EXAMINING OUR SURROUNDINGS: EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF

RACIAL AND STATUS SIMILARITY ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION

By

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(Under the Direction of Kecia Thomas)

ABSTRACT

In light of the continued discrepancies in unemployment rates and employee turnover among racial groups (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017, 2019), the current study examines the workplace experiences of some of the most vulnerable and marginalized workers: employees of color. Using relational demography theory and others to draw conclusions about the effects of demographic similarity, the findings of the study suggest that depending on the context, worker-group and worker-supervisor similarity can either be a benefit or challenge for both the employee of color and the organization. Specifically, diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) served as a boundary condition for the extent of influence similarity had on perceived organizational investment (POI) and employee retention, an outcome many organizations value above others. Frameworks such as relational demography theory, social-identity theory, and otherness were used to test the effects of racial, status, and gender similarity, and interesting findings were discovered. The results will likely steer relational demography research in a direction needing further exploration.

Survey data was collected from over 2,500 full-time employees of a large healthcare organization. Only data from those who self-identified as Black or Hispanic was used to analyze the study's hypotheses, resulting in a sample of 532 individuals. Of

that sample, 177 employees had resigned since taking the survey. The results from hypothesis testing revealed that demographic similarity to one's work group members and supervisor was not directly related to employee retention, however, further analyses found conditional direct effects and conditional mediated effects on retention through POI. DCPs were a critical component in all significant findings in the study, suggesting a need to consider one's contextual environment when examining determinants of retention.

Exploratory analyses were also conducted to answer a research question that was posed to understand the unique experiences of women of color. A consideration of the codependency of race and gender this way exposed some gaps in the current literature on women of color. Results revealed that women of color, in particular Hispanic women, may respond to demographic similarity differently than the other women examined. Implications for research and practice, limitations, and future research opportunities are discussed as well. Overall, scholars and practitioners should determine the ideal diversity climate for members of their workforce, while considering idiosyncrasies within defined groups. Doing so may promote and maintain positive experiences for their workers of color, thus encouraging retention.

INDEX WORDS: diversity climate perceptions, people of color, women of color, employee retention, perceived organizational investment, workplace

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DEDICATION

To Kecia M. Thomas, thank you for your commitment and dedication to mentoring me and believing in my aspirations throughout graduate school. I could not have gotten through these years without your endless encouragement and reassurance. To my parents, Glenda and Claude, and to my sister, Amani, thank you all for putting up with me during these stressful times. Thank you all for believing in me and for cheering me on every step of the way. Your love and faith in my abilities kept me going. To my grandparents and other family, thank you all for the love and encouragement sent my way no matter where I was in the process. Your love, cheers, and pride are irreplaceable and much appreciated. To my mentors and friends, thank you all for pushing me when I couldn't see the finish line. The guidance and support I received from you all assured me that I was never in it alone. I love each and every one of you!

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INTRODUCTION

**<u>Purpose of Study</u>**

Diversity of the workplace is a topic in all areas of employment due to the

growing number of people of color participating in the labor force (BLS, 2017; Toossi,

2015). More so, the subject has garnered attention because of the impact that the presence

of diversity has on important workplace outcomes, such as individual job satisfaction

(Choi, 2012; Zatzick et al., 2003), innovation (Bell et al., 2011), sales performance

(McKay et al., 2008; Richard et al., 2017), and turnover (Jackson et al., 1991; Nishii &

Mayer, 2009; Zatzick et al., 2003). The influence of diversity on these outcomes is not

fully understood, however, as its impact has been both favorable and unfavorable, with

more favorable outcomes observed mainly when contextual factors (e.g. diversity

climate, Avery & McKay, 2010; collectivistic culture, Chatman & Spataro, 2005; length

of time group members worked together, Harrison et al., 1998) are considered and when

diversity is managed properly in the workplace (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013). To

this end, numerous benefits of having a diverse workforce have been cited, such as an

increase in an organization's competitive advantage (Sultana et al., 2013), better group

decision making and problem solving (Chrobot- Mason & Aramovich, 2013), and

enhanced levels of creativity and innovations (Guillaume et al., 2017). Along with its

benefits, negative implications of increased diversity have also been discussed, such as its

adverse influence on group cohesion in the short term (Chrobot- Mason & Aramovich,

2013) and satisfaction (Tsui et al., 1992). Additionally, a meta-analysis conducted by Bell

and colleagues (2011) discovered greater racial diversity was related to lower team performance.

