Championing Diversity: The Influence of Personal and Organizational Antecedents

George B. Cunningham
Laboratory for Diversity in Sport
Department of Health and Kinesiology
Texas A&M University

Melanie L. Sartore
Department of Exercise and Sport Science
College of Health and Human Performance
East Carolina University

The purpose of this research was to examine antecedents of championing diversity (i.e., extra-role behaviors aimed at ensuring the success of diversity initiatives). In Study 1 (N = 170 students), race and sex were marginally related to championing diversity, while extraversion, racial prejudice, and sexual prejudice held stronger associations with the behavior. In Study 2 (N = 299 employees), racial prejudice, sexual prejudice, and coworker support for diversity were all predictive of championing behavior. The findings suggest that both personal and social factors influence people’s championing behaviors. Contributions, limitations, and future directions are advanced.

Workplace diversity holds the promise of greater inclusiveness, enhanced creativity, better decision-making capabilities, and, ultimately, performance gains (for reviews, see Mannix & Neale, 2005; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). As a result of these and other factors (e.g., changing workplace demographics), organizations have increasingly sought to diversify their labor force while also establishing an organizational culture that supports such differences. Consider, for instance, that in Gordon’s 1988 study of medium and large firms, diversity was not mentioned among the top 40 topics for training. As of 2001, 66% of companies indicated that they either had such programs in place or had plans to implement them in the future (Society for Human Resource Management, 2001). Similarly, many organizations’ human resource practices, structures, visions, and goals have all been altered to consider more explicitly the influence of diversity (see Hayes-Thomas, 2004).

Despite the potential benefits of diversity, transitioning from a monocultural workplace to a multicultural one (e.g., Cox, 2001) is less than seamless.

1Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to George B. Cunningham, Laboratory for Diversity in Sport, Department of Health and Kinesiology, Texas A&M University, 4243 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843-4243. E-mail: gbcunningham@tamu.edu or Melanie L. Sartore, 160 Minges Coliseum, Department of Exercise and Sport Science, College of Health and Human Performance, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858-4353. E-mail: sartorem@ecu.edu
Indeed, change initiatives of any kind are often met with resistance (Robbins, 2003), and diversity-related programs are no exception (Dass & Parker, 1999). Such opposition arises from, among others, the desire to protect the status quo, personal prejudice, questions as to how diversity impacts the business bottom line, higher personnel costs, and the perception that diversity is just a code word for affirmative action (Cunningham, 2007; Dass & Parker, 1999; Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006; Thomas, Mack, & Montagliani, 2004). Without taking into account these potential sources of resistance, diversity change efforts are unlikely to reach their goals, and, ultimately, they fail (Holvino, Ferdman, & Merrill-Sands, 2004).

Employee support for organizational diversity, whether psychological or behavioral in nature, is often seen as key to ensuring the change’s success (Dass & Parker, 1999; Harrison et al., 2006). With respect to the latter form of support, employee behavioral responses to change can take two forms: focal or discretionary (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Focal behaviors are those to which the employee is bound, based on her or his involvement and association with the organization. Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) described focal behaviors of support for change efforts as compliance, while terming the failure to provide such obligatory support as resistance. The latter can be manifested either actively or passively.

Unlike focal behaviors, discretionary behaviors represent an effort on the part of the employee to go above and beyond what is required. Within this class, cooperation on the part of the employee consists of “going along with the spirit of the change” (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p. 476); while championing calls for specific effort and considerable sacrifices on the part of employees—actions that are intended to persuade others inside and outside the organization as to the value of the change efforts.

Indeed, not only is championing behavior the highest form of discretionary behavior, but it is also considered the most effective behavior in terms of gathering support for change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Consider, for example, that champions fight for the success of an initiative’s success, even in the face of opposition or resistance (Simon, Elango, Houghton, & Savelli, 2002). Without such efforts, the likelihood of successful change would diminish. As one example, the United Way of Allen County (UWAC) was recognized in 2008 for their efforts in championing diversity. Key to this recognition was the establishment of the Task Force to Undo Racism and Overcome Barriers on the part of UWAC’s Board of Directors. This initiative not only served as a catalyst for unparalleled community involvement, but also helped to increase the proportion of racial minorities and women on the nonprofit board, provided diversity training for various entities, and helped organize racial dialogue groups attended by schools and police departments (“We’re No. 1!,” 2008). Without such strong support, the
change efforts—that is, improved diversity in the community—would not have taken place. As evidenced in this example, championing behavior is key for an organization’s diversity-related change and, therefore, serves as the primary outcome examined in the current study.

