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# Beyond One-Size-Fits-All: Tailoring Diversity Approaches to the Representation of Social Groups

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When and why do organizational diversity approaches that highlight the importance of social group differences (vs. equality) help stigmatized groups succeed? We theorize that social group members' numerical representation in an organization, compared with the majority group, influences concerns about their distinctiveness, and consequently, whether diversity approaches are effective. We combine laboratory and field methods to evaluate this theory in a professional setting, in which White women are moderately represented and Black individuals are represented in very small numbers. We expect that focusing on differences (vs. equality) will lead to greater performance and persistence among White women, yet less among Black individuals. First, we demonstrate that Black individuals report greater representation-based concerns than White women (Study 1). Next, we observe that tailoring diversity approaches to these concerns yields greater performance and persistence (Studies 2 and 3). We then manipulate social groups' perceived representation and find that highlighting differences (vs. equality) is more effective when groups' representation is moderate, but less effective when groups' representation is very low (Study 4). Finally, we content-code the diversity statements of 151 major U.S. law firms and find that firms that emphasize differences have lower attrition rates among White women, whereas firms that emphasize equality have lower attrition rates among racial minorities (Study 5).

*Keywords:* diversity, equality, representation, race, gender

Despite substantial increases in U.S. labor force participation over the past 50 years (Toossi, 2002), historically stigmatized social groups (e.g., women and racial minorities) still face considerable social and structural obstacles that can impede performance in the workplace and lead to attrition (Chatman & Flynn, 2001; Hom, Roberson, & Ellis, 2008; Mueller, Finley, Iverson, & Price, 1999; Roberson & Kulik, 2007; Sørensen, 2000). To counteract these challenges, organizations may seek to implement affirmative action plans (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006), create affinity groups, provide flexible work arrangements, and offer training and sponsorship programs (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006; Kravitz, 2008; Moen, Kelly, & Hill, 2011). These structural interventions can improve stigmatized groups' experi-

ences, but they are not the only instruments available. One powerful tool at organizations' disposal is their ability to shape the cultural context of the workplace (Avery, McKay, Wilson, & Tonidandel, 2007; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998)—a key component of which is how diversity and social group differences are discussed, what we refer to as their *diversity approach*.<sup>1</sup>

Diversity approaches provide a blueprint for intergroup processes and relations at work—how to think, feel, and interact with individuals from different backgrounds to be successful. While it is clear that diversity approaches can influence stigmatized groups' performance and persistence in the workplace (Ely & Thomas, 2001; McKay et al., 2007), mixed results have cast doubt on the idea that there exists a one-size-fits-all approach to discussing diversity that will be uniformly effective for all stigmatized groups (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Plaut, 2014; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). A fundamental question underlying this past research is whether

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<sup>1</sup> This construct overlaps to varying degrees with constructs identified in social psychological research on intergroup relations, including diversity philosophies (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Dittmann, & Crosby, 2008), diversity structures (Kaiser et al., 2013), diversity ideologies (Knowles, Lowery, Hogan, & Chow, 2009), and models of diversity (Plaut, 2002), as well as with constructs identified in organizational scholarship on team and group diversity, including diversity perspectives (Ely & Thomas, 2001) and diversity mindsets (van Knippenberg, van Ginkel, & Homan, 2013).

bringing attention to social group differences will strengthen or undermine stigmatized groups' potential to succeed.

Here, we theorize that a social group's numerical representation in an organization, in absolute terms as compared with the majority group (typically, White men), is one critical factor that influences whether a diversity approach that highlights differences is helpful or harmful. Specifically, we propose that a social group's representation influences the degree to which they possess *representation-based concerns*, or concerns about the negative implications of being distinct or "standing out" because of their group membership. We further propose that the level of representation-based concerns that an individual experiences will determine whether diversity approaches that focus on differences (vs. equality) will promote performance and persistence. We test this theory through a focus on the experience of White women, and Black women and men in professional service firms (e.g., law, financial services, and consulting) who are relatively early in their job tenure. Though both White women and Black individuals are frequently targeted by diversity initiatives in this setting, as compared with White men, White women are typically in moderate numbers (comprising around 35% of employees) whereas Black individuals are typically in very small numbers (comprising around 5% of employees; NALP Directory of Legal Employees, 2015; United States Government Accountability Office, 2010).

### Representation-Based Concerns and Diversity Approaches

In organizational and academic settings, being represented in very small numbers or experiencing solo status can amplify individuals' concerns about their group membership being distinctive (Kanter, 1977; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Ott, 1989; Pollak & Niemann, 1998; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2003; Thomas & Sekaquaptewa, 2002), what we refer to as *representation-based concerns*. They include individuals' concerns of feeling like a "representative" of their social group and apprehension that they and their performance will be evaluated through the lens of their group membership (Cohen & Swim, 1995; Sekaquaptewa, Waldman, & Thompson, 2007). Accordingly, representation-based concerns can lead underrepresented groups to feel as though they are subjected to excessive scrutiny and stereotyping (Kanter, 1977; Niemann & Dovidio, 1998). In the workplace, these concerns may manifest as the fear that individuals' position, promotion, or positive evaluation will be attributed to their social group membership—not their qualifications or competence (Garcia, Erskine, Hawn, & Casmay, 1981; Major, Feinstein, & Crocker, 1994).

More important, research suggests that representation-based concerns contribute to disengagement and underperformance when a social group's representation is very low (Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000; Lord & Saenz, 1985; Niemann & Dovidio, 1998; Saenz & Lord, 1989; Sekaquaptewa et al., 2007). Given this, we propose that when a social group's representation is very low, a diversity approach that reduces the salience of social group membership, and instead focuses on the importance of equality—what we refer to as a *value in equality* approach—will alleviate these representation-based concerns and, in turn, increase performance and persistence. A value in equality approach affirms that group membership will not be an obstacle to career opportunities and advancement, and that all employees are judged equally and fairly based on their skills, qualifications, and effort. When a social group's representation is very low, the value in

equality approach may thus mitigate representation-based concerns by making individuals feel less distinct from others while affirming a commitment to equal and fair access to opportunities in the organizational setting (acknowledging, at least implicitly, that inequity exists).

On the other hand, when groups are moderately represented and are relatively buffered from representation-based concerns, we expect that a diversity approach that highlights the importance of social group differences—what we refer to as a *value in difference* approach—will increase performance and persistence. A value in difference approach advocates for the importance of creating a workplace environment that appreciates (and is inclusive of) social group differences. It underscores the organization's efforts to increase awareness of differences and bias, and the organization's belief that these differences not only improve employees' experiences in the workplace, but also advance the firm's bottom-line goals. Because groups in moderate numbers are less burdened by representation-based concerns, we expect that directly linking their social group membership to the firms' ability to be successful will benefit their performance and persistence. General support for this prediction comes from a large body of evidence showing that when representation-based concerns are not salient in intergroup settings, highlighting versus overlooking social group differences signals that stigmatized groups are valued and leads them to feel more comfortable (Apfelbaum, Norton, & Sommers, 2012; Galinsky et al., 2015; Holoien & Shelton, 2012; Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007; Verkuyten, 2009; Vorauer, Gagnon, & Sasaki, 2009). Furthermore, research conducted in organizational contexts among social groups' who are in moderate (vs. very small) numbers has shown that highlighting the merits of group differences is associated with better performance (Ely & Thomas, 2001), more trust and comfort in the workplace (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008), and greater psychological engagement in one's job (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009).

In summary, in the context of typical professional settings, where Black women and men are in very small numbers and White women are in moderate numbers, we expect Black individuals to express greater representation-based concerns than White women. As a result of these heightened concerns, we expect that Black individuals will show better performance and greater persistence in response to the value in equality approach than the value in difference approach. By contrast, we expect that White women will show better performance and greater persistence in response to the value in difference approach than the value in equality approach.

### Overview

Over the course of five studies, we enlist a mixed-method approach to develop and test the predictions that comprise our theory. In Study 1, we investigate the prediction that Black women and men possess greater representation-based concerns than White women and men. In Study 2, we assess the behavioral impact of using a diversity approach that is tailored to these expected differences in representation-based concerns. Here, we predict that whereas White women will exhibit greater performance and persistence in response to the value in difference (vs. equality) approach, Black women and men will show the opposite response pattern. In Study 3, to examine the process underlying these

effects, we assess whether the greater representation-based concerns among Black individuals as compared with White women explain the divergent responses we expect. In Study 4, we directly manipulate these social groups' perceived representation in an organization. We expect that whereas the value in difference approach will be more effective than the value in equality approach when individuals believe their group is moderately represented (40% of employees), the value in equality approach will be more effective than the value in difference approach when individuals believe their group's representation is very low (5% of employees). Finally, in Study 5, we examine the ability of our theory to predict an important downstream consequence of performance and persistence in a real world professional setting: attrition of associate-level attorneys in large U.S. law firms. Specifically, we examine the predictions that women will be less likely to turnover to the degree that firms emphasize the value in difference approach, whereas racial minorities (i.e., Black and Latino individuals) will be less likely to turnover to the degree that firms emphasize the value in equality approach.

### Study 1

The primary goal of Study 1 was to establish the predicted difference in representation-based concerns between White women and Black individuals. We asked a sample of Black women, Black men, White women, and White men to envision the experience of recently joining and working at a professional services firm. They then reported their representation-based concerns regarding gender or race. We focused on gender with White women and men, and race for Black women and men, because these are the social group memberships that previous research suggests will be most salient for each group in this setting, respectively (Bell, 1990; Brewer, Weber, & Carini, 1995; Fiske, 2000; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Levin, Sinclair, Veniegas, & Taylor, 2002; Shelton & Sellers, 2000). We expected Black women and men to have greater representation-based concerns than White women and men.

### Method

**Participants.** We recruited 257 adults (66 Black women, 61 Black men, 63 White women, and 67 White men) to participate in an online survey using Survey Sampling International (SSI; www.surveysampling.com).<sup>2</sup> We requested at least 60 participants per social group and analyzed any surplus. Given our design, this targeted sample size provided 80% power to detect what we anticipated being smaller sized effects (specifically, Cohen's  $f = .21$ ; Cohen, 1988). All power calculations in this article were conducted using G\*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). Participants were U.S. citizens, employed at the time of participation, and were on average 42 years old ( $SD = 11.74$  years). In terms of educational attainment, 20% held an advanced graduate degree (e.g., PhD, MD, MBA, or JD), 59% held a 4-year college degree (BS or BA), 21% held a 2-year college degree or completed some college.

**Procedure and materials.** After providing consent, participants were told that researchers needed their feedback on various messages that organizations were considering as content for their websites. Allegedly because of time constraints, participants were told that one organization's website content would be randomly selected from a larger set. All participants were led to believe that this orga-

nization was Redstone & Company, Inc. Participants were then presented with a statement that familiarized them with Redstone. To increase its personal relevance to participants, the statement put participants in the mindset of a typical Redstone employee:

You have worked tirelessly, through many years of schooling and numerous jobs and internships, to earn a position at an elite consulting firm, Redstone & Company, Inc. Redstone specializes in organizational change management, strategy development, technology implementation, and team skills coaching.

