

The Impact of Method, Motivation, and Empathy on Diversity Training Effectiveness

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Abstract

Purpose The purpose of this paper is to examine method, motivation, and individual difference variables as they impact the effectiveness of a diversity training program in a field setting.

Design We conducted a longitudinal field experiment in which participants ($N = 118$) were randomly assigned to participate in one of three diversity training methods (perspective taking vs. goal setting vs. stereotype discrediting). Eight months after training, dependent measures on diversity-related motivations, attitudes and behaviors were collected.

Findings Results suggest the effectiveness of diversity training can be enhanced by increasing motivation in carefully framed and designed programs. Specifically, self-reported behaviors toward LGB individuals were positively impacted by perspective taking. Training effects were mediated by internal motivation to respond without prejudice, and the model was moderated by trainee empathy.

Implications These findings serve to demonstrate that diversity training participants react differently to certain training methods. Additionally, this study indicates that taking the perspective of others may have a lasting positive effect on diversity-related outcomes by increasing individuals' internal motivation to respond without prejudice. These effects may be particularly powerful for training participants who are low in dispositional empathy.

Originality/Value This study is among the first to examine trainee reactions to diversity training exercises focused on different targets using different training methods. Additionally, we identify an important mediator (internal motivation to respond without prejudice) and boundary condition (trainee empathy) for examining diversity training effectiveness.

Keywords Diversity training · Motivation · Empathy · Perspective taking · Goal setting · Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) populations

Introduction

Organizations depend on employees to effectively interact with people who are different from themselves. Indeed, diversity in the U. S. workplace has steadily increased over the past 50 years; the workforce is now comprised roughly equal amounts of men and women, and the number of Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, and older employees in the workplace continues to grow (Toosie 2006). The most common response by organizations to this substantial change has been to institute diversity training programs—approximately two thirds of human resource managers report using diversity training in their companies (Esen 2005). As a result, a critical emergent question is how diversity training can be successfully leveraged. The answer to this question, however, remains elusive. A recent review suggested that the most common approaches to diversity training might not be effective in accomplishing organizational goals (Bezrukova et al. 2012). Indeed, recent research has demonstrated that diversity training methods, if not framed appropriately, can actually lead to increases in both implicit and explicit expressions of

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prejudice (Legault et al. 2011). Thus, the aim of this paper will be to investigate the often asked but seldom answered question: How can diversity training programs be designed effectively?

Accordingly, we investigate whether certain diversity training methods are more effective than others. Specifically, we will compare diversity-related perspective taking, goal setting, and stereotype discrediting methods as they relate to diversity training effectiveness. We offer theoretical rationale for why the perspective taking and goal setting methods may be more effective than the stereotype discrediting methodology. In doing so, we provide a comparison of prominent social and organizational psychology theories to examine their explanatory power in the realm of diversity training. We will also test a potential explanatory mechanism and a potential boundary condition. Specifically, we will investigate internal motivation to respond without prejudice as a potential mediator that explains the effect of diversity training methods on diversity-related outcomes. Additionally, we examine empathy of the participants as a potential moderator of these effects. We hypothesize that while diversity training may be relatively effective for individuals low in empathy, it may not be as effective for highly empathetic individuals. In sum, we hypothesize a moderated mediation model wherein internal motivation to suppress prejudice mediates the relationship between diversity training and its outcomes, but these effects are moderated by the empathy of training participants.

In addition to the practical contribution of providing recommendations on how to effectively carry out diversity training initiatives, this paper will make important contributions to diversity management theory. Given that trainee individual differences have been identified as an important factor to consider in the training literature more broadly (Brown 2006), we think it is important to consider such characteristics in a diversity training context as well. Indeed, previous reviews have called for this addition to the diversity training literature (Bezrukova et al. 2012). Individual differences in responsiveness to training may be particularly relevant in the case of diversity training, given that reactions to such training vary substantially. Additionally, decidedly few studies have been able to identify mediators that can explain the relative effectiveness of a given diversity training exercise. If we are to truly gain a better understanding of diversity training, we must begin to uncover explanatory mechanisms for why some training exercises produce desired attitudes and behaviors while others do not. We address this gap in the literature while measuring our mediator and outcomes in the long-term, which is also rare in diversity training research (see Kulik and Roberson 2008). Thus, in conducting this study, we hope to unveil not only the relative effectiveness of

diversity training methods, but also why and for whom they are effective when they do indeed work as intended.

Comparison of Diversity Training Methods

Diversity training can be defined as any program designed to facilitate positive intergroup interaction, reduce prejudice and discrimination, and generally teach dissimilar others how to work together effectively (Bezrukova et al. 2012). Within this broad definition, different implementations of diversity training programs vary greatly. Accordingly, this paper will attempt to compare the effectiveness of several different methods that can be used to carry out target-specific diversity training. The three methods discussed—perspective taking, goal setting, and stereotype discrediting—are all interactive methods that call attention to a specific stigmatized group, but each method is based on a different theoretical background. By comparing these methods to each other, we hope to provide a test of the relative explanatory power of these theoretical viewpoints in the diversity training domain.

