in the study in exchange for a chocolate bar. We used the definition of Anderson and his colleagues in order to operationalize status (Anderson et al., 2006). Status is defined as the extent to which a person is highly regarded by others because of his/her characteristics such as pleasantness, success, and intelligence. Participants rated each group's status on a 10-item measure with 7-point response scales. We combined items from two different scales that are frequently used to assess status perceptions but that only had subsets of items relevant to the work context with additional items generated for this study for a longer and thus more reliable measure. We took the two items from the social distance scale (Bogardus, 1933; Verkuyten et al., 1996) that were suitable to work contexts (e.g., "To work together with someone of (group x) seems to me very pleasant/very unpleasant."), three items from the socio-cognitive dimensions of interpersonal judgments (Fiske et al., 2007) that assessed status judgments relevant to the work context (e.g., "I found (group x) people very unintelligent/ very intelligent"), and five items that were about the status in the work-place such as "To what extent do you think that (group x) people can make successful business decisions?" Participant responded to scale for each of the six target groups. The reliability of the scales was high: Chinese $\alpha = 0.83$, Moroccan $\alpha = 0.94$, Turkish $\alpha = 0.94$, German $\alpha = 0.90$, Western European $\alpha = 0.93$, and East Asian $\alpha = 0.87$.

We performed a repeated measures general linear model (GLM) with as within-factor the status scores of Chinese, Moroccan, Turkish, German, Western European, and East Asian groups. The status scores of the minority groups were significantly different from each other, $F(5, 40) = 14.54$, $p < .001$; Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.36$, $\eta^2 = 0.65$. Post hoc analyses with an LSD procedure revealed that Germans ($M = 5.21$, $SD = 0.82$) had higher status than Chinese people ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 0.83$, $p < .001$), confirming our theory-based inference about their status in the Netherlands. We, therefore, concluded that a team composition manipulation in terms of a German versus a Chinese minority group member constituted a valid operationalization of minority group status.

3.2 | Participants and design

One hundred and eighty Dutch, German, and Chinese students (72 women, 108 men, $M_{age} = 20.63$ years, $SD_{age} = 2.62$ years)

participated in the study. Participant selection was based on nationality and not on ethnicity, but all Dutch and German participants were ethnically Caucasian and all Chinese participants ethnically Chinese. Participants were assigned to three-person teams. All teams were same-sex and consisted of two members with a nationality majority (Dutch) background and one member with a nationality minority background—either low-status (Chinese) or high-status (German). We had to remove nine teams from the analyses because a team member indicated during the experiment that he or she had a different nationality background than they stated earlier. The study was conducted in English (all students were admitted to the program based on language proficiency). The study had a multilevel design in that individuals were nested in teams and process accountability was a team-level manipulation (teams were randomly assigned to conditions), whereas individuals' nationality status (majority, high-status minority, or low-status minority), the mediating variable access to distributed information, and the outcome variable performance were analyzed at the individual level.

3.3 | Manipulations

3.3.1 | Nationality minority status

Variations in nationality minority status were induced by composing three-person teams such that two Dutch majority members were paired with either a Chinese (low-status) minority member or a German (high-status) minority member. Because acting on nationality background assumes the awareness of nationality background, we asked members to introduce themselves by telling their names and nationality. Our questioning of participants at the end of the experiment suggested that this did not invite hypothesis guessing.

3.3.2 | Process accountability

In the high process accountability condition, a Dutch male confederate joined the session (i.e., present in addition to the team of three, but not part of the team) and was introduced as an expert on team processes. We told participants that he would observe how they behaved in interaction with their fellow team members and that he might ask questions about this at the end of the study (cf. Tetlock, 1992). The confederate then proceeded to observe the team during its interaction. In the low process accountability condition, no observer was present.

3.4 | Distributed information task

To create a setting with distributed information in which team members are responsible for their individual performance, we adapted the distributed information paradigm (Stasser & Titus, 1985). The original paradigm is a team decision-making paradigm and we

adapted the task to individual decision making that would rely on access to distributed information. We based our task on work by Hoever and colleagues (Hoever et al., 2012, 2018). In our task, there were six issues to address. Each member was responsible for two of these six issues. Issue-relevant information was distributed such that each member depended on the other two members for some of the information relevant to their assigned issues.

Participants received a package describing the task and decision-relevant information. They were instructed that a city theater planned to display musicals and that they were assigned to a three-person team to make a number of decisions in this respect: Which musicals they were going to show, how much they were going to charge for the tickets, which theater groups they were going to contract, how many performances they would show on weekdays and on the weekend, how they were going to sell the tickets, and which advertisement strategies they would adopt. Each member was assigned two issues for individual decision making. These issues were counter-balanced between nationality backgrounds so that there is no relationship between nationality background and the issues assigned to individuals.

