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## INVITED ARTICLE

# The psychology of diversity and its implications for workplace (in)equality: Looking back at the last decade and forward to the next

Luke Fletcher<sup>1</sup>  | T. Alexandra Beauregard<sup>2,3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>University of Bath, Bath, UK

<sup>2</sup>Birkbeck, University of London, London, UK

<sup>3</sup>Oslo New University College, Oslo, Norway

## Correspondence

Luke Fletcher, School of Management, University of Bath, Bath, BA2 7AY, England, UK.  
Email: lf645@bath.ac.uk

## Abstract

In this British Psychological Society (BPS) landmark paper, we employ an evidence synthesis approach to review the broad range of diversity research published in BPS journals between 2011 and 2021. By focusing on research that investigates stereotypes associated with, and discrimination towards, minority and minoritized groups, we seek to provide readers with a better understanding of the dynamics of a diverse workforce and, going forward, to facilitate the efforts of the psychology research community towards building a body of work that meaningfully addresses workplace inequalities. We thematically analyse and synthesize 25 articles, which fall into four interconnected themes: identity development and management; negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination; working in a diverse team; and the broader organizational environment. Highlighting key strengths of this work and areas for future development, we note the absence of overarching theoretical debates and discussions that might facilitate the development of an ongoing narrative across diversity-related research published within BPS journals. We outline a future research agenda to bridge methodological divides and to connect with diversity literatures in related disciplines such as human resource development (HRD), human resource management (HRM),

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and organization studies. In so doing, we advocate for psychologists to move beyond a solely individualistic perspective and instead recognize and account for the context within which diversity-related processes take place.

#### KEYWORDS

discrimination, diversity, future research agenda, identity, inclusion, organizational climate, organizational psychology, prejudice, stereotypes, systematic review

#### Practitioner points

- Significant global events and social changes over the past decade have highlighted the need to take stock of what we already know about diversity in the workplace and to clarify important paths forward in relation to addressing (in)equalities.
- We review 25 diversity-related papers published between 2011 and 2021 within the British Psychology Society (BPS) journals, and uncover four core research themes across these papers, from those focusing on a person's unique identity to those examining the broader organizational environment.
- Based on a critical analysis of this evidence base, we identify areas for future development, with a particular focus on developing a stronger overarching framework and strengthening practical significance.
- Lastly, we suggest ways to build bridges with diversity and inclusion practitioners by developing, testing, and evaluating interventions that promote allyship, authenticity, and empowerment.

## BACKGROUND

Diversity in the workplace has been a research topic of interest for many years, yet it is particularly over the last decade where significant global events and social changes have underscored the need for research to keep advancing our knowledge on this important subject (Bal & Dóci, 2018; Bal et al., 2019; Ghislieri et al., 2018; O'Connor et al., 2020). Rising and persistent inequalities in societies across the world further emphasize this need (Piketty, 2017; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Psychological research on diversity within the workplace has a critical role to play in providing relevant insight into how individuals and groups interact with one another within an organizational context (Guillaume et al., 2013). Importantly, psychologists can help identify opportunities and benefits that a diverse workforce can bring. Yet, psychologists can also highlight the challenges and fault lines that need to be navigated to harness the positive and most rewarding aspects that diversity can achieve for individuals and organizations. Of particular significance for addressing social justice challenges and persistent inequalities in the workplace are the experiences of minorities/minoritized<sup>1</sup> groups, and those who face and/or confront prejudice and unequal treatment.

It is with this in mind that the idea for this landmark paper was first formulated. The British Psychological Society (BPS) has a valuable role in helping the international psychological research

<sup>1</sup>The term minority tends to refer to distinct statistical minority social groups in a given society, whereas minoritized signifies how groups can be subordinated through the processes of power and domination by other groups.

community come together to collectively tackle great societal challenges (Berry, 2021; Ellemers, 2021). Guillaume et al.'s (2013) special issue in this journal helped to provide a strong focus and energy to advancing our research efforts on the psychology of diversity at work, but the time has now come to stand back, take stock, and identify future paths forward. Management scholars, for example, have started to reflect on these aspects in relation to diversity research, such as Post's et al. (2021) special issue editorial on theorizing about diversity in management studies, Köllen's (2021) critical review of diversity management practice, and Triana's et al. (2021) review of discrimination and diversity research within human resource management studies. These reviews generally focus on meso/macro factors and tend to draw on sociologically informed theoretical frameworks; often neglecting psychological perspectives. It is therefore timely and significant for the BPS journals to come together under this landmark paper to contribute to these wider discussions about the current state, and future directions, of diversity research. We bring a unique perspective by focusing on diversity research that is explicitly psychological in nature, but is also aiming to better understand, and tackle, prejudice and discrimination against minority and minoritized groups. We need to understand what knowledge we do have and where potential gaps and areas for improvement are first. In laying out the landscape of diversity-related research across the BPS journals, we will be better able to predict, understand, and mobilize the potential of diversity during periods of rapid societal change, which are set to continue over decades to come (Smith et al., 2019).

Our landmark paper aims to stand back and take stock by reviewing research on diversity within the BPS journals over the past 10 years (from 2011 to 2021). We adopt an evidence synthesis approach to identify diversity-related research across the BPS journals. We thematically analyse and synthesize 25 papers (22 empirical, three conceptual) and, in doing so, we showcase the breadth and depth of research that our community of psychologists have undertaken. We highlight key strengths and areas for further development and identify future paths forward that will help us, as psychologists, to enrich a broader range of diversity research and to expand our own horizons beyond a solely individualistic psychological perspective. We hope this landmark paper inspires our psychological research community to be bolder in their actions and more empowered to advance diversity at work research. By building on the works reviewed here, and by reflecting on our potential shared biases as researchers trained in a particular tradition (which has acknowledged its own complicity in perpetuating harmful stereotypes and discrimination – American Psychological Association, 2021), we have the potential as psychologists to work meaningfully towards addressing workplace inequalities.

