Mending the Gaps: An Exercise in Identifying and Understanding Diverse and Multicultural Team Faultlines

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ABSTRACT

The Faultlines Exercise, an experiential activity, introduces students to concepts of diversity attributes (surface and deep levels), social identity, and team faultlines. Through individual reflection and team discussion, students apply these concepts to their own diverse multicultural class teams with the goals of (a) preventing negative outcomes that may develop from faultlines and (b) improving team performance. Plenary class discussions reinforce key learning points that can be applied to teamwork throughout the course. Students in both face-to-face and online classes report that the exercise helps improve team performance and helps to identify and resolve problems. Instructions for facilitating classroom discussion and student handouts are provided, as are suggestions for adapting the exercise to other constructs.

Business schools strive to prepare their students for success in organizations. Increasingly, businesses and governments are moving from traditional hierarchies and static departmental structures to organizational designs that feature flexible and dynamic teams (McDowell, Agarwal, Miller, Okamoto, & Page, 2016), which are increasingly composed of individuals with diverse and multicultural backgrounds. Individuals who develop greater diversity within their social networks and who have been exposed to multiple cultures may improve creative thinking and complex problem-solving skills (Antonio et al., 2004; Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008), which is beneficial not only to the individual but also to a group to which that individual is committed (Bodenhausen, 2010).

The benefits of teams, including better decision-making, higher job satisfaction, and increased profitability, among others, are well documented (see, for example, Connaughton & Shuffler, 2007; Tadmor, Satterstrom, Jang, & Polzer, 2012; van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004). Yet, not all teams operate effectively (van Knippenberg et al., 2004), as the impact of the aging workforce, the influx of immigrants into the workforce, the need to accommodate workers with disabilities, and the need to include and respect members of religious and LGBT communities (Konrad, 2006) place more demands on teams by requiring greater effort to maintain and maximize team effectiveness.

How can we prepare our students to face these challenges and to function at high levels in diverse and multicultural teams and organizations? There is wisdom to be gained from organizations that have faced these challenges and met them head on. For example, Google launched a multiyear intensive investigation, called Project Aristotle, to learn how to build the perfect team and improve team performance (Duhigg, 2016). Perhaps not surprisingly, it found that (a) team process was more important than who was on the team and (b) the most important factor contributing to working together was psychological safety – a concept defined by Edmondson (1999) as "shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking" (p. 354). Countless other corporate examples of effective team building and team cultures exist in the burgeoning literature surrounding the topic of team performance. Recently, IBM has been recognized for its design thinking approach, the brainchild of CEO Ginni Rometty, used to embed the needs of customers as a central guiding force in teams across the corporation (see O'Keefe, 2017). Likewise, Toyota and Whole Foods have been recognized for their unique team attributes both inside and outside of the office (see Alsever, Hempel, Taylor, & Roberts, 2014).

Further, recent meta-analytic findings support these corporate examples, with both affective outcomes (i.e., enhanced trust, confidence, and favorable attitudes toward teammates) and process outcomes (enhanced communication, coordination, and adaptability) resulting from team building (Salas, DiazGranados, Weaver, & King, 2008). Thus, to aid students in team building and improving team performance, the Faultlines Exercise asks students to identify and apply the concepts of diversity attributes, social identity, and team faultlines to their own diverse and multi-cultural teams. By reflecting on and applying these concepts to their team interactions throughout the semester, team members may develop communication norms and an understanding of their teammates that helps to build trust within the team. When such trust develops, teams will likely perform more effectively (Edmondson, 1999; "Identify dynamics of effective teams", n.d.).

Theoretical foundation

The major constructs employed in the Faultlines Exercise are described below.

Diversity – demographic attributes

Diversity typically refers to the differences between individuals on attribute(s) that may result in the perception that the other person is different from oneself (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). According to Harrison, Price, and Bell (1998), the two types of diversity commonly associated with group formation are surface-level diversity and deep-level diversity. Surface-level diversity refers to the differences in individual characteristics that are "immediately observable" and "are typically reflected in physical features" (p. 97). Such characteristics include age, sex, race/ethnicity, and country of origin. Deep-level diversity refers to the differences in individuals that are not easily observable and "are communicated through verbal and nonverbal behavior patterns" (p. 98). Such characteristics include attitudes, beliefs, and values. Deep-level diversity is not easily observable; it is "learned through extended, individualized interactions and information gathering" (Harrison et al., 1998, p. 98).

Harrison et al. (1998) suggest that at the stage of a team's initial formation, group members may categorize themselves using readily observable demographic features, i.e., using surface-level definitions. However, as time progresses and more group interactions take place, group members' perceived notions about other members can be modified or replaced with a better understanding of other members' psychological attributes. Thus, continued affiliation among members is based on the knowledge of attitudes, beliefs, and value similarities rather than on demographics.

When it comes to team outcomes, deep-level attributes have a greater potential to impact team performance than surface-level attributes. Horwitz and Horwitz (2007) found that surface-level attributes such as gender, age, and race/ethnicity did not impact team performance, but deep-level attributes such as organizational tenure, education, and functional expertise impact the quality of team performance. Besides acquired individual attributes such as tenure and expertise, deep-level diversity can include differences based on cultural values and beliefs that can impact a team's outcomes (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonsen, 2009). Findings by Hoogendoorn and Praag (2015) suggest that a lower level of cultural diversity has a flat or declining effect on teams' outcomes in terms of sales, profits, and profits per share but more cultural diversity in the teams has significant positive effect on teams' performance.

