

4-2016

Demographic Faultlines and Team Cohesion on Team Performance

Maya S. Budovitch

The University of Western Ontario, mbudovi@gmail.com

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Citation of this paper:

Budovitch, Maya S., "Demographic Faultlines and Team Cohesion on Team Performance" (2016). *Undergraduate Honors Posters*. 18.
http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/psychd_posters/18



Demographic Faultlines and Team Cohesion on Team Performance



Maya Budovitch

The TeamWork Lab
Department of Psychology
Western University

Natalie Allen

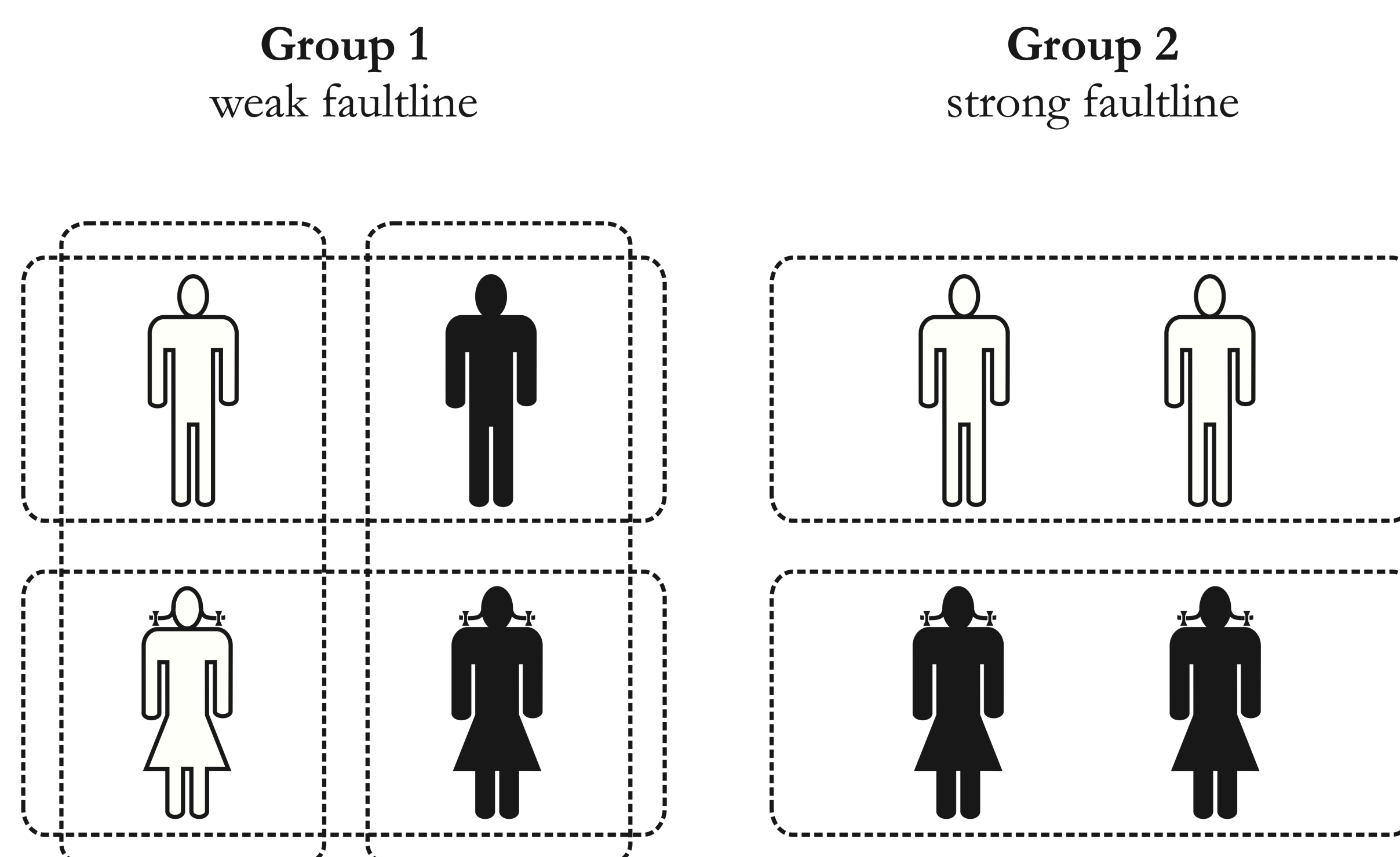
ABSTRACT

This research examines team faultlines and their potential impact on team performance. Faultlines are defined as hypothetical dividing lines that split a group or team into two or more subgroups based on one or more individual attributes. Investigations explored the possibility that team cohesion (i.e. team members' attraction and commitment to their team) would moderate the relationship between faultlines and team performance. Participants (N = 867) completed The Task and Social Cohesion Questionnaire during two academic years (2013-2015). Faultline strength was calculated for each team using two approaches, Thatcher's Fau and Meyer's Average Silhouette. It was hypothesized that faultline strength will be negatively related to team performance, and team cohesion will be positively related to team performance. Pearson correlational analyses revealed that none of Thatcher's Fau ($r = -.06$), Meyer's ASW ($r = .002$), social cohesion ($r = .06$) and task cohesion ($r = .10$) were related to team performance. It was also hypothesized that cohesion will moderate the relation between faultline strength and team performance, such that faultlines will have a less negative effect at high levels of cohesion. Moderated hierarchical multiple regression analyses revealed that all interaction terms were nonsignificant, although the interaction term between Thatcher's Fau and task cohesion was trending towards significance ($\Delta R^2 = .016$).

