Chapter 7

General Discussion

Despite decades of research on team composition and conflict, research in both fields has yielded largely contradictory results (for reviews, see Harrison & Klein, 2007; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Jehn, Greer & Rupert, 2008; Mannix & Neale, 2005; Kochan et al., 2003; Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998). Team composition has been shown to both help and hurt team performance, as has intragroup conflict. Several reasons may exist for these contradictory findings. First of all, past conceptualizations and operationalizations of team composition and conflict have been primarily at the team level and have overlooked the importance of individual differences within the team, especially in terms of individual differences in perceptions and behaviors. This is surprising as many of the key theories used to explain the effects of team composition and conflict on team outcomes carry an implicit assumption of perception. For example, theories of self-categorization and social identity suggest that people are constantly busy with categorizing themselves and those around them on the basis of salient characteristics (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1985, 1987; for reviews, see: Ellemers et al., 2002, 2003). Despite this assumption that the effects of demographic differences are driven by their perception, scant research on team composition or conflict has looked at how members’ perceptions may vary or impact team interactions. Secondly, past research in these fields has often overlooked a key factor with the potential to greatly shape the effects of team composition and conflict on team outcomes - namely, power differences in teams. Classic research in social psychology has suggested that power may have a profound impact on all social interaction (Fiske, 1993); however, research on teams has yet to acknowledge this ubiquitous presence of power and to investigate its impact on team interaction.
The central goal of this dissertation was therefore to integrate these two key themes – the role of individual differences in perceptions and behaviors and the role of power differences in relation to teams – to create a framework which will allow for a better understanding of the relationships between team composition, conflict, and team outcomes. In this dissertation, I explored these relationships using multiple methods, including field (survey, quasi-experiment, interviews, and observation), laboratory, and archival methods of research. In the following sections, I will provide an overview of the main findings in this dissertation and discuss how these findings help advance past theories and frameworks. I will then present a new theoretical model for understanding the multi-level nature of team phenomena, such as team composition and conflict.

Overview of the Results

The primary finding in this dissertation is that acknowledging individual differences in perceptions and behaviors is critical in gaining an accurate knowledge of team dynamics. While past work has acknowledged the potential for differences in individual perceptions and behaviors within teams (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), still scant research has theoretically and empirically pursued the meaning of these differences for team interactions (for exceptions, see Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Jehn & Rispens, 2007). The findings in this dissertation therefore contribute towards this more multi-level understanding of teams, in which individual differences in perceptions and behaviors are acknowledged when investigating team-level phenomena. Specifically, I find across multiple studies and contexts that differences in individual perceptions and behaviors help explain key team processes and outcomes. For example, I find that differences in individual conflict engagement within a team can have implications for team-level conflict and performance. I also find that differences in perceptions of team composition may help explain the effects of team composition on team processes and outcomes. Additionally, I find that differences in perceptions of team power structures may play an important role in explaining the effect of power on team-level conflict and performance. Together these findings show the importance of considering not only team-level factors but also individual-level factors and differences when developing and
testing theories of team interaction.

A second main finding in this dissertation is the centrality and importance of power to team interactions. While a rich literature exists on the interpersonal and intrapersonal effects of power (see Keltner et al., 2003), investigation of power in the team setting is just beginning. This dissertation has set forward that power (and members’ potentially divergent perceptions of it) may have a dramatic impact on team and individual processes and outcomes. I investigated how several different aspects of power may influence interactions and performance in the team setting. Building upon past research which has identified power, status, and relative group size as three closely related constructs which determine the ability of a group or an individual to influence others (e.g., Wolf & Latane, 1985), I investigated the impact of social power, demographic status, and relative subgroup size in understanding the relationships between team composition, conflict, and team outcomes. I find that a team’s social power within the organization may affect the team’s internal levels of conflict and performance. Additionally, I find that dividing lines in teams based on perceived differences in social power had a negative effect on group functioning. In another line of work, I find that power differences as stemming from relative subgroup size within a team altered individual and team conflict engagement and performance, and that these relationships were moderated by the demographic status of the members involved. Together, these findings show that power is an important variable in shaping team and individual perceptions, behaviors, and outcomes. Additionally, these findings show that across the potentially different conceptualizations of power - social power, status, or numerical size, power has a consistently strong impact on team functioning, helping to further our understanding of the nature of power. The findings in this dissertation therefore extend past research on power (Keltner et al., 2003) and teams (see Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006 for a review) by integrating theories of power into the team setting. In the following section, I will discuss more in-depth the findings from the specific studies that have led to these conclusions.