Research on multicultural teams has explored the impact of both surface-level diversity and deep-level diversity on the functioning of teams. In investigating the impact of each of these dimensions, two research perspectives have been utilized – social categorization and the information/decision-making perspective (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). When a team focuses more on surface-level aspects, such as gender, race/ethnicity, and age, it is emphasizing social categorization, homophily, and faultlines, and, accordingly, distinguishes between similar *in-group* members and dissimilar *out-group* members (Stahl et al., 2009; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). On the other hand, when a team focuses more on deep-level aspects such as education and functional background, it is emphasizing the information/decision-making perspective (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Here, group members are likely to direct more effort in making communication richer and effective, which is associated with creativity and innovation (Stahl, Mäkelä, Zander, & Maznevski, 2010).

Social identity

The concept of social identity was first introduced by Tajfel in the early 1970s; later Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed social identity theory. Tajfel (1974) defines social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 69). In other words, it refers to an individual's conceptualization of self, using that person's affiliation

to a social group. As Turner (1975) explains, because people derive their identity from the group to which they belong, they may increase self-image by enhancing the status of the group to which they belong. Alternatively, self-image can be enhanced by discriminating or holding prejudice against members of outside groups. These situations promote intergroup social comparisons and create *in-groups* (groups to which we belong) and *out-groups* (groups to which we do not belong). For example, when students categorize themselves as female students, they are doing two things at a time – highlighting their similarities to other female students and showcasing their differences from male students. In this context, female students form the *in-group* and male students form the *out-group*.

The concept of social identity is useful in understanding how groups are formed and how they function. It explains how, in our need for more positive identity, we treat *in-group* members more favorably than *out-group* members (Turner, 1975). Social identity is also helpful in explaining the problems that can occur in groups with diverse members (Brickson, 2008) and in easing the problems associated with diversity (Stahl et al., 2010). For example, strong *in-group* identity positively influences members' commitment to the team and is related to higher motivation (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; Zee, Atsma, & Brodbeck, 2004); however, strong in-*group* identity may create tensions and elicit negative affective consequences within the large group (Costarelli & Callà, 2004; Hennesy & West, 1999). In this way, in-group social identities may create what are known as faultlines.

Faultlines

In geology, a faultline occurs when rocks slide past each other in large-scale plate tectonic movements that can eventually lead to earthquakes. In their description of group faultlines, Lau and Murnighan (1998) draw an analogy with geological faultlines in the following ways. As with plate tectonics, a fracture in the group can lie dormant for many years absent an outside external force. And, just as the earth represents many layers of attributes, group members' demographic attributes exist side by side in a group, representing a complex array of layers of understanding and perceptual similarity. Finally, the analogy is useful for the colorful reveal that results from the act of a fracturing faultline: a physical crack reveals the importance of the layered attributes in ways that may not be evident had the collapse along the faultline not occurred. Similarly,

geological faultlines serve as a metaphorical template for the impact of differences within groups of human beings who have been tasked with working collaboratively toward common goals.

A rich body of literature has evolved in the organizational behavior domain that explores the intra-group differences of team members from the unique perspective of faultlines. Described by Lau and Murnighan (1998), group faultlines are "hypothetical dividing lines" (p. 328) that are based on one or more demographic characteristics of members, such as age or race, or on non-demographic characteristics, such as personal values. Faultlines are said to develop within groups based on members' social identities and on perceptions that members form regarding their own similarities and/or differences when they compare themselves with other members (Bodenhausen, 2010; Lau & Murnighan, 2005). The most immediate impact of faultlines is that they serve to break the primary group into several smaller subgroups (Lau & Murnighan, 1998).

Some benefits have been reported from the presence of group faultlines, particularly as it pertains to the increased learning within subgroups (Gibson & Vermeulen, 2003). More often than not, however, faultlines have been found to lower group outcomes and to lower employee attitudes and citizenship behaviors (Thatcher & Patel, 2012). A group faultline can sap the energy of a group away from its common purpose. When strong faultlines are formed in a group, many negative outcomes can result, including interpersonal conflict (Chrobot-Mason, Ruderman, Weber, & Ernst, 2009), competition within the large group, increased conflictual interactions, lowered satisfaction in the group, and the lowering of performance overall (Thatcher & Patel, 2012).

When diverse teams fail due to emergence of faultlines, there are often two primary reasons: failure to collaborate and failure to share knowledge (Gratton, Voigt, & Erickson, 2007). As Gratton et al. found, when subgroups emerge along faultlines in a team, the subgroup members are more likely to collaborate only within their own subgroup, hindering the development of trust and goodwill throughout the entire team. Additionally, subgroup members are more likely to keep information to themselves. Coupled with the lack of collaboration, this selfish retention of information can severely impact the functioning of complex work teams so common in the organizational landscape.

In summary, group faultlines may result in many negative group outcomes (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2009; Thatcher & Patel, 2012). When a team focuses on surface-level diversity characteristics of its members, it is more likely to emphasize faultlines and distinguish between similar *in-group* members and dissimilar *out-*

group members (Stahl et al., 2009; van Knippenberg & schippers, 2007). Social identity theory helps us to understand how groups are formed and why we treat *in-group* members more favorably than *out-group* members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity is also helpful in explaining the problems that can occur in groups with diverse members (Brickson, 2008) and in easing the problems associated with diversity (Stahl et al., 2010).

