DIVERSITY SIGNAL SETS: IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

by

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Abstract

Organizations send multiple signals to communicate their support for diversity. Questions of how organizations communicate diversity and how such communication relates to organizational and individual outcomes have been of emerging interest to scholars and practitioners. Research on diversity signaling tends to focus on isolated expression-based signals, (i.e., statements made about diversity); however, less is known about evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity performance facts and statistics). I set out to examine different forms of expression-based signals and evidence-based signals and how such diversity signals are related to corresponding organizational performance outcomes and individual job-seeker outcomes of racial/ethnic minority group members. I argue that when organizations communicate diversity signal sets incorporating both expression-based and evidence-based signals positive organizational and individual outcomes will result. Drawing on Spence's (1971) signaling theory, I conduct three studies following the exploratory sequential mixed methods design. I find that organizations communicate multiple diversity signal sets, and such communication has positive implications for organizations and racioethnic minorities. I contribute to organizational research on diversity signaling by introducing the concept of diversity signal sets and by identifying the affective mechanisms behind the influence of multiple diversity signal sets on racioethnic minorities job-related outcomes.

Study One shows that US Fortune 500 firms signal four types of expression-based signals: equal opportunity (EO), business case (BC), value-and-integration (VI) and mixed, and three types of evidence-based signals: third-party bestowed diversity awards or recognition, employee demographics; and leadership demographics. These findings inform the selection of

variables in the subsequent studies – Studies Two and Three. Study Two examines the association between different types of expression-based signals and their association with evidence-based signals and organizational outcomes. Findings demonstrate that companies with no diversity signals on their corporate websites have negative financial (ROA and ROIC) and diversity-related performance (measured by external recognition/awards of diversity). I find the relationship between companies communicating VI type of expression-based signals and their diversity-related performance significantly positive.

Study Three explores organizational diversity signal sets and their influence on racioethnic minorities' job-related outcomes. I determine that diversity signal sets comprising of both expression-based and evidence-based signals significantly influence racioethnic minorities' organizational attraction and leadership aspirations through different affective mechanisms (i.e., perceptions of inclusion and perceptions of affective trust). My research contributes to signaling theory by introducing diversity signal sets and by testing their organizational and individual implications. It opens future research avenues for investigation of diversity signal sets in global companies and their organizational and individual implications for multiple diversity groups in the workplace.

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BC   Business Case

BWFD   Best Place to Work for Diversity

CEO   Chief Executive Officer

DM   Diversity Management

EEO   Equal Employment Opportunity

EEOC   Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

EO   Equal Opportunity

ILO   International Labour Organization

TCA   Thematic Content Analysis

VI   Value and Integration

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

The early 1990s in North America saw an emergence of the term *workforce diversity* triggered by dramatic socioeconomic trends such as graying population, worker and employer migration, increase in female labour-force participation, widening educational and economic gaps, and rapid globalization (Roberson, 2013). At the same time, strides in human, civil, and women's rights movements over many decades resulted in greater labour participation of people from underrepresented groups (Roberson, 2019). For example, by 2045, the United States is projected to become a 'majority-minority' nation, with non-Hispanic whites representing under 50% of the total population (Catalyst, 2018). Similarly, women's participation in the workforce has changed significantly. Reports suggest that the share of women in the labour force has remained steady above 40% since 2000 (ILO, 2010; Catalyst, 2018). Consequently, the number and diversity of people in organizations increased significantly (Mor Barak & Travis, 2013).

The Canadian scenario is similar. According to recent statistical data, women have been a major driving force in Canada's workforce growth since the 1980s and 1990s, representing 53.4% of the current Canadian workforce (Statistics Canada, 2021). Likewise, reports suggest that immigrant workers from visible minorities will represent one-third of the Canadian labour force by 2031 (Statistics Canada, 2011). Other changes at the workplace related to categorical differences (e.g., sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, and social class) have also contributed to global changes in the composition of the workforce (Volpone et al., 2014). As a result, today's organizations have increasingly recognized the need to manage workplace diversity (Olsen & Martins, 2016).

Despite the significant demographic changes in the employee landscape in the US and Canada, the managerial landscape in both nations resembles monolithic cultures. Almost 90% of US Fortune 500 firms' CEOs are white males, less than six percent are women, and less than four percent are African American or Hispanic (Flory et al., 2021; Fortune, 2015). Similarly, in Canada, more than ninety percent of CEOs in the 100 largest publicly traded companies are white males, less than ten percent are women, and less than two percent are non-whites (Catalyst, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2019). These figures have remained significantly low, despite tremendous advances of women and racial or ethnic minorities in educational achievements. For example, African Americans account for an ever-larger proportion of MBA holders in the USA, rising from four percent in 1990 to fifteen percent in 2015 and from twenty-two percent in 1980 to 47% in 2014 for women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). This disparity indicates vital barriers in the career paths of women and racial minorities. An important question is how to remove these barriers to enhance employee demographic diversity at all levels of management.

One of the ways to remove barriers is to indicate that diverse individuals are welcome within the organization. Organizations may attempt to attract more diverse people by having a public-facing website or communication to signal that the organization supports diversity. Almost all larger companies in both USA and Canada publicly express their support for diversity on their corporate websites (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Osler Report, 2021). Such communication can act as an important signal to diverse individuals that they are welcome within the organization and will help to attract them to the organization. In recent years, there has been an increasing scholarly interest in corporate diversity communication (e.g., Flory et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022).

One recent study suggests that diversity communication focused on equality is ineffective, and statements making the business case for diversity can have a negative effect on LGBT group members (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022). However, no study has provided clear evidence on what types of diversity communication are linked to positive consequences for underrepresented groups. In addition, companies may communicate multiple signals focused on diversity. Yet much remains unknown about diversity signals (i.e., diversity-related information communicated by organizations) and the impact of such signals on fostering workplace diversity.

When an organization sends multiple diversity signals, these can be thought of as a *diversity signal set* — a rhetorical bundle of multiple diversity signals (expression and evidence-based) sent by the sender for receiver interpretation (Drover et al., 2018). Study 1 of my dissertation examines the types of diversity signal sets sent by US Fortune 500 firms – a group of firms employing around 29 million people worldwide (Fortune, 2020). Specifically, I focus on diversity management (DM) statements as expression-based signals, which are textual messages created by an organization to highlight their support for diversity (Volpone et al., 2014) and diversity performance facts (such as facts or statistics related to employee demographics, third-party bestowed diversity awards, and diversity performance indicators) as evidence-based signals. Evidence-based signals are hard-to-fake signals related to actual diversity performance of an organization (Spence 1973; Connelly et al., 2011; Volpone et al., 2014) versus expression-based signals which may be more easily faked.

Unlike other studies on DM communication (e.g., Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Jansen et al., 2016), the second study of my dissertation focuses on answering the question: Are expression-based signals (i.e., DM statements) associated with evidence-based signals and organizational performance? Specifically, Study 2 examines the association between different

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expression-based signals (DM statements informed by Study 1) and evidence-based signals (i.e., third-party bestowed awards on diversity) and organizational outcomes related to discrimination lawsuits and financial performance. Research indicates that if organizations are thoughtful of what is written in their organizational communication, such communication should be close to organizational action. For example, Bartkus and Glassman (2008) found that organizations signaling the importance of social issues such as diversity or the environment were more likely to take stakeholder actions supportive of these areas. Fiset and Hajj (2022) found that the contents of institutional communication act as a signal set that conveys credible performance-related information to reduce information asymmetry between the institution and its stakeholders. After all, if language choice structures thoughts and influences actions, business language can indeed become business practice (Kirby & Harter, 2003). Previous studies report that expression-based signals communicate a diversity approach – how diversity and intergroup differences are managed in the organization (e.g., Apfelbaum et al., 2016). However, no study, to my knowledge, has evaluated the association between expression-based signals and relevant evidence-based signals or organizational performance outcomes.

Study 3 of my dissertation examines the influence of diversity signal sets — collections of multiple diversity-related signals available for receiver interpretation (Drover et al., 2018) on racioethnic minority jobseekers' outcomes. I argue that organizations send diversity signal sets which will be differentially interpreted by minority jobseekers. Specifically, I focus on expression-based signals (DM statements) and evidence-based signals (diversity facts or statistics) as a diversity signal set. I employ experimental methodology to test a moderated-mediation model of the direct and indirect effects of diversity signal sets (i.e., expression-based signals and evidence-based signals) on individual outcomes (racioethnic jobseekers'

organizational attraction and leadership aspirations) through jobseekers' perceptions of cognitive trust, perceptions of affective trust, and perceptions of inclusion.

Research on organizational signaling tends to concentrate on isolated signals assuming the highly rational responses to those signals (see Drover et al., 2018 for review). However, in a highly competitive environment, signal receivers may scan for multiple signals for interpretation and decision-making. In Study 3, I examine the cognitive and affective processes associated with the interpretation of diversity signal sets and their influence on racioethnic minority jobseekers' organizational attraction and leadership aspirations. Contributing to a signaling perspective on DM communication, I theorize that organizations send multiple diversity signals (i.e., expression-based signals and evidence-based signals) in the form of diversity signal sets, and the receivers' outcomes are dependent on the interplay between multiple diversity signals in diversity signal sets.

Collectively, this dissertation focuses on diversity signal sets communication of large business organizations, their association with organizational outcomes, and the impact of such communication on underrepresented group members. The research questions that guide my dissertation are:

1. *What types of diversity signal sets (i.e., expression-based and evidence-based signals) are communicated by large firms on their websites?*

2. *What is the association of different expression-based signals with evidence-based signals and organizational outcomes?*

3. *How do different types of diversity signal sets (i.e., DM statements as expression-based signals and diversity performance facts as evidence-based signals) impact individual outcomes?*

I investigated these research questions using signaling theory as a main guiding theoretical framework with a few supporting theories, such as social identity theory and implicit theory, explained where applicable. Organizational diversity signal sets are examined qualitatively and quantitatively through three studies.

This thesis identifies racioethnic minorities as people who are different from the White/Anglo majority in terms of race and/or ethnicity (Cox & Blake, 1991; Cox, 2004; Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). Research on diversity recruitment suggests that racioethnic minorities are more attentive toward potential employers' diversity communication due to their experiences of historical discrimination (Avery et al., 2008; Deitch et al., 2003). Specifically, racioethnic minorities appraise diversity as more vital in a prospective employer compared to people from majority groups (Chapman et al.,2005; Thomas & Wise, 1999; Volpone et al., 2014). Racioethnic minority job seekers will be more attentive to diversity cues while judging potential employers as opposed to people from majority groups (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Stevens & Beach, 1996; Walker et al., 2012; Wilton et al., 2020). Moreover, the literature on minority recruitment shows that racioethnic minorities are more concerned about the possibility of social integration and acceptance when screening their potential employers (McKay et al., 2009; Walker et al., 2012) as compared to majority groups. Jobseekers from racioethnic minority groups will be more likely to be interested in those organizations with cues supportive towards diversity than majority groups or dominant groups (Apfelbaum et al., 2016).

There are five main reasons behind my focus on racioethnic minorities. First, the current decade of the twenty-first century is characterized by an increasingly complex set of race and ethnic issues invigorated by a steady flow of immigrants, deeply entrenched racioethnic disparities, and polarized views on racioethnic events and policies (Nkomo et al., 2019; Nkomo

& Hoobler, 2014). Second, the shifting demographics of North America suggest that in the USA, racioethnic minorities will gain the majority status by 2042 (US Census Bureau, 2008), and in Canada, the population will comprise one-third of racioethnic minorities by 2036 (Catalyst, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2017). Third, the research on workplace diversity (e.g., Flory et al., 2021; Singh & Point, 2006; Plaut et al., 2011; Wilton et al., 2020) suggests that organizations frequently highlight racioethnic minorities in their diversity-related communication. Fourth, social psychology has long been stimulated by the question of how race/ethnicity brings a difference in behaviour (Plaut, 2010). Finally, research on diversity recruitment suggests that racioethnic minorities are more attentive toward potential employers' diversity communication due to their experiences of historical discrimination (Avery et al., 2008; Deitch et al., 2003). Therefore, it is now both timely and relevant to look at racioethnic diversity in the context of the association between diversity signal sets and minority recruitment outcomes.

Next, I explain the concept of diversity in the workplace, followed by an explanation of signaling theory as a guiding theoretical framework to answer my research questions.

1.1 Workplace Diversity

Diversity is a multifaceted term that has been used to encompass different definitions with different meanings and contexts. Within the management literature, diversity refers to any compositional differences among people in a workgroup (see Roberson, 2019 for a review). Litvin (1997) describes diversity as having six principal dimensions – age, sex, ethnicity, physical ability, race and sexual orientation and eight secondary dimensions – education, income, geographical location, marital status, military experience, religious beliefs, parental status, and work experience. Similarly, Harrison et al. (1998) proposed and distinguished between two diversity dimensions: surface-level and deep-level. Surface-level dimensions

consist of overt or biological differences among work-group members, such as age, sex, and race/ethnicity. In contrast, deep-level dimensions comprise of differences based on members, values, beliefs, and attitudes.

I focus on racioethnic minorities as a principal dimension/surface-level aspect of diversity (Harrison et al., 1998) because, in general, workplace diversity is often understood as recruiting and retaining people from underrepresented demographic groups (Thomas & Ely, 1996). Research also suggests that in the context of recruitment, organizational signals are focused on people from underrepresented groups because people in these racioethnic groups will be more attentive towards organizations that value their unique sociocultural identity (see Avery & Mckay, 2006 for a review). As discussed earlier in this chapter, this dissertation is concentrated on racioethnic minorities who are considered a historically underrepresented group.

1.2 Signaling Theory as an Overarching Framework

Stemming from Spence's (1973) influential work on labour markets, signaling theory is based on the fundamental concept of minimizing information asymmetries between two parties – sender and receiver. The core of signaling theory consists of the analysis of signals and the context in which they are used (Spence, 2002). Signaling theory has become a prominent theoretical model to explain how organizations (such as Fortune 500 firms) transmit relevant information about their characteristics to stakeholders via observable signals (Certo et al., 2003; Spence, 2002; Windscheid et al., 2016). Information asymmetry occurs when the sender (i.e., firms) and receiver (i.e., stakeholders) have access to different information. In the presence of information asymmetry, there will be knowledge disparities between firms and stakeholders. Consequently, receivers are compelled to rely on observable signals which they believe are related to the firm's underlying characteristics (see Connelly et al., 2011 for review). Therefore,

diversity related signals are important and accessible communication signals used by organizations to communicate to their stakeholders about why and how they value diversity in their workplace (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Plaut et al 2014).

Management researchers have applied signaling theory to explain the influence of information asymmetry in a broad range of research contexts. For example, Spence (1973) demonstrated how job applicants might engage in behaviours to reduce information asymmetry while making employment decisions. In the organizational behaviour and human resource management literatures, signaling theory has been widely used to explore organizational attraction (e.g. Olsen et al., 2016; Windscheid et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2012), job-pursuit intentions (e.g. Avery et al., 2013), job satisfaction (e.g. Jansen et al., 2016), team outcomes (e.g. Hajro et al., 2017), and discrimination (see Leslie et al., 2019 for meta-analytic review). Organizations may send diversity related signals for a number of reasons, targeted toward various receivers, such as job-seekers, employees, suppliers, and shareholders (Connelly et al., 2011).

 My work is related to an emerging literature on understanding and removing barriers to labour market entry and leadership progress based on race and ethnicity. As previously explained, racioethnic minorities are more sensitive to the organizations' diversity related signals than majority groups (Volpone et al., 2014). Signaling theory suggests that the signal receiver attentively scans the environment for signals important to them (Connelly et al., 2011).

Underrepresented groups have historically faced discrimination in the workplace. Consequently, they will try to avoid workplaces they perceive as lacking in demographic diversity and/or they may seek workplaces where the salience of group membership is minimal (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). Consistent with signaling theory, I argue that racioethnic minority

applicants will be sensitive to diversity signals that are easily observable on the career pages of a website related to their organization of interest. My argument is based on the proposition that diversity signal sets function as information about an organization's support for diversity. Diversity signal sets should be both observable and perceived as honest by the receiver (Drover et al., 2018). This dissertation is focused on three key elements of signaling theory: (a) organizations as senders of diversity signal sets, (b) expression-based signals (DM statements) as signals regarding organizations' rationale for why diversity matters, and evidence-based signals (diversity performance facts) as hard-to-fake signals and (c) potential jobseekers from racioethnic minorities as receivers of diversity signal set.

Diversity scholars have applied signaling theory to explain how firms use various types of diversity signals to communicate their commitment to social values and diverse organizational stakeholders. For example, Miller and Trianna (2009), in their study on corporate governance, reported how firms use diversity on boards to signal diversity as a priority in their organization to a range of stakeholders. Williams and Bauer (1994) found that organizations get positive ratings from jobseekers when recruitment advertisements include a diversity management policy. In the section below, I explain the key elements of signaling theory in the context of diversity signal set communication.

1.2.1 Key Elements of Signaling Theory

The key elements of signaling theory are: (a) a population of *signalers* who produce and send signals to influence receiver's behaviour; (b) *signal* that corresponds with the unobservable but valid characteristic of senders; and (c) a population of *receivers* who construe the signal as an indicator of that characteristic (Spence, 1973; Bangerter et al., 2012).

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Signaler. At the core of signaling theory is that signalers are insiders who have information that outsiders do not have (e.g., Spence, 1973, Kirmani & Rao, 2000, Ross, 1977). Usually, insiders have information, both positive and negative, which could be very useful to outsiders. For example, specifics about the products or services are helpful to the customers in making buying decisions, news regarding financial performance is beneficial to the investors in making stock purchase decisions, or information related to the union negotiations or lawsuits on hold could be helpful to the employees in making job quit decisions (Connelly et al., 2011).

Organizational behaviour and human resource management (OB/HRM) studies concentrate mainly on signals originating from individuals, such as CEOs (e.g., Vergne et al., 2018), members of top management teams (e.g., Dauth et al., 2023), managers (e.g., Ramaswami et al., 2010), recruiters (e.g., Martins & Parsons, 2007; Rynes et al., 1991), and employees (e.g., Hochwarter et al., 2007). In the context of recruitment, some OB/HRM research also explores firms as signalers to understand how organizations showcase their unobservable qualities, such as organizational culture (Highhouse et al., 2007, Ryan et al., 2000). Expression-based signals (e.g., DM statements) represent a public declaration of an organization's values (Windscheid et al., 2016) and decisions endorsed by organization's leadership (Bartkus & Glassman, 2008; Kanze et al., 2019) about how the organization thinks diversity should operate. Therefore, expression-based signals and other diversity-related attributes of an organization are perceived to transmit important information about life in an organization (Backhaus et al., 2002), especially for racioethnic minority employees. Organizations send expression-based signals to their broad audiences (i.e., organizational stakeholders) as organizations have a vested interest in hiring top talent and cultivating a positive corporate reputation in society (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Wang

et al., 2022). In relevance to this dissertation, signalers are organizations trying to differentiate themselves from others in order to attract a diverse pool of candidates to join them.

Signal. Signals are the informational cues sent from one party to another to create desired results (Taj, 2016). After gathering the information (positive or negative), it is at the discretion of the sender whether to send it to outsiders or not. Usually, the primary objective of the sender is to communicate an efficient signal to outsiders and deliberately avoid sending negative and confusing information (Spence, 2002). For a signal to be efficient, it must be visible, accessible, trustworthy, and high-quality (Drover et al., 2018). Below I explain these aspects of an efficient signal in the context of diversity signal set communication.

First, to be considered an efficient signal, diversity signals must be *visible and easily accessible* to the receivers (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence 2002). As organizations are highly accountable to their stakeholders (Cooper & Owen, 2007), many firms place their expression-based signals (i.e., DM statements) and evidence-based signals (e.g., diversity performance facts) in an easily accessible place, such as the corporate website, as websites are commonly used by stakeholders to gain information about companies (Singh & Point, 2009; Wang et al., 2022). Research (e.g., Volpone et al., 2014) suggests that organizations display their diversity signals predominantly in the careers section of their websites to attract a larger and more diverse applicant pool.

Second, receivers must interpret signals as *high-quality* signals that represent the underlying characteristics of the sender (Connelly et al., 2011). Most senders want to convey positive signaler attributes to outsiders. The extent to which the signal portrays the attributes of the signaler is termed signal quality. Quality signals help organizations attain legitimacy and a positive reputation from diverse groups of stakeholders including customers, investors,

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employees, community, and job applicants (Certo, 2003). High quality signals have also been called honest, reliable, hard-to-fake, credible, or costly signals (Bergstrom & Lachmann, 2001; Cronk, 2005). The key question answered by signaling theory is: What factors can assure high-quality signal communication given that signaler and receiver rarely have completely coincident interests? Some signals are high-quality signals simply because they are impossible to fake. While other signals are of high-quality because of the high cost and low net benefit involved in faking (Smith & Bird, 2005). In the context of diversity signal set communications, evidence-based signals are higher quality than expression-based signals because evidence-based signals are based on factual data or statistics of diversity performance that are very difficult or impossible to fake.

On the other hand, expression-based signals are of lower quality because they are easier to fake, and senders can wordsmith expression-based signals to portray themselves as committed to diversity. Moreover, companies have a strong incentive to have an expression-based signal, but not necessarily for it to be accurate. Even though expression-based signals are public-facing messages where providing misinformation can impact organizations' public image and reputation (e.g., Kaiser et al., 2013; Leslie, 2019; Nishii et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2022), organizations send expression-based signals because of strong pressures to have expression-based signals, regardless of the quality of these signals (i.e., relatively low cost of faking). Indeed, 65% of employees want companies and their top executives to take a stand on social issues such as diversity (Barton et al., 2018; Larcker & Tayan, 2018; Sprout Social, 2017). Research suggests that companies that discuss diversity in ways that do not necessarily mirror their actual performance attract greater investments from institutional investors (Baker et al., 2022). Interestingly, Baker and colleagues (2022) found that institutional investors are attracted

by companies 'diversity talk', even when companies are more likely to face discrimination lawsuits and pay larger fines. This result indicates that expression-based signals may not be of high quality because of the low cost and high benefit of faking them.

I argue that if organizations are truly committed to increasing their workplace diversity, they should communicate evidence-based signals (diversity performance facts) and expression-based signals (DM statements) in the form of diversity signal sets. In this dissertation, I introduce the concept of diversity signal sets as the collective of expression-based and evidence-based signals. I propose that organizations that send diversity signal sets — evidence-based signals alongside expression-based signals — will have effective signaling transactions with a receiver.

Receiver. A signaling transaction is incomplete without the signal receiver. Receivers are outsiders with limited information about the sender (i.e., organization) who are interested in receiving more sender information. Receivers in management research are generally individuals or groups of individuals (Connelly et al., 2011). OB/HRM studies using signaling theory are mainly concerned with labour markets (Davila et al., 2003) or elements of the labour market such as jobseekers (see Bangerter et al., 2012 for review) and employees (Ashikali & Groeneveld, 2015). Signaling effectiveness is determined in part by the characteristics of the receiver (Spence, 1973). Two concepts are important in understanding the role of the receiver in the signaling system.

First, receiver attention is defined as the extent to which the receiver attentively scans the environment for signals (Connelly et al., 2011; Gulati & Higgins, 2003). Signaling mechanism's effectiveness depends on the signal's relevance to the receiver (Ilmola & Kuusi, 2006; Taj, 2016). As was pointed out in the introduction to this dissertation, racioethnic minority jobseekers will look for the signals that are salient to their social identity needs. Thus, diversity signal sets

will likely act as strong signals for racioethnic minority jobseekers to help them make informed choices about joining the organization. Next, receiver interpretation is defined as the extent to which receiver translates signals into correct perceived meaning (i.e., the original meaning intended by the signaler: Connelly et al., 2011; Ehrhart & Zieger, 2005; Srivastava, 2001; Taj, 2016). In signaling theory, receiver interpretation is of utmost importance as the signals transmitted may be interpreted by signal receiver differently than intended by the sender (Perkins & Hendry, 2005). This aspect of signaling theory is critical for my dissertation. My research is based on the hypothesis that organizations send diversity signal sets composed of a multitude of expression-based signals (e.g., DM statements) and evidence-based signals suggestive of diversity performance facts (e.g., employee demographics, diversity awards, and diversity in leadership positions). I introduce the concept of diversity signal sets, defined as a collection of multiple expression-based signals and evidence-based signals available for receiver interpretation, and such signals will be interpreted differently by racioethnic minority jobseekers.

OB/HRM researchers have been effective in expanding signaling theory to incorporate the receivers' perspective (Bangerter et l., 2012; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Turban & Greening, 1996). For example, research suggests that (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Rynes, & Connerley, 1993; Turban & Cable, 2003) job applicants use signals from recruiters to draw inferences about aspects of organizational quality. Highhouse and colleagues (2007) suggest that applicants may not have the same perceptions about their potential employers, so they will look for signals to acquire as much information as possible. Even though organizations may try to signal specific attributes to enhance their attractiveness, receiver's perceptions of organizational attractiveness are based not only on the signal messages but also on the conclusions drawn by the signal receiver (Celani & Singh, 2011). Consequently, jobseekers (i.e., signal receivers) should

evaluate the organizations' signal on diversity and differentiate amongst organizations (i.e., signalers) while selecting an organization as a potential place for employment.

Next, I explain how organizations communicate diversity signal sets and how such communication can have an influence on receivers' outcomes.

Diversity Signal Set Communication

Signaling theory suggests that job seekers have limited information about organizations, and consequently, they use signals to assess whether their potential employer values diversity or not (Highhouse & Hoffman, 2001; Rynes, 1991; Spence, 1973). During targeted recruitment (recruitment targeted to attract underrepresented groups to apply for jobs; Volpone et al., 2014), jobseekers are receivers of both expression-based signals and evidence-based signals (Volpone et al., 2014; Winton et al., 2020). In the context of diversity communication, expression-based signals are diversity messages created and circulated by an organization to influence stakeholders' overall impressions (Boswell et al., 2003; Rynes et al., 1991; Volpone et al., 2014). For example, organizations consciously communicating DM statements on their websites are trying to highlight their support for diversity. In this dissertation, I focus on DM statements as expression-based signals.

On the other hand, evidence-based signals are reliable signals that depict hard-to-fake signals related to diversity performance (Connelly et al., 2011; Wilton et al., 2020). In the context of diversity communication, evidence-based signals might include personal demographics of the employees, integration of diversity throughout organizational ranks, awards for diversity, and responses to lawsuits that suggest the organizations' tangible commitment or achievement to maintaining a diverse and inclusive workplace (McKay et al., 2008).

Evidence-based signals are just as important (or may even be more critical) thans expression-based signals (Avery et al., 2004; Goldberg & Allen, 2008) because they provide jobseekers with a decision-making tool to discern how they might be valued (Volpone et al., 2014). For targeted recruitment to be successful, I argue that organizations want both expression-based signals and evidence-based signals as diversity signal sets to exhibit their value for diversity. In this dissertation, I test the influence of diversity signal sets comprised of expression-based and evidence-based signals on racioethnic minority jobseekers' career outcomes.

DM Statements as Expression-based Signals

DM statements are concrete declarations that incorporate how organizations see themselves and want others to view them regarding their stance toward diversity (Palmer & Short, 2008). Organizations may use DM statements as a tool for differentiation, reflecting their unique values about diversity (Leslie, 2019). Such statements can differentially shape the perspectives of both internal and external stakeholders (Dover et al., 2019). As DM statements that emphasize the values of diversity may be received positively by minority group members (Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011), it is essential to understand the association between different types of DM statements and individual (i.e., racioethnic minority) outcomes.

As shown in previous research (e.g., Singh & Point, 2004; Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Wang et al., 2022), diversity-related statements are commonplace on today's corporate websites. Large and successful firms frequently tout their commitments to diversity by incorporating their stance and values on diversity into corporate strategy (Ng & Sears, 2018). An obvious question arises: Why would a profit-oriented organization go the extra mile to engage in such behaviour? One often-voiced explanation is that by developing and publishing diversity statements, firms send a positive signal about their underlying characteristics (i.e., a firm's willingness to promote

equality and fairness to attract potential employees, customers, and investors: Robinson & Dechant, 1997; Herring, 2009). Diversity signals convey that the organization is socially responsible and cares about social justice and egalitarian values (Shin & Gulati, 2010). To increase diversity, an organization wants its audience to perceive it as an employer that cultivates a workplace guided by progressive norms of fairness, equality, and non-discrimination where everyone has the potential to succeed, regardless of their demographic characteristics, such as gender or race. Portraying such an image should benefit the organization in terms of effective recruitment of diverse employees to enhance its image and reputation (Avery et al., 2013).

Diversity Performance Facts as Evidence-based Signals

Contrary to expression-based signals (i.e., DM statements), evidence-based signals are the diversity performance facts suggestive of an organization's achievement in promoting diversity in its workplace. Such signals may comprise facts or statistics or third-party recognitions of diversity performance of the organization. It is incumbent on the jobseekers to look beyond the surface of expression-based signals (such as diversity pictures and diversity statement wordings) and look at evidence-based signals that go beyond performative diversity (Hurtado et al., 1998; Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2006; Volpone et al., 2014). Previous research has found that organizations send many expression-based diversity signals through diversity statements (e.g., Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Singh & Point, 2004; Wang et al., 2022). However, studies have yet to look at organizational communication of evidence-based signals. In this dissertation, I look at the prevalence of diversity signal sets (both expression-based and evidence-based diversity signals) on corporate websites of US Fortune 500 firms and how these signal sets are related to corresponding organizational and individual outcomes.

Having discussed the key elements of signaling theory and diversity signal sets in the context of DM statement communication, I now discuss the study design I followed to answer my research questions.

1.3 Study Design

To answer the research questions guiding this dissertation, I conducted three studies following the exploratory sequential mixed methods design (Figure 1-1). An exploratory sequential mixed method is a design where the researcher explores a topic before building to a second phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The two-phase sequential design intends that the results of the first stage of qualitative methods can help inform or develop the second stage of quantitative investigation (Greene et al., 1989). In Study 1, I conducted a content analysis of diversity signal sets from corporate websites of US Fortune 500 firms to identify different DM statements as expression-based signals and diversity performance facts as evidence-based signals communicated by organizations. In Study 2, I explored whether expression-based signals are associated with evidence-based signals and corresponding organizational performance. In Study 3, I conducted an experiment based on vignettes and variables informed by Study 1 and Study 2 and tested the moderated-mediation model of the impact of diversity signal sets on racioethnic minorities' job-related outcomes – organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations.

Figure 1-1 Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design of the Dissertation

Phase 1 (Studies 1, 2)

Phase 2 (Study 3)

| Study 1 Qualitative – Data Collection and Content Analysis, & Study 2 – Quantitative - Correlational Study | → | Builds Into | → | Quantitative-Instrument (Stimuli for experiment) design, new variables, data collection & analysis | → | Interpretation |
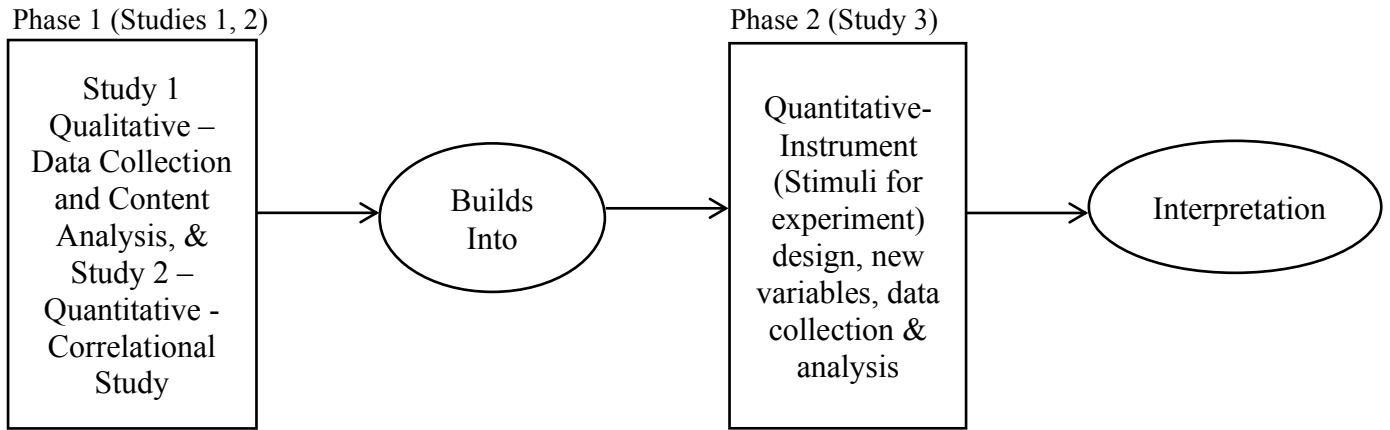
1.3.1 Contribution

Most research on organizational signaling investigates how a positive signal (such as a diversity statement) in isolation influences the signal receiver (Connelly et al., 2011). The assumption that forms the basis for signaling theory is that everyone receives signals equally and rationally interprets them in ways corresponding to the valence of the message being transmitted (Drover et al., 2018; Kim & Jensen, 2014; Park & Patel, 2015). Consequently, little is known about how multiple and potentially conflicting signals are interpreted by receivers. Especially in diversity communication, where organizations send multiple signals, we must have a theoretical understanding of different diversity signals and how receivers interpret such signals. As cognitively processing the multiple diversity signals is both complicated and challenging (Drover et al., 2018), we presently lack a rich, theoretically consistent understanding of multiple diversity signals and an empirical investigation of how signal receivers interpret such signals.

In this dissertation, I introduce a concept of *diversity signal sets* to investigate the attention and interpretation of multiple diversity signals by signal receivers — racioethnic minority job seekers. As organizations continue to communicate their stance on diversity, this research responds to calls for a comprehensive investigation of diversity signal sets and their

influence on organizational and individual outcomes. I propose that diversity signal sets consist of two types of signals — expression-based and evidence-based signals. Empirical research on DM communication suggests that organizations communicate different types of expression-based signals on their websites. However, we do not know whether these signals are distinguishable in terms of their focus (i.e., can we create a comprehensive typology of such signals based on their content). Moreover, to my knowledge, no research has investigated whether different types of expression-based diversity signals are associated with the specific organizational outcomes proclaimed in such statements. Also, less is known about evidence-based diversity signals and the interplay between expression-based and evidence-based diversity signals in predicting job-seeker outcomes.

To address these research gaps, I explore the types of diversity signal sets communicated by US Fortune 500 companies and their organizational and individual implications. I propose a typology of expression-based signals — DM statements based on similarities between several existing theoretical diversity frameworks along seven dimensions (see Chapter 2 – Table 1 and 2 for details) and potential forms of evidence-based signals suggestive of diversity performance facts of organizations. First, I investigated the possibility of organizations communicating diversity signal sets (i.e., proposed typology of DM statements and evidence-based signals) on their websites. Next, I conducted a quantitative correlational study to investigate the association of expression-based signals with evidence-based signals and organizational outcomes. Lastly, I investigated the influence of diversity signal sets or the interplay between expression-based and evidence-based diversity signals on individual outcomes (organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations of racioethnic minority jobseekers).

This dissertation makes several contributions to our understanding of diversity signal sets. Past research suggests that expression-based signals focused on equality (see Leslie et al., 2019 for meta-analytic review) and business case (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022) have detrimental effects on underrepresented group members. However, we do not know what type of expression-based signals have positive organizational and individual outcomes. Moreover, we do not know what other forms of diversity signals organizations communicate besides expression-based signals. This dissertation advances our understanding of the types of diversity signal sets that organizations communicate and their organizational and individual implications.

