Using a social marketing approach to develop a pro-diversity intervention

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Abstract

Purpose – Despite more than half a century of academic research, relatively few methods have been shown to reliably improve intergroup relations in the real world. This paper aims to use a social marketing approach to design a pro-diversity intervention in a university setting.

Design/methodology/approach – We conducted extensive qualitative, quantitative and observational background research to identify elements that would increase the effectiveness of the intervention. Focus groups and surveys allowed us to identify a target audience, target behaviors and the relevant barriers and benefits.

Findings – The background research suggested increasing inclusive behavior would have a greater impact than reducing discriminatory behavior. Based on this research, this paper determined an optimal target audience was students who had relatively positive attitudes toward diversity but engaged in few inclusive behaviors. This paper used relevant theories from the behavioral sciences to design an intervention that promoted a small set of inclusive behaviors and that addressed the relevant barriers and benefits. The intervention took the form of a single page of targeted messages that instructors can add to their course syllabi. The page communicates injunctive and descriptive norms, highlights the benefits of behaving inclusively and provides concrete behavioral advice.

Originality/value – The research applies the social marketing approach to a novel domain. This approach represents a new way to advance diversity, equity and inclusion through promoting inclusive and reducing discriminatory behavior.

Keywords Social marketing, Interventions, Behavior/attitudes, Diversity and inclusion, Intergroup relations, Prejudice and discrimination

Paper type Research paper

Improving intergroup relations is one of the most pressing challenges of our time. People continue to hold prejudicial attitudes and engage in discrimination toward members of historically marginalized social groups, including racial and ethnic minorities, Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals, religious minorities and individuals with disabilities (Lee *et al.*, 2019; Robert Johnson Wood Foundation, 2018). This treatment

leads to detriments in the health and well-being of individuals belonging to these groups (Berchick *et al.*, 2018; Meyer, 2003). Furthermore, past injustice toward these groups has been built into our social systems, propagating inequality even in situations where acts of prejudice and discrimination are absent (Feagin, 2006). Companies and organizations have invested large sums in anti-bias training to address interpersonal and systemic sources of inequality, but very few of these interventions have been evaluated, and the results of those that have suggest their effectiveness is limited (Carter *et al.*, 2020; Chang *et al.*, 2019; Dobbin and Kalev, 2016, 2018).

There is a pressing need to develop effective techniques to improve intergroup relations that can be applied in corporate, organizational and community settings. In the present paper, we seek to determine whether the social marketing approach, which uses both contextual information and relevant scientific theories to craft behavior change interventions, can be used to develop such a technique in a university setting (Campbell and Brauer, 2020b). Previous research has shown that the social marketing approach can be used to change behaviors in various domains, including health and conservation (Lee and Kotler, 2019): we wondered whether the same principles can be leveraged to change intergroup behavior. We describe the process we used to design a pro-diversity intervention to be implemented at a large Midwestern university. The goals of such intervention include making the intergroup climate more welcoming and inclusive, increasing a sense of belonging and well-being among individuals from marginalized backgrounds, advancing toward greater equity between individuals, etc. This process included collecting qualitative, quantitative and observational background information, as well as crafting persuasive messages based on this information and relevant psychological theories. Our goal was not to test a prediction derived from a specific theory, but to use the background research to determine which theories and behavior change techniques were the most relevant. The central purpose of this paper is to provide a method that other researchers can use to develop effective pro-diversity interventions to change behavior in real-world contexts, both at universities and in other settings (e.g. companies, schools and communities).

Improving intergroup relations in the real world
Decades of research have spurred the development of a variety of methods to improve intergroup relations (Murrar *et al.*, 2017; Paluck *et al.*, 2021). Despite the progress made, there is relatively scant evidence that these methods have any lasting impact on real-world behavior, both in and outside of the workplace (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; FitzGerald *et al.*, 2019; Noon, 2018). Many existing methods have been tested extensively in the lab, but rarely in natural settings (Paluck and Green, 2009). Of the interventions to improve intergroup relations that are implemented in real-world settings, such as diversity trainings or implicit bias trainings, only a very small proportion is evaluated (Bezrukova *et al.*, 2016). The evaluations that have been conducted indicate that many interventions have no effect (e.g. discussion-based approaches; Brauer *et al.*, 2001; Paluck, 2010) and some are counterproductive (e.g. mandatory diversity trainings; Dobbin and Kalev, 2016, 2018).

The lack of information about how to improve intergroup relations in the real world can lead practitioners to develop interventions that are theoretically sound but counterproductive in practice. Consider, for example, hiring tests: standardized assessments of ability that job applicants complete (Bateson *et al.*, 2013; Knight, 2017). These tests were developed and became widespread as a result of evidence of bias in hiring, particularly against Black people (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004) and women in STEM (i.e. science, technology, engineering and mathematics; Moss-Racusin *et al.*, 2012). However, recent evidence shows that businesses that use these tests actually hire fewer racial/ethnic

minorities and women than those that do not (Dobbin and Kalev, 2016). These findings show that even pro-diversity interventions based on well-established theories can have unanticipated effects. There is a need to better understand how methods to improve intergroup relations apply in real-world settings. Such research will enhance our theoretical understanding of the underlying psychological processes while providing more tools for practitioners.

