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Attracting racioethnic minorities: A social cognitive perspective

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Abstract

The influential power of minority recruitment efforts within businesses are examined from a Social Cognitive Theory perspective. Specifically, this study tested the potential manipulation of racioethnic minority candidates' job-related self-efficacy by internet-based organizational recruitment materials. Results from this experimental study ($N = 100$) indicate that creating the impression of a perceptibly diverse work climate enhances the perceived job search self-efficacy, organizational attractiveness, and job-pursuit intentions of prospective racioethnic minority applicants. The resulting conclusions hold considerable implications for practitioners and organizations seeking to increase the effectiveness of minority recruitment efforts.

Minority Recruitment: A Growing Trend or a Growing Necessity?

Nearly two decades ago, Rynes and Barber (1990) predicted that an increasingly diverse general population would result in an increased demand for nontraditional workers (e.g., racioethnic minorities). That prediction has gradually become a reality as the representation of racioethnic minorities (i.e., biologically and/or culturally distinct groups; Cox, 1990) in the labor force has grown from 18% in 1990 (Fullerton & Toossi, 2001) to nearly 30% in 2007, making racioethnic minorities one of the fastest growing sub-groups within the labor market (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). Moreover, Thomas and Wise (1999) suggest that many organizations must now provide more diversity in product development, sales, marketing, and other areas of customer service to accommodate the increasing demands of the more diverse consumer base.

Given these conditions, it is frequently assumed that, “organizations which are adept at effectively recruiting and hiring from a diverse applicant pool will have a significant competitive advantage” (Thomas & Wise, 1999, p. 376). Several researchers have empirically supported this assertion showing that a diverse, heterogeneous organization reaps numerous benefits, including an improved ability to reach minority consumer markets and increased market share (Richard, 2000; Thomas & Ely, 1996), improved creativity and decision-making (McLeod, Lobel, & Cox, 1996; Richard, Barnett, Dwyer, & Chadwick, 2004), lower turnover rates (McKay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2007), an enhanced organizational image (Thomas, 2005), and increased career commitment and career satisfaction among majority *and* minority employees (Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000).

Therefore, as the racioethnic minority consumer base and labor force steadily increase, many organizations and firms have begun devoting substantial resources toward better

understanding which factors and strategies are most attractive to racioethnic minorities as both a consumer and prospective applicant (cf. Brown, Cober, Keeping, & Levy, 2006; Digh, 1999; Doverspike, Taylor, Shultz, & McKay, 2000). This is perhaps best captured by Perkins, Thomas, and Taylor's (2000) assertion that, "the diversity age mandates that scholars develop new models and raise new questions that address the minority job applicant as a consumer as well as the impact of...recruitment ads on all potential job applicants" (p. 236).

While nearly one in two companies plans to become more aggressive in their minority recruitment efforts (Thaler-Carter, 2001), guidelines for how to successfully attract targeted racioethnic minorities remain rather non-prescriptive. This is largely due to the widespread criticism of existing minority recruitment research, for being: (a) overly Eurocentric (Bowman, 1991; Perkins et al., 2000), (b) too narrowly focused on post-hire outcomes rather than pre-hire decisions (Rau & Hyland, 2003; Rynes, 1991), and (c) inappropriately focused on personal intuition and experience rather than empirical support (Highhouse, Stierwalt, Bachiochi, Elder, & Fisher, 1999). Many organizations may therefore view the goal of achieving successful and/or effective minority recruitment as ostensibly unguided or impractical when considering the state of existing research in this area.

Hence, there is a need for empirical attempts to demonstrate organizational practices that can increase the attraction of diverse applicants and subsequently improve minority recruitment efforts. Indeed, effective minority recruitment strategies are likely to become increasingly important in the United States alone, as the in-country proportion of racioethnic minorities rises to nearly 54% of the total population by the year 2042 (as projected by the U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

The Present Study: Signaling a Positive Climate for Diversity

Recent studies suggest that racioethnic minority applicants are attracted to organizations by different factors than non-minority (i.e., White) applicants (Avery & McKay, 2006; Thomas & Wise, 1999). More specifically, racioethnic minorities appear to value, welcome, and be more positively influenced by an organization's diversity efforts than their White counterparts, particularly White men (Avery, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2004). The reason for this discrepancy remains unclear, although Brown et al. (2006) and Kim and Gelfand (2003) suggest it is more attributable to differing degrees of racial tolerance and ethnic identity than merely race itself.

According to Avery and McKay (2006), "attempts to attract minority and female job applicants could prove highly effective when tactics convey that the organization is targeting these groups because it values the differences they bring" (p. 177). Because *perceptions* of organizational fit are more potent than actual fit in the early stages of the recruitment process (Dineen, Ash, & Noe, 2002), it is essential for employing organizations to send information, or signal, that their organizational values and culture are congruent with the values and personalities held by members of a targeted applicant pool (Behling, Labovitz, & Gainer, 1968; see also Avery & McKay, 2006). Therefore, one commonly used minority recruitment tactic is the signaling of an inclusive and diverse work climate through organizational recruitment materials and processes (Avery & McKay, 2006; Doverspike et al., 2000).

In the most general sense, a diverse organizational climate refers to the extent that an organization's policies and practices support diversity within its workforce. Such a climate demonstrates a shared organizational value for diversity and an openness to employees with differing backgrounds in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability (Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000). More specifically, Mor Barak, Cherin, and Berkman

(1998) describe a diverse climate in terms of: (1) the extent to which an organization is perceived to adhere to fair and nondiscriminatory personnel practices (i.e., organizational fairness), and (2) the extent to which minority employees are integrated and included within the functional and hierarchical systems of an organization (i.e., organizational inclusion).

