Allyship — a specific behavioral form of diversity support defined as actions by members of advantaged social groups to support those from disadvantaged social groups (Dang & Joshi, 2023; Knowlton, Carton, & Grant, 2022) — is critical to advancing racially marginalized employees. As members of advantaged racial groups typically comprise the majority of employees and hold positions of power (Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008), they can play a meaningful role in improving the position of more disadvantaged racial groups and enacting change toward an organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals (Erskine & Bilimoria, 2019; Gardner & Ryan, 2020; Hitt & Keats, 1984). However, despite their potential for positive impact, advantaged group members (e.g., White employees in Western contexts) often withhold support for racial diversity because they see it as either threatening or irrelevant to their personal interests (Brown & Jacoby-Senghor, 2021; Craig, Rucker, & Richeson, 2018; Dover, Major, & Kaiser, 2016; Gu, McFerran, Aquino, & Kim, 2014; Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006). Given that such attitudes can thwart an organization's diversity goals, it is crucial to understand the factors that drive employees from advantaged groups to perceive workplace diversity more positively and engage in the types of behaviors that constitute allyship.

Recognizing this, previous research has sought to address this issue through two distinct perspectives, rooted in the literature on diversity cases and ally motivation. On one hand, prior scholarship on diversity cases (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022) has tried to unpack how different rationales for valuing or de-valuing diversity can meaningfully impact advantaged employee support for workplace diversity and minority group members. For instance, meta-analytical research reveals that attitudes toward diversity initiatives, namely affirmative action, are significantly shaped by the rationale employed (Harrison et al., 2006). Moreover, studies exploring the application of instrumental or economic reasoning to justify diversity have noted

that advantaged groups tend to favor this rationale, leading to favorable attitudes toward diversity initiatives (Kravitz, Bludau, & Klineberg, 2008; Kravitz, Klineberg, Avery, Nguyen, Lund, & Fu, 2000; Richard & Kirby, 1997) and organizations (Olsen & Martins, 2016; Starck, Sinclair, & Shelton, 2021) that adopt this framing. People's beliefs and narratives regarding the purpose of diversity thus wield significant influence over their decisions to either extend or withhold support for racial minorities and diversity initiatives.

Despite shedding considerable light on these varied perspectives regarding the case for diversity, prior scholarship has presented a somewhat limited view of why employees from advantaged groups, in particular, would be behaviorally motivated to support diversity by engaging as allies. Specifically, it has mainly described that employees from advantaged groups support diversity when they view it as beneficial to *collective interests*, such as when it is believed to improve the organization's bottom line (business case) or broadly contribute to greater equality within society (moral case; Ely & Thomas, 2001; (Hajro, Gibson, & Pudelko, 2017; Kauff, Asbrock, & Schmid, 2021). Missing in these arguments, however, is the possibility that members of advantaged groups might engage in allyship because they find it to be *personally* beneficial, for reasons that have little to do with advancing a moral cause or the organization's interests. That is, just as some White employees find the prospect of workplace diversity to be a *personal threat*, others might see it as a *personal opportunity*—a possibility that prior research on diversity cases has largely overlooked.

One exception to this is the research on ally motivation, which has indeed considered how personal motivation can drive advantaged group members to act as allies (Kutlaca & Radke, 2023; Radke, Kutlaca, Siem, Wright, & Becker, 2020). Specifically, advantaged group allies have frequently been described as motivated to help disadvantaged group members for

self-interested reasons, such as to enhance their own reputations by being seen as individuals who possess strong moral character (Inesi & Rios, 2023). Notably, however, such studies have cast personal motivation as a more inauthentic or performative driver of allyship (Wellman, 2022), where advantaged group members aim to exploit or personally capitalize upon social movements for increased personal attention or financial gain (Radke et al., 2020). That is, this research has highlighted how personal motivation reflects the desire to accrue largely extrinsic and superficial benefits from allyship, such as the reputational capital that comes from being *perceived* as an ally. It has also discussed how such personal motivation can come at a cost to the social movement itself (Wellman, 2022). What has been missed is the possibility that advantaged group allies can be more intrinsically motivated at the prospect of *being* an ally (rather than merely being seen as one) and perceive deeper-level personal benefits from allyship.

In this research, I build theory on the latter possibility. Specifically, I integrate initial insights from research on diversity cases and ally motivation with theory on the norm of self-interest (Miller, 1999; Ratner & Miller, 2001) to propose a *personal case for diversity*, which I define as *a rationale justifying diversity is valuable for the individual benefits associated with being part of a racially diverse work unit*. Specifically, I argue that similar to perceived collective benefits, such personal benefits can be a strong incentive for White individuals to support workplace racial diversity and engage as allies. The norm of self-interest suggests that people are presumed to largely engage in behaviors that benefit their self-interest and personal well-being (Miller, 1999) and that doing so is viewed as entirely natural and acceptable. As self-interest is considered a reasonable, instinctive, and socially normative driver of individual action, in this research I explore how White employees' belief that they have something to personally gain from workplace diversity influences their allyship with racial minorities.