Additionally, this dissertation is the first study investigating the influence of diversity signal sets on racioethnic minorities' leadership aspirations. Racioethnic minorities represent a high percentage of the workforce in industrialized countries but a low representation in leadership positions (Catalyst, 2015; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2020; Obenauer & Langer, 2019). There has been little change in the percentage of racioethnic minorities in leadership roles over the past decade. For example, in the United States, only 22.2% of board seats in Fortune 500 were racioethnic minorities (Deloitte, 2023), although about 40% of the US workforce are racioethnic employees (SHRM, 2023). This underrepresentation is undesirable as organizational diversity is associated with many positive outcomes, such as quality decision-making, enhanced creativity, and innovation (Ely & Thomas, 2020; Galinsky et al., 2005; Guest, 2019). Greater diversity at the upper echelons of management is associated with higher firm performance (Barta et al., 2012). Moreover, minority leadership is associated with positive minority employee performance outcomes (Marx et al., 2009) and low workplace discrimination (Plaut et al., 2009). Considering this importance, many organizations use diversity programs and policies to enhance minority leadership, such as affirmative action policies (Harrison et al., 2006). However, these

initiatives are often accompanied by unintended consequences such as perceived incompetence and distrust from others (Leslie, 2019; Leslie et al., 2014). Study 3 of my dissertation concerns the following research question: Can diversity signal sets — namely expression-based signals (DM statements) and evidence-based signals (diversity performance facts) — influence racioethnic minorities' leadership aspirations? It is crucial for organizations that are genuinely committed to diversity at all levels of management to identify diversity signal sets that can stimulate racioethnic minorities' leadership ambitions and their willingness to acquire leadership positions in the organization.

Further, my work is based on a mixed methods approach where the content analysis of actual companies' corporate websites provides the basis of the subsequent study. Specifically, this dissertation integrates qualitative and quantitative techniques to explore the type of diversity signal sets conducive to organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations of people from underrepresented racioethnic groups. The proposed sequential mixed methods approach will provide evidence-based recommendations for organizations to design recruitment content effectively for attracting racioethnic underrepresented groups to apply for jobs and aspire for leadership positions. Overall, the current findings add to a growing body of literature on diversity-related communication by providing a comprehensive typology of organizational diversity signal sets and their corporate and individual implications.

1.3.2 Overview of the Document

Following this introductory chapter (**Chapter 1**), I review relevant literature to develop the hypotheses used to examine Study 1's typology of diversity signal sets (**Chapter 2**). Specifically, I identify different types of expression-based and evidence-based signals communicated by Fortune 500 firms. I also present the rationale for choosing Fortune 500 firms,

the procedure to identify diversity signal sets, coding strategy, data analysis, and results.

Chapter 3 summarizes the literature on the association of different types of expression-based signals with evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity awards) and relevant organizational outcomes – discrimination lawsuits and financial performance (Study 2). I also present the methodology, analysis, results, and discussion for Study 2. Informed by the results of Studies 1 and 2, **Chapter 4** outlines Study 3, which focuses on identifying the effect of diversity signal sets on racioethnic minority jobseekers' organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations. Specifically, Study 3 explores the interplay between expression-based and evidence-based signals and the influence of mediating variables (perceptions of inclusion, cognitive trust, and affective trust) on these relationships. In **Chapter 5**, I provide a general discussion of diversity signal sets, highlight the contributions and limitations of the current research, suggest future research avenues, and provide theoretical and practical implications.

CHAPTER 2 – STUDY ONE: TYPOLOGY OF DIVERSITY SIGNAL SETS

In this chapter, I present a theoretically grounded framework that I then use to conduct a content analysis of diversity signal sets transmitted by the US Fortune 500 companies—firms employing more than 29 million people worldwide (Fortune, 2020). I propose that there will be variability in types of diversity signal sets (i.e., expression-based signals and evidence-based signals) among Fortune 500 firms. Relevant theory and research are synthesized to determine whether the theoretical framework aligns with practice. I review the relevant theoretical frameworks on diversity, conduct qualitative thematic analysis, and discuss the findings.

2.1 Theoretical Development

2.1.1 Expression-based Signals

Three robust theoretical frameworks on diversity are often cited when explaining the types of expression-based signals communicated by firms. First, Cox (1991, 1993) categorized organizations as monolithic, plural, or multicultural based on structural integration. Cox defined structural integration as the level of representation of employees from different identity groups within the organization. Second, Ely and Thomas (2001) found that workgroups usually take one of the three perspectives on managing diversity: discrimination-and-fairness; access and legitimacy; and integration-and-learning. The integration-and-learning perspective is characterized by a collective commitment towards valuing and integrating differences to gain insights and enhance task processes based on heterogeneity in insights. The access-and-legitimacy view focuses on increasing representation of minorities with a rationale of the business case for diversity wherein employees are expected to assimilate to the organization's dominant norms. The

discrimination-and-fairness perspective promotes assimilation to the dominant culture using an identity-blind belief that diversity represents the moral obligation to ensure equality and fairness to all, irrespective of demographic characteristics. Using research conducted among 48 multicultural teams in 11 multi-national companies, this framework identified three diversity climates among work groups in multinational companies (Hajro et al., 2017): policy-focused climate, awareness-focused climate, and engagement-focused climate. Policy-focused climates require employees to conform or assimilate to the dominant organizational culture and dilute their own cultural values. Awareness-focused climates are primarily concerned with the business case for diversity, where diversity is a means to gain access and legitimacy in new markets while suffering from low integration of diversity in workgroup processes. Engagement-focused climates use diversity to enhance workgroup processes based on the assumption that differences result in novel insights.

Theoretical frameworks for categorizing diversity approaches are based on empirical work on team-level diversity (e.g., Lisak et al., 2016; Nishii, 2013; Ravazzani, 2016). It is unknown whether team-level diversity approaches will also be reflected in organizational-level communication of diversity signals. In investigating this gap, I advance scholarship on diversity by identifying organizational diversity signal sets as an overlooked organizational construct of diversity communication.

I integrated the similarities between the highly cited diversity frameworks of Cox (1993), Ely and Thomas (2001), and Hajro et al. (2017) to propose that organizations signal three types of expression-based signals: (1) equal opportunity (EO); (2) business case (BC); and (3) value-and-integration (VI). The proposed typology depicts a tripartite framework of expression-based signals progressing from identity-blind to identity-conscious diversity ideology (see Table 2-1

below). Diversity ideology can be defined as beliefs about the importance of demographic differences (Leslie et al., 2019). Scholars have broadly categorized diversity ideologies into two types: identity-blind and identity-conscious (e.g., Konrad & Linnehan, 1995; Thomas et al., 2018; Wolsko et al., 2000). Identity-blind ideologies state that demographic differences are not essential and should be minimized, whereas identity-conscious ideologies emphasize the crucial importance of demographic differences and the need to recognize them (Leslie et al., 2019).

A preliminary pilot study among the top ten Fortune companies (see Chapter Three methods section for more details) suggests that organizations adopt one of the three proposed expression-based signals when communicating diversity messages on their websites, identifying variability in the use of these signals. For example, Exxon Mobil Corporation states: "ExxonMobil is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, colour, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or protected veteran status" (www.exxonmobil.com). This statement aligns with EO expression-based signals because it includes words or phrases suggesting equal opportunity at the workplace irrespective of demographic differences.

Table 2-1: Proposed Typology of Expression-based Signals

EO Type	BC Type	VI Type
Maps Onto: Monolithic Organizations (Cox, 1993) Discrimination and Fairness Perspective (Ely & Thomas, 2001) Policy-focused Climate (Hajro et al., 2017)	Maps Onto: Plural Organizations (Cox,1993) Access-and-legitimacy Perspective (Ely & Thomas, 2001) Awareness-focused Climate (Hajro et al., 2017)	Maps Onto: Multicultural Organizations (Cox, 1993) Integration-and-learning Perspective (Ely & Thomas, 2001) Engagement-focused Climate (Hajro et al., 2017)
End discrimination	Gain access to new markets and clients	Enhance work processes via learning from each other and valuing each other's differences.

Primary Rationale to Diversity

Identity-blind → Identity-conscious

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2.1.2 Evidence-based Signals

Evidence-based signals use facts of statistics to demonstrate an organization's performance in maintaining or promoting workplace diversity (McKay et al., 2008). Evidence-based signals are transparent, hard-to-fake signals that can be fact-checked (Drover et al., 2018). Signal receivers can use these messages to determine whether the organization values diversity. Previous research on diversity primarily focused on expression-based diversity signals rather than evidence-based signals (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Singh & Point, 2004). Consequently, we do not know whether organizations signal diversity performance facts as evidence-based signals on their websites. If organizations do indeed communicate evidence-based signals, then there is a knowledge gap within the literature regarding these types of signals and their impact on diversity. Multiple factors can be taken into account when considering facts related to the diversity performance of an organization, including (but not limited to) employee demographics, leadership representation of people from underrepresented groups, supplier diversity, diversity awards or recognition, and workplace discrimination outcomes (Volpone et al., 2014). Due to the lack of theoretical perspectives on evidence-based diversity signals, I conducted a content analysis based on emergent coding of Fortune 500 firms' corporate websites. In line with the objective of this dissertation, I specifically focused on signals that may be of higher importance to racioethnic minority job seekers.

2.1.3 Communication of Diversity Signals: Scholarly Evidence

Little is known about the multiple diversity signals communicated by organizations, largely because the available research on diversity communication largely focuses on expression-based signals alone. There are only a handful of studies that have looked at the

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types of expression-based signals communicated by organizations. For example, Point and Singh (2003) investigated online texts from 241 top European companies to identify how companies construe the meaning and dimensions of diversity. This qualitative method used a grounded theory approach to closely inspect text and language to construct the ideas and their implications (Burck, 2005). They found that while companies tend to follow multicultural ideals when expressing their approaches to diversity, only half of the companies mentioned the term 'diversity' on their website and only 13 websites provided a clear working definition of diversity. The authors suggest that it is essential for organizations to provide a clear working definition of diversity to target necessary interventions and track progress.

Ravazanni (2016) surveyed 90 Italian companies to determine how companies implement diversity management in practice and what factors might explain organizational approaches to diversity. Building on the typologies from previous literature (Cox, 1991; Thomas & Ely, 1996), this study reveals that the integration approach to diversity is utilized most frequently by Italian companies to enhance employee acculturation and corporate reputation.

Georgeac and Rattan (2022) found that organizations make either a business case or a fairness case for diversity while communicating diversity messages on their websites. They applied machine-learning technology to identify the types of diversity cases communicated by organizations. However, as the findings were based on the binary classifier—instrumental (business case) and non-instrumental (fairness case)—there was a possibility that the companies were using mixed cases or cases containing terminologies beyond the business or fairness cases. Indeed, the authors recommended future research investigations of diversity

statements to help identify the comprehensive types of diversity approaches adopted by companies.

Similarly, Wang et al. (2022) applied computerized text-mining analysis of solidarity messages publicly released by US firms in response to the senseless deaths of African Americans people at the hands of law enforcement. They found that companies' solidarity statements consist of themes suggesting support and acknowledgement of Black communities, general diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) terms, and a commitment to diversifying their workforce.

These studies suggest that organizations are increasingly sending *expression-based signals* to communicate their beliefs on how diversity should operate (Jonsen et al., 2021). However, there is currently no study that comprehensively examines *evidence-based signals* to identify organizations' performance on diversity. This is unfortunate, as the literature suggests that *how* receivers interpret evidence-based signals is just as important as the *contents* of expression-based signals (Jonsen et al., 2021). Research suggests that psychological framing — how signals are communicated and how receivers interpret them — has a powerful impact on the signal receiver (Howard-Grenville et al., 2003). Therefore, it is essential to gain a strong understanding of diversity signal set contents to provide evidence that multiple diversity signal sets are effective. Based on the tenets of signaling theory, this dissertation uses the following two research questions to explore the possibility of communication of diversity signal sets: *How do large firms communicate diversity signal sets on their websites?* and *What specific types of expression-based and evidence-based signals are disseminated by these firms?*

2.2 Study One Methods

To answer the above research questions, I conducted a thematic content analysis (TCA) of corporate websites of US Fortune 500 companies published in 2019 (www.fortune.com). 'Fortune 500 companies' is an annual list of the biggest US companies in terms of annual revenue and employee base (Fortune, 2020). This list is widely used by researchers interested in various management research topics such as accounting, finance, corporate governance, human resource management, and marketing (e.g., Young & Bennamati, 2000; Wang et al., 2022). The homepages of Fortune 500 companies have been extensively researched to analyze corporate financial performance and governance (Brower & Dacin, 2020; Gupta et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2019; Robbins & Stylianou, 2003). However, the analysis of diversity-related aspects of these companies' webpages is still an under-researched topic.

2.2.1 Sample

I collected data for the current study from the Fortune 500 companies in the United States. A link to the corporate websites of the selected companies was obtained via the Fortune Companies database website (https://www.fortune.com/fortune500/). I focused on content analysis of websites instead of other secondary sources such as annual reports or brochures. Previous content analytic research on corporate communication has primarily focused on annual reports (e.g., Bowman, 1984; Lajili & Zeghal, 2005; Roca & Searcy, 2012). I chose not to use the annual report for my study's content analysis because they are only issued annually and are targeted at shareholders (Zeghal & Ahmed, 1990). This dissertation required coding documents that prospective employees would have a high probability of seeing in their job search activity. With advances in technology and the digital

revolution, many organizations include diversity separately on their websites to communicate

their corporate mission and values (Chaudhri & Wang, 2007). Websites target a wider group

of stakeholders and represent a mainstream medium of corporate communication that reaches

prospective employees (Chun, 2019). Since I am interested in prospective employees'

perceptions in my third study, websites are an appropriate communication tool to analyze

because jobseekers frequently use the Internet in the initial stages of a job search (Allen et

al., 2007; Lievens & Harris, 2003; Van Esch & Black, 2019). Websites also present a

significant advantage because data can be collected directly from existing and public sources,

in contrast to surveys where a low response rate may be more likely due to the sensitivity of

the issue in question. While executive surveys may be useful in the context of diversity

communication to identify organizational approaches to diversity, research suggests that

executive respondents' response rate is lowest among all other respondents in different levels

of management (see Anseel et al., 2010; Cycyota & Harrison, 2006 for meta-analytic

review).

2.2.2 Preliminary Pilot Study

A preliminary pilot study was conducted among the websites of the top 10 Fortune

500 companies to identify whether there was variability in expression-based signals

communicated on organization websites. Coding was based on the proposed typology of

expression-based signals and the rationale for diversity (Table 2-1). An emergent coding

approach was also used to identify the other types of *evidence-based signals* (Stemler, 2000)

not included in the proposed typology. First, for EO-type expression-based signals, I looked

for terms such as fair treatment, equal employment, equal opportunity, and compliance.

Second, for BC-type expression-based signals, I focused on terms such as business case,

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profit, competitive advantage, performance and results. Lastly, for VI-type expression-based signals, I looked for terms such as learning, growing, celebrate diversity, value diversity, and feel included.

The findings (Table 2-2) suggest that organizations use the proposed expression-based signals when communicating their diversity approaches. Companies with EO types of expression-based signals used words or phrases like 'equal opportunity' and 'without regard to race, sex, religion'. The firms using BC type of expression-based signals presented a business motive towards managing diversity using words and phrases like 'diversity: for positive impact on products and services', 'to better serve customers,' and 'for the business to thrive'. Finally, companies with VI types of expression-based signals focused on valuing and including people from diverse backgrounds using words and phrases like 'every individual recognized for uniqueness,' 'valuing identities,' 'celebrated,' and 'everyone has a voice'. Interestingly, one of the organizations incorporated both EO and BC types of words or phrases in their expression-based signals. Two of the top ten Fortune 500 companies used no visible expression-based signals on their homepages. A coding manual (Table 2-4) was developed for the main analysis and incorporated the preliminary pilot study findings as shown in Table 2-2 below.

Table 2-2: Pilot Study - TCA of Expression-based Signals of US Fortune 10 Companies

	Fortune Company	Expression-based Signal as published on the company website	Words/Phrases from a- priori coding	Words/Phrases from emergent coding	Typology
1	Walmart	At Walmart, we believe we are best equipped to help our associates, customers and the communities we serve live better when we really know them. That means understanding, respecting and *valuing diversity*—unique styles, experiences, identities, ideas and opinions—while being inclusive of all people.	Valuing diversity	Valuing unique styles, experiences, identities, ideas, and opinions; inclusive of all people.	VI
2	Exxon Mobil	ExxonMobil is an *Equal Opportunity* Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or protected veteran status.	Equal Opportunity	Without regard to race, color, religion…	EO
3	Apple	At Apple, 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 to create products that serve everyone, we believe in including everyone.		…to create products.	BC
4	Berkshire Hathaway	No visible expression-based signal	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	Amazon	Amazon's mission is to be the earth's most customer centric company, and this mission is central to our work in diversity and inclusion. Diverse and inclusive teams have a positive impact on our products and services, and help us better serve customers, selling partners, content creators, employees, and community stakeholders from every background.		Positive impact on products and services, help better serve customers, selling partners.	BC
6	United Health Group	At UnitedHealth Group, we are committed to inclusion and diversity. Our core values of integrity, compassion, relationships, innovation and performance steer our actions and interactions. We believe that the uniqueness and experiences you bring to the table increases the effectiveness of our ability to identify solutions. We're dedicated to building teams where every individual is recognized for their unique experience and contributions. Continued…		recognized for uniqueness; committed to inclusion	VI

	Fortune Company	Expression-based signals as published on the company website	Words/Phrases from a- priori coding	Emergent coding	Typology
7	McKesson	Our responsibility to making employees <u>feeling valued</u>. McKesson understands the value of diversity. Our shared ICARE (Integrity, Customer-First, Accountability, Respect, Excellence) principles ensure that every person feels included, <u>valued and celebrated</u> at our company.	Valuing diversity	… feels included, valued and celebrated.	VI
8	CVS Health	Diversity touches every aspect of our *business*. Every day we seek out and implement new solutions from colleagues from all walks of life. We believe that for our <u>business to thrive</u>, our workforce must <u>reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.</u>	Business	Diversity for the business to thrive; workforce reflect the diversity of the communities.	BC
9	AT&T	Everyone has a <u>voice at our table</u> – including you.		Everyone has a voice	VI
10	AmerisourceBergen	No visible diversity statement	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: a-priori coding based words/phrases are italicized, and emergent coding based words/phrases are underlined in expression-based signals.

The expression-based and evidence-based signals were collected from the same section of the websites to determine how firms communicate diversity as diversity signal sets. A preliminary pilot study was conducted to identify the types of evidence-based signals communicated by the top ten Fortune 500 firms. Following this preliminary investigation of data, categories were developed for the final content analysis of evidence-based signals of Fortune 500 firms (Haney et al., 1998). The pilot study suggested that firms do communicate facts on diversity performance as evidence-based signals. Specifically, firms communicated three forms of evidence-based signals related to their diversity-related performance: diversity awards or recognition; employee demographics; and leadership demographics. First, diversity awards or recognition consisted of information related to third parties giving external recognition to an organization for enhancing diversity and inclusion in their workspaces. Second, employee demographics information consisted of charts or bar diagrams demonstrating the percentage or numerical representation of employees based on gender and/or race and ethnicity. Third, leadership demographics information included the percentage or numerical representation of women and/or racial/ethnic minorities in managerial or top leadership positions in the organization. Table 2-3 below reports the pilot study findings of evidence-based signals sent by US Fortune 500 firms.

Table 2-3: Pilot Study - TCA of Evidence-based Signals

	Fortune Company	Evidence-based Diversity Signal (Examples)	Type of information
1	Walmart	Truth in numbers: Top 50 ranking Diversity Inc.	Award or recognition
2	Exxon Mobil	None	N/A
3	Apple	Demographics on leadership and non-leadership positions A look at the last five years 50 % white, 23% Asian, 9% black, 14% Hispanic, 3% multiracial, 1% Native American Our new hires are even more diverse than our current employees.	Employee Demographics and Leadership Demographics statistics
4	Berkshire Hathaway	None	N/A
5	Amazon.com	Our Workforce Data: In the US, 15.4% identify as Asian, 26.5% as Black/African American, 18.5% as Hispanic, 1.3% as Native American, 3.6% as two or more races, and 34.7% as White. Among managers in the US, 20.8% identify as Asian, 8.3% as Black/African American, 8.1% as Hispanic, 0.6% as Native American, 3% as two or more races, and 59.3% as White.	Employee Demographics and Leadership Demographics
6	United Health Group	None	None
7	McKesson	Total Workforce: Ethnicity (McKesson US employees) White: 51%, Unknown/Unspecified: 4%, People of Color: 45%	Employee Demographics
8	CVS Health	CVS Health is Ranked #24 on DiversityInc's Top 50 Companies list.	Award or recognition
9	AT&T	In 2019, our new hires were 34% Women, 44.8% people of color Best Places to Work for Diversity 2019 DiversityInc 2019 Top 50 Companies for Diversity	Awards and Employee Demographics
10	Amerisource Bergen	None	N/A

2.3 Study One: Analysis and Results

In exploratory sequential designs, the researcher analyzes and uses data obtained in the first phase to plan the subsequent steps (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I conducted a content analysis of diversity signal sets—expression-based signals and evidence-based signals—using qualitative thematic analysis to inform the variables for the subsequent phases of data collection. The following sections review these analyses, which justify the inclusion of relevant variables in Study Two and Study Three.

2.3.1 Overview

I coded the diversity signal sets based on the typology explained earlier in this chapter and the results from the preliminary pilot study. Each expression-based signal was coded for the presence of terminologies related to the proposed typology of expression-based signals. For the evidence-based signals, consistent with the findings from the preliminary pilot study, I coded for presence of diversity awards/recognition, employee demographics, and leadership positions demographics. From an examination of raw data, I found that companies mainly communicated three different types of expression-based signals: (1) EO; (2) BC; and (3) VI. Similar to the findings in my preliminary pilot study, a fourth type of expression-based signal emerged during the coding process: a mix of two or more types of expression-based signals. These expression-based signals were separately coded as mixed types in my final analysis. The results indicate that the firms communicate BC type of expression-based signals (41%) compared to VI type (21%), EO type (8%), and mixed type of expression-based signals (11%). 96 (20%) Fortune 500 companies had no expression-based signals on their websites.

With respect to evidence-based signals, I found that companies primarily communicated three types of facts suggestive of their performance on diversity: (1) diversity awards or

recognition; (2) employee demographics; and (3) leadership demographics. Overall, 104 out of 500 Fortune firms communicated one or more types of evidence-based signals on their websites.

2.3.2 Data Analysis

I applied TCA as a method to identify diversity signal sets communicated by Fortune 500 firms. TCA is a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I conducted a TCA of Fortune 500 companies in five phases following the Nowell et al. (2017) recommendations.

Phase 1: Familiarize Yourself with the Data

Study One focuses on content analysis of expression-based and evidence-based signals of Fortune 500 firms found in the careers section of the websites. One of the important objectives of this dissertation is to find out what type of diversity signals will enhance the organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations of racioethnic minorities. An initial pilot study of ten Fortune 500 companies' websites (Table 2-2) suggested that diversity signals were frequently found in the careers section of the websites. Consequently, I decided to retrieve textual data related to diversity signals from the careers section. This approach was also justified, given my focus on job seekers in Study Three.

Data management is imperative to the success of projects involving large data sets (White et al., 2012). As shown in Figure 2-1 below, all the information was stored securely in an Excel template. Expression-based signals and evidence-based signals were copied, screenshots were taken to represent the originating website, unique identifiers for the case (i.e., the section of the website from where the diversity signals were retrieved) were used, and the original creation date was noted.

Figure 2-1: Screenshot of Excel Template Sample

Company	Expression-based Signals	Type	words	words/phrases	Frequency	Evidence-based Signals	Type
Cummins	At Cummins, diversity and inclusion is a core company value. Diversity and inclusion means our individual differences never have to be checked at the door. Our leaders have long believed that diversity creates a stronger and more competitive work environment, and ultimately helps us attract and retain top talent. Read more on our business case for diversity.	Business Case	business case for diversity; creates competitive work environment;	0	2	No	NA
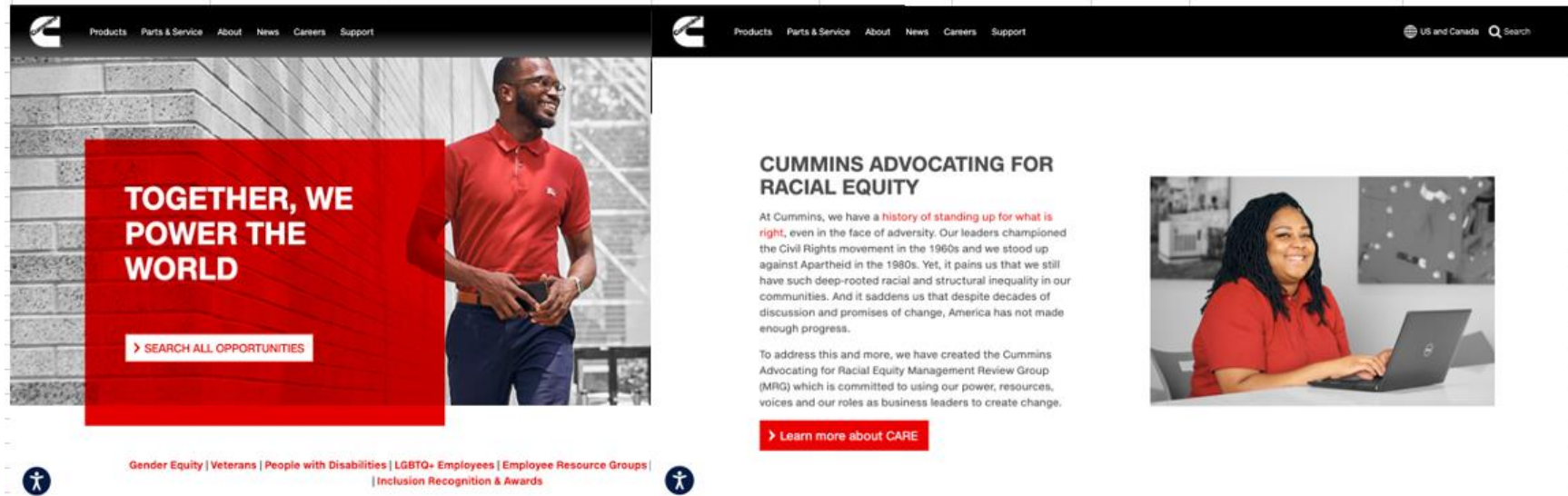
Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Once the diversity signals were recorded in the Excel sheet, I read and familiarized myself with the data to gain ideas and identify interesting data patterns. The data was constantly compared with the theoretical framework to determine if it aligned with the pre-defined categories. Qualitative coding was conducted to simplify and concentrate on specific characteristics of the statements. During coding, important sections of expression-based signals were identified and labeled to index them as they related to specific themes (King, 2004). I read each expression-based signal to identify phrases referring to the primary reason behind diversity. A systematic process for coding data was followed in which specific expression-based signals were analyzed and categorized into themes (Creswell, 2014). A coding template was used to justify the inclusion of each code. Before commencing an in-depth analysis of the data, a code manual (Table 2-4) was developed based on the theoretical framework and pilot study involving the preliminary content analysis of ten largest Fortune 500 companies.

Specifically, my coding manual included detailed definitions of each type of expression-based signal and exemplar text. This procedure is valuable for researchers performing a TCA (Nowell et al., 2017). Using a coding manual provides a clear trail of evidence important for the study's credibility. To further enhance the credibility of the study, two coders (the author and a trained research assistant with no prior knowledge of the study's objectives) independently analyzed the data set for ten percent of Fortune 500 companies. Both members worked systematically through the data of all 50 companies with expression-based signals, giving full and equal attention to each company's diversity communication.

Table 2-4: Coding Manual

	Type of expression-based signal	Definition	A priori codes (example words/phrases)	Emergent Codes	Total number of expression-based signals
1	EO	Statements focused on equal treatment of people from all backgrounds without considering the importance of demographic differences such as gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, and disability.	Fair treatment; equal opportunity; equal employment; equal employment opportunity (EEO); Affirmative Action (AA); compliance with …; Without regard to race, color, religion…	Decide based on the definition and word/phrases with similar meaning close to a-priori coded words/phrases	A-priori + Emergent
2	BC	Statements focused on bottom-line rationale (i.e., business objectives such as cost reductions, higher return on investment, and reduced turnover) for incorporating diversity in their workplace	Diversity initiatives such as diversity council, diversity training, Chief Diversity Officer (CDO); competitive advantage; business case; bottom line; Positive impact on products and services; help better serve customers; selling partners; Diversity for the business to thrive; workforce reflect the diversity of the communities; …to create products.	Decide based on the definition and word/phrases with similar meaning close to a-priori coded words/phrases	A-priori + Emergent
3	VI	Statements focused on value and inclusion of members of diverse groups in all work-group processes.	Learning and growing; celebrate and value differences; contribute, and reach maximum potential; Valuing unique styles, experiences, identities, ideas, and opinions; inclusive of all people; Every individual recognized for uniqueness; … feels included, valued, and celebrated; Everyone has a voice.	Decide based on the definition and word/phrases with similar meaning close to a-priori coded words/phrases	A-priori + Emergent
4	Mix	Statements containing two or more of the expression-based signal types	NA (mix of words or phrases (1+2 or 1+3 or 2+3 or 1+2+3)	Emergent	Emergent

The diversity signals were coded and classified using the proposed typology of expression-based signals derived from the tripartite framework on group-level diversity communication and evidence-based signal categories derived from preliminary content analysis of the largest ten Fortune 500 firms (see Chapter 1, Table 2-1 for details; 3 categories of expression-based and evidence-based signals). An interclass correlation coefficient between 0.75–1 was taken as a cut-off range for valid interrater agreement (Cicchetti, 1994). Once each expression-based signal was independently coded, the coders met to compare scores. Individual extracts of data were coded in multiple themes where relevant. Notes were recorded to identify significant aspects of the data and to code any emerging themes evolving from the data. Biweekly research meetings were conducted after the coding of every ten companies to compare the agreement in coding between the two researchers. Initial interrater reliability was 90% for the typology of expression-based signals. In cases of disagreement, expression-based signals were re-evaluated and discussed until an agreement was achieved. All remaining disagreements were resolved through two rounds of discussion.

For the evidence-based signals, I thoroughly scanned the webpage with expression-based signals for the presence of diversity performance facts. Yes/No coding was done for the presence/absence of one of the three primary types of evidence-based signals as pre-defined by the preliminary pilot study findings. First, I searched for the presence of diversity performance facts (i.e., evidence-based signals) in the same web section where the expression-based signals were found. Next, I performed qualitative coding to see if the diversity performance facts related to pre-defined evidence-based signal themes.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Tables 2-5 and 2-6 summarizes the findings related to TCA. Once the diversity signal sets were collated and coded, a list of the codes identified across the data set was developed, and all of the potentially relevant coded data were extracted into themes. This phase involved sorting and collating all of the possibly relevant coded data extracts into themes. The TCA process was followed to generate themes based on prior theory and research. The pre-existing coding framework was utilized to provide a more detailed data analysis. The coding manual developed in Phase Two was used to organize codes and themes to make the text interpretation procedures clear (Attride-Stirling, 2001). When searching for themes, pre-defined codes from the coding manual were used to guide the analysis. Any data that did not fit the pre-defined criteria was coded as emergent codes. Emergent codes were further examined and interpreted to identify the possibility of belonging to the pre-defined themes. The emergent codes that did not belong to any pre-defined criteria were temporarily housed in the 'miscellaneous theme' category for further investigation.

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

Once a set of themes was devised, the coded extracts were reviewed for each theme to determine whether they reflected the meanings evident in the data set. As predicted for expression-based signals, organizations focused on three central themes: equal opportunity (EO); business case for diversity (BC); and the value of inclusion or belonging (VI). However, one interesting new theme also emerged during the content analysis process: organizations were found to communicate a mix of two or more of the above themes while communicating expression-based signals on their websites.

Similarly, for evidence-based signals, organizations communicated diversity performance

facts based on three central themes: (a) third-party bestowed diversity awards; (b) statistics suggesting the demographic diversity of employees; and (c) diversity-related facts suggesting the representation of underrepresented groups in leadership positions. Organizations communicated one or more than one type of evidence-based diversity signals alongside the expression-based diversity signals.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

During this phase, a detailed analysis (see below in the Findings section) was written, which identified the story told by each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes were organized and compared with the typology derived from the tripartite framework on diversity communication and pilot study findings on evidence-based diversity signals. The organizations' expression-based signals fit into the theoretical framework with the inclusion of one more emerged type of expression-based signal. Mixed expression-based signals consisted of four types of mix: EO and BC; BC and VI; EO and VI; and EO, BC and VI (Table 2-5). Altogether, the identified themes suggested that organizations communicate four types of expression-based signals: EO; BC; VI; and Mixed. The themes identified for evidence-based diversity signals aligned well with the pilot study findings (Table 2-6). Specifically, organizations signaled three types of evidence-based signals: diversity awards; employee demographics; and leadership demographics to demonstrate their performance on enhancing diversity at their workplaces.

2.3.3 Findings

Table 2-5 and 2-6 below summarize the findings from Study One.

Table 2-5: TCA Findings with Keywords to Identify Types of Expression-based Signals

Types	Orientation	Sample Words/Phrases	Themes	Example	Rationale
EO (n=38)	Compliance Oriented	Workplace equality; free from discrimination; …without regard to race color, origin…; Equal Opportunity; free from discrimination; Fair employment Practice; consider all qualified applicants; affirmative action; for everyone; comply with laws.	Workplace equality/equal opportunity/affirmative action/compliance (k=32); Fairness and non-discrimination (k=15); Without regard to race, colour, gender, etc. (k=11); For everyone (k=5)	World Fuel Services is an Equal Opportunity Employer. It is our policy to comply with all applicable laws that provide equal opportunity in employment for all persons, and to prohibit discrimination in each country where we operate. [World Fuel Services]	Compliance or legal requirement
BC (n=203)	Bottom-line Oriented	Good for Business/business case/ business in every part/essential part of business strategy/how we do business/business excellence; competitive advantage; to	business growth/performance/success (k=135); creativity/innovation (k=87); competitive advantage (k=21); reflect customers/marketplace (k=89); change and decision making (k=12)	We strongly believe that diversity brings many advantages to the business: increased profitability, better problem-solving abilities, high creativity, and stronger innovation [Parker-Hannifin]	Financial performance or business success

		create products; reflect marketplace; creativity; innovation.			
VI (n=97)	People Oriented	valuing diversity/believe in value of unique identity/feel valued for who they are/culture where you are valued/every voice is … valued/value the different ideas/value unique voice/value the contribution/value uniqueness; promote inclusion/inclusive culture; belong/create sense of belonging; celebrated; integrate; bring authentic self; learning/learn from each other.	inclusion/inclusive culture (k=60); valuing diversity (k=52); celebrate diversity (k=20); belonging (k=20); bring authentic self (k=14); learning (k=5).	At AT&T, we know that being truly inclusive is not just telling people they are welcome. It is about showing them they are valued because of who they are and all they bring. That's why we place our employees and their lived experiences at the heart of our inclusive culture, valuing and celebrating the diversity of their backgrounds, perspectives, and abilities. [AT&T]	Support inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds

Mixed1 (n=2)	Mix	Mix of EO and BC	power in different perspectives (k=1), set the pace of industry (k=1), proud to be an EO employer (k=1), strategic advantage (k=1), for the business success (k=1), equal and fair treatment for all (k=2)	At Navistar, we believe there's power in diverse perspectives, gained through different life experiences and backgrounds. And that it's only through new ways of seeing that we'll continue to set the pace of our industry. For this reason – and because we value the contributions of all people – we are proud to be an equal opportunity employer and do not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, race, color, ethnicity, nation of origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, physical or mental disability, or veteran status.	Both for equality and better business performance
Mixed2 (n=3)	Mix	Mix of EO and VI	everyone feels a sense of equity (k=1), diversity valued at all levels (k=1)	Kohl's is committed to creating an environment where everyone feels a sense of equity, where diversity is valued at all levels, and where inclusion is evident across our business.	Equity and inclusion
Mixed3 (n=40)	Mix	Mix of BC and VI	bring your whole selves to work (k=7), competitive advantage (k=9), for our customers (k=15), for our business (k=21), feel valued, engaged and inspired (k=22), feel they have a voice (k=8), heard (k=6), belonging (k=11), reflect the diverse customer base (k=15), promote and celebrate diversity (k=9), recognize and appreciate differences (k=12), culture of inclusion (k=15), empowerment (k=3), outperform/exceed expectations (k=8),	At Spectrum, we're proud of our diverse and inclusive workforce, which enables us to fully appreciate, understand, and respond to the unique needs of our customers across our company's 41-state footprint. We're committed to fostering a culture of inclusion in which every employee feels respected, engaged, and able to reach their full potential so that together, we can all support Spectrum's objectives to exceed customer expectations.	business case and inclusion

| Mixed4 (n=7) | Mix | Mix of EO, BC and VI | equal opportunity/affirmative action employer (k=2), business advantage (k=2), for customers (k=2), inclusive culture (k=3), feel highly valued (k=2), equality/equity (k=3), belonging (k=2), regardless of nationality, origin, religion, etc. (k=1), celebrate diversity (k=1), performance driven (k=1), leveraging differences (k=1), reflect customers (k=1); celebrate diversity (k=1) | We're building an inspiring, inclusive culture where everyone can bring their best self to the workplace and realize their individual potential. We are driving to a time when leaders embrace diversity as a business advantage and individuals feel highly valued and actively engaged. Our inclusive approach to delivering financial security helps create a distinctive experience for our clients. These are just a few of the accolades we've received as an employer. Northwestern Mutual is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer who welcomes and encourages diversity in the workforce. We are committed to creating and maintaining an environment in which each employee can contribute creative ideas, seek challenges, assume leadership and continue to focus on meeting and exceeding business and personal objectives. | focus on equity, business case and inclusion. |

Table 2-6: TCA Findings on Evidence-based Diversity Signals

Type of Signal	Frequency by Type of Expression-based Signal	Example Statements
Awards (N=64)	EO (k=1) BC (k=34) VI (k=20) Mix (k=9)	AT &T ranked as Fortune 100 Best Places to Work for Diversity in 2019. CVS Health is Ranked #24 on DiversityInc's Top 50 Companies list
Employee Demographics (N=54)	EO (k=2) BC (k=30) VI (k=17) Mix (k=5)	Bar diagram and mention of gender or ethnic representation in percentage. Example: Starbucks: Employee representation statistics by race/ethnicity: Black (8%), Hispanic (27%), Asian (5.5%), Multiracial (4.7%), Indigenous (1.2%)
Leadership representation (N=42)	EO (k=2) BC (k=25) VI (k=11) Mix (k=4)	IBM: 41.8% representation of women among IBMers to executive positions in 2019.

