The Moderating Influence of Nationalism on the Relationship Between National Diversity and Conflict

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Abstract

To understand the relationship between national diversity and conflict types (relationship and task conflict) in nationally diverse workgroups, we examined group members' nationalistic attitudes regarding outgroup derogation (nationalistic derogation) and ingroup preference (national ingroup preference). A sample of 131 employees in nationally diverse workgroups was used to examine our hypotheses. A moderating effect of nationalistic derogation was found on the relationship between national diversity and both task and relationship conflict, such that national diversity was more likely to lead to both task conflict and relationship conflict when members had negative attitudes based on nationality toward the outgroup members. National ingroup preference was less influential on the relationship between diversity and conflict. Results are discussed for future research and practical implications.

Diversity can have contrasting effects with positive effects often determined by access to information while negative effects are often caused by social processes such as social categorization (cf. Dahlin, Weingart, & Hinds, 2005; Van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004). In this study of nationally diverse workgroups, we focus on perceived national diversity, defined as the perception of employees that differences in national backgrounds exist in their workgroup (Dahlin et al., 2005; Zellmer-Bruhn, Maloney, Bhappu, & Salvador, 2008). A recent theoretical piece (Ayub & Jehn, 2006) discussed the need to study national diversity as a variable that can promote potentially helpful as well as harmful conflict. To understand the effects of national diversity in workgroups more thoroughly, we empirically study the effects of perceived national diversity on relationship and task conflicts moderated by two forms of nationalism: ingroup preference

for one's own nationality and derogation of other nationalities (Dekker, Malová, & Hoogendoorn, 2003; Mummendey, Klink, & Brown, 2001).

Nationalistic attitudes are context-specific and they are likely to be activated in nationally diverse settings which can lead to the categorization of members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Given recent national, political, and economic events, these differences in nationalities have become more pronounced and have reinforced nationalistic feelings in many countries (see Ahmad, 2004; Li & Brewer, 2004; Weiss, 2003) including workgroup settings. We propose an interaction of national diversity with nationalism such that when the derogation aspect of nationalism is present we expect the negative effects of diversity to be exacerbated (see Figure 1).

By definition, task conflicts are debates and arguments about the task contents for which functional expertise and information is required (e.g., Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). Thereby, if diversity implies wider access to information, then it also presumes the possibility of increased task conflict. Additionally, if diversity leads to social categorizations that distinguish the group members into different categorized subgroups, relationship conflict (i.e., conflict about interpersonal, nontask issues; Jehn, 1995) is expected to occur in these groups (e.g., O'Reilly, Williams, & Barsade, 1998; Pelled, 1996). We, therefore, examine a model of the effects of national diversity and nationalism on task and relationship conflict. We contribute to the literature on diversity, conflict, and multinational teams by examining the importance of social attitudes and feelings (such as nationalistic preferences and derogation) that influence relationships and behavior in workplaces. This study will also extend past theorizing (e.g., Ayub & Jehn, 2006; Jehn et al., 1999) by empirically examining the role of social attitudes within diverse groups. In addition, we contribute to the diversity and conflict literature by showing that it is not just the categories or aspects of diversity that matter, but that attitudes of individuals (e.g., nationalism) also matter significantly.
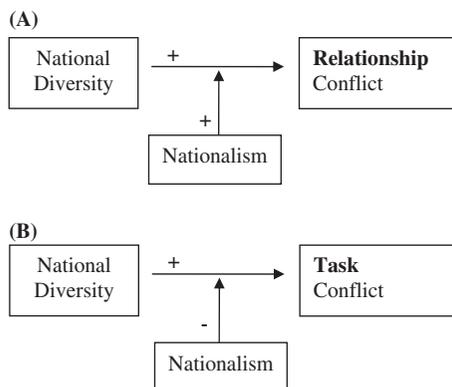

Figure 1. (A) Relationship between national diversity and relationship conflict moderated by nationalism (national ingroup preference and nationalistic derogation). (B) Relationship between national diversity and task conflict moderated by nationalism (national ingroup preference and nationalistic derogation).

There have been very few studies regarding attitudes such as nationalism despite the recognition that attitudes are important in influencing and directing behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Attitudes are formed over time through a number of direct and indirect experiences that are often ingrained within cultural and national contexts (cf. Lavine, Huff, Wagner, & Sweeney, 1998). It is important to understand members' attitudes when they work together as a group since the groups' performance depends on how the group members interact and respond to one another. Therefore, if diversity and conflict, as well as social attitudes (such as national ingroup preferences and nationalistic derogation), are considered in workgroups, we propose that this will contribute to a better understanding of nationally diverse workgroup dynamics.

In this study, we also contribute to the existing literature by taking a more perceptual perspective on national diversity and intragroup conflict of individual members of nationally diverse workgroups. Dahlin et al. (2005) reasoned that the differences in results of diversity studies could be explained with reference to the salience of the demographic factors; that is, whether they are actively perceived or not (see also Garcia-Prieto, Bellards, & Schneider, 2003; Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Randel, 2002). According to this research, perceptions are more influential than actual or objectively constructed variables (Jehn & Bezrukova, 2010; Zellmer-Bruhn et al., 2008). In order to perceive conflict, Bayazit and Mannix (2003) also point out the importance of the subjective perception of members that their group comprised members with different characteristics. For example, researchers of conflict asymmetries show that it is the *perceived* attributes that affects group's dynamics and outcomes (Jehn & Chatman, 1999; Jehn, Rupert, & Nauta, 2006). Accordingly, we study the subjective perception of national diversity among workers and how it is related to conflict in a multinational workgroup context. We propose that diversity will lead to conflict when group members are cognitively aware of that diversity (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999).

