

A Closer Look at Inclusion-For-All Approaches to Diversity Initiative Implementation

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Abstract : In response to increasing demographic diversity, many U.S. organizations have implemented diversity initiatives to increase the representation of women and ethnic minorities. While these initiatives aim to promote more fair and positive outcomes for underrepresented minorities (URMs) widespread backlash against these policies can negatively impact the groups of individuals that are supposed to be supported by them. A recent theory-based analysis of best practices for instituting diversity policies proposes an "inclusion for all" approach that negotiates the oft-divergent goals and motivations of both marginalized and dominant group members in these contexts. Empirical work finds that "inclusion for all" strategies decrease Whites' tendency to implicitly associate diversity with exclusion and increased their personal endorsement of diversity initiatives. Similarly, Whites report higher belongingness when considering an inclusion for all approach to diversity versus a colorblind approach. While inclusion-for-all approaches may effectively increase Whites' responsiveness to diversity efforts, the downstream consequences of implementing these policies on URM's have yet to be explored. The current research investigated how inclusion-for-all diversity framing influences Whites' sensitivity to detecting discrimination against URM's as well as perceptions of reverse discrimination against Whites. Lastly, the current research looked at how URM's respond to inclusion-for-all diversity approaches. Three studies investigated the impact of inclusion-for-all diversity framing on perceptions of discrimination against Whites and URM's in a company setting. Two separate mechanisms by which exposure to an inclusion-for-all diversity statement might differentially influence perceptions of discrimination for URM's and Whites were also tested. In Studies 1 and 2, exposure to an inclusion-for-all diversity approach reduced Whites' concerns about reverse discrimination and heightened sensitivity to detecting discrimination against URM's. These effects were mediated by decreased concerns about zero-sum outcomes at the company. Study 3 found that racial minorities are concerned about increased discrimination at a company with an inclusion-for-all diversity statement and that this effect is mediated by decreased feelings of belonging at the company. In sum, companies that adopt an inclusion-for-all approach to diversity implementation reduce Whites' backlash and the negative downstream consequences associated with such backlash; however, racial minorities feel excluded and expect heightened experiences of discrimination at these same companies.

Keywords : diversity, intergroup relations, organizational social psychology, zero-sum

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