You applied for this position along with a pool of the most talented applicants in the field and you were one of a very small number to earn a spot. As a result of your impressive skills, qualifications, and hard work, you have already been quite successful in your time at the firm.

You continue to work extremely hard and for very long hours. The company culture is highly competitive, filled with bright and ambitious people. You are regularly evaluated based on your ability to make good decisions and successfully complete projects. You are fully confident in your skills, and with good reason. You are well-liked and have earned the respect of your colleagues.

After reading this statement, participants were asked to envision what their experience would be like at Redstone. They then completed a measure of representation-based concerns and two items that measured their expectations regarding the numerical representation of White women and racial minorities at Redstone. Finally, they provided demographic information.

**Representation-based concerns.** Drawing on previous research on underrepresentation, solo status, and tokenism (Cohen & Swim, 1995; Lord & Saenz, 1985; Pollak & Niemann, 1998; Sekaquaptewa et al., 2007), we used six items to assess representation-based concerns regarding gender or race at Redstone: "My performance at Redstone will only reflect on me, not other [men/women/racial minorities] (R)"; "At Redstone, I will feel like I have to represent all [men/women/racial minorities]"; "My [gender/race] would be very important to me at Redstone"; "At Redstone, I would be concerned that people will treat me differently because of my [gender/race]"; "If I don't do well at Redstone, it will be viewed as stereotypic of my [gender/race]"; and "At Redstone, I do not want to stand out as a [man/woman/racial minority]." Participants indicated their agreement using a 7-point response scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). We averaged these items to form a composite ( $\alpha = .73$ ).

**Expected numerical representation.** To substantiate materials to be used in Study 2, at the end of Study 1, we presented participants with the following text, "Currently 45% of Redstone's associates are either women or racial minorities. What percentage of associates do you think are White women and what percentage of associates do you think are racial minorities?" Participants recorded numerical values for each of these two groups. We restricted responses such that their sum had to equal 45%.

<sup>2</sup> SSIs U.S. panel is comprised of approximately 1 million households. SSI recruits participants through various online communities, social networks, and websites that allow access to hard-to-reach groups. When deploying a study, SSI randomly selects panel participants to receive invitations to participate.



## Results

**Representation-based concerns.** To examine variability in participants' representation-based concerns, we submitted scores on this measure to a 2 (race: Black vs. White)  $\times$  2 (gender: female vs. male) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA). We observed no significant interaction,  $F(1, 253) = .07, p > .79, \eta_p^2 = .0003$ , but significant main effects of race,  $F(1, 253) = 27.81, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .10$ , and gender,  $F(1, 253) = 4.66, p < .04, \eta_p^2 = .02$ , such that Black individuals possessed greater representation-based concerns than White individuals and women possessed greater concerns than men. Inspection of means by social group revealed that Black women possessed the greatest concerns ( $M = 4.53, SE = .15$ ), followed by Black men ( $M = 4.28, SE = .13$ ), White women ( $M = 3.85, SE = .12$ ), and White men ( $M = 3.53, SE = .14$ ). Black women's concerns did not differ from those of Black men,  $M_{diff} = .26, SE = .19, p > .18$ , but they were significantly greater than those of White women,  $M_{diff} = .68, SE = .19, p < .001$ , and White men,  $M_{diff} = 1.01, SE = .19, p < .001$ . Black men's concerns were also significantly greater than those of White women,  $M_{diff} = .42, SE = .19, p < .04$ , and White men,  $M_{diff} = .75, SE = .19, p < .001$ . White women's concerns were marginally significantly greater than White men's,  $M_{diff} = .32, SE = .19, p < .09$ .

**Expected numerical representation.** To examine participants' expectations regarding the representation of social groups, we used a 2 (race: Black vs. White)  $\times$  2 (gender: female vs. male)  $\times$  2 (expected representation: racial minorities vs. White women) ANOVA with repeated measures on the latter factor. We observed a large main effect of expected representation,  $F(1, 253) = 330.94, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .57$ , consistent with our predictions. Across the sample, participants expected 31.07% ( $SE = .47$ ) of employees to be White women but only 13.93% ( $SE = .47$ ) of employees to be racial minorities. We also observed two-way interactions between the expected representation factor and race,  $F(1, 253) = 24.67, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$ , and the expected representation factor and gender,  $F(1, 253) = 16.94, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$ . Black participants expected there to be fewer racial minorities ( $M = 11.59\%, SE = .67$ ) and more White women ( $M = 33.41\%, SE = .67$ ) than did White participants ( $M = 16.28\%, SE = .66$  and  $M = 28.73\%, SE = .66$ , respectively). Moreover, men expected there to be more racial minorities ( $M = 15.87\%, SE = .67$ ) and fewer White women ( $M = 29.13\%, SE = .67$ ) than did women ( $M = 11.99\%, SE = .67$  and  $M = 33.01\%, SE = .67$ , respectively). The three-way interaction was not significant,  $F(1, 253) = 2.44, p > .11, \eta_p^2 = .01$ .

Finally, to examine whether stigmatized groups' expected representation was associated with their representation-based concerns, we created a single variable that reflected the expected representation of their social group (i.e., expected representation of racial minorities for Black women and men; expected representation of White women for White women). Analyses demonstrated that these groups' expected representation was negatively correlated with the representation-based concerns they expressed,  $r(190) = -.29, p < .001$ , indicating that stigmatized groups had more representation-based concerns when they expected to be in smaller numbers.

## Discussion

Study 1 asked Black women, Black men, White women, and White men to envision the experience of working at a professional firm and

then to indicate the extent to which they would possess representation-based concerns. As expected, we observed that Black women and men possessed greater representation-based concerns than did White women and men. Furthermore, participants expected racial minorities to be represented in substantially smaller numbers at Redstone than White women—expectations that were correlated with stigmatized group members' representation-based concerns. In Study 2, we examine the possibility that tailoring diversity approaches to the degree of representation-based concerns that Black individuals versus White women possess will promote performance and persistence.

## Study 2

We assess the prediction that whereas White women will exhibit greater performance and persistence in response to the value in difference as compared with the value in equality approach, Black women and men will show the opposite response pattern. To do so, we use an anagram task, which has been used to assess performance and persistence in related work on solo status, person-culture fit, and stereotype threat (Lee & Nass, 2012; Saenz, 1994; Stephens et al., 2012; Strube & Boland, 1986). The anagram task is well-suited to assess performance and persistence because, with no time limit, solving anagrams requires both skill and determination as one must repeatedly struggle through failed attempts to successfully recombine the letters of words (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998). Accordingly, anagram tasks have proven to be a useful behavioral indicator of individuals' perseverance, goal pursuit, and performance on difficult tasks (Erez & Isen, 2002; Hamedani, Markus, & Fu, 2013; Hollenbeck & Brief, 1987; Sandelands, Brockner, & Glynn, 1988; Shah & Kruglanski, 2003).

## Method

**Participants.** We recruited 204 adults (65 Black women, 63 Black men, and 76 White women) to participate in an online survey (SSI).<sup>3</sup> Based on related work using anagram tasks, we requested at least 30 participants per condition and analyzed any surplus. Given our design, this provided 80% power to detect medium-sized effects (Cohen's  $f = .27$ ), but was underpowered to detect smaller-sized effects. Participants were U.S. citizens, employed at the time of the experiment, and were on average 36 years old ( $SD = 6.93$  years). In terms of educational attainment, 23% held an advanced graduate degree, 74% held a 4-year college degree, and 3% held a 2-year college degree or only completed some college.

**Procedure and materials.** This experiment sought to examine how an organization's use of either a value in difference or a value in equality approach affects employees' performance and persistence. The initial procedure was identical to that of Study 1: participants were familiarized with Redstone & Company, Inc., and were asked to envision themselves as an employee in the organization. In contrast to Study 1, however, participants then learned that Redstone planned to release a new company-wide diversity statement. At this point, participants were randomly assigned to read a diversity statement that either emphasized the value in difference or the value in equality approach. They were

<sup>3</sup> We also collected data from White men ( $n = 115$ ) after collecting these initial data.

asked to review the statement carefully and consider their experience as a Redstone employee. Participants were then asked to complete a series of challenging anagrams. Finally, participants completed two manipulation check items and provided demographic information.

**Diversity statements.** We reviewed a large set of real law firm diversity statements—materials we use again in Study 5—to create prototypical, externally valid statements that exemplify either a value in difference or value in equality approach. The value in equality statement focused on fair and equal access to opportunities in the organizational setting based on one's accomplishments, irrespective of social group membership. In contrast, the value in difference statement focused on the importance of social group differences for conducting business, but also for creating a climate that is open, inclusive, and sensitive to issues of diversity. Both statements began in the same manner, affirming the firm's commitment to diversity.

Redstone's strong commitment to diversity is reflected in its mission to attract, retain, and advance a diverse group of employees. Currently, 30% of our partners and 45% of our associates are either women or minorities. In addition, Redstone has also been recognized among the Top 100 U.S. Companies for Diversity and Women for 10 consecutive years.

However, the two statements differed in *how* they characterized their diversity approach. The statement designed to convey a value in equality approach stated:

Redstone is committed to providing exceptional services to a broad range of clientele. At Redstone, we believe that our clients receive the highest quality consulting services when our workforce is comprised of the most qualified, hardworking, and ambitious individuals in the field. Redstone rewards the success and hard work of all of our employees according to their accomplishments. Our commitment to equal opportunity employment enables us to recruit and retain the most talented, educated, and experienced individuals in the field. All employees, regardless of background, are treated equally and fairly. Equal opportunity further ensures that our employees are recruited, hired, and promoted without regard to race, sex, age, gender, gender identity or expression, religion, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status, or other. Furthermore, blind evaluations ensure that our employees are promoted and given equal opportunity to succeed.

At Redstone, our commitment to equal opportunity contributes to our success as a company. We seek the most qualified individuals to join our team and reach their potential, which, in turn, benefits our employees, clientele, and the industry at large.

The statement designed to convey a value in difference approach stated:

Founded on principles of tolerance and inclusion, Redstone believes that a diverse workforce allows the firm to better serve a broad range of clientele and creates a superior work environment for employees and staff. At Redstone, we believe that our clients receive the highest quality consulting services when our workforce mirrors the increasingly diverse marketplace. Redstone is actively committed to recruiting, retaining, and promoting employees from diverse backgrounds and experiences. The company's Diversity Committee is committed to supporting diversity initiatives and programs. For example, Redstone attends over 40 job fairs annually to recruit associates from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, community building events, diversity training sessions, and mentoring and sponsorship programs ensure that our company maintains an open and tolerant culture. Not only do

we focus our efforts to promote inclusion, but our policies also ensure that all employees feel supported in the workplace.

