Beyond the Obvious: Facets of Diversity in Marketing Student Groups

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Abstract Student cohorts at higher education institutions worldwide are more diverse than ever due to international student mobility and a greater inclusion of previously underrepresented groups within the higher education system. Despite the potential effects of diversity on student academic performance and wellbeing, related studies have commonly been limited by a focus on cultural diversity. To better understand the importance of cultural diversity, we expand the literature by exploring various types of diversity simultaneously. A two-step research process, including a series of in-depth interviews and a survey, was used to examine the extent to which different dimensions of diversity, including characteristics brought to the group (language skills, academic goals and extroversion) and those that emerge during the group process (external commitments, commitment to task and adherence to rules), can influence the students' satisfaction with the process and satisfaction with the outcome. Furthermore, bi-directionality of communication and information-sharing emerge as processes that mediate the influence of diversity, in particular influencing the effect of differences in academic goals and differences in language skills, on group satisfaction with the process and outcome respectively. Implications for marketers are provided.

Keywords Diversity · Group work · Satisfaction · Group process · Mixed method

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Introduction

Research on student group work within marketing courses has often purported various benefits of diversity for student learning, such as the development of teamwork skills (McCorkle et al. 1999), a multicultural experience (Williams et al. 1991) and a higher level of motivation (McCorkle et al. 1999). Group work is also often favoured as it is thought to closely replicate the style in which marketers work within practice. And it is perhaps for these benefits that Professor Pascale Quester initially designed her Introduction to Marketing assignment as a group experience; a format that has stood the test of time via many successive instructors. Despite these accolades, studies have found varied results regarding the functioning and outcomes of group work. For instance, a study by Sweeney and Weaven (2005) suggests that group work promotes deep learning, a greater appreciation of the contributions of different cultural backgrounds, and leads to changes in students' feelings and behaviours from a more egoistic to a more collectivist style. Yet, Kates (2002) found various barriers to deep learning due to an avoidance of confrontation, lack of dealing with free loaders and issues with control/dominance. In direct contrast to Sweeney and Weaven (2005), students were often found to disregard others' efforts, misleading them and reworking contributions to obtain a 'higher grade'. This study, thus, aims to shed some light on these incongruous results by exploring multiple dimensions of group diversity and their effect on outcomes, as mediated by group processes.

Our current study is warranted now more than ever, as universities across the globe have experienced a substantial change in the diversity of the student body, as evidenced by the doubling of the number of students studying abroad globally since 2000 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2014). Importantly, researchers have so far focused strongly on student group composition with particular reference to international student status. However, it may be important to broaden our focus on diversity to understand the relative importance of such status. Hence, the following discussion starts with a review of research surrounding various types of diversity within groups. Students' reflections on their group experience are then explored via interviews with an aim to better understand all relevant dimensions of diversity and their potential influence on group processes and outcomes (phase 1). Our refined framework is then tested in a preliminary survey (phase 2). The paper concludes with an outline of implications for marketing educators, limitations and directions for future research.

Diversity Within Groups

Diversity is a broad term for a multitude of differences between group members. Indeed, diversity can be categorised as either readily detectable attributes such as age, gender or nationality, most commonly studied (Paulus et al. 2005), or underlying attributes such as skill levels or values (Jackson et al. 1995). In general,

differences in observable traits tend to negatively influence the affective outcomes for the group, such as satisfaction and identification with the group; yet can have a positive effect on cognitive outcomes such as the number of alternatives considered and the quality of ideas (Milliken and Martins 1996). Students who have found similar underlying attributes, such as their values, will enjoy working together due to positive reinforcement. However, similarity of values and attitudes may also hinder the creativity and critical argument that arises from differing opinions (Milliken and Martins 1996).

Nationality Diversity

Despite the identification of a large number of factors that may characterise group diversity, the majority of previous studies have focused on nationality or cultural diversity. For example, students working in groups encompassing domestic and international students are more likely to learn to look at issues from different perspectives (Williams et al. 1991), in turn inducing greater performance measured by mean grades (Bacon et al. 1998). Other studies also confirmed better grades for more ethnically diverse groups (Watson et al. 2002). In contrast, using a number of national clusters, Thomas (1999) found that homogeneous groups performed higher than heterogeneous groups with respect to grades.