Next, I explain each type of diversity signal and the themes identified.

Expression-based Signals

EO type expression-based signals (n=38) were characterized by a concern for diversity primarily

stemming from a *compliance perspective*. For example:

> World Fuel Services is an Equal Opportunity Employer. It is our policy to comply with all applicable laws that provide equal employment opportunities for all persons and to prohibit discrimination in each country where we operate. (https://www.wfscorp.com/Careers/Equal-Employment-Opportunity-Statement)

> CHS is an equal-opportunity employer and complies with all applicable federal, state, and local fair employment practice laws. (https://www.chsinc.com/careers)

Firms signaling EO type of expression-based signals emphasized equal employment opportunity

policies regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, or other demographic characteristics. These signals

communicated *low value for identity* as expressed by the identity-blind ideology. The words or

phrases suggestive of ignoring differences indicated that the organizations with EO type

expression-based signals place an uncertain value on identity and expect individuals to lessen the significance of their demographic characteristics and assimilate into the organizational culture.

> Crown is an equal opportunity employer dedicated to maintaining a workplace that encourages professional and personal growth for all employees, regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, or status as a special disabled veteran or other protected veteran. (https://www.crowncork.hua.hrsmart.com/custom/themes/customer_front_end/pages/diversity.html)

The primary rationale for diversifying was based on *fairness and anti-discrimination* in the workplace as required by law. Firms signaling EO type expression-based signals espoused the belief that discrimination must be eliminated from the workplace and that all employees should be considered equal. However, these firms also neglected significant demographic differences in the workplace. They demanded that employees follow the corporate communication and be aware of the policies required by the home country's law (the U.S.). No information was provided on how diversity is incorporated into the core work processes, which suggests a limited connection between diversity and work in the organization's signaling EO type expression-based signals. Instead, the diversity message suggested an expectation for minorities to minimize the significance of their demographic difference and *assimilate into the dominant organizational culture.* Plains All-American's website provided the following example:

> Our company (Plains GP) insists on maintaining a professional, safe, and discrimination-free work environment. We will not tolerate any illegal discrimination or harassment of any kind. Examples include derogatory comments based on racial or ethnic characteristics, unwelcome sexual advances or requests, or engaging in coercive behaviour that is sexual in nature. Plains is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Thank you for your interest in working with Plains All American. (https://www.plains.com/careers)

BC type expression-based signals were more common in Fortune 500 firms' (n=204) diversity communication as compared to all other types of expression-based signals. These signals were characterized by a *concern for diversity primarily from the bottom-line perspective*. Firms

communicating beliefs of business cases to diversity signaled that they value diversity because it

is suitable for their business growth, profitability, and success. For example:

> Having diverse employees, business partners and community relationships is vital to creating advanced products and services for our diverse customers around the world. (https://www.jobs.boeing.com/diversity-and-inclusion)

> A key part of our commitment is to attract and maintain a diverse and multi-generational workforce that can help us meet the continually evolving needs of our customers. (https://www.nexteraenergy.com/sustainability/employees/diversity.html)

> We strongly believe that diversity brings many advantages to the business: increased profitability, better problem-solving abilities, high creativity, and stronger innovation. (https://www.parker.com/us/en/careers/diversity-and-inclusion.html)

The firms sending BC type expression-based signals suggested that people from diverse

backgrounds were expected to contribute to the *organization's core culture of financial*

performance.

> As a company, we nurture a culture where innovation thrives, and our workforce reflects the communities we serve. (https://www.careers.carmax.com/us/en/diversity-inclusion)

The BC type expression-based signals also signaled *moderate value for identity* wherein the

firms considered diversity a resource only when it created a connection between the organization

and markets. The financial performance justification of the BC type expression-based signals

suggests that diversity is valued in the organization only if it is profitable.

> We are committed to employing a diverse workforce that can deliver exceptional performance on a sustainable basis. (https://www.phillips66.com/our-people)

BC type expression-based signals chiefly communicated diversity messages with a rationale to

access new markets, reflect a diverse customer base, and compete in the global market. This

suggests that diversity at work *is indirect and partially integrated into core work processes*.

However, their diversity rhetoric suggested that firms communicating BC type expression-based

signals were less able to incorporate cultural differences beyond market-based explanations.

As the face of America changes, it only makes sense that the face of MassMutual reflects that change as well – which is why diversity is a key part of our business strategy today. (https://www.massmutual.com/sustainability/diversity-equity-and-inclusion)

VI type expression-based signals communicated a concern for diversity based on valuing differences, focusing more *on the inclusion, and belonging* of heterogeneous work groups. Terms related to inclusion (n=60) were frequently signaled by firms sending VI type expression-based signals. The diversity message inherent in these signals focused on integrating *people from heterogeneous backgrounds* and addressing the concerns of minorities such as having the opportunity to express their voice, bringing their authentic selves to work, and growing professionally. The primary rationale for diversification stemmed from an internal motivation to support the inclusion of minorities and address their career needs.

At AT&T, we know that being truly inclusive is not just about telling people they are welcome. It is about showing them they are valued because of who they are and all they bring. That's why we place our employees and their lived experiences at the heart of our inclusive culture, valuing and celebrating the diversity of their backgrounds, perspectives, and abilities.
(https://www.att.jobs/diversity)

Firms communicating VI type expression-based signals placed a *high value on identity*. Terms such as 'value for unique identity,' 'feel valued for who they are, 'bring all of who they are, 'we care for your background,' 'respect and celebrate differences, 'understanding, respecting, and valuing differences, 'value unique voice' were frequently used (n=52). For example:

At GE, we believe in the value of your unique identity, background, and experiences.
(https://jobs.gecareers.com/global/en/diversity-at-ge)

Our I&D outcome is to foster an inclusive culture that embraces our differences and provides employees an environment where they can bring their whole selves to work.
(https://jobs.bestbuy.com/bby?id=item_detail&content=culture)

Companies communicating VI types of expression-based signals stressed the importance of valuing diversity and *including diversity in all work-group processes*. Some companies went

beyond values and signaled the importance of diversity and inclusion for developing and

advancing minorities in the workplace.

> Valero embraces Diversity and Inclusion as a driver that enables the development of the best teams with diverse talents, thoughts and experiences that are acknowledged and respected in the workplace. We strive every day to create a safe, supportive environment in which individual differences, cultures and capabilities are valued and contribute to a winning team. Valero is fully committed to supporting Diversity and Inclusion in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, hiring, compensation, work environment, development, and advancement (https://www.valero.com/careers/working-valero/diversity-inclusion).

Mixed type expression-based signals also emerged during the data coding process. The findings

suggested that companies communicate a mix of EO, BC and VI messages in their expression-

based signal communication. Specifically, companies signaled four types of mixed-type

expression-based signals (n=52): EO and BC mix (n=2); EO and VI mix (n=3); BC and VI mix

(n=40); and all three (n=7). For example, an excerpt of a diversity communication from

Enterprise Products suggested that the company signaled a mix of EO and BC type of

expression-based signals on their website.

> Enterprise Products supports a diverse workplace and recognizes the strategic advantage of such an environment. Enterprise Products seeks diversity in its workforce, respects its employees' differences, treats everyone fairly and encourages and recognizes contributions of individuals. In doing so, we are always focused on recruiting, hiring, training, and promoting those individuals whose qualifications will be the best fit for the job and will contribute the most to the success of our business. (https://www.enterpriseproducts.com/careers/diversity-inclusion)

On the other hand, companies (n=3) also signaled a mix of EO and VI type of expression-based

signals. These signals focused on promoting a feeling of equity, establishing inclusion,

recognizing the values of diverse perspectives, and celebrating unique differences. The

companies communicated the mixed message of simultaneously valuing and disregarding

differences.

Kohl's is committed to creating an environment where everyone feels a sense of equity, where diversity is valued at all levels, and where inclusion is evident across our business. (https://www.careers.kohls.com/diversity-inclusion)

We are dedicated to creating an inclusive environment for everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, color, … or physical appearance. We're united by our values, and we celebrate our unique differences. (https://www.careers.expediagroup.com/life)

40 out of 52 companies under the mix type of expression-based signals communicated a combination of BC and VI perspectives on their corporate websites. The companies' *primary rationale for diversifying was focused on both business success and inclusion*.

Nike is a company of purpose, growth, and innovation. As we seek to move the world forward through sport, we believe the success of our teammates drives the success of our business. Nike is at its best when every member of our team feels respected, included, and heard—when everyone can show up as themselves and do their best work every day. (https://www.jobs.nike.com/diversity-equity-and-inclusion)

These companies' message content suggested that they give *greater value to identity* and consider diversity a resource for achieving business success and inclusion. However, the inherent financial justification in these types of mixed expression-based signals suggests that organizations may also signal both business and inclusion justification to diversity.

We thrive on the power and potential of diversity. As a global company, we believe the most effective way to embrace the diversity of our customers and communities is to mirror it from within. We believe the fusion of various perspectives results in the best outcomes for our employees, our company, our customers, and the world around us. We are committed to an inclusive environment where every individual can thrive through a sense of belonging, respect, and contribution. (https://www.jobs.westerndigital.com/why-western-digital/our-culture)

Interestingly, seven companies signaled all three types of expression-based signals—(EO), {BC}, and [VI]—on their corporate websites while communicating their stance on diversity.

We're building an inspiring, [inclusive culture where everyone can bring their best self to the workplace and realize their individual potential]. We are driving to a time when leaders embrace diversity as a {business advantage} and individuals feel highly valued and actively engaged. Our inclusive approach to {delivering financial security helps create a distinctive experience for our clients}. These are just a few of the accolades we've received as an employer. (Northwestern Mutual is an equal opportunity/affirmative

action employer) who welcomes and encourages diversity in the workforce.
(https://www.careers.northwesternmutual.com/culture)

Evidence-based Signals

104 out of 500 US Fortune 500 firms communicated evidence-based signals[1] (i.e.,

diversity performance facts) alongside expression-based signals. Table 2-6 shows the findings

for types of evidence-based signals.

Diversity awards or recognition (n=64) types of evidence-based signals were characterized by

the mention of diversity awards or recognition by third parties. Companies also provided their

diversity performance ranking where applicable. For example:

> We pride ourselves on being a great place to work. Forbes 2019 - The Best Employers for
> Diversity. (https://www.jobs.dell.com/diversity-and-inclusion)

> CVS Health is Ranked #24 on DiversityInc's Top 50 Companies list. DiversityInc - Top
> 50 Companies to Work for Diversity. (https://www.jobs.cvshealth.com/diversity)

> AT&T - Best Workplaces for Diversity - Awarded by Great Place to Work - USA, 2019.
> (https://www.att.jobs/diversity)

Most of the companies' awards or recognition on diversity were honoured by third parties such as

Fortune magazine and DiversityInc. 49 out of 64 companies published only diversity awards as a

signal of evidence on diversity performance. No other facts or statistics were published by these

companies to suggest their progress or performance on diversity. The evidence-based signals

suggesting diversity awards were presented alongside the expression-based signals.

Employee demographics (n=54) types of evidence-based signals included facts on the numerical

representation of employees based on gender and race/ethnicity. The figures or statistics were

represented in bar diagrams or pie-charts to show the progress in representation of employees

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[1] Texts related to evidence-based signals were bold or highlighted by Fortune 500 firms and augmented in picture
format (i.e., bar diagrams or pie-charts) to make them more noticeable.

from different minority groups. Organizations also signaled their achievement or continuous

progress in achieving meaningful workforce representation of people from underrepresented

groups. For example:

> Our track record — 60% diversity in the workforce. 59.3% employees are women or people of color in our US workforce. (https://www.verizon.com/about/careers)

> Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. 35% of our employees were women as of year-end 2019. 44% of our employees were of people of color as of year-end 2019. (https://www.comcast.com/values/diversity-equity-inclusion)

Organizations published employee demographics facts alongside their expression-based signals.

Only ten percent of Fortune 500 firms published their employee demographics or statistics as

evidence of performance in promoting diversity in their workplace.

Leadership demographics (n=42) types of evidence-based signals consisted of facts or statistics

suggesting numerical representation of people from underrepresented groups in leadership

positions. Like employee demographics, companies presented leadership demographics in bar

diagrams or pie charts to make this information clear and easily recognizable. For example:

> Greater than 49% of our U.S. workforce and 35.5% of our management team are minorities. (https://www.fedex.com/en-us/about/diversity-inclusion)

> Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion. 36% Supervisory positions identify as people of color. Centene's Board of Directors. 42% Women and/or identify as people of color. (https://www.centene.com/who-we-are/diversity-and-inclusion)

In sum, these results provide evidence of significant variability in the contents and types

of expression-based signals communicated by Fortune 500 firms on their websites. Specifically,

the firms with expression-based signals conveyed four types of diversity signals: EO; BC; VI;

and Mixed. The results suggest that the BC type is more prevalent (n=204, 41%) than other types

of expression-based signals.

On the other hand, only 104 firms communicated evidence-based diversity signals such as diversity awards, employee demographics, and leadership demographics to demonstrate their diversity-related performance alongside expression-based signals. These findings indicate that companies may send expression-based signals and evidence-based signals simultaneously in the form of diversity signal sets for receiver interpretation.

2.4 Study One Discussion

Diversity management literature has long argued that organizations communicate expression-based signals when communicating an approach to managing diversity (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Singh & Point, 2004; Wang et al., 2022). However, to my knowledge, there is no research that examines organizational communication of other diversity signals. In this study, I complement previous research by examining the prevalence of diversity signal sets in US Fortune 500 firms. I examined how organizations send expression-based and evidence-based signals to communicate their beliefs on approaching diversity and their evidence of diversity-related performance. Organizations primarily communicate expression-based signals as isolated signals without any evidence of their action or performance on diversity. However, I found evidence of the presence of diversity signal sets transmitting multiple expression-based and evidence-based diversity signals simultaneously in more than twenty percent of US Fortune 500 firms (Drover et al., 2018).

Using TCA methods, I collected data from US Fortune 500 firms to better understand large firms' diversity-related communication. Firms communicated their beliefs on diversity primarily from a compliance perspective (EO), bottom-line perspective (BC), people perspective (VI), or a mix of two or three of these types. The results suggest that a greater number of firms communicate BC type of expression-based signals on their websites as compared to the other

59

three types. The results indicate that an economic motive predominates companies' expression-based diversity communication.

While the results suggest that most firms consider diversity a resource for financial success, I found that firms also send a type of expression-based signal beyond the compliance and utilitarian arguments for diversity. The organizations sending such signals, which I label as VI-type expression-based signals, focus on a people orientation. In any organization, employees are concerned with their own issues, such as the opportunity to bring their authentic selves to work, have a voice, and grow professionally (Plaut, Thomas, Tran, et al., 2014). Companies espousing VI type of expression-based signals focus on 'valuing diversity rather than managing diversity' and appear to do so based on a morality argument rather than arguments based on business imperatives or legal compliance. Organizations also communicated a mixed type of expression-based signal comprising a mix of two or more types of expression-based signals.

Similarly, firms communicated three forms of evidence-based signals in the form of diversity performance facts: third-party bestowed diversity awards or recognition; employee demographics; and leadership demographics. 21% of Fortune 500 firms sent evidence-based signals. Alongside their evidence-based signals, these firms also communicated one of the types of expression-based signals, providing evidence that firms may send diversity signal sets instead of only isolated expression-based signals. The companies that provided evidence-based signals were more likely to have VI type expression-based signals (34%), followed by mixed type expression-based signals (29%) and BC type expression-based signals (25%).

Overall, Study 1 uncovered how organizations communicate isolated expression-based signals and diversity signal sets when organizations pair their evidence-based signals with certain types of expression-based signals. Study 1 provides a glimpse into the nature of diversity signals

and diversity signal sets. It builds a foundation for Study 2 and Study 3 to investigate the implications of multiple diversity signals and diversity signal sets.

2.4.1 Contribution and Theoretical Implications

One contribution of this study is that it offers an answer to the question: What are the multiple diversity signal sets communicated by organizations? To my knowledge, no study has comprehensively provided a comparative account of expression-based signals and evidence-based signals related to diversity communicated by organizations. The results of this study indicate that, in practice, many of the expression-based signals sent by firms follow from the theoretical foundations in the literature on diversity. Specifically, organizations' expression-based signals can be categorized into four main groups: (i) EO types that are compliance-oriented, focused on providing equal opportunities to everyone based on their merit, qualifications, and skills; (ii) BC types that are business or profit-oriented, focused on bottom-line rationale or financial profitability for incorporating diversity in their workplace; (iii) VI types that are people or employee-oriented, focused on diverse members' empowerment, belonging, and inclusion in all work-group processes; and (iv) a mix of two or three of these types. Several characteristics of the first three types of expression-based signals map onto those presented in the prior literature on group-level communication (see Table 2-1). However, some nuances of this research depart from existing literature because many companies communicated a mix of two or more types of expression-based signals, such as a mix of EO and BC, BC and VI, or a mix of all three.

Approximately 1 in 5 (n=96) Fortune 500 firms did not have an expression-based signal visible on their websites, suggesting that there could be industry-related differences between the firms that publish and do not publish expression-based signals. Indeed, 71 out of 97 firms that

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did not have expression-based signals were from manufacturing industries. The results indicated that industries requiring minimal or no interaction with end users or customers were more likely to have no expression-based signals on their websites.

Similarly, companies' evidence-based signals focused on diversity performance facts like diversity awards or recognition, workforce composition, and leadership demographics. Interestingly, organizations with no expression-based signals also did not communicate evidence-based signals. Current study findings suggest that organizations may communicate evidence-based signals to enhance the credibility of their expression-based signals. Organizations that published evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity performance facts) were more likely to have VI type expression-based signals and were least likely to have EO type expression-based signals in their diversity-related communication.

2.4.2 Limitations and Research Implications

The data in Study One were collected from websites of Fortune 500 firms, raising questions of the generalizability of these findings to smaller firms. As well, these data are cross-sectional, and we cannot attribute causal relationships from this. However, in line with institutional theory, it is possible that the findings related to the typology of diversity signal sets would generalize beyond Fortune 500 companies. Institutional theory suggests that smaller firms mimic the language and behaviour of established firms to gain a reputation and appear legitimate in the corporate world (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Future research could empirically investigate whether organizations beyond US Fortune 500 firms signal these types of expression-based and evidence-based signals.

CHAPTER 3 - STUDY TWO: DIVERSITY SIGNAL SETS AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Study One presented a TCA to provide a comprehensive typology of diversity signal sets, expression-based signals (i.e., EO, BC, VI, and mixed) and evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity performance facts like diversity awards, employee demographics, and leadership demographics). I found that expression-based signals primarily communicate the rationale for diversity based on equality, non-discrimination, financial performance, and inclusion within an organization.

In Study Two, I explore consistency between different diversity signals that create diversity signal sets and their association with related organizational outcomes. Specifically, I examine whether different types of expression-based signals are correlated with certain types of evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity awards) and whether there is an association between different expression-based signals and corresponding organizational outcomes (i.e., discrimination lawsuits and financial performance).

Drawing on signaling theory, I propose that multiple diversity signals can act as rhetorical signal sets conveying information relevant to corresponding organizational performance (Drover et al., 2018). Signal sets are the "collection of signals used by the signal receiver for the interpretation" (Drover et al., 2018, p. 218). In this study, I answer the research questions: *What kind of outcomes can be predicted by expression-based signals? What is the association between expression-based signals and evidence-based signals?*

3.1 Expression-based Signals and Organizational Outcomes

Changes in the demographic landscape described in the first chapter push organizations to redefine diversity and reassess their approaches toward managing diversity. Organizations often use expression-based signals to express their beliefs on how diversity should operate (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022). As discussed in previous chapters, an expression-

based signal is the written communication that organizations use to signal their diversity beliefs to stakeholders. Previous research presumes that expression-based signals are an integral part of organizational communication (Hon & Brunner, 2000). However, to my knowledge, there is no research which explores the association between expression-based signals, evidence-based signals, and organizational performance.

Despite this lack of research on expression-based signals and their association with enacted outcomes, research from organizational mission statements—meaning formal declarations that reflect the desired state of an organization — suggests that these statements include organization's diversity values (Hirota et al., 2010; Gilbert et al., 1999). Previous research has included expression-based signals in organizational mission statements (Kaiser et al., 2013). Bart et al. (2001) demonstrate that mission statements influence employee behavior and substantially impact organizational performance. Similarly, Bartkus and Glassman (2008) found that diversity-related mentions in mission statements are positively associated with corresponding diversity-related behaviours. These findings indicate that performance is impacted when diversity is mentioned in mission statements. There is the possibility of an association between expression-based signals and subsequent performance because expression-based signals typically include references to primary stakeholders and the firm's commitment to diversity. In this study, I investigate the association of expression-based signals with their enacted outcomes and whether some types of expression-based signals are correlated with evidence-based signals related to diversity performance facts (i.e., third-party bestowed diversity awards).

Ideally, firms should be honest and accurate in their expression-based signals to avoid any damage to their image or reputation related to communicating false signals (Bartkus & Glassman,

2008; Connelly et al., 2011). However, despite the risk of false signals, some research suggests that an organization's official statements may not always represent an accurate self-declaration (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Waddock & Smith, 2000; Wright, 2002). The consequences of violating the behavioural standards mentioned in expression-based signals could include a damaged reputation or increased levels of distrust from stakeholders such as investors, shareholders, customers, employees, and job seekers (Bartkus & Glassman, 2008; Drover et al., 2018). While such consequences may often deter false signals, it is possible that expression-based signals can sometimes serve simply as 'window dressing' (Trevino & Weaver, 2001, p. 654). Nonetheless, there is evidence to suggest that most organizational decisions and policies related to diversity are aligned with diversity-related goals (Wang et al., 2022). Consistent with this finding, there should be a positive relationship between expression-based signals and related progress indicators. However, no previous study has studied the relationship between expression-based signals and corresponding performance, despite considerable research on mission statement contents and related performance (e.g., Bartkus & Glassman, 2008; Fiset & Hajj, 2022).

Study One findings suggest that organizations communicate expression-based signals to signal fairness or non-discrimination, the profit rationale of diversity, and the value of including or integrating employees in all work processes. Based on the main messages in each of those three types of expression-based signals, I identified three potential outcomes. For example, EO type expression-based signals focus on equality and non-discrimination; therefore, I focused on discrimination lawsuits and settlements as an outcome of interest. Similarly, BC type expression-based signals focus on enhancing diversity for profit maximization; therefore, I focused on financial performance as another outcome. Lastly, VI type expression-based signals focus on welcoming and including people from diverse backgrounds; therefore, I focused on third-party

bestowed diversity awards, such as Best Places to Work for Diversity (BWFD), as an evidence-based signal.

3.1.1 Discrimination Lawsuits

EO Type Expression-based Signals and Discrimination Lawsuits. Organizations following the EO type of expression-based signals mainly focus on preventing discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping in the workplace (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Leslie et al., 2019). The evolution of the concept of EO in organizations traces back to the comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that was predominant in the USA, an early adopter of equal employment opportunity policies in the workplace (Gutman, 1993). The civil rights movement in the USA resulted in two federal efforts to address discrimination: affirmative action and equal employment opportunity (EEO) (Hammerman, 1984). In 1961, federal legislators used President Kennedy's Executive Orders 11246 and 11375 to require affirmative action as a means to end discrimination based on sex, race, or country of origin (Gutman, 1993; Hammerman, 1984). After the promulgation of the US Civil Rights Act of 1964, the central EEO law in the USA, which was popularly known as Title VII, workplace discrimination based on age, sex, race, colour, religion, and country of origin became illegal for employers at large (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998).

Many countries adopted practices and legislation similar to the US EEO law and regulations. For example, in 1970 and 1976, respectively, the UK introduced the Equal Pay Act and the Equal Opportunities Commission (Manning, 1996). Canada introduced its first Employment Equity Act in 1986, following debates on systemic discrimination during the mid-1980s and recommendations from the Abella Commission (Agocs, 2002). The Abella Commission developed the idea of employment equality (EE) and inspired the formation of the Federal EE Act, 1986, which was founded to end systemic discrimination and efficiently promote

employment opportunities for women, people with disabilities, aboriginal people, and visible or racial minorities (Agocs, 2002; Leck & Saunders, 1992).

Consequently, organizations adopted an EO approach to diversity in their communication to signal to the courts and other government agencies (such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)) that they were legally compliant (Deitch & Hegewisch, 2013). Frequently, organizations signaled their EO type expression-based signals by elaborating on the importance of fair and equitable treatment in the workplace and by discussing potential repercussions of discriminatory workplace practices (Podsiadlowski et al., 2013). However, EO type expression-based signals focus on equal treatment of people from all backgrounds without considering the importance of demographic differences such as gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, and disability (Dass & Parker, 1999; Ely & Thomas, 2001). Scholars argue that organizations following EO type signals tend to marginalize the identity of underrepresented groups by expecting them to assimilate into the dominant group culture (Cox, 1993; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Hajro et al., 2017). Organizations signaling EO often focus on symbolic compliance to protect themselves from discrimination lawsuits rather than working on substantive organizational change to protect employees (Deitch & Hegewisch, 2013). While focusing on litigation prevention strategies may identify discrimination in the workplace, such defensive practices often mask, rather than eliminate, discriminatory incidents (Bisom-Rapp, 1998). In fact, research has found that ignoring differences such as sex, race, and age while following EEO in diversity programs can create a backlash that leads to increased discrimination claims and lawsuits (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

Organizations' EO type expression-based signals can have a counterproductive effect at the individual employee level because of this focus on legal compliance as a means of reducing

discrimination in the workplace. For example, research suggests that controlling directives against discrimination may hinder internal motivation resources and produce outcomes opposite to those intended (Blanchard et al., 1991). Experimental findings further show that motivating people to reduce prejudice based on a message to comply with social norms of non-discrimination produces the opposite effect — an increase in discrimination (Legault et al., 2011).

In keeping with the aforementioned research, I argue that EO type expression-based signals may trigger a backlash and ultimately increase workplace discrimination incidents.

BC Type Expression-based Signals and Discrimination Lawsuits. BC for diversity gained traction in the 1990s because of the shaky legal foundations for workplace equality and because EEO programs failed to bring real social change (Colella et al., 2017). While affirmative action and non-discrimination policies helped to increase job opportunities for people from underrepresented groups, a significant number remained relegated to low-status and low-paying positions within their organizations (US Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

Ambiguities in EEO law which prohibited discrimination without clearly defining the term created an unstable legal environment for employers (Bisom-Rapp, 1999). As a result, the EEO approach is symbolic of legal conformity rather than an authentic vehicle for substantive change. During this period, the North American population was also becoming more multicultural (Cox & Blake, 1991). In the mid-1980s, the Hudson Institute released a Workforce 2000 report calling for organizations to become more diverse in response to these significant demographic changes (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). As a result, the diversity rhetoric shifted from EO to BC, and organizations started to consider diversity as a strategic asset (Vallas, 2003).

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Organizations following BC type expression-based signals focus on the strategic importance of people with heterogeneous identities (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Research suggests a positive association between mission content and employees' mission engagement (Desmidt, 2016). The framing of diversity as a business asset promotes specific diversity practices and enhances workgroup functioning (Podsiadlowski et al., 2013; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Hajro et al., 2017). Recent research findings report that teams following the BC approach to diversity have a lower cultural bias (Hajro et al., 2017). In line with these findings, I argue that organizations signaling the BC type expression-based signals should have a smaller number of workplace discrimination incidents compared to organizations following EO type expression-based signals. However, the bottom-line rationale of BC type expression-based signals that organizations should value diversity only if it is profitable may not successfully level the playing field for all employees within an organization (O'Leary & Weathington, 2006). Diversity scholars suggest that the profit-based explanation of diversity can marginalize underrepresented group employees (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Konrad, 2003). As such, we may still find discrimination in organizations that have adopted the BC type of expression-based signals.

VI Type Expression-based Signals and Discrimination Lawsuits. The linguistic evolution of diversity rhetoric in corporate communication continued to evolve between 2000 and 2011, shifting from BC to diversity to inclusion (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014; Shore et al., 2011). The term inclusion was first coined by practitioners and is now widely used in academic work (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). Inclusion is concerned with integrating differences in all organization's workgroup processes (Nishii, 2013). Inclusion is often tacked onto diversity and labelled as diversity and inclusion in the expression-based signals to recognize the value of diversity and integrate differences within the business practices of the firms (Roberson, 2006).

Study One findings demonstrate that organizations with VI type of expression-based signals convey a proactive strategy that values diversity as an integral part of an organization's work processes. Previous qualitative research on teams suggests that when workgroups highly value diversity as an integral part of work processes, we create learning environments where all workgroup members reap the benefits of diversity (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Hajro et al., 2017; Podsialowski et al., 2013). This approach resembles inclusion because it satisfies an individual's need for uniqueness and belongingness (Brewer, 1991; Shore et al., 2011). There is a great deal of research which emphasizes that multicultural work groups valuing diversity and learning from one another contributes to organizational success (Dass & Parker, 1999; Dwertmann et al., 2016; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Hajro et al., 2017; Thomas & Ely, 1996). However, because these studies focused on diversity in workgroup processes, it is unclear whether such findings are similar at the organizational level. Specifically, we do not know whether organizations signaling a VI approach to diversity in their expression-based signals will be associated with positive diversity performance.

No previous study has examined the relationship between expression-based signals (e.g., VI type signals) communicated by organizations and diversity performance outcomes, such as the frequency of discrimination lawsuits. However, some recent evidence from the individual level suggests that employees' perceptions of the organizational integration-and-learning approach to diversity are positively associated with positive employee outcomes. Rabl et al. (2020) found that employee perceptions of an organization following the VI approach to diversity are positively associated with their perceived ethical virtue, organizational citizenship behaviour and negatively related to interpersonal workplace deviance. Similarly, Hofhius et al. (2012) found a positive relationship between the VI approach to diversity and cultural identity salience of branch

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employees, where the majority group members became more accepting of other cultural perspectives, and the minority employees had stronger organizational identification. In light of these findings, it seems reasonable to suggest that organizations signaling VI types of expression-based signals would have a negative association with discrimination lawsuits filed against them. Therefore, I hypothesize that:

> *Hypothesis 1: VI type expression-based signals will have a more strongly negative association with discrimination lawsuits and settlements compared to BC and EO type expression-based signals.*

3.1.2 Financial Performance

EO Type Expression-based Signals and Financial Performance. At the macroeconomic level, equality of opportunity can have economic and social benefits by increasing the labour supply, enhancing efficiency through effective use of human resources, reducing labour costs, and increasing average income (Riley et al., 2008). However, although macroeconomic benefits may impact all businesses, less is known about the impact of signaling the EO type expression-based signals on the financial performance of specific organizations.

Only a handful of research studies have examined the relationship between EO policy and various aspects of business performance. Perotin et al. (2003) found that managers perceive higher labour productivity in firms with formal EO policies than in firms without such policies after controlling for other factors. However, Dex et al. (2001) found no association between EO policies and business performance. Instead, they identified a negative relationship between EO policies and sales growth due to high labour turnover among organizations with equal opportunities policies. Gray (2002) reported negative, positive, and insignificant links between financial performance and a range of EO practices in the workplace. These three studies

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measured the financial outcomes as managerial perceptions of their firm's profit or productivity compared to similar establishments. It is unclear whether these findings, as related to the relationship between the EO approach and subjective measures of financial performance, will also extend to the relationship between EO policies and objective measures of financial performance.

Evidence suggests an unclear association between EO policies and related business outcomes. Research findings from the UK indicate that a lack of EO policies leads to higher labour turnover and reduced morale (Özbilgin, & Tatli, 2011; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2007). However, Riley et al. (2008) found no definitive link between EO policies and organizational performance. These findings indicate the indirect effect of the EO approach on financial performance through an impact on employee productivity but do not suggest a relationship between EO approach and objective financial performance such as return on assets, return on equity, or return on investment.

BC Type Expression-based Signals and Financial Performance. Organizations signaling the BC type of expression-based signals tend to focus on a bottom-line rationale for incorporating diversity into their workplace (Dass & Parker, 1999; Ely &Thomas, 2001; Hajro et al., 2017). An organization operating with the BC approach to diversity tries to achieve business objectives such as cost reductions, higher return on investment, and reduced turnover (Cox, 1991). The primary rationale for workplace diversity amongst organizations signaling BC type expression-based signals' is to gain access to new market opportunities, increase sales, and enhance profitability, something which is further encouraged by global trends of immigration, competitiveness, diverse markets, and customers (Ely & Thomas, 2001). A resource-based view suggests that one primary motivation for entering these new markets is to gain access to resources to help face challenges in

existing markets (Hitt et al., 2006). For example, we saw organizations begin to follow a BC approach to diversity in the 2000s as a way to cope with global immigration, globalization, and the prevalence of multiculturalism in the workplace. Given the increase in ethnic and cultural diversity within US markets, formerly niche markets have become desirable and worth pursuing by all organizations (Volpone et al., 2018). Marketers who share the same cultural background as the markets they wish to access have a substantial advantage arising from cultural understanding (Avery et al., 2012). Gaining access to new markets is the primary antecedent of sales growth and financial performance (see Bahadir et al., 2009, for a meta-analytic review).

Organizations following the BC type of expression-based signals portray diversity as beneficial for business, including (but not limited to) financial profits and earnings (Herring, 2009). Proponents of the BC for diversity claim that diversity brings financial gains (Cox, 1993; Hubbard, 2004; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Indeed, a large body of evidence, including meta-analyses, suggests that diversity in the workplace is positively related to multiple business outcomes. These include: accounting returns such as return on assets (ROA) and return on equity (ROE); sales growth; employee productivity; market performance such as stock performance and shareholder returns; and product performance such as product innovation (Carter et al., 2010; Herring, 2009; Miller & Triana, 2009; Post & Byron, 2015; Talke et al., 2010; Webber & Donnahue, 2001). Therefore, it is likely that the organizations signaling BC type expression-based signals will have better financial performance than organizations signaling EO type expression-based signals.