At Redstone, our commitment to diversity contributes to our success as a company. We foster an inclusive and open-minded workplace that values differences, which, in turn, benefits our employees, clientele, and the industry at large.

## Measures.

**Anagram task.** We asked participants to work on a series of 12 challenging anagrams. Solving an anagram requires rearranging the letters of one word (e.g., "cone") to spell another word (e.g., "once"). Participants were encouraged to solve as many anagrams as they could, but they were free to advance at any time. We assessed performance based on the number of anagrams that participants solved. We assessed persistence based on the number of anagrams that participants attempted to solve. We considered any typed response to a given anagram as an attempt.

**Manipulation checks.** Following the anagram task, participants completed two manipulation checks. One item assessed whether participants perceived the organization's commitment to diversity to be authentic: "Redstone cares about promoting diversity." The second item assessed participants' understanding of the diversity statement they received; namely, the extent to which it focused on acknowledging demographic differences: "Redstone focuses on appreciating race/gender differences." Participants indicated their agreement with both items using a 7-point response scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

## Results

**Manipulation checks.** We first examined participants' perception of the degree to which the organization cares about promoting diversity using a 3 (social group: Black women vs. Black men vs. White women)  $\times$  2 (diversity approach: value in difference vs. value in equality) between-subjects ANOVA. Participants in the value in difference ( $M = 5.90$ ,  $SE = .12$ ) and value in equality ( $M = 6.05$ ,  $SE = .12$ ) conditions perceived the organization's efforts to be comparably authentic,  $F(1, 198) = .80$ ,  $p > .37$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .004$ . These perceptions did not vary by social group,  $F(2, 198) = .075$ ,  $p > .92$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .001$ , nor was there a social group by diversity approach interaction,  $F(2, 198) = .45$ ,  $p > .63$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .005$ .

Next, we examined whether the manipulation effectively conveyed the desired emphasis on value in difference versus value in equality. As expected, participants perceived the value in difference message to focus more on appreciating group differences ( $M = 5.75$ ,  $SE = .15$ ) than the value in equality message ( $M = 5.33$ ,  $SE = .15$ ),  $F(1, 198) = 4.12$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .020$ . Neither the main effect of social group,  $F(2, 198) = 2.14$ ,  $p < .13$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .021$ , nor the interaction was significant,  $F(2, 198) = .051$ ,  $p > .95$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .001$ .

**Performance.** To test the effectiveness of value in difference and value in equality approaches in promoting performance, we submitted the number of anagrams participants solved to the same 3 (social group)  $\times$  2 (diversity approach) between-subjects ANOVA. This analysis yielded a marginally significant main effect of social group on performance,  $F(2, 198) = 2.70$ ,  $p < .07$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .027$ , such that Black men's performance ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SE = .45$ ) was significantly lower than that of Black women ( $M = 5.52$ ,  $SE = .44$ ),  $p < .03$ , but did not differ from that of White women ( $M = 4.97$ ,  $SE = .41$ ),  $p < .15$ . White women and Black women

did not differ,  $p > .45$ . There was no main effect of diversity approach,  $F(1, 198) = .36$ ,  $p > .54$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .002$ . However, this analysis yielded the expected two-way interaction,  $F(2, 198) = 3.89$ ,  $p < .03$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .038$ .

We then decomposed this interaction to test how each group responded to the two diversity statements. As expected, among White women, the value in difference approach ( $M = 5.77$ ,  $SE = .60$ ) led to better performance than the value in equality approach ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SE = .55$ ),  $p < .05$ . By contrast, among Black women, we observed a nonsignificant trend such that the value in equality approach ( $M = 6.18$ ,  $SE = .60$ ) led to better performance than the value in difference approach ( $M = 4.87$ ,  $SE = .63$ ),  $p < .14$ . For Black men, the value in equality condition ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SE = .67$ ) did not significantly differ from the value in difference condition ( $M = 3.49$ ,  $SE = .60$ ),  $p > .18$ . When considering Black women and men together, the value in equality approach led to significantly better performance than the value in difference approach,  $M_{diff} = 2.50$ ,  $SE = 1.25$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**Persistence.** To evaluate the effectiveness of value in difference and value in equality approaches in promoting persistence, we submitted the number of anagrams participants attempted to the same  $3$  (social group)  $\times$   $2$  (diversity approach) between-subjects ANOVA. This analysis yielded a marginally significant main effect of social group on persistence,  $F(2, 198) = 2.89$ ,  $p < .06$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .028$ , such that Black men ( $M = 5.29$ ,  $SE = .49$ ) persisted significantly less than Black women ( $M = 6.92$ ,  $SE = .48$ ),  $p < .02$ , but no differently than White women ( $M = 6.32$ ,  $SE = .45$ ),  $p < .14$ . White women and Black women did not differ,  $p > .35$ . There was no main effect of diversity approach,  $F(1, 198) = .003$ ,  $p > .95$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00001$ . However, this analysis again yielded a two-way interaction,  $F(2, 198) = 3.01$ ,  $p = .051$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .030$ .

For White women, the value in difference approach ( $M = 7.20$ ,  $SE = .66$ ) led to greater persistence than the value in equality approach ( $M = 5.44$ ,  $SE = .61$ ),  $p < .05$ . By contrast, for Black women, we only observed a nonsignificant trend such that the value in equality approach ( $M = 7.62$ ,  $SE = .67$ ) led to greater persistence than the value in difference approach ( $M = 6.23$ ,  $SE = .70$ ),  $p < .15$ . For Black men, the value in equality condition ( $M = 5.43$ ,  $SE = .73$ ) did not significantly differ from the value in difference condition ( $M = 5.14$ ,  $SE = .66$ ),  $p > .77$ . Further, we did not observe a significant effect when considering Black women and men together,  $M_{diff} = 1.68$ ,  $SE = 1.38$ ,  $p > .22$ .<sup>4</sup>

## Discussion

In Study 2, we exposed White female and Black employees to a value in difference or value in equality statement, and examined the impact of these statements on their task performance and persistence. As expected, for White women, a value in difference approach led to greater performance and persistence than a value in equality approach. Though the patterns of means for Black women and men were in the opposite direction, these effects were not significant when considered separately. Considering Black women and men together, with the benefit of greater statistical power, the value in equality approach led to significantly greater performance (but not persistence) than a value in difference approach.

Thus, empirically, Study 2 provides some support for our predictions. Yet it also is limited in several ways. First, one possibility is that the content of the diversity approaches not only differ in their focus on

differences versus equality, but also in the degree to which they are perceived by participants to be directed at racial minorities versus White women. For instance, it may be that the value in difference approach is perceived to be more relevant for racial minorities than White women. If so, this could have contributed to the differences we observed. Second, participants (in both Studies 1 and 2) were asked to imagine that their standing as an employee in the firm was quite positive; however, diversity approaches may be most relevant for individuals who do not receive this explicit affirmation, thus calling into question the generalizability of the observed effects. Finally, Study 2 does not assess our theorized account of *why* the same diversity approaches would engender different responses from White women as compared with Black women and men. Study 3 aimed to address these limitations.

## Study 3

In Study 3, we evaluate the mechanism underlying our observed effects. We expect that the greater representation-based concerns among Black women and men as compared with White women underlie their divergent responses. That is, we expect that the value in difference (vs. equality) approach will be less effective for Black women and men as compared with White women, because Black individuals have more representation-based concerns. In Study 3, we consider this possibility by examining how diversity approaches interact with the representation-based concerns that White women and Black women and men have in this professional setting.

## Method

**Participants.** We recruited 542 adults (137 Black women, 121 Black men, 145 White women, and 139 White men) to participate in an online survey using SSI. Given that some of our analyses in Study 2 may have been underpowered, in Study 3 we requested at least 60 participants per condition and analyzed any surplus. Given our design, this provided 80% power to detect smaller-sized effects (Cohen's  $f = .17$ ). Participants were U.S. citizens, employed at the time of the experiment, and were on average 40 years old ( $SD = 12.38$  years). In terms of educational attainment, 23% held an advanced graduate degree, 59% held a 4-year college degree, and 18% held a 2-year college degree or only completed some college.

**Procedure and materials.** Following the procedure from Study 2, participants were first given information about Redstone & Company, Inc., and then asked to envision themselves as an employee in the organization. Participants then completed the measure of representation-based concerns from Study 1. Next, participants learned that Redstone planned to release a new company-wide diversity statement. We randomly assigned participants to read either a value in difference or value in equality

<sup>4</sup> We also examined differences in performance and persistence between the value in difference and value in equality approach for a post hoc sample of White men via separate independent samples  $t$ -tests. With respect to performance, the value in equality condition ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SE = .50$ ) did not significantly differ from the value in difference condition ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SE = .50$ ),  $t(113) = .10$ ,  $p > .92$ . Similarly, with respect to persistence, the value in equality condition ( $M = 6.41$ ,  $SE = .55$ ) did not significantly differ from the value in difference condition ( $M = 5.47$ ,  $SE = .53$ ),  $t(113) = 1.23$ ,  $p > .22$ .



statement. Finally, participants completed the anagram task, two manipulation check items assessing the perceived target of the diversity statement, and demographic items.

However, to address two unresolved concerns from Study 2, two key changes were made to the diversity statements. To address the concern in Study 2 that the positive, affirming language contributed to our effects, we removed the introductory language that affirmed individuals' positive standing in the organization: "you have already been quite successful in your time at the firm" and "You are fully confident in your skills, and with good reason. You are well-liked and have earned the respect of your colleagues." In addition, to address the concern that the value in difference versus equality messages were seen as directed toward different groups, we modified these statements such that each only referenced the social groups "race" and "gender," and did so twice in each statement. These changes were made so that each statement would be relevant to both race and gender.

**Manipulation checks.** To assess the perceived target of the diversity statement, participants indicated their agreement with two items: "Redstone's diversity statement was directed at women" and "Redstone's diversity statement was directed at racial minorities." Participants responded to both items using a 7-point response scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

## Results

**Manipulation checks.** We conducted a 2 (race: Black vs. White)  $\times$  2 (gender: female vs. male)  $\times$  2 (diversity approach: value in difference vs. value in equality)  $\times$  2 (perceived target of statement: women vs. racial minorities) ANOVA with repeated measures on the latter factor.<sup>5</sup> There was a marginally significant main effect of diversity approach,  $F(1, 505) = 3.72, p < .06, \eta_p^2 = .007$ , such that the value in difference approach generally was perceived to be more directed at both women and racial minorities ( $M = 5.30, SE = .08$ ) than the value in equality approach ( $M = 5.10, SE = .07$ ), likely stemming from the fact that the core emphasis of the value in difference message is that social group differences are important. Notably, however, there were no interactions between these perceptions and other variables, all  $F_s < 1.78$ , all  $p_s > .18$ , indicating that a given approach's perceived relevance for women versus racial minorities did not vary by the type of diversity approach, the social group, or both.