While grades certainly provide one form of evaluation for group performance, a more comprehensive measurement might help in understanding the seemingly disparate results of the aforementioned studies. For example, Kates (2002) suggested that students may not be dealing with problems of skill diversity and may be submitting work without the full input of the members they perceive as less able. While the group may gain a higher grade, all students, including those with greater workloads and those who have their work disregarded, have a negative experience (Kates 2002). Van Der Zee et al. (2004) also found that diversity, measured as perceived difference in backgrounds, negatively affects satisfaction with under-graduate student groups. This refocus on the perception of diversity is an interesting development as it deals with the student's own measure of difference.

More recently, Kimmel and Volet (2010) introduced a bi-dimensional measure of cultural diversity where non-local schooling and multilingual skills denoted an 'other' culture student. Consequently they found particular manifestations of cultural differences, such as language proficiency, to negatively affect attitudes towards intercultural group work. In light of these distinctions, this study addresses the call for further refinement by exploring different ways in which diversity may arise in student groups and what effect various dimensions of diversity may have on the groups' performance. To allow a more comprehensive investigation of nationality diversity, three factors will be further explored, including international student status (enrolment as a domestic or international), ethnic background (Van Der Zee et al. 2004) and language skills (Paulus et al. 2005). In addition, further dimensions of diversity relevant to group work will be examined to explore their relative importance.

Prior (Pre-existing) Characteristics

The propensity of a particular personality trait to affect group processes and outcomes may be greater when the trait affects our ability to interact. For instance, in exploring multiculturalism, several personality traits have been found to influence the success of culturally diverse groups, such as cultural empathy, open mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability and flexibility, whilst several other traits relating to task orientation, outgoingness (Van Der Zee and Van Oudenhoven 2000) and Type A personalities (Watson et al. 2005) did not. In addition to their personality, students are also likely to differ in their academic goals. This could include differences in more surface oriented goals, such as their expectations for the grade they want to achieve, or deep-oriented goals, such as the skills and knowledge needed for their future career or existing job (Volet 1997). A student with high academic goals is likely to be a self-directed learner, who is proactive and motivated to learn (Zimmerman et al. 1992).

Diversity Surfacing During Group Work

The level of a student's external commitment has seldom been studied as a factor influencing student group work. The Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE 2009) reports that 68 % of students surveyed were working for pay while studying. Such a high level of external commitment is likely to not only influence the time a student is able to commit to studying but also limit their interaction with others. Indeed, individuals value group work less and have significantly lower appraisal of the group experience when more than half its members work more than two days a week (D'Alessandro and Volet 2012).

Alternately, students may simply differ in relation to their commitment to the task at hand. The concept of task commitment is manifested in the actual completion of tasks and the amount of effort expended on those tasks. In an individual context, a student's effort is mediated by their general ability to maintain and enact their goals as well as their cognitive and emotional motivation towards the task (Volet 1997). For instance, if many group members are committed to the task, this may enhance overall members' interest and emotional states, thus increasing performance. However, if there is significantly lower commitment from only some members, this may have two opposing effects. That is, it either instigates even more attention or commitment from those students concerned about the achievement of their goals, or incites less commitment from previously committed members due to a decrease in motivation, both cognitively and emotionally.

A Framework of Diversity and Its Effects

Drawing from our review of the existing literature on diversity and students' group work, we have developed a broad framework depicting the impact of multiple dimensions of diversity (namely, international student status, ethnic background, language skills, academic goals and personality (prior to group work), as well as external commitments and commitment to task (during group work)) on group outcomes. Several group processes were also included within the framework so that a deeper exploration could be undertaken, where these processes may mediate any effects of diversity on group outcomes. For instance, external commitments may be managed differently depending on the level to which the group still engages in dialogue, which in turn may affect the satisfaction of each member in the group.