We examine Pakistanis in this study, a sample that has been relatively ignored even though Pakistanis make up a significant part of the diverse workforce around the world (cf. Ogbonna & Harris, 2006). In addition, significant events such as the September 11 attack on the New York twin towers have influenced attitudes regarding various nationalities. Research has explored the changes in attitudes of Americans toward certain nationalities and religions (e.g., Li & Brewer, 2004; Skitka, 2005). However, research has not examined the attitudes in workgroup settings and specifically the attitudes of employees from predominantly Muslim countries (e.g., Pakistan) and how they now react in multinational workgroups. With this study, we will be able to examine the relationship between diversity and conflict in yet another culture, as well as explain this relationship through the moderating effect of nationalism.

Theoretical Background: National Diversity and Conflict

Specific diversity types such as social category diversity (e.g., age and gender) have been shown to have negative effects on workgroup processes and outcomes (Milliken & Martins, 1996; Pelled, 1996; Pelled, Ledford, & Mohrman, 1999), while others have argued that such diversity types can also have positive effects (Ayub & Jehn, 2006; Jehn,

1997). With a collection of mixed findings on diversity, scholars now attempt to specify the research focus in terms of types and moderators of diversity (cf. Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003; Mannix & Neale, 2005; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Ayub and Jehn (2006) proposed that national diversity can be considered to have both a social category aspect and also a structural or informational aspect of diversity at the same time. A nationally diverse group consisting of members from different nationalities has the tendency for members to socially categorize the other members into ingroup and out-groups and thus create an us-versus-them tension and intergroup discrimination (based on nationality) that negatively affects the group. On the other hand, Jehn (1997) suggested that when members of a group have different experiential backgrounds, they may benefit from the informational diversity of the group (see also Cramton & Hinds, 2005; Maznevski, 1994).

In this study, we specifically look at national diversity and its effects on members' conflict experiences. National diversity is an especially relevant category as more multi-national workgroups exist within organizations and the organizations expand across nations. Social category theory suggests that self-definition occurs in intergroup contexts (Hogg & Turner, 1987), such as nationally diverse workgroups in this case, where certain characteristics are contextually more salient than others. When members are placed in nationally diverse workgroups, they are likely to perceive the national differences and differentiate workgroup members into national categories (Jenkins, 1997). Therefore, in this study we specifically consider national diversity given that our focus is on nationally diverse workgroups where multiple nationalities are present.

Social theories suggest that categorization into subgroups follows almost automatically after individuals perceive differences (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Thatcher & Jehn, 1998). For example, when an Indian and a Dutch employee are working together, the two are likely to perceive national differences. Thereafter, despite the fact that the Indian has lived in the Netherlands for over 20 years, the two will still categorize each other as socially different. The categorization is often based on visible characteristics such as skin color and physical features (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992). Other bases of categorization may include language, lifestyle, the social group one is identified with, and eating, dressing, and living habits. These same issues lead some individuals to reaffirm their social identity when in a situation where an identity becomes salient or challenged. This reaffirmation effect of seeking a relevant social identity within a context (Kozmitski, 1996; Laurent, 1983) implies that members will identify with their national-ity as the salient identity when in a nationally diverse context.

National Diversity and Conflict

As stated, relationship conflict is disagreement or contention about interpersonal issues and incompatibilities among group members (cf. De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Rispens, 2008). The quality of interpersonal relationships in a group is lowered as diversity increases in the group (Riordan & Shore, 1997). According to self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985), dissimilarity impedes work-unit friendships. The categorization processes associated with diversity can lead to heightened levels of intragroup conflict

(Jehn et al., 1999; O'Reilly et al., 1998; Pelled, 1996; Pelled et al., 1999; Thatcher & Jehn, 1998). Similarly, research shows that members of nationally diverse groups are likely to experience relationship conflict (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000). For example, if a Pakistani is placed in a group with an Italian, or an Iraqi is placed with an American, these group members will perceive the national differences and will be less comfortable working with each other due to the national differences than if they were in a nationally homogenous group.

The perceived differences not only serve to differentiate people into social categories, they also indicate that the individual is in a group with a dissimilar other which may increase the likelihood of relationship conflict among ingroup and outgroup members. Research on national diversity reveals that it negatively affects members' social integration into the group (Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1999), thus also increasing relationship conflicts (Bayazit & Mannix, 2003). This can be due to the discomfort associated with being or working with members of national groups categorized as different from their own. We, therefore, propose that national diversity will be related to relationship conflict.

Hypothesis 1: Perceptions of national diversity by workgroup members will be positively related to relationship conflict.

When members of a group have different experiential backgrounds, the group can be considered informationally diverse (Jehn, 1997). This diversity of information and experience can facilitate task accomplishment as it is positively related to constructive task conflict (Jehn et al., 1999). Research has suggested that workers from different backgrounds and geographic contexts (e.g., nations) are likely to have diverse sets of knowledge (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Bantel & Jackson, 1989). When members with different perspectives participate in a group, they help enhance debates about task content (Hoffman, 1978). Adler (1997) specifically theorizes that cross-national diversity will increase creativity and different task opinions. Therefore, diverse bases of information that national diversity can bring to a group can lead to task conflict (Amason, 1996; de Dreu & Vliert, 1997; Jehn, 1995; Jehn et al., 1999; Schulz-Hardt, Jochims, & Frey, 2002).

Task conflict develops in workgroups due to disagreements about the content of the tasks being performed, such as differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions. Consider again the example of an Italian working alongside a Pakistani. Both of them will be motivated to prove their national esteem by participating in the task arguments (Van Knippenberg, 2000) and they will have different opinions to offer based on the diversity of learning and thought processing that they have acquired (Jehn, Chadwick, & Thatcher, 1997). The differentiation of nationally diverse group members into national categories may rise to an intergroup competitive situation (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) where the members will be motivated to make an effort to put forth the best image and self-representation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) of their own national category. Being different in this sense may facilitate the discussion and debate of different perspectives in the group that result from unique cultural learning, educational background, and experiential learning. This can lead the group members to productive debates and arguments over the tasks.