Due to these inconsistencies, the current study explores the influence of racial and status similarities on the workplace outcomes of professional workers of color, while also considering contextual factors that may impact an employee's decision to either remain with their organization or seek opportunities elsewhere. Perceived organizational investment is used as a mediator to this relationship, with the intention to understand the mechanisms through which similarity to others impacts retention. Diversity climate perceptions (DCPs), understood as individuals' shared perceptions of an organization's value of and commitment to diversity (McKay et al., 2007), are also examined as a moderator for the relationship between racial and status similarity and perceived organizational investment.

The study uses a sample of workers of color in a large professional, corporate organization- a work context where White individuals comprise an overwhelming majority of all senior executives and dominate most of the remaining leadership positions (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Workers of color account for a small percentage of the professional workers in these organizations, and they are almost absent in very senior level positions (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Therefore, a focus on Black and Hispanic employees is important due to their continued placement into lower level professional roles, which perpetuates assumptions of their lower status relative to other racial groups and shows up in the power dynamics of the organization (Ibarra, 1995). Of the various groups of people of color, Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to experience being dissimilar from others in business and professional settings, especially at higher job

levels (Thorpe-Moscon & Pollack, 2014). This provides justification for focusing on members of these groups when investigating similarity's effects.

The theory of relational demography is used to explain how racial demographic similarities between an individual and others in a work group impact attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes (Tsui et al., 1992). Relational demography theory posits that individuals assess their attributes relative to those of others in their social environment (Riordan & Shore, 1997). This assessment results in a decision that one is similar or dissimilar, with respect to demographics, to the collective group in which one is a part of. Relational demography theory and supporting theories may help to explain any effects demographic similarity to others in one's environment may have on an individual's workplace experiences.

## Review of the Literature

Researchers studying relational demography have focused on numerous outcomes of similarity, such as turnover intentions (Avery et al., 2012; Gonzalvez & DeNisi, 2009; McKay et al., 2007; Tsui et al., 1992), cooperation (Chatman & Spataro, 2005), commitment and satisfaction (Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009; Riordan & Shore, 1997; Tsui et al., 1992), perceptions of advancement (Riordan & Shore, 1997), and performance (Joshi et al., 2006). For example, in a study conducted by Riordan & Shore (1997), Black employees were more committed to their work groups when they made up at least 50% of the group composition than when they were the substantial minority. The same was found for Hispanic employees. Additionally, Wesolowski and Mossholder, (1997) surveyed two service organizations and found same-race supervisor-subordinate relationships to positively impact job satisfaction.

While these studies and numerous others show the impact of racial similarity on a variety of employee attitudes and outcomes, there is more to disclose about one particular outcome that holds implications for the success of an organization and for individuals: retention. A study examining similarity's effects on employee retention is important for both researchers and practitioners and to the field of psychology for a few reasons. Employee retention is arguably one of the highest priorities for organizations due to their competitive nature and due to the costs associated with replacing top talent (Zatzick et al., 2003). Research shows that the cost of replacing one employee can range between 50% to 60% of the replacement's annual salary (Allen, 2008), with total costs (replacement and other expenses) ranging from 90% to 200% of one's annual salary. Considering that the number of people voluntarily leaving their organizations has been steadily increasing over the last nine years, totaling 40.1 million at the end of 2018 (BLS, 2019), the bottom line costs of turnover are no small matter. Among spending thousands of dollars per individual during the recruitment and selection process, losing an employee also comes with losing organizational knowledge (Kim et al., 2017), disrupting team dynamics and productivity, and expending resources for onboarding and training (Nishii & Mayer, 2009).