There are numerous possible explanations for the limitations of existing diversity research for improving intergroup relations in the real world. First, though prejudice is fundamentally communicated through behavior (Carr *et al.*, 2012), diversity research has focused primarily on changing explicit and implicit biases. The focus on bias is based on the assumption that changes in bias will subsequently lead to changes in behavior (Dovidio *et al.*, 2002). However, explicit biases and attitudes more generally have been shown to predict behavior only weakly (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977; Wicker, 1969), and a recent meta-analysis found no evidence that changes in implicit bias lead to changes in behavior (Forscher *et al.*, 2019).

Second, because behavioral scientists are driven to develop general principles of human behavior (Oyserman, 2016; Rad *et al.*, 2018), they may underestimate the degree to which a given method is affected by the characteristics of the setting in which it is implemented. However, there are abundant examples of psychological effects being tied to particular contexts or individuals, such as Walton and Cohen's (2011) social-belongingness intervention for Black students or Okonofua *et al.*'s (2016) empathetic mindset intervention for middle school teachers. Attempting to generalize a given finding to all individuals in all settings may have the effect of limiting the applicability of diversity science (Henrich *et al.*, 2010).

Finally, whereas social marketers often have the goal of maximizing behavior change, diversity researchers tend to focus instead on advancing psychological theory. In pursuit of this goal, they are motivated to make specific, well-defined manipulations of given constructs, which may or may not address the real-world motivations people may have for engaging in a given behavior. Thus, diversity research provides valuable information about variables that *can* affect behavior in the real world, but not necessarily about the variables that *do* affect behavior.

A potential path forward: the social marketing approach

The limitations of current diversity research can be addressed by adopting a social marketing approach to intervention development. This approach involves changing a specific behavior among a specific segment of the population within a specific setting. The approach uses classical marketing theory and principles to influence behavior to address social ills (Andreasen, 2005; Lee and Kotler, 2019). Thus, it bridges the gap between science and practice, as it requires the consideration of contextual factors and features of individuals within that context that could alter the effects of a given intervention (French and Gordon, 2019).

By selecting a specific behavior to change, catering interventions to a particular audience, incorporating relevant information about factors that may affect how members of the target audience appraise the target behavior and making informed choices about an intervention's form, implementation and content, diversity researchers can develop interventions that overcome the limitations of existing methods (Campbell and Brauer, 2020b).

Despite its potential, the social marketing approach has rarely been used to improve intergroup relations. Both Evans-Lacko *et al.* (2018) and Rimal and Creel (2008) found that social marketing campaigns could reduce stigma toward individuals with mental illnesses. Hull *et al.* (2013) adopted a similar approach to that we describe in this paper to develop a social marketing campaign to combat homophobia in Milwaukee. In a follow-up study, Hull

et al. (2017) found that this campaign had the intended impact, i.e. it improved attitudes toward gay individuals. Despite these scant research examples, many questions remain about how to identify target audiences and target behaviors to improve intergroup relations and what behavioral theories are relevant. In the following paragraphs, we will describe different aspects of the social marketing approach and its application in the intergroup relations domain.

Target behavior
Social marketers typically consider a range of desired behaviors and then select a specific behavior or a small set of related behaviors to be targeted (for introductory texts on social marketing, see Campbell and Brauer, 2021; French and Gordon, 2019; Lee and Kotler, 2019). The most important criteria for the selection of the target behavior are the behavior's *impact* (the degree to which it has a consequential effect on the problem at hand), *probability* (how likely people are to adopt it) and *market opportunity* (how many people currently do not engage in it). Changing to light-emitting diode lightbulbs may reduce CO_2 emissions less than becoming vegetarian (impact), but people may be more likely to do it (probability). The behavior with optimal features across these criteria is selected as the target behavior, which becomes the focal outcome of the campaign. Applied to the intergroup relations domain, the goal is thus, to identify a target behavior that has a substantial positive impact on individuals from marginalized backgrounds, is easy to adopt and that many individuals in the setting currently do not currently engage in regularly.

Target audience
When social marketers develop an intervention, they typically tailor it to a specific group within the broader population: the target audience. They start out by dividing the general population into segments defined by demographic, geographic, psychometric and other characteristics. They then evaluate each segment on relevant criteria, notably *size* (population of individuals not engaging in the target behavior), *readiness* (the extent to which people are able and willing to change behavior) and *reachability* (the extent to which audience members are identifiable and there are known ways to message to them). Adolescents may have more instances of bullying behavior than younger children (size) but be less willing to change their behavior (readiness). The segment with optimal characteristics across these criteria is chosen as the target audience. Applied to the intergroup relations domain, then, the goal is to find a segment of the population that is relatively large, that contains members who have expressed attitudes or motivations that are consistent with the target behavior, and that is easily reachable through existing distribution channels.

Barriers and benefits
When developing their interventions, social marketers consider the factors that are likely to decrease or increase the probability that members of the target audience will engage in the desired target behavior. The former are referred to as *barriers* and the latter as *benefits* (Andreasen, 1995). The goal of a social marketing campaign is to minimize the barriers that currently prevent members of the target audience from engaging in the target behavior (e.g. lack of opportunities, low self-efficacy and negative attitudes toward target behavior) and to maximize the benefits, which represent potential motivators to increase future engagement in the target behavior (e.g. incentives, improving self-esteem and advancing social identity). The barriers and benefits identified feed directly into the messages used in a social marketing campaign. For example, some existing anti-smoking campaigns provide

information about potential health risks, but it could be that smokers know about these risks and persist smoking because they do not know about alternates for decreasing nicotine dependence (barrier) or have not been made aware of all the ways in which quitting smoking could improve their well-being (benefit).

