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AN INVESTIGATION OF PERCEIVED AUTHENTICITY OF DIVERSITY AND BLACK
LIVES MATTER STATEMENTS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON APPLICANT
ATTRACTIVENESS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

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Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

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May 2022

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April 8, 2022

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ABSTRACT

AN INVESTIGATION OF PERCEIVED AUTHENTICITY OF DIVERSITY AND BLACK LIVES MATTER STATEMENTS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON APPLICANT ATTRACTIVENESS

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (i.e., organizations' diversity and social justice [Black Lives Matter] statements) influences applicant attractiveness to organizations. Using Fortune-500 companies' diversity and Black Lives Matter statements as indicators of CSR activities, I examined the relationship between CSR activities, perceived authenticity, organizational attractiveness, and person-organization fit. It was hypothesized that diversity statements that specifically mention race and actions taken to promote diverse workplaces (i.e., *strong*) will be seen as authentic and those organizations will be the most attractive. Additionally, it was hypothesized that social Black Lives Matter (BLM) statements that specifically mention systemic racism/ racial inequality and/or actions to make a change (i.e., *strong*) will be seen as authentic and those organizations will be attractive. A significant relationship was found between statement substantive authenticity and diversity statements. A marginally significant relationship was found between BLM statements and statement symbolic authenticity. Results indicate that stronger diversity statements are seen as genuine and authentic, while stronger BLM statements are seen as insincere. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Applicant Attractiveness, CSR Authenticity

I dedicate this thesis to my family. To my mom and dad that have been there for me and supported me through any and everything – thank you for always encouraging me to accomplish all my goals and lifting me up on the days when I doubted myself. To my sister – thank you for always showing me the bright side of life and making me laugh (hopefully you can be as awesome as me one day). To my grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, thank you for always being my prayer warriors. To my friends, thank you for being a shoulder and motivator throughout this entire journey. I love you all and I will continue to make you all proud!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend a special thank you to my Thesis Director, Dr. Katrina Burch, for all her support, guidance, and direction throughout my thesis writing process and my time here at WKU. Dr. Burch has been a very understanding, motivational and supportive mentor to me. A special thank you to Mia Kendrick, Cora Hurt, Molly Simmons, Adalin McDaniel, and Melissa Sorensen for helping me to get my thesis started. I would also like to thank Dr. Reagan Brown and Dr. Aaron Wichman for being on my thesis committee. A final thanks to Kennedy Hammonds for being my friend throughout this entire journey.

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Introduction

The social responsibility of organizations has been a widely explored concept. There is a long-standing belief that corporations have a responsibility towards society, referred to as Corporate Social Responsibility. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to when organizations are concerned with the social problems of the neighborhoods and communities they serve (Mueller et al., 2012). CSR addresses the total impact and responsibilities organizations have towards the society in which they operate. These responsibilities can include controlling pollution, ensuring fairness, and contributing to neighborhoods and communities (Mueller et al., 2012).

Literature discussing the social responsibility of businesses can be traced back to the 1930's. The 1953 publication of Howard R. Bowen's book *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* is regarded as the springboard for present-day CSR (Carroll, 1999). The book outlined the power and influence held by large businesses and proposed the question "What responsibilities to society may [businesses] reasonably be expected to assume?". This 68-year-old question still stands. Interest in this topic has steadily increased over time. In an international survey of corporation's social responsibility reporting's, the consultancy firm KPMG found a 60% increase in responsibility reporting's from 2005 to 2008. These findings emphasize the increased interest in issues related to the social responsibility of businesses (KPMG 2008, as cited in Mueller et al., 2012). The inclusion of CSR policies in organizations is on the rise (Donia et al., 2019; Glavas, 2016); if I-O psychology wants to stay current, the scientist-practitioners of the discipline will take notice and lend the specialties of the field towards this growing initiative.

Organizational Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility

Attracting applicants can be done through internal methods, external methods, and employee references. This paper will focus primarily on external methods of recruiting. External methods may include advertising through job boards, newspapers, internet job search engines, etc. Organizations can also use CSR as an external method for attracting and retaining employees.

Recruitment

Recruitment is important for organizations because it attracts qualified candidates and increases the talent pool for organizations. Increasing the talent pool presents organizations with a greater opportunity of selecting the best candidates and increasing the success rate of selection processes. A successful and effective recruitment strategy for organizations also decreases the rate of turnover due to selecting employees that will be less likely to leave the organization. As explained in Adetunji & Ogbonna (2013), the stages of the recruitment process are defining the position, attracting applicants, managing applications, and lastly selecting and appointing roles.

Organization Attractiveness

An organization's attractiveness refers to the degree in which applicants perceive an organization as desirable. It is important for organizations to attract job applicants/ employees with the same values and beliefs as the organization's core values. Being able to attract and employ quality talent gives organizations a competitive edge. As explained by Lis (2012), job applicants look for clues as to what working for an organization will be like. These clues can come in the form of corporate social responsibilities. Lis (2012) found that CSR has a positive effect on an organization's perceived attractiveness and lends to sustainable human resource management.

