

Discomfort and Diversity: How Blame, Shame, and Moral Identity Relate to DEI Efforts among Members of Privileged vs. Marginalized Groups

Disagreements about DEI focus on demographic vs. viewpoint diversity and high vs. low discomfort. Using materials from real-world DEI programs, we tested these competing views among white participants in 3 samples. Blame and discomfort affect DEI motivation differently depending on marginalized status: Discomfort promotes DEI among women; and feeling like a moral hero promotes DEI among men.

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Levin Low, Jake Womick & Kurt Gray

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Disagreements about DEI focus on demographic vs. viewpoint diversity and high vs. low blame and discomfort. White Fragility focuses on demographics and high blame/discomfort; and Diversity without Division stresses viewpoints and low blame/discomfort. We tested these competing views among white participants in 3 samples. Study 1, $N=306$, exposed participants to demographic or viewpoint diversity vs. control. Demographic diversity led to more discomfort, $F(2,303)=14.08$, $d=0.63$, and DEI motivation, $F(2,298)=3.14$, $d=0.30$, $p's<.05$. Study 2 ($N=611$) exposed participants to high vs low blame for inequality. Blame boosted discomfort, $t(609)=4.85$, $d=0.39$, $p<.001$, but not DEI $p>.09$ (yet discomfort predicted DEI, $r=.39$). Study 3, $N=373$, unpacked these conflicting results: Discomfort promoted DEI among women ($r=.17$, $p=.02$), but not among men ($r=-.07$, interaction $\beta=-.17$, $p=.02$). Identifying as a moral hero promoted DEI more strongly among men, $r=.47$ vs. women, $r=.19$, interaction $\beta=.19$, $p's<.01$. Thus, blame and discomfort affect DEI differently depending on marginalized status. We are testing these questions using behavioral paradigms of cooperation/trust, and among marginalized racial groups.