In addition, outgroup minorities can be active and influential in diverse workgroups (cf. Moscovici, 1980; Wood, Lundgren, Ouellette, Busceme, & Blackstone, 1994). This may be especially true for an objective task-relevant discussion or debate. Objective tasks often allow the minority voice to provide differing views relevant for objective and useful information (see Wood et al., 1994). Moscovici (1980) suggested that minority influences can be quite strong because of the diversity and uniqueness of the individuals in that group (see also Moscovici, Mugny, & Papastamou, 1981). Studies suggest that outgroup disagreements are often expected in diverse groups and opinion differences with the outgroup members are accepted because they are congruent with the expectations of being different (e.g., Phillips, 2003; Phillips, Mannix, Neale, & Gruenfeld, 2004; Rink & Ellemers, 2007). We can, therefore, see how national diversity may cause relationship conflict (Hypothesis 1) but also shows a potential for increased task conflict as task differences and opinions are debated (see Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Thus, we propose that national diversity will have a positive relationship with task conflict.

Hypothesis 2: Perceptions of national diversity by workgroup members will be positively related to task conflict.

The Moderating Role of Nationalism: National Ingroup Preference and Nationalistic Derogation

To resolve the issue of contrasting results, Jackson and Joshi (2004) have suggested that diversity research examine individual attitudinal differences. Although a few studies have examined the relationship between national diversity and conflict (e.g., Bayazit & Mannix, 2003), studies that examine the specific attitudinal moderators of this relationship are rare. While Brief et al. (2005) have emphasized the importance and influence of attitudes that members bring to the workgroups from outside communities, this has been a neglected aspect of diversity and conflict research. We believe that one of the main moderating aspects between national diversity and conflict is nationalism, in two forms: ingroup preference and outgroup derogation. Nationalism is especially relevant when workers from different backgrounds come to work together such as in multinational workgroups (Adler, 1991; Garcia-Prieto et al., 2003). Once group members are identified as different, social category theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) assumes that individuals are placed into different social categories. The interaction is consequently influenced by the attitudes held toward these social categories. Thus, we discuss nationalism as the social attitude toward other nationalities within nationally diverse workgroups.

Past research has defined nationalism as a form of ethnocentrism (Sumner, 1906) that combines positive feelings of individuals toward members of their own national group and as a bias against other national groups different from one's own (Druckman, 2006; Federico, Golec, & Dial, 2005; Schatz & Staub, 1997). While ingroup as well as outgroup attitudes can both be considered as nationalistic attitudes, we distinguish the two from each other and believe that they are different functional concepts that may not necessarily work together or covary (Duckitt, Callaghan, & Wagner, 2005; Duckitt & Parra,

1999; Shah, Brazy, & Higgins, 2004). That is, there can be a preference for ingroup members but not hate for outgroup members. Outgroup members may even like one another despite realizing they are different.

We define nationalism as an attitude of national superiority an individual holds for his or her national group. This concept has two aspects: certain degrees of *national ingroup preference* for one's own nation and *nationalistic derogation* for the members belonging to other nations (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Mummendey et al., 2001; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). Similarly, Dekker et al.'s (2003) framework of nationalism includes both positive patriotic feelings and attitudes of extreme negative nationalism. National ingroup preference comprises perceived superiority and positive sentiments for one's own country and country-fellows and nationalistic derogation denotes negative attitudes and prejudice against other countries and their people (see Brewer, 1999). In distinguishing the two aspects of nationalism as national ingroup preference and nationalistic derogation, we propose a moderating effect of nationalistic derogation such that when nationalistic derogation is present in a nationally diverse workgroup, it is expected to exacerbate the experience of conflict (i.e., relationship and task conflict). We also delineate specific arguments for national ingroup preference as a moderating factor that will influence the relationship between perceived diversity and task and relationship conflict, but to a lesser extent than attitudes of nationalistic derogation.

Nationalistic Derogation and National Ingroup Preference

Since nationalism is a context-specific attitude (Haslam, McGarty, & Turner, 1996), it is likely to be active and especially relevant in nationally diverse groups. For example, Hinds and Bailey (2003) noted that members of international teams use an "us-versus-them" attitude. Different nationalities in a workgroup can trigger intergroup discrimination just by the awareness of members that other nationalities are present (Rivenburgh, 1997). Individuals have the tendency to communicate more with similar workers who are given ingroup preference (Byrne, 1961), and categorize the dissimilar as outgroup members (Tajfel, 1982). Thus, the categorization process triggered by national diversity will be strengthened and sustained in the presence of nationalism in the forms of outgroup derogation and ingroup preference.

Adler (1991) has suggested that national differences play an important role in group dynamics and processes. We propose that the relationship conflict that was predicted in a nationally diverse group will be intensified due to different nationalistic attitudes (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000). When members of a nationally diverse group possess attitudes of nationalism, they will experience more relationship conflict than when nationalistic attitudes are inactive. Nationalistic derogation is particularly about negative intentions directed toward the outgroup. It can bring about feelings of discomfort, irritation, and hatred toward different others (Peterson, 2002; Scheff, 1994), which will increase relationship conflict as compared to the members of a nationally diverse group with members who exhibit low nationalistic derogation. Nationalistic derogation may restrict a person from initiating and encouraging communication

since the outgroup is considered to be less honest (Brewer, 1999) and may be less worthy of being involved. The outgroup derogatory attitude of nationalism is, therefore, expected to intensify the perceived conflict among group members.

When there are derogatory feelings toward some group members, the members are less likely to learn and benefit from contact because the effort is often directed at self-verification of the presumed derogatory attitudes (Swann, 1983) or confirmation bias (Nickerson, 1998). Nationalistic derogation may lead members to be engaged in impolite, hostile, and/or defeating behaviors. This could be in terms of rejecting or demeaning an outgroup member's viewpoints or it could be in the form of denying information to those outgroup members. Derogation can also be displayed by passing remarks at the outgroup member or about the outgroup member(s) to other group members. For example, a group including a Pakistani and an Indian may not perform to its best of potential if one of these members holds derogatory attitudes toward the other due to negative nationalistic feelings. We therefore hypothesize that outgroup derogatory attitudes toward group members who are from nations different from an individual's own will intensify the relationship conflict of members in a nationally diverse group.