Albinger and Freeman (2000) used Corporate Social Performance (CSP) as a method of evaluating organizations' corporate social responsibilities. CSP, as defined by Wood (1991, p.693), "is a business organization's configuration of principles of social responsibility, processes of responsiveness and policies, programs, and observable outcomes as they relate to the firm's social relationships." Albinger and Freeman (2000) aimed to add to the CSR literature by investigating the effects of CSP on perceived organization attractiveness among different job seeking groups. Albinger & Freeman (2000) found that CSP does yield a competitive advantage for organizations. There was an increase in ability to attract employees and job-choice when organizations demonstrated high levels of CSP. Albinger & Freeman (2000) also found that CSP yielded even more of a competitive advantage with applicants with a high level of job choice. These findings suggest that organizations who demonstrate high levels of CSP have a greater chance of having a highly qualified applicant pool. This suggests that CSR positively influences organization attractiveness and competitiveness.

Catano and Hines (2016) made a significant contribution to CSR literature by reinforcing that applicants' individual values influence their initial perception of organizations. While most CSR literature focuses on influencing a diverse applicant pool, Catano and Hines (2016) link individual values to initial attraction. The findings address how different recruitment information influences job applicants in a variety of ways suggesting that recruitment strategies and CSR efforts should be catered to the type of individual organizations want to attract.

Furthermore, Evans and Davis (2011) explored the effects of perceived corporate citizenship on job applicant attraction and work role definition. Perceived corporate citizenship is the extent to which employees perceive an organization as *fulfilling* corporate social responsibilities. CSR work role definition links prominent CSR goals – legal, economic, and

ethical – to employee in-role activities. Results suggested that high levels of corporate citizenship positively impact organization attractiveness and employees from those organizations view CSR as a part of their work roles. In other words, organizations with high CSR activities are systemically implementing CSR activities within the organization. Evans and Davis (2011) further suggested that job applicant attraction was increased with applicants that had prior CSR knowledge. Evans and Davis' (2011) findings emphasized the employee buy-in of CSR. When employees perceive organizations as being highly socially responsible, they are more likely to view those CSR activities as a part of their everyday goals.

Social media has also been linked with CSR to influence organization attractiveness. Belinda et al. (2018) found that organizations social media pages often offer more information to potential applicants than their websites do. This study also reinforced that socially responsible organizations are seen as more attractive to job applicants. Taken together, past research consistently suggests that CSR policies and procedures are beneficial to an organization and contribute to the sustainability of an organization. Not only do CSR activities influence applicant and organization attractiveness, but they also influence employee commitment.

Corporate Social Responsibility Today

According to Feagin (2006), systemic racism is an unjust system – in which the members of the dominating ethnic group implicitly or explicitly suppress the success of the members of the minority ethnic group, creating and perpetuating patterns of discrepancies in equality – that creates impoverishment of some ethnic groups, to the benefit of other ethnic groups. This can appear within the education system, health care, the criminal justice system. The beating of Rodney King by officers of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) stands as the first heavily publicized incidents of social injustice. Although there have been many instances of such

injustices over the years, two more recent incidents are worth specific attention for the purpose of this thesis? On March 13, 2020, Breonna Taylor was fatally shot in her Louisville home and a few months later in Minneapolis, George Floyd was killed during an arrest. Unfortunately, these deaths were at the hands of police officers.

Social injustices such as these have led to social/ activist movements in support of establishing accountability and racial equality. One such social movement is the Black Lives Matter movement. The Black Lives Matter movement started off as a hashtag on Twitter in 2013 but did not gain momentum until 2014. Its sole purpose was to shine a light on these social injustices so that they could be discussed candidly. Since the beginning of Black Lives Matter, activists have acted by launching letter writing campaigns, organizing peaceful protests, assisting in voter registration, and aiding in the collection of bail for individuals who were arrested during peaceful protests.

The focus of corporations' CSR activities and efforts are continually changing to align with the social issues most relevant in society. The goal of CSR is for organizations to be socially responsible and promote economic prosperity, social justice, and environmental quality. Since 2020, companies have been left to confront the social injustices against Black lives. Their stances on diversity initiatives and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement have been shown in their public diversity and/or Black Lives Matter statements. Corporations have a considerable influence on society and the DEI policies and procedures they implement can influence other organizations to follow suit. Organizations with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs can potentially build equal access to opportunities and advancement for minority groups.

The Present Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceived authenticity of Fortune-500 diversity and Black Lives Matter statements and their influence on applicant attractiveness. With this research, potential organizational interventions that aim to enhance DEI by reducing bias can be developed. Specifically, we addressed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Fortune-500 diversity statements that specifically mention race and actions taken to promote diverse workplaces will be seen as authentic and those organizations will be the most attractive.

Hypothesis 2: Fortune-500 Social Justice (Black Lives Matter) statements that specifically mention systemic racism/ racial inequality and/or actions to make a change will be seen as authentic and those organizations will be attractive for people.

In order to address the influence of diversity and Black Lives Matter statements a mixed-method study was conducted.

Method

Participants

Participants ($N = 220$) were recruited using snowball sampling and participants were recruited via social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc., as well as on Western Kentucky University's study board system. Participants were eligible if they were 18 years of age or older. The majority of participants were Black (55%), and female (76%). There was a mean age of 44.3 years, with a standard deviation of 15.94. Many of the participants (51.8%) had a graduate degree (Master's, M.B.A., Ph.D., M.D., Lawyer) or beyond. Of the 220 participants, 157 (71.3%) were employed in a full-time job, 22 (10%) were employed part-time, and 23 (10.5%) were not employed. Participants were employed in a wide variety of jobs

including: Government (15.3%), Education (7.7%), Military (6.7%), and Healthcare (5.8%).