Part of the decision-relevant information was given to all members. Part of the information, however, was distributed across team members such that each member uniquely held some information only known to him or her. The information was distributed such that for optimal decision making, each team member needed information uniquely held by the two other team members. For each decision issue, each of the two other members uniquely held one piece of decision-relevant information. Thus, each member could receive a maximum of four new pieces of information from the other members (two new pieces of information from each), and for optimal decision making on an issue, they needed information from both other members.

For instance, one member had to choose two advertisement strategies out of four (radio, TV, newspaper, and direct mail of flyers). From his/her information handout, it could be concluded that TV and radio advertisements were the most effective strategies, and direct mail of flyers was more effective than newspaper advertisement. However, one of the other team members had additional information that radio advertisement was only possible after August because all the time slots before that date were sold out. This was particularly relevant information, because members were informed that the musicals would be shown in July. In addition, the other team member held the information that TV advertisements would be too costly and if they used this option, they would not have enough budget for the advertisements of any other show, resulting in a financial loss. As a result, if the member faced with this decision would not receive any information from the other team members, he/she would likely make the wrong decision. If he/she would get information from one of the team members, he/she would be inclined to pick one correct and one wrong strategy. And if he/she would receive information from both team members, he/she would presumably select two correct strategies. The decision-making task thus had the characteristics of a so-called "hidden profile" task in which distributed information would point to another decision than shared information, but at the individual level rather than at the team level. To confirm that the implications of the full package of information were clear, we ran an informal pilot study in which we handed out the task with full information to a number of graduate students who were all able to identify the best decisions based on the full set of information.

3.5 | Measures

3.5.1 | Elaboration of distributed information

Two independent judges coded the elaboration of distributed information from audio-video records of the team discussion (Cohen's Kappa for the inter-rater agreement was 0.78, and the mean correlation coefficient for the inter-rater agreement was 0.94). The coding scheme was based on van Ginkel and van Knippenberg's (2008) coding, which relies on behavioral anchors to classify the extent to which distributed information is shared, discussed, and integrated on a scale from 1 to 5. Note that these are definitionally intertwined elements of information elaboration that cannot be separated. The essence of information elaboration is the integration of distributed information. This is only possible when this information is exchanged, and discussion is the means for individuals to collaboratively integrate information (van Ginkel & van Knippenberg, 2008; Hoever et al., 2012; van Knippenberg et al., 2004).

By coding the elaboration of distributed information separately for each piece of distributed information, we could assign individual team members' scores for the extent to which the team gave them access to distributed information. For each piece of distributed information, a score of 1 was assigned when the information was not brought up in discussion. A score of 2 was assigned when the information was brought up, but the other team members (i.e., the ones not possessing the information before discussion) did not react to it (either by saying something or by nodding). A score of 3 was assigned when the information was brought up and one of the other members reacted to it, but after this, the team failed to integrate it with other decision-relevant information. A score of 4 was assigned when the information was brought up and both of the other members reacted to it, but after this, the team failed to integrate it with other information. A score of 5 was assigned when the information was brought up and the team discussed its implications in relationship to other pieces of information. Thus, each team member could get an integer score between 1 and 5 for each piece of distributed information relevant to one of their individual decision issues. Because there were four pieces of decision-relevant distributed information for each team member, each member's overall score for their access to distributed information could vary between 4 and 20.

3.5.2 | Performance

Each team member had to individually make a decision about two issues choosing one of the four options for each issue (see the advertisement example above). Each option consisted of two parts. When

the individual chose the option consisting of two wrong parts, it led to a score of 0. When the individual chose the option consisting of one correct and one wrong part, it resulted in a score of 1. When the individual selected the option consisting of two correct parts, it led to a score of 2. Because each individual made decisions about two issues, this resulted in a performance score between 0 and 4.

3.5.3 | Nationality status

To check whether participants were aware of the nationality background of their fellow team members, we asked them to indicate their own nationality background and the nationality backgrounds of their team members on a list with the following options: Chinese, German, Dutch, British, French, Spanish, and Other (other had to be specified). Participants also filled out the same status scale used in the pilot study (see the *pilot study* section above) for Dutch ($\alpha = 0.83$), Germans ($\alpha = 0.84$), Chinese ($\alpha = 0.88$), Turkish, and Moroccans (the latter two added as fillers to reduce awareness of the fact that we were assessing status differences associated with team member differences in nationality background).

