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## The Impact of Gender Diversity and Tokenism on the Attractiveness of an Organization

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# **The Impact of Gender Diversity and Tokenism on the Attractiveness of an Organization**

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of Marketing and Management

Lacy School of Business

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Lilly Thuma

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to look at how variations in the gender diversity of the top management team of an organization will influence the perceived attractiveness and advancement opportunities job applicants see in the organization. College students reviewed a job posting that displayed three variations of gender diversity on the top management team (equal gender representation, all male gender diversity, and token female gender diversity), and either included or lacked a statement about the organization's commitment to hiring a gender diverse work force. Participants reviewed the information about the job and then completed a questionnaire assessing the organization's attractiveness and their perceptions of advancement opportunities in the organization. I predicted that exposure to inconsistent signals regarding the importance of gender diversity (e.g. diversity supportive statement and an all-male top management team) would negatively impact the attractiveness of the organization. Results showed that men and women reacted differently to the inconsistent signals. Specifically, men exposed to a gender diversity supportive statement found organizations more attractive and saw greater advancement opportunities when there was a token female present on the top management team rather than an all-male top management team. When no diversity statement was provided, top management team diversity did not impact either the attractiveness of the organization or perceptions of advancement opportunities. In contrast, when women were exposed to a gender diversity supportive statement, amount of top management gender diversity did not impact either outcome. But when no diversity statement was present, women perceived the organization as more attractive when a token female was on the top management team than when the top management team consisted of all males or had equal gender representation. Implications of the results are discussed.

## **The Impact of Gender Diversity and Tokenism on the Attractiveness of an Organization**

Historically, women have been underrepresented within firms, particularly in top management. As of 2016, women made up 46.8% of the workforce in the United States. However, by the first quarter of 2017, only 20.2% of positions on Fortune 500 company boards of directors were filled by women and only 5.4% of the CEO positions of Fortune 500 companies are filled by women (Brown, 2017). In 2019, 6.6% of Fortune 500 CEO positions were held by women, meaning that 33 women were serving in this role (Zillman, 2019). The percentage of women CEOs in both 2016 and 2019 represented new records for the number of women serving as CEO in Fortune 500 companies (Brown, 2017; Zillman, 2019); the first female became the CEO of a Fortune 500 company in 1997 (Brown, 2017). These numbers clearly show that there is a lack of representation of women in the nation's top companies, specifically in top management.

Several reasons have been suggested for why there are smaller numbers of women in top management roles in most companies (Braun, Stegmann, Bark, & Junker, 2017). One reason is that there is a selection bias, where male leaders prefer to select other males for leadership roles. Another suggested reason relates to differences in power motivation between men and women. Specifically, having a stronger desire for power is typically more consistent with males rather than females which means that women may voluntarily choose not to pursue powerful, high level positions. Gender role stereotypes have also contributed to the small number of women in top positions in organizations. According to gender role stereotypes, the agentic qualities associated with effective leaders are believed to be more common in men than in women which means that women may be perceived as less suitable for leadership positions. There is also evidence of a “push-pull” effect where women tend to be pushed away from leadership positions and pulled

into the role of follower because the female gender role stereotype is more consistent with a follower role (Braun, Stegmann Bark and Junker, 2017). Finally, Derks, Van Laar, and Ellemers (2016) suggested that the “queen bee” phenomenon may be another contributing factor to the smaller number of women in top management positions. This phenomenon suggests that when women hold top management positions they tend to adapt to the male-dominant hierarchy rather than challenge it. This ultimately results in women distancing themselves from female subordinates rather than increasing their opportunities. It is important to address the representation of women in top management positions because having women in high level positions has been shown to have a number of very positive effects on the operations of businesses (Derks, Van Laar & Ellemers, 2016).

The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of female leaders on business outcomes. Specifically, this study focused on how having women represented in top management positions affects a firm’s attractiveness to potential employees. This study will focus specifically on the concept of tokenism. Tokenism involves having a single woman (or a very small number of women) in an organization’s top management which may be used by organizations to create the impression of a gender diverse organization when such diversity is not actually present. The following study examined how tokenism, in contrast to true gender diversity, in the top management team of an organization influences the attractiveness of an organization to job applicants.

### **Why Gender Diversity in Top Management Matters**

Prior research has examined the impact that gender diversity in key decision-making positions in an organization has on the effectiveness of an organization. This research as addressed gender diversity within the top management team, the board of directors as well as

having a female CEO. I will specifically examine the following three aspects of effectiveness: financial performance, social performance, and managerial effectiveness.

**Financial Performance.** The impact of gender diversity in a firm can first be measured by the financial performance of a firm. Several studies have examined how gender diversity affects different financial measures of a firm's performance. For example, research by Conyon and He (2016) used both accounting and market measures of the performance of a firm. They found that a strong positive correlation exists between the percent of women on the board of directors and the firm's accounting and market performance. Parola, Ellis, and Golden (2015) also examined the impact of gender diversity on the market performance of a firm but focused on performance during the merger and acquisition process. This process was broken into two parts, selection and integration, both of which need to be performed efficiently to improve market performance after a merger. It was found that having a gender diverse top management team improves the selection process, but has less of an impact in the integration process (Parola, Ellis & Golden, 2015).

Financial performance has also been examined using loan book quality and return on assets in non-profit organizations. Ward and Forker (2015) found that having a higher percent of women on the board of directors led to lower provisions for loan losses which increased loan book quality. However, the authors found no association between women on the board and return on assets.

**Social Performance.** In addition to looking at a firm's financial performance, another way of assessing a firm's effectiveness is in terms of its social performance, or how socially responsible the firm is. Social responsibility is the obligation businesses have to act in a way that benefits society. Two important aspects of social responsibility include the support of social

rights and environmental protection. A study by Cook and Glass examined a firm's social responsibility through a company's social policies, specifically LGBT policies. This study found that having a female CEO and having a high percentage of women on the Board of Directors had a positive relationship with the likelihood of the business implementing LGBT policies (Cook & Glass, 2016).

In addition to LGBT policies, the presence of women has also been found to promote pro environmental policies. Glass, Cook, and Ingersoll (2016) examined a firm's environmental strengths and concerns. Environmental strengths included strategic initiatives and plans developed by the firm to enhance environmental awareness and responses. Environmental concerns relate to compliance violations and pollution levels of the organization. The study found a positive correlation between environmental strengths and the presence of women on the board of directors.

**Managerial Effectiveness.** Another way that a firm's effectiveness can be measured is through the effectiveness of management in terms of its ability to be innovative and create a positive working environment. Gender diversity has been found to have a positive impact on how innovative firms are. For example, research by Ruiz-Jiménez, Fuentes-Fuentes, and Ruiz-Arroyo (2016) found that gender diversity on the top management team enhances innovativeness by strengthening the positive relationship between knowledge capability within a firm (the ability of individuals in the firm to understand and share knowledge with each other) and innovative behavior. Torchia, Calabro, and Huse (2011) found that the presence of women on top management teams increases the perspectives within the team which positively contributes to innovativeness throughout the organization. Diaz-Garcia, Gonzalez-Moreno, Saez-Martinez (2013) also found that the presence of women fosters novel solutions that lead to innovation.

