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"An Investigation into the Influence of Perceived Diversity on the Creative Climate and the Role of Identity Leadership"

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between perceived diversity, the creative climate and identity leadership. The research expands existing knowledge of diversity by examining perceived diversity and differentiating between surface-level and deep-level characteristics. Additionally, we employ a novel leadership theory that emphasizes the creation of a shared identity as an essential leadership approach. The study included 67 participants who completed our questionnaire. As anticipated, perceived deep-level diversity was found to have a negative impact on the creative climate. Moreover, perceived surface-level diversity had a negative influence on the creative climate for differences in cultural backgrounds but not differences in age. Contrary to expectations, identity leadership did not moderate the relationship between perceived surface- or deep-level diversity and the creative climate. Nevertheless, through exploratory analysis, it was revealed that the relationship between identity leadership and the creative climate is mediated by perceived deep-level diversity. The implications of this study are that managers should prioritize the creation of a shared identity to foster successful diversity management.

*Keywords:* perceived diversity, deep level-diversity, surface-level diversity, creative climate, identity leadership, innovation, diversity management

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## Introduction

In today's rapidly changing and globalized world, the significance of diversity in work teams has grown considerably. It is presumed that teams comprising diverse members foster innovation, a critical determinant of organizational performance and adaptability (Ringel et al., 2018). However, organizational theory and practice continue to grapple with the significant challenges of understanding the underlying processes behind the effects of diversity, and how to effectively manage them (O'Reilly et al., 1998). Gaining insights into how perceived diversity influences the creative climate holds broad implications for the field of work, with potential to drive positive outcomes and transformative changes. Hence, the aim of the present study is to examine whether perceived diversity negatively impacts the creative climate within the workplace. The current research delves into the mechanisms of a new theory through which leaders can facilitate the development of a shared social identity, ultimately promoting inclusivity and optimizing organizational outcomes, such as a creative climate.

## Diversity research

The conventional focus of research on this topic has been on *surface-level diversity*, characteristics that are easily observed and measured, such as age and race (Milliken & Martins, 1996). Surface-level diversity is considered important due to the potential underlying differences it signifies, as it may potentially elicit individual prejudices and biases (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). This can be attributed to the theory that individuals establish their own identity and distinguish themselves from others through noticeable dissimilarities (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Due to the motivation to preserve or improve social identities, individuals are inclined to positively assess and identify with individuals and groups whose members display similar overt features.

Instead of examining the overt features, a complementary research focus has emerged which emphasizes the impact of deep level diversity within teams (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). The characteristics of *deep-level diversity*, as defined by Harrison et al. (1998), revolve around the psychological attributes exhibited by individuals within a work team. It encompasses individual dissimilarities, such as values, as well as preferences and beliefs. As there has been extensive research about the link between value deep-level diversity and team outcomes, the current research solely focuses on this aspect (Jehn & Mannix, 2001; O'Reilly et al., 1991). Value diversity arises when individuals within a workgroup hold divergent perspectives regarding the actual task, objective, target, or mission of the group (Jehn et al., 1997). For instance, when some team members prioritize innovation and long-term growth,

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while others prioritize stability and short-term profitability. This disparity in values can lead to task conflicts, as they create friction and discord when it comes to making critical decisions and managing the allocation of time and effort among group members (Jehn et al., 1997).

The current study advances and expands upon prior research on diversity exploring its surface-level and deep-level aspects through the lens of *perceived diversity*. Perceived deep level diversity can be described as the degree to which an individual perceives another person's characteristics, values and goals, as similar or dissimilar (Bolloju et al., 2002). It is important to study the perceived differences because team dynamics are not solely influenced by objective reality but also by the diverse perceptions individuals have regarding similarity and dissimilarity (Shemla et al., 2016). Moreover, research shows that the effects of diversity, such as increased innovation, rely mostly on perceptions of diversity instead of actual diversity (Lawrence, 1997).

### **The creative climate**

To establish the link between diversity and innovation, various contextual factors have been identified, such as climate (Miron et al., 2004) and leadership (Janssen, 2005). These elements can determine how diversity either positively or negatively impacts the creative process (Tripathi & Ghosh, 2020). Creativity and innovation are often thought of as the same thing, but they consist of different processes. Namely, according to Amabile (1988), creativity is typically described as the act of generating ideas that possess both originality and value. Innovation, on the other hand, relies not merely on the presence of a good idea but also on the actual outcome and progression of that idea and its implementation (Van de Ven, 1986). Thus, creativity alone does not guarantee innovation. To go from idea generation to implementation, it is crucial to have a *creative climate* (Anderson & West, 1994). A creative climate nurtures both creativity and innovative thinking, while also emphasizing the ability to implement these ideas effectively. Moreover, Ekvall (1991) defines the *creative climate* as an environment characterized by certain key attributes such as openness to new ideas and encouragement of risk-taking.

