

# Diversity and Inclusion Have Greater Support than Most Americans Think

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### **Abstract**

In a series of large-scale studies ( $N = 5,448$ ) we show that Americans across many different demographic categories vastly underestimate their fellow Americans' support for diversity and inclusion. Trump voters were particularly inaccurate when their task was to estimate prevalent attitudes among Biden voters. Our results show that the degree of underestimation of others' support for diversity and inclusion predicts the frequency of conversations about diversity, reduced intentions to behave inclusively, and a smaller likelihood of confronting discrimination. Our last two studies ( $N = 723$ ) demonstrate that it is possible to correct people's misperceptions through "social norms messaging," i.e., communications about statistics from national opinion polls highlighting that a majority of Americans are pro diversity. Our findings suggest that once people form accurate impressions of the high percentage of Americans who support diversity and inclusion, they will be more likely to be in favor of pro-diversity initiatives, behave more inclusively, and endorse policies aimed at reducing racial disparities.

### **Significance Statement**

Despite numerous efforts, progress in the reduction of racial disparities has been slow and members of marginalized group continue to be the target of discrimination and lack of inclusion. Our findings suggest that Americans drastically underestimate their fellow Americans' support for pro-diversity policies and that this misperception decreases their tendency to voice their own support for diversity, behave inclusively, or confront discrimination in public. Our research shows that "social norms messaging"—communications about the majority support for diversity and inclusion among people's peers—should be part of the toolbox of every diversity practitioner. Messages deploring widespread discrimination and rampant bias are likely to be less effective than messages that highlight peers' strong support for diversity and inclusion.

## **Introduction**

People's attitudes and behaviors are influenced by their perceptions of their peers' opinions and preferences. These perceptions in turn are shaped by sources of information such as statements that peers make, observation of peers' behaviors in public, and the media (1). But what happens when people draw incorrect inferences? Misperceiving one's peers' opinions and preferences—a phenomenon called “pluralistic ignorance”—has been shown to affect individual behavior in ways that can be detrimental to them and to society (2). In the present article we will show that Americans vastly underestimate their fellow citizens' pro-diversity attitudes and that this effect is prevalent in numerous socio-demographic categories. We also show that correcting people's misperceptions can lead to greater support for pro-diversity policies and more self-reported inclusive behaviors.

### **Pluralistic Ignorance**

Sometimes discrepancies develop between people's perceptions of their peers' level of agreement with a certain position and the actual level of peer agreement (3). There are many reasons that contribute to the emergence of this misperception, which is often referred to as “pluralistic ignorance” (4). We will describe each of the reasons in turn and explain how it might contribute to misperceptions in the diversity domain.

First, people make inferences about the prevalence of certain attitudes by observing others' public behavior, but public behavior is weakly reflective of an individuals' true attitudes (5). If there are few opportunities for individuals to publicly express their support for diversity initiatives, then observers may incorrectly conclude that others do not care about diversity and inclusion. If most friendly intergroup interactions take place in private, then people may develop the incorrect belief that only few of their peers engage in inclusive behaviors.

Second, certain behaviors are more noticeable and memorable than others, thus holding more weight in information processing and decision-making. Discriminatory acts “stick out,” whereas neutral or inclusive behaviors do not, similar to the negativity bias (6). People may be surprised by a co-worker who expresses dislike toward a particular marginalized group but may have no reaction to a person who states that equity for marginalized groups is important. Even worse, several weeks later people may remember the racist comment, but not the statement about equity.

Third, conversations with peers are a primary source of information. If people refrain from talking with others about important issues, they may end up developing misperceptions of prevalent attitudes. This pluralistic ignorance may then cause these individuals to talk even less to others about their opinions on the topic, a recursive cycle known as the “spiral of silence” (7). If conversations about diversity and inclusion are not commonplace within a community, the perception that others do not care about these topics is likely to develop.

Fourth, vocal numerical minorities have a disproportionate influence on people’s perceptions of peer attitudes. When a subgroup of individuals endorses a position that is not widely shared but communicates about it intensely, then this position appears more popular than it actually is (8). We know that those who oppose diversity training and policies that address systemic forms of inequality are a numerical minority, but if these individuals are very vocal about their anti-diversity attitudes, then the general public may perceive pro-diversity attitudes to be less common than they actually are.

Fifth, the media play a large role in how people understand public opinion. Leviston and colleagues (9) describe how systematic biases in media reporting of issues can lead to individuals misperceiving the popularity of certain opinions. Additionally, the ways in which ideas and

information about racial disparities are covered in media is known to shape public perceptions of causes and solutions for these disparities in important ways (10). If the media frequently highlight acts of discrimination but rarely report on the widespread support for diversity and inclusion, then consumers of these media are likely to develop the incorrect perception that most Americans consider diversity-related issues rather unimportant.