Hypothesis 3: The attitude of nationalistic derogation will moderate the relationship between perceived national diversity and relationship conflict, such that the presence of nationalistic derogation intensifies the positive relationship between national diversity and relationship conflict.

Nationalistic Derogation and Task Conflict

We proposed earlier that national diversity will lead to task conflict. Some research has, however, found results that may indicate other relationships (e.g., Bayazit & Mannix, 2003). Studies show that members dissimilar in demographic and functional characteristics are more inclined to have less frequent communication among group members (Adler, 1997; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989). If this occurs they may not be very involved in the tasks (Kirchmeyer & Cohen, 1992) and therefore experience less conflict regarding the task. This appears to contradict our assumption that national diversity will lead to task conflict. However, some of the previous studies have shown that it is not the national diversity itself but the attitudes about task interaction (e.g., Homan, van Knippenberg, van Kleef, & De Dreu, 2007) that causes a decrease in productive discussion and task-opinion sharing. Research has shown that group members may not feel comfortable disclosing their opinions and ideas to other members who are different from them in terms of demography and attitudes (Bayazit & Mannix, 2003; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Although national diversity may potentially allow the diverse group members to be involved in task conflict given their background differences and experiences (Thatcher & Jehn, 1998), there are other factors like restricted communication (Lau & Murnighan, 2005) related to attitudes of nationalism that may cause a group to fail to benefit from its diversity potential. We propose to explain these findings in the framework of our model by examining the nationalistic attitudes held by the group members of a nationally diverse group.

While national diversity has the potential for groups to have task debates and constructive conflicts (Watson, Johnson, Kumar, & Critelli, 1998), the group may not be able to take advantage of the possible beneficial aspects due to nationalistic attitudes, specifically nationalistic derogation. When the information-sharing is based on subjective perceptions and evaluations of other's knowledge and expertness (Borgatti & Cross, 2003; Fiske & Taylor, 1991), it is likely that the members will favor the national ingroup and discriminate against the outgroups (i.e., nationalistic derogation). The contributions and capacities of the outgroups will be ignored or disregarded (Elsass & Graves, 1997) and detract members' efforts to participate as they withhold useful information from each other (Armstrong & Cole, 1995; Milliken & Martins, 1996). Blake and Mouton (1962) observed that, in a problem-solving situation, the group members were more inflexible when they approached conflict resolution with a competitive ''win–lose'' orientation rather than a problem-solving orientation. When members tend to favor their ingroup and disregard the opinions of the outgroups (Yaniv & Kleinberger, 2000), the likely task conflict in nationally diverse groups will be diminished as the problem-solving orientation is less of a focus. Also, the ingroup-versus-outgroup nationalistic behavior has the tendency to give rise to knowledge-sharing hostility (Husted & Michailova, 2002) where members may refuse to share information and thus restrict the flow of information in the group (Huang & Ocker, 2006). Accordingly, we propose that nationalism moderates the positive effect of national diversity on task conflict. Nationalistic attitudes of outgroup derogation will reduce the effect of national diversity on task conflict as members focus less on the task dimension of the group interaction.

We assume that nationalistic derogation will diminish the task conflict in nationally diverse workgroups because members will be less likely to communicate or cooperate within the workgroup (Lau & Murnighan, 2005). For example, an Indian would consider herself to be more competent than a Dutch member due to her nationalistic derogatory attitude against the Dutch and may suspect that the Dutch would not share information or the resources equally and honestly with her as the Dutch would with a nationally similar member. In fact, she would be rather more willing to share with a member who is from her own country or preferably a similar country. Both of them lose the chance of beneficial task-specific sharing due to being a nationalistic member or even a target of nationalism. Therefore, we propose that nationalistic derogation will moderate the positive relationship between national diversity and task conflict such that any task conflict possible due to national diversity will be lowered in the presence of nationalistic derogation. We, therefore, hypothesize that nationalistic derogation will weaken the positive relationship between national diversity to task conflict.

Hypothesis 4: The attitude of nationalistic derogation will moderate the relationship between perceived national diversity and task conflict, such that the presence of nationalistic derogation weakens the positive relationship between national diversity and task conflict.

Finally, we hypothesize about the moderating role of nationalistic derogation compared to national ingroup preference. We propose that nationalistic derogation has strong moderation effects compared to that of national ingroup preference. National ingroup preference in terms of ingroup favoritism may restrict workgroup involvement and

communication with diverse others but may not cause workgroup members to shun outgroup members, as is the case with members who have the attitude of outgroup derogation (Allport, 1954). National ingroup preference is also not likely to provoke negative feelings such as exclusion and discomfort compared to nationalistic derogation. While the tendency to prefer similar members (national ingroup preference) may moderate the national diversity to conflict relationship, the attitudes toward outgroup members (nationalistic derogation) will exacerbate conflict in nationally diverse groups given the negative components associated with nationalistic derogation. We propose that national ingroup preference will not be as destructive as nationalistic derogation. Therefore, we believe that nationalistic derogation may be considerably more significant in aggravating the conflicts in nationally diverse workgroups than attitudes of national ingroup preference.

Hypothesis 5: Nationalistic derogation will be a stronger moderator of the relationship of national diversity and conflict than national ingroup preference.

