



Do organizations' diversity signals threaten members of the majority group? The case of employee professional networks[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Employee Professional Networks (EPNs) are now commonplace in today's organizations, and they are frequently used to signal diversity and inclusion in line with public policy mandates. Despite EPNs' pervasiveness, scant research has explored their impact on attracting prospective employees. The authors address this gap by exploring the influence of EPNs on job pursuit intentions. Across two studies, the authors find that EPNs focused on minority employees (vs. all employees) reduce perceived threat and increase job pursuit intentions among majority group members (Caucasian Americans) as a function of their support for social hierarchy (Social Dominance Orientation). The integration of perceived threat and social hierarchy attitudes to explain the impact of EPNs is a novel theoretical contribution to literature on marketplace diversity with important implications for managers, policy makers, and researchers.

1. Introduction

Although seminal public policy regarding workforce diversity has been in place since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, these policies continue to be updated with respect to varying issues in social diversity, including race and ethnicity, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, and physical abilities (Leslie, Mayer, & Kravitz, 2014; Oakenfull, 2013). As part of their diversity efforts, firms offer formalized networks of support and professional development where membership is often based on Equal Employment Opportunity-protected characteristics (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation; Segal, 2013). Approximately 90% of Fortune 500 companies have such Employee Professional Networks (EPNs; Nance-Nash, 2015), also referred to as affinity groups and employee resource groups. Originally developed in part to comply with federal legislation that mandated diversity (Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998), Employee Professional Networks are now viewed as a “strategic priority aimed at positioning organizations more competitively in the marketplace” (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004, p. 204). Importantly, firms often highlight their EPNs to signal diversity and inclusion to stakeholders via various communication channels, including company websites and recruiting materials intended to attract potential employees (e.g., Olsen & Martins, 2016). It is firms' use of EPNs to attract potential employees that is of interest to the present investigation.

Although more research is needed on the impact of diversity policies

in general (Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 2000; Hideg, Michela, & Ferris, 2011), EPNs are one particular area in need of research (Martins & Parsons, 2007; McNab & Johnston, 2002). There is a growing body of literature on the effects of diversity initiatives on employee recruitment (Martins & Parsons, 2007; Olsen & Martins, 2016; Pitts, 2009; Smith, Wokutch, Harrington, & Dennis, 2004), however, results of these studies have been mixed. While some studies suggest that prospective employees are attracted to organizations that have diversity programs, other studies find that applicants are repelled (Avery & McKay, 2006; Goldberg & Allen, 2008; Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006; Leslie et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2004).

In order to explore these mixed findings, researchers have called for studies that explore additional factors beyond group membership that may impact whether diversity signals attract or repel employees (Bell et al., 2000; Martins & Parsons, 2007; Olsen & Martins, 2016; Swider, Zimmerman, Charlier, & Pierotti, 2015; Truxillo & Bauer, 2000). Additionally, recent diversity literature has highlighted how consumer perception of inclusion is impacted not only by workforce diversity, but also by the attitudes, behaviors and beliefs of the workforce (e.g., how much they support inclusion; Catherine Demangeot et al., 2013; Evett, Hakstian, Williams, & Henderson, 2013; Mirabito et al., 2016).

Drawing on social dominance theory and signaling theory, we answer the call to examine factors that explain when diversity signals

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attract (versus repel) prospective employees. Specifically, we examine how the presence of a minority-focused (e.g., African American) EPN serves as a signal that influences individuals' perceptions of threat and thereby impacts their job pursuit intentions. We further show this effect is influenced by individuals' social dominance orientation (SDO) – i.e., the degree to which they support social hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Whereas extant diversity literature suggests a potentially harmful effect of a minority EPN on majority group members' (e.g., Caucasian Americans) behavioral intentions, we uniquely integrate signaling and social dominance theories to argue for an enhancing effect on intentions. In other words, majority group members are more attracted by a minority-focused EPN than by a generic EPN. Further, we posit that this should hold when individuals' attitudes are less supportive of the existing social hierarchy – that is, when individuals have a low social dominance orientation (SDO). The use of concepts such as majority and minority can be malleable and contingent on the context (Azab & Clark, 2017; Brumbaugh, 2002). While our theoretical conceptualization may apply across minority-majority contexts, we examine our proposed theoretical relationships in the context of the United States' ethnic majority (Caucasian Americans) and minority groups (e.g., African-, Latino-, and Asian-Americans).

In sum, although EPNs are now commonplace in today's organizations and are frequently used to communicate diversity and inclusion in line with public policy mandates, scant research has explored their impact on attracting stakeholders. We address this gap by exploring the influence of EPNs on job pursuit intentions among majority group members (Caucasian Americans). We argue that minority EPNs may reduce perceived threat and increase job pursuit intentions as a function of individuals' attitude toward social hierarchy. The integration of perceived threat and social hierarchy attitudes to explain the impact of EPNs is a novel theoretical contribution to literature on marketplace diversity with important implications for managers, policy makers, and researchers. In the remainder of this paper, we develop our theoretical framework and report empirical evidence from two experiments that test and support the proposed relationships.

2. Theoretical background

Firms are increasingly aware that diversity and inclusion within the organization can increase their competitiveness in the marketplace (Bartikowski & Walsh, 2015; Baum, Sterzing, & Alaca, 2016). Having employees that support diversity and inclusion can improve service interactions with customers (Avery, McKay, Tonidandel, Volpone, & Morris, 2012; Catherine Demangeot et al., 2013; Hopkins, Hopkins, & Hoffman, 2005; Klinner & Walsh, 2013; Lee, Kim, & Vohs, 2011; Sharma, Tam, & Kim, 2009), improve consumer perceptions of firm superiority (Matta & Folkes, 2005), and play an important role during service failures (Azab & Clark, 2017; Baker, Meyer, & Johnson, 2008; Evett et al., 2013; Johnson, Meyers, & Williams, 2013; Maher & Sobh, 2014; Montoya & Briggs, 2013). This body of literature highlights the importance of diversity and inclusion in the marketplace on consumer response and firm competitiveness – but how do firms create a diverse and inclusive organization in the first place? The impact of diversity and inclusion initiatives on firms' other stakeholders (e.g., employees) is an area in need of additional research (Catherine Demangeot et al., 2013; El-Bassiouny, 2014; Johnson et al., 2013; Lacznick & Murphy, 2012; Mirabito et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2009), especially EPNs in particular (Martins & Parsons, 2007; McNab & Johnston, 2002).

2.1. Employee professional networks as threat signals

Employee Professional Networks are associations of employees that meet regularly to share information, capture opportunities, and solve problems that may arise for its members or the organization (Van Aken, Monetta, & Sink, 1994). These networks, particularly those whose

members share a social identity (e.g., race/ethnicity), help facilitate contact with other similar individuals in the organization and decrease feelings of isolation. In addition to strengthening ties with in-group members, EPNs help strengthen ties with out-group members including senior leaders in the organization. These ties with leaders, in turn, can help facilitate members' career advancement (Ceniza-Levine, 2016). Membership in an EPN can be based on common interests or characteristics. Quite often, however, membership is based on Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)-protected characteristics (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation; Segal, 2013).