Pluralistic ignorance has detrimental consequences. One of these is behavioral conformity to the opinion that is incorrectly perceived as being normative. In 1931, Katz and Allport (11) surveyed White college fraternity members on their attitudes about admitting Black students and found that most had favorable attitudes but perceived their fellow members to have unfavorable attitudes. As a result, the majority of fraternity members voted against the admission of Black students. A more recent study found that individuals who underestimated others' concern over climate change were less likely to talk to others about climate change and that correcting this pluralistic ignorance led to increased willingness to discuss this topic (12).

Furthermore, pluralistic ignorance poses a threat to engagement in collective action when faced with a crisis (13). Because individuals rely on cues from others and their environments on how to behave in response to problems, inaction from others in the presence of a problem will signal to others that there is nothing to worry about and that action does not need to be taken (14). For example, pluralistic ignorance has been suggested as a potential explanation for why the US government has not enacted major policies to combat climate change (15). When individuals converse and learn about their peers' opinions on important topics, support for positive change can occur. For example, Nguyen et al. (16) found that social media discourse about the murder of George Floyd led to a decline in negative sentiments toward Black Americans, a greater awareness of structural racism, and a desire for social change.

Discrimination and lack of inclusion continue to be pervasive problems in the US. Could it be that pluralistic ignorance contributes to these problems, in addition to the known systemic factors that cause them? In the studies reported below, we examine the extent to which Americans misperceive their peers' support for diversity and inclusion.

### **Social Norms Messaging**

“Social norms messaging” has been shown to be an effective method to influence people's behavior. The strategy consists of highlighting a particular social norm—i.e., communicating information about what most other people approve of or do—with the goal to get people to engage in norm-consistent behavior (17). Social norms messaging has been shown to be effective for changing a wide variety of behaviors such as college binge drinking, driving under the influence, environmental sustainability, and inclusion in college classrooms (18, 19, 20, 21).

Based on this prior work, it appears likely that pluralistic ignorance about diversity and inclusion can be corrected with social norms messaging. By providing individuals with accurate information about their peers' support for diversity and inclusion, their misperceptions should be corrected, and the negative consequences of pluralistic ignorance should be mitigated (22). Our last two studies examine whether two types of social norms messaging, called “descriptive” and “dynamic,” effectively reduce pluralistic ignorance and lead to more self-reported inclusive behaviors.

### **Present Research**

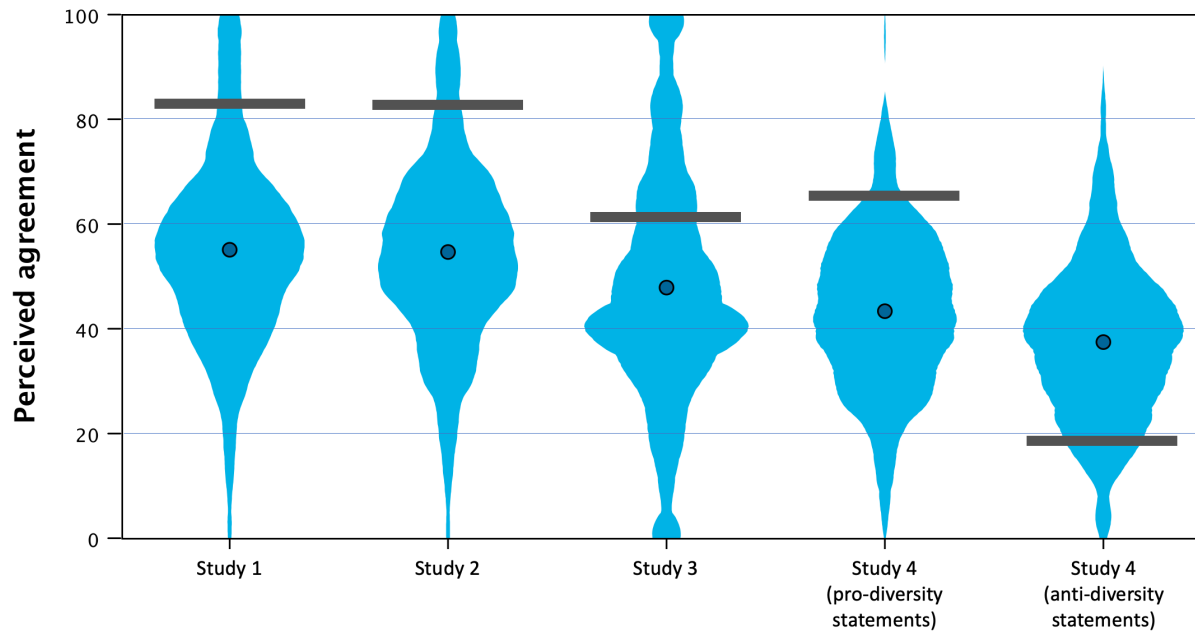
We conducted a series of studies to (a) examine how pluralistically ignorant Americans are regarding support for diversity and inclusion amongst fellow Americans, (b) identify potential predictors of these misperceptions, and (c) determine whether correcting the pluralistic

