Inclusive for Whom?

How to champion inclusion and diversity for all in the workplace

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Abstract

This research investigates the impact different messages of inclusion and diversity (I&D) practices have on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and resistance to diversity. The goal is to determine whether the target (all-inclusive vs. exclusive) and the proposed benefits (value vs. performance oriented) of corporate messages promoting I&D practices are predictors of OCB and resistance to diversity, and whether the relationships are mediated by perceived discrimination.

An online experiment with 179 participants was conducted to assess the direct and indirect effects of target and benefits of I&D messages. The results highlighted that the use of all-inclusive I&D messages increases the likelihood to show OCB in the workplace, meaning the participants showed more likely to engage in corporate activities outside their contract. Also, the perception of discrimination mediates the relationship between target of the message and OCB. This study could not establish a relation between target and benefits of I&D messages and resistance to diversity. Also there was no observed moderation effect of minority or majority status on the direct effects, meaning the effect of target of I&D messaging can effect OCB for both minorities and majorities. This study suggests practitioners to appeal to the entire corporate population when promoting I&D practices in order to monitor perceived discrimination and encourage organizational change. Future research should further explore the roles of minority/majority status and resistance to diversity in relation to I&D practices.

*Keywords*: inclusion and diversity, organizational citizenship behavior, resistance to diversity, minority, majority, discrimination.
Introduction

All over the world, companies are pushing their agenda to achieve a balanced workplace where employees feel valued and included. The nature of today's organizations is becoming more global, and diverse, with employees dealing everyday with different backgrounds, cultures, genders, ages and educations (Chavez & Weisinger, 2008; Van Knippenberg, De Dreu & Homan, 2004). Practitioners have acknowledged the need for deeper understanding of the challenges and consequences that this heterogeneity requires (Jansen, Otten & van der Zee, 2015; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Jang & Ko, 2017; Cramwinckel, Scheepers & Toorn, 2018; Acquavita, Pittman, Gibbons, & Castellanos-Brown, 2009). All those practices aiming to tackle this challenge and incentivize a dialogue around diversity are defined as inclusion and diversity (I&D) practices.

Diversity practices are shown to be effective when supported by an inclusive climate, fostering support and collaboration within the diverse workforce (Downey, Werff, Thomas & Plaut, 2015). To inform the workplace population about the concept of inclusivity, practitioners must activate more conversations on the topic, even though they can be perceived as risky and uncomfortable. Those conversations allow us to raise awareness and acknowledge the differences across the workforce. However, despite the positive ideals of seeking a diverse workforce, it often happens that I&D practices fail in their aim and appear discriminatory for certain employees (Downey et al., 2015). Focus on fostering the inclusion of minority members in the workplace, can be perceived as ignoring the role that majority members have in the discussion (Downey et al., 2015; James, Brief, Dietz, & Cohen, 2001). Including majorities in the dialogue is fundamental to educate everyone and to assure a workplace without discrimination and unconscious bias (Jansen et al., 2015).
The present study will contribute to shape more effective I&D practices in organizations with diverse personnel, meaning differences in gender, age, culture, race, etc. In detail, this empirical research will assess the role the target (all-inclusive vs. exclusive) and proposed benefits (value vs. performance) of messages promoting I&D practices have for both minorities and majorities members. Jansen et al.’s (2015) work guides the thinking of this study, drawing from the finding that the inclusion of majorities as a target of the I&D messages will generate a clear call to action to all employees, and engagement in I&D causes. Thanks to this finding, practitioners can confidently apply an all-inclusive communication approach to reach engagement in multicultural organizations. What other outcomes can an all-inclusive approach foster? Is it only applicable to cultural diversity, or can be extended to a broader range of diversities? The use of different targets and benefits in I&D messages will be explored aiming to test their effect on encouraging and harmful business outcomes.

Organizational citizenship behavior will be analyzed as an encouraging organizational outcome of the practice, and resistance to diversity as a harmful one. Previous studies suggest that practices aiming to tackle diversity issues are often co-authors of changes in employees’ behaviors (Brief & Barsky, 2005). The way I&D practices are communicated might influence and change individuals’ intention to engage with the cause, and change attitudes towards diversity (Holladay, Knight, Paige & Quiñones, 2003).

This research aims to contribute to the current literature, and define possible solutions to drive an inclusive and diverse workplace, avoiding resistance and promoting ownership to drive positive change. First, there will be the analysis of a broader concept of all-inclusive communication, beyond the cultural sphere of diversity. Second, the role of minority and majority status will be observed. Third, new organizational outcomes will be analyzed as result of different I&D messages, namely OCB and resistance to diversity. Ultimately, the role of perceived discrimination as mediator of those relationships will be taken into account.
The research will use an online experiment to answer the research question: to what extent and how does the target and the benefits of messages promoting I&D practices influence organizational behaviors and attitudes?

Drawing on organizational and communication literature, in the upcoming paragraphs the importance of I&D practices will be discussed, highlighting the role target and suggested benefits of the messages might have in the efficacy of I&D communications. After that, the effects of those factors on outcomes such as OCB and resistance to diversity will be analyzed together with the possible role of perceived discrimination and minority and majority status with an online experiment. Methodology and results will be presented and the conclusion discussed in relation to practical applications of the findings.