However, if a team focuses on the deep-level diversity characteristics of its members, it is more likely to extend effort in communicating effectively, which enhances its ability to be creative and innovative (Stahl et al., 2010). Better communication may also improve knowledge sharing as well as help to build trust and goodwill among team members, both of which contribute to collaboration (Gratton et al., 2007) and thereby enhance team performance. For these reasons, we emphasize the concepts of diversity, social identity, and faultlines in the Faultlines Exercise. The perspective that recognition of faultlines can be healthy and lead to positive outcomes is central to the creation of this exercise. While the term "fault" may lead to misunderstanding for some, the use of the geological metaphor has been found to ease that discomfort in prior administrations of the exercise, and is, thus, recommended.

The Faultlines Exercise

The Faultlines Exercise is designed to introduce students to major theories about diversity and demographic attributes (Harrison et al., 1998), social identity (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), and team faultlines (Gratton et al., 2007; Lau & Murnighan, 1998, 2005; Thatcher & Patel, 2012). Students reflect upon and then discuss and apply these concepts to their teams during the process of forming the teams, with the goal of developing effective communication and empathetic norms to improve team performance as teams work together throughout the semester. We use the exercise in both face-to-face and online classes at the beginning of a semester after standing teams are formed, typically in week 3 or 4 of a 15-week semester. It is immediately followed by a team charter assignment, and we encourage students to use what they have learned about team members' diversity and identification of possible faultlines as they develop their team norms and procedures. In the next weeks of the semester, the team engages in several team assignments and a major project related to leadership and ethics. Team members may be asked to reflect at midterm and at semester's end about their experiences within their team.

Learning objectives for the exercise

Two student learning objectives inform this exercise:

a. To identify the concepts of demographic diversity, including surface-level and deep-level attributes, social identity, and team faultlines, and to apply these concepts in their own diverse and multicultural teams.
b. To collaborate with teammates in devising team-centric strategies to prevent or combat negative outcomes associated with faultlines and to improve team performance.

Target audience

Although designed for a graduate survey course in leadership and ethics in which team performance is a critical component, the exercise may be modified for use in other courses, e.g., organizational behavior or courses in which standing teams are used. It may be used with both graduate and undergraduate students; please see Appendix A for variations in the exercise, including adaptation for online classes. In the most ideal circumstance, the instructor curates the teams to include members with various diversity attributes and cultural backgrounds. Such standing teams may be employed, or the instructor may form new teams for the exercise.

The recommended team size for this activity is four to five members, although larger teams may be employed if necessary. Multiple teams' experiences will add richness to plenary discussions. In large class sizes, the instructor may need to adjust the timing of plenary discussions to allow for participation by all teams.

Timing of exercise

This exercise is designed to be used soon after teams are formed, typically at the beginning of a semester. The exercise is timed for 75 minutes in one face-to-face class meeting but may be divided into two sections for 50-minute class meetings. It may also be expanded to allow for more plenary discussion in a longer class period. Please see Table 1 for a summary of the suggested timing of the exercise and Appendix A for adaptation for an online course.

Materials needed

In face-to-face classes, students will need a copy of assigned readings (please see Appendix B: Required and

Table 1. Time table for conducting the exercise in 75 minutes.

Estimated time	Action
Before class meeting in which exercise is run	Students read assigned readings about diversity, social identity, faultlines, and multicultural teams (see Appendix B).
10 minutes in class (This can be extended for longer classes.)	Instructor leads brief plenary discussion of surface-level diversity, deep-level diversity, and social identity, based on assigned readings, to ensure students are familiar with concepts.
5 minutes in class	Instructor briefly introduces exercise to students and asks them to sit with their previously formed teams. Instructor distributes Student Worksheet (Appendix C).
4 minutes in class	Students use the Worksheet to individually write notes to describe their own surface-level and deep-level diversity characteristics, as well as their own social identities.
16 minutes in class	Instructor reminds students of the principles of respect, confidentiality, and no pressure. Students join with team members. Each team member shares the diversity attributes and social identities they are willing to share. All team members speak, if only to say, "I don't want to share anything." All team members listen respectfully while each teammate speaks in turn.
8 minutes in class (This begins the second session for a 50-minute class meeting.)	Instructor leads brief plenary discussion of team faultlines, based on assigned readings, to ensure students can apply concept to their teams.
12 minutes in class, as time allows	Each team appoints scribe to capture main points of discussion to distribute to team members. Team members may also make notes for personal use. Based on what team members know of themselves and each other at this time, each team brainstorms about its own possible surface-level faultlines, how to prevent or combat negative outcomes associated with faultlines and how to improve the positive outcomes of team communication and trust. Depending on design of module and length of class, this discussion may be extended.
10 minutes	In plenary discussion, each team shares a 1-to-2 minute summary of its discussion about possible faultlines and strategies, maintaining individual confidentiality. Alternately, teams may post this summary on the class' electronic learning system.
10 minutes	Instructor leads exercise debriefing using the questions listed in Appendix D. Alternately, the questions may be used for a written discussion board or journal assignment, as the instructor prefers.

Suggested Readings). They will also need individual copies of Appendix C: Student Worksheet and of Appendix D: Reflection Questions about the Faultlines Exercise. The instructor may also choose optionally to distribute copies of Appendix E: Diversity, Social Identity, and Faultlines – Definitions. If desired, the instructor will need a white board and writing instruments to make notes during plenary discussion.