Specifically, I ask the following questions: *What (if any) personal benefits do White individuals perceive regarding racially diverse work units? Further, how and when does such a personal case for diversity impact White individuals' allyship behaviors?*

To understand the *content of White individuals' personal case for diversity*, I conducted an exploratory qualitative study that examines the distinct, personally relevant beliefs that White individuals hold regarding racial diversity in the work unit. In this research, I propose and find that although White employees can certainly tend to view workplace diversity as perilous to their personal job opportunities and way of life (Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010), they can also see diversity as a personal boon in several ways. For instance, in its potential to facilitate personal growth and a better understanding of the world, elevate White employees' personal job effectiveness from access to different viewpoints, enable a greater sense of belonging through feelings of acceptance for all types of individuals, and cultivate a fun and enriching work environment via unique cultural exposures.

Furthermore, to understand *how the personal case influences allyship* for racial diversity, I develop and test a theoretical model that links White employees' personal case for diversity to their engagement in *allyship*, defined as positive and discretionary (extra-role) actions by members of advantaged social groups to support employees from disadvantaged social groups (Dang & Joshi, 2022). In keeping with the literature on the norm of self-interest, I propose that White employees who strongly hold a personal case for diversity will experience an increase in *psychological standing* (Effron & Miller, 2012; Miller & Effron, 2009), or the perception that they have the legitimacy to engage to advocate for and support diversity based on the belief that they are personally affected by it. In exploring *when the personal case for diversity influences allyship*, I consider how an organization's *diversity climate* creates an additional consideration

for White employees' decision to act as an ally. Diversity climate is referred to as employees' perception of the degree to which the organization values diversity (Holmes, Jiang, Avery, McKay, Oh, & Tillman, 2020), as demonstrated by its formal practices, informal values, and the integration of minority employees (Dwertmann, Nishii, & van Knippenberg, 2016). For instance, whereas an organization with a supportive diversity climate might take pains to highlight its commitment to diversity and espouse that value often (McKay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2007), an organization with an unsupportive diversity climate might view diversity as a divisive issue, take few explicit measures to support it and say silent on the issue. I propose that a low (i.e., unsupportive) diversity climate will lead White employees with a strong personal case for diversity and psychological standing to reduce their engagement in *public* or easily visible forms of allyship (e.g., speaking up to management about diversity policy; Dang & Joshi, 2023). However, I argue that in a low diversity climate, they might compensate for lower levels of public allyship by increasing their engagement in more *private* forms of allyship that are less openly visible coworkers and managers. Figure 1 illustrates my theoretical model.

--- Insert Figure 1 about here ---

My research makes three primary contributions to the organizational literature. First, by examining White employees' *beliefs about the personal case for diversity*, I shed light on personal benefit as an overlooked antecedent of majority group members' support for diversity. Second, research to date has widely regarded personal motivation as a driving force for less desirable forms of allyship, such as performative allyship (Kutlaca & Radke, 2023). Finally, I contribute to research on diversity climate by highlighting how a low diversity climate can influence allies to hide, rather than publicize, their personal support for diversity.

REFERENCES

Brown, N. D., & Jacoby-Senghor, D. S. 2021. Majority members misperceive even "win-win" diversity policies as unbeneficial to them. ***Journal of Personality and Social Psychology***.

Craig, M. A., Rucker, J. M., & Richeson, J. A. 2018. The pitfalls and promise of increasing racial diversity: Threat, contact, and race relations in the 21st century. ***Current Directions in Psychological Science***, 27: 188-193.

Dang, C. T., & Joshi, A. 2023. On the plurality and politics of ally work: Liberalism and self, relational, and organizational ally work. ***Academy of Management Journal***, 66: 1554-1585.

Dover, T. L., Major, B., & Kaiser, C. R. 2016. Members of high-status groups are threatened by pro-diversity organizational messages. ***Journal of Experimental Social Psychology***, 62: 58-67.

Dwertmann, D. J. G., Nishii, L. H., & van Knippenberg, D. 2016. Disentangling the fairness & discrimination and synergy perspectives on diversity climate. ***Journal of Management***, 42: 1136-1168.

Effron, D. A., & Miller, D. T. 2012. How the moralization of issues grants social legitimacy to act on one's attitudes. ***Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin***, 38: 690-701.

Erskine, S. E., & Bilimoria, D. 2019. White allyship of afro-diasporic women in the workplace: A transformative strategy for organizational change. ***Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies***, 26: 319-338.

Gardner, D. M., & Ryan, A. M. 2020. What's in it for you? Demographics and self-interest perceptions in diversity promotion. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 105: 1062.