### **The impact of diversity on the creative climate.**

The relationship between diversity and outcomes such as performance, creativity, and innovation show varying and inconsistent results (Basset-Jones, 2005). It is theorized that diverse or interprofessional teams offer numerous advantages. For instance, the inclusion of different perspectives, networks, and knowledge from team members can enhance overall performance (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Additionally, when diverse workgroups aspire to achieve innovation, they frequently generate and explore a wide spectrum of unique and original ideas

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(Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017). This wealth of varied viewpoints acts as a primary catalyst for fostering creative ideas (Huggins & Clifton, 2011).

However, it is crucial to have a convergent process that can effectively consolidate these divergent ideas and transform them into tangible outcomes (Bledow et al., 2009; West, 2002). Difficulties in collaboration in diverse teams may arise during this convergent process, due to the differences among team members (Jehn et al., 1997). When it comes to surface-level variables, age differences tend to have a detrimental impact on individual or team functioning (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Additionally, studies have indicated that ethnic diversity is linked to lower performance ratings and hindered communication (Larkey, 1996).

Moreover, research conducted by Jehn et al. (1999) suggests that deep-level diversity tends to elevate conflict levels within teams. This heightened conflict can have adverse effects on advancements in innovation (York et al., 2009). The conflicts linked to diversity often arise from individuals' inclination to categorize the individuals in their social surroundings into 'ingroup' and 'outgroups' members (Fiske, 1998). When there is high diversity within groups, individuals are less likely to form strong interpersonal bonds and exhibit similarity in their perceptions (Ford & Seers, 2006). This might hamper the development of a creative climate, where innovative thoughts can be openly discussed without concern for judgment or rejection. Based on the aforementioned rationale, our contention is that the presence of perceived surface-level or deep-level diversity within a team has a detrimental effect on the creative climate.

***Hypothesis 1:*** Perceived surface-level diversity has a negative effect on the creative climate of a company.

***Hypothesis 2:*** Perceived deep-level diversity has a negative effect on the creative climate of a company.

### **The influence of leadership**

As theorized above, diversity leads to the generation of more creative *ideas*, but it seems that it's harder to consolidate these ideas and create actual creative outcomes. However, some studies show that diversity does lead to innovation under certain circumstances (Adiguzel & Cakir, 2020; Wörter, 2007), in which leaders seem to play a crucial role (Amabile et al., 1996; Janssen, 2005; Scott & Bruce, 1994). Nevertheless, there remains a significant body of knowledge yet to be acquired regarding the precise leader behaviours that effectively cultivate the competitive advantages linked to diversity (Dahm et al., 2009).

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Following extensive research spanning over a century, transformational leadership has emerged as the leading theory among numerous competing perspectives (Spector, 2014). Research conducted by Wieland (2004) reveals that transformational leadership has been identified as the most advantageous approach for effectively managing diverse workforces. Nevertheless, studies examining the role of transformational leadership as a moderator for the impact of diversity on innovation have yielded diverse outcomes, encompassing positive, negative, and neutral effects (Homan et al., 2020). According to the findings of Yildiz et al. (2014), the element of 'cohesion climate' exerts a significant moderating impact on the creativity of subordinates. Consequently, the present study aims to explore a novel paradigm proposing that leadership fundamentally operates as a process of group-based social influence. This paradigm emphasizes the significance of leaders being part of the group they lead (Platow et al., 2015; Turner, 1991), further highlighting the complex relationship between leadership and diversity.

### **Identity leadership.**

Instead of the focus on differences among team members, leaders can employ social categorization methods that highlight shared goals and identities while preventing dysfunctional conflicts (Reicher et al., 2005). Expanding upon the framework of the social identity approach (Haslam, 2012), *identity leadership* can be construed as a dynamic and multifaceted process (Steffens et al., 2014). At the core of this process lies the ability of leaders to adeptly represent, promote, establish, and unify a group, thereby fostering the development of a shared social identity. By effectively fulfilling these roles, leaders facilitate the integration of individuals within the team, fostering a sense of belonging and shared vision (Haslam et al., 2011).

### **The moderating effect of identity leadership**

It has been observed that diversity can enhance creative outcomes, but only when effectively managed (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Identity leadership has the potential to (a) foster convergence towards views and actions that align with the group's norms, (b) cultivate stronger commitment to those views and actions, and (c) increase receptiveness to influence from fellow ingroup members. Consequently, it is posited that effective leadership promotes the cultivation of social identity, and the sustained success or failure of leadership hinges on the feasibility of identity-related endeavours (Haslam & Reicher, 2007). By harnessing this shared social identity, an environment of openness and innovation is promoted (Haslam & Reicher, 2007). Hence, we hypothesize that that identity leadership plays a positive moderating role on the effects of diversity.

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***Hypothesis 3:*** Identity leadership positively moderates the relationship between perceived surface-level diversity and the creative climate.

***Hypothesis 4:*** Identity leadership positively moderates the relationship between perceived deep-level diversity and the creative climate.