The 4Ps: Place, price, product and promotion

Social marketers make deliberate choices about where their interventions should be administered (*place*), the relevant incentives and disincentives that should be highlighted (*price*), what materials they should provide (*product*) and what distribution channels and creative strategies should be used (*promotion*; Lee and Kotler, 2019). These choices are based on both extensive background research and situational opportunities and constraints. The place indicates where the target behavior takes place and where people will receive or be exposed to the campaign materials. A bicycle safety campaign may decide to set up a table next to a popular bike path. The price refers to both monetary and non-monetary costs and incentives that members of the target audience associate with the current undesired behavior (the "competition") and the future desired behavior (the target behavior). The campaign should choose desirable and stylish products and could highlight the negative consequences of engaging in unsafe behaviors, such as not wearing a helmet. The product refers to the tangible object or service that can be used to facilitate behavior change. The campaign could offer helmets, provide a bike ride tracking app that reminds users to engage in safe behaviors or post bulletins along bike routes reminding people about these behaviors. Finally, the promotion encompasses the messages and communication channels used to market the campaign. The bicycle safety campaign may recruit a professional cyclist as a spokesperson and use the slogan "bike like a pro!" When designing a pro-diversity campaign, researchers and practitioners should make similarly deliberate choices about where the intervention is implemented, how it leverages incentives and disincentives, the materials it will provide and what messages and messengers it uses.

The present research

As we have described, it is likely that using the social marketing approach will lead to the development of highly effective interventions to improve intergroup relations. Furthermore, using psychological constructs in a social marketing intervention could identify and establish new techniques that could be used in future social marketing campaigns (French and Lefebvre, 2012). Thus, we sought to develop a pro-diversity intervention that targeted intergroup behavior in a setting that we were familiar with, a large, Midwestern American university. We did not have preconceived notions about the state of intergroup relations in this setting or what specific behavior-change mechanisms we wanted to include. Instead, we adopted a methodology for acquiring the information that allowed us to develop and answer these questions as the research project progressed. We conducted qualitative, quantitative and observational background research to identify a target behavior, a target audience and the relevant barriers and benefits. We then identified a setting in which to implement the intervention and developed the intervention materials, integrating background information with relevant psychological theories. Through our description of this process, we will both discuss relevant features of the context and the target audience and explain the psychological mechanisms used in the intervention. More broadly, we sought to demonstrate the utility of the social marketing approach in developing interventions to improve intergroup relations in the real world.

Background research

The goal of our background research was to better understand how students at the university thought about peers from different social backgrounds and about intergroup relations generally. For students from marginalized backgrounds, we wanted to gain perspective on their perceptions of the problems that existed on campus and what specific behaviors had the greatest impact on their sense of belonging at the university. For students not belonging to these groups, we wanted to know what they thought about different intergroup behaviors and what factors affected their likelihood of engaging in these behaviors. Furthermore, some background research was intended to elucidate the current state of intergroup relations at the university, including students' perceptions of the climate, their peers and actual intergroup behaviors. As we will describe, this background research was necessary to inform decisions about the target behavior, target audience and other facets of our intervention. In addition to focus groups, we performed additional types of data gathering to provide a more comprehensive picture of the state of intergroup relations within the university context (Kubacki and Rundle-Thiele, 2016). The constructs we chose to assess and the way the information was used to shape intervention content and implementation was based on the approach described by Campbell and Brauer (2020b).

Qualitative data gathering

For the qualitative arm of this background research, we conducted a series of five focus groups: two with students of color (i.e. non-white students) and three with white students. Each focus group comprised three to seven university students lasted about 1 h and was audio recorded. Students were either compensated with course credit or entered in a drawing for a $20 gift card. Students of color were asked a series of questions about their impressions of campus climate, what experiences negatively affected their sense of belonging on campus and what behaviors we could change to improve their experiences on campus. White students were also asked about their impressions of campus climate, but then reported their thoughts on different intergroup behaviors and what could motivate them to change these behaviors. In addition to having both a facilitator and a note-taker in the room, two additional researchers later listened to the recordings and added their own notes. The lead researchers then distilled the comments from each focus group and connected common themes across groups. The results provided a comprehensive characterization of the campus climate from the perspective of both students of color and white students.

The students of color were broadly representative of the larger group on campus: a plurality was Asian, followed by Latino/a/x, then Black students (international students were not included, and we failed to recruit any American Indian/Native American students). These students reported that the campus climate was generally positive, but that there was little integration: someone's social background was often a good predictor of who was in their social network. Few of these students had experienced overt discrimination, but many provided examples of experiences that made them feel uncomfortable or excluded. They also described experiences wherein there was attributional ambiguity about whether the perpetrator intended to be harmful (see Crocker *et al.*, 1991 for an explanation of attributional ambiguity). For example, numerous students of color said they had taken a course in which they were one of the last students chosen for group projects. They stated that these kinds of experiences, demonstrating social distance or discomfort, affected them to a greater degree than overtly discriminatory behaviors. In their telling, overtly discriminatory behaviors were more infrequent and easier to attribute to the actions of overtly bigoted individuals, in turn making them easier to dismiss.