Advance preparation by students

Students may be assigned traditional research articles, chosen from the reading list in Appendix B; optionally, instructors may assign other articles about these constructs. The articles introduce the concepts of diversity demographics, social identity, and faultlines in diverse and multicultural teams. The articles should be read prior to the class meeting in which the exercise is run.

As a further step in understanding of these concepts, instructors may ask students to think about their own history and the ways in which others describe them. These experiential stories, in which students themselves are the central actors, may help them to clarify their own values, attitudes, and beliefs.

Advance preparation by instructor

Before running the exercise with students, the instructor should:

- curate diverse and/or multicultural teams within the class,
- assign specific readings for the class,
- read through the entire exercise,
- gather the writing materials needed for a white board, if one is to be used, and
- print/photocopy copies for each student of the worksheet in Appendix C: Student Worksheet for the Faultlines Exercise and copies of Appendix D: Reflection Questions about the Faultlines Exercise.

For those who would like to read more about diversity demographics, social identity, faultlines, and multicultural team theories, read Appendix B: Required and Suggested Readings.

Teaching notes

Instructions for running the exercise

Please review Table 1 for the timing of each step of the exercise. Decide whether to modify time allotted for

plenary discussions and individual and team tasks to fit the timing of your class meetings. Also, review the previous section entitled "Advance Preparation by the Instructor."

When assigning the readings, the instructor may tell students that individual and team exercises in the following weeks will be based on the readings. To start the exercise in class, tell students that the class session will begin with a discussion of the assigned readings, followed by individual reflection and team discussion. The instructor may also share that the goal of the exercise is to help students work more effectively in their multicultural teams on several projects throughout the semester. An optional script to introduce the exercise is provided in Appendix C.

Guidelines for group and class discussion

Self-disclosure is "the intentional revelation of information that outsiders would not otherwise know" (Frisby & Sidelinger, 2013, p. 241). Student sharing of personal information is an important element of the Faultlines Exercise. Self-disclosure about deep-level diversity attributes and social identities may be more difficult in a multicultural group or class due to cultural differences about the appropriateness of self-disclosure, in attitudes toward hierarchy and authority, in methods of decision-making, in preferences for direct vs. indirect communication, and in understanding of verbal and nonverbal communication (Allen, Long, O'Mara, & Judd, 2003; Brett, Behfar, & Kern, 2006; Frisby & Sidelinger, 2013; Holley & Steiner, 2005).

It may be useful for students to recall prior group experiences to draw out self-disclosure. For example, at the beginning of the semester when assigned teams begin their work, one of our authors routinely asks students to report out on what their worst team experiences have been in previous classroom environments. The focus of this discussion is commonly on student team members' behaviors and on work flow and teammates' reliability. The instructor then suggests ways in which these problems may be avoided in their class and encourages students to structure their work to avoid similar difficulties. Similarly, by asking students about prior team experiences, students may be prompted to explore faultlines that may be root causes of the conflicts and lackluster performance difficulties experienced in previous team situations.

Student disclosures may help build a positive class environment but could also disrupt classroom learning (Frisby & Sidelinger, 2013). To promote an environment in which student disclosure may promote positive outcomes, instructors should provide guidelines for group and class discussion (Frisby & Sidelinger, 2013; Griffing, 2016; Holley & Steiner, 2005) at the beginning of the exercise. Guidelines have been shown to offer structure and constraint that may be lacking in students' often unfiltered sharing of personal information on social media (Boyden, 2012).

Guidelines should make clear to students that some shared information cannot be held in confidentiality by the instructor. Examples include incidents related to sex discrimination and sexual misconduct, such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking, whether the incidents occurred on campus or off campus ("What is Title IX?", 2018). While some campus officials, such as mental-health and pastoral counselors or healthcare workers, may have professional obligations that allow them to hold certain disclosures in confidence, other campus officials, including faculty, may be obligated to report certain types of incidences ("What is Title IX?", 2018; Cartwright & Luningham, 2014). Instructors may be required to include specific university statements in their syllabi. (Check your institution's policies about instructor responsibility relative to Title IX; Griffing, 2016.)

This exercise is written with the understanding that there will be differences across individual students' national origins and the inherent associated cultural mores. It is recognized that in some cultures the good of the company reigns supreme over what is good for the individual. For the purposes of this exercise, students are asked to be as honest and as open as they can be, within their own bounds of comfort. The assumption is that all students are concerned about team performance but not at any significant personal cost to their own emotional well-being or sense of safety as a member of the class. Should they become uncomfortable with the exercise, students can be encouraged to speak to the instructor and can be reminded of campus resources, such as a counseling center, health center, or interfaith center. Campus resources can be listed in the course syllabus. Additional guidelines appear below.

Recommended guidelines for a multicultural group emphasize these four principles: relevancy, respect, confidentiality, and the choice of disclosure ("Crossing the line", n.d.; Griffing, 2016). Relevancy reminds students that their disclosures should be appropriate to the topic at hand, whether in sharing direct information or personal examples (Frisby & Sidelinger, 2013; Griffing, 2016). Relevancy is particularly expected by peers (Frisby & Sidelinger, 2013). Respect includes being courteous to others; listening to each other and not interrupting those who are speaking; allowing everyone to speak; challenging ideas, not the person expressing the idea ("Examples of discussion guidelines", n.d.;

Frisby & Sidelinger, 2013), and not demeaning or devaluing others' experiences (Cannon, 1990; "Examples of discussion guidelines", n.d.).

