We Need You! Diversity Messages That Enlist Dominant Group Members in Diversity Efforts

Kaylene McClanahan
UCLA Anderson School of Management, kaylene.mcclanahan@anderson.ucla.edu

Hannah Birnbaum
Notrhwestern University, hannah.birnbaum@kellogg.northwestern.edu

Margaret Shih
University of California, Los Angeles, margaret.shih@anderson.ucla.edu

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Organizational pro-diversity messages lead to greater psychological fit and increased engagement for people from traditionally marginalized groups and are therefore an essential first step in promoting inclusion and diversity. Yet, these diversity messages are not always successful because they sometimes invoke noncompliance or resistance from dominant group members (who are often critical gatekeepers to diversity in organizations). Past theorizing suggests that dominant group members feel threatened by organizations' diversity messages because these messages prompt (largely unfounded) concerns that dominant group members could be discriminated against. In our manuscript, we suggest two novel concerns that diversity messages may prompt among dominant group members—concern about lack of belonging in organizational diversity efforts, and concern about whether they can make a significant contribution to such efforts. We argue that these two concerns have been overlooked by the pro-diversity literature but represent important factors in dominant group members' attitudes towards organizations. We introduce a novel framing for diversity messages that can help mitigate these concerns while still emphasizing a commitment to diversity. This framing, which we call "We Need You" messaging, combines traditional diversity messages with a call for ally involvement in diversity efforts. We theorize that this messaging will be effective because it not only promotes and celebrates diversity, but also describes the clear role that allies play in diversity efforts. We suggest that this messaging can alleviate both concerns about lack of belonging in organizational diversity efforts as well as concerns about whether dominant groups can make a significant contribution to diversity efforts. Six studies ($n = 5,546$) support this theory. An initial survey of employees found that many dominant group member employees felt concerned about whether they belong in and can contribute to diversity efforts in their current workplace; these concerns were more prevalent for dominant group members than concerns about being

discriminated against, which has been the focus of prior research (Study 1). Five experiments then demonstrated that relative to traditional diversity messages, "We Need You" diversity messaging can reduce dominant group member's concerns about their belonging and contribution to diversity organizational efforts, which in turn increases their positivity towards the organization (Studies 2a, 2b, 3, 4, Supplemental Study 1). We also find that this novel diversity messaging has some benefits for dominant group members compared to no diversity messaging at all (Study 4). Crucially, minority group members responded as positively to "We Need You" messaging as traditional pro-diversity messaging (Study 3), indicating that the benefits of "We Need You" messaging for dominant group members do not come at the expense of minority group members. Together, these results suggest that diversity messages that highlight both diversity and the role of allies can effectively garner support from both minorities as well as dominant group members. This could have important implications for creating more diverse and equitable workplaces.