Table 3 contains the descriptive statistics of demographic information obtained.

Materials

The 2020 Fortune-500 list was used to determine which organizations to find statements for. Fortune-500 diversity and Black Lives Matter statements were gathered from google, company websites, and internet searches. The statements gathered were public statements and easy to locate.

Procedure

As previously mentioned, Fortune-500 diversity and Black Lives Matter statements were collected via online searches. Once all statements were gathered, undergraduate and first-year graduate students were utilized as coders and trained in the coding process. After undergoing training, coders began coding the statements. Coders determined if the diversity statements were neutral (i.e., no specific mention of race or ethnicity), soft (i.e., still no mention of race or ethnicity but does mention differences in cultures), moderate (i.e., specifically mentions race and ethnicity, but non-committal), or strong (i.e., specifically mentions race/ ethnicity and provides examples of actions taken to promote a diverse workplace). Each statement was coded twice to check for inter-rater reliability. Statements were coded a third time by myself to correct for any disagreements.

Coders then determined if the Black Lives Matter statements were soft (i.e., simple, generic, noncommittal), moderate (i.e., only mentions racial inequality/ racism or actions to make a change), or strong (i.e., mentions systemic racism/ racial inequality and actions to make a change). Each statement was coded twice. Each statement was coded twice to check for inter-rater reliability, disagreements were then corrected.

A self-report survey to gauge participants' perceptions of diversity and Black Lives Matter statements was then developed which included one statement from each level for diversity and Black Lives Matter statements. Snowball sampling was used to recruit participants and the survey was sent out via social media outlets once a week for three weeks. The survey was also distributed on Western Kentucky University's study board site.

Measures

Measures used were all used in prior research and have been found to demonstrate good psychometric properties. The ordering of the measures in this section is consistent with the order in which participants viewed and responded to them. See Appendix A for a full list of the survey items included in this study.

Demographic Information. Participants' age, gender, race, sexual orientation, education, and job history was collected.

Organizational Attraction. Organizational attraction was assessed with 10-items comprising the general attractiveness (5-items) and intentions to pursue (5-items) subscales of the Organizational Attraction scale (Highhouse et al., 2003). The general attractiveness subscale measured attitudes about the organization as a potential place of employment, focusing on overall attractiveness (Highhouse et al., 2003). The intentions to pursue subscale measured participants' willingness to deal with the organization in the future (Highhouse et al., 2003). Participants provided ratings based upon a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores were indicative of more favorable general attractiveness and stronger intentions to pursue. An example item for general attractiveness is, "For me, this company would be a good place to work"; an example item for intentions to pursue is, "I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company." Both subscales demonstrated

good internal consistency: general attractiveness (diversity statements; $\alpha = .85$, BLM statements; $\alpha = .93$), and intentions to pursue (diversity statements; $\alpha = .90$, BLM statements; $\alpha = .95$).

Perceived Statement Authenticity. Perceived authenticity was measured using two subscales adapted from Moehl and Friedman (2021); symbolic authenticity (3 items) and substantive authenticity (7 items). After viewing one randomly selected diversity statement and one randomly selected Black Lives Matter statement, participants were prompted to rate their perceived authenticity of each statement. Symbolic authenticity reflects CSR activities that are done to benefit the organization (i.e., to gain a competitive advantage; Moehl & Friedman, 2021). Substantive authenticity reflects CSR activities that are genuine and done with pure intentions to better society (Moehl & Friedman, 2021). Participants provided ratings based upon a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores were indicative of higher levels of symbolic and substantive authenticity. An example item for symbolic authenticity is, “This organization uses diversity and BLM statements to look better than its competitors;” an example item for substantive authenticity is, “This organization uses diversity and BLM statements because it feels it is important to help those in need.” Both subscales demonstrated good internal consistency: symbolic authenticity (diversity statements; $\alpha = .83$, BLM statements; $\alpha = .92$), and substantive authenticity (diversity statements; $\alpha = .85$, BLM statements; $\alpha = .86$).

Person-Organization Fit. Person-organization fit was assessed with 3-items adapted from Cable and DeRue’s (2002) Person-Organization fit scale. After viewing one randomly selected diversity statement and one randomly selected Black Lives Matter statement, participants were prompted to rate their perceived Person-Organization fit (P-O fit). Participants provided ratings based upon a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to

5 (strongly agree). Higher values were indicative of better P-O fit between the company and the participant. An example item is, “The things I value in life are very similar to the things that the organization seems to value.” P-O fit demonstrated good internal consistency (diversity statements; $\alpha = .95$, BLM statements; $\alpha = .96$).

Results

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all study variables of interest, see Table 1 for the means, standard deviations, and correlations for variables associated with rating of diversity statements. See Table 2 for the means, standard deviations, and correlations for variables associated with the rating of Black Lives Matter statements.

