

**HOW MUCH RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT REALLY EXISTS?
BIASED PERCEPTIONS OF RACIALLY DIVERSE TEAMS**

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ABSTRACT

The current paper presents three studies examining whether racial diversity can bias observers' evaluations of relationship conflict in work teams. Study 1 found that observers perceived more relationship conflict when teams were described as racially diverse rather than racially homogeneous, even though the objective content of the team discussion was held constant. Study 2 replicated this finding among managers in the field, while also showing that this bias is most likely to occur when the level of conflict in a team is ambiguous. Finally, Study 3 examined the consequences of biased perceptions of relational conflict for team outcomes, showing that people are less likely to provide continued financial support to racially diverse teams than to homogeneous teams. Implications for diverse teams in organizations are discussed. I will also present a broader framing for my work which questions whether this research and others should be framed in terms of the effects of homogeneity on perceptions and behavior, instead of the effects of diversity.