**Representation-based concerns.** Given that we measured participants' representation-based concerns before the diversity approach manipulation, we then examined variation in representation-based concerns using 2 (race: Black vs. White)  $\times$  2 (gender: female vs. male) ANOVA. We observed a significant main effect of race,  $F(1, 538) = 10.53, p < .002, \eta_p^2 = .02$ , such that Black individuals possessed greater concerns than White individuals. Neither the main effect of gender,  $F(1, 253) = .02, p > .88, \eta_p^2 = .00004$ , nor the interaction was significant,  $F(1, 253) = .18, p > .67, \eta_p^2 = .0003$ . Inspection of means by social group revealed that Black women ( $M = 4.12, SE = .09$ ) and Black men ( $M = 4.15, SE = .10$ ) possessed the greatest concerns, followed by White women ( $M = 3.86, SE = .08$ ), and White men ( $M = 3.80, SE = .10$ ). Consistent with Study 1, Black women's concerns were significantly greater than those among White women,  $M_{diff} = .26, SE = .13, p < .05$ , and White men,  $M_{diff} = .32, SE = .13, p < .02$ , but did not differ from those among Black

men,  $M_{diff} = -.03, SE = .14, p > .84$ . Also consistent with Study 1, Black men's concerns were significantly greater than those among White women,  $M_{diff} = .29, SE = .13, p < .04$ , and White men,  $M_{diff} = .34, SE = .14, p < .02$ . In contrast to Study 1, however, we observed no difference in concerns between White women and White men,  $M_{diff} = .05, SE = .13, p > .68$ .

**Performance.** We then examined the effectiveness of value in difference and value in equality approaches in promoting performance. We submitted the number of anagrams participants solved to a 2 (race)  $\times$  2 (gender)  $\times$  2 (diversity approach) between-subjects ANOVA (displayed in Figure 1). There was a significant main effect of race on performance,  $F(1, 534) = 5.65, p < .02, \eta_p^2 = .01$ , such that Black individuals performed better than White individuals. There was also a significant main effect of gender,  $F(1, 534) = 19.55, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$ , such that women performed better than men. There was no main effect of diversity approach,  $F(1, 534) = .017, p > .89, \eta_p^2 = .00003$ . However, this analysis yielded a two-way race by diversity approach interaction,  $F(1, 534) = 14.50, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$ , consistent with the pattern observed in Study 2.

We then decomposed this interaction to examine differences in how White versus Black participants responded to the diversity approaches. For White participants, the value in difference approach ( $M = 4.13, SE = .31$ ) led to better performance than the value in equality approach ( $M = 2.96, SE = .32$ ),  $t(538) = 2.66, p < .009$ . By contrast, for Black participants, the value in equality approach ( $M = 4.93, SE = .32$ ) led to better performance than the value in difference approach ( $M = 3.68, SE = .34$ ),  $t(538) = 2.72, p < .007$ . The three-way interaction was not significant,  $F(1, 534) = .56, p > .45, \eta_p^2 = .001$ , however, we also conducted more focused tests of how each of the social groups responded to the diversity approaches. For White women, the value in difference approach ( $M = 4.78, SE = .43$ ) led to better performance than the value in equality approach ( $M = 3.30, SE = .44$ ),  $p < .02$ , replicating the effect observed in Study 2. For White men, the value in difference condition ( $M = 3.48, SE = .44$ ) did not significantly differ from the value in equality condition ( $M = 2.62, SE = .45$ ),  $p > .17$ . By contrast, for Black women, the value in equality approach ( $M = 5.93, SE = .44$ ) led to better performance than the value in difference approach ( $M = 4.51, SE = .46$ ),  $p < .05$ . We observed a nonsignificant trend in the same direction for Black men ( $M = 3.94, SE = .47$  vs.  $M = 2.85, SE = .49$ ),  $p < .11$ .

**Persistence.** To evaluate the effectiveness of value in difference and value in equality approaches in promoting persistence, we submitted the number of anagrams attempted to the same 2 (race)  $\times$  2 (gender)  $\times$  2 (diversity approach) between-subjects ANOVA. As shown in Figure 2, in patterns that were consistent with the performance results, there was a significant main effect of race on persistence,  $F(1, 534) = 5.55, p < .02, \eta_p^2 = .01$ , and a significant main effect of gender on persistence,  $F(1, 534) = 9.32, p < .003, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . There was no main effect of diversity approach,  $F(1, 534) = .11, p > .73, \eta_p^2 = .0002$ . However, again, the two-way race by diversity approach interaction was significant,  $F(1, 534) = 9.57, p < .003, \eta_p^2 = .02$ .

<sup>5</sup> Because of a programming error that allowed participants to skip this measure, we did not record observations from 29 participants.



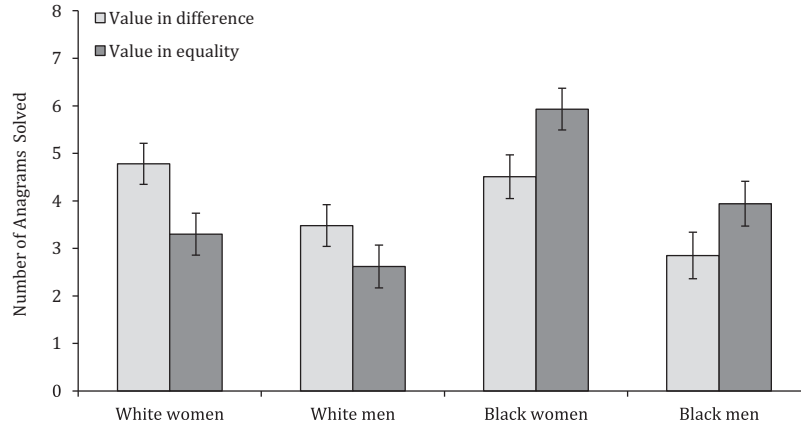


Figure 1. Effects of value in difference and value in equality approach on performance by social group (Study 3).

For White participants, the value in difference approach ( $M = 5.83$ ,  $SE = .35$ ) led to greater persistence than the value in equality approach ( $M = 4.84$ ,  $SE = .36$ ),  $t(538) = 2.02$ ,  $p < .05$ . By contrast, for Black participants, the value in equality approach ( $M = 6.79$ ,  $SE = .36$ ) led to greater persistence than the value in difference approach ( $M = 5.56$ ,  $SE = .38$ ),  $t(538) = 2.37$ ,  $p < .02$ . The three-way interaction was not significant,  $F(1, 534) = 1.03$ ,  $p > .31$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .002$ , however, we again examined differences in how each of the social groups responded to the diversity approaches. For White women, the value in difference approach ( $M = 6.40$ ,  $SE = .48$ ) led to greater persistence than the value in equality approach ( $M = 4.73$ ,  $SE = .50$ ),  $p < .02$ . For White men, the value in difference condition ( $M = 5.25$ ,  $SE = .50$ ) did not differ from the value in equality condition ( $M = 4.94$ ,  $SE = .51$ ),  $p > .65$ . By contrast, we observed nonsignificant trends whereby the value in equality approach led to greater persistence than the value in difference approach for Black women ( $M = 7.68$ ,  $SE = .49$  vs.  $M = 6.40$ ,  $SE = .52$ ),  $p < .12$ , and for Black men ( $M = 5.91$ ,  $SE = .53$  vs.  $M = 4.72$ ,  $SE = .55$ ),  $p < .13$ .

**Moderated mediation.** We then assessed evidence for our theorized process: that the greater representation-based concerns among Black women and men as compared with White women—the stigmatized groups in question—underlie their divergent responses to diversity approaches. Specifically, we ran two moderated mediation models (for performance and persistence, separately) to examine whether the greater representation-based concerns among Black women and men versus White women explained the differential effectiveness of value in equality and value in difference for these groups. We used bootstrapped analyses with 5000 samples and bias corrected 95% confidence intervals (CI; PROCESS macro, Model 15; Hayes, 2013) with social group (Black women and men = 1, White women = -1) as the predictor, diversity approach (value in difference = 1, value in equality = -1) as the moderator, and representation-based concerns (mean-centered) as the mediator.

Supporting moderated mediation, these analyses demonstrated that the effect of social group on performance through representation-based concerns was moderated by the type of di-

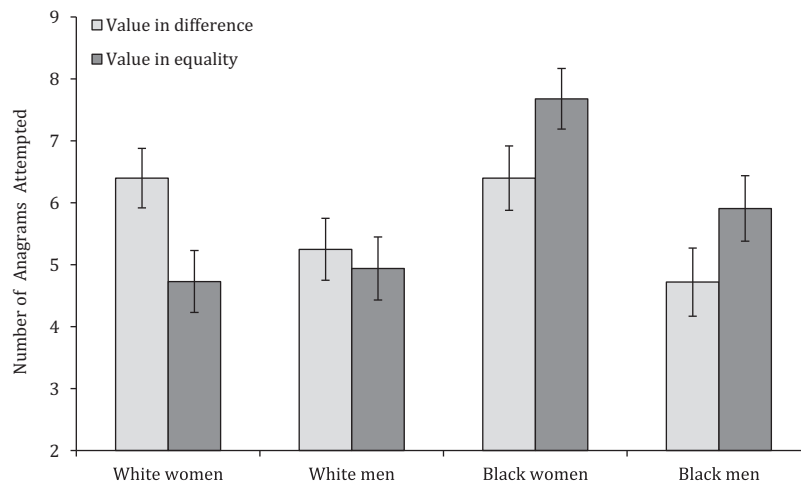


Figure 2. Effects of value in difference and value in equality approach on persistence by social group (Study 3).

versity approach presented,  $B = -.19$ ,  $SE = .09$ , 95% CI  $[-.41, -.05]$ , as was the effect of social group on persistence through representation-based concerns,  $B = -.15$ ,  $SE = .08$ , 95% CI  $[-.36, -.03]$ . Because the diversity approach manipulation (the moderator) was administered after (rather than before) representation-based concerns were measured—a design choice modeled after our theorized process (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005)—we decomposed our analyses by the type of diversity approach. Doing so allowed us to test whether the greater representation-based concerns that Black participants versus White women brought to this setting explained the divergent effects each diversity approach had on performance and persistence. In the value in difference condition, greater representation-based concerns explained the worse performance (indirect effect =  $-.14$ ,  $SE = .07$ , 95% CI  $[-.31, -.04]$ ) and lower level of persistence (indirect effect =  $-.08$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI  $[-.22, -.01]$ ) among Black women and men compared with White women. In the value in equality condition, by contrast, greater concerns did not significantly mediate the better performance among Black participants compared with White women (indirect effect =  $.05$ ,  $SE = .04$ , 95% CI  $[-.01, .15]$ ). However, consistent with our predictions, they did mediate the higher level of persistence among Black participants compared with White women (indirect effect =  $.07$ ,  $SE = .04$ , 95% CI  $[.01, .19]$ ). Overall, these results are consistent with the theoretical claim that the value in difference versus value in equality approach was more effective for White women, yet less effective for Black women and men, in part, because of how these diversity approaches interacted with the differing levels of representation-based concerns these groups possessed.

