DIVERSITY INITIATIVE EFFECTIVENESS: A TYPOLOGICAL THEORY OF UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

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The purpose of diversity initiatives is to help groups that face disadvantage in society achieve better outcomes in organizations, but they do not necessarily work as intended. To advance understanding of the effects of diversity initiatives, I develop a typological theory of their unintended consequences. I propose that diversity initiatives produce four unintended consequence types: backfire (negative diversity goal progress), negative spillover (undesirable effects on outcomes other than diversity goal progress), positive spillover (desirable effects on outcomes other than diversity goal progress), and false progress (improved diversity metrics without true diversity goal progress). I then adopt a signaling perspective to identify mechanisms underlying the four types and the diversity practices most likely to produce them. The resulting typological theory not only provides an organizing framework for prior work on the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives but also specifies new unintended consequence types, identifies signals that serve as their root causes, and suggests that the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives are interrelated and multidetermined. Collectively, these contributions advance a broader conceptualization of diversity initiative effectiveness, in which a wider range of mechanisms and outcomes, as well as the relationships among them, must be considered. More comprehensive theory regarding their unintended consequences provides a foundation for increasing diversity initiative effectiveness.

Diversity initiatives—defined as the implementation of one or more practices aimed at improving the workplace experiences and outcomes of groups that face disadvantage in society (e.g., ethnic/racial minorities, women, etc.)—are a prevalent feature of organizations around the globe (Society for Human Resource Management, 2009). Studies have shown that the majority of organizations have diversity initiatives (Bartels, Nadler, Kufahl, & Pyatt, 2013; Kwoh, 2012), and in the United States alone, organizations spend billions of dollars on diversity initiatives each year (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). If diversity initiatives work as intended, they are likely to have distal beneficial impacts. Increased diversity and inclusion are positively related to performance, at least in some contexts (e.g., McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2009; Richard, Murthi, & Ismail, 2007), and improving the workplace

outcomes of the groups diversity initiatives target helps redress societal injustice. The success of diversity initiatives is therefore critical from the standpoint of not only organizations but also the broader society.

Yet whether diversity initiatives are effective remains an open question. For example, a number of Silicon Valley companies recently implemented extensive diversity initiatives that failed to produce the desired impact (Wiener, 2016). The conclusion that diversity initiatives are not always effective is mirrored in academic research. Some studies have shown that many of the practices commonly included in diversity initiatives increase targets' representation (e.g., Richard, Roh, & Pieper, 2013)—the most commonly studied indicator of diversity initiative effectiveness—but others have shown that some of the same practices have no impact on or even decrease target representation (e.g., Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006).

Evidence that organizations invest heavily in diversity initiatives, coupled with evidence that they do not always work as intended, suggests that the science and the practice of diversity management are at a critical juncture. Staying the course with regard to how diversity initiatives are currently implemented is unlikely to result in

substantial progress toward diversity goals. New theories that deepen our understanding of the effects of diversity initiatives are needed as a first step in developing strategies for increasing their effectiveness.

Abundant theory exists on whether, why, and when diversity initiatives work as intended (e.g., Kalev et al., 2006; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995a; Nishii, Khattab, Shemla, & Paluch, 2018). Yet, at times, diversity initiatives not only fail to produce the intended consequences (e.g., no effect on target representation) but produce unintended consequences instead (e.g., decreased target representation; Dobbin, Schrage, & Kalev, 2015; Kalev et al., 2006). The mechanisms that explain why diversity initiatives produce intended versus unintended consequences are likely distinct. Theory building dedicated to understanding the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives is therefore needed to fully understand their impacts.

Scholars have indeed provided some insight into the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives. For example, prior theory and evidence indicate that diversity initiatives increase negative evaluations of targets (e.g., Duguid & Thomas-Hunt, 2015; Heilman, 1994) and negative attitudes among nontargets (e.g., Lowery, Unzueta, Knowles, & Goff, 2006; Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011), and these reactions to diversity initiatives have been invoked as explanations for why diversity initiatives at times decrease target representation (Dobbin et al., 2015; Kalev et al., 2006). Yet extant work on the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives has developed in a fragmented and piecemeal fashion, resulting in a number of unanswered questions.

Specifically, prior studies have often focused on a single unintended outcome, such as negative evaluations of targets (Duguid & Thomas-Hunt, 2015), negative nontarget attitudes (Lowery et al., 2006), or decreased target representation (Dobbin et al., 2015). Because more comprehensive attempts at theory building are lacking, it is unclear whether prior work has uncovered the full spectrum or only a subset of the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives. Moreover, the tendency to study different unintended consequences in isolation implicitly suggests that they are independent. Scholars have given little attention to understanding whether different unintended consequences are indeed distinct or whether they are interrelated such that efforts to prevent one unintended consequence have

implications for the likelihood of others. Similarly, it is not uncommon for studies to investigate the unintended consequences of a single diversity practice or small subset of diversity practices (e.g., Leslie, Mayer, & Kravitz, 2014; Plaut et al., 2011), which gives the impression that different practices have idiosyncratic effects. Limited theory has addressed whether diversity practices produce unique unintended consequences or whether there is a common set of unintended consequences produced by different practices (for exceptions see Dobbin et al., 2015, and Kalev et al., 2006). Extant theory does not provide answers to these questions, which suggests that understanding of the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives is underspecified.

To advance understanding of the effects of diversity initiatives, I develop broader, more comprehensive theory regarding their unintended consequences. The unintended consequences of any change initiative can only be defined in relation to its intended consequences (Merton, 1936). I therefore begin by defining the intended consequences of diversity initiatives as positive progress toward one or more of three diversity goals—increased target representation, reduced gaps in career success between targets and nontargets, and increased target inclusion—and reviewing existing work on whether diversity initiatives work as intended. Implicit in this definition is a key boundary condition of my theorizing: I assume that leaders adopt diversity initiatives because they want to improve targets' outcomes and implement them substantively. As a result, situations in which leaders adopt and implement diversity initiatives as mere window dressing (i.e., symbolically rather than substantively; Edelman, 1992) fall outside the scope of my theorizing. When implemented as window dressing, it is unsurprising that diversity initiatives do not result in positive progress toward diversity goals. I focus on the more surprising situations in which diversity initiatives are motivated by good intentions but nevertheless fail to work as intended.

Defining the intended consequence of diversity initiatives as positive diversity goal progress implies that their unintended consequences include any other effects they produce. Using this definition, I propose a typology of four unintended consequences: backfire (i.e., negative diversity goal progress), negative spillover (i.e., undesirable effects on outcomes other than diversity goal

progress), positive spillover (i.e., desirable effects on outcomes other than diversity goal progress), and false progress (i.e., improved diversity metrics without true diversity goal progress). The typology includes unintended consequences documented in the diversity literature as well as those documented in other literatures but poorly understood in the context of diversity initiatives. To provide insight into mechanisms that drive the four unintended consequence types, I adopt a signaling perspective on the effects of organizational initiatives (e.g., Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). I propose that individuals interpret diversity initiatives as signals regarding what an organization is like and that these signals are a root cause of unintended consequences. Central to my theorizing is the idea that individuals often interpret and react to diversity initiatives in ways that are disconnected from leaders' intentions.

The signaling effects I identify are general; they capture common interpretations of and reactions to diversity initiatives. Yet all diversity initiatives are unlikely to be interpreted in the same way by all individuals. Rather, there is considerable variability in how diversity initiatives are implemented (e.g., Kulik & Roberson, 2008), which may affect individuals' interpretations and reactions. There is also considerable variability in how individuals interpret and react to the same initiative (e.g., Lowery et al., 2006). I propose that the specific practices included in a diversity initiative—a commonly studied dimension along which diversity initiative implementation varies (e.g., Kalev et al., 2006)—is one factor that affects the strength of the signals it sends and, thus, the likelihood of unintended consequences. I also discuss other situational and individual-difference moderators as avenues for future work.

The typological theory offers a number of contributions. I provide an organizing framework for prior work by categorizing documented unintended consequences of diversity initiatives into one of two types (i.e., backfire and negative spillover). I also advance theory regarding two unintended consequences that have been poorly understood to date (i.e., positive spillover and false progress). In addition, I build on prior work by identifying signals that serve as root causes of all four unintended consequence types. Doing so suggests that the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives are both interrelated (i.e., the same signal leads to different unintended consequences) and multidetermined (i.e., different signals

lead to the same unintended consequence) and, thus, operate in more complex ways than prior theory can account for. Collectively, these contributions advance a broader conceptualization of diversity initiative effectiveness, in which a wider range of mechanisms and outcomes, as well as the relationships among them, must be considered. I also propose that the specific practices included in a diversity initiative moderate the strength of the signals it sends and the likelihood of different unintended consequences. At the same time, the typological theory indicates that there are more commonalities in the unintended effects of different diversity practices than prior theory would suggest. Finally, by advancing more comprehensive theory regarding their unintended consequences, I provide a foundation for identifying new strategies for increasing diversity initiative effectiveness.

INTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

Building theory regarding the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives requires first defining diversity initiatives and their intended consequences. I define diversity initiatives as the implementation of one or more practices aimed at improving the workplace experiences and outcomes of groups that face disadvantage in both organizations and the broader society (Kalev et al., 2006; Kulik & Roberson, 2008; Nishii et al., 2018). Diversity initiatives tend to target ethnic/racial minorities and women but can target other disadvantaged groups (e.g., individuals with disabilities, immigrants, low-socioeconomic-status individuals, sexual orientation minorities, etc.; Society for Human Resource Management, 2009). Some scholars have suggested that the targets of diversity initiatives have broadened such that diversity initiatives include efforts to increase diversity in characteristics not linked to disadvantage (e.g., diversity in attitudes or communication styles; Edelman, Fuller, & Mara-Drita, 2001). Nevertheless, defining the targets of diversity initiatives as members of disadvantaged groups is consistent with the original intent of diversity initiatives and the groups they continue to target most often (e.g., Kulik & Roberson, 2008; Society for Human Resource Management, 2009).