3.5.4 | Process accountability

To check the process accountability manipulation, we asked participants whether there was someone in the room observing them. They could choose between "yes" or "no." Afterward, they rated to what extent they felt that they had been observed during the study on a 7-point scale with anchors *not at all* and *very much*.

3.5.5 | Demographic questions

Participants answered questions about their nationality background, gender, age, and study field.

3.6 | Procedure

The lab contained three separate tables next to a wall and one table in the middle of the room. The researcher seated participants at these tables randomly. After signing the informed consent form and introducing themselves to each other by telling their names and nationality backgrounds, participants had 22 min to read the task information package. After 22 min, the researcher came to the room, let participants start the team discussion, and left the room. The discussion was audio-video recorded and participants had 8 min to discuss. After 8 min, the researcher stopped the discussion and seated the participants at the individual tables, where participants indicated their decisions for the two issues assigned to them individually. Next, they filled out a questionnaire that consisted of the status

scales, demographic questions, and manipulation checks. There was a lottery among the best performing teams and the best performing individuals who participated in the study. The 10 best performing individuals won €50 each, and each member of the best performing team (summed score for all members) won €10. We closed by debriefing the participants and paying them €10 for participation.

4 | RESULTS

4.1 | Manipulation checks

4.1.1 | Nationality background

Participants were asked to indicate the nationality backgrounds of their two team members, which 98% identified correctly. Binary logistic regression analysis showed that participants were more likely to choose the correct option than the wrong option, $b = 3.89$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 14.45$, $p < .001$, indicating the success of the manipulation.

4.1.2 | Status

We performed a repeated measures GLM analysis with nationality background (Dutch, German, Chinese) as within-subjects factor. The status of Dutch, German, and Chinese were different from each other, $F(2, 176) = 70.45$, $p < .001$; Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.56$, $\eta^2 = 0.45$. Post hoc analyses with LSD procedure revealed that the status of Dutch ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 0.57$) is higher than those of Germans ($M = 5.68$, $SD = 0.60$, $p = .02$), and than those of Chinese ($M = 5.03$, $SD = 0.89$, $p < .001$), while the status of Germans is higher than of Chinese ($p < .001$).

4.1.3 | Process accountability

Ninety-six percent of the participants correctly indicated whether there was someone monitoring them (binary logistic regression, $b = 1.81$, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 9.71$, $p = .01$). We also asked participants to what extent they felt they were observed during the study. Indicating the manipulation's success, regression analysis showed higher ratings in the high process accountability condition ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.65$) than in the low process accountability condition ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.96$), $\beta = 0.64$, $t(173) = 2.32$, $p = .02$.

4.2 | Multilevel data structure

Individuals are nested in teams and to justify multilevel analysis it is important to establish that individual-level observations are sufficiently independent to not violate the assumption of independence of observations. This is done by computing intraclass correlations

(ICCs) and within-group agreement correlations (Rwg; James et al., 1993). The ICC1, ICC2 and Rwg values of access to distributed information ($ICC(1) = 0.07$, $ICC(2) = 0.19$, $Rwg = 0.40$) and individual performance ($ICC(1) = 0.02$, $ICC(2) = 0.06$, $Rwg = 0.31$) were substantially lower than the cut-off scores suggested by James et al. (1984) for aggregation, thus showing that there was sufficient independence to treat these as individual-level variables. Thus, because the process accountability manipulation was a team-level manipulation, we conducted multilevel analyses in SPSS to test our hypotheses.

4.3 | Hypotheses testing

In all analyses, nationality status was represented by two dummy variables: majority dummy (1 = majority, 0 = minority) and high-status minority dummy (1 = high-status minority, 0 = non-high-status minority). This combination allowed us to compare the majority with the low-status minority (majority dummy effect) and the high-status minority with the low-status minority (high-status minority dummy effect). Process accountability was coded 1 = high, 0 = low. Gender composition (1 = all-men versus. 0 = all-women) was added as a control variable (we did not treat gender composition as a more substantive variable because the focus of our analysis was on nationality and we have insufficient statistical power to bring in a third factor; in addition, we only have same-gender teams and the situation of interest for the current analysis would be that of gender dissimilarity).

To test our hypotheses, we ran 2-level random intercepts regression models. For the main effects hypotheses, we included main effects and gender control. For the test of the interaction hypotheses, the product terms of process accountability and the nationality dummies were added as predictors. Table 1 displays the results of the hypothesis tests.