VI Type Expression-based Signals and Financial Performance. The VI type of expression-based signal focuses on enhancing diversity in all work-group processes within an organization and represents a proactive business strategy that regards diversity as a valuable resource to create

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learning environments where all employees benefit from a diverse work context (Hajro et al., 2017; Dass & Parker, 1999; Ely & Thomas, 2001). Shore et al. (2011) posits that organizations following such an approach value inclusion, and subsequently include members of diverse groups in all work-group processes. While there are no studies that investigate the association between the VI diversity approach and financial outcomes, related literature suggests a positive association. Qualitative findings suggest that workgroups following the integration-and-learning VI approach tend to focus on the uniqueness and expertise of group members to gain long-term benefits such as efficiency, innovation, and competitive advantage (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Podsiadlowski et al., 2013; Rabl et al., 2020). When organizations value and integrate their diverse employees, this has been associated with employees' organizational citizenship behaviours via ethical virtue signaling to employees (Rabl et al., 2020). Research findings suggest a positive association between organizational citizenship behaviour—defined as an "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization" (Organ et al., 2006, p.8) —and organizational performance indicators such as operating efficiency, increased profit, cost reduction, low employee turnover, and customer satisfaction (see Podsakoff et al., 2009 for metanalytic review). In their field-study report, Kochan et al. (2003) recommended that organizations look beyond the business case approach to diversity, instead genuinely integrating diversity into work-group processes. It does little to enhance an organization's performance to simply hire diverse employees without incorporating meaningful representation of different groups throughout the organization (Heilman, 1994). Therefore, organizations with VI type of expression-based signals should have better financial performance than organizations communicating BC type and EO type expression-based signals.

Hypothesis 2: VI type expression-based signals will have a more strongly positive association with financial performance compared to BC and EO expression-based signals.

3.2 Expression-based Signals and Evidence-based Signals (Diversity Awards)

The reputational awards received by organizations are publicly available information representing the aggregate assessments of organizational prestige which help to explain the stratification of institutions and industries (Martins, 2005; Shapiro,1987; Walker, 2010). External diversity awards attempt to measure the diversity of an organization's employee base and the inclusiveness of its practices, policies, and work climate (Tayar, 2017). Such awards focus on how company programs and policies may affect underrepresented groups (Roberson & Park, 2007). Research suggests that these awards represent a source of organizational legitimacy that encourages organizations to consistently align with the rankings criteria in terms of their organizational performance and behaviors (Gioia & Corley, 2002). Diversity awards as external benchmarks are more useful than internal standards because they are more transparent and verifiable (Kolk & Perego, 2014). While there remains some danger that organizations may garner awards based solely on symbolic activities without substantive change, many modern diversity awards require data-based evidence of substantive actions (McKee et al., 2005; Tayar, 2017).

Organizations signaling the EO type of expression-based signals are compliance-oriented, focused on providing equal opportunities to people from all backgrounds to comply with legislation related to fairness and non-discrimination (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022). Such organizations' diversity programs tend to focus on changes in antidiscrimination and are unlikely to be associated with proactive strategies that go above and beyond legal requirements to create

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fully inclusive workplaces (Holmberg & Smith, 2014; Stonewall, 2015). On the other hand, organizations signaling the BC type of expression-based signals only view diversity as a resource if it is profitable. Consequently, it is more likely that organizations making BC justifications for diversity will display diversity among their employees only when there are opportunities to access new markets or benefit from a diverse customer base. In addition, Study One found that organizations signaling BC type of expression-based signals primarily value diversity as it relates to accessing diverse markets and customers and tend to integrate cultural differences for market-based reasons. In contrast, organizations signaling VI type of expression-based signals celebrate diversity; these people-oriented organizations value the equal representation of people from underrepresented groups in different levels of management. Consequently, I expect such organizations to be ranked as the best places to work for people from underrepresented groups compared to organizations signaling BC type expression-based signals and EO type expression-based signals.

Overall, there seems to be some evidence to indicate that organizations signaling EO and BC type of expression-based signals are more likely to manage diversity within the boundaries of legal requirements and bottom-line rationale, respectively, rather than focusing on substantive changes related to diversity and inclusion in all work-group processes (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Holmberg & Smith, 2014). As a result, such organizations are less likely to be associated with greater diversity rewards or rankings than organizations signaling VI type of expression-based signals.

Hypothesis 3: VI type expression-based signals will have a more strongly positive association with diversity rewards/rankings compared to BC and EO type expression-based signals.

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3.3 No Expression-based Signals and Outcomes

If organizations signaling one of the types of expression-based signals have a significant negative association with discrimination lawsuits and a positive association with financial performance and evidence-based signals (diversity-related performance), then it might follow that the relationships should be opposite for organizations that have no expression-based signals. Organizations with no expression-based signals suggest a lack of strategic commitment to diversity and inclusion. In such organizations, the diversity necessary to achieve espoused outcomes may be lacking in different levels of management. Therefore, I hypothesize that:

> *Hypothesis 4: Lack of diversity signals will have a significant positive association with (a) discrimination lawsuits and settlements and a significant negative association with (b) financial performance and (c) diversity-rewards/rankings.*

3.4 Study Two Methods

3.4.1 Procedure

The sample for the current study consisted of the 2020 Fortune 500 firms. I chose US Fortune 500 firms as they represent the largest firms in the world in terms of sales revenue and employee size (Fortune, 2020). The final data set included 493 firms, as seven companies had been merged or acquired by another Fortune 500 firm. I performed correlational analysis to identify the association between different types of expression-based signals with an evidence-based signal, and related organizational outcomes. The data for the independent variable (i.e., types of expression-based signals) were collected at one point in time in 2020, whereas the data for dependent variables (i.e., evidence-based signal and organizational outcomes) consisted of the five-year mean across 2015-2019 for continuous variables or a frequency count for that same time period for nominal variables.

3.4.2 Measures

Predictor Variables

The independent variable is the expression-based signal type. Four different types of expression-based signals (EO, BC, VI, and mixed type identified from Study One) and the lack of expression-based signals were operationalized as predictor variables. The expression-based signals were coded in line with the typology identified from Study One for each Fortune 500 firm, based on their rationale for promoting workplace diversity. The type of expression-based signal was measured as a five-level multicategorical predictor applying indicator coding (Hayes, 2018). Companies with no expression-based signals were the reference group (all coded as 0s), and dummy variables (D1, D2, D3, and D4) were created for the four types of expression-based signals. D1 was set to 1 for all companies that communicated EO type expression-based signals and 0 for all other types; D2 was set to 1 for all companies that communicated BC type expression-based signals and 0 for all other types; D3 was set to 1 for all companies that communicated VI type expression-based signals and 0 for all other types; D4 was set to 1 for all companies that communicated mixed type expression-based signals and 0 for all other types. A list of keywords and themes developed to identify the types of expression-based signals are explained in detail in Study One's findings.

Outcome Variables[2]

Discrimination Lawsuits. Discrimination lawsuits were operationalized in terms of

discrimination likelihood and frequency of discrimination lawsuits filed against the firm(s).

Discrimination likelihood was coded as binary "1" if the firm was named in an EEOC litigation

settlement and "0" if not. The frequency of discrimination lawsuits was measured by counting

the total number of EEOC violations (i.e., litigation cases) filed against the firm(s) in a five-year

period (2015-2019). I gathered data for measures from the publicly available repository of EEOC

litigation settlements for 2015 to 2019, which was obtained from the EEOC website

(www.eeoc.gov). Previous research suggests EEOC violations is an appropriate measure of an

organization's discriminatory behaviour (Kanze et al., 2019). The frequency ranged from 0 for

the best non-discriminatory firms to 15 for the worst number of discrimination lawsuits against a

firm.

Financial Performance. Financial performance was operationalized as accounting-based

performance using two measures: average return on assets (ROA) and average return on

investment (ROI, measured as net income divided by total capital) from 2015 to 2019. ROI

was chosen because it has been recommended as the most comprehensive measure of

financial performance (Venkatraman & Ramanujam, 1986; Woo & Willard, 1983). ROI has

been frequently used in studies related to performance outcomes of diversity (Ernhardt et al.,

2003; Miller & Trianna, 2009; Shrader et al., 1997). Similarly, ROA was chosen because it is

considered a measure of competitive advantage, and diversity management is often regarded

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[2] The data for independent variables were collected in 2020. For dependent variables, data for 2020 was unavailable as the year 2020 was still running. Therefore, to provide a more accurate assessment of average performance on these outcomes, the five-year average between 2015 to 2019 was taken when computing dependent variables. A temporal separation of predictor and outcome variables appropriately tests these hypotheses (Cook, et al., 1979; Spencer, 2019). As the expression-based signals were all collected from beginning-to-mid 2020, I assume that the diversity message of the company is the reflection of plans, actions, and changes that occurred in the organization during the last five-year period. Measuring average future performance over a number of years would be ideal and is left for future studies.

as necessary by organizations to gain competitive advantage (Cox & Blake, 1991). Following the procedures of Staw and Epstein (2000), ROA and ROI were first standardized and aggregated to create a five-year average performance measure.

I obtained the information related to financial performance from the website Morningstar (Morningstar.com). Morningstar is considered an authentic and legitimate platform for obtaining financial information on publicly traded companies (Blake & Morey, 2000; Hong & Najmi, 2020). The Morningstar Investment Research Center provides comprehensive financial data for investors, practitioners, and academics (Hong & Najmi, 2020). Publicly traded companies are required by law to publish their financial performance data (Stittle, 2003). Morningstar's free database represents the most complete and up-to-date listing of financial data on the internet (Ammann et al., 2019). Several published studies have used this database to access firm-level financial information (e.g., Ammann et al., 2019; Armstrong et al., 2019). ROA ranged from -0.06 percent to 23 percent, and ROI ranged from -12 percent to 46 percent.

Evidence-based Signal. I measured evidence-based signal using two measures: (i) frequency count of how many times the organization was selected as one of the 100 best places to work for diversity (BWFD); and (ii) frequency count of how many times an organization got recognition from DiversityInc as one of the top 50 companies for diversity between 2015 and 2019 (i.e., '4' would be the rating if the sampled firm was selected as BWFD four times between 2015 to 2019). By looking at the list of the past five years in both *Fortune* and DiversityInc, the current study ensures that the companies examined have a sustained track record of being ranked a great workplace for diversity. Next, I explain why I chose BWFD and DiversityInc as the measures of evidence-based signal.

Fortune research partner 'Great Place to Work' (www.greatplacetowork.com)

annually compiles a list of the 100 BWFD representing the organizations creating diversity-supportive environments for women, people of colour, LGBT, aging employees, and persons with disabilities (www.fortune.com). BWFD is one form of diversity ranking given to organizations where historically underrepresented and discriminated against people experience their workplace as a great place to work and are represented at every level in the organization, including the Board. The BWFD ranking is based on nationwide survey feedback representing more than 4.8 million US employees. The ranking is based on a 60-question survey of daily workplace experiences related to the trust and pride of people from underrepresented groups. The survey also considers employees' everyday experiences of innovation, organizational values, and their leaders' effectiveness. Finally, considering industry trends, the ranking assesses the diversity of the company's overall workforce, management, and top leadership positions. The BWFD ranking is determined by analyzing confidential survey feedback of more than 4.8 million US employees (Great Place to Work, n.d.). To be considered, firms must employ at least 1000 employees, enabling Fortune 500 firms to fit in this category as all 500 firms had more than 1000 employees during the time of data collection. To make sure that the survey results truly represent all employees, Great Place to Work requires that Trust Index survey results are accurately calculated at a 95% confidence interval with a 5% margin of error or better.

I chose BWFD ranking as an indicator of the evidence-based signal on diversity performance because past studies have identified a positive correlation between diversity-related variables (such as diversity in top leadership positions) and a firm's appearance on *Fortune's* "100 Best Companies to work for" list (Bernardi et al., 2006, p. 235). This list

uses company practices informed by the survey of at least 400 random samples of employees for each company (Ballou et al., 2003; Levering & Moskowitz, 2000; Dominick et al., 2021). Researchers have also used *Fortune's* BWFD list to measure workplace attitudes (e.g., Dominick et al., 2021; Lau & May, 1998; Fulmer et al., 2003).

On the other hand, DiversityInc, relative to *Fortune*, takes a broader and more objective perspective by ranking firms based on their talent pools, equitable employee development, leadership/CEO commitment, and supplier diversity (diversityinc.com). Companies submit detailed surveys to DiversityInc, with the publication requiring the CEO or another senior leader to sign a notarized form attesting to the veracity of the submitted information to ensure data accuracy. Every organization that submits the survey receives a free report card to compare its performance relative to other participating companies. To reduce selection bias (Winship & Mare, 1992), I looked at the association between expression-based signals and both types of diversity awards separately by counting the number of times the companies were awarded by DiversityInc and BWFD, respectively. The mean scores for BWFD and DiversityInc ranged from 0 to 5.

3.5 Study Two: Analyses and Results

Hypotheses were tested by calculating point bi-serial correlations between the types of expression-based signals and outcomes. Point-biserial correlations were used to measure the strength of the association between two variables. Point-biserial correlation method is recommended to identify the association between multi-categorical variables and continuous variables (Flora & Curran, 2004; Olsson et al., 1982). Table 3-1 presents the results.

Test of Significance of the Difference between Two Correlations

To confirm correlational findings, I also performed a Z-test examining whether the two correlations were significantly different from each other. Table 3-2 shows the Z-test scores comparing expression-based signals and outcomes.

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis 1 was not supported as there were no significant associations between EO ($r = 0.05$, $p > 0.05$), BC ($r = -0.01$, $p > 0.05$) and VI ($r = 0.01$, $p > 0.05$) type expression-based signals and discrimination lawsuits. However, descriptive statistics suggested that the companies communicating EO type expression-based signals had faced more discrimination lawsuits (18%) compared to the firms signaling mixed (17%), VI (13%), and BC statements (12%). On the other hand, 6% of the companies without expression-based signals had faced discrimination lawsuits. These findings could have been influenced by meso-level (i.e., firm or industry-level) factors such as industry type, firm size, number of employees, number of branches, and firm location.

Hypothesis 2 was not supported even though a positive association between firms indicating the VI types of expression-based signals and financial performance indicators – ROA ($r = 0.07$, $p < 0.10$) and ROIC ($r = -0.08$, $p < 0.10$) approached significance at the confidence interval of ninety percent. There were no significant positive associations between the firms signaling other types of expression-based signals and their financial performance. On average, firms signaling the VI types of expression-based signals had a ROA (five-year average) of 6.22% and an ROIC (five-year average) of 11.33%.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that firms with VI type expression-based signals are more likely to be associated with the best diversity-related performance. Therefore, I expected a more significant number of diversity awards (such as frequency of BWFD rankings and DiversityInc)

in firms that signaled VI type of expression-based signal compared to the other types of expression-based signals. I found support for this hypothesis. As shown in Table 3-1, there was a significant positive association between the firms signaling VI type of expression-based signals and diversity performance — BWFD rankings ($r = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$) and DiversityInc ($r = 0.12$, $p < 0.01$). Z-test between two correlations (Table 3-2) found significant differences in correlations between firms communicating EO ($Z = -2.12$, $p < 0.05$) and BC ($Z = -0.10$, $p < 0.05$) type of expression-based signals and their diversity performance measured by BWFD when compared to organizations communicating VI type expression-based signals. The results indicate that organizations with VI type expression-based signals are more likely to be awarded BWFD compared to organizations communicating EO or BC type expression-based signals. For the other measure of diversity performance, DiversityInc., a Z-test showed significant differences in correlations between firms communicating BC ($Z = -0.05$, $p < 0.05$) and VI ($Z = -3.77$, $p < 0.001$) type of expression-based signals and their diversity performance measured by DiversityInc. recognition when compared to organizations communicating EO type expression-based signals. The results suggest that organizations that communicate EO type expression-based signals are less likely to be associated with diversity employer recognition compared to organizations that communicate BC or VI type expression-based signals.

Hypothesis 4 (a) was not supported as there was no significant association between the expression-based signal and discrimination lawsuits. However, there was a significant difference in the association between EO type of expression-based signals and discrimination lawsuits compared to the association between the absence of expression-based signals and discrimination lawsuits ($Z = -2.03$, $p < 0.05$).

Hypotheses 4 (b) was supported. As hypothesized, the firms with no expression-based signals had a significant negative association with financial performance — ROA (r = -0.08, p < 0.05) and ROI (r = -0.15, p < 0.01). The test of significance of differences (i.e., Z-test) between two correlations (Table 3-2) found no significant differences in correlations between firms communicating EO and BC type of expression-based signals and their ROA performance when compared to organizations not communicating any expression-based signals and their ROA performance. A Z-test, however, found significant differences in correlations between firms communicating VI type of expression-based signals and their ROA performance when compared to organizations not communicating any expression-based signals and their ROA performance (Z = -2.35, p < 0.05). In other words, organizations with no expression-based signals had significantly negative ROA performance compared to organizations communicating VI type of expression-based signals.

For the other measure of financial performance, ROI, a Z-test (Table 3-2) found significant differences in correlations between firms communicating EO (Z = -2.42, p < 0.05), BC (Z = -3.32, p < 0.001), and VI (Z = -3.41, p < 0.001) type of expression-based signals and their ROI when compared to organizations not communicating any expression-based signals and their ROI. The results indicate that a lack of expression-based signals is associated with significant negative financial performance as measured by ROI compared to communication of expression-based signals.

Hypotheses 4 (c) was supported. As hypothesized, the firms with no expression-based signals had a significant negative association with diversity-related performance using both measures — BWFD rankings (r = -0.11, p < 0.05) and DiversityInc (r = -0.16, p < 0.01). A Z-test found no significant differences in correlations between firms communicating EO and BC type

of expression-based signals and their BWFD rankings when compared to organizations not communicating any expression-based signals. However, there were significant differences in correlations between firms communicating VI type of expression-based signals and their BWFD rankings when compared to organizations not communicating any expression-based signals ($Z = -3.72$, $p < 0.001$). In other words, organizations with no expression-based signals were less likely to be nominated as BWFD compared to organizations communicating VI type of expression-based signals.

For the other measure of diversity performance, DiversityInc recognition, a Z-test (Table 3-2) found no significant differences in correlations between firms communicating EO type of expression-based signals and their DiversityInc recognition when compared to organizations not communicating any expression-based signals. However, there were significant differences in correlations between firms communicating BC ($Z = -3.93$, $p < 0.001$) and VI ($Z = -4.39$, $p < 0.001$) type of expression-based signals and their DiversityInc recognition when compared to organizations not communicating any expression-based signals. In other words, organizations with no expression-based signals were less likely to be recognized as diverse employers by DiversityInc compared to organizations communicating BC or VI type of expression-based signals.

Table 3-1: Study Two Correlations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. EO	1									
2. BC	--	1								
3. VI	--	--	1							
4. MIX	--	--	--	1						
5. NO	--	--	--	--	1					
6. Lawsuits	0.05	-0.01	0.01	0.05	-0.08	1				
7. ROA	0.02	0.02	$0.07^{\dagger}$	-0.03	-0.09^{*}	--	1			
8. ROI	0.01	0.06	$0.07^{\dagger}$	0.01	-0.15^{**}	--	--	1		
9. BWFD	-0.01	0.01	0.13^{**}	-0.05	-0.11^{*}	--	--	--	1	
10. DIVINC	-0.01	0.10^{*}	0.12^{**}	-0.05	-0.16^{**}	--	--	--	--	1

$^{**}p < 0.01$ (2-tailed); $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{\dagger}p < 0.10$; N=493

Note: EO = Equal Opportunity, BC = Business Case, VI = Value-and-Integration, MIX = Mixed type of expression-based signals, NO = Absence of expression-based signals
ROA = Return on Assets, ROIC = Return on Investment, BWFD = Best Place to Work for Diversity, and DIVINC = Diversity Incorporate.

Table 3-2: Test of Significance of the Difference between Two Correlations

Comparison	Outcome	Correlations	Z-Score	p-value
Expression-based Signals	Lawsuits			
NO vs EO		[-0.08, 0.05]	-2.03	0.04*
NO vs BC		[-0.08, -0.01]	-1.18	0.23
NO vs VI		[-0.08, 0.01]	-1.47	0.14
EO vs BC		[0.05, -0.01]	0.84	0.39
EO vs VI		[0.05, 0.01]	0.56	0.57
BC vs VI		[-0.01, 0.01]	-0.28	0.77
Expression-based Signals	ROA			
NO vs EO		[-0.09, 0.02]	-1.70	0.08
NO vs BC		[-0.09, 0.02]	-1.66	0.09
NO vs VI		[-0.09, 0.06]	-2.35	0.02*
EO vs BC		[0.02, 0.02]	-0.04	0.96
EO vs VI		[0.02, 0.06]	-0.64	0.52
BC vs VI		[0.02, 0.06]	-0.69	0.49
Expression-based Signals	ROI			
NO vs EO		[-0.15, 0.01]	-2.42	0.01*
NO vs BC		[-0.15, 0.06]	-3.32	< 0.001**
NO vs VI		[-0.15, 0.07]	-3.41	< 0.001**
EO vs BC		[0.01, 0.06]	-0.89	0.37
EO vs VI		[0.01, 0.07]	-0.98	0.32
BC vs VI		[0.06, 0.07]	-0.09	0.92
Expression-based Signals	BWFD			
NO vs EO		[-0.11, -0.01].	-1.60	0.11
NO vs BC		[-0.11, 0.01]	-1.85	0.06
NO vs VI		[-0.11, 0.13]	-3.72	< 0.001**
EO vs BC		[-0.01, 0.01]	-0.25	0.80
EO vs VI		[-0.01, 0.13]	-2.12	0.03*
BC vs VI		[0.01, 0.13]	-0.09	0.04*
Expression-based Signals	DIVINC			
NO vs EO		[-0.16, -0.05]	-1.75	0.08
NO vs BC		[-0.16, 0.10]	-3.93	< 0.001**
NO vs VI		[-0.16, 0.12]	-4.39	< 0.001**
EO vs BC		[-0.05, 0.10]	-2.18	0.03*
EO vs VI		[-0.05, 0.12]	-3.77	< 0.001**
BC vs VI		[0.10, 0.12]	-0.45	0.64

$**p < 0.001$ (2-tailed); $*p < 0.05$; N=493, EO = Equal Opportunity, BC = Business Case, VI = Value-and-Integration, NO = Absence of expression-based signals ROA = Return on Assets, ROI = Return on Investment, BWFD = Best Place to Work for Diversity, and DIVINC = Diversity Incorporate.

3.6 Study Two Discussion

In this study, I examined the capacity of expression-based signals to indicate organizational financial performance measured by ROA and ROI and diversity-related performance measured by diversity awards and discrimination incidents. First, in terms of workplace discrimination incidents as an outcome, the results suggest no significant association between firms with expression-based signals and workplace discrimination. However, the associations were significantly different between the organizations that communicated the EO type of expression-based signal and the organizations that did not communicate any form of expression-based signal. These findings were based on panel data correlations, so we cannot conclude the causal relationship between firms with no expression-based signals and their discriminatory behaviour.

Second, in terms of diversity awards as an outcome, VI type of expression-based signals were significantly associated with positive diversity-related performance compared to EO, BC or No expression-based signals. Results suggest that VI type of expression-based signals are more likely to be associated with diversity awards in terms of their external recognition than compared to firms with no expression-based signals or other types of expression-based signals. This finding also indicates that VI type expression-based signals that portray beliefs in the value of including people from diverse groups are more likely to be associated with evidence of diversity performance in terms of external rewards for their efforts.

Third, in terms of financial performance as an outcome, expression-based signals are associated with better financial performance compared with no expression-based signals. This finding highlights the possibility that firms that do not give importance to diversity in their communication are associated with poor financial performance. In Study One, I found that

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organizations that lack expression-based signals also lack evidence-based signals such as workforce diversity demographics or statistics. Moreover, a large body of evidence, including meta-analyses, suggests that workforce diversity is positively related to financial performance. Taken together, these findings report the possibility of low diversity performance and, consequently, low financial performance in companies with no expression-based signals. However, as my findings were based on panel data correlations, we cannot make causal inferences.

Collectively, Study Two suggests that expression-based signals (or a lack thereof) can be associated with a firm's financial and diversity performance. However, the strength of the associations were less than expected. This finding provides evidence that the comprehensiveness of expression-based signals does not necessarily infer strong organizational performance. The absence of a diversity message in corporate communication, which was identified in more than 20% of Fortune 500 firms, may reinforce Bart's (2001) findings that many companies decide not to post their diversity stances online because it would draw attention to poor performance related to diversity. Current study findings indicate that a significant number of the largest firms in the USA do not pay enough attention to diversity. There is also the possibility that these companies may have overlooked the benefits of communicating diversity on their website.

3.6.1 Contribution and Theoretical Implications

Study Two extends signaling theory by demonstrating the informational value of expression-based signals. I provide preliminary evidence that expression-based signals can provide information relevant to organizational performance and may serve as a decision-making tool for organizational stakeholders. Moreover, the findings related to the negative association between companies without diversity signals and their performance further bolster the findings

related to the informational value of rhetorical signals. Specifically, VI-type expression-based signals can act as quality rhetorical signals as these signals may have a positive association with evidence of diversity performance.

3.6.2 Limitations and Research Implications

Study Two is the first to examine the association between the presence (versus the absence) of different types of expression-based signals and three discrete performance outcomes (discrimination, financial performance, and diversity-related performance). Despite these strengths, the study is not without limitations. First, the study is based on cross-sectional data of expression-based signals collected at the start and middle of 2020. Therefore, I cannot make causal inferences related to the current study's findings. To minimize this limitation, predictor and outcome variables were temporally separated (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Spencer, 2019). However, future research should incorporate outcomes over multiple years after measuring the expression-based signal types. In addition, because expression-based signals may fluctuate over time, future research could investigate the possibility of expression-based signals evolving over time and their subsequent association with dimensions of organizational performance at different periods.

Another area for improvement is the sample selection of Fortune 500 firms as it is not fully representative of business firms in different parts of the world. However, Fortune 500 firms represent the largest group of US-based companies with global operations that provide employment to more than 29 million employees worldwide (Fortune, 2020). Therefore, the communication pattern of expression-based signals should be similar to other first-world economies. This also provides a future research opportunity to explore expression-based signals and their association with evidence-based signals and performance comparatively in different-

sized firms worldwide. For example, a similar study could be conducted among the FTSE firms to determine whether this study's findings are replicated in a UK context.

In sum, Study Two's findings suggest that companies with no expression-based signals are more likely to be associated with low financial and diversity performance. Moreover, I found that organizations signaling VI type of expression-based signals are more likely to be associated with better diversity performance (i.e., third-party bestowed diversity awards). The findings of Study Two encouraged me to undertake Study Three to better understand the interplay between diversity signal sets (expression-based signal and evidence-based signals) and their influence on individual outcomes.

In Study Three, I investigate how diversity signal sets are perceived by racioethnic minority jobseekers and how such signaling influences their job-related outcomes.

CHAPTER 4 – STUDY THREE: DIVERSITY SIGNAL SETS AND INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES

Study One presented content-analysis research identifying different types of expression-based signals communicated by US Fortune 500 firms. This study demonstrated that 104 firms communicated evidence-based signals using diversity facts suggestive of their performance on diversity (such as employee demographics, facts or statistics related to diversity in leadership, diversity awards, etc.). Study Two presented panel-data research examining the association between different types of expression-based and evidence-based signals and related organizational outcomes.

In this current chapter, I shift my focus to examine how diversity signal sets (expression-based signals and evidence-based signals) influence individual outcomes (i.e., organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations) of racioethnic minorities. The findings from Studies One and Two informed the choice of variables in Study Three. Specifically, I explore how evidence-based signals may strengthen or weaken racioethnic minorities' evaluation of expression-based signals and evaluate whether this relationship will be mediated by perceptions of trust and inclusion explaining organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations as outcomes.

An experimental vignette method was chosen to avoid the limitations associated with correlational studies (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). All participants were randomly assigned to experimental vignettes in which expression-based signal types and evidence-based signals had been manipulated. The relevant literature is synthesized to explain why a specific kind of expression-based signal and the presence or absence of evidence-based signals may strengthen or weaken the relationships under examination. This study adds to signaling theory by testing the

model of diversity signal sets and investigating how racioethnic minority jobseekers interpret diversity signal sets as signal receivers.

4.1 Study Three: Diversity Signal Sets and Racioethnic Minority Outcomes

Study One found that firms primarily communicate expression-based signals on their websites, but more than twenty percent of the largest firms also communicated evidence-based signals like diversity-related facts and statistics. Literature suggests that the *ways* in which job seekers interpret the contents of evidence-based signals are as important as the *contents* of expression-based signals (Avery et al., 2004; Goldberg & Allen, 2008; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). Previous research on workplace diversity suggests that those organizations communicating value in diversity will attract applicants from underrepresented groups in comparison to organizations signaling value in similarity or organizations with no mention of diversity in their corporate communications (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Gundemir et al., 2017; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Wilton et al., 2020). Few studies have examined the effectiveness of expression-based signals on jobseekers' organizational attractiveness, and even less is known about how expression-based signals may influence jobseekers' leadership aspirations. We also do not know whether applicants will look for evidence-based signals to discern the trustworthiness of expression-based signals. This is significant because while many organizations pledge to enhance diversity in their workplaces, few disclose diversity facts (Baker et al., 2022).

Study One's findings suggest that only one in five US Fortune 500 firms publish evidence-based signals in the form of third-party bestowed diversity awards or diversity-related facts or statistics suggesting their performance on diversity. Past research on diversity recruitment indicates that diversity facts or statistics influence job-related outcomes of minority

applicants (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Volpone et al., 2014). Applicants' turnover intentions rise when they become employees if the organization communicates unrealistic information during recruitment (Gallagher & Trower, 2009; Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Despite the importance of evidence-based signals during diversity recruitment, it is unknown how the presence or absence of such information will influence minority applicants' attraction and career aspirations. Research on diversity communication suggests that organizations signaling fairness or profit rationale to diversity may not have intended outcomes for minorities (e.g., Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). Rather, organizations' expression-based signals may be scrutinized by minority jobseekers as a disingenuous attempt to promote diversity. However, organizations also signal genuine efforts to promote diversity in their workplace when they communicate diversity signal sets consisting of multiple expression-based and evidence-based signals. No research, to my knowledge, has looked at the influence of diversity signal sets (both expression-based and evidence-based signals) on racioethnic minority applicants. My third study addresses this research gap by investigating the influence of diversity signal sets on racioethnic minorities' job-related outcomes.

I explore the different forms of diversity signal sets that are necessary to attract racial minority applicants and increase their leadership aspirations, research which will help organizations identify concrete ways to communicate their commitment to diversity. My research explores the positive impact on racioethnic minority jobseekers when evidence-based signals are used, an important contribution given the mixed findings of research on the effectiveness of expression-based signals. I explain how organizations can communicate diversity signal sets as evidence of their true commitment to diversity, something that may encourage racioethnic minorities to apply for jobs while addressing the systematic underrepresentation of racioethnic

minorities in different levels of management. I explore processes that might explain the influence of diversity signal sets on minority job seeker outcomes; specifically, I examine potential mediators (perceptions of inclusion, perceptions of cognitive trust, and perceptions of affective trust) and their relationship to different types of diversity signal sets and the outcomes for racioethnic minority jobseekers in terms of organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations.

Two prevalent theoretical perspectives in the diversity literature, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and social categorization theory (Brewer, 1979) – explain why the racioethnic status of applicants is influential in diversity recruitment. Social identity theory suggests that group membership is very important to the self because people are motivated to favour the in-group so as to preserve a positive sense of self (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

If categorization is a chief cause of adverse intergroup outcomes, minimizing the importance of group categorization by adopting identity-blind ideals should bring positive results. Consistent with social categorization theory, however, if group membership is essential to the individual's identity, then reducing difference is neither desirable nor possible (Leslie et al., 2019). Likewise, social identity theory suggests that individuals develop more favourable attitudes towards in-group members than out-group members in order to maintain high self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Collectively, social identity theory and social categorization theory explain why the demographic identity of an individual is important to the self and why it is even more critical for racioethnic minorities.

Furthermore, individuals search for environments that affirm their identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Since racioethnic minority group members experience more discrimination in the

workplace than dominant groups, they are often expected to be more concerned with feeling valued and included in the organization (Avery et al., 2008). In addition, the minority gap in leadership positions is problematic from both fairness and business perspectives. Minorities' representation in leadership positions is disproportionate to their participation in lower levels of management (Catalyst, 2022), and numerous research studies, including meta-analyses, indicate an association between diversity in leadership positions and financial outcomes (Bell et al., 2011; Post & Byron, 2015; Roh et al., 2019). Therefore, I selected racioethnic minorities as participants for this study. In line with signaling theory, I now explain the interplay between expression-based signals and evidence-based signals and their influence on jobseeker outcomes.

4.1.1 Targeted Recruitment and Related Signals

Organizations must expand and align their recruitment activities to adapt to the changing demographic characteristics of potential applicants if they want to attract racioethnic minorities (Volpone et al., 2014). Targeted recruitment can be tailored to individuals from underrepresented groups (i.e., targeted groups) so that the targeted group members are more attracted to the organization as a potential employer (Newman & Lyon, 2009). Targeted recruitment has also been referred to in the literature as diversity recruitment (Konrad & Linnehan 1995). Recruitment efforts largely determine workplace diversity (Newman et al., 2014). Research by Murphy et al. (1995) demonstrated that recruitment interventions likely provide the biggest payoff in attracting diverse representation of underrepresented groups in the workplace. Despite the important role that recruitment plays in establishing diverse workplaces, there has been scant research focusing on diversity recruitment (see Sackett et al., 2001; Volpone et al., 2014 for reviews).

As shown in Figure 4.1 below, I propose that expression-based signals and evidence-based signals work in tandem to influence racioethnic jobseekers' outcomes (i.e., organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations) via psychological mechanisms such as perceptions of inclusion, perceptions of cognitive trust, and perceptions of affective trust. Next, I provide theoretical explanations behind the proposed relationships and state the hypotheses.

Figure 4-1: Visual Summary of Conceptual Model (Study 3)
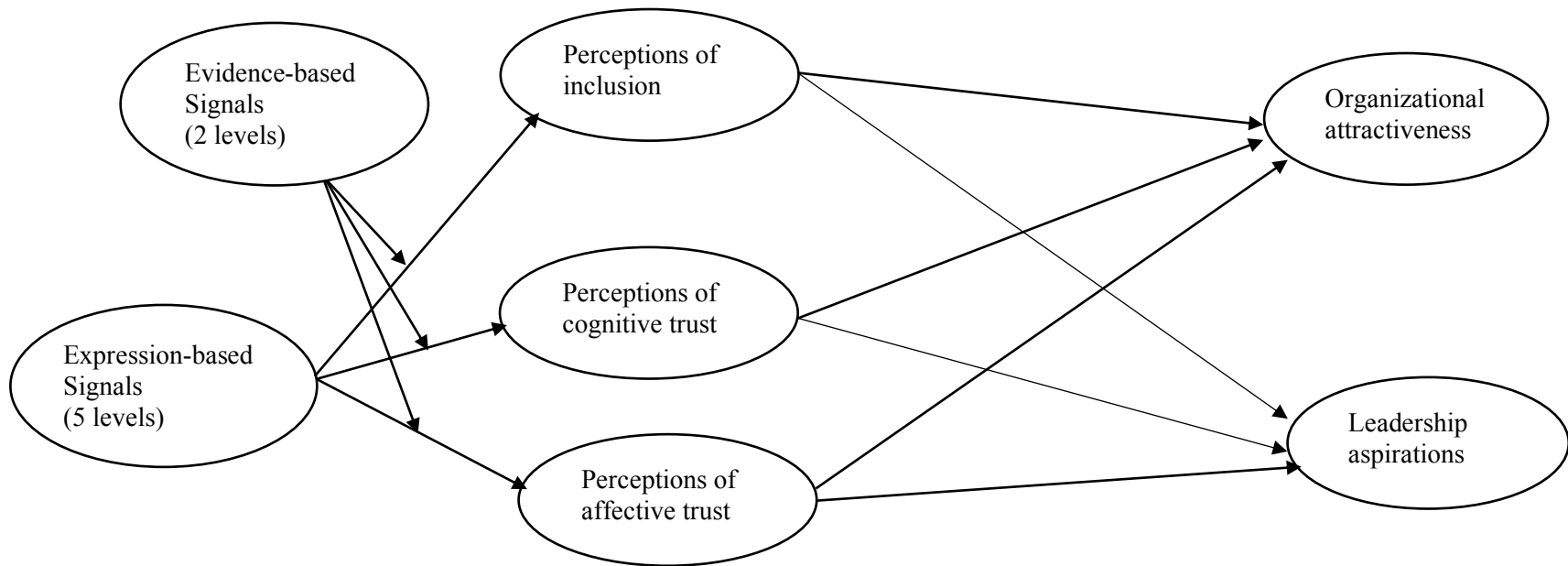
To propose mediational hypotheses, I first explain how the expression-based signals affect proposed mediators and how the mediators, in turn, predict the outcomes. Then I present hypotheses providing an explanation behind my predictions and the overall model.