Diversity initiatives are intended to improve targets' experiences and outcomes on three dimensions. Targets tend to be underrepresented,

particularly in high-level positions (e.g., Bertrand & Hallock, 2001); to achieve lower levels of career success than nontargets (e.g., lower pay; Joshi, Son, & Roh, 2015); and to be excluded and devalued in everyday interactions (e.g., Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998). The intended consequences of diversity initiatives therefore include progress toward one or more of three diversity goals: increased representation of targets, reduced gaps in career success between targets and nontargets, and increased inclusion of targets (i.e., perceptions that they are well integrated and valued in an organization; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011). Consistent with this definition, prior work on the intended consequences of diversity initiatives has focused on increased representation (e.g., Nishii et al., 2018) and, to a lesser extent, reduced career gaps (e.g., Huffman, King, & Reichelt, 2017) and increased inclusion (e.g., Herdman & McMillan-Capehart, 2010) as the outcomes of interest.

Diversity initiatives share the common goal of diversity goal progress but vary in aspects of their implementation, such as the specific practices they include (Kulik & Roberson, 2008). Scholars have organized common diversity practices— which also have been referred to as diversity programs, equal employment opportunity (EEO) structures, and affirmative action (AA) structures— into three categories, each of which is intended to facilitate diversity goal progress through a different mechanism (Kalev et al., 2006; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995a; Richard et al., 2013; see Table 1 and Figure 1).[1]

Early work differentiated nondiscrimination diversity practices and resource diversity practices (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995a). *Nondiscrimination practices,* also referred to as identity-blind and EEO practices, are intended to facilitate diversity goal progress by ensuring that decision making (e.g., hiring, promotions, allocating desirable assignments) is based on qualifications and abilities, not demographics (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995a; Kovach, Kravitz, & Hughes, 2004). Example nondiscrimination practices include diversity training to avoid implicit biases and name-blinding applications to conceal demographic characteristics.

In contrast, *resource practices*, also referred to as identity-conscious, opportunity-based, and preferential treatment practices, are intended to facilitate diversity goal progress by providing targets with additional support and opportunities (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995a; Richard et al., 2013). Example resource practices include diversity mentoring and sponsorship programs that provide targets with access to social support and career advice and targeted recruitment practices that provide targets with information about job opportunities.

More recently, scholars have identified *accountability practices*, also referred to as responsibility practices, as a third category of diversity practices that are intended to facilitate diversity goal progress by increasing responsibility for and monitoring of diversity outcomes (Kalev et al., 2006; Richard et al., 2013). Whereas nondiscrimination and resource practices focus on the means used to achieve diversity goal progress, accountability practices focus on the end of diversity goal progress itself. Example accountability practices include appointing a chief diversity officer and including diversity as a criterion in managers' performance evaluations.

Scholars have investigated whether different diversity practices work as intended, most often focusing on reduced discrimination as the mechanism of interest and increased target representation as the outcome of interest (Nishii et al., 2018). Yet findings are contradictory. For example, diversity performance evaluations are associated with increased racial diversity (Richard et al., 2013) but also decreased representation of Black men (Kalev et al., 2006). Likewise, diversity networking groups are associated with increased representation of women (Kalev et al., 2006) and racial diversity (Richard et al., 2013) but also decreased representation of Black men (Kalev et al., 2006). Even more puzzling is evidence that diversity training is associated with decreased discrimination against targets (Bezrukova, Spell, Perry, & Jehn, 2016) but also decreased representation of targets (Kalev et al., 2006). Conversely, AA statements are associated with increased discrimination against targets (Heilman, 1994) but also increased representation of targets (Kalev et al., 2006). These findings contradict extant theory; practices that decrease discrimination should increase representation, and vice versa (see Figure 1).

Contradictory findings may stem from statistical artifacts or use of varying research methodologies across studies. Yet they are also suggestive

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[1] The practices studied in the EEO/AA literature and in the diversity literature overlap largely, if not entirely (e.g., Edelman et al., 2001; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Kulik & Roberson, 2008). I use the term *diversity practices* as a general term that encompasses practices studied in both literatures.

TABLE 1
Categories of Diversity Practices

Practice	Description
Nondiscrimination practices	
Merit-based decision making	Ensuring that decision making is based on qualifications and abilities, not demographics. Examples include use of tests or other objective tools in hiring, use of performance evaluations to determine pay and promotions, and name-blinding applications to conceal demographic information.
Diversity training	Educating employees about bias and disadvantages faced by targets and providing strategies for preventing bias from resulting in discrimination. Diversity training is often focused on preventing discrimination and, thus, is best categorized as a nondiscrimination practice. Training that educates managers on how to provide additional resources to targets is better categorized as a resource practice.
Resource practices	
Preferential treatment	Giving an advantage to targets in decision making. Examples include hiring/promoting targets over more qualified (i.e., strong preferential treatment) or equally qualified (i.e., tiebreak) nontargets. Preferential treatment is illegal in the United States, unless mandated by a court as a temporary remedy for past discrimination (Kovach et al., 2004).
Targeted recruitment	Increasing access to and the attractiveness of jobs and promotion opportunities among targets. Examples include advertising jobs with target group associations and using targets in recruitment materials or as recruiters.
Diversity statements	Increasing the attractiveness of an organization to targets by including a statement that an organization is an AA employer or that diversity is valued (e.g., in job ads, on a website, etc.).
Targeted training	Providing targets with additional training (e.g., managerial skills) to increase their likelihood of being hired or promoted.
Diversity networking groups	Increasing targets' access to and support from one another. Examples include employee affinity groups (also referred to as employee resource groups) and paying for targets to belong to professional associations designed for members of their group.
Diversity mentoring programs	Increasing targets' access to powerful others. Examples include formal mentoring and career sponsorship programs for targets.
Accountability practices	
Diversity plans	Setting diversity goals (e.g., increasing representation, reducing career gaps, improving survey-based inclusion scores) and monitoring progress toward those goals. Examples include setting aspirational numbers (e.g., for target representation) an organization hopes to meet or establishing quotas that are strictly enforced.
Diversity performance evaluations	Evaluating managers' performance in terms of helping the organization meet diversity goals. Examples include offering a bonus to managers if they hire or promote targets.
Diversity positions	Appointing a person or persons within the organization who is responsible for overseeing the organization's diversity efforts, either temporarily or permanently. Examples include appointing a chief diversity officer or AA officer and establishing a diversity department, committee, or task force.
Grievance systems	Establishing a system through which individuals can report instances of discrimination and other events that inhibit progress toward diversity goals.

Note: The three categories of diversity practices are consistent with those identified in prior work; although the labels used for each category vary, large-scale studies tend to categorize diversity practices in ways that are consistent with this taxonomy (e.g., Kalev et al., 2006; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995a; Richard et al., 2013). Yet scholars at times place the same practice in different categories. In particular, Richard and colleagues (2013) categorized diversity performance evaluations as an accountability practice, whereas Kalev and colleagues (2006) categorized this practice as a nondiscrimination (i.e., bias reduction) practice. Diversity performance evaluations hold managers accountable for diversity goal progress, regardless of whether progress is achieved through nondiscrimination or the provision of additional resources. Thus, consistent with Richard and colleagues, I categorize diversity performance evaluations as an accountability practice.

FIGURE 1
Intended Consequences of Diversity Initiatives
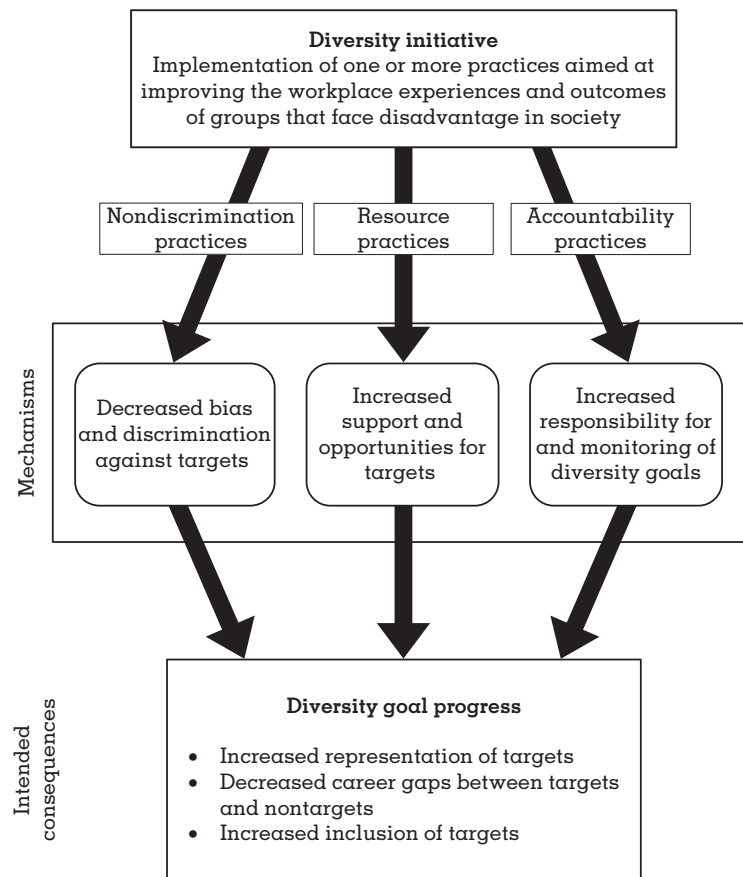
that existing theory on the intended consequences of diversity initiatives cannot fully account for their effects. Rather, diversity initiatives may operate through additional mechanisms that produce unintended consequences.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF DIVERSITY INITIATIVES

Unintended consequences are defined as unforeseen outcomes of efforts to create change in complex social systems (Merton, 1936). The academic study of unintended consequences began with sociologist Robert Merton (1936), who observed that change initiatives rarely occur in a psychological or social vacuum. Rather, they take place in complex social systems comprising interdependent entities, which makes their impacts difficult to predict. As a result, unintended consequences are a near inevitability of efforts to create change in organizations and societies, and they have

been documented as a result of any number of change initiatives (e.g., Buchanan & Stubblebine, 1962; Campbell, 1979; Coase, 1960; Kerr, 1975; Portes, 2000). The notion that diversity initiatives produce unintended consequences is therefore unsurprising.

