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Rachel D. Arnett

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# Uniting Through Difference: Rich Cultural-Identity Expression as a Conduit to Inclusion

Rachel D. Arnett<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104

Contact: [rarnett@wharton.upenn.edu](mailto:rarnett@wharton.upenn.edu), <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8566-7856> (RDA)

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**Abstract.** Although previous research suggests that bringing attention to minority cultural identities in the workplace can lead to professional penalties, this research provides promising evidence that the opposite can occur. I examine how cultural minority employees engaging in rich and meaningful conversations about their racial, ethnic, and national backgrounds (referred to as *rich cultural-identity expression*) influences majority-group coworkers' inclusive behaviors, such as majority-group employees' willingness to socially integrate with and professionally support minority coworkers. Three experiments found evidence of majority-group employees behaving *more*—not less—inclusively toward minority coworkers who engaged in rich cultural-identity expression, as opposed to small talk that did not bring attention to a minority cultural background. Even when minority employees richly expressed negatively valenced cultural information that could provoke anxiety (such as issues with discrimination), this form of sharing had positive effects on most measures of inclusive behavior in Studies 2 and 3 (although one exception was found in Study 3). No benefits were observed when minority employees engaged in surface-level cultural-identity expression (Studies 2 and 3) and intimate, noncultural self-disclosure (Study 2). The power of rich cultural-identity expression is its ability to increase majority-group individuals' status perceptions of, feelings of closeness to, and sense of learning potential from minority coworkers. This research provides promising evidence that minority employees may be able to express valued aspects of their cultural identities while gaining—as opposed to jeopardizing—inclusion.

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## Introduction

Differences pervade the workplace. Although this reality reflects important strides in organizational diversity efforts aimed at increasing representation, it brings a new challenge of understanding how to navigate sources of difference at work. For cultural minorities (i.e., racial, ethnic, and national minorities), whose identities are not only different but often associated with lower status, a common dilemma involves determining whether to highlight their dissimilarities (Phillips et al. 2009). One way to do so is to engage in what the present article refers to as *cultural-identity expression*: the act of bringing one's cultural identity (i.e., race, ethnicity, or nationality) to others' attention during an interpersonal interaction. For instance, Dara, a Black woman, can respond to a coworker's inquiry about her weekend by mentioning that she went to an African festival and a Black book club meeting, highlighting her cultural background. Minority employees have a preference for celebrating

their identities (Verkuyten 2005, Ryan et al. 2007), as doing so not only has psychological benefits of authenticity and self-esteem but can also fuel broader goals like social change (Meyerson and Scully 1995, Bell and Nkomo 2001, Roberts 2005, Cha et al. 2019).

Yet, despite these potential psychological and social-change benefits, minority employees associate cultural-identity expression with high professional risk. This perception stems from a belief that highlighting membership in a historically disadvantaged, stigmatized group can undermine one's workplace image and relationships, leading many minority employees to avoid cultural-identity expression at work (Goffman 1963, Hewlin 2003, Dumas et al. 2008, Phillips et al. 2009). In Dara's case, she may simply state that she attended a festival and a book club meeting, suppressing the culturally based focus of her activities. Although this choice downplays her cultural background in a way that can undermine authenticity (Cha et al. 2019), she may believe this is a necessary

sacrifice to avoid jeopardizing her career (Phillips et al. 2009). But are negative professional outcomes from cultural-identity expression a given?

The lion's share of literature focusing on the professional and interpersonal consequences of cultural-identity expression provides a compelling case that bringing attention to one's cultural background can backfire and that minority employees are indeed wise to downplay their identities. For instance, verbal, written, and visual cues associated with a minority identity often lead to worse professional evaluations and fewer job opportunities (Dovidio et al. 2007, Kaiser and Pratt-Hyatt 2009, Opie and Phillips 2015, Kang et al. 2016). These findings contribute to the belief that highlighting or discussing one's cultural background is professionally risky and that downplaying one's identity at work is a safer choice. Yet, this conclusion is premature, as past work has typically focused on superficial approaches to highlighting one's cultural background, such as hairstyles and brief references to an identity. These surface-level approaches to cultural-identity expression may be especially prone to eliciting negative stereotypes that confer lower status on minority employees (Phillips et al. 2009), making downplaying a minority cultural identity a wise survival tactic. However, given the aforementioned psychological value that minority employees gain from celebrating their identities, not to mention the potential for leveraging one's cultural identity for social change, it is paramount that researchers broaden the conceptualization of identity expression to identify potential options that may be less prone to backfiring professionally. Doing so could open up a path for minority employees to leverage and celebrate their cultural identities, as opposed to feeling restricted to downplaying their backgrounds to protect their careers.

I propose that an important determinant of how minority cultural-identity expression compares to downplaying one's identity is the extent to which cultural expressions are high in *richness*, meaning the extent that they provide insight into culturally relevant aspects of the inner self. The present research departs from past work by introducing *rich cultural-identity expression*, which I argue has the potential to outshine downplaying one's cultural background. Similar to the related construct of intimate self-disclosure (Clark and Reis 1988, Reis and Shaver 1988), rich cultural-identity expression involves sharing intimate feelings, inner thoughts and views, and personal experiences that are relevant to one's inner self. However, rich cultural-identity expression does so in a manner that pertains to one's cultural background. Rather than concealing the racial foundations of a festival or book club, Dara may divulge several reasons why attending an African festival each year is an exciting way to stay connected to her Nigerian roots or share how several books she read helped her understand

the unexpected ways that stereotypes about Black people influence her own life. Past work has shown the benefits of intimate (*noncultural*) self-disclosure relative to a baseline of discussing impersonal, small-talk topics like restaurants and movies (Aron et al. 1997, Ensari and Miller 2002). I similarly compare rich cultural-identity expression to small talk, as the latter represents one way to downplay cultural information while still engaging in nonwork conversation. An open question remains as to how rich cultural-identity expression—which leverages some of the benefits of providing insight into the self but involves the risky behavior of bringing attention to cultural differences—influences majority-group coworkers' inclusive behavior relative to a baseline of small talk.

Compared with small-talk conversations that downplay cultural identity, I hypothesize that rich cultural-identity expression can lead to *more* inclusive responses from majority-group colleagues. By connecting meaningful disclosure to cultural differences, rich cultural-identity expression has the potential to increase majority-group members' inclusive behavior toward minority employees through three mechanisms: elevating status perceptions, generating closeness, and enhancing a sense of learning potential from minority-group colleagues. Three studies test these proposed benefits of rich cultural-identity expression on both professionally and socially inclusive behaviors. I also investigate whether the effects of rich cultural-identity expression are moderated by valence of expressions, as past work shows that majority individuals find negatively valenced topics like discrimination to be anxiety provoking (Goff et al. 2008, Dittmann et al. 2017). To isolate the unique impact of rich cultural-identity expression, I examine the effects of two other forms of self-expression—intimate (*noncultural*) self-disclosure and surface-level cultural-identity expression. Thus, relative to a baseline that downplays information about both culture and the inner self (small talk), I evaluate the impact of forms of sharing that involve more risk and vulnerability, either by shedding insight into the inner self (intimate *noncultural* self-disclosure), bringing attention to one's cultural background (surface-level cultural-identity expression), or both (rich cultural-identity expression).

The current research contributes to the literature on identity management and diversity by answering a question plaguing employees—as well as scholars—about whether and how to express minority cultural identities at work (Roberts 2005, Phillips et al. 2009). By highlighting a professionally beneficial way of bringing attention to one's cultural background, this research demonstrates that cultural-identity expression need not always be a trade-off. Rather, minority employees can highlight their authentic selves and stand up for social change without necessarily endangering their careers. Moreover, whereas past work highlights majority- and minority-group individuals' conflicting views about whether multiculturalism and

the celebration of differences should be encouraged at work (Plaut et al. 2011, Apfelbaum et al. 2012), rich cultural-identity expression introduces the potential for a collectively beneficial “win-win”: minority employees can feel empowered to vocalize their cultural identities, and majority employees can also benefit by feeling closer to and learning from their minority coworkers. To the extent that the present research highlights a way for cultural identities to be a source of connection and inclusion, as opposed to difference and division, this work makes a meaningful step forward in the search for ways to harness the benefits and mitigate the pitfalls of diversity in organizations (Williams and O’Reilly 1998).

### Cultural-Identity Expression

Cultural-identity expression involves a person actively bringing attention to his or her race, ethnicity, or nationality during an interaction. Prior work on diversity and identity management has frequently classified race, ethnicity, and nationality within a broader umbrella of cultural identities because each involves belonging to a group that is socioculturally distinct—such that ingroup members often share common heritage, world views, languages, norms, values, and power dynamics (Nkomo 1992, Cox 1993, Ely and Thomas 2001, Cha and Roberts 2019). Whether one is a cultural minority based on race, ethnicity, or nationality, the decision about whether to engage in cultural-identity expression similarly includes determining whether to bring attention to unique sociocultural aspects of one’s background (e.g., traditions, norms), as well as experiences that stem from membership in one’s identity group such as navigating the ways others may perceive and treat people from one’s background (Goffman 1963, Roberts 2005, Dumas et al. 2008, Cha and Roberts 2019). Because racial, ethnic, and national identities are often associated with physical and stylistic characteristics that can make it apparent when a coworker belongs to a different cultural group, the present paper focuses on expressions that bring attention to a cultural identity that others are already aware of, as opposed to disclosure of a previously unknown identity. Although cultural-identity expression can involve the disclosure of other unknown information (e.g., a Korean American man sharing his private thoughts and emotions about a film with a predominantly Asian cast), it may involve no disclosure at all (e.g., the same man simply reminding his colleagues where he is from). This conceptualization of cultural-identity expression allows the present paper to empirically examine the effectiveness of different approaches to bringing attention to one’s cultural identity, including doing so with varying levels of personal disclosure.

To this end, the present paper examines the potential benefits of cultural-identity expression that is high

in richness. Rich cultural-identity expression involves actively bringing attention to one’s race, ethnicity, or nationality in a manner that provides insight into culturally relevant aspects of one’s inner self. Like intimate self-disclosure, this insight into the self can be provided through expressing emotions (Reis and Shaver 1988), such as a Mexican American woman sharing why she is excited to attend her cousin’s quinceañera, a celebration for girls in her culture who are turning 15. Because individuals often have limited insight into the specific thoughts, practices, and experiences of people from different cultural backgrounds (Allport 1954), rich cultural-identity expression can also shed light on the self through cognitive information such as culturally based insights, perspectives, and experiences (Cha and Roberts 2019). For instance, the Mexican American employee may discuss the activities and events that she engaged in as part of her own quinceañera. Even brief statements related to one’s cultural background can be rich. In response to a question about what dish she is looking forward to eating for Christmas, the Mexican American employee may share that “I’m most excited to make tamales with my family—it can be hard to feel connected to Mexican culture sometimes but making tamales is a tradition that has been passed down by the matriarchs of my family for generations and helps keep me anchored in my cultural roots.” Although the examples involving the Mexican American woman differ in terms of the level of affective or cognitive information expressed, as well as in the level of detail shared, what unites them as examples of rich cultural-identity expression is that they all provide insight into culturally relevant aspects of her inner self.

In contrast, surface-level cultural-identity expression provides little or no insight into the inner self. The relationship between rich and surface-level cultural-identity expression is somewhat analogous to the difference between intimate self-disclosure and a baseline comparison of small talk that has often been used in past work (Aron et al. 1997, Ensari and Miller 2002). Small talk is considered low in intimacy due to a focus on impersonal, non-self-relevant facts that provide minimal insight into the self (Reis and Shaver 1988), such as discussing general history or popular culture. Surface-level cultural-identity expression brings attention to one’s cultural background, but is similarly impersonal—and thus low in richness—because it tends to focus on cultural information and facts that are not illuminating about the self. For instance, a Dominican employee may mention an event that the Latinx Employee Resource Group is hosting after work that day, bringing attention to his cultural background and his involvement in the group, but providing little insight into his inner thoughts, feelings, and experiences relating to his cultural identity. In the following sections, I consider the potential outcomes of surface-level versus rich cultural-identity expression.

## Pitfalls to Cultural-Identity Expression

Both surface-level and rich cultural-identity expression face a potentially common challenge due to the attention they bring to sources of difference. Highlighting differences can trigger majority individuals to socially categorize a minority employee, resulting in status loss, bias, and professional obstacles (Fiske and Neuberg 1990, Phillips et al. 2009). Negative outcomes like these may be especially prevalent when cultural-identity expressions are surface-level and provide minimal insight into the self. For instance, compared with when their cultural identities were downplayed, minority employees received fewer callbacks when their resumes signaled their racial identities through names and extracurricular activities (Kang et al. 2016), were viewed as less respectable when they briefly mentioned membership in a Latin American Student Association (Kaiser and Pratt-Hyatt 2009), and were deemed less professional when they wore their hair in Afro-centric hairstyles (Opie and Phillips 2015, Koval and Rosette 2020, McCluney et al. 2021). These results suggest that cultural-identity expression, when surface-level in nature, is unlikely to increase inclusive behavior because it encourages categorization into a lower status group and activates stereotypes and biases.