This exploratory study uses a mixed methods approach, enabling us to make use of the advantages of both qualitative and preliminary quantitative research. The qualitative phase (one) will be discussed first, leading to the discussion and results of the quantitative phase (two).

Phase 1—In-Depth Interviews

Method

A qualitative approach was employed in phase one of this study, as it enables the capture of rich data and the understanding of complex concepts and interrelations (Ticehurst and Veal 1999). More specifically, in-depth interviews were preferred as they may elicit more honest, less constrained responses reflecting a wide range of experiences. Using judgment sampling, nine students from a mid-sized Australian University were chosen from a third year marketing class. This late stage in the degree was selected to allow for a greater number of group experiences to be discussed. The students were chosen to represent various types of diversity, including age, gender (five males, four females), educational background, academic performance, extra or introversion and ethnic background (five local students, one each from China, Singapore, Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates).

An interview protocol was used, offering a systematic approach to a series of interviews without limiting the opportunity to uncover and explore new issues. While this qualitative research phase aimed at identifying the most relevant processes for students, the following concepts were included in the interview guideline based on available literature: communication (Kates 2002), leadership (Sy et al. 2005), role allocation (Batra et al. 1997), and group atmosphere (Jehn and Mannix 2001). Several group outcomes were also included so that a well-rounded exploration of the impact of diversity on the student group experience could be made.

The interviews lasted for approximately 40 min each. Interviewing continued until responses began to converge. All interviews were voice recorded and

transcribed, as advantages of recording are believed to outweigh its limitations (Carson et al. 2001). Both researchers conducted a thematic analysis of the data, followed by a comparison and discussion of results.

Discussion of Results

The successive framework based on our preliminary findings is provided in Fig. 1, with a detailed discussion of results following.

Prior Characteristics

Consistent with our findings in the literature review, the more easily identifiable factors such as age, gender and educational background did not emerge as relevant factors affecting group performance. Interestingly, international student status and the ethnic background of students were also not perceived as factors significantly influencing group functioning and outcomes. This finding is in contrast with previous studies conducted within the US context (Bacon et al. 1998) and might be explained by the characteristics of the Australian student cohort. With more than half of the students enrolled in Australian business degrees classified as international, a group task bringing these groups of students together is a common experience.

However, three types of diversity emerged as relevant, including differences in relation to language skills, academic goals and personality. One type of nationality diversity, language skills, emerged as a significant inhibitor. The interviewees described language skills as a primary reason for a perceived inequality of work and an alleged lower mark. For example: "*One guy didn't contribute at all. He was an*
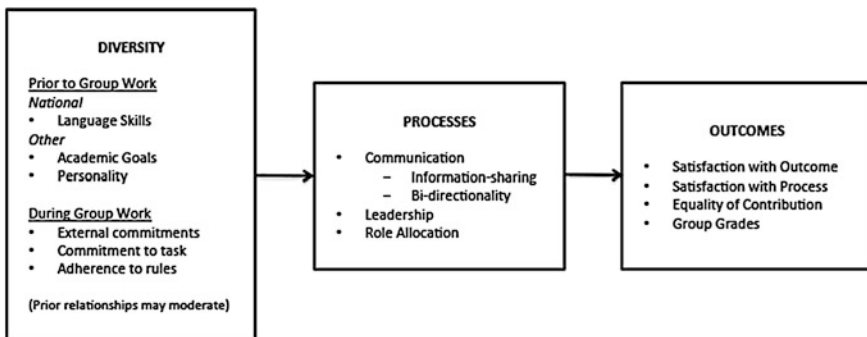

Fig. 1 Framework of group diversity, processes and outcomes

international student and couldn't speak a lot of English… we just said 'mate, it's OK. We'll do this". Students who did not speak English well were often excluded from deeper discussions and contributed in only a very structured way. Although initial attempts at inclusion were often made, groups tired of this effort as it slowed the process of creativity. Interestingly, international students whose English was not their native language but who spoke it relatively well also held this view; thus language skill rather than nationality or student status appears relevant.