## METHOD

### Systematic review process

We broadly followed the systematic evidence synthesis method (Briner & Denyer, 2012; Madden et al., 2018). We focused our search on publications from 2011 to 2021 in the BPS journals, using two search strings<sup>2</sup> where a term within the first had to be within the abstract or title and a term from the second found anywhere in the document (Table 1).

Figure 1 shows the process of sifting from the initial search that yielded 138 hits to the final sample of 25 papers (22 empirical, three conceptual). Our sifting process evaluated papers against four quality criteria<sup>3</sup> where we were guided by the core research question 'What is the scope of empirical evidence and novel conceptual advances across the BPS journals in relation to

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<sup>2</sup>first string- "divers\*" OR "equality" OR "discriminat\*" OR "prejudic\*" OR "minorit\*"; second string - "work\*" OR "employment" OR "employee" OR "employees" OR "management" OR "manager" OR "managers" OR "organizatio\*" OR "occupation\*" OR "leade\*" OR "team\*" OR "superviso\*" OR "busines\*" or "staff" OR "workgroup". We also reran searches with "inclusion" in first string – we did not find any significantly relevant studies/papers that we missed in the initial search.

<sup>3</sup>a) adequacy/validity/sufficiency of research design, b) sensitivity and specificity of sample and analyses, c) relevance and appropriateness of the study to the review's research questions, and d) robustness, rigor, and replicability of the study

TABLE 1 Descriptive overview of the 22 empirical papers

Characteristic of the empirical paper	N/%	Illustrative example
Research design		
Quantitative – mainly experimental	11/50	Kukucka et al. (2020)
Qualitative – mainly interview/ focus group	4/18	Fernando and Kenny (2018)
Quantitative –mainly dyadic or multisource	3/14	Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2017)
Quantitative – mainly time lagged or longitudinal	2/9	Bayl-Smith and Griffin (2017)
Quantitative – mainly cross sectional	2/9	Derks et al. (2011)
Single or multiple study paper		
Single	10/45	Dobai and Hopkins (2021)
Multiple – 2 study paper	9/41	Bongiorno et al. (2013)
Multiple – 3 or more study paper	3/14	Moisuc et al. (2018)
Sampling strategy		
Primarily used university students and/or the personal networks of students	8/36	Woods, and Ruscher (2021)
Primarily used convenience and snowball sampling via researchers' networks, social media, and advertising	6/27	Fletcher and Everly (2021)
Primarily used Amazon Mturk, a reputable market research company, or an industry body/ association	5/23	Bayl-Smith and Griffin (2017)
Primarily gained access to specific organizations	3/14	Groggins and Ryan (2013)
Origin of core sample		
USA	8/36	Singh et al. (2013)
UK or Britain	3/14	Fairlamb and Cinnirella (2021)
Australia/France/Germany	2 each/9 each	Bongiorno et al. (2013)/Rohmer and Louvet (2012)/Liebermann et al. (2013)
China/Hungary/Netherlands/South Africa/Spain	1 each/5 each	Wei et al. (2015)/Dobai and Hopkins (2021)/Derks et al. (2011)/Nkomo and Krick (2011)/Vazquez and Louis (2020)
Diversity strand focused on		
Multiple strands	5/23	Kahn et al. (2016)
Gender/Sex	4/18	Luksyte and Avery (2015)
Age/Ethnicity, nationality, or race/broadly applied – no strands focused on	3 each/14 each	Burmeister et al. (2018)/Fernando and Kenny (2018)/Howell and Ratliff (2017)
Disability/exonerees and offenders/LGBT/ socio-economic	1 each/5 each	Rohmer and Louvet (2012)/Kukucka et al. (2020)/ Fletcher and Everly (2021)/ Vazquez and Louis (2020)

diversity-related research applicable to work and workplaces?'. We decided to exclude papers that focused purely on functional diversity, as it is not directly relevant to our main interests of workplace (in)equality. Given the background of rising and persistent inequalities in society (Piketty, 2017; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009), our central interest was in studies/papers which focused on, or at least sought to understand, the experiences of minorities/minoritized groups, and/or the factors influencing who face and/or confront prejudice and unequal treatment. At each stage of the sifting process, the authors independently reviewed half of the papers each, and then met to discuss any that they were unsure about. Both authors read the full set of 25 papers and checked again against the inclusion criteria before extracting data.