Rich cultural-identity expression also brings attention to differences and thus has the potential to activate categorization processes. At a minimum, this possibility limits the ability for rich cultural-identity expression to capitalize on a previously established benefit of self-disclosure: individuation. Past research on diversity interventions suggests that self-disclosure and in-depth dialogue can be a means to overcome diversity issues due to the ability to shift observers from categorization to individuation. Unlike categorization, in which a minority employee is treated as a prototypical member of his or her identity group whose characteristics are consistent with group stereotypes, individuation occurs when observers view and respond to a minority employee based on his or her unique attributes (Fiske and Neuberg 1990, Van Dijk et al. 2017). Although the benefits of individuation have been illustrated in past work, these findings have specifically emerged for *non-cultural* forms of self-disclosure that minimize differences, such as sharing individual qualities and skills (Polzer et al. 2002) and engaging in intimate (noncultural) self-disclosure (Ensari and Miller 2002). Although rich cultural-identity expression brings attention to a minority employee's inner self in a way that is similar to self-disclosure, it also explicitly links that self to one's identity group in a manner that may limit or even overshadow individuation processes. For instance, if a Syrian man shares detailed feelings regarding the holiday Ramadan, his colleague gains insight into his personal experiences and self-concept; but these aspects of his inner self are closely linked to his culture, potentially making his

colleague more—not less—inclined to categorize him as Syrian. Given that categorization and individuation are typically considered as falling along a continuum of impression formation (Fiske and Neuberg 1990), this suggests that rich cultural-identity expression may be unlikely to capitalize on individuation processes that have fueled the success of noncultural forms of self-disclosure.

Although the potential to activate categorization (and the inability to trigger individuation) processes is typically considered a problem, making identity differences salient need not always undermine intergroup interactions. Indeed, more nuance can shed light on the conditions under which highlighting differences can be harmful or helpful (Van Knippenberg et al. 2004). Whereas surface-level cultural-identity expression highlights one's background in a way that is unlikely to increase inclusive behavior, I present several reasons why rich cultural-identity expression—despite bringing attention to differences—is likely to be a conduit to inclusion.

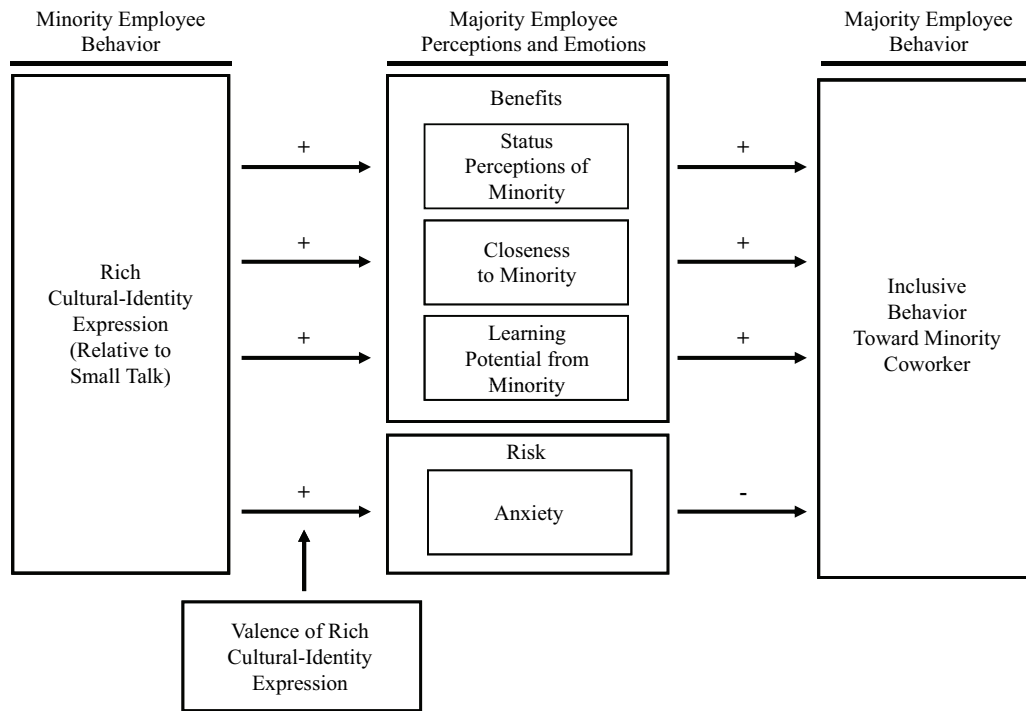
## Benefits of Rich Cultural-Identity Expression

I propose that minority rich cultural-identity expression is likely to increase majority-group colleagues' inclusive behavior due to three mechanisms. The first two involve counteracting two of the most fundamental concerns associated with diversity and bringing attention to identity differences in the workplace—perceptions of status differences and a lack of closeness (Williams and O'Reilly 1998, Phillips et al. 2009). The third mechanism involves the potential for rich cultural-identity expression to capitalize on one of the most well-established benefits of diversity in the workplace: the ability to learn from others (Williams and O'Reilly 1998, Ely and Thomas 2001, Van Knippenberg et al. 2004). Thus, as shown in Figure 1, I expect that rich cultural-identity expression (compared with small talk) will lead to more inclusive behavior through majority employees' increased status perceptions of, feelings of closeness to, and sense that they can learn from a minority colleague. Given that social connections can be critical to minority employees' career success (Ibarra 1995), I not only examine the impact of rich cultural-identity expression on professionally inclusive behavior (such as willingness to recommend a colleague for a promotion or incorporate her input) but also socially inclusive behavior (such as willingness to interact with a coworker in an informal setting).

### Status Perceptions

Status perceptions, meaning the extent that a majority employee perceives a minority coworker as admirable and deserving of respect (Magee and Galinsky 2008, Blader and Yu 2017), relates to one of the most heavily

**Figure 1.** The Predicted Positive Influence of Minority Rich Cultural-Identity Expression on Majority-Group Inclusive Behaviors Due to Increased Status Perceptions, Closeness, and Learning Potential



*Note.* Anxiety is expected to operate as a suppressor mechanism that weakens, but does not eliminate, the positive effects of rich cultural-identity expression when expressions are negative in valence.

cited explanations for group-based bias: the motivation to view members of other groups as having lower social worth (Tajfel and Turner 1986, Williams and O'Reilly 1998). Although bias is often observed when individuals are made aware of a previously unknown group-based difference (e.g., Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004, Milkman et al. 2015), the present research is instead focused on work settings where minority employees' cultural differences are already known and potentially subjected to biases. Relative to this latter baseline, rich cultural-identity expression may have the potential to elevate a majority employee's perceptions of a minority coworker's status. By giving majority employees access to more in-depth information about one's cultural background and how it relates to the self, rich cultural-identity expression can encourage more effortful processing that disrupts common assumptions about the relative status of cultural minorities. These rich expressions can, for instance, disconfirm stereotypes (showing that they are untrue; Roberts 2005), shift attributions about negative outcomes for minority employees (away from internal attributions such as stereotypes and toward situational attributions such as discrimination; Vescio et al. 2003), or reframe stereotypes (showing that they are positive rather than negative; Tajfel and Turner 1986).

Regardless of the exact way in which stereotypes shift, changing the perceptions of one's group can in

turn elevate the extent to which an individual is respected and admired (i.e., seen as higher status) by others (Roberts 2005, Phillips et al. 2009). For instance, although a Black employee is likely to be negatively evaluated for wearing her hair in Afro-centric, rather than Euro-centric, styles (Opie and Phillips 2015), opening up about her hair choice could counteract negative assumptions that Black people wear Afro-centric hairstyles due to a lack of understanding regarding professional standards. The Black employee can help a White coworker understand that her hairstyle is a valuable aspect of her cultural background and that the decision to wear her hair in a manner that is historically devalued in society is a brave attempt to reshape standards of professionalism and beauty. Thus, rather than distancing herself from her identity, the Black employee has brought attention to her group in a way that can debunk negative stereotypes that "Black is bad" (e.g., unprofessional), or at least counteract it with positive associations of "Black is good" (e.g., proud, brave, beautiful) (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Embracing her identity and sharing novel logic and attributes about it can enhance the positive distinctiveness of her group, which, in turn, elevates her social standing in the eyes of others (Roberts 2005).

The enhanced status achieved through rich cultural-identity expression has the potential to increase inclusive behavior from majority-group colleagues. Ample

research demonstrates that the more status and respect an individual has among her colleagues, the more likely others are to professionally include her by evaluating her favorably, incorporating her input, and helping her attain work-related goals and opportunities (Berger et al. 1972, Ely and Thomas 2001, Roberts 2005, Doyle et al. 2016). Since people value relationships with those who have greater social standing (Anderson et al. 2012, Leary et al. 2014), a minority employee who achieves status, respect, and positive impressions in the eyes of others is also more likely to be socially integrated into the workplace (Flynn et al. 2001, Roberts 2005). Correspondingly, minority identity management strategies that build status and credibility are likely to garner professional support and social inclusion from one's colleagues (Ely and Thomas 2001, Roberts 2005).

### Closeness

Another potential benefit of rich cultural-identity expression is closeness, meaning a subjective feeling of interconnectedness and bonding between the self and another person (Aron et al. 1991, Dumas et al. 2013). Extensive research has demonstrated that intimate disclosure can increase closeness, liking, and social integration (Reis and Shaver 1988, Collins and Miller 1994, Aron et al. 1997, Polzer et al. 2002, Dumas et al. 2013). Although this evidence focuses on noncultural disclosure, there is reason to believe that sharing meaningful aspects about one's cultural differences may be at least as beneficial because of the potential to directly counteract barriers to trust and social connection that are often present in intergroup interactions. Trust is a critical component of social bonding and closeness (Dumas et al. 2013), yet it is often fragile in intergroup contexts (Dovidio et al. 2002). Indeed, majority-group individuals often enter interactions with minority-group counterparts expecting rejection (Shelton and Richeson 2005), in part due to concerns that they will be perceived as prejudiced (Vorauer et al. 1998).

A minority employee opening up about her cultural identity may play a vital role in alleviating these fears and generating feelings of closeness. Discussions of cultural differences are often considered taboo in the workplace and are therefore avoided, particularly when interacting with outgroup members (Phillips et al. 2009). For this very reason, however, choosing to discuss one's cultural background in a rich way may be perceived as a particularly intimate gesture, as it involves discussing information that is not typically shared with outgroup members (Reis and Shaver 1988, Miller 2002). By allowing a majority-group member to be privy to in-depth thoughts and feelings, particularly those that are typically reserved for trusted and presumably less biased ingroup members, a minority employee sends a strong signal that the majority coworker is a trusted confidant (Jourard 1964, Ensari and Miller 2002, Sanchez et al. 2021) and potentially validates an important part of the

person's self-concept as an unprejudiced individual (Vorauer et al. 1998). For example, when opening up about her hair choice, the Black employee signals that she trusts the White male coworker to be open-minded enough to listen and respond positively when she shares meaningful aspects of her cultural identity. A minority employee signaling her own feelings of trust and closeness through expressing culturally relevant information about her inner self, as well as verifying an important part of the majority-group colleague's self-concept as unprejudiced, is likely to prompt reciprocal feelings of closeness and social connection from the majority-group colleague (Collins and Miller 1994, Swann et al. 2000).

Through enhancing feelings of closeness, rich cultural-identity expression can have positive consequences for how much minority employees are socially included and professionally supported by their colleagues. The more an individual infers that a person from another group has positive intentions toward him or her, as is the case with feelings of closeness, the more likely he is to want to interact with and actively engage with her (Cuddy et al. 2008, Brannon and Walton 2013, Van Dijk et al. 2017). Moreover, individuals place value in working with people that they enjoy being around. During daily interactions, feelings of interpersonal connection and warmth can make employees more likely to value a colleague's skills, seek her input, and want to work with her (Hinds et al. 2000; Casciaro and Lobo 2008, 2015).

### Learning Potential

Finally, a third means through which rich cultural-identity expression can increase inclusive behavior is by increasing majority-group employees' perceptions that they can learn from a minority-group coworker—referred to in the present paper as *learning potential*. Research highlighting the benefits of diversity often focuses on the benefits of learning from different perspectives and viewpoints (Williams and O'Reilly 1998, Van Knippenberg et al. 2004). Building on this idea, research on identity management has shed light on the educational benefits of members of underrepresented groups opening up about their backgrounds in a way that highlights identity-based insights, often signaling their ability to produce higher quality work more broadly (Cha and Roberts 2019). This can include educative encounters in which a minority employee focuses on aspects of her identity that are unrelated to work topics, as informally assuming the role of an instructor who provides unique perspectives can help highlight the informational value that she offers as a minority coworker (Creed and Scully 2000).

The more majority-group employees believe they can learn from a minority-group coworker, the more likely they are to engage in professionally inclusive behaviors like integrating the minority employee's opinion (Ely and Thomas 2001). On the social inclusion side, interracial interactions that are framed as opportunities

to learn from different perspectives are characterized by lower threat and relational conflict, which, in turn, encourages majority employees to adopt an approach orientation toward minority coworkers and engage in more positive interactions (Pettigrew 1998, Goff et al. 2008, Vorauer et al. 2009). Thus, in addition to having benefits for professional inclusion, the learning potential highlighted through rich cultural-identity expression is likely to ease concerns associated with diversity and intergroup interactions, leading to more socially inclusive behavior.