Given the number of job attitudes linked to retention, the negative effects of turnover, and the growing increase of people of color entering the workforce, (Roland & Toossi, 2018; Colella et al., 2017), it is not surprising that people of color are among those often discussed in conversations around retention. Particularly in settings where people of color are largely underrepresented, this issue of retention is critical. Furthermore, not only does a loss of talent affect organizations and stifles their chances

of a competitive advantage (Thorpe-Moscon & Pollack, 2014), this turnover holds implications for workers as well.

While organizations can be greatly affected by voluntary exits, the individuals who resign, and those who remain, also face challenges as a result of turnover (Holtom et al., 2008). For example, it may be difficult for an employee of color who has resigned to find employment elsewhere, due to people of color having fewer social capital resources and high status network connections relative to their White counterparts (Ibarra, 1995; Parks-Yancy, 2006; K. M. Thomas et al, 2019). Because informal networks are valuable in helping to discover and attain employment opportunities (Byrd-Blake, 2004; McGuire, 2000), this reality could adversely affect their chances of re-entry into the workforce. Additionally, the consequences of not finding employment, such as financial instability, could then negatively affect one's life satisfaction and physical and mental health (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). For the employees of color still employed with the organization, the loss of a person of color, particularly a leader of color, is meaningful for their workplace experiences as well. As they navigate an environment dominated by dissimilar others, Black workers specifically have been shown to form close developmental relationships with other Black workers and with Black leaders (D. A. Thomas, 1990). These relationships provide the employee of color with necessary resources to succeed in a setting. Therefore, the exit of a person or leader of color may leave the employee who remains with ineffective career guidance, less support, and less exposure to career promoting opportunities (K.M. Thomas et al., 2019).

A closer look at retention in organizations is important for another reason. A recent review of workplace diversity notes the tendency for scholars to use social

integration (e.g. cooperation, commitment) and performance-related variables (innovation, team performance, sales performance; Guillaume et al., 2017 as correlates of workplace diversity, with little mention of other outcomes. These outcomes, in addition to others that have been studied, such as satisfaction, perceptions of advancement, and turnover intentions, are merely predictors of retention (Gonzalvez & DeNisi, 2009). This further highlights the need to go a step further and investigate the effect of workplace diversity and its actual, rather than assumed, effect on retention.

Additionally, over the past few years, diversity and inclusion (D&I) have been listed on the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology's (SIOP) "Top 10 Workplace Trends" list. Specifically, the society highlights diversity, inclusion, and equity as topics needing continued attention to better help leaders in today's organizations develop unbiased practices, analyze the outcomes associated with diversity and inclusion, and increase organizations' knowledge around and ability to manage diversity through training (Rebar, 2019). Therefore, a study that delves into diversity's effects by examining the relationship between racial and status similarity and retention is vital.

As can be assumed, diversity management was not always a priority of organizations, evidenced by a period of resistance to diversity exercised by a countless number of employers (Cox, 1994; D.A. Thomas & Ely, 1996). Rightfully so, organizations now implement diversity goals to correct for this era of wrongdoing (Cox, 1994). Some of them now realize that increasing the representation of people of color in the workplace improves their organization's image, allows them to reach a broader consumer base (D.A. Thomas & Ely, 1996), and is a moral obligation. Not only are

people of color valuable when it concerns appealing to organizations' consumers (D.A. Thomas & Ely, 1996), they also add value by contributing their unique opinions and identities that could only help create a better and more productive workplace (Stevens et al., 2008). While this shift has occurred for many organizations, studies continue to show that people of color have less favorable job attitudes when compared to their White counterparts (Colella et al., 2017; Greenhaus et al., 1990). These attitudes are due to several factors, including the presence of inequitable power dynamics, a history of and ongoing discrimination, and the inability to identify with members of the dominate group (Clar et al., 1999; Deitch et al., 2003; Cortina, 2008). For example, in a field study assessing the perceptions of university employees, Black and Hispanic employees perceived themselves to be more mistreated and discriminated against than their White counterparts (Dixon et al., 2002), and these employees were dissatisfied with how their organizations addressed the issue of workplace discrimination. In a study assessing the workplaces experiences of 529 physicians in the U.S., Black doctors reported the most workplace discrimination, and their mistreatment predicted employee turnover (Nunez et al., 2009; K.M. Thomas et al., 2019). Thus, it is important that studies continue to focus on the evolvement of attitudes of workers of color.