Diversity in academic goals appeared to have an even greater influence on students' frustration and satisfaction with group work. Depending on what individuals aim to achieve in regards to their studies, or a specific task, they choose varied timings for milestones and quality levels for their work. Diversity in academic goals clearly limited not only the students' satisfaction with the group but also the quality of work produced:

> There can be issues. Especially when there are different people … trying to attain different goals in the end; and that could be from international students through to Australian students. If you have got an assignment where you have got someone who is doing university because it is a stop gap measure and all they are interested in is getting a piece of paper in the end; and so what they do normally is they are usually quite happy to do their assignment on the last day. That doesn't work if you want to produce high quality work. And then you can have problems.

Overall, group work seems to be easier if people in the group are generally similar: "*I found that people that are like me, it is easier to work with*". In the given context, students primarily identified one personality facet as influencing group work; namely extroversion (or introversion). A consensus within the interviews regarding the benefit of outgoing personalities was apparent. These people were seen as good at managing groups and generating ideas, allowing for a thorough discussion and in turn deep learning. Shy and passive individuals, on the other hand, were described as neither opening up to ideas nor contributing to discussions: "*… when you've got people that are submissive it can become very difficult because you can't tell whether you are on the right track*".

Another characteristic that influenced group functioning is the prior relationships amongst individuals on entering the group. While some described working with a friend as highly satisfactory, due to mutual support, motivation and established modes of communication, others perceived existing friendship as a disadvantage due to a lack of focus. Moreover, students outside of these friendship groups often felt awkward and excluded, in turn limiting their mutual learning: "*I wasn't expecting to do something on the weekend with them but I did feel left out. Maybe they did talk about the assignment. I didn't know about it*". Although this prior characteristic of the group is not diversity per se, it may moderate the effects of diversity, due to established communication and group norms or a greater distance between those who were and were not already within the relationship.

Diversity During Group Work

Interviewees also identified differences in group members' attributes and behaviours throughout the group work. Three major differences appeared to influence group functioning and success, namely the extent of external commitments, the level of commitment to the task and adherence to rules. Interviewees identified external commitments, particularly work commitments, as hindering group work functioning and success:

> Are they studying full-time or not full-time, are they studying and working at the same time? Or do they think that studies are just for the fun of it, just to get a degree regardless of the mark? … This plays a very important part.

Students felt that work commitments often meant that group work was not as efficient, partially because students could not spend large amounts of time working together.

Task commitment was manifested in the students' dedication to the work. One student mentioned that groups with only one or two committed individuals are most likely to struggle and achieve less than favourable learning outcomes. While the committed individuals may complete the group task, free riding puts extra pressure on them and excludes loafers from the deep learning process. Interviewees indicated that an individual's commitment to the task correlates with the academic goals the individual wants to achieve.

Perhaps related to task commitment are differences in the students' tendency to adhere to group rules. Adherence to rules relates to issues of being punctual or attending meetings and providing the work agreed upon at the appropriate time. In particular, when someone places a high importance on sticking to these rules or relies on this to organise their study schedule whilst others do not, this can cause angst and is more likely to lead to unequal workloads and a lack of deeper learning for those who break the rules, due to their exclusion from the process. While the management literature has discussed group norms, and thus informal rules aimed at conforming group behaviour (Van Engelen et al. 2001), the effect of diversity in adherence to these rules has received little attention to date.

Group Processes

Interviewees highlighted three primary processes that mediated their experience of success, namely communication, leadership and role allocation. Communication, in particular information-sharing and bi-directionality, is critical for group functioning and success. The difference between these two processes lies in the different nature of communication. Information-sharing relates to the expectations of openly sharing information and has been conceptualised previously with items measuring the belief that information sharing is important and that all relevant information is

exchanged between parties (Fisher et al. 1997). Bi-directional communication, on the other hand, relates to the dialogue between parties, the feedback that is provided and the level of two-way communication between parties (Fisher et al. 1997).