Signaling theory describes how firms communicate or “signal” information about their organization (see Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011 for a review). Given the objectives of EPNs, such groups may serve as signals or cues about the organization's commitment to the advancement of EPN members. Indeed, organizations frequently highlight diversity initiatives such as EPNs in their recruiting materials to signal their commitment to diversity (e.g., Olsen & Martins, 2016). According to signaling theory, prospective applicants at the beginning of the job-search process know little information about an organization (Kim, Jeon, Jung, Lu, & Jones, 2012; Rynes, 1991). To address this lack of information, signaling theory contends that applicants look for cues (e.g., human resource practices) that signal whether the organization will advance their career prospects (Williamson, Slay, Shapiro, & Shivers-Blackwell, 2008). These signals create expectations of how employees will be treated.

Whereas some cues may signal safety, other cues may signal threat. For example, research finds that African and Latino Americans are attracted to organizations in which minority representatives are depicted on recruitment brochures (Avery, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2004). These representatives serve as cues that the organization is likely to affirm their identities (Avery et al., 2013), will not discriminate against them (Avery & McKay, 2006), and will value them as employees (Baum et al., 2016; McKay & Avery, 2005). Related studies find that African Americans distrust and perceive threat from organizations that espouse a colorblind philosophy as opposed to a philosophy of valuing diversity (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Dittmann, & Crosby, 2008).

Studies have also examined the impact of diversity initiatives on members of the majority group (e.g., Avery, 2003; Rau & Hyland, 2003). Although there are boundary conditions (Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014), findings generally show that diversity approaches that support multiculturalism may generate backlash among Caucasian Americans because they perceive exclusion based on their identity (Jansen, Vos, Otten, Podsiadlowski, & van der Zee, 2016; Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010; Olsen & Martins, 2016; Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011; c.f., Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). The extant findings suggest that majority group members (e.g., Caucasian Americans) may thereby feel threatened when organizations signal that they are pro-diversity (e.g., Dover, Major, & Kaiser, 2016; see also Eibach & Keegan, 2006). As such, the extant literature suggests that a minority EPN as a diversity signal will be perceived as threatening, and thus decrease the job pursuit intentions of majority group members.

Following this discussion, we argue that when it comes to examining the impact of diversity signals on recruiting, one common theme across both minority and majority groups is that exclusion begets threat. In the present paper, we conceptualize initiatives that benefit one specific group (i.e., initiative beneficiaries) as posing a potential threat to the power, status, or well-fare of other groups (e.g., non-beneficiaries; Bobo, 1983; Insko & Schopler, 1998; Maddux, Galinsky, Cuddy, & Polifroni, 2008; Morrison et al., 2010; Stephan et al., 2002). Applying this specifically to the domain of EPNs, it may therefore be argued that the mere presence of *any* EPN may signal exclusion and therefore threat, given that the nature of the EPN is to exclusively help its members with additional resources and support. However, the membership of the EPN may play a role. Specifically, we argue that to the extent that members of the EPN have historically had greater

barriers to success (e.g., less resources and support), an EPN comprised of such individuals is likely perceived as less threatening. For example, Caucasian Americans viewing an exclusively ethnic-minority EPN may feel less threatened than when viewing a generic EPN (that is not exclusively for ethnic minorities). Thus, an ethnic-minority EPN (vs. a generic EPN) may reduce threat and thereby increase job pursuit intentions for Caucasian Americans. This proposition is novel to the literature, where extant research suggests that minority-focused diversity initiatives are perceived as more threatening to majority group members (Dover et al., 2016). We further contend that this prediction may depend on an additional factor: individuals' attitude toward, or support for, social hierarchy – referred to in prior literature as Social Dominance Orientation. In answering the call for further investigation into influential factors at play in diversity initiatives (Martins & Parsons, 2007), we outline this theoretically relevant moderator below.

2.2. Attitudes toward social hierarchy

Social Dominance Theory posits that societies are characterized by three group-based hierarchies: age systems, gender systems, and arbitrary-set systems (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The arbitrary-set system is based on social distinctions (e.g., race/ethnicity) and characterized by the domination of subordinate groups (e.g., Latino-, African-, and Asian-Americans) by dominant groups (e.g., Caucasian Americans). The present research focuses on the racial/ethnic social hierarchy resulting from this arbitrary-set system.

As the socially dominant group, Caucasian Americans have had a disproportionate share of resources that have positive social value, such as greater levels of wealth, political power, and access to higher paying jobs. In contrast, ethnic minorities have had a disproportionate share of resources that have negative social value, such as substandard housing and underemployment (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). According to social dominance theory, the racial hierarchy is maintained through various mechanisms, including the policies that people support. Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) is the individual difference that helps explain which individuals are likely to support policies that seek to maintain inequality and the extant hierarchy. Social dominance orientation is defined as “the degree to which individuals desire and support a group-based hierarchy and the domination of ‘inferior’ groups by ‘superior’ groups” (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 48). As such, we conceptualize SDO in the present theoretical framework as capturing individuals' attitudes toward social hierarchy.

Research finds that individuals who seek to maintain social hierarchy (i.e., high SDOs) oppose policies such as affirmative action because this policy seeks to level the playing field by increasing ethnic minorities' access to employment and higher education (Federico & Sidanius, 2002a, 2002b; Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996). Similarly, studies have found that high (vs. low) SDOs will support the use of legacy admissions policies when these benefit Caucasian Americans, but not when they benefit ethnic minorities (e.g., Asian Americans; Gutiérrez & Unzueta, 2013). Conversely, those same studies show that individuals who seek equality (i.e., low SDOs) support such policies because they help society move toward an egalitarian ideal.

A central tenet of social dominance theory is that individuals draw on *legitimizing myths* to justify their social behavior. Legitimizing myths are defined as, “attitudes, values, beliefs, stereotypes, and ideologies that provide moral and intellectual justification for the social practices that distribute social value within the social system” (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 45). One belief on which individuals may draw to justify views about a minority EPN is that its members have become too powerful, and access to resources that the EPN provides will only make group members even more powerful and threatening to the professional success of other employees. This idea is consistent with previous research showing that professionally successful groups (e.g., Asian and Jewish people) are viewed as a threat to the majority group and their position

in the social hierarchy (Gutiérrez, 2017; Maddux et al., 2008). Following this, in the present research we posit that individuals' job pursuit intentions (JPI) will be explained by the perceived threat of the EPN. That is, Caucasian Americans with a desire to maintain the extant social hierarchy (high SDOs) may believe that minority EPNs confer its members with resources that may facilitate their career advancement and thereby threaten the status of the majority group.