Method

Data and Sample

We collected survey data from 131 IT professionals working in 29 multinational workgroups in four organizations located in Islamabad, Pakistan. By assuring the organizations and groups that they surveys would be anonymous and important for the company, we were able to secure an 82% response rate. Considering our target sample, national diversity is rare in workgroups, as well as in the general society in Pakistan. Thus, national diversity is prominently noticeable whenever present in a workgroup and it is likely that any difference is highly visible and salient to Pakistanis who are generally unaccustomed to national diversity (i.e., contrast effect or exaggerated differences; Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergall, 1965). In this sample, the average amount of diversity in a group was around 30% diverse members. Therefore, this was a typical sample to study national diversity within the Pakistani multinational setting. The groups generally included 1 or 2 non-Pakistani members. The participants were involved in groups with an average group size of 7.73 ($SD = 3.45$) members. An all-Pakistani sample was used to control for the effect of members working in a workgroup within their homeland as compared to that of members of workgroups who are working away from their homelands (Doucet & Jehn, 1997). The multinational workgroups of the participants included members from Pakistan, the United States, China, Korea, and United Arab Emirates. The mean age of the participants was 28.94 ($SD = 6.62$) with the age range of 28–63 years, and 23 (17.6%) were women. The participation was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

Measures

Perceived National Diversity
Similar to Zellmer-Bruhn et al. (2008), we were interested in the members' subjective experience of national diversity in their workgroups. Accordingly, members' perceptions

of national diversity were determined by items asking whether group members perceived that the group had members with different nationalities. We adapted two Zellmer-Bruhn et al. (2008) items such that the perception of national diversity was measured by asking respondents how much they thought their workgroup was diverse with reference to nationality with a 7-point Likert scale (How diverse is your workgroup in nationality?). We also added a second item asking for the approximate percentage of dissimilar nationalities present in the workgroup (What percentage of your workgroup are not Pakistanis?). We computed the average of the two items after converting the percentage to a 7-point scale. The items gave a mean value of 1.51 ($SD = 1.01$) and an alpha coefficient of .76. The Cronbach alpha coefficient showed sufficient internal consistency for using the two items as a measure of perceived diversity. Although this was an individual level study, we also checked the variances across members who belonged to the same group. The two items gave adequate range (from 0 to 6) showing the existence of national diversity and that members within the same group perceived diversity differently, similar to the study of Zellmer-Bruhn et al. (2008).

Task and Relationship Conflict

We used Jehn's (1995) scales for measuring task and relationship conflict. The items were included in the survey in question format with 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 7 (*A Lot*). Nine items were selected for measuring the conflict types. We used principal component analysis with oblique rotation to confirm and establish our scales and subscales. The analysis for the conflict items distinguished task conflict and relationship conflict (see Table 1). Four items measured task conflict (e.g., "How much conflict of ideas is there among the members of this workgroup"?) and five items measured relationship conflict (e.g., "How much do members differ about personal

Table 1

Principal Components Analysis of the Conflict Items (N = 131)

	Component	
Item	Relationship conflict	Task conflict
(1) Conflict of ideas	.074	**.790**
(2) Differences of viewpoints on decisions	−.021	**.867**
(3) Disagreement about varying opinions	.044	**.846**
(4) Differences of opinions	−.019	**.881**
Variance explained = 59.74%		
(1) Fighting about personal issues	**.838**	.043
(2) Differences about personal issues	**.959**	−.182
(3) Personality clashes	**.794**	.118
(4) Interpersonal fighting about people issues	**.816**	.120
(5) Do not get along interpersonally	**.694**	.109
Variance explained = 13.32%		
Total variance explained = 73.07%		

Note. Statistics in bold represent loadings greater than .40 on that factor.

issues''?). The Cronbach alpha coefficients for task and relationship conflict were .86 and .90, respectively.

Nationalism

We conceptualize nationalism as an attitude comprised two components, namely, national ingroup preference and nationalistic derogation. To measure individuals' level of national ingroup preference, we used the nationalism items from Dekker et al.'s (2003) nationalism scale (e.g., ''I feel I am a member of one Pakistani family''; ''Pakistan is the best country to live in''; ''In general, I like Pakistanis better.'') and the Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) outgroup derogation subscale (e.g., ''Other nationalities have jobs that Pakistanis should have only because of their nationalities''; ''Pakistanis can never be comfortable with other nationalities even if they are close friends'') with 7-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The principal component analysis of the items with oblique rotation extracted two components shown in Table 2. Cronbach alpha coefficients for national ingroup preference and nationalistic derogation are .91 and .78 respectively.

Table 2
Principal Components Analysis of the Nationalism Items (N = 131)

	Components	
	National ingroup preference	Nationalistic derogation
(1) I prefer being a Pakistani citizen	**.724**	−.007
(2) I prefer to live in Pakistan	**.827**	−.084
(3) In general, I like Pakistanis better	**.870**	−.020
(4) Pakistanis are the best people for personal contacts	**.752**	.072
(5) Pakistan is the best country to live in	**.906**	−.016
(6) The Pakistani nationality is the best nationality	**.862**	.006
(7) I feel I share a common origin	**.817**	.039
(8) I feel I am a member of one Pakistani family	**.526**	.039
(9) I feel I have Pakistani blood	**.659**	−.017
Variance explained = 39.02%		
(10) The Pakistanis should not mix with other	.323	**.562**
(11) All the Pakistanis should live in Pakistan	.124	**.422**
(12) The non-Pakistanis living in Pakistan should leave	−.133	**.793**
(13) International cooperation overburdens	.058	**.666**
(14) Other nationalities have jobs that Pakistanis should have	−.091	**.515**
(15) Other nationalities and Pakistanis can never be comfortable	.041	**.719**
(16) Other nationalities are less competent	−.021	**.764**
Variance explained = 15.06%		
Total variance explained = 54.08%		

Note. Statistics in bold represent loadings greater than .40 on that factor.

Controls

We included age and gender as control variables since they are known to have significant effects on the perception of conflict (Jehn, 1995; Jehn et al., 1999; Pelled, 1996; Randel, 2002). The results, however, did not differ significantly in the presence of these variables in this study.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations were computed for all the measures as presented in Table 3. Age was negatively related to perceptions of relationship and task conflicts as well as nationalistic derogation. This shows that older members experience less task and relationship conflict and they are less nationalistically derogatory as compared to younger members. Gender did not have significant correlations with any of the study variables.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses were tested with regression analyses after centralizing our variables for interactions (Aiken & West, 1991). We entered national diversity and the nationalism components in the first step and then the interactions of national diversity with the national ingroup preference and nationalistic derogation variables in the second step (see Tables 4 and 5).