When asked what white students could do to improve campus climate, the most common responses from students of color were that white students should make more of an effort to get to know and attend events organized by people who are different from them. This suggestion reflects a general theme that students of color desired to be recognized and have their backgrounds respected and celebrated. When asked whose behaviors needed to change, they reported the most influential group was white students who were neither particularly inclusive nor actively discriminatory toward them. Furthermore, they identified the classroom as a potential intervention setting: many of the negative experiences the students cited occurred in the classroom, and they reported that faculty were doing less to improve intergroup relations than other staff members they interacted with (e.g. residential coordinators), in addition to noting professors' position of authority in the eyes of the student body.

Most white students reported having little experience interacting with people who were from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. This makes sense because the majority of these students originate from cities and towns in the surrounding area, the large majority of which are predominantly white. The students said they worried about doing or saying the wrong thing when interacting with individuals from different social backgrounds due to their lack of experience. As a result, they remained socially distant. Still, the majority of white students reported caring about diversity and finding it interesting. Though they recognized the importance of inclusivity and stated it as a value, most did not frequently engage in inclusive behaviors, at least in part because they lacked information about what these behaviors were. They noted that they did not see their peers frequently engaging in inclusive behaviors, nor did they see behaving inclusively as a particularly high priority, despite being generally supportive of diversity. Few white students said they had witnessed discrimination on campus, and they expressed doubts about whether they would intervene if they saw it occurring. When asked what prevents them from engaging in more inclusive behaviors, white students identified a number of barriers, which can be described as social (e.g. being the only white person in the room at a diversity event), psychological (e.g. saying the wrong thing, causing conflict and experiencing guilt) and practical (e.g. not knowing where a pro-diversity event is held and not living near or working with any non-white students) in nature.

Quantitative data gathering

Based on the insights we obtained from these focus groups, we included relevant items in multiple large-scale surveys of students at the university. Results from these surveys reinforced and extended the findings of the focus groups in a number of important ways. First, in a survey administered to all students in an introductory psychology course, we consistently found across six semesters of data collection that the large majority of students (i.e. more than 85%) reported that they cared about diversity and tried to make the campus more inclusive. Next, we asked a representative sample of 168 students to participate in a survey in which they rated the personal relevance of potential barriers and benefits of inclusive behavior. The most relevant barriers were involuntarily offending others, failing to recognize when they behave in an exclusive way and having to make a conscious effort to enact the relevant behaviors. These responses suggest that students see intergroup interactions as more mentally taxing and anxiety-provoking than intragroup interactions (Richeson and Shelton, 2007, for a similar finding). This difference in perception may explain why they avoid intergroup interactions, an idea supported by relevant literature (Stephan and Stephan, 2000; Trawalter et al., 2009). The most relevant potential benefits for white students were learning and discovering new things, meeting new people, learning about

different cultures and contributing to a more positive campus climate. These benefits are consistent with the desires of students of color.

A large-scale campus climate survey was conducted while we were holding focus groups (total $N = 8,652$; Campbell and Brauer, 2020a). The results of this survey showed that 18% of students of color had personally experienced hostile, harassing or intimidating behavior compared to 11% of white students, which is consistent with the finding from focus groups that these incidents did occur, but were less common than often assumed and not the primary factor determining the sense of belonging among students of color. However, 50% of students of color reported they very or extremely often felt they belonged on campus, compared to 75% of white students, indicating a persistent inequality on the university's campus. Consistent with what white students reported in focus groups and the earlier survey, the large majority of them (82%) reported they very or extremely often tried to make the campus a welcoming environment, yet just about half (49%) said they very or extremely often spend time with students from a different racial/ethnic background. This discrepancy shows that inclusivity is a common value, but inclusive behaviors are not as common as may be expected. Together, these results suggested that the root cause of campus climate concerns was a lack of inclusive behavior, not the prevalence of discriminatory behavior. Finally, students of color reported that they were less likely to feel respected in study groups, in group project work or when posing questions or comments in class than white students, though they did feel respected by instructors and teaching assistants. This gap suggests that the classroom is a productive context in which to intervene, given it is an environment where students of color report more negative experiences than white students. The results also suggest that it is more important to change the behaviors of students than those of instructors or teaching assistants.

Observational data gathering
Finally, we ran a series of observational field experiments to determine how members of marginalized social groups were treated compared to non-marginalized peers across a series of subtle behaviors (Campbell and Brauer, 2020a). We reasoned that although experiences of overt discrimination may be propagated by a small proportion of students with extreme views, slightly negative treatment of individuals from marginalized backgrounds could be widespread among individuals. Using research confederates, we manipulated different aspects of social identity (e.g. White vs Black, gay vs straight) across a series of behavioral paradigms (e.g. seating on a campus bus, door holding). These research confederates, representing individuals with different social group memberships, engaged in these behaviors on the university campus. A second trained confederate observed and noted the behaviors of unsuspecting participants, allowing us to observe student behavior in a natural setting. Together, the evidence suggested that a numerical minority of individuals were responsible for the lion's share of subtle negative intergroup behaviors. These results reinforce the idea that discriminatory behavior, overt and subtle, was propagated by a relatively small group, suggesting that it may be more fruitful to target the promotion of inclusive behavior.