Integrating this discussion of social dominance theory with our prior theorizing regarding EPNs and signaling theory, SDO offers a theoretically relevant moderating variable. Specifically, the predicted reduction in threat (and thus increase in JPI) following exposure to a minority EPN should hold for majority group members with relatively lower SDO. As SDO increases, the effect should reverse, such that exposure to a minority EPN will increase threat and reduce job pursuit intentions. Thus:

Hypothesis 1. For majority group members, the presence of a minority-focused (vs. generic) Employee Professional Network increases (reduces) job pursuit intentions when Social Dominance Orientation is relatively low (high).

Hypothesis 2. The interactive effect of minority-focused (vs. generic) Employee Professional Network presence and Social Dominance Orientation on job pursuit intentions is mediated by perceived threat.

In summary, the present research seeks to fill the literature gap surrounding the influence of EPNs on marketplace inclusion efforts. We uniquely integrate signaling and social dominance theories to propose that minority EPNs may actually reduce perceived threat and thereby increase job pursuit intentions for majority group members (e.g., Caucasian Americans). We further argue that this effect is influenced by individuals' SDO – that is, their attitude toward social hierarchy. Specifically, we argue that the helpful effect of a minority EPN on majority individuals' intentions should hold when SDO is relatively lower, but should reverse as SDO increases. This pattern of relationships is a novel insight to the literature, and given the pervasiveness of EPNs in today's organizations, the findings have important practical implications for managers and policy makers. In particular, our hypotheses suggest that hiring managers interested in developing an inclusive workplace should indeed highlight EPNs in their recruiting materials, as this would attract majority individuals that support inclusion (low SDOs) and repel those that do not (high SDOs).

We test the foregoing theoretical framework in two studies using an experimental approach, as experiments allow researchers to cleanly isolate the effects of individuals' beliefs and EPN type, and hold fixed other variables (i.e., geographic location, industry, compensation) that may influence individuals' JPI. This approach helps reduce effects of social desirability that might arise from actual job applicants in a field study, which would make it difficult to measure respondents' true beliefs about inequality, the racial hierarchy, and minority EPNs. In addition, the present experiments help test the underlying mechanisms in detail, and provide insights on what may explain differential effects of an EPN on perceived threat and JPI. To strengthen the validity of the study design, the descriptions of the EPN that participants were asked to review are from actual companies: a Big Four accounting firm (Study 1) and a large, multinational corporation (Study 2). Below, we report the findings of the two experimental studies and discuss further implications.

3. Study 1

3.1. Sample and procedures

Two hundred twenty-six Caucasian Americans (106 women, 120 men) were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). It has been argued that MTurk participants provide reliable, quality data and are more representative of the U.S. population than student samples or

standard internet samples (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Relevant to the present research, prior work has shown that MTurk workers from the U.S. generally tend to be younger and more liberal than alternative (e.g., probabilistic) samples (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; Paolacci & Chandler, 2014). In our sample, the age ranged from 21 to 69 ($M = 36.06$, $SD = 11.78$). Participants were paid \$0.50 for their participation.

Participants were told that they would complete two brief, unrelated surveys. The first survey consisted of the items to measure Social Dominance Orientation, and it was described as a survey on people's perceptions of different groups in society. The second survey was described as a survey on people's views about organizations. In this portion of the study, participants were told that Strathmore, Inc. is a company that is interested in learning about how information on its website may influence individuals' decision to apply for its positions. These instructions are intended to emulate the real world situation in which applicants learn about a potential employer before submitting a job application. They were further told that they would randomly review various aspects of the company's website, including its strategic plan, mission statement, recruitment brochure, employee professional networks, and company logo. At this point, all participants have viewed the same materials.

Next, all participants were randomly assigned to review only one of two Employee Professional Network descriptions: Employee Professionals Network ($n = 103$), Black Professionals Network ($n = 123$). The description of the employee network, which is that of an existing Big Four accounting firm, was the same except that the term "Employee" was replaced with "Black" (minority-focused EPN condition). In both of the conditions, participants read that the members of the Employee [Black] Professional Network expand personal networks, exchange information and develop professional skills, all while working with leadership on their respective network's goals and marketplace opportunities. The description of the professional network was that of an existing employee network in one of the Big Four accounting firms.

Finally, participants completed a measure for perceived threat and a measure of job pursuit intentions, described below. The study design thus has two experimental conditions (Generic vs. Black EPN), and SDO is a measured variable.

3.2. Measures

3.2.1. Social dominance orientation

SDO was measured using a sixteen-item scale¹ (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with various items (see Appendix A). Sample items included, "To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups," and "If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems" (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree, $\alpha = 0.96$, $M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.37$). Preliminary analysis showed a significant correlation of SDO with gender (Kupper & Zick, 2011; Pehrson, Carvacho, & Sibley, 2017; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999); $r = -0.2$, $p = .003$. Following this, we utilize gender as a covariate in all subsequent analyses.² Study 1 correlations are provided in Table 1.

3.2.2. Perceived threat

To measure perceived threat, participants were asked to think about the employees who belong to the employee professional network that they reviewed and indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with various statements (see Appendix B). Items were from a

¹ For psychometric analyses see Pratto et al. (1994), Social dominance orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 741–763.

² The relationship between gender and SDO has been the subject of prior research, and a detailed discussion of the topic is beyond the scope of the present article. The observed results persist without including gender in the model.

Table 1
Study 1 correlations.

	JPI	SDO	Threat	Female	Age
JPI	–				
SDO	–0.295**	–			
Threat	–0.483**	0.181**	–		
Female	0.087	–0.200*	–0.110	–	
Age	0.071	0.003	–0.073	0.158*	–

** Correlation significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

slightly modified scale used in previous research³ (Gutiérrez, 2017; Maddux et al., 2008; Stephan et al., 2002). Sample items included, "Employees like them hold too many positions of power and responsibility in this country," and "When employees like these are in positions of authority, they discriminate against other groups when making hiring decisions," (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree, $\alpha = 0.97$, $M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.43$).

3.2.3. Job pursuit intentions

To measure intentions to pursue a job in the company that has the Employee Professional Network that they reviewed, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements (see Appendix C). These items were from a slightly modified scale used in previous research (Avery et al., 2004). Items read, "If I was offered a job here, I would accept the job offer," "If I were looking for a job, a job here would be very appealing," "If I were looking for a job, I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company," "If I were looking for a job, I would be interested in pursuing an application with this company," (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; $\alpha = 0.95$, $M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.43$).

3.3. Results

3.3.1. Job pursuit intentions

The job pursuit intentions variable was regressed on EPN condition (0 = generic Employee Professional Network, 1 = Black Professional Network), SDO, and the interaction between the two with gender as a covariate. This analysis revealed a non-significant main effect of EPN condition, $b = -0.1$, $SE = 0.22$, $\beta = -0.03$, $t(226) = -0.47$, $p = .64$, a non-significant main effect of SDO, $b = -0.08$, $SE = 0.11$, $\beta = -0.06$, $t(226) = -0.76$, $p = .45$, and the predicted significant EPN \times SDO interaction, $b = -0.64$, $SE = 0.16$, $\beta = -0.34$, $t(226) = -3.99$, $p < .0001$, $R^2 = 0.15$. Regression results are reflected in Table 2.