Confidentiality means that students keep personal information shared by others during the exercise secret or private ("Confidentiality", n.d.). The instructor may want to advise students that although classmates may pledge confidentiality, it is not guaranteed; therefore, before disclosing personal information, students should consider how they might feel should their information be shared outside of the classroom (Griffing, 2016). Such a reminder about individual choice of disclosure should be coupled with the guideline that students should not pressure those who have set limits on what they are willing to share ("Examples of discussion guidelines", n.d.).

Other guidelines that are helpful to promoting good discussion practices advise students to share information about their own culture, to actively pursue information about others' cultures, and to be aware that they may be misinformed about their own and others' cultures (Cannon, 1990). Finally, remind students to assume that group members are doing their best (Cannon, 1990; "Examples of discussion guidelines", n.d.). All of the preceding guidelines may be included in the course syllabus as well as reviewed orally in class.

After reviewing guidelines for group and class discussion, ask students to sit with their teams. After teams are assembled, follow the steps and timing outlined in Table 1.

Leading the plenary discussions

There are two plenary discussions led by the instructor and a recommended, but optional, plenary discussion for team sharing and debriefing at the end of the exercise. The purpose of the two instructor-led plenary discussions is to ensure that students understand the concepts discussed in the assigned readings on which the exercise is based.

Plenary discussion about diversity and social identity

The first plenary discussion occurs at the beginning of the in-class exercise and focuses on the concepts of surface-level diversity, deep-level diversity, and social identity. Definitions from suggested readings are provided in Appendix E: Diversity, Social Identity, and Faultlines – Definitions.

Instructors may begin the exercise by stating that students will be working individually and with their teams to apply the concepts of diversity and social identity to their team interactions and will be doing so in multiple steps throughout the class meeting. To ensure that students have a good understanding of these concepts, open the floor to discussion by asking, in your preferred style, a broad question, such as "What can you tell me about diversity?" or a specific question, such as, "How might you define surface level diversity?" Encourage students to build on their classmates' contributions. Allow a few minutes for students to discuss and differentiate between the concepts of surface-level and deep-level diversity. If students do not quickly arrive at definitions provided in the assigned readings, shorten the discussion by adding your own commentary and completing the definition.

Students may be hesitant to express their ideas and to share personal examples, especially when the exercise is run in one of the first few classes of the semester when students and instructors are still unknown to each other. Instructors can model desired communication behaviors and empathy by listening respectfully to those students who volunteer and by encouraging all to speak. Instructors may also provide their own personal examples of each construct. Finally, showing students a slide of the popular "iceberg" graphic that depicts surface-level characteristics above the waterline and deep-level characteristics below the waterline may provide a visual image of the diversity concepts.

Plenary discussion about faultlines

The second plenary discussion occurs at the midpoint of the in-class exercise and focuses on the concept of team faultlines. If the exercise is run in two 50-minute class meetings, this plenary discussion occurs at the start of the second day. Instructors may begin by noting that this part of the exercise involves both individual and team effort in applying the faultline concepts to their teams. Similar to the first plenary discussion, instructors may ask students to describe faultlines to ensure a common understanding of the term.

Team meetings and discussions

After this brief introduction, the teams should meet and, building on their previous discussion of diversity attributes and social identities, identify possible faultlines within the team. Likely these would be based on surface-level characteristics at this early point of team interaction. As possible faultlines are identified, teams should brainstorm strategies to prevent or combat negative outcomes associated with faultlines and to improve positive outcomes for their working together. Teams should appoint a scribe to record notes about this discussion for sharing in plenary discussion and for future team meetings (please see Table 1).

During the teams' discussions about diversity attributes and social identity in face-to-face class meetings, instructors should observe how each team interacts and give help

only if asked. Instructors can note to themselves if any student does not speak, if team members listen respectfully to peers or interrupt or ignore some team members. These observations can be shared with teams during the debriefing session or in a private meeting, as appropriate.

Plenary discussion for team sharing and debriefing at the end of the exercise

The third plenary discussion may be held at the end of the exercise in conjunction with the exercise debriefing. During this period, each team shares a 1-to-2 minute summary of its discussion about possible faultlines and how to prevent or work with them, maintaining individual confidentiality. The instructor serves as a facilitator and ensures that all teams have time to share their comments. If class time is insufficient for this team sharing, we recommend that teams post their summaries on the class' electronic learning system. The instructor can extend this into a discussion board assignment in which all students respond to the team summaries, if desired.

Debriefing the exercise

The debriefing session may be conducted in class or via the course's electronic learning system as a class discussion board or as an individual journal assignment. Whether conducted in class or online, instructors should distribute the debriefing questions to the students (please see Appendix D: Reflection Questions about the Faultlines Exercise).

Student feedback

Feedback on the exercise was sought from students enrolled in both face-to-face and online class sections in a graduate course in ethics and leadership. Data were collected at the end of two semesters in 2017 from 45 individual students who were members of standing semester-long teams in both class modalities. Missing data were limited, with only four students not responding. Of the respondents, 26 were members of seven teams in face-to-face sections, and 15 were members of five teams in online sections. Of the respondents, 46% were from the United States while 54% were from African countries, Asian countries, or Caribbean islands. Of respondents, 51% were women, and 49% were men. Students answered open-ended questions about the exercise.

Did exercise help improve team performance?

Students were asked to reflect upon their individual work and team discussions in week 3 or 4 of surface-level and deep-level diversity characteristics and social

Table 2. Students' feedback on how the exercise helped team performance.