4.1.2 Expression-based Signals – Organizational Attraction via Inclusion Processes

Expression-based signals convey an organization's rationale as to why diversity matters. People who belong to racioethnic minority groups are more concerned than those in racioethnic majority groups about the information an organization provides regarding the value and importance granted to their group (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). Consequently, racioethnic job seekers will look for signals that fulfill their perception of inclusion should they join the organization. Consistent with the conceptual model of inclusion in this study, perception of inclusion is defined as the degree to which people perceive that they are valued members of an organization who will be treated in a way that satisfies their need for uniqueness and belongingness (see Shore et al., 2011).

First, the uniqueness component of inclusion incorporates jobseekers' perceptions that they can be different from others in the workgroup and can have divergent views that are valued by other members of the organization (Shore et al., 2011). Second, the belongingness component of inclusion comprises jobseekers' perceptions that they will feel accepted, supported, and cared for by the organization's members (Shore et al., 2011, Chung et al., 2020). Research suggests that belongingness and uniqueness are different aspects that, when combined, provide the experience of inclusion (Chung et al., 2020).

VI Type Expression-based Signals and Perceptions of Inclusion

Findings from Study One suggest that firms with VI type expression-based signals on their websites communicate value for inclusion, belonging, and bringing one's authentic self to

work. Organizations sending these signals express diversity as a resource to learn from each other. In Study One, I determined that organizations signaling the VI types of expression-based signals convey wordings related to preserving demographic identities and valuing the contributions of individuals' from various demographic groups. Specifically, I found that VI type expression-based signals include wordings focused on inclusion such as 'celebrate and value differences', 'feel included', and 'feel recognized for uniqueness', to name a few, more so than other types of expression-based signals. I argue that the VI type of expression-based signals will have the strongest relationship with racioethnic minorities' inclusion perceptions when compared to other types of expression-based signals.

Study One findings are consistent with diversity research on workgroups. Ely and Thomas (2001) found that when workgroups adopt an integration-and-learning approach to diversity that values members' cultural identities, it encourages them to openly discuss different ideas and learn from each other. Organizations adopting this approach evaluate progress based mainly on levels of interpersonal integration amongst diverse members and the value given to diversity in the decision-making process. Similarly, Hajro and colleagues (2017), in their qualitative study utilizing 143 interviews from 48 teams from 11 companies, found knowledge exchange processes were more effective in organizations that had adopted a value-and-integration approach to diversity. Together, these studies suggest that diverse workgroups adopting an integration-and-learning approach to diversity fulfill both the uniqueness and belongingness needs of minority workgroup members and enhance collaboration (Hajro et al., 2017; Ely & Thomas, 2001); this could also be true for organizations communicating VI type of expression-based signals.

BC Type Expression-based Signals and Perceptions of Inclusion

Organizations communicating BC type expression-based signals present diversity as a business prospect intended to create value and ensure market competitiveness (Dass & Parker, 1999; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Thomas & Ely, 1996). Konrad (2003) provides three main arguments for diversity as a business case. The first argument is based on the war for talent perspective wherein organizations require a diverse pool of talent to enhance their market competitiveness. The second argument assumes that a diverse workforce can better understand the needs of diverse markets and customers, bringing increased access to new markets. The third argument states that diversity introduces a wide array of new perspectives into an organization that is essential to fostering creativity and innovation. By communicating the BC type of expression-based signal, organizations provide a rationale for the value of diversity and help to promote diversity as a corporate strategy to the receivers (Singh & Point, 2004).

Despite the strengths of the BC approach to diversity, Ely and Thomas (2001) found that workgroups using this type of communication tended to focus on the importance of cultural differences as a means of gaining access to niche markets without necessarily digging deeper to determine how such differences affect work processes. Moreover, employees may feel exploited when their employer uses their differences solely to gain access to new markets (Thomas & Ely, 1996). Consistent with this line of thinking, Noon (2007) contends that the BC perspective on diversity is seriously flawed because it is based on an overly rational cost-benefit analysis that may use economics to justify discrimination. Similarly, Barnes and Ashtiany (2003) argue that organizational strategies that are based on exploiting diversity for business benefits are vulnerable to short-term challenges and may be used against social equality justifications for diversity. The argument that a diverse group of people bring market opportunities for their

specific cultural groups threatens to insulate members of historically marginalized groups by limiting them to roles where they represent their organization to their communities (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Such logic suggests that African Americans, for example, are best suited to develop business plans for the African American community.

Consequently, BC type expression-based signals send a message to racioethnic minorities that their organizational value and acceptance depend entirely on their ability to bring in profits. The argument that companies should hire members of underrepresented groups because diversity fosters creativity and innovation implies that diversity is only welcome when it outperforms traditional homogeneous groups (Konrad, 2003; Linnehan & Konrad, 1999). Hence, I anticipate that organizations using the BC type of expression-based signals will have less influence on racioethnic minorities' perceptions of inclusion compared to VI type expression-based signals, as these types of expression-based signals focus only on profitability to explain the importance of diversity.

EO Type Expression-based Signals and Perceptions of Inclusion

EO type expression-based signals are closely related to the identity-blind model (Thomas, 1990; Triandis, 1996). Organizations following the identity-blind approach emphasize the equal treatment of all demographic groups regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, or other demographic characteristics. While group differences should not matter in this approach, in reality, dominant group members are more prototypical of the organization than the non-dominant members (Chattopadhyaya et al., 2004). Consequently, organizations with EO beliefs focus on the assimilation of non-dominant group members (e.g., visible minorities) into the dominant group culture (e.g., ethnic/racial majority), an approach that can be perceived as exclusionary by racioethnic minorities (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002; Markus & Steele, 2000).

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Purdie-Vaughns and colleagues (2008) conclude that minority members may perceive organizational policies based on an EO approach as an insincere attempt to demonstrate concern about equality and fairness while doing less or nothing to support these goals. In a field experiment conducted across 10 US cities, Leibbrandt and List (2018) observed that EO approaches increase the perception of tokenism and stereotype threat among minority jobseekers who are concerned that they were hired as a solo minority group member simply to make the company look like a fair and equitable employer. The colour-blind approach argues that group membership should be ignored, and people treated as universally similar (Bereni et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2004).

Research suggests that minorities are less likely to associate themselves with organizations signaling an EO approach compared to organizations signaling a value-in-diversity approach (Plaut et al., 2011). The content analysis of Fortune 500 companies that I conducted in Study One found that organizations signaling EO type of expression-based signals contain none of the cues related to belongingness and uniqueness that are important to racioethnic minorities. Appropriate belongingness cues could include phrases such as 'will feel accepted' and 'will feel valued,' and appropriate uniqueness cues could include phrases such as 'can have different views' and 'can be authentic self.' Therefore, I anticipate that racioethnic minorities will have the lowest perception of inclusion when organizations signal EO type of expression-based signals compared to BC and VI types of expression-based signals.

From Perceptions of Inclusion to Organizational Attraction

One important outcome in Study Three is the applicants' organizational attraction. Organizational attraction is an individual's affective and attitudinal perceptions about an organization as a possible place of employment (Highhouse et al., 2003). The first step to

increasing diversity in the workplace is to encourage more people from underrepresented groups to apply for jobs (Volpone et al., 2014). Jobseekers are attracted to organizations that appear to fulfill their psychological and emotional needs (Uggerslev et al., 2012). Empirical evidence on recruitment suggests that minority jobseekers will be attracted to organizations that can enhance their self-concept (McNab & Johnston, 2002). Inclusion is critical in predicting work-related outcomes such as individual well-being, creativity, and on-the-job performance (Jansen et al., 2016; Pearce & Randell, 2004). Therefore, I predict that perceptions of inclusion will be positively associated with jobseekers' organizational attractiveness.

Expression-based Signals and Organizational Attraction: The Mediating Role of Perceptions of Inclusion

Expression-based signals communicate the values of an organization to those who may have little knowledge about the organization, including racioethnic minority jobseekers (Gully et al., 2013). Specifically, expression-based signals provide diagnostic information related to the organization's values on diversity. Research conducted by Lievens and Highhouse (2003) and Windscheid and colleagues (2016), along with the meta-analytic review findings of Uggerslev et al., (2012) suggest that applicants' perceptions about the value of diversity at an organization significantly predicts applicants' attraction to the organization.

Lievens and Highhouse (2003) provide a comprehensive examination of the signaling phenomenon behind the influence of organizational traits on jobseekers' organizational attraction. They suggest that jobseekers look for both job-related cues (objective job-specific information related to tangible benefits such as pay, bonuses, location, promotion, and work-life balance) and corporate value-related cues (information related to the organization's stance on specific issues relevant to the stakeholders) during the early stages of recruitment. For instance,

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job seekers may credit an organization with traits such as innovation or social reputation and consequently be attracted to said organization. With limited variability in job-related information such as salary and location, jobseekers often look for value-related information to draw inferences related to the organization's stance on social values or to evaluate the extent to which an organization can serve their social identity needs related to belongingness and uniqueness (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Chung et al., 2020; Highhouse et al., 2007; Shore et al., 2011). This will be especially true for applicants from racioethnic minority groups (Plaut et al., 2011). Past research suggests that an organization's value-related information significantly impacts employer attractiveness above and beyond job-related information (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Windscheid et al., 2016). Moreover, an organization's signaling of value-related cues such as their social and environmental responsibility values) in recruitment materials positively influences minority job-seekers' organizational attractiveness and subsequent job-pursuit intentions (Gully et al., 2013).

Much of the available literature on expression-based signals has focused on identity-blind and identity-conscious messages on diversity and their influence on applicants from stigmatized groups. For example, Purdie-Vaughns and colleagues (2008) examined the impact of multicultural versus identity-blind diversity messages in recruitment brochures and their effect on African American job applicants' organizational attraction. The results of this experimental study suggest that job brochures with either multicultural messages or images of diverse employees cause higher organizational attraction and perceived belongingness than brochures with neither.

In another set of studies, white female and male of colour participants reported more perceived belonging at the company in the presence (versus the absence) of diversity ideology

(i.e., the organization's positive attitudes toward women and racial minorities; see Chaney et al., 2016). One significant finding of the study is that white women experienced identity-safety (defined as safety from stigma related to one's affiliation with a minority group) from expression-based signals aimed at racial minorities, and men of colour experienced identity-safety from expression-based signals aimed at women.

This theory and research indicate that when signals express specific diversity elements, minority job-seekers may experience attraction because of enhanced perceptions of inclusion. I argue that racioethnic minorities will be most attracted to expression-based signals that fulfill their perceptions of inclusion when expression-based signals highlight the organization's beliefs on managing diversity and the extent and type of value placed on diversity (Avery & Mckay, 2006; Thomas & Wise, 1999). Specifically, racioethnic job seekers will be more attentive to expression-based signals that incorporate cues meant to enhance their anticipated fulfillment of needs related to inclusion.

> *H1: The relationship between expression-based signals and organizational attractiveness*
> *will be mediated by racioethnic minorities' perceptions of inclusion, where the VI type*
> *expression-based signal will have the strongest mediational effect followed by BC type,*
> *and the strength of the relationship will be lowest for EO type of expression-based signal.*

4.1.3 Expression-based Signals – Organizational Attractiveness via Trust Processes

Expression-based signals act as signals of trust, which minority jobseekers utilize to make job-related decisions. An organizational environment has the power to signal the extent of safety and threat that a person will experience (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). Certain features of organizational settings serve as cues or signals of how a person might be treated within an organization based on their social identity (Steele et al., 2002). Such signals transfer identity-

relevant information on the probable judgements, treatments, support, opportunities, and barriers that may be associated with having a specific identity within the organization (Purdue-Vaughns, 2004; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008, Steele et al., 2002). Accordingly, such signals will factor into racioethnic minority jobseekers' perceptions of trust in joining the organization. In other words, racioethnic jobseekers' concerns about their social identity are tied to specific settings (Goffman, 1963), and these jobseekers will draw information from expression-based signals to determine whether they can trust the given environment or not (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008).

Researchers (e.g., Cook & Wall, 1980; Johnson & Grayson, 2005; McAllister, 1995; Yang & Mossholder, 2010; Webber & Klimoski, 2004) suggest that trust is a multidimensional term primarily comprised of cognitive trust and affective trust. I propose perceptions of cognitive and affective trust as variables to explain the relationships between different types of expression-based signals and jobseeker outcomes.

Cognitive trust is one party's confidence or readiness to rely on another party's competency, integrity, and reliability (Moorman et al., 1992; Mayer et al., 1995; Yang & Mossholder, 2010). In the case of jobseekers and diversity signals, receivers have limited information about the sender's actual characteristics, and cognitive trust is knowledge-driven (Johnson & Grayson, 2005). However, receivers of expression-based signals have incomplete knowledge about the organization's characteristics, information that is important for their future actions. Specifically, racioethnic minority job seekers will be more positively inclined toward organizations that provide information on diversity that meets their career-enhancement needs (Thomas et al., 2014).

On the other hand, affective trust is the confidence one has in another party based on the care and concern demonstrated by that party (Yang & Mossholder, 2010). In the context of

diversity signaling, racioethnic minority jobseekers seek information that allows them to express their identity or that fits with their values. As affective trust is related to personal feelings about the other party, racioethnic minorities will be more attentive to identity-relevant cues directly concerning their care, belonging, and social identity related needs (McAllister, 1995; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008).

VI Type Expression-based Signals and Perceptions of Cognitive Trust

Racioethnic minority jobseekers are more likely to trust an organization that provides them with information which enables them to safely express their identity or which fits with their values (Buchan et al., 2002). Consequently, racioethnic minorities will appraise organizations sending VI type expression-based signals as identity-safe workplaces due to perceptions of favourable treatment tied to their social identity. Study One found that VI type expression-based signals consist of words or phrases (i.e., 'we believe in value of unique identity', 'inclusive culture', 'feel empowered', and 'feel accepted') suggestive of an identity-safe work environment. Such terms may enhance racioethnic minorities' perceptions related to the competence and integrity of the organization. Research suggests that the organizations' signaling value in diversity can minimize threats among racial minority group members and enhance their perceptions of feeling valued in the workgroup (Murphy et al., 2007; Purdie-Vaughns, 2004; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). As cognitive trust is knowledge-driven, and expression-based signals increase jobseekers' knowledge about the organization, VI type expression-based signals are more likely than other types of expression-based signals to provide diversity relevant information to racioethnic jobseekers thus enhancing their cognitive trust perceptions of the organization. In line with these findings and theoretical perspectives, I argue that organizations signaling the VI types of expression-based signals will provide positive situational cues to

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racioethnic minorities in the form of an identity-safe signal to enhance their positive perceptions of cognitive trust.

BC Type Expression-based Signals and Perceptions of Cognitive Trust

Organizations portraying the business advantage rationale to diversity will be able to send a signal refuting racioethnic minorities' identity threat perceptions. Content analysis of US Fortune 500 companies from Study One found that business case arguments included wordings related to reduced costs, competitive advantage, resource acquisition, enhanced profit, creativity, and problem-solving. These cues suggest that racioethnic minorities will feel that their identity will be safe in the workplace because the firm evaluates diversity as a valuable resource defining their business success. However, the utilitarian rhetoric inherent in the BC type of expression-based signals may be problematic if people from underrepresented groups feel concerned about the consequences if their addition to the organization does not result in increased profits. It also raises the question for racioethnic minorities: What happens when the demographic shift stops, and skill shortages disappear? Consequently, BC type expression-based signals should have a negative influence on the perceived competence and reliability of the organization which are the components of cognitive trust.

EO Type Expression-based Signals and Perceptions of Cognitive Trust

Racioethnic minorities may view the EO type of expression-based signal as an identity-threat because it follows an identity-blind philosophy (Levy et al., 2005; Plaut, 2002). The main problem with EO type expression-based signals is the focus on minimizing group differences to work against discrimination (Brooks, 2000; Loury, 1998). Study One findings suggest that EO type expression-based signals communicate identity-blind terms or phrases such as 'without regard to race or colour', 'for everyone', and 'equality for all'. The identity-blind message

inherent in EO type expression-based signals is less likely to enhance perceptions of competence and reliability related to diversity among racioethnic minority jobseekers. Consequently, I argue that EO type expression-based signals will have no significant influence on racioethnic minority jobseekers' perceptions of cognitive trust toward the organization.

From Perceptions of Cognitive Trust to Organizational Attraction

Previous studies have reported that expectations of competence and reliability are positively related to job applicants' organizational attractiveness (Klotz et al., 2013; Wilhelmy et al., 2018). It is important for organizations to attract more racioethnic minorities in order to build a large and diverse job applicant pool (Volpone et al., 2014). Establishing a diverse applicant pool is the first step in achieving effective employee selection outcomes (Newman & Lyon, 2009).

As perceptions of competence and reliability are the major components of cognitive trust (Yang & Mossholder, 2010), cognitive trust can positively predict the organizational attraction of jobseekers. This relationship may be valid in organizations signaling personableness in their expression-based signals. Personableness is generally defined as demonstrating welcome, concern, and friendliness toward potential jobseekers (Connerley & Rynes, 1997). Research suggests that personableness in message signals enhances perceived organizational competence, which in turn predicts applicants' organizational attraction (Wilhelmy et al., 2018). Thus, I argue that racioethnic job seekers' perceptions of cognitive trust in joining the organization will be positively related to organizational attractiveness.

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Expression-based Signals and Organizational Attraction: The Mediating Role of Perceptions of Cognitive Trust

Overall, the VI type of expression-based signals provide contents relevant to the organization's diversity-related competence and reliability of racioethnic minorities. Therefore, racioethnic minorities will report higher cognitive trust in organizations that signal VI types of expression-based signals, enhancing their perceptions of competence and reliability. In contrast, the EO type of expression-based signal focuses on providing equal opportunities to everyone, irrespective of their demographic background, without any information suggesting diversity-related competence and reliability. On the other hand, BC type of expression-based signals looks at diversity as a resource that provides business advantages due to the employment of people from diverse backgrounds. Such signals demonstrate an interest in fulfilling financial benefits for the organization rather than in providing information on an organization's diversity-related competence and reliability. Research suggests that self-interested behaviours, also called opportunism (Williamson, 1975), undermine perceptions of cognitive trust because opportunism is detrimental to an individual's instrumental goals (Williams, 2007). Thus, I hypothesize that:

> *H2: The relationship between expression-based signals and organizational attractiveness will be mediated by racioethnic minorities' perceptions of cognitive trust, where the VI type will have the strongest mediational effect followed by the BC type and the strength of the relationship will be lowest for the EO type of expression-based signals.*

VI Type Expression-based Signals and Perceptions of Affective Trust

My findings in Study One suggest that the VI type of expression-based signals contains affective wording or phrases (i.e., 'bring your authentic selves to work', 'empowering people', 'valued for who they are', 'you belong here', and similar terms) related to the care and

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belongingness needs of people from underrepresented groups. As affective trust is driven by needs related to care and concern, VI type expression-based signals are more likely to enhance perceptions of affective trust in the organization when compared to other types of expression-based signals. In line with these arguments, I posit that organizations signaling the VI types of expression-based signals will positively enhance affective trust in joining the organization.

BC Type Expression-based Signals and Perceptions of Affective Trust

Recent research suggests that profit justifications for diversity have a detrimental effect on the belonging needs and organizational attractiveness of underrepresented groups. Georgeac and Rattan's (2022) experimental studies found that LGBTQ+ professionals feel low perceptions of belonging to organizations communicating financial justifications for diversity. Therefore, based on past theory and empirical research, I argue that BC type expression-based signals will have no significant influence on racioethnic minority jobseekers' perceptions of affective trust towards the organization.

EO Type Expression-based Signals and Perceptions of Affective Trust

EO types of expression-based signals focus on equality and identity-blind ideology, which overlook the care and belonging needs of people from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, EO types of expression-based signals focus on minimizing group identities or even ignoring group identities and the challenges associated with them (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Markus et al., 2000). Research suggests that these signals elicit a sense of threat among historically marginalized groups (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). For example, Purdie-Vaughns and colleagues (2008) used three experiments to determine that African American participants feel low perceptions of trust and comfort toward an organization's identity-blind philosophy. In line with these findings, I argue that EO types of expression-based signals will have no significant

influence on racioethnic minority jobseekers' perceptions of affective trust towards the organization.

From Perceptions of Affective Trust to Organizational Attraction

Organizational trust perceptions are related to job applicants' organizational attraction (Kausel & Slaughter, 2011; Klotz et al., 2013). Kausel and Slaughter (2011) demonstrate that the perception of organizational trustworthiness is comprised of affective components measured by perceptions of friendliness, honesty, and attention to people; these components can positively impact jobseekers' attraction to the organization. Klotz et al. (2013) reviewed the literature on the role of trust in recruitment and reported that job applicants' initial perceptions of organizational trustworthiness largely influence their attraction to the organization. In line with these findings, I argue that racioethnic job seekers' perceptions of affective trust of the organization will be positively related to their organizational attractiveness.

Expression-based Signals and Organizational Attraction: The Mediating Role of Perceptions of Affective Trust

Overall, VI types of expression-based signals provide content relevant to the social identity needs of racioethnic minorities. Therefore, racioethnic minorities will report higher affective trust in organizations that signal VI types of expression-based signals speaking to their social identity needs. In contrast, the EO type of expression-based signal focuses on providing equal opportunities to everyone, irrespective of their demographic background, and without offering any information to address the identity-related concerns of racioethnic minorities. Research suggests that affective trust is harmed when identity-related concerns are neglected (e.g., Emerson & Murphy, 2013; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). Similarly, BC types of expression-based signals consider diversity as a resource that provides

business advantages to organizations employing people from diverse backgrounds. Such signals are more concerned with fulfilling the financial interests of the organization than with supporting the interests of racioethnic minorities. Thus, I hypothesize that:

H3: The relationship between expression-based signals and organizational attractiveness will be mediated by racioethnic minorities' perceptions of affective trust, where the VI type expression-based signal will have the strongest mediational effect followed by the BC type, and the strength of the relationship will be lowest for the EO type of expression-based signal.

4.1.4 Expression-based Signals – Leadership Aspirations via Inclusion Processes

Applicants' leadership aspirations are an outcome of interest in Study Three. Past research suggests that underrepresented group members may have lower leadership aspirations compared to majority group members because of workplace discrimination toward minority leadership (Festekijan et al., 2014). However, my dissertation identifies three potential explanatory variables (perceptions of inclusion, perceptions of cognitive trust, and perceptions of affective trust) that may explain the relationship between expression-based signals and racioethnic minorities leadership aspirations. Leadership aspiration can be defined as an individual's interest in reaching a leadership position and their willingness to accept an offered leadership position (Singer, 1991). Diversity in leadership positions is associated with higher financial and non-financial performance (see Bell et al., 2011; Byron & Post, 2016; Post & Byron, 2015 for review). Moreover, diversity in leadership has many additional advantages, such as reducing discrimination (Ruggs et al., 2011) and enhancing the individual outcomes of underrepresented group employees (Marx et al., 2009). Despite an increasingly diverse workforce, racial minorities are underrepresented in leadership positions (Catalyst, 2022).

Considering this, many organizations face the challenge of increasing the number of racial minorities in the upper echelons of management. Organizations may use human resource tools and other resources to resolve this challenge; such actions can stimulate the interest in and development of leadership talent within underrepresented groups via structural approaches such as affirmative action policies (Leslie et al., 2014).

Building on the overarching concept of signaling theory, I argue that communicating a specific type of expression-based signal will differentially predict perceptions of leadership aspirations for racioethnic minority job seekers through different psychological mechanisms. I argue that compared to the BC and EO types of expression-based signals, the VI type of expression-based signal will have the strongest positive influence on the leadership aspirations of racioethnic minority jobseekers due to two main reasons.

First, the BC perspective on diversity is related to the value-in-diversity hypothesis, which suggests that society's values regarding organizational diversity place significant pressures on organizations to include underrepresented groups in leadership positions (Elgart, 1983). Organizations pursue diversity to gain legitimacy from their stakeholders (Milliken & Martins, 1996). For example, institutional investors increasingly scrutinize corporate boardrooms for diversity (Kirsch, 2018; Singh, 2007). Organizations signaling a business rationale toward diversity would likely provide cues about the benefits of diversity with the aim of helping minorities to feel welcome and therefore comfortable in accepting leadership positions. However, the business case rhetoric for diversity (i.e., the rationale of diversifying to gain access to diverse markets and customers) may trigger minorities' perceptions of being pigeonholed in specific roles within an organization. As such, the BC type expression-based signals may not

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significantly influence the leadership aspirations of potential employees from underrepresented groups.

Next, the value-in-homogeneity ideology associated with EO types of expression-based signals communicates equality of treatment while simultaneously failing to acknowledge the demographic differences between minority groups or attempting to compensate for the historical biases faced by minority groups (Dovidio et al., 2008). Accordingly, these signals do little to meet or respect the uniqueness and belongingness needs of people from underrepresented groups (Bergsieker et al., 2010). They also may not signal perceptions of equitable treatment within an organization, particularly in promotion processes (Huo et al., 1996). Research suggests that the identity-blind beliefs embedded within EO types of expression-based signals are negatively related to the leadership efficacy and goals of racial-ethnic minorities (Gundemir et al., 2017). Gundemir and colleagues (2017) demonstrated that policies indicating value-in-diversity tend to enhance leadership self-perceptions for people from underrepresented groups, whereas policies expressing value-in-similarity had a negative influence on the leadership self-perceptions of people from underrepresented groups. Therefore, I expect that EO types of expression-based signals will have the weakest influence on the leadership aspirations of racioethnic minority jobseekers compared to other types of expression-based signals.

On the other hand, VI type expression-based signals transmit cues of openness to diversity and acknowledgement, inclusion, and acceptance of people from diverse groups in the organization (Rattan & Ambady, 2013, Rios & Cohen, 2023). Organizations communicating openness and acceptance of diversity can signal support for leadership-related self-views for people from underrepresented groups (Van Laar et al., 2013). Recent evidence demonstrates that racioethnic managers express identity-related concerns as a main barrier to their progression to

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leadership roles (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). This indicates that an organization that signals openness, inclusion, and acceptance of diverse identities may have the positive influence on racioethnic minorities' leadership aspirations.

In keeping with these theoretical and empirical arguments, I next explore how perceptions of inclusion, cognitive trust, and affective trust explain the influence of VI types of expression-based signals on racioethnic minority jobseekers' leadership aspirations. Having established the relationships between VI, BC and EO types of expression-based signals and the three mediators in the previous section, I will now focus on the theoretical justification for relationships between the three mediators and the leadership aspirations outcome and justify these mediational hypotheses.

From Perceptions of Inclusion to Leadership Aspirations

Organizational signals influence underrepresented group members' general perceptions about organizations (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Walton & Cohen, 2007), but whether and how these cues can play an important role in shaping minority members' leadership aspirations is less known. An organization communicating inclusion could be influential in promoting high-potential minorities' leadership aspirations by signaling appreciation and inspiring positive self-views (Van Laar et al., 2013). In a qualitative study involving semi-structured interviews conducted among ethnic minority employees, Wyatt and Silvester (2015) found that organizations signaling inclusion (where expression of divergent views is accepted) boost underrepresented group members' positive expectancies related to leadership roles. It is also documented that when organizational values demonstrate openness to diversity, there is an impact on individuals' leadership aspirations (e.g., Hirschi & Fischer, 2013). The relation

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between value fit and leadership aspiration is based on the logic that when there is fit, the environment affords the individual an opportunity to fulfil those needs (Singer, 1991).

Expression-based Signals and Leadership Aspiration: The Mediating Role of Perceptions of Inclusion

Expression-based signals are communicated to explain the diversity-related values of an organization (Wilson et al., 2012). Prominent theory of vocational development suggests that values play an important role in predicting an individual's career choice (e.g., Holland, 1997; Super, 1980). The central idea of this theory is simple: people will choose occupations relevant to their personal values. This suggests that organizations communicating diversity-supportive values may be able to align themselves with the individual values of racioethnic minority jobseekers. Perceptions of inclusion are comprised of two specific components, belongingness and uniqueness, that are critically important to racioethnic minority jobseekers because of historical accounts of discrimination they face at the workplace (Shore et al., 2011; Chung et al., 2020). Consequently, racioethnic minorities will be more motivated to apply for leadership positions at organizations signaling inclusive values in their expression-based signals. In addition, Study One indicates that VI type expression-based signals communicate words or phrases suggesting value towards uniqueness, belongingness, and empowerment of people from underrepresented groups. Therefore, the VI type of expression-based signals may significantly influence racioethnic minorities' leadership aspirations via enhanced perceptions of inclusion.

Organizations communicating the BC type of expression-based signals mainly focus on the extrinsic values of diversity that are associated with financial gain. Georgeac and Rattan (2022) found that organizations communicating the business rationale of diversity undermine the personableness needs (i.e., needs related to warmth, friendliness, and feeling welcomed) of

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people from underrepresented groups. As the BC type expression-based signals do not speak to the personableness of racioethnic minority jobseekers, I expect no significant influence of BC type expression-based signals on racioethnic minority jobseekers' leadership aspirations via perceptions of inclusion.

Similarly, Study One findings suggest that organizations communicating EO type expression-based signals are focused on equality without any regard for demographic differences. Consequently, such signals may not be able to connect with the personal values of people from underrepresented groups. I argue that there will be no significant influence of EO type expression-based signals on racioethnic minorities' leadership aspirations through perceptions of inclusion.

> *H4: The relationship between expression-based signals and leadership aspirations will be mediated by racioethnic minorities' perceptions of inclusion, where the VI type expression-based signal will have the strongest mediational effect followed by the BC type, and the strength of the relationship will be lowest for the EO type of expression-based signals.*

4.1.5 Expression-based Signals – Leadership Aspirations via Trust Processes
From Perceptions of Cognitive Trust to Leadership Aspirations

The dominant model of trust in organizational settings proposes that trust facilitates workplace attitudes by influencing one party's expectations about another party's future behaviour (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). In the context of diversity recruitment, minority jobseekers' leadership aspirations will be contingent on whether they can trust the organization to gain leadership positions in future (Stiehl et al., 2015). In keeping with the theoretical reasoning from

the dominant model of trust in organizational settings, racioethnic jobseekers may trust organizations that signal messages relevant to their leadership aspirations.

Trust is based on beliefs about the other party; these beliefs are shaped by information (Thomas et al., 2009). As cognitive trust relates to the amount of relevant information, I argue that perceptions of cognitive trust will directly influence the leadership aspirations of racioethnic minority jobseekers.

Expression-based Signals and Leadership Aspirations: The Mediating Role of Perceptions of Cognitive Trust

Study One's findings suggest that organizations signaling the VI type expression-based signals are people-oriented and provide information on diversity and bringing authentic selves to work. Cognitive trust in work environments is influenced by the amount of relevant information enhancing perceived competence and reliability (Yang & Mossholder, 2010). Thus, I argue that VI type expression-based signals will be more effective than BC and EO types at predicting racioethnic minorities' leadership aspirations through perceptions of cognitive trust.

> *H5: The relationship between expression-based signals and leadership aspirations*
>
> *will be mediated by racioethnic minorities' perceptions of cognitive trust, where the*
>
> *VI type expression-based signals will have the strongest mediational effect followed*
>
> *by the BC type, and the strength of the relationship will be lowest for the EO type of*
>
> *expression-based signals.*

From Perceptions of Affective Trust to Leadership Aspirations

Affective trust is subjective in nature and is related to affective processes influencing an individual's feelings or emotions about the trustworthiness of the target (Atkinson & Butcher, 2003; Hansen et al., 2002). Studies on outcomes of trust in organizational settings indicate that

affective trust predicts employees' work-related behaviour and attitudes. For example, employees who trust in management are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviours and support organizational change (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Albrecht, 2002). Even though there is a paucity of research on the influence of affective trust on leadership aspirations, scholars argue that perceptions of affective trust in an organization should develop a sense of identification with organizational values (e.g., Ladebo, 2006). Based on the proposition that affective trust forms an identification with organizational values that predicts leadership aspirations (Lechner et al., 2018), I argue that jobseekers' affective trust in the organization will positively influence their aspirations to acquire leadership positions.

Expression-based Signals and Leadership Aspirations: The Mediating Role of Perceptions of Affective Trust

VI type expression-based signals (see Study One findings) seek to preserve demographic identities and respect the contributions of individuals from various demographic groups, something which relates to affective components such as personableness and belonging. As racioethnic minorities face increased discrimination in the workplace, they are more likely to trust settings that truly value their identity and which allow them to express their identity (Buchan et al., 2002).

Research suggests that when organizations make their values prominent and connect them to followers' values through symbolic communications, followers begin to internalize the organization's values into their own values systems (i.e., higher PO fit; Epitropaki & Martin 2005; Shamir et al., 1993). Olsen and Martins (2016) demonstrated that organizational diversity messages signal the value an organization places on diversity. Specifically, they found that BC type expression-based signals provide instrumental value (e.g., diversity leads to higher financial

performance), whereas social responsibility messages signal terminal value (e.g., diversity as the desired end in attaining a just society). On the other hand, EO type expression-based signals focus on equality and identity-blind values in contrast to value in diversity. Values are considered as higher-ranked goals integral to the self-concept that guides choices and behaviour (Schwartz, 1992). Therefore, I argue that VI type expression-based signals focusing on value and appreciation for demographic identities will be more effective at predicting racioethnic minorities' leadership aspirations via perceptions of affective trust compared to other types of expression-based signals. Consistent with these lines of theory and empirical evidence, I suggest the following hypothesis:

> *H6: The relationship between expression-based signals and leadership aspirations will be mediated by racioethnic minorities' perceptions of affective trust, where the VI type expression-based signals will have the strongest mediational effect followed by the BC type, and the strength of the relationship will be lowest for EO type of expression-based signals.*

4.1.6 Diversity Signal Sets and Outcomes

Organizations generally portray themselves as concerned with or committed to diversity as a way of attracting individuals from underrepresented groups (Windscheid et al., 2016). However, simply stating that the organization values diversity may be insufficient because stakeholders will seek out evidence to support these claims (Avery & Johnson, 2008). As explained in Chapter One's theory section, information about organizations' commitment to diversity is communicated through multiple diversity signal sets. Diversity signal sets consist of expression-based signals and evidence-based signals relaying information to the receiver about

the sender's underlying characteristics related to diversity performance or reputation (Derous & Decoster, 2017).

I argue that diversity signal sets produce more positive responses from racioethnic minority jobseekers compared to isolated expression-based signals without evidence-based signals. In fact, racioethnic minorities may interpret expression-based signals without evidence-based signals as 'woke washing' — cynical efforts meant to appear as authentic attempts to address societal issues which lack any genuine commitment (Dowell & Jackson, 2020; Wilton et al., 2020).

Moreover, research suggests that signals will seem credible or honest only if recognized as costly or hard-to-fake signals (see Chapter One, signaling theory for review). In the context of recruitment, external recognition (for example, BWFD) signals reputation. Organizations may seek third-party endorsement on diversity performance as an evidence-based signal to minority job seekers that the organization is the best workplace for diversity. Such endorsements are hard to fake as they are costly to acquire in terms of time and effort and they are third-party bestowed. However, third-party bestowed diversity awards could still be considered inauthentic by outsiders. Racioethnic minorities might be expected to look for more diagnostic information suggesting diversity-related performance. I argue that factual data related to the demographics of employees and managers in an organization may also act as an evidence-based signal. Such disclosure is considered a transparent and credible organizational effort to provide facts about the organization's diversity situation. This information is hard to fake because it is based on concrete facts or statistics.