## Discussion

Consistent with Study 1, Study 3 revealed that Black women and men had greater representation-based concerns than White women and men. Moreover, we observed that for White participants, the value in difference approach led to better performance and greater persistence than the value in equality approach, whereas for Black participants, the value in equality approach led to better performance and greater persistence than the value in difference approach. Study 3 thus extends Study 2 by providing stronger evidence for our predicted effects among Black women and men, and replicating the effects observed among White women. The relative impact of diversity approaches on White men is less clear, however. On one hand, the nonsignificant three-way interactions in Study 3 suggest that the diversity approaches influence White men and women similarly. On the other hand, the more focused tests of how White men respond to diversity approaches in Studies 2 and 3 (that must be interpreted with caution because of the nonsignificant omnibus interactions that preceded them) suggest that diversity approaches do not differentially impact outcomes among White men. The possibility that there are weaker effects for White men is consistent with past research indicating that effects of diversity approaches—and negative effects of solo status—are less likely to be observed among White men (Cohen & Swim, 1995; Crocker & McGraw, 1984; Niemann & Dovidio, 1998; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Yoder, 1991), who are not a historically stigmatized group and generally are represented in large numbers in professional settings.

More important, however, we found evidence to support the theorized process underlying our effects: that the greater representation-based concerns among Black women and men as compared with White women underlie these groups' divergent responses to diversity approaches. Specifically, the value in difference (vs. equality) approach was more effective for White women, yet less effective for Black women and men, in part, because Black individuals possessed greater representation-based concerns than did White women in this setting. Overall, that our predicted effects were robust to modifications to the content of the introductory text and diversity approaches bolsters confidence in the internal and external validity of our results.

## Study 4

In Study 4, we recruit Black women, Black men, and White women to examine the conditions—a social group's representation in the organization—that we theorize give rise to the divergent effects of diversity approaches on women and racial minorities. Specifically, we recruit Black women, Black men, and White women to complete the paradigm used in Study 2 with the inclusion of an additional manipulation of perceived representation in which they learn that they are either among 5 or 40% of women/racial minorities working at the organization. The remainder of the study proceeds as in Study 2: participants review a value in difference or a value in equality statement and then complete an anagram task. We test the prediction that whereas the value in difference (vs. equality) approach will be relatively more effective when social groups' representation is moderate, the value in equality (vs. difference) approach will be relatively more effective when social groups' representation is very low.

## Method

**Participants.** We recruited 780 adults (253 Black women, 272 Black men, and 255 White women) to participate in an online survey (SSI). We requested at least 60 participants per condition and analyzed any surplus. Given our design, this provided 80% power to detect smaller-sized effects (Cohen's  $f = .15$ ). Participants were U.S. citizens, employed, and were on average 40 years old ( $SD = 13.74$  years). In terms of educational attainment, 17% held an advanced graduate degree, 46% held a 4-year college degree, 36% held a 2-year college degree or completed some college, and 1% held a high school diploma or less.

**Procedure.** We utilized the same materials to familiarize participants with Redstone as in Study 2. Immediately afterward, we administered our manipulation of perceived representation: "You are among [5%/40%] of employees at Redstone who are [racial minorities/women]." We presented the term "racial minorities" to Black women and men, and "women" to White women. We then asked them to consider the experience of being an employee at Redstone before viewing Redstone's new diversity statement. Participants were randomly assigned to read either a value in difference or a value in equality statement using the same materials as in Study 2 with the only exception that we did not present the initial shared paragraph in the diversity statements that affirmed Redstone's commitment to, and recognition for, diversity efforts, including information regarding the representation of women or minority employees. We elected to remove this information to

avoid potential confusion, and interference with the perceived representation manipulation that directly preceded it. After reading the diversity statement, participants completed the anagram task, manipulation checks, and demographic items.

## Results

**Manipulation checks.** We submitted our manipulation checks to separate 3 (social group: Black women vs. Black men vs. White women)  $\times$  2 (representation: 5% vs. 40%)  $\times$  2 (diversity approach: value in difference vs. value in equality) between-subjects ANOVA. With regard to authenticity, these results revealed that participants in both conditions perceived the organization's efforts to be relatively authentic, but more so in the value in difference ( $M = 5.86$ ,  $SE = .07$ ) than in the value in equality condition ( $M = 5.55$ ,  $SE = .07$ ),  $F(1, 768) = 8.98$ ,  $p < .004$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .012$ . Removing the initial shared paragraph that affirmed Redstone's commitment to diversity may have increased relative skepticism regarding the value in equality approach (see Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008).<sup>6</sup>

With regard to the second item, as expected and consistent with Study 2, participants perceived the value in difference statement to focus more on appreciating group differences ( $M = 5.51$ ,  $SE = .08$ ) as compared with the value in equality message ( $M = 5.08$ ,  $SE = .08$ ),  $F(1, 768) = 14.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .018$ . There was also a main effect of social group,  $F(2, 768) = 7.49$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .019$ , such that White women ( $M = 5.49$ ,  $SE = .10$ ) and Black men ( $M = 5.40$ ,  $SE = .10$ ) perceived both diversity statements as focusing on appreciating differences more than did Black women ( $M = 4.98$ ,  $SE = .10$ ). There were no other significant effects in the model, all  $F_s < 1.98$ , all  $p_s > .15$ .

**Performance.** To test whether the effectiveness of a given diversity approach in promoting performance depends on a group's representation, we submitted the number of anagrams participants solved to the same 3 (social group)  $\times$  2 (representation)  $\times$  2 (diversity approach) between-subjects ANOVA. As shown in Figure 3, this analysis yielded a main effect of social group on performance,  $F(2, 768) = 8.81$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .022$ . Black women ( $M = 5.12$ ,  $SE = .22$ ) performed better than Black men ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SE = .22$ ),  $p < .001$ , but not differently than White women ( $M = 4.69$ ,  $SE = .22$ ),  $p > .17$ . Moreover, White women performed better than Black men,  $p < .01$ . There was also a marginally significant main effect of representation,  $F(1, 768) = 3.63$ ,  $p < .06$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .005$ , indicating that performance tended to be better in the 40% ( $M = 4.79$ ,  $SE = .18$ ) versus 5% ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SE = .18$ ) representation condition, consistent with past work that has found solo status undermines performance (Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000; Lord & Saenz, 1985; Saenz & Lord, 1989; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2002). There was no main effect of diversity approach,  $F(1, 768) = 1.31$ ,  $p > .25$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .002$ . Neither the two-way interaction between social group and diversity approach,  $F(2, 768) = 1.71$ ,  $p > .18$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .004$ , nor the three-way interaction were significant,  $F(2, 768) = .044$ ,  $p > .95$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .0001$ . More important, however, we observed the predicted two-way interaction between representation and diversity approach,  $F(1, 768) = 16.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .021$ , indicating that representation moderated the effectiveness of diversity approaches.

Decomposing this interaction by level of representation demonstrated that across social groups, in the 5% representation condition, the value in equality approach ( $M = 4.68$ ,  $SE = .25$ ) led to signifi-

cantly better performance than the value in difference approach ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SE = .25$ ),  $t(768) = 2.05$ ,  $p < .05$ . By contrast, in the 40% representation condition, the value in difference approach led to significantly better performance ( $M = 5.45$ ,  $SE = .26$ ) than the value in equality approach ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SE = .25$ ),  $t(768) = 3.63$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**Persistence.** We then examined whether the effectiveness of a given diversity approach in promoting persistence depends on representation. To do so, we submitted the number of anagrams participants attempted to the same 3 (social group)  $\times$  2 (representation)  $\times$  2 (diversity approach) ANOVA. As shown in Figure 4, this analysis yielded a marginally significant main effect of social group on persistence,  $F(2, 768) = 2.85$ ,  $p < .06$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .007$ . This reflected the fact that Black women ( $M = 6.88$ ,  $SE = .25$ ) attempted more anagrams than Black men ( $M = 6.04$ ,  $SE = .24$ ),  $p < .02$ , but not significantly more than White women ( $M = 6.35$ ,  $SE = .25$ ),  $p < .14$ . Black men and White women did not differ,  $p > .38$ . There was no main effect of representation,  $F(1, 768) = .83$ ,  $p > .36$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .001$ , or diversity approach,  $F(1, 768) = .26$ ,  $p > .60$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .0003$ . Moreover, neither the two-way interaction between social group and diversity approach,  $F(2, 768) = .89$ ,  $p > .41$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .002$ , nor the three-way interaction were significant,  $F(2, 768) = .14$ ,  $p > .86$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .0004$ . However, we again observed the predicted two-way interaction between representation and diversity approach,  $F(1, 768) = 11.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .015$ , indicating that the effectiveness of diversity approaches in promoting persistence depended on representation.

As above, decomposing this interaction by level of representation demonstrated that across social groups, in the 5% representation condition, the value in equality approach led to significantly greater persistence ( $M = 6.70$ ,  $SE = .29$ ) than the value in difference approach ( $M = 5.88$ ,  $SE = .28$ ),  $t(768) = 2.04$ ,  $p < .05$ . By contrast, in the 40% representation condition, the value in difference approach led to significantly greater persistence ( $M = 7.12$ ,  $SE = .29$ ) than the value in equality approach ( $M = 6.00$ ,  $SE = .29$ ),  $t(768) = 2.73$ ,  $p < .007$ .

## Discussion

In Study 4, we asked Black women, Black men, and White women to consider the experience of moderate or very low representation, and we then evaluated the effect of either a value in difference or a value in equality statement on performance and persistence. We observed that across social groups, in the 5% representation condition, the value in equality approach led to greater performance and persistence than the value in difference approach, whereas in the 40% representation condition, the value in difference approach led to greater performance

<sup>6</sup> Though not central to our predictions, there was additional nuance to this relationship. The effect of diversity approach did not interact with the type of social group,  $F(2, 768) = .71$ ,  $p > .49$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .002$ , but there was a significant social group by representation interaction,  $F(2, 768) = 3.58$ ,  $p < .03$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .009$ , such that White women and Black men tended to perceive greater authenticity in the 40% versus 5% condition whereas Black women were relatively skeptical in both conditions. This suggests that Black women may be particularly likely to question the authenticity of an organization's diversity approach, perhaps because of the joint concerns of experiencing prejudice on the basis of gender and race (Beale, 1970; Berdahl & Moore, 2006). There was also a three-way interaction,  $F(2, 768) = 3.32$ ,  $p < .04$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .009$ , stemming primarily from the fact that Black men perceived the value in equality approach in the 40% versus 5% condition to be more authentic than White and Black women.