### Summary of Benefits

In sum, by increasing majority-group employees' status perceptions of, feeling of closeness to, and sense of learning potential from minority-group coworkers, rich cultural-identity expression is expected to increase inclusive behavior relative to an alternative baseline of downplaying cultural identities by simply engaging in small talk. In contrast, surface-level cultural-identity expression, which lacks content that could lead to these benefits, is not expected to increase inclusive behavior.

**Hypothesis 1.** *Minority rich cultural-identity expression, but not surface-level cultural-identity expression, increases majority employees' inclusive behavior relative to small talk.*

**Hypothesis 2.** *Minority rich cultural-identity expression (relative to small talk) has an indirect effect on majority employees' inclusive behavior through (a) increased status perception of the minority employee, (b) increased feelings of closeness toward the minority employee, and (c) increased perceived learning potential from the minority employee.*

### Valence of Rich Cultural-Identity Expression and the Risk of Anxiety

One potential boundary condition to rich cultural-identity expression is the valence of the information a minority employee shares when expressing his cultural background. Minority employees often depict their cultural backgrounds in a positive manner in professional contexts, which is effective because it can replace negative assumptions with positive attributes that majority coworkers respect and find socially attractive (Roberts 2005). The influence of cultural-identity expression on inclusive behavior becomes more complex when considering a negative framing. Minority employees may wish to share negative experiences associated with being in a less advantaged group, especially if doing so has the potential to motivate social change (Creed and Scully 2000). However, doing so risks eliciting adverse reactions given that majority individuals often feel anxious during intergroup interactions focusing on negative cultural topics like racial bias and inequality (Goff et al. 2008, Trawalter and Richeson 2008, Ditlmann et al. 2017). A strong source of anxiety is majority employees'

awareness that minority-group coworkers may view them as prejudiced (Vorauer et al. 1998, Plant 2004, Shelton et al. 2010a). On the one hand, as previously argued, rich cultural-identity expression may alleviate majority individuals' concerns with appearing prejudiced because they are the recipient of information that is typically reserved for ingroup members. On the other hand, in the context of negatively valenced conversations about identity, majority individuals may experience anxiety about whether they have the necessary skills to respond appropriately and sustain their self-concept of being unprejudiced (Creed and Scully 2000). Once feelings of anxiety are activated, majority-group individuals cope by distancing themselves from minority counterparts (Stephan and Stephan 1985; Vorauer et al. 1998, 2000; Plant 2004; Goff et al. 2008; Ditlmann et al. 2017).

Despite the potential for triggering anxiety, there is reason to believe that at least some forms of rich cultural-identity expression can lead to more inclusive behavior when negatively valenced. Consistent with the perspective-taking literature, this may be especially true when the rich, negative content highlights difficulties and vulnerability. Envisioning what it is like to live in another person's challenging circumstances can foster social bonding by creating more perceived overlap between the self and the other person (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000, Galinsky et al. 2005). Additionally, thinking through a minority coworker's fears and obstacles can help majority employees understand that the difficulties many minority individuals face are attributable to discrimination rather than negative stereotypes that assign blame to minority groups (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000; Bruneau and Saxe 2012; Todd et al. 2012a, b). For example, a Black employee sharing his fears about police brutality can illuminate that many minority individuals are fatally harmed due to police officer bias rather than posing an actual threat. These insights frame interactions with a minority coworker as a learning opportunity and may also disrupt stereotypes in a way that can contribute to the minority coworker's status. In these ways, rich cultural-identity expression that focuses on negative experiences, particularly relating to vulnerability, still has the potential to operate through the predicted mechanisms of closeness, learning, and status perceptions. Thus, although negative topics can trigger anxiety, this anxiety is unlikely to be sufficient to completely undermine the manifold benefits of rich cultural-identity expression. Rather, anxiety should operate as a suppressor variable that weakens—but does not eliminate—the positive effect of rich cultural-identity expression when such expressions are negatively valenced (see Figure 1).

**Hypothesis 3.** *Valence will moderate the relationship between minority rich cultural-identity expression (relative to small talk) and majority-group inclusive behavior such that rich cultural-identity expression will increase inclusive*



behavior when expressions are positively valenced, but this positive effect will be attenuated when expressions are negatively valenced.

**Hypothesis 4.** Valence will serve as a moderator for a conditional indirect effect of minority rich cultural-identity expression (relative to small talk) on majority-group inclusive behavior via anxiety, such that minority rich cultural-identity expression will increase anxiety and, therefore, attenuate majority-group inclusive behavior, but only when expressions are negatively valenced.

## Overview of Studies

Three studies tested the effects of rich cultural-identity expression on inclusive behaviors relative to a control condition of small talk. Study 1 tested this effect in a field setting. Study 2 employed a recall prime experiment to replicate the effect from Study 1, examine the moderating role of valence, and explore the mechanisms of status perceptions, closeness, learning potential, and anxiety. In addition to testing the influence of rich cultural-identity expression, Study 2 investigated the effects of two other conditions (relative to small talk): intimate (noncultural) self-disclosure and surface-level cultural-identity expression. Study 3 delved deeper into the role of valence, using a more controlled experiment to investigate the effectiveness of rich cultural-identity expressions that primarily focus on negatively valenced topics that are likely to be strong sources of anxiety for majority-group individuals.

Inclusive behavior was measured in a professional and social sense, as both aspects have emerged as important to inclusion (Mor Barak et al. 1998, Pelled et al. 1999, Ely and Thomas 2001, Pearce and Randel 2004, Roberson 2006, Nishii 2013). Building on research demonstrating that inclusive climates involve incorporating employees' input in decision making and giving them access to professional opportunities (Nishii 2013), professionally inclusive behavior was assessed in terms of individuals' willingness to incorporate a minority coworker's professional input on a work task as well as facilitate a minority colleague's professional advancement. Reflecting past work conceptualizing inclusion in terms of social connection and integration with others (Shore et al. 2011), socially inclusive behaviors were measured in terms of willingness to engage in social interactions and/or friendliness during social interactions. In some cases, intentions of engaging in inclusive behavior were assessed, as meta-analytic evidence demonstrates that intentions often convert into actual action (Webb and Sheeran 2006).

## Study 1: Rich Cultural-Identity Expression in a Field Setting

Study 1 tested Hypothesis 1 by using a two-condition design to examine how rich cultural-identity expression

influences inclusive behavior in a field setting. Attendees at a professional conference, Workhuman Live, were paired together and completed a getting-to-know-you session in which they engaged in either small talk (control) or shared meaningful aspects of their cultural backgrounds (rich cultural-identity expression). Inclusive behaviors were assessed using an end-of-session questionnaire that participants completed immediately following the getting-to-know-you session. To the extent possible, participants were put in pairs such that their partner differed from them in terms of race, ethnicity, and/or nationality. However, due to the predominantly White American sample, only a subset of participants was placed in pairs in which one individual was a cultural majority-group member (White American) and the other person was a cultural minority-group member (either non-White or non-American). Nonetheless, Study 1 provides an opportunity to examine whether rich cultural-identity expression can lead to more inclusive behaviors in a real-world setting, and supplemental analyses provide insight into whether effects hold when limiting the sample to majority-group (White American) individuals who interacted with cultural minority counterparts.

## Method

**Participants.** Employees from different companies were recruited to participate in the study at Workhuman Live (workhumanlive.com), a conference for professionals in human resources, technology, and analytics. One hundred and thirteen participants completed the study<sup>1</sup> (78% women;  $M_{\text{age}} = 45$ ; 88% American, 65% White/Caucasian, 13% Black/African American, 12% Asian, 4% Hispanic/Latino, 4% Pacific Islander, 2% Middle Eastern or Arab, 1% Native American, 1% Other Race). Participants' answers to free-response background questions indicated that they came from a variety of industries (e.g., HR, Healthcare, Consulting, Financial Services, Energy, and Technology) and held a range of titles (54% of participants wrote titles relating to top leadership roles such as "Founder," "Owner," "CEO," "Vice President," "Director," or "Lead" whereas 43% of participants wrote titles such as "Manager," "HR Business Partner," "Specialist," "Generalist," "Analyst," or "Administrator").

**Procedure.** Participants were invited to participate in a research study on "creating more connected workplaces" during the first session of the conference and were told it would involve a getting-to-know-you session with a partner. Participants completed demographic questions, including: name, email address, industry, job title, age, gender, region, nationality, racial/ethnic identity, and any cultural backgrounds they identified with based on their parents and grandparents (e.g., if their parents were immigrants from Italy or Chile). This demographic information was used to classify individuals as majority-group or

minority-group individuals. Because conference attendees were predominantly White Americans, an a priori decision was made to use a broad definition of “minority” to include anyone who indicated that they were non-White, non-American, or identified with any other nationalities or ethnicities based on their parents’ or grandparents’ backgrounds. Based on the demographic survey responses, majority-group participants were given an orange sticker and minority-group participants were given a blue sticker. Study facilitators used sticker colors to quickly pair majority-group and minority-group participants together (majority-minority pairs), although in a few instances people were put in majority-majority or minority-minority pairs because no other participants were available after waiting for 5–10 minutes. Participants were unaware of the meaning of the stickers, and at no point did any participants raise questions or suspicions about the stickers. Several aspects of the study design and implementation ensured that participants did not associate the stickers with race or culture (e.g., Qualtrics assigned the sticker color, and study facilitators did not know the purpose of the colors; participants were spread apart spatially and temporally so they could not identify patterns in sticker color).

Once participants were in pairs, they took turns answering eight getting-to-know-you questions, each answering the question before proceeding to the next one. Participants randomly assigned to the control condition answered small-talk questions developed by Aron et al. (1997) such as: “What is the best restaurant you have been to in the last month? Tell your partner about it.” Participants randomly assigned to the rich cultural-identity expression condition answered questions about their cultural background, such as: “What aspect of your cultural background (i.e., your family origins, nationality, race, ethnicity, or area where you grew up) is the greatest source of pride for you? Why?” and “Describe something about your cultural background (i.e., relating to family origins, nationality, race, ethnicity, or area where you grew up) that has stood out as different from others that you work with. How have you navigated this source of difference?” See the e-companion for the full set of questions. After the getting-to-know-you session, participants privately completed an online end-of-session questionnaire including the dependent measures of professionally and socially inclusive behavior, manipulation checks, an attention check verifying what getting-to-know-you questions they read (only two participants failed the attention check, but their data were included because their partner answered the attention check correctly, which suggests they were indeed exposed to the correct getting-to-know-you questions), and a question verifying that participants did not know their partner prior to the study (three participants knew their partner “a little bit”).

## Measures

**Dependent Variables.** Three items assessed professionally inclusive behavior, and two items assessed socially inclusive behavior. A maximum likelihood factor analysis with oblique (direct oblimin) rotation indicated that these items loaded onto two factors, one social and one professional; however, the two socially inclusive behavior items exhibited low reliability ( $\alpha = 0.52$ ) and were analyzed separately. Thus, three dependent variables (DVs) were assessed. The first socially inclusive behavior item (DV1) asked: “If it were up to you, how many minutes would you spend interacting with your partner socially during the remainder of the conference? Please write a number of minutes.” The second socially inclusive behavior item (DV2) asked: “If you ran into your partner at a social event during the conference, how many minutes would you spend interacting with your partner at the event? Please write a number of minutes.” Given that these measures of socially inclusive behavior had no upper bound, univariate outliers were trimmed to not exceed 2.5 standard deviations from the mean (when analyzing data without outliers trimmed, significant results remained significant). For professionally inclusive behavior (DV3), participants responded to the following items using a Likert scale (1 = *extremely unlikely*, 9 = *extremely likely*): “If you knew someone who was looking to hire someone with your partner’s expertise, and you knew that your partner might be interested in the position, how likely would you be to refer your partner?” “If you encountered a challenge at work, and had the opportunity to talk to your partner, how likely would you be to ask your partner for his/her input on the best way to tackle the challenge?” “If your partner and another professional contact (from outside your organization) provided conflicting recommendations for how to best tackle a work-related problem that you were grappling with, how likely would you be to follow your partner’s recommendation (as opposed to the other person’s recommendation)?” ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ).

**Manipulation Checks.** All manipulation check items were assessed using a 1 to 5 (*not at all to extremely*) scale. Building on past research that has defined intimacy of self-disclosure in terms of the level of insight into the inner self (Reis and Shaver 1988) and has operationalized it using questions assessing the levels of personal information, views, and feelings shared (Shelton et al. 2010b), intimacy of self-disclosure was assessed using two items (“During this session, to what extent did your partner . . . share details about him/herself that were extremely intimate and personal?” and “share intimate feelings and emotions in general?”  $\alpha = .87$ ). As richness of cultural-identity expression builds on the construct of intimate self-disclosure but focuses on providing insight into *culturally relevant* aspects of the self,

richness of cultural-identity expression was assessed by asking two items that tapped into the extent that culturally relevant feelings and views were shared by the other person (“During this session, to what extent did your partner . . . express his/her feelings relating to his/her cultural background (i.e., his/her family origins, nationality, race, ethnicity, or area where he/she grew up)?” and “disclose personal thoughts relating to his/her cultural background (i.e., his/her family origins, nationality, race, ethnicity, or area where he/she grew up)?”  $\alpha = 0.90$ ). Participants also completed two items assessing the salience of their partner’s cultural identity (“During this session, to what extent did your partner . . . make you aware of his/her cultural background (i.e., his/her family origins, nationality, race, ethnicity, or area where he/she grew up)?” and “make his/her cultural background (i.e., his/her family origins, nationality, race, ethnicity, or area where he/she grew up) more apparent to you?”  $\alpha = 0.93$ ).