Theoretical Framework

The goal of inclusion and diversity (I&D) research is to define practices and solutions to meet the needs of an evolving workforce, and with it to implement practices to create a dialogue around the I&D trends in diverse organizations (Shore et al., 2011). Before describing the advantages and disadvantages that I&D practices can bring, it is important to differentiate the two terms. Diversity means the bare numerical representation of minorities and majorities in the workforce (Roberson, 2006). A diverse workforce is characterized by employees with different background, culture, gender, age and so on. Diversity practices are often linked to their strategic power and the organizational outcomes they can lead to, such as creativity, innovation and performance (Jackson & Joshi, 2011). Barak (2015) highlights the many connotations that the term diversity can take. She distinguishes between observable differences, like gender, race or age, and underlying differences such as religion, sexual orientation, education or tenure. Both typologies can be subjected to prejudice, bias, and discrimination and need to be moderated in order to allow employees to express their full
potential in the workplace (Sabharwal, 2014). On the other side, organizational inclusion takes place when the diversity initiatives are supported by an embracing attitude towards the other members of the organization despite their diversities: age, race, culture or gender (Holladay, Knight, Paige, & Quiñones, 2014). When there is inclusion, we often see members of different segments of the population collaborate and being supportive in order to foster a climate in which everyone feels valued (Downey et al., 2015).

Inclusion and diversity has been studied in various disciplines, such as management, communication, psychology, sociology. A great deal of this research assessed the key role inclusion has in diversity management and the positive outcomes that derive from it (Barak, 2015; Downey et al., 2015; Brimhall, Lizano & Barak, 2014; Shore et al., 2010). Hiring a diverse workforce to reflect the demographics of the consumers (Sabharwal, 2014), increase job satisfaction (Cramwinckel et al., 2018; Acquavita et al., 2009), rise and implement personal and organizational performance (Roberson, 2006), boost innovation and creativity (Jang & Ko, 2017) and reduce turnover intention (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002) are only a few of the advantages research suggests can result from I&D practices. They were found to be present not only with a diverse workforce, but in particular when an inclusive climate was also in place. These outcomes are studied as a result of all those practices aiming to encourage diversity, such as human resources (HR) policies, talent acquisition strategies, training, internal events, marketing campaigns, employer branding etc. With those practices, companies seek the benefits that come from having this kind of diverse workforce.

Often times, despite the encouraging outcome a diverse workplace can generate, majorities tend to perceive diversity topics to be “only for minorities”, and do not engage in inclusion and diversity practices (Jansen, Otten & van der Zee, 2015). Research suggests that to achieve an inclusive workplace, I&D practices should foster the active engagement of both majorities
and minorities. Having the majorities as ambassadors opens a dynamic dialogue and empower minorities to achieve equality and stability (Jansen et al., 2015).

**All-Inclusive Vs. Exclusive Message**

The demographic composition of the workforce leads individuals into groups of in-group and out-group members (Chen, Crossland & Huang, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Reynolds, Turner, & Haslam, 2003). According to the self-categorization theory and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Reynolds, Turner, & Haslam, 2003) this distinction might foster in the in-group members the attitude to categorize the out-group members for their differences, often developing bias, prejudice and stereotypes towards them. Even though the distinction between majorities and minorities might seem a constant in the workplace, it might take different facets according to context and location (Cohen, 1984). For instance, in a western country, such as Italy, a 45 years old, male, white, heterosexual man would be considered part of the majority of the population. If the same individual was working in a predominantly female childcare agency, he would probably consider himself part of the minority of men working for the company. Similarly, the same person in a different location, such as Kenya, might be perceived as part of a minority group if compared to the average 29 years old, black man.

The way I&D practices are communicated is crucial to trace results in both majority and minority members. A study carried out by Jansen et al. (2015) assessed that an all-inclusive diversity approach is significantly more effective than a standardized one in order to engage majorities in diversity practices. In their study, they devoted their attention on the creation of an all-inclusive multicultural approach, in which they aimed to target not only cultural minorities, but also majorities in the communication, and test the effects that the communication had on the participants’ support to organizational diversity efforts. The call
for the majorities in the communication showed that the participants felt more socially included and were more disposed to support the organizational efforts to create a better workplace. As emphasized formerly by other scholars, those findings are fundamental to understand the role of majority stakeholders as key agent of diversity management success (Jansen et al., 2015; James, Brief, Dietz, & Cohen, 2001; Stevens, Plaut and Sanchez-Burks, 2008).

Very few studies explored a broader all-inclusive communication approach in which all members of the organization are called out to be part of I&D practices, not only for their belonging to a particular majority group due to their cultural origin. I will distinguish between exclusive diversity communication, in which the message of the communication targets only minorities, and all-inclusive diversity communication, in which majorities and minorities are both explicitly mentioned as the target of the message. Contrary to other studies (Jansen et al., 2015; Stevens et al., 2008), I will broaden the all-inclusive multiculturalism to an all-inclusive approach of I&D messages to evaluate if this approach can have a significant effect for different diverse groups. I want to analyse whether different ways of communicating inclusion and diversity practices have consequences on individual attitudes and behaviours towards the organization. In the next paragraphs, I will introduce organizational citizenship behaviour and resistance to diversity as organizational outcomes that may be affected by different ways of communicating I&D messages.