In a qualitative review of the effects of diversity training on relevant training outcomes, Kulik and Roberson (2008) concluded that while diversity training is generally effective in terms of improving overall attitudes toward diversity, effects are far more variable when it comes to attitudes toward specific stigmatized groups. Similarly, the authors conclude that while trainees generally perceive themselves as having higher skill levels for interacting with diverse populations after training has taken place, there has not been overwhelming evidence that diversity training exercises actually improve behaviors toward stigmatized groups (Kulik and Roberson 2008). Given that the goal of diversity training initiatives is to improve diversity-related attitudes and behaviors in an effort to help dissimilar individuals work harmoniously with one another (Bezrukova et al. 2012), these inconsistent findings are somewhat troubling for diversity training science and practice.

We would argue that one potential explanation for these inconsistent findings is that outcomes measured after diversity training do not always (or even often) match the level of specificity of the training exercise that was used. With this in mind, it is not surprising that general attitudes and perceived diversity skill have received the most support as outcomes of diversity training, given that most training exercises err on the side of inclusion and focus on diversity as a general topic of interest, as opposed to focusing on specific stigmatized groups (Bezrukova et al. 2012). On the other hand, goal setting and perspective taking are more focused activities and thus should be able to produce more specific and favorable outcomes of interest. Another thing to consider when discussing the

outcomes of diversity training exercises is when outcome measures are collected. The role of time has been all but ignored in the diversity training literature thus far, with most diversity training evaluations utilizing laboratory studies and cross-sectional designs. However, there is empirical work to suggest that goal setting may be effective over longer periods of time (Madera et al. 2013). Thus, we hoped to extend these findings to perspective taking while incorporating a rarely used lagged design in an experimental field study.

Perspective Taking

Perspective taking can be defined as actively considering the psychological experiences of others, with an emphasis on how those experiences may differ from our own (Todd et al. 2011). Within a social identity theory (Tajfel 1986) framework, perspective taking is thought to be effective because it breaks down psychological barriers between in-groups and out-groups. Indeed, individuals tend to categorize themselves and others into in-groups and out-groups based on meaningful social variables such as ethnicity and sexual orientation (Hogg and Terry 2000). Although this categorization process has the potential to improve in-group self-esteem via social comparison (Tajfel 1986), it also has the potential to produce in-group favoritism and bias toward out-groups that could result in prejudice and ostracism (Dudley and Mulvey 2009). Thus, perspective taking reduces prejudice by requiring individuals to think about what it would be like to be a member of a different group, which serves to break down in-group versus out-group barriers and more generally reduces an “us versus them” mentality (Galinsky et al. 2005).

Indeed, research indicates that taking the perspective of another person can lead trainees to view others more positively. For example, one study found that when people took the perspective of an individual from a stigmatized group, they tended to express more positive attitudes toward that group overall (Batson et al. 1997). Another study replicated this finding and also found that taking the perspective of a stigmatized individual decreased the extent to which participants used stereotypes to judge members of that group (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000). In addition to its effects on attitudes and stereotypes, perspective taking can also influence behavior; one study of contextual workplace performance showed that taking the perspective of others led to cooperative workplace behaviors (Parker and Axtell 2001). Overall, perspective taking has been shown to improve attitudes toward ethnic minorities, the elderly, and other stigmatized populations (Dovidio et al. 2004; Galinsky and Ku 2004). It follows that integrating this method into diversity training should be relatively effective (when compared to other training methods) in

terms of positive attitudes toward ethnic minority as well as lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals.

Goal Setting

The next method we will investigate is one in which participants set diversity-related goals involving a specific stigmatized group. Goal setting theory states that performance will be improved to the extent that participants set specific and challenging but achievable goals (Locke et al. 1981). In diversity training, goal setting theory can be incorporated by asking trainees to set high quality goals aimed at promoting diversity within an organization. Goals are thought to have their positive effect by driving motivation and guiding behavior (Locke and Latham 1990). Importantly, goals are also thought to be an effective transfer of training strategy that can enhance or at least retain the effectiveness of a training session long after it has concluded (Latham 1997). This is of particular importance in the realm of diversity training, where training sessions are generally few and far between.

Empirical work has demonstrated the effectiveness of goal setting in diversity training and more general training contexts. Specifically, goal setting has been shown to produce positive changes in leadership and interpersonal skills training (Wexley and Nemeroff 1975) and time management skills training (Wexley and Baldwin 1986). Additionally, goal setting 3 months after an initial training has been shown to enhance the effectiveness of safety training 9 months after the initial training had taken place (Reber and Wallin 1984), indicating the potential of this strategy to produce long-lasting attitude and behavior change. The use of goal setting to promote diversity is supported by a recent study in which students were asked to set goals promoting acceptance of LGB individuals in addition to receiving standard diversity training while other students only received the standard training. Results after 3 months showed that students who had participated in the goal setting training exhibited more behaviors promoting the acceptance of LGB individuals. After 8 months, trainees also reported more positive attitudes toward LGB individuals (Madera et al. 2013). In this paper, we will use similar procedures to apply goal setting theory to diversity training. Based on the results of the aforementioned studies and theory surrounding goal setting, we expect diversity-related goal setting to be a relatively effective method (when compared to other training methods) associated with favorable diversity-related attitudes and behaviors.