### Analysis

Because participants were in pairs, there is dependency in the data. Therefore, analyses were conducted using a multilevel model with participants nested within pairs (level-two variable, 59 pairs total). Experimental condition was treated as a fixed effect, and the intercept for each dependent variable was allowed to vary by pair. For each analysis, the fixed effect of the rich cultural-identity expression condition was compared with the small-talk control condition.

### Results

**Manipulation Checks.** Compared with the control condition (salience:  $M = 2.38$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ; richness of cultural-identity expression:  $M = 2.03$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ; intimacy of self-disclosure:  $M = 2.02$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ), participants in the rich cultural-identity expression condition perceived their partner’s cultural identity as significantly more salient ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ),  $b = 1.57$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI [1.14, 2.01], cultural-identity expression as significantly richer ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ),  $b = 1.68$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI [1.30, 2.06], and self-disclosure as significantly more intimate ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ),  $b = 1.15$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI [0.73, 1.57].

**Dependent Variables.** Results are summarized in Table 1, and the dependent variables (DVs) here are presented in the same order as the table. Rich cultural-identity expression (compared with small talk) led to greater interest in social interaction during the conference (DV1),  $b = 33.75$ ,  $p = 0.004$ , 95% CI [10.67, 56.83], had no impact on interest in interacting during specific social events (DV2),  $b = 3.23$ ,  $p = 0.49$ , 95% CI [−5.83, 12.28], and led to more professionally inclusive behavior (DV3),  $b = 0.61$ ,  $p = 0.05$ , 95% CI [0.01, 1.20]. Thus, results using two of the three dependent variables

supported Hypothesis 1. Additional analyses were also conducted by limiting the sample to 33 White American participants whose partners were either non-White and/or non-American. In this case, effects remained significant for interest in socially interacting during the conference,  $p = 0.02$ , and professionally inclusive behavior,  $p = 0.03$ .

### Discussion

Study 1 provides initial evidence of the positive effect of rich cultural-identity expression on inclusive behaviors. However, an alternative interpretation is that these positive effects were driven by majority individuals’ ability to share details about themselves as part of the getting-to-know-you session. This interpretation would be consistent with past research showing that individuals are more socially attracted to people to whom they disclose (Collins and Miller 1994). Study 2 eliminates this confound by examining whether the benefits of rich cultural-identity expression hold when majority individuals do not personally engage in self-disclosure. Additionally, although Study 1 did not include a full set of mediators, a preliminary test of mechanisms provided initial evidence for closeness as a mechanism (see the e-companion). Study 2 includes a complete examination of the mechanisms and also tests for moderation by valence.

### Study 2: Examining Mediation and Moderation of Rich Cultural-Identity Expression and Other Forms of Sharing

Using a recall prime task, Study 2 sought to replicate the finding that majority-group coworkers behave more inclusively toward minority-group employees who engage in rich cultural-identity expression, as well as show that this effect does not occur in response to surface-level cultural-identity expression (Hypothesis 1). Intimate (noncultural) self-disclosure was also included as an experimental condition to examine whether any effects of rich cultural-identity expression could be attributed to meaningful conversations in general or were unique to rich conversations regarding culture. All three forms of expression were compared with a baseline of small talk. Study 2 also tested the mechanisms driving the benefits of rich cultural-identity expression (Hypothesis 2(a)–(c)), the potential moderating role of valence (Hypothesis 3), and the role of anxiety as a suppressor mechanism when valence is negative (Hypothesis 4).

### Method

**Participants.** Study 2 was initially powered for a design involving four experimental conditions, one continuous independent variable (valence), and their interaction. The study was powered to detect a relatively small interaction

**Table 1.** Summary of Findings Across Studies

Experimental condition	DV	Experimental condition: Mean (SD)	Small talk control condition: Mean (SD)	Total effect (Hypothesis 1)	Direct effect	Status indirect effect (Hypothesis 2(a))	Closeness indirect effect (Hypothesis 2(b))	Learning indirect effect (Hypothesis 2(c))	Anxiety indirect effect (Hypothesis 4)
Study 1									
Rich cultural	DV1 (S)	77.12 (73.02)	43.97 (38.13)	33.75**					
	DV2 (S)	28.89 (27.97)	25.64 (20.31)	3.23					
	DV3 (P)	6.52 (1.46)	5.92 (1.74)	0.61*					
Study 2 <sup>a</sup>									
Rich cultural	DV (S+P)	0.13 (0.66)	−0.08 (0.82)	0.20*	−0.04	0.10*	0.09*	0.06*	−0.01
Surface-level cultural	DV (S+P)	−0.07 (0.92)	−0.08 (0.82)	0.01	−0.04	−0.02	0.06	0.03	−0.02
Intimate noncultural	DV (S+P)	0.05 (0.73)	−0.08 (0.82)	0.12	−0.03	0.08	0.06	0.04	−0.02
Study 3 (All Conditions Negative in Valence) <sup>b</sup>									
Rich cultural	DV1 (S)	6.42 (0.97)	6.14 (0.74)	0.28**	0.15	0.01	0.01	0.11*	0.002
					0.31**				−0.03
	DV2 (S)	42.49 (33.35)	36.58 (31.73)	5.91 <sup>†</sup>	0.35	0.90	0.41	5.61*	−1.41*
					9.13*				−3.27*
DV3 (P)	7.18 (1.26)	6.88 (1.45)	0.30 <sup>†</sup>	0.13	0.03	−0.003	0.22*	−0.07*	
				0.43**				−0.11*	
DV4 (P)	0.28 (0.17)	0.32 (0.17)	−0.04*	−0.07**	0.003	0.001	0.02*	0.01	
Surface-level cultural <sup>c</sup>	DV1 (S)	6.23 (0.84)	6.14 (0.74)	0.09	0.13	−0.002	−0.01	0.003	−0.03*
					0.14 <sup>†</sup>				−0.05*
	DV2 (S)	38.10 (30.78)	36.58 (31.73)	1.52	5.77*	−1.76*	−1.37	0.09	−1.26*
					4.42				−2.95*
DV3 (P)	6.72 (1.72)	6.88 (1.45)	−0.16	0.02	−0.08*	−0.01	0.004	−0.09*	
				−0.01				−0.14*	
DV4 (P)	0.30 (0.19)	0.32 (0.17)	−0.01	−0.02	−0.005	−0.004	0.001	0.01 <sup>d*</sup>	
					−0.02				0.003

Notes. Total effects are reported based on planned contrasts from ANOVA analyses, whereas direct and indirect effects are based on mediation analyses from Hayes Process macro. The full description of each dependent variable is provided in the measures section for each study. DV, Dependent variable; (S), Socially inclusive behavior; (P), Professionally inclusive behavior.

<sup>a</sup>Study 2 results in Table 1 are displayed without valence as a moderator given that, contrary to Hypotheses 3 and 4, this study found no evidence that total or indirect effects were moderated by valence.

<sup>b</sup>The negatively valenced cultural content in Study 3 is expected to heighten anxiety. To better understand the role of anxiety as a potential suppressor mechanism that may be weakening total effects for rich cultural-identity expression (consistent with Hypothesis 4), a second set of mediation analyses was conducted with anxiety entered as the sole mediator.

<sup>c</sup>Study 3 mediation results reveal that, for some dependent measures, surface-level cultural-identity expression was less effective due to increased anxiety and decreased status perceptions.

<sup>d</sup>In this analysis, anxiety operated as a mechanism in an unexpected manner, such that increased anxiety was associated with higher—not lower—inclusive behavior; however, this indirect effect was no longer significant when eliminating other mediators from the model.

<sup>†</sup> $p < 0.10$ .

\* $p < 0.05$  for total and direct effects; for indirect effects, this indicates that the confidence interval did not cross zero.

\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

effect size of  $\eta_p^2 = 0.03$  (at 80% power and  $\alpha = 0.05$ ), which required a sample size of 472 participants according to G\*Power (Faul et al. 2007). However, a sample size of at least 600 participants was targeted to allow for the possibility of exclusions. Data were collected in batches from Mechanical Turk (e.g., posting 150 slots at a time) until reaching a sample size exceeding 600 eligible participants. To be eligible for the study, individuals were required to meet the following eligibility criteria: pass an initial attention check, identify racially as White, select American as their nationality, and indicate that they have been working in a white-collar job for at least three

months. White-collar workers were those who self-identified as belonging to the following U.S. Census categories of occupation: executive, administrative, or managerial; professional specialty; technicians or related support; sales; administrative support or clerical. Seven hundred and three eligible participants completed the study in its entirety,<sup>2</sup> of whom 110 were excluded because they indicated that their coworker was not culturally dissimilar from them, 12 were excluded for either not providing a real response to the prompts or indicating that they could not recall an experience pertaining to the prompts, one was excluded for switching which

coworker they discussed during the study, and four were excluded for having taken the study previously. The final sample included 576 participants (49% women;  $M_{age} = 37$ ; 100% American; 100% White/Caucasian; some participants indicated an additional race/ethnicity, resulting in the following additional racial/ethnic breakdown: 1% Asian; 1% Black/African American; 1% Latino/Hispanic; 1% Native American; 0.3% Pacific Islander).

**Procedure.** After completing an attention check and demographic questionnaire (age, gender, race, nationality, education, occupation, and length of current employment), eligible participants were asked to write down the initials of a culturally dissimilar coworker (a coworker who differed from them in terms of race, ethnicity, and/or nationality). Participants were then randomly assigned to one of four recall prime conditions in which they were asked to describe a time when they were interacting with their selected coworker and he/she “discussed thoughts, emotions, or experiences that helped you to better understand his/her cultural background” (rich cultural-identity expression), “said or did something that made you aware of his/her cultural background” (surface-level cultural-identity expression), “discussed something that helped you to better understand his/her emotions and feelings” (intimate noncultural self-disclosure), or “engaged in small talk” (control condition). Example responses can be found in Table 2.

After the recall prime, participants completed mediation measures (status perceptions, closeness, learning potential, anxiety), dependent measures (inclusive behavior), manipulation checks, and a question confirming whether they answered all questions with the same coworker in mind.

## Measures

**Dependent Variables.** Participants completed items assessing socially inclusive behavior (one item assessing the number of minutes they would be interested in socially interacting with their coworker in the next week,<sup>3</sup> as well as four items about potential interactions, for example, “If you were about to eat lunch with another coworker and saw [coworker] eating alone, how likely would you be to invite [coworker] to join?”). They also completed professionally inclusive behavior items (two items assessing their willingness to recommend their coworker for a promotion, as well as three items assessing their willingness to integrate their coworker’s input, for example, “If you had to assemble a team to work on an important new project, how likely would you be to ask [coworker] to join your team?”). Items are described in further detail in the e-companion.

A maximum likelihood factor analysis with oblique (direct oblimin) rotation indicated that socially and professionally inclusive behavior items all loaded onto one factor, and these items were therefore standardized and combined into one measure of inclusive behavior ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ).

**Mediators.** Closeness was assessed with four subjective closeness questions adapted from Holoien 2016 (e.g., “how close do you feel to [coworker],” “how much do you like [coworker]”), which were combined with three questions assessing their willingness to engage in intimate self-disclosure with their coworker (e.g., “If you had an important non-work-related secret, how likely would you be to tell [coworker]?”),  $\alpha = 0.91$ . These latter items were included based on past work in the relationships literature, which states that “the amount of personal information that one person is willing to disclose to another appears to be an index of the ‘closeness’ of the relationship” (Jourard 1959, p. 428). Participants also completed measures of status perceptions (two items from Anderson et al. 2012: “I respect him/her,” “I admire him/her,”  $\alpha = 0.83$ ), learning potential (three items adapted from Turner et al. 2007: “I learned important information while interacting with [coworker],” “The information that [coworker] shared was valuable,” “Interacting with [coworker] felt rewarding,”  $\alpha = 0.90$ ), and anxiety (participants indicated the extent to which they felt “anxious,” “nervous,” “uncomfortable,” and “relaxed” (reverse coded) during the interaction they recalled,  $\alpha = 0.84$ ). A maximum likelihood factor analysis with oblique (direct oblimin) rotation indicated that closeness and anxiety each loaded on two separate factors. Status perceptions and learning potential loaded together on one factor but were kept as separate variables given the diverging theoretical background associated with these two measures. Specifically, whereas status is often viewed as an explanation for diversity-related challenges (due to the tendency to see outgroup members as lower status than oneself in order to bolster one’s own self-image), learning potential is often viewed as an explanation for diversity-related opportunities (because increasing diversity can allow people to learn from different perspectives). Additional analyses combining status perceptions and learning potential into one factor did not change the findings.