From the 500 companies assessed, 95% had diversity statements and 57% had Black Lives Matter statements. Of the 473 diversity statements, 310 (62%) were coded as neutral, 54 (11%) were coded as soft, 79 (16%) were coded as moderate, and 30 (6%) were coded as strong. Of the 284 Black Lives Matter statements, 47 (9%) were coded as soft, 126 (25%) were coded as moderate, and 111 (22%) were coded as strong. Table 4 contains the descriptive statistics of the Fortune-500 diversity and Black Lives Matter statements. The following section showcases the statements that were coded into the categories chosen for this study. The following is an example of a diversity statement that was coded as *neutral*:

“At Lowe's, we're not all the same. And that's our greatest strength. We draw on the differences in who we are, what we've experienced and how we think because we believe celebrating our differences and valuing every associate makes all of us better. Here at Lowe's, we combine our differences to achieve greater results.”

The following is an example of a diversity statement that was coded as *soft*:

“We know that a diverse, equitable, and inclusive company is a more innovative and successful one. Across our workforce, products, and content, we embrace diversity of background, perspective, culture, and experience, and together with our partners, we have been working to fight injustice and inequity for decades. From bringing broadband and digital skills training to underserved families; to creating opportunities for underrepresented entrepreneurs; to amplifying diverse voices; we’re committed to leveraging our unique platforms to help create positive change.”

The following is an example of a diversity statement that was coded as *moderate*:

“A diverse and inclusive workforce is critical to Nationwide's success. Bringing together the unique characteristics of each of our associates – gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, nationality, disability, veteran status, ethnicity, race, religion, as well as many other differences such as thinking styles, personalities and work experience – is an integral part of who we are and how we operate as a company. We are proud of Nationwide's inclusive culture that supports every associate's success and encourages an environment where they can feel challenged, appreciated, respected, and engaged.”

The following is an example of a diversity statement that was coded as *strong*:

“At the crux of our efforts is a focus on cultivating and sustaining a diverse work environment and workforce, which is critical to meeting the unique needs of our diverse client base and the communities in which we operate. We are committed to making progress toward racial equity, advancing gender equality, and increasing representation at every level of our firm. At Goldman Sachs, we have long been committed to promoting inclusion, diversity, and equity. Yet there is more to be done. That is why we are investing in the power of Black communities, supporting Black businesses, and

recognizing the power of an inclusive workforce. As a firm focused on sustainable and inclusive growth, we are channeling the power of capital to drive economic prosperity for more people.”

The following are examples of Black Lives Matter statements that were coded as *soft*:

“The events we have all witnessed over the past few weeks have been disturbing. There is much work to do to ensure that equal justice and opportunity are available to all members of our society. As teammates and fellow citizens, we remain committed and will work even harder to support one another in this endeavor, at work and in our communities.”

“We stand in solidarity with the African American community. Join us in supporting the organizations that safeguard the diversity, equality, social justice, and civic involvement that our communities, our company, our city, and our country embrace.”

The following are examples of Black Lives Matter statements that were coded as *moderate*:

“We are reflecting. Juneteenth is a day to recognize the Black community and acknowledge a fundamental fact: Black Lives Matter and Deserve Equal Justice. We are taking action. We are taking action at ... by enhancing our diversity recruiting efforts and creating new programs to support career opportunities for Black colleagues. But this is not enough...”

“As we heard from our CEO this week...it will take all of us to make a difference. Racism has no place, injustice has no place, silence has no place! #blackouttuesday”

The following are examples of Black Lives Matter statements that were coded as *strong*:

“Systemic racism is pervasive, and we must not be complicit by inaction or silence. For our society to eliminate the inequities in America, each of us needs to have the will to change, the heart to trust and the energy to lead. We are conducting a top-to-bottom

review of our operating practices, pay and promotions for people of color and women to further promote equity and equality at Allstate. Through the Allstate Foundation we will focus on accelerating equity and helping drive systemic change. Further, we are observing Juneteenth as an annual company holiday to provide Allstaters the opportunity to reflect on this monumental event and engage in their communities.”

“Addressing racism and closing the racial wealth gap is the most critical challenge we face in creating a fair and inclusive society and we know that more of the same won’t do,” said Citi CEO Michael Corbat. “We are bringing together all the capabilities of our institution—our people, our lines of business, our balance sheet, and our philanthropy—like never before to combat the impact of racism in our economy. This is a moment to stand up and be counted, and Citi is committed to leading the way and investing in communities of color to build wealth and strong financial futures.”

In the self-reported survey, diversity and Black Lives Matter statements were randomly distributed with each participant seeing one of each. Out of the total number of responses ($n = 224$), 56 (23.4%) participants saw a neutral diversity statement, 58 (24.3%) participants saw a soft diversity statement, 55 (23%) participants saw a moderate diversity statement, and 55 (23%) participants saw a strong diversity statement. Of the total number of responses ($n = 163$), 53 (22.2%) participants saw a neutral Black Lives Matter statement, 55 (23%) participants saw a moderate Black Lives Matter statement, and 55 (23%) participants saw a strong Black Lives Matter statement.

Hypothesis Testing

Data were analyzed via univariate analysis of variance for each outcome of interest (i.e., general attractiveness, intentions to pursue, symbolic authenticity, substantive authenticity, P-O

fit). Prior to running analyses, I examined the zero-order bivariate correlations of the outcome variables with demographic characteristics. Based on the zero-order correlations, I determined that gender, race, and education should be entered as control variables.