A few studies have examined how having a female presence in top management and on the board of directors impacts the work environment within a company, especially the treatment of the employees. One way that this can be measured is through team cohesiveness. Post (2015) examined how teams led by men and women differ in cohesiveness, cooperative learning and participative communication. The results showed that female leadership resulted in more cohesiveness and participative communication than male leadership.

### **Organizational Attractiveness**

Another important outcome for organizations is its ability to attract high quality job applicants. To better understand why employees are more attracted to some organizations than to others we can look to person-organization (P-O) fit theory (Schneider, 1987). P-O fit is described as the overall level of compatibility between an individual and the organization they work for. P-O fit has been found to be a key element affecting organizational attractiveness, and is an important factor for employees in their job choice (Kristoff, 1996). It has typically been found to be the best predictor of applicant attraction along with job and organization characteristics and the recruitment process (Uggerslev, Fassina, & Kraichy, 2012). Prior research on P-O fit has looked at fit with respect to a variety of organizational characteristics, including an organization's work-life benefits (Firfiray & Mayo, 2017), pay (Cable & Judge, 1994), social media policies (Cho, Park & Ordonez, 2013), and organization size and level of decentralization (Lievens, DeCaesteker, Coetsier, & Geirnaert, 2001).

Research has examined three primary forms of fit – congruence in terms of values, in terms of personality, and in relation to the work environment. Westerman and Cyr (2004) studied the relative importance of these three forms of fit and found that job satisfaction had a stronger positive relationship with values congruence and work environment congruence than

with personality congruence. This finding suggests that P-O fit is a multidimensional construct because both value and work environment congruence each had a distinct impact on the level of satisfaction (Westerman & Cyr, 2004).

As more people are placing an importance on corporate social responsibility (CSR), P-O fit theory suggests that companies should reflect these values of their potential employees in order to make their organization more attractive to employees. Bohlmann, Krumbholz, and Zacher (2018) examined the impact that CSR has on organizational attractiveness. Their findings show that an organization's social performance, which includes philanthropic investments, social community relationships, and employee well-being, has a greater impact on organizational attractiveness than compensation, location and intellectual challenge, meaning that employees are placing a larger emphasis on corporate social responsibility when searching for an organization. As discussed above, an important aspect of firm social responsibility is supporting social rights, including diversity and inclusion.

### **Gender Diversity's Impact on Organizational Attraction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of gender diversity within the top management of a company on the attractiveness of the organization. Prior research has found that gender diversity within an organization can influence a firm's attractiveness to job applicants. Research by Windschied, Sperry, Jonsen, and Morner (2018) examined how using impression management techniques to promote gender diversity on a company website impacts the attractiveness of the company. The results showed that promoting gender diversity on the company's websites was effective in increasing the attractiveness of an organization, but only if the company was truthful about the actual level of diversity. When companies use their website to create an illusion of diversity it did not have a positive impact on the attractiveness of the

organization. Ng and Burke (2005) found that when diversity management practices are advertised to prospective employees, the attractiveness of the company as a place of employment increases and they have more success recruiting women and minorities (Ng & Burke, 2005).

Research by Martin and Parsons (2007) suggested that whether gender diversity impacts the attractiveness of the organization depends on the gender-related attitudes and beliefs of the potential employee. They focused on three attitudes/beliefs: a candidate's gender identity centrality, attitudes toward affirmative action programs and beliefs about discrimination. The results were consistent with the hypotheses, showing that those with a higher gender identity centrality, and those with positive feelings about affirmative action programs and with the belief that discrimination exists found gender diverse firms to be more attractive (Martin & Parsons, 2007). A different approach was taken in a study by Madera (2017). This study looked at how an employee's discrimination perspective affected their attraction to a diverse organization. However, instead of comparing attitudes of individuals who had experienced discrimination, they asked individuals who had not experienced discrimination to take on a different perspective and imagine they had been discriminated against. The results were consistent with the previous study, finding that those who put themselves in the perspective of someone who had been discriminated against had greater attraction to a diverse organization than those who did not (Madera, 2017).

### **Tokenism**

To accurately assess the impact of gender diversity within an organization, the phenomenon of tokenism must be considered. Tokenism looks at the number of people from a specific demographic category who are included in a group. Token status occurs when fewer than 15% of the members in a group are from a particular demographic category (Hassell,

Archbold, & Stichman, 2010). In the context of this study, the inclusion of one woman in a leadership position would be considered tokenism. Tokenism is a theory first developed by Rosabeth Kanter in 1977. Kanter argued that token status leads to a number of negative workplace experiences, but that as the token minority group's representation increases, these negative workplace experiences diminish (Stichman, Hassel & Archbold, 2010). Since Kanter's original description of tokenism, a substantial amount of research has been conducted looking at the impacts tokenism has on individuals in the workplace.

According to Kanter (1977), the negative workplace dynamics that result from tokenism are mainly due to several perceptual effects, including the visibility, contrast, and assimilation of the token individual. First, when there is a token in a social identity group the token is typically more visible, making superiors in the organization more aware of their presence. This higher awareness can result in more pressure being placed on the token individual, and lead the individual to have increased fears regarding making mistakes in the workplace and being scrutinized. There is also high contrast between token individuals and the majority, resulting in exclusion of token individuals. Lastly, assimilation stems from the categorization of minorities and leads to the individual feeling stereotyped. This feeling may lead them to fulfilling the role of their stereotype, and acting in ways that are associated with the stereotype. These token dynamics have been found to not only create negative emotions for the token and a less desirable work experience but also less favorable career outcomes (see Watkins, Simmons, and Umphress, 2019) for a review of this research).

Research has found, for example, that women have a more difficult time advancing into upper management when they are experiencing effects of tokenism. Not only do they experience challenges advancing, but there is also a higher likelihood that they will leave the organization

due to the negative consequences of being a token (Watkins et al., 2019). Furthermore, it has been found that even when an organization has gender equality throughout the organization, it is still more likely that the top management will favor men over women, and women will largely be in a token role (Samuelson, Levine, Barth, Wessel & Grand 2019). Nielsen and Madsen (2019) examined differences between male and female employees who had token status within their job to see if token status affected their management aspirations. They found that there was a negative correlation between token status and manager aspirations among women, meaning that when women are a token they have a lower level of interest in advancing into a management position. On the other hand, token status had no impact on the interest males had in moving into a management position.

## **Hypotheses**

This study examined how varying levels of gender diversity on a top management team influences the attractiveness of an organization to job applicants and their perceived advancement opportunities. This study also considered how the presence of a diversity supportive statement in the job description would influence the attractiveness of the organization to job applicants and their perceptions of advancement opportunities, particularly when the diversity statement appears to conflict with the amount of gender diversity on the top management team (e.g. no gender diversity or token gender diversity combined with a gender diversity supportive statement).