We decomposed the interaction to explore the effect of EPN condition at different values of SDO. Specifically, we used a "spotlight" analysis (Spiller, Fitzsimons, Lynch, & McClelland, 2013) via the PROCESS macro from Hayes (2013). Results show that when SDO was one standard deviation below the mean (1.05), viewing a Black (vs. generic) EPN significantly increased job pursuit intentions ($b_{Low\ SDO} = 0.77$, $SE = 0.31$, $t(226) = 2.5$, $p = .01$). When SDO was one standard deviation above the mean (3.79), viewing the Black (vs. generic) EPN significantly decreased JPI ($b_{High\ SDO} = -0.98$, $SE = 0.31$, $t(226) = -3.13$, $p = .002$). This pattern of effects is consistent with the predictions of hypothesis 1, where a minority (vs. generic) EPN increases job pursuit intentions when SDO is relatively low, but decreases intentions when SDO is relatively high (see Fig. 1).

3.3.2. Perceived threat

The Perceived Threat variable was regressed on Employee

³ For the initial development of the scale items see Stephan et al. (2002), The role of threats in the racial attitudes of Blacks and Whites. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28, 1242–1254.

Table 2
Study 1 regression results.

STUDY 1 (n = 226)		b	SE b	β	t	p
JPI $R^2 = 0.15$						
	Female	-0.003	0.23	-0.001	-0.01	.99
	EPN	-1	0.22	-0.3	-0.47	.64
	SDO	-0.08	0.11	-0.06	-0.76	.45
	EPN \times SDO	-0.64	0.16	-0.34	-3.98	< .0001
Threat $R^2 = 0.2$						
	Female	-0.27	0.18	-0.09	-1.51	.13
	EPN	-0.83	0.17	-0.29	-4.75	< .0001
	SDO	-0.11	0.09	-0.1	-1.24	.22
	EPN \times SDO	0.61	0.13	0.4	4.8	< .0001
JPI controlling for threat $R^2 = 0.3$						
	Female	-0.15	0.20	-0.04	-0.07	.47
	EPN	-0.59	0.21	-0.17	-2.83	.005
	SDO	-0.14	0.10	-0.11	-0.15	.14
	EPN \times SDO	-0.29	0.15	-0.15	1.9	.06
	Threat	-0.57	0.08	-0.47	-7.52	< .0001

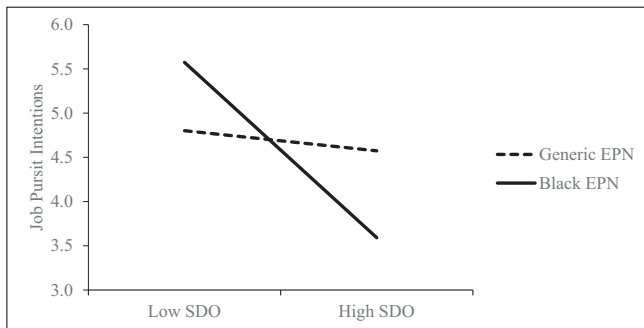


Fig. 1. Study 1: Black (vs. generic) EPN increases (decreases) job pursuit intentions for Caucasian participants with low (high) SDO. Note: SDO is depicted at + or - 1 SD.

Professional Network condition, SDO, and the interaction between the two with gender as a covariate. Results reveal a significant main effect of Employee Professional Network, $b = -0.83$, $SE = 0.17$, $\beta = -0.29$, $t(226) = -4.75$, $p < .0001$, a non-significant main effect of SDO, $b = -0.11$, $SE = 0.09$, $\beta = -0.10$, $t(226) = -1.24$, $p = .22$, and the predicted significant interaction, $b = 0.61$, $SE = 0.13$, $\beta = 0.4$, $t(226) = 4.80$, $p < .0001$, $R^2 = 0.20$.

Analyzing the effect of EPN at ± 1 SD of SDO, spotlight analysis reveals that when SDO is one standard deviation below the mean (1.05), viewing a Black (vs. generic) EPN significantly decreased perceived threat ($b_{Low\ SDO} = -1.66$, $SE = 0.24$, $t(226) = -6.8$, $p < .0001$). When SDO is one standard deviation above the mean (3.79), viewing a Black (vs. generic) EPN non-significantly increases perceived threat ($b_{High\ SDO} = 0.004$, $SE = 0.24$, $t(226) = 0.02$, $p = .99$). Further analysis using the Johnson-Neyman technique (Spiller et al., 2013) reveals that perceived threat is significantly increased by viewing a Black (vs. generic) EPN only at values of SDO above 4.99 on the 7-point scale ($b = 0.73$, $SE = 0.37$, $t(226) = 1.97$, $p = .05$). These results support our predictions about the influence of a minority EPN on perceived threat (see Table 2, Fig. 2).

3.3.3. Mediation by threat

Perceived threat was then examined to determine whether it explained the influence of the EPN \times SDO interaction. Consistent with the possibility of mediation, perceived threat negatively predicts job pursuit intentions, $b = -0.60$, $SE = 0.07$, $\beta = -0.46$, $t(226) = -8.31$, $p < .0001$, $R^2 = 0.24$. The job pursuit intentions variable was regressed on EPN \times SDO while controlling for perceived threat as the final step in testing for mediation. The mediation model that matches our hypothesized relationships is model 8 from Hayes (2013), where both the effect of EPN on JPI and Threat are moderated by SDO. Thus, we test for mediation using model 8.

This analysis revealed that perceived threat mediated the direct

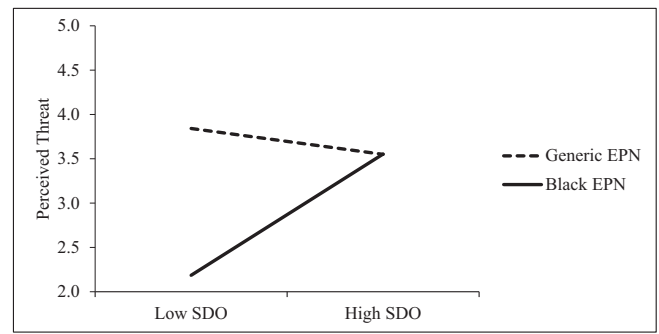


Fig. 2. Study 1: Black (vs. generic) EPN decreases (increases) perceived threat for Caucasian participants with low (high) SDO. Note: SDO is depicted at + or - 1 SD.

effect of the EPN \times SDO interaction on job pursuit intentions, where the effect of EPN \times SDO changed from $b = -0.64$, $SE = 0.16$, $\beta = -0.34$, $t(226) = -3.99$, $p < .0001$ to $b = -0.29$, $SE = 0.15$, $t(226) = -1.91$, $p = .06$, beyond the accepted standard of statistical significance. The index of moderated mediation for this effect is statistically significant, $b = -0.35$, $SE = 0.092$, Bootstrap Confidence Interval -0.58 to -0.2 , $p < .01$. See Table 3 for regression results. This finding supports the prediction of hypothesis 2, where the interactive effect of viewing a Black (vs. generic) EPN and SDO on job pursuit intentions is mediated by perceived threat (see Fig. 3). We discuss these findings below and identify limitations which Study 2 seeks to address.