### **Exploratory analysis**

Considering the utilization of the novel theory of identity leadership in this study, an additional exploratory analysis will be conducted to further investigate and delve into its implications. This supplementary analysis aims to uncover additional insights and explore potential nuances in the relationship between perceived diversity, identity leadership and the creative climate. Research has shown that the perceived similarity among members within a group has a considerable impact on the outcome of shared identity (Billig & Tajfel, 1973). Jans et al. (2012) demonstrated that even within a diverse group where individual members perceived their values to be vastly dissimilar, the group could still develop a strong sense of collective identity when a shared identity was deliberately fostered by leaders. Subsequently, shared identity establishes a shared perspective which promotes effective communication (Postmes, 2003), ultimately leading to the cultivation of creativity (Haslam et al., 2013). Thus, the positive effects of identity leadership on the creative climate might operate indirectly, through the perception of diversity.

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## Method

### Participants

A total of 82 participants initially started the survey. However, 15 questionnaires were left unfinished and were consequently excluded from the analysis. Therefore, the final dataset consisted of 67 participants ( $M_{\text{age}} = 34.89$ ,  $SD = 14.19$ ). Among the participants, 47 participants identified as female ( $M_{\text{age}} = 34.11$ ,  $SD = 13.81$ ) and 20 participants identified as male ( $M_{\text{age}} = 37.61$ ,  $SD = 15.58$ ). When it comes to level of education, the majority of participants (43%) disclosed that they had successfully completed a university (WO) program. Following closely behind, 39% reported having completed HBO, while 18% had finished MBO.

Among these participants, the highest percentage (41%) reported having worked in the same team for more than three years. Subsequently, 21% reported working together for one year, 20% for less than half a year, and 18% for two years. Most respondents (60%) reported working in teams consisting of more than eight people. Of the respondents, 78% exclusively identified with a Dutch background. The rest of the sample (22%) were categorized as non-Dutch because they or their parent(s) were born in a country other than The Netherlands, such as Ireland, China, Tunisia, or Iran.

### Materials and design

The current study utilized a cross-sectional design, gathering data through a questionnaire administered at a single point in time. Participants in the study were only allowed to participate if they worked in a team and under the supervision of a manager. The recruitment of participants for this study was conducted through the utilization of popular social media platforms, namely Facebook and LinkedIn. All participants provided informed consent. Lastly, our study has received approval from the Utrecht University Student Ethics Review under the supervision of the Faculty Ethics Review Board.

### Measures

The following scales were measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree which are included in Appendix A. Means and standard deviations are presented in the results section.

#### **Perceived surface-level diversity.**

The items assessing perceived surface-level diversity have been modified from the scale from Harrison et al. (1998). The scale included three items – age and ethnicity and gender. Participants were asked how similar they perceived their team members to be on these items. An example question of this scale is: “my team members generally have the same



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ethnic background”. It was decided to exclude the item gender from the questionnaire due to its impact on Cronbach's alpha, which resulted in a higher reliability coefficient when the item was removed. The coefficient alpha for this scale was  $\alpha = .56$ .

### **Deep-level diversity.**

To measure deep-level diversity, an adapted version of the value deep-level diversity scale of Jehn et al., (1999) was used ( $\alpha = .85$ ). The scale included perceptions of (dis)similarity on personal values, such as: “all group members share the same values.” For the current research, the coefficient alpha was  $\alpha = .88$ .

### **Creative climate.**

To measure the creative climate, an adapted 9-item version of the Situational Outlook Questionnaire (SOQ) was used. The different items tap into 9 unique dimensions of creativity, such as Freedom and Humour. An example question of this scale is: “there is time to explore new ideas”,  $\alpha = .81$ .

### **Identity leadership.**

The Identity Leadership Inventory was employed to assess identity leadership, encompassing various aspects such as leader prototypicality, advancement, and entrepreneurship (Steffens et al., 2014). For this study, a shorter four-item version of the inventory was used. An example items of this scale is: “my manager/leadership is representative of the members of my team.” In the current study, the scale was reliable  $\alpha = .93$ .

### **Statistical analysis**

The collected data from the questionnaire was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics v27. A linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the proposed relationships between perceived surface-level and deep-level diversity, the creative climate and identity leadership. To test the mediation depicted in Figure 1, the PROCESS macro within the SPSS package was utilized (Hayes, 2017).

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## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Prior to performing the regression analysis, assumptions such as homoscedasticity, linearity, and normality for all the variables were examined and validated. The correlation matrix and descriptive statistics consisting of these variables are shown in Table 1. An analysis considering the duration of employment in the same team and the team size was conducted for the means of the variables (see Appendix B). Surprisingly, there were no significant differences found. However, it is noteworthy that individuals with the least amount of work experience had the highest mean scores for both identity leadership and creative climate.