In Chapter 3, I built upon past research which has suggested that members within the same team may have different perceptions of
intragroup conflict (e.g., Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Jehn et al., 2006; Jehn & Rispens, 2007) to investigate how members’ behavior may diverge in conflict situations. I specifically investigated whether a member’s choice to engage in conflict affected the member’s performance in the group. I also incorporated relevant theory on power and influence to investigate how the influence tactics the member used during the conflict altered the effect of conflict engagement on individual performance. Using an archival dataset including over 7,500 emails sent to the organizational list-serves of political-activist organizations, I utilized multiple methods, including text analysis and coder ratings to determine the effects of conflict engagement on individual performance. My findings were in line with my initial expectations - the effects of conflict engagement were found to be contingent upon the type of conflict the individual engaged in and the manner in which the individual behaved while engaging in the conflict. Specifically, I found that when engaging in task-related conflicts, individuals performed best when using clear (but not didactical language), and when engaging in relationship conflicts, individuals performed best when using flattery and logic to influence others. The findings in this study contribute to past theory and research on power and influence (e.g., Keltner et al., 2003; Yukl & Falbe, 1990) and conflict management (e.g., De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997; Rahim & Magner, 1995) by showing the relevance of influence strategies to conflict management. To engage in conflict and to convince others of one’s opinion, power and influence are central. However, conflict management research has yet to draw on the extensive literature in the fields of power and influence (e.g., Keltner et al., 2003; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Yukl & Tracey, 1992) to develop theory and propositions regarding how power and influence strategies may be of use in conflict settings. The theory and findings in this chapter therefore extend research on conflict management by showing the relevance of power and influence processes for theories and studies of conflict. Additionally, the theory and findings in this chapter extend past conflict research which has primarily focused on conflict perceptions (see Jehn & Bendersky, 2003) by introducing the concept of conflict engagement, with its unique focus on individual differences in conflict behavior in the team setting.

In Chapter 4, I looked at both the antecedents as well as the
individual- and team-level consequences of conflict engagement. Specifically, I proposed that the power (as determined by the relative numerical representation of similar team members) and status of a member in a team would predict when members would choose to engage in conflict. I also proposed that in teams where diverse members did not feel able to engage in conflict, teams would have less intragroup conflict and team performance would suffer. I thus investigated the effects of conflict engagement in teams at multiple levels of analysis. Across three studies, involving both laboratory and field data, I find that conflict engagement is critical for team and individual performance. Teams with higher levels of conflict performed better on a decision-making task. Additionally, a member’s position in the team, in terms of power and demographic status, affected the member’s perceptions and behaviors regarding conflict. Members with low power (in terms of relative numerical representation of similar members) and low demographic status were more likely to perceive conflict than other team members, but were less likely to engage in conflict. The awkward position of these members was shown to translate into lower levels of performance for these members, both in individual performance in the field and individual cognitive performance in the laboratory. The findings in this chapter offer several extensions to existing theory and research. First of all, they extend existing research on intragroup conflict (cf. De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; cf. Jehn & Bendersky, 2003) by showing the antecedents and consequences of individual differences in conflict engagement. Secondly, this chapter contributes to research on team composition (e.g., Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Mannix & Neale, 2005) by looking at how power and status differences may play a large role in determining team composition and its effects on team and individual conflict engagement and performance. Past research has commonly looked at the effects of demographic differences on conflict and performance without taking into account the relative status of certain demographic characteristics. However, theory suggests that such investigations may be naïve, as demographic characteristics are often tightly intertwined with status and eventual power differences within a team (e.g., Berger Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972). Relatedly, past research has also often overlooked how the proportional representation of members in a team can create power
differentials within the team. This in spite of the fact that past research has suggested that relative (sub)group size may be an important determinant of power (e.g., Ebenbach & Keltner, 1998; Guinote, Brown, & Fiske, 2000; Wolf & Latane, 1985) and of individual perceptions and behaviors (e.g., Ely, 1995; Guinote, 2004). Therefore, the findings in this chapter help to address these past limitations in theory and research on team composition by showing that power in terms of status and relative group size is indeed critical in shaping the effects of team composition on team and individual conflict engagement and performance.