Additionally, the past several years have been marked by a push for more diversity representation in media, literature, the gaming industry, corporate America, film, and other arenas. Operating under the claim that all humans prefer to relate to something or someone (Page, 2016), this "representation matters" movement has sparked conversation across the globe on the importance of seeing yourself or someone from a similar background in places and on platforms of various types. It is argued that when

you do see a "version of yourself" in cinema, tv shows, leadership positions in organizations, politics, books, sports, and other areas, you are able to better embrace your background and culture, believe decisions are made with you in mind, envision opportunities for you to enter those spaces, better relate to storylines and characters, and become aware of a world with opportunities that extend beyond one's initial belief. In line with this philosophy, it is possible that being dissimilar from others in one's workplace setting, and not seeing similar others in the roles one aspires to reach, may impact an individual's assumed chances of succeeding in such an environment, thus leading to turnover.

While the importance of the current study of demographic similarity and its effects on retention has been extensively argued with the use of the current literature and current trends in the D&I space, the usefulness and value added from this study is also without question. As evidenced, the current study expands the potential indicators of retention by including a measure of perceived organizational investment, a variable similar to perceived advancement opportunities, and one that has yet to be examined (Zatzick et al., 2003). This study also uses a sample of full-time professional, manager, director, and VP-level employees, thus increasing the study's generalizability to other organizations. Additionally, many relational demography studies have been conducted in laboratory settings, while studies examining general diversity composition of work units have been in the field. Therefore, this study adds value to relational demography and diversity literature by adding to the few relational demography studies performed in field settings. Ultimately, the current study investigates the effects of diversity in a way that is likely to impact diversity literature and organizations today and well into the future.

**Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses**

*Relational Demography and Social Identity*

The study of relational demography is an area of research often used to explain the effects of diversity. Tsui and O'Reilly (1989) used the term to refer to individual similarity or dissimilarity from others in a work unit and how one's appraisal of being similar or dissimilar may affect any work related behaviors and attitudes (Riordan & Shore, 1997; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989). In their field study examining the effects of racial differences among dyads, these authors found dissimilarity to be related to greater role ambiguity and role conflict (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989), such that greater dissimilarity was related to greater ambiguity and conflict. From this study, many more investigations surfaced seeking to understand the effect of demographic similarity on one's workplace experience and on the organization as a whole.

People often use distinguishable traits (e.g., race, gender, and age) to group themselves with those they *match* with and to separate themselves from others who appear different from them, otherwise known as in-group and out-group classifications (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This tendency is explained in detail by social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theories (Turner et al., 1987), which posit that individuals place themselves and others in categories based on social characteristics and develop an in-group bias based on the attributes used to define members of the group. Individuals are said to self-categorize based on perceived relatedness and an assumption of shared historical experiences, values, and behaviors (Avery et al., 2012). These assumed similarities form positive perceptions of the group in which an individual belongs, contributing to a positive appraisal of self as well (Tajfel & Turner, 1979;

Zatzick et al., 2003). This in turn creates intergroup conflict, as individuals label those whom they do not identify with as out-group members, assigning less favorable qualities to that individual and their group (Roberson et al., 2017; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). If an individual is outnumbered by out-group members, typically others who occupy an identity that carries a different level of status or power, their social identity may then be threatened, and thoughts of out-group membership and feelings of otherness may surface (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). These thoughts may result in the dissimilar individual feeling out of place and undervalued, unlikely to wish to remain in an environment comprised of those he or she cannot relate (Zatzick et al., 2003).