**Value vs. Performance-Oriented Message**

As mentioned, I&D practices try to foster the benefits that a diverse environment can give, such as financial profit, more creative and innovative team outcomes, relationship building, employees’ well-being and more (Jansen et al., 2015). Similar research on organizational practices fostering inclusive environments illustrated the positive role motivation has on
employee’s engagement and involvement in the co-creation of such environment (Brown, Subramaniam, & Ali, 2017; Simmons & Birchall, 2005; Gronroos, 2004; Ballard et al., 2015). Communication studies, in particular, related to branding and advertising, highlighted the different results there are when different elements of a campaign, ad or narrative are stressed in the text of a communication to motivate the public to engage with the message (Merrilees, 2016; Fatemi, Glaum, & Kaiser, 2018). The message can present the promise of a certain results appealing to different drivers. For instance, the promise to better performance or the creation of values (Holtzhausen, 2014; Bizri, 2017). The creation of values as aim of the message allows for the establishment of an emotional connection with the public, and the employees in the workplace (Bizri, 2017). This type of relationship with the employees is based on an affective commitment and has been found to promote the organization even outside contractual obligations as the employees felt connected with the promise of values (Bizri, 2017). On the other side, establishing a bond with the receiver can be done also through promising compensations and welfares. This type of engagement is found to have short-term benefit, and does not have the effect of having employees feel more committed to the company (Bizri, 2017).

To my knowledge, there are no specific studies exploring the impact of different motivational triggers on I&D activation. In this analysis, I will focus on two dimensions of the benefits an organization can achieve from I&D practices: values and performance. Employees may be intrigued by the promise that I&D can lead to a more creative and innovative workplace, which then can lead to higher revenues and to higher performance (Jansen, Frans, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 2006). This dimension is related to self-oriented values, in which the employees see the practice as a means to an end, called in this instance performance-oriented. On the other hand, the value-oriented dimension highlights the benefit
of the practice as a means to serve a bigger cause, such as organizational inclusiveness and employee well-being (Peloza & Shang, 2011; Garcia-Ramirez, Balcazar, & de Freitas, 2014).

Understanding the motives that drive employee engagement is pivotal to predict and plan how to communicate in an effective way to all employees (Simmons & Birchall, 2005; Gronroos, 2004; Ballard et al., 2015). These dimensions have been applied to studies related to public service and corporate social responsibility (CSR) but rarely have they been associated with I&D practices (Simmons & Birchall, 2005; Christian Grönroos, 2004; Peloza & Shang, 2011). Value-driven motivation can drive employees to perceive the practices as more effective, and even to personally commit to the cause (Peloza & Shang, 2011). In this way, it is possible to create and promote micro-behaviours to incorporate ideas and beliefs in the employees’ lives, even outside the organization. In this study, it will be possible to empirically test if the proposed benefits of the practices can be a predictor of organizational outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) or resistance to diversity. Thus, the second independent variable of this study, will be divided into two dimensions of primary drivers for I&D practices motivation: performance-oriented, in which the communication promotes the increase in performance for the organization, or value-oriented meaning the creation of durable values through the I&D practice. I will assess if leverage on performance or value will affect the OCB and resistance to diversity.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

This paper will look at the effects of I&D messages on organizational citizenship behaviour. The motives that drive employees to contribute positively to the organization’s performance are many. But what are the drivers that lead employees to commit to the overall organization? The organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) can be defined as the voluntary self-initiatives individuals take in the workplace even if they are not explicitly required in
their job contract, aiming to improve the organization and corporate functions (Hall & Ferris, 2011; Abdullah & Rashid, 2012). The objective of I&D practices is often the activation of employee’s interest in diversity-related causes. However, when employees feel responsible for the organizational climate and are empowered to support the organizational causes, they might feel motivated and commit to I&D activities (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). In relation to I&D practices, previous research focused on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, employee retention or well-being as outcomes (Cho & Mor Barak, 2008). I will introduce OCB as organizational outcome of I&D practices, expecting lower OCB when an exclusive message is used, compared to an all-inclusive message. I expect this to happen as the more employees feel included in organizational commitment to inclusive causes, the more they will feel engaged with the cause itself and encouraged to take part in initiatives outside the working contract. For instance joining events to raise awareness around gender equality, or volunteer in the organization of Pride activities. In the same way, I expect that appealing to the creation of values will be a stronger motivation compared to the performance one. This will happen as the participant will feel emotionally connected to the cause, and not only connected to it due to an economic outcome. I suggest that OCB will vary according to the different content of the message:

**H1a:** Participants’ likelihood to exhibit OCB is lower after being exposed to the exclusive I&D message, compared to all-inclusive message.

**H1b:** Participants’ likelihood to exhibit OCB is lower after being exposed to the performance-oriented I&D message, compared to value-oriented message.

**Resistance to diversity**

The implementation of I&D practices have often been linked to positive organizational outcomes such as performance, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, employee retention, and employees’ well-being (Sabharwal, 2014). Backlashes and negative outcomes
have not been extensively investigated, in particular in relation to predictors associated with the way the practices are communicated. In this instance, I will look into resistance to diversity, meaning hostile reactions of individuals or groups towards inclusion and diversity practices as the effect of different ways to communicate them (Hill, 2009). As a matter of fact, in spite of the effort made by management and other areas of the organization, diversity practices are not always effective, and they do not always lead to the desired outcomes. There are still cases of resistance when those practices are communicated, and even more when policies have to be put in practice (Moss-Racusin et al., 2016). What happens when the communication of I&D practices produce effects that can harm the reputation of the firm? Is diversity always perceived as a benefit or sometimes a threat?

