

Dismantling Bias Conference Series

An Investigation of Perceived Authenticity of Diversity and Black Lives Matter Statements and Their Influence on Applicant Attractiveness

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Recommended Citation

Davis, Shelby and Burch, Katrina A. () "An Investigation of Perceived Authenticity of Diversity and Black Lives Matter Statements and Their Influence on Applicant Attractiveness," *Dismantling Bias Conference Series*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 2, Article 4.

Available at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgg/vol3/iss2/4>

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An Investigation of Perceived Authenticity of Diversity and Black Lives Matter Statements and Their Influence on Applicant Attractiveness

The social responsibility of organizations has been a widely explored concept. 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). An organization's attractiveness refers to the degree in which applicants perceive an organization as desirable. CSR actions and statements can influence applicant attractiveness and organizational development. It is important for organizations to attract job applicants/ employees with the same values and beliefs as the organizations core values. 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.

Since 2020, companies have been left to confront the social injustices against Black lives and their stances on diversity initiatives and Black Lives Matter (BLM) have been shown in their public diversity and/or Black Lives Matter statements. The aim of this study is to understand the perceived authenticity of those statements and their influence on applicant attractiveness. Specifically, we will address 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 for people who reflect those values.

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 who reflect those values.

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

Method

Participants

The participants of this study will be undergraduate students at [University in the South, blinded for review] in the Departments of Psychology and Psychological Sciences.

Materials/ Measures

The student survey will be administered via Western Kentucky University's study board research participation system. *Organizational attraction* will be assessed via Highhouse et al.'s (2003) scale, which is comprised of two subscales: general attractiveness (5 items) and intentions to pursue (5 items). *Perceived statement authenticity* will be assessed using Moehl and Friedman's (2021) scale (14 items). We will also collect diversity fatigue (Smith et al., 2021) and Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS; Neville et al., 2000) to assess participant's value-based attitudes. Participants will provide ratings based upon a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Procedure

Diversity and Black Lives Matter statements were gathered from google, company websites, etc. The statements gathered were public statements and easy to locate. 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. 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. The proposed survey to test student perceptions of diversity and Black Lives Matter statements will include an example statement from each level with organization attractiveness and perceived authenticity questions to follow.

The proposed analyses for this study are text analysis, and correlation and regression analyses. Black Lives Matter statements will be analyzed using Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count to determine the percentage of words that reflect different emotions, thinking styles, and social concerns. Correlation and regression analyses will be conducted to determine if there is a correlation between an organization's CSR activities and an organizations attractiveness and if an organization's CSR activities are a significant predictor of an organization's attractiveness.

Discussion

Organizations have the resources and influence/ power to influence DEI efforts in society and organizations with mature DEI programs have the potential to build equal access to opportunities and advancement for minority groups. We will review the future directions and practical implications of Corporate Social Responsibility efforts, including how diversity and BLM statements can help address the latest social injustices and social expectations of organizations.

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