ignorance with social norms messaging results in greater support for diversity and inclusion and stronger intentions to speak up against discrimination. In Studies 1-5, we recruited large samples of US adults ( $N = 5,448$ ) on various online platforms and asked them to report both their own level of agreement with various diversity-related statements and the percentage of Americans they thought would agree with the same statements. Order was counterbalanced across participants and did not affect the results. We varied minor aspects of the Methods—e.g., the type and number of diversity statements, the response scale—from one study to the next to make sure that the observed effects were not due to methodological artifacts. We also varied the specific predictors of pluralistic ignorance that we assessed in each of the studies. In Studies 6 and 7 (total  $N = 724$ ) we exposed participants to national opinion survey results suggesting that support for diversity and inclusion is widespread among Americans and then measured both support for diversity and intentions to behave inclusively.

## Results

*Is there pluralistic ignorance with regard to diversity and inclusion?* In Study 1, participants recruited on Prolific—with quotas for age, race, and gender—vastly underestimated their peers' agreement with 15 pro-diversity statements. Averaged across the 15 statements, actual support was 82.26%, whereas perceived support was 55.09%, a 27.17% difference (see Fig. 1). We replicated this finding with a second Prolific sample (Study 2), where we observed a 27.61% difference between actual and perceived agreement. In Study 3, we recruited a Qualtrics sample that was representative of the US population, with quotas for age, race, gender, and political affiliation. The observed difference was 12.73% across the six diversity statements included in the study. Study 4 demonstrates that the effect is not limited to statements that endorse a position in favor of diversity and inclusion. Participants *underestimated* others'

**Fig 1. Participants' perceived agreement with the diversity statements in Studies 1-4.**



*Note.* All statements expressed a position in favor of diversity and inclusion, except in Study 4 where half of the statement communicated an anti-diversity position. The blue “violins” show participants’ perceived agreement averaged across the statements used in the study. The thick horizontal lines show actual agreement.

support for pro-diversity statements (difference = 25.10%) but they *overestimated* the support for anti-diversity statements (difference = 18.65%).

*What predicts pluralistic ignorance with regard to diversity and inclusion?* Most demographic variables were unrelated or weakly related to participants’ tendency to underestimate their fellow Americans’ support for diversity and inclusion, suggesting that pluralistic ignorance is a general phenomenon that is not limited to certain demographic groups. Pluralistic ignorance scores were virtually unrelated to gender identity, age, racial/ethnic identity, and geographical region (see Table 1). Members of marginalized racial/ethnic groups and