Team performance	Face to Face (F2F) (%)	Online (%)
Exercise helped team performance	73	76
Helped to identify and resolve problems	63	46
Helped to understand members' differences	58	31
Helped to identify shared goals	11	23

identity(ies), consider their several team projects throughout the semester, and then answer whether they thought the team's early discussion helped, did not help, or had no effect on their team's subsequent working together in the remainder of the semester. Results are summarized in Table 2. To consider and further explore the impact of modality, sampling was taken from both delivery platforms.

As noted in Table 2, the majority of students did find the exercise to be effective, in both online and face-to-face sections. The exercise was also deemed to help the group to identify problems and resolve them, to help members understand differences, and to identify shared goals, across both forms of course delivery platforms.

Differences across delivery platforms: face-to-face and online modalities

As shown in the results in Table 3, chi-square test of independence [$\chi2(2, N = 41) = .04, < .05$] indicated a significant difference between face-to-face students and online students in only one area: initial closeness. More students from online sections compared to face-to-face sections indicated that they did not feel initial closeness to another team member. That online students may profess an initial lack of closeness is not surprising given the lack of face-to-face contact and early stage of interaction online at the beginning of the semester.

Small subset reported "no effect"

Less than 20% students found this exercise had no effect on subsequent team performance. Reasons given for respondents' judgment of "no effect" varied. For those in face-to-face sections, one explanation was that team members focused on team goals and followed the team charter. Several students reported that focusing on the task was an important reason why the exercise had no effect. According to Gratton et al. (2007), focusing on team goals and tasks is an effective strategy in newly formed teams, albeit for our results we note that this focus may not assist the team in identifying or responding to faultlines.

Table 3. Students' feedback on different aspects of the exercise.

	Face to Face (%)			Online (%)			
	Yes	No effect	No	Yes	No effect	No	Chi-square test
Effectiveness of the exercise	73.1	19.2	0.0	76.5	11.8	0.0	$\chi^2(1, N = 41) = .60, > .05]$
SI – initial closeness*	85.0	4.0	11.0	53.3	0.0	46.7	$\chi^2(2, N = 41) = .04, < .05]$
SI – later shift	30.7	34.6	34.6	46.7	6.7	33.3	$\chi^2(2, N = 39) = .15, > .05]$
Occurrence of FL	50.0	3.8	46.2	66.7	0.0	33.3	$\chi^2(2, N = 41) = .49, > .05]$

Note: * denotes significant difference between face-to-face and online format.
Also, SI refers to social identity and *FL* refers to faultline.

Occurrence of faultlines

Twenty-three of the 41 students (56.1%) said that faultlines emerged in their teams during their semester's projects. Several faultlines related to deep-level diversity characteristics emerged and were thought to be disruptive to the team's work in both face-to-face and online teams. The most common faultlines for both types of teams included time management (scheduling time for meetings and working on team-set project benchmarks), differences in work ethic (preference to start early to avoid last-minute pressure vs. preference to delay start and work under pressure), and communication – or lack thereof. Students reported that there were differences in members' values related to time management and work ethic, and these were largely resolved by planning and allocating work and by confronting teammates who were not contributing as expected. Due to these confrontation discussions, in two cases errant members improved performance, and, in one case, members did not improve performance, resulting in other teammates completing those members' tasks. Communication issues (lack of timely response or no response to teammates) were resolved through the employment of different communication methods such as texting, email, and Google Docs.

Teams that reported the absence of faultlines

Seventeen of the 41 students (41.5%) did not think that faultlines emerged in their teams during the semester. The most common reasons identified by students in face-to-face classes were team members focusing on team goals and tasks, which is an effective strategy in newly formed teams (Gratton et al., 2007).

Strategies to combat faultlines

The most common strategy mentioned by both face-to-face and online students concerned communication practices. As is evident in the literature (Gratton et al., 2007), several teams identified communication as a possible faultline and developed strategies to prevent its emergence, while other teams faced communication difficulties as they worked on different class assignments and then developed strategies to resolve the issues. Both types of student teams used a mixture of communication channels, including text, emails, group talk apps, group phone calls, and Google Docs. One team thought that use of Google Docs allowed everyone's voice to be heard and not overpowered by dominant members, and another advocated using Google Docs to overcome language barriers between English-as-first language and English-as-second language speakers.

Social identities

As noted above, a majority of students indicated that early discussion of social identities, along with discussion of diversity characteristics, helped to improve team performance. Because we were also interested in students' application of these concepts in their personal team interactions, we asked students if they initially felt closer to or more comfortable with any of their team members, and, if so, was it due to social identity emerging from surface-level or deep-level characteristics. We also asked if their preference for or closeness to team members changed over the semester, and, if so, why. In face-to-face classes, 85% of students felt close to one or more teammates in the initial stages of teamwork due to sharing surface-level or deep-level diversity attributes. In contrast, only 53% of online students said that they felt closer to one team member at the beginning of teamwork, and all attributed it to sharing surface-level traits.

Discussion

The Faultlines Exercise gives students an opportunity to engage in self-reflection about the formal constructs of diversity and social identity. Then the exercise provides a space where students can engage in a dynamic process with their teammates in which they share their reflections and learn more about faultlines. This early awareness of what problems might arise and students' brainstorming of strategies to prevent or minimize possible faultlines leads to students being better prepared to appreciate the similarities and differences among team members. This includes students being

conscious of deep-level differences that affect interpersonal interactions and, ultimately, team performance.