Our first hypothesis, that national diversity will lead to relationship conflict, could not be confirmed as national diversity failed to have a significant main effect on relationship conflict. However, national diversity had a direct main effect on perceptions of task conflict (shown in Table 5), thus verifying our second hypothesis that national diversity is positively associated with task conflict. Hypothesis 3 predicted a moderating effect of nationalistic derogation on relationship conflict. The interaction between national diversity and nationalistic derogation had significant moderating effects on relationship conflict

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations (N = 131)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Age	28.97	6.64	—					
(2) Gender	1.18	0.38	−.25**	—				
(3) National diversity	1.51	1.01	−.06	−.04	—			
(4) National ingroup preference	5.20	1.32	−.12	.15	−.03	—		
(5) Nationalistic derogation	3.10	1.21	−.26**	.17	.31**	.31**	—	
(6) Relationship conflict	2.75	1.28	−.24*	.12	.13	−.09	.30**	—
(7) Task conflict	3.59	1.19	−.29**	.07	.21*	.07	.24**	.62**

*p < .05; **p < .01; two-tailed.

Table 4
Regression Analysis: Dependent Variable Is Relationship Conflict (N = 131)

Predictors	β	F	R^2	Change F	Change R^2
Step 1: Main effects					
National diversity (ND)	.03				
National ingroup preference (NP)	−.22**				
Nationalistic derogation (NDero)	.36***	6.04***	.14		
Step 2: Two-way interactions					
ND × NP	−.13				
ND × NDero	.34**	5.33***	.20	3.79**	.06

**$p < .05$; ***$p < .005$.

Table 5
Regression Analysis: Dependent Variable Is Task Conflict (N = 131)

Predictors	β	F	R^2	Change F	Change R^2
Step 1: Main effects					
National diversity (ND)	.16*				
National ingroup preference (NP)	−.02				
Nationalistic derogation (NDero)	.22**	3.68**	.09		
Step 2: Two-way interactions					
ND × NP	−.15				
ND × NDero	.21*	2.52**	.11	2.14	.02

*$p = .07$; **$p < .05$.

(see Table 4), such that the presence of a derogatory attitude among workers with per-
ceived national diversity in their group led to increased relationship conflict among the
workers (see Figure 2). This result, in combination with the results for hypothesis 1,
showed that national diversity itself may not be directly related to relationship conflict but
through strong moderation effects of factors such as nationalistic derogation.

We expected that perceived task conflict would be decreased when group members'
derogatory attitudes moderate the group's national diversity (Hypothesis 4). Noticeably,
the results showed an increase in task conflict when the workers reported national diver-
sity and the presence of nationalistic derogation as shown in Table 5 (see also Figure 3).
When workers perceived national diversity in their group and were high on nationalistic
derogation, relationship as well as task conflict was higher among these workers as com-
pared to workers who had lower levels of nationalistic derogation. Although the F statis-
tic for this interaction term was significant, including this interaction in the regression
equation did not significantly increase the amount of variance accounted for by task
conflict. As a result, Hypothesis 4 was only partially supported.[1]

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[1]The regression model was significantly supported when only nationalistic derogation was entered as a
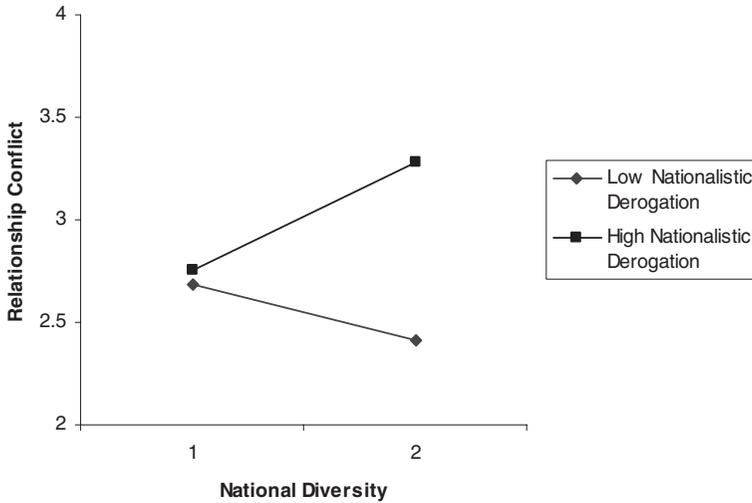moderator.

Figure 2. Effect of nationalistic derogation on the relationship between national diversity and relationship conflict.
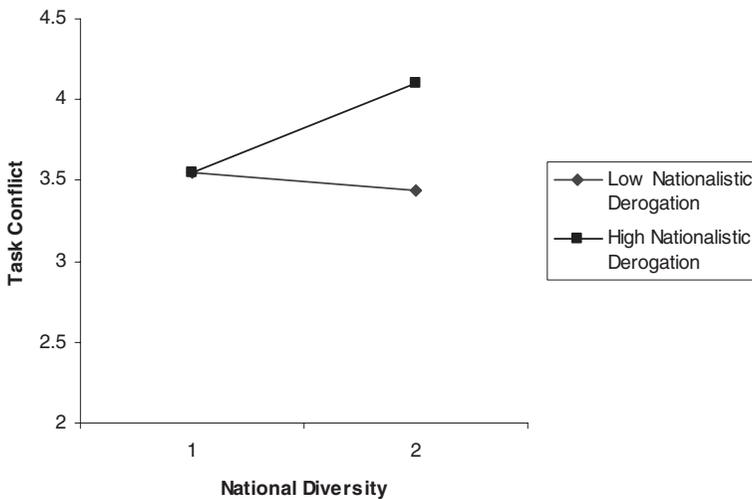

Figure 3. Effect of nationalistic derogation on the relationship between national diversity and task conflict.