**Table 1. Pluralistic Ignorance Scores as a Function of Demographic Categories in Studies 1 to 3.**

|                                           | Study 1<br><i>M (SD)</i> | Study 2<br><i>M (SD)</i> | Study 3<br><i>M (SD)</i> |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Overall</b>                            | 27.17 (17.99)            | 27.61 (18.08)            | 12.73 (22.29)            |
| <b>Age</b>                                |                          |                          |                          |
| Young Adult (18-39)                       | 26.63 (16.38)            | 27.68 (17.08)            | 10.09 (22.79)            |
| Middle Adult (40-59)                      | 28.87 (19.25)            | 27.68 (19.08)            | 13.52 (23.13)            |
| Older Adult (60+)                         | 25.74 (18.65)            | 27.62 (19.04)            | 15.09 (20.75)            |
| <b>Gender</b>                             |                          |                          |                          |
| Men                                       | 27.82 (17.72)            | 27.89 (17.38)            | 14.21 (22.85)            |
| Women                                     | 26.38 (18.33)            | 27.25 (18.74)            | 11.55 (21.67)            |
| Non-Binary & Other                        | 34.22 (12.28)            | 29.37 (18.80)            | 5.95 (24.25)             |
| <b>Race &amp; Ethnicity</b>               |                          |                          |                          |
| Asian / Asian American                    | 23.63 (18.04)            | 31.31 (15.02)            | 8.29 (21.74)             |
| Black / African American                  | 25.35 (22.13)            | 23.73 (21.54)            | 5.36 (22.41)             |
| Hispanic / Latino/a/x                     | --                       | --                       | 8.39 (20.70)             |
| White                                     | 27.44 (17.19)            | 27.81 (17.17)            | 15.85 (21.73)            |
| Multiple Races/Ethnicities                | 29.96 (15.33)            | 30.64 (22.99)            | 8.49 (23.83)             |
| Other                                     | 26.37 (20.41)            | 26.70 (20.44)            | 12.76 (25.53)            |
| <b>Political Affiliation</b>              |                          |                          |                          |
| Republican                                | 33.12 (17.70)            | 33.84 (17.84)            | 17.40 (21.51)            |
| Independent                               | 28.25 (18.59)            | 29.00 (17.88)            | 13.93 (22.06)            |
| Democrat                                  | 24.39 (17.16)            | 24.63 (17.73)            | 7.16 (22.10)             |
| <b>Vote in 2020 Presidential Election</b> |                          |                          |                          |
| Donald Trump                              | 33.87 (18.47)            | 34.83 (17.19)            | 17.66 (21.59)            |
| Joe Biden                                 | 25.26 (17.45)            | 25.29 (17.99)            | 8.44 (21.54)             |
| Other                                     | 30.52 (14.23)            | 29.32 (16.35)            | 16.80 (21.18)            |
| Did not vote                              | 24.87 (18.34)            | 27.68 (17.83)            | 11.35 (23.50)            |
| <b>Region</b>                             |                          |                          |                          |
| Midwest                                   | 27.08 (17.59)            | 29.44 (17.41)            | 14.41 (21.03)            |
| Northeast                                 | 27.11 (17.17)            | 28.42 (17.65)            | 11.60 (21.67)            |
| South                                     | 26.90 (19.31)            | 25.53 (18.82)            | 11.95 (23.16)            |
| West                                      | 28.05 (15.94)            | 29.19 (17.33)            | 13.21 (22.30)            |

*Note.* Pluralistic Ignorance Scores were computed by subtracting participants' perceived agreement with the diversity statements from the percentage of Americans who actually agree with these statements. Higher values signal a greater degree of underestimation of others' support for diversity and inclusion.

Democrats were somewhat less pluralistically ignorant, but even these groups strongly underestimated their fellow Americans' support for diversity and inclusion.

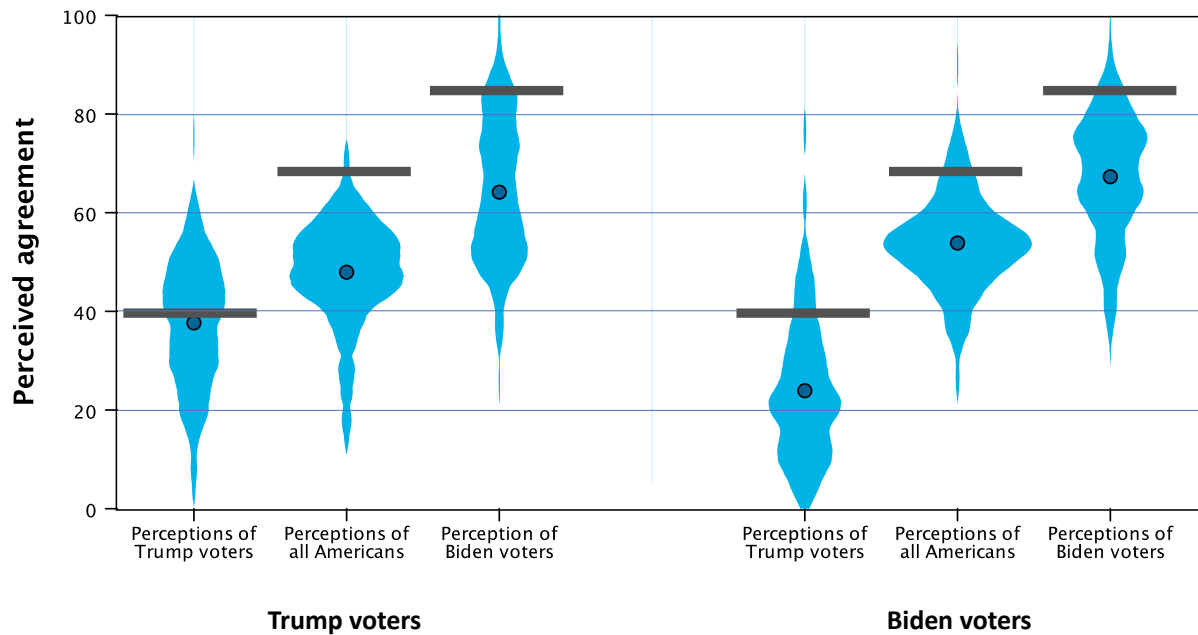
In Study 3, pluralistic ignorance was positively correlated with participants' scores on a Racism scale ( $r = .25$ ) and on a Sexism scale ( $r = .20$ ). The more participants rated their close peers to be liberal the less they underestimated support for diversity and inclusion ( $r = -.18$ ). Pluralistic ignorance was negatively correlated with consumption of liberal media ( $r = -.18$ ), exposure to media content related to diversity and inclusion ( $r = -.17$ ), and trust in media ( $r = -.24$ ). Those who perceived others to be more influenced by the media than themselves were also more pluralistically ignorant ( $r = .13$ ).