### *Similarity-Attraction Theory*

Both the social identity and the self-categorization theories, which introduce intragroup and intergroup perceptions and self and other appraisal, help to explain why individual similarity may influence attitudes and outcomes. A related theory cited often in relational demography research is similarity-attraction theory. This theory suggests similarities with respect to salient identities would encourage attraction and integration, which would then increase the chances of an individual developing networks among others (Byrne, 1961). For example, a Hispanic employee who finds his or herself among other Hispanic employees may connect based off the same-race identity shared. They may then bond and form an informal social network, increasing their attraction to their environment. Having this network with similar others may positively influence one's affinity to the organization, due to increased communication and levels of trust and reciprocity that occur when interacting with similar others (Ibarra, 1995). These experiences could then contribute to one's likelihood to wish to remain in their

environment. Using personnel data from a large service organization, Zatzick and colleagues (2003) found evidence to support this theory. Studying the effects of racial similarity on employee retention, these researchers found similarity to be positively related to employee retention when comparing individuals to similar others in their work unit. Unfortunately, there is often a low presence of same-race others in people of color's work environment compared to that of White workers (Ibarra, 1995). Furthermore, when people of color *are* represented, it is often at lower levels of their organization (e.g. staff, maintenance, etc.) or in roles holding little organizational power (Thorpe-Moscon & Pollack, 2014). These demographic fault lines, represented by a concentration of people of color in lower level positions rather than a more even distribution of people of color across levels, may signal a lack of true diversity or an absence of its value to the organization. This perception may impact a person of color's decision to stay or exit the organization.

### *Tokenism and "Otherness"*

Feelings of otherness are a common consequence reported as a result of being a token or being dissimilar from others (Thorpe-Moscon & Pollack, 2014). Tokenism is the practice of making an individual the sole representative, or one of the few representatives, of his or her social group (Kanter, 1977). These individuals who are the representatives of their social group are viewed as "different" or "unique", therefore, making them easily identified. Because of this saliency, their actions are more often remembered, and their work is more scrutinized as compared to those in the dominant group (Kanter, 1977; Thompson & Sekaquaptewa, 2002). In a study conducted by Rosabeth Kanter (1977), it was found that being among the substantial minority warrants

feelings of discomfort due to hypervisibility, isolation due to majority group members who exaggerate differences among the social groups (i.e. polarization), an expectation of role conformance due to generalizations about minority groups (i.e. stereotyping), and decreased efficacy. While the population of interest in this classic work was women in a male dominated organization, this study and others state the same consequences are likely for people of color. For example, Taylor & Fiske (1976) conducted laboratory studies that involved subjects listening to an audio recording of a group conversation while also viewing pictures of the group members. When exposed to an all-White group with one Black male, subjects paid keen attention to the minority group member and exaggerated his attributes, giving him a special role in the group. In the condition with the mixed (White and Black) group, Blacks and Whites were evaluated equally (Taylor & Fiske, 1976).

In a series of laboratory experiments, Thompson & Sekaquaptewa (2002) illustrate that when vastly outnumbered by men or Whites, women and African Americans underperformed on a task. This performance decreased further when asked to perform under the scrutiny of the dominant members in the group. Specifically, they were subjected to performance pressures due to their hypervisibility and standards to represent their social group a certain way. Additionally, Thorpe-Moscon & Pollack (2014) from Catalyst released a report outlining the workplace experiences of over 2,000 high potential women and men in corporate and non-corporate settings who feel "othered". To be an "other" is similar to being a token, in that it characterizes a person who is different in some way from members of the dominant group. While the qualities of members of the dominant group, typically White and male in corporate settings, are normalized and

signal power and status, the "others" are treated as outsiders and excluded from positions of power (Thorpe-Moscon & Pollack, 2014).