**Table 1.**

*Pearson's Correlations and Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	ILI	CC	PSDL
ILI	4.82	1.50	.		
CC	5.18	.82	.61**	.	
PSLD	4.12	1.41	-.19	-.30*	.
PDL D	2.72	1.03	-.74**	-.69**	.21

*Note.* ILI= Identity leadership inventory, CC= creative climate, PSDL= perceived surface-level diversity, PDL D= perceived deep-level diversity.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed). *M* and *SD* are used to present mean and standard deviation.

### Hypothesis Testing

#### **Regression analysis surface-level diversity.**

Hypothesis 1 was not supported: perceived surface-level diversity (PSLD) had no significant negative effect on the creative climate of a company (see table 2). This implies that a high perceived surface-level diversity does not lead to a low creative climate. Due to the low Cronbach's alpha of the scale ( $\alpha = .55$ ), the decision was made to split the scale. We conducted a linear regression analysis separately for the items measuring perceived diversity in age (PDA) and perceived diversity in cultural background (PDCB). Interestingly, PDA did not predict a low creative climate, but PDCB did (see table 3 and 4).

#### **Regression analysis deep-level diversity.**

Hypothesis 2 was supported: perceived deep-level diversity (PDL D) had a significant negative effect on the creative climate of a company (see table 3). Consequently, in situations

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where deep-level diversity is perceived to be high, one can anticipate a low level of creative climate.

### **Moderation analysis surface-level diversity.**

Next, the moderating effects of identity leadership were tested. Hypothesis 3 was not supported: when looking at the total moderating effect, no significant effect was found (see table 2). Hence, identity leadership did not moderate the relationship between PSLD on the creative climate, nor did it moderate the effects of PDA and PDCB (see table 3 and 4).

### **Moderation analysis deep-level diversity.**

Next the moderating effects of identity leadership (hypothesis 4) were tested. Hypothesis 4 was not supported: when looking at the total moderating effect, no significant effect was found. Hence, identity leadership did not moderate the direct effect of PDL on the creative climate (see table 5).

**Table 2.**

*Regression analysis of the relationship between surface-level diversity and creative climate, moderated by identity leadership.*

<b>Variable</b>	<b><i>b</i></b>	<b><i>t</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
<b>Intercept</b>	4.01	9.11	<.001
<b>ILI</b>	.32	5.49	<.001
<b>PSLD</b>	-.090	-1.43	.16
<b>ILI* PSLD</b>	.008	.11	.94

*Note.* Dependent variable= creative climate. ILI= Identity leadership inventory, PSLD= perceived surface-level diversity

**Table 3.**

*Regression analysis of the relationship between perceived diversity in age and creative climate.*

<b>Variable</b>	<b><i>b</i></b>	<b><i>t</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
<b>Intercept</b>	3.29	6.81	<.001
<b>ILI</b>	.37	5.65	<.001
<b>PDA</b>	.019	.334	.74
<b>ILI* PDA</b>	-.104	-.98	.330

*Note.* Dependent variable= creative climate. PDA= perceived diversity age.

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**Table 4.**

*Regression analysis of the relationship between perceived diversity in cultural background and creative climate, moderated by identity leadership.*

<b>Variable</b>	<b><i>b</i></b>	<b><i>t</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
<b>Intercept</b>	4.01	12.05	<.001
<b>ILI</b>	.32	5.84	<.001
<b>PDCB</b>	-.12	-2.49	.016
<b>ILI* PDCB</b>	.038	.439	.663

*Note.* Dependent variable= creative climate. PDCB= perceived diversity cultural background.

**Table 5.**

*Regression analysis of the relationship between deep-level diversity and creative climate, moderated by identity leadership.*

<b>Variable</b>	<b><i>b</i></b>	<b><i>t</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
<b>Intercept</b>	5.72	8.77	<.001
<b>ILI</b>	.122	1.56	.12
<b>PSLD</b>	-.42	-3.34	.002
<b>ILI*PSLD</b>	.003	.084	.97

*Note.* Dependent variable= creative climate.

ILI= Identity leadership inventory, PDL= perceived deep-level diversity.