A Typology of Unintended Consequences

The intended consequence of diversity initiatives is positive diversity goal progress, which indicates that their unintended consequences include any other effects they produce (Merton, 1936). I propose that diversity initiatives produce four unintended consequence types—backfire, negative spillover, positive spillover, and false progress—that are differentiated by two dimensions: whether the intended or an unintended outcome is affected and whether the effect is undesirable or desirable in direction (see Figure 2). I derive this typology by categorizing documented unintended

FIGURE 2
A Typology of the Unintended Consequences of Diversity Initiatives

	The intended outcome is affected	An unintended outcome is affected
Direction of the effect is undesirable	**Backfire** A diversity initiative affects the intended outcome (i.e., diversity goal progress) but does so in an undesirable direction instead of in the intended desirable direction (e.g., decreased target representation)	**Negative spillover** A diversity initiative affects an outcome other than the intended outcome (i.e., any outcome other than diversity goal progress) in an undesirable direction (e.g., decreased nontarget engagement)
Direction of the effect is desirable	**False progress** A diversity initiative affects the metrics used to assess the intended outcome (i.e., diversity goal progress) in the intended desirable direction, without creating true change (e.g., improved target representation in management achieved by reclassifying existing employees)	**Positive spillover** A diversity initiative affects an outcome other than the intended outcome (i.e., any outcome other than diversity goal progress) in a desirable direction (e.g., increased nontarget engagement, increased ethical behavior not tied to diversity issues)

Note: The four unintended consequences are defined and differentiated by crossing two dimensions: the direction of the effect (i.e., desirable versus undesirable) and the outcome affected (i.e., intended versus unintended).

consequences of diversity initiatives into one of two types, and also including two additional types that have been documented in the broader literature on unintended consequences but are poorly understood in the context of diversity initiatives.

Documented unintended effects of diversity initiatives can be categorized as contributing to one of two undesirable unintended consequences, differentiated by whether the intended or an unintended outcome is affected. Specifically, *backfire* occurs if a diversity initiative affects the intended outcome—diversity goal progress—in an undesirable direction instead of the intended desirable direction (i.e., decreased representation and inclusion of targets, increased career gaps). Prior work has documented mechanisms that contribute to backfire. A variety of diversity practices (e.g., diversity training, preferential treatment, diversity and AA statements) increase negative evaluations of targets, among both nontargets and targets themselves (Brown, Charnsangavej, Keough, Newman, & Rentfrow, 2000; Duguid & Thomas-Hunt, 2015; Heilman, 1994; Heilman & Welle, 2006; Leslie et al., 2014). Negative evaluations of targets provide an explanation for evidence that diversity practices

(e.g., diversity training, diversity networking groups, diversity performance evaluations) at times decrease target representation (Dobbin et al., 2015; Kalev et al., 2006).

Alternatively, *negative spillover* occurs if a diversity initiative affects an unintended outcome (i.e., any outcome other than diversity goal progress) in an undesirable direction. Negative spillover encompasses prior evidence that diversity initiatives, although intended to help targets, also evoke negative reactions among nontargets; a number of diversity practices (e.g., diversity and AA statements, preferential treatment) increase negative attitudes toward and perceptions of organizations that implement them among nontargets (Dover, Major, & Kaiser, 2016; Heilman, Battle, Keller, & Lee, 1998; James, Brief, Dietz, & Cohen, 2001; Lowery et al., 2006; Plaut et al., 2011; Shteynberg, Leslie, Knight, & Mayer, 2011).

Although documented unintended consequences of diversity initiatives are uniformly undesirable, change initiatives also produce consequences that, although unintended, are desirable (Merton, 1936). Consistent with this idea, I propose that diversity initiatives produce two unintended consequences that are desirable in direction and differentiated by

whether an unintended or the intended outcome is affected. Specifically, *positive spillover* occurs if a diversity initiative affects an unintended outcome (i.e., any outcome other than diversity goal progress) in a desirable direction. Although well documented in other literatures (e.g., positive externalities in economics; Greenwald & Stiglitz, 1986), positive spillover has received little attention in the diversity literature. Nevertheless, there is suggestive evidence that diversity initiatives may produce positive spillover, specifically favorable reactions among nontargets. Diversity initiatives often evoke negative nontarget reactions (e.g., Lowery et al., 2006), but a few studies have shown that diversity practices (e.g., merit-based decision making, diversity training, diversity statements) at times evoke favorable attitudes and perceptions among nontargets (e.g., Bezrukova et al., 2016; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995b; Williams & Bauer, 1994). These findings suggest that diversity initiatives may produce positive spillover, yet little theory exists on the mechanisms that produce positive spillover and the ways in which it manifests.

Alternatively, *false progress* occurs when a diversity initiative affects the metrics used to measure the intended outcome of diversity goal progress in a desirable direction and, thus, appears to produce the intended consequence. However, improved diversity metrics are achieved through shortcuts, not through the intended mechanisms (e.g., reduced discrimination), and, thus, do not reflect true improvements in targets' experiences and outcomes.[2] False progress is well documented in other literatures; change initiatives often motivate behaviors that improve the metrics used to gauge the effectiveness of the initiative, without creating true, underlying change (e.g., Campbell, 1979; Magee, Kilduff, & Heath, 2011). In the diversity literature scholars have speculated regarding actions managers might take to give the appearance of diversity goal progress, such as increasing target representation in management by reclassifying jobs dominated by targets as managerial (Smith & Welch, 1984). Yet, as with positive spillover, theory regarding the nature and sources of false progress effects is lacking in the diversity literature.

In all, existing work on diversity initiatives, in combination with the broader literature on unintended consequences, suggests that diversity initiatives produce four unintended consequence types. This typology provides a starting point for expanding theory on the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives. Yet a typology is a useful theoretical device only to the extent that it goes beyond classification by also providing explanation and prediction (Doty & Glick, 1994; Snow & Ketchen, 2014). To this end, I adopt a signaling perspective on the effects of organizational initiatives and build theory regarding why and when diversity initiatives produce each of the four unintended consequence types.

Signals As a Source of Unintended Consequences

Signaling provides a useful framework for advancing theory regarding mechanisms that drive the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives. Theory and research in the field of human resource management (HRM) support the notion that individuals interpret organizational initiatives and practices—which are easily observable—as signals of what an organization is like, including its values, priorities, culture, and climate—which are harder to observe (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Guzzo & Noonan, 1994; Jones, Willness, & Madey, 2014; Nishii, Lepak, & Schneider, 2008; Nishii & Wright, 2008; Rousseau, 1995; Rynes, 1991).[3] The signaling effects of organizational initiatives are often functional; by communicating values and priorities, organizational initiatives motivate individuals to engage in behaviors that facilitate organizational goals (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff & Bowen, 2000). At the same time, "all HRM practices communicate messages constantly and in unintended ways" (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004: 206); individuals' interpretations of and reactions to organizational initiatives are frequently disconnected from the intent of the leaders who implement them, which explains why

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[2] Although the intended outcome is affected in a desirable direction, false progress is a detrimental unintended consequence because it results in only the appearance of the intended effect.

[3] HRM theory on the signaling effects of organizational initiatives shares some commonalities with Spence's (1973) influential economic theory of signaling. Central to both perspectives is the idea that individuals use easily observable behaviors to make inferences about characteristics that are harder to observe. Yet the two perspectives also differ. For example, Spence's original work focuses on the costs associated with signals and the idea that costly signals often produce the intended effect of reducing information asymmetry. In contrast, the HRM literature focuses less on costs and more on the unintended effects of signals.

organizational initiatives do not always work as intended (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994; Nishii et al., 2008; Nishii & Wright, 2008).

Consistent with these ideas, I propose that individuals interpret the presence of a diversity initiative as providing signals regarding what the organization is like, and that the signaling effects of diversity initiatives are often disconnected from leaders' intentions in terms of either the content of the signals themselves or individuals' psychological and behavioral reactions to those signals. Thus, the signals that diversity initiatives send, together with individuals' reactions to those signals, are mechanisms that drive unintended consequences (see Figure 3). Although diversity initiatives may send any number of signals, I focus on identifying those signals that are likely root causes of the four unintended consequence types. For previously studied unintended consequences (i.e., backfire and negative spillover), I identify signals that are both core to the definition of diversity initiatives and likely drivers of documented unintended effects. For unintended consequences that are poorly understood (i.e., positive spillover and false progress), I similarly identify signals that are core to the definition of diversity initiatives, but

then build more novel theory regarding their subsequent unintended effects.

Signal 1: Targets Need Help

I propose that individuals interpret the presence of a diversity initiative as a signal that targets need help to succeed in the organization, which is a root cause of backfire. The signal that targets need help may not be the primary message leaders intend to convey by implementing a diversity initiative, but it is nevertheless core to the definition of diversity initiatives and, thus, almost axiomatic. Given that the purpose of diversity initiatives is to improve targets' outcomes, individuals likely interpret the presence of such an initiative as evidence that targets are unlikely to achieve high levels of career success on their own and need additional help to succeed in the organization. If targets had the same odds of success as nontargets, a diversity initiative would not be needed.