In Study 5 we recruited Trump voters and Biden voters and asked them to indicate their own support and their perceived support among either Trump voters or Biden voters. Results revealed that Trump voters more accurately estimated the (low level of) support for pro-diversity statements among other Trump voters, but vastly underestimated the (high level of) support among Biden voters (see Fig. 2). Biden voters moderately underestimated the level of support among both Trump voters and Biden voters.

Our findings also suggest that pluralistic ignorance may have important consequences. The more participants underestimated their fellow Americans' support for diversity and inclusion the less frequently they reported having conversations about topics related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and discrimination ( $r = -.17$ ), the less they intended to behave inclusively in the near future ( $r = -.23$ ), and the less they reported being likely to confront discrimination if they were to witness it ( $r = -.23$ ).

*What happens when pluralistic ignorance is corrected?* Participants played a two-truths-and-a-lie game in which they were unobtrusively exposed to recent statistics from national

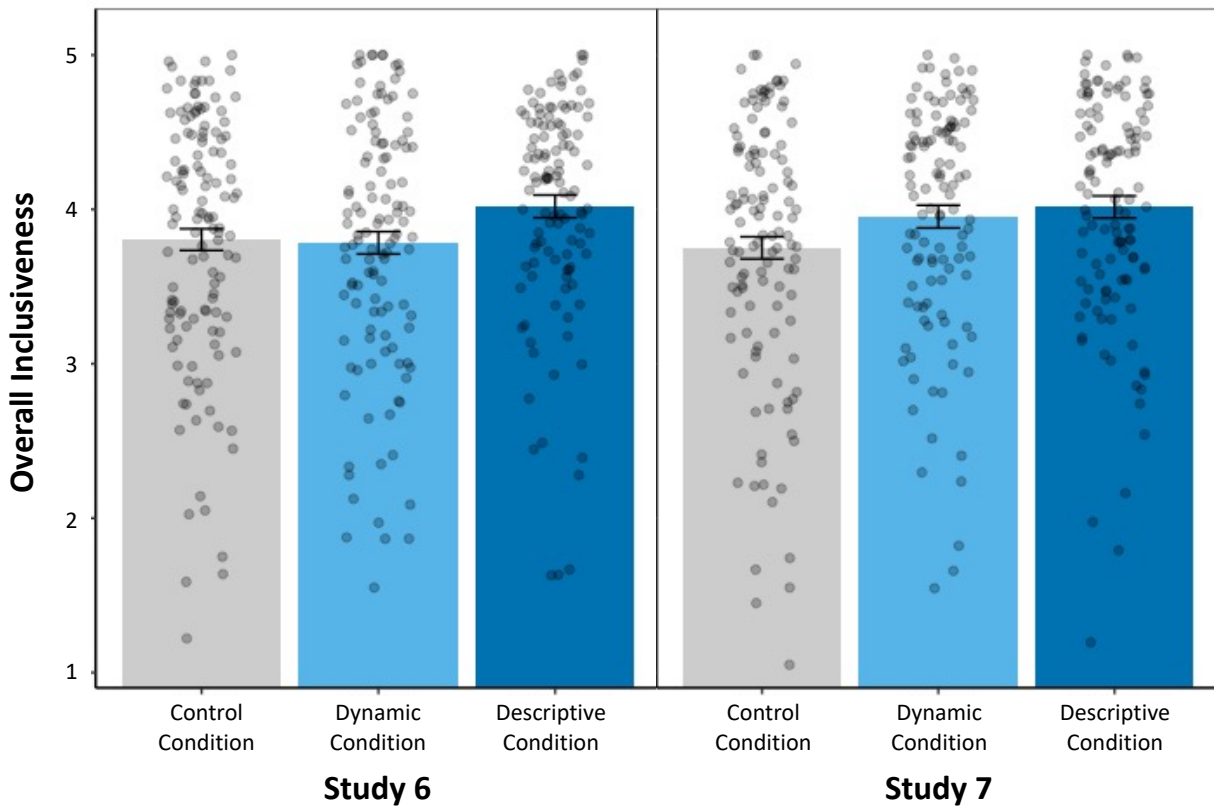
**Fig. 2. Participants’ perceived agreement with the diversity statements as a function of participant group (Trump voters vs. Biden voters) and target group (Trump voters vs. All Americans vs. Biden voters) in Studies 4 and 5.**