Stereotype Discrediting

The final diversity training method that we will investigate involves asking trainees to actively engage in discrediting

common stereotypes about a given stigmatized group. Classic social psychological theory and evidence suggest that making arguments that are inconsistent with one's own beliefs can lead to attitude change (e.g., Janis and King 1954). Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) explained this phenomenon using cognitive dissonance theory, which states that a discrepancy between attitudes and behaviors will cause an individual to change over time so that behaviors and attitudes become more concordant (Festiner 1957). Based on these findings, one might conclude that actively discrediting stereotypes via diversity training may be an effective method of reducing prejudiced attitudes against stigmatized groups. However, research on attitude change indicates that strongly held attitudes are more difficult to change using such direct methods than weaker attitudes (see Bohner and Dickel 2011). Given that stereotypes are likely strong attitudes held by many individuals, one might begin to question whether stereotype discrediting would work as intended.

Furthermore, theory surrounding stereotype suppression cautions against implementing stereotype discrediting as a diversity training method. From this perspective, a stereotype discrediting method actually prompts trainees to suppress stereotypes that have been previously wired into their cognitions. In other words, stereotype discrediting does not actually result in the modifying of stereotypes; rather, it results in suppressing stereotypes and casting them off as untrue. Although thought suppression is possible, most research suggests that suppressing stereotypes is not a particularly effective method of reducing prejudice over time (e.g., Macrae et al. 1994). The justification suppression model of prejudice explains that individuals often make attempts to suppress their prejudices. People do this because of internal pressures, such as a desire to have an egalitarian self-image, as well as external pressures, such as the desire to be politically correct around others. However, people tend to develop justifications for their prejudices over time, which will ultimately override suppression and lead them to express these prejudiced attitudes (Crandall and Eshleman 2003). Additionally, external motivators (such as being asked to discredit a stereotype that one holds) to suppress prejudice have been shown to lead to increases in prejudice in other diversity training research (Legault et al. 2011). Thus, in general it seems as though people are able to suppress their prejudices, but they cannot do so over an extended period of time.

Empirical studies on prejudice and stereotype suppression demonstrate the fallibility of suppression as a prejudice reduction strategy. For example, one experiment found evidence of a rebound effect after prejudice suppression such that stereotypes were held to an even greater extent after participants' had tried to suppress them (Macrae et al. 1994). In the experiment, participants who

were asked to suppress their stereotypes of skinheads exhibited more implicit prejudice as compared to individuals who were not asked to suppress their prejudices. Thus, although it is possible that stereotype discrediting may lead to a decrease in prejudice in the short-term due to engagement in active argument, the fact that this strategy relies on prejudice suppression suggests that this method will not be as effective as time passes or when compared to perspective taking and goal setting.

Hypothesis 1 Training methods involving perspective taking and goal setting will be associated with more favorable diversity-related attitudes and behaviors when compared to the stereotype discrediting method.

How Diversity Training Methods Impact Outcomes

If the overarching goal of diversity training programs is to get people who are meaningfully different from each other to have more supportive attitudes and behaviors toward one another, a more proximal goal might be to change motivations to have such attitudes and engage in such behaviors. Indeed, improving individuals' motivation to successfully interact with differing others is actually listed as a goal outcome in the definition of diversity training provided by Bezrukova et al. (2012). Importantly, we focus on internal motivation to respond without prejudice, which can be defined as responding without prejudice due to one's own egalitarian beliefs (Plant and Devine 1998). On the other hand, external motivation to respond without prejudice can be defined as responding without prejudice due to external constraints such as laws and norms preventing the expression of prejudice (Plant and Devine 1998). Promoting external motivation to respond without prejudice has actually been shown to increase expressions of prejudice (see Legault et al. 2011), and thus should not be a focus of successful diversity training programs.

Two of the diversity training methods of focus here should promote internal motivation to respond without prejudice through their promotion of egalitarian values and beliefs. First, an individual who sets a goal to respond with less prejudice toward a given stigmatized group should theoretically be internally motivated to respond without prejudice to meet their own goal, which should then be associated with favorable diversity-related attitudes and behaviors. Indeed, previous research has shown that setting goals can lead to an increase in intrinsic motivation to accomplish those goals (Harackiewicz and Elliot 1993). Previous work has also shown that internal motivation to respond without prejudice is related to more positive diversity-related attitudes (Ratcliff et al. 2006). Thus, we hope to extend these findings to a diversity training context

in a more comprehensive mediation model. Second, an individual who takes the perspective of a stigmatized individual should be internally motivated to respond without prejudice as a result of having that new perspective. We reason that taking the perspective of a stigmatized individual will invoke trainees' egalitarian self-concept, which should serve to internally motivate them to respond without any prejudices that they may have to avoid potential cognitive dissonance (Festiner 1957). In turn, this internal motivation to respond without prejudice should be associated with favorable diversity-related attitudes and behaviors by motivating people to respond to stigmatized individuals in an egalitarian manner. Indeed, internal motivation to respond without prejudice has been shown to be predictive of positive diversity-related attitudes in previous research (e.g., Ratcliff et al. 2006). Based on the rationale above, we anticipate that internal motivation to respond without prejudice will serve as a partial mediator between successful diversity training methods and diversity-related outcomes. More formally, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2 Internal motivation to respond without prejudice will partially mediate the relationships between diversity training methods and diversity-related attitudes and behaviors.