In Chapter 5, I investigated the interplay between objective demographic characteristics and members’ perceptions of these characteristics in understanding the effects of team composition. I built upon past theories which have suggested the importance of perception when investigating team composition (e.g., social identity theory and self-categorization theory, Ellemers et al., 2002, 2003; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1985, 1987) to provide one of the first theoretical integrations of perceptions and realities of team composition (for notable exceptions, see Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Hobman, Bordia, & Gallois, 2003, 2004; Randel, 2002; Rink & Ellemers, 2007; Van der Vegt & Van de Vliert, 2005). I proposed that the more team members perceived divides, or faultlines, in their team, the worse their group functioning and team performance would be. I also proposed that this effect would be exacerbated when objective demographic divides also existed in the team, when members disagreed about the extent of the divide, and when members perceived the divide to stem from person-based, rather than job-based, characteristics. I tested these ideas in a field study at a multinational financial corporation using a mix of both quantitative and qualitative data, including ethnographic observation, interviews, surveys, and a quasi-experiment. My theoretical model concerning team composition was largely supported. The more members perceived a divide within their team, the worse their functioning. This was made even worse when an objective demographic divide also existed in the team, when members all agreed upon the divide, and when members perceived the divide to be based on person, rather than job, related characteristics. When investigating the reasons to which people ascribed divides in their teams, I utilized a
qualitative approach which resulted in more reasons for divides within teams than initially expected. I found that in addition to social category and functional differences, as commonly examined in past research (e.g., Jehn et al., 1999; Pelled et al., 1999), value differences and power differences were also two other primary perceived causes of divides, or faultlines, in teams. In supplemental analyses, I found that divides in teams were negative for team functioning when the divides were perceived to be based on social category, value, or power characteristics, and positive for team functioning when based on functional characteristics. These findings contribute to past research on team composition by showing the importance of both values and power differences in shaping team composition. While a larger literature exists on how social category or functional differences may shape team interactions (for a review, see Mannix & Neale, 2005), still scant research has examined the role of value or power differences within teams. The findings in this study therefore suggest important new pathways to explore in understanding differences in team composition - namely, to better understand how differences in member values or power levels may impact team processes and outcomes. Additionally, the findings in this study show the importance of examining both perceptions and realities when investigating the impact of team composition on team outcomes. These findings extend past research on team composition (e.g., Mannix & Neale, 2005; Williams & O’Reilly, 1998) and demographic faultlines in particular (e.g., Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Li & Hambrick, 2005; Thatcher et al., 2003) by showing that the effects of faultlines may be best understood through investigating not just demographic differences, but the interplay between these differences and members’ perceptions.

In Chapter 6, I built on an emerging theme in the preceding chapters in this dissertation - namely the importance of power differences in understanding team interactions and performance – to provide one of the first theoretical frameworks and investigations of power in the team setting. I proposed that a team’s power in the organization, as well as the internal power balance within the team, may impact the conflict and performance of the team. In a first survey-based field study and a second quasi-experimental study utilizing multiple methods (including archival data, video-ratings, and survey data), I found across both studies that teams with
high power in the organization had higher levels of conflict and lower levels of performance than teams with low levels of power in the organization. In the second study, I introduced the concept of power congruence - the degree to which members agree upon the internal power hierarchy within the team - as a relevant moderating factor. In line with previous findings in this dissertation, I found that individual perceptions and differences were key in this situation as well - specifically, I found that when individuals’ in the team had similar perceptions of the team hierarchy - i.e. when interpersonal power congruence existed, the negative effects of team power were diminished. These findings extend the large, but separate literatures on team composition (see Mannix & Neale, 2005) and the individual-level effects of power (see Keltner et al., 2003) by integrating power into the study of team composition. Additionally, these findings further show the importance of considering both objective realities and subjective perceptions when studying team composition. As shown in this chapter, the effects of group-level realities, such as team power, may be largely contingent on differences in members’ perceptions. Therefore, future research would strongly benefit from further integration of perceptions and realities as well as theories of power when studying team dynamics and outcomes.