The benefits of effectively signaling, and actually achieving, a fair and inclusive climate are becoming major topics of research within organizations (Avery & McKay, 2006; Richard, 2000). Thus far, a diverse climate has been linked with higher levels of employee trust in management (Virick, Goswami, & Czekajewski, 2004) and an enhanced sense of career and organizational commitment and attitudes (Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000), both of which have been linked with low turnover (McKay et al., 2007). For this reason, many organizations have begun to test the potential win-win scenario of achieving a diverse climate by resorting to targeted recruitment strategies that actively create the (hopefully truthful) impression of a fair and inclusive diverse climate (Avery & McKay, 2006; Conklin, 2001; Doverspike et al., 2000).

Previous research on minority recruitment (e.g., Doverspike et al., 2000; Rynes & Barber, 1990) suggests that there are numerous ways to successfully create the impression of a diverse climate via targeted recruitment efforts, such as: (a) including and depicting racial diversity in pictures via printed or televised recruitment materials and job advertisements (Avery, 2003; Perkins et al., 2000), (b) acknowledging and advertising identity-conscious staffing policies (e.g., affirmative action and EEO statements) (Highhouse et al., 1999; Moechnig & Ratz, 2001), (c) promoting and including high-commitment-to-diversity statements that convey the importance and value of diversity to an organization's environment and overall success (Rau & Hyland, 2003; see also Kim & Gelfand, 2003), and (d) employing and deploying minority recruiters to specifically target prospective minority applicants and employees (Goldberg, 2003; Young,

Place, Rinehart, Jury, & Baits, 1997). Because of the inconsistent effects of recruiter characteristics on applicant job-choice decisions (cf. Avery & McKay, 2006; Maurer, Howe, & Lee, 1992; Young et al., 1997), the present study focuses on the three strongest and most consistent climate-related factors shown to influence minority applicant reactions: the presence of racially diverse images, identity-conscious staffing policies, and strong-commitment-to-diversity statements.

In addition to these general recruiting practices, organizations are turning to technology-based recruitment tactics to manage and accommodate the issues and needs of the diversity-age (Allen, Mahto, & Otondo, 2007; Cober, Brown, Blumental, Doverspike, & Levy, 2000). In doing so, some organizations have even been found to admit to digitally altering website images to portray more organizational diversity (Conklin, 2001), while nearly 78% of *Fortune* 100 companies admit to varying the racial and/or gender composition of corporate website images to portray a more diverse organizational climate (Cober, Brown, & Levy, 2004).

Hence, just as applicants attempt to persuade employing organizations to *select* them as organizational members, employing organizations are attempting to competitively persuade applicants to *become* organizational members. As pointed out by Perkins et al. (2000):

Organizations, like individuals, engage in impression management (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1991). Individuals such as job seekers engage in impression management during the recruitment process by dressing professionally and highlighting the credentials they believe will best fulfill a potential employer's needs. Like individuals, organizations engage in impression management by attempting to manipulate the image prospective job seekers form of the company through the use of recruitment advertisements. (p. 242)

Although these efforts to signal a diversity-supportive climate may be generally well-intentioned, they are typically unguided by theory or strong empirical support. The present study provides a much-needed empirical contribution in the minority recruitment literature by experimentally examining the extent to which integrated dimensions of a perceptibly diverse climate may affect applicant's reactions to organizations. In addition to empirical evidence within an experimental framework, the present study offers a clear theoretical rationale for *why* certain types of manipulations are likely to be effective when the goal is to enhance minority applicant attraction.

Social Cognitive Theory: A Theoretical Framework at Work

The theoretical grounding for this study comes primarily from social cognitive theory (SCT), as outlined by Bandura (1986). This theory proposes that human behavior is reciprocally and integrally connected to personal (i.e., cognition) and environmental factors. Despite the widespread knowledge of this three-factor model, studies of organizational behavior often focus most heavily on environmental factors (e.g., Bozeman, Perrewé, Hochwarter, & Brymer, 2001; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Ployhart & Ryan, 1997), while neglecting the third and very important factor of the person, specifically his/her cognitive and mental processes. Within the present context, the role of an individual's belief in his/her ability to succeed within an organization can be expected to be a critically important individual characteristic within Bandura's triadic structure.

Within the language of SCT, such a belief is identified as the applicant's job-related or job search self-efficacy, a variable that has not been assessed in previous studies of minority recruitment. Self-efficacy represents a person's belief or confidence in his/her ability to accomplish a desired goal or outcome, or influence specific life outcomes (Bandura, 1986;

1999). Unless people believe they can produce desired results through their exerted effort and action, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties (Bandura, 1999). Efficacy beliefs thus affect whether individuals think optimistically (self-enhancing) or pessimistically (self-debilitating) about outcome expectations. Additionally, efficacy beliefs serve as a determining factor in the choices that people make at important decisional points (e.g., acceptance or rejection of a job offer; perception of promotion potential within an organization), as social influences operating within a decisional situation may elicit certain perceptions of which abilities and values are linked to success on a given task or impending goal (Bandura, 2006).

Over the past 25 years, SCT's central concept of self-efficacy has been investigated in more than 10,000 studies, with over 800 self-efficacy related articles published in industrial-organizational psychology journals (Judge, Shaw, Jackson, Scott, & Rich, 2007). Despite the abundance of existing self-efficacy research, no studies have attempted to empirically evaluate the applicant recruitment related impact of manipulations of self-efficacy involving the four elements just discussed. Further, although many studies have examined the perceived self-efficacy of members of marginalized groups at work like the elderly (Dendinger, Adams, & Jacobson, 2005), the physically and mentally disabled (Hergenrather, Rhodes, Turner, & Barlow, 2008; Waghorn, Chant, & King, 2005), and women (Betz & Hackett, 1997; Sullivan & Mahalik, 2000), few investigations have considered the perceived self-efficacy of racioethnic minority job applicants.