**Manipulation Checks.** Following the same scale and similar logic to Study 1, participants completed items assessing intimacy of self-disclosure (three items, e.g., “to what extent did he/she provide you with insight into his/her personal thoughts and perspectives,”  $\alpha = 0.88$ ), richness of cultural-identity expression (three

**Table 2.** Examples from Each Experimental Condition and Type of Valence in Study 2

Condition	Valence	Example
Rich cultural-identity expression	Positive	<p>GT is Cuban and has deep religious ties. Family is important to her, as are customs and recipes. She was telling me about birthday and holiday celebrations and the rituals they perform. It was all very different from my American upbringing. Her story had so much heart, emotion, and passion. She feels her heritage is to thank for the deep bonds.</p> <p>It was a few months ago and he wanted MLK’s actual birthday off from work. This was the first time I had a subordinate ask for that day off and explain why as a Black man it was important to him and his life. It gave me some insight into his culture and background for how he acted and presented himself. I have a lot of respect for him before this interaction, but after it quite a bit more. I’m glad I was able to have him share this with me and open my eyes to others culture.</p>
	Negative	<p>JC is the leader of a diversity working group in my workplace. We once had a conversation about an upcoming presentation she would be giving, wherein she said, “How do I, as a Black woman, stand in front of a group of White men and tell them that they can be racist?” From there, she shared with me some more about her experiences growing up as a woman of color in the 80s, and how her identity informed her interactions with others, regardless of whether she wanted it to.</p> <p>KL seemed discouraged after an interaction with a client, when I asked what had happened, she confided in me that the language barriers over the phone often complicate her interactions with clientele. It made me realize the impact of these misunderstandings because in her home country she had a much higher position and held more authority, downgrading because of a new system here and being held back is a major challenge which made me empathize.</p>
	Mixed	<p>We had a discussion about how we grew up. He, being African American, grew up in Arkansas. He overcame racial prejudice to become successful in the community we lived in. He described what it was like growing up in a place where Blacks were a minority.</p> <p>She explained exactly where she was from Mexico and went over her upbringing, her journey to the United States and how she still has deep roots to her family and culture. She helped me understand more in regards to how she grew up, the customs and traditions she had as well as how others viewed her because of that. She felt sad that because English is her second language, that often people criticize or decide to not talk to her because of that.</p>
	Neutral	<p>BB is Arab and Muslim in terms of religion. She told me about how she was fasting for Ramadan and I told her that I didn’t know much about it. She fully explained how it works and when she can eat and drink a bit. She also stated how it is normal for her and the family and most Muslims to cheat. I thought this was funny but it was an interesting introspective into her religion.</p> <p>KM had told me something about arranged marriage. He said that he would probably get one because that is a part of his culture. At first I thought it was weird but in the end, everyone is different. It has helped me see that he was of a different culture, but we were the same people working in the same company.</p>
Surface-level cultural-identity expression	Positive	<p>GR and I were talking when we encountered each other, which we commonly do. We were discussing how our days were going and what we might be doing over the weekend. GR mentioned that he would be attending his niece’s quinceañera over the weekend.</p>
	Negative	<p>Last week when we were going in for our yearly reviews to see if we would get a raise HW stated that she most likely would not get a raise due to her being a Black woman.</p>
	Mixed	<p>We were talking about food at local restaurants, and he began to talk about the lack of good southern food in the area. He went on to describe a few dishes tied to his cultural background. This got me thinking about differences as I had not tried any of what he had mentioned.</p>
	Neutral	<p>She came to work with braids in her hair, and we talked about how long it took to do them, and how long you can keep them like that. About if she used extensions or a weave.</p>

**Table 2.** (Continued)

Condition	Valence	Example
Intimate (noncultural) self-disclosure	Positive	I spoke with M about her new baby granddaughter. I asked her if she enjoyed babysitting and M talked about how much she loved spending time with her granddaughter and how happy she was.
	Negative	Although I work closely with EG, I didn't realize just how stressful her job was. One day, I found her crying in the breakroom. I asked her just what was happening and she told me about a patient who was very cruel to her. Apparently, she takes a lot of abuse. I asked her just to talk about it, and she was feeling better after a brief chat.
	Mixed	I was talking with FC and I mentioned something about my children, and how it was frustrating to "potty train" them. FC responded with stories about her own child, and some similar experiences to mine. I had previously viewed her as very stoic and almost machine-like, but she talked about things that frustrated her and things that made her laugh, which gave me a new understanding of her emotions and feelings.
	Neutral	She was just talking about how she felt about natural selection and evolution. It was interesting to hear her thoughts and helped me understand some things about her and her interests outside of work.
Small talk (control)	Positive	We were going to be riding the elevator up to our floor together. LV brought up that it's a beautiful spring morning, great weather, and that she was looking forward to being outside for the weekend.
	Negative	Yesterday there was a major building fire north of us and we discussed the situation. He asked me if I had seen the large smoke plume and I said I had not. We went to the window to look at it and discussed what it could be and where we thought it was. When we got back to our desks I pulled up the new article and told him what it was.
	Mixed	We have talked about little things like commutes, the different cities we live in (I work remote from the office where he works). We talk about sports regularly, especially baseball. Last time we chatted about random things it was about the weather up in his part of the state. Severe spring weather. I was keeping watch on radars and passing information along as I got it. Luckily his area was spared the worst of the weather that day but I kept him updated regardless.
	Neutral	We were discussing fitness and she was showing me her Fitbit and how it integrated with a sleep program to track her sleeping and that I thought it was pretty cool.

*Note.* Two examples are provided for each type of valence within the rich cultural-identity expression condition given the focus of the present paper.

items, e.g., "to what extent did he/she provide you with insight into personal thoughts and perspectives that are shaped by his/her cultural background (e.g., race, ethnicity, nationality),"  $\alpha = 0.91$ ), and salience of the coworker's cultural identity (two items, e.g., "to what extent did he/she make you aware of his/her culture (e.g., race, ethnicity, nationality),"  $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

**Valence Moderator.** The responses participants described regarding the information their coworker shared were categorized into four categories in terms of valence: neutral, positive, negative, and mixed (positive and negative). This categorical approach was taken so that mixed valence responses and neutral valence responses would not be treated as the same given that they are both likely to fall toward the middle of a continuous valence scale. Table 1 provides examples of responses within each valence category. Three research assistants who were blind to condition and the study purpose coded

the responses participants provided when recalling what their coworkers shared with them. Responses were coded in terms of the level of positivity (1 = Not at all positive, 3 = Moderately positive, 5 = Extremely positive; interrater reliability = 0.71), as well as negativity (1 = Not at all negative, 3 = Moderately negative, 5 = Extremely negative; interrater reliability = 0.91). Responses that received greater than a 1 on both positivity and negativity were categorized as mixed valence (16% of responses). For the remaining responses, negativity was reverse-coded and combined with positivity to form a composite measure of valence that ranged from 1 (extremely negative) to 5 (extremely positive), with 3 representing the neutral scale midpoint. Responses were then categorized as either negative (less than 2.5 on the valence scale; 25% of responses), neutral (ranging from 2.5 to 3.5 on the valence scale, i.e., within 0.5 point of the scale midpoint; 39% of responses), or positive (greater than 3.5 on the valence scale; 20% of responses).

## Results

**Manipulation Checks.** For each manipulation check variable, results are presented for the subset of contrasts for which there were a priori predictions based on the present paper’s theorizing. Consistent with the main hypotheses in the paper, several comparisons were conducted relative to the baseline control condition of small talk. However, additional comparisons were needed to confirm that rich cultural-identity expression was indeed more culturally focused, but not more intimate, than the intimate self-disclosure condition; and that rich cultural-identity expression made culture salient to a similar degree compared with surface-level cultural-identity yet did so in a richer manner. Given the need for these additional comparisons, all comparisons were conducted using a Bonferroni adjustment.

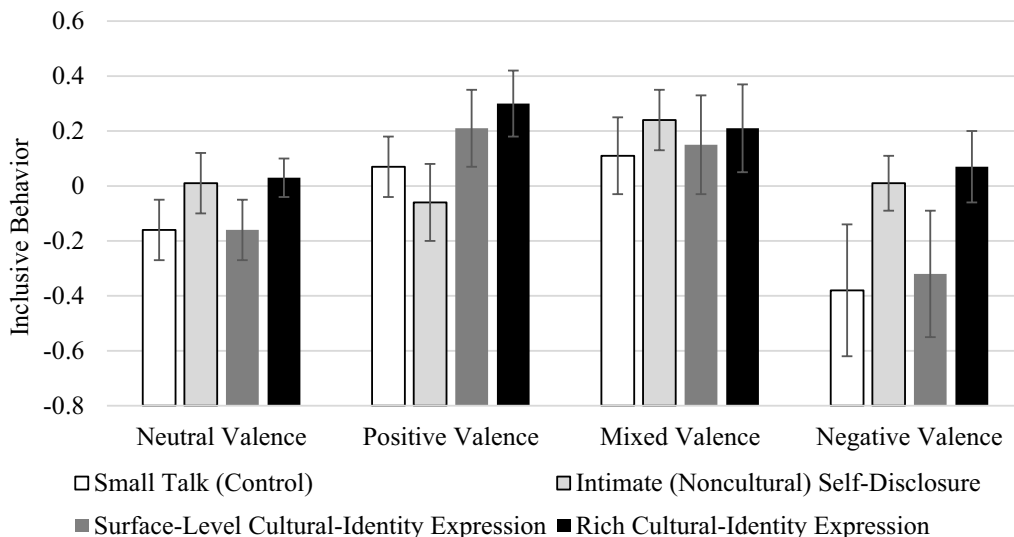
Three separate ANOVAs revealed there was a significant overall effect of experimental condition for salience of cultural identity, intimacy of self-disclosure, and richness of cultural-identity expression ( $F_s \geq 30$ ,  $p_s < 0.001$ ,  $\eta_p^2s > 0.15$ ). As expected, relative to control, culture was more salient in the rich and surface-level cultural-identity expression conditions,  $p_s < 0.001$ , and, unexpectedly, was also more salient in the intimate self-disclosure condition,  $p < 0.001$ ; however, consistent with expectations, culture was less salient in the intimate self-disclosure condition compared with the rich cultural-identity expression condition,  $p < 0.001$ , and was similarly salient in the two cultural conditions,  $p = 1.00$ . Also consistent with expectations, compared with control, there was greater intimacy of self-disclosure in the rich cultural-identity expression and intimate self-disclosure conditions,  $p_s < 0.001$ ; this was not the case for the surface-level-cultural-identity expression condition,  $p = 0.74$ , which was intended to

highlight cultural differences without providing greater insight into the self. There was also no difference in intimacy of self-disclosure when comparing the rich cultural-identity expression condition and the intimate self-disclosure condition,  $p = 0.27$ , a result that is consistent with the notion that both conditions provide greater insight into the self. Finally, the rich cultural-identity condition was indeed higher in richness than the surface-level cultural-identity condition,  $p < 0.001$ , indicating that rich cultural-identity expression brought attention to culturally relevant aspects of the inner self to a greater degree.

**Dependent Variables.** Inclusive behavior was submitted to an analysis of variance (ANOVA) with condition as the predictor. Small talk was used as the reference category for all contrasts. Results are summarized in Table 1 and Figure 2. Supporting Hypothesis 1, relative to small talk, inclusive behavior was significantly greater in response to rich cultural-identity expression,  $b = 0.20$ ,  $p = 0.03$ , 95% CI [0.02, 0.39], but not surface-level cultural-identity expression,  $b = 0.01$ ,  $p = 0.92$ , 95% CI [−0.17, 0.19]. There was also no difference between small talk and intimate self-disclosure,  $b = 0.12$ ,  $p = 0.19$ , 95% CI [−0.06, 0.30]. These findings suggest that—consistent with the central thesis of the present paper—rich cultural-identity expression may be uniquely suited to increase inclusive behavior; however, the null findings with other experimental conditions resulted in a marginally significant omnibus effect across all four conditions,  $F(3,572) = 2.17$ ,  $p = 0.09$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$ .

As an examination of Hypothesis 2, indirect effects for rich cultural-identity expression (relative to small talk) were assessed using Hayes (2017) Process macro (model 4) percentile bootstrapping procedure with 10,000 resamples

**Figure 2.** Inclusive Behavior Predicted by Condition and Valence in Study 2



Note. Error bars represent standard errors.



to create 95% confidence intervals (2017). Analyses with all mediators entered simultaneously revealed significant indirect effects via increased status perceptions (Hypothesis 2(a)),  $b = 0.10$ , 95% CI [0.02, 0.18], closeness (Hypothesis 2(b),  $b = 0.09$ , 95% CI [0.03, 0.16], and learning potential (Hypothesis 2(c)),  $b = 0.06$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.12]. An unconditional indirect effect via anxiety was neither expected nor found,  $b = -0.01$ , 95% CI [-0.03, 0.003]. Table 1 summarizes the main and indirect effects for rich cultural-identity expression, as well as the other two experimental conditions. Although not central to the paper's theorizing, indirect effects for surface-level cultural-identity expression and intimate noncultural self-disclosure were included in Table 1 to give insight into whether these conditions operated differently from rich cultural-identity expression.