In summary, diversity signal sets provide diagnostic information related to the strength and usefulness of multiple diversity signals (Volpone et al., 2014) and the degree to which an

organization practices what it says it values in relation to diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Nishii, 2013). Such diagnostic information might include, but is not limited to, demographic characteristics of employees at different levels of management, organizations' external recognition or awards on diversity performance, and responses to discrimination lawsuits (Mayhew et al., 2006).

Past research indicates that environments typical of weaker diversity signals often include negative racial attitudes and more frequent discrimination (Avery et al., 2008; Deitch et al., 2003) and are a significant source of stress for racioethnic minorities (Brown et al., 2007; Tsui et al., 1992). Therefore, it is logical to posit that minority applicants' perceptions of organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations are the function of diversity signal sets (i.e., both expression-based and evidence-based signals). The degree to which the organization's diversity signal sets provide the diagnostic information related to diversity support will determine the success of diversity signaling in enhancing racioethnic minorities' organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations.

I argue that racioethnic minorities' perceptions of inclusion and trust will be higher for organizations with the presence of an evidence-based signal, and the hypothesized relationships (H7 & H8) will be weaker for organizations without evidence-based signals. Thus, I hypothesize:

H7 Diversity signal sets will positively influence racioethnic minorities' organizational attractiveness through (a) perceptions of inclusion, (b) perceptions of cognitive trust, and (c) perceptions of affective trust.

H8 The strength of the association in H7 (a), (b), and (c), respectively, will be stronger for VI types of diversity signal sets, followed by BC and EO types.

H9 Diversity signal sets will positively influence racioethnic minorities' leadership aspirations

through (a) perceptions of inclusion, (b) perceptions of cognitive trust, and (c) perceptions

of affective trust.

H10 The strength of the association in H9 (a), (b), and (c), respectively, will be stronger for VI

types of diversity signal sets, followed by BC and EO types.

4.2 Pilot Studies

All pilot studies, the main study, and all modifications were approved through

Memorial's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) (see Appendix

A for initial approval). Pilot studies were conducted first to check whether participants were able

to correctly identify the manipulated expression-based signals and evidence-based signals.

4.2.1 Pilot Study 1

Methods

Participants. Racioethnic participants from the USA (n=100) with full-time or part-time

current work experience were recruited from the Prolific platform. Prolific allowed me to filter

participants based on their demographics and other characteristics to ensure that only racioethnic

minority jobseekers participated in the survey. The mean age of the sample was 32 years (*SD =*

11 years *MIN.* 20 *MAX.* 67), and 60% of participants identified as female. In terms of race or

ethnicity, 20% of participants were Black or African American, 40% of participants were Asian,

28% of participants were Hispanic, and 12% of participants described themselves as mixed race

or ethnicity.

Design. I designed corporate web pages for the fictitious company CYZ, Inc., focusing on

careers pages. These web pages were designed using the digital graphic platform Wix

(www.wix.com). The study was conducted online using Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com), and the participants were recruited via the online research platform Prolific Academic (www.prolific.co). Research suggests that Prolific Academic consists of more diverse participants and higher data quality than other research platforms, such as Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) (Peer et al., 2017; Palan & Schitter, 2017).

Participants were presented with the careers section of the company website and asked to imagine themselves as a potential job applicant. First, they were provided with a company description informed by Study One and similar to those used in previous diversity recruitment studies (e.g., Martins & Parsons, 2007). Next, the participants were randomly assigned to one of ten conditions using a 5 (expression-based signals) by 2 (evidence-based signals) design. They read the company's diversity signal sets (i.e., expression-based signals with presence or absence of evidence-based signals) (manipulated). Altogether, ten conditions were created as shown in Table 4-1 below. Information on the specific experimental manipulations is presented later in this chapter.

Table 4-1: True Experiment - Randomized Design (5x2)

Evidence-based Signal (B)

Expression-based Signal (A)		Evidence-based Signal B1	No Evidence-based Signal B2
	EO (A1)	A1 B1	A1 B2
	BC (A2)	A2 B1	A2 B2
	VI (A3)	A3 B1	A3 B2
	Mix (A4)	A4 B1	A4 B2
	Neutral (A5)	A5 B1	A5 B2

Procedure. Given the 5x2 design, ten websites were designed to represent ten different types of diversity signal sets conditions, as elaborated in Table 4-1. After providing informed consent, participants were randomly assigned to conditions and were informed that they were to imagine themselves as someone looking for an entry-level manager job who had found a vacancy matching their knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs). Participants then read the careers section of the company's website that included an expression-based signal and the presence (or absence) of an evidence-based signal. A neutral statement *unrelated to* diversity was provided instead of an expression-based signal as a control condition. Similarly, neutral facts *unrelated* to diversity were provided as a control condition for the absence of an evidence-based diversity signal.

Expression-based Signal Stimulus Condition. Participants read one of four different types of expression-based signals and one neutral statement. For example, participants in the EO type of expression-based signal condition read "Our Commitment. We are committed to equality for all individuals. We treat everyone with fairness, dignity, and respect. We provide equal opportunities based on ability, performance, and potential. Our workplace is free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying. We provide training to team members regarding rights and responsibilities for fair treatment." For a complete list of conditions and contents, see Appendix B.

Evidence-based Signal Stimulus Condition. Lastly, participants in each expression-based signal condition read either the diversity performance facts [or neutral facts] for evidence-based signals manipulation, "CYZ At-a-Glance. Selected as a 'Best Place to Work for Diversity' in 2019, 2020 and 2021 [In the industry for 10 years]. 58% racial and ethnic minorities in our workforce

[Listed on the New York Stock Exchange – NYSE]. 10% growth in racial and ethnic minorities in leadership positions since 2015 [10% growth in a roster of talent since 2015]".

Measures

Expression-based Signal Stimulus Check. Stimulus checks are performed in experimental research to ensure that participants clearly understand the manipulation (Cook et al., 2002). A stimulus check is not necessarily a test of whether the intended manipulation has had the intended effect on the outcome variable of interest (Ejelöv & Luke, 2020) but that participants have correctly identified the manipulation condition. After reading their assigned website, participants were provided with a list of reasons why organizations might value diversity in their workplace and asked how much they perceived that the reasons applied to CYZ.

Evidence-based Signal Stimulus Check. A stimulus check was completed for the presence of evidence-based signals (presence vs. absence of diversity performance facts). Participants were asked the following question: "CYZ provided diversity-supportive facts (such as diversity awards and minority representation in leadership positions) on their website," with responses of Yes, No, and Not Sure.

Results

Results of the pilot study suggested that the expression-based signal manipulations worked for neutral statements. Participants could distinguish neutral expression-based signals, but all other types of expression-based signals were seen as equivalent (evidenced by a lack of significant differences between groups on the expression-based signal type stimulus check). Moreover, even though the type of expression-based signal manipulation was effective for neutral statements, some wording in the neutral vignettes (such as career development, work-life balance, etc.) may have positively influenced participants' organizational attraction and

leadership aspirations (the 2 DVs). Based on these results, I made the following changes in stimulus materials.

a. Website appearance and pictures. I changed the image on all websites to a corporate building background landing picture rather than a group of people from various backgrounds based on the feedback from participants on the open-ended question at the end of the survey: Why do you think that CYZ Inc. supports diversity? Participants perceived the company to be supportive of diversity based on the picture of a group of people from various backgrounds, regardless of the type of expression-based signal.

b. Company introduction. Feedback from the participants in the neutral condition in response to the open-ended question at the end of the survey (Why do you think that CYZ Inc. supports diversity?) indicated their perception that the company supports diversity because it is an international conglomerate providing multiple products and services. Thus, all words/phrases suggestive of diversity, such as international conglomerate, multinational, and multiple products were deleted.

c. Careers section, 'Connecting Talent with Opportunity'. I removed all content which might influence applicants' organizational attraction and leadership aspirations (as described above: career development, work-life balance, etc.).

d. Wording. The wording used for each type of expression-based signal was changed to make it more direct. The equal opportunity (EO) type is presented from a compliance perspective, business case (BC) from a strictly financial perspective, and value-and-integration (VI) from an inclusion perspective. Moreover, wordings such as 'for everyone,' 'for all,' and 'everywhere' were removed from the VI condition as these words might indicate equal opportunity.

e. <u>Neutral statement wording.</u> I altered this wording to ensure that it was neutral and had no influence on jobseekers' outcomes.

Before testing these revised websites, the actual stimulus check items were tested to determine which items best reflected each expression-based signal condition. This was done in Manipulation Items Selection Study (see 4.2.2) before implementing Pilot Study Two and the Main Study.

4.2.2 Manipulation Items Selection Study (n=150)

Methods

Pilot Study One found that the expression-based signal type manipulation was not working. Initially, the manipulation included four items on the website, which may have created too much information for participants to digest. To simplify, a survey study was conducted to determine the top two manipulation items to retain in each condition.

Participants. Racioethnic participants from the USA (n=150) with full-time or part-time current work experience were recruited from the Prolific platform. Prolific allowed me to filter participants based on their demographics and other characteristics to ensure that only racioethnic minority jobseekers participated in the survey. The mean age of the sample was 33 years (*SD* = 10 years *MIN.* 19 *MAX.* 61) and 31% of participants identified as female. In terms of race or ethnicity, 34% of participants were Black or African American, 30% of participants were Asian, 23% of participants were Hispanic, and 13% of participants described themselves as mixed race or ethnicity. Participants who participated in Pilot Study 1 were not invited to participate in Pilot Study 2 to ensure no data contamination (Leon, Davis, & Kraemer, 2011). The elimination process was conducted using the 'filter participants' feature available in *Prolific* that only sends invitations to participants who did not participate in specific or all previous studies.

Design

Procedure. Participants first read the description: "Organizations express their stance on diversity by publishing different diversity management statements on their websites. Such statements may be compliance-oriented, business-oriented, or people-oriented." Next, participants were provided with the definition of each type of expression-based signal and then were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed that each of the items best represented (a) the compliance-oriented (EO) expression-based signal, (b) the business-oriented (BC) expression-based signal and (c) the people-oriented (VI) expression-based signal (see Appendix C for list of items in each condition).

Results

Pairwise comparison results showed that participants successfully identified the items belonging to each type of expression-based signal condition when they were provided with the definition of each type of expression-based signal. As a result of this pilot study, the two items with the highest mean score were identified and included in each expression-based signal condition for Pilot Study Three. Two items (highest mean for BC and for VI) were selected for the Mixed condition. The items included were: (i) We attract, retain, and engage diverse talents because we believe that diversity is the key to our long-term financial performance; and (ii) We empower our diverse team members by creating an inclusive culture that values diverse perspectives. The neutral condition did not change (other than previously noted changes).

4.2.3 Pilot Study 2 (n=150)

Sample

Racioethnic participants from the USA with full-time or part-time work experience (n=150) were recruited from the Prolific platform. Participants who participated in the previous

studies were not invited to participate in Pilot Study Two to ensure no data contamination (Leon, Davis, & Kraemer, 2011). The elimination process was conducted using the 'filter participants' feature available in *Prolific* that only sends invitations to participants who did not participate in specific or all previous studies.

The mean age of the sample was 35 years (*SD* = 10 years *MIN.* 19 *MAX.* 74), and 35% of participants identified as female. In terms of race or ethnicity, 37% of participants were Black or African American, 27% of participants were Asian, 17% of participants were Hispanic, and 19% of participants described themselves as mixed race or ethnicity.

Design

Procedure. Ten websites were redesigned to represent ten different conditions, as elaborated in Table 4-1. After providing informed consent, participants were asked to imagine themselves as someone looking for an entry-level manager job who had identified a vacancy matching their knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs).

Expression-based Signal Type Stimulus Condition. After reading the scenario, participants were randomly assigned to read one of the ten websites [four expression-based signals plus one neutral statement with the presence of evidence-based signal and neutral facts unrelated to diversity]. 15 participants were assigned to each condition. In the first part of the website, all participants read: "Build your dream career here at CYZ. We are a company with operations in multiple industrial sectors." Second, participants read the evidence-based signals stimulus condition, which was the same as in Pilot Study One. Third, participants read their randomly assigned expression-based signals for either the EO condition, the BC condition, the VI condition, the Mix condition, or the neutral condition). These five conditions follow:

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- *Diversity at CYZ: Equal Opportunity Employer*. Our company is an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Employer that makes employment decisions based on merit as required by law. We provide an equal-opportunity work environment where employees are evaluated on the basis of their merit, qualifications, and skills.

- *Diversity at CYZ: The Business Case*. We attract, retain, and engage diverse talents because we believe that diversity is the key to our long-term financial performance. We firmly believe that diversity can help us meet and exceed our business goals.

- *Diversity at CYZ: Our Inclusive Culture*. At this company, individuals from diverse groups are valued, heard, and included in all workgroup processes. We empower our diverse team members by creating an inclusive culture that values diverse perspectives.

- *Diversity at CYZ: Our Inclusive Culture and Business Case (Mixed).* We attract, retain, and engage diverse talents because we believe that diversity is the key to our long-term financial performance. We empower our diverse team members by creating an inclusive culture that values diverse perspectives.

- *Neutral.* Participants in the neutral condition read: "Our Company. CYZ Corporation was established in 2010. Our headquarters is located in North America."

Fourth, participants in all website conditions read, "Connecting talent with opportunity. CYZ provides career opportunities in many areas of expertise. Find the role you are looking for in any of our locations."

Measures

Stimulus checks for expression-based signal types and evidence-based signals remained the same as in Pilot Study One.

Results

I did two stimulus checks: (a) for the presence of evidence-based signals; and (b) for the type of expression-based signals. The stimulus check was successful for evidence-based signals presence (vs. absence) as there were significant differences in the mean scores between the participants who read diversity performance facts compared to participants who read the neutral facts unrelated to diversity. Also, the stimulus check was successful for EO and neutral conditions, as there were significant differences in the mean score between the participants who read EO type expression-based signals and neutral statements. However, there were no significant differences between the BC, VI and Mixed conditions as participants rated VI and Mix as BC oriented and BC as VI oriented. Consequently, one additional attempt was made to successfully manipulate expression-based signals and collect data to complete the full analysis. The objective was to ensure that the participants perceived BC and VI types of expression-based signals as different.

I consulted with a social media expert to get an opinion on what might be happening with participant perceptions of the website content. Based on this consultation, the aesthetics of the websites were revised (between Pilot Two and Final Study) to provide a stronger manipulation of the expression-based signal type. The items related to each type of expression-based signals were moved to the start of the website to make them more noticeable, and then evidence-based signals (presence vs absence) were presented subsequently. For a complete list of conditions, contents, and sample website after changes, see Appendix D.

4.3 Main Study

Findings regarding stimulus checks: (a) evidence-based signals; and (b) expression-based signal types showed that evidence-based signals were again successfully manipulated, but

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expression-based signal types were not. As before, participants did not distinguish between BC, VI, and Mixed type expression-based signals. Because the results from two pilot studies (Studies One and Two) and this study (Main Study) *consistently* suggested that BC, VI, and Mixed type expression-based signals were not distinguishable from the participant's point of view, I consolidated these three conditions to create a condition called the 'Benefits of Diversity'. Results suggested that stimulus checks were successful when the BC, VI and Mixed conditions of expression-based signals were consolidated. I then conducted subsequent analyses to test the revised hypotheses consolidating these three conditions into one called 'Benefits'. Neutral and EO conditions remained unchanged. Below I provide the revised hypotheses, methods, design, measures, analysis, and findings of the main study.

4.3.1 Revised Hypotheses

The findings from three pilot studies and a main study suggested that participants were able to distinguish among three expression-based signal conditions — EO, Benefits and Neutral. Consequently, the main analyses were performed with these three types of expression-based signals. Accordingly, hypotheses 1 to 10 were revised and proposed as below:

H1R: The relationship between expression-based signals and organizational attractiveness will be mediated by racioethnic minorities' perceptions of inclusion, where the Benefits type expression-based signal will have a stronger mediational effect than EO type expression-based signal.

H2R: The relationship between expression-based signals and organizational attractiveness will be mediated by racioethnic minorities' perceptions of cognitive trust, where the Benefits type expression-based signal will have a stronger mediational effect than EO type expression-based signal.

H3R: The relationship between expression-based signals and organizational attractiveness will be mediated by racioethnic minorities' perceptions of affective trust, where the Benefits type expression-based signal will have a stronger mediational effect than the EO type expression-based signal.

H4R: The relationship between expression-based signals and leadership aspirations will be mediated by racioethnic minorities' perceptions of inclusion, where the Benefits type expression-based signal will have a stronger mediational effect than EO type expression-based signal.

H5R: The relationship between expression-based signals and leadership aspirations will be mediated by racioethnic minorities' perceptions of cognitive trust, where the Benefits type expression-based signal will have stronger mediational effect than EO type expression-based signal.

H6R: The relationship between expression-based signals and leadership aspirations will be mediated by racioethnic minorities' perceptions of affective trust, where the Benefits type expression-based signal will have a stronger mediational effect than EO type expression-based signal.

H7R: Diversity signal sets will positively influence racioethnic minorities' organizational attractiveness through (a) perceptions of inclusion, (b) perceptions of cognitive trust, and (c) perceptions of affective trust.

H8R: The strength of the association in H7R (a), (b), and (c), respectively, will be stronger for Benefits type diversity signal sets than EO type diversity signal sets.

H9R: Diversity signal sets will positively influence racioethnic minorities' leadership aspirations through (a) perceptions of inclusion, (b) perceptions of cognitive trust, and (c) perceptions of affective trust.

H10R: The strength of the association in H9R (a), (b), and (c), respectively, will be stronger for Benefits type diversity signal sets than EO type diversity signal sets.

4.3.2 Participants

Participants residing in USA who identify as racioethnic minorities were recruited using the *Prolific* (www.prolific.co) online panel recruitment service. Prolific allowed me to filter participants based on their demographics and other characteristics to ensure that only racioethnic minority jobseekers participated in the survey. 300 participants clicked on the link to enter the survey. The mean completion time was 569.20 seconds ($SD = 381.60$), and the median completion time was 466 seconds. There were 21 participants who submitted responses in under 186.4 seconds (40% of median completion time); consistent with best practices on maintaining data quality, these participants were eliminated from the analysis (McGonagle et al., 2016), leaving 279 participants.

I followed best practices for ensuring high data quality (Porter, Outlaw, Gale, & Cho, 2019). For example, the questionnaire included two attention check items and two instructional stimulus check items to ensure high data quality. The data for respondents who failed more than one attention check were removed. Similarly, data for respondents who failed the stimulus check were not considered for further analysis. Participants who provided incorrect responses to attention check (N = 10) and stimulus check questions were excluded from the analysis ($N = 23$).

The final sample size was 246 participants. The mean age of the final sample was 33.6 years of age ($SD = 10.81$ years *MIN.* 18 *MAX.* 75), and 46% of participants identified as female.

In terms of race or ethnicity, 33% of participants were Black or African American, 29% of participants were Asian, 22% of participants were Hispanic, and 12% of participants described themselves as mixed race or ethnicity.

4.3.3 Procedure

Participants viewed websites that were designed to imitate multiple versions of an organization's 'careers' website, similar to those maintained by US Fortune 500 companies. The contents of the websites were informed by the findings of two pilot studies (Pilot Studies One and Two) and a manipulation items selection study. Contents and sample 'careers' website are presented in Appendix D. The basic appearance of the website and the company information provided were identical in all of the experimental conditions.

4.3.3 Design

Participants read the websites with the company's expression-based signal (manipulated) and the presence or absence of evidence-based signals (diversity performance facts (manipulated)). I used a between-subjects three (expression-based signals) by two (evidence-based signals) experimental design. Altogether, six conditions were created. First, the participants under EO type expression-based signals with no evidence-based signal read websites with EO type expression-based signal and neutral facts (i.e., no evidence-based diversity signal). Second, the participants under EO type diversity signal sets read websites with EO type expression-based signal and evidence-based signal (i.e., diversity performance facts). Third, the participants under the Benefits type expression-based signal with no evidence-based signal read benefits-oriented expression-based signals (i.e., BC or VI or Mix) and neutral facts. Fourth, the participants under the Benefits type diversity signal sets read benefits-oriented expression-based signal and evidence-based signal. Fifth, participants under a neutral statement condition with an

evidence-based signal read a neutral statement unrelated to diversity and evidence-based signals. Sixth, participants under a neutral statement condition without an evidence-based signal read a neutral statement unrelated to diversity and neutral facts unrelated to diversity. The conditions are presented in Table 4-2. Participants then completed a survey about the organization that will be described in the next section.

Table 4-2: True Experiment - Randomized Design (3x2)

Evidence-based Signal (B)

		No Evidence-based Signal B1	Evidence-based Signal B2
Expression-based Signal (A)	EO (A1)	A1 B1	A1 B2
	Benefits (A2)	A2 B1	A2 B2
	Neutral (A3)	A3 B1	A3 B2

4.3.4 Measures

For a complete list of measures, see Appendix E.

Organizational Attractiveness: Participants' perceptions of organizational attractiveness ($\alpha = 0.88$; Highhouse et al., 2003) were measured using five items (e.g., 'This company is attractive to me as a place for employment') on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 Strongly Disagree to 7 Strongly Agree.

Leadership Aspirations: Participants' leadership aspirations ($\alpha = 0.90$; Simon & Hoyt, 2012) were measured using two items (In this company 'I would actively pursue leadership positions in the future' and 'I would work hard to be selected as a leader') on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 Strongly Disagree to 7 Strongly Agree.

Perceptions of Inclusion: Participants' perceptions of inclusion (α = 0.94; Chung et al., 2020) were measured using eight items (e.g., 'I would be treated as a valued member of my workgroup') on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 Strongly Disagree to 7 Strongly Agree.

Perceptions of Cognitive Trust: Participants' perceptions of cognitive trust (α = 0.95; Yang & Mossholder, 2010) were measured using five--items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 Strongly Disagree to 7 Strongly Agree. Sample items for cognitive trust include 'I can depend on management to meet its responsibilities' and 'I see no reason to doubt the management's competence'.

Perceptions of Affective Trust: Participants' perceptions of affective trust (α = 0.94; Yang & Mossholder, 2010) were measured using five items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 Strongly Disagree to 7 Strongly Agree. Sample items for affective trust include 'I am confident that management will always care about my personal needs at work' and 'I am sure I could openly communicate my feelings to management'.

4.2.4 Analysis

To test the hypotheses, I used Andrew Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2017). I tested hypotheses 1R to 10R using linear regression analysis (OLS technique). Linear regression analysis is recommended for the analysis of experimental data because it is consistent, robust to heteroskedasticity, and less prone to biases as compared to logistic regression (Gomila, 2021). I applied indicator coding for categorizing the multi-categorical independent variable - types of expression-based signals.

4.3 Main Study Results

4.3.1 Revised Hypotheses Testing

The main analyses were performed with three types of expression-based signals: Neutral, EO, and Benefits. Figures 4-1 and 4-2 demonstrate the hypothesized indirect effects and conditional effects of types of expression-based signals (i.e., influence of diversity signal sets) on outcomes via mediators.

Figure 4-2: Indirect Effects Analyses in Main Study 3 for Outcomes

Note. The path represents the indirect effect of the Types of Expression-based Signals (X) on Outcomes (Y), through respectively, Perceptions of Inclusion (M1—Path 1), Perceptions of cognitive trust (M2—Path 2), and Perceptions of affective trust (M3—Path 3).

Figure 4-3: Conditional Indirect Effects Analyses in Main Study 3 for Outcomes
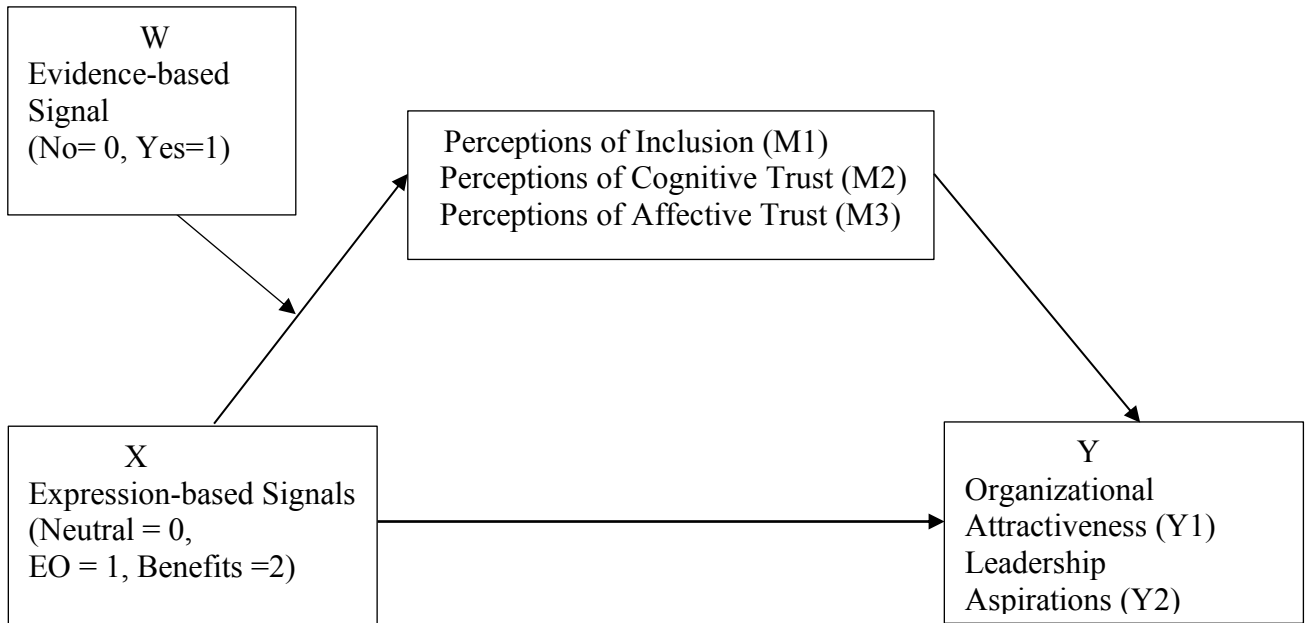
Note. The path shows the influence of diversity signal sets on racioethnic minority job-seeker outcomes. It represents the indirect effect of the Type of Expression-based Signals (X) on Organizational Attractiveness (Y), through respectively, Perceptions of Inclusion (M1—Path 1), Perceptions of cognitive trust (M2—Path 2), and Perceptions of affective trust (M3—Path 3) conditional on presence (vs absence) of evidence-based signal (W). Bolded subscale represents significant indirect effect.

Indirect Effects of Expression-based Signals (X) on Organizational Attractiveness (Y1)

As shown in Figure 4-1, I tested for indirect effects of types of expression-based signals (X) on the organizational attractiveness (Y1) of racioethnic jobseekers via each of the psychological processes (M_i, model 4 in Hayes 2013). The coefficients reported below are indirect effects, and their bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CIs, computed with 5,000 resamples using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2013). I tested for the indirect effects of types of expression-based signals on organizational attractiveness via three psychological mechanisms (M_i): perceptions of inclusion, cognitive trust, and affective trust. Table 4-3 summarizes the results.

Table 4-3: Mediational Analyses for Effects of Expression-based Signals on Organizational Attractiveness via Mediators

Outcome variable	Type	Statistics	Total effect	Indirect effect 1	Indirect effect 2.	Indirect effect 3	Direct effect
Organizational Attractiveness	Benefits	b (SE)	0.57 (0.23)	0.08 (0.09)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.06)	0.5 (0.13)
		95% CI	[0.12; 1.03]	[-0.09; 0.27]	[-0.11; 0.06]	[-0.13; 0.13]	[0.01; 0.25]
		p	< 0.05				< 0.01
	EO	b (SE)	0.49 (0.27)	0.13 (0.12)	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.02 (0.07)	0.39 (0.16)
		95% CI	[-0.04; 1.02]	[-0.09; 0.39]	[-0.11; 0.09]	[-0.16; 0.13]	[0.06; 0.70]
		p	0.07				0.02

Note. N = 246. Indirect effects 1-3 represent the indirect effects of Type of Expression-based Signals (X) on Organizational Attractiveness (Y) through, respectively, M_1 = Perceptions of inclusion, M_2 = Perceptions of cognitive trust, and M_3 = Perceptions of affective trust. Confidence Intervals (CIs) were computed with the bias-corrected bootstrap method with 5,000 resamples.

Through Perceptions of Inclusion. Unexpectedly, the indirect effect of types of expression-based signals on organizational attractiveness via perceptions of inclusion (H1R) was not supported when the Benefits type and EO type of expression-based signals (Table 4-3, Benefits: $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI [-0.09; 0.27];EO: $b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.12$, 95% CI [-0.09; 0.39]) were compared to the control condition (i.e., neutral condition).

Through Perceptions of Cognitive Trust. Similarly, the indirect effect of types of expression-based signals on organizational attractiveness via perceptions of cognitive trust (H2R) was not supported when the Benefits type and EO type of expression-based signals (Table 4-3, Benefits: $b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [-0.11; 0.06]; EO: $b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [- 0.11; 0.09]) were compared to the control condition (i.e., neutral statement).

Through Perceptions of Affective Trust. There was no significant indirect effect of types of expression-based signals on organizational attractiveness via perceptions of affective trust when the Benefits type and EO type of expression-based signals (Table 4-3, Benefits: $b = -0.002$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI [-0.13; 0.13]; EO: $b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI [-0.16; 0.13]) were compared to the control condition (i.e., neutral statement). Consequently, H3R was not supported.

Indirect Effects of Expression-based Signal Types (X) on Leadership Aspirations (Y2)

As shown in Figure 4-2, I tested for indirect effects of types of expression-based signals (X) on the leadership aspirations (Y2) of racioethnic jobseekers via each of the psychological processes (M_i, model 4 in Hayes 2013). The coefficients reported below are indirect effects and their bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CIs, computed with 5,000 resamples using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2013). I tested for the indirect effects of types of expression-based signals on leadership aspirations through three psychological mechanisms (M_i): perceptions of inclusion, cognitive trust, and affective trust. Table 4-4 summarizes the results.

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Table 4-4: Mediational Analyses for Effects of Expression-based Signals on Leadership Aspirations via Mediators

Outcome variable	Type	Statistics	Total effect	Indirect effect 1	Indirect effect 2	Indirect effect 3	Direct effect
Leadership Aspirations	Benefits	*b (SE)*	0.12 (0.25)	0.09 (0.11)	-0.02 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.04 (0.19)
		95% CI	[-0.38; 0.62]	[-0.11; 0.34]	[-0.13; 0.10]	[-0.07; 0.08]	[-0.33; 0.42]
		p	0.63				0.79
	EO	*b (SE)*	-0.08 (0.30)	0.16 (0.15)	-0.08 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.22 (0.23)
		95% CI	[-0.68; 0.52]	[-0.09; 0.49]	[-0.12; 0.10]	[-0.11; 0.07]	[0.67; 0.22]
		p	0.79				0.32

Note. N = 246. Indirect effects 1-3 represent the indirect effects of Type of expression-based signals (X) on Leadership Aspirations (Y) through, respectively, M_1 = Perceptions of inclusion, M_2 = Perceptions of cognitive trust, and M_3 = Perceptions of affective trust. Confidence Intervals (CIs) were computed with the bias-corrected bootstrap method with 5,000 resamples.

Through Perceptions of Inclusion. The indirect effect of types of expression-based signals on leadership aspirations via perceptions of inclusion (H4R) was not supported when the Benefits type and EO type of expression-based signals (Table 4-4, Benefits: $b = 0.09$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% CI [-0.11; 0.34]; EO: $b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.15$, 95% CI [-0.09; 0.49]) were compared to the control condition (i.e., neutral statement).

Through Perceptions of Cognitive Trust. Similarly, the indirect effect of types of expression-based signals on leadership aspirations via perceptions of cognitive trust (H5R) was not supported when the Benefits type and EO type of expression-based signals (Table 4-4, 95% CI [-0.13; 0.10]; EO: $b = -0.08$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [-0.12; 0.10]) were compared to the control condition (i.e., neutral statement).

Through Perceptions of Affective Trust. There was no significant indirect effect of types of expression-based signals on leadership aspirations via perceptions of affective trust when the Benefits type and EO type of expression-based signals (Table 4-4, Benefits: $b = -0.001$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [-0.07; 0.08]; EO: $b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [-0.11; 0.07]) were compared to the control condition (i.e., neutral statement). Consequently, H6R was not supported.

Effects of Diversity Signal Sets — Conditional Indirect Effects of Expression-based Signals (X) on Organizational Attractiveness (Y1)

To test for effects of diversity signal sets on outcomes, I declared the type of diversity signal set (i.e., expression-based signal types with or without evidence-based signal) as a multi-categorical variable (six categories) and effect-coded it to produce relevant comparisons, where neutral expression-based signal with no evidence-based signal was taken as a reference category. Specifically, I tested for indirect effects of types of expression-based signal (X) based on the

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presence (vs absence) of evidence-based signals (W) via three psychological mechanisms (M_i): perceptions of inclusion, cognitive trust, and affective trust. Table 4-5 summarizes the results.

Table 4-5: Moderated Mediation Analyses for Conditional Effects of Expression-based Signals on Organizational Attractiveness (Y) via Mediators

X	W	Statistics	Total effect	Indirect effect 1	Indirect effect 2	Indirect effect 3	Direct effect
Benefit	Neutral	b (SE) 95% CI p	0.68 (0.32) [0.05; 1.31] 0.03	0.13 (0.10) [-0.06; 0.35]	-0.04 (0.05) [-0.16; 0.05]	0.03 (0.07) [-0.11; 0.20]	0.56 (0.19) [0.17; 0.94] 0.004
	Diversity	b (SE) 95% CI p	1.15 (0.32) [0.51; 1.78] <0.001	0.32 (0.11) [0.11; 0.56]	0.03 (0.05) [-0.05; 0.15]	0.13 (0.09) [0.001; 0.35]	0.65 (0.19) [0.27; 1.04] <0.001
EO	Neutral	b (SE) 95% CI p	0.79 (0.38) [0.04; 1.54] 0.04	0.22 (0.15) [-0.06; 0.55]	0.01 (0.05) [-0.09; 0.14]	0.01 (0.09) [-0.16; 0.22]	0.52 (0.22) [0.07; 0.98] 0.02
	Diversity	b (SE) 95% CI p	0.87 (0.37) [0.12; 1.61] 0.02	0.33 (0.15) [0.04; 0.63]	-0.002 (0.09) [-0.13; 0.11]	0.11 (0.09) [-0.05; 0.33]	0.43 (0.22) [-0.02; 0.88] 0.06

Note. N = 246. Indirect effects 1-3 represent the indirect effects of Expression-based Signals (X) on Organizational Attractiveness (Y) through, respectively, M_1 = Perceptions of inclusion, M_2 = Perceptions of cognitive trust, and M_3 = Perceptions of affective trust. Confidence Intervals (CIs) were computed with the bias-corrected bootstrap method with 5,000 resamples.

Through Perceptions of Inclusion. As predicted by H7R (a), racioethnic minorities' perception of inclusion was found as a significant mechanism explaining the relationship between the type of expression-based signals (Table 4-5, EO: $b = 0.33$, $SE = 0.15$, 95% CI [0.04; 0.63]; Benefits: $b = 0.32$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% CI [0.11; 0.56]) and attraction to the organization contingent on the presence of evidence-based signals. In other words, relative to their counterparts in the control condition, racioethnic minorities who received EO and Benefits types of diversity signal sets anticipated feeling significantly higher perceptions of inclusion, which in turn predicted higher attraction to the organization. H8R(a) was not supported as the strength of the association as measured by the beta-coefficient was not stronger for the benefit type of diversity signal set compared to the EO type of diversity signal set.

The results indicate that organizations with a diversity signal set (i.e., EO or Benefits type of expression-based signal with diversity performance facts as evidence-based signal) will have a positive effect on the organizational attractiveness of racioethnic minorities through enhanced perceptions of inclusion.

Through Perceptions of Cognitive Trust. The conditional indirect effect [H7R(b)] on attraction to the organization via perceptions of cognitive trust was not supported for either of the expression-based signals (Table 4-5, EO: $b = -0.002$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI [-0.13; 0.11]; Benefits: $b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [-0.05; 0.15]) conditional on the presence of evidence-based signals. As such, there was no support for H8R (b).