4.3.1 | Elaboration of distributed information

As per Table 1, even though there was a trend for the elaboration of distributed information to be lower for the low-status minority than for the majority (majority dummy effect) and the high-status minority (high-status minority dummy effect), these effects were not significant. Results thus did not support Hypothesis 1. Interactions qualify main effects, however, and in that sense, the more important tests are those of the interactions. The signs of both interactions were in line with Hypothesis 4, and there was a significant interaction of process accountability and the majority dummy, but not of process accountability and the high-status minority dummy. To analyze this pattern of results further, we followed Aiken and West (1991) and computed contrast for different comparisons (see Figure 2 for a graphic display).

Under low process accountability, majority members ($M = 12.92$, $SD = 4.95$) had higher elaboration of distributed information than low-status minority members ($M = 9.60$, $SD = 5.03$), $b = 3.44$, $t(168) = 2.52$, $p = .01$, 95% CI [0.74, 6.14], $SE = 1.36$, and high-status minority members ($M = 13.38$, $SD = 4.00$) had higher elaboration of distributed information than low-status minority members, $b = 3.98$, $t(168) = 2.31$, $p = .02$, 95% CI [0.58, 7.38], $SE = 1.72$. Majority members and high-status minority members did not differ in their elaboration of distributed information under low process accountability, $b = -0.54$, $t(168) = -0.41$, $p = .68$, 95% CI [−3.17, 2.08], $SE = 1.33$. Under high process accountability, there were no differences in the elaboration of distributed information. Importantly, low-status minority members under high process accountability ($M = 13.29$, $SD = 4.58$) had higher elaboration of distributed information than low-status minority members under low process accountability, $b = 3.82$, $t(168) = 2.16$, $p = .03$, 95% CI [0.33, 7.30], $SE = 1.77$. Thus, the results supported our Hypothesis 4.

TABLE 1 Results of multilevel regression

| | Elaboration of distributed information | | | | Performance interactions | | | |
| | Main | | Interactions | | Main | | Interactions | |
	b	p	b	p	b	p	b	p
Gender	−0.61	ns	−0.69	ns	−0.16	ns	−0.19	ns
Majority	1.59	0.11	3.44	0.01	0.16	0.51	0.83	0.01
High-status minority	2.44	0.06	3.98	0.02	0.51	0.09	1.02	0.02
Process Acc. (PA)	0.73	ns	3.82	0.03	−0.03	ns	1.08	0.01
PA × Majority			−3.83	0.05			−1.39	0.01
PA × High-status min.			−3.19	0.20			−1.04	0.08

Note:: Gender composition: 1 = all-men, 0 = all-women; majority dummy: 1 = majority, 0 = minority; high-status minority dummy: 1 = high-status minority, 0 = non-high-status minority; Process accountability: 1 = high, 0 = low.
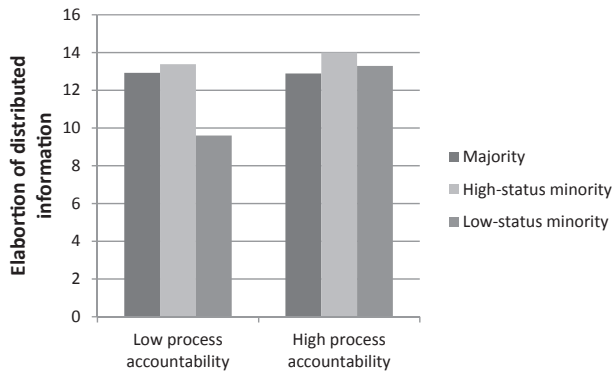
FIGURE 2 The Interaction between nationality status and process accountability on individuals' elaboration of distributed information
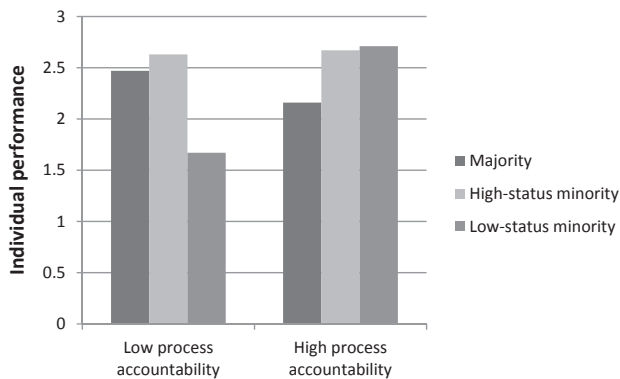

FIGURE 3 The Interaction between nationality status and process accountability on individual performance

4.3.2 | Performance

Also displayed in Table 1, results showed no support for Hypothesis 2, with non-significant dummy main effects. As noted above, interactions qualify main effects, and here too the more important tests are those of the interactions. Following the same pattern as for access to distributed information, the signs of both interactions were in line with Hypothesis 5, but the interaction was significant only for the majority dummy. We again computed a series of contrast to analyze the pattern of results further (also see Figure 3).