Together, the qualitative, quantitative and observational data painted a coherent picture of the intergroup climate on the university's campus. White students generally reported positive intergroup attitudes, but there was a gap between their values and their actions. Students of color reported experiences of social exclusion from their peers, wanted white students to make a greater effort to recognize and appreciate them for their differences and identified the university classroom as a potential setting for intervention.

Intervention development
Our next step was to design a pro-diversity intervention. We used the data acquired from our background research to inform the intervention, including where it would be implemented, what form it would take, what information it should contain, what psychological constructs we should try to influence and what behavior change techniques we should use.

Target behavior
First, we decided that inclusive behavior would be the target behavior of the intervention. Our background research indicated that blatant discriminatory behaviors occurred on campus, but they were relatively rare. Thus, discriminatory behaviors rated relatively poorly in terms of market opportunity (few people engaged in them) and impact (changing them would not address campus climate concerns). We focused instead on inclusive behavior, which, in addition to having both higher market opportunity and impact, rated better in terms of probability. Within the category of inclusive behavior, we chose to target a set of related behaviors that had a high impact, required little effort and were explicitly identified by students of color: getting to know people from different backgrounds, attending pro-diversity events, choosing diverse groups for class projects and confronting discrimination when it occurs.

Target audience
Next, we identified the specific segment of the campus community the intervention would target. Both information from our focus groups with white students and results from the campus climate survey suggested that there was a substantial portion of students, most of them white, who thought diversity was valuable but engaged in few inclusive behaviors. Compared to other potential target audiences, this group, with positive attitudes but neutral to socially distant behaviors, rated very well on relevant dimensions such as size (large number of them), readiness (open to acting more inclusively) and reachability (existing channels can be used to message to them). Other potential audiences, such as instructors and teaching assistants, seemed to have less influence on marginalized students' experiences and were also a much smaller group.

Barriers and benefits
After deciding on the target behavior and the target audience, we identified salient factors that either prevented the target audience from behaving more inclusively (barriers) or that could motivate them to do so (benefits). These barriers and benefits then informed the specific, theoretically informed messages we included in the intervention. Below, we describe each of the salient barriers and benefits we addressed by drawing on three distinct psychological theories.

Social norms
Members of our target audience reported that despite generally finding diversity to be valuable, they did not think being inclusive was particularly important, especially compared to concerns such as academics and social life. Furthermore, a barrier for them was not seeing their peers engaging in the targeted inclusive behaviors and worrying they would be the only member of their group in the room at a pro-diversity event. However, they noted they would be more likely to engage in these behaviors if there was more social support. These

barriers and benefits, combined with the known relevance of social approval for young adults, led us to include social norms messages in the intervention.

Both injunctive norms, which indicate what behaviors are considered appropriate or proper, and descriptive norms, which indicate what behaviors are common among one's peers, can have a substantial impact on human behavior (McDonald and Crandall, 2015; Reynolds, 2019). Neighbors *et al.* (2008) showed that first year college students' drinking behaviors were affected by the degree to which they believed their friends and parents approved of drinking (i.e. the injunctive norm). Illustrating the power of descriptive norms, Nolan *et al.* (2008) showed that residents who received information about their neighbors' utility use reduced their own use more than those who received any of four alternate messages. Murrar *et al.* (2020) showed that descriptive norms can also be used to improve intergroup outcomes. Social norms have also been used effectively in social marketing campaigns, including one to reduce underage drinking in Australia (Jones *et al.*, 2017; Burchell *et al.*, 2013). Some evidence suggests that using injunctive and descriptive norms jointly is particularly effective in field settings (Schultz *et al.*, 2007). Thus, we implemented both norm types in our intervention. To communicate injunctive norms, we provided quotations from the Chancellor and Dean of Students on the importance of diversity. To highlight descriptive norms, we reported the percentage of students who stated on the campus climate survey that they try to make the campus a more welcoming environment for other students. We also wrote a sentence that reinforced the idea that the large majority of students are trying to do the right thing, whereas a numerical minority is responsible for most of the discriminatory behaviors that occur on campus.

Personal benefits
A salient barrier for members of the target audience to behaving more inclusively was a general lack of motivation. In the survey measuring the relevance of various barriers and benefits, students reported that they were hesitant to engage in inclusive behaviors because it required effort to do so. There was also evidence from the survey that in addition to making salient how these behaviors could be enjoyable or allow people to live out their values, it could be effective to communicate how useful inclusive behavior is: participants rated "[acquiring] skills that will help me in my career" as a very relevant potential benefit of inclusive behavior. Based on background research, we reasoned that including a message in the intervention highlighting potential positive consequences should increase motivation to behave inclusively. Note that this element is rather different from prior pro-diversity initiatives, which focus nearly exclusively on negative consequences of bias and discriminatory behaviors.