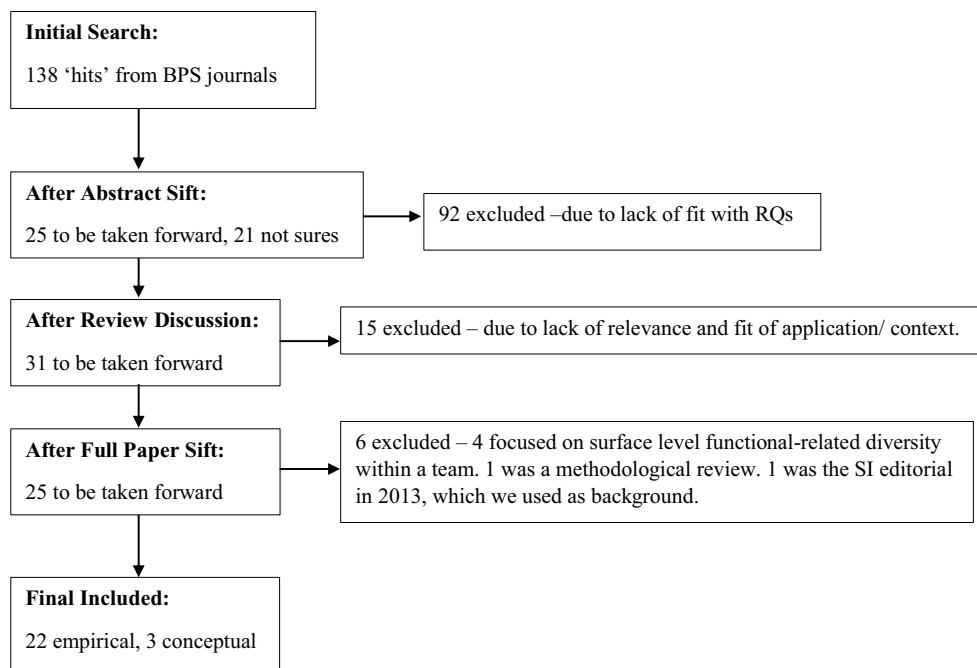


FIGURE 1 The process of sifting from initial search to final included sample for review

## Descriptive overview

Between one and three of the 25 included papers were published each year (from 2011 to 2021), except for 2013 (five papers), 2018 (four papers), and 2021 (four papers). The *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* had the highest number of papers included (13, of which two were conceptual papers), followed by *British Journal of Social Psychology* (11, of which one was a conceptual paper). One (empirical) paper was included from *Legal and Criminological Psychology*.<sup>4</sup>

The three conceptual papers represent different areas of diversity: one focuses on social class and economic threat (Manstead, 2018), another focuses on cultural identity and acculturation (Samnani et al., 2013), and the last focuses on status differentiation within work groups/teams (van Dijk & van Engen, 2013). We now turn to describing the 22 empirical papers in terms of research design, number of studies included, sampling strategy used, origin of core sample, and the diversity strand focused on. Table 1 summarizes this information.

Quantitative papers equate to 82% of the empirical papers (18 papers). Half (11 papers) are primarily experimental, such as Kukucka et al. (2020). The other quantitative papers (seven) are a mix of dyadic/multisource (three papers, e.g., Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2017), time-lagged/longitudinal (two papers, e.g., Bayl-Smith & Griffin, 2017), or cross-sectional (two papers, e.g., Derks et al., 2011) designs. Qualitative papers make up the remaining 18% (four), whereby interview/focus group data are collected and thematically analysed, such as in Fernando and Kenny's (2018) study. This shows that despite a dominant positivist and experimental paradigm, there is some breadth of other research designs and approaches being utilized.

More than half (12) of the 22 empirical papers include more than one study, most being experimental in research design (e.g., Vázquez & Lois, 2020). The most common sampling strategies utilized were

<sup>4</sup>Although there were 'hits' from all the BPS journals in the initial search, no papers were included from the remaining BPS journals as these tended to examine statistical/methodological approaches or were focused on other applications pre-employment or in a clinical/therapeutic setting not centred around workplaces

via university students and/or their personal networks (eight papers, representing 36%) as well as via researchers' own networks and snowballing efforts (six papers, representing 27%). However, a few studies used panel datasets acquired through reputable market research companies, with Bayl-Smith and Griffin (2017) being a good example of a strong research design coupled with a strong sampling strategy in this regard. Three papers sought out specific organizations in which to conduct research, which is particularly useful when examining practical and contextual boundaries; Groggins and Ryan (2013) provide an interesting case study example in this respect.

Samples are generally drawn from the United States (eight papers, representing 36%) and the United Kingdom/Britain (three papers, representing 14%). A wider range of European countries as well as Australia, China, and South Africa are represented by one or two papers. However, many South/East Asian, African, Central/South American, and Central/Eastern European countries are not represented.

Although a wide range of diversity strands are included, we note that nearly a quarter of the articles reviewed (five papers) consider multiple strands to some extent, rather than focus on one specific strand. Another 14% (three papers) do not directly consider any strands; rather, diversity can be broadly applied within the paper.

## Review findings

Our review uncovers four distinct, yet somewhat interconnected themes of research across the included studies (see Table 2 for an overview). We order these themes according to their level of analysis – from the micro (intra/interpersonal) to the meso (broader contextual and cultural factors). Within each main theme are subthemes which denote more specified topics and so we present our findings below starting with the first subtheme related to 'positive stereotypes/distinctiveness' within the theme of 'identity development and management' to the final subtheme focusing on 'the impact of culture and leadership' within the fourth theme of 'the broader organizational environment'.

### Theme 1: Identity development and management

#### *The nuanced effects of positive stereotypes and positive distinctiveness*

Dobai and Hopkins's (2021) study of Roma people highlights that from the minority group's perspective, what may appear to be a positive distinctive stereotype about their group may be a misrecognition or misrepresentation, which signals the minority group's subordinate position and may limit their opportunities for autonomy. Importantly, positive stereotypes may be problematic when they illustrate the power and instrumentality of the dominant in-group to define the bounds within which the minority group are

TABLE 2 Themes and subthemes emerging from the review

Main theme	Subtheme
1. Identity development and management	1.1. The nuanced effects of positive stereotypes and positive distinctiveness 1.2. Not everyone is the same – the influence of identity centrality/salience 1.3. Threats and their contextual determinants
2. Negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination	2.1 In hiring and related forms of decision-making 2.2. Confronting prejudice and discrimination 2.3 Changing attitudes and norms
3. Working in a diverse team	3.1. Prescriptive stereotypes and work roles 3.2. The effects of team diversity
4. The broader organizational environment	4.1. The role of organization-specific policies/practices 4.2. The effects of diversity climate and the psychological contract 4.3. The impact of leadership and cultural change