Several attributes differentiate this study from previous research on the impact of top management gender diversity. First, this study looked at how gender diversity affects the attractiveness of the organization, whereas most prior research has primarily examined gender diversity's impact on firm performance, both financially and socially. Second, in this study, I

included a condition where there is a single female on the top management team to examine the impact of token gender diversity. The majority of prior research has not looked at how variations of gender diversity influence the attractiveness of an organization. I also examine tokenism from a different perspective than most prior research on tokenism. Specifically, I examined the impact a token female on the top management team has on the way others perceive the attractiveness of the organization while most prior research has examined the impact of token status on the token him/herself. Finally, including the gender diversity supportive statement allowed me to determine how an inconsistency between the gender diversity on the top management team and the gender diversity statement affected both the attractiveness of the organization and perceptions of advancement opportunities.

Based on prior research (Ng & Burke, 2005; Windschied et al. 2018), I expected that when greater gender diversity on the top management team is shown, the organization would appear more attractive to potential employees than when less gender diversity is shown (i.e., all male top management team or token female on the top management team). However, because women are the primary beneficiaries of gender diversity initiatives, I expected the effect would be stronger for women than men. Furthermore, I expected that greater gender diversity on the top management team would also increase the perceived advancement opportunities for prospective employees because prior research has found that advancement opportunities serves as a mediating variable between gender diversity and organizational attractiveness (Olsen, Parsons, Martins & Ivanaj, 2016).

I also expected that there would be no difference in either the attractiveness of the organization or perceptions of advancement opportunities when the top management team was composed of all males and when there is token female gender diversity and that both conditions

will be viewed less favorably than equal gender representation. This is because I expected that both the all male and the token female conditions will be viewed by job applicants as indicating that the organization does not value gender diversity. This leads to the following hypotheses:

*H1a: Females and males will view the organization as more attractive and will perceive greater advancement opportunities when there is equal gender representation on the top management team than when there is token gender diversity or an all-male top management team, but the effect will be stronger for females than males.*

*H1b: There will be no difference in perceptions of attractiveness or advancement opportunities for an organization that has an all-male top management team and an organization that has token gender diversity on the top management team.*

I also anticipated that the inclusion of a gender diversity supportive statement in the job description would increase both the attractiveness of the organization and perceptions of advancement opportunities for female job applicants. Prior research has found that a display of diversity management increases the attractiveness of an organization for women, and that women frequently look for a display of diversity management when searching for a job (Ng & Burke, 2005). Therefore, when the diversity statement was present in the job description I suspected that it would display active diversity management efforts in the organization, and stand out to women as a good place to work. However, I anticipated that it would decrease the attractiveness for males because the diversity statement indicates the organization values creating opportunities for women over men. Therefore, I hypothesized the following:

*H2: The presence of a diversity statement will increase the perception advancement opportunities and the attractiveness of an organization for females, but will decrease the attractiveness and advancement opportunities for men.*

Finally, I predicted that when a diversity statement is provided and combined with equal gender representation on the top management team the attractiveness of the organization will be greater than when a diversity statement is provided and the top management team has either token gender diversity or has all males. Research from Windschied et al. (2018) looked at how

promoting gender diversity on the company's website influenced the attractiveness of the organization. Results indicated that this promotion of diversity was effective in increasing the attractiveness of the organization when there actually was gender diversity within the organization. However, if an organization that lacked gender diversity was promoting it on the website, this was seen as untrustworthy and the organization was viewed as less attractive. Therefore, I anticipated similar results when combining a gender diversity supportive statement with a top management team that has either no women or only a single female. In this situation, I believed job applicants will view this as the organization trying to create the image that they value gender diversity and inclusion when they really do not. Therefore, I hypothesized:

*H3: Organizational attractiveness will be greater when a diversity statement is provided and there is equal gender representation on the top management team than when a diversity statement is provided and either token or no diversity exists on the top management team.*

## **Method**

### **Participants**

One hundred thirty-one college students between the ages of 18 and 22 participated in this study. There were 56 males and 74 females (1 student did not indicate their gender). All of the participants attended Butler University and were from the following academic colleges: Lacy School of Business (n = 70), Liberal Arts and Sciences (n = 35), College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (n = 12), College of Communication (n = 4), Jordan College of the Arts (n = 8), and College of Education (n = 2). This sample was an appropriate one for this study because college students will soon be members of the workforce. Soon-to-be college graduates can easily imagine themselves searching for a job, or have already had experience searching for a job. Therefore, their responses should be natural and realistic in this situation.

## **Procedure**

Data was collected using a survey created in Qualtrics. The survey consisted of several sections. The first section of the survey asked participants to provide demographic information and past work experience. The second section of the survey provided a position announcement that included both a job and an organization description. The third section of the survey included questions relating to participants' perceptions of the job and company. The final section of the survey included some questions about their attitudes and beliefs (these questions were not analyzed as part of this thesis).

The survey was distributed electronically via email. The survey was sent to students in four sections of a sophomore level economics class. It was also made available to psychology students through their research participation system. Prior to completing the survey, all participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study, and were provided with a description of the purpose of the study, their rights as a participant in the study, and were provided with contact information for the researchers. This study was approved by the IRB prior to any data collection.

Participants completed the survey on their own time and location. After completing the first set of questions, participants were instructed to imagine that they were a college senior and were looking for a job. They were told to assume that they had had several interviews but no job offers yet. They were then instructed to carefully read through the position announcement provided and then answer the questions on the survey. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

## **Independent Variable Manipulation**

The two independent variables in the study were gender diversity among the top management team of the organization and the inclusion of a diversity statement in the organization description. The independent variables were manipulated within the position announcement that was provided. The position announcement included a job description that gave position details and benefits information, and a description of the organization, which included the names of the top management team in the organization. The position announcement was identical in all conditions except for the changes made to manipulate the two independent variables.

Three levels of gender diversity on the top management team were compared: equal gender representation on the top management team; token gender diversity, where there was a single female on the top management team, and no diversity, where all members of the top management team were male. Gender diversity on the top management team was manipulated by changing the names listed in the leadership section of the organization description. Gender specific names were used so participants could clearly identify if each person was a male or female.

The diversity statement was manipulated by either including it or not including it in the organization description. The diversity statement was a modified version of the statement used in the Martin and Parsons (2007) study. The diversity statement was:

*At CLA Global, we are committed to hiring and retaining a diverse and highly qualified workforce and to maintaining a work environment that both values diversity and benefits from it. We make it a priority to ensure that all employees are able to become highly competent at their jobs and reach their full potential. To this end, we offer mentoring programs, career counseling, company-sponsored support groups, financial support for travel to conferences, executive shadowing, personal leadership coaches, and opportunities to network with upper management. While these programs are available to all employees, we specifically target and design many of these to meet the unique needs of women. Furthermore, our evaluation systems hold*

*upper-level managers accountable for developing female managers and for encouraging their female employees to participate in these development programs.*

Participants were randomly assigned by Qualtrics to the six experimental conditions: (1) equal gender diversity and diversity statement, (2) equal gender diversity and no diversity statement, (3) no gender diversity (all-male) and diversity statement, (4) no gender diversity and no diversity statement, (5) token gender diversity (single female) and diversity statement, and (6) token gender diversity and no diversity statement. A copy of the experimental materials can be found in Appendix B.

### **Measures**

The dependent variables in the study were organizational attractiveness and perceptions of advancement opportunities within the organization.