**Exploratory analyses**

**Mediation analysis.**

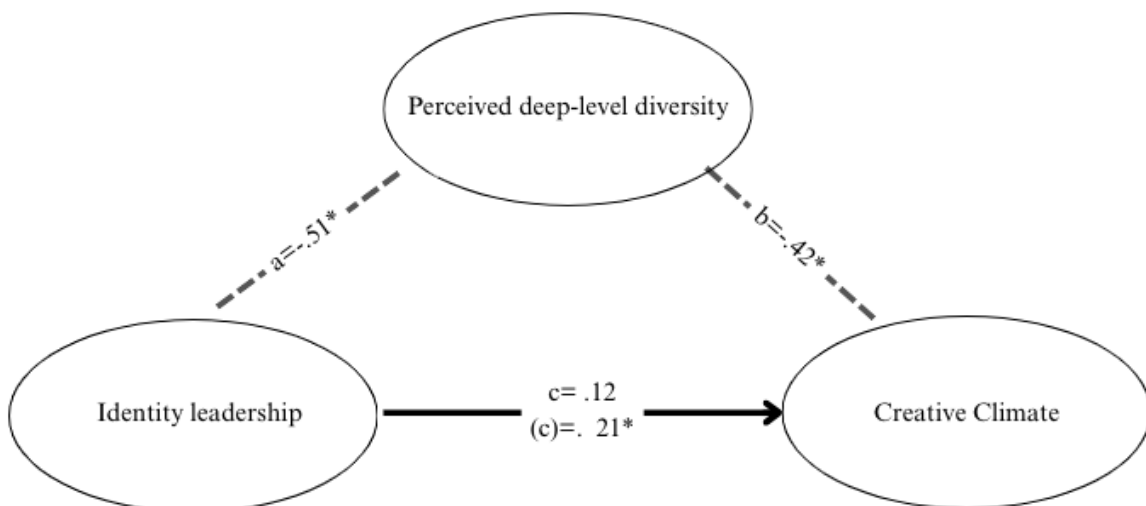
Since the moderation analysis yielded ineffective results, we explored potential alternative relationships between identity leadership, perceived diversity, and a creative climate. We tested whether perceived deep-level diversity mediated the relationship between identity leadership and creativity (Figure 1). The initial regression analysis (a) examining the relationship between identity leadership and perceived deep-level diversity revealed a significant result, with a coefficient of  $b = -.51$ ,  $t = -8.37$ ,  $p < .001$ . The subsequent regression analysis (b) investigating the association between perceived deep-level diversity (as a mediator) and the creative climate also yielded a significant finding, with a coefficient of  $b = .27$ ,  $t = -3.72$ ,  $p < .001$ . The final regression analysis (c) did not yield a significant result, indicating that there was no statistically significant relationship between identity leadership and the creative climate  $b = .12$ ,  $t = 1.57$ .

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The findings of Model 1 indicated a significant indirect effect, as evidenced by the following results  $b = .21$ ,  $SE = .064$ ,  $LLCI = .10$ , and  $ULCI = .36$ . The 95% confidence interval did not contain zero, indicating that perceived deep-level diversity played a mediating role in the relationship between identity leadership and the creative climate. As formulated by Zhao et al. (2010), the lack of significance in pathway (c) suggests that the model operates solely as an indirect mediation model.

### Figure 1.

*A mediation model of identity leadership, perceived deep-level diversity and creative climate.*



*Note.* The value in brackets indicates the indirect impact of identity leadership on creative climate via perceived deep-level diversity. The asterisk (\*) demonstrates statistical significance of standardized path coefficients at  $p < .05$ .

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## Discussion

The goal of this study was to see if perceived diversity had a negative impact on the creative climate within teams. Moreover, we investigated how identity leadership plays a role in this relationship.

### Findings and Implications

#### **The effect of perceived diversity on the creative climate.**

##### *Surface-level diversity.*

Drawing upon earlier studies (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Larkey, 1996; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), the hypothesis emerged that perceiving a substantial degree of diversity based on surface-level characteristics, such as age or ethnic background, would negatively impact the creative climate. Our research findings were partly consistent with this hypothesis. Contrary to initial expectations, the perceived-surface level diversity scale which we employed did not yield any significant effect. However, upon dividing the scale into two distinct items, it was discovered that perceived differences in cultural background exhibited detrimental effects on the creative climate. On the other hand, perceived differences in age still did not impact the creative climate. To put it differently, when participants perceive their team to be diverse in terms of cultural background it had adverse consequences for the creative climate, while perceived differences in age did not elicit a similar effect.

The effects of surface-diversity variables have indeed been found to be inconsistent, despite their extensive history of study in this domain (Riordan, 2000). The results of research on racial or ethnic diversity report optimistic and pessimistic views (Milliken & Martins, 1996). The current study did not find results for theory that supports the positive effects of racial diversity on the performance of organizations (Richard et al., 2004). On the contrary, our study found evidence for the pessimistic perspectives which pose those differences in cultural background negatively affect team outcomes, in this case being the creative climate. Considering the significant negative impact observed due to perceived differences in cultural background, we recommend that companies exercise caution in their diversity hiring practices. It is crucial to recognize that such efforts may inadvertently yield unintended consequences contrary to the desired outcomes.

Based on previous research (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), it was expected that perceived age diversity would negatively predict the creative climate. Contrary to what was expected, perceived age diversity does not have any effects on the creative climate. In other

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words, it does not negatively influence the creative climate when team members perceive that their team members to have a range of different ages.