Diversity Statements

Hypothesis 1 indicated that diversity statements that specifically mention race and actions taken to promote diverse workplaces (*strong* statements) will be seen as authentic and those organizations will be the most attractive. Results of univariate ANOVAs indicated there was a significant main effect of diversity statements on substantive authenticity, $F(3) = 3.62, p = .016$. Fisher's LSD post hoc analyses indicate there were significant mean differences between *neutral* and *strong* statements ($p = .049$) and *moderate* and *strong* statements ($p = .021$); participants rated *strong* diversity statements as more substantively authentic than both *neutral* and *moderate* diversity statements. There was no significant mean difference between *soft* and *strong* diversity statements. Please see Table 6. Results indicated stronger diversity statements were rated as more genuine and authentic. There were no main effects of diversity statements on general attractiveness ($p = .924$), intentions to pursue ($p = .609$), symbolic authenticity ($p = .446$) or P-O fit ($p = .814$). Please see Table 5.

Black Lives Matter Statements

Hypothesis 2 indicated social justice (Black Lives Matter) statements that specifically mention systemic racism/ racial inequality and/or actions to make a change (*strong* statements) will be seen as authentic and those organizations will be attractive for people. Results of univariate ANOVAs indicate that there were no significant main effects of Black Lives Matter statements on general attractiveness ($p = .469$), intentions to pursue ($p = .688$), substantive authenticity ($p = .093$) or P-O fit ($p = .140$). However, the main effect of Black Lives Matter

statements on symbolic authenticity was not significant, $F(2) = 2.87, p = .061$. If the observed pattern of results were to hold if statistical power were greater, then this pattern would indicate that participants rated *strong* Black Lives Matter statements as done so to benefit the organization rather than genuine in the organizations' intentions. Please see Table 7 and Table 8.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact Fortune-500 companies CSR activities (diversity and Black Lives Matter statements) has on their organizational attractiveness. I further sought to examine how statement authenticity affected this level of attraction. These relationships were suggested through past CSR literature and the Attraction-Selection-Attrition model (Schneider, 1987). I hypothesized that Fortune-500 diversity statements that specifically mention race and actions taken to promote diverse workplaces will be seen as authentic and those organizations would be the most attractive. I also hypothesized that Fortune-500 Social Justice (Black Lives Matter) statements that specifically mention systemic racism/ racial inequality and/or actions to make a change would be seen as authentic and those organizations will be attractive for people.

I found partial support for the hypothesized relationships. Specifically, participants who viewed strong diversity statements (i.e., statements that specifically mention race/ethnicity and actions taken to promote diverse workplaces) rated those statements as more genuine than those who viewed neutral or moderate diversity statements. In addition, there was a marginally significant relationship found for Black Lives Matter statements in regard to their symbolic authenticity. Participants who viewed strong Black Lives Matter statements (i.e., statements that specifically mention systemic racism/ racial inequality and/or actions to make a change) rated those statements as organizational posturing; in other words, they viewed the statements as an

effort of the organization to be perceived more favorably rather than genuinely authentic. This study adds to the current CSR literature by supporting previous findings that CSR activities should be genuine and authentic. As stated before, people look for cues as to what it would be like working for an organization and my results support that one of the cues people look for is authenticity in organizational actions.

One interesting takeaway from this study are the demographic characteristics of the participants. Participants of this study were primarily Black, African-American or African, and female. The lack of significant relationships between Black Lives Matter statements and organization attractiveness may suggest that grandiose CSR activities geared specifically towards minority groups may not have desired effects. The unexpectedly diverse makeup of the applicant pool is also a strength of this study. I conducted this study in hopes of gaining knowledge and understanding through research to help promote inclusion and career equality for minority groups. Because my participants were primarily Black, this research sheds a light into what Black applicants seek when searching for and selecting jobs. Thus, helping to contribute to diversity, equity and inclusion research and practices.

Limitations and Future Research

The research conducted as a part of this study raises a number of questions and insights that future researchers should consider. One limitation of this study was the instrument used to collect data. Using a self-report survey could have led to common-method bias. In the survey, there were several common items for both the diversity and Black Lives matter statements and that may have been daunting for participants. Due to that, there may have been some habituation bias where participants were providing the same answers in response to similarly worded items. Common-method bias is also increased when the criterion and predictor variables are obtained

from the same person within the same measurement which is the case for most self-report surveys, including the survey used in this study.

Future research should consider gathering data from a variety of measurement methods (e.g., focus groups, survey measurement). Participant feedback showed that they wanted to be interviewed to further express their feelings about the organizations and their statements. A qualitative study may be helpful to further our understanding on CSR and applicant attractiveness by being able to explore emotions associated with these CSR activities.

While my applicant pool provided some strengths, it also provided some limitations. The mean age of my applicants was 44 years of age with most participants being further in their career life-cycle. The Black Lives Matter movement and other similar social justice movements have only picked up popularity in recent years. It leads to the question of whether people later in their career think differently about CSR activities and do they search for the same cues when selecting a job? For future research, it would be nice to compare responses from people further in their career compared to those just starting their career. Are value-based attitudes subsided when trying to secure a job in your field? Are you more willing to ignore an organizations' CSR activities if you are just starting your career? Or are younger generations more aware of the social action's organizations take? Studies have also shown that the quality of an applicant may impact their likeliness to search for these P-O fit cues and that may be another layer that impacts the relationships of interest in this study.