**Organizational Attractiveness.** A six-item scale developed by Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2003) was used to measure organizational attractiveness. Items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, with “1” being strongly disagree with the statement, “7” being strongly agree with the statement, and “4” being neutral. A sample question is: “For me, CLA Global Inc. would be a good place to work”. The coefficient alpha reliability for this scale was .82.

**Advancement Opportunities.** Advancement opportunities was measured using the four item scale developed by Olsen, Parsons, Martins & Ivanj (2016). An additional item was developed and included with the original scale. Items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, with “1” being strongly disagree with the statement, “7” being strongly agree with the statement, and “4” being neutral. A sample questions is: “I believe that I will be able to advance into upper management at CLA Global Inc”. The coefficient alpha reliability for this scale was .90.

## Results

Table 1 provides the means, standard deviations, and correlation between the two dependent variables used in the study. The data was analyzed using a 3 (top management team gender diversity: equal gender diversity, token gender diversity, no gender diversity) x 2 (diversity statement/no diversity statement) x 2 (gender of participant: male, female) analysis of variance.

Hypothesis H1a was that females and males will perceive greater advancement opportunities and will perceive the organization as more attractive when there is equal gender diversity on the top management team than when there is token diversity or no diversity, but the effect will be stronger for females than males. Hypothesis H1b was that there would be no difference in perceptions of advancement opportunities and attractiveness for an organization that has no gender diversity and an organization that has token gender diversity. Support for this hypothesis would be shown for a significant interaction between the top management team gender diversity condition and the gender of the participant for advancement opportunities and organization attractiveness. This hypothesis was not supported because the interaction between gender of the participant and the gender diversity condition was not significant for organizational attractiveness ( $F(2, 118) = .102, p = .903$ ) or advancement opportunities ( $F(2, 118) = .272, p = .762$ ).

My second hypothesis was that the presence of a diversity statement will increase the perception advancement opportunities and increase the attractiveness of an organization for females, but will decrease them for men. Support for this hypothesis would be shown through a significant interaction between the diversity statement condition and gender of the participant. This hypothesis was not supported because there was not a significant interaction for either

organizational attractiveness ( $F(1, 118) = 2.374, p = .126$ ) or advancement opportunities ( $F(1, 118) = .763, p = .384$ ).

My third hypothesis was that organizational attractiveness will be greater when a diversity statement is provided and there is equal gender representation on the top management team than when a diversity statement is provided and either token or no diversity exists on the top management team. Support for this hypothesis would be shown by a significant interaction between top management team gender diversity and the presence/absence of a diversity statement. This hypothesis was not supported because the interaction was not significant ( $F(2, 118) = .602, p = .55$ ).

Although the two way interactions predicted were not statistically significant, there was a significant three-way interaction between the top management team gender diversity condition, the diversity statement condition, and gender of the participant for both organizational attractiveness ( $F(2, 118) = 4.635, p = .012$ ) and advancement potential ( $F(2, 118) = 4.027, p = .02$ ). Figure 1 depicts the three-way interaction for organizational attractiveness. It shows the relationship between the diversity statement condition and the top management team gender diversity condition separately for males and females. In looking at Figure 1 we can see that for males, when a diversity statement is provided, the attractiveness of the organization was much higher in the token diversity condition ( $\bar{x} = 5.67$ ) than the no diversity condition ( $\bar{x} = 4.46$ ); the attractiveness of the organization with equal gender diversity was similar to the token diversity condition ( $\bar{x} = 5.39$ ). However, when no diversity statement is provided there is very little difference in the attractiveness of the organization across the three gender diversity conditions: equal gender diversity ( $\bar{x} = 4.82$ ), token gender diversity ( $\bar{x} = 4.75$ ), and no gender diversity ( $\bar{x} = 5.05$ ). In contrast a very different pattern emerges for females. When females are provided a

diversity statement there is very little difference in the attractiveness of the organization between the three top management gender diversity conditions: equal gender diversity ( $\bar{x} = 5.29$ ), token gender diversity ( $\bar{x} = 5.0$ ), and no gender diversity ( $\bar{x} = 5.24$ ). On the other hand, when there was no diversity statement provided, the attractiveness of the organization was higher when there was a token female on the top management team ( $\bar{x} = 5.86$ ) compared to equal gender diversity ( $\bar{x} = 5.32$ ) and no gender diversity ( $\bar{x} = 5.03$ ).

Figure 2 shows the three-way interaction for advancement opportunities. It shows the relationship between the diversity statement condition and the top management gender diversity condition separately for males and females. The pattern of results I found for perceptions of advancement opportunities for males were similar to that observed for organization attractiveness. Specifically, when there is a diversity statement provided, males perceive greater advancement opportunities when there is token gender diversity on the top management team ( $\bar{x} = 5.58$ ) than when there is no gender diversity ( $\bar{x} = 4.35$ ); perceptions of advancement opportunities for the equal gender representation condition ( $\bar{x} = 5.18$ ) were somewhat lower than for the token gender diversity condition. When there was no diversity statement provided, perceptions of advancement opportunities were lower when there was token gender diversity ( $\bar{x} = 4.48$ ) than when there was no gender diversity ( $\bar{x} = 5.2$ ) or equal gender diversity ( $\bar{x} = 4.98$ ). For women, the presence or absence of a diversity statement and the diversity of the top management team had little impact on their perceptions of advancement opportunities (means for all 6 conditions ranged between 5.03 and 5.4), although as with attractiveness, the mean was lowest for the token gender diversity/diversity statement condition.

### **Other Findings**

I found one other unanticipated significant result which was a main effect of gender for advancement opportunities ( $F(1, 118) = 3.939, p = .05$ ). Females overall perceived greater advancement opportunities ( $x = 5.278$ ) than males ( $x = 4.951$ ).

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine how differing levels of gender diversity on the top management team of an organization influences the attractiveness of the organization to potential employees and perceptions of their advancement opportunities within that organization. I compared equal gender diversity, token gender diversity, and no gender diversity. I also looked at how the presence of a diversity statement that specifically highlights the organization's commitment to hiring a diverse workforce, and helping their female employees advance influences both the attractiveness of the organization to job applicants and their perceptions of advancement opportunities. I was especially interested in how the attractiveness of an organization would be impacted if the gender diversity on the top management team appeared to conflict with the diversity statement (i.e., a top management team composed of all males or having only a single – token – female on it). I hypothesized that both females and males would perceive greater advancement opportunities and attractiveness when there is equal gender diversity on the top management team than when there is token diversity or no diversity, but that the impact would be stronger for females than males. I also expected that there would be no difference in attractiveness or advancement opportunities when the organization has no gender diversity and token gender diversity on the top management team. I predicted that the presence of a diversity statement would increase the perception advancement opportunities and the attractiveness of an organization for females, but would decrease them for men. Finally, I expected that when the gender diversity on the top management team appeared to conflict with

the diversity statement (i.e., either token gender diversity or no gender diversity), that the attractiveness of the organization would be lower than when there was no conflict (i.e., equal gender representation on the top management team).