To examine Hypothesis 3, inclusive behavior was submitted to a factorial ANOVA with condition, valence, and their interaction as predictors. Effects for experimental condition were similar to above, including a significant positive effect of rich cultural-identity expression relative to small talk,  $p = 0.02$ . Although not hypothesized, inclusive behavior also differed based on valence of expressions,  $F(3,560) = 4.28$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$ . Relative to neutral expressions ( $M = -0.10$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ), participants' inclusive behavior was greater in response to expressions that were positive ( $M = 0.15$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ),  $b = 0.20$ ,  $p = 0.04$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.39], and mixed ( $M = 0.18$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ),  $b = 0.25$ ,  $p = 0.01$ , 95% CI [0.05, 0.44], but not negative ( $M = -0.06$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ),  $b = -0.09$ ,  $p = 0.37$ , 95% CI [-0.28, 0.10]. Contrary to Hypothesis 3, there was no evidence for an interaction between condition and valence,  $F(9,560) = 0.53$ ,  $p = 0.85$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.008$ . To test Hypothesis 4, Hayes Process macro (model 8) was used to test for a conditional indirect effect of rich cultural-identity expression on inclusive behavior via anxiety, with valence serving as a categorical moderator. Contrary to Hypothesis 4, there was no indirect effect of rich cultural-identity expression via anxiety regardless of the level of valence (indices of moderated mediation crossed zero).

### Discussion and Robustness Checks

Study 2 replicated the benefits of rich cultural-identity expression relative to small talk. The fact that neither surface-level cultural expression nor intimate (noncultural) self-disclosure differed from small talk suggests that rich cultural-identity expression may have some advantages that cause it to have more reliably positive effects relative to other forms of sharing. The benefits of rich cultural-identity expression were rooted in majority-group participants' increased status perceptions of, feelings of closeness to, and sense that they could learn from a minority coworker. Although unexpected, minority employees discussing negatively valenced topics did not attenuate the beneficial effects of rich cultural-identity

expression, nor did anxiety play a role as a suppressor variable when negative information was shared.

Additional analyses, shown in the e-companion, provide further insight into the processes through which rich cultural-identity expression does—or does not—influence inclusive behavior. First, supplemental analyses support the present paper's theorizing that rich cultural-identity expression does not operate through individuating the minority employee (rich cultural-identity expression did not change the extent to which minority employees were viewed as prototypical of their cultural group and if anything trended toward increasing prototypicality,  $b = 0.19$ ,  $p = 0.12$ ). Second, the present paper proposes that although richness may at times involve providing more detail and information, what matters most for determining the level of richness is the extent to which the details and information shared provide insight into culturally relevant aspects of the inner self. Providing support for this argument, inclusive behavior was regressed on participant ratings of richness of cultural-identity expression (richness manipulation check questions, which indicate the degree to which the minority employee provided insight into culturally relevant aspects of the inner self), and this had a significant positive effect,  $b = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , even when controlling for response length (which was used as a proxy for level of detail and information).

Third, Study 2 has some potential for social desirability biases, such that the positive effect of rich cultural-identity expression could be due to participants feeling as though they must exhibit more inclusive behavior to appear less prejudiced after a minority employee divulges details about their cultural background. To address this concern, a follow-up correlational study was conducted in which the Study 2 experimental manipulation was replaced with an independent variable simply measuring the level of rich cultural-identity expression a minority coworker typically engages in. This supplemental study found a positive relationship between rich cultural-identity expression and inclusive behavior, providing some additional evidence for the benefits of richness with less potential for social desirability biases. This supplemental study also found additional support for the role of closeness and learning potential as mechanisms. In the supplemental study, status perceptions was a significant mechanism for professionally inclusive behavior; however, for socially inclusive behavior, status perceptions was significant when included in the model alone but did not operate as a mechanism above and beyond learning potential.

### Study 3: Rich Cultural-Identity Expression Incorporating Negatively Valenced Information in a Controlled Experimental Setting

Study 3 digs deeper into the role of negatively valenced information to examine whether this may dampen the

impact of rich cultural-identity expression on inclusive behavior (relative to small talk) using a controlled experimental design. The research team created predetermined cultural-identity expressions shared by a Black woman about slavery and police-related racism, as both are negatively valenced, anxiety-producing topics for majority-group individuals (Goff et al. 2008, Dittmann et al. 2017). Study 3 tested whether discussing these topics in a rich manner, such as conveying emotions of vulnerability and distress about these issues, could still lead to more inclusive behavior (Hypothesis 1) by activating the mechanisms of status, closeness, and learning (Hypothesis 2(a)–(c)), despite the potential for these positive effects to be attenuated due to a focus on negative topics that might heighten anxiety (Hypotheses 3 and 4). Study 3 also included a surface-level cultural-identity expression condition, leading to a three-condition design: rich cultural-identity expression, surface-level cultural-identity expression, and small talk (control). Whereas Studies 1 and 2 operationalized cultural identity in terms of race, ethnicity, and/or nationality, Study 3 operationalized cultural identity specifically in terms of race, which is one type of cultural identity (Ely and Thomas 2001, Cha and Roberts 2019). This approach allowed for a conservative test of rich cultural-identity expression, assessing whether it can be beneficial when it involves anxiety-provoking discussions between individuals whose groups have a history of intergroup tension (Blacks and Whites in the United States). Finally, although the behavioral intentions assessed in Studies 1 and 2 are likely to lead to actual changes in behavior (Webb and Sheeran 2006), Study 3 included several dependent measures that were more behavioral in nature (such as coding actual messages written by participants about their minority coworker).

## Method

**Participants.** Study 3 was powered for a design involving three experimental conditions and a relatively small effect size of  $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$  (at 80% power and  $\alpha = 0.05$ ). This required a sample size of 477 participants according to G\*Power (Faul et al. 2007). However, a sample size of 550 participants was targeted to allow for the possibility of exclusions. Data were collected in batches from Mechanical Turk (e.g., posting 150 slots at a time) until reaching a sample size exceeding 550 eligible participants. To be eligible for the study, individuals were required to meet the following eligibility criteria: pass an initial attention check, identify racially as White, and indicate that they are currently employed. Five hundred and ninety White adults residing in the United States completed the study.<sup>4</sup> Of those participants, 69 were excluded for failing to identify the coworker as being a racial minority, 11 were excluded for stating that they treated their partner as

though they were fake, 6 were excluded for not providing real responses to the free-response dependent measures, and 1 was excluded for having taken the study previously. The final sample included 503 participants (58% women;  $M_{age} = 38$ ; 99.4% American; 100% White/Caucasian).

**Procedure.** After a demographic questionnaire, participants read that this was a study conducted on behalf of a consulting company, TCX Consulting, which was interested in developing an environment that enables employees to work together virtually while interacting in ways that resemble an office environment (this study was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic). Participants created a username and selected an avatar that resembled them physically. The survey led participants to believe that they were paired with a coworker who selected a Black female avatar and whose name was Latoya, a name associated with Black women (Milkman et al. 2015). In reality, Latoya's responses were all pre-programmed. Participants first completed a work task in which they each provided numeric answers to five consulting questions facing TCX Consulting's clients (e.g., "A tech start-up aims to launch a new free email service provider with innovative features. To do so, they want to gather information on how many emails an average American sends in a week. Please provide your estimate.>").

Participants then took a "coffee break" to get to know their coworker by taking turns answering personal questions. The experimental manipulation was embedded in the coworker's responses; full details are provided in the e-companion. In response to the question "Describe your interests and some of the things you have done in your free time lately," the coworker described a movie she recently watched (*A Star Is Born* in the control condition, *BlackKkKlansman* in the two cultural conditions), and a book club she joined (focusing on either American history in the control condition or Black American history, including slavery, in the two cultural conditions). Whereas the control condition and surface-level cultural condition focused on superficial details (such as who produced the movie), the rich cultural condition added in-depth thoughts, feelings, and experiences relating to race (e.g., "I remember crying during [*BlackKkKlansman*] because it made me realize just how bad things were not too long ago" and "some [books] can be a little terrifying and hard to swallow"). In response to the question "Describe something sad or upsetting that has happened to you recently," the coworker described getting a ticket for \$200 and having to contest it in court. In the control condition, no cultural information was shared about this incident. In the surface-level cultural-identity expression condition, superficial references to race were made (e.g., "I got a

ticket for \$200 for ‘disturbing the peace’ because I was playing loud music. . . . I had been playing music in my car while waiting for a friend outside of their house in a predominantly White neighborhood. The police pulled up and said they had received a noise complaint from a neighbor. I think that the only reason why the neighbor complained is because I am Black.”). In the rich cultural-identity expression condition, she noted the same information as the surface-level cultural condition but added in-depth thoughts and feelings, such as “I remember feeling very anxious and just remember thinking that—as a Black person—I needed to try my best to keep my hands visible and show that I wasn’t posing a threat. It definitely felt very scary. . . . I remember feeling very helpless because it didn’t seem to matter what I said, the police officer just seemed to treat me like a Black person who didn’t belong there. It still makes me feel shaky, even when I’m just thinking back on it.”

After the manipulation, participants completed mediation questions, dependent measures of inclusive behavior, manipulation checks, and an attention check regarding their coworker’s race.

## Measures

**Dependent Variables.** Four dependent variables (DVs) were assessed, two focused on socially inclusive behavior and two focused on professionally inclusive behavior. These four DVs are described here in the same order as in Table 1, and more detailed descriptions are provided in the e-companion. Social inclusiveness during an interaction (DV1): Participants completed a free-response “Nice to Meet You” message for their coworker; two coders (blind to experimental condition) coded these messages for their level of social inclusiveness (interrater reliability:  $ICC_2 = 0.87$ ) using a scale of 1 to 9. Spending time socializing (DV2): After the first three coffee-chat questions, participants were told that for the remainder of their coffee break they could decide what percentage of the time (from 0 to 100) they would prefer to spend interacting with their coworker versus doing fun individual tasks. Strength of written promotion recommendation (DV3): Participants wrote a recommendation for their coworker to be considered for a promotion and these were coded by two independent coders who were blind to experimental condition (interrater reliability:  $ICC_2 = 0.92$ ) using a scale of 1 (*extremely unlikely to promote*) to 9 (*extremely likely to promote*). Incorporation of coworker input (DV4): Participants had the opportunity to adjust their original answers to the five consulting questions to incorporate their coworker’s answers; the extent to which participants’ final answers incorporated the minority coworker’s answers to each of the five consulting questions was assessed using a previously established approach to examining incorporation of other’s input (Yaniv 2004, Gino and Moore

2007). These five items exhibited modest reliability,  $\alpha = 0.64$ .

**Mediation Variables.** Participants completed items for status perceptions (three items adapted from Anderson et al. 2012, e.g., “I respect him/her,”  $\alpha = 0.88$ ), closeness (inclusion of other in the self, using overlapping circles; Aron et al. 1992), learning potential (using the same items as Study 2,  $\alpha = 0.93$ ), and anxiety (using the same items as Study 2,  $\alpha = 0.85$ ). A maximum likelihood factor analysis with oblique (direct oblimin) rotation indicated that although anxiety loaded on its own factor, the remaining mechanisms (status perceptions, learning potential, closeness) loaded together on one factor. Status perceptions and learning potential loading together is consistent with Study 2; closeness may have also loaded with this factor because it was comprised of a one-item measure. These factors were nonetheless kept separate, for similar theoretical reasons as described in Study 2. As seen in the results below, keeping the factors separate in Study 3 also provides better insight into which mechanisms drove the main effects.

**Manipulation Checks.** Following the same Likert scale and a similar logic to Studies 1–2, participants completed items assessing intimacy of self-disclosure (three items, e.g., “to what extent did she express her feelings to you,”  $\alpha = 0.91$ ), richness of cultural-identity expression (three items, e.g., “to what extent did she express her feelings relating to her racial or ethnic background,”  $\alpha = 0.98$ ), and salience of cultural identity (two items, e.g., “to what extent did she make you aware of her race or ethnicity,”  $\alpha = 0.98$ ).

## Results

**Manipulation Checks.** Similar to Study 2, pairwise comparisons were conducted using a Bonferroni adjustment for the comparisons about which there were a priori expectations. Three separate ANOVAs revealed there was a significant overall effect of experimental condition for intimacy of self-disclosure, salience of cultural identity, and richness of cultural-identity expression ( $F_s \geq 135$ ,  $p_s < 0.001$ ,  $\eta_p^2_s > 0.30$ ). As expected, culture was more salient in the two cultural conditions compared with control,  $p_s < 0.001$ , but did not differ between the two cultural conditions,  $p = 0.38$ . Also as expected, relative to control, intimacy of self-disclosure was higher in the rich cultural-identity expression condition,  $p < 0.001$ . Although the surface-level cultural-identity expression condition was unexpectedly perceived as more intimate in self-disclosure relative to control,  $p < 0.001$ , nonetheless, consistent with expectations, surface-level cultural-identity expression was lower than rich cultural-identity expression on both intimacy of self-disclosure and richness of cultural-identity expression,  $p_s < 0.001$ .