The student feedback that was collected post-exercise was quite revealing, and results appear to indicate that the goals of the exercise have been achieved. Several points from the self-report questions are noteworthy. First, over 70% of students report that their participation in the Faultlines Exercise helped to improve their class team's performance. Second, these results occurred in online classes, as well as face-to-face classes. The outcome of improved team performance for both online and in-person teams has practical implications in organizational settings, where use of flexible and dynamic teams continues to grow (McDowell et al., 2016).

Perhaps the most interesting chapter in the story behind the student feedback findings is the "how" behind perceptions of improved team performance. In our experience, students often come to the classroom without full awareness of their own identities and of the ways in which they are different from their teammates. Differences may be swept into the broad category of "personality," and thus may be perceived to be insurmountable when differences create team interaction flaws. Students may favor those whom they already know or who appear to have similar characteristics, and they shy away from those who are "different." These patterns of behavior are perhaps easier than reaching out to those whom one is unlike and are consistent with literature on homophily in organizations (see, for example, Kleinbaum, Stuart, & Tushman, 2013). However, by addressing faultlines, the team can improve its performance, as this exercise promotes.

Conclusion

In the Faultlines Exercise, we link the discrete constructs of diversity, social identity, faultlines, and team performance. Organizations with diverse and multicultural teams face practical problems caused by team fissures, in-groups, and out-groups. The Faultlines Exercise offers an approach to mending such gaps.

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Appendix A: Adaptations

Topical Content

While designed to introduce and apply the constructs of diversity, social identity, and faultlines to work teams, the Faultlines Exercise is much like a prism that, with a turn of the wrist, offers a different perspective. As such, organizational behavior and management concepts such as conflict, negotiation, or leadership may be highlighted. If focusing on leadership, one may apply different leadership theories or styles to the discussion or might emphasize how a leader can navigate faultlines by switching from relationship building to task orientation (see Gratton et al., 2007, for an example of this).

The Faultlines Exercise can be extended by adding articles and assignments about cultural intelligence, and it works well in conjunction with an assignment about team charters. The exercise may also be extended by adding discussion sessions throughout the semester or a follow-up session at the end of the course.

Online Modality

As with administration in a face-to-face class, we use the Faultlines Exercise in online classes at the beginning of a semester after standing teams are formed, typically in week 3 or 4 of a 15-week semester. Thereafter, the exercise progresses much like it does in the face-to-face classes with one exception: the online format exercise occurs during a 1-week module rather than in one class meeting.

Assignments for online use include using journal assignments to record individual reflection, team discussion board assignments to record team interaction about the constructs, and course discussion board assignments for team sharing and debriefing of the exercise. The assignments mirror the face-to-face assignments very carefully.

SAMPLE Online Assignments

Week 4 Journal: Diversity and Social Identity (individual assignment)

After reading our assigned readings for this module: complete the "Thinking about yourself" worksheet. Please identify at least three surface-level and three deep-level diversity characteristics that you have. Also, identify at least three social identities that you have (100–150 words). Please remember that this should be done with your own sense of safety and within your own zone of comfort. While your journal can only be read by you and your instructor, at some point you will be asked to share this sort of information with your teammates.

Week 4 Group Discussions: Identities and Faultlines

Assignment G4A: On your team's private group discussion board, all team members should share their diversity and identities – as much as they are comfortable in sharing. This may include information that you discussed in your Journal 4 assignment.

Assignment G4B: On your team's private group discussion board, all team members should brainstorm about the following: (a) possible surface-level (and deep-level, too, if you have shared deep-level attributes) faultlines that might exist in your team that could cause performance challenges for your team, (b) strategies that team members can use to combat the faultlines, and (c) likely strengths and weaknesses of your team that can help you prevent or minimize faultlines that might occur unexpectedly throughout the semester.

Assignment G4C: Then, *as a team*, prepare a summary of your discussion (200 words) about possible faultlines and challenges and how your team might overcome them. Maintain the confidentiality of individual team member information in this summary. This summary will be posted to the Course Discussion Board (D4) by (deadline). Only one team member needs to post it, although any team member is free to add comments.

Appendix B: Required and Suggested Readings

Required Readings for Students

We recommend that the following two articles should be read by students before the class meeting in which the exercise is run. Alternately, instructors may choose their own articles to describe the concepts of diversity, social identity, and faultlines:

Feitosa, J., Grossman, R., Coultas, C. W., Salazar, M. R., & Salas, E. (2012). Integrating the fields of diversity and culture:

A focus on social identity. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 5*(3), 365–368.

Gratton, L., Voigt, A., & Erickson, T. J. (2007). Bridging faultlines in diverse teams. *MIT Sloan Management Review, 48*(4), 22–29.

Suggested Readings for Instructor

For further information about the constructs, instructors may wish to read the following articles:

For demographic diversity, surface and deep levels:

Stahl, G. K., Mäkelä, K., Zander, L., & Maznevski, M. L. (2010). A look at the bright side of multicultural team diversity. *Scandinavian Journal of Management, 26*, 439–447.

van Knippenberg, D., & Schippers, M. C. (2007). Work group diversity. *Annual Review of Psychology, 58*, 515–541.

For social identity theory:

Brown, R. (2000). Social Identity Theory: past achievements, current problems and future challenges. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 30*, 745–778.

Hogg, M. A., & Terry, D. J. (2000). Social identity and self-categorization processes in organizational contexts. *The Academy of Management Review, 25*(1), 121–140.