The results did not show these hypothesized two-way interactions, but there was an interesting three-way interaction that was found between the top management team gender diversity condition, diversity statement condition, and the gender of the participant for both organizational attractiveness and advancement opportunities. Overall, my results showed that male and female participants responded quite differently to the diversity statement when combined with the differing degrees of gender diversity on the top management team. The study found that men find organizations significantly more attractive when there is a diversity statement in the job description and a token female on the top management team than when there is all-male top management team. The same is true for their perceptions of advancement opportunities. When there was equal gender representation on the top management team, perceptions of attractiveness and advancement opportunities were somewhat lower than for the token gender diversity condition. While it is surprising that men found both greater attractiveness and advancement opportunities when there was a token female on the top management team and diversity statement present than when there was an all-male top management team, I suggest this occurred because men perceived the organization as not taking diversity seriously when they observed a token female on the top management team and were provided the gender diversity supportive statement. However, when they see a top management team composed only of men and a gender diversity statement, they evaluate this as the organization seriously wanting to increase the number of women in the organization and therefore, they expect that there will be fewer opportunities for them to advance in the

organization. When the diversity statement was not present there is no significant difference in organizational attractiveness and perceptions of advancement opportunities for men regardless of the degree of gender diversity on the top management team. This may have occurred because the gender diversity of the top management team was not a sufficiently strong signal for them to pay attention to in order to assess the importance of gender diversity and inclusion to the organization. Instead, the top management team gender diversity only impacted them when it was combined with the diversity statement. The fact that I found a similar pattern of results for both organizational attractiveness and perceptions of advancement opportunities is consistent with findings from Olsen, Parsons, Martins and Ivanaj (2016) since they found that advancement opportunities was a mediating variable between gender diversity and attractiveness. Additionally, this was consistent with the fact that I found that the correlation between these two variables was both statistically significant and of high magnitude.

The results showed that the combination of a diversity statement and the top management team gender diversity had a very different impact on women. Specifically, the presence of a diversity statement had little impact on women's perceptions of their advancement opportunities or the attractiveness of the organization, regardless of the degree of gender diversity on the top management team. This result might have happened because women do not trust the diversity statement alone (or the gender diversity on the top management team) to demonstrate the true value that the organization places on gender equality throughout the organization; therefore it does not influence their perceptions of their advancement opportunities or the attractiveness of the organization. Rather, women may reserve judgement on this factor until they are a part of the organization and see the actions the organization takes to ensure the advancement of all demographic groups throughout the organization. On the other hand, when there was no diversity

statement, the gender diversity of the top management team did influence how attractive they perceived the organization to be (although in the opposite direction from males) but not their perceptions of their advancement opportunities. In particular, when women were not exposed to a diversity statement they reported higher levels of organizational attractiveness when there was a token female on the top management team than when there was equal gender diversity or no gender diversity. This finding suggests that as long as no diversity statement is provided, token gender diversity may be viewed by women as an indication that the organization values gender diversity and is trying to increase the number of female managers. This may also suggest that females look for evidence of diversity and are more attracted to an organization when they see it in practice rather than hear about it, especially if the words do not seem to match actual practice. Additionally, token gender diversity on the top management team may be viewed more positively than equal gender diversity for women because it indicates that the organization is actively working towards hiring more women in the organization, whereas equal gender diversity may indicate that the organization believes it is already sufficiently gender diverse and thus, may not be as proactive in hiring women.

I also expected that token gender diversity and all male gender diversity would be viewed similarly by participants, but the results did not indicate this. For men, token gender diversity, when a diversity statement was provided, led a more positive perception of attractiveness and advancement opportunities than all male gender diversity. Women also perceived token gender diversity and all male diversity differently. For women, token gender diversity led to greater organization attractiveness than all male gender diversity, but only when no diversity statement was provided. I originally speculated that they would be viewed similarly because I expected that both of them would indicate the organization places little importance on gender diversity.

Instead, it appeared that when provided a diversity statement, the token diversity condition is perceived by males as the organization is trying to create the illusion of diversity that is not actually there while in the all-male condition the diversity statement is taken at face value and as an indication that the organization is actively trying to hire women. Therefore, they saw greater opportunities in the organization that does not actually care about hiring women. However, women may have perceived the token female as a sign that the organization does value gender diversity and is actively trying to hire more women, which makes the organization more attractive than an organization with all men on the top management team and with no indication of effort to hire women.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings of this study can be used by organizations and hiring managers to determine how to best attract potential employees to their organization. The results indicate that organizations must use diversity statements with caution, especially when attempting to attract minority groups to apply for a position. Hiring managers should not incorporate a diversity statement into a job description if there is not really gender diversity throughout the organization, unless they are solely trying to appeal to male candidates. When there is a diversity statement present, and the organization shows that there is no gender diversity or token gender diversity, potential employees are likely to recognize this as the organization not actually attempting to increase diversity and it may not, therefore, positively impact the attractiveness of the organization as they hoped. My results also suggest that when trying to attract women to an organization, incorporating a diversity statement into the job description is not enough to convince women that the organization truly values gender diversity and inclusion. Rather actions that indicate the organization is working towards a more diverse workforce must be displayed to

influence their perceptions of advancement opportunities and the attractiveness of the organization for women.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

There are many opportunities for future research based on the findings of this study. This study looked at how gender diversity on the top management team influenced the attractiveness of the organization and opportunities for advancement, but it would be interesting to look at how diversity on the Board of Directors would influence these dependent variables as well. In the United States, the Board of Directors is typically responsible for electing the Chief Executive Officer, and setting goals and principles for the organization to adhere to (McNamara, n. d.). The Board of Directors has a direct influence over the mission and direction of the organization, therefore, examining how diversity on the Board of Directors influences the dependent variables presented in this study is a possibility for future research.

Another potential opportunity for future research is examining a wider range of gender diversity on the top management team. This study compared equal gender representation, token female, and all male conditions. There are additional options that could be considered. For example, it would be interesting to see how having a token male on the top management team influences perceptions of attractiveness and advancement opportunities for both male and female job applicants. Watkins et al. (2019) reviewed research finding that the experiences of male and female tokens are often different. I suspect that the inclusion of a token male on the top management team would lead to men viewing the organization less favorably, as it may indicate that an organization has over-compensated their gender diversity efforts. This may result in men seeing fewer opportunities for them to succeed in the organization. However, I suspect that women would view this favorably and it would make the organization more attractive. Including

a condition where all members of the top management team were female would be interesting as well. I speculate that an all female gender diversity condition would have a similar impact as a token male gender diversity condition, in that men would find the organization less attractive, and women would find the organization more attractive. Additionally there is an opportunity to apply this study to race and ethnicity, and look at how having differing degrees of a specific race and ethnicity on the top management team will influence the attractiveness and perceived advancement opportunities of the organization to potential employees.