With low process accountability, majority members performed better ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.13$) than low-status minority members ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 1.05$), $b = 0.83$, $t(173) = 2.52$, $p = .01$, 95% CI [0.18, 1.49], SE = 0.33, and high-status minority performed better ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 0.96$) than low-status minority members, $b = 1.02$, $t(173) = 2.46$, $p = .02$, 95% CI [0.20, 1.85], SE = 0.42). Under low process accountability majority members and high-status minority members did not differ in their performance, $b = -0.18$, $t(173) = -0.59$, $p = .56$, 95% CI [−0.83, 0.45], SE = 0.32. Under high process accountability, there were no differences in performance. Low-status minority members under high process accountability

performed better ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.20$) than low-status minority members under low process accountability, $b = 1.08$, $t(173) = 2.53$, $p = .01$, 95% CI [0.24, 1.92], SE = 0.43. Thus, results supported Hypothesis 5.

4.3.3 | Mediation

Because none of the main effects was significant, we can conclude that Hypothesis 3 was not supported. To test Hypothesis 6, we conducted mediation analysis following Edwards and Lambert's (2007) first stage moderation model. This is an approach that yields bootstrapped estimates of the indirect effect (i.e., the mediated path) of the nationality dummies on performance via access to information for high and low process accountability (also see Preacher et al., 2007, on the superiority of bootstrapping over other mediation tests). We first took the estimated coefficients from multilevel analysis as per our test of Hypothesis 4 (Equation 5 in Edwards & Lambert, 2007). Then we regressed individual performance on the elaboration of distributed information controlling for the nationality dummies and gender (Equation 4 in Edwards & Lambert, 2007). To determine the indirect effect, we placed these coefficients in the indirect effect formula of Equation 9 in Edwards and Lambert (2007). We used bias-corrected confidence intervals (BCCI) based on the bootstrap coefficients to test the indirect effect (Stine, 1989). The relationship of the elaboration of distributed information with performance was significant, $b = 0.20$, $t(170) = 17.68$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.17, 0.22], SE = 0.01. Next, we estimated the coefficients of Equation 5 and Equation 4 from 1,000 bootstrap samples with the constrained nonlinear regression modules. Under low process accountability, elaboration of distributed information mediated the effect of the majority dummy, point estimate = 0.66, with a 95% BCCI excluding 0 (0.22, 1.16) indicating significance. Likewise, under low process accountability, elaboration of distributed information mediated the effect of the high-status minority dummy on performance, point estimate = 0.76, 95% BCCI (0.25, 1.31). Next, we tested whether the positive effect on the performance of being a low-status nationality minority under high process accountability, compared to being a low-status nationality minority under low process accountability, was mediated by the elaboration of distributed information. To test this, we followed the same procedure as above (except with different effect comparisons). Elaboration of distributed information mediated the effect of process accountability for low-status minorities, point estimate = 0.74, 95% BCCI (0.11, 1.36). Results thus supported Hypothesis 6.

4.4 | Post hoc exploratory data analyses

Team composition is an experimental manipulation, but it is based on a factor that is not under experimental control: nationality. We, therefore, performed a series of supplementary analyses to establish that the effects we observe for nationality minority status are,

indeed, nationality status effects and not effects of other variables that may co-vary with nationality.

We first established that status perceptions are associated with our predicted effects. For the nationality status of each team member, we took the average of the ratings of the other two team members. We substituted this status score for our nationality dummies and ran otherwise the same hypothesis tests as reported above. There was an interaction effect of status scores and process accountability on information access, $p < .001$, with the same pattern of the results as for the nationality status dummy coding.

We then focused on exploring whether variables that may co-vary with nationality might provide alternative explanations. We first considered whether the English language skills of the team members affected information access and performance from the perspective that for Dutch and German members English would be an easier language to acquire than for Chinese members (even when all students in the school are admitted based on English proficiency). Team members rated each other's English proficiency and we took the average of the other two team members' ratings for each member as a measure of English proficiency. Multilevel analysis showed that English skills did not affect information access ($p = .14$) or performance ($p = .54$).