**Final Theoretical Framework**

In this dissertation, I have shown that understanding differences in perceptions and behaviors is central to the study of teams. In this section, I advance a new theoretical framework which future research can utilize to incorporate the existence and evolution of differences in individual perceptions and behaviors in the study of teams. Additionally, I discuss the important role of power and influence in understanding how individual differences in perceptions and behaviors may affect team-level phenomena. For clarity, I specifically focus in this section on differences in individual perceptions and behaviors of intragroup conflict. This framework, however, could also be easily applied to understanding how perceptual differences regarding other team constructs may affect team outcomes and evolve over time.
Towards an Integrative Theory of Individual Differences in Teams

In moving forward towards more advanced conceptualizations of team composition and conflict, better highlighting the multi-level nature of the team setting is imperative. In this dissertation, I have built on past work which has suggested that individual perceptions and behaviors within a team may vary (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000) by showing the consequences of divergent member perceptions and behaviors. However, it is of interest if over time, members’ perceptions will come to converge or not. Recent research suggests team-level factors may have an important impact on individual perceptions and behaviors, for example, in relation to conflict (Jehn & Greer, 2007; Weingart et al., 2007). This suggests that members’ perceptions and behaviors do not take place in a vacuum - rather team members are constantly being influenced the other members in their team. Indeed, research suggests that people in groups over time may converge in their perceptions based on their interaction and sharing interpretations of common group features, events, and processes (James, 1982; Kozlowski & Hattrup, 1992). However, there is not yet clear theory to understand how such shared interpretations, especially of team composition and conflict, may emerge in team or how team dynamics may vary at different stages of this process. For example, when only a few members in a team perceive a conflict, the team may have different dynamics than when the entire team perceives a conflict. By developing theory to better understand the interplay between the individual and the team - how the individual is impacted by the group and how individuals in turn may impact the group - we may gain a better understanding of team-level variables (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000).

A Theory of Conflict Contagion

In a recent theoretical piece with Karen Jehn and Sonja Rispens (Greer, Jehn, & Rispens, 2008), we developed an initial framework for understanding the emergence of group processes and perceptions, and in particular the process of intragroup conflict. In this paper, we introduced the concept of conflict contagion, which is the process by which conflict may evolve from an initial individual’s perception of an obstructed goal to a fully involved intragroup conflict in which all team members are behaviorally engaging in the conflict. See Figure 1 for a graphical depiction
of what groups with differing levels of intragroup conflict involvement could look like at different points in time in the conflict contagion process. In the following sections, I present an abbreviated outline of this new theoretical framework. While the focus of this framework is conflict, the basic concepts of it, in understanding how team processes and perceptions of emerge could easily be applied to other topics, such as team diversity cultures or communication norms.

As an illustration of this concept of conflict contagion, imagine a weekly meeting of an existing organizational team. During this meeting, one member makes a suggestion about how to tackle a team task. Another member disagrees with this approach. A dyadic conflict now exists within the team. However, this dyadic conflict is not taking place in isolation – the other team members are present and watching and have the potential to join in the conflict. For example, one team member may join in on the side of the member who initially proposed the idea, as this member is a close personal friend. As the debate goes on, another member may join in on the other side, as he dislikes the member who joined the conflict on the other side. As tensions and emotions rise, these emotions may infect other initially uninvolved group members, leading them to become behaviourally
involved in the conflict as well. Additionally, other group members may feel the need to step in and mediate the conflict, in order to protect their own and team outcomes, but may very likely get swept up into the conflict themselves. By the end of the meeting, the entire team may be embroiled in a conflict that began as a simple disagreement between just two individual team members.

As seen in this example, several mechanisms are present which may serve to spread conflict between team members. The primary mechanisms of conflict contagion which we identify in our theoretical framework of conflict contagion are coalition formation, emotional contagion, and threats to team outcomes (Greer, Jehn, & Rispens, 2008). Coalition formation occurs when two or more persons jointly act to affect the outcomes of others (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Coalitions may form following conflicts when, for example, members feel compelled to support friends or allies in the team. In line with Heider’s balance theory (1958), it is important that the enemy of your friend is your enemy as well. Relatedly, members involved in the initial conflict may also proactively recruit other members to form coalitions (Smith, 1989). If an interpersonal conflict takes place in a team, one of the parties may discuss the issue with his or her private support networks in the team (Kolb & Bartunek, 1992). Therefore, after initial interpersonal conflicts in teams, coalitions may form as initially uninvolved group members feel the need to also negatively judge and oppose the opponent(s) of the members they are close to, thereby leading to the involvement of the initially uninvolved members in the conflict.