4. Study 2

Consistent with our predictions, Study 1 shows that exposure to a Black Professional Network significantly increases job pursuit intentions among majority individuals with low SDO, and decreases intentions among those with high SDO. Additionally, the effect of EPN on job pursuit intentions was explained by the perceived threat of the EPN. While Study 1 findings supported our hypotheses, we conducted Study 2 to address Study 1 limitations and expand upon the findings.

Study 2 makes several changes from Study 1. First, we used Amazon MTurk's "unemployed" participant filter in Study 2. As such, only participants who were currently unemployed were able to access the survey. By focusing on an unemployed sample, we are better able to examine the effects of EPNs on a group whose job pursuit intentions may be most influenced. Considering that this research is situated in the context of recruiting, this change extends the external validity of the findings. Second, while the present research is focused on how majority (Caucasian American) stakeholders respond to EPNs as diversity signals, it may be of both practical and theoretical interest to compare the responses of majority groups to those of minority groups.

Based on prior literature (e.g., McKay & Avery, 2005), it is expected that for minorities, viewing a minority-focused (vs. generic) EPN will reduce threat and thereby increase job pursuit intentions. However, it is possible that ethnic minorities, despite being historically disadvantaged in the American social hierarchy, may vary in their attitudes toward social hierarchy (e.g., Gutiérrez & Unzueta, 2013). The presence of a minority EPN may therefore run counter to high SDO minorities' belief that certain groups (e.g., Caucasian Americans) belong at the top of the hierarchy and other groups (e.g., minorities) belong at the bottom. This idea would be consistent with the race-neutral social dominance perspective, which contends that subordinate group members (e.g., African Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans) are as likely as dominant group members (e.g., Caucasian Americans) to support the policies and practices that maintain the extant racial hierarchy (Gutiérrez & Unzueta, 2013; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Umphress, Smith-Crowe, Brief, Dietz, & Watkins, 2007). Thus, study 2 includes both minority and

Table 3
Study 2 correlations.

	JPI	SDO	Threat	Minority support	Multicultural ideology	Minority status	Female	Age
JPI	–							
SDO	–0.200**	–						
Threat	–0.510**	0.361**	–					
Minority support	–0.105	0.028	–0.060	–				
Multicultural ideology	0.035	–0.074	–0.074	0.447**	–			
Minority status	–0.060	–0.088	–0.015	0.086	–0.011	–		
Female	0.008	–0.142*	–0.016	–0.021	0.038	0.084	–	
Age	0.135*	–0.097	–0.067	–0.068	–0.085	–0.288**	0.054	–

** Correlation significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed).

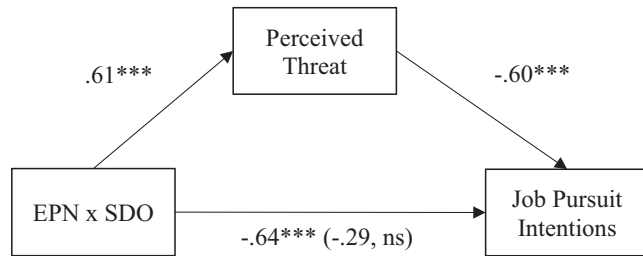


Fig. 3. Perceived threat significantly mediates the relationship between the EPN-type and SDO interaction and JPI in Study 1.

majority respondents, and the expectation is that SDO will moderate the influence of a minority EPN for both groups in the pattern consistent with Study 1.

Hypothesis 3. For minorities, the presence of a minority-focused (vs. generic) Employee Professional Network increases (reduces) job pursuit intentions when Social Dominance Orientation is relatively low (high).

Recent research also suggests that perceptions of the organization's diversity ideology have important implications—that is, whether it is a multicultural ideology that values differences in employees' backgrounds, or a colorblind approach that values performance and qualifications rather than demographics. A multicultural (vs. colorblind) ideology may be helpful for minorities, but have the unintended consequence of increasing threat for Caucasian Americans (Jansen et al., 2016; Olsen & Martins, 2016), which in turn exacerbates racial biases (Morrison et al., 2010; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Wilkins & Kaiser, 2014). Integrating this work on diversity ideologies into the present research, it may be the case that a minority-focused EPN is indicative of a multicultural ideology and a generic EPN is indicative of a colorblind ideology. In this case, the aforementioned prior work suggests a minority EPN (multicultural) increases threat for Caucasian Americans when compared to a generic EPN (colorblind). In contrast to this expectation, hypotheses 1 and 2 make the opposite prediction for Caucasian Americans with low SDO. In Study 2 we capture participants' perceptions of the organization's ideology in order to test whether a multicultural (vs. colorblind) ideology can indeed reduce threat when SDO is low. If a minority EPN is viewed as indicative of a multicultural ideology and a generic EPN is colorblind, this finding would therefore add SDO as an additional contribution to literature on diversity ideologies. Further methodological details are described below.

4.1. Sample and procedures

Two hundred fifty-two unemployed Americans (192 women, 60 men, 145 Caucasian, 107 minority) were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk. In our sample, the age ranged from 18 to 62 (M = 32.66, SD = 9.98). The minority sample included 1 Native

American, 29 Asian Americans, 50 African Americans, 25 Latino/a Americans, and 2 individuals who marked "Other." Asian American and Latino/a American participants' responses did not significantly differ from African American participants' responses on any of the measures described below (all $t < 1.5$; all $p > .14$). Note that dropping the 3 participants who identified as "Native American" or "Other" does not alter the pattern of results on any subsequent analyses; thus, they were included in the analyses. Participants were paid \$1.00 for their participation.

The materials and procedures were identical to Study 1 with the following exceptions. First, instructions about the company information were adjusted to state that Strathmore, Inc. is a company that is interested in learning about how "individuals view information on its website." This is different from Study 1, where the company was interested in how "information on its website may influence individuals' decision to apply for its positions." Although Study 1's instructions were a more accurate simulation of job-hunting, they may have prompted an evaluative process that biased participant responses. Second, rather than the Black (vs. "Employee") Professional Network presented in Study 1, Study 2 participants were randomly assigned to evaluate either the Minorities Professional Network (n = 135) or the Employee Professional Network (n = 136). The "Minorities Professional Network (MPN)" was described as "a network of Latino, African American, and Asian employees within Strathmore, Inc." Consistent with Study 1, the Employee Professional Network was described as a network for all employees within Strathmore, Inc. The employee professional network description in both conditions was that of an existing large, multinational corporation, and it was the same in both conditions except that the name differed ("Minorities" vs. "Employee") and the ethnicity qualifiers were added in the minority condition ("Latino, African American, and Asian employees" vs. "employees"). After completing measures of perceived threat and JPI identical to Study 1, Study 2 participants were then asked to complete a measure of organizational diversity ideology and a measure of the perceived target of organizational support, the latter of which serves as a manipulation check.