Research Overview

Given the primacy of champions in the diversity-change process, the current study is aimed at understanding the antecedents of such behaviors. As outlined in greater detail in the following sections, we consider the influence of demographic characteristics, personality characteristics, bias toward historically underrepresented groups, and organizational support for diversity initiatives. We conducted two studies—one with a student sample and the other consisting of university employees—to examine these relationships.

The university setting for the studies had a history of strong conservatism; however, at the time of the data collection, considerable diversity efforts were taking place. The long-term strategic plan listed four specific diversity-related goals: (a) to achieve student diversity that reflects that of the state; (b) to alleviate completely the number of persons who leave the campus because of perceptions of an unwelcoming environment; (c) to target specific areas in the state, country, and world where specific recruitment efforts could be made; and (d) to recruit minority students and provide educational opportunities that will equip them to be leaders in the state.

In addition to being included as a major initiative in the long-term strategic plan, diversity was listed by the university president as one of four major initiatives during his term. Given the university’s conservative past, however, the efficacy of such initiatives had come into question by some in its community. Given the potentially contrasting viewpoints toward the diversity initiatives, the importance of diversity champions (both in terms of students and university employees) became even more paramount. Thus, examination of how the patterns of prejudice impacted championing behaviors was particularly salient in this context.

Study 1

In Study 1, we examined the effects of personal demographics, personality, and bias toward historically underrepresented groups on the championing behavior of university students. In developing our hypotheses concerning

\footnote{The state was one of four in the United States where the majority of the residents were racial minority.}
demographics, we drew from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). From this perspective, the categorization of the self and others, social comparisons, and the desire for positive differentiation all provide answers for understanding group relations. People from a given group (e.g., women) are thought to react toward those in other groups (e.g., men) out of a need to positively differentiate their own group. Because group members derive their social identity from connections with social groups, it is likely that they seek to have their in-group be recognized, respected, and accepted (Verkuyten, 2005). This provides them with a positive social identity, which they will seek to maintain. On the other hand, when their in-group is not valued or when it lacks distinctiveness, people are likely to engage in identity-management strategies, such as endorsing the rights of historically underrepresented and disadvantaged groups (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2006).

These principles have a direct bearing on the current study. White men hold key power positions in most social institutions today. Thus, from a social identity theory perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), women and racial minorities are all likely to be considered out-group members in these contexts. Women and racial minorities also experience prejudice and discrimination in the workplace (Cokley, Dreher, & Stockdale, 2004; Stroh, Langlands, & Simpson, 2004), thereby suggesting that their social groups are devalued or delegitimized. As such, women and racial minorities might engage in identity-management strategies, such as supporting diversity initiatives that might enhance the status of their social group.

On the other hand, Whites and men, because they are privileged in most contexts within the United States, might not be motivated to champion diversity. After all, doing so would potentially mean altering their status and power within their organizations. Such reasoning is consistent with various reports of majority members’ backlash toward diversity and diversity initiatives in the workplace (Avery, 2003; Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004; Snyder, Cleveland, & Thornton, 2006). Based on this literature, we predict the following:

Hypothesis 1. Women will be more likely than men to champion diversity.

Hypothesis 2. Racial minorities will be more likely than Whites to champion diversity.

Additionally, one’s personality might influence his or her support for diversity and the likelihood that he or she would champion such causes. In the current study, we drew from the five-factor model of personality, in which one’s personality is described as consisting of the following dimensions: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability,
and openness to experience (for further discussion, see Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1996).