In addition to coalition formation, the negative emotions present in conflict situations may also lead initially uninvolved team members to become behaviorally involved in the conflict. When conflicts arise, negative emotions are likely to result (e.g., Bodtker & Jameson, 2001; Greer & Jehn, 2007), such as frustration, resentment, anger, and approach (Allport, 1937; Guetzkow & Gyr, 1954; Russell, 1978; Stearns, 1972). When negative emotions arise from an interpersonal conflict within a team, these negative emotions may spread to other team members through a process of emotional contagion (Barsade, 2002; Barsade & Gibson, 1998; Hatfield et al., 1994; Kelly & Barsade, 2001). These negative emotions may serve to heighten members’ behavioral involvement in the conflict.
This linkage between emotional contagion and behavioral conflict involvement is supported by research which suggests that emotions may manifest themselves in actual behaviors (e.g., Morris & Keltner, 2000). For example, when emotional expression is negative, behavioral responses by other group members are likely, such as the raising of voices, hostility towards others, the making of threats, the pressure or intimidation of others (c.f. Yang & Mossholder, 2004), and the engagement in workplace deviance (Lee & Allen, 2002). Therefore, emotional contagion, in addition to coalition formation, is another mechanism by which interpersonal conflicts may lead initially uninvolved team members to behaviorally engage in a conflict.

The third primary mechanism we propose that facilitates conflict contagion is members’ defense of own and team outcomes. This stems from the interdependency that is inherent to teams (Hackman, 1987; Langfred, 2000; Wageman, 1995). Because team members are often reliant on each other to accomplish a task (e.g., Van de Ven, Delbecq, & Koenig, 1976), when certain members become involved in a conflict, other members may become involved when the behaviors of the conflicting members inhibit the outcomes of the team or other team members. Indeed, past research has suggested that interdependence may strengthen the effects of conflict (Gladstein, 1984; Schmidt & Kochan, 1972). For example, team members who witness other team members involved in a conflict may feel obligated to engage in the conflict, in order to protect their own outcomes, as these are dependent on the other fighting members. However, when an unobjective party intervenes in a conflict, such a party is likely to become part of the conflict. This is supported by research which has shown that an intervention by an unobjective party, such as a fellow team member, may serve to strengthen existing conflicting viewpoints (Morrill & Thomas, 1992). Therefore, members’ defense of own and team outcomes may lead to conflict contagion, as an increasing number of members become behaviorally involved in the conflict.

The identification of how conflicts may spread in teams through coalition formation, emotional contagion, and members’ defense of team and individual outcomes provides an initial framework to utilize when understanding the multi-level nature of conflicts in teams. As proposed in
this initial multi-level theoretical model of conflict contagion, intragroup conflicts may not be as straightforward as often assumed in the existing literature. Rather, intragroup conflicts may often stem from a dyadic conflict that has spread through a group over time. During this process of conflict contagion, differing levels of conflict involvement may exist which may lead to differing dynamics and performance of teams according to the relative level of member conflict involvement within the team.

By providing a preliminary outline for the emergence of team level and processes cognitions, the theoretical framework introduced in this section may help researchers better understand how complex multi-level team phenomena, such as intragroup conflict, may come to exist. Future research would benefit from empirical investigation of the ideas presented in this section, as well as from utilizing this framework to develop theories to explain how other team level phenomena, such as perceptions of diversity, emerge in the team and spread from one member to another. In understanding this contagion process, theories of power and influence are likely to be important. The degree to which an individual’s perception of, for example, conflict or diversity, may spread to other team members may be largely contingent on the power of the individual within the team and the manner in which the individual attempts to influence others. Therefore, future research would benefit from further development and investigation of frameworks for understanding how individual differences in teams come to shape team-level processes and perceptions over time and how power and influence may be central factors in this process.

**General Contributions and Implications of the Dissertation**

In this dissertation, I have shown the importance of considering individual differences in perceptions and behaviors when investigating team composition and conflict. This dissertation offers several important contributions to and implications for research on team composition and conflict. As discussed above, the theory and findings presented in this dissertation further multi-level theory and research regarding team-level phenomena, such as team composition and conflict. Specifically, this dissertation demonstrates that within teams, members may have very different perceptions and behaviors relating to team composition and
conflict. This realization is important for small group research, as research has often assumed that concepts such as conflict or team composition are equally experienced by all members of the team. This assumption may explain many past contradictory findings in these fields (cf. Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). By better taking into account individual differences, either by controlling for them when not relevant for the current research question or by developing more complex theories and models which incorporate both the similarities and differences in team member perceptions and behaviors, researchers may gain a better understanding of team composition and conflict. Ideally, research would begin to move towards this latter option - to the development of better multi-level theory to explain team phenomena, such as composition or conflict. A single-focus on the group level effects or antecedents of these variables does not do justice to their multi-level nature. My findings show that both team composition and conflict are shaped by differences and similarities between individual team members in terms of their perceptions and behaviors. By developing theory to explain how these individual perceptions and behaviors may create emergent team-level phenomena, small group researchers may gain a more accurate and nuanced picture of teams.