The effectiveness of interventions that highlight how people can benefit personally from engaging in a given behavior has primarily been shown in the education domain. In a large-scale field experiment, Harackiewicz *et al.* (2016) narrowed the achievement gap in introductory biology classes where students wrote short essays about the utility of course concepts to their own lives. Even providing information about the usefulness of STEM to the parents of high schoolers (but not the students themselves) led those students to take an additional semester of STEM in their latter two years of high school (Harackiewicz *et al.*, 2012). To communicate personal benefits, we included a few sentences describing the importance of being able to work with people from different backgrounds and communicate effectively across differences, as well as noting that people who build these skills in college are more likely to be successful later.

Concrete behavioral recommendations
Given their relative lack of experience interacting with people from different social backgrounds, members of our target audience also lacked information about how to be inclusive. The most salient barrier they reported makes this clear: involuntarily offending others. Members of the target audience may choose not to engage with people from different backgrounds because they fear a negative outcome. The phrase "being inclusive" is also relatively opaque; someone could agree they are inclusive despite engaging in few inclusive behaviors, as indeed many white students did in our focus groups. To address this issue, we generated a list of concrete behavioral recommendations for being more inclusive.

Most people work to maintain non-prejudiced self-images (O'Brien *et al.*, 2010). This self-image is easy to maintain when there is no objective metric, just as people can claim they are, for example, "green" without engaging in conservation behaviors. Messages encouraging specific conservation behaviors are more effective than those that reinforce the general principle of "being green" (Costanzo *et al.*, 1986). The same idea is an aspect of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals, which suggests goals must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (Wade, 2009). Thus, providing concrete behavioral recommendations makes it more difficult for students to maintain an inclusive self-image without behaving inclusively because it provides an objective standard, demystifies inclusive behaviors, addresses white students' claims that they lack information about these behaviors, and also makes inclusive behavior seem more attainable due to the simplicity of the behaviors. Many of the behaviors we listed came from comments made by students of color in focus groups (e.g. "attend several activities, talks or other diversity events per semester" and "choose students from different social groups for class projects").

The 4Ps
Next, we decided where the intervention would be implemented, how to highlight incentives for the target behavior, what form it would take and what communication channels we would use.

Place
We identified the classroom as a good potential place for intervention. Many incidents that made marginalized students feel excluded occurred in this setting. In addition, one of the most meaningful ways to reduce inequality is to close the achievement gap between white students and students from underrepresented backgrounds. The classroom is the most proximal setting to this potential outcome. Finally, the classroom is a unique setting, as it is one of the only situations in which students from different backgrounds must come together, making it a fitting place to encourage inclusive behavior. The large majority of students (including first-year students) choose who they live with, and research suggests they usually choose people similar to them (Seder and Oishi, 2009). Many other activities on campus comprise self-selecting members who are also likely to be similar (e.g. student organizations and sports clubs). Grier (2020) also provided suggestive evidence that pro-diversity social marketing campaigns could be effectively implemented in a classroom setting.

Despite these opportunities, the classroom setting also came with certain constraints. One relevant constraint was the limited instructional time available in a class period. Thus, we decided the intervention would have to be implemented the first day of class: many instructors use this day primarily to go over their course syllabi, leaving additional time. This timeframe came with the additional benefit of setting the tone for the class: it set expectations about the importance of inclusion, and thus, provided an opportunity for

recursive effects of the intervention to unfold over the course of the semester. Given concerns about time and scalability, we decided that the intervention must be brief. Recent research has shown that even very brief interventions, when well-targeted, can have substantial effects (Walton, 2014; Walton and Wilson, 2018).

Price
We decided it would be inappropriate to offer monetary or other material incentives to members of the target audience for behaving inclusively, both for pragmatic reasons and because such an extrinsic reward could undermine these students' intrinsic motivation to engage in inclusive behaviors (Ryan and Deci, 2000). However, we did make salient non-monetary incentives of these behaviors by communicating information about the benefits members of the target audience could experience by behaving more inclusively, such as fitting in with their peers and aiding their future success.

Product
Given the opportunities and constraints of the chosen setting and being mindful of the relevant costs, we chose a form for the intervention to take: the product. We created a one-page document comprising the targeted messages described above about diversity and inclusive behavior. The page was designed to be easily appended to course syllabi, and instructors would present the information it contained as they went through their syllabi. Many instructors already included information about diversity, usually a diversity statement, on their syllabi, so including additional pro-diversity information would be unlikely to be viewed as unusual by students.

Promotion
An integral element of the intervention's implementation was having instructors present it to students. In our background research, students noted that few instructors actively promoted inclusion, but those who did were held in high esteem among students, suggesting that instructors could enhance the effectiveness of a pro-diversity message. Choosing instructors as distribution channels also influenced our creative and message strategies. We gave the page an unambiguous title ("inclusivity at UW-Madison") and had clearly identifiable, short sections of text titled with a topic sentence (e.g. "working well with diverse individuals is critical to your success"). The specific messages we chose were the operationalization of the relevant theories we presented above. First, we included quotations from campus leaders about the value of diversity (injunctive norm). Next, a short paragraph highlighted how being able to work with individuals from different social groups contributed to success in life and career (personal benefits). The third section provided information about the ubiquity of pro-diversity attitudes among students at the university (descriptive norms). Finally, the last section contained a series of "do" and "do not" behaviors, providing students with concrete advise about how to behave in a more inclusive, less discriminatory way (e.g. "choose a diverse group for class projects and assignments;" concrete behavioral recommendations).