Individual Differences in Responsiveness to Diversity Training

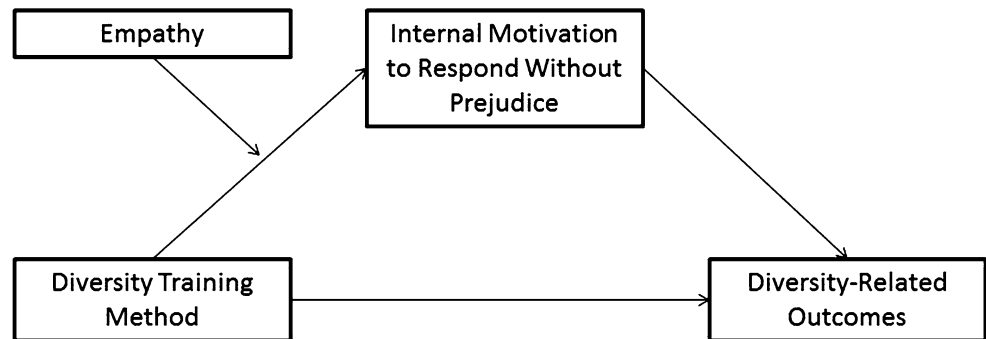
The final question this paper will address is whether individual differences may alter the effectiveness of the different diversity training methods discussed above. Individual differences have been identified as an important factor to consider in the general training literature. For instance, one study found that individual differences such as goal orientation and learning self-efficacy predicted training performance (Brown 2006). Despite these findings, diversity training researchers have largely ignored trainee characteristics as an important input variable that can alter training effectiveness. Indeed, a recent review revealed that only five studies have been conducted examining the effects of trainee characteristics other than demographics (see Bezrukova et al. 2012). However, research and theory on empathy provide some direction as to which types of individuals may be more responsive to certain types of diversity training methods.

Empathy is a dispositional construct that captures the capacity to understand others' emotions and experiences. Empathy has repeatedly been shown to negatively relate to expression of prejudice (see Bäckström and Björklund 2007). Thus, people low in empathy tend to express more

prejudice when compared to those who are higher in empathy. In terms of our current model, it stands to reason that highly empathetic people are aware of and attuned to the needs of diverse populations. These people would not stand to benefit from diversity training because their awareness of others' needs should motivate them to respond without prejudice. Thus, the previously hypothesized mediation effect may not hold for these individuals because they are already motivated to respond without prejudice based on their egalitarian attitudes. On the other hand, individuals who are low in empathy may need to be prompted by diversity training to enhance understanding and awareness of the experiences of diverse populations. Indeed, these individuals should show the previously hypothesized mediation effect in that they would need to have their internal motivation to respond without prejudice promoted by diversity training before this motivation could show a beneficial association with diversity-related attitudes and behaviors. Previous work has shown that taking the perspective of others can lead to an increase in *state* empathy (Madera et al. 2011), which should be more beneficial for those low in dispositional empathy than those who are high on this trait. Thus, we believe individuals who are low in dispositional empathy stand to benefit the most from diversity training methods aimed at improving their diversity-related attitudes and behaviors through their influence on internal motivation to respond without prejudice. More formally, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3 Empathy will moderate the mediating role of internal motivation to respond without prejudice, such that the indirect effect will exist for those who are low in empathy, but not for those who are high in empathy.

In sum, we propose a first stage moderated mediation model in which diversity training methods impact diversity-related outcomes through their influence on internal motivations to respond without prejudice, but this indirect relationship is moderated by the empathy of diversity training participants (see Fig. 1). We test this model using diversity training sessions focused on African Americans and LGB individuals in order to examine any differences and/or crossover effects. This contribution should not be overlooked, as this will unveil whether positive effects of diversity initiatives can generalize across different training methods and different targets of prejudice. For example, it may be the case that taking the perspective of one stigmatized group causes one to engage in more perspective taking toward other stigmatized groups, leading to a positive crossover effect. Similarly, it may be the case that training focused on stigmatized groups with concealable stigmas (e.g., LGB individuals) could expand the way training participants think about diversity, leading to more

Fig. 1 Model of hypotheses

positive crossover when compared to training focused on more classically studied stigmas such as gender and race differences. While we do not think enough work has been conducted to develop specific hypotheses for these potential crossover effects, we believe this is an important research question that our work is uniquely positioned to begin answering. Indeed, recent reviews (see Lindsey et al. 2013; Ruggs et al. 2013) have called for a better understanding of prejudice reduction strategies for stigmatized individuals that vary based on Goffman's (1963) theoretical dimension of visibility.