Historically, the experience of racioethnic minorities in the workplace has been marred by dreams deferred and inequitable treatment (cf. Foley, Kidder, & Powell, 2002; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990). Media hype and personal stories of discrimination have

traditionally blamed existing institutional barriers for creating limited opportunities for career advancement, limited rewards, and limited optimism for succeeding generations of racioethnic minority workers (cf. Doverspike et al., 2000; Fine, Johnson, & Ryan, 1990; Kossek & Zonia, 1993). A common rationale for the restriction of racioethnic minorities and women to lower organizational ranks was the notion that White men were the only individuals who possessed the behaviors and skill-sets necessary to competently hold high-status positions within organizations (Fine et al., 1990). This thinking resulted in a “difference is deficient” (Fine et al., 1990, p. 305) mindset in which minorities were viewed as being inherently less competent and less qualified than their White male counterparts (cf. Kossek & Zonia, 1993).

Unfortunately, these myopic ethnocentric attitudes and prejudiced misconceptions are still apparent in present-day corporate America. Studies indicate that racioethnic minorities: (a) lack visible role models and mentors in organizational positions (Doverspike et al., 2000), (b) have limited access to valuable information about available jobs, promotions, and recognition within the workplace because of inadequate social networks (Doverspike et al., 2000; Fine et al., 1990), (c) expect to receive less significant rewards and recognition for their accomplishments and satisfactory performance (Doverspike et al., 2000), and (d) have less favorable organizational attitudes and expectations about their overall career success because of anticipated barriers to advancement (e.g., the “glass ceiling”, inadequate resources and support; Foley et al., 2002; Maume, 1999).

Kossek and Zonia (1993) further stress how much progress remains to be made in the areas of racial tolerance and justice in the workplace, noting that:

It is likely to be easier to mandate the hiring of White women and racioethnic minorities for entry jobs...than to socialize members to value or respect differences, to seek out and

enjoy interaction with those whose intergroup backgrounds differ from their own, and to work productively in those relationships.... While organizations have often stressed representation, in terms of sheer numbers in the organization, they have often overlooked the issues of upward mobility and glass ceilings. (p. 62)

With these conditions in place, it follows that awareness of institutional barriers may prompt racioethnic minority workers to think and act in a self-debilitating fashion (i.e., with depressed self-efficacy). However, previous studies have neither empirically validated such a claim, nor empirically investigated the extent to which the perceived self-efficacy of racioethnic minorities is malleable within organizational contexts, especially the early phases of new-hire recruitment. The present study begins to fill this void by studying applicant-related outcomes associated with an experimental manipulation of the four core contributors to self-efficacy identified by Bandura (1999): (1) mastery experience, (2) vicarious experience, (3) social persuasion, and (4) physical and emotional states.

Mastery experience refers to the notion that focusing on and/or achieving successes or positives within a given context (e.g., work settings) will raise one's perceived self-efficacy, whereas focusing on failures or negatives within a given context will lower one's perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1999). According to Gecas and Schwalbe (1983), mastery experiences within a given context serve as the most powerful factor in an individual's development of his/her perceived self-efficacy. Because social contexts are conducive to efficacious activity, an individual's status within the macrostructure of society (e.g., socioeconomic status, minority vs. majority) should strongly influence and correlate with one's level of self-efficacy (Gecas & Schwalbe). It is therefore understandable that racioethnic minorities typically report lower levels of perceived self-efficacy than their White counterparts primarily because they generally, (a)

hold lower social statuses compared to their White counterparts, and (b) are less likely to experience significant amounts of mastery or successful performances because of existing barriers like institutional discrimination and inadequate social networks and resources (Hughes & Demo, 1989; cf. Franks & Marolla, 1976).

Vicarious experience develops when individuals see others like themselves (models) succeed within a given context. Through this act of observing models, these individuals may come to believe they too possess the capacity to succeed in the same or similar context. Conversely, if individuals see others like themselves fail within a given context, they may come to feel discouraged and incompetent in the same or similar context themselves (Bandura, 1999). Such may be the case with racioethnic minorities in work settings.

The influence of vicarious experience is consistent with other attraction theories including social identity theory (Stryker, 1968; Tajfel & Turner, 1985) and similarity-attraction theory (Byrne, 1961), which suggest that individuals are typically more concerned with others who are similar to themselves because similarities positively reinforce self-identities, whereas dissimilarities signify a threat and/or incompatibility. Although phenotypical or surface-level traits (e.g., sex and race) are the most convenient and immediately useful features guiding self-categorization and similarity assessment (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Kulik & Ambrose, 1992), race appears to be the *most* salient factor for self-categorization (e.g., Avery et al., 2004; Elsass & Graves, 1997; Goldberg, 2003). Some implications of this have already been observed within organizations, as Black employees reporting to Black supervisors report higher ratings of perceived career support and positive job attitudes (Dreher & Cox, 1996; Kalbfleisch & Davies, 1991). Conversely, Black employees reporting to White supervisors report less interpersonal

trust, increased experiences of discrimination and role ambiguity, and lack of supervisor support and developmental opportunities (Jeanquart-Barone, 1993, 1996; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989).

For the present study, these findings become more directly relevant with the addition of work by Leonard (2001), who found that nearly half of all Black job seekers view the racial composition of a prospective employer as a critical factor in their job-choice decisions. This finding was bolstered by Avery (2003) who found that Blacks are more attracted to an organization's recruitment advertisement when Blacks are portrayed at both the supervisory and entry levels of the organization, instead of just at the entry level. One possible reason for this is that such images provide Black applicants with the vicarious experience that the organization is sincerely committed to fostering diversity at multiple levels.