### **Limitations**

There are multiple reasons why the findings from this study should be viewed with caution, one of which is a lack of external validity. Because this was a lab study it is possible that the reactions of the participants may have been different had they been searching for a job and encountered this job description in their daily life. However, the sample of this survey was individuals who are either currently looking for jobs, or will be looking for jobs very soon. Therefore, their responses may have been more realistic than a typical lab study which would enhance the external validity of the results. Additionally, there were 61 participants that completed the study that were not in the Lacy School of Business. Since it was a business position that was listed on the job description, it is possible that some students may have lacked interest in position which could have also lessened the accuracy of their responses.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, this study looked at three different conditions of gender diversity on the top management team, and two conditions of a diversity statement in a job description. The study examined how combinations of these two conditions influenced the respondents' perceptions of attractiveness and advancement opportunities within the organization. The goal of this research

was to confront the underrepresentation of women in the top management of businesses, and examine how the presence of women in top management would influence the opinions potential employees have regarding the organization. This study helps organizations understand the impact having a gender diverse top management team has on the hiring process, and helps hiring managers understand the impact that including a diversity statement in the job description has on potential employees. This study suggests that men view an organization more favorably when there is a token gender diversity, and a diversity statement present, whereas women view an organization more favorably when there is token gender diversity and no diversity statement present. The research will assist organizations in understanding how to better attract applicants to their organization. Additionally, it will help organizations better understand how men and women value gender diversity in an organization differently.

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**Table 1**

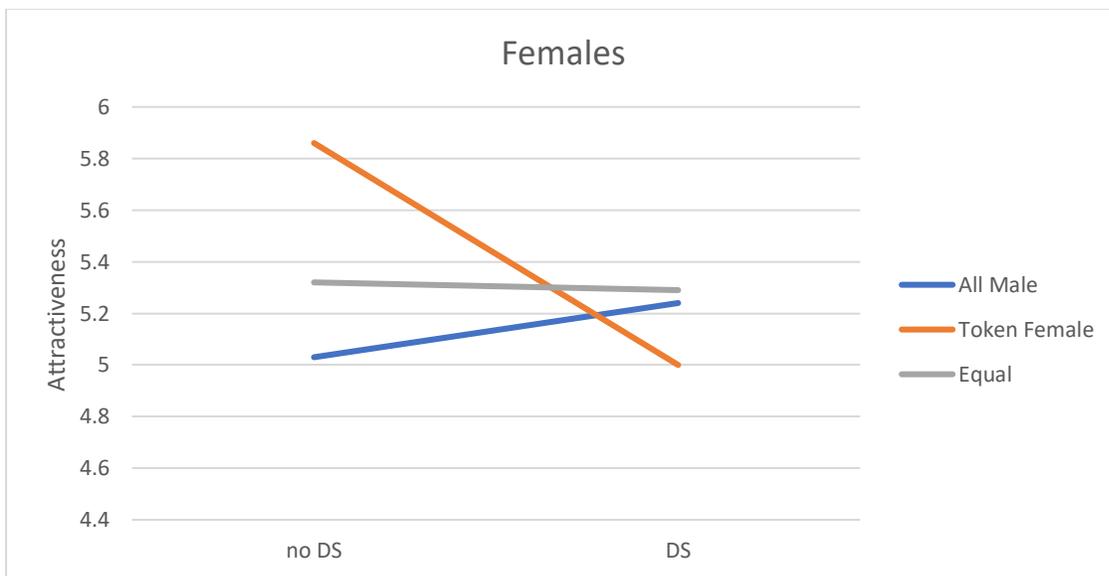
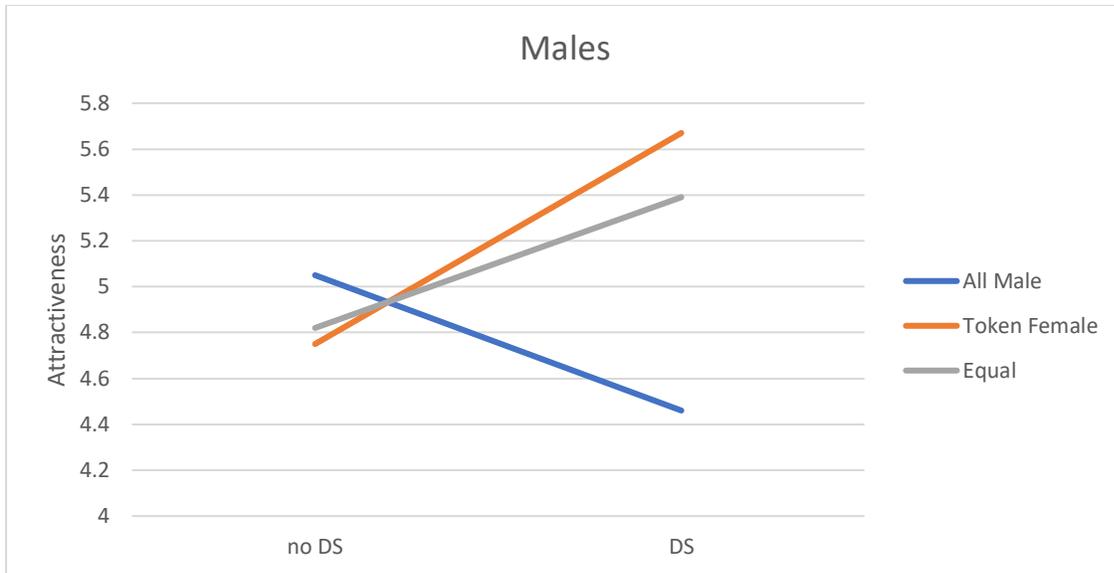
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Between Study Variables

	<b>Variable</b>	$\bar{x}$	$\sigma$	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1</b>	Organization Attractiveness	5.18	.98	-	-
<b>2</b>	Advancement Opportunities	5.15	.92	.621**	-