valued and can be successful. This can make minority group members feel humiliated and powerless, where their employment and career aspirations may be hindered as a result. However, Fernando and Kenny (2018) show that focused career progression and personal autonomy can arise when a minority group member is able to strategically harness the positive distinctiveness of their group identity. In their study, they show how early career British Sri Lankans were able to strategically manage their ethnic identity, and draw on their ethnic heritage, in ways that claimed positive stereotypes whilst rejecting more negative ones. Despite this, they found that these efforts could also lead to paradoxical career outcomes, for example narrowing attention on roles/career opportunities that reflect only those characteristics, for example, specialist roles, and evaluations that they may not be suitable for other roles requiring a broader skillset, for example, leadership positions. A key element differentiating Dobai and Hopkins (2021) and Fernando and Kenny (2018) is that the Roma people in the former study are considered a much lower socio-economic class than British Sri Lankans in the latter study, who were found to exercise the advantages that a higher class allowed them, for example, higher levels of autonomy and stronger affiliation with dominant group. Therefore, socio-economic status is also worth considering here.

#### *Not everyone is the same – the influence of identity centrality/salience*

The role of identity centrality or salience is highlighted in the empirical paper by Fletcher and Everly (2021) that shows how the centrality of an LGBT person's sexual or gender identity may influence their experience of authenticity in the workplace. Their findings underscore the situations where identity centrality is particularly important – those whose marginalized identity is more central to their sense of self will want to be open and authentic about their identity, yet when they feel they must constrain or conceal this identity in the work environment they will be expending energy and experiencing strain, which will alienate them from themselves. In a slightly different vein, the conceptual paper by Samnani et al. (2013) focuses on cultural identity salience (i.e., the extent to which individuals perceive their original culture to be central to their overall identity). They discuss how such identity salience may influence how newcomers from different cultures/countries acculturate into an organization that is based in a host/dominant culture/country. They argue that those who are high in cultural identity salience will be less likely to assimilate with the dominant culture and more likely to separate as they may feel a perceived threat to their cultural identity from the dominant culture. This may also be fuelled by relational pressures, particularly if they are part of a strong ethnic enclave. However, they may choose to integrate the less conflicting aspects of the dominant culture when they, or significant others around them, value economic rewards (for example career benefits). This stands slightly in parallel with Fernando and Kenny's (2018) finding that British Sri Lankans may focus on the positive distinctiveness of their cultural identity when there may be personal socio-economic rewards in doing so. In contrast, Samnani et al. (2013) argue that those with low cultural identity salience will be more likely to assimilate or integrate with the dominant culture as they will be more accepting of, and can more easily rationalize, other possible identities. This may also be underscored by relational pressures to integrate and assimilate. However, when the economic rewards are not highly desirable then these individuals may marginalize the dominant culture rather than assimilate with it.

#### *Threats and their contextual determinants*

The sense of threat touched upon above becomes a focal topic in three other papers, where they reveal more complex and contextual elements. The studies by Derks et al. (2011) and Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2017) both show how identity threat experienced within the workplace can facilitate a distancing away from one's minority group and a move towards the dominant in-group. This has been labelled the Queen Bee syndrome in the context of successful women who do not actively promote women's equality and advancement. Importantly, Derks et al. (2011) contributes by showing how women with low gender identity centrality who have experienced discrimination as they progressed their career may be more likely to display this Queen Bee syndrome. They argue that it is the tension between these women's personal ambitions and the gender stereotypes within the wider social context that leads them



to disengage from other women to prevent themselves from being evaluated based on their gender. Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2017) adds to this by highlighting how women (and ethnic minorities) are likely to feel much less supported by each other when they perceive the diversity climate of the organization to be highly inequitable. This further supports the idea that the wider social context helps to drive the conditions through which identity threat leads to tensions and distancing effects within minority groups. Lastly, moving beyond identity threat, Manstead's (2018) conceptual paper explores how the perception of one's own social class can heighten one's sensitivity and reaction to potential external threats, such that lower social classes tend to grow up in more adverse environments which make them more attuned to external threats in the long term. They, therefore, generally have lower perceived control over their environment, have a greater need for interdependency, and make more situational attributions about social phenomena, which make them more sensitive to the emotions and distress of others. They also argue that many workplaces are characterized by norms and values that mirror ideals of higher classes, and so lower classes will feel uncomfortable in such institutions and will perform below their true potential. They also position economic threat as an important contextual factor, such that when minorities at the same social standing are competing for scarce or unstable economic resources then they will be more likely to be prejudiced against by those from the same social status. For example, white working classes tend to be more prejudicial to immigrants and minorities who are also at a similar socio-economic status to them as they are likely to be in (perceived) competition for jobs, etc., whereas white middle/upper class tend to be more prejudicial to highly educated, wealthy immigrants and minorities but only when their economic privileged position is being threatened.

## Theme 2: Negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination

### *In hiring and related forms of decision-making*

The role of negative stereotypes and prejudice in workplace decision making was a common theme in four articles examining different dimensions of diversity: criminal history, social class, disability, and age. In a study assessing stereotypes held by professionals about criminal offenders and those exonerated of all charges related to a crime, Kukucka et al. (2020) demonstrates that prospective hiring managers may expect both criminals and exonerees to be less trustworthy than a job applicant with no criminal record. More surprisingly, exonerees (but not offenders) are expected to be less articulate, intelligent, and competent; compared to a control applicant. Subsequently, prospective hiring managers wished to contact more of an exoneree's references (but not an offender's) and were prepared to offer exonerees a lower wage than both the control applicant and offenders. This places exonerees, unexpectedly, in a more disadvantaged employment position than criminal offenders.

In another vignette study related to hiring decisions, Vázquez and Lois (2020) invoke stereotypes about social class and show that when a student's physical appearance matched clichés about 'chonis', the Spanish equivalent to British 'chavs', participants rated the student lower on competence, morality, and adequacy as a team member or as being professional. Participants were less willing to interact with the student or recommend them for a job, compared to when they were characterized as belonging to a high social class or were uncategorized. Negative attitudes were more common among highly materialistic individuals, suggesting that screening hiring managers for this trait may protect against biased decisions to some extent.