As described by Chrobot-Mason and Aramovich (2013), workforce diversity can be seen as a double-edged sword. The backlashes are numerous and can be explicit or implicit, such as intolerance, lack of involvement, exclusion from the team, perception of “special treatment”, unfairness, discrimination, critique of practices and policies, to name a few (Hill, 2009; Cocchiara, Connerley, & Bell, 2010; Mobley & Payne, 1992; Kirby, Kaiser & Major, 2015). Promoting workforce diversity in order to minimize resistance has been shown to encourage the development of social capital and positive employee relations (Stevens et al., 2008). It can happen that changes fostering inclusion and diversity in the workplace are perceived as special treatment for some and unjust for others. The resentment that springs from this injustice might cause resistance (Galinsky et al., 2015). In this study, the proposal is to encourage the participation of everyone in the company, and not only of minorities, to assure that everyone feels involved in leading the organizational change. For this, I expect resistance to diversity to be lower in the case of an all-inclusive message. The use of an all-inclusive message has the advantage to make the participants part of the conversation and drive their motivation towards less resistance to diversity. Similarly, pushing better
performance as main motivation for I&D practices will lead to higher resistance to diversity as I expect participants to not perceive the economic outcome as a valuable reason to invest in inclusion.

Thus, I hypothesize:

H2a: Participants likelihood to exhibit resistance to diversity is higher after being exposed the exclusive I&D message, compared to all-inclusive message.

H2b: Participants likelihood to exhibit resistance to diversity is higher after being exposed to the performance-oriented I&D message, compared to value-oriented message.

The Moderating Effect of Minority vs. Majority status

So far, we observed the several research and concerns raised around the relationship between majorities and minorities and their relevance for organizational outcomes (Jansen et al., 2015; Zeromskyte & Wagner, 2017). We draw from the self-categorization theory and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Reynolds, Turner, & Haslam, 2003) to distinguish the concepts of minority and majority. In a group, we normally consider a minority the subgroup numerically lower than the other group (Simon, Aufderheide & Kampmeier, 2001). Those subgroups form as individuals identify themselves as similar or dissimilar as per certain characteristics to the other members, social identity, or reinforcing individual characteristics and personal identity (Simon, Aufderheide & Kampmeier, 2001). According to Jansen et al., (2015), cultural minorities groups perceive an all-inclusive language more positively as they feel more engaged when called out explicitly. On the other hand, majority members prefer a more generic approach, in which there are no references to minority or majority status. Hence, the affiliation to a minority or majority groups might furtherly affect this relationship. I will research the impact that being part of a minority or
majority has on an individual’s perception of the message. On the basis of these studies, I would expect that the membership to minority or majority group would influence not only the engagement as tested by Jansen et al. (2015), but also other organizational outcomes. In my research, I hypothesize that this relationship will be different for outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviour and resistance to diversity. This effect will be tested in the case of an all-inclusive vs. exclusive message. In line with Hypothesis 1 and 2, I expect the relationships to vary across minority and majority members. The effects on OCB and resistance to diversity will be perceived differently for majority members. Indeed, I expect them to engage more in OCB and less in resistance to diversity in the all-inclusive experimental condition.

Therefore, I hypothesize that:

**H3a:** The positive effect of all-inclusive I&D message (compared to exclusive) on OCB will be more pronounced for majority members than minority members.

**H3b:** The positive effect of exclusive I&D message (compared to all-inclusive) on resistance to diversity will be more pronounced for majority members than minority members.

**The Mediating Role of Perceived discrimination**

When talking about inclusion and diversity practices, we saw that in many cases they can generate significant backlashes (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013). A diverse approach should foster an environment in which minorities and majorities feel included to the same extent. However, Jansen et al. (2015) found out that those activities often lead to resentment, scepticism, and resistance by majority members as they feel not considered both part of the problem or the solution (Brief & Barsky, 2005; Stevens et al., 2008; Thomas & Plaut, 2008; Linnehan & Konrad, 1999). This paradox has not been extensively explored, and the causes that lead to counter-reactions to diversity practices are still uncertain. The
justification of this relationship might be mediated by the perception one has of the exclusivity of the practice. The inclusion or not of members of the organization in the message might lead to a perceived discrimination from the majority and to a lower perception of fairness (Deitch et al., 2003; Dwertmann, Nishii & Knippenberg, 2016). As previously highlighted, often majority individuals feel excluded from inclusion and diversity practices and perceive the practices as not fair. I suggest that perceived discrimination will mediate the relationship between the target and benefits of I&D messages and OCB, and resistance to diversity.

**H4:** The negative effect of (a) exclusive (vs. all-inclusive) target and (b) performance-oriented (vs. value-oriented) message on OCB will be mediated by perceived discrimination.

**H5:** The positive effect of (a) exclusive (vs. all-inclusive) target and (b) performance-oriented (vs. value-oriented) message on resistance to diversity will be mediated by perceived discrimination.

For a visual representation of the hypothesized relationships, see Fig.1

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**Figure 1** - Visual representation of the hypothesized relationships
Methods

A 2x2 between-subjects design was conducted, with target of the message (all-inclusive vs. exclusive) and benefits of the message (value vs. performance) as factors. This was done to analyze the impact of different type of messages on OCB and resistance to diversity in the context of inclusion and diversity training in a fictitious organization (Table 1).

Table 1 – 2x2 between-subjects design with target and benefits of the message as factors.