One possible explanation for the lack of results in this study is the fact that absenteeism may have played a significant role in the influence of perceived age diversity on the creative climate. Cummings et al. (1993) revealed that individuals who differed the most in age from their team tended to have greater rates of absence. As a result, absenteeism may negate the negative impact of perceived age diversity on the creative climate. Examining this factor in greater depth could lead to a broader comprehension of this relationship. Moreover, the overall evidence regarding the effects of age diversity on performance is not robust. In line with this finding, Bantel and Jackson (1989) also concluded that age diversity does not emerge as a significant determinant of organizational innovation. Consequently, it can be inferred that when examining surface-level variables, diversity in age may not hold as much importance as other surface-level variables.

Overall, these findings align with the literature review conducted by Yadav and Lenka (2020), emphasizing the necessity of distinguishing between various dimensions of surface-level diversity, as they produce distinct effects on a variety of outcome variables.

### ***Deep-level diversity.***

In line with our reasoning based on previous research (Jehn et al., 1999), perceived deep-level diversity negatively affected the creative climate. In other words, when individuals perceive differences in the values and goals of their team members, it hampers the overall environment for creativity and innovation. Contrary to previous research (Wang et al, 2019), these findings suggest that perceived deep-level diversity does not necessarily contribute to increased innovation. In fact, perceiving differences in values can be detrimental for innovation advances. One implication for this might be managers should aim for a balance between diversity and cohesion within their teams. While diversity brings varied perspectives and ideas, too much divergence in values can hinder collaboration and impede innovation.

### **The moderating effect of identity leadership.**

Based on previous research (Haslam & Reicher, 2007), it was expected that high identity leadership, meaning the establishment by leaders of a shared social identity of team members, would buffer the negative effect of perceived diversity on the creative climate. In contrast to initial expectations, identity leadership did not exhibit a positive moderating effect on the relationship between perceived diversity and the surface- or deep-level diversity variables. In other words, even when participants reported that their manager was effective in

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fostering unity within the team, the negative effect of perceived diversity on the creative climate were not mitigated.

We based our expectations on the fact that transformational leadership was found to be crucial in realizing the potential advantages of diversity within an organization (Wieland, 2004). A possible explanation for our lack of results is that identity leadership has different effects than transformational leadership. Moreover, the positive effects of identity leadership on the creative climate might operate indirectly, through the perception of diversity. By recognizing perceived diversity as a mediating factor, it explains why the moderating effect of identity leadership on the harmful effects of high perceived diversity was not observed. The relationship between identity leadership and team creativity might be more nuanced and influenced by the team's perception of diversity.

### **Exploratory analysis.**

As identity leadership proved not to be significant in moderating the relationship between perceived diversity and the creative climate, we explored whether perceived deep-level diversity would act as a mediator between identity leadership and the creative climate. Surface-level characteristics such as gender, age, and ethnicity are difficult to disregard or modify group dynamics. As a result, identity leadership does not alter these perceived differences. Cues associated to deep-level qualities, such as values and attitudes, on the other hand, are more susceptible to modification. As a result, identity leadership is more likely to influence and shape judgments of dissimilarity based on deep-level features.

We found a significant mediating relationship between identity leadership and the creative climate, partially mediated by perceived deep-level diversity. Thus, when managers are effective in creating a shared identity, team members perceive their values and goals to be less diverse, which enhances the creative climate. This is in line with Luring and Klitmøller, (2017), who found that low perceived differences are important for organizational outcomes. Furthermore, additional studies shed light on the mediating mechanisms by which perceived diversity enhances various aspects of organizational performance (Choi et al., 2017).

This study contributes to previous research by providing evidence that perceived deep-level diversity is not a stable variable in the sense that it is subject to change (Harrison et al., 1998). It appears that perceived differences in age have a less prominent impact on team outcomes than previously believed, providing reassurance for managers. However, our results also highlight the complexity of creating a creative climate within a team. Managers face the challenge of integrating individuals who differ in underlying and fundamental ways. Consequently, the implication of our findings suggests that managers should concentrate on



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fostering a shared sense of unity among team members, as a collective identity that can help overcome these differences and promote collaboration.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The findings of the current study should be understood in the context of some limitations. A first limitation that could have affected the results, is the small sample size used in this study. Using a small number of participants can present possible biases (Shen et al., 2011), which may restrict the extent to which the findings can be extended to a larger population or in different circumstances. Future research should try to resolve these limitations through replication studies and joint research initiatives. These methods can improve the generalizability of findings and provide a more complete understanding of the topic within the area (Shen et al., 2011).

Furthermore, a strength in our studies lies that we separated the different constructs into surface- and deep-level diversity. However, a limitation could be that we solely used diversity in values to measure deep-level diversity whereas Jehn et al. (1999) also included informational diversity as a deep-level variable. Informational diversity can be defined as differences in expertise and educational backgrounds. As this construct might have different effects than value deep-level diversity, we cannot entirely conclude that deep-level diversity has a detrimental effect on the creative climate. To obtain more profound insights, future research should prioritize examining the influence of informational diversity on the creative climate. Compared to deep-level value diversity, we expect that that informational diversity will yield distinct outcomes. By exploring this aspect, we can better understand how deep-level diversity influences the overall creative environment within organizations.