Social persuasion refers to the notion that individuals can be persuaded to believe they have what it takes to succeed within a given context. Some organizations use social persuasion to create the impression of a diverse climate. Avery and McKay (2006) found that the presentation of inclusive policy statements (e.g., EEO and affirmative action statements) successfully conveys to minorities that the organization values, and is committed to, diversity. Other studies show that promoting diversity policies and initiatives enhances minority applicants' perceptions of the organization because it emphasizes access to fair training, as well as the organization's commitment to recruiting underrepresented minority applicants and equal opportunity (Highhouse et al., 1999). A comparative study by Moechnig and Ratz (2001) found EEO statements to be the most appealing form of inclusiveness policy statements because it assures minority applicants that an organization conforms to, and abides by, antidiscrimination laws and legislation (see also Mohamed, Gardner, & Paolillo, 1999).

Rau and Hyland (2003) found that the presence of high-commitment-to-diversity statements in recruitment materials effectively signal a diverse work climate to prospective applicants, particularly racioethnic minority men and non-minority women. Rau and Hyland further suggested that, “applicants will be more attracted to organizations committed to diversity if they perceive themselves to be the beneficiary of the [organization’s] diversity policies and practices” (p. 2470).

Finally, *physical and emotional states* can increase or decrease a person’s feelings of efficacy. In general these states include physiological and psychological conditions such as arousal, tension, anxiety, or depression. When negative, these states may translate into perceptions of personal deficiency and low self-efficacy; when positive, the opposite may be expected. In many fast-paced work environments, anxiety and tension are common experiences (Yuen, 1998). These particular psychophysiological states are also especially likely to develop during most job application processes, potentially eliciting a wide range of positive and negative applicant emotions (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991).

There is some evidence to suggest that the strongest source of anxiety for applicants stems from the employment interview (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004). In an interview, an applicant is typically placed in a highly stressful and evaluative situation (Heimberg, Keller, & Pecabaker, 1986), with a stranger (Ayres, Keereetaweep, Chen, & Edwards, 1998), and without any control over what is and will be discussed (Jones & Pinkney, 1989). Thus, while some applicants may simply view the employment interview as an indicator of what type of people and situations they might potentially encounter on the job (Goldberg, 2003), others may view the interview process as a very nerve-wrecking and self-debilitating scenario. For this reason, certain elements

of the recruitment process (especially an interview) have the potential to influence applicants' perceptions of their self-efficacy within the organization.

Hypotheses

Because studies have found that Blacks report comparatively lower ratings of perceived self-efficacy than Whites (Hughes & Demo, 1989; cf. Gordon, 1969; Hunt & Hunt, 1977), the present study provides a much-needed empirical contribution into the area of minority recruitment by testing a method for enhancing job search self-efficacy among racioethnic minority applicants. Accomplishing this objective would provide organizations with a method that could be used to improve the fairness of recruitment and hiring procedures to all applicants, regardless of their minority or majority status. To achieve this goal, an experimental procedure was developed to manipulate the four previously described contributors to self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physical and emotional states. Participants were exposed to two mock-organizational recruitment websites tailored to be either efficacy-enhancing or efficacy-suppressing by manipulating these four contributors to efficacy (detail provided in the Method section).

The general hypothesis was that exposing racioethnic minorities to the efficacy-enhancing website content enhances individuals' perceived job search self-efficacy and creates the impression of a diverse organizational climate, resulting in an increased sense of organizational attraction and intentions to pursue employment with that particular organization. Conversely, it was expected that exposing racioethnic minorities to the efficacy-suppressing content will neither create the impression of a diverse climate, nor enhance applicant perceived self-efficacy, resulting also in a weak sense of organizational attraction and intentions to pursue employment with that particular organization. Stated more formally,

Hypothesis 1: Racioethnic minority participants will report a comparatively higher rating of job search self-efficacy than white participants in the efficacy-enhancing condition than when in the efficacy-suppressing condition.

Hypothesis 2: Racioethnic minority participants will report a comparatively higher rating of organizational attraction than white participants in the efficacy-enhancing condition than when in the efficacy-suppressing condition.

Hypothesis 3: Racioethnic minority participants will report a comparatively higher rating of intention to pursue employment than white participants in the efficacy-enhancing condition than when in the efficacy-suppressing condition.

Method

Participants

Workforce-bound junior and senior students ($N=100$) were recruited from multiple undergraduate courses at a medium-sized public university in the southeastern United States. Of these participants, 40% were male, 50 participants were White/Caucasian, and 50 participants were racioethnic minorities (72% Black or African-American, 20% Asian-American, 6% Bi-racial, 2% Latino/Latina). This particular university has an undergraduate minority student population of nearly 23%, but purposive sampling was used in the present study to balance the number of minority and non-minority participants. The average age of study participants was 22.3 years ($SD = 3.90$). A set of small incentives (highest value \$20 gift card) was offered via a raffle drawing (open to all students, not just participants) at the conclusion of the study.

Experimental Design and Materials

The present study was a single-blind (i.e., participants were temporarily deceived about the real purpose of the study), between- and within-subjects mixed method factorial design (2

(order) \times 2 (race) \times 2 (company)). The order of presentation of the efficacy-enhancing and efficacy-suppressing organizational conditions was counterbalanced, so that half of the participants (25 Whites and 25 minorities) were exposed to the efficacy-enhancing condition first, while the other half of participants were exposed to the efficacy-suppressing condition first; random assignment was used to place participants into these structured conditions. All participants were eventually exposed to both efficacy conditions; hence, the within-subjects nature of the company factor.