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Zee, K. V. D., Atsma, N., & Brodbeck, F. (2004). The influence of social identity and personality on outcomes of cultural diversity in teams. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 35*, 283–303.

For faultline theory:

Gibson, C., & Vermeulen, F. (2003). A healthy divide; subgroups as a stimulus for team learning behavior. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 48*, 202–239.

Lau, D. C., & Murnighan, J. K. (1998). Demographic diversity and faultlines: The compositional dynamics of organizational groups *Academy of Management Review, 23*(2), 325–340.

Lau, D. C., & Murnighan, J. K. (2005). Interactions within groups and subgroups: The effects of demographic faultlines. *Academy of Management Journal, 48*(4), 645–659.

Thatcher, S. M. B., & Patel, P. C. (2012). Group faultlines: A review, integration, and guide to future research. *Journal of Management, 38*(4), 969–1009.

For priming individuals to think about team experiences and individual attributes:

Useem, M., Jordan, R., & Koljatic, M. (Fall 2011). How to lead during a crisis: Lessons from the rescue of the Chilean miners. *MIT Sloan Management Review, 53*(1), 49–55.

Appendix C: Student Worksheet for the Faultlines Exercise

Optional Instructor Script

The following script is one method by which an instructor could introduce the exercise to a class before distributing the Student Worksheet. Instructors may use other language or methods, as they prefer. Similar language could be posted for an online class:

As noted in the last class, I have assigned readings that are carefully chosen to help you have a meaningful experience in the exercise we are going to participate in today. In a few moments, I am going to hand out a template that I ask you to complete and then discuss in your team.

The rules of the day are this: answer the questions on this Worksheet and participate in the discussions at your own level of comfort. No one is asking you to disclose anything that you feel uncomfortable discussing. The purpose of the exercise is to surface unique attributes of your team that serve to enhance or to deter from its performance. We will debrief soon on how or why that might occur.

What I want you to hear now is this: be as open and as forthright as you care to be. But remember, to mean something to you and your team, expressing your vulnerabilities could help you to improve the performance of the team. Do so within your own zone of comfort.

After I hand this out, I am going to stand to the side and let you reflect and then interact with your teammates. Please remember that this is all about improving your team's performance.

Now, here is the Worksheet. Instructions are written on the sheet.

Student Worksheet for the Faultlines Exercise
Instructions: Thinking about yourself, list some examples of your own surface-level characteristics, your own deep-level characteristics, and your own social identities. You may list any number of characteristics and identities.

Surface-Level Diversity Characteristics
Some examples of surface-level diversity characteristics include, but are not limited to, age, gender, race, and ethnicity.

1.	4.	7.
2.	5.	8.
3.	6.	9.

Deep-Level Diversity Characteristics
Some examples of deep-level diversity characteristics include, but are not limited to, education, values, attitudes, beliefs, religion, and sexual preference. You may think about specific examples in your past to solidify this glimpse into yourself, answering these prompts: "In the past I have…," and "When others have spoken about me, they have suggested that…."

1.	4.	7.
2.	5.	8.
3.	6.	9.

Social Identity(ies)
Some examples of social identities include, but are not limited to, family roles (e.g., father, mother, uncle, aunt, son), work position (e.g., cashier, manager, intern, teacher, nurse), community relationships (e.g., volunteer, basketball coach), political affiliations (e.g., Democrat, Republican, Independent), and religious affiliations (e.g., Hindu, Muslim, Jew, Christian, atheist).

1.	4.	7.
2.	5.	8.
3.	6.	9.

Appendix D: Reflection Questions about the Faultlines Exercise

These debriefing questions are organized around the two learning objectives of the exercise. They may be distributed to students prior to the debriefing discussion. They may also be used for a written discussion board or journal assignment, as the instructor prefers.

Identification of Constructs and Relation to Exercise

The instructor may ask: how would you describe (insert one of the constructs of surface-level diversity, deep-level diversity, social identity, or team faultlines; for example, how would you describe surface-level diversity?). Or, in your own words, explain (insert name of construct) to me. Or, how would you compare surface-level and deep-level diversity? Did your reading about these concepts help you gain insight into yourself or help you as you engaged in the exercise with your teammates?

Application of Constructs to Own Team

The instructor may ask the individual: would you give me an example of (insert name of construct) in your team? Or, the instructor may address the team: as a team, how did you apply (insert name of construct) in your team? Or, as a team, did you recognize (insert name of construct) in your team? What occurred in your team as you discussed these concepts?

Collaboration to Prevent Negative Outcomes and/or Maximize Positive Outcomes

To follow the last question, the instructor may ask the team: recognizing as you did (insert name of construct) in your team, how will you approach it to prevent or minimize its impact on your team performance? What strategies or techniques did you develop to minimize negative effects or maximize positive effects of (insert name of construct)? Finally, after students share their comments, the instructor should summarize comments and highlight important learning points that students have shared.

Appendix E: Diversity, Social Identity, and Faultlines – Definitions

Surface-Level Diversity: "Differences in individual characteristics that are immediately observable, such as gender or race" (Feitosa, Grossman, Coultas, Salazar, & Salas, 2012, p. 71).
Deep-Level Diversity: Individual characteristics that are not as easy to observe, such as cultural values, personality, attitudes, and experiences (Feitosa et al., 2012).
Social Identity: Individual's conceptualization of selves, derived from their affiliation to a social group (Tajfel, 1974).
Faultlines: "Hypothetical dividing lines that may split a group into subgroups based on one or more attributes" (Lau & Murnighan, 1998, p. 328).