The signal that targets need help is likely to increase discrimination against targets and decrease targets' performance, both of which result in backfire (i.e., negative diversity goal progress).

FIGURE 3
Unintended Consequences of Diversity Initiatives
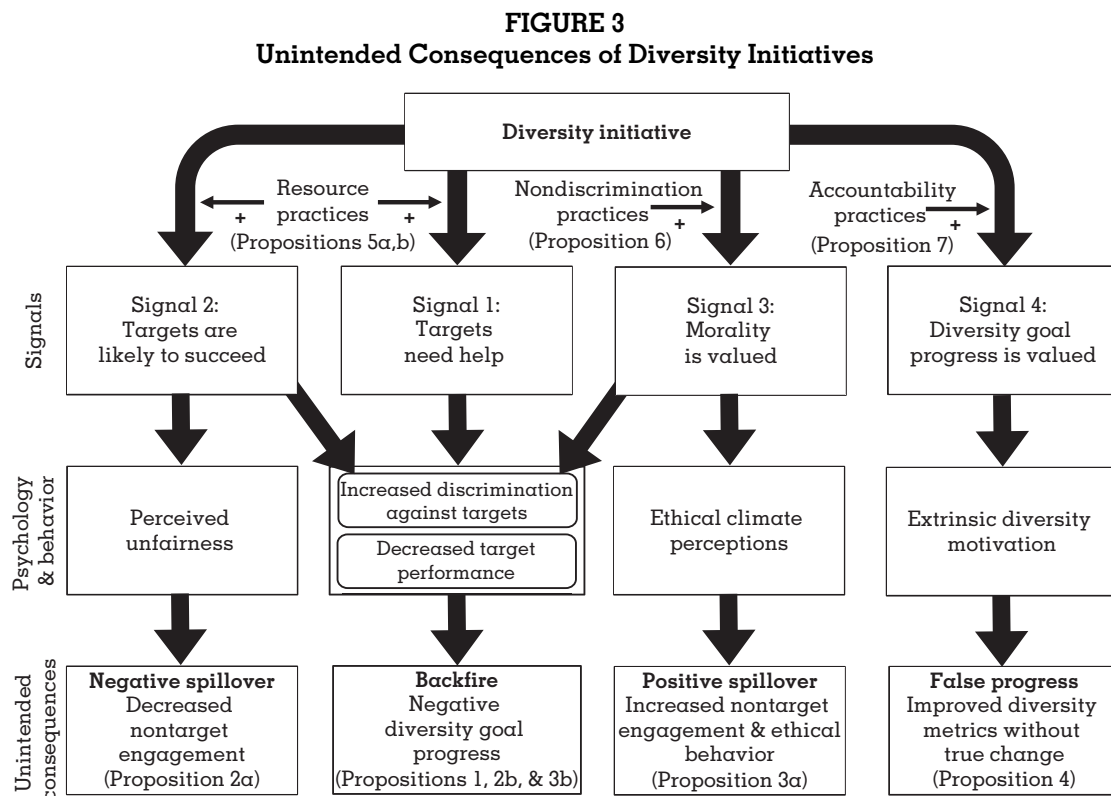
The signal that targets need help is likely to prompt individuals to make attributions regarding why targets tend to experience comparatively poor outcomes, both in organizations and in the broader society, and therefore need additional help to succeed (cf. Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley & Michela, 1980). Targets' inferior outcomes are driven by situational factors, including pervasive discrimination (e.g., Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Joshi et al., 2015). Yet individuals tend to underestimate situational factors and overestimate dispositional factors in forming casual attributions (Ross, 1977, but see also Morris & Peng, 1994); therefore, individuals are likely to infer that targets need help to succeed because they lack competence. Individuals are also motivated to believe that the world is just and that disadvantaged groups' inferior outcomes are deserved (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002), which similarly suggests that the signal that targets need help increases stereotypes that targets lack competence. Stereotypes of low competence, in turn, increase discrimination—for example, by reducing targets' chances of being hired, being promoted, and receiving informal rewards (Cuddy, Glick, & Beninger, 2011).

The signal that targets need help also likely decreases targets' job performance. Research on stereotype threat demonstrates that individuals are aware of negative stereotypes others hold about their group and that this awareness reduces cognitive capacity and increases anxiety, both of which impede performance (Schmader, Johns, & Forbes, 2008; Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007). To the extent that targets are aware that diversity initiatives signal they need help and increase stereotypes that they lack competence, diversity initiatives are likely to negatively affect targets' performance.

Increased discrimination against targets and decreased target performance, in turn, are likely to result in negative diversity goal progress. Increased discrimination against targets in formal (e.g., hiring, pay, promotion) and informal (e.g., allocation of desirable assignments) decision making is likely to reduce their representation, increase gaps in career success, and contribute to perceived exclusion. Similarly, poor target performance is likely to increase targets' chances of being fired, thereby reducing their representation, and it is also likely to reduce their chances of receiving pay raises and promotions, thereby exacerbating career gaps. The stereotype

threat processes through which diversity initiatives decrease targets' performance (i.e., beliefs that they are negatively stereotyped) are also likely to increase perceived exclusion among targets. In all, diversity initiatives are likely to produce backfire (i.e., negative diversity goal progress) by signaling that targets need help, which, in turn, increases discrimination against targets and decreases targets' performance.

> *Proposition 1: The presence of a diversity initiative signals that targets need help to succeed in the organization, which increases discrimination against targets and decreases targets' performance, both of which result in negative diversity goal progress (i.e., backfire).*

Proposition 1 encompasses prior theory and evidence on the negative effects of diversity initiatives on targets. Studies have documented that diversity practices, including diversity statements (e.g., Heilman & Welle, 2006), diversity training (e.g., Duguid & Thomas-Hunt, 2015), and AA statements and preferential treatment (e.g., Brown et al., 2000; Heilman, 1994; Leslie et al., 2014), increase stereotypes that targets lack competence, increase discrimination against targets, and also decrease targets' performance. Moreover, although not tested directly, scholars have invoked negative perceptions and treatment of targets as explanations for why diversity practices decrease target representation (Kalev et al., 2006). Proposition 1 also builds on prior work by identifying the signal that targets need help as a root cause of these effects.

Signal 2: Targets Are Likely to Succeed

I propose that individuals interpret the presence of a diversity initiative as a signal that targets are more likely to succeed in the organization than they would be without the initiative, which is a root cause of both negative spillover and backfire. Like the signal that targets need help, the signal that targets are likely to succeed is core to the definition of diversity initiatives and, thus, almost axiomatic. Given that the purpose of diversity initiatives is to improve targets' outcomes, individuals are likely to interpret diversity initiatives as evidence that targets have improved odds of success. Moreover, the signal that targets are likely to succeed is a message that leaders

likely intend to send, since it may help attract and retain targets (cf. Avery, 2003).

Yet the signal that targets are likely to succeed is nevertheless likely to produce unintended consequences, specifically negative spillover (i.e., undesirable effects on outcomes other than diversity goal progress), by increasing perceptions that organizational practices are unfair and, in turn, reducing engagement among nontargets. Intergroup relations tend to be viewed as a zero-sum game such that majority group members interpret evidence that bias against minority groups is declining and minority groups' success in society is rising as evidence that bias against majority groups is rising and majority groups' success in society is declining (Norton & Sommers, 2011; Wilkins & Kaiser, 2014). It follows that perceptions that targets' odds of success in an organization are increasing lead nontargets to assume that their odds of success in the same organization are decreasing. Such perceptions threaten nontargets self-interest and are therefore likely to lead to perceptions that the organization's practices are unfair (cf. Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997). Likewise, because the targets of diversity initiatives are defined based on the experiences of their group in society, not their personal skills and abilities, perceptions that targets' increased odds of success come at the expense of nontargets may lead individuals to construe diversity initiatives as violating the meritocracy principle and, thus, as unfair (e.g., Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley, & Zanna, 1998).

Perceived unfairness, in turn, decreases organizational engagement, which scholars define as positive organizational attitudes (e.g., applicant attraction, organizational commitment) and beneficial discretionary behaviors (e.g., citizenship, role expansion; Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006; Macey & Schneider, 2008). The core tenet of social exchange theory is that individuals reciprocate the treatment they receive from other individuals and entities (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960). If nontargets believe organizational practices are unfair, they are likely to reciprocate the unfair treatment they receive from the organization by forming negative organizational attitudes and refraining from discretionary behaviors that benefit the organization (e.g., Colquitt et al., 2013). It follows that diversity initiatives produce negative spillover, which manifests as low nontarget engagement, by signaling that targets

are likely to succeed and increasing perceived unfairness.

> *Proposition 2a: The presence of a diversity initiative signals that targets are likely to succeed in the organization, which increases nontargets' perceptions that organizational practices are unfair and, in turn, decreases nontargets' engagement in the organization (i.e., negative spillover).*

Proposition 2a encompasses prior theory and evidence on the negative effects of diversity initiatives on nontargets. Studies have documented that a variety of diversity practices, including diversity statements (e.g., Dover et al., 2016; Plaut et al., 2011), preferential treatment (e.g., Heilman et al., 1998; Lowery et al., 2006), and AA statements (e.g., Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006; James et al., 2001; Shteynberg et al., 2011), increase perceived unfairness, disadvantage, and threat among nontargets, and also decrease their organizational engagement. Proposition 2a also extends prior work by identifying the signal that targets are likely to succeed as a root cause of these effects.

In addition to producing negative spillover, the signal that targets are likely to succeed is likely to result in backfire (i.e., negative diversity goal progress) by increasing discrimination against targets. Individuals interpret evidence that an outgroup takes resources and opportunities away from their own group as an indication that the competing group has negative intent and therefore lacks interpersonal warmth (e.g., friendliness, sincerity, etc.; Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske et al., 2002). Thus, the signal that targets are likely to succeed—and the associated assumption that this occurs at the expense of nontargets—is likely to increase the extent to which nontargets stereotype targets as low in warmth. Like stereotypes of low competence, stereotypes of low warmth increase discrimination—for example, by decreasing targets' likelihood of being hired, promoted, or given desirable assignments (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2011; Dipboye, 1985)—which, in turn, contributes to negative diversity goal progress.