Method

Participants

The original sample consisted of 493 incoming freshmen at a Southern university in 2006. The sample was 69 % female and 93 % heterosexual. In terms of ethnicity, the sample was 67 % White, 15 % Asian, 5 % Black, 5 % Hispanic, and 8 % were of another ethnicity. No compensation was provided for participation in this study. The final sample consisted of 118 students (a 24 % retention rate) who were 61 % female and 93 % heterosexual. In terms of ethnicity, the final sample was 62 % White, 12 % Asian, 10 % Black, 6 % Hispanic, and 10 % were of another ethnicity. Although we encountered substantial attrition due to measuring our outcome variables 8 months post-training, this attrition appears to have been largely random, as indicated by the fact that the training completion percentage was comparable across conditions. More specifically, while 23 % of participants in the goal setting and stereotype discrediting conditions completed the study, roughly 25 % of participants in the perspective taking condition completed the study. Additionally, 24 % of participants in the LGB condition completed the study, while 25 % of participants in the African American condition completed the study.

Procedure

This study involved three time points. First, all incoming students were contacted via email prior to their arrival at the university and asked to complete an online survey, which included our measure of empathy. Second, all incoming students were required to attend a two-hour standard diversity workshop during their orientation to the university. The training was developed and delivered by students and the same trainers were used across all conditions. Additionally, the trainers were diverse with regard to ethnicity and sexual orientation. In the first 15 min of the training, trainees were randomly assigned to experimental conditions. This involved a 3 (training module: goal setting vs. stereotype discrediting vs. perspective taking) \times 2 (target of training: African Americans vs. LGB individuals) fully crossed between-subjects design. To accomplish random assignment, the materials for each condition were printed separately. Before distributing the materials (and thus, prior to assigning participants to conditions), the copies were combined, shuffled, and reshuffled. Participants took the top copy on the stack and passed the intermingled materials to the next participant. Third and finally, the dependent measures were collected via internet survey 8 months after training (at the end of the school year) to determine if the training had a meaningful effect over time. This eight month time lag lined up well with the academic school year, but was also chosen in order to maintain consistency with previous diversity training research (e.g., Madera et al. 2013) and to ensure that no demand characteristics from the training would be present when the final outcomes were measured.

Materials

Diversity Training Method

The diversity training that was conducted as a part of this study varied between subjects as a function of the type of

diversity training module that was received (perspective taking vs. goal setting vs. stereotype discrediting). Those participating in the goal setting diversity training were asked to personally set specific, challenging, and attainable goals related to the diversity training. For instance, a participant may have opted to make a goal to challenge jokes about marginalized groups when they heard them in the future. Those participating in the stereotype discrediting diversity training were shown several discredited stereotypes (e.g., “Just like Caucasians, most African-Americans are NOT lazy”) and asked to write about the discredited stereotype that they most agreed with. Those participating in the perspective taking diversity training were asked to consider the challenges faced by marginalized groups. With these challenges in mind, these participants were asked to write a short narrative about what a typical day would be like for a member of a marginalized group to gain a better understanding of the challenges they face.

Focus of Training

To assess the generalizability of effects across targets of prejudice, the marginalized group which was the target of the diversity training (African Americans vs. LGB individuals) varied across participants. When African Americans were the focus of training, participants were asked to perform one of the diversity training methods while focusing specifically on African Americans (e.g., setting a goal to take a class to learn more about African American history). When LGB individuals were the focus of training, participants were asked to perform a diversity training method while focusing specifically on LGB individuals (e.g., taking the perspective of an LGB individual while writing about a typical day in his/her life).

Attitude Measures

To measure prejudiced attitudes toward African Americans, we used the 7-item Modern Racism Scale (McConahay 1986), which is designed to capture subtle rather than explicit expressions of racism (sample item: “Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve”; $\alpha = 0.84$). To measure prejudiced attitudes toward lesbians and gays (ATLG), we used the 10-item Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG; Herek 1984), which was designed to capture prejudiced attitudes of heterosexuals toward homosexual individuals (sample item: “I think male homosexuals are disgusting”; $\alpha = 0.96$). Both of these measures utilized Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). All participants completed both attitude measures, regardless of condition.

Behavioral Measures

To measure behaviors toward LGB individuals, we used a 7-item scale developed by Madera et al. (2013). This scale was designed to capture self-reported supportive behaviors toward LGB individuals (sample item: “Been to a social or community event supporting gay and lesbian individuals”; $\alpha = 0.75$). We used this same scale to measure supportive behaviors exhibited toward African Americans by adapting the items such that the focus of each item was on African Americans rather than LGB individuals (sample item: “Used derogatory terms to refer to African Americans”; reverse coded; $\alpha = 0.67$). Both of these measures utilized Likert scales ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (all the time). All participants completed both behavioral measures, regardless of condition.

Motivation Measures

To measure internal motivation to respond without prejudice toward African Americans, we used a 10-item subscale developed by Plant and Devine (1998). This subscale was designed to capture self-reported internal motivation to respond without prejudice toward African Americans (sample items: “I attempt to act in nonprejudiced ways toward Black people because it is personally important to me”; $\alpha = 0.79$). We used this same scale to measure internal motivation to respond without prejudice toward LGB individuals by adapting the items such that the focus of each item was LGB individuals rather than ethnic minorities (sample item: “Being nonprejudiced toward gays and lesbians is important to my self concept”; $\alpha = 0.82$). Both of these measures utilized Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). All participants completed both motivation measures, regardless of condition.