Of particular importance to the current study are extraversion and openness to experience. Extraverts are seen as being “sociable, gregarious, talkative, assertive, adventurous, active, energetic, and ambitious” (Mount & Barrick, 1995, p. 165). People with such personalities often emerge as leaders in groups (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Watson & Clark, 1997) and are effective in influencing others (Judge et al., 2002). We expect similar patterns to emerge within the context of diversity-related change. That is, extraverts might be more willing than their counterparts to emerge as leaders for the diversity effort and be effective in influencing others toward that end. Consistent with this rationale, we hypothesize the following:

**Hypothesis 3.** Extraversion will be positively associated with championing diversity.

We expected a similar relationship for openness to experience. People with this personality characteristic are likely to be creative, cultured, imaginative, and open-minded (Mount & Barrick, 1995). Thus, open individuals might be more likely than their peers to emerge as leaders and effectively to persuade others as to an initiative’s value—relationships observed in Judge et al.’s (2002) meta-analysis. What’s more, open individuals have a propensity for divergent thinking (McCrae, 1987). Therefore, people with this personality characteristic might be more convivial to the idea of diversity-related change. Thus, we predict the following:

**Hypothesis 4.** Openness to experience will be positively associated with championing diversity.

Given the lack of strong theoretical linkages, we did not make formal predictions concerning the relationships among agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and championing diversity.

Finally, we examined the potential effects of bias toward racial minorities and toward sexual minorities (i.e., gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals) on championing behavior. Racial and sexual prejudices have long shaped people’s attitudes and behaviors (Herek, 2000; Waller, 1998). For instance, overt and subtle forms of racial prejudice have both been shown to influence hiring decisions (e.g., Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000), while research has suggested that sexual minorities face subtle forms of discrimination in the selection process (Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002). Similarly, prejudice affects people’s attitudes toward diversity-related initiatives. For instance, Harrison et al. (2006), in their extensive meta-analysis, found that racism and sexism were negatively associated with support for affirmative action. Similarly,
Mack, Johnson, Green, Parisi, and Thomas (2002) found that people who were motivated to control their prejudice were more likely to support diversity initiatives—an important finding, considering that less prejudiced people express greater motivation to control their prejudice (Dunton & Fazio, 1997).

We expected comparable findings in the current study with respect to racial and sexual prejudice. For many people, diversity initiatives are viewed as programs aimed at aiding historically underrepresented persons, which includes racial minorities and sexual minorities. Thus, for persons who harbor negative attitudes toward these persons, resistance to such plans and activities is likely to be high, and, as a result, the likelihood of them championing such causes is bleak. In short, we predict the following:

**Hypothesis 5.** Racial prejudice will be negatively associated with championing diversity.

**Hypothesis 6.** Sexual prejudice will be negatively associated with championing diversity.

### Method

#### Participants

Study participants \((N = 170; 89\) females, 81 males) were students who were enrolled in physical activity classes at a large, public university located in the southwestern United States. As the classes were required of all students, the sample represents a cross-section of the university student population. The sample was mostly female (52.4%) and mostly White \((n = 121; 71.2\%\). Participants’ mean age was 20.7 years \((SD = 3.0\). The sample consisted of a relatively even distribution of first-year students \((n = 43; 25.3\%\), sophomores \((n = 24; 14.1\%\), juniors \((n = 38; 22.4\%\), and seniors \((n = 59; 34.7\%\). There was 1 graduate student \((0.1\%\) in the sample, and 5 persons did not reveal their classification.

#### Measures

Students received a questionnaire asking them to provide their demographic information, as previously outlined. Participants also responded to items pertaining to their personality, racial prejudice, sexual prejudice, and their self-reported championing behavior.

**Personality.** We used 10 items from Goldberg’s (1992) instrument to measure extraversion (5 items) and openness to experience (5 items). All
items were measured on a 7-point scale. Word-pair examples for extraversion include *introverted–extraverted* and *silent–talkative*, while examples for openness to experience include *unreflective–reflective* and *uncreative–creative*. Both measures demonstrated high reliability estimates (extraversion, $\alpha = .81$; openness to experience, $\alpha = .80$).

**Prejudice.** Prejudice was measured using the Evaluation Thermometer (Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993). This measure assesses participants’ overall reactions toward different groups on a scale ranging from 0 (*extremely unfavorable*) to 50 (*neither favorable nor unfavorable*) to 100 (*extremely favorable*). This scale has been used in a number of studies (e.g., Gill, Morrow, Collins, Lucey, & Schultz, 2006).