> *Proposition 2b: The presence of a diversity initiative signals that targets are likely to succeed in the organization, which increases discrimination against targets and, in turn, results in negative diversity goal progress (i.e., backfire).*

Proposition 2b has some basis in prior theory and research. Stereotypes of low competence are the most common explanation for why diversity initiatives increase discrimination against targets (e.g., Heilman, 1994). However, studies have documented that stereotypes of low warmth are also a mechanism through which diversity practices, including AA statements and preferential treatment, increase discrimination against targets (e.g., Aquino, Stewart, & Reed, 2005; Leslie et al., 2014). Proposition 2b builds on prior work by identifying the signal that targets are likely to succeed as a root cause of these effects.

Signal 3: Morality Is Valued

I propose that individuals interpret the presence of a diversity initiative as a signal that morality is valued in the organization, which is a root cause of both positive spillover and backfire. In considering why diversity initiatives may produce positive spillover, their relevance to social justice is noteworthy. Unlike many other organizational initiatives, which often address organization-specific problems (e.g., restructuring to increase efficiency), diversity initiatives are intended to counteract the unfair disadvantages targets face in society. Combating injustice is widely construed as morally virtuous (e.g., Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001; Folger, 1998). It is therefore not surprising that promoting racial equality and diversity is viewed both as a sacred moral value that should not be compromised (Ruttan & Nordgren, 2018; Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000) and as an indicator of whether an organization fulfills its moral obligation to society (Greening & Turban, 2000). Thus, although different leaders emphasize the moral case for diversity to varying degrees (e.g., Mayer, McCluney, Sonday, & Cameron, 2015), the tendency to view promoting diversity as a moral act suggests that individuals commonly interpret diversity initiatives as a signal that morality is valued.

The signal that morality is valued likely leads to positive spillover (i.e., desirable effects on outcomes other than diversity goal progress) by increasing ethical climate perceptions and, in turn, nontarget engagement and ethical behavior. The dominant cultural values in an organization shape climate perceptions regarding the behaviors that are expected, supported, and rewarded (Schein, 2010; Schneider, 1987; Schneider,

Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013). Thus, the signal that morality is valued is likely to result in ethical climate perceptions—or beliefs that moral behavior is expected, supported, and rewarded (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2010; Mayer, Kuenzi, & Greenbaum, 2010; Victor & Cullen, 1988). Consistent with this idea, evidence indicates that the extent to which organizational leaders emphasize moral values is positively related to ethical climate perceptions (Bedi, Alpaslan, & Green, 2016; Mayer et al., 2010).[4]

Ethical climate perceptions, in turn, increase nontarget engagement. Social exchange theory posits that individuals reciprocate positive treatment from other individuals and entities (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960). Ethical climate perceptions indicate that moral behavior is normative and that others in the organization act with good intentions. Organizational members are likely to reciprocate these good intentions via increased engagement. Evidence indeed shows that ethical climate perceptions are positively related to indicators of engagement, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and citizenship behavior (Martin & Cullen, 2006; Mayer, 2014). Importantly, increased engagement among targets can be considered an intended consequence of diversity initiatives, given that high levels of engagement are likely to facilitate increased retention and, thus, representation of target group members. By comparison, increased nontarget engagement meets the definition of positive spillover; diversity initiatives are not intended to benefit nontargets directly (Kulik & Roberson, 2008).

Ethical climate perceptions also increase ethical behavior. Social information processing theory posits that information in the environments individuals are embedded in guides their

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[4]The relationships among diversity initiatives, the signal that morality is valued, and ethical climate perceptions may be characterized by additional complexity. If morality is valued in an organization, this may lead to both ethical climate perceptions and the implementation of a diversity initiative. Nevertheless, prior work indicates that organizational initiatives shape individuals' perceptions of what is valued in an organization and, in turn, the climate perceptions they develop (e.g., Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff & Bowen, 2000). Thus, although other causal patterns are possible, prior work provides theoretical justification for the idea that the implementation of a diversity initiative signals that morality is valued and, in turn, increases ethical climate perceptions.

behavior (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Thus, perceptions that an organization has an ethical climate, where moral acts are supported, expected, and rewarded, increase ethical behavior (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010; Martin & Cullen, 2006; Mayer et al., 2010). Notably, decreased discrimination is both an ethical act and a mechanism through which diversity initiatives are intended to facilitate diversity goal progress (see Figure 1) and, thus, does not qualify as an unintended consequence. Yet ethical climate perceptions also lead to ethical behaviors unrelated to diversity issues (e.g., reduced theft, reporting of fraud, etc.; Kish-Gephart et al., 2010), which meet the definition of positive spillover. In all, diversity initiatives are likely to produce positive spillover, in the form of both increased nontarget engagement and ethical behavior not tied to diversity, by signaling that morality is valued and increasing ethical climate perceptions.

> *Proposition 3a: The presence of a diversity initiative signals that morality is valued in the organization, which increases ethical climate perceptions and, in turn, nontarget engagement and ethical behavior not tied to diversity (i.e., positive spillover).*

The notion that diversity initiatives produce positive spillover has received little attention, but there is nevertheless some suggestive evidence in support of Proposition 3a. A number of studies have shown that diversity initiatives evoke negative nontarget reactions (e.g., Plaut et al., 2011; Shteynberg et al., 2011), but a few have shown that diversity initiatives evoke positive nontarget reactions instead. For example, nontargets are supportive of nondiscrimination diversity practices (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995b), diversity training evokes positive nontarget attitudes (Bezrukova et al., 2016), and diversity statements increase organizational attraction among nontargets (Williams & Bauer, 1994). Yet little theory exists to explain these findings. Proposition 3a provides insight into the mechanisms through which diversity initiatives produce positive spillover (i.e., the signal that morality is valued, ethical climate perceptions) and the dimensions on which positive spillover occurs (i.e., nontarget engagement, ethical behavior). The notion that diversity initiatives create both positive and negative spillover also provides insight into mixed findings regarding

the effects of diversity initiatives on nontarget engagement. Diversity initiatives likely have a negative (positive) net effect on nontarget engagement in organizations where negative (positive) spillover outweighs positive (negative) spillover.

The signal that morality is valued also likely produces backfire (i.e., negative diversity goal progress) by increasing discrimination against targets. Individuals are motivated to avoid being perceived as biased and, thus, monitor their behavior to prevent discrimination (Crandall & Eshelman, 2003; Plant & Devine, 1998). Yet research on moral credentialing has documented that when individuals engage in acts that can be construed as nondiscriminatory, such as hiring a highly qualified woman, this establishes their credentials as unbiased. Moral credentialing reduces the tendency to monitor the self and thereby increases discrimination, particularly subtle acts of discrimination for which alternative explanations exist (e.g., hiring a nontarget over a target when their qualifications are roughly equivalent; Effron, Cameron, & Monin, 2009; Merritt, Effron, & Monin, 2010; Monin & Miller, 2001).

The presence of a diversity initiative signals that morality is valued, specifically with regard to the treatment of targets, and, thus, is likely interpreted as evidence that the organization is bias free. Perceptions that an organization is bias free are likely to credential individuals in the organization as unbiased, thereby increasing subtle acts of discrimination. Relative to overt discrimination, subtle discrimination has an equally strong negative impact on targets' work outcomes (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016) and, thus, is likely to result in negative diversity goal progress.

> *Proposition 3b: The presence of a diversity initiative signals that morality is valued in the organization, which increases subtle discrimination against targets and, in turn, results in negative diversity goal progress (i.e., backfire).*

Proposition 3b has not received empirical attention. Prior work has documented that diversity initiatives increase discrimination but has focused on stereotypes of low competence (e.g., Heilman, 1994) and, to a lesser extent, low warmth (e.g., Leslie et al., 2014) as the mechanism of interest. Nevertheless, there is some support for these ideas. Diversity practices, including

diversity training and diversity statements, increase perceptions that an organization is bias free (i.e., targets are treated fairly) and, in turn, decrease awareness of discrimination (e.g., Brady, Kaiser, Major, & Kirby, 2015; Dover, Major, & Kaiser, 2014; Kaiser et al., 2013; Kirby, Kaiser, & Major, 2015), which is consistent with the idea that diversity initiatives reduce monitoring of discrimination via moral credentialing. Similarly, although not a study of diversity initiatives, a related study has shown that cultures of meritocracy (i.e., bias-free decision making) have a moral credentialing effect by increasing pay discrimination against women (Castilla & Benard, 2010).

Signal 4: Diversity Goal Progress Is Valued

I propose that individuals interpret the presence of a diversity initiative as a signal that diversity goal progress is valued in the organization, which is a root cause of false progress. Organizational initiatives provide information regarding the values and priorities in an organization (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff & Bowen, 2000). The purpose of diversity initiatives is to improve targets' outcomes, which suggests that individuals commonly interpret these initiatives as evidence that progress toward diversity goals is valued. The signal that diversity goal progress is valued is likely a signal that organizational leaders intend to send in implementing diversity initiatives, since it may motivate individuals to engage in behaviors that facilitate the achievement of diversity goals (cf. Leslie, Manchester, & Dahm, 2017).