Two articles in this sub-theme address the protected characteristics of disability and age. Rohmer and Louvet's (2012) study elicit both explicit and implicit judgements about people with disabilities and identifies that, at an explicit level, others may judge people with disabilities as warmer yet less competent than their non-disabled peers, but, at an implicit level, they may judge those with a disability as both less competent and less warm. The authors suggest that explicit judgements may be subject to societal pressures against prejudice and therefore present as more favourable than 'true' implicit evaluations. This has implications for job applicants with disabilities whose double jeopardy may be hidden. Finally, shifting the focus from the decision maker to target individuals, Bayl-Smith and Griffin (2017) find that

individuals' perceived experiences of age discrimination at work are associated with reduced perceptions of job fit over time. These negative effects can be buffered; however, when individuals engage a work style characterized by high levels of effort and activity, which might be elicited by improving workers' perceptions of self-efficacy and personal goals.

### *Confronting prejudice and discrimination*

A trio of papers investigate precursors to, and outcomes of, confronting prejudice. Moïsuc's et al. (2018) vignette studies examine the role of individual characteristics and find that participants' self-reported tendency to confront perpetrators of immoral, uncivil and/or discriminatory behaviour correlate positively with a range of individual characteristics associated with social responsibility, social desirability, and effective emotional-cognitive coping, yet may not be correlated with self-esteem or empathy. Those more likely to confront perpetrators are likely to score low on social dominance orientation and harm avoidance, yet tendency to confront may not be related to aggressiveness. These findings suggest that speaking up is not so much about helping someone who is suffering as it is about enforcing social norms and trying to facilitate justice.

Turning to situational determinants of support for those experiencing prejudice, Kahn et al. (2016) find that men may be more likely to support women who are confronting sexism when the men themselves perceive sexism to be rare rather than pervasive, whereas the opposite may be true for women supporting women. Personal threat seems to underpin these responses when sexism is perceived as being rare, such as a fear of appearing sexist among male participants or fear of being oversensitive to sexism among female participants. When sexism is perceived as pervasive, support for confronters appears to be driven by more collective threats to group status. Results also suggest that the pervasiveness of sexism may be more salient to women and 'rare' may not seem particularly rare to them.

Woods and Ruscher's (2021) work examine communication styles used in confronting prejudice, contrasting 'call-in' (typically private, using accommodating language, with a confronter focused on education) with 'call-out' confrontations (typically public, using non-accommodating language, with a self-promoting confronter). Their findings suggest both styles are seen as similarly effective for persuading perpetrators to accept responsibility for wrongdoing and for potentially helping them change their behaviour in the future. However, call-ins may be particularly associated with positive inferences of confronter motive (educating the perpetrator rather than self-promoting), which then foster expectations of positive confrontation outcomes. Conversely, it is less clear how call-outs are expected to produce successful outcomes. Fostering positive perceived motives may therefore be an effective route for changing attitudes and behaviour when confronting prejudice.

### *Changing attitudes and norms*

Several publications offer ideas for how biased attitudes and norms might be challenged via interpersonal or organizational interventions. Howell and Ratliff's (2017) studies investigate the role of receiving information about oneself, showing how people generally believe they are less biased than other people. Importantly, they find that this 'better-than-average' belief produces a defensive and hostile reaction to feedback that indicates that they exhibit a preference for majority groups and endorse common stereotypes about a range of minority groups. The capacity for reflection, accountability, and change may therefore be lower among those who see themselves as 'better than average', suggesting that self-affirmation of key values or a focus on how negative emotional reactions can be better processed may be useful.

Shifting the focus to providing information about the out-group, Fairlamb and Cinnirella's (2021) three studies explore the boundary conditions of tolerance as a tool against prejudice. They show that adopting tolerant views can reduce prejudicial attitudes towards an out-group but may not actually change the degree to which individuals report liking out-group members. In addition, if the out-group is perceived as being intolerant itself, 'tolerant' individuals paradoxically respond with intolerance to defend the norm of tolerance they perceive to be threatened because they want to restore faith in their own cultural worldview. Finally, Vázquez and Lois (2020) show how prejudicial responses towards a

minority person can be inhibited when there is explicit information about the target's excellent (academic) performance or high social class, reinforcing the importance of individuating information in dispelling stereotypes but also demonstrating how individuals subject to stigma may be held to a higher performance standard than members of the majority group.

### Theme 3: Working in a diverse team

#### *Prescriptive stereotypes and work roles*

Two papers examine how prescriptive stereotypes can influence the work roles that are perceived as being a better or worse fit for. The first by Bongiorno et al. (2014) focuses on how a positive bias towards men in leadership roles still exists, whereas there is an equivalent 'penalty' bias for women. However, the paper finds that 'assertive' women leaders are no longer being prejudiced against as previously found/thought; rather women who fail to show assertiveness are more likely to be prejudiced against, indicating a shift in prescriptive stereotypes about women away from traditional gender roles. The subtle prejudice towards women's non-agentic behaviour suggests that traditional notions of sexism have morphed into a more contemporary form of aversive sexism, which is expressed in ambiguous situations, where it is easier to rationalize. Thus, women who do not conform to (masculinized) leadership ideals may face a penalty whereas men may have more scope to behave in different ways as a leader. In contrast, Burmeister et al. (2018) examine age rather than gender. They show how age elicits normative expectations about what role people occupy in the knowledge transfer process, such that older workers tend to be classified as the knowledge sharer and younger workers as the knowledge receiver. Underlying these classifications are perceptions regarding motive – for the older worker as the knowledge sharer, the perceived motive is more about willingness to share knowledge, rather than ability to do so; whereas for the younger worker as the knowledge receiver, the perceived motive is more about the ability to receive knowledge, as opposed to willingness to share it.