While some interviewees described a true collaborative approach within some groups, where no leader was necessary, the importance of a good group leader emerged from the majority of interviews: "*I think a group leader is very important; but even more important than that is to have a 'good' group leader*". Students defined good leadership as taking the responsibility for directing the group while ensuring a collaborative approach. Dominance, which interviewees related to a student's personality, language skills and the 'type of group' they are in, reflected bad leadership. One student described a negative experience in which the work produced by one very dominant individual was not good, however, he did not feel it was appropriate for him to tell the individual or change the work. This resulted in a bad mark and also limited learning, as most group members did not engage with the task or each other.

Lastly, students highlighted the importance of role allocation, which relates to how the roles are divided between students. Role allocation by task (research, writing, editing) or sections (i.e. external analysis, promotion section, conclusion) allows for the use of individual students' strengths, provides for a relatively equal contribution to the group, and is a method for dealing with diversity. In particular, it was used by groups to deal with differences in language skills. For example, "*We had two students that had English as a second language so we said 'OK, they won't be doing any of the final writing up'*". Despite their 'good' intentions, this approach can mean that students do not learn relevant skills, affecting variety and depth of learning (Kates 2002), particularly if groups did not discuss individual contributions.

Phase 2—Exploratory Quantitative Survey

Method

Phase two of the research project involved the distribution of a self-administered questionnaire to students attending the lecture of a third-year marketing course, where groups were asked to develop an integrated marketing communications campaign. With 70 students attending the lecture and 48 usable questionnaires, a response rate of 68.6 % was achieved. While the relatively small sample size should be noted as a limitation of this paper, it was deemed sufficient for a preliminary assessment of the interrelationships proposed (although categorical variables such as role allocation could not be included). Fifty-five point six % were domestic and 44.4 % international students while 27.1 % worked 5 h or less a week, 33 % of students worked 15–20 h, with another 31.3 % of students working 25 h or more.

Appropriate measurement items for the constructs were identified in the available literature and adapted to the current context of the study. Measurement items

and respective sources are outlined in the Appendix. The most significant adaptations of items occurred in relation to the dimensions of difference. While academic goals, personality, external commitments and others have been individually measured for a respondent, a direct measurement of difference has to the authors' knowledge not been reported in the literature. Hence, individual items had to be re-worded to reflect the level of perceived difference within the group.

Results—The Impact of Diversity

A series of multiple regression analyses was conducted to identify which dimensions of diversity significantly influence group outcomes and processes. First, multiple regressions were conducted testing diversity dimensions 'prior to group work' on satisfaction with group outcomes. As shown in Table 1, language skills have a moderately significant ($\alpha \leq 10$) negative effect on satisfaction with the outcome. This result is in line with our qualitative findings, which indicated that differences in language skills lowered satisfaction with the outcome due to a shift of workload to native speakers. Students with a poor grasp of English language were often excluded from deeper discussion and appeared to have limited contribution to the outcome. This situation is also likely to cause dissatisfaction with the outcome for the educator. When testing diversity dimensions (during group work), none of the regression coefficients were significant. Hence, diversity appears to have very limited direct influence on satisfaction with the outcome.

A second multiple regression analysis was then conducted employing satisfaction with the process as the dependent variable (Table 2). The model examining

Table 1 Regression results of diversity on group outcomes

	Satisfaction with outcome	Satisfaction with process
Prior group work		
Diff. in language skills	β = −0.284[a]	β = 0.087
Diff. in academic goals	β = −0.090	β = −0.294[b]
Diff. in extroversion	β = −0.035	β = −0.307[b]
Presence of prior relationships (control)	β = 0.201	β = 0.125
Total for all prior diversity	$R^2 = 0.15$	$R^2 = 0.25$
During group work		
Diff. in external commitments	β = −0.048	β = −0.284[b]
Diff. in commitment to task	β = −0.206	β = −0.246
Diff. in adherence to rules	β = −0.010	β = −0.131
Total for all during diversity	$R^2 = 0.05$	$R^2 = 0.23$