Through Perceptions of Affective Trust. Hypothesis H7R (c) was partially supported. Racioethnic minorities' perception of affective trust was found as a significant mechanism to explain the relationship between the Benefit type of expression-based signals (Table 4-5, $b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI [0.001; 0.35]) and attraction to the organization contingent on the presence of

evidence-based signals. However, the relationship was not significant for the EO type of expression-based signal (Table 4-5, $b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI [-0.05; 0.33]). In other words, relative to their counterparts in the control condition and EO condition, racioethnic minorities who read diversity performance facts in the Benefits conditions anticipated feeling significantly higher perceptions of affective trust, which in turn predicted their higher attraction to the organization. Consequently, H8R (c) was also supported.

The results indicate that the Benefit type of diversity signal sets will positively influence racioethnic minorities' attraction to the organization via perceptions of affective trust.

Effects of Diversity Signal Sets — Conditional Indirect Effects of Expression-based Signal Types (X) on Leadership Aspirations (Y2)

To test for the effect of diversity signal sets on leadership aspirations, I declared the type of expression-based signals with or without evidence-based signals as a multi-categorical variable (six categories) and effect-coded it to produce the relevant comparisons. The coefficients reported below are indirect effects, and their bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% CIs, computed with 5,000 resamples using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2013). Specifically, I tested for indirect effects of type of expression-based signals (X) based on presence of evidence-based signals (vs neutral facts) (W) via the three psychological mechanisms: perceptions of inclusion, cognitive trust, and affective trust. Table 4-6 summarizes the results.

Table 4-6: Moderated Mediation Analyses for Conditional (W) Effects of Expression-based Signals (X) on Leadership Aspirations (Y) via Mediators

X	W	Statistics	Total effect	Indirect effect 1	Indirect effect 2	Indirect effect 3	Direct effect
Benefit	Neutral	b (SE)	-0.07 (0.35)	0.15 (0.12)	-0.04 (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.20 (0.27)
		95% CI	[-0.78; 0.62]	[-0.07; 0.41]	[-0.19; 0.04]	[-0.06; 0.14]	[-0.73; 0.33]
		p	0.83				0.45
	Diversity	b (SE)	0.50 (0.35)	0.38 (0.14)	0.03 (0.05)	0.06 (0.07)	0.03 (0.27)
		95% CI	[-0.19; 1.21]	[0.12; 0.68]	[-0.06; 0.16]	[-0.06; 0.16]	[-0.50; 0.57]
		p	0.15				0.89
EO	Neutral	b (SE)	-0.09 (0.42)	0.26 (0.19)	0.01 (0.05)	0.007 (0.05)	-0.39 (0.32)
		95% CI	[-0.93; 0.74]	[-0.07; 0.70]	[-0.09; 0.15]	[-0.10; 0.14]	[-1.02; 0.23]
		p	0.81				0.22
	Diversity	b (SE)	0.12 (0.42)	0.39 (0.18)	-0.002 (0.06)	0.04 (0.07)	-0.31 (0.32)
		95% CI	[-0.71; 0.95]	[0.05; 0.79]	[-0.14; 0.11]	[-0.06; 0.23]	[-0.95; 0.31]
		p	0.77				0.32

Note. N = 246. X= Expression-based Signals, W = Evidence-based Signals. Indirect effects 1-3 represent the indirect effects of Type of Facts (X) on Leadership Aspirations (Y) through, respectively, M_1 = Perceptions of inclusion, M_2 = Perceptions of cognitive trust, and M_3 = Perceptions of affective trust. Confidence Intervals (CIs) were computed with the bias-corrected bootstrap method with 5,000 resamples.

Through Perceptions of Inclusion. As predicted by H9R (a), racioethnic minorities' perceptions of inclusion were found as a significant mechanism explaining the relationship between diversity signal sets (Table 4-6, EO: $b = 0.39$, $SE = 0.18$, 95% CI [0.05; 0.79]; Benefits: $b = 0.37$, $SE = 0.14$, 95% CI [0.12; 0.68]) and aspirations to achieve leadership positions in the organization. In other words, relative to their counterparts in the control condition, racioethnic minorities who read diversity performance facts in the EO and Benefits conditions anticipated feeling significantly higher perceptions of inclusion, which in turn predicted higher leadership aspirations. H10R (a) was not supported as the strength of the association as measured by the beta-coefficient was not higher for the Benefit type of diversity signal sets compared to the EO type of diversity signal sets.

Through Perceptions of Cognitive Trust. The conditional indirect effect [H9R (b)] on leadership aspirations via perceptions of cognitive trust was not supported for either of the expression-based signals (Table 4-6, EO: $b = -0.01$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI [-0.14; 0.11]; Benefits: $b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [-0.06; 0.16]) conditional on the presence of evidence-based signals. As a result, there was no support for H10R (b). In other words, diversity signal sets had no influence on racioethnic minorities leadership aspirations through perceptions of cognitive trust.

Through Perceptions of Affective Trust. The conditional indirect effect H9R (c) on leadership aspirations via perceptions of affective trust was not supported for either of the expression-based signals (Table 4-6, EO: $b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI [-0.06; 0.23]; Benefits: $b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI [-0.06; 0.25]) As a result, there was no support for H10R (c). In other words, diversity signal sets had no influence on racioethnic minorities leadership aspirations through perceptions of affective trust.

Direct Effects of Types of Expression-based Signals on Outcomes and Mediators

Even though not hypothesized, the direct effect of expression-based signals on organizational attractiveness was significant. There was a significant influence of both EO-type of expression-based signals ($b = 0.38$; $p < 0.05$) and Benefits type of expression-based signals ($b = 0.51$; $p < 0.0001$) on organizational attractiveness compared to neutral statements. However, the direct effects of the type of expression-based signals on leadership aspirations and mediators (perceptions of inclusion, cognitive trust, and affective trust) were not significant.

4.4 Supplemental Analyses: Evidence-based Signals and Outcomes

Content analysis of US Fortune 500 firms suggests that a significant number of firms communicate both expression-based signals and evidence-based signals in the form of a diversity signal set. The main study findings in this chapter determined that when an organization communicates a diversity signal set, it will have a positive influence on racioethnic minorities' organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations via different psychological processes. Nonetheless, it is possible that evidence-based signals alone could predict racioethnic minority applicants' organizational attractiveness through different psychological mechanisms, regardless of the information from expression-based signals (i.e., DM statements). An organization that provide evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity performance facts) such as percentage of racioethnic minorities in the workforce and leadership positions on its website implies that it is more supportive of bringing diversity to all levels of management. I conducted a supplemental analysis to examine the influence of evidence-based signals alone, irrespective of information from expression-based signals, on racioethnic minorities job-related outcomes. For the analysis to be focused solely on the evidence-based signals and their impact on racioethnic minorities'

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outcomes, I collapsed the data across the different types of expression-based signals. Therefore, the predictor was whether evidence-based signals were present or not.

I found significant differences between the presence of evidence-based signals (diversity performance facts) and neutral facts and most outcomes, including organizational attractiveness, leadership aspirations, perceptions of inclusion, and affective trust. An organization with a website that provides evidence-based signals was perceived by participants as significantly more inclusive and higher on affective trust compared to organizations with no evidence-based signals. Participants were more likely to be attracted to organizations communicating evidence-based signals. Similarly, the participants' aspirations to hold higher leadership positions were significantly higher for organizations communicating evidence-based signals. Below, I explain the direct and indirect effect of evidence-based signals on racioethnic minorities' organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations.

4.4.1 Direct Effect of Evidence-based Signals on Outcomes and Mediators

To identify the effect of the condition (presence vs absence of evidence-based signals) on participants' outcomes, I ran an independent samples *t*-test. The *t*-test results suggested significant differences between the presence of evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity performance facts) and neutral facts on outcomes (organizational attractiveness, leadership aspirations, perceptions of inclusion, and affective trust) except perceptions of cognitive trust. Relative to those in neutral facts (no evidence-based signals) conditions, racioethnic minorities who were randomly assigned to websites containing evidence-based signals reported a significantly higher attraction to the prospective organization ($M_{evidence-based} = 5.40$, $M_{neutral\ facts} = 4.97$, $t(244) = -2.44$, $p<0.05$). The organization with a website that provided evidence-based signals was perceived by participants as significantly more inclusive ($M_{evidence-based} = 5.50$, $M_{neutral}$

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facts $= 5.16$, $t(244) = -2.50$, p<0.05) and higher on affective trust ($M_{evidence-based} = 4.94$, $M_{neutral facts} = 4.53$, $t(244) = -2.54$, p<0.05) compared to organizations with no evidence-based signals. Similarly, the participants' aspirations to hold leadership positions were significantly higher for organizations communicating evidence-based signals compared to organizations communicating neutral facts unrelated to diversity performance ($M_{evidence-based} = 5.40$, $M_{neutral facts} = 4.97$, $t(244) = -2.44$, p<0.05). These findings suggest that there were significant differences in participants' outcomes in the evidence-based signals condition compared to the condition of the neutral facts.

The results motivated me to understand the psychological processes that might explain the influence of evidence-based signals on racioethnic minority jobseekers' outcomes. Below I explain the supplementary analyses I conducted on the influence of evidence-based signals on racioethnic minorities' organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations through psychological mechanisms (perceptions of inclusion, cognitive trust, and affective trust).

4.4.2 Indirect Effect of Evidence-based Signals on Organizational Attractiveness Via Mediators

Consistent with past research on the positive influence of racial representation on ethnic minorities' work-related experiences (e.g., Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2005; Wilton et al., 2020), I was interested in testing whether or not simply providing evidence-based signals was enough to enhance perceptions of inclusion, cognitive, and affective trust which, in turn, might predict organizational attractiveness of racioethnic minority jobseekers compared with a condition where evidence-based signal (i.e., information on diversity-related performance) was absent.

As a supplemental analysis, I tested for the indirect effects of tested an indirect effect of evidence-based signals (X) on attraction to the organization (Y) via each of the potential psychological processes (M_{i};, Model 4 in Hayes, 2013; see Figure 4-4).

Figure 4-4: Indirect Effects Supplemental Analyses for Outcomes
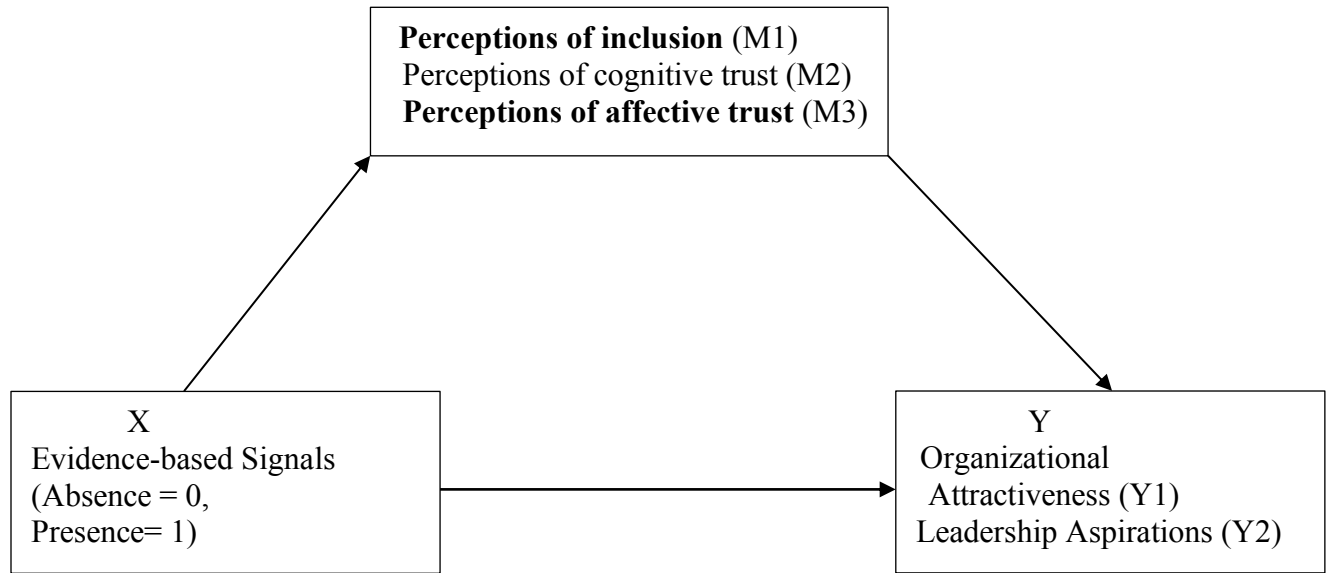
Note. Paths 1–6 represent the indirect effects of Type of facts (X) on Organizational Attractiveness (Y), through, respectively, Perceptions of Inclusion (M1—Path 1), Perceptions of cognitive trust (M2—Path 2), and Perceptions of affective trust (M3—Path 3). Bolded mediators represent significant indirect effects.

The coefficients reported in Table 4-7 are indirect effects, and their bias-corrected boot-strapped

95% CIs, computed with 5000 resamples using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013).

Table 4-7: Direct and Indirect Effects Model Coefficients for Effects of Evidence-based Signals on Organizational Attractiveness

	Consequent											
	M1 (PI)			M2 (CT)			M3 (AT)			Y(OA)		
Antecedent	Coeff	SE	p	Coeff	SE	p	Coeff	SE	p	Coeff	SE	p
X	0.30	0.12	0.02	0.19	0.12	0.13	0.31	0.15	0.04	0.10	0.09	0.28
PI (M1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.59	0.07	<.001
CT (M2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.19	0.08	0.02
AT (M3)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.25	0.07	<.001
	$R^2 = 0.02$			$R^2 = 0.01$			$R^2 = 0.01$			$R^2 = 0.68$		
	$F_{(1, 298)} = 5.75, p = 0.02$			$F_{(1, 298)} = 2.29, p = 0.131$			$F_{(1, 298)} = 4.40, p = 0.037$			$F_{(4, 295)} = 148.10, p < 0.001$		

Note: PI = perceptions of inclusion, CT = perceptions of cognitive trust, AT = perceptions of affective trust, OA = Organizational Attractiveness; M1, M2, M3 = mediators; X = predictor - presence (vs absence) of evidence-based signals; Y = outcomes.

As indicated in Table 4-7, 68% of the variance in jobseekers' organizational attractiveness is explained by the model. Participants' attraction to the organization differed as a function of evidence-based signals and perceptions of inclusion, cognitive trust, and affective trust. Table 4-8 summarizes the results for the influence of evidence-based signals on racioethnic minorities' organizational attractiveness through perceptions of inclusion, perceptions of cognitive trust, and perceptions of affective trust.

Through Perceptions of Inclusion. There were significant indirect effects of evidence-based signals on organizational attractiveness through heightened perceptions of inclusion (evidence-based signal vs. control: b = 0.20, SE = 0.08, 95% CI [0.04; 0.38]) when comparing the evidence-based signals to the control condition (neutral facts). Racioethnic minorities exposed to an evidence-based signal (vs control) condition anticipated significantly greater perceptions of inclusion which, in turn, predicted greater anticipated attraction to the organization.

Through Perceptions of Cognitive Trust. There were no significant indirect effects of evidence-based signal on organizational attractiveness through perceptions of cognitive trust (evidence-based signal vs. control: b = 0.04, SE = 0.03, 95% CI [-0.01; 0.12]) when comparing the evidence-based signal to the control condition.

Through Perceptions of Affective Trust. There was a significant indirect effect of evidence-based signal on organizational attractiveness through perceptions of affective trust (evidence-based signal vs. control condition: *b* = 0.11, *SE* = 0.06, 95% CI [0.01; 0.28]) when comparing the evidence-based signal to the control condition. Racioethnic minorities exposed to an evidence-based signal (vs. control) condition anticipated significantly greater perceptions of affective trust which, in turn, predicted greater attraction to the organization.

Table 4-8: Mediational Analyses for Effects of Evidence-based Signals on Organizational Attractiveness via Mediators

Outcome variable	Comparison	Statistics	Total effect	Indirect effect 1	Indirect effect 2	Indirect effect 3	Direct effect
Organizational Attractiveness	Presence vs. absence of X	b (SE)	0.42 (0.17)	0.20 (0.08)	0.04 (0.03)	0.11 (0.06)	0.06 (0.10)
		95% CI	[0.08; 0.77]	[0.04; 0.38]	[-0.01; 0.12]	[0.01; 0.28]	[-0.14; 0.28]
		p	<0.05	<0.05		<0.05	

Note. N = 246. Indirect effects 1-3 represent the indirect effects of type of Evidence-based Signals (X) on Organizational Attractiveness (Y) through, respectively, M_1 = Perceptions of inclusion, M_2 = Perceptions of cognitive trust, and M_3 = Perceptions of affective trust. Confidence Intervals (CIs) were computed with the bias-corrected bootstrap method with 5,000 resamples.

4.4.3 Indirect Effect of Evidence-based Signals on Leadership Aspirations Via Mediators

Even though research on racioethnic minorities' leadership aspirations is in a rudimentary stage, empirical research (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004; Windscheid et al., 2016) and theory (Kossek et al., 2017) on gender and leadership suggests that women's leadership aspirations are enhanced when they see women in decision-making roles. Similarly, observing the representation of people from racioethnic minorities in leadership positions may enhance the leadership aspirations of racioethnic minorities. In keeping with the honest signaling argument (see Chapter One, components of signaling theory), I was interested in testing whether communicating diversity performance facts (such as statistics suggesting meaningful representation of racioethnic minorities in leadership positions) as evidence-based signals enhances the perceptions of inclusion and trust (cognitive and affective trust), which in turn predict racioethnic minorities' aspirations to acquire leadership positions compared with a condition where evidence-based facts were absent.

I tested for the indirect effects of evidence-based signal (X) on leadership aspirations (Y) via each of the potential psychological processes. The coefficients reported below are indirect effects, and their bias-corrected boot-strapped 95% Cis, computed with 5000 resamples using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013). As shown in Table 4-9, the model predicts 46% of the variance in jobseekers' leadership aspirations.

Table 4-9: Direct and Indirect Effects Model Coefficients for Effects of Evidence-based Signal on Leadership Aspirations

	Consequent											
	M1 (PI)			M2 (CT)			M3 (AT)			Y(LA)		
Antecedent	Coeff	SE	p	Coeff	SE	p	Coeff	SE	p	Coeff	SE	p
X	0.30	0.12	0.02	0.19	0.12	0.131	0.311	0.148	0.037	0.14	0.13	0.27
PI (M1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.58	0.09	<.001
CT (M2)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.28	0.11	0.01
AT (M3)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.11	0.09	0.26
	$R^2 = 0.02$			$R^2 = 0.01$			$R^2 = 0.01$			$R^2 = 0.46$		
	$F_{(1, 298)} = 5.75, p = 0.02$			$F_{(1, 298)} = 2.29, p = 0.13$			$F_{(1, 298)} = 4.40, p = 0.04$			$F_{(4, 295)} = 62.42, p < 0.001$		

Note: PI = perceptions of inclusion, CT = perceptions of cognitive trust, AT = perceptions of affective trust, LA = Leadership Aspirations; M1, M2, M3 = mediators; X = predictor - presence (vs absence) of evidence-based signal; Y = outcomes.

These results suggest that participants' leadership aspirations differ as a function of evidence-based signals and their perceptions of inclusion, cognitive trust, and affective trust. Table 4-10 summarizes the results for the influence of evidence-based signals on racioethnic minorities leadership aspirations through perceptions of inclusion, perceptions of cognitive trust, and perceptions of affective trust.

Through Perceptions of Inclusion. There were significant indirect effects of evidence-based signals on racioethnic minorities' aspirations to acquire leadership positions in the prospective organization through heightened perceptions of inclusion (Table 4-10, evidence-based signal vs. control: $b = 0.22$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI [0.04; 0.42]) when comparing the evidence-based signal to the control (neutral facts) condition. Racioethnic minorities exposed to an evidence-based signal (vs. control) condition anticipated significantly greater perceptions of inclusion which, in turn, predicted their greater aspirations to acquire leadership positions in the prospective organization.

Through Perceptions of Cognitive Trust. There were no significant indirect effects of evidence-based signal on leadership aspirations of racioethnic minorities through perceptions of cognitive trust (Table 4-10, evidence-based signal vs. control: $b = 0.05$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [-0.01; 0.15]) when comparing the evidence-based signal to the control (neutral facts) condition.

Through Perceptions of Affective Trust. The indirect effect of evidence-based signals on racioethnic minorities' aspiration to acquire leadership positions through perceptions of affective trust was not significant when comparing the evidence-based signal case to the control (neutral facts) case condition (Table 4-10, evidence-based signal vs. control: $b = 0.05$, $SE = 0.05$, 95% CI [-0.05; 0.17]).

Table 4-10: Mediational Analyses for Effects of Evidence-based Signal on Leadership Aspirations via Mediators

Outcome variable	Comparison	Statistics	Total effect	Indirect effect 1	Indirect effect 2	Indirect effect 3	Direct effect
Leadership Aspirations	Diversity Facts vs. Neutral Facts	*b (SE)*	0.42 (0.19)	0.22 (0.09)	0.05 (0.04)	0.05 (0.05)	0.10 (0.14)
		95% CI	[0.04; 0.80]	[0.04; 0.42]	[-0.01; 0.15].	[-0.05; 0.17]	[-0.18; 0.39]
		p	<0.05				0.47

Note. N = 246. Indirect effects 1-3 represent the indirect effects of evidence-based signal (X) on Leadership Aspirations (Y) through, respectively, M_1 = Perceptions of inclusion, M_2 = Perceptions of cognitive trust, and M_3 = Perceptions of affective trust. Confidence Intervals (CIs) were computed with the bias-corrected bootstrap method with 5,000 resamples.

4.5 Study Three: Discussion

I used an experimental vignette methodology to examine the influence of diversity signal sets (i.e., expression-based signals and evidence-based signals) on racioethnic minority groups' attraction to organizations and their aspirations to achieve leadership positions in these organizations. The findings from three pilot studies and a main study suggest that participants can distinguish only three types of expression-based signals: EO, Benefits, and Neutral statements. This may mean that individuals' lay or implicit beliefs about organizations' expression-based signals are narrower than the theoretical typology of expression-based signals developed by academics. Specifically, participants were unable to distinguish the BC, VI and Mixed (BC and VI) type of expression-based signals. Implicit theories about organizational communication support these findings related to the challenge of manipulating expression-based signals. Implicit theories are based on the concept that individuals create cognitive representations of the world based on their understanding of the surroundings and influenced by their preconceived expectations and assumptions (Dweck, 2012). In the context of diversity communication, there is an implicit assumption related to modern-day organizations that any efforts to increase employee diversity by companies are based primarily on financial motives (Vredenberg et al., 2020). Indeed, 56% of consumers report that too many companies use societal issues as marketing strategies to sell more of their products or services (Edelman, 2019). In addition, research indicates that 70% of US Millennials are more likely to buy products from companies displaying support for social cause movements (AMA, 2017). Given the recent examples of employment discrimination and the significant legal settlements associated with this discrimination (for example at Amazon, Walmart, and Starbucks), and the display of solidarity statements in the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement without any concrete

commitment to the cause (Dowell & Jackson, 2020), organizations' display of expression-based signals might have been viewed by participants as a performative diversity practice (Melaku & Winkler, 2022) motivated by financial gain or the need for legal compliance. Therefore, it is possible that participants in Study Three inferred BC or VI or Mixed type expression-based signals as primarily driven by the profit justification for diversity and EO type expression-based signals as driven by the compliance justification for diversity.

However, participants did correctly identify evidence-based signals while looking at corporate websites. In addition, supplemental analysis indicated that the presence of evidence-based signals alone significantly influenced jobseekers' affective outcomes (perceptions of inclusion and affective trust), organizational attractiveness, and leadership aspirations. This study elaborates on the importance of diversity signal sets for the honest signaling of diversity. Organizations might consider providing evidence-based signals to back up expression-based signals. The results indicate that organizations providing diversity performance facts as evidence-based signals will positively influence individual outcomes. This might be because evidence-based signals are based on objective diversity performance facts or statistics that are easier to verify when compared to expression-based signals that companies can manipulate to present themselves as pro-diversity employers. Future research is warranted to examine this finding.

Study Three also provides evidence suggesting that exposure to diversity signal sets generates greater perceptions of inclusion among racioethnic minority professionals, which predicts greater organizational attraction and greater leadership aspiration. These findings have important implications regarding how organizations should communicate about diversity if they are truly committed to enhancing diversity at different levels of management in their workplace.

Specifically, the current study indicates that expression-based signals without any evidence-based signals as proof of diversity performance may have no influence on racioethnic minority groups' psychological processes (i.e., perceptions of inclusion, cognitive trust, and affective trust) associated with predicting their attraction to the organization or their aspirations to achieve leadership positions. This study demonstrates the importance of sending both expression-based and evidence-based signals for effective recruitment outcomes.

In terms of explanatory mechanisms, EO types of diversity signal sets had a significant influence on racioethnic groups' attraction to the organization and their aspirations to achieve leadership positions in the organization through their enhanced perceptions of inclusion. On the other hand, the Benefits type of diversity signal sets had a significant influence on racioethnic groups' attraction to the organization via perceptions of affective trust and perceptions of inclusion. It is worth noting that perceptions of cognitive trust did not mediate any of the diversity signal sets and racioethnic minority outcomes. These findings indicate that affective processes (vs knowledge) seem to explain how diversity signal sets influence organizational attraction and leadership aspirations for racioethnic minorities.

The results from supplemental analyses suggest that people are more interested in evidence-based diversity signals (e.g., employee demographics, diversity awards, and minority representation in leadership positions) than in expression-based signals. Irrespective of the types of expression-based signals, organizations presenting evidence-based signals in the form of diversity performance facts positively influenced racioethnic minorities' organizational attraction through perceptions of inclusion and perceptions of affective trust. Similarly, irrespective of the types of expression-based signals, organizations communicating evidence-based signals positively influenced racioethnic minority jobseekers' leadership aspirations via perceptions of

inclusion. Study Three thus provides initial evidence that organizations communicating

expression-based signals without any evidence-based signals (i.e., facts or statistics related to the

organization's diversity performance) may be considered by racioethnic minority groups as

specious or diversity-washing when organizations are trying to present themselves as supportive

of diversity without any tangible evidence or commitment to enhancing diversity (Baker et al.,

2022).

4.5.1 Contributions and Practice Implications

Study Three enhances the knowledge base of diversity and human resource management

fields in at least three areas: (1) signaling theory; (2) targeted recruitment; and (3) minority

representation in leadership. First, it introduces the concept of diversity signal sets to

demonstrate the interplay between expression-based signals and evidence-based signals in

enhancing minority job seekers' organizational attraction and their aspirations to achieve

leadership positions in the organization. To date, signaling theory has largely portrayed signals in

an isolated fashion (Drover et al., 2018). This is specifically true in the context of diversity

communication that focuses solely on expression-based signals. Previous research (Georgeac &

Rattan, 2022; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008) solely focused on the influence of expression-based

signals on minorities' jobseeker outcomes. This could be the reason behind mixed findings on

influence of EO and BC type expression-based signals on minorities' job related outcomes. For

example, Georgeac and Rattan (2022) found that statements focused on profit-based rationale for

diversity undermine minorities perceptions of feeling included and their interest in joining the

organization. On the other hand, Purdie-Vaughns et al. (2008) found that EO type diversity

messages undermine perceptions of organizational trust among racioethnic minorities.

Considering these mixed findings on the influence of expression-based signals, I contribute to

this stream of work by demonstrating organizations that include evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity performance information) in addition to expression-based signals (i.e., diversity statements) will enhance feelings of inclusion and affective trust among racioethnic minorities and their interest in the organization. In sum, profit or compliance-oriented diversity messages may still have positive influence on minority jobseekers if organizations can signal their performance on diversity.

My research extends signaling theory by emphasizing the simultaneous interaction of multiple diversity signals. The application of Spence's (1973) signaling theory in the context of human resource management and diversity recruitment illustrates that signaling is a tool for organizations to reduce information asymmetry between themselves and jobseekers regarding the organization's unobservable characteristics. The utility of any given signal largely depends on the extent to which the signal resembles the unobservable quality that the receivers (e.g., racioethnic minority jobseekers) desire. Management scholars (see Connelly et al, 2011 for review) term this signal honesty or signal credibility, which essentially explains whether receivers can trust the signal. Signals with low credibility or low honesty could be subject to false signaling, a situation where organizations send a signal that falsely suggests that they have a particular desired underlying characteristic (Bergh et al., 2014). Previous research suggests that organizations are more attractive to minorities when an expression-based signal is included in their recruitment materials (e.g., Avery et al., 2004; Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Walker et al., 2012). However, the credibility of such signals is often ignored due to the unanimous assumption of signaling theory that assumes rational attention of receivers to isolated signals according to the valence of the signals. For example, if the sender sends positive signals, receivers will interpret them positively; if the sender sends negative signals, receivers will interpret them negatively.

However, the business environment is complex; in such an environment, organizations send multiple congruent or incongruent signals for receivers' interpretation. Study Three bolsters the argument for sending honest or credible signals as evidence-based signals. I provide evidence that organizations communicating diversity signal sets (i.e., expression-based signals and evidence-based signals) will be positively evaluated by signal receivers. However, isolated expression-based signals without any evidence of diversity performance will have no influence on jobseekers. Specifically, individuals from minority groups will look for additional signals in the form of hard facts or statistics portraying diversity performance to assess the expression-based signal's credibility. Study Three demonstrates that organizations communicating diversity signal sets with fairness or a benefits justification to diversity in their expression-based signal combined with evidence-based signals can enhance racioethnic minorities' attraction to the organization and their aspirations to achieve leadership positions in the organization. This study extends signaling theory by testing the influence of diversity signal sets on racioethnic minorities and by providing empirical evidence for the effectiveness of diversity signal sets in the context of diversity recruitment.

Second, Study Three advances our understanding of targeted recruitment by highlighting the importance of evidence-based signals. Avery and McKay (2006) said it best: "targeted recruitment cannot be improved without understanding why previous efforts have failed" (p. 178). Previous research suggests that organizations signaling both equal opportunities (e.g., Purdie-Vaugns et al., 2008) and business case arguments (e.g., Georgeac & Rattan, 2022) for diversity can backfire. However, these studies focused only on diversity-related words communicated by organizations and not on facts related to diversity performance. I contribute to the research on targeted recruitment by proposing evidence-based signals as a boundary

condition on the influence of expression-based signals on racioethnic minorities' organizational attraction. My research has practical implications for organizations that truly aim to enhance diversity at different levels of management. Findings suggest that organizations employ evidence-based signals to back up their expression-based signals when communicating their support for diversity. This is an interesting suggestion, as organizations could be reluctant to publish their diversity performance facts because many organizations struggle to enhance diversity. Consequently, they may choose not to be transparent by disclosing their statistics on diversity for fear of a bad image or reputation. Interestingly, recent evidence indicates that disclosing a lack of progress in diversity, as opposed to suppressing this information, is perceived by racial minorities as a trustworthy act demonstrating that the organization truly values diversity (Apfelbaum & Suh, 2023). Organizations can disclose their diversity performance facts to signal their genuine care for diversity, thereby enhancing signal receivers' trust in the organization.

Third, Study Three has implications for research on organizational leadership. Much of the current research on diversity communication focuses on targeted groups' job or organizational attraction. To my knowledge, this is the first study to examine the signals that influence minorities' aspirations to achieve leadership positions in the organization. Diversity in leadership positions is important from fairness and social equality perspectives because racioethnic minorities are significantly underrepresented in leadership roles in countries like the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom compared to their representation in the general workforce (Catalyst, 2022). In addition, research evidence, including meta-analyses, confirms that diversity in leadership positions leads to better financial performance (e.g., Andrevski et al., 2014; Joshi & Roh, 2009; Post & Byron, 2015) and non-financial performance such as socially-

responsible business practices (e.g., Byron & Post, 2016). A recent meta-analysis suggests that the minority gap in leadership aspirations has not been given enough attention in terms of research and practice interventions (Netchaeva et al., 2022). Study Three found that when racioethnic minorities see the meaningful representation of minorities in leadership positions they will be more encouraged to aspire for leadership positions. Specifically, the current study provides evidence for 'seeing is believing' and adds to a body of research which focuses on increased representation of minority groups in leadership positions as a crucial first step to address minority gaps in leadership (e.g., Arnold & Loughlin, 2019).

4.5.2 Limitations and Future Research

Study Three has three notable limitations. First, as with all experimental studies, this study has a risk of low external validity (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). To mitigate this risk, the variables of interest were selected from the content analysis of real Fortune 500 firms; in addition, the content of the manipulations was inspired by my previous studies (Study One and Study Two). Moreover, the websites used in the experiment resembled the aesthetics and features of the largest US firms' websites.

A second limitation is the inability of participants to distinguish between BC, VI, and Mixed types of expression-based signals unless given the definition of each (i.e., manipulation items selection study). Given a lack of published findings demonstrating this distinction, it is unlikely that other studies have been able to successfully manipulate these theoretical differences (e.g., Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Gundemir et al., 2017; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). This study's findings indicate that our theory is perhaps too fine-grained or nuanced, making it difficult to transfer into workplace settings. This could be a contributing factor behind the hotly debated topic of research-practice gaps in management literature (e.g., Gubbins & Rousseau,

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2015; Podgorodnichenko et al., 2022). Certainly, this suggests that examining how theory relates to practice in this area could be an interesting future direction for research.

Lastly, while Study Three investigated the effects of expression-based signals for racioethnic minorities, there are many other disadvantaged groups in society, such as women, LGBTQ+, and people with disabilities, who remain underrepresented in different levels of management in organizations. Consequently, my research findings provide future research opportunities to explore further generalizability. Future research could investigate whether the diversity signal sets intended for racioethnic minorities will also be effective for other diversity groups. This study also provides opportunities to expand the research on group-specific diversity signal sets, which could be instrumental in enhancing the representation of minorities from certain target populations. For example, people with disabilities remain highly underrepresented in the global workforce. Research on disability-specific diversity signal sets as recruitment interventions could provide evidence-based recommendations to organizations that encourage more people with disabilities to apply for jobs and aspire to leadership positions.

CHAPTER 5 – GENERAL DISCUSSION

Organizations frequently communicate expression-based signals to demonstrate that they value diversity in their workplace. Expression-based signals can be theoretically categorized as compliance-oriented (EO), profit-oriented (BC), people-oriented (VI) and mixed. However, people seem to perceive expression-based signals as either compliance-oriented or benefit-oriented. More importantly, people are interested in an organization's evidence of diversity performance alongside their organizational statements about diversity. Stakeholders receive multiple signals for their attention and interpretation, something which is compounded by the complexity of modern business environments and the associated issues that spill over into workplaces, such as global migration, post-pandemic economic crises, and societal issues of racial abuse and discrimination (especially in Western countries like the USA and UK) (Nkomo et al., 2019). As such, people may be suspicious of isolated expression-based signals with pro-diversity claims without evidence of diversity performance, assuming that unsubstantiated claims are primarily motivated by profit maximization. I conducted three studies and found that sending organizational diversity signal sets in the form of both expression-based signals and evidence-based signals will be associated with effective outcomes in enhancing minority representation at different levels of management.

5.1 Results Overview

I employed a sequential mixed methods design to investigate different types of diversity signal sets and their organizational and individual implications. The results of Study One provided a comprehensive account of the expression-based and evidence-based signals communicated by Fortune 500 firms. The qualitative thematic content analysis conducted in

Study One was vital in shaping subsequent studies. Study One demonstrated that companies signal four types of expression-based signals while expressing their beliefs about managing diversity in their workplace: EO, BC, VI, and Mixed. Organizations communicated various rationales for workplace diversity in their expression-based signals, such as increased fairness, reduced discrimination, enhanced financial performance, and enhanced diversity-related performance.

Moreover, I also found that many organizations communicate evidence-based signals alongside expression-based signals. For example, diversity performance-related facts, statistics, and awards on their websites were common evidence-based signals. These findings suggest that organizations send multiple signals (both expression-based signals and evidence-based) in the form of *diversity signal sets* when communicating their stance on diversity to stakeholders. Study One informed the selection of variables in Studies Two and Three.