Nevertheless, the signal that diversity goal progress is valued is likely to result in false progress (i.e., improved diversity metrics without true change) by increasing extrinsic diversity motivation. Because diversity initiatives are implemented by organizational leaders, they signal that diversity goal progress is valued by those leaders. As a result, the motivation that diversity initiatives provide for making progress toward diversity goals is extrinsic in nature (i.e., driven by external forces). As a result, individuals face pressure to facilitate diversity goal progress, regardless of their intrinsic diversity motivation (i.e., belief that diversity is inherently important). Moreover, extrinsic incentives for a behavior signal that the behavior is not inherently rewarding, with the result that extrinsic motivators can reduce intrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999; Wrzesniewski et al.,

2014). Thus, the signal that diversity goal progress is valued not only may increase extrinsic diversity motivation but also may decrease intrinsic diversity motivation.

Extrinsic diversity motivation, in turn, is likely to result in false progress. When motivated by extrinsic more than intrinsic factors, individuals often engage in behaviors that give only the appearance of improved performance (cf. Blau, 1963; Campbell, 1979). The appearance of improved performance satisfies external pressures and is viewed as sufficient by the individual if true performance improvements are not intrinsically rewarding. Extrinsic diversity motivation may therefore result in shortcuts that give the appearance of diversity goal progress by improving diversity metrics, without creating true diversity goal progress. For example, to improve metrics capturing targets' representation in management, managers might recategorize jobs dominated by targets as managerial or might expand the definition of diversity to include groups that are not disadvantaged in society (Edelman et al., 2001; Smith & Welch, 1984). To reduce career gaps, managers might promote targets to high-level positions, regardless of their fit and qualifications, which is unlikely to create lasting change since these individuals are likely to turnover. Alternatively, managers might strategically allocate pay raises to a few targets to reduce the pay gap in the aggregate, while the majority of targets remain underpaid (Anderson, Bjarnadóttir, Dezső, & Ross, in press). Finally, managers might report overall inclusion scores from an employee survey to hide evidence that although nontargets feel included, targets do not.

Notably, extrinsic motivation does not always result in false progress (cf. Vroom, 1964). Rather, such effects occur when true performance improvements are difficult to achieve, regardless of effort (Campbell, 1979; Kerr, 1975; Ordóñez, Schweitzer, Galinsky, & Bazerman, 2009; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006). Target groups face pervasive disadvantages in society that begin early in life and are hard to counteract in organizations, and discrimination also operates through subtle processes that are hard to prevent (e.g., Deitch, Barsky, Butz, Chan, & Brief, 2003; Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2012; Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009). Because of the difficulty of achieving true diversity goal progress, regardless of effort, extrinsic diversity motivation

likely leads to behaviors that improve diversity metrics without creating true change.

> *Proposition 4: The presence of a diversity initiative signals that diversity goal progress is valued in the organization, which increases extrinsic diversity motivation and, in turn, results in improved diversity metrics not accompanied by true diversity goal progress (i.e., false progress).*

Proposition 4 has received little attention, yet there is some suggestive evidence in support of these ideas. Studies have documented that although intrinsic motivation to control prejudice reduces discrimination, extrinsic motivation does not (e.g., Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones, & Vance, 2002; Legault, Green-Demers, Grant, & Chung, 2007). This evidence is consistent with the idea that extrinsic diversity motivation is unlikely to motivate behaviors that result in true diversity goal progress (e.g., reduced discrimination; see Figure 1) and may instead motivate false progress. Proposition 4 also sheds new light on prior speculation that diversity initiatives may breed false progress effects (e.g., Smith & Welch, 1984). Scholars have suggested that leaders at times adopt diversity initiatives as window dressing and implement them symbolically (e.g., Edelman, 1992), which explains why diversity initiatives may produce false progress. Proposition 4 suggests that because diversity initiatives increase extrinsic diversity motivation among other individuals in the organization, they can result in false progress even when leaders adopt them with good intentions.

Corollaries

Propositions 1 through 4 build on prior work by identifying signals that serve as root causes of both documented unintended consequences of diversity initiatives and those that have been poorly understood in the diversity literature to date. A signaling perspective on the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives also suggests two corollaries, which stem from Propositions 1 through 4 without requiring additional logic. These corollaries suggest that the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives operate in more complex ways than prior theory can account for.

First, Propositions 1 through 4 collectively suggest that different unintended consequences at times stem from the same signal. Specifically, the signal that targets are likely to succeed is a root cause of both negative spillover (Proposition 2a) and backfire (Proposition 2b). Likewise, the signal that morality is valued is a root cause of both positive spillover (Proposition 3a) and backfire (Proposition 3b). To the extent that they have common root causes, different unintended consequence types are not entirely independent of one another and are instead interrelated.

> *Corollary 1: The unintended consequences of diversity initiatives are interrelated such that different unintended consequences (i.e., negative spillover and backfire, positive spillover and backfire) stem from the same signal.*

Corollary 1 has implications for prior work. Because different unintended consequences are often studied in isolation, extant research on strategies for preventing detrimental unintended effects provides a narrow view of their likely impacts. For example, scholars have identified different justifications for why diversity initiatives are needed (e.g., Ely & Thomas, 2001), including the moral case (e.g., to remedy past discrimination) and the business case (e.g., to facilitate innovation and match the customer base). Both justifications mitigate negative nontarget reactions to diversity initiatives (i.e., negative spillover; Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006; Mayer et al., 2015), presumably because they highlight the benefits of diversity for everyone and, thus, prevent nontargets from interpreting the signal that targets are likely to succeed in a zero-sum manner. If moral and business justifications prevent nontargets from interpreting the signal that targets are likely to succeed in a zero-sum manner, they are also likely to prevent stereotypes that targets lack warmth and increased discrimination against targets, thereby reducing backfire.

Similarly, although positive spillover has received less attention, Corollary 1 suggests that attempts to increase positive spillover by amplifying the signal that morality is valued cannot be studied in isolation. Strengthening the signal that morality is valued is likely to increase not only positive spillover but also backfire.

Second, in addition to suggesting that different unintended consequences stem from the same signal, Propositions 1 through 4 collectively suggest that the same unintended consequence— and backfire in particular—stems from different signals. The signals that targets need help

(Proposition 1), that targets are likely to succeed (Proposition 2b), and that morality is valued (Proposition 3b) are all root causes of negative diversity goal progress (i.e., backfire). As a result, rather than having a single cause, the same unintended consequence is driven by multiple signals.

> *Corollary 2: The unintended consequences of diversity initiatives are multidetermined such that the same unintended consequence (i.e., backfire) stems from different signals.*

Corollary 2 has implications for prior work on preventing backfire. For example, one documented strategy for reducing backfire is providing evidence that targets have high ability (e.g., Heilman, Block, & Stathatos, 1997). This strategy is likely to prevent the signal that targets need help from increasing stereotypes that targets lack competence and discrimination against targets, but it is unlikely to prevent the backfire effects that stem from the signals that targets are likely to succeed and that morality is valued. Preventing backfire therefore requires counteracting all signals that it stems from.

Diversity Practices and Signal Strength

The proposed signaling effects of diversity initiatives (i.e., Propositions 1–4) likely capture common interpretations of and reactions to diversity initiatives. Yet any number of situational factors and individual differences are also likely to shape how individuals interpret and react to diversity initiatives and, thus, moderate the likelihood of different unintended consequence types. For example, there is considerable variability in how any organizational initiative is implemented, and this variability affects signal strength, or the extent to which an initiative sends clear and unambiguous messages regarding what an organization is like (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Ostroff & Bowen, 2000). A commonly studied dimension along which the implementation of diversity initiatives varies is the specific practices included (Kalev et al., 2006; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995a; Kulik & Roberson, 2008), which may have implications for the strength of the signals they send. I therefore identify the signal(s) that each category of diversity practices (i.e., nondiscrimination, resource, and accountability) sends most strongly as an example of one factor that moderates the likelihood of different unintended consequences.

Resource practices. Resource practices likely send the strongest signals that targets need help (i.e., signal 1) and are likely to succeed (i.e., signal 2). All diversity practices are intended to help targets and to increase their odds of success—regardless of whether this is achieved by reducing bias (i.e., nondiscrimination practices), providing support and opportunities (i.e., resource practices), or increasing monitoring (i.e., accountability practices)—and are therefore likely to be interpreted as signals that targets need help and are likely to succeed. Yet resource practices provide targets with concrete, direct forms of help that are likely to have a significant impact on their career success (Kovach et al., 2004; Richard et al., 2013). By comparison, nondiscrimination and accountability practices are more limited in the help they provide and their likely impact on career success. Thus, resource practices likely send stronger signals that targets need help and are likely to succeed than do nondiscrimination and accountability practices.

Notably, diversity initiatives tend to include many practices (Kalev et al., 2006; Kulik & Roberson, 2008) and, thus, vary in the number of resource practices included. Resources practices also vary in prescriptiveness, or the extent to which they constrain behavior (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006; Kravitz, 1995). For example, preferential treatment constrains managers' decision making more than targeted recruitment. The signals associated with resource practices are likely stronger (i.e., clearer and less ambiguous) when initiatives include both a larger number of and more prescriptive resource practices. It follows that diversity initiatives send stronger signals that targets need help and are likely to succeed—and therefore are more likely to produce the associated backfire (i.e., Propositions 1 and 2b) and negative spillover (Proposition 2a) effects—if they include extensive resource practices (i.e., many highly prescriptive resource practices) than if they include limited resource practices (i.e., no or less prescriptive resource practices).

> *Proposition 5: Diversity initiatives send stronger signals that targets (a) need help and (b) are likely to succeed—and therefore are more likely to result in negative diversity goal progress (i.e., backfire) and to decrease nontarget engagement (i.e., negative spillover)—if they include more extensive resource practices.*

Consistent with Propositions 5a and b, evidence indicates that resource practices, especially highly prescriptive resource practices (e.g., preferential treatment), are particularly likely to result in negative evaluations of targets (mechanisms that produces backfire; e.g., Evans, 2003; Heilman et al., 1998) and negative reactions among nontargets (mechanisms that produces negative spillover; e.g., Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006; Lowery et al., 2006). Propositions 5a and 5b also add to prior work by highlighting that resource practices increase the likelihood of detrimental unintended consequences by strengthening two distinct signals.