Furthermore, a notable strength of our study lies in the analysis of perceived diversity and its impact on organizational outcomes. By examining how individuals' perceptions of diversity influence various aspects within an organization, we gain valuable insights into the subjective experiences and beliefs of employees. This approach allows us to delve into the nuanced ways in which diversity is understood and interpreted by individuals, ultimately shaping their attitudes and behaviours within the organizational context. However, it is important to acknowledge a limitation of our research, namely the absence of measuring diversity *within* teams. While our study captures individuals' perceptions of diversity, it does not directly assess the actual diversity present within teams or departments. This limitation hinders our ability to compare the perceived diversity with the objective reality, potentially missing out on valuable insights. Future research should consider including such measures to further advance our understanding of diversity and its effects in the workplace.

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Lastly, our study did not distinguish per profession. Not every profession relies on innovation to the same extent, which raises the question of whether it is equally important to foster a creative climate across all industries and work domains. Research has demonstrated that certain sectors, such as globally engaged firms, are more likely to prioritize and engage in innovative practices (Criscuolo et al., 2005). These findings indicate that the correlation between diversity and innovation may differ based on the professional context. Considering this, it becomes essential for future research to delve deeper into differentiating between professions and industries. By doing so, we can gain valuable insights into the effects of diversity on innovation across various work domains. Understanding how diversity impacts innovation in specific contexts can guide managers and organizations in tailoring their strategies to maximize innovation outcomes effectively.

### **Conclusion**

This study builds upon prior research (e.g., Yadav & Lenka, 2020) by presenting evidence that highlights the inconsistent effects of diversity variables on organizational outcomes. The unique aspect of this paper is its investigation into the impact of *perceived* diversity and its use of a novel framework for examining leadership. Essentially, our study design enabled us to gather a dataset that facilitated the examination of the impacts of surface and deep-level diversity on the creative climate, and how identity leadership influences this relationship. Our results indicate that the effects of perceived surface-level diversity only partly influence the creative climate, whereas perceived deep-level diversity has detrimental effects on the creative climate. Moreover, identity leadership did not moderate this relationship. However, the relationship between identity leadership and the creative climate is partially mediated by perceived deep-level diversity. Although further research is necessary to fully comprehend these intricate interactions, our findings suggest that gaining a deeper understanding of the roles of perceived diversity in the organizational context will offer valuable insights on effectively managing diverse teams.

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## Appendix A

### Questionnaire

#### Items for measuring “demographic variables”

1. Wat is uw gender?

- Man
- Vrouw
- Anders, namelijk:

2. Wat is uw leeftijd?

3. Bent uzelf of een van uw ouders van niet-Nederlandse komaf?

- Ja
- Nee

4. Zoja; welke achtergrond heeft u?

- Surinaams
- Marrokaans
- Turks
- Antilliaans
- Spaans
- Indisch
- Anders, namelijk;

5. Wat is uw opleidingsniveau?

- Mbo

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- Hbo
- Wo
- Anders, namelijk:

### **Control block team**

6. Werkt u (soms) in teamverband?

- Ja
- Nee

7. Hoelang werkt u al in hetzelfde team?

- Korter dan een half jaar
- 1 jaar
- 2 jaar
- >3 jaar

8. Uit hoeveel leden bestaat uw team?

- Tussen de 2 en 4
- Tussen de 4 en 6
- Tussen de 6 en 8
- Meer dan 8

*The following Items had to be rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.*

### **Items for measuring “creative climate” - Situational Outlook Questionnaire**

**(Isaksen et al, 1999)**

9. Er heerst in mijn team een energieke werksfeer

10. Er heerst in mijn team een energieke werksfeer

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11. Mensen in mijn team maken zelf keuzes over hun eigen werkzaamheden
12. Mensen in mijn team stelen elkaars ideeën niet
13. Er is tijd om nieuwe ideeën te onderzoeken
14. In mijn team hebben mensen gevoel voor humor
15. In mijn team heerst er een strijd om macht en territorium
16. In mijn team voelen mensen zich meestal welkom als ze nieuwe ideeën aandragen
17. Er wordt in mijn team een grote verscheidenheid aan standpunten geuit
18. Mensen in mijn team wagen zich vaak op onbekend terrein

### **Perceived surface-level diversity** (Harrison et al., 1998).

19. Mijn teamleden hebben over het algemeen dezelfde leeftijd
20. Mijn teamleden hebben over het algemeen dezelfde etnische achtergrond
21. Het merendeel van mijn team bestaat uit vrouwen

### **Perceived deep-level diversity** (Jehn et al., 1999)

22. Alle groepsleden delen dezelfde waarden.
23. Mijn team als geheel heeft vergelijkbare professionele waarden.
24. Mijn team als geheel heeft vergelijkbare doelen.
25. De leden van mijn groep hebben sterke overtuigingen over wat belangrijk is binnen het team.
26. De leden van mijn team hebben vergelijkbare doelen.
27. Alle leden van mijn team zijn het eens over wat belangrijk is voor de groep.