Lastly, in a Settles and colleagues' (2018) study examining the effects of tokenism on the experiences of faculty of color, participants reported being made hyper visible, evidenced by being asked to sit on committees to increase its diversity and to participate in stereotyped activities. The use of faculty of color's identities in such a way signaled that the universities did not truly value diversity, but rather needed representatives to give the impression that the faculty were diverse (Settles et al., 2018). In this study detailing the experiences of faculty of color, the role of status was also evident. One study participant explained how the university preferred the faculty of color hide any parts of their identity that diverge from White middle-class norms. In this study, not only did participants express feeling dehumanized due to their visible attributes, but their ascribed social status was clearly ranked lower than other groups' as well. Ascribed status is defined as respect and prestige assumed of an individual, which also contributes to that individual's attainment of power (Leslie, 2017). This status is usually associated with some demographic characteristic, such as age, race, or gender, that holds no bearing on job performance or any other job-related outcome (Jackson, 1996). Much of the literature around relational demography and demographic similarity omits the mention of status and power when investigating the effects of race-based differences on individual and organizational outcomes, although its inclusion could contribute to literature around diversity's effects.

In American society, Whites and males possess more perceived status than women and people of color (Leslie, 2017) largely due to a long history of racism and

discrimination that has led to cultural stereotypes and racial and gender disparities in favor of Whites and males. For example, in his book, "Racist America", Feagin (2010) shares Thomas Jefferson's words regarding Blacks' status in comparison to Whites, arguing Blacks are inferior to Whites with respect to intellect, beauty, musical talent, and other attributes. These beliefs were not solely held by Jefferson, but were the widely held beliefs of America at the time, shaping the fabric of the country and contributing to the maintenance of White dominance throughout society today (Feagin, 2010). In Gaines' and Reed's (1995) article detailing the philosophies believed of both Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois, the authors further stress the argument that social meaning was given to physical attributes (e.g. darker skin interpreted and treated as inferior) that otherwise had no bearing on one's actual capabilities and cognitive processes. It is the passed down belief system beginning from slavery and thereon that has allowed for people of color to be identified, and thus treated as "bad" relative to the fairer skinned "good" that has justified prejudice and mistreatment of these individuals (Gaines & Reed, 1995). In the workplace specifically, centuries of exploiting laborers of color, keeping them out of certain professions, by law and by force, and other acts of discrimination have positioned Whites to disproportionately occupy roles with the highest status, prestige, and power over people of color. These status and power imbalances influence inter-group communication and interaction, distribution of resources, and levels of influence, all of which benefit the higher status individuals most often (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Therefore, not surprisingly, studies indicate that the difficulties people of color have when in environments largely populated with White peers (Morrison & von Glinow, 1990) contribute to findings of higher levels of turnover (Nishii & Mayer, 2009)

and absenteeism (Avery et al., 2007; McKay & McDaniel, 2006; Roth et al., 2003) when compared to their White counterparts.

In sum, the theories identified serve to draw conclusions about the potential effects of racial and status similarities on workplace outcomes for people of color by highlighting the influence of affinity to similar others, status, and power imbalances. These theories and the studies cited suggest people of color receive differential treatment and are subsequently less satisfied when outnumbered by dissimilar others, particularly when those individuals are of a higher status (e.g. Blacks and Hispanics in a group of dissimilar Whites). As the proportion of people of color in a work unit or group setting increases, people of color may feel more attached to their groups and thus the organization, they may be more satisfied, they may be less burdened with polarization and scrutiny, and they may perceive more investment that warrant their continued participation in their organization. A group context that is more balanced with respect to ascribed social status and power may also contribute to positive attitudes and outcomes, such as a decreased probability of people of color leaving the organization. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is formed:

*Hypothesis 1a*: There will be a positive relationship between worker-group racial similarity and retention.

*Hypothesis 1b*: There will be a positive relationship between worker-group status similarity and retention.

Thus far, several theories have been cited to explain the impact similarity and status may have on employee outcomes (Thorpe-Moscon & Pollack, 2014). Low representation and status may influence one's perceptions of their organization and

contribute to their leaving or staying. Furthermore, not only could these relationships be present when investigating work unit demography alone, but other contextual factors could affect outcomes as well.