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<th>Benefits of the message</th>
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<td>Performance</td>
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Sample and Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through a survey-embedded online experiment. Through the manipulation of key sentences in the text, it was possible to examine the effects of different target and benefits of the messages on the OCB and resistance to diversity, and the role of minority/majority status and perceived discrimination. The participants were gathered using snowball convenience sampling, via the author’s personal network, with participants encouraged to share the study with their personal network. In total, the number of participants was 217, with 179 valid respondents, between 18 and 74 years old. The sample was mostly female (57%), young \(Median = 25, M = 27.96, SD = 7.95\), educated (79.9% had obtained at least a bachelor degree) and employed (78.7% currently employed, 2.2% unemployed and 18.4% student). The participants came from twenty-nine countries, with most coming from Italy (40.8%). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions, namely: all-inclusive, value-oriented \(n=45\), all-inclusive, performance-oriented
exclusive, value-oriented (n=45), exclusive, performance-oriented (n=43). The randomization check was successful and showed that there was not a significant difference of demographic variables between the experimental conditions, showing they were distributed randomly\(^2\).

**Procedure.** The online-questionnaire was self-administered and the content was in English. The link to the experiment was shared in a post on social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram) and sent as message via WhatsApp. Clicking on the link the participants landed on the informed consent page were they could agree or disagree to the conditions. Once agreed, demographics and minority/majority status were tested. To assess the influence of the type of messages on the outcome variables, an image of a training offered by a fabricated company’s internal website was used for each stimulus (stimuli can be found in Appendix A). The choice to limit to an I&D training was to give a real-world example of how internal communication and HR departments activate I&D practices. Trainings are often used to educate or to raise awareness around diversity topics (Chavez & Weisinger, 2008). The outline of the website was the same for the four conditions. Finally, participants were asked to answer the scales for perceived discrimination, OCB and resistance to diversity. After filling the questionnaire, participants were debriefed regarding the aim of the experiment and fictitious nature of the stimuli.

**Manipulation check.** The stimuli and the manipulation check before being included in the final survey were tested with a preceding pilot test and adjusted, to ensure quality in the results. Serving as manipulation check, participants were asked two questions regarding to whom the training was open, and two asking what was the proposed benefit of the training. The manipulation check was successful for both target of the message, \(\chi^2(6, 179) = 123.30, p < .001\), and benefits of the message, \(\chi^2 (9, 179) = 71.51, p < .001\).
Independent Variables

**Target of the message.** In the four conditions, to test the target of the message the test explicitly invited all-employees or minorities only to take part to the training. Maintaining the rest of the text constant, it was possible to test the exact effects of the particular independent variables (all stimuli can be found in Appendix A). For instance, in the condition exclusive target the text would say: “We invite women and employees with a minority background […] It’s a collective issue, together minorities can impact change. Open to: women and employees with minority background”.

**Benefits of the message.** In the conditions testing the benefits of the message, the text was manipulated proposing value or performance-oriented content. For example, the value-oriented condition would read: “Benefits of this training: contribute to creating values and equal opportunities, develop empathy to build connections […] Building a diverse and inclusive workplace is how we can create the highest value for our people. It’s a collective issue, together minorities can impact change”.

Dependent Variables

**Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).** Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) was measured by using seven items based on Lee and Allen’s (2002) scale for measuring OCB dimensions (all items of the upcoming scales can be found in Appendix B). The respondents were asked to imagine working for the company in which the training was offered and to indicate on a one-to-seven Likert scale from ‘1=strongly disagree’ to ‘7=strongly agree’ their agreement with the statement (e.g., ‘Go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group’, ‘Orient new people even though it is not required’). A principal component analysis with Direct Oblimin rotation was conducted. For
the OCB items one component was extracted based on the analysis of the scree plot and eigenvalues. The component explained 51.1\% of the total variance\(^3\). The scale was reliable \(\alpha = .82\) (\(M = 5.21, SD = .82\)).

**Resistance to diversity.** Resistance to diversity was measured by using seven items based on Biga, Marira and Shockley’s (2011) scale for measuring diversity performance. The scale was created to assess the ability of the participants to work with diverse people. In this study I will translate the inability to work with diverse people as resistance to diversity, hence I reversed the items in the scale with the exception of one (item 3). The respondents were asked to imagine to work for the company in which the training was offered and to indicate on a one-to-seven Likert scale from ‘1=strongly disagree’ to ‘7=strongly agree’ their agreement with the statement (e.g., ‘Be considerate of coworker’s group differences when I work with them’, ‘Work well with diverse co-workers’\(^4\)). Two factors were extracted for the seven items, with two items (“Be considerate of co-worker’s group differences when I work with them” and “Not allow other co-worker’s religious or cultural habits interfere with my work, even if it interfere with their ability to do their job correctly”) loading onto the second factor. The two factors explained 48.65\% and 17.69\% of the variance. However, analysis of the scree plot suggested that only one factor could be extracted. The second factor did not appear to represent something distinct from the main factor. It was decided to conduct a Cronbach’s alpha with the seven items. The initial Cronbach alpha was .70. The two items of factor two were removed in order to increase the reliability. The final scale of five items had a reliability of \(\alpha = .86\) (\(M = 1.97, SD = .81\)).