Participants were asked to provide ratings for the following groups of people: lesbians, gay men, bisexual men, bisexual women, African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans. Given the high correlations among the individual ratings within each category, we took the mean score for each category: racial minorities ($\alpha = .93$) and sexual minorities ($\alpha = .96$). For the current study, the responses were reverse-coded, such that higher scores indicate greater prejudice.

**Championing diversity.** We used four items from Cunningham’s (2006) scale to measure the degree to which participants championed diversity on campus. While Cunningham measured championing in the context of organizational change initiatives, we altered the items to reflect championing of the university’s diversity initiatives. A sample item is “I try to overcome others’ resistance toward diversity at the university.” The items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The reliability ($\alpha = .85$) was acceptable.

**Data Analysis**

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations were computed for all variables. Regression analysis was used to examine Hypotheses 1 through 6, with the two demographic variables, the two personality characteristics, and the two forms of prejudice serving as independent variables and championing diversity serving as the dependent variable. Additionally, the squared semipartial (part) correlations ($sr^2$) were examined to determine which variables accounted for the most variance. As noted by Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998), the part correlation represents the association between an independent and the dependent variable after removing the effects of all other independent variables. Thus, the squared part correlation represents the unique variance of an independent variable on the dependent variable.
Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. Several findings are worth noting here. First, from a bivariate perspective, championing diversity was significantly associated with five of the six independent variables. Openness to experience was the lone exception. These findings provide preliminary support for most of the study hypotheses. Second, a $t$ test indicates that the mean score for sexual prejudice ($M = 52.55$, $SD = 29.20$) was significantly higher than the score for racial prejudice ($M = 18.72$, $SD = 21.05$), $t(161) = 12.76$, $p < .001$. These findings are consistent with those of Gill et al. (2006), who also observed that students expressed greater sexual prejudice than other forms of prejudice. Also, note the similarity between these results and those from Madon, Smith, and Guyll (2005), who found that participants responded with less explicit prejudice (i.e., affective threat reactions) toward members of stigmatized groups who were “protected,” according to legal and social norms. In the context of the current study, racial minorities receive various legal protections in the U.S. (e.g., in the hiring process), while sexual minorities do not. Thus, the presence of differences supports the notion that legal mandates and social norms help to shape the bias expressed toward various groups (see Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Masser & Phillips, 2003; McCann, 2006).

The results of the regression analysis (see Table 2) indicate that the predictor variables accounted for 30% of the variance in championing diversity. Race ($\beta = .12$, $p = .08$) and sex ($\beta = .13$, $p = .07$) were only marginally related

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>−.10</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to experience</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial prejudice</td>
<td>18.72</td>
<td>21.05</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>−.12</td>
<td>−.11</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual prejudice</td>
<td>52.55</td>
<td>29.20</td>
<td>−.09</td>
<td>−.11</td>
<td>−.07</td>
<td>−.06</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Championing diversity</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>−.29</td>
<td>−.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Race: 0 = White, 1 = racial minority. Sex: 0 = male, 1 = female. $r \geq |.16|$, $p < .05$. 

PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ANTECEDENTS 795
to championing diversity, thereby providing limited support for Hypotheses 1 and 2, respectively. Consistent with our predictions, racial minorities and women were more likely (albeit marginally) to champion diversity than were Whites and men, respectively.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 predicted that extraversion and openness to experience, respectively, would hold positive associations with championing behavior. In support of Hypothesis 3, extraverts were more likely than their counterparts to champion diversity ($b = .15, p < .05$), and the construct explained 1.9% of the variance. This finding is consistent with the leadership literature, which has shown that extraverts are more likely to emerge from groups as leaders and to be effective in convincing others of a vision (Judge et al., 2002). On the other hand, openness to experience was not associated with championing diversity ($b = .07, ns$). Thus, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Finally, with Hypotheses 5 and 6, we focused on the role of prejudice in championing diversity. In support of our predictions, both racial prejudice ($b = -.22, p < .01$) and sexual prejudice ($b = -.35, p < .001$) held significant, negative associations with championing diversity. Intuitively, this finding makes sense, as people are unlikely to provide extra support for a program or initiative that likely supports something against which they hold a bias (for comparable results, see Harrison et al., 2006). Interestingly, however, sexual prejudice explained more than twice the unique variance (11.7%) in championing behavior as did racial prejudice (4.9%; see Table 2). This finding suggests that it is people’s prejudice, or lack thereof, toward strongly stigmatized