Empathy

To measure empathy we used a 10-item scale from the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg et al. 2006). This scale was designed to capture dispositional empathy (sample item: “Am concerned about others”; $\alpha = 0.81$). This measure utilized a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Results

See Table 1 for descriptive statistics and correlations between key study variables. To test hypothesis 1, we conducted a series of multiple regression analyses. We regressed all of our attitude and behavior variables onto

Table 1 Correlations among and descriptive statistics for key study variables

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Target of training			0.00	0.04	-0.04	-0.12	-0.20	0.19	0.13	-0.05	0.08	-0.05
2. Goal setting				-0.52*	-0.47*	-0.00	0.03	0.05	0.01	-0.01	0.02	-0.00
3. Perspective taking					-0.52*	0.01	-0.08	0.03	0.16	-0.00	0.08	-0.10
4. Stereotype discrediting						-0.01	0.06	-0.07	-0.17	0.02	-0.10	0.10
5. Modern racism	2.55 (0.89)					(0.84)	0.31*	-0.23*	-0.41*	-0.23*	-0.22*	-0.46*
6. ATLG	2.04 (1.30)						(0.96)	-0.19	-0.46*	0.06	-0.49*	-0.10
7. African American supportive behavior	5.11 (0.94)							(0.67)	0.48*	0.40*	0.34*	0.32*
8. LGB supportive behavior	4.46 (1.07)								(0.75)	0.09	0.34*	0.26*
9. IMS (African American)	5.83 (0.91)									(0.79)	0.60*	0.27*
10. IMS (LGB)	5.76 (1.10)										(0.82)	0.22*
11. Empathy	5.03 (0.78)											(0.81)

Reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) for each scale are reported in the diagonal. For target of training, 1 = LGB, 2 = African American. Goal setting, perspective taking, and stereotype discrediting are all dummy coded such that 1 = participant was in that training condition and 0 = participant was not in that training condition

ATLG attitudes toward lesbians and gays, IMS internal motivation to respond without prejudice

* $p < 0.05$

target of training (coded dichotomously) and two dummy-coded variables accounting for the type of training received (see Table 2). To test hypotheses 2 and 3, we used SPSS macros developed by Hayes (2013) designed for testing complex mediation and moderated mediation models using regression analysis. Specifically, these macros allow for testing indirect effects and conditional indirect effects, wherein the indirect effect in a mediation model varies across levels of a proposed moderator variable. Finally, it is important to note that these analyses were conducted on all participants regardless of the focus of training (African American vs. LGB individuals) in order to test for potential crossover effects.

Main Effects of Training Module

LGB supportive behavior differed between training conditions ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.05$), such that those who participated in the perspective taking diversity training ($M = 4.73$) displayed more supportive behaviors than participants in the stereotype discrediting condition ($M = 4.21$). However, ATLG ($\beta = -0.15$, $p > 0.05$), modern racism ($\beta = 0.02$, $p > 0.05$), and ethnic supportive behaviors ($\beta = 0.05$, $p > 0.05$) did not differ when comparing perspective taking to the other training conditions. Additionally, training outcomes were not significantly different in the goal setting condition when compared to the other training methods (all $ps > 0.05$). However, our models were able to explain seven percent of the variance in both ATLG and LGB supportive behaviors. These results provide weak support for hypothesis 1.

Indirect Effects of Training Module

Hypothesis 2 predicted that internal motivation to respond without prejudice would partially mediate the relationship between training method and diversity-related attitudes and behaviors. To test this hypothesis, we used macros developed by Hayes (2013) for testing simple mediation. We regressed all of our attitude and behavior variables onto dummy-coded variables representing training module (our independent variable) and internal motivation to respond without prejudice (our mediator). Each model was run with 1,000 bootstrapped samples of the indirect effect. Results for these tests of simple mediation can be found in Table 3, which demonstrates that the indirect effect (-0.20) was significant for perspective taking in predicting ATLG [-0.55, -0.02]. The indirect effect (0.13) was also significant for perspective taking in predicting LGB supportive behavior [0.01, 0.31], but non-significant for all other outcomes and training methods (note that a confidence interval excluding zero is indicative of a significant mediation effect). These results provide partial support for

Table 2 Summary of multiple regression analysis

Independent variable	Dependent variable											
	ATLG			LGB supportive behavior			Modern racism			Ethnic supportive behavior		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> <i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> <i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> <i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β
Target of training	–	0.23	–	0.30	0.20	0.14	0.14	0.16	–	0.22	0.17	0.12
Goal setting	0.56	0.30	0.20	0.19	0.25	0.08	0.21	0.20	0.11	0.02	0.22	0.01
Perspective taking	–0.41	0.28	–0.15	0.53*	0.24	0.23*	0.03	0.20	0.02	0.09	0.21	0.05
<i>R</i> ²			0.07*			0.07*			0.02			0.02

Target of training (1 = race, 2 = LGB), goal setting, and perspective taking were all dummy coded before being entered into the regression analysis

* *p* < 0.05

Table 3 Indirect effects of the perspective taking and goal setting diversity training methods on various diversity outcomes, as mediated by internal motivation to respond without prejudice

Outcome	Perspective taking				Goal setting			
	Effect	Lower limit CI	Upper limit CI	<i>K</i> ²	Effect	Lower limit CI	Upper limit CI	<i>K</i> ²
ATLG	–0.20	–0.55	–0.02	0.08	0.03	–0.21	0.30	0.01
LGB supportive behavior	0.13	0.01	0.31	0.06	–0.02	–0.21	0.14	0.01
Modern racism	–0.04	–0.17	0.05	0.03	0.02	–0.07	0.17	0.01
African American supportive behavior	0.06	–0.07	0.20	0.04	–0.03	–0.21	0.10	0.02

Confidence intervals excluding zero indicate a significant mediation effect

ATLG attitudes toward lesbians and gays, *K*² kappa-squared effect size (Preacher and Kelley 2011)

hypothesis 2 in the perspective taking condition, but no support for this hypothesis in the goal setting condition.