\*\*p &lt; .01

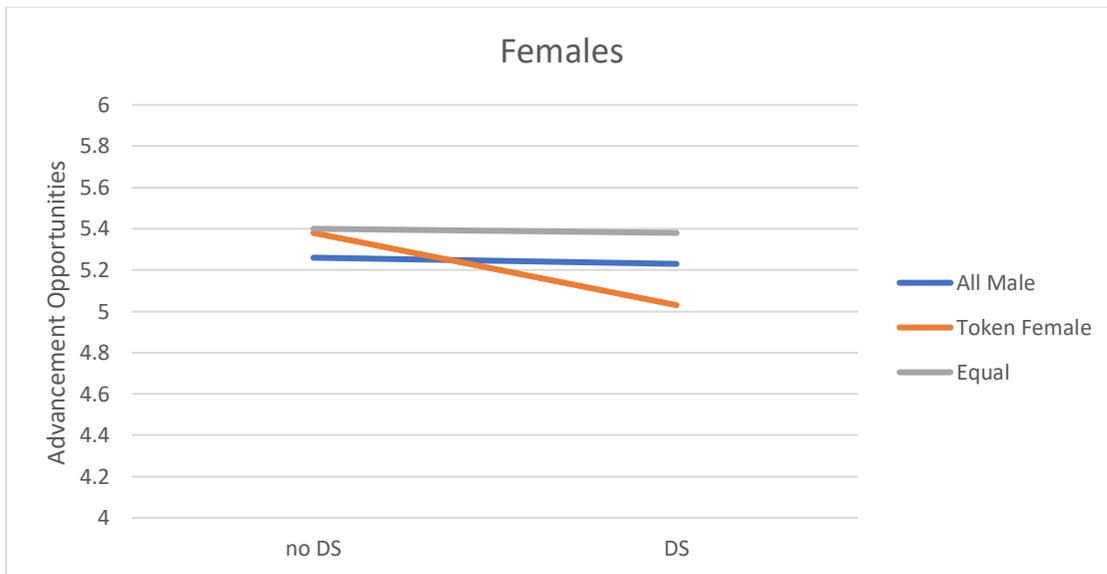
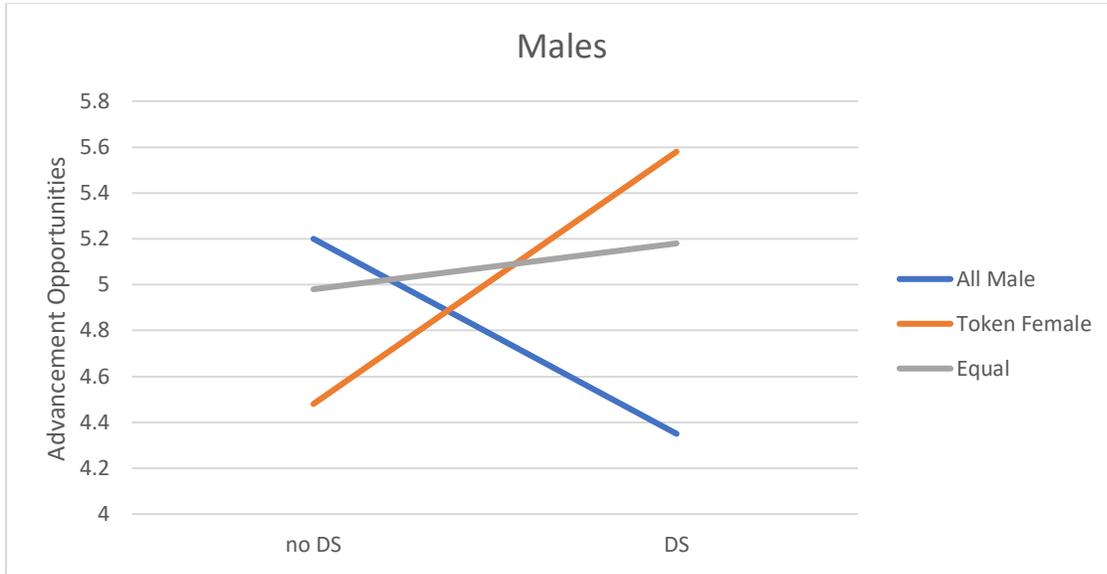
**Figure 1**

Three-way Interaction Between Top Management Team Gender Diversity, Diversity Statement and Participant Gender for Organizational Attractiveness



**Figure 2**

Three-way Interaction Between Top Management Team Gender Diversity, Diversity Statement and Participant Gender for Advancement Opportunities



## **APPENDIX A**

**My name is Lilly Thuma. I am a senior Marketing and IB major and am in the Honors Program. I am conducting research for my honors thesis and would like to request your help with my research. The purpose of my study is to identify important factors someone seeks when looking for a job. Your participation will involve reviewing information about a job opening and then answering some questions about the job. The survey also includes some general attitude questions as well as demographic questions. Completing the survey should take no more than 15-20 minutes and your responses will be completely anonymous. We do not anticipate any risks or benefits to you personally if you participate in this study but you will help us to better understand the job search process. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. If you have questions about this research you may contact me ([lthuma@butler.edu](mailto:lthuma@butler.edu)) or my thesis advisor, Dr. Peg Padgett ([mpadgett@butler.edu](mailto:mpadgett@butler.edu)). Thank you for helping me with my research!**

**Please place an “X” next to the gender you most identify with:**

Male  Female  Transgender  Gender Neutral  Other  Prefer not to say

**Please place an “X” next to your age:**

18-22  23-27  27-31  31+

**Please place an “X” next to the race you most identify with:**

Caucasian/White  Asian  Hispanic/Latino  Black/African  Native American  
 Pacific Islander  Other  Prefer not to say

**Please place an “X” next to the school you are enrolled in:**

Lacy School of Business  
 Liberal Arts and Sciences  
 College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences  
 College of Communication  
 Jordan College of the Arts  
 College of Education

**If in the Lacy School of Business Please place an “X” next to your primary major:**

Marketing  
 Finance  
 Accounting  
 Risk Management  
 MIS  
 International Business

\_\_\_ Economics  
 \_\_\_ Entrepreneurship

**If you are not in the Lacy School of Business please write your primary major on the line provided below:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Fill out the following table with information about your employment history. If you have not had 4 jobs leave the extra spaces blank**

Job Title: (Fill in the blanks with your 4 most recent jobs.	How many months you worked in this job?	How many hours per week you worked at this job?	Did you supervise other employees in the context of this job? (Yes or No)	If you supervised in the context of this job, how many people did you supervise?
Job 1:				
Job 2:				
Job 3:				
Job 4:				

**Put yourself in the following situation. It is your senior year of college and you are on the job market. You have had several interviews, but no offers yet. You are searching online and have found the following job description just recently posted. Please carefully read the following job description and think about how you would feel about the job and company as a place of employment. After reading the description answer the following questions about your perceptions of the job and organization.**

**Company Description:**

CLA Global Inc. is an innovative software development start-up based in Indianapolis, IN. We focus on building top quality software products and strong client relationships. CLA Global prides itself in maintaining involvement in our client's day-to-day realities, working collaboratively to build superior digital experiences for global advancement. CLA Global Inc. began in 2014 with 10 employees, and in the past 5 years has grown to 150 employees. We have an exceptional sales and management team, who focus on educating and delivering the best products and services to meet the customer's needs.

CLA Global has a top management team consisting of 6 people:

- CEO: Laura Williams
- VP of Finance: Sophie Brooks
- VP of Marketing: Thomas Johnson
- VP of Operations: Emma Smith
- VP of Staff: Jeff Stevens
- VP of Sales: Tyler Anderson

Our number one goal at CLA Global is to build a positive and long-lasting relationship with each new customer. We offer our customers professional experience and excellent customer service. We strive to provide all our team members with the training, tools, and knowledge they need to be as successful as possible. Our company has seen great success due to our one of a kind training. We have always believed in promoting from within our firm, so all promotions are based on merit. Our managers all started in the entry-level position, so they know exactly how to coach and mentor new team members.

At CLA Global, we are committed to hiring and retaining a diverse and highly qualified workforce and to maintaining a work environment that both values diversity and benefits from it. We make it a priority to ensure that all employees are able to become highly competent at their jobs and reach their full potential. To this end, we offer mentoring programs, career counseling, company-sponsored support groups, financial support for travel to conferences, executive shadowing, personal leadership coaches, and opportunities to network with upper management. While these programs are available to all employees, we specifically target and design many of these to meet the unique needs of women. Furthermore, our evaluation systems hold upper-level managers accountable for developing female managers and for encouraging their female employees to participate in these development programs.