Participants were only able to see one diversity statement and one Black Lives matter statements. They were not able to compare the varying levels of statements and that may have impacted how attractive they found the organizations to be. In the future, it would be interesting

to have participants see varying levels of statements and determine which organization was more attractive and which statements were more authentic.

Lastly, in the future I would like to see if the organizations from this research followed through with their statements. A longitudinal study that focuses on the impacts of not following through or following through with these CSR activities would be another interesting addition to CSR literature.

Practical Implications

This study contributes to literature on CSR by providing more information on how CSR activities impact organizations. According to Aguinis et al. (2019), employees search for meaning in their work and this search for meaningfulness is referred to as sensemaking. CSR influences employee's interpretation of the meaningfulness of their work. If employees find their work meaningful, then they are more likely to commit to an organization and its core values. A corporation that visibly engages in CSR promotes employees' feelings of attachment to the organization, which consequently reduces turnover intention (Lee et al., 2013).

As cited in Mueller et al. (2011), Meyer and Allen (1991) defined an employee's affective commitment as an "emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (p. 97). In their 2011 study, Mueller et al. found positive relationships between CSR and affective organizational commitment. Affective organizational commitment relates to organizational values reflecting humanity, responsibility, and cooperation. Therefore, affective commitment is linked to CSR which expresses similar values. This means, if employees found their organizations to be socially responsible – depending on cultural values – then those employees identified with and were more committed to the organization they served. This contribution suggests when corporations are committed to improving and implementing genuine

CSR activities, those organizations will profit in a positive way. These benefits will come from having buy-in from external factors such as consumers and investors, and employee buy-in. Employees buy-in and engagement is essential to CSR because it is the employees who are tasked with fulfilling the goals set by the organization.

Conclusion

I collected and analyzed statements from Fortune-500 companies to better ascertain how people perceive organizations' diversity and social justice statements in considering the attractiveness of the organization. Results suggest applicants search for cues as to what it would be like to work for an organization. People spend most of their adult lives working for organizations, therefore, it is important to understand what organizations can do to create psychologically and physically safe environments for their minority employees. Understanding how applicants perceive organizational activities, like CSR activities, helps to create and/or refine organization policies and procedures that can be implemented to aid in the reduction of bias in the workplace.

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Table 1. Diversity Statements Correlation Matrix

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender			—								
2. Race			.08	—							
3. Education			-.02	-.02	—						
4. Current Work			-.07	-.12	-.25	—					
5. General Attractiveness**	4.30	.847	-.01	-.08	.16	.09	(.85)				
6. Intentions to Pursue**	4.13	.833	.07	-.04	.11	.10	.81	(.90)			
7. Symbolic Authenticity**	2.93	.979	.04	.08	-.10	.06	-.08	-.12	(.83)		
8. Substantive Authenticity**	3.44	.715	.02	-.05	-.02	.05	.48	.45	.02	(.85)	
9. Person-Organization Fit**	4.10	.940	.04	-.06	.10	.09	.76	.70	-.16	.50	(.95)

Note. **Outcome Variables; reliabilities reported on the diagonal; means and standard deviations not reported for gender, race, education or current work (categorical variables).

Table 2. *Black Lives Matter Statements Correlation Matrix*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender			—								
2. Race			.08	—							
3. Education			-.02	-.02	—						
4. Current Work			-.07	-.12	-.25	—					
5. General Attractiveness**	3.97	1.05	.15	.04	.17	.02	(.93)				
6. Intentions to Pursue**	3.82	1.01	.11	.09	.21	.04	.89	(.95)			
7. Symbolic Authenticity**	2.93	.979	.06	.07	-.08	-.02	.13	.07	(.91)		
8. Substantive Authenticity**	3.44	.715	-.01	-.03	-.03	.03	.54	.55	.14	(.86)	
9. Person-Organization Fit**	3.88	1.14	.15	.07	.22	.01	.84	.83	.10	.56	(.96)

Note. **Outcome Variables; reliabilities reported on the diagonal; means and standard deviations not reported for gender, race, education or current work (categorical variables).

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	168	76.4
Male	51	23.2
Prefer Not to Say	1	0.4
Race		
Black, African-American, African	121	55.0
White, European Decent	88	40.0
American Indian, Alaska Native	0	0
Asian, Asian American	5	2.3
Hispanic, Latino/a	6	2.7
Highest Educational Level		
Some High School	1	.4
High School (or GED)	12	5.0
Some College (or technical school)	31	13.0
Two-year College (Associate's)	8	3.3
Four-year College (Bachelor's)	54	22.6
Graduate Degree or Beyond	114	47.7

Table 4. *Fortune-500 Statement Frequencies*

		Frequencies	%
Diversity Statements	No Statement	27	5%
	Neutral	310	62%
	Soft	54	11%
	Moderate	79	16%
	Strong	30	6%
Black Lives Matter Statements	No Statement	216	43%
	Soft	47	9%
	Moderate	126	25%
	Strong	111	22%

Table 5. *Diversity Statements: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects*