In Study Two, I examined the association of different types of expression-based signals with evidence-based signals and related organizational outcomes. Study Two's findings indicate that organizations without any diversity signals are associated with lower financial performance (measured by ROA and ROIC) and diversity performance (measured by the frequency of BWFD awards and DiversityInc rankings). The relationship between companies communicating VI types of expression-based and evidence-based signals was significantly positive. In other words, when companies communicated VI type expression-based signals, they were also more likely to have won 'best place to work for diversity' awards.

In Study Three, I turned to an investigation of individual outcomes associated with diversity signal sets. Participants in this experimental study were unable to distinguish between BC, VI, and Mixed types of expression-based signals. To address this issue, I bundled these

expression-based signals into a group named 'Benefits' and sought to identify how different types of expression-based signals could influence outcomes. Study Three revealed that while expression-based signals can be theoretically separated into four different types, people (specifically racioethnic minorities) may only differentiate between two types of expression-based signals: EO and Benefits of diversity. The major finding of Study Three was that companies' diversity-related performance (i.e., evidence-based signals) had more of an impact on participant outcomes than diversity-related statements (i.e., expression-based signals) did. The presence of diversity performance facts (i.e., percentage of minorities in workforce and leadership positions, frequency of diversity awards from external organizations) were significantly associated with racioethnic minorities' organizational attraction and leadership aspirations through different psychological mechanisms. I also tested for the influence of diversity signal sets (i.e., conditional indirect effects of expression-based signals in the presence of evidence-based signals) on racioethnic minorities' work-related outcomes. Diversity signal sets directly influenced racioethnic jobseekers' organizational attraction and leadership aspirations. In terms of mediating variables, the relationship between diversity signal sets and racioethnic minorities' organizational attractiveness was mediated by perceptions of inclusion and affective trust. Similarly, the relationship between diversity signal sets and racioethnic minorities' aspirations to apply for leadership positions was mediated by enhanced perceptions of inclusion.

The following sections revisit my dissertation's research questions, summarize relevant study results, and discuss limitations and future research opportunities.

5.1.1 Types of Diversity Signal Sets Communicated by Firms

The first research question guiding this dissertation was: *What types of diversity signal sets are communicated by large firms on their websites?*

Study One reveals that firms either communicate isolated expression-based signals or a combination of expression-based signals and evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity signal sets) when communicating about diversity. However, the prevalence of isolated expression-based signals is significantly higher compared to evidence-based signals.. Also, Study One demonstrates that firms always send evidence-based signals in a diversity signal set (i.e., evidence-based signals are always accompanied by expression-based signals).

Four out of five US Fortune 500 firms only communicate expression-based signals on their corporate websites. Expression-based signals focus on a compliance-oriented approach (EO), a business-oriented (BC) approach, a people-oriented (VI) approach, or a mix of two or more types of approaches. These findings are consistent with the previous research and theoretical frameworks derived from qualitative studies on cultural workgroups and add to the literature identifying additional types of expression-based signals (Mix types) communicated by companies (Cox, 1981; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Georgeac & Rattan, 2022).

Study One determined that 20% of Fortune 500 firms communicate evidence-based signals (e.g., employee demographics, diversity awards, diversity in leadership positions, etc.) alongside expression-based signals. These findings suggest that few organizations communicate their diversity-related performance in addition to diversity-related statements. This is a missed opportunity for organizations, given my dissertation's findings that evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity-related performance data and statistics) have more impact on individual outcomes compared to simply words on diversity. This may indicate that organizations' communication of

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expression-based signals is simply 'diversity washing' wherein organizations expend more energy discussing diversity rather than actively taking steps to improve their diversity performance (Baker et al., 2023). However, organizations with low performance on diversity may have little motivation to publicize their diversity-related data or statistics. This raises a question: How can companies that truly want to commit to diversity signal their honesty if they do not have a meaningful representation of minorities in their workplace. One possible way for companies to accomplish this goal could be to embrace transparency about their diversity performance, even when it is lacking. Indeed, recent research suggests that when companies are forthright about their lagging diversity numbers, they are perceived as more trustworthy compared to companies that suppress diversity information (Apfelbaum & Suh, 2023).

5.1.2 Expression-based Signals and their Organizational Implications

Given the novelty of empirical research on the linkage of expression-based signal contents and firms' distal outcomes, the second research question guiding this dissertation was: *What is the association between different types of expression-based signals with evidence-based signals and organizational outcomes?*

This is an important question to consider if we are to comprehensively understand expression-based signal contents and their association with evidence-based signals and distal organizational outcomes. To my knowledge, there have been no empirical studies investigating the connection between organizations' expression-based signals and evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity rankings/ awards) and relevant organizational performance (i.e., financial performance and frequency of discrimination lawsuits). Specifically, Study Two's findings suggest that contents related to VI (i.e., celebrating differences, inclusion, and belonging) are positively related to evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity awards – BWFD and Diversity INC rankings).

However, there was no strong association between expression-based signals and related organizational outcomes. Conversely, organizations without expression-based signals were more likely to exhibit more negative financial performance and less likely to have won diversity awards (i.e., evidence-based signal). Overall, Study Two's findings indicate that when organizations have no expression-based diversity signals, organizational performance and diversity performance are lower in comparison to organizations with expression-based signals. Although I cannot attribute causality due to the nature of this data, future research could investigate the causal relationship between companies that express specific types of expression-based signals and their performance (such as employees' daily sales performance) in a field experimental setting.

5.1.3 Diversity Signals Sets and Their Individual Implications

The third research question guiding this dissertation was: *How do different types of diversity signal sets impact individual outcomes?*

Study 3 results suggest that in the current context, where expression-based signals are commonplace, racioethnic minorities are more interested in evidence-based signals than expression-based signals. Previous research has focused extensively on how expression-based signals influence minority job seekers' job-related outcomes; however, scant attention has been given to the influence of diversity signal sets on racioethinic minority jobseekers' outcomes. The results of Study Three indicate that the presence of *evidence-based signals* positively influences racioethnic minorities' attraction to the organization and their aspiration to apply for leadership positions, *irrespective of the type of expression-based signals*. Study Three also identified psychological mechanisms such as perceptions of inclusion and perceptions of affective trust that explain the conditional positive influence of the Benefits type of diversity signal sets on

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racioethnic minorities' organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations, where the effect was only significant in the presence of evidence-based signals. Study Three provides preliminary evidence that signaling inclusion with a real commitment to diversity can benefit organizations by making them an employer-of-choice for minority groups. Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that the real value of expression-based signals is their ability to serve as effective or 'honest' signals of trust and inclusion for targeted minorities. Organizations may want to focus on sending diversity signal sets that incorporate both expression-based and evidence-based signals to improve their diversity recruitment outcomes.

Collectively, these three studies examined types of diversity-related communication and the implications of these communications for organizations and racioethnic minorities' job-related outcomes. First, I find that organizations communicate multiple types of diversity signals in the form of expression-based signals, evidence-based signals, and diversity signal sets. Second, I identify negative relationship between organizations without diversity signals and their financial and diversity related performance. Third, racioethnic minorities evaluate organizations that send diversity signals more favourably compared to organizations that do not send diversity signals. Most importantly, racioethnic minorities' job-seeker outcomes are positive only in the presence of diversity signal sets (i.e., when organizations send both expression-based signal and evidence-based signal). Therefore, for effective racioethnic minority outcomes, organizations should send diversity signal sets when communicating about diversity.

5.2 Contributions

This dissertation presents a comprehensive investigation of the contents, prevalence, and organizational and individual implications of multiple diversity signals. The findings from this dissertation make several contributions to the current literature. First, it introduces the concept of

diversity signal sets consisting of both expression-based and evidence-based signals. To date, studies of organizational signals on diversity have largely concentrated on isolated expression-based signals and their influence on minority recruitment outcomes. My research moves the diversity literature forward by exploring the simultaneous interaction of multiple diversity signals and investigating how expression-based signals can work in tandem with evidence-based signals as diversity signal sets for effective recruitment outcomes.

Second, I contribute to the body of diversity communication knowledge by identifying four different types of expression-based signals: EO, BC, VI and Mixed. Within the Mixed type of expression-based signals, organizations may combine 'EO and BC' or 'BC and VI' or 'EO and VI' or 'EO, BC and VI' related words or phrases when communicating their diversity stance on their corporate websites. Previous research on the content of expression-based signals suggests that organizations publish either fairness or business case types of expression-based signals (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022). My study adds to this literature by identifying four different types of expression-based signals communicated by larger firms in the USA.

Third, this dissertation contributes to research on diversity by demonstrating the affective mechanisms behind the influence of diversity signal sets on racioethnic minorities' attraction to the organization and aspirations to achieve leadership positions. My findings extend previous research (e.g., Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2022) by providing perceptions of affective trust and perceptions of inclusion as the mediators behind the influence of diversity signal sets on minority outcomes. Significance of these mediating mechanisms was conditional on the presence of evidence-based signals, which enhance our understanding of the importance of diversity signal sets for organizations truly committed to diversity in their workplace. The notion that racioethnic minorities attend to cues that activate

their perceptions of inclusion and affective trust provides compelling new evidence of the affective nature of reaction to diversity signal sets. Future research could confirm this finding with different groups and examine these mediational pathways in more detail.

Fourth, I contribute to the literature by complementing previous findings on the influence of organizational signals on organizational outcomes. I found that the lack of expression-based signals is associated with negative financial and diversity performance. However, the association between the presence of expression-based signals and related outcomes was weak or insignificant. These findings are consistent with the mixed findings in previous research on the compound nature of organizational statements and the corresponding performance (Drover et al., 2018), where they have identified positive (Bart et al., 2001; Bartkus et al., 2006; Fiset & Al Hajj, 2022), negative (Bart 1997, Fiset & Al Hajj, 2022) or no association (O'Gorman & Doran, 1999) between statement contents and institutional performance. Future research may examine the influence of multiple diversity signals and related organizational outcomes in big samples such as US Fortune 1000 firms or in other countries like UK publicly traded firms (i.e., FTSE firms) to examine whether the findings may replicate in larger data sets or in other geographical regions.

Fifth, I provide evidence-based recommendations to organizations that genuinely wish to enhance diversity in leadership ranks. Previous research suggests that there will be a positive effect on minority jobseekers' leadership related outcomes when organizations communicate value in diversity (Gundemir et al., 2017). Contrary to previous research findings, I determined that organizations' words about diversity without diversity performance evidence will have no significant influence on racioethnic minorities' leadership aspirations. I provide evidence that 'seeing is believing' when it comes to diversity. My findings indicate that racioethnic minorities

will aspire to achieve leadership roles when they see other minorities represented in an organization's leadership positions. My dissertation both complements and departs from these streams of research on diversity signals and their outcomes by exploring the influence of multiple diversity signals. Specifically, organizations that send both expression-based signals and evidence-based signals in the form of diversity signal sets will positively influence racioethnic minorities' leadership aspirations. Therefore, beyond making pro-diversity claims, organizations should send diversity signal sets to demonstrate an authentic commitment to diversity, thereby providing evidence that they truly promote diversity and inclusion in their workplace to achieve positive recruitment outcomes.

Sixth, this dissertation contributes to the targeted recruitment literature by elaborating on the importance of honest signals (i.e., evidence of diversity performance) in the signaling transaction. Specifically, I found that expression-based signals and evidence-based signals work in tandem and that any expression-based signals without evidence may be considered a performative diversity attempt that lacks a true commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Evidence-based signals may act as signal amplifiers that enhance the credibility of expression-based signals in influencing the organizational attractiveness and leadership aspirations of racioethnic minority jobseekers.

Lastly, I contribute to the implicit theories by proposing that individuals' implicit beliefs about organizations' communication on diversity are narrower than the theoretical typology of expression-based signals. My findings on racioethnic minorities' inability to differentiate between BC, VI, and Mixed types of expression-based signals indicate that people may hold implicit beliefs about organizations' diversity communications being primarily motivated by profit justification or legal compliance. When people hold implicit beliefs or theories, they may

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look for evaluative information while rating an organization as a potential place for employment. Therefore, organizations that are willing to enhance diversity amongst their workforce can benefit from providing evidence-based signals to serve as decision-making tools for minority jobseekers.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

My dissertation began with an examination of the diversity signal sets used by US Fortune 500 firms in the Careers sections of their websites. As this data came from a single source (i.e., from the specific companies in USA), it can be argued that the findings on the comprehensive typology of expression-based signals may not be replicable in other geographical regions or with small-medium size organizations. However, 125 of these Fortune 500 firms have more than 25 international locations (Caprelo, 2019). Therefore, my findings on the typology of expression-based signals communicated by US Fortune 500 firms could be comparable to firms in other countries, such as Canada or the UK. Future research could investigate the variance in types of multiple diversity signals communicated by firms of various sizes in different geographical locations.

Study Two investigated the association between organizations communicating different types of expression-based signals and their financial and diversity-related performance. These findings were based on cross-sectional panel-data correlation, which does not allow for causal inferences. Future research could investigate a time-lagged analysis to see how expression-based signals evolve over time and how they may relate to diversity-related performance dimensions at different points in time. Such longitudinal research will add to the ability to possibly make causal inferences when measuring the association between expression-based and related outcomes.

Study Three is an online website experiment that presents racioethnic minorities with a website containing a) multiple expression-based signals with no evidence-based signals; and b) diversity signal sets with both expression-based signals and evidence-based signals (i.e., diversity performance facts). However, many organizations may not publish evidence-based signals specifically because of their low performance on diversity or because evidence-based signals are not usually published by larger companies, unlike expression-based signals. Future research could investigate how racioethnic minority jobseekers' outcomes, such as organizational attractiveness and aspirations to apply for leadership positions, are influenced by forthrightness and honesty from organizations about their diversity-related facts or statistics, whether positive or negative. Additionally, the findings of Study Three are specific to racioethnic minority jobseekers and may not generalizable to other underrepresented groups. Future research should investigate the influence of diversity signal sets on other minority groups, such as LGBTQ+ individuals and people with disabilities.

5.4 Conclusion

In summary, this dissertation employed sequential mixed methods to identify the types of diversity signal sets communicated by larger firms and their organizational and individual implications. Research studies on diversity communication tend to focus on expression-based signals in isolation. I contribute to the signaling theory literature by introducing the concept of diversity signal sets and their implications; this moves the literature forward by demonstrating that firms send multiple expression-based and evidence-based signals via their diversity communication, with positive outcomes for racioethnic minorities and organizations.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVALS

ICEHR Number:	**20222744-BA**
Approval Period:	April 11, 2022 – April 30, 2023
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Kara Arnold **Faculty of Business Administration**
Title of Project:	*Jobseekers' reactions to different types of organizational communication*

MEMORIAL
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Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7
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April 11, 2022

Mr. Shasanka Chalise
Faculty of Business Administration
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Mr. Chalise:

Thank you for your submission to the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR), seeking ethical clearance for your research project. The Committee appreciates the care and diligence with which you prepared your application.

The project is consistent with the guidelines of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS2). *Full ethics clearance* is granted for one year from the date of this letter. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2* (2018). Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project.

The *TCPS2* requires that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before April 30, 2023. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. If you need to make changes during the project which may raise ethical concerns, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes for the Committee's consideration. If funding is obtained subsequent to ethics approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR so that this ethics clearance can be linked to your award. All post-approval event forms noted above must be submitted by selecting the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Researcher Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Kelly Blidook, Ph.D.
Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

KB/th

copy: Supervisor – Dr. Kara Arnold, Faculty of Business Administration

ICEHR Number:	**20222744-BA**
Approval Period:	April 11, 2022 – April 30, 2023
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Kara Arnold Faculty of Business Administration
Title of Project:	*Jobseekers' reactions to different types of organizational communication*
Amendment #:	*01*

MEMORIAL
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**Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)**

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June 15, 2022

Mr. Shasanka Chalise
Faculty of Business Administration
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Mr. Chalise:

The Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) has reviewed the proposed revisions for the above referenced project, as outlined in your amendment request dated June 13, 2022. We are pleased to give approval to the revised data collection instruments, as described in your request, provided all other previously approved protocols are followed.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you **strictly adhere to the protocol and documents as last reviewed** by ICEHR. If you need to make any other additions and/or modifications during the conduct of the research, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes, for the Committee's review of potential ethical issues, before they may be implemented. Submit a Personnel Change Form to add or remove project team members and/or research staff. Also, to inform ICEHR of any unanticipated occurrences, an Adverse Event Report must be submitted with an indication of how the unexpected event may affect the continuation of the project.

Your ethics clearance for this project expires **April 30, 2023**, before which time you must submit an Annual Update to ICEHR, as required by the *TCPS2*. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance, and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer requires contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you need to provide an annual update with a brief final summary, and your file will be closed.

All post-approval ICEHR event forms noted above must be submitted by selecting the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Researcher Portal homepage.

The Committee would like to thank you for the update on your proposal and we wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely,

James R Drover

James Drover, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
  Ethics in Human Research

JD/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Kara Arnold, Faculty of Business Administration

ICEHR Number:	**20222744-BA**
Approval Period:	April 11, 2022 – April 30, 2023
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Kara Arnold Faculty of Business Administration
Title of Project:	*Jobseekers' reactions to different types of organizational communication*
Amendment #:	*02*

MEMORIAL
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**Interdisciplinary Committee on
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September 7, 2022

Mr. Shasanka Chalise
Faculty of Business Administration
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Mr. Chalise:

The Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) has reviewed the proposed revisions for the above referenced project, as outlined in your amendment request dated August 31, 2022. We are pleased to give approval to the revised survey/vignettes, and to recruit participants using Prolific, as described in your request, provided all other previously approved protocols are followed.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you **strictly adhere to the protocol and documents as last reviewed** by ICEHR. If you need to make any other additions and/or modifications during the conduct of the research, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes, for the Committee's review of potential ethical issues, before they may be implemented. Submit a Personnel Change Form to add or remove project team members and/or research staff. Also, to inform ICEHR of any unanticipated occurrences, an Adverse Event Report must be submitted with an indication of how the unexpected event may affect the continuation of the project.

Your ethics clearance for this project expires **April 30, 2023**, before which time you must submit an Annual Update to ICEHR, as required by the *TCPS2*. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance, and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer requires contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you need to provide an annual update with a brief final summary, and your file will be closed.

All post-approval ICEHR event forms noted above must be submitted by selecting the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Researcher Portal homepage.

The Committee would like to thank you for the update on your proposal and we wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely,

[signature]

James Drover, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, ICEHR

JD/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Kara Arnold, Faculty of Business Administration

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APPENDIX B: PILOT STUDY ONE CONDITIONS CONTENTS

All participants read, "Imagine that you are looking for an entry-level manager job and found a vacancy matching your knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics on the careers page of the company called – CYZ Incorporate. In the next section, you will find a part of the careers section of the company website. You are required to go through the web page and read all the contents before filling out the survey. You will be provided with survey questions once you read the webpage".

Next, participants were randomly assigned to read one of the ten websites [four DM statements plus one neutral statement with the presence of diversity performance facts and neutral facts]. In the first part of the website, all participants read, "Build your dream career here at CYZ. We are an international conglomerate with multiple global business operations in various manufacturing and service sectors. Connecting Talent with Opportunity. CYZ is known as an employer that focuses on individual career growth, leadership development, employee well-being and work-life balance. We provide career opportunities in a variety of areas of expertise (e.g., finance and accounting, operations, marketing, information technology and e-business, international business, strategy and business development, etc.)."

Next, participants in the EO condition [BC condition] {VI condition} (Mix condition) read:

"Our Commitment. We are committed to equality for all individuals [Diversity is key to our business success] {Diversity brings unique value to our organization} (CYZ promotes diversity and inclusion in every part of the business). We treat everyone with fairness, dignity, and respect [We include diversity in every part of our business to launch innovative products and services and to remain competitive in the market] {At CYZ everyone wins, every voice is heard, every

point of view is celebrated, and everyone feels like they truly belong} (We are committed to diversity to launch innovative products/services and remain competitive in the market). We provide equal opportunities based on ability, performance, and potential. Our workplace is free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying [We believe in diversity to ensure our business practices accurately reflect our community and customers] {We are committed to actively cultivating a diverse and inclusive workplace} (At CYZ, every voice is heard, every point of view is celebrated, and everyone feels like they truly belong). We provide training to team members regarding rights and responsibilities for fair treatment [We offer a variety of diversity training programs and employee resource groups] {We welcome associates of all backgrounds to bring their authentic selves to work. We empower our team members by creating an inclusive culture that values diverse perspectives} (We offer a variety of diversity training programs and employee resource groups)".

Participants in the neutral condition read, "Our Commitment. Recruiting and developing a pool of energetic and success-oriented industry talent. We have great facilities designed to provide our team with a comfortable working environment. We are committed to developing and promoting within the company. We provide hands-on, meaningful experience in your early-career development".

APPENDIX C: MANIPULATIONS ITEMS SELECTION STUDY

Scenario Description

Organizations express their stance on diversity by publishing different diversity management statements on their websites. Such statements may be <u>compliance-oriented, business-oriented or people-oriented.</u>

Organizations communicating the <u>compliance-oriented diversity management statement</u> focus on providing equal opportunities to everyone based on their merit, qualifications, and skills as required by law.

Organizations communicating the <u>business-oriented diversity management statement</u> focus on bottom-line rationale or financial profitability for incorporating diversity in their workplace.

On the other hand, organizations communicating the <u>people-oriented diversity management</u> statement focus on diverse members' empowerment, belonging, and inclusion in all work-group processes.

Block 1

Organizations communicating the <u>compliance-oriented diversity management statement</u> focus on providing equal opportunities to everyone based on their merit, qualifications, and skills as required by law.

On a scale from 1 to 7, rate the extent to which you agree that each of the following best represents the compliance-oriented diversity management statement.

- We strive to create an environment where our company can leverage the unique contributions of our diverse employees to **meet the needs of our diverse customer base**.

- We firmly believe that diversity can help us **meet and exceed our business goals**.

- We attract, retain, and engage diverse talents because we believe that diversity is the key to our long-term **financial performance**.

- We include diversity in every part of our business to launch innovative products and **provide high-quality services to our customers.**

- … company is an inclusive and diverse workplace where **you belong and where your uniqueness is celebrated.**

- At … company, individuals from **diverse groups are valued**, heard, and included in all workgroup processes.

- We empower our diverse team members by creating an **inclusive culture** that values diverse perspectives.

- We foster an **inclusive culture** that encourages our diverse employee base to feel comfortable in an environment that supports bringing your full self to work.

- … company is committed to **complying with all applicable laws and legislation** by providing equal employment opportunities to all.

- We provide an equal-opportunity work environment where **employees are evaluated on the basis of their merit, qualifications, and skills**.

- … company commits to not discriminating against employees based on **fairness and respect as dictated by Federal legislation.**

- … company is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer that makes employment decisions based on **merit as required by law**.

- … company is committed to continuous improvement, responding to the needs of our customers.

- We believe in a strategy that prioritizes our stakeholder's interests.

- Our organization helps clients to reimagine their processes by providing innovative solutions.

- … company is committed to achieving the corporate vision, mission, and goals and works on bringing value to our partners.

Block 2

Organizations communicating the business-oriented diversity management statement focus on bottom-line rationale or financial profitability for incorporating diversity in their workplace.

On a scale from 1 to 7, rate the extent to which you agree that each of the following best represents the business-oriented diversity management statement.

(Same survey questions as above)

Block 3

On the other hand, organizations communicating the people-oriented diversity management statement focus on diverse members' empowerment, belonging, and inclusion in all work-group processes.

On a scale from 1 to 7, now please rate the extent to which you agree that these statements best represent the value-and-integration type of diversity management statement.

(Same survey questions as above)

APPENDIX D: MAIN STUDY THREE WEBSITE CONTENTS

Note: Texts were augmented to look like a careers section of the company website

Website 1: Equal Opportunity type (No diversity performance facts)

[INTRO]

Build your dream career here at CYZ

We are a company with operations in multiple industrial sectors

[Non-diversity-related information]

CYZ at-a-glance

- Listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE).
- In the industry for 10 years.
- 10% growth in our roster of talent since 2015.

[Diversity Management Statement]

Diversity at CYZ: Equal Opportunity Employer

- Our company is an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Employer that makes employment decisions based on merit as required by law.
- We provide an equal-opportunity work environment where employees are evaluated on the basis of their merit, qualifications, and skills.

Connecting Talent with Opportunity

CYZ provides career opportunities in many areas of expertise. Find the role you are looking for in any of our locations.

We're proud of what we are doing here. Come and Join Us!

Website 2: Equal Opportunity type (With diversity performance facts)

[Information with diversity-related facts]

CYZ at-a-glance
- Selected as a 'Best Place to Work for Diversity' in 2019, 2020 and 2021.
- 58% racial and ethnic minorities in our workforce
- 10% growth in racial and ethnic minorities in leadership positions since 2015.
  Note: The rest of the information are same as above

Website 3: Business Case (No diversity performance facts)
[Diversity Management Statement]

Diversity at CYZ: The Business Case

- We attract, retain, and engage diverse talents because we believe that diversity is the key to our long-term financial performance.
- We firmly believe that diversity can help us meet and exceed our business goals.

Website 4: Business Case (With diversity performance facts)

Website 5: Value and Integration Type (No diversity performance facts)

Diversity at CYZ: Our Inclusive Culture

- At this company, individuals from diverse groups are valued, heard, and included in all workgroup processes.
- We empower our diverse team members by creating an inclusive culture that values diverse perspectives.

Website 6: Value and Integration Type (With diversity performance facts)

Website 7: Mixed Type (No diversity performance facts)

[Diversity Management Statement]

Diversity at CYZ: Our Inclusive Culture and Business Case

- We attract, retain, and engage diverse talents because we believe that diversity is the key to our long-term financial performance.
- We empower our diverse team members by creating an inclusive culture that values diverse perspectives.

Website 8: Mixed Type (With diversity performance facts)

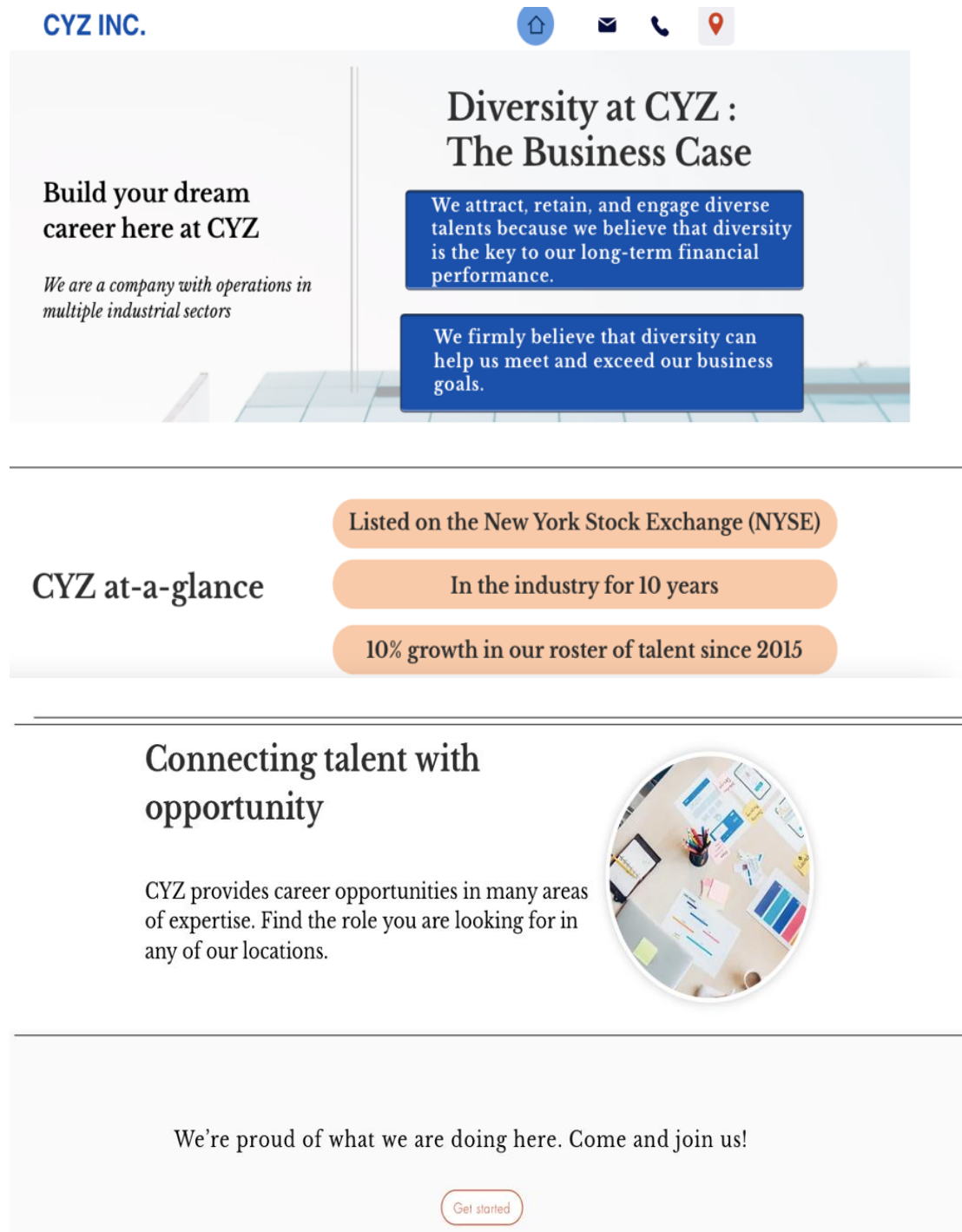**Website 9: Neutral Statement (No diversity performance facts)**

[Neutral Statement]

Our Company

- CYZ Corporation was established in 2010.
- Our headquarters is located in North America.

Website 10: Neutral Statement (With diversity performance facts)

Sample Screenshot of Website (BC Type No Diversity Performance Facts Condition)

APPENDIX E: STUDY THREE MEASURES

Survey Title: Jobseekers' Reactions to Different Types of Organizational Communication

Study materials order
1. Informed Consent
2. Scenario Description
3. Website (one of the ten – randomly assigned)
4. Stimulus Check Questions
5. Survey (Mediators first and then outcomes)
6. Demographic Questions
7. End of the Study

SCENARIO DESCRIPTION

Organizations express their stance on diversity by publishing different diversity management statements on their websites. Such statements may be compliance-oriented, business-oriented, or people-oriented.

Organizations communicating the compliance-oriented diversity management statement focus on providing equal opportunities to everyone based on their merit, qualifications, and skills as required by law.

Organizations communicating the business-oriented diversity management statement focus on bottom-line rationale or financial profitability for incorporating diversity in their workplace.

On the other hand, organizations communicating the people-oriented diversity management statement focus on diverse members' empowerment, belonging, and inclusion in all work-group processes.

Imagine that you are looking for an entry-level manager job and found a vacancy matching your knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics on the careers page of the company called – CYZ Incorporate. In the link below, you will find a part of the careers section of the company website and one of the types of organizational communication on diversity. You are required to go through the web page and read all the contents before filling out the survey. You will be provided with survey questions once you read the webpage.

[Added link to website – each participant were provided with a different vignette and they rated only one – a timer will be set to be able to tell how long each participant looked at the website]

Please answer the following questions as you would if this were a real organization that you were considering applying to:

1. STIMULUS CHECK QUESTIONS

Note: These are stimulus check questions for different types of DM statements. Each participant will only view one web section with one of the specific types of DM statements.

1. CYZ is supportive of diversity – 1=Strongly Disagree to 7=Strongly Agree

   If 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree': (What made you think that CYZ is supportive of diversity?
   ………………………………….

   If 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree': What made you think that CYZ is not supportive of diversity?
   ………………………………….

2. Based on the contents of the website you just viewed, please rate the extent to which each statement applies to CYZ on a scale from 1= Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree.

   a. We provide an equal-opportunity work environment where employees are evaluated on the basis of their merit, qualifications, and skills.
   b. Our company is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer that makes employment decisions based on merit as required by law.
   c. We attract, retain, and engage diverse talents because we believe that diversity is the key to our long-term financial performance.
   d. At this company, individuals from diverse groups are valued, heard, and included in all workgroup processes.
   e. We empower our diverse team members by creating an inclusive culture that values diverse perspectives.
   f. CYZ Corporation was established in the year 2010 AD.
   g. CYZ Corporation's headquarter is located in North America.

2. MODERATOR VARIABLE

Note: This is a stimulus check question for the moderator – diversity, fact-supported information.

a) Presence (vs absence) of diversity-supportive facts

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement.

CYZ provided diversity supportive facts (such as diversity awards and minority representation in leadership positions) on their website.
- Yes
- No
- Not sure

3. MEDIATOR VARIABLES

a) Perceptions of Inclusion

[Chung, B. G., Ehrhart, K. H., Shore, L. M., Randel, A. E., Dean, M. A., & Kedharnath, U. (2020). Work group inclusion: Test of a scale and model. *Group & Organization Management*, *45*(1), 75-102.]

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on scale from 1= Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree:

At CYZ I believe:
a. I would be treated as a valued member of my workgroup.
b. I would belong to my workgroup.
c. I would feel connected to my workgroup.
d. I feel people would really care about me in my workgroup.
e. I feel that I can bring aspects of myself to the workgroup.
f. Please select 'Agree'. [this is an attention check question to ensure data quality]
g. I feel people in my workgroup will listen to me even when my views are dissimilar.
h. I will feel comfortable expressing opinions that diverge from my group.
i. I will be able to share a perspective on work issues that is different from my group members.

b) Perceptions of Cognitive Trust and Perceptions of Affective Trust

[Yang, J., & Mossholder, K. W. (2010). Examining the effects of trust in leaders: A bases-and-foci approach. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *21*(1), 50-63.]

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree:

At CYZ, I think:
a. I can depend on management to meet its responsibilities.
b. I can rely on management to do what is best at work.
c. Top managers follow through with the commitments they make.
d. I see no reason to doubt the management's competence.
e. Management approaches work with professionalism.
f. I am confident that management will always care about my personal needs at work.
g. If I shared my problems with management, I know they would respond with care.
h. Please select 'Strongly Agree'. [this is an attention check question to ensure data quality]
i. I'm confident that I could share my work difficulties with management.
j. I'm sure I could openly communicate my feelings to management.
k. I will feel secure with management because of its sincerity.

4. OUTCOME VARIABLES

a) Organizational Attractiveness

[Highhouse, S., Lievens, F., & Sinar, E. F. (2003). Measuring attraction to organizations. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *63*(6), 986-1001.]

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree:

a. For me, CYZ would be a good place to work.
b. I would not be interested in this company except as a last resort.
c. This company is attractive to me as a place for employment.
d. I am interested in learning more about this company.
e. A job at this company is very appealing to me.

b) Leadership Aspirations

[Simon, S., & Hoyt, C. L. (2013). Exploring the effect of media images on women's leadership self-perceptions and aspirations. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *16*(2), 232-245.]

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree:

a. At CYZ, I would actively pursue leadership positions in the future.

b. At CYZ, I would work hard to be selected as a leader.

5. DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Please enter your prolific ID: _____

2. Please indicate your age (in years):

Slide bar 18 ---100

3. I identify as:

Female (1)
Male (2)
Transgender female (3)
Transgender male (4)
Gender nonconforming (5)
I prefer not to report my gender (6)
I prefer to report my gender this way: _____

4. What is your highest level of education?

High-School (1)
College or university (2)
Completion of college diploma (3)
Completion of a Trade and/or apprenticeship program (4)
Completion of undergraduate university degree (5)
Completion of Master or PhD (6)
Other-Please explain: _____

5. How long have you been in the workforce?
   • Slide bar 0 --20+ years

6. How long have you been with your current employer?
   • Slide bar 0 --20+ years

7. Please indicate the type of industry you work in: (Only displayed if answered Q6)

International-private sector (1)
National-private sector (2)

Public sector (3)
Non-profit organization (4)
Family business (5)
None of the above. Please specify: _____

8. Are you currently in a management position?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Not sure

9. What is the title of your position? (If yes to Q8)

10. ……………………….How many direct reports do you have?
   Slide bar 0 --20+

11. Do you intend to apply for a more senior leadership position than you currently have?
Within the next year (1)
Within the next 2 years (2)
Within the next 5 years (3)
Within the next 10 years (4)
Timing will depend on circumstances (5)
Not sure if I will (6)
Never (7)
Not Applicable (8)