#### *The effects of team diversity*

Two empirical papers examine the effects of team diversity on health and well-being. The first by Liebermann et al. (2013) focus on age diversity within teams and shows that younger as well as older workers' health can be negatively affected by working in an age-diverse team. For younger workers, holding ageist views may exacerbate the negative impact that working in an age-diverse team has on their health; whereas for older workers holding such views may buffer the negative impact that working in age diverse team has on their health. The second empirical paper, by Luksyte and Avery (2015), focuses on gender (or sex as they refer to<sup>5</sup>), and shows that when a superordinate and a supervisor are from different genders or sexes, the subordinate tends to engage in less interpersonal citizenship behaviour. This relationship is mediated by reduced personal accomplishment, a dimension of burnout, as a subordinate may feel a lack of support and be offered inadequate resources within a mixed-sex dyad. Moreover, the study finds that work-family facilitation (i.e., where one's work activities are perceived as improving one's family life) may, on one hand, buffer the negative impact of working in a mixed-sex dyad because such facilitation can help recover resources and enable better coping, yet, on the other hand, may intensify the negative impact of working in a mixed-sex dyad. Although the reasons for this contradiction remain unclear, the authors suggest this may be due to experiencing ambivalent emotions.

A different perspective on the effects of team diversity is offered by the conceptual paper by Van Dijk and van Engen (2013). They explore how status differentiation within a diverse team influences the behaviour and performance of the group. They define status as 'an individual's prominence, respect, and influence in the eyes of others' (p.224), and within work groups, they argue that status will be unevenly

<sup>5</sup>We would like to note that a person's sex is more focused on biological/physical characteristics, whereas gender is more focused on a person's internalised identity and expression of that identity.

distributed such that it creates a rank order or 'informal social' configuration that brings a structure and clarity to how the group functions. Status tends to be attributed by fellow group members based on their judgements about the level of expertise and competence each team member has in relation to specific tasks that need to be performed. They also position status veridicality (the extent to which group members' status rank is congruent with their respective levels of expertise or competence), status legitimacy (the extent to which group members agree with each group member's status rank), and status stability (the perceived likelihood and willingness that a particular status configuration is changeable) as key moderating factors in how status may influence performance – whereby high veridicality, legitimacy, and stability enable diverse teams to perform. Although van Dijk and van Engen (2013) focus on status within a workgroup, there are interesting potential links to Manstead's (2018) paper which discusses the status differences that emerge at a more macro, structural level as a function of longer-term socio-economic circumstances. This highlights the need to bridge micro-level theorising on workgroup diversity and macro-level theorizing on broader organizational/societal diversity.

#### Theme 4: The broader organizational environment

##### *The role of organization-specific policies/practices*

Looking at the broader organizational environment, two papers show evidence that policies and practices related to diversity management are important for the lived experience of minority groups. Fletcher and Everly's (2021) time-lagged survey study on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) workers finds that these workers' perceptions of LGBT supportive practices positively relate to their life satisfaction, and that the experience of authenticity at work is a key mediating process. Providing a more in-depth case analysis, Groggins and Ryan (2013) provide a rich account of a vocational rehabilitation organization for whom the diversity of their client-workers – regarding disability, refugee status, ethnicity, and language – is central to their organizational identity. Respecting difference is seen as essential to everyday functioning and accommodation of workers' needs is treated as an expectation rather than an exception, emphasizing structural inclusion where subgroups within the organization can maintain their group identity. The diverse workplace is framed as requiring continuous learning and an openness to change as well as to making mistakes that in turn paves the way for organizational improvement. This case study encourages organizations to move away from traditional diversity and inclusion policy to a more culturally embedded practice which highlights the role of idiosyncratic deals in creating a climate of inclusion.

##### *The effects of diversity climate and the psychological contract*

Two articles illustrate how organizational context can have varying impacts depending upon employee identity. In a study of how organizations' decisions to reduce labour costs impact psychological contract breach and employee commitment, Wei et al. (2015) determine that gender plays a key role. Upon being informed that the organization will respond to financial crisis by downsizing and/or decreasing overall pay levels, women tend to report greater psychological contract breach and lower commitment when they perceive low managerial control over cutbacks. Men, in contrast, tend to report greater psychological contract breach and lower commitment when managerial control is perceived to be high. The authors attribute this difference to a discrepancy in what men and women expect from employers, with men focusing on agency and prompt receipt of entitlements and women focusing on long-term employment and support. Looking at race/ethnicity rather than gender, Singh et al. (2013) investigates links between an organization's diversity climate and employee contextual performance. They find that it is through the assurance of psychological safety that individuals can maintain and express their identity and feel comfortable enough to engage in extra-role behaviours benefitting the organization. These links may be stronger for minority employees, suggesting that positive organizational contexts may ultimately be more effective in establishing inclusive workplaces than individual diversity management practices and policies.

### *The impact of leadership and cultural change*

Finally, Nkomo and Kriek's (2011) case narratives of South African business leaders show how leaders' life stories and identities influenced their approach to leading change during the period characterized by the end of the apartheid system. Leaders took deliberate action to connect with and leverage African values in the change process. This 'African' approach is epitomized by the use of narratives closely related to the local context and a different focus on interpersonal interaction based on ubuntu, a philosophical belief that 'I am because we are', which is rooted in Africa's largely collectivist culture. Ubuntu is identified as a means of distinguishing the unique leadership challenges and needs of the African continent from the traditional Eurocentric approaches that had dominated in the apartheid era.