Standardised regression weights reports
[a]Significant at $\alpha = 0.10$
[b]Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Table 2 Regression results of diversity on group processes

	Information-sharing	Bi-directionality	Leadership
Prior group work			
Diff. in language skills	$\beta = -0.215$	$\beta = -0.228$[a]	$\beta = 0.208$
Diff. in academic goals	$\beta = -0.082$	$\beta = -0.287$[b]	$\beta = 0.035$
Diff. in extroversion/introversion	$\beta = 0.397$[b]	$\beta = -0.153$	$\beta = 0.274$[a]
Presence of prior relationships (control)	$\beta = 0.074$	$\beta = 0.264$[b]	$\beta = 0.190$
Total for all prior diversity	$R^2 = 0.13$	$R^2 = 0.33$	$R^2 = 0.20$
During group work			
Diff. in external commitments	$\beta = 0.113$	$\beta = -0.160$	$\beta = -0.099$
Diff. in commitment to task	$\beta = -0.019$	$\beta = -0.282$[a]	$\beta = 0.416$[b]
Diff. in adherence to rules	$\beta = 0.056$	$\beta = -0.144$	$\beta = -0.145$
Total for all during diversity	$R^2 = 0.01$	$R^2 = 0.22$	$R^2 = 0.12$

[a]Significant at $\alpha = 0.10$
[b]Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

diversity 'prior to group work' shows an R-squared of 0.25, with differences in both extroversion and academic goals showing significant negative effects. In addition, diversity of external commitments emerged as negatively affecting satisfaction with the process. These results further confirm our earlier discussion, highlighting the relevance of common academic goals, which was identified as the most critical dimension of diversity in the qualitative phase. In addition, similar personalities and similar levels of external commitments within groups may ease interaction and significantly contribute to higher levels of satisfaction with the process.

In a second step, multiple regressions were employed to test the effect of diversity on group processes, namely information-sharing, bi-directionality and leadership. Interestingly, while all dimensions of diversity 'prior to group work' significantly affected group processes, the results showed both positive and negative effects. As expected, differences in language skills and academic goals negatively influenced bi-directionality, and thus the dialogue within the group. Alternately, differences in extroversion positively influenced leadership and, unexpectedly, information sharing. With the inclusion of prior relationships, the significant positive influence it had on bi-directionality was controlled for.

These results suggest that students implement specific processes to overcome challenges brought on by diversity within the group. For example, if only one or two extroverted students are part of the group, these students are likely to see no option but to take on a leadership role (Barry and Stewart 1997). One example of this situation emerged in the qualitative phase of this research: "*I take charge of groups (but) I don't necessarily want to take charge of groups*". Results from a study by Barry and Stewart (1997) may provide guidance in understanding the positive relationship between extroversion diversity and information sharing. The proportion of extroverts within a group had a negative curvilinear effect on task focus, thus, the greater the weight of intro- or extroverted students within a group, the less focus on the task.

When considering diversity 'during group work', only differences in task commitment emerged as significantly influencing group processes, in particular bi-directionality. This finding is in line with the qualitative phase: If some group members are not committed to the task while others work hard, a meaningful dialogue within the group is unlikely to be established. However, such a situation is likely to require the committed students to take on a leadership role to at least gain some contribution from the less committed students. In line with this argument, differences in task commitment emerge as significantly and positively affecting leadership.

Results—The Mediating Role of Group Processes

To examine the potential mediating role of group processes, two additional tests were undertaken. Multiple regressions were conducted to assess the effect of group processes firstly on group outcomes and then on group processes (Table 3). The results show a significant positive effect of both communication variables, information-sharing and bi-directionality, on satisfaction with the outcome, as well as a significant effect of bi-directionality on satisfaction with the process. The relatively large R-squared, particularly for the model explaining satisfaction to outcome ($R^2 = 0.56$), shows the importance of communication for satisfaction with group work.

The results of the exploratory regressions indicated two potential mediating effects, namely bi-directionality mediating (1) the effect of goal differences on satisfaction with the process, and (2) the effect of language skills on satisfaction with the outcome. Only these paths meet the prerequisites of mediation (Baron and Kenny 1986). Further analysis was thus undertaken in relation to the two potential mediating effects, which were found to be significant (see Fig. 2).