The theoretical framework presented in this chapter offers an initial theoretical framework which researchers can utilize when looking at multi-level team phenomena, such as conflict or perceptions of team composition. This framework offers several potential pathways for research on multi-level phenomena in teams. For example, the theoretical framework in this chapter would suggest that a team’s perception of its own diversity may be an emergent process, wherein initially only a few members perceive the team as diverse. Over time, the views of these members may come to be shared by other members through as members’ views become visible to other members in the team. Relatedly, the value members have for certain forms of team composition, such as for gender diversity, may also be such an emergent process. By investigating this multi-level temporal nature of group perceptions, research may gain more insight into the effects of team composition on team dynamics and outcomes. This opens up multiple new pathways in research on team
composition and conflict, such as investigating whether some forms of team composition (such as gender) or conflict (such as task conflict) are more quickly perceived by all team members than other forms of team composition (such as value differences) or conflict, whether the views of powerful members matter more in the eventual emergence of team-level perceptions than the views of less powerful members, and the processes and mechanisms by which individual views of team composition and conflict may or may not converge over time.

In addition to the implications of this dissertation for multi-level theory and research on team composition and conflict, my dissertation has also shown the relevance and importance of power differences to team interaction. While much research exists on the effect power has on individuals (see Keltner et al., 2003 for a review), power is just now beginning to be acknowledged as a critical factor in understanding team structures and processes (c.f. Mannix & Sauer, 2006). This dissertation offers several relevant theoretical frameworks (supporting by empirical findings) that may help explain how power affects team interactions. Specifically, I show that power imbalances may affect conflict engagement, absolute team power levels may affect conflict and performance, misperceptions of team hierarchy may exasperate the effects of team power on conflict, and power-based faultlines may negatively impact both team functioning and team outcomes. This has important implications for research on both group composition and conflict. My findings suggest that when investigating team composition and conflict, theory and measures of power differences in teams may help provide a more complete explanation of how diverse team members interact and fight. For example, when examining demographic differences in a team, incorporation of theory and methods that also capture how these differences affect the power structures in the team may help researchers may gain a more in-depth understanding of how demographic differences affect team outcomes. Status characteristics theory (Berger et al., 1972) offers a useful pathway for this. Specifically, status characteristics theory suggests that individuals are continually busy in assessing their and others’ status. They base these assumptions on, for example, demographic characteristics. Therefore, by understanding how individuals assess and give status to certain individual
characteristics and how these status beliefs influence the emergence of hierarchies and power differentials in the team, researchers may better unravel the complexities of team composition.

The theory and findings presented in this dissertation also suggest the importance of power for studies of intragroup conflict as well. Specifically, I show that the power a member holds in the group dramatically affects whether or not that individual will choose to engage in a conflict in the team setting. Additionally, I also show that the wielding of power through the use of influence tactics may help determine the effects of conflict engagement on individual performance. Therefore, by better integrating notions of power and influence into theory and research on conflict, researchers may gain additional insights into the nature and management of conflicts in teams. Therefore, in future multi-level investigations of the emergence and development of intragroup conflict, developing theory and methods to investigate how power may affect not only conflict engagement, but conflict contagion (a leader engaging in a fight may have more influence than a subordinate), may help further advance the field of intragroup conflict.

In addition to these theoretical contributions, this dissertation also contributes to research on team composition and conflict through its investigation of theories using multiple methods. The theories presented in this dissertation were investigation using a mix of both quantitative and qualitative research techniques, including ethnographic observations, interviews, surveys, archival studies, field-based quasi-experiments, and laboratory experiments. Through investigating the theoretical concepts put forward in this dissertation across a variety of samples and methodological techniques, the generalizability and reliability of the theory and findings presented in this dissertation is increased. Therefore, the methodological diversity of this dissertation is also a central aspect of its contribution to research on team composition and conflict.

**Issues for Further Research**

The theory and findings presented in this dissertation suggest a number of interesting pathways for future research. Further investigation of the perceptions and realities surrounding team composition is certainly in
order. Much still remains to be known about when and why certain demographic characteristics are more salient than others, as well as about how the values, or stereotypes, attached to these characteristics influence team interaction. In the realm of intragroup conflict, the model of conflict contagion presented in this chapter has a number of interesting aspects that could be tested, such as identifying the mechanisms which may influence the speed and extent of conflict contagion, and identifying the point at which individual perceptions of conflict translate into individual conflict behaviors. Relatedly, development and testing of such models for the emergence of team perceptions of team composition would also provide an interesting pathway for future research. Lastly, but equally important, much still remains to be known about how power affects the above processes - how power may determine the effects of team composition and conflict. In the following sections, I will discuss each of these future research directions in more detail.

Perceptions of Team Composition

As briefly discussed in the new theoretical framework put forward in this chapter, team members may have a considerable influence on each others perceptions and behaviors. However, still little is known about how individual level perceptions evolve into group-level phenomena. Numerous pathways are available in exploring this emergence of group-level perceptions and beliefs of team composition. For example, researchers could investigate the degree to which the beliefs of high-power individuals in the group, such as leaders, affect the perceptions and beliefs of other members in the group and eventual shared group cognitions. Relatedly, another aspect of perceptions that is showing promise is the value members attach to their perception of diversity. For example, when team members perceive their team to be diverse on race, this diversity may be more likely to help team performance when members have positive perspectives, or beliefs, about the value of racial diversity (e.g., Ely & Thomas, 2001; Homan & Greer, 2007; Homan et al., 2007a; van Knippenberg, Haslam, & Platow, 2007). For example, Van Knippenberg et al. (2007) have shown that diversity is more positively related to team identification when high diversity beliefs exists, and Homan et al. (2007a) showed that diversity was
more positively related to team performance when teams had positive
diversity beliefs. Not only may diversity beliefs help teams perform better,
recent research by Homan and Greer (2007) suggests that diversity beliefs
may also reduce the likelihood of diverse teams seeing themselves as
diverse. Future research would thus benefit from further investigating the
interplay between the perceptions and values members attach to their team
composition. For example, researchers investigating team composition
could begin to better draw on the large literature on intergroup-relations to
better understand how stereotyping and discrimination may explain the
effects of team composition and intragroup conflict. Ayub and Jehn (2006;
2007) are doing some promising work in this area, which suggests that
indeed the effects of group composition and conflict may be better
understood by taking into account the stereotypes held by members within
a team. They identify how factors such as nationalism or cultural
preference may determine the degree to which national diversity may
impact intragroup conflict and performance. Further research along these
lines, which better integrates research on intergroup relations with that on
team composition may help researchers better understand the effects of
team composition on team processes and performance.

Conflict
In this dissertation, team members were shown to have potentially
divergent conflict behaviors and perceptions. Further investigation of such
asymmetric perceptions and behaviors is in order. For example, I show that
the status and power level (in terms of numerical support) of a member
may affect differences in members’ conflict perceptions and behaviors.
Other factors may also have an effect on these perceptions and behaviors,
such as the norms surrounding conflicts in a team. In teams with more open
conflict norms (Jehn, Greer, Szulanski, & Levine, 2008), members might
be expected to have more symmetric perceptions and behaviors as
members are encouraged to share their perceptions regarding conflicts in
the team and thus have more opportunity to potentially converge in views
than in teams where members keep their perceptions to themselves.
Relatedly, future research would benefit from identifying the ‘tipping’
point at which members decide to engage in conflict. Pondy (1967)
suggested that the perception of conflict is a different phase in the conflict process than engaging in conflict behaviors, but still little is known about what pushes members from phase to phase - why members would choose to engage in conflict and how conflict may spread through a team. Future research would thus benefit from investigating the interplay between perceptions and behaviors in conflicts in the team setting and using this knowledge to understand how conflicts evolve in teams over time.

Power and Teams

This dissertation has set forward the notion that power may dramatically alter team functioning and outcomes. While research has suggested that power hierarchies are inevitable in the team setting (Sidanius, 1993), still scant research has investigated the effects of power in the team setting. This dissertation has set forward several ways in which power, status, and influence can shape team interactions, but much more theoretical development and empirical investigation is needed in this area. For example, I show in this dissertation that influence tactics may be important tools of conflict management. Future research could explore the potential linkages between these two large but disparate research fields – influence and conflict – to further identify the best influence strategies in certain conflict situations. For example, research on influence tactics has suggested that the most effective influence tactic strategy may depend on the relative power levels of those whom one is trying to influence (Yukl & Falbe, 1990). Therefore, a boss intervening in a conflict may need to use different influence tactics than a subordinate trying to intervene in a conflict where several more senior team members are involved. As another pathway for future research on the role of power in the team setting, I show in this dissertation that power balances in teams, in term of the numerical representation of members, may impact both team and individual performance. However, I restrict my focus in this dissertation to the extreme end of this spectrum – whether or not there is a solo. Future research would benefit from also examining other areas of this spectrum, such as the effects of different sized subgroups. Does a subgroup with less members than another subgroup suffer the same negative consequences as a solo member? As a final pathway for future research, I show in this
dissertation that members may have different levels of power within the same team, and that members’ perception of this is important in understanding the effects of power on team performance. This leads into another area that has not yet been extensively looked at - power differences, or power diversity within teams. Keltner and coauthors (2008) suggest that power differences in teams may improve conflict resolution through serving as a prioritization device for teams, and indeed recent empirical work by Greer and Van Kleef (2008) shows initial support for this idea. This implies that power diversity may help team performance. In line with this, recent research has shown that in groups with diversity in demographic status, members of higher status had better cognitive performance than when functioning in homogenous groups (Sommers, Warp, & Mahoney, 2008). Future research would thus benefit from more in-depth examination of how power differences within teams may affect team and individual outcomes.

Managerial Implications

Perceptions are critical to understanding the effects of team composition on team processes and outcomes. Organizational members may not always perceive team composition as traditionally assumed in past research. For example, individuals in teams may not always perceive the same differences within the same team, and this heterogeneity in cognitions may have important repercussions for team and individual performance. My research thus suggests that managers should pay attention not to just the external realities of their teams (such as their demographic diversity), but also to employees’ perceptions of these realities. How employees think about their team’s composition or conflict may ultimately determine the effects of the team’s composition and conflict on team performance.

Given the importance of perceptions, and the likelihood that individuals with teams may have divergent perspectives, it seems logical that organizations should focus on these perceptions in their diversity agendas. However, it seems that diversity programs are not as effective as they could be – Ely (2004) in a study of 486 retail bank branches found virtually no effect of diversity training programs in improving the effects of diversity on branch performance. Rynes and Rosen (1995) identified a few
conditions which, if in place, could enhance the success, or at least perceived success, of diversity programs. Namely, they found that diversity programs were more likely to be perceived as successful when they included mandatory attendance for all managers, long-term evaluation of training results, rewards for managers who increase diversity within their units, and an inclusionary definition of diversity within the organization. Therefore, future research would benefit from investigating the most effective ways to influence employee perspectives regarding team composition (e.g., diversity) and conflict.

Lastly, this dissertation suggests that conflict may be a more multi-level phenomenon than traditionally thought. Therefore, managers should make sure that interventions and trainings to address conflict focus on conflict at the individual (i.e. by coaching individuals on the best tactics to utilize in engaging in conflict and in understanding the most appropriate situations to engage in conflict), dyadic (i.e. by noticing and resolving conflicts between a few members within the team before the conflict engulfs the entire team), and team (i.e. by providing teams with trainings on conflict norms and resolution to allow teams to better manage conflicts if they do come to encompass the entire team) levels. Through acknowledging the multi-levels at which conflict may occur, managers may be able to better manage and resolve conflicts in their teams.

**Conclusion**

In this dissertation, I have examined new theoretical perspectives which may help shed more light on the effects of team composition and conflict on team outcomes. I build upon past research and theory which has suggested the importance of perception in understanding team composition (e.g., social identity theory and self-categorization theory, Ellemers et al., 2002, 2003; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1985, 1987) and conflict (e.g., Pondy, 1967; Jehn et al., 2006; Jehn & Rispens, 2007) by developing theory to integrate the interplay between perceptions and realities concerning team composition and conflict. Additionally, I build upon this past research by also looking at how individual perceptions and behaviors and vary, and show how discrepancies between members’ views may also have a large influence on team dynamics and outcomes. In the final chapter
of this dissertation, I propose a theoretical framework to understand how members’ views may emerge and change over time and what the differences in these views may mean for team processes and outcomes at different points in a team’s life. Lastly, I extend a rich history of social psychological research on the effects of power on individual cognitions and behaviors (for a review, see Keltner et al., 2003) by incorporating power into theory and investigation of teams. My findings show that power may have a profound effect on teams and may be an integral component in understanding the complex relationships between team composition, conflict, and team outcomes. Taken together, this dissertation advances past research on team composition and conflict through its focus on the role of the individual in the team. By better understanding how individuals differ, we may come to better understand the process by which team level phenomena may emerge.