Results also supported our Hypothesis 5, that nationalistic derogation is a stronger moderator of the national diversity to conflict relationship than national ingroup preference. Following the regression analysis including both nationalistic derogation and national ingroup preference, we entered the two moderators in two separate regression analyses to observe the added variance due to each moderator entered into separate regression tests. When the two moderation terms were entered into separate regression

analyses, variance was added due to nationalistic derogation while national ingroup preference failed to add any variance toward either relationship conflict or task conflict. Nationalistic derogation added to the variance for relationship conflict ($\beta = .26$; $p < .05$) as well as task conflict ($\beta = .19$; $p = .09$).

Discussion

Recently, nationality has been recognized as a distinct and important demographic characteristic but it has not been studied in depth. In this study, we examined how national diversity can influence group processes such as task and relationship conflict. We identified nationalism as an important factor in nationally diverse workgroups due to the strong attributes associated with national diversity in many multinational groups. We defined nationalism as attitudes incorporating national ingroup preference and nationalistic derogation. We hypothesized that nationalism exacerbates the relationship of national diversity to relationship conflict due to contact distances and tensions between ingroups and outgroups. At the same time, we believed that task conflict will be undervalued in the presence of nationalism when nationalistic members hold back information and ignore the information and opinions of the outgroup members. The results supported our hypotheses that national diversity increased task conflict and nationalistic derogation intensified this effect. National diversity had a significant direct effect on task conflict but not on relationship conflict. We predicted that national diversity leads to task conflict given that national diversity implies functional diversity and a wider range of skills and expertise which could assist creativity. The results showed that national diversity, for this sample, was perhaps more important as a functional diversity characteristic and did not form a basis for interpersonal issues. The finding substantiates previous studies speculating national diversity as a potential contributor to positive group processes (e.g., Adler, 1997; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Jehn et al., 1999). This work is also consistent with research on minority influence (Moscovici, 1980) and expectancy congruence (Phillips et al., 2004; Rink & Ellemers, 2007). National diversity is somewhat rare in Pakistani organizations and thus any nationally diverse workgroups were perhaps more enthusiastically welcomed as unique by Pakistanis who were able to be a part of it. When asked about their workgroups, the participants reported their workgroup as generally more competent indicating that they were possibly capable of perceiving and appreciating the informational diversity present in their groups.

When we take into account the influence of nationalism, the relationship of national diversity to both task as well as relationship conflict was affected by nationalistic derogation. Both relationship and task conflicts were increased in the presence of members with nationalistic derogatory attitudes. Apparently, national diversity by itself does not always possess the potential for relationship conflict unless we incorporate moderating variables, such as attitudes, into the model. This observation not only confirmed our hypothesis that derogatory attitudes increase relationship conflict in nationally diverse workgroups, it also pointed out the importance of the moderating effects of nationalistic attitudes in nationally diverse workgroups.

Nationalistic derogation moderated the relationship between national diversity and task conflict such that it increased task conflict in nationally diverse workgroups. This provides hope that nationalistic derogation can be converted into positive competition, or task conflict, in multinational workgroups. We can explain the above results in view of intergroup competition (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and self-esteem theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). When members perceive national diversity and they have a nationalistic attitude, they will be motivated to enhance their national esteem and thus make an effort to bring forth the best representation of their national image (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Group members may be tempted to derogate and disregard the outgroup members when they are perceived to be different and competing for the same resources and rewards as the ingroup members. This threat is also likely to compel them to compete even more forcefully, not only to win the resources but also to defeat the outgroup members. For example, we mentioned that an Indian was likely to be suspicious of a Dutch colleague's information and resource sharing, but it is also possible that this challenges her (the Indian's) competence and makes her invest more in proving her (derogatory) superiority. The group members will be motivated to self-verify and uphold their presumed national esteem and expectancies (Swann, 1983; Swann, Kwan, Polzer, & Milton, 2003a; Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004). They may exert more effort at proving their national superiority by competing with the outgroup members and challenging their own skills and ideas as they strive to evoke self-congruent reactions (Swann, Kwan, Polzer, & Milton, 2003b). This could take the shape of healthy competition, task debates, and better performance. Future research should also look at this mediation chain to explain performance in multinational groups. Keeping in view the potential curvilinear relationship between task conflict and performance (Jehn, 1995), further research on the influence of nationalism should also explore the levels of nationalism and task conflict and how they influence performance.

While nationalistic derogation was apparently capable of increasing task conflict in nationally diverse workgroups, it also increased perceptions of relationship conflict. Relationship conflict has been consistently shown to have negative effects on group outcomes and thus found to be an undesirable type of conflict. In view of the results, we know that nationalistic derogation is harmful in terms of enhancing relationship conflicts among workgroup members and we also know from the social and political research that nationalism is a strong attitude that can not be easily eliminated. To our surprise, however, nationalism seems to work somewhat positively in some group situations by reinforcing task conflict. Whereas we cannot easily change the national identities and the nationalism of members, managers can perhaps redirect the competition between nationalities by setting clear task goals such that members become more involved in task conflict and the relationship conflict is diminished. We must, however, note that the model with both national ingroup preference and nationalistic derogation was not fully supported and thus these results need further verification.

One of the strengths of this study is that we conducted a field survey with actual workgroups that have real interactions and experiences with diversity and conflict. It is interesting to note that our results did not show national diversity to be related to relationship conflict. While we argue that attitudes are the crucial moderators of the

relationship between national diversity and conflict, perhaps one of the reasons for no significant effects of national diversity on relationship conflict (as opposed to studies conducted in the lab, e.g., Bayazit & Mannix, 2003) is the real workgroup context where people actually experience diversity. It is likely that the workgroup members (in this case in Pakistan) value the national diversity in their workgroups and are more inclined to be occupied with task conflict than relationship conflict. We can base our assumption on our findings for national ingroup preference. We entered national ingroup preference into our analyses to explore its effects on the relationship between national diversity and conflict. We suggest that national ingroup preference will cause members to be more reserved in communicating with others and they will remain distant since national favoritism or preferences leads to the restricted criteria of the ingroup inclusion of the group members (Pelled et al., 1999). The members have prejudices and, therefore, are less open to other members (Pelled et al., 1999) and thus restrict interpersonal interaction.