Specifically, the effect of differences in academic goals on satisfaction with the group process and the effect of diversity in language skills on satisfaction with the group outcome were shown as fully mediated, such that the direct effects become non-significant once bi-directionality within the group process is introduced.

Table 3 Regression results of group processes on group outcomes

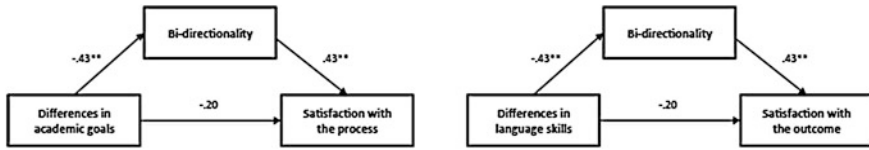| Independent variables	Dependent variables	
	Satisfaction with outcome	Satisfaction with process
Group processes		
Diff. in information-sharing	$\beta = 0.352$[a]	$\beta = -0.047$
Diff. in bi-directionality	$\beta = 0.605$[a]	$\beta = 0.588$[a]
Diff. in leadership	$\beta = -0.009$	$\beta = 0.194$
Total for all group processes	$R^2 = 0.56$	$R^2 = 0.30$

[a]significant at $\alpha = 0.05$

Fig. 2 Mediating effects of bi-directionality

Although these results are only exploratory in nature, they provide preliminary insight into the dynamics of diversity effects on student satisfaction with their group experience. In particular the important role of bi-directionality is highlighted, providing a potential focus for instructors in dealing with diversity.

Implications for Marketing Educators

Our study has drawn together several important dimensions of diversity, such as academic goals, language skills, extroversion and task commitment. With many of these dimensions not readily observable, it is suggested that educators should undertake more than a basic analysis of individuals prior to establishing groups. In particular, working habits, personality and their goals need to be understood. In dealing with diversity, group projects may be split into a number of components, allowing students to understand their group members' language skills, academic goals, commitment to the task, as well as the personalities involved before a final hand-up is required. Perhaps students may be allowed to change group members after each component, as proposed by Aggarwal and O'Brien (2008), or provided with guidance on how to overcome specific group challenges. For example, if difference in language skills is the primary challenge for a group, online discussion forms may be considered as a complement face-to-face discussions, providing students with lesser language skills an opportunity to find the right words in their time and thus actively contribute to the discussion.

Educators also need to provide assistance to students on how to deal with diversity. Tools may include a template for their first meeting, facilitating discussion regarding their working habits (e.g. completing tasks early on versus at the last minute), commitments (work, sport, other) and personalities (e.g. need for structure and planning). In particular, the academic goals of each student should be discussed, with reference to grades but also the skills and experience students wish to gain from the group work. A greater alignment of goals may be achieved by asking students to reflect on how they might achieve each other's unique goals together or by providing added motivation for those students who have 'lesser' goals, by outlining how the group work supports their original motivations for undertaking marketing studies.

Understanding what mediates group performance allows marketing educators to target these processes. For instance, with bi-directional communication shown as a

strong predictor of satisfaction with the process and the outcome, dialogue and open discussions should be fostered. For example, educators may be part of group discussions at the beginning, providing some examples of how to moderate discussion. Groups can then be asked to assign a moderating role to one individual or to assign the role on a rotating basis. In addition, information sharing can be encouraged in a number of different ways; more formally, by asking individuals to present their contributions to the group at certain intervals, and assigning some class time for this. Informally by asking students about their knowledge of other group member's assigned areas, prompting them to share each other's work.

From the outset, instructors should provide guidance for students in relation to suitable levels of external commitments. Asking students to devise group meeting times and outlining the reasonable time commitment that is necessary for face to face contact within groups will serve to reinforce the commitment of students. In addition, the instructor might want to establish allocated mentoring sessions during which they provide additional face-to-face or online guidance to individual groups, focusing on the group's diversity and functioning.