INTRODUCTION

FAULTLINES

- Faultlines measure diversity in groups by examining subgroups based on the alignment of demographic variables.
- Two measures: Thatcher's Fau and Meyer's Average Silhouette. (Thatcher & Patel, 2012; Meyer & Glenz, 2013)



COHESION

- **Task Cohesion:** a group's shared commitment or attraction to the group task or goal.
- **Social Cohesion:** a shared linking or attraction to the group, emotional bonds of friendship, caring and closeness among group members, enjoyment of each other's company, or social time together. (Castaño et al., 2013)

HYPOTHESES

1. Demographic faultline strength will have a significant negative correlation with team performance.
2. Team cohesion will have a significant positive correlation with team performance.
3. Cohesion will moderate the relation between faultline strength and team performance, such that faultlines will have a less negative effect at high levels of cohesion.

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

- 867 engineering students at The University of Western Ontario; project teams in one of two academic years (2013-14; 2014-15).
 - Mean age of participants was 18.75 years (range: 16 to 36).
 - N = 213 teams.

MATERIALS

- **The Task and Social Cohesion Questionnaire**
 - 16 items; 8 task cohesion and 8 social cohesion.
 - Likert scale from 1-7.

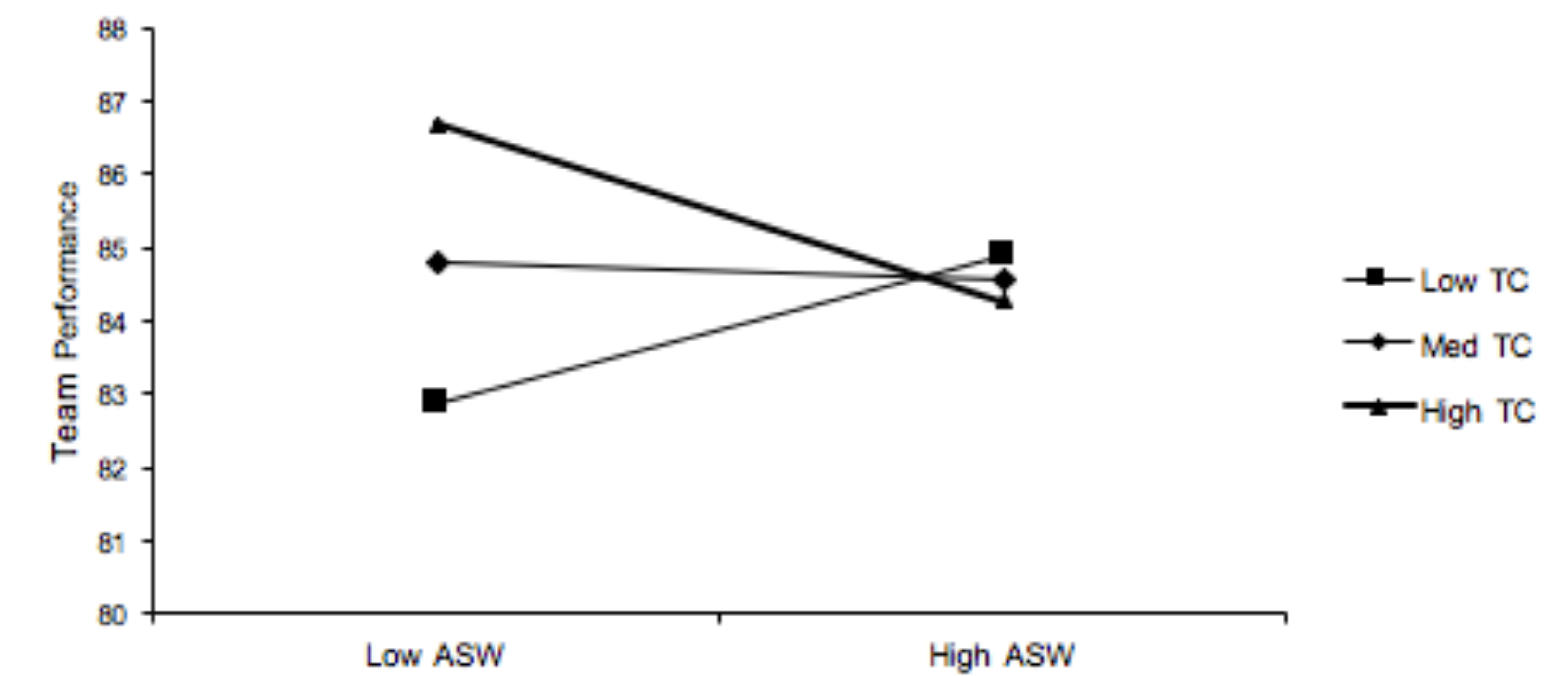
PROCEDURE

- Participants completed demographic survey; faultlines calculated.
- Participants worked in project teams for about seven months.
- Participants completed cohesion questionnaire.
- Collect project grade; team performance measure.

RESULTS

Variable	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. ASW	.51	.27					
2. Fau	.67	.27	.79**				
3. SC	5.25	.80	.13	.07	(.68)		
4. TC	5.27	.74	.11	.07	.82**	(.68)	
5. TP	84.63	8.68	.00	-.06	.06	.10	(.02)

Note. Cronbach's alpha reliabilities are reported in the diagonals; ** $p < .001$



DISCUSSION

- The present study investigated the relations between both faultlines and cohesion with team performance; they were found to be uncorrelated with team performance.
- A moderated regression analysis found that neither type of cohesion moderated the impact of faultlines on team performance, although task cohesion was trending towards moderating the effect (Meyer's ASW).

CONTRIBUTIONS & LIMITATIONS

- Evidence that Thatcher's Fau and Meyer's ASW are correlated.
- Diversity effects may be weaker than often hypothesized, even when alignment is considered.
- Student teams may not be generalizable to other populations.
- Future research might examine cohesiveness in a way that is more specific to subgroups.

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