Predictors	Outcome Variables	F	df	<i>p</i>
Gender	General Attractiveness	.344	1	.559
	Intentions to Pursue	.498	1	.482
	Symbolic Authenticity	.543	1	.463
	Substantive Authenticity	.668	1	.416
	Person-Organization Fit	.065	1	.799
Race	General Attractiveness	1.75	1	.189
	Intentions to Pursue	.262	1	.610
	Symbolic Authenticity	1.73	1	.197
	Substantive Authenticity	.036	1	.850
	Person-Organization Fit	.1.20	1	.297
Education	General Attractiveness	3.31	1	.071
	Intentions to Pursue	2.37	1	.126
	Symbolic Authenticity	1.07	1	.309
	Substantive Authenticity	1.29	1	.259
	Person-Organization Fit	1.50	1	.223
Diversity Statements	General Attractiveness	.158	3	.924
	Intentions to Pursue	.612	3	.609
	Symbolic Authenticity	.921	3	.446
	Substantive Authenticity	3.62	3	.016
	Person-Organization Fit	.316	3	.814

Table 6. *Diversity Statements: Multiple Comparisons*

Diversity Statements		Mean Differences	<i>p</i>
Neutral	Soft	-.273	.305
	Moderate	.055	.986
	Strong	-.408	.049
Soft	Neutral	.273	.305
	Moderate	.327	.170
	Strong	-.135	.821
Moderate	Neutral	-.055	.986
	Soft	-.327	.170
	Strong	-.463	.021
Strong	Neutral	.408	.049
	Soft	.135	.821
	Moderate	.463	.021

Note. Dependent Variable – Substantive Authenticity

Table 7. *Black Lives Matter Statements: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects*

Predictors	Outcome Variables	F	df	<i>p</i>
Gender	General Attractiveness	1.44	1	.233
	Intentions to Pursue	.447	1	.505
	Symbolic Authenticity	.418	1	.519
	Substantive Authenticity	.002	1	.964
	Person-Organization Fit	1.62	1	.206
Race	General Attractiveness	.094	1	.759
	Intentions to Pursue	.739	1	.392
	Symbolic Authenticity	.382	1	.538
	Substantive Authenticity	.202	1	.654
	Person-Organization Fit	.388	1	.535
Education	General Attractiveness	2.40	1	.125
	Intentions to Pursue	4.34	1	.040
	Symbolic Authenticity	.789	1	.376
	Substantive Authenticity	.032	1	.859
	Person-Organization Fit	5.26	1	.024
Diversity Statements	General Attractiveness	.764	2	.469
	Intentions to Pursue	.375	2	.688
	Symbolic Authenticity	2.88	2	.061
	Substantive Authenticity	2.43	2	.093
	Person-Organization Fit	2.00	2	.140

Appendix A

Demographic Questions		
Var. Name		Response Scale
Age	What is your age?	Numeric Open
Gender	Gender	1 = Male 2 = Female 3 = Transgender 4 = Gender neutral 5 = Non-binary
Race	What is your racial background? (Please select all that apply).	1 = White, European decent 2 = Black, African American, African 3 = American Indian, Alaska Native 4 = Asian, Asian American 5 = Hispanic, Latino/a
Sexual Orientation	Sexual Orientation	1=Heterosexual/Straight 2=Gay/Lesbian 3=Asexual 4=Bisexual 5=Queer 6=A sexual orientation not listed here
Education	What is the highest level of education you've completed?	1 = Some high school 2 = High school graduate (or GED) 3 = Some college (or technical vocational school) 4 = Two-year college degree (Associate's) 5 = Four-year college degree (Bachelor's) 6 = Graduate degree or beyond (Master's, M.B.A., Ph.D., M.D., Lawyer)
Job History 1	What type of work do currently you do?	1 = Shift work 2 = Part-time work 3 = Full-time work 5 = Contract work 6 = No work 7 = Other (Open-ended text box response)

Job History 2	Throughout your working life, how much experience do you have working in full-time positions?	1= No experience 2 = 1-3 years 3 = 3-5 years 4 = 5+ years
Job History 3	Throughout your working life, how much experience do you have working in part-time positions?	1= No experience 2 = 1-3 years 3 = 3-5 years 4 = 5+ years
Job History 4	In what industry do you work?	Open

Diversity Statements (4)		
Level	Var. Name	
1	DS1	At ... we're not all the same. And that's our greatest strength. We draw on the differences in who we are, what we've experienced and how we think because we believe celebrating our differences and valuing every associate makes all of us better. Here at ... we combine our differences to achieve greater results.
2	DS2	We know that a diverse, equitable, and inclusive company is a more innovative and successful one. Across our workforce, products, and content, we embrace diversity of background, perspective, culture, and experience, and together with our partners, we have been working to fight injustice and inequity for decades. From bringing broadband and digital skills training to underserved families; to creating opportunities for underrepresented entrepreneurs; to amplifying diverse voices; we're committed to leveraging our unique platforms to help create positive change.
3	DS3	A diverse and inclusive workforce is critical to [company] success. Bringing together the unique characteristics of each of our associates – gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, nationality, disability, veteran status, ethnicity, race, religion, as well as many other differences such as thinking styles, personalities, and work experience – is an integral part of who we are and how we operate as a company. We are proud of [company] inclusive culture that supports every associate's success and encourages an environment where they can feel challenged, appreciated, respected, and engaged.
4	DS4	At the crux of our efforts is a focus on cultivating and sustaining a diverse work environment and workforce, which is critical to meeting the unique needs of our diverse client base and the communities in which we operate. We are committed to making progress toward racial equity, advancing gender equality, and increasing representation at every level of our firm. At [company], we have long been committed to promoting inclusion, diversity, and equity. Yet there is more to be done. That is why we are investing in the power of Black communities, supporting Black businesses, and recognizing the power of an inclusive workforce. As a firm focused on sustainable and inclusive growth, we are channeling the power of capital to drive economic prosperity for more people.