Conclusions, Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has confirmed the need to go beyond nationality and cultural diversity. In particular, exploring the factors that students themselves believe to manifest diversity, as well as how they may be dealing with diversity, is important as this may have unintended consequences for the learning experience of all types of students. Our study serves as an exploratory platform for further research in this area and should be interpreted in view of its limitations. First, the scope of findings reported here is limited to a small sample and perhaps consequently, sometimes a low variance is explained (R^2). While it served the purpose of identifying and discussing a range of factors relating to diversity and processes in teamwork, further empirical research is required to confirm these results across various student groups, projects, classrooms, universities and countries.

Our results suggest that students struggle with diversity on many levels and that various types of diversity can significantly affect both tangible and intangible outcomes of group work. Depending on the reasons for using group work this struggle may or may not be perceived as warranted. By understanding the effects of various types of diversity at a broader level we, as providers of education, can hope to control and direct the student experience so that greater satisfaction and deeper learning can be achieved through group work. It is important to note that responsibilities for the success of group work do not lie solely with the instructor. Not only should students be reminded of their responsibilities, university support staff and senior management should help to ensure the best possible learning environment is established for all students. Lastly, these results may help us to understand students and thus become better teachers. Teachers that are more than just content providers

and teachers that can make a difference through facilitating positive experiences between students, helping to gain more than a good grade but to learn how to be members of a well-functioning and productive team.

Appendix: Measurement

Prior group work
Diff. in language skills (New) (Cronbach alpha = 0.915)
• Our level of written English language skills differed • Our level of verbal (spoken) English language skills differed
Diff. in academic goals (Marsh et al. 2003)—different goal orientations bracketed (Cronbach alpha = 0.91)
• Group members differed in what we wanted to achieve • We differed in the extent to which we aimed to get the best mark we possibly could (approach success) • We differed in the extent to which we aimed to work to the best of our ability (mastery) • We differed in the extent to which we aimed to do better than other students (competition)
Diff. in extro-/introversion (John and Srivastava 2001) (Cronbach alpha = 0.88)
• Are talkative • Are reserved (r) • Are full of energy • Generate a lot of enthusiasm • Tend to be quiet (r) • Have an assertive personality • Are sometimes shy, inhibited (r) • Are outgoing, sociable
Diff. in commitment to task (Marsh et al. 2006) (Cronbach alpha = 0.94)
• We differed in the extent to which we worked as hard as possible • We differed in the extent to which we kept working even when the assignment was difficult • We differed in the extent to which we tried our best to acquire the skills and knowledge pertaining to the assignment • We differed in the extent to which we put forth our best effort
Diff. in external commitments (new)
• We differed in the amount of external commitments we had
Group processes
Information-sharing (Fisher et al. 1997; Mohr and Sohi 1995) (Cronbach alpha = 0.84)
• We shared any information with others in the group • We provided the others in the group with any information that might help the them • We kept each other informed about events or changes that may affect the other • We believe that sharing information in the assignment group is important
Bi-directionality (Fisher et al. 1997) (Cronbach alpha = 0.89)
• We discussed things a lot • We had great dialogues in the group • We provided a lot of feedback to each other • There was a lot of two-way communication between me and others in the group

(continued)

Leadership emergence (Barry and Stewart 1997) (Cronbach alpha = 0.84)

- A leader emerged in the group
- The group had one member who assumed the leader role
- Our group did not have a specific leader (r)

Outcomes

Satisfaction with outcome (not at all—to a great extent) (Reinig 2003) (Cronbach alpha = 0.87)

- How satisfied are you with the quality of your group's solution?
- To what extent does the final solution reflect your inputs?
- To what extent do you feel committed to the group solution
- To what extent are you confident that the group solution is correct?

Satisfaction with process (Reinig 2003; Cronbach alpha = 0.91)

- Efficient–inefficient
- Coordinated–uncoordinated
- Fair–unfair
- Understandable–confusing
- Satisfying–dissatisfying

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