*Note.* All scores were recoded so that higher scores express more support for diversity and inclusion. The blue “violins” show participants’ perceived agreement averaged across the statements used in the study. The thick horizontal lines show actual agreement.

opinion surveys. They were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: (1) a control condition in which they saw statistics about life changes during the COVID-19 pandemic, (2) a dynamic norm condition in which the statistics suggested that support for diversity and inclusion has increased over recent years, and (3) a descriptive norm condition where the statistics communicated that a solid majority of Americans support diversity and inclusion. After playing the game, participants in the descriptive norm condition, and to some extent also those in the dynamic norm condition, scored higher on several indicators related to diversity and inclusion (see Fig. 3). For example, they valued diversity in the workplace more and reported increased

**Fig. 3 Participants' Overall Inclusiveness Scores as a function of experimental condition in Studies 6 and 7.**



*Note.* Participants were randomly assigned to either a control condition, a dynamic condition (support for diversity and inclusion is increasing), or a descriptive condition (support for diversity and inclusion is high). The Overall Inclusiveness Score is the average of participants' scores on several self-report scales assessing inclusiveness (e.g., interest in other social groups, inclusive behavioral intentions). The error bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Study 6 was conducted in Democratic states (where there is strong support for diversity and inclusion), Study 7 in Republican states (where there is less strong support for diversity and inclusion).

intentions to confront discrimination. The effect occurred in both democratic-leaning states (Study 6) and Republican-leaning states (Study 7).

### Discussion

The seven studies provide strong evidence for the idea that Americans tend to underestimate their fellow Americans' support for diversity and inclusion. The effect held across

a large variety of diversity-related topics including abstract vs. concrete claims, as well as pro-diversity and anti-diversity statements. Furthermore, individuals from the age groups, gender groups, racial/ethnic groups, geographical regions, and political affiliations assessed in our study underestimated support. Pluralistic ignorance related to diversity and inclusion is a general phenomenon that cuts across demographic categories.

Although our correlational findings prevent us from drawing causal conclusions, the additional variables we measured in the studies nevertheless provide some insights in the psychological factors that contribute to this phenomenon. Individuals with high pluralistic ignorance scores tend to be conservative, are rarely exposed to media content related to diversity and inclusion, do not trust the media, and score high on scales that measure racism and sexism. Additionally, Trump voters tend to be more accurate at predicting support for DEI among other Trump voters, but are worse at predicting support among Biden voters, whereas Biden voters were more similarly inaccurate at predicting support among Trump and Biden voters.

Pluralistic ignorance has important consequences: Pluralistically ignorant individuals are less motivated to behave inclusively or to speak up when they witness discrimination. They also have fewer conversations about diversity, consistent with the “spiral of silence” phenomenon where people become increasingly ignorant because they rarely hear others’ opinions and thus fail to update their incorrect beliefs about others (7).

When people learn about the widespread support for diversity and inclusion, they change their own attitudes about these issues. After being exposed to actual survey data from national opinion polls, our participants scored higher on a variety of indicators related to diversity and inclusion. In other words, correcting people’s pluralistic ignorance has important beneficial effects.

Our research is not without limitations. We do not know for example if we accurately measured Americans' actual level of support for the various diversity-related statements. Even though the demographic distribution of our samples resembled that of the US population, there is no doubt that participants on online platforms are not representative of all Americans. It should be noted, however, that pluralistic ignorance was present in all socio-demographic categories that we measured, suggesting that the phenomenon was not limited to individuals who were over-represented in our samples. It could be that Americans' actual support is lower than they self-report, which could be due to biased responding. We consider this possibility unlikely given that there was pluralistic ignorance even for pro-diversity items with which only a numerical minority of respondents agreed (i.e., for which it was "descriptively normative" to disagree) and for items that communicated an anti-diversity position. In sum, although it is unlikely that respondents overreporting their actual agreement accounts for the observed findings, our studies do not allow us to categorically exclude this alternative interpretation.