Conditional Indirect Effects of Training Module

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the indirect effects would be moderated by the empathy of the training participants, such that the indirect effect would exist for individuals low in empathy, but not for individuals who are high in empathy. To test this hypothesis, we used macros developed by Hayes (2013) for testing moderated mediation. Importantly, these macros calculate the index of moderated mediation, which is essentially equivalent to bootstrapping the difference between two conditional indirect effects. If the confidence interval for this index excludes zero, one can conclude evidence of moderated mediation (Hayes, in press). We regressed all of our attitude and behavior variables onto dummy-coded variables representing training module (our independent variable) and internal motivation to respond without prejudice (our mediator) with empathy entered as the first stage moderator. Each model was run with 1,000 bootstrapped samples of the indirect effect and the index of moderated mediation.

When running this model for the perspective taking method with ATLG as our dependent variable, the indirect

effect was significant for individuals low in empathy [–0.88, –0.05] but not for individuals high in empathy [–0.18, 0.50]. Additionally, the index of moderated mediation was significant for this model [0.04, 0.80]. When running this model with LGB supportive behavior as our dependent variable, again the indirect effect was significant for individuals low in empathy [0.03, 0.58] but not for individuals high in empathy [–0.35, 0.10]. Additionally, the index of moderated mediation was significant for this model [–0.49, –0.02]. When running this model with modern racism as our dependent variable, the indirect effect was again significant for individuals low in empathy [–0.33, –0.01] but not for individuals high in empathy [–0.01, 0.32]. Additionally, the index of moderated mediation was significant for this model [0.01, 0.38]. When running this model with African American supportive behaviors as our dependent variable, the indirect effect was yet again significant for individuals low in empathy [0.03, 0.47], but not for individuals high in empathy [–0.58, 0.02]. Additionally, the index of moderated mediation was significant for this model [–0.61, –0.07]. When running these models for the goal setting training method, the indirect effect was insignificant and did not vary across levels of empathy. The index of moderated mediation was also not significant for any of these models. Collectively,

Table 4 Conditional indirect effects of the perspective taking diversity training method on various diversity outcomes, as mediated by internal motivation to respond without prejudice and moderated by participant empathy

Outcome	Low empathy		High empathy	
	Lower limit CI	Upper limit CI	Lower limit CI	Upper limit CI
ATLG	−0.88	−0.05	−0.18	0.50
LGB supportive behavior	0.03	0.58	−0.35	0.10
Modern racism	−0.33	−0.01	−0.01	0.32
African American supportive behavior	0.03	0.47	−0.58	0.02

Confidence intervals excluding zero indicate a significant mediation effect. Results for goal setting are not shown because all moderated mediation models yielded non-significant results

ATLG attitudes toward lesbians and gays

these results provide strong support for hypothesis 3 in the perspective taking condition, but no support for this hypothesis in the goal setting condition (see Table 4).

Do These Effects Carry Over Across Targets of Training?

Although we proposed no specific hypotheses regarding the target of training, we did examine these results to see if diversity training effectiveness carried over across conditions. ATLG differed significantly by target of training ($\beta = -0.19$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that those participating in the LGB training ($M = 1.79$) displayed less prejudice toward LGB individuals than those who participated in the racial training ($M = 2.32$). However, LGB supportive behaviors ($\beta = 0.14$, $p > 0.05$), modern racism ($\beta = -0.08$, $p > 0.05$), and ethnic supportive behaviors ($\beta = 0.12$, $p > .05$) did not significantly differ based on the target of training. Collectively, these results indicate that the effectiveness of diversity training exercises largely generalized across target groups, regardless of the target of training.

Discussion

This study presents results of a longitudinal field experiment assessing the effectiveness of diversity training programs as a function of the training method and the empathy of training participants. Overall, the results suggest that the relative effectiveness of diversity training can be enhanced by increasing motivation in carefully framed and designed programs that appeal to particular types of people.