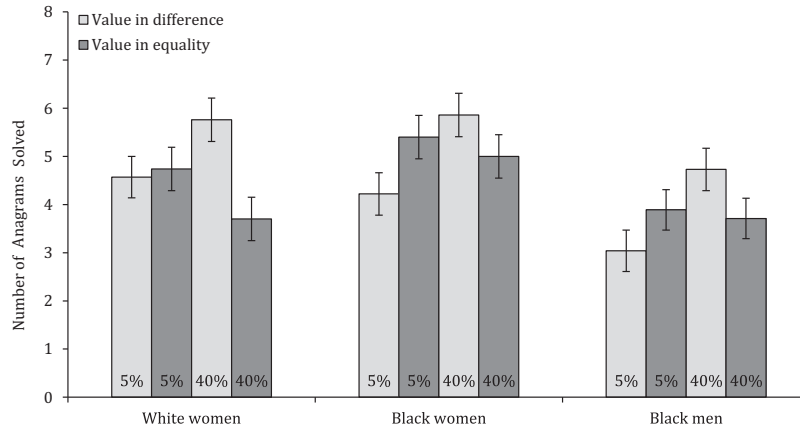


Figure 3. Effects of representation and diversity approach on performance by social group (Study 4).

and persistence than the value in equality approach. Thus, Study 4 provides key evidence in support of our theory. Moreover, the fact that White women, Black women, and Black men all respond similarly in the 40% representation conditions underscores the critical role that representation (and social context, more generally) can play in shaping how stigmatized group members respond to diversity approaches. In Study 5, to assess external validity, we examine the ability of our theoretical framework to predict an important downstream consequence of performance and persistence in a real world professional setting: attrition in large U.S. law firms.

### Study 5

In Study 5, we analyze the content of the public diversity statements from 151 U.S. law firms. This was an ideal context for our study given that, in this set of firms, women are moderately represented (46.8% of associate-level attorneys) whereas Black and Latino individuals are represented in very small numbers (4.67% and 4.62% of associate-level attorneys, respectively; NALP Directory of Legal Employers, 2015). In Study 5, we first evaluate whether value in difference and value in equality approaches represent distinct dimen-

sions of firms' diversity statements. We then examine whether there is a relationship between how much these statements emphasize the value in difference and value in equality approaches, and rates of attrition among women and racial minority associates at these firms. We focus on associate-level attorneys because they are relatively early in their job tenure and, therefore, are still evaluating their fit with the culture of the firm (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Jovanovic, 1979; Meitzen, 1986). Consistent with the experimental evidence from Studies 2–4, we expected that women would be less likely to turnover when firms' emphasis on the value in difference approach was high, whereas racial minorities would be less likely to turnover when firms' emphasis on the value in equality approach was high.

### Method

**Law firm database.** Our law firm data comes from Building a Better Legal Profession (BBLP; Building a Better Legal Profession, 2011), a nonprofit corporation that aggregates, analyzes, and publicizes law firm employment statistics from the NALP, including the degree to which firm-level attrition of lawyers differs by race and gender. BBLP reports employment data for every major law firm

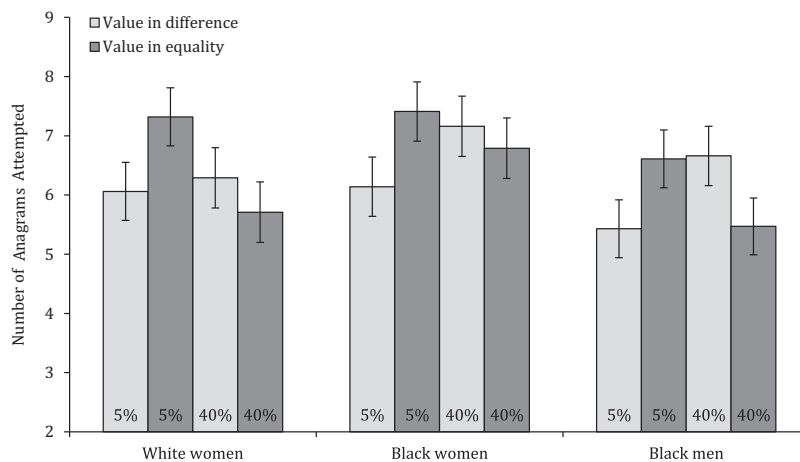


Figure 4. Effects of representation and diversity approach on persistence by social group (Study 4).



office in six major legal markets: New York, Washington DC, Chicago, Southern California, Northern California, and Boston—and five subsidiary markets: Atlanta, Miami, Pacific Northwest, Philadelphia, and Texas. All law firm offices use at least 50 attorneys.

**Coding diversity statements.** We collected the public diversity statements from the websites of every firm that was included in the BBLP database as of 2011. We started with 160 firms, but 9 firms did not have a diversity statement, which left 151 statements for analysis. We developed 12 items designed to capture the degree to which diversity statements emphasized the value in difference or value in equality approach (see Table 1). We asked two research assistants—blind to our research objectives—to independently code 80 randomly selected diversity statements for the presence (1) or absence (0) of these items. Analyses indicated our two coders evaluated the statements similarly. Interrater reliability was sufficient ( $M_{\kappa} = .72$ ,  $K$  range =  $.56$ – $1.00$ ; Landis & Koch, 1977) and disagreements were resolved through discussion. After achieving interrater reliability, each coder then independently coded half of the remaining diversity statements.<sup>7</sup>

**Distinguishing diversity approaches.** We then examined whether our theorized distinction between the value in difference and value in equality approach was evident in the diversity statements. To do so, we calculated the distances between the 12 items and subjected those distances to a multidimensional scaling algorithm (see Figure 5). In Figure 5, items that appear close to one another tended to co-occur in the same statements. These results generally support our theorized distinction between diversity approaches. The value in difference cluster contained items that provided a rationale for why group differences are important and should be embraced. These items advocated for the cognitive, cultural, and bottom-line business advantages of diversity. For instance, they suggested that diversity would foster creativity and multiple perspectives (*diverse perspectives*), that it would create an open and inclusive culture in which differences are embraced (*inclusive culture*), and that it would improve the firm's performance and ability to serve customers (*business case*). In contrast, the value in equality cluster contained items that advocated for the importance of equal and fair access to career opportunities, irrespective of one's social group membership. For example, it suggested that the primary goals of diversity and inclusion efforts were to provide a fair shot at advancing in the firm (*fairness*), to remove obstacles to equity, including discrimination (*prevention focus*), and to treat each employee equally regardless of their background (*blind to diversity*). Unexpectedly, two of the items we coded—merit and individual focus—could not solely be classified into the value in difference or value in equality cluster; therefore, they were not included in subsequent analyses.<sup>8</sup> This analysis suggests that merit and individual focus are shared themes that are used to support both diversity approaches.

**Quantifying emphasis on diversity approaches.** For every diversity statement, we created two variables: one measured the degree to which a firm's statement emphasized the value in difference approach and a second measured the degree to which the statement emphasized the value in equality approach. The value in equality variable represents a count of the number of items from the value in equality cluster (0–5) that appeared in a firm's diversity statement, with higher numbers reflecting a greater emphasis on the value in equality approach. The value in difference variable represents a count of the number of items from the value in difference cluster (0–5) that appeared in a firm's diversity statement, with higher numbers reflect-

ing a greater emphasis on the value in difference approach. Summary statistics are presented in Table 2.

**Attrition estimates.** BBLP does not provide individual attrition data, but it does provide aggregated attrition estimates among associates for each firm in their database. BBLP estimates attrition at a firm in a particular year based on the standard industry practice of hiring summer associates from the previous year. Accordingly, attrition is estimated by subtracting the number of associates in 2011 ( $A(t)$ ) from the number of associates and summer associates in 2010 ( $A(t - 1)$ ) and dividing that difference by the number of associates and summer associates in 2010:  $[A(t - 1) - A(t - 1)]/A(t - 1)$ . BBLP breaks down attrition estimates by race *or* by gender, but not by race and gender simultaneously, thus we obtained estimates for women, men, racial minorities (i.e., Black and Latino) and White individuals. For each firm, we computed a relative attrition score for women (by dividing the attrition estimate for women by the attrition estimate for men) and a relative attrition score for racial minorities (by dividing the attrition estimate for racial minorities by the attrition estimate for White individuals).<sup>9</sup>

## Results

**Analytic approach.** Our outcome variables are the relative rates of attrition among women and racial minorities in 2011. Our

<sup>7</sup> We also used an additional word count approach to coding the diversity statements. We counted the keywords associated with the 12 items and focused on the extent to which they co-occurred in diversity statements. Specifically, we counted the number of times these keywords co-occurred in the same paragraphs of our diversity statements and used those counts to calculate the conditional probability of two items being discussed at the same time in a given diversity statement. We assumed items discussed at the same time represented two elements of a broader diversity approach. Analyses provided support for the two diversity approaches theorized, and the consistency between our coding methods (i.e., the position of an item in our research assistant-coded MDS had a .78 correlation with its position in the word count MDS).

<sup>8</sup> The results we present here are similar if we define value in difference only in terms of the four items that occurred in both MDS solutions (promotion focus, inclusive culture, business case, and community and society) and value in equality only in terms of the four items which occurred in both MDS solutions (fairness, prevention focus, blind to diversity, and moral responsibility). Specifically, the more a firm's diversity statement emphasized the value in difference approach, the lower attrition rates were for women,  $b = -.34$ ,  $p < .05$ , but emphasis on value in equality was not related to attrition rates for women,  $b = -.03$ ,  $p > .65$ . Moreover, the more a firm's statement emphasized the value in equality approach, the lower attrition rates were for racial minorities,  $b = -.20$ ,  $p < .05$ , however, emphasis on value in difference was not related to attrition rates for racial minorities,  $b = -.19$ ,  $p > .16$ .

<sup>9</sup> Focusing on relative (vs. absolute) attrition helps control for unmeasured factors that could have affected the attrition of both social groups. We reach similar conclusions if we focus on absolute attrition. Specifically, when we use the absolute level of attrition among women as the outcome variable (and control for the absolute level of attrition among men), we find a marginally significant effect, such that the more a firm's statement emphasized the value in difference approach, the lower attrition rates were for women,  $b = -.16$ ,  $p < .10$ , but find no relationship between emphasis on value in equality and attrition among women,  $b = -.04$ ,  $p > .44$ . When we use the absolute level of attrition among racial minorities as the outcome variable (and control for the absolute level of attrition among White individuals), we find that the more a firm's statement emphasized the value in equality approach, the lower rates of attrition among racial minorities,  $b = -.17$ ,  $p < .05$ , however, we find no relationship between emphasis on value in difference and attrition among racial minorities,  $b = -.02$ ,  $p > .87$ .