Black Lives Matter Statements (3)		
Level	Var. Name	
1	BLM1	The events we have all witnessed over the past few weeks have been disturbing. There is much work to do to ensure that equal justice and opportunity are available to all members of our society. As teammates and fellow citizens, we remain committed and will work even harder to support one another in this endeavor, at work and in our communities.
2	BLM2	We are reflecting. Juneteenth is a day to recognize the Black community and acknowledge a fundamental fact: Black Lives Matter and Deserve Equal Justice. We are taking action. We are taking action at Robert Half by enhancing our diversity recruiting efforts and creating new programs to support career opportunities for Black colleagues. But this is not enough...
3	BLM3	Systemic racism is pervasive, and we must not be complicit by inaction or silence. For our society to eliminate the inequities in America, each of us needs to have the will to change, the heart to trust and the energy to lead. We are conducting a top-to-bottom review of our operating practices, pay and promotions for people of color and women to further promote equity and equality at [company]. Through the [company] Foundation we will focus on accelerating equity and helping drive systemic change. Further, we are observing Juneteenth as an annual company holiday to provide [company] the opportunity to reflect on this monumental event and engage in their communities.

Applicant Attractiveness (10)			
Highhouse, S., Lievens, F., & Sinar, E. F. (2003). Measuring attraction to organizations. <i>Educational and Psychological Measurement</i> , 63 (6), 986-1001.			
Stem: Please indicate the extent to you agree with the following statements			
Var. Name		Response Scale	
General Attractiveness	AA1	For me, this company would be a good place to work.	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neither agree nor disagree 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
	AA2	I would not be interested in this company except as a last resort. *	
	AA3	This company is attractive to me as a place for employment.	
	AA4	I am interested in learning more about this company.	
	AA5	A job at this company is very appealing to me.	
Intentions to pursue	AA6	I would accept a job offer from this company.	
	AA7	I would make this company one of my first choices an employer.	
	AA8	If this company invited me for a job interview, I would go.	

	AA9	I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company.	
	AA10	I would recommend this company to a friend looking for a job.	

Authenticity (10)			
Moehl, S., and Friedman, B. A. (2021). Consumer perceived authenticity of organizational corporate social responsibility (CSR) statements: A test of attribution theory. <i>Social Responsibility Journal</i> , http://doi.org/10.1108/SRJ-07-2020-0296			
Stem: Please indicate the extent to you agree with the following statements			
Var. Name			Response Scale
Symbolic Authenticity	A1	This organization uses diversity and BLM statements to look better than its competitors**	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neither agree nor disagree 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
	A2	This organization uses diversity and BLM statements to avoid looking bad in front of others**	
	A3	This organization uses diversity and BLM statements to avoid criticism from the media and/or external actors it does business/interacts with**	
Substantive Authenticity	A4	This organization uses diversity and BLM statements to avoid criticism from the media and/or external actors it does business/interacts with**	
	A5	This organization uses diversity and BLM statements because it cares about what happens to the community in which it operates (both domestic and internationally, if operating globally)	
	A6	This organization uses diversity and BLM statements because it cares about what happens to external factors it does business/interacts with	
	A7	This organization uses diversity and BLM statements because it wants to help external factors it does business/interacts with in any way it can	
	A8	This organization uses diversity and BLM statements because it values a role of interacting with the community	
	A9	This organization uses diversity and BLM statements because it takes on the needs of the community and external individuals as its own	
	A10	This organization uses diversity and BLM statements to impress its employees as caring for those outside their organization**	

Person-Organization Fit (3)		
Cable, D. M., & Judge, T. A. (1996). Person–organization fit, job choice decisions, and organizational entry. <i>Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes</i> , 67(3), 294-311.		
Stem: Please indicate the extent to you agree with the following statements		
Var. Name		Response Scale
PO1	The things I value in life are very similar to the things that the organization seems to value	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree
PO2	My personal values would match the organization’s values and culture	3 = neither agree nor disagree
PO3	The organization’s values and culture would provide a good fit with the things I value in life	4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

End of Survey Question			
Q#	Var. Name		Response Scale
		Did you give your best effort on this study? Please note you will receive credit regardless of your response.	1 = I gave my best effort 2 = I gave partial effort 3 = I gave minimal effort 4 = I gave no effort

Appendix B



*INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY*

DATE: February 3, 2022

TO: Katrina Burch, PhD
FROM: Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1870338-1] Organizational Attraction and Perceptions
REFERENCE #: IRB# 22-181
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: February 3, 2022

REVIEW TYPE: Exempt Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Exempt Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by an *implied* consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Robin Pyles at (270) 745-3360 or irb@wku.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.