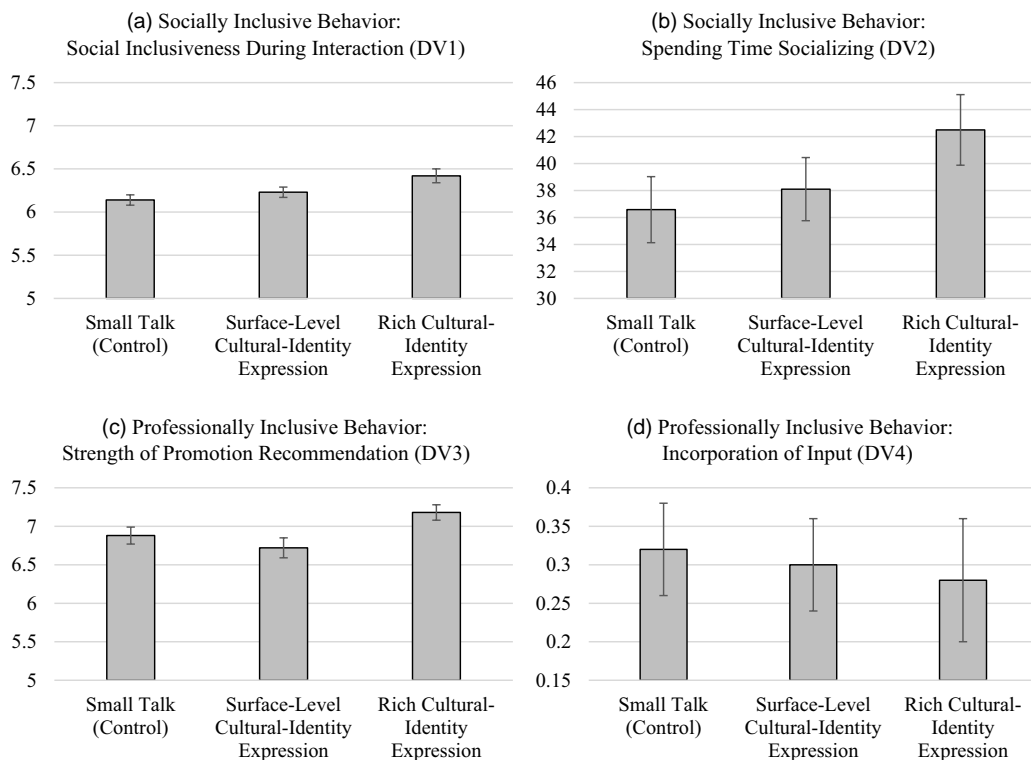
**Dependent Variables: Overview.** Table 1 summarizes the main and indirect effects for rich cultural-identity expression, as well as surface-level cultural-identity expression, on inclusive behavior. Figure 3(a)–(d) graphically depicts the results. Total effects are based on planned contrasts from ANOVA analyses, with small talk as the baseline comparison. Direct and indirect effects were generated from Hayes (2017) Process macro (model 4) with all mediators entered simultaneously unless stated otherwise; significance was concluded when confidence intervals did not cross zero. Although not central to the paper’s theorizing, indirect effects for surface-level cultural-identity expression were included in Table 1 to give insight into whether this condition operates differently from rich cultural-identity expression. The dependent variables (DVs) are labeled and described below in the same order as in Table 1.

**Socially Inclusive Behavior: Social Inclusiveness During an Interaction (DV1).** As shown in Figure 3(a), socially inclusive behavior during an interaction was significantly influenced by condition,  $F(2,500) = 4.50$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$ . Supporting Hypothesis 1, relative to small talk, there was a significant positive effect of rich cultural-identity expression,  $b = 0.28$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ,

95% CI [0.09, 0.46], but not surface-level cultural-identity expression,  $b = 0.09$ ,  $p = 0.34$ , 95% CI [−0.09, 0.27]. As seen in Table 1, rich cultural-identity expression (compared with small talk) operated through increased learning potential,  $b = 0.11$ , 95% CI [0.03, 0.21], supporting Hypothesis 2(c), but not via status perceptions, closeness, and anxiety (Hypotheses 2(a), 2(b), and 4, respectively).

**Socially Inclusive Behavior: Spending Time Socializing (DV2).** As modest support for Hypothesis 1, compared with small talk, rich cultural-identity expression led to somewhat greater interest in socializing,  $b = 5.91$ ,  $p = 0.09$ , 95% CI [−1.00, 12.82], whereas surface-level cultural-identity expression did not,  $b = 1.52$ ,  $p = 0.66$ , 95% CI [−5.28, 8.32]. See Figure 3(b). The omnibus effect examining whether all three conditions differed from one another did not reach significance,  $F(2,500) = 1.52$ ,  $p = 0.22$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$ , perhaps because the mean for the surface-level cultural condition fell between the means for the rich cultural and control conditions. As seen in Table 1, rich cultural-identity expression (vs. small talk) had a significant indirect effect via increased learning potential,  $b = 5.61$ , 95% CI [2.84, 9.07], supporting Hypothesis 2(c), but not via status perceptions and closeness (Hypothesis

**Figure 3.** Socially and Professionally Inclusive Behaviors Predicted by Condition in Study 3, with All Three Conditions Focused on Negatively Valenced Content



Note. Error bars represent standard errors.

2, (a) and (b), respectively). However, given the negative content, rich cultural-identity expression also had a countervailing indirect effect via increased anxiety,  $b = -1.41$ , 95% CI  $[-2.96, -0.29]$ . Indeed, including anxiety as a sole mediator revealed that the direct effect of rich cultural-identity expression (factoring out the indirect suppressor effect via anxiety) was fully significant,  $b = 9.13$ ,  $p = 0.01$ , 95% CI  $[2.22, 16.03]$ . These findings suggest that, consistent with Hypotheses 3 and 4, the total effect of rich cultural-identity expression was marginally significant ( $p = 0.09$ ) due to the negative, anxiety-provoking content that somewhat offset the benefits of rich cultural-identity expression; when accounting for this suppressor indirect effect via anxiety, the positive direct effect of rich cultural-identity expression reached conventional levels of significance ( $p = 0.01$ ).

**Professionally Inclusive Behavior: Strength of Written Promotion Recommendation (DV3).** Strength of written promotion recommendations differed significantly across conditions,  $F(2,500) = 4.07$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$ . As seen in Figure 3(c), relative to small talk, there was a marginally significant positive effect for rich cultural-identity expression,  $b = 0.30$ ,  $p = 0.07$ , 95% CI  $[-0.02, 0.63]$ , providing modest support for Hypothesis 1. Also consistent with Hypothesis 1, surface-level cultural-identity expression did not differ from small talk and in fact trended directionally lower,  $b = -0.16$ ,  $p = 0.34$ , 95% CI  $[-0.47, 0.16]$ . As seen in Table 1, mediation results for this dependent measure of strength of promotion recommendation (DV3) followed a similar pattern as with spending time socializing (DV2). Specifically, there was a significant indirect effect of rich cultural-identity expression (relative to small talk) via increased learning potential,  $b = 0.22$ , 95% CI  $[0.09, 0.38]$ , supporting Hypothesis 2(c), and a countervailing indirect effect via increased anxiety,  $b = -0.07$ , 95% CI  $[-0.15, -0.01]$ . Furthermore, consistent with Hypotheses 3 and 4, accounting for the suppressor indirect effect via anxiety (by including it as a sole mediator) revealed a positive direct effect of rich cultural-identity expression that reached conventional levels of significance ( $p = 0.004$ ).

**Professionally Inclusive Behavior: Incorporation of Professional Input (DV4).** Following Gino and Moore (2007), a mixed design analysis of variance was used such that condition was a between-subjects variable and each consulting question was treated as a separate repeated-measure round. For simplicity, results are depicted in Figure 3(d) with rounds averaged. Incorporation of professional input trended toward a significant omnibus effect for condition but did not reach significance,  $F(2,472) = 2.25$ ,  $p = 0.11$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$ . Surface-level cultural-identity expression did not differ

from small talk,  $b = -0.01$ ,  $p = 0.61$ , 95% CI  $[-0.05, 0.03]$ . However, this is the one domain where rich cultural-identity expression seemed to have an adverse effect: incorporation of coworker professional input was significantly lower in the rich cultural-identity expression condition compared with the small talk condition,  $b = -0.04$ ,  $p = 0.04$ , 95% CI  $[-0.08, -0.001]$ . As seen in Table 1, there was a significant indirect effect of rich cultural-identity expression via increased learning potential,  $b = 0.02$ , 95% CI  $[0.002, 0.04]$ , supporting Hypothesis 2(c), as well as a significant direct effect,  $b = -0.07$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , 95% CI  $[-0.11, -0.03]$ , that was stronger in significance than the total effect. This result indicates that although rich cultural-identity expression had a negative total effect, this negative effect was softened due to a positive underlying mechanism of learning potential. There was insufficient evidence for indirect effects of rich cultural-identity expression via status perceptions and closeness (Hypothesis 2, (a) and (b), respectively). Despite the fact that rich cultural-identity expression had a negative effect, anxiety did not emerge as a significant mediator (Hypothesis 4).

### Discussion and Robustness Checks

Study 3 demonstrated that despite the anxiety-provoking nature of discussing negative topics such as racial discrimination, rich cultural-identity expression—but not surface-level cultural-identity expression—led to more inclusive behavior on several dimensions. Learning potential was the primary mechanism enabling these effects, suggesting that learning overpowered anxiety. Status perceptions did not operate as a mechanism, perhaps because rich cultural-identity expression in this study activated negative stereotypes about Black people (seeing them as louder and more belligerent,  $b = 0.040$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ), and led the minority employee to be seen as more prototypical of her group,  $b = 1.36$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (see analyses in the e-companion for more detail). These results suggest that, consistent with my theorizing, rich cultural-identity expression does not operate through individuation. It is worth noting, however, that rich cultural-identity expression did not decrease status perceptions, whereas surface-level cultural-identity expressions did adversely impact status (see Table 1). Closeness may not have emerged as a mediator for rich cultural-identity expression because of its operationalization as self-other overlap (Aron et al. 1992); when sharing about differences, it may be unlikely that individuals will perceive greater overlap between themselves and an outgroup member.

Study 3 also revealed some potential for rich cultural-identity expression that has negative content to backfire (relative to small talk) in the sense that coworkers were less willing to adjust their answers to the five consulting questions to incorporate the professional input of the minority coworker. Also surprisingly, anxiety did not

operate as a mediator in this case. Analyses using other key mechanisms (e.g., status, closeness), as well as additional measures included in the e-companion (e.g., perceived prototypicality/stereotypicality of the minority employee), also did not explain this negative effect. The exact reason for this negative effect therefore remains unclear. It is worth noting, however, that the number of consulting questions (five rounds of questions) was significantly lower than the number of items used in past research (e.g., 40 rounds used in Gino and Moore 2007). This may have contributed to the modest reliability of this measure and could mean that further investigation is needed to see if this negative effect replicates with more rounds of consulting questions.

Finally, although rich cultural-identity expression in Study 3 included more negative content (by virtue of focusing on negative topics like slavery and policing), it also included a few positive words (inspired, moving, happy; see extended methods in the e-companion). It is possible that incorporating a few positive emotions may have made participants more open to the negative content. Nonetheless, the results of Study 3 are consistent with Study 2, suggesting that rich cultural-identity expression can be effective whether the content is negative, or a mixture of negative and positive.

## General Discussion

The present research reveals promising evidence that, contrary to the expectations suggested by past organizational research, cultural-identity expression by a minority-group employee can be effective at *increasing* majority-group coworkers' inclusive behaviors—specifically, when such expressions are high in richness. Rich cultural-identity expression amplified both socially and professionally inclusive behavior, fueling positive relationships and career success. The power of rich cultural-identity expression (compared with small talk that downplays cultural information) is its ability to enhance status perceptions of a minority colleague, cultivate feelings of closeness, and demonstrate that interactions with minority colleagues are valuable learning opportunities. Supplemental analyses found no evidence for an alternative mechanism involving increased individuation.

Rich cultural-identity expressions that skewed negative in nature—that is, sharing difficulties or vulnerabilities relating to one's cultural background—were successful in many ways at increasing inclusive behavior. This was especially true when discussing a range of negatively valenced topics that varied in severity, as was the case in Study 2. The level of severity was then increased in Study 3, which included more extreme forms of negative content (slavery and policing) that activated deeply rooted sources of tension and anxiety between Blacks and Whites in the United States as well

as negative stereotypes. These highly contentious topics triggered anxiety and prevented status perceptions and closeness from operating as mechanisms. Although this tempered the power of rich cultural-identity expression in some cases, positive effects nonetheless emerged due to the ability to learn from the minority-group colleague. Although rich cultural-identity expression was mostly beneficial, the negative content in Study 3 yielded one adverse effect regarding majority individuals' willingness to incorporate a minority coworker's input. Overall, these findings offer promising evidence that rich cultural-identity expression can be a way for minority employees to open up about their identities at work if they so choose. However, discussing highly contentious topics—even in a rich way—may have mixed effects, with professionally inclusive behavior potentially more susceptible to a mix of positive and negative outcomes.

