

Annotation 3

"Members of High-Status Groups are Threatened by Pro-Diversity Organizational Messages.", *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, By Tessa L. Dover, Brenda Major and Cheryl R. Kaiser provides an enlightening view into the mindset of white job applicants and their perception of companies with pro-diversity messaging. Researchers conducted an experiment on 640 participants who were Latino, Black, Native, mixed race (low-status groups) and white (high-status group) with similar gender distribution, education level (some college) and political orientation (majority liberal). In two experiments they were shown recruitment material for companies that were either pro-diversity or neutral then asked to fill out a survey. In another study, 78 white men participated in a hiring simulation where cardiovascular measures were recorded while participating. The results of all three studies indicated that for white people, pro-diversity messages caused them to think that their group was "unwelcome or undervalued" and according to the researchers, *"even subtle, inclusive and non-controversial forms of diversity messages—messages that indicate that a company values all types of people—can be experienced by members of high-status groups as threatening"* *"Although companies may be defining diversity broadly in order to avoid making high-status groups feel left out, our research suggests that whites may still see this language as "code" for anti-white sentiment even if gender or race is never mentioned."* Additionally, the young white men in the hiring simulation displayed cardiovascular measures that correlated with being exposed to a threat. They also expected more discrimination against whites and less against underrepresented groups.

The results of this experiment do not bode well for D&I efforts and adds an additional layer to our conversation on Black equity and inclusion. If companies are trying to placate the feelings of white workers, they are doing so at the expense of Black workers by watering down diversity initiatives. On the other hand, if strong D&I measures are put into place, this study indicates that some whites will react with resentment and negativity towards underrepresented groups. Perhaps some of the solutions from other sources can help address these issues.

Reference:

Dover, Tessa L., Brenda Major, and Cheryl R. Kaiser. "Members of High-Status Groups are Threatened by Pro-Diversity Organizational Messages." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 62, 2016, pp. 58-67.