The efficacy-enhancing and efficacy-suppressing mock-organization websites within the present study were modeled after real alternative energy corporations, so as to be appealing to most, if not all, of our participants who were either already, or about to begin, searching for entry-level jobs. All information (i.e., the company's mission, goals and objective, executive bios, employee testimonials and descriptions of the company culture and climate) contained in each company website was modeled after similar content found on websites for actual alternative energy companies. All images displayed on these websites were public domain images found through popular internet search engines. All websites were developed by the second author (Cunningham), using the Adobe Contribute software program. The content of these websites is detailed in the following paragraphs.

Each company website was created with an identical layout to control for any potentially confounding effects of website content usefulness and website usability (cf. Williamson, Lepak, & King, 2003). The only differences across the two websites were in the colors (all neutral) and the content of the information presented as part of each site. As an additional design control, equivalent ratios of male and female, White and minority participants were maintained in each experimental condition.

Applying the conceptual framework described by Williamson et al. (2003), each company website was composed of four sections for participants to peruse. The “*What We Do*” page served as the company main introduction page, presenting information about the company’s mission, goals, and general objectives. The “*Who We Are*” page provided a description of the company’s leadership, presenting biographical information about members of the executive board and photos of the top senior executives (i.e., the President and Chief Executive Officer, the Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, and the Vice President of Human Resources). The “*Working Here*” provided participants with employee testimonials about the experiences of current employees in the company as well as images of typical company employees. Lastly, the “*Interested*” page served as the opening to the company’s hiring process, describing what the next steps would be for a prospective applicant.

Because the opening page for both company websites (i.e., “What We Do”) only contained information about the company’s mission, goals, and objectives, the actual differentiation between efficacy-enhancing and efficacy-suppressing conditions was only evident on the remaining pages of the two company websites. Screen shots from these websites are available from the authors upon request.

The four contributors to self-efficacy that we leveraged to create the efficacy-enhancing and efficacy-suppressing organizational conditions can be summarized as follows:

	TyFlo (Efficacy-enhancing)	QuadAir (Efficacy-suppressing)
Mastery Experience	Positive list of strengths	Negative list of weaknesses
Vicarious Experience (as shown on the “ <i>Who We Are</i> ” and “ <i>Working Here</i> ” web pages)	Portrayal of a racially diverse workforce in website images of company employees and executives (i.e., modeling present)	Portrayal of a racially homogenous workforce in website images of company employees and executives (i.e., <i>no</i> modeling present)
Social Persuasion (as shown on the “ <i>Working Here</i> ” web page)	Presence of EEO and high-commitment-to-diversity statements within the website content, as well as diversity-embracing employee testimonials	Absence of EEO and high-commitment-to-diversity statements within the website content, as well as diversity-embracing employee testimonials
Physical & Emotional State (as shown on the “ <i>Interested</i> ” web page)	Description of the low-stress hypothetical job site preview as the next step in the application process	Description of the high-stress hypothetical job site preview as the next step in the application process

The efficacy-enhancing organization (TyFlo) included all of the more attractive, efficacy-enhancing elements listed above as recommended by previous minority recruitment research (e.g., Avery, 2003; Avery et al., 2004; Doverspike et al., 2000; Perkins et al., 2000), while the efficacy-suppressing organization (QuadAir) included all of the efficacy-suppressing elements listed above.

Measures

Efficacy elements. The manipulation and malleability of the four contributors to self-efficacy (i.e., mastery experiences, vicarious experience, and social persuasion) were assessed with five self-constructed items and one preexisting scale.

Mastery experiences were assessed with two original items designed to assess the strength of the manipulation across the two conditions. Respondents indicated (via seven-point rating scales from 1 = not at all to 7 = completely) the extent to which they considered their listed strengths (positives) and/or weaknesses (negatives) when (a) thinking about their chances of being hired by each company, and when (b) thinking about their chances of succeeding in each company.

The strength of the vicarious experience manipulation in the present study was assessed with one original item that asked respondents to indicate their agreement (via a seven-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) with a statement seeking their perception of whether similar individuals would be able to succeed in each company. The malleability of vicarious experience within the present study was assessed by a separate original item that asked respondents to indicate their agreement (via a seven-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) with a statement regarding their perceived similarity to the successful employees and executives portrayed in each company's website.

Social persuasion was assessed with an original item that asked respondents to indicate (via a seven-point rating scale from 1 = not at all to 7 = completely) the extent to which they felt that the website content had persuaded or convinced them that they have what it takes to succeed in each company.

Change in physical and emotional states was measured with six items adapted from Marteau and Bekker's (1992) state anxiety inventory. All six items asked respondents to indicate (via seven-point rating scales where 1 = not at all and 7 = completely) the extent they believed that statements regarding their current level or state of anxiety at that particular moment in time best described them (e.g., "I feel calm" or "I feel upset"). The response scale was adapted from a

four- to a seven-point scale to improve the variability among participant responses. Cronbach's alphas were acceptable across both efficacy conditions (efficacy-enhancing = .75, efficacy-suppressing = .88).

Job search self-efficacy. Perceptions of job search self-efficacy were measured with three items adopted from Moynihan, Roehling, LePine, and Boswell's (2003) job search self-efficacy scale. This scale was used because it is believed to be more specific than measures of general self-efficacy (cf. Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001; see also Walker, Feild, Giles, Bernerth, & Jones-Farmer, 2007) in that it focuses on confidence related to the job search process. All three items asked respondents to indicate (via seven-point Likert scales where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) the extent they agreed with statements regarding their perceived ability to successfully find and obtain a good or ideal job after reviewing the website content of each company (e.g., "I feel certain about my ability to get the job I want" or "I have what it takes to get a good job"). Cronbach's alphas were acceptable across both efficacy conditions (efficacy-enhancing = .87, efficacy-suppressing = .89).