4.2. Measures

4.2.1. Target of organizational support

Two items measured whether the EPNs differed on their perceived target of support: "Strathmore, Inc.'s Professional Network is intended to support ethnic minorities, specifically" and "Strathmore, Inc.'s Professional Network is intended to support all employees, in general [reverse scored]," (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). These were adapted from prior literature (Apfelbaum, Stephens, & Reagans, 2016), and in the present paradigm they serve as a manipulation check. It is expected that seeing the minority (vs. generic) EPN will increase the perception that minorities are the target of support. We collapsed these items into a single scale where higher scores represent greater support for minorities; M = 3.99, SD = 1.78.

4.2.2. Organization's diversity ideology

Two additional items assess the organization's diversity ideology (multicultural vs. colorblind): “Strathmore, Inc. focuses on appreciating group differences (i.e., ethnicity) in the workplace” and “Strathmore, Inc. focuses on appreciating employees' qualifications and performance in the workplace, rather than their background (i.e., ethnicity) [reverse scored],” (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). These items were derived from previous research (Jansen et al., 2016; Podsiadlowski, et al., 2013; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). It is expected that seeing the minority (vs. generic) EPN will lead to higher ratings of multicultural ideology. We collapsed these items into a single measure where a higher score represents a more multicultural (and less colorblind) ideology; $M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.93$.

4.2.3. Social dominance orientation, perceived threat, and job pursuit intentions

SDO, threat, and JPI measures were consistent with Study 1. SDO: $\alpha = 0.94$, $M = 2.18$, $SD = 1.14$. Perceived threat: $\alpha = 0.97$, $M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.46$. Job pursuit intentions: $\alpha = 0.91$, $M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.36$. Breaking out SDO by minority status interestingly reveals no significant differences in SDO depending upon whether participants identified as an ethnic minority or majority (i.e., Caucasian American). Minorities: $M = 2.07$, $SD = 1.10$. Caucasian Americans: $M = 2.27$, $SD = 1.17$. The means are not significantly different ($t(250) = -1.40$, $p = .16$), and there is no significant correlation between minority status (e.g., majority vs. minority) and SDO; $r = 0.08$, $p = .23$. As with Study 1, gender significantly correlated with SDO; $r = -0.14$, $p = .025$. Gender was again included as a covariate in all subsequent analyses. Study 2 correlations are reported in Table 3.

4.3. Results

4.3.1. Target of organizational support and multicultural ideology

Regression analyses reveal a significant main effect of minority (vs. generic) EPN on the extent to which participants viewed the target of organizational support as minorities, $b = 2$, $SE = 0.16$, $\beta = 0.64$, $t(252) = 12.89$, $p < .0001$, as well as the extent to which the organization was perceived to have a multicultural (vs. colorblind) ideology, $b = 0.84$, $SE = 0.11$, $\beta = 0.45$, $t(252) = 7.86$, $p < .0001$. Interactions with SDO were non-significant (both $t \leq 1$, $p > .3$). This is consistent with our expectations that the minority EPN is viewed as targeting minorities and supporting a multicultural ideology.

4.3.2. Job pursuit intentions

The JPI variable was regressed on EPN condition, SDO, and the interaction between the two with gender as a covariate. This analysis revealed a non-significant main effect of EPN condition, $b = 0.23$, $SE = 0.17$, $\beta = 0.09$, $t(252) = 1.40$, $p = .16$, a significant main effect of SDO, $b = -0.46$, $SE = 0.10$, $\beta = -0.38$, $t(252) = -4.53$, $p < .0001$, and the predicted significant EPN \times SDO interaction, $b = -0.47$, $SE = 0.14$, $\beta = -0.28$, $t(252) = -3.25$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = 0.09$. Regression results are reflected in Table 4.

We again decomposed the interaction with a spotlight analysis. Results reveal that when SDO was one standard deviation below the mean (1.04), viewing a minority (vs. generic) EPN significantly increased job pursuit intentions, $b_{Low\ SDO} = 0.76$, $SE = 0.24$, $t(252) = 3.21$, $p = .002$. When SDO was one standard deviation above the mean (3.33), viewing a minority (vs. generic) EPN non-significantly decreased job pursuit intentions, $b_{High\ SDO} = -0.32$, $SE = 0.24$, $t(252) = -1.37$, $p = .17$. Further analysis using the Johnson-Neyman technique reveals that JPI was significantly decreased for values of SDO above 3.89 on the 7-point scale, $b = -0.59$, $SE = 0.30$, $t(252) = -1.97$, $p = .05$. This pattern of effects is consistent with our predictions (see Fig. 4).

Interestingly, there was no significant three-way interaction with participants' minority status (majority vs. minority); three-way

Table 4

Study 2 regression results.

Study 2 (n = 252)		b	SE b	β	t	p
JPI $R^2 = 0.09$	Female	-0.02	0.20	0.37	-0.08	.93
	EPN	0.23	0.17	0.09	1.4	.16
	SDO	-0.46	0.1	-0.38	-4.53	< .0001
Threat $R^2 = 0.27$	EPN \times SDO	-0.47	0.14	-0.28	-3.25	.001
	Female	0.08	0.19	0.45	0.4	.69
	EPN	-0.88	0.16	-0.3	-5.51	< .0001
JPI controlling for threat $R^2 = 0.27$	SDO	-0.72	0.1	-0.57	-7.47	< .0001
	EPN \times SDO	0.6	0.14	0.33	4.26	< .0001
	Female	0.02	0.18	0.01	0.11	.91
EPN	EPN	-0.18	0.16	-0.07	-1.16	.26
	SDO	-0.12	0.1	-0.10	-1.17	.24
	EPN \times SDO	-0.19	0.14	-0.11	-1.41	.16
Threat	-0.47	0.06	-0.51	-7.94	< .0001	

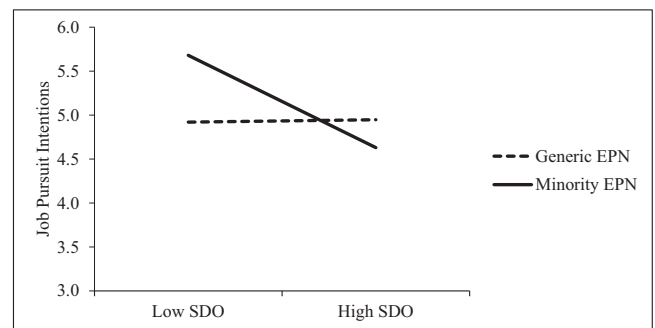


Fig. 4. Study 2: Minority (vs. generic) EPN increases (decreases) job pursuit intentions for unemployed Caucasian and minority participants with low (high) SDO.