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$sr^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to experience</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial prejudice</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual prejudice</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.35***</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Race: 0 = White, 1 = racial minority. Sex: 0 = male, 1 = female. Model $R^2 = .30$, $p < .001$.  
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.*
groups—in this case, sexual minorities—that impacts the extent to which they will engage in extra-role behaviors aimed at supporting diversity.

Collectively, these findings suggest that personal attributes help to explain substantially the degree to which individuals will engage in efforts to champion diversity. Despite these encouraging findings, there are additional avenues of inquiry. First, we only examined personal attributes (i.e., demographics, personality, prejudice), while not considering the role of environmental factors. Eagly and Diekman (2005) noted that “the best way to understand the nature of prejudice is to take both the structure of the social environment and the psychological structure of the individual into account” (p. 23). We suggest that such is also likely the case for understanding championing behaviors, as it is important to recognize the reciprocally influential relationship that exists between the individual and social entities in explaining people’s behaviors.

Second, the focus of Study 1 (i.e., championing diversity) precluded an examination of other potential behavioral reactions to diversity initiatives. In drawing from Meyer and Herscovitch’s (2001; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002) framework, persons can adopt a variety of behavioral responses to diversity-related change: active or passive resistance, compliance, cooperation, and championing. Given certain antecedents, such as positive attitudes toward sexual minorities or an organizational workplace that supports diversity, how much more likely is a person to engage in championing behavior relative to other behavioral options? For that matter, do the antecedents affect the various behavioral responses differently? These are questions that, while not addressed in Study 1, have considerable implications for the management of the workplace. In Study 2, then, we examined the collective influence of both personal and social factors on the various behavioral responses to diversity-related change.

Study 2

In addition to one’s personal characteristics, the people with whom he or she works might influence behavioral responses to diversity. Both social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) purport as much. From a social learning theory perspective, Bandura (1986) argued that “virtually all learning phenomena, resulting from direct experience, can occur vicariously by observing other people’s behaviors and the consequences for them” (p. 19).

In a somewhat similar fashion, social information processing theory holds that people form their perceptions of organizational phenomena
based on their interactions with the social environment. Salancik and Pfeffer argued that “the social context, through informational social influence processes, can affect beliefs about the nature of jobs and work, about what attitudes are appropriate and, indeed, about what needs people ought to possess” (p. 233). Together, these theories suggest that influential others in one’s work environment could help shape how they respond to diversity initiatives.

Important to the current research project, Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) argued that coworkers and supervisors would both meaningfully influence the social construction of one’s reality or, in this case, the appropriate or acceptable behavioral responses to diversity initiatives. Note that these arguments have been advanced elsewhere. For instance, Jayne and Dipboye (2004) argued that the top management team plays a critical role in ensuring an organization’s diversity efforts. Cox (2001) also alluded to the importance of a leader’s vision and philosophy in the creation of a diverse workplace. Finally, Gilbert and Ivancevich (2000) told of how a CEO in their study led the charge for diversity efforts, and, as a result, support for the initiatives spread throughout the organization.

While these studies focused on the effects of leaders, social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) both suggest that coworkers should have a similar influence. Thus, the greater the support for diversity in the workplace, both from supervisors and coworkers, the more likely one is to champion diversity (see Cunningham, 2008). Based on this literature, we predict the following:

**Hypothesis 7.** Supervisor support for diversity will be positively associated with championing diversity.

**Hypothesis 8.** Coworker support for diversity will be positively associated with championing diversity.

As previously argued, behavioral responses to diversity programs are likely to be shaped by both personal and social factors (Eagly & Diekman, 2005). The results from Study 1 demonstrate the primacy of racial and sexual prejudice, as the two variables collectively explained most of the variance in championing diversity. On the other hand, the influence of demographic and personality characteristics, while significant, was less strong. Consequently, in Study 2, we considered the effects of both personal (i.e., racial prejudice, sexual prejudice) and social (i.e., supervisor support for diversity, coworker support for diversity) factors on individuals’ behavioral responses.
Method