Organizational attraction. Perceptions of organizational attraction were measured with five items adopted from Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar's (2003) organizational attraction scale. All five items asked respondents to indicate (via seven-point Likert scales where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) the extent they agreed with statements regarding their perceived attraction and attitude towards each company as a potential place of employment (e.g., "For me, this company would be a good place to work" or "A job at this company is very appealing to me"). The response scale was adapted from a five- to a seven-point scale to improve the variability among participant responses. Cronbach's alphas were acceptable across both efficacy conditions (efficacy-enhancing = .90, efficacy-suppressing = .94).

Intentions to pursue. Perceptions of intentions to pursue employment with an organization were measured with five items adopted from Highhouse et al.'s (2003) intentions to pursue subset of their organizational attraction scale. All five items asked respondents to indicate (via seven-point Likert scales where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) the extent they agreed with statements regarding their levels of intention to pursue employment with each company (e.g., "I would accept a job offer from this company" or "I would make this company one of my first choices as an employer"). The response scale was adapted from a five- to a seven-point scale to improve the variability among participant responses. Cronbach's alphas were acceptable across both efficacy conditions (efficacy-enhancing = .82, efficacy-suppressing = .88).

Procedure

All study procedures were approved by the university's Institutional Review Board. Participants were recruited from upper-level undergraduate courses over a four to five month period using a semi-elaborate cover story designed to maintain the single-blind nature of this study. The first author (Pegues) introduced this study as an opportunity for students to get involved with a market research project that the second author (Cunningham) was managing for a fictitious recruitment firm, New Origins Solutions, Inc. (NOS). For compensation, participants were told that they would be eligible to win one of several raffle prizes; however, it was stressed that their eligibility to win a raffle prize was not contingent upon their full participation in the study (i.e., the market research task). The purpose of this initial cover story was to increase the personal relevance of this task and minimize students' efforts to provide socially desirable and/or false personal reactions to the material they were viewing. Instead of this being a "psych study" students were simply providing their opinions about new recruitment websites that two fictitious

Fortune 500 companies were getting ready to release as they expanded into the southern United States (the participants' home regions).

All data collection took place in a proctored computer laboratory in the university's psychology building, where the computers were arranged in such a way that no peer review and/or peer copying was possible during the study. This was done to further control social desirability in responses, and to ensure that all responses remained confidential and tied to each individual participant's reactions to the stimulus materials. Participants were randomly assigned to their seats in this lab upon arrival.

The first author (Pegues) played the role of moderator and proctor during these data collections. He also provided all informed consents and instructions at the beginning of this activity, while participants viewed the same documents which were presented as part of the cover organization's website portal. After agreeing to participate in this market research study, participants were instructed via computer prompt and the moderator's instruction to review a brief fictitious description of the market research firm that was managing this project. This same information was read aloud by the moderator of the data collection sessions. This additional step was included to increase the sense of order and formality of the fictitious market research task, and to ensure that each participant received the same amount of information, from having to hear it and/or read it, irrespective of his or her reading level, reading speed about the study, or level of apathy.

Upon reading the "About Us" page, participants were then instructed via computer and the experimenter to click on the "Tell Us About Yourself" link, where they recorded and submitted certain personal (i.e., name, e-mail address, highest level of education, and school affiliation) and professional (i.e., current or most recent employer, career aspiration or interest)

information. After submitting the necessary information for the “Tell Us About Yourself” page, participants were subsequently directed to the “Your Task” page where they were instructed to assume that they were prospective applicants seeking employment with each mock-organization as they evaluated each company’s respective website content, and received more information about the purpose of the market research task at hand. Participants were told to read the presented information on the “Tell Us About Yourself” page as the experimenter read the information aloud via script.

Participants were allotted 60-minutes (one hour) to complete the market research task in its entirety; most students required no more than 30 minutes (range was from 20 to 45 minutes). Once the market research task was initiated, participants were introduced to one of the two fictitious companies which signified one of two efficacy conditions (enhancing or suppressing). After participants browsed through each page (i.e., “What We Do,” “Who We Are,” “Working Here,” and “Interested”) of the company website at their own leisure and discretion, they were instructed via computer to click a link for access to a brief survey of their reactions to each company’s website content. The survey questions entailed that participants compile a list of either their strengths or weaknesses, and respond to several questions pertaining to their general impressions about the company (e.g., perceived belief in their ability to succeed in the company, and perceived similarities between themselves and company employees and executives), their state of anxiety, their attraction to the company, their intentions to pursue employment with the company, their perceived job search self-efficacy, and personal information (i.e., race and gender).

At the conclusion of the survey questions, participants were automatically directed to the second company website which signified the alternate condition (i.e., efficacy-enhancing or

efficacy-suppressing), where they repeated the same process of website browsing and survey answering. The conclusion of the market research task was indicated by a “Thank You” page. Once finished, participants were instructed to remain seated until they received further instruction and/or until all present participants had completed the study.

Following the conclusion of data collection and the study in its entirety, the researchers distributed an e-mail to study participants to debrief them of the true purpose and intent of their participation in the market research task. For compensation, participants were told that they would be eligible to win one of several raffle prizes; however, it was stressed that their eligibility to win a raffle prize was not contingent upon their full participation in the study (i.e., the market research task).