**Mediator.** Perceived discrimination was measured by using 7 items based on James, Lovato and Cropanzano’s (1994) scale for measuring Workplace Prejudice/Discrimination from ‘1=strongly disagree’ to ‘7=strongly agree’ (e.g., ‘Prejudice exists in this company’, ‘There is no discrimination in this company’). A principal component analysis with Direct
Oblimin rotation was conducted. One component was extracted based on the analysis of the scree plot and eigenvalues. The component explained 58.76% of the total variance. The Cronbach alpha was $\alpha = .87$ ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.24$).

**Minority/majority status.** Membership to a minority or majority group was measured with a self-reporting question. Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they considered themselves part of a minority or majority group positioning themselves on a scale from ‘1=Minority’ to ‘5=Majority’ ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.03$).

**Analytical Strategy**

To test the hypotheses a series of multivariate ANOVA will assess if there are mean differences between target and benefits of the message and OCB and resistance to diversity. The moderation of minority/majority status on the relationship between target of the message and OCB, and resistance to diversity will be analyzed with a two-way ANOVA. The mediation effect of perceived discrimination between target and benefits of the message and OCB and resistance to diversity will be tested with a series of PROCESS analyses using model 4 (Hayes, 2018), which allows to estimate mediation models and outline the indirect effect of X on Y through M.

**Results**

To test if the use of exclusive messaging would decrease OCB (H1a) and increase resistance to diversity (H2a), compared to an all-inclusive message, a multivariate ANOVA was conducted with target of the message as independent variable and OCB and resistance to diversity as dependent variables. There was an overall statistically significant difference in OCB and resistance to diversity based on target of the message, $F(2, 176) = 4.57$, $p = .012$, Wilk’s $\Lambda = 4.57$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$. However, univariate tests showed that the target of the message had a statistically significant effect on OCB ($F(1, 179) = 9.07; p = .003$; partial $\eta^2 =$
and a non-significant effect on resistance to diversity ($F(1, 179) = 3.32; p = .070$; partial $\eta^2 = .02$). Participants exposed to an all-inclusive message showed higher OCB ($M = 5.49, SD = .69$), than participants exposed to an exclusive message ($M = 5.13, SD = .91$). H1a is accepted and H2a is rejected.

It was hypothesized that the use of performance-oriented message would decrease OCB (H1b) and increase resistance to diversity (H2b), compared to a value-oriented message. A multivariate ANOVA was conducted with benefits of the message as independent variable and with OCB and resistance to diversity as dependent variables. There was not a statistically significant difference in OCB and resistance to diversity based on benefits of the message, $F(2, 176) = .02, p = .978$, Wilk’s $\Lambda = 1.00$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$. Univariate tests showed that the benefits of the message had a non-statistically significant effect on OCB ($F(1, 177) = .00; p = .988$; partial $\eta^2 = .00$) and a non-significant effect on resistance to diversity ($F(1, 177) = .35; p = .851$; partial $\eta^2 = .00$). Thus, H1b and H2b are rejected.

It was expected that the minority/majority status moderated the relationship between target of the message and OCB (H3a) and resistance to diversity (H3b). Two-way ANOVA analyses showed that there was not a statistically significant interaction between the effect of target of message and minority/majority status on OCB, $F(4, 169) = 1.116, p = .351$, and no statistically significant interaction on resistance to diversity, $F(4, 169) = 1.670, p = .159$. Hypothesis H3a and H3b are rejected.

To test the mediating effect of perceived discrimination between target (H4a) and benefits of the message (H5a) and OCB, a PROCESS analysis model 4 (Hayes, 2018) with 5000 bootstrap samples was used. The results showed that there was a significant indirect effect of target of the message on OCB through perceived discrimination (indirect effect = -.15, boot $SE = .05$, 95% BCI [-.27,-.06]). The mediation could be considered a complete mediation as the direct effect of target of the message on OCB was no longer significant, as we can see in
Fig. 2. With the outcome of a full mediation, we can assume that the relationship between target of the message and OCB happens because of the perceived discrimination and not for other reasons. H4a is confirmed. As anticipated from the not significant result for the direct effect, the results show that there was no indirect effect of target of the message on resistance to diversity through perceived discrimination, hypothesis H5a is rejected (95% BCI [-.00, .16]).

![Diagram](image1)

*Figure 2* - Mediation of perceived discrimination of target and benefits of the message and OCB

The mediating effect of perceived discrimination between target (H4b) and benefits of the message (H5b) and resistance to diversity was tested with a PROCESS analysis model 4 (Hayes, 2018) with 5000 bootstrap samples. For both independent variables the confidence interval contained zero, the hypotheses H4b (95% BCI [-.06, .09]) and H5b are rejected (95% BCI [-.07, .02]). Perceived discrimination is not a mediator for target and benefits of the message and resistance to diversity (Fig.3).

![Diagram](image2)

*Figure 3* - Mediation of perceived discrimination of target and benefits of the message and resistance to diversity
Conclusion and Discussion

This research aimed to answer to what extent the target and the benefits of I&D messages impact on OCB and resistance to diversity, and whether perceived discrimination and minority/majority status influences this relationship. Here, it finds a partial response: targeting all employees rather than just minorities increases respondents OCB, and their perception of being discriminated explained the relationship. In line with the hypotheses, this study confirms that the more employees feel involved in the message of the communication, the more they are heartened to contribute to organizational causes outside the working contract. In contradiction with previous findings, here it is possible to state that the way I&D messages are communicated affects positively the way employees behave in the workplace, contrarily to negative outcomes reported in prior scholarships (Hill, 2009; Cocchiara, Connerley & Bell, 2010; Kirby, Kaiser & Major, 2015). The fact that the target expressed in the message of the communication plays an important role in creating OCB in employees adds on Jansen et al. (2015) conclusions, focusing on employees’ engagement, and contributes to our understanding of how to include majorities in diversity practices. In addition, this study indicates the generalizability of all-inclusive I&D practices from a multicultural focus to a broader all-inclusive language applied to different diverse groups (Jansen et al., 2014; Stevens et al., 2008).