Nondiscrimination practices. In contrast, nondiscrimination practices likely send the strongest signal that morality is valued (i.e., signal 3). All diversity practices are intended to combat the unfair disadvantages targets face—regardless of whether this is achieved by reducing bias (i.e., nondiscrimination practices), providing support and opportunities (i.e., resource practices), or increasing monitoring (i.e., accountability practices)—and are therefore likely to be interpreted as a signal that morality is valued. At the same time, ensuring just treatment through nondiscrimination is a near-universal moral principle (e.g., Folger, 1998). By comparison, resource practices provide additional support and opportunities on the basis of group membership, which is at times construed as violating the meritocracy principle and thus unfair (e.g., Bobocel et al., 1998). Likewise, accountability practices do not dictate whether diversity goals are achieved through nondiscrimination or resource access, resulting in more variable perceptions regarding whether they facilitate justice and are moral. Hence, nondiscrimination practices likely send a stronger signal that morality is valued than do resource and accountability practices.

Like resource practices, diversity initiatives likely vary in the number of nondiscrimination practices they include. Moreover, although the subject of less attention, nondiscrimination practices likely vary in prescriptiveness. For example, requiring the use of nondiscriminatory tests in hiring constrains managers' behavior more than does diversity training on strategies for reducing bias (cf. Dobbin et al., 2015). It follows that diversity initiatives send a stronger signal that morality is valued—and are therefore more likely to produce the associated positive spillover (i.e., Proposition 3a) and backfire (i.e., Propositions 3b) effects—if they include

extensive nondiscrimination practices (i.e., many highly prescriptive nondiscrimination practices) than if they include limited nondiscrimination practices (i.e., no or less prescriptive nondiscrimination practices).

> *Proposition 6: Diversity initiatives send a stronger signal that morality is valued— and are therefore more likely to increase nontarget engagement and ethical behavior (i.e., positive spillover) and to result in negative diversity goal progress (i.e., backfire)—if they include more extensive nondiscrimination practices.*

Although positive spillover has received little attention, Proposition 6 has implications for prior evidence that nontargets respond more negatively (e.g., perceived unfairness, decreased engagement) to resource practices (e.g., preferential treatment) than to nondiscrimination practices (e.g., merit-based decision making; Heilman et al., 1998). Scholars previously assumed that nontargets' differential reactions are driven by a negative effect of resource practices on nontarget engagement (i.e., negative spillover). The notion that nondiscrimination practices are also particularly likely to increase nontarget engagement (i.e., positive spillover) suggests that comparisons of the effect of resource versus nondiscrimination practices on nontargets' engagement may reflect both negative and positive spillover.

Prior work also indicates that resource practices are more likely than nondiscrimination practices to result in negative evaluations of targets (e.g., Aquino et al., 2005; Evans, 2003), which is a mechanism that produces backfire. Yet some studies have shown that nondiscrimination practices also result in backfire (e.g., bias-reduction training, use of nondiscriminatory tests; Dobbin et al., 2015; Kalev et al., 2006). Proposition 6 explains why backfire effects are not limited to resource practices and identifies distinct mechanisms through which resource practices (i.e., the signals that targets need help and are likely to succeed) and nondiscrimination practices (i.e., the signal that morality is valued) increase the likelihood of backfire. As a result, Proposition 6 brings into question prior conclusions that avoiding highly prescriptive resource practices is sufficient to eliminate backfire (e.g., Evans, 2003).

Finally, accountability practices likely send the strongest signal that diversity goal progress

is valued (i.e., signal 4). All diversity practices are intended to facilitate diversity goal progress—regardless of whether progress is achieved by reducing bias (i.e., nondiscrimination practices), providing support and opportunities (i.e., resource practices), or increasing monitoring (i.e., accountability practices)—and are therefore likely to signal that diversity goal progress is valued. At the same time, accountability practices provide direct monitoring of and oversight for the end of diversity goal progress itself (Kalev et al., 2006; Richard et al., 2013). By comparison, nondiscrimination and resource practices focus on different means for achieving diversity goal progress and place less emphasis on whether diversity goal progress is indeed achieved. Thus, accountability practices likely send a stronger signal that diversity goal progress is valued than do nondiscrimination and resource practices.

Like resource and nondiscrimination practices, diversity initiatives likely vary not only in the number of accountability practices included but also in their prescriptiveness. For example, strict diversity quotas constrain managers' behavior more than do aspirational diversity goals. It follows that diversity initiatives send the strongest signal that diversity goal progress is valued—and are therefore more likely to produce false progress (i.e., Proposition 4)—if they include extensive accountability practices (i.e., many highly prescriptive accountability practices) than if they include limited accountability practices (i.e., no or less prescriptive accountability practices).

> *Proposition 7: Diversity initiatives send a stronger signal that diversity goal progress is valued—and are therefore more likely to result in improved diversity metrics not accompanied by true diversity goal progress (i.e., false progress)—if they include more extensive accountability practices.*

False progress effects have received little attention. Nevertheless, Proposition 7 has implications for prior work, which indicates that accountability practices are particularly likely to result in positive diversity goal progress (Kalev et al., 2006; Nishii et al., 2018). The notion that accountability practices are also particularly likely to produce false progress suggests that they are not a panacea; accountability practices

do not necessarily facilitate true diversity goal progress and may motivate behaviors that give only the appearance of diversity goal progress.

DISCUSSION

Scholars have advanced broad theory regarding whether, why, and when diversity initiatives produce their intended consequence (e.g., Nishii et al., 2018). In contrast, research on the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives has developed in a fragmented and piecemeal fashion, often focusing on a single unintended consequence (e.g., Dobbin et al., 2015) or a small subset of diversity practices (e.g., Leslie et al., 2014). By developing more comprehensive theory regarding the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives, I advance understanding in several ways.

First, I propose that diversity initiatives produce a wider array of unintended consequences than prior work suggests. Documented unintended effects of diversity initiatives include negative evaluations of targets (e.g., Heilman, 1994), negative nontarget reactions (e.g., Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006), and decreased target representation (e.g., Dobbin et al., 2015; Kalev et al., 2006). I categorize documented unintended effects as contributing to either backfire (i.e., negative target evaluations, decreased target representation) or negative spillover (i.e., negative nontarget reactions). I also propose two unintended consequences—positive spillover and false progress—that have been poorly understood in the context of diversity initiatives to date.

Second, I build on prior work by identifying signals that serve as root causes of the four unintended consequence types and, in doing so, suggest that the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives operate in more complex ways than prior theory can account for. Scholars have often investigated different unintended effects in isolation (e.g., Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006; Kalev et al., 2006; Leslie et al., 2014), which gives the impression that they are independent. My signaling perspective suggests that different unintended consequences stem from the same signal (i.e., negative spillover and backfire both stem from the signal that targets are likely to succeed; positive spillover and backfire both stem from the signal that morality is valued) and, thus, are interrelated. As a result, interventions aimed at preventing or facilitating

one unintended consequence may have implications for others. My theorizing also suggests that the same unintended consequence—and backfire in particular—stems from multiple signals (i.e., the signals that targets need help, targets are likely to succeed, and morality is valued) and is therefore multidetermined. Thus, preventing backfire requires addressing all signals from which it stems.

Collectively, these contributions advance a broader conceptualization of diversity initiative effectiveness. Prior work suggests that diversity initiatives are effective if they result in positive diversity goal progress (e.g., Kalev et al., 2006), without evoking negative evaluations of targets (e.g., Leslie et al., 2014) or negative nontarget reactions (e.g., Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006). My framework suggests that diversity initiative effectiveness is a function of additional mechanisms (e.g., the signals they send, ethical climate perceptions, extrinsic diversity motivation) and outcomes (e.g., ethical behavior, improved diversity metrics without true change). Moreover, because they are interrelated and multidetermined, different signals and unintended consequences cannot be considered in isolation. Understanding diversity initiative effectiveness therefore requires accounting for a fuller range of mechanisms and outcomes, as well as the interrelationships among them. Failure to do so will lead to premature and underspecified conclusions regarding whether a diversity initiative is effective.

The typological theory also indicates that there are more commonalities in the unintended effects of different diversity practices than prior work suggests. Scholars have often investigated the unintended effects of a single practice or a small subset of practices (e.g., Leslie et al., 2014; Plaut et al., 2011), which implicitly suggests that different practices have idiosyncratic effects. Moreover, studies in which scholars have investigated a broad array of practices similarly focus on their divergent effects (e.g., Dobbin et al., 2015; Kalev et al., 2006). Yet, across studies, different practices often have the same effect. For example, different studies have shown that diversity training, preferential treatment, and diversity statements all increase stereotypes of targets (Duguid & Thomas-Hunt, 2015; Heilman, 1994; Heilman & Welle, 2006). Conversely, the same practice often has different effects. For example, different studies have shown that both diversity performance evaluations and diversity networking groups either increase or decrease target representation (Kalev et al., 2006; Richard et al., 2013). Thus, the idea that different practices produce unique unintended effects in a strict one-to-one fashion is likely overly simplistic. I identify four general signals that diversity initiatives send—not tied to specific diversity practices—as root causes of their unintended effects. As a result, any number of practices may produce one or more of four common unintended consequence types.

At the same time, I identify the category of diversity practices that sends each signal most strongly and is therefore most likely to produce the associated unintended effects. Yet the resulting propositions further underscore that different practices do not necessarily produce unique effects. Because the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives are multidetermined, different practices increase the likelihood of the same unintended effect (e.g., resource and nondiscrimination practices both increase backfire). Moreover, because the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives are interrelated, the same practice increases the likelihood of multiple unintended effects (e.g., nondiscrimination practices increase both positive spillover and backfire).