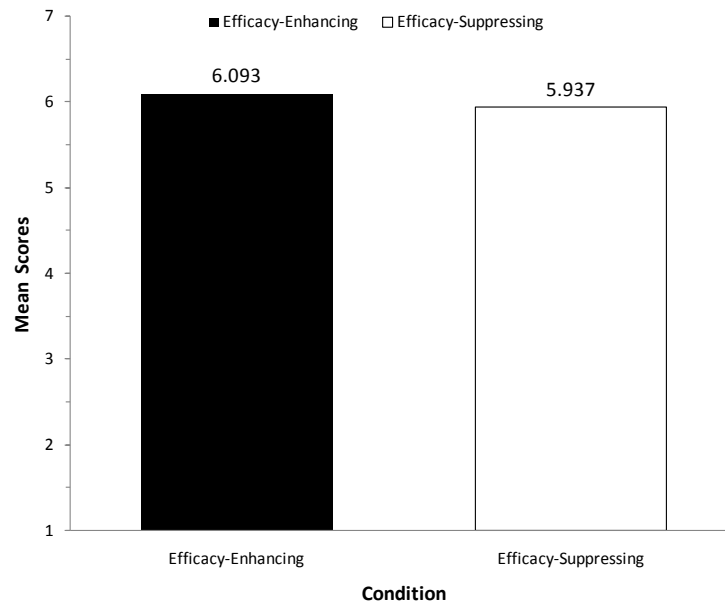
Results

Manipulation Check

As discussed in the introduction the central concept of job search self-efficacy was manipulated across the two mock-organizations using four contributors to efficacy (mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physical and emotional states). As this type of theoretically based and comprehensive attempt at manipulating efficacy with a website has never been done before (to our knowledge), it was necessary to empirically demonstrate a successful manipulation of self-efficacy across the two organizational conditions. Results comparing self-reported job search self-efficacy across the efficacy-enhancing and efficacy-suppressing conditions indicated that self-efficacy did significantly differ across the two efficacy conditions in the study, $F(1, 96) = 4.33, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$ (see Figure 1); the order of presentation of the efficacy conditions did not matter. Specifically, results indicated that the job search self-efficacy mean scores in the efficacy-enhancing condition ($M = 6.09, SD = 1.02$) were

significantly greater than the mean scores in the efficacy-suppressing condition ($M = 5.94$, $SD = 1.17$).

Figure 1. Job Search Self-Efficacy Scores between Two Experimental Conditions



In addition to this overall support for successful manipulation of efficacy across the two organizations, we also tested the various contributors to self-efficacy across the two efficacy conditions. As summarized in Table 1, significant differences were observed between the two efficacy conditions in terms of all four contributors to efficacy that were manipulated as a set.

Table 1. Paired Samples *t*-test Results Comparing Efficacy-Enhancing vs. Efficacy-Suppressing Organizational Conditions

	Efficacy-enhancing		Efficacy-suppressing		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	95% CI	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>					Lower	Upper
Mastery	2.36	2.15	1.16	2.29	6.15	99.00	0.00	0.61	0.81	1.58
Physical & emotional states	1.90	0.73	2.56	1.20	-6.87	99.00	0.00	-0.69	-0.85	-0.47
Vicarious experience	5.70	0.98	4.60	1.50	7.11	99.00	0.00	0.71	0.79	1.41
Social persuasion	5.47	1.41	4.16	1.76	6.97	99.00	0.00	0.70	0.94	1.68

Hypotheses Testing

A three-way mixed-method ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses that the efficacy-enhancing condition would positively affect the outcomes of participant organizational attraction and intentions to pursue. The multivariate analysis suggested that there were indeed significant multivariate effects between the efficacy-enhancing and -suppressing conditions, Wilks' Lambda = .58, $F(2, 95) = 34.74, p < .05$. More specifically, results indicated a significant main effect of condition (i.e., efficacy-enhancing vs. efficacy-suppressing) on the outcomes of organizational attraction, $F(1, 96) = 69.75, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .42$, and intentions to pursue, $F(1, 96) = 54.64, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$.

Our initial concern about possible order effects (i.e., efficacy-enhancing first, then efficacy-suppressing or v.v.) was not supported, as results failed to support any evidence for a significant interaction between order of presentation and efficacy condition, Wilks' Lambda = .96, $F(2, 95) = 2.07, p > .05$. In other words, regardless of whether the efficacy-enhancing condition was presented first or second, the mean responses of organizational attraction and intentions to pursue were significantly greater in the efficacy-enhancing condition than the efficacy-suppressing condition. These differences are summarized in Figures 2 and 3. For organizational attraction, $M_{\text{enhancing}} = 5.81$ ($SD = 1.15$) versus $M_{\text{suppressing}} = 4.54$ ($SD = 1.62$), while for intentions to pursue (see Figure 3), $M_{\text{enhancing}} = 5.73$ ($SD = 0.98$) versus $M_{\text{suppressing}} = 4.82$ ($SD = 1.38$).

Figure 2. Differences in Organizational Attraction between Experimental Conditions