Note: SDO is depicted at + or - 1 SD.

interaction $t < 1$, $p > .6$). If we divide the sample based on minority status given the theoretical basis for such an examination, both groups of respondents still showed the significant EPN \times SDO interaction term (Majority: $b = -0.39$, $SE = 0.19$, $\beta = -0.25$, $t(145) = -2.07$, $p = .04$; Minority: $b = -0.53$, $SE = 0.24$, $\beta = -1$, $t(107) = -2.22$, $p = .029$). This provides strong evidence that supports both hypotheses 1 and 3.

An ancillary analysis reveals that the two-way interaction between EPN condition and minority status is significant. The EPN \times Minority Status regression revealed a significant main effect of EPN condition, $b = 0.71$, $SE = 0.26$, $\beta = 0.25$, $t(252) = 2.66$, $p = .008$, a non-significant main effect of minority status, $b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.24$, $\beta = 0.06$, $t(252) = 0.67$, $p = .5$, and the significant interaction, $b = -0.75$, $SE = 0.35$, $\beta = -0.25$, $t(252) = -2.14$, $p = .033$, $R^2 = 0.03$. This is an expected effect: viewing a minority (generic) EPN was more attractive for minority (majority) participants. To clarify, minority status and SDO are both separate variables that moderate the influence of EPN on job pursuit intentions; however, the two do not interact with one another. We discuss the implications of this in the General Discussion section.

4.3.3. Perceived threat

The perceived threat variable was regressed on Employee Professional Network condition, SDO, and the interaction between the two with gender as a covariate. Results reveal a significant main effect of Employee Professional Network, $b = -0.88$, $SE = 0.16$, $\beta = -0.30$, $t(252) = -5.51$, $p < .0001$, a significant main effect of SDO, $b = -0.72$, $SE = 0.1$, $\beta = -0.57$, $t(252) = -7.47$, $p < .0001$, and the predicted significant interaction, $b = 0.60$, $SE = 0.14$, $\beta = 0.33$, $t(252) = 4.26$, $p < .0001$, $R^2 = 0.27$.

A spotlight analysis reveals that when SDO is one standard deviation below the mean (1.04), viewing a minority (vs. generic) EPN

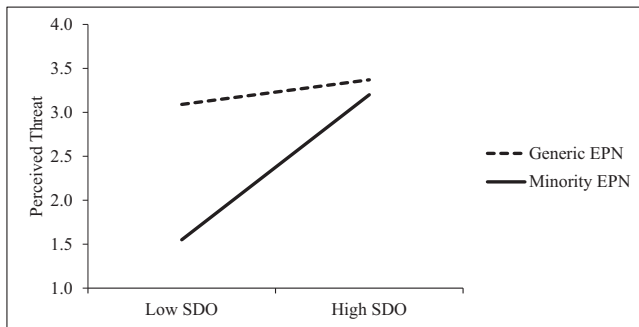


Fig. 5. Study 2: Minority (vs. generic) EPN decreases (increases) perceived threat for unemployed minority participants and Caucasian participants and with low (high) SDO.

Note: SDO is depicted at + or - 1 SD.

significantly decreased perceived threat, $b_{\text{Low SDO}} = -1.54$, $SE = 0.23$, $t(252) = -6.82$, $p < .0001$. When SDO is one standard deviation above the mean (3.33), viewing a minority (vs. generic) EPN non-significantly increased perceived threat, $b_{\text{High SDO}} = 0.18$, $SE = 0.23$, $t(252) = 0.79$, $p = .43$. The Johnson-Neyman technique reveals significantly increased threat for values of SDO above 4.99 on the 7-point scale, $b = 0.83$, $SE = 0.42$, $t(252) = 1.97$, $p = .05$. These results support our predictions about the influence of a minority EPN on perceived threat (see Fig. 5).

Incorporating the effect of minority status, there was a significant 3-way interaction between EPN, SDO, and minority status on perceived threat (interaction $b = 0.57$, $SE = 0.29$, $\beta = 0.25$, $t(252) = 1.98$, $p = .049$, $R^2 = 0.29$). A closer examination reveals that while the EPN \times SDO interaction remained significant for majority participants ($b = 0.80$, $SE = 1.70$, $\beta = 0.50$, $t(145) = 4.74$, $p < .0001$), this term became non-significant for minority participants ($b = 0.23$, $SE = 0.24$, $\beta = 0.10$, $t(107) = 0.94$, $p = .351$). In other words, the minority EPN was less threatening for minorities regardless of their SDO. Consistent with Study 1, the impact of EPN on threat depends on SDO for Caucasian Americans.

4.3.4. Mediation by threat

Consistent with the possibility of mediation, perceived threat again negatively predicts JPI: $b = -0.48$, $SE = 0.05$, $\beta = -0.51$, $t(252) = -9.37$, $p < .0001$, $R^2 = 0.26$. The JPI variable was regressed on EPN \times SDO while controlling for perceived threat as the final step in testing for mediation (model 8 from Hayes, 2013).

This analysis revealed that perceived threat mediated the influence of the EPN \times SDO interaction on job pursuit intentions. When controlling for the impact of perceived threat, the effect of EPN \times SDO changed to $b = -0.19$, $SE = 0.14$, $t(252) = -1.41$, $p = .16$, beyond the accepted standard of statistical significance. The index of moderated mediation for this effect is statistically significant, $b = -0.28$, $SE = 0.08$, Bootstrap Confidence Interval -0.14 to -0.48 , $p < .01$. See Table 4 for regression results. This finding supports the prediction of hypothesis 2, where the interactive effect of viewing a minority (vs. generic) EPN and SDO on job pursuit intentions is mediated by perceived threat (see Fig. 6).

5. General discussion

Our study of EPNs adds to the body of literature that offers direction on which types of diversity and inclusion approaches are successful. Implemented in part as a response to public policy mandates, EPNs are viewed as a key tool for organizations to signal diversity and inclusion in the marketplace. It was previously unclear, however, whether and which individuals such networks would attract vs. repel. The present research is among the first to empirically examine the effect of EPNs on attracting potential employees.

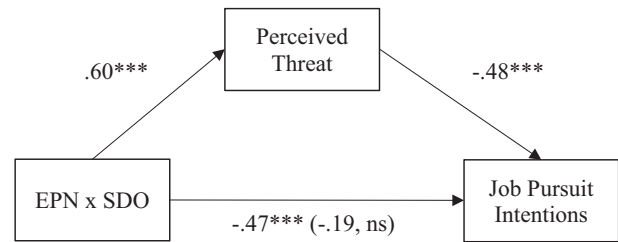


Fig. 6. Perceived threat significantly mediates the relationship between the EPN-type and SDO interaction and JPI in Study 2.

Our experimental studies found support for the contention that majority group members (Caucasian Americans) are more attracted to organizations with a minority EPN than a generic EPN to the extent that they have relatively low social dominance orientation. As SDO increases, this effect reverses, and a generic EPN is more attractive than a minority EPN. Consistent with the proposed theoretical model, the pattern of effects is shown to be significantly mediated by perceived threat. In sum, our hypotheses are supported, where minority EPNs are attractive to Caucasian Americans – specifically, those who support equality and inclusion.