Our philosophy is to work hard but also have fun while you're doing it. CLA Global Inc. has daily team meetings, weekly team nights, and annual conferences in fun locations to help our team members grow and succeed. Our corporate culture is refreshing and fun; we believe in providing a positive environment where our team members can be as successful as possible. CLA Global Inc. is growing at a rapid rate and is looking for energetic and ambitious individuals to join our team.

**Job Title:**

Management Trainee

**Position Description:**

CLA Global is a start-up tech company that strives to make everyday lives easier. CLA Global Inc. is looking for a candidate who loves helping others, finds it easy to connect with people quickly, and is ready to take on a new challenge in their career. We represent one of the largest telecommunication companies in the world and are looking for a full time, entry level management trainee to deliver best in class customer service to our clients. This position will have the opportunity to progress into a management career for individuals who possess top-notch leadership skills and want growth within a company.

**Ideal Qualifications:**

- Bachelor's Degree
- Effective interpersonal & excellent communication skills
- Self-confidence, flexibility and sense of humor
- Results driven attitude with a hunger for success

**Entry Level Marketing Representatives have the opportunity for career growth in the following areas:**

- Corporate Training
- Human Resources and Talent Management
- Sales Management
- Social Media and Online Marketing
- Direct Marketing Communications
- Business Management and Business Development

**Seniority Level:**

Entry level

**Industry:**

Technology

**Benefits:**

- Stable employment in a growing organization
- Fast paced work environment
- Internal advancement opportunities
- \$50,000 starting salary
- Modern facilities and technology
- Unique leadership opportunity
- Paid training
- Comprehensive benefits package: Health, 401(k), Dental, Vision, AD&D, etc.
- Paid holidays (8); paid vacation and personal days





- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. My gender plays a large role in my life.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. I have experienced discrimination on the basis of my race or ethnicity.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. EEO programs advance less qualified women over men.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. My gender is an important part of who I am as a person.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. In general, affirmative action programs for women are  
(Harmful) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Helpful)  
(Negative) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (positive)  
(Worthless) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (Worthwhile)

*Thank you for completing my survey!!*

## **APPENDIX B**

## **Condition 1: Equal Gender Representation/Diversity Statement**

### **Company Description**

CLA Global Inc. is an innovative software development start-up based in Indianapolis, IN. We focus on building top quality software products and strong client relationships. CLA Global prides itself in maintaining involvement in our client's day-to-day realities, working collaboratively to build superior digital experiences for global advancement. CLA Global Inc. began in 2014 with 10 employees, and in the past 5 years has grown to 150 employees. We have an exceptional sales and management team, who focus on educating and delivering the best products and services to meet the customer's needs.

CLA Global has a top management team consisting of 6 people:

- CEO: Laura Longhorn
- VP of Finance: William Brooks
- VP of Marketing: Emma Lewis
- VP of Operations: Sarah Marshall
- VP of Staff: Jeff Stevens
- VP of Sales: Tyler Anderson

Our number one goal at CLA Global is to build a positive and long-lasting relationship with each new customer. We offer our customers professional experience and excellent customer service. We strive to provide all our team members with the training, tools, and knowledge they need to be as successful as possible. Our company has seen great success due to our one of a kind training. We have always believed in promoting from within our firm, so all promotions are based on merit. Our managers all started in the entry-level position, so they know exactly how to coach and mentor new team members.

At CLA Global, we are committed to hiring and retaining a diverse and highly qualified workforce and to maintaining a work environment that both values diversity and benefits from it. We make it a priority to ensure that all employees are able to become highly competent at their jobs and reach their full potential. To this end, we offer mentoring programs, career counseling, company-sponsored support groups, financial support for travel to conferences, executive shadowing, personal leadership coaches, and opportunities to network with upper management. While these programs are available to all employees, we specifically target and design many of these to meet the unique needs of women. Furthermore, our evaluation systems hold upper-level managers accountable for developing female managers and for encouraging their female employees to participate in these development programs.

Our philosophy is to work hard but also have fun while you're doing it. CLA Global Inc. has daily team meetings, weekly team nights, and annual conferences in exotic locations to help our team members grow and succeed. Our corporate culture is refreshing and fun; we believe in providing a positive environment where our team members can be as successful as possible. CLA Global Inc. is growing at a rapid rate and is looking for energetic and ambitious individuals to join our team.

## **Condition 2: Equal Gender Representation/No Diversity Statement**

### **Company Description**

CLA Global Inc. is an innovative software development start-up based in Indianapolis, IN. We focus on building top quality software products and strong client relationships. CLA Global prides itself in maintaining involvement in our client's day-to-day realities, working collaboratively to build superior digital experiences for global advancement. CLA Global Inc. began in 2014 with 10 employees, and in the past 5 years has grown to 150 employees. We have an exceptional sales and management team, who focus on educating and delivering the best products and services to meet the customer's needs.

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- VP of Staff: Jeff Stevens
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Our number one goal at CLA Global is to build a positive and long-lasting relationship with each new customer. We offer our customers professional experience and excellent customer service. We strive to provide all our team members with the training, tools, and knowledge they need to be as successful as possible. Our company has seen great success due to our one of a kind training. We have always believed in promoting from within our firm, so all promotions are based on merit. Our managers all started in the entry-level position, so they know exactly how to coach and mentor new team members.

Our philosophy is to work hard but also have fun while you're doing it. CLA Global Inc. has daily team meetings, weekly team nights, and annual conferences in exotic locations to help our team members grow and succeed. Our corporate culture is refreshing and fun; we believe in providing a positive environment where our team members can be as successful as possible. CLA Global Inc. is growing at a rapid rate and is looking for energetic and ambitious individuals to join our team.

### **Condition 3: All Male Top Management Team/Diversity Statement**

#### **Company Description**

CLA Global Inc. is an innovative software development start-up based in Indianapolis, IN. We focus on building top quality software products and strong client relationships. CLA Global prides itself in maintaining involvement in our client's day-to-day realities, working collaboratively to build superior digital experiences for global advancement. CLA Global Inc. began in 2014 with 10 employees, and in the past 5 years has grown to 150 employees. We have an exceptional sales and management team, who focus on educating and delivering the best products and services to meet the customer's needs.

CLA Global has a top management team consisting of 6 people:

- CEO: Mark Longhorn
- VP of Finance: William Brooks
- VP of Marketing: Matthew Lewis
- VP of Operations: Thomas Marshall
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At CLA Global, we are committed to hiring and retaining a diverse and highly qualified workforce and to maintaining a work environment that both values diversity and benefits from it. We make it a priority to ensure that all employees are able to become highly competent at their jobs and reach their full potential. To this end, we offer mentoring programs, career counseling, company-sponsored support groups, financial support for travel to conferences, executive shadowing, personal leadership coaches, and opportunities to network with upper management. While these programs are available to all employees, we specifically target and design many of these to meet the unique needs of women. Furthermore, our evaluation systems hold upper-level managers accountable for developing female managers and for encouraging their female employees to participate in these development programs.

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## **Condition 4: All Male Top Management Team/No Diversity Statement**

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## **Condition 5: Token Gender Diversity/Diversity Statement**

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## **Condition 6: Token Gender Diversity/No Diversity Statement**

### **Company Description**

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