Participants

Data were collected from 299 employees (160 females, 136 males, 3 did not reveal their sex) of a large, public university located in the Southwest. The sample consisted of both faculty \( n = 63, 21.1\% \) and staff \( n = 227, 75.9\%; 9 \text{ people did not provide their position}, 3.0\% \). In terms of racial composition, most participants were White \( n = 223, 74.6\% \), followed by African American \( n = 20, 6.7\% \), Asian \( n = 19, 6.4\% \), Latino \( n = 18, 6.0\% \), “Other” \( n = 8, 2.7\% \), Native American \( n = 4, 1.3\% \), and 7 who did not provide their race. Participants’ mean age was 44.1 years \( (SD = 11.8) \), and their mean organizational tenure was 10.8 years \( (SD = 8.3) \).

Measures

Participants received a questionnaire through campus mail asking them to provide their demographic characteristics, as previously outlined, and to respond to questions concerning their racial prejudice, sexual prejudice, the support their supervisor and coworkers showed for diversity, and their behavioral manifestations of diversity. Several of the items were developed specifically for the present study: supervisor support for diversity, coworker support for diversity, and behavioral responses. Thus, prior to the study, we followed Fraenkel and Wallen’s (2000) guidelines by asking a panel of experts to review the items to ensure the measure’s validity evidence based on test content.

Prejudice. Racial and sexual prejudice were measured with the same items as in Study 1. Both demonstrated acceptable reliability (racial minorities, \( \alpha = .97 \); sexual minorities, \( \alpha = .89 \)).

Supervisor support. We developed three items to measure supervisor support for diversity: “My supervisor really supports diversity at the university,” “My supervisor often talks of the benefits of diversity in the university,” and “All in all, my supervisor does not support diversity at the university” (reverse-scored). Items were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 \((\text{strongly disagree})\) to 7 \((\text{strongly agree})\). Reliability \( (\alpha = .77) \) for the measure was acceptable.

Coworker support. Coworker support for diversity was measured with the following three items: “I get a sense that most of my coworkers really support diversity at the university,” “My coworkers are very supportive of diversity at the university,” and “Most of my coworkers speak out against diversity at the university” (reverse-scored). Participants responded on a 7-point scale.
ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale’s reliability was acceptable ($\alpha = .76$).

**Behavioral support of diversity.** Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) described five behaviors employees could manifest in relation to an organizational initiative: active resistance, passive resistance, compliance, cooperation, and championing. These same behaviors were examined in the current study.

Study participants first read the following: “Listed below are several behaviors people can exhibit. Please rate how often you exhibit each of these behaviors. There are no right or wrong answers.” Responses were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (a lot). The description for active resistance read, “I demonstrate opposition in response to diversity initiatives by engaging in overt behaviors designed to ensure that the initiatives fail.” The description for passive resistance was, “I demonstrate opposition in response to diversity initiatives by engaging in subtle behaviors aimed at preventing the initiatives’ success.” Compliance was described by the following: “I demonstrate minimum support for diversity initiatives by going along with them, but doing so reluctantly.” Cooperation was measured with the item, “I demonstrate support for diversity initiatives by exerting effort when it comes to the initiatives, going along with the spirit of the initiatives, and being prepared to make modest sacrifices.” Finally, championing was measured with the item, “I demonstrate extreme enthusiasm for diversity initiatives by going above and beyond what is formally required to ensure the initiatives’ success and promoting the initiatives to others.”