Future Theory and Research

A first step is to test aspects of the typological theory that have not received empirical attention, including whether diversity initiatives create positive spillover and false progress through the proposed mechanisms, whether the signals I identify serve as root causes of the four unintended consequence types, and whether different categories of diversity practices affect signal strength. Moreover, because the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives are interrelated and multidetermined, it is important to investigate different signals and unintended consequence types simultaneously, not independently.

Beyond testing the specific propositions it includes, the typological theory also provides a framework for guiding future work. I identify diversity practices as one aspect of diversity initiative implementation that affects the likelihood of different unintended consequences. Yet my theorizing is also a foundation from which scholars can identify any number of additional moderators that affect the likelihood of unintended consequences and, thus, have implications for diversity initiative effectiveness.

For example, intentional messaging by leaders, such as providing a moral or business justification, is another aspect of diversity initiative implementation that may affect the likelihood of unintended consequences. Evidence indicates that moral and business justifications reduce negative spillover (e.g., Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006; Mayer et al., 2015). This likely occurs because they prevent the signal that targets are likely to succeed from being interpreted in a zero-sum manner. As a result, these justifications are also likely to reduce the backfire effects that stem from the same signal. Yet providing economic justifications for sacred moral values, such as nondiscrimination and diversity, decreases perceptions of those values as moral (Ruttan & Nordgren, 2018). Thus, a business justification for a diversity initiative may also weaken the signal that morality is valued, thereby decreasing positive spillover and also further decreasing backfire. Alternatively, a moral justification likely strengthens the signal that morality is valued, thereby increasing both positive spillover and backfire. Finally, both business and moral justifications may decrease false progress. Highlighting that diversity has moral or business benefits may prevent the signal that diversity goal progress is valued from resulting in purely extrinsic diversity motivation and leading to actions that give only the appearance of diversity goal progress.

The likelihood of different unintended consequences also depends on the characteristics of individuals in an organization. For example, evidence indicates that nontargets' awareness of the disadvantages targets face in society decreases nontargets' negative reactions to diversity initiatives (i.e., negative spillover; Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006), likely by weakening interpretations of the signal that targets are likely to succeed as an indicator of perceived unfairness. Individuals' awareness of disadvantage may also weaken interpretations of the signal that targets are likely to succeed as evidence that targets lack warmth, as well as interpretations of the signal that targets need help as evidence that targets lack competence, thereby preventing increased discrimination and backfire. In addition, individuals' awareness of disadvantage may strengthen interpretations of diversity initiatives as a signal that morality is valued, thereby increasing positive spillover but also increasing backfire. Finally, individuals'

awareness of disadvantage may decrease false progress by preventing the signal that diversity goal progress is valued from resulting in purely extrinsic diversity motivation. In contrast, evidence indicates that individuals' level of prejudice toward targets increases negative spillover (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006) and may also moderate other unintended consequences of diversity initiatives in the opposite direction, as compared to individuals' awareness of disadvantage.

The above arguments suggest that the detrimental unintended consequences of diversity initiatives may be less likely—and beneficial ones may be more likely—in organizations with many individuals who are aware of the disadvantages targets face, with the exception that this individual difference likely increases the backfire effects associated with the signal that morality is valued. A personal commitment to diversity may have the same benefits as individuals' awareness of target disadvantage, without increasing backfire. Moral credentialing is less likely when the credentialing event, in this case belonging to an organization with a diversity initiative, reflects one's personal values (Mullen & Monin, 2016). Thus, although a personal commitment to diversity likely strengthens interpretations of diversity initiatives as a signal that morality is valued, it may also prevent the moral credentialing processes through which this signal leads to backfire.

Future work should also explore interactions among the mechanisms that contribute to the different unintended consequences of diversity initiatives. For example, if a diversity initiative strongly signals that morality is valued (e.g., includes extensive nondiscrimination practices), the associated ethical climate perceptions may prevent the signal that targets are likely to succeed from resulting in perceived unfairness and negative spillover. Ethical climate perceptions may similarly prevent the signal that diversity goal progress is valued from resulting in false progress; behaviors that improve diversity metrics without creating true change violate expectations in an organization with a strong ethical climate.

Diversity practices may also interact with one another. For example, because accountability practices provide oversight and monitoring, the signals most strongly associated with resource and nondiscrimination practices may be further intensified if a diversity initiative also includes accountability practices. In contrast, achieving

diversity goal progress via nondiscrimination is somewhat antithetical to doing so via providing targets, but not nontargets, with additional resources. Thus, including nondiscrimination and resource practices in the same diversity initiative may weaken the signals most strongly associated with both sets of practices.

My theorizing also has implications for more distal outcomes. For example, some evidence indicates that diversity initiatives are positively related to organizational performance (e.g., Armstrong et al., 2010), presumably because they increase diversity, which, in turn, facilitates performance. I theorize that diversity initiatives increase ethical behavior and engagement (i.e., positive spillover), which are both positively related to organizational performance (Detert, Treviño, Burris, & Andiappan, 2007; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). Future work could explore if any positive effects of diversity initiatives on performance are driven by positive spillover, in addition to or instead of increased diversity. Another distal intended outcome of diversity initiatives is fewer discrimination lawsuits. Yet to the extent that they create negative spillover (i.e., perceived unfairness and low nontarget engagement), diversity initiatives may increase discrimination lawsuits from nontargets.

Finally, the typological theory of the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives has implications for future research on the unintended consequences of other change initiatives. Unintended consequences are commonly studied in the social sciences (e.g., Buchanan & Stubblebine, 1962; Campbell, 1979), yet Merton's (1936) seminal paper remains one of the few general treatments of the topic. Although the signals and other mechanisms I identify as drivers of unintended consequences are specific to the goals and content of diversity initiatives, the typology of unintended consequences I develop is more general; any number of change initiatives may produce one or more of the four unintended consequence types. Thus, my theorizing may prompt scholars to build theory regarding the mechanisms through which other change initiatives produce a wider array of unintended effects.

Implications for Practice

Broader theory on the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives has practical value. For example, my theorizing suggests that the metric most commonly used to gauge diversity initiative effectiveness—increased target representation (Kulik & Roberson, 2008)—is insufficient. If target representation alone is assessed, a leader might deem a diversity initiative effective, without realizing that improved representation metrics reflect false progress and that the initiative is creating negative spillover. As a result, a full understanding of diversity initiative effectiveness requires measuring not only diversity goal progress but also other mechanisms and outcomes (e.g., ethical climate perceptions, engagement, ethical behavior, extrinsic diversity motivation, etc.) and also assessing diversity goal progress in ways that are immune to false progress effects.

My theorizing also has implications for increasing diversity initiative effectiveness; leaders can use various aspects of diversity initiative implementation (e.g., practices included, justifications provided) to decrease the likelihood of detrimental—and increase the likelihood of beneficial—unintended consequences. At the same time, any one strategy is unlikely to be a panacea that increases diversity initiative effectiveness across all criteria. For example, using extensive nondiscrimination practices while avoiding resource and accountability practices is likely to increase positive spillover and to decrease negative spillover, false progress, and some pathways that lead to backfire. At the same time, nondiscrimination practices are likely to increase backfire via moral credentialing and are also less likely than resource and accountability practices to result in positive diversity goal progress (e.g., Kalev et al., 2006; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995a). Thus, strategies for improving diversity initiative effectiveness should be considered holistically, and the best strategy likely depends on the most pressing needs in an organization (e.g., is a lack of diversity goal progress or negative nontarget reactions a bigger concern?).

Limitations and Boundary Conditions

The typological theory offers a first step in broadening theory regarding the unintended effects of diversity initiatives, yet diversity initiatives may nevertheless produce additional unintended consequences. Moreover, there may be additional mechanisms and outcomes associated with the four unintended consequences. For example, any of the four unintended consequence types may be driven by additional factors, other than the signals and associated psychological and behavioral reactions

I focus on. Moreover, negative and positive spillover may occur on dimensions other than those I identify (i.e., nontarget engagement and ethical behavior). Likewise, although I rely on prior work to categorize diversity practices (e.g., Konrad & Linnehan, 1995a; Richard et al., 2013), there may be alternative ways to categorize diversity practices, which, in turn, have consequences for the strength of the signals diversity initiatives send.

A boundary condition of my theorizing is the assumption that leaders adopt diversity initiatives with good intentions and implement them substantively. This assumption likely holds true in many organizations. Senior leaders are frequently the initiators of and primary advocates for diversity initiatives (Society for Human Resource Management, 2009). Moreover, even when motivated by external factors (e.g., government legislation), organizational leaders often have discretion in implementing diversity initiatives and choose to do so substantively (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Kovach et al., 2004). Nevertheless, governments at times force organizations to implement diversity initiatives in ways that afford little discretion (e.g., corporate board gender quotas in Norway; Huse, 2012). These situations fall outside the scope of my theorizing, given that government mandates may cause leaders to implement diversity initiatives as window dressing, or even engage in purposeful sabotage, with the result that the detrimental consequences I classify as unintended (i.e., backfire, negative spillover, false progress) are intended by organizational leaders. Yet my theorizing also generalizes to these situations if the intended consequences of diversity initiatives are defined from the standpoint of governmental, rather than organizational, leaders. Just as the consequences of diversity initiatives implemented by organizational leaders depend on the reactions of individuals in the organization, the consequences of diversity initiatives implemented by governmental leaders depend on the reactions of organizational leaders.

CONCLUSION

The success of diversity initiatives is critical from the standpoint of benefiting not only organizations but also the broader society. Yet diversity initiatives do not necessarily work as intended. To advance understanding of their effects, I developed broader theory regarding the types of unintended consequences diversity initiatives produce, the signals that serve as their root causes, and the categories of diversity practices most likely to result in different unintended consequence types. Broader theory regarding the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives is likely to generate new insight into strategies for increasing their effectiveness.

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