Georgeac, O. A., & Rattan, A. 2022. The business case for diversity backfires: Detrimental effects of organizations' instrumental diversity rhetoric for underrepresented group members' sense of belonging. ***Journal of personality and social psychology***.

Gu, J., McFerran, B., Aquino, K., & Kim, T. G. 2014. What makes affirmative action-based hiring decisions seem (un)fair? A test of an ideological explanation for fairness judgments. ***Journal of Organizational Behavior***, 35: 722-745.

Hajro, A., Gibson, C. B., & Pudelko, M. 2017. Knowledge exchange processes in multicultural teams: Linking organizational diversity climates to teams' effectiveness. ***Academy of Management Journal***, 60: 345-372.

Harrison, D. A., Kravitz, D. A., Mayer, D. M., Leslie, L. M., & Lev-Arey, D. 2006. Understanding attitudes toward affirmative action programs in employment: Summary and meta-analysis of 35 years of research. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 91: 1013.

Hitt, M. A., & Keats, B. W. 1984. Empirical identification of the criteria for effective affirmative action programs. ***The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science***, 20: 203-222.

Holmes, O., Jiang, K., Avery, D. R., McKay, P. F., Oh, I.-S., & Tillman, C. J. 2020. A meta-analysis integrating 25 years of diversity climate research. ***Journal of Management***: 014920632093454.

Inesi, M. E., & Rios, K. 2023. How prosocial actors use power hierarchies to build moral reputation. ***Journal of Experimental Social Psychology***, 106: 104441.

Kauff, M., Asbrock, F., & Schmid, K. 2021. Pro-diversity beliefs and intergroup relations. ***European Review of Social Psychology***, 32: 269-304.

Knowlton, K., Carton, A. M., & Grant, A. M. 2022. Help (un) wanted: Why the most powerful allies are the most likely to stumble—and when they fulfill their potential. ***Research in Organizational Behavior***: 100180.

Kravitz, D. A., Bludau, T. M., & Klineberg, S. L. 2008. The impact of anticipated consequences, respondent group, and strength of affirmative action plan on affirmative action attitudes. ***Group & Organization Management***, 33: 361-391.

Kravitz, D. A., Klineberg, S. L., Avery, D. R., Nguyen, A. K., Lund, C., & Fu, E. J. 2000. Attitudes toward affirmative action: Correlations with demographic variables and with beliefs about targets, actions, and economic effects¹. ***Journal of Applied Social Psychology***, 30: 1109-1136.

Kutlaca, M., & Radke, H. R. 2023. Towards an understanding of performative allyship: Definition, antecedents and consequences. ***Social and Personality Psychology Compass***, 17: e12724.

McKay, P. F., Avery, D. R., Tonidandel, S., Morris, M. A., Hernandez, M., & Hebl, M. R. 2007. Racial differences in employee retention: Are diversity climate perceptions the key? ***Personnel Psychology***, 60: 35-62.

Miller, D. T. 1999. The norm of self-interest. ***American Psychologist***, 54: 1053.

Miller, D. T., & Effron, D. A. 2009. Psychological license: When it is needed and how it functions, ***Advances in experimental social psychology***, vol. 43: 115-155. Elsevier.

Morrison, K. R., Plaut, V. C., & Ybarra, O. 2010. Predicting whether multiculturalism positively or negatively influences white americans' intergroup attitudes: The role of ethnic identification. ***Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin***, 36: 1648-1661.

Olsen, J. E., & Martins, L. L. 2016. Racioethnicity, community makeup, and potential employees' reactions to organizational diversity management approaches. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 101: 657.

Radke, H. R. M., Kutlaca, M., Siem, B., Wright, S. C., & Becker, J. C. 2020. Beyond allyship: Motivations for advantaged group members to engage in action for disadvantaged groups. ***Personality and Social Psychology Review***, 24: 291-315.

Ratner, R. K., & Miller, D. T. 2001. The norm of self-interest and its effects on social action. ***Journal of personality and social psychology***, 81: 5.

Richard, O. C., & Kirby, S. L. 1997. Attitudes of white american male students toward work force diversity programs. ***The Journal of Social Psychology***, 137: 784-786.

Rosette, A. S., Leonardelli, G. J., & Phillips, K. W. 2008. The white standard: Racial bias in leader categorization. ***Journal of Applied Psychology***, 93: 758.

Starck, J. G., Sinclair, S., & Shelton, J. N. 2021. How university diversity rationales inform student preferences and outcomes. ***Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences***, 118: e2013833118.

Wellman, M. L. 2022. Black squares for black lives? Performative allyship as credibility maintenance for social media influencers on instagram. ***Social Media + Society***, 8: 205630512210804.

FIGURE 1

Theoretical Model of the Personal Case for Diversity and Allyship Behaviors