Our first hypothesis received only weak support in that those who participated in the perspective taking method showed more supportive behaviors of LGB individuals when compared to the other training conditions. While we were unable to provide support for the idea that both perspective taking and goal setting would work more

effectively than stereotype discrediting, it is very interesting that perspective taking set itself apart from the other two training conditions. This main effect is particularly interesting in that it existed regardless of the focus of the training (African Americans or LGB individuals). Thus, perspective taking appears to be capable of producing positive crossover effects, wherein behaviors toward a diverse population may be more positive even if that group was not explicitly mentioned in the training exercise. One plausible explanation for why the goal setting method did not enjoy similar success is that individuals were able to develop external justifications for the goals that they set (given that they were asked to create the goal by someone else), causing them to abandon these goals over time. By comparing these methods, we have provided a rare test of the relative explanatory power of these training methods and the theoretical viewpoints upon which they are based. Theoretically speaking, this study indicates that taking the perspective of others may have a lasting positive effect on diversity-related outcomes, regardless of the focus of training, when compared to setting diversity-related goals or discrediting commonly held stereotypes about stigmatized groups. Practically speaking, this study supports the continued use of the perspective taking method in various diversity training initiatives. Empirically speaking, our models examining the target of training and training method accounted for seven percent of the variance in ATLG and LGB supportive behaviors (see Table 2). Thus, these are important variables to account for in future diversity training research.

Our second hypothesis was partially supported in that internal motivation to respond without prejudice served as a partial mediator between the perspective taking training method and diversity-related attitudes and behaviors toward LGB individuals. These findings highlight the potential of internal motivation to respond without prejudice as an explanatory mechanism for effective diversity training programs. Given the current lack of understanding of *why* diversity training programs work when they are

effective (Bezrukova et al. 2012), these findings serve as substantive contributions to the diversity training literature. In the future, motivation to respond without prejudice should be investigated as a potential mediator of other diversity training methods. Additionally, this variable could serve as a more proximal predictor of attitude and behavior change in future diversity training work.

Our third hypothesis was supported in that our mediated model was only supported for individuals who are low in empathy. This result likely occurred because while high empathy individuals are attuned to the needs of diverse populations and thus internally motivated to respond without prejudice toward them, low empathy individuals may require diversity training to promote motivation and ultimately reduce prejudice. These findings highlight an important boundary condition on effective diversity training while also providing an important individual difference characteristic to examine moving forward. Despite the fact that trainee individual difference characteristics have been identified as an important factor to consider in the training literature more broadly (Brown 2006), they have been rarely studied in the diversity training literature (see Bezrukova et al. 2012). This finding is also important because it means that specific types of diversity training (i.e., perspective taking) may be particularly beneficial for individuals who need the training more than others (i.e., individuals who are low in empathy). In fact, previous researchers have noted that empathy “involves an understanding of experiences, concerns and perspectives of another person, combined with a capacity to communicate this understanding” (Hojat 2009, p. 412), which indicates that dispositional empathy may be particularly important to consider in terms of the effectiveness of perspective taking. Indeed, perspective taking seems particularly well suited to foster empathy within training participants, and this notion is supported by previous empirical research (Madera et al. 2011). Future work should seek to replicate these findings while also investigating other individual difference characteristics that may impact the effectiveness of diversity training programs. For instance, does conscientiousness moderate the effectiveness of diversity-related goal setting?

Limitations

As with any research, the present study is not without limitations. First, the use of a student sample is not ideal for a line of research that is ultimately interested in the workplace. However, students now compose a fair amount of the workplace and are undoubtedly the employees of our future. Moreover, by considering individual differences in our model we are able to directly assess some of the variability that might be in question in a student sample.

Second, we conducted our study in a sample of predominantly white and straight individuals at a southern school. Thus, our results should be replicated to ensure that they generalize to more diverse training populations and individuals from other regions of the country. For example, some minorities may be more effective at perspective taking because they need to take the perspective of the majority group on a relatively regular basis in order to get along in society. Third, there was a considerable amount of attrition associated with our sample. However, we have no reason to believe that this systematically affected study results. Indeed, as mentioned previously, the completion rates each diversity training method and training target was roughly equal. Fourth, our measure of African American supportive behaviors had a relatively low reliability, which serves to make us less confident in our findings predicting this dependent variable. However, the alpha value was just below the conventionally accepted level of .70. Even so, this measure should be revisited before future researchers use it, especially considering that this measure was adapted from a measure of LGB supportive behavior. Fifth, our measures of diversity attitudes and behaviors were very specific. Future research should seek to replicate our findings using specific and broad measures of diversity attitudes in order to assess transfer of training and examine how broad the effects of diversity training really are. Sixth, perhaps unsurprisingly, given the lack of participation incentives and the longitudinal nature of the design, our experiment was relatively underpowered. Although this makes the effects that we did discover even more impressive, we would encourage future researchers to continue testing the effectiveness of the perspective taking and goal setting diversity training exercises with larger samples. Seventh, we were unable to examine attitude and behavior change due to the lack of a pretest in the current study design. While any differences between training conditions were handled via random assignment, it would be beneficial to see these results replicated using a more truly longitudinal design. Finally, our lack of a control group precludes us from making conclusions regarding whether these forms of training are more or less beneficial when compared to receiving no training at all. As such, our results should be replicated with a control group. However, we still believe our paper makes an important contribution by comparing the relative efficacy of various diversity training methods.

Conclusion

The current study provides novel evidence regarding the relative effectiveness of three diversity training methods on diversity-related attitudes and behaviors. Specifically,

while the perspective taking method was most successful overall, we showed that diversity trainers and researchers may need to consider the empathy levels of the individuals in their sample before deciding which training method to use. Appealing to individuals who are low in empathy may be a fruitful opportunity for future research and practice.

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