Next, we considered whether there were nationality differences in discussion style that might offer an alternative explanation for our findings. We coded a new variable from behavioral observation: preference for shared information, arguing that there may be a cultural difference in the extent to which different nationalities are focused on sharedness and consensus. To code preference for shared information, we counted positive responses whenever shared information was mentioned. Multilevel analysis showed that discussion style did not predict access to distributed information ($p = .81$) or performance ($p = .59$).

In sum then, our supplementary analyses suggest that our interpretation of our findings in terms of status effects is more plausible than in terms of these two alternative mechanisms that may be associated with nationality differences.

4.5 | DISCUSSION

Our study shows that in a team context where the nationality majority is the numerical majority, status differences between nationality minority groups affect the performance of individuals with a nationality minority background. Results link this effect to the elaboration of distributed information as the mediating process and identify process accountability as an attenuating influence. These findings complement earlier research in relational demography that showed that nationality minority versus majority status moderates dissimilarity effects, and underscore the value of a more nuanced treatment of the minority group status. In linking minority status effects to the elaboration of distributed information, these findings are also important in bridging relational demography and team diversity perspectives.

4.6 | Theoretical implications

The differentiation between different nationality minorities in terms of their status in society adds nuance to relational demography research that is important in understanding the influence of holding a nationality minority position. Previous research already showed that being dissimilar to one's fellow team members in terms of nationality affects nationality majority and nationality minority individuals differently (e.g., Guillaume et al., 2014). In the present study, we shifted focus to a comparison between individuals with different nationality minority backgrounds to demonstrate that further differentiation beyond the difference between nationality majority and nationality minority is necessary for our understanding of the influence of holding a nationality minority position within a team. The importance of this insight lies in the fact that it helps us understand that different nationality minorities may face challenges to a different degree.

In more conceptual terms, the current insights are important because they raise awareness of the fact that there is more to nationality dissimilarity than being either a low-status individual in a high-status team (i.e., an individual with a nationality minority background in a team dominated by the nationality majority) or being a high-status individual in a low-status team (i.e., an individual with a nationality majority background in a team dominated by one or more nationality minorities). Taking as a given that the nationality majority is typically also the largest group within a team of knowledge workers and thus that the team is relatively high-status in terms of nationality background, our study shows that there are influential differences in terms of the higher or lower status associated with a minority individual's nationality background. For such situations, the notion of disengagement from a low-status team versus identification with a high-status team used to explain differences between nationality majority and nationality minority reactions to nationality dissimilarity (Chattopadhyay, George, et al., 2004) does not apply.

Rather, what our findings show is that nationality minority status invites differences in team member interactions that result in less elaboration of distributed information and lower performance for low-status nationality minority individuals than for high-status nationality minority and nationality majority individuals. These findings are better understood in terms of intergroup biases in team interactions than in terms of psychological engagement or disengagement from the team. Importantly, what these findings also show is that this team interaction influence has individual-level consequences. Access to distributed information and performance are individual-level consequences of nationality status. Even when these consequences come about in team interaction, nationality majority of individuals' access to distributed information and performance is not affected by whether they work with a high-status or low-status nationality minority individual. The evidence for the elaboration of distributed information as the mediating process linking nationality status to individual performance is especially relevant in view of the growing reliance on knowledge work in organizations. Evidence that access to distributed information is key to performance, creativity, and innovation is growing, both from team research (e.g.,

Richter et al., 2012) and from social network research (e.g., Hirst et al., 2015), and it thus is a particularly relevant and worrying conclusion that individuals with a low-status minority background may be cut off of informational resources even when they contribute to the sharing of distributed information themselves.

Viewed from that perspective, our evidence for the moderating role of process accountability as an attenuating influence is important. This evidence is important not only because it helps paint a coherent picture of the processes involved—social categorization processes put information access and performance at stake, and process accountability as a factor that reduces social categorization tendencies attenuates this negative effect. It is also important because it speaks to a broader category of factors that may attenuate social categorization processes inspired by a low-status nationality background: factors that are associated with epistemic motivation. Kruglanski and Webster (1996) outline how dispositional as well as situational influences may inspire more carefully considered perceptions, attitudes, and actions because they are associated with epistemic motivation. Process accountability can be understood as an instance of such situational influences. Accordingly, even though our data do not speak to this directly, it is not too much of a leap of faith to propose that other factors that are associated with epistemic motivation may also reduce intergroup biases that stand in the way of low-status minorities' access to distributed information. Such influences would include dispositional variables such as the need for cognitive closure (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996), need for cognition (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982), and learning orientation (Dweck, 1999), but also other situational influences such as the absence of time pressure (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996) and the absence of job stress (Cicero et al., 2007). Put differently, the implication of the moderating role of process accountability is that it points to a whole set of influences.