From the research presented in this article, it is evident that pluralistic ignorance about diversity and inclusion is an important phenomenon to highlight in the grander scope of understanding the underlying factors that maintain current intergroup relations. Specifically, rather than focusing our attention on attempting to change intergroup attitudes by providing information or raising awareness, which has been the dominant approach to addressing issues of intergroup relations for decades, it may be fruitful to investigate how changes to one's environment and information sources mitigate the "value-action gap" between good intergroup attitudes and a lack of inclusive behavior (23). Our research shows that most Americans support diversity and inclusion efforts to some degree. However, engagement in inclusive behavior and confidence to speak up against discrimination is hindered in part by perceptions that these

actions are not widely supported by one's peers. By locating environmental cues and information sources that correct this underestimation of support among one's peers, we will develop a better understanding for why and how discrimination persists in society.

Future research may want to consider the potential role of "prototypicality biases" in pluralistic ignorance. Research shows that individuals tend to think of White men when asked to make judgments about "Americans" (24). To what extent can people's ignorance about support for diversity and inclusion be corrected by encouraging them to think about the social identities of all Americans (25)? It would also be of interest to determine the role of motivated reasoning and attitude strength in pluralistic ignorance. Some individuals may be motivated to believe that support for diversity and inclusion is low because they want to maintain existing power structures or feel concerned about resources and opportunities being taken away from them. Other individuals, especially those belonging to marginalized groups, may have lived experiences that caused them to develop rather strong attitudes about diversity and inclusion, and these attitudes are unlikely to be influenced by information about what other Americans think. Finally, future studies should examine experimentally if pluralistic ignorance has a causal impact on actual discriminatory or inclusive behaviors.

Furthermore, the current research provides insight into a potential mechanism that explains why social norms interventions are effective at improving intergroup relations (19). These interventions are theorized to affect norm-conforming behavior change by making social norms salient (18). However, another potential explanation for their effect is that social norms interventions correct misperceptions of widespread beliefs and attitudes among one's peers. Thus, the effectiveness for social norms interventions to promote inclusive behaviors may be due to individuals realizing how widespread support for diversity and inclusion is among their peers,

that they will gain social approval for behaving inclusively, and that others will support them when they speak up against discrimination.

It seems that those with favorable attitudes toward diversity have not succeeded in communicating to the wider public their commitment to inclusion and their support for pro-diversity initiatives. The individuals with less favorable attitudes—a numerical minority—not only are the most pluralistically ignorant, but they also seem to be more vocal and thus have a disproportionate influence on Americans’ perceptions of their fellow citizens’ attitudes. Our findings suggest an agenda for the future: Our goal should be to communicate about the actual high percentages of support for diversity and inclusion. By helping people to form accurate impressions of their peers’ pro-diversity attitudes, we will interrupt the “spiral of silence” and, consequently, get people to behave in a more inclusive manner and be more willing to put resources into policies that reduce systemic disparities between marginalized and non-marginalized groups.

### **Materials and Methods**

The protocols for all seven studies received ethics approval from the Minimal Risk Research Institutional Review Board (formerly the Education and Social/Behavioral Science Institutional Review Board) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. All research was performed in accordance with relevant guidelines and regulations. Informed consent was obtained from all subjects prior to their participation.

#### **Study 1.**

Participants were 1,001 US adults recruited through Prolific with quotas for age, race, and gender. The distribution of the demographic characteristics in the sample was similar to that in the US population except for political affiliation. With 50.50% of the respondents identifying

as Democrats, individuals with progressive views were overrepresented in our sample. In an online survey, participants were presented with 15 statements expressing favorable opinions about diversity and inclusion in the US. Two sample items are “Racial diversity benefits the country” and “It is okay with me if my state taxes are used for college scholarships for students from minority groups so that they can attend the state’s public university.” Participants were asked to (a) indicate their agreement with each statement (agree/disagree) and (b) estimate the percent of the US adult population who would agree with each of the statements (0-100%). The order of the two tasks and the order of the 15 statements within each task were counterbalanced across participants. For the correlational analyses we computed a pluralistic ignorance score by subtracting the participants’ estimated agreement from the actual agreement for each statement and then averaging across statements. A positive value on this score means that the respondent underestimates Americans’ support for diversity and inclusion. Participants were also asked to respond to questions regarding the political affiliation of their community and the extent to which their community was diverse. We measured a variety of demographic variables including participants’ political affiliation.

## **Study 2.**

Study 2 was an exact replication of Study 1 ( $N = 997$ ), but we measured four additional constructs at the end: frequency of conversations (about diversity-related topics), political affiliation of close peers, media influence on others (relative to oneself), and the portrayal of minority groups by media.