Limitations of This Study and Future Research

We studied the moderating role of personal attitudes, that is, nationalism, on the relationship between national diversity and conflict. Based on its relevance in a nationally diverse context, nationalism was selected as a significant moderator of the relationship between national diversity and conflict in workgroups. We offer some observations which call for further research to continue to verify observations with various samples.

This was mainly a correlational study and the data were collected through self-report surveys where common-method bias is often a concern. However, we believe the results to be interpretable for two reasons. One, the participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity to encourage them to respond genuinely and honestly (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Also, the survey was carefully designed with unambiguous and focused scales with sets of items separated by definitions and instructions (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Secondly, our constructs of interest were the subjective perceptions and therefore, required self-report (Spector, 1994; Spector, Zapf, Chen, & Frese, 2000).

Another limitation of this study is that the sample was involved in workgroups that were not diverse to a large extent in national background providing a conservative test of our model. This sample is, however, representative of workgroups in Pakistan which is not a highly multinational society. We are, however, curious to know how Pakistanis (and members of other nationalities) carry their attitudes outside their homeland and how they perceive other's attitudes and behaviors toward them, and whether that in turn affects their performance. Also, of interest is how different nationalities deal with their nationalistic attitudes in international interactions in workgroups and the differences of attitudes among various nationalities. Similarly, national distances and nationalist attitudes of nations may be studied in majority and minority situations (inside or outside their country). Future research may consider cross-national observations for further understanding and verification of the findings of this study.

The data were collected from actual workers in multinational organizations and the study included a Pakistani sample which represents a set of characteristics that are

different from the often studied Western samples due to its geographic and cultural differences, as well as from the Eastern or Asian countries like China and Japan. Although an addition to research, it is also a challenge to study such a novel sample not frequently examined but this also allowed us to validate the conflict scale with two distinct dimensions with a Pakistani sample and examine this unique setting.

Although nationalism, as a concept as well as an ideology, gained pronounced popularity around the world from the countries of the West to the East after the nineteenth century and was attended to by philosophical and qualitative debates (e.g., Gellner, 1983; Kohn, 1955; Smith, 1983), it failed to win considerable attention in the foreground of empirical research (for an exception, see Dekker et al., 2003). There have been very few research studies that include Pakistanis as a nationality, and even rarer is a study that focuses on Pakistanis in multinational workgroups. We believe, in line with culture-specific arguments, that Pakistanis have their unique cultural, as well as cross-cultural, experiences which makes it desirable to understand the views, attitudes, and perceptions of Pakistanis. Pakistanis contribute to the economy within Pakistan but they are also a part of the world community and organizations as immigrants. The results of this study are thus of interest to organizational research in general that attempts to understand the social aspects of the organizational world.

There were some unexpected results and although the results distinguished between the two types of conflict, we could have benefited more if we had information on some of the underlying mechanisms for task and relationship conflict that could help us understand how the two are different. In the future, research should include measures of underlying mechanisms such as whether diversity facilitates discussion and how national identity is related to motivations of self-verification and ultimately, how these mechanisms distinctly relate to different types of conflict. In addition, since this study included only perceptual measures, the future research in this area might include objective measures for comparison and verification of the differences between the objective versus the perceived. Diversity and conflict asymmetries (see Jehn & Rispens, 2008; Jehn, Rispens, & Thatcher, in press) could also result in interesting contributions to our understanding of diversity and conflicts in nationally diverse workgroups.

Social distances are also an important area to explore. Similar to social distances as a psychological factor (acceptance or rejection based on perception of certain desirable or undesirable characteristics; Bogardus, 1967), we assume that members from different nationalities will be perceived as similar or dissimilar based on national distances. This suggests the possibility for future research to study national distances between individuals of various countries. Research should also explore other moderators and mediators that can improve our understanding of the diversity to conflict and outcome relationships. For example, cross-national learning and organizational or group cultures may facilitate constructive group processes.

Practical Implications

In view of our results, we suggest that national diversity has different effects depending on the attitudinal variables that moderate the effects of national diversity. Organizations

must realize that the package of national diversity comes with other characteristics within itself that they must be aware of in order to benefit from that diversity. To be able to profit from the positive aspects of national diversity, we need to understand and take into account the negative aspects as well. One of the presumably harmful attributes present in diverse groups and organizations is nationalism and, more specifically, nationalistic derogation of outgroup members. Such attributes cannot be easily eliminated but require cautious handling especially in current day organizations where workers may be surrounded by pronounced historic, economic, and political nationalism. Our results showed that nationalistic derogation positively moderated the relationship between national diversity and conflict types. As expected, nationalistic derogation enhanced relationship conflict in nationally diverse groups and thus appeared to be a nondesirable attitude among workgroup members negatively affecting the group processes. It also enhanced task conflict when members perceived national diversity in the group. A conducive group environment for open communication and clearly defined tasks and routines may, thus, help lessen chances of misunderstandings. Consequently, there should be no ground for provoking attitudes such as national ingroup preference or nationalistic derogation which could create disturbance or conflict among the members.

It is also important to note that although relationship conflict is not directly related to the workgroup task, it can interfere with job-related processes and performance. In order to have efficient and productive personnel, we must consider individual attitudes that shape group members' interpersonal relationships. Conflicts can become disruptive when actively perceived by the group members. Therefore, managers must be closely involved with their personnel and know how the group members perceive and behave, instead of acting on their own presumptions and perceptions, and manage diversity and conflict accordingly.

Conclusion

In this study, we examined the relationship between national diversity and task and relationship conflict with nationalism as a moderator of this relationship. We distinguished between group members' national ingroup preference for their own nation and nationalistic derogation toward other nations and observed that nationalistic derogation is a stronger moderator of the relationship between national diversity to task and relationship conflict than national ingroup preference. The results draw attention to the need of a broader vision for research examining attitudinal moderators and mediators in diversity and conflict research. This will help researchers discover, and managers implement, improved conflict management.

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