We should not take the current evidence to mean that influences on epistemic motivation will always reduce intergroup biases. Research in motivated information processing has documented how epistemic motivation drives careful processing, but also how a precondition for this effect is the ability to process (cf. van Knippenberg et al., 2004). When circumstances are associated with low processing ability, for instance, because of time pressure working toward a deadline, this invites reliance on simpler cues like stereotype-based biases despite the influence of other factors that would stimulate epistemic motivation (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Further developing the current motivated information processing perspective thus also requires attention to the role of processing ability.

We argued how process accountability and the associated epistemic motivation make people more mindful of their social judgments. For nationality dissimilarity specifically, this role may arguably also be fulfilled by factors that affect how individuals understand diversity, such as diversity perspectives (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Dwertman et al., 2016), diversity mindsets (van Knippenberg et al., 2013), and dogmatism (Chattopadhyay, 2003). Research on these issues has in common that it argues that some understandings of diversity make people look more beyond stereotypes than others. This may to a certain extent be an epistemic motivation effect—encouragement to look beyond stereotypes—but could also become a more habitual, lower-effort process. Future research exploring the overlap and unique contributions of the motivated information processing perspective and these perspectives on people's understanding of diversity would be worthwhile in developing integration across research streams.

The fact that high-status minority members did not differ in the elaboration of information or performance from majority members also points to some potentially interesting implications. In line with the notion that Germans would be a high-status minority group, the difference in the perceived status of Dutch and Germans was significant but small. One not so exciting interpretation of the absence of elaboration and performance differences between Dutch and Germans is that with such a small status difference, effects on elaboration and performance were too small to be detected. Whereas this could definitely true and at least part of the story, there is also a theoretically more interesting aspect to this. It is possible that the greater similarity between Dutch and Germans than between Dutch and Chinese makes it easier for Germans than for Chinese to assimilate and "act Dutch." A core notion underlying our analysis is that it is a similarity to the Dutch "prototype" (cf. Turner et al., 1987) that drives the status of different minority groups. Extending this proposition, we can also argue that minority group individuals (i.e., as opposed to the group as a whole) that display more majority group characteristics are perceived to have higher status. To some degree, this is outside of the individuals' control (e.g., "ethnic Germans" are more physically similar to "ethnic Dutch" than "ethnic Chinese" are), but to some degree, this may also be achieved through acquired behavior such that nationality minorities in the Netherlands may have adopted more prototypically Dutch behavior than they would display in other countries. Here, the smaller cultural distance for Germans may make it easier for Germans to "act Dutch" than for Chinese. That is, whereas the perceived status differences are based on stereotypical perceptions of the groups as a whole, individual group members have some leeway in the extent to which they assimilate to the majority group stereotype, and members of minority groups that are more similar to the majority group may be more effective in engendering the perception that they are "like the majority group." Of course, at this point, this is mere speculation, but we believe it is an interesting possibility explaining why despite perceived status differences German team members were in effect able to achieve the same levels of elaboration and performance as Dutch team members.

An important aspect of our analysis is that it bridges research in relational demography and diversity. Relational demography research is focused on the individual level of analysis (Guillaume et al., 2012), whereas team diversity research is focused on the team level of analysis (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). The present study bridges these research traditions in its focus on team interaction processes as a predictor of individual-level outcomes. As such, it paves the way for further integration of these research streams. On the one hand, this would entail extending

insights from diversity research to relational demography research to understand how team processes may influence individual outcomes—and differentially so for team members with different backgrounds (i.e., like in the present study). On the other hand, this would entail extending insights from relational demography research to understand how different processes and outcomes at the individual level (i.e., as a function of relational demography) may feedback into team-level processes and outcomes. For instance, if individual performance is hampered by dynamics invited by the individual's low-status nationality background (e.g., like in the present study), how does this feedback into team process and performance when the team would be dependent on the quality of the individual's performance? In addition, an important implication for team diversity research is that the current findings highlight that not all team nationality (cultural, ethnic) diversity is created equal. In the current state of the science, nationality (cultural, ethnic) diversity is treated as a matter of degree and there is a lack of recognition of the status dynamics associated with different national (cultural, ethnic) minorities (cf. Guillaume et al., 2017; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Exploring such issues would be valuable in building a more integrated understanding of diversity at work.