## DISCUSSION

In this landmark paper, we stand back and take stock of the last decade of research on diversity at work, in relation to workplace (in)equality, and look forward to the next decade by articulating important areas of future research. We systematically identify and review 25 papers published within the BPS journals from 2011 to 2021. Our review reveals many interesting and significant areas of research being conducted on the topic of diversity at work across the BPS journals.

These coalesce around a few broader insights, which we revisit in our suggestions for future research in the following section. One of these relates to the nuances of different forms of stereotypes, for example, how 'positive' stereotypes can be strategically harnessed yet are also reflective of a minority group's subordinate position and lack of autonomy (cf., Dobai & Hopkins, 2021; Fernando & Kenny, 2018), and how specific organizational roles and practices elicit prescriptive stereotypes that guide expectations and behavior within that context (e.g., Burmeister et al., 2018). Another broad insight gained is in relation to the role of the wider social context in signalling a discriminatory versus inclusive climate, and in generating threats versus safety cues, as particularly salient for how individuals navigate their identities and behaved to others (cf. Groggins & Ryan, 2013; Manstead, 2018; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2017; Singh et al., 2013). Related to this is how status is differentiated and distributed within a group (van Dijk & van Engen, 2013), and how individuals may vary in the centrality of their identity (Fletcher & Everly, 2021), which alters the way in which group members will react and behave. A final insight is how confronting prejudice/discrimination and changing attitudes/behaviour is complex and sometimes paradoxical – for example, focusing on being tolerant may increase prejudicial behaviour in certain circumstances (Howell & Ratliff, 2017), and presenting feedback to people about their prejudicial attitudes may generate defensiveness and hostility (Fairlamb & Cinnirella, 2021). Yet, there may be value in a more educational, justice-orientated, emotionally regulative approach to confronting prejudice and changing others' attitudes/behaviour (Woods & Ruscher, 2021).

Despite these insights, we are surprised not to find a common 'core' research paradigm or knowledge framework, nor any overarching theoretical debates and discussions, that help develop an ongoing narrative across diversity-related research papers published within the BPS journals. This results in a bit of a fragmented and disparate range of research studies which do not all naturally complement one another to form a core guiding research agenda. Although social identity theory (SIT) is the most widely utilized theoretical framework within the articles in our review, it is often very specific elements of the theory which are focused upon (e.g., social categorization), with some of these elements being advanced incrementally and somewhat in separation from each other. For example, Liebermann et al. (2013) focuses on the effect that holding a negative evaluation of the in-group versus out-group has on the link between team diversity and individual health whereas Luksyte and Avery (2015) examine whether being in a dissimilar (or diverse) dyad (i.e., supervisor-subordinate) may, in itself, have an impact. In relation to this, there are several interesting, interrelated theories within the broader organizational behavior/management discipline that are used, for example, person-environment fit theory

(Bayl-Smith & Griffin, 2017), climate theories (Groggins & Ryan, 2013), psychological contract theory (Wei et al., 2015), and social support theories (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2017). Yet, these theories do not seem to be integrated into an overarching model or meta-theory that helps hang or bring these together within an SIT perspective. Therefore, we encourage more novel theoretical work that seeks to address this concern and better articulate a common framework that psychological *and* management research on diversity can align with. However, we, as a community of researchers, should also reflect on our potential shared biases and how these may be influencing our theoretical perspectives on diversity research, as well as on what type of research endeavours are (de)legitimized over time (American Psychological Association, 2021; Ferguson et al., 2019).

There are also methodological and sampling limitations that mean the field is somewhat restrictive and bounded. For example, many papers within our review include multiple experimental studies to enhance rigor and replicability of the findings. However, quasi-experimental field studies and workplace interventions can also help strengthen ecological validity and explore relevant contextual factors on the ground (Briner & Walshe, 2015; Fletcher & Schofield, 2021). Moreover, there seems to be an overreliance on student samples and snowballing strategies, which may distort the accuracy and robustness of findings. Although there might be important reasons for adopting such approaches, for example when trying to gain access to difficult to reach minority groups, it may be problematic when trying to apply findings within, and across, workplace contexts. Related to this is the problem of cultural homogeneity – many studies included in our review drew upon samples from North America, the United Kingdom, or Western Europe and so caution is warranted when applying the findings of this review beyond predominantly Westernized, democratic, and capitalist contexts. We therefore encourage a greater emphasis on examining diversity, and (in)equality, at work in more collectivist, communist, or indigenous/kinship cultures. Lastly, our review is neither able to delve as deep into specific strands of diversity, nor compare findings across different strands, as much as it would have liked, given the lack of critical mass of studies around any one diversity strand. However, since we undertook our review, recently published work within the BPS journals has started to unpack stigma and objectification of weight, and ways to tackle it in the workplace (Lemmon et al., 2021). Additionally, Dobai and Hopkins (in press) have applied the concepts of identity concealment and non-disclosure to ethnicity, which has traditionally been viewed as a more visible (rather than invisible) stigma. Understanding the unique nuances within a particular diversity strand (for example, the importance of disclosure for LGBT individuals – Fletcher & Everly, 2021) as well as the specific commonalities between strands (for example, how a person's perceived competence and warmth may be influenced by their minority status – Rohmer & Louvet, 2012) may generate insight to inform an overarching model or meta-theory as discussed above.

Reflecting on the issues above, we advocate that future research, not just within the BPS journals but more widely in applied psychology, take a more epistemologically and ontologically flexible approach. This would help the field expand and to connect more readily and easily with other disciplinary areas of diversity as well as to practical concerns and challenges. Critical realism or a pragmatic philosophical perspective (Anderson et al., 2001; Kwiatkowski & Winter, 2006) may help bridge divides between positivistic, experimental studies and interpretivist, qualitative studies. To further develop this approach, in our next section we provide a few key recommendations for building bridges with human resource development (HRD), human resource management (HRM), and organization studies research on diversity. We summarize our core recommendations with regard to research designs, diversity strands, and theoretical perspectives in Table 3.