**Worker-Supervisor Relationships**

While worker-group similarity may warrant considerations of remaining with or leaving the organization, there is evidence to suggest the characteristics of one's supervisor in relation to self may affect attitudes and behaviors as well (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989; Alvarez et al., 2009). Leader- member exchange (LMX) theory is used to explain possible worker-supervisor dynamics by focusing on the quality of the relationship between supervisors and their subordinates. The perceptions of the social exchange between the leader and subordinate are influenced by the unique characteristics of each person and the way the leader treats his or her subordinate in the work context (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Martin et al., 2016). These perceptions can influence both parties' commitment, turnover intentions (Avery et al., 2012), and performance (Martin et al., 2016). To that point, LMX has been shown to be influenced by racial similarity between the leader and subordinate (Bakar & McCann, 2014; Chang et al., 2016), where the subordinates expect and/or perceive low quality interactions when his or her supervisor is of a different racial background. This assumption may be influenced by people of color's knowledge of societal and workplace prejudice and discrimination experienced by members of their group and the preference to be paired with an individual with similar experiences who can relate better (D.A. Thomas, 1990).

Consider a study conducted by D.A. Thomas (1990) examining roughly 200 Black and White managers and their subordinates. In the study, same-race developmental

relationships were found to be related to greater perceived psychosocial support than cross-race relationships (D.A. Thomas, 1990). A relationship high in psychosocial support would be one in which the subordinate perceives him or herself to be confident, effective in the role, and would include identifying with the role, all with help from the supervisor (Brown et al., 2015). Additionally, the supervisor would not only serve a professional purpose (Alvarez et al., 2009; D.A. Thomas, 1990), but would also act as a role model and friend, seeing his or her subordinate as an individual rather than a direct report (Ibarra, 1995). In this instance, a person of color would be receiving both professional and personal guidance, with a good chance that the personal guidance is influenced by the supervisor having had similar experiences, or at minimum, an understanding of the racial dynamics the subordinate must navigate. D.A. Thomas (1990) implies that because Blacks are often in cross-race dyads, they receive inadequate levels of the psychosocial support, which is likely attributable to racial dynamics and differences in ideas about race between the Black protégé and the White mentor. In other words, Black employees may perceive same-race supervisors to better understand racial issues and provide the support needed to deal with the cultural and racial challenges he or she may face as a person of color within the organization (Brown et al., 2008; Chang et al., 2016; Chrobot-Mason, 2012; D.A. Thomas, 1990). To support this argument, Helms (1995) suggests that when mentors are not aware of racial issues their mentee may be facing, the relationship becomes strained and ineffective, posing challenges for both parties. Additionally, Brown and colleagues (2008) sampled 139 National Black MBA Association members and found perceived congruence in racial perspectives to be positively associated with psychosocial support. This in turn positively affected career

benefits, such as advancement, for the organizational members. Lastly, the Gallup

Organization surveyed over 2,000 employees across the U.S. and found that for those in

same-race dyadic relationships, the respondents were more likely to remain with their

organization than those who were a part of cross-race dyads (Jones et al., 2005). Other

studies have found racial similarity of dyads to be associated with greater organizational

attraction, higher ratings of the worker, higher procedural justice, and higher satisfaction

(Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989: Wesolowski & Mossholder, 1997).

Because supervisors are viewed as representatives of the organization, their

support and perceived relatedness with their subordinate is not only critical to the LMX

relationship (Horne et al., 2016), but it may be paramount to a person of color's opinion

of the organization. Therefore, the effects of congruence between the worker of color and

supervisor may hold positive implications for that worker's decision to remain an

organizational member. Based on this rationale, the following arguments are made:

*Hypothesis 2a*: There will be a positive relationship between worker-supervisor racial

similarity and retention.

*Hypothesis 2b*: There will be a positive relationship between worker-supervisor status

similarity and retention.

While thus far it has been argued that the characteristics of one's work group and

supervisor in relation to the self may influence employee attitudes and behaviors, the

relationships may not be straightforward and without complexity. Therefore, it is

worthwhile to also examine potential mechanisms through which the relationships

between demographic similarity and retention could exist.

**Processes Through which Similarity Affects Retention**

*Perceived Organizational Investment*

As discussed, previous studies examining the effects of racial similarity on workplace outcomes neglect to measure potential mediