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“Medice, cura te ipsum!” a (mini) review of how white men are portrayed in diversity management research

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This mini-review explores the framing and portrayal of dominant group members (DGMs) and highlights a significant gap between the stated goals of inclusion in diversity management and how they are represented in research. Drawing on cooperation and paradox theories, this research analyzes the abstracts of 560 journal articles from the USA and South Africa. Both regions predominantly use a potentially adversarial framing—focusing on group differences with only a small fraction employing reflexive reframing, which is needed to promote intergroup cooperation. The study also identifies the portrayal of DGMs in research, which was analyzed based on an in-depth analysis of 26 articles selected to explore the constructs associated with this group. Based on the classification of constructs devised, both countries mostly follow a dilemma portrayal. This review serves as a call to action, urging scholars to reassess their positioning and avoid exacerbating existing divisions. Exploring alternative solutions and fostering collaboration, ensuring that diversity initiatives are effective and inclusive for all groups requires a shift from adversarial to reflexive reframing and from dilemma to paradox portrayals of dominant group members. This involves acknowledging privilege dynamics while emphasizing the benefits of diversity and the synergies it can create. Embracing a paradoxical view of diversity management can help develop strategies that ensure inclusion and cohesion, recognizing the multifaceted reality of DGMs and avoiding restrictive notions about group identities.

KEYWORDS

diversity management, dominant group members, intergroup cooperation, paradox theory, research discourse

Introduction

Research discourse, as a system of shared knowledge, powerfully shapes societal perceptions and practices (Foucault, 1972). Researchers, through repeated use and subsequent popularization in education and media, heavily influence what society deems “truth” (Foucault and Rabinow, 1984). The theories they promote validate certain actions and behaviors of managers while invalidating others, thus shaping the broader intellectual and normative framework (Ghoshal, 2005). This, in turn, limits the range of alternatives deemed plausible (Besley, 2015). Critically challenging the narratives perpetuated within specific disciplines, such as diversity management, becomes crucial to ensuring that research messages are reflected in practice (Ahonen et al., 2014). This requires, first and foremost, a self-reflexive turn—“Medice, cura te ipsum”—among researchers to avoid inadvertently perpetuating discrepancies that could cause harm.

This mini-review addresses a critical gap in the literature by examining how dominant group members (DGMs) are framed within workplace diversity and inclusion research. According to social dominance theory, members of dominant groups benefit from privilege (Sidanius and Pratto, 2012). Privilege refers to an advantage that an individual or group enjoys beyond what is accessible to others (Carrim and Moolman, 2020). However, instead of being viewed as partners in diversity efforts, DGMs—often white men in Western contexts—tend to be seen, at best, as potential allies (Kelan, 2018), or at worst, as those “for which inclusion is far less of a concern” (Van Knippenberg, 2022). Viewed as hindering progressive inclusion interventions in organizations (Nkomo et al., 2019), they are a crucial focus given the backlash against diversity management and frequent failure of diversity initiatives (Boros et al., 2022; Leslie, 2019). This has generated recent calls for new perspectives on framing dominant group members in diversity research (Creary, 2025; Toma et al., 2024).

Our core argument is that there is a disconnect between the stated goals of inclusion in diversity management literature and the predominant research framing of DGMs. We suggest that researchers should move beyond adversarial portrayals (i.e., focused on differences and attributing blame) to embrace reflexive reframing (i.e., accentuating interdependence). This entails portraying both dominant and minority group members in a paradoxical (both/and) rather than a dilemmatic (either/or) manner (Van Lange et al., 2013). We argue that this will foster greater intergroup similarities and build bridges (Toma et al., 2024).

In this paper, we take an ethical stance, emphasizing researchers' awareness of framing, which shapes public discourse and may limit alternative perspectives. Instead of theoretical approaches (such as power, privilege, social justice), we focus on the framing of studies beyond their theories, using a binary position of potential adversarial vs. reflexive reframing to highlight the current research gap. Grounding our analysis in cooperation (Rothman, 2012) and paradox theories (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018), we provide insights into addressing identity-based conflict and promoting more inclusive diversity management literature.

Theoretical lens

Cooperation theory provides a foundation for understanding intergroup dynamics by advocating for the protection and acknowledgment of all groups' legitimacy, while highlighting the mutual benefits of collaboration (Gray, 2006). This approach is crucial in managing identity-based conflicts between diverse groups, as it fosters resonance and cooperation (Rothman, 2012). However, much research has focused on group differences and privilege, reinforcing intergroup polarization through adversarial framing (Nkomo et al., 2019).

Adversarial framing presents situations as dilemmas, emphasizing opposing choices and potentially oversimplifying the causes of tension (Van Lange et al., 2013). This framing can lead to a lack of exploration of alternative solutions that might satisfy multiple stakeholders (Kollock, 1998). In contrast, reflexive reframing offers a “we are in this together” perspective, transcending intergroup differences by focusing on future needs and promoting intergroup resonance (Rothman, 2012, p. 5). This

approach encourages positive strategies and cooperation, reducing adversarial stances (Jordaan, 2022).

Paradox theory is a form of reflexive reframing that emphasizes the interdependencies between seemingly conflicting elements (Schad et al., 2019; Lewis and Smith, 2023). It allows for the exploration of contradictions and conflicts, aiming to manage aspects that are both at odds and interdependent (Schad et al., 2016). Unlike adversarial framing, which aligns with polarization by offering binary choices (Karhu and Ritala, 2018), paradox theory seeks solutions that consider multiple options simultaneously (Gorbatai et al., 2022).

In the context of diversity management, applying paradox theory involves embracing tensions between advocating for previously disadvantaged groups and addressing the concerns of dominant group members (Bosch, 2024; Morton, 2019). This approach ensures the inclusion of all group members by considering competing possibilities and managerial actions (Waldman and Bowen, 2016; Lewis and Smith, 2023). For instance, it might involve balancing identity-conscious and identity-blind perspectives to achieve diversity goals (Konrad et al., 2021). By embracing paradoxes such as the tension between inclusion and meritocracy, paradox theory offers an alternative to the status quo adversarial framing, providing a more nuanced understanding of intergroup dynamics in diversity management.

Methods

This study examined journal articles on diversity management from the USA and South Africa, two countries with histories of racial inequality and white-settler colonization by northwest European Protestants (Fredrickson, 1982). Both nations continue to grapple with the social impacts of past state-sanctioned segregation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Clawson, 2021). In these contexts, white men are often viewed as the dominant group against which others are judged, due to their disproportionate share of social goods (Sidanius and Pratto, 2012). However, while the dominant group in the USA largely reflects the country's demographics (Craig et al., 2018), in South Africa, white people hold significant power despite being a minority (Goldman, 2016).

To focus the broad scope of diversity management (Farndale et al., 2015), the search concentrated on studies in humanities and social sciences, as recommended by Marfelt (2016). The year 1994 marked South Africa's transition to democracy (Levy, 2022) and the rise of global diversity-management research and serves as the start for this review (Jonsen et al., 2011). The literature review involved a two-part data analysis process, outlined in Figure 1.

A thematic analysis was conducted, which involves identifying patterns across the data set and creating descriptive themes through coding (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Snilstveit et al., 2012). Themes are recognizable configurations of meanings that co-occur systematically (Willig, 2013). This analysis allowed us to identify the main research trends and attributes, which were further analyzed using the theoretical frameworks of cooperation and paradox theories.

The analytical framework consisted of two stages. The first stage classified articles based on research trends from their abstracts, using adversarial framing and reflexive reframing.

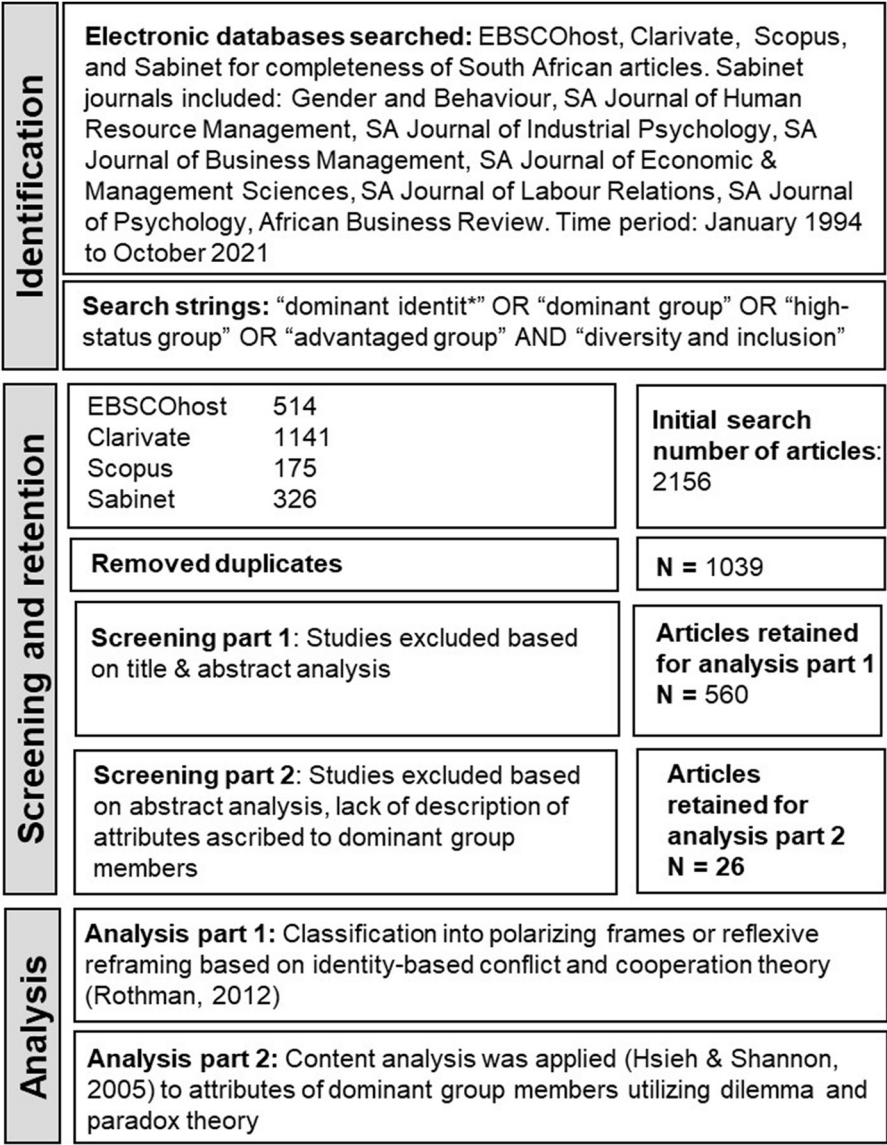


FIGURE 1
PRISMA diagram of the review.

Adversarial framing focuses on potentially polarizing research that attributes blame or emphasizes intergroup differences. In contrast, reflexive reframing highlights the possibility of an interdependent focus between groups, where the identity needs of all groups are considered (Rothman, 2012). An example of a potential adversarial framing found in this review includes research on competitive victimhood (Sullivan et al., 2012). Research classified as reflexive reframing, for example, highlights the limitations of relying solely on a multicultural perspective or an identity-blind approach to understand intergroup dynamics (Hahn et al., 2015).

This stands in contrast to research, which is classified as an example of reflexive reframing, by emphasizing the limitations of using only a multicultural or identity-blind perspective for understanding intergroup dynamics.

The second stage of analysis was conducted on a selection of articles to examine constructs associated with dominant group members. This included conceptual papers on intergroup relations and/or diversity management with an emphasis on dominant group members (masculinities and/or whiteness). Paradox theory was operationalized by classifying research as either portraying dominant group members in a dilemma (either/or) frame or using a paradox (both/and) perspective. This classification distinguished between research that focused on a critique of and/or only challenges faced by dominant group members (dilemma). Research was classified as a dilemma frame when the focus was only on critique (Jawitz, 2016) and/or identity/ally issues for dominant group members (Siegel and Sawyer, 2020). Research was classified as a paradox when, in addition to critique and/or challenges faced, there was a focus on shared challenges/similarities (Oosthuizen

et al., 2019) or alternative solutions (Bohonos, 2020). For more information on the methods please consult the following link.

Findings

Part 1: research trends on theorizing about dominant group members from a cooperation theory perspective

Our analysis, guided by cooperation theory, identified two primary research trends: adversarial framing, which focuses on group differences and blame, and reflexive reframing, which emphasizes interdependence. Among 560 articles (475 from the USA and 66 from South Africa), 153 from the USA (compared with only 3 from South Africa) highlighted group differences, stereotyping, and bias, with a notable increase post-2016, possibly influenced by the presidential election (Carian, 2022). Socio-economic factors and income disparities were prominent in 77 articles, particularly in the 1990s and early 2000s, reflecting class-exploitative capitalism (Feagin and Ducey, 2017). In contrast, South African research focused on workplace diversity management, especially after 2002, driven by legislation like the Employment Equity Act (e.g., *Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998*, 2025).

The USA literature emphasized convincing researchers of the importance of group differences, while South African research addressed practical workplace interventions, reflecting an acknowledgment of existing inequities. Across both samples, 541 articles adopted a potentially adversarial frame, while only 19 employed reflexive reframing. Reflexive reframing included critical reflections on diversity management and societal changes, such as in South Africa (Booyesen, 2007), and the role of dominant group members in creating inclusive organizations in the USA (Ostrove and Brown, 2018; Moser and Branscombe, 2021). Notably, the interdependence between dominant and non-dominant group members remains under-researched, with a lack of theoretical contributions in both countries.

Part 2: attributes of dominant group members in research from a paradox theory perspective

Our in-depth analysis of 26 articles (13 from South Africa and 13 from the USA) examined how dominant group members are portrayed in research, focusing on whether they reflect a dilemma or paradox approach. All USA articles adopted a dilemma perspective, either critiquing dominant group members or highlighting their challenges and benefits in diversity management. These articles often exposed the privileged position of dominant group members and their resistance to change ($n = 13$ and $n = 10$, respectively). Additionally, they discussed identity-related challenges such as gender role expectations ($n = 6$) and the benefits of dominant group members acting as allies ($n = 2$). Only three articles employed paradox framing, which was limited

to understanding the impact of interventions on both dominant and non-dominant group members and exploring alternatives like meritocracy (Konrad et al., 2021).

In South Africa, articles were divided between criticizing and challenging dominant group members. Criticisms included resistance to change ($n = 13$) and privileges ($n = 9$), while challenges involved social identity anxiety ($n = 10$) and the need to engage dominant group members in diversity management ($n = 5$). Paradoxical portrayals noted similar challenges for all group members ($n = 2$) and increasing congruence between black and white men's experiences ($n = 1$).

Our findings indicate that researchers predominantly take a dilemma view of dominant group members, perpetuating an either-or mindset. This framing can exacerbate communication difficulties and polarize parties (Shmueli et al., 2006). By focusing mostly on past wrongs, research may hinder cooperation efforts (Hogg et al., 2017). Identity-based characterization frames perpetuate simplistic labeling and preclude shared understanding (Shmueli et al., 2006). The attributes identified portray dominant group members as having privilege and positional power, with few discussions also focused on the challenges they face (Oosthuizen et al., 2019) and/or combined with a paradoxical view of diversity management (Lease et al., 2010; Dover et al., 2020). Overall, these trends highlight a trade-off between focusing on privilege and exploring interdependence or cooperation (Table 1).

Discussion

Our findings indicate that current diversity management research predominantly employs a likely adversarial framing of dominant group members, emphasizing differences and conflicts as intractable dilemmas. This framing is evident in both the United States and South Africa, where interdependence is often neglected. The attributes associated with dominant group members are also predominantly framed as dilemmas, highlighting their privileged positions and resistance to change (Klein and Harrison, 2007). This approach overlooks the importance of intergroup cooperation and the need to balance addressing non-dominant group concerns with collaboration among all groups (Carian, 2022).

Research on diversity initiatives shows that neglecting cooperation can lead to unintended outcomes, such as reduced engagement from non-targeted groups due to perceived unfairness and increased discrimination against intended beneficiaries when initiatives fail (Leslie, 2019; Bosch, 2024). The status quo approach to diversity management has proven ineffective, as evidenced by continued workplace exclusion and resistance (Gallegos et al., 2020). The predominant use of adversarial and dilemma framings in diversity management research forecloses the search for alternative solutions and entrenches separation between groups (Creary, 2025).

Most studies in our review focused on the grievances of and resistance to change among dominant-group members, further entrenching separation and opposition between groups (Klein and Harrison, 2007). This approach neglects the importance of intergroup cooperation (Creary, 2025) and the need to balance

TABLE 1 Articles included for attribute analysis.^a

Article	Author(s)	Year	Journal	Methods	Research focus	DOI
Male allies at work: gender-equality supportive men reduce negative underrepresentation effects among women	Moser, C. E.; Branscombe, N. R.	2021*	Social Psychological and Personality Science	Qualitative: questionnaires	Assessing women's perceptions of workplaces that included the presence (vs. absence) of a male ally	doi: 10.1177/19485506211033748
Both diversity and meritocracy: managing the diversity-meritocracy paradox with organizational ambidexterity	Konrad, A. M.; Richard, O. C.; Yang, Y.	2021*	Journal of Management Studies	Theoretical review	Focus on the diversity challenge organizations face as they seek to enhance opportunities for marginalized groups without damaging fairness perceptions for advantaged groups	doi: 10.1111/joms.12752
"We don't talk about feelings or struggles like that": white men's experiences of eating disorders in the workplace	Siegel, J. A.; Sawyer, KB	2020*	Psychology Of Men and Masculinities	Qualitative: interviews	Examine the intersection of masculinity and mental health in the workplace, focusing specifically on White men with eating disorders (EDs), who may experience (or perceive) compounded stigma	doi: 10.1037/men0000253
Critical race theory and working-class white men: exploring race privilege and lower-class work-life	Bohonos, J. W.	2020*	Gender Work and Organization	Qualitative: theoretical	Applies critical race theory to analyse the dynamic intersection between the racial and gender privilege available to working-class White men from their position of social and economic marginality	doi: 10.1111/GWAO.12512
Mixed signals: the unintended effects of diversity initiatives	Dover, T. L.; Kaiser, C. R.; Major, B.	2020*	Social Issues and Policy Review	Qualitative: theoretical	Review social psychological evidence that the mere presence of diversity initiatives can have unintended consequences through the communication of (1) fairness signals, (2) inclusion signals, and (3) competence signals	doi: 10.1111/sipr.12059
Subjective experiences of employment equity in South African organizations	Mayer, C M., Oosthuizen R M.; Tonelli, L.	2019#	SA Journal of Human Resource Management	Qualitative: Hermeneutic phenomenological	Employees experiences of EE in contemporary South African organizations	
Multiculturalism in the workplace: model and test	Jackson, L. T. B.; Van de Vijver, F. J. R.	2018#	SA Journal of Human Resource Management	Quantitative survey questionnaires	Multiculturalism and employee attitudes.	
In good company: when gender diversity boosts a company's reputation	Wilton, L. S.; Sanchez, D. T.; Unzueta, M. M.; Kaiser, C.; Caluori, N.	2019*	Psychology of Women Quarterly	Qualitative: could be experimental	Explore whether advertising gender diversity improves White men's beliefs about an organization	doi: 10.1177/0361684318800264
Unearthing white academics' experience of teaching in higher education in South Africa	Jawitz, J.	2016#	Teaching in Higher Education	Qualitative: interviews	Understanding how the racialized context interacts with the experience of teaching	doi: 10.1080/13562517.2016.1198760
Toward A sunlit path: stigma identity management as a source of localized social change through interaction	Lyons, B. J.; Pek, S.; Wessel, J. L.	2017*	Academy Of Management Review	Qualitative	How individuals communicate to others about their stigmatized identity (i.e., stigma identity management) can enable them to overcome their power disadvantage	doi: 10.5465/amr.2015.0189
Employment equity in the South African retail sector: legal vs. competence and business imperatives	Roman, L. J., Mason, R. B.	2015#	South African Journal of Labor Relations	Mixed-methods approach, using questionnaire surveys, in-depth interviews, case studies, focus groups and secondary data	Determining what supportive action regulatory authorities and businesses could take to achieve employment equity	https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC179268

(Continued)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Article	Author(s)	Year	Journal	Methods	Research focus	DOI
The historical origins of ethnic (white) privilege in US organizations	Nkomo, S. M.; Al Ariss, A.	2014*	Journal Of Managerial Psychology	Qualitative: theoretical	Tracing the genealogy of ethnic (white) privilege in US organizations and its continuing significance in organizations today	doi: 10.1108/JMP-06-2012-0178
Perceptions of gender discrimination across six decades: the moderating roles of gender and age	Kehn, A.; Ruthig, J. C.	2013*	Sex Roles	Qualitative review: Questionnaire	Examine whether women and men view gender discrimination as having changed over time	doi: 10.1007/s11199-013-0303-2
Attitudes toward and experience of employment equity: original research	Oosthuizen, R. M., Naidoo, V.	2010#	SA Journal of Industrial Psychology	Qualitative: interviews	Exploring employees' attitudes toward and experiences of EE in the South African work context	doi: 10.4102/sajip.v36i1.836
Workplace challenges in corporate America: differences in black and white.	Smith, J. W.; Joseph, Stephanie E.	2010*	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Qualitative: interviews	Analysis of the diversity management challenges of professionals in corporate America	doi: 10.1108/02610151011089500
Masculinity and interpersonal competencies: contrasting white and African American men	Lease, S. H.; Hampton, A. B.; Fleming, K. M.; Baggett, L. R.; Montes, S. H.; Sawyer, R. J.	2010*	Psychology Of Men and Masculinities	Qualitative	Examined differences between White and African American men's endorsements of traditional masculinity ideology and compared the associations between masculinity ideology and interpersonal competencies with relationship partners and co-workers	doi: 10.1037/a0018092
Shadows of transformation: inclusion and exclusion of academic staff at a university of technology	Hemson, C.; Singh, P.	2010#	South African Journal of Higher Education	Mixed methods: interviews and questionnaires	Exploring perceptions and experiences related to inclusion and exclusion at a tertiary institution	
Intersections of power and privilege: long-term trends in managerial representation	Stainback, K; Tomaskovic-Devey, D.	2009*	American Sociological Review	Qualitative: interviews	Examines post-Civil Rights Act trends in private sector managerial representation for white men, white women, black men, and black women	doi: 10.1177/000312240907400506
Gender impediments to the South African executive boardroom	April, K.; Dreyer, S., Blass, E.	2007#	South African Journal of Labor Relations	Qualitative	The challenges facing women in executive positions in South Africa.	https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC59609
Barriers to employment equity implementation and retention of blacks in management in South Africa	Booyesen, L.	2007#	South African Journal of Labor Relations	In-depth descriptive case analysis	Identify barriers to the implementation of Employment Equity (EE) and effective retention strategies	https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC59603
Societal power shifts and changing social identities in South Africa : workplace implications	Booyesen, L.	2007#	South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences	Qualitative: theoretical	Examine social identity changes and power shifts on the political, social, economic and management levels	https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC21806
A systems psychodynamic interpretation of South African diversity dynamics: a comparative study	Cilliers, F., Smit, B.	2006#	South African Journal of Labor Relations	Qualitative: focus group	Study and report on the systems psychodynamic diversity behavior manifesting in a South African organization	https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC59600
Reverse discrimination. A facet of sexual discrimination? A micro-focus on the legal profession: forum	Berezowski, N., Bothma, H., Goodman, S.	2003#	South African Journal of Labor Relations	Qualitative and quantitative: survey questionnaires	Examine experiences and perceptions of sexual discrimination within the legal profession	https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC59569
Employment equity best practices at selected companies in South Africa	Thomas, A.	2003#	South African Journal of Labor Relations	Qualitative: interviews focus groups.	Identify practices employment equity at selected companies in South Africa 'best practices'	https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC59573

(Continued)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Article	Author(s)	Year	Journal	Methods	Research focus	DOI*
An affirmative action audit for affirmative change: a management perspective	Theron, S. W., Viljoen M. R.	2001#	South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences	Qualitative/questionnaire	Management's perception of affirmative action for affirmative change	https://hdl.handle.net/10520/AJA10158812302
Women above the glass ceiling—perceptions on corporate mobility and strategies for success	Davies-Netzley, S. A.	1998*	Gender and Society	Qualitative: interviews	Focuses on women in corporate positions above the glass ceiling and explores their perceptions on corporate mobility and strategies for success in elite positions with a focus on both the perceptions of men and women	https://www.jstor.org/stable/190289

Articles are chronologically ordered and respectively marked as United States “” and South Africa “#”.

addressing the concerns of non-dominant-group members together with collaboration among all groups (Carian, 2022). Without collaboration, dominant-group members may become excluded, undermining the ethos and values of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Adversarial dilemma-based framing fails to recognize the potential of dominant-group members as allies and champions of inclusion, and it does not show how to facilitate collaboration between different identity groups.

To foster collaborative interdependence, researchers need to explore framing that balances making diversity initiatives appealing to dominant groups while emphasizing inclusion for the disadvantaged (Morton, 2019). By incorporating both marginalized and advantaged groups in theorizing diversity, researchers can better address workplace inequality and achieve cooperative diversity (Van Knippenberg, 2022). This requires shifting from an adversarial/polarizing to a collaborative/reflexive theoretical framing, and moving past dilemma (either-or) portrayals of groups to paradoxical ones (and-and). We must both acknowledge privilege dynamics and reveal social inequalities, as well as focus on the benefits of diversity as variety (Harrison and Klein, 2007) and the synergies it can create (Van Knippenberg, 2022). We should give voices to minorities beyond portraying them as oppressed, and also portray majority members in a nuanced way, beyond their privilege and resistance to change (Brannon et al., 2018).

Our in-depth analysis of 26 articles showed that while most used a dilemma view, some included paradoxical portrayals, noting similar challenges for all group members and increasing congruence between black and white men's experiences (Cilliers and Smit, 2006). This indicates a missed opportunity, as cross-categorization theory has shown that shared attributes between groups can bridge intergroup differences (Lease et al., 2010; Thatcher and Patel, 2012). Gray (2006) emphasizes the importance of framing for managing identity conflict, stating that focusing on similarities can foster a sense of compatriots rather than aliens.

Embracing a paradox view of diversity management can contribute to developing strategies for inclusion and cohesion by recognizing the multifaceted reality of being a dominant group member and avoiding restrictive notions about group identities (Lasch-Quinn, 2001). This approach combines historical complexity and interdependence in addressing

power relation changes. Framing dominant groups and diversity management as a paradox could greatly contribute to ensuring both inclusion and cohesion in organizations (Konrad et al., 2021).

Our review serves as a call to action, urging scholars to reassess their positioning and avoid exacerbating existing divisions. A shift is needed to explore alternative solutions and foster collaboration, ensuring that diversity initiatives are effective and inclusive for all groups. This requires researchers to critically reflect on their practices to prevent harm and promote meaningful change in diversity management research. By adopting a more nuanced and collaborative approach, researchers can help organizations move beyond current limitations and foster a more inclusive work environment. This shift toward a paradoxical perspective can facilitate a deeper understanding of diversity management complexities, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable solutions.

Limitations

This review aimed to uncover research discourse trends related to dominant group members using a binary proposition, but several limitations are acknowledged. The binary approach inherently overlooks nuances that cannot be captured by categorizing articles as one or the other. Additionally, our timeframe might not include recent literature postdating the Black Lives Matter movement, though trends identified over nearly three decades are unlikely to be significantly offset by recent changes. We made an explicit effort to exclude gray literature and non-peer-reviewed articles (Jesson et al., 2011), which could be explored in future research to provide a more comprehensive view.

Future studies could extend the search to include media analysis from both countries to uncover how dominant group members are portrayed in the public sphere. Furthermore, treating all white men as a homogeneous group overlooks nuances such as men in less privileged positions or those with subordinated identities (Hearn and Collinson, 2006). Future research should consider these differences and whether similar trends prevail accounting for these nuances. Despite these limitations, our findings highlight the need for further investigation into these dynamics to provide a more nuanced understanding of dominant group members.

Conclusion: toward a more inclusive research agenda

Our findings highlight a significant gap between the stated goals of inclusion in diversity management and the way dominant group members are represented in research. The over-reliance on adversarial framing not only limits our understanding of their experiences but also risks alienating a critical constituency in diversity efforts. To move forward, we propose a research agenda that prioritizes cooperation, mutual understanding, and the exploration of common ground. This involves investigating the challenges faced by dominant group members, their ambivalence regarding diversity management, recognizing their potential as allies, and developing interventions that address their concerns alongside those of minority groups. Furthermore, future research should focus on developing theoretical frameworks that embrace paradox and complexity, moving beyond binary oppositions to foster a more nuanced and holistic understanding of diversity dynamics. Ultimately, a more inclusive research framing fosters bridge-building and leads to diversity management practices that are not only more equitable but also more effective.

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KG: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft. AB: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. SB: Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

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Supplementary material

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/forgp.2025.1525043/full#supplementary-material>

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