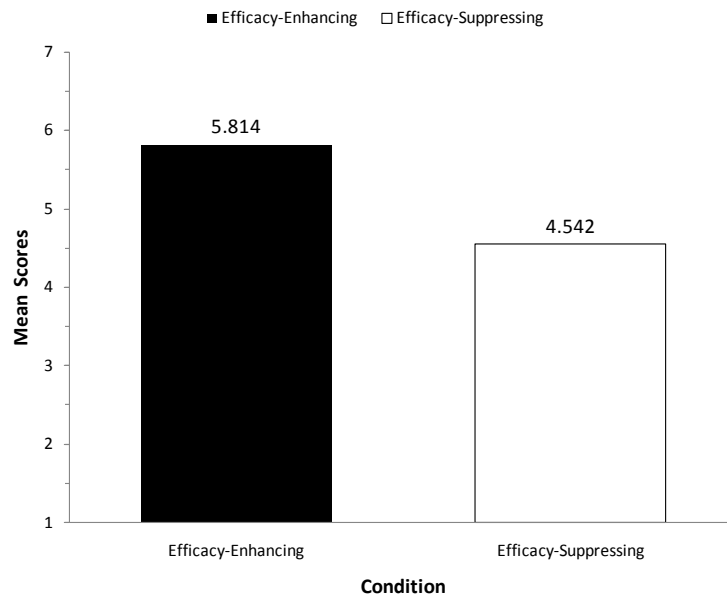
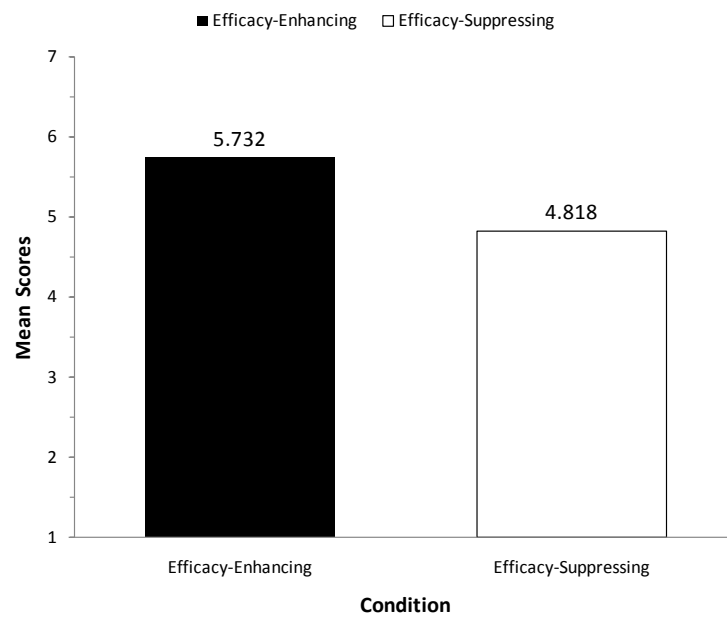


Figure 3. Differences in Intentions to Pursue between Experimental Conditions



Finally, no evidence for a significant main effect or interaction involving the majority/minority status of respondents was observed for any of the outcomes.

Discussion

The present study makes a significant empirical contribution to the literature investigating strategies of minority recruitment. Using an experimental design that was based on sound theory, creative operationalization of key constructs, and a conservative research methodology, we have provided novel and compelling evidence for the malleability of applicant's job search self-efficacy in the initial stages of the recruitment and selection process. Perhaps most importantly, the present findings lay the groundwork for real efforts to improve the fairness of recruitment and hiring procedures for all applicants, regardless of their minority or majority status.

There was no evidence in the present findings of an interaction between efficacy condition (i.e., enhancing vs. suppressing) and majority or minority status on the outcomes of organizational attraction and intentions to pursue. Instead, the results did indicate a significant main effect of efficacy condition in predicting the outcomes of job search self-efficacy, organizational attraction, and intentions to pursue for all participants, not just racioethnic minorities. Thus, it seems that racioethnic majority and minority members can be attracted by similar factors, even when an organization is "diversity-conscious", as both groups were similarly and significantly more attracted to the company in the pro-diversity, efficacy-enhancing condition than the more racially homogenous company in the efficacy-suppressing condition. These findings are in contrast with previous research (e.g., Avery et al., 2004; Backhaus, Stone, & Heiner, 2002; James, Brief, Dietz, & Cohen, 2001) that suggests that racioethnic minority members place greater value on, and are more attracted by organizational diversity efforts than racioethnic majority members (i.e., Whites).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As with any study, caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions from the present results. One potential limitation stems from our sample, which consisted of undergraduate students instead of those prospective applicants or working adults who are actually seeking full-time employment and a career. However, this potential limitation could be mitigated by the fact that all participants were nearing college graduation and were certainly attuned to the job search process. Moreover, the deception incorporated into our experimental task also encouraged our participants to take their responsibilities and/or tasks seriously, as they believed that their participation could possibly lead to a follow-up interview with either or both mock-organizations as implied in the study's initial stages (i.e., the NOS cover story and request for personal information).

A second limitation associated with our sample is that participants were obtained from the southern United States where the proportion of minorities is relatively high compared to other regions of the country. According to Avery (2003), this fact could have potentially affected the race-related attitudes of the participants, as well as participants' willingness to work in a more racially diverse climate, as they may be more comfortable with such an experience than those individuals who may live in a more segregated, or racially homogenous, region of the country.

Also, because the experiences of racioethnic minorities in the United States are not generally identical, the persuasiveness and strength of certain racioethnic minority recruitment tactics may vary across different racioethnic groups. This limitation on the present study may have mitigated the potentially significant interaction between condition and race on the outcomes of organizational attraction and intentions to pursue. Additionally, because all study participants interacted with a Black male moderator and proctor, another potential limitation and question for

future research is whether the minority-status of the experimenter or facilitator has some form of biasing impact on participants' responses in this type of activity.

Lastly, previous studies by Avery (2003), Brown et al. (2006), and Kim and Gelfand (2003) suggest that individual differences in racial tolerance, other-group orientation, and/or ethnic identity can potentially moderate the relationship between race reactions and minority recruitment tactics (e.g., ad diversity). Future studies along these lines may benefit from assessing these individual attributes as potential covariates.

Despite these limitations, the present study offers preliminary empirical support for a theory-based approach to enhancing applicant attraction by sending the appropriate signals regarding diversity and potential for employee success. We hope future researchers can build on the theoretical grounding and methodological approach taken in this study as we continue to identify ways to improve the fairness and effectiveness of recruitment procedures for all applicants.

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