**Data Analysis**

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations were computed for all variables. The hypotheses were examined through a multivariate multiple regression, with racial prejudice, sexual prejudice, supervisor support for diversity, and coworker support for diversity serving as the independent variables, and the five behavioral outcomes serving as the dependent variables. According to Lutz and Eckert (1994), similar to, but distinct from canonical correlation analysis, multivariate multiple regression “is the logical extension of ordinary multiple linear regression (MLR), wherein each of several continuous dependent variables is regressed on a set of continuous independent variables” (p. 666). Armstrong (2002) further noted that multivariate multiple regression analysis reduces family-wise error and, because of the stringent nature of the test, allows for maximal predictive ability (for an additional example, see Cunningham & Sagas, 2003).
Results and Discussion

There are several interesting findings from the descriptive statistics (Table 3). First, the antecedents included in the study held significant, bivariate associations with championing, thereby providing preliminary support for the hypotheses. Second, the relative strength of the association between the antecedents and behaviors corresponded to the discretionary nature of the behavior. That is, while the collective group of antecedents held a weak association with active resistance, they held the strongest association with championing, which is considered the highest form of discretionary behavior (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Finally, and consistent with Study 1 and past research (Gill et al., 2006), employees expressed greater sexual prejudice ($M = 49.49, SD = 27.15$) than they did racial prejudice ($M = 27.19, SD = 22.18$), $t(281) = 12.01, p < .001$.

The results from the multivariate multiple regression provide a significant multivariate effect, Wilks’s $\Lambda = .65, F(20, 840) = 5.72, p < .001$ (see Table 4). In all, the predictor variables accounted for 5% of the variance in active resistance, 8% of the variance in passive resistance, 9% of the variance in compliance, 20% of the variance in cooperation, and 25% of the variance in championing. Thus, consistent with the bivariate correlations, the strength of the relationships (i.e., variance explained) increased, as did the level of discretionary behavior. It is also worth noting that the variance explained in the discretionary behaviors was more than double that explained in the focal behaviors.

With respect to the specific hypotheses, in support of Hypotheses 5 and 6, both racial prejudice ($\beta = -.20, p < .001$) and sexual prejudice ($\beta = -.31, p < .001$) significantly predicted championing behavior. As with Study 1, the strength of the association was larger for sexual prejudice than it was for racial prejudice. Additionally, coworker support for diversity held a significant, positive association with championing diversity ($\beta = .15, p < .05$), thereby supporting Hypothesis 8. However, supervisor support for diversity was not related to championing behavior ($\beta = .10, ns$). Thus, Hypothesis 7 failed to receive support. Collectively, these findings lend general support to our argument that both personal and social factors influence people’s behavioral responses to diversity (see Eagly & Diekman, 2005).

The importance of coworker support for diversity, relative to that of supervisors, could be a function of time spent with coworkers. That is, employees likely spent more time with coworkers than with supervisors, and may not have even been aware of their supervisors’ attitudes toward diversity. In the work setting, then, perhaps it is proximity and time that affect these behaviors.
Table 3

Descriptive Statistics: Study 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Racial prejudice</td>
<td>27.19</td>
<td>22.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sexual prejudice</td>
<td>49.49</td>
<td>27.15</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Supervisor support</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Coworker support</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Active resistance</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Passive resistance</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Compliance</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Cooperation</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.36</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Championing</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.25</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $r \geq |.15|$, $p < .05$. 
Table 4

*Results of Prejudice and Support for Diversity on Behavioral Manifestations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active resistance</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>3.52**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial prejudice</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>2.22*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual prejudice</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor support</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworker support</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-2.16*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive resistance</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>5.56***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial prejudice</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>2.40*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual prejudice</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor support</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworker support</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>-2.73**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>6.08***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial prejudice</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual prejudice</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>1.90*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor support</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworker support</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>-2.30*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>15.76***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial prejudice</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-1.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual prejudice</td>
<td>-.33</td>
<td>-5.79***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor support</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>1.95*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworker support</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Championing</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>21.52***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial prejudice</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>-3.65***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual prejudice</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>-5.57***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor support</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworker support</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>2.25*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
General Discussion

Given the critical role champions play in ensuring the success of organizational change initiatives (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Simon et al., 2002), the purpose of the current research project was to examine the antecedents of such behaviors. The results from two studies, one with a student sample and the other with a sample of university employees, show that personal and social factors both influence one’s championing behavior. More specifically, sex, race, personality, prejudice, and support from others were all found to influence the extent to which people would champion diversity at the university; that is, the degree to which they would engage in extra-role behaviors aimed at promoting the benefits of individual differences.