Table 1  
 Content-Coding of Diversity Statements for Emphasis on Value in Difference and Value in Equality (Study 5)

Coding category	Definition	Example
<b>Value in difference</b>		
Diverse perspectives	Diversity shapes people's mindset, perspective, or understanding	"We recognize that everyone benefits from broad, creative thinking and the perspectives that result from understanding and utilizing the knowledge and experience of diverse cultures."
Business case	Diversity improves profit, client relations, or performance	"In today's increasingly mobile, multicultural world, many of our clients recognize that diversity and inclusion are not only beneficial social values, but also vital ingredients in business innovation and success."
Inclusive culture	Internal culture of openly embracing differences	"At [Name of firm], we strive to create a culture of inclusiveness, one open to differences in people, backgrounds and ideas."
Promotion focus	Focus on promoting diversity	"We actively promote a diverse culture through our recruitment, mentoring, training, professional development and public service programs."
Community and society	Diversity serves community and guides societal outreach	"[Name of firm] demonstrate a commitment to diversity through various activities, including community-building events for [Name of firm] lawyers of diverse heritage and experience, outreach programs to students from an array of cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds, and training and event programs focused on issues of diversity."
<b>Value in equality</b>		
Blind to diversity	Disregard social category differences	"At [Name of firm], all persons, without regard to differences among them that do not matter in the workplace, shall be respected and valued fully, so that each person may maximize his or her potential to contribute to the common good of our firm . . ."
Fairness	Processes that are fair or provide the same chances to everyone	"At [Name of firm], our mission in the area of diversity and inclusion is to create equal and fair access to all aspects of firm life . . ."
Equal opportunity	Equal employment opportunities provided to all individuals	"Our commitment to equal opportunity enables [Name of firm] to draw from a remarkable wealth of talent to recruit and retain the best lawyers, professional staff and paralegals to create one of the world's leading law firms."
Prevention focus	Focus on preventing inequity	". . . the right to work in an atmosphere free from discrimination and prejudice are important principles of the [Name of firm]."
Moral responsibility	Moral responsibility to uphold diversity principles	"We believe that a respectful, collegial, and equal-opportunity work environment is a moral imperative . . ."
<b>Common themes</b>		
Merit	Processes and values that emphasize merit and qualifications	"Every attorney and staff member deserves a supportive, merit-driven environment in which people of all backgrounds are given the opportunity to excel and thrive."
Individual focus	Individualized approach to development, evaluation, and behavior	"[Name of firm] seek, through its diversity policy, to promote the treatment of every person with dignity and respect, value the contribution that each person makes as an individual, enable our colleagues to be comfortable being themselves, and encourage every person to realize his or her potential."

control variables are the relative rates of attrition in 2010 and several firm-level variables: the number of attorneys employed at the firm, the number of offices each firm has, and the population of the city (divided by 1,000,000) in which the office is located. Some firms had one diversity statement but multiple locations; thus, producing multiple observations. We used the robust cluster option in STATA to adjust the size of our standard errors for nonindependence of observations.

**Attrition of women.** The relative rate of attrition for women in 2011 was regressed on our control variables, each diversity approach variable, and the interaction between our diversity approach variables. We observed a marginally significant main effect of value in difference,  $b = -.26$ , robust  $SE = .14$ ,  $p = .06$ , such that the more a firm's diversity statement highlighted the value in difference approach, the lower attrition rates were for women. As shown in Figure 6a, the main effect for value in equality was not

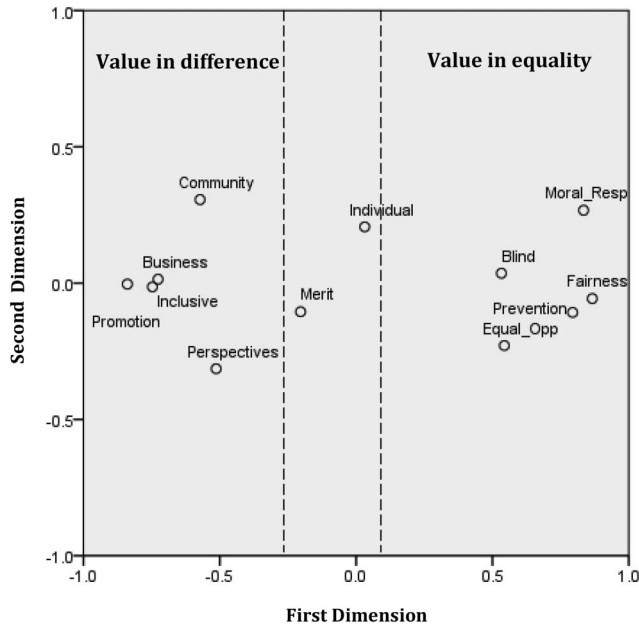


Figure 5. Multidimensional scaling of the Euclidian distances between items coded in the diversity statements (Study 5). In terms of fit between the observed distances and the two dimension solution illustrated, Kruskal’s Stress = .067, which is less than .10, and the squared correlation between the observed and the transformed distances = .97. Finally, Dispersion Accounted For and Tucker’s Coefficient of Congruence = .993 and .996, respectively, with values closer to 1 denoting superior fit. The dashed lines demarcate the value in difference and value in equality clusters, which were confirmed using k-means cluster analysis.

significant,  $b = -.22$ , robust  $SE = .29$ ,  $p > .44$ , nor was the interaction between diversity approach variables,  $b = .05$ , robust  $SE = .07$ ,  $p > .46$ . The finding that firms had lower rates of attrition when the emphasis on the value in difference approach was high is consistent with Studies 2–4’s finding that the value in difference (vs. equality) approach increased White women’s performance and persistence.

**Attrition of racial minorities.** As above, the relative rate of attrition for racial minorities in 2011 was regressed on our control variables, each diversity approach variable, and the interaction between the diversity approach variables. We observed a significant main effect of value in equality,  $b = -1.21$ , robust  $SE = .37$ ,  $p < .002$ , indicating that the more a firm’s

diversity statement highlighted the value in equality approach, the lower attrition rates were for racial minorities. The main effect for value in difference was also significant,  $b = -.29$ , robust  $SE = .14$ ,  $p < .05$ , indicating that the more a firm’s diversity statement highlighted the value in difference approach, the lower attrition rates were for minorities. We also observed an interaction between diversity approach variables,  $b = .25$ , robust  $SE = .09$ ,  $p < .005$ .

As displayed in Figure 6b, we decomposed this interaction by examining the relationship between value in difference and the relative rate of attrition of racial minorities at low ( $-1 SD$ ) and high ( $1 SD$ ) levels of value in equality. When firms’ emphasis on value in equality was high, greater emphasis on value in difference predicted increased attrition of racial minorities,  $b = .39$ , robust  $SE = .19$ ,  $p < .04$ . However, when firms’ emphasis on value in equality was low, greater emphasis on value in difference predicted lower rates of attrition among racial minorities,  $b = -.29$ , robust  $SE = .14$ ,  $p < .05$ . In summary, the main effect of value in equality on reduced attrition of racial minorities conceptually replicates the experimental evidence from Studies 2–4 in which value in equality (vs. difference) approach increased Black individuals’ performance and persistence. The interaction between diversity approaches on attrition of racial minorities further suggests that the value in equality approach is most effective when firms’ concurrent emphasis on the value in difference approach is low.

**Discussion**

In Study 5, the content of the public diversity statements from 151 U.S. law firms indicated the presence of two distinct messages, one focusing on the value in difference and one focusing on the value in equality. The content of these messages was broadly consistent with the distinction we theorized. We also investigated the relationships between firms’ emphasis on value in difference and value in equality approaches and the attrition of women and racial minority associates working at these firms. We observed that when firms’ emphasis on the value in difference approach was high, there were lower rates of attrition of women, whereas when firms’ emphasis on the value in equality approach was high, there were lower rates of attrition of racial minorities. Results also demonstrated that when firms’ emphasis on the value in equality approach is high and concurrent emphasis on the value in difference approach is low,

Table 2  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Variables (Study 5)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Rate of attrition of women (vs. Men) in 2011	.050	1.33								
2. Rate of attrition of women (vs. Men) in 2010	.050	.97	-.1077							
3. Rate of attrition of racial minorities (vs. Whites) in 2011	-.053	1.62	.1946	.0116						
4. Rate of attrition of racial minorities (vs. Whites) in 2010	-.07	1.35	.0249	.0959	-.2252					
5. Number of attorneys	218	171	.0058	.0249	-.0406	-.0223				
6. Number of offices	14.9	13.3	-.1634	-.0315	-.0244	-.0636	-.0098			
7. City population/1,000,000	3.02	3.17	.0195	-.0378	-.0598	-.0362	.3790	-.0012		
8. Value in equality	1.38	1.36	-.0674	.0549	-.1024	.0245	-.0759	.0397	-.1526	
9. Value in difference	4.16	.88	-.1546	-.0547	-.0473	.0090	-.0244	.0250	-.0882	.247

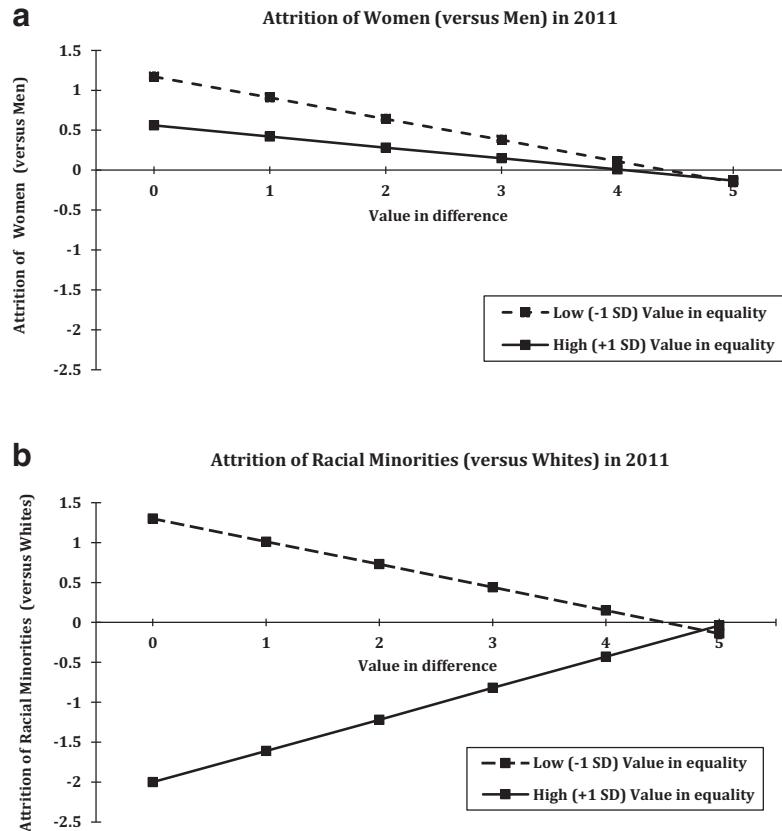


Figure 6. (a) Relationship between Emphasis on Value in Difference (0 = lowest, 5 = highest) and Attrition of Women versus Men at Low ( $-1 SD$ ) and High ( $1 SD$ ) Levels of Value in Equality (Study 5). (b) Relationship between Emphasis on Value in Difference (0 = lowest, 5 = highest) and Attrition of Racial Minorities versus Whites at Low ( $-1 SD$ ) and High ( $1 SD$ ) Levels of Value in Equality (Study 5).

they are especially likely to show reduced rates of attrition of racial minorities.