The intervention (Appendix) was made to be implemented in a key setting at a specific point in the semester. It comprised a series of messages on a single page that manipulated established psychological constructs, though some had not been tested in the diversity domain specifically. Furthermore, these constructs were tightly linked to findings from our background research, suggesting they were likely to be especially relevant to members of our target audience. Finally, the intervention was to be presented by course instructors, individuals held in high esteem by students, and thus, functionally reinforcing the injunctive

norms message included in the intervention. Thus, we used the background information about the setting under consideration and relevant psychological theory to create an intervention informed by social marketing principles.

Selecting relevant outcomes

As discussed previously, the fundamental goal of most social marketing campaigns is to change behavior. For many campaigns, the relevant behavior to measure is clear and unambiguous: for example, feet of paper towel used in a restroom (conservation), doses of COVID-19 vaccine administered (public health) or voter turnout (civic engagement). In the intergroup domain, the relevant behaviors are harder to observe and measure. When considering the outcomes that we would measure to establish whether the pro-diversity intervention we have described was effective, then, we considered new, sometimes unconventional measures.

We decided to include self-report outcomes measuring three broad constructs. Two of these constructs were devised to demonstrate the effectiveness of the page among all students. We measured *pro-diversity attitudes and behaviors* by including scales requiring participants to report their support for pro-diversity policies, their general enthusiasm toward diversity, their warmth toward different social groups, etc. We measured *perceptions of climate* by including scales asking participants to indicate how inclusive, welcoming and respectful they considered the university to be, as well as the extent to which they believed pro-diversity attitudes were normative among their peers. In selecting scales, we tried to choose ones that would not impose salient social desirability concerns on participants and were unlikely to be connected to the intervention implemented on the first day of class.

The third broad construct was included to better understand the downstream effects of the intervention on students from marginalized backgrounds. If the intervention was effective and improved intergroup behaviors among the individuals in a given classroom, we reasoned we should also observe reductions in the deficits that often exist between marginalized and non-marginalized students. To this end, we included scales measuring students' *well-being,* including their mental and physical health, sense of belonging and academic motivation. We also decided to collect grade information from the target course at the end of the semester to examine any reductions in the achievement gap. Though the intergroup behaviors targeted by the intervention are nebulous and difficult to measure, the observed impact on marginalized students could enable us to make inferences about those behaviors.

We evaluated the effectiveness of the intervention in two large-scale randomized control trials in which university classrooms were randomly assigned to experimental conditions. The evaluation study and its results are described elsewhere, but we will briefly mention here that the intervention increased pro-diversity attitudes and behaviors, improved the well-being of students from marginalized backgrounds, and reduced the achievement gap.

Discussion

In the present article, we illustrate how a social marketing approach can be used to develop a pro-diversity intervention. Because it is highly targeted to a particular context, a focused intervention based on social marketing principles has a greater likelihood to make an impact than generic methods, yet still allows researchers to advance relevant theory. In the process of developing our pro-diversity intervention, we conducted background research to identify a target audience, a target behavior and relevant barriers and benefits. We integrated this information with relevant psychological theories to create our intervention: a page to be added to a course syllabus (product) making salient the non-monetary incentives of

inclusive behaviors (price) to be delivered in the classroom (place) by instructors (promotion). More broadly, we suggest researchers should tailor real-world tests of psychological theories to the contexts in which they are administered. As described by Rundle-Thiele *et al.* (2019), grounding social marketing campaigns in well-defined theories can increase the likelihood of intervention success and makes social marketing scholarship more replicable and generative. Furthermore, this paper is one among few demonstrating the applicability of the social marketing approach to developing interventions to improve intergroup relations.

We decided to separate the present paper describing the intervention development from the article reporting the research in which we tested the intervention's effectiveness. We did this for several reasons. First, we worried about such a paper being onerously long and, as a result, giving short shrift to either our background research process or to the test of the intervention. Second, and more importantly, our goal was to describe in detail the process of intervention development so that it can serve as a model for other researchers and practitioners. Our intervention was designed for students at UW-Madison. It could be that several key findings of our background research are different elsewhere. For example, at a different university, students may endorse diversity to a lesser extent or discriminatory behaviors could have a greater impact on the sense of belonging of students of color. It is, thus, important to have an in-depth outline of the method that one can use to develop a pro-diversity intervention in any setting. This is precisely what the current article attempts to achieve.

When we have presented this research at conferences, our colleagues often ask us if they can have a copy of the page to use in their own classrooms or workplaces. Though we have provided a copy of the intervention in the Appendix, we suggest that direct application of the messages and theories discussed in this paper is relatively unlikely to be successful: the intervention relies on background information that may or may not be representative of any new contexts in which it is applied. The same concern would apply if someone wanted to use an advertisement designed to appeal to millennials in the Midwest with elderly individuals in the Southeast. Rather than directly applying our intervention, we suggest that other researchers and practitioners use the step-by-step approach to intervention development that we describe in the present paper. They can use similar methods for obtaining background information, then use this information to identify a target behavior, select a target audience, identify relevant barriers and benefits, decide on a form and implementation plan for the intervention based on the "4Ps." This approach can be used to improve intergroup relations and other human behavior problems, providing additional opportunities to test the bounds of the social marketing approach in novel domains.