4.7 | Limitations and suggestions for future research

The choice of research methods is a trade-off in which the strengths of any approach inevitably are associated with limitations on other counts. The current study is no exception to that rule. An obvious strength of our experiment is that we can reach conclusions about causality, and moreover, conclusions with high internal validity not only because of our experimental manipulations but also because of the controlled introduction of distributed information, behavioral coding of the elaboration of distributed information, and the chronology of the assessment of our independent, mediating, and dependent variables. At the same time, we have to recognize that our laboratory set-up can give us no guarantee that the same processes can also be observed in organizations. Meta-analytic comparison of findings from field surveys and laboratory experiments in team diversity suggests that there are no differences between lab and field in diversity effects (van Dijk et al., 2012; cf. LePine et al., 2008). Even so, future research further developing this analysis in the field would be valuable.

The distributed information task is designed such that it is likely to produce a strong relationship between the elaboration of distributed information and performance. Because distributed information is key to performance, other than luck in guessing a correct solution it is not possible to come to the best decision without the relevant distributed information. From that perspective, the relationship between the elaboration of distributed information and performance is the less interesting finding, and the core contribution lies in the experimental effects we find on the elaboration of information and performance.

We should also realize that our conclusions regarding minority group status effects are based on the comparison of the performance of members from only two nationality minority groups in The Netherlands. Our interpretation in terms of status differences is supported by our supplementary analysis. It is also well-aligned with the earlier analysis of nationality status effects in teams (Chattopadhyay, George, et al., 2004; Guillaume et al., 2014). Even so, we cannot rule out that other attributes associated with the difference between Germans and Chinese than the ones we could explore in our supplementary analysis may have also played a role.

Nationality is a variable that derives its subjective meaning from the variables it covaries with, and the current focus on status is in no way to negate the complex, multifaceted nature of nationality. Rather it is to argue that a focus on status differences provides a useful and conceptually well-grounded perspective to understand that individuals with different nationality minority backgrounds will have different experiences of nationality dissimilarity.

We also note that we have a limited design in that our hypotheses are about nationality minorities when they are in a numerical minority position, and nationality majorities when they are in a numerical majority position in a team. We do not have comparison conditions of teams where nationality majorities are in a numerically minority position and where nationality minorities are in a numerical majority position. We do not have teams that consist of all nationality majorities or all nationality minorities either. Whereas our design makes sense in terms of reflecting the realities of knowledge-intensive work, it does mean that our study does not speak to these other composition constellations and that conclusions are limited to the primary experimental comparison between the high-status and the low-status minority groups. In that sense, our study is no exception in the relational demography and diversity fields where comparisons typically revolve around a limited number of nationality groups within one nationality setting in any given study (cf. Tröster & van Knippenberg, 2012). Even so, we should recognize that whereas the conceptual implication of our analysis is that our findings should hold regardless of country (in the Western world at least) or specific minority groups involved, design limitations do not allow us to draw this broader conclusion. Future research replicating our findings and developing our analysis in other nationality contexts focusing on other minority groups would, therefore, be particularly valuable.

4.8 | Managerial implications

One implication for the practice of our findings that might feed into diversity management is that circumstances like process accountability that are associated with epistemic motivation may reduce intergroup biases that stand in the way of low-status nationality minority individuals' performance. To some extent at least, these are situations that can be created through managerial intervention, and the present findings may thus translate into actionable knowledge for practice—even when we would prefer replication in the field before we would advise such interventions.

More tentatively, we would also suggest that such interventions could form a more focused and more direct alternative or complement to diversity training. Diversity training is typically targeted at reducing stereotyping and intergroup biases by creating awareness of such processes and appreciation of differences (Pendry et al., 2007). Diversity training thus sets out to achieve a similar bias-reducing influence as we observed for process accountability. The effectiveness of diversity training tends to be disappointing, however (Pendry et al., 2007), and one possible reason for this is that such effectiveness asks that insights are transferred from the training context to the job context. The present results, in contrast, point to influences within the job context itself; influences that do not rely on the transfer from training context to job context. This is an implication for future research to substantiate, but one reading of the current findings vis-à-vis the diversity training literature is that on-the-job interventions like process accountability may effectively complement or even substitute for diversity training.

5 | CONCLUSION

Our study extends research in relational demography by demonstrating that status differences between nationality minority groups affect the performance of individuals with a nationality minority background. To establish this, our findings link nationality status to access distributed information, and in doing so our study provides a potentially important bridge between research in relational demography and research in team diversity that may set the stage for the development of a more integrated understanding of diversity at work. In identifying process accountability as a moderating, intergroup bias-attenuating influence, our study also points to a set of dispositional and situational influences that may reduce such intergroup biases.

6 | ETHICS

The authors followed the ethical principles related to human rights and professional integrity.

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