## **Study 3.**

Study 3 was a replication of Studies 1 and 2 with some notable exceptions ( $N = 2,010$ ). Participants were recruited through a Qualtrics Panel, and in addition to quotas for age, race, and

gender, we also included quotas for political affiliation (7 categories ranging from strongly Republican to strongly Democrat). We used 6 of the 15 diversity statements from Studies 1 and 2. For each statement participants indicated their agreement on a scale with five response options, “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Neither disagree nor agree,” “Somewhat agree,” and “Strongly agree.” They also estimated the percentage of Americans who would choose each of the five response options for each of the six items. We computed a pluralistic ignorance score by subtracting the participants’ estimated agreement (estimated percentage of Americans who chose either “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree”) from the actual agreement (percentage of participants who chose either of these two response options) and then averaged across statements. Like in Study 2 we measured several other constructs at the end: self-reported conservative and liberal media use, diversity media exposure, discrimination is serious (as portrayed by media), trust in media, anti-DEI media bias, anti-liberal media bias, confront discrimination, and inclusive behavior. We also included the Modern Racism Scale (26) and the Modern Sexism Scale (27).

#### **Study 4.**

The study was a modified replication of Studies 1-3. It included 497 US adult respondents from Prolific who were asked to report their own agreement and estimate Americans’ agreement to 10 new diversity-related statements, again using the five-point response scale (as in Study 3). Five of these statements were supportive of diversity and inclusion (i.e., pro-diversity, e.g., “I would confront a friend if they were ever being racist toward another person”) and five were not supportive—or critical—of diversity and inclusion (i.e., anti-diversity, e.g., “Minority groups receive more resources than they deserve, thus we don’t need any more policies that benefit them”). For each statement participants rated their own agreement

(on a 5-point scale from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree,” see Study 3) and indicated the percentage of Americans they thought would choose the response options “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” (0-100%). The pluralistic ignorance scores were computed so that higher values represent *underestimation* of Americans’ agreement with pro-diversity statements and *overestimation* of Americans’ agreement with anti-diversity statements.

### **Study 5.**

Study 5 was similar to Study 4. We recruited a sample of 943 Prolific respondents who had voted for either Trump or Biden in the 2020 Presidential Election (455 Trump voters and 488 Biden voters). We used the same 10 statements from Study 4, half of which were pro-diversity and half were anti-diversity. Participants were randomly assigned to estimate the agreement of either Trump voters or Biden voters, using the same percentage scale as in Study 4 (0-100%). The study thus had a 2 (participant group: Trump voters vs. Biden voters) x 2 (target group: Trump voters vs. Biden voters) design with both factors varying between participants. All participants also rated their own agreement with the ten statements using the same 5-point scales as in Studies 3 and 4. Pluralistic ignorance scores were computed as in Study 4.

### **Study 6.**

We recruited 367 White US adults who resided in states that voted for Biden in the 2020 Presidential Election on Prolific. Participants were led to believe that they were taking part in two separate studies. According to the consent form the first study examined whether participants could accurately identify trends and opinions in the US. Participants played a Two Truths and One Lie game in which they repeatedly had to identify the one incorrect statement in a group of three statements. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three versions of the game: In the “descriptive condition,” participants were exposed to recent statistics from opinion

polls suggesting that a majority of US adults are supportive of diversity and inclusion. In each round, participants saw three statements, two statements that accurately reported majority support for diversity and inclusion and one statement that incorrectly reported that only a numerical minority of US Americans support a particular diversity-related cause. Participants' task was to identify the correct and incorrect statements by dragging two of the statements to the "Truth Box" and one statement to the "False Box" on the screen. After participants had made their choice, they saw the answer key: All three statements were shown again, the two true statements were labeled as correct, whereas the false statement was labeled as incorrect and the correct (i.e., high) percentage of Americans supporting the diversity-related cause was reported. The answer key also contained hyperlinks to the official webpage with the survey results so that participants could verify the reported percentages if they wanted to. There were 3 rounds of this task, so participants were exposed in total to 9 statistics all suggesting that a majority of Americans support diversity and inclusion. The procedure for participants in the "dynamic condition" was virtually identical except that they were exposed to statistics suggesting that an intermediate percentage of US Americans are supportive of diversity and inclusion but that this number has increased in recent years. Participants in the "control condition" saw statistics describing ways in which Americans changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants were then directed toward a Qualtrics survey labelled as "Study 2." We assessed the following constructs indicative of pro-diversity commitment: Intergroup anxiety, allophilia (i.e., positive attitudes toward outgroups) (28), confront discrimination, discrimination concern, workplace diversity, outgroup curiosity, and inclusive behaviors. We also included two behavioral measures of inclusion: Participants were encouraged to post a pro-diversity message on social media and had the opportunity to click on a link to a webpage on how to be inclusive.

**Study 7.**

This study was an exact replication of Study 6 with one minor change. Participants were 356 White US adults who resided in states that voted for Trump in the 2020 Presidential Election on Prolific.

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