Surface-level cultural-identity expression, which provides less insight into culturally relevant aspects of the inner self, did not increase inclusive behavior relative to small talk. Despite increasing anxiety and sometimes decreasing status perceptions, it is worth noting that these surface-level expressions did not decrease inclusive behavior. This may be because although the surface-level cultural expressions were less intimate than the rich cultural expressions, they were still more intimate than the control condition of small talk. Interestingly, intimate noncultural disclosure also failed to increase inclusive behavior relative to small talk, although it trended toward doing so. This finding suggests that rich cultural-identity expression is, at a minimum, at least as effective as noncultural intimate self-disclosure.

## Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes to scholarship on identity management, inclusion, and diversity. Minority employees face a common dilemma at work. Although they perceive many psychological benefits to expressing their cultural backgrounds (Cha et al. 2019), they often suppress their identities out of fear that they will jeopardize their careers if they bring attention to a minority identity (Leary 1999, Hewlin 2003, Clair et al. 2005, Phillips et al. 2009). Seeming to confirm this belief, ample past research shows that expressing minority cultural identities can backfire, particularly when done in extremely *surface-level* ways (Dovidio et al. 2007, Kaiser and Pratt-Hyatt 2009, Opie and Phillips 2015, Kang et al. 2016, Koval and Rosette 2020). However, the current work provides evidence that expressing a cultural background in a *rich* manner is a promising pathway for minority employees to share valued aspects of their backgrounds in a manner that fosters—rather than sacrifices—inclusion. As opposed to creating a sense of social distance or decreasing perceptions of minority employees' status, rich

cultural-identity expression can expand majority-group coworkers' perceptions beyond a superficial knowledge regarding differences and generate a greater feeling of closeness, sense of respect, and appreciation for how much they can learn. Thus, rich cultural-identity expression provides a potential solution wherein minority employees can glean the benefits of expressing their authentic selves without risking their professional standing.

Findings regarding valence provide insights into how minority employees may balance another tension—the desire to leverage their cultural identities for social change without encountering backlash. Members of marginalized groups often deploy their identities to debunk negative stereotypes about their group, point out injustices, and advocate for equitable organizational practices (Meyerson and Scully 1995, Creed and Scully 2000, Roberts 2005). Although educating one's colleagues has the potential to turn adversaries into allies (Creed and Scully 2000), fears of being seen as disruptive or making others uncomfortable can make minority employees hesitant to mobilize their identities in this way (Cha and Roberts 2019). However, the present research suggests that minority employees do not need to necessarily avoid certain topics simply because they make majority coworkers feel anxious. To help push past this anxiety, minority employees can provide novel insights that others can learn from, such as challenges and vulnerabilities that help majority-group coworkers understand their perspectives and experiences. Although this cannot completely eliminate any risk, it may enable the benefits of speaking up to outweigh the risks.

The present work also highlights the potential to achieve a more collectively beneficial climate of inclusion, providing an avenue for resolving a conundrum highlighted by research on multiculturalism and colorblindness (Apfelbaum et al. 2012). The irony of inclusion is that the conditions that foster inclusion for one group often detract from a sense of inclusion for other groups. Whereas minority employees fare better in multicultural contexts that recognize and value differences, members of the majority feel most comfortable in a colorblind atmosphere in which commonalities are emphasized and differences are often-times suppressed (Chatman et al. 1998, Verkuyten 2005, Wolsko et al. 2006, Ryan et al. 2007, Purdie-Vaughns et al. 2008, Plaut et al. 2011). In light of these divergent perspectives, researchers are increasingly interested in establishing inclusive conditions that are welcoming for both minority- and majority-group individuals (Stevens et al. 2008). Rich cultural-identity expression may be a valuable tool for fostering collectively beneficial “win-wins,” empowering minority employees to express their cultural identities while

eliciting more inclusive behaviors from their colleagues, and enabling majority employees to feel closer to and learn from their minority coworkers.

Finally, this work extends research on diversity by demonstrating how diversity is helped or hindered not only by the extent that differences are present, but also by the ways that those differences are made salient at work. While past work has provided some initial evidence that highlighting a minority cultural identity can have benefits, this work has primarily focused on circumstances in which concerns about being seen as biased—by oneself or others—are motivating behavior (Barron et al. 2011, Kirgios et al. 2022). Rich cultural-identity expression paves an alternative path that has the potential to alleviate majority-group colleagues' concerns with being seen as biased by facilitating closeness and trust. More broadly, rich cultural-identity expression is an effective means for mitigating relational concerns associated with diversity and social categorization (through increasing, rather than decreasing, status perceptions and closeness) and leveraging the value of diversity through increased learning opportunities (Williams and O'Reilly 1998). Thus, the present work builds on past diversity literature by identifying a pathway for making identities salient without eliciting bias (Van Knippenberg et al. 2004), thereby identifying a powerful way to make diversity an asset to organizations.

### Practical Implications

These findings have important implications for minority employees as well as leaders. For employees coming from minority cultural backgrounds, the present research is intended to alleviate concerns that discussing a cultural identity will jeopardize one's career. Indeed, rich cultural-identity expression facilitates opportunities, connection, and other valued outcomes. One question on the minds of minority employees may be whether they are limited to just painting a rosy depiction of their identities, or whether they can open up about challenges they are facing. For minority employees who wish to tackle these difficult topics in the workplace, most of the results in the present research suggest that it is possible to push past anxiety and still be heard, understood, and supported by their colleagues. Yet, rich cultural-identity expression is not a silver bullet. Despite positive effects on several outcomes, such as professional recommendations as well as multiple socially inclusive behaviors, rich discussions of tense topics such as slavery and police discrimination still had an adverse effect on one outcome in terms of majority-group individuals' willingness to incorporate a minority coworker's input. This suggests that although rich cultural-identity expression is largely beneficial, it cannot

rule out any chance of risk, especially when discussing highly contentious topics.

This latter finding helps illustrate a broader point that, although rich cultural-identity expression has many benefits, minority employees should not feel forced to engage in such expressions to educate others, cultivate inclusion, or make diversity “work.” This is not only because richly discussing contentious topics still bears some professional risk. Beyond this concern, rich cultural-identity expression involves making oneself vulnerable through deep personal sharing, especially when discussing negative topics. Such vulnerability may make some minority employees uncomfortable (Sanchez et al. 2021). Additionally, trying to explain less-known aspects of one’s identity has the potential to be psychologically taxing, especially when doing so for another’s sake rather than a personal desire for authenticity. Thus, although rich cultural-identity expression can be beneficial in many respects, minority employees are likely to weigh the potential benefits against some of the costs of feeling vulnerable and psychologically burdened. Given that some individuals may feel like the costs outweigh the gains, it is important that rich cultural-identity expression is a voluntary decision rather than something minority employees feel forced to engage in at work. Strong pressure to richly express their identities can lead to concerns that these identities are being exploited for the sake of others rather than expressed for their own personal benefit.

The potential challenges associated with minority rich cultural-identity expression mean that it is important to consider the role of leaders, especially given their influence on experiences of inclusion (Nishii and Mayer 2009). Leaders can ensure that minority employees feel comfortable engaging in various forms of self-expression, but at the same time do not feel obligated to do so. One way to accomplish this is to communicate—both through words and actions—that sharing diverse perspectives is valued at the company, but leaving it to minority employees to decide whether they would like to incorporate their identities into or exclude their identities from the workplace (Ramarajan and Reid 2013, Creary et al. 2015). Another approach is for leaders to make themselves vulnerable through their own self-disclosure, as past research suggests that when one person self-discloses, the recipient is likely to reciprocate (Derlega et al. 1973). A third option is for leaders to educate themselves on other cultures, including the inequities they face, and provide resources for majority-group employees to do the same. This places less of the burden on minority employees to discuss identities and negative experiences for others’ sake. At the same time, this may increase the chances that, if such conversations occur, minority employees feel as though their colleagues are coming from a position of pre-existing understanding

and support rather than minority employees having to legitimize their views and experiences to others.

### Boundary Conditions and Future Directions

Although the present research provides promising evidence that rich cultural-identity expression can lead to increased inclusion, it is important to consider caveats and boundary conditions that may be avenues for future research. One important boundary condition concerns the consequences of expressing different types of negative emotions as part of rich cultural-identity expression. For instance, in Study 3, rich cultural-identity expression involved expressing negative affect in terms of vulnerability (e.g., sadness and helplessness) during a confrontation with the police. Although this led to more support in terms of majority employees writing a professional recommendation, showing friendliness during a social interaction, and spending time interacting, it also backfired when it came to incorporating professional input. Further research is needed to disentangle the source of these mixed effects, as well as whether backfiring may be more likely to occur in professional—rather than social—domains.

Additionally, although expressing vulnerability had more benefits than costs, it is important to consider whether incorporating other types of negative emotions—such as anger—may tip the scales such that the costs of rich cultural-identity expression outweigh the benefits. This could be the case given that anger is especially anxiety-inducing and—at least for Black people—could reinforce negative stereotypes. Indeed, one possible reason that the surface-level cultural condition was not effective at increasing inclusive behavior in Study 3 could be because it was interpreted as an expression of anger at being ticketed only “because I am Black” (in addition to omitting additional details that indicate fear and helplessness, which were part of the rich cultural condition). Future research can delve deeper into the consequences of expressing anger. For instance, would rich cultural-identity expression be effective if it included a minority employee expressing outrage about a police officer’s behavior toward them, or an impassioned critique of discriminatory practices that impact them at work or in society at large? Given that many minority-group individuals believe they are prohibited from displaying anger regarding bias and injustices at work (Wingfield 2010), this is an important area of future inquiry.

Future research can also investigate whether others, beyond cultural minority employees, can benefit from engaging in rich identity expression. Considering underlying mechanisms can provide insight into whether, for example, a White person would benefit from using rich cultural-identity expression when interacting with a minority coworker. Based on past research on the benefits of



intimate self-disclosure for closeness (Aron et al. 1997), as well as the tendency of White people to focus on being liked in cross-race interactions (Bergsieker et al. 2010, Swencionis et al. 2017), rich cultural-identity expression by a White employee is likely to increase a sense of closeness from the perspective of a minority coworker. However, given that White individuals occupy a high-status position in society already (Fiske et al. 2002), it is unclear whether there is much room for rich cultural-identity expression to enhance the status of a White individual in the eyes of a minority coworker. Additionally, past work suggests that White—compared with minority—individuals are less concerned with how to enhance their status and if anything may seek to minimize status distance between themselves and minority colleagues (Phillips et al. 2009, Bergsieker et al. 2010, Arnett and Sidanius 2018). If White employees try to accomplish this by, for example, disclosing weaknesses, then this is likely to hurt their perceived status (Gibson et al. 2018). Finally, whereas minority cultures can be relatively inaccessible to majority individuals due to the nature of being underrepresented, minority employees are likely to have more exposure to White individuals and White culture through both direct interactions as well as indirect sources such as the media. Thus, although rich cultural-identity expression by a minority employee is a ripe learning opportunity for majority coworkers, this may be less so the case when individuals in the majority engage in rich cultural-identity expression. Even in situations where a member of a societal majority group may be a local minority (e.g., a White American working in an Asian- or Black-owned business), belonging to a group that is highly regarded and well known in society at large still raises questions about whether rich cultural-identity expression will have benefits such as status and learning.

Finally, future research can provide further insight into what identity groups can reap the benefits of rich identity expression. For example, the findings from the present research are more likely to extend to individuals who—similar to cultural minority employees—have identities that are traditionally conferred lower status in society, are numerically in the minority in society, and are known to their coworkers (i.e., not an invisible identity). For instance, the findings from the present work would likely apply to an LGBTQ individual whose sexual orientation is known to his coworkers. If John's coworkers are aware that he is gay, then he may already be subjected to negative stereotypes associated with his identity. Engaging in rich cultural-identity expression with a heterosexual coworker not only has the opportunity to increase closeness but could also counteract any negative stereotypes that his coworker previously applied to him. Additionally, the heterosexual

coworker may lack exposure to individuals from the LGBTQ community (in part because of them being numerical minorities in society), making this type of interaction a learning opportunity.

## Conclusion

Past work has emphasized the pitfalls and risks of expressing minority identities at work, leading to the conclusion that downplaying one's cultural background is a necessary survival tactic. However, given the value that minority employees place on their cultural identities, as well as the cyclical resurgence of cultural protests and movements focused on social change, it is critical to understand whether there is any viable way for minority employees to incorporate their cultural identities into the workplace without jeopardizing their careers. The present research provides promising evidence that rich cultural-identity expression is an effective means for minority employees to discuss aspects of their cultural background that are of personal importance while elevating—rather than sacrificing—their professional opportunities and relationships.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Thirty-seven additional participants began the study but were excluded for not completing the study (32 participants began the study but did not complete the experimental manipulation; 5 participants completed the experimental manipulation but did not complete the dependent measures).

<sup>2</sup> Ninety-one additional participants were eligible for the full study but were excluded for not completing the study (83 never completed the experimental manipulation, 8 did not complete all key measures).

<sup>3</sup> As in Study 1, outliers for this item were trimmed at 2.5 SDs above the mean.

<sup>4</sup> Sixty-seven additional participants were eligible for the full study but were excluded because they did not complete the study (15 did not start the study, 52 began the study but did not complete all key measures).

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**Rachel D. Arnett** is an assistant professor of management at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on diversity, identity, inclusion, and intergroup relations. She received her PhD in Organizational Behavior from Harvard University.