## **Promoting a broader and practically relevant future research agenda**

The psychological literature in our review largely examines diversity-related outcomes at the individual level and tends to do the same for antecedents to discrimination or inequalities. Although this has created a substantial evidence base at the individual level, there are opportunities to build

TABLE 3 Recommendations for future diversity research

Recommended research designs	Diversity strands focusing on protected characteristics/those with significant disadvantage	Recommended theoretical perspectives
Move away from purely quantitative experimental lab-oriented designs and towards: Post-positivist/critical realist quantitative methods particularly time-lagged, longitudinal, and/or multilevel designs. Critical realist/pragmatist mixed methods particularly field interventions, quasi-experiments, large scale evaluations. Critical realist/interpretivist qualitative methods particularly comparative and/or longitudinal case studies, context-rich embedded research	Extending evidence and understanding related to more established strands of gender/sex; ethnicity, race, culture, religion, and nationality; age/generations. Move to explore intersections and multiplicities of the above. Addressing neglected or harder to access strands such as LGBT+, those with disabilities/long-term health (mental and/or physical) conditions, neurodiverse individuals, lower socio-economic groups, those with a criminal history/record	SIT complemented or contrasted with broader psychological and sociological theories such as relational inequality theory, intersectionality theory; theories related to/connecting with allyship, authenticity, and empowerment; and HR perceptions and attributions frameworks

bridges with other related diversity literatures to recognize and assess the role of the context in which these processes take place. This will require psychology scholars to go beyond a purely individualistic understanding of workers' experiences with discrimination. One means of doing so would be engagement with relational inequality theory (RIT), which focuses on the role of social relationships between people and positions in organizations as the cause of inequality in access to status and rewards. According to RIT, individuals in work organizations differ in their ability to claim organizational resources and exploit other individuals in production and exchange relationships due to differences in power; cultural, status, and material advantages in resource-distributing relationships are often based on categorizations such as gender, race, citizenship, occupation, and education (Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019). A psychological approach could add considerable value to future work examining institutional and organizational variation in which categorizations form the basis for unequal access to resources as well as in how relationships are structured, and would build on the insights generated in this review article about how group members' behaviour is altered by variation in identity centrality and how status is differentiated and distributed within groups (van Dijk & van Engen, 2013; Fletcher & Everly, 2021).

Another way to connect with other literatures is to make greater use of an intersectional framework in future studies. Scholars using an intersectionality lens seek to understand social categories in relational terms, rather than as isolated units of analysis (Collins, 2015). Individuals' experiences in the workplace are produced by a complex intermingling of gender (identity), age, race and/or religion, class, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation; their outcomes cannot be fully understood without accounting for more than one demographic characteristic. Similar to RIT, contextualization is key; individuals interpret their multiple identities within the broader structures and institutions in which they are located, and thus power and inequality are dynamic and fluid within interpersonal, organizational, and societal contexts (Hwang & Beauregard, 2021). Working together with sociologists and organizational studies scholars, psychologists are uniquely qualified to extend the insights produced by our review regarding different forms of stereotypes and how these can be linked to organizational roles and practices (Burmeister et al., 2018; Dobai & Hopkins, 2021; Fernando & Kenny, 2018) by assessing individuals' understanding of their social identities and helping to situate these in a wider context, drawing together

multiple levels of analysis in one integrated framework. Future research could also gain a deeper understanding of the psychology of socially dominant groups and of privileged employees and supervisors, who may not perceive their privileges as such<sup>6</sup>.

Additionally, there is a growing interest from diversity and inclusion practitioners in the concepts of allyship (as a form of active support and advocacy to a marginalized group – Fletcher & Marvell, 2022), authenticity (as a subjective experience of expressing, and being true to, one's inner self – Cha et al., 2019), and empowerment (structural in the form of access to information, power, resources, and instrumental support; and psychological in the form of feeling a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact; Spreitzer, 2008). For example, many global consultancies implicitly discuss the importance of these (and how they feed into specific initiatives) in dedicated diversity and inclusion sections on their career webpages (Deloitte, 2021; KPMG, 2021; PwC, 2021), and Microsoft seemingly places these at the core of their diversity and inclusion strategy and make resources about inclusion available to others via an online website (Microsoft, 2021). Psychologists have a unique and critical role in advancing our understanding of how these concepts can translate into meaningful and impactful interventions. Building on the insights presented in this article relating to how confronting discrimination and changing attitudes and behaviour is complex and sometimes paradoxical (Fairlamb & Cinnirella, 2021; Howell & Ratliff, 2017; Woods & Ruscher, 2021), psychologists can apply precise theory and robust methodologies to uncover core mechanisms that can explain why and how diversity interventions to enhance allyship, authenticity and empowerment work (or not), and for whom and in what circumstances they have the most impact (Briner & Walshe, 2015). Relatedly, there is also an opportunity to extend the insights generated in this review regarding the role of the wider social context in creating threat and safety cues and in signalling the level of inclusivity of an organizational climate (Groggins & Ryan, 2013; Manstead, 2018; Paustian-Uderhal et al., 2017; Singh et al., 2013). To do so, psychologists can apply knowledge about HR perceptions and attributions to further explain why there might be misalignments between what an organization strategically intends, what happens when such diversity management practices are implemented, and how employees react to them (Wright & Nishii, 2007).

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## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

**Luke Fletcher:** Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Methodology; Project administration; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing. **T. Alexandra Beauregard:** Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

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

## ORCID

Luke Fletcher  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7238-3480>

T. Alexandra Beauregard  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9348-9110>

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