Second, the results show that there is no difference in OCB and resistance to diversity when values or performance are promoted as benefits of the I&D practice. The emotional connection with the cause was expected to establish a stronger impact of the practice and motivate participants to higher OCB and lower resistance, compared to the promise of better organizational performance. This could be explained by the fact that the public is not educated to the difference between value and performance, perceiving them similarly. Scholars should ask what motivational triggers could influence the relationship. The results express the
salience that an all-inclusive message has on the activation of positive outcomes, but what other positive outcomes can be activated? Which emotions are involved in this relationship? Future research should address these questions.

Third, there were no signs that it is the message of the communication that activates resistance to diversity. This study also failed to prove perceived discrimination as mediator for resistance to diversity. The case could be that discrimination triggers resistance in different ways and might be beneficial to consider it as predictor of the relationship. Resistance to diversity is still a challenge in today’s organizations, antecedents could be present and not examined in this instance. It is necessary to include more variables to research and explain additional variance. What are the elements that raise resistance in the workplace? How do we monitor them to ensure an inclusive climate? This study did not clarify how to tackle resistance to diversity in the workplace, forthcoming research should focus on different measures and predictors to develop significant conclusions and strategies, as resistance to diversity remains a blind spot in diverse organizations (Moss-Racusin et al., 2016). Moreover, the used design does not allow the assessment of long-term effects. Possibly scholars should include a pre- and post-test to examine differences before and after the exposure to the condition with the passage of time. To cope with resistance to diversity it is important to gather insights of the causes that bring about this conflictual behaviour. It might be helpful to include different aspects of the organizational life to assess what are the catalysts of negative behaviours regarding diversity.

In contradiction with the initial hypotheses, also belonging to a minority or majority group seemed to not affect the relationships. The fact that minority/majority status is not a moderator might be explained by the perception one has of the two categories. The concept is not unique and often happens to be misinterpreted according to context and location (Cohen, 1984). This could imply that the answers were dictated by the perception someone has of
minority and majority rather than their actual position in the scale. The context, location and background were possibly important factors to address to understand the membership to one of the two groups and define the position of an individual in the minority/majority spectrum. Future research should examine different ways to assess minority/majority status, and the meaning the terms have for the subjects. To do so, they could take example from the Handbook on European non-discrimination law (Fribergh & Kjaerum, 2018) published by the European Union. Those categories are a selection of the “protected grounds” considered in risk for discrimination. Belonging to one of those categories would represent the belonging to a minority group in the population.

This research highlights some practicalities organizations should take into account when approaching I&D practices. From literature, it is known that inclusion of majorities in the message establishes positive outcomes such as trust (Downey et al., 2014), employee engagement (Jansen et al., 2014), well-being and high quality relations (Shore et al., 2011) and we can now add to that list OCB. In order to develop a more inclusive and diverse workplace, practitioners should consider to implement their communication and engage not only with minorities, the direct target, but also with majorities, often considered secondary stakeholders. As we see with the failed moderation hypothesis, the effects on OCB are positive across the board, for both majorities and minorities, all-inclusive communication makes employees more likely to engage in activities not necessary according to their work contract. To advance a collaborative climate in which employees take the ownership to invest extra time for organizational causes, safety, trust and internal motivation should also be considered in the relationship (Kraiger & Wolfson, 2011; Downey et al., 2014; Stevens, Plaut & Sanchez-Burks, 2008). Future research should look deeper into these factors in future research on the topic of I&D practices.
Some more limitations should be addressed. The effects found in this study are limited to the message promoted in an organizational training. Even though educational environments are beneficial for an inclusive culture (Chavez & Weisinger, 2008), the use of different practices such as events promotion, internal campaigns, HR policies and strategies might increase the validity and generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the nature of the sample, mainly young and European, might have affected the results. It is advised to use a various and heterogeneous sample, representative of all diversity categories (e.g. gender, age, and ethnicity) and consider to measure the variables not only based on self-reporting. To increase external validity and be able to assess important components, such as corporate climate, trust or psychological safety (Hofhuis, Pernill, Van Der Rijt & Vlug et al., 2016; Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon & Ziv, 2010), it is preferable for future research to focus on a case study, analysing the role of the aforementioned variables in a real company.

With this study, it was possible to prove that I&D practices including majority members in their message affect employees’ OCB, rather than decreasing their resistance towards diversity. However, it is important to mention that the scale for resistance to diversity was designed to assess diversity performance, and was assumed to be explicative of the inability of participants to work with diverse employees and hence resist to diversity. In addition, the fact that the items were often implying forms of racism might have led the respondents to give more socially desirable answers. One might feel pressured to give a commonly accepted answer to not be categorized as racist or intolerant. Future studies should overcome this obstacle observing unconscious and inaccessible representations of attitudes with the use of implicit measures (Gawronski, 2007).