Together, these results build on the empirical evidence developed in Studies 1–4. Of course, it is worth noting that there are at least two alternative explanations for the relationships in Study 5. The first is reverse causation: firms may have adjusted the content of their diversity statement as a *reaction* to prior increases or decreases in attrition. This possibility would indicate that firms' actions in this arena are considerably more sophisticated than previously thought (Dobbin, 2009). It would suggest not only that firms are attuned to the distinct value in difference and value in equality components of their diversity statements, but also that they strategically alter these statements in one manner in response to attrition of women and in another manner in response to attrition of racial minorities. Given that organizations often use diversity initiatives with little proof or understanding of their effectiveness (Edelman, Uggen, & Erlanger, 1999), this interpretation is unlikely, but possible. The second alternative explanation is that a third (unmeasured) variable influenced our results. While we cannot rule out these alternative explanations from the results of Study 5 alone, the consistency of these field data with our experimental results provides additional evidence to support our theoretical account.

## General Discussion

The current research develops and tests a theory of when and why organizational diversity approaches are likely to help stigmatized groups succeed in professional settings. Our theory highlights the importance of tailoring value in difference and value in equality approaches to the concerns of social groups by considering their degree of representation in organizational contexts. Specifically, because Black individuals are typically represented in very small numbers in professional settings and possess relatively high representation-based concerns, we theorized that a value in difference (vs. equality) approach would undermine their performance and persistence. However, for White women who are moderately represented and possess relatively low representation-based concerns, we theorized that a value in difference (vs. equality) approach would promote performance and persistence. Five studies drawing on middle-aged, employed, college-educated samples, provide support for this theory.

In Study 1, we demonstrate that Black women and men possess greater representation-based concerns than White women. In Study 2, we observe that, for White women, the value in difference (vs. equality) approach yields greater performance and persistence. However, Black women and men show some evidence of the



reverse response pattern. In Study 3, we replicate these effects and show that they emerge, in part, because Black individuals possess greater representation-based concerns than do White women. We then directly manipulate the perceived representation of one's social group in the organization—the condition presumed to underlie variation in representation-based concerns—and find that the value in difference (vs. equality) approach is relatively more effective when social groups' representation is moderate, but relatively less effective when social groups' representation is very low. Finally, to assess the external validity of our theory, we content-coded the diversity statements of 151 major U.S. law firms according to their emphasis on the value in difference and the value in equality and examined their relationship with attrition rates of women and racial minorities. Consistent with our hypotheses, when firms' emphasis on the value in difference approach is high, we observed reduced rates of attrition among women, and when firms' emphasis on the value in equality approach is high, we found reduced rates of attrition among racial minorities (i.e., Black and Latino individuals).

### Theoretical Contributions

The general consistency of our findings over the course of five studies—drawing on evidence from laboratory experiments and the field—supports the internal and external validity of our theory. To our knowledge, this research offers the first empirical evidence that diversity approaches may carry different, even divergent, outcomes for stigmatized groups; in this case, for women and racial minorities. More important, we not only demonstrate these divergent effects, but also explain when and why these effects emerge: because of different levels of numerical representation and the corresponding effects of representation-based concerns. More generally, our findings suggest that harnessing the benefits of diversity approaches requires tailoring them to the concerns of the particular social groups targeted by these efforts. While the relative representation of White women and racial minorities may differ across types of occupations, industries, and geographical locations, the theoretical framework we present may be broadly relevant to a range of settings (e.g., in organizations and academic institutions) and for a variety of stigmatized social groups (e.g., with respect to ethnicity, LGBTQ, disability). Needless to say, however, additional research is necessary to evaluate the scope of our theory.

Nevertheless, this research makes an important contribution to research on solo status, tokenism, and organizational demography. To counteract the negative effects of solo status or low levels of representation, this previous work suggests that the solution is to increase the size of these social groups (e.g., Cohen & Swim, 1995; Kanter, 1977; Yoder, 1991). While increasing stigmatized groups' numerical representation is clearly an important and sensible goal notwithstanding, an additional tool at organizations' disposal is their ability to shape the cultural context of the workplace, particularly with respect to how diversity is discussed. Specifically, our findings suggest that tailoring diversity approaches to stigmatized groups' concerns may help them succeed.

The present research is relevant not only for the experience of solo status and low levels of representation, but also for the related experience of stereotype threat. This research extends stereotype threat research by demonstrating that the level of representation-

based concerns (one potential component of stereotype threat) shapes whether diversity approaches that emphasize differences or equality will help stigmatized social groups thrive. In this way, our work unites work on stereotype threat with work on diversity approaches to explain which approaches work best for whom. This research also helps resolve the tension between these literatures by showing how social groups' numerical representation and their corresponding concerns shape the costs and benefits of focusing on differences. While the stereotype threat research typically reveals that drawing attention to social differences is harmful (e.g., that it can foster bias and undermine performance; Brewer & Miller, 1984; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Gurin & Nagda, 2006; Gurin, Nagda, & Zuniga, 2013; Inzlicht & Schmader, 2012; Markus, 2008), the literature on colorblindness and multiculturalism generally argues the opposite—that acknowledging and embracing social group differences produces more positive outcomes (Plaut, 2010; Plaut et al., 2009; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004). With respect to the stereotype threat literature, our findings suggest that emphasizing differences need not be a threatening experience and can even increase performance and persistence. With regard to the literature on colorblindness and multiculturalism, our findings suggest that deemphasizing differences, as colorblind messages generally do, need not be detrimental and can even increase performance and persistence.

Finally, this research also contributes to literatures on group diversity and processes by underscoring the important *heterogeneity* among stigmatized groups' concerns and behaviors. In this work, a common practice is to aggregate differences in attitudes and behaviors between gender, race, ethnicity, and other social group characteristics to form a single index of group diversity (Chatman & Flynn, 2001; Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998; Jackson, May, & Whitney, 1995; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Pelled, 1996; Polzer, Milton, & Swann, 2002; Schippers, Den Hartog, Koopman, & Wienk, 2003; Van der Vegt & Janssen, 2003; Webber & Donahue, 2001). Implicit in using these aggregate measures is the assumption of empirical and theoretical *equivalence* of different stigmatized or lower status groups—with respect to gender, race, or other social characteristics (Apfelbaum, Phillips, & Richeson, 2014; Ely, Padavic, & Thomas, 2012; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Given that our research shows that, at least in some cases, stigmatized groups respond in divergent ways to the same stimulus, there is reason to question the theoretical and empirical merit of this assumption.

### Limitations and Future Directions

Of course, this research is also limited in ways that raise new questions and present opportunities for future inquiry. For instance, one question is what makes the value in difference (vs. equality) approach effective when representation-based concerns are relatively low. When these concerns are less pronounced, does the value in difference approach increase individuals' comfort by signaling that their group is valued in the setting? Another question is why we did not find the performance gaps between groups that are typically found in work on solo status and tokenism. Though we find evidence to support our central predictions regarding the *relative* effectiveness of the value in difference (vs. equality) approach for social groups, the absolute levels of performance and

persistence between social groups in Studies 2–4 indicated that women, and in particular, Black women, tended to perform better than men. This result could indicate that the presence of *any* diversity approach is most beneficial for Black women—individuals perhaps at greatest risk of being marginalized (Berdahl & Moore, 2006)—or alternatively, that the presence of diversity approaches negatively impacts men (Dover, Major, & Kaiser, 2016). Future research may further explore how the presence versus absence of a diversity approach may differentially impact these social groups.

This research also raises the possibility that other factors moderate the effectiveness of a given diversity approach. For instance, one assumption implicit in our investigation is that, for White women, gender is the most salient group membership, whereas for Black women and men, race is the most salient group membership. While there is reason to accept this premise in our setting (Bell, 1990; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Levin, Sinclair, Veniegas, & Taylor, 2002), future research should more carefully consider the intersection of race and gender, and the malleability of which group membership is most salient in a setting. One possibility is that shifts in the salience of gender versus race for a single social group (e.g., Black women) may impact the effectiveness of a value in difference versus equality approach.

Another potential moderating factor is the authenticity of a diversity approach (see also Brady, Kaiser, Major, & Kirby, 2015; Kaiser et al., 2013). In the present context, we took steps to ensure that participants would perceive both the value in difference and value in equality approaches as similarly authentic attempts to support stigmatized groups. In the absence of an ostensibly legitimate commitment to diversity, however, stigmatized groups may be especially skeptical of the value in equality approach (see Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). This interpretation is broadly consistent with related research showing that Whites' efforts to claim that they "don't see race" when race is salient leads racial minorities to perceive them as relatively disingenuous and prejudiced (Apfelbaum et al., 2008). Despite these limitations and questions, the present findings clearly indicate the need to shift the ways that scholars, professionals, and laypeople alike conceive of the optimal approach to diversity.

### Practical Implications

In the eyes of many organizations, the perceived effectiveness of a diversity approach will depend, in part, on its capacity to increase performance while stemming turnover—outcomes directly tied to productivity and profitability (Badal & Harter, 2014; Fulmer, Gerhart, & Scott, 2003; Jones & Harter, 2005). Our theory suggests a way to align these business objectives with the goal of helping historically stigmatized social groups succeed. To this end, before organizations use a particular diversity approach, they should first consider *which* social groups they are targeting, and second, how social groups' numerical representation and corresponding concerns may influence the effectiveness of this approach. Just as this insight begins to disentangle some mixed results and offers promising directions for advancing theory, it also brings to light important new questions. Mostly notably, our work highlights the practical challenge that contemporary organizations and institutions face with managing populations comprised of multiple stigmatized groups who have different concerns. Our data

suggest that no single approach to diversity represents a panacea—that one size does not fit all. This insight may accurately reflect the complexity of diversity in contemporary society. Nevertheless, our research suggests that efforts to value equality versus differences may be effectively *sequenced* as the representation of social groups change. The value in equality approach may represent a foundational priority—a commitment to fairness and equality, all else equal. Yet, as a social group's representation increases, and they are buffered from the psychological costs of "standing out," this foundation may no longer be sufficient. It may become increasingly important to build on this foundation by explicitly acknowledging group differences, and to communicate how and why they matter. Armed with this insight and the proposed theoretical framework, organizations will be better equipped to meet the challenges of creating a workplace in which a wider range of social groups have an opportunity to thrive.

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