The present research also demonstrates that not all ethnic minorities respond the same way to diversity cues (Study 2). While extant research suggests ethnic minorities may be attracted to organizations that signal diversity (e.g., minority representatives on recruitment brochures), our findings suggest that SDO plays a similar role in minorities' response to EPNs as it does in majority group members' responses. Specifically, ethnic minorities who have a desire to maintain the status hierarchy (high SDOs) are repelled by organizations perceived to support ethnic minorities' advancement in organizations. This advancement may run counter to high SDO ethnic minorities' belief that certain groups (e.g., Caucasian Americans) belong at the top of the hierarchy and other groups (e.g., minorities) belong at the bottom. This idea is consistent with the race-neutral social dominance perspective, which contends that subordinate group members are as likely as dominant group members to support the policies and practices that maintain the extant racial hierarchy (Gutiérrez & Unzueta, 2013; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Umphress et al., 2007).

Our findings stand in contrast to prior literature that suggests heightened threat for Caucasian Americans following exposure to a minority-focused diversity initiative (e.g., Dover et al., 2016). Not all Caucasian Americans will respond the same to diversity cues. While those who seek to maintain the extant racial hierarchy (high SDOs) may experience heightened threat from a minority-focused EPN, Caucasian Americans who seek to level the playing field (low SDOs) will not. It is interesting to note that this prior work also includes the notion of acculturation ideologies, where the diversity initiative may be construed as assimilative and colorblind, or integrative and multicultural (Jansen et al., 2016; Olsen & Martins, 2016; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Yogeewaran & Dasgupta, 2014). This prior research argues that majority group members prefer an assimilation/colorblind organizational culture over an integrative/multicultural one (see also Apfelbaum et al., 2016). The findings from Study 2 in the present research show that the generic EPN was perceived as a colorblind signal and the minority EPN was perceived as a multicultural signal. Thus, it is particularly insightful to the extant literature that our results show low SDO Caucasian Americans may be more attracted by the minority EPN/multicultural signal, and high SDO minorities may be more attracted by the generic EPN/colorblind signal.

To further reconcile this, we contend that the EPN context has a unique focus on the resources and support allocated to members of these formalized networks. Given this focus, a minority EPN may therefore be interpreted in light of the historical disparity in resources and support. This is different from the contexts of the diversity

initiatives explored in prior research, which have been shown to be interpreted in terms of identity safety, affirmation, belongingness, or representation (Apfelbaum et al., 2016; Chaney, Sanchez, & Remedios, 2016; Jansen et al., 2016; Plaut et al., 2011; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Yogeewaran & Dasgupta, 2014). Thus, our research contributes to this literature by exploring diversity and inclusion signals in the context of EPNs and as a function of individuals' desire to maintain the extant social hierarchy.

The findings herein have implications for public policy makers and managers, especially in light of the recent announcement by Deloitte that it will eliminate affinity groups for women, minorities, and LGBT employees (Green, 2017). The accounting and consulting firm will nix EPNs for women and minorities and replace them with “inclusion councils,” which are professional networks that are open to all employees. The firm notes that its leaders are still older, Caucasian men, and the firm contends that they are more likely to advocate on behalf of women and minorities if gender- and race-based employee networks are eliminated and replaced by these inclusion councils. Our studies empirically test the effects of minority-focused networks (e.g., the Black and Minority-EPNs) compared to a more inclusive network open to all employees (e.g., the Generic EPNs) on perceived threat and JPI. Study 2 results in particular explicitly show that the generic “Employee Professional Network” is viewed as supporting all employees in general (rather than minorities, specifically), making a clear parallel to Deloitte's inclusion councils. Our findings from both studies demonstrate that individuals with relatively high SDO (i.e., people in favor of social hierarchy) are particularly threatened by minority-focused EPNs, and that this threat in turn lowers job pursuit intentions. This finding suggests that managers should indeed maintain and perhaps even highlight minority-focused EPNs in their recruiting efforts to attract individuals whose views (of inclusion) are consistent with those of the employer. These EPNs serve as signals that not only attract individuals who favor social equality, but also repel individuals who prefer social inequality (hierarchy). As such, managers need not be aware of or measure prospective applicants' SDO. Our studies suggest that individuals – whether high or low in SDO, will self-select in or out of an organization depending on the presence of EPNs and their perceived effect on the extant hierarchy. Firms that follow Deloitte's efforts to eliminate EPNs may find that they will inadvertently attract individuals who support inequality and repel those who seek to level the playing field.

Rather than eliminating EPNs, firms such as Deloitte who are concerned about these networks appearing threatening to majority groups (e.g., Caucasian Americans) may consider mitigating the inference that non-EPN members may be discriminated against. For example, firms may instead communicate that all employees, regardless of membership in an EPN, will receive organizational support. Eliminating ethnicity-based EPNs and replacing them with inclusion councils – akin to the generic EPN in our two studies, may yield more unintended consequences than benefits. As previously noted, given that SDO is not a readily identifiable characteristic for target hires, the presence of minority-based EPNs may best serve as a signal to encourage self-selection by stakeholders who support inclusion. By attracting a work force more supportive of diversity, managers should experience greater competitiveness from the enhanced focus on marketplace inclusion.

Appendix A. Social dominance orientation

(Sidanius & Pratto, 1999)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

1. Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.
2. In getting what you want, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups.
3. It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.
4. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other

groups.

5. If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.
6. Inferior groups should stay in their place.
7. It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups at the bottom.
8. Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place.
9. It would be good if groups could be equal (R).
10. Group equality should be our ideal (R).
11. All groups should be given an equal chance in life (R).
12. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups (R).
13. Increased social equality (R).
14. We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally (R).
15. We should strive to make incomes as equal as possible (R).
16. No one group should dominate in society (R).

Appendix B. Perceived threat

(Maddux et al., 2008)

Thinking about the employees who belong to this employee professional network, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

1. Employees like them hold too many positions of power and responsibility in this country.
2. Employees like them dominate American society more than they should.
3. When employees like these are in positions of authority, they discriminate against other groups when making hiring decisions.
4. Education benefits employees like these over other groups more than it should.
5. Employees like these have more economic power than they deserve in this country.
6. Employees like these make it harder for other groups to get into good schools.
7. Employees like these make it harder for other groups to get good grades.
8. Employees like these make it harder for other groups to get good jobs.
9. Many companies believe that employees like these are more qualified than other groups.
10. Employees like these have more political power than they deserve in this country.
11. Employees like these make it harder for other groups to have a good quality of life.
12. The legal system lets employees like these get away with more than other groups.

Appendix C. Job pursuit intentions

(Avery et al., 2004)

Based on the Employee Professional Network that you reviewed for this company (Strathmore, Inc.), please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

1. If I was offered a job here, I would accept the job offer.
2. If I were looking for a job, a job here would be very appealing.
3. If I were looking for a job, I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company.
4. After viewing the company's Employee Professional Network, I would no longer be interested in working for this company except as a last resort (R).

5. If I were looking for a job, I would be interested in pursuing an application with this company.

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