The work discussed in this paper has numerous shortcomings, some of which stem from the decisions we made about our target behavior and target audience. For example, the intervention we describe in this paper is unlikely to reduce discrimination among "repeat offenders," nor is it likely to directly reduce explicit or implicit biases, simply because these were not the aims of the current intervention. Additionally, the intervention we developed focuses specifically on the behaviors of students, not considering the roles others in the university play in shaping intergroup relations or the broader social context in which the university is situated. A more comprehensive systems-based approach to such a social marketing campaign would also examine what behaviors need to be changed among other individuals in this context (Brychkov and Domegan, 2017; Domegan *et al.*, 2016), such as faculty, administrators or people with "upstream" roles such as admissions officers and peer leaders (Andreasen, 2005). Thus, the work we have described could be thought of as just one

piece of what a broader, systems-based approach to developing a pro-diversity social marketing campaign might look like.

The present work demonstrates how the social marketing approach can be used to design pro-diversity interventions that are likely to be effective. Existing interventions have effects that often do not last longer than a few hours or days (Bezrukova *et al.*, 2016). In standard anti-bias training, facilitators introduce and describe many concepts relevant to the diversity domain, some of which are abstract and difficult to understand. In addition to being complex, some of these concepts highlight the role white and other high-status individuals have played in subjugating members of marginalized groups, which can invoke feelings of guilt among these individuals and lead to reactance (Rudman *et al.*, 2001; Stone *et al.*, 2011). The typical approach in these trainings is to highlight the negative consequences of discrimination and exclusion (in other words, the nonmonetary costs of the existing behavior), based on the idea that people will change their behavior if they understand how wrong and unfair their current behavior is.

In contrast, the social marketing approach tends to focus on the benefits people will experience, the needs they will satisfy and the problems they will have resolved as a result of engaging in the desired target behavior (the nonmonetary benefits of the target behavior). Put differently, existing anti-bias programs largely use a prevention approach (i.e. preventing a negative outcome) where social marketers instead favor a promotion approach (i.e. approaching a positive outcome). Furthermore, it is unclear how existing programs that highlight the importance of avoiding discrimination could have the effect of increasing inclusive behavior: the messages do not align. Thus, we are suggesting a paradigmatic shift in how to approach anti-bias training that consists of highlighting the many potential benefits people may experience as a result of being more inclusive, e.g. getting to know new and interesting people, feeling part of a welcoming team, experiencing alignment between one's values and behaviors, learning how to work with people from different social backgrounds.

To improve intergroup relations, we should meet people where they are. Individuals who are unfamiliar with high-level concepts covered in traditional diversity trainings are more likely to be reactive and not benefit from these efforts, whereas social justice advocates are likely to be bored by continually being taught information they already know. The social marketing approach overcomes this challenge because it acknowledges that the best way to improve intergroup relations depends on the features of the individuals and the context being targeted. The research discussed in this article provides a framework for how to obtain relevant background information and how to synthesize this information with the relevant scientific literature to craft a targeted intervention. Such an approach may hold the key to improving the experiences of individuals from marginalized groups by targeting the intergroup behaviors that can make them feel more recognized, respected, welcomed and valued.

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Appendix

Inclusivity at University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison

- Message from campus leaders:

"At Wisconsin, we value our diversity, in all of its forms and are trying to create a safe and inclusive community for everyone" – Lori Berquam, Dean of Students. "UW–Madison is committed to fostering a campus environment where every student can learn, feels safe and valued and is able to thrive" – Chancellor Rebecca Blank.

- Building good communication skills is critical to your success:

In our diverse society, employers seek candidates who can effectively interact and work in teams with people from many different backgrounds. Like leadership or critical thinking, learning how to communicate well with people from diverse backgrounds is a skill anyone can learn with practice. Badgers who build this skill in college are not only doing the right thing, but they are also more successful in the job market and excel more quickly in their careers.

- What your peers think:

A recent survey found that 87% UW students agreed with this statement: "I embrace diversity and make sure that people from all backgrounds feel part of the UW-Madison community." They also said they do their best to behave inclusively, though they sometimes worry about saying the wrong thing. While overt acts of discrimination occur at UW, recent research suggests these acts are committed by a small minority of individuals who differ radically from other students in terms of their attitudes and personalities.

- What you can do:

Building cultural sensitivity and behaving inclusively are not difficult. Engaging in a few straightforward behaviors can both sharpen your skills and improve our campus climate.

Do . . .	Do not . . .
. . . have a conversation with a student who has a different background from you. Ask them about their experiences	. . . assume you know about an individual's abilities and interests just because they belong to a certain social group
. . . attend several activities, talks or other diversity events per semester. Find an events list at bit.ly/UWdiverse	. . . use expressions others find offensive (e.g. "that is gay," "gypped," "ghetto" and "retarded"). Others see your behavior, not your intent
. . . display the same level of warmth and enthusiasm when interacting with students from all social groups	. . . tell someone their name is odd because you find hard to pronounce. Instead, learn how to say their name correctly
. . . ask individuals from different social groups what terms or phrases they find offensive	. . . tell someone they are different from "typical" members of a social group they belong to
. . . choose students from different social groups for class projects	. . . remain silent when you see others engage in discrimination. Speak up!

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