### **Identity leadership Inventory**

28. Mijn manager/leidinggevende leider is representatief voor de leden van mijn team
29. Mijn manager/leidinggevende behartigt de belangen van de leden van mijn team
30. Mijn manager/leidinggevende creëert een gevoel van saamhorigheid binnen de groep
31. Mijn manager/leidinggevende bedenkt activiteiten die ons team samenbrengen

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*End of questionnaire*

Geachte respondent,

Bij deze willen we u persoonlijk bedanken voor uw deelname aan onze vragenlijst. Dankzij uw deelname kunnen wij waardevolle informatie verzamelen die ons zal helpen bij het uitvoeren van ons onderzoek en het verkrijgen van nieuwe inzichten in ons vakgebied.

We beseffen dat uw tijd kostbaar is en zijn daarom des te meer dankbaar voor uw bereidheid om deel te nemen aan ons onderzoek. Graag houden wij u daarom op de hoogte van de uitkomsten van het onderzoek. Als u dit interessant vindt kunt u hieronder uw e-mailadres invullen en ontvangt u te zijner tijd het rapport. Daarnaast maakt u op deze manier ook kans op een cadeaubon ter waarde van **25 euro**. Uw e-mailadres zal nooit verbonden worden aan de antwoorden die u hebt gegeven op de vragen.

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**Appendix B**

Descriptive statistics for differences in amount of time and amount of people

		<b>Descriptive Statistics<sup>a</sup></b>				
Hoelang werkt u al in hetzelfde team?		N	Minimu m	Maximu m	Mean	Std. Deviation
Korter dan een half jaar	Identity leadership	12	4.75	6.50	5.5833	.54703
	Creative climate	13	4.56	6.22	5.6154	.55484
	Perceived surface- level diversity	12	2.00	6.00	3.4167	1.27624
	Perceived deep- level diversity	12	1.67	2.83	2.1806	.36555
	Valid N (listwise)	12				
1 jaar	Identity leadership	13	1.00	7.00	4.2308	2.13713
	Creative climate	14	3.44	6.22	4.7698	.98850
	Perceived surface- level diversity	13	2.00	6.50	4.2308	1.07268
	Perceived deep- level diversity	14	1.67	5.50	3.1071	1.27870
	Valid N (listwise)	12				
2 jaar	Identity leadership	10	3.25	6.50	4.4500	1.12916
	Creative climate	11	4.11	6.67	5.2222	.76336
	Perceived surface- level diversity	11	2.00	6.00	3.9091	1.46318
	Perceived deep- level diversity	10	1.50	4.67	3.3167	1.02274
	Valid N (listwise)	10				
>3 jaar	Identity leadership	24	1.00	6.50	4.9167	1.44588
	Creative climate	27	3.44	6.78	5.1636	.79291
	Perceived surface- level diversity	26	1.00	6.50	4.5192	1.51315
	Perceived deep- level diversity	24	1.17	5.17	2.5069	.92793
	Valid N (listwise)	24				

a. No statistics are computed for one or more split files because there are no valid cases.

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		Descriptive Statistics <sup>a</sup>				
Uit hoeveel leden bestaat uw team?		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tussen de 2 en 4	Identity leadership	5	4.25	6.00	5.2500	.75000
	Creative climate	5	4.89	6.11	5.4444	.45134
	Perceived surface-level diversity	5	2.00	6.00	4.5000	1.54110
	Perceived deep-level diversity	5	1.83	3.33	2.4667	.55777
	Valid N (listwise)	5				
Tussen de 4 en 6	Identity leadership	11	1.00	6.50	4.4545	1.81940
	Creative climate	13	4.11	6.78	5.4017	.89067
	Perceived surface-level diversity	12	1.00	6.00	3.3333	1.40346
	Perceived deep-level diversity	11	1.17	5.33	2.6515	1.11419
	Valid N (listwise)	11				
Tussen de 6 en 8	Identity leadership	8	4.00	6.00	5.2500	.75593
	Creative climate	8	3.44	6.11	5.0556	.93718
	Perceived surface-level diversity	8	2.00	6.50	3.8750	1.82737
	Perceived deep-level diversity	8	1.83	4.00	2.4375	.71790
	Valid N (listwise)	8				
Meer dan 8	Identity leadership	35	1.00	7.00	4.7786	1.60396
	Creative climate	39	3.44	6.67	5.0962	.81994
	Perceived surface-level diversity	37	2.00	6.50	4.4054	1.23512
	Perceived deep-level diversity	36	1.33	5.50	2.8333	1.11412
	Valid N (listwise)	34				

a. No statistics are computed for one or more split files because there are no valid cases.

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