Regardless of aforementioned limitations, this study contributes to a better understanding on what creates a more inclusive and diverse workplace. The aim of this study was to understand how to better communicate I&D practices in the workplace, and to observe the
outcomes that different messages can incite. These results are a guideline for future research aiming to tackle pitfalls in I&D practices. Best practices can take inspiration from this study to amplify their outcomes and create an inclusive environment for everyone. Organizations should establish an open-environment in which everyone feels included and appreciated. I&D practices foster this kind of behaviour and need to be supported by every segment of the business. Motivating the workforce to engage in such activities is still a challenge for many practitioners. To accomplish this, the present research suggests to focus on the target of the message and to appeal to the entire corporate population, including not only the interested target but also majorities. Majorities have the power to drive change, and to contribute to a balanced workplace. The enactment of appropriate messages should be a mission for professionals in the near future.

Notes

1 38 respondents were categorized as missing values as they did not completed the survey.
3 For OCB the sum of squared loadings was 3.57. Factor loadings were: .46, .80, .83, .81, .75, .69, .58.
4 For resistance to diversity the sum of squared loadings was 3.47. Factor loadings were: .70, .74, .88, .90, .85.
5 For perceived discrimination the sum of squared loadings was 2.94. Factor loadings were: .66, .78, .76, .70, .82, .74, .83.
Reference


Appendix A

Stimuli

All-inclusive and value-oriented condition

Inclusion@work

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUES OF AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

In our company we seek to create an inclusive environment where each employee is valued. In this training we invite everyone in the company to understand how we can help women and minority groups in facing unconscious bias and embracing diversities.

Benefits of this training:
- Contribute to creating values and equal opportunities
- Develop empathy to build connections
- Free others from prejudice and discrimination.

Building a diverse and inclusive workplace is how we can create the highest value for our people. It's a collective issue, together we can impact change.

Open to: All Employees

All-inclusive and performance-oriented condition

Inclusion@work

UNDERSTANDING THE PERFORMANCE BENEFITS OF AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

In our company we seek to create an inclusive environment where each employee is valued. In this training we invite everyone in the company to understand how we can help women and minority groups in facing unconscious bias and embracing diversities.

Benefits of this training:
- Accelerate your performance
- Outperform your peers
- Ensure improved success with metrics and follow-up.

Implementing goal-setting into diversity training may be the key to positive and long-lasting results. It's a collective issue, together we can drive change.

Open to: All Employees
Exclusive and value-oriented condition

In our company we seek to create an inclusive environment where each employee is valued. In this training we invite women and employees with a minority background to understand how we can help them to face unconscious bias and embracing diversities.

Benefits of this training:
- Contribute to creating values and equal opportunities
- Develop empathy to build connections
- Free others from prejudice and discrimination.

Building a diverse and inclusive workplace is how we can create the highest value for our people. It’s a collective issue, together minorities can impact change.

Open to: Women and Employees with Minority Background

Exclusive and performance-oriented condition

In our company we seek to create an inclusive environment where each employee is valued. In this training we invite women and employees with a minority background to understand how we can help them to face unconscious bias and embracing diversities.

Benefits of this training:
- Contribute to creating values and equal opportunities
- Develop empathy to build connections
- Free others from prejudice and discrimination.

Building a diverse and inclusive workplace is how we can create the highest value for our people. It’s a collective issue, together minorities can impact change.

Open to: Women and Employees with Minority Background
Appendix B

Survey Items

Rate from ‘1=strongly disagree’ to ‘7=strongly agree’ the following statements. *If I was working for this company, I would think that*

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*Organization Citizenship Behaviour (Lee & Allen, 2002)*

1. Go out of the way to make newer employees feel welcome in the work group.
2. Show genuine concern and courtesy toward co-workers, even under the most trying business or personal situations.
3. Give up time to help others who have work or non-work problems.
4. Assist others with their duties.
5. Orient new people even though it is not required.
6. Not abuse the rights of others.
7. Attend functions, that are not required, but that help the company image.

*Resistance To Diversity (Biga, Marira & Shockley, 2011)*

1. Be considerate of co-worker’s group differences when I work with them.
2. Not allow other co-worker’s religious or cultural habits interfere with my work, even if it interfere with their ability to do their job correctly.
3. Find it hard to take orders from managers of certain ethnic, religious, age, or gender groups.
4. Work well with diverse co-workers.
5. Be able to connect with co-workers who are different from me.
6. Be able to establish working relationships with diverse co-workers.
7. Handle myself at work with others who are different from me.
40

138 respondents were categorized as missing values as they did not complete the survey.


For OCB the sum of squared loadings was 3.57. Factor loadings were: .46, .80, .83, .81, .75, .69, .58.

For resistance to diversity the sum of squared loadings was 3.47. Factor loadings were: .70, .74, .88, .90, .85.

For perceived discrimination the sum of squared loadings was 2.94. Factor loadings were: .66, .78, .76, .70, .82.

Perceived Discrimination by (James, Lovato & Cropanzano, 1994)

1. I could be unfairly singled out because of my membership to a group (ethnic/gender/sexual...).

2. Prejudice exists in this company.

3. In this company, all people are treated the same, regardless of their membership to a group (ethnic/gender/sexual...).

4. In this company, I feel socially isolated because of my belonging to a group (ethnic/gender/sexual...).

5. In this company, minority employees receive fewer opportunities.

6. There is no discrimination in this company.

7. Here, members of some groups are treated better than members of other groups.