Study Contributions

This study makes several contributions to the extant literature. First, the study contributes by identifying antecedents of championing behaviors. Many have hailed the benefits champions bring to the organization. Organizational-change scholars point to champions’ “extreme enthusiasm” (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002, p. 478), their ability to articulate the positive outcomes associated with change, and the manner in which they are able to convince others to go along with the change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Simon et al., 2002). Similarly, diversity scholars (e.g., Holvino et al., 2004) have argued that champions “promote successful diversity initiatives” (p. 272) by “building alliances and coalitions among diverse internal constituencies and networks to support change” (p. 272). Despite the many benefits champions bring to the organization, systematic investigation of what prompts them to engage in such extra-role behaviors has largely been missing (for two exceptions, see Cunningham, 2006; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). The present study begins to address this void by articulating several factors that influence one’s championing behavior.

From a more practical standpoint, the present research findings also point to potential ways to increase the extent to which people will champion diversity change. Across Studies 1 and 2, prejudice served as a reliable predictor of championing behavior. This finding is important because, while demographics and personality are relative constants, prejudice is socially constructed and is based largely on contextual factors (Eagly & Diekman, 2005; Schwarz, 2000). Such a stance is promising, as it suggests that attitudes and prejudice can change. For example, people’s attitudes toward women have generally grown more egalitarian over time (Spence & Hahn, 1997). Within the organizational context, this suggests that diversity-training efforts
might be helpful in decreasing prejudice and, ultimately, in increasing the number of champions for diversity (for a review of the diversity-training literature, see Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 1999).

In a related way, the results from Study 2 point to the importance of coworkers and their attitudes toward diversity in shaping one’s championing behaviors. Interestingly, supervisor support for diversity was not a significant predictor of championing. It is possible that identification with the referent source might influence these results. That is, because coworkers are on the same hierarchical level, and employees likely interact more closely and more often with coworkers than they do with their supervisors, identification with coworkers might be stronger than is a similar connection with supervisors. These dynamics are important because the influence of referent others in shaping one’s diversity attitudes is likely to be stronger when identification with that person is high (Sinclair, Dunn, & Lowery, 2005).

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the many contributions to the literature, the present research is not without limitations. First, the data were collected from persons at a single university, which is located in the southwestern United States. Future researchers should seek not only to expand analysis to other regions of the United States and abroad, but also potentially examine these relationships in other industries. Second, the data were collected on a single questionnaire, raising concerns of method variance.

Finally, some may see the use of students as a limitation. We counter this perspective with the argument that students are often the frontrunners for change at their universities, and such has been the case for decades. As a recent example, in 2008, students at Southern Oregon University marched for domestic rights for gays and lesbians on campus and within the state, a position that was supported by federal courts (French, 2008). Thus, understanding students’ championing behavior is certainly a worthwhile endeavor.

In addition to those previously mentioned, we see other areas for future research. The results from both studies indicate that not only do people harbor the most negative feelings toward sexual minorities, but attitudes toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) individuals are the strongest predictor of championing behavior. This leads to two questions. First, why is sexual prejudice higher than other forms (see Gill et al., 2006); and second, why is sexual prejudice, or lack thereof, the strongest predictor of championing behavior? As previously noted, we expect that differential evaluations are likely a function of social norms and values, but this supposition deserves further attention. With respect to the latter question, it might be that people
with positive attitudes toward GLB persons have a more encompassing perspective toward diversity, and this vantage point translates into actively supporting diversity initiatives. Again, this is a question that warrants investigation.

Other avenues for future research are available. Examination of the potential interactions among the independent variables might yield new results. For instance, is the relationship between prejudice and championing equally strong for men and women, or for Whites and racial minorities? Further, future researchers should consider the referent group composition more explicitly. In drawing from the relational demography literature (Tsui & Gutek, 1999), we might expect that demographic (dis)similarity might impact the influence others have on one's championing behaviors. Clearly, there are many possibilities. Given the focus on creating diversity-related change, coupled with the importance of champions in ensuring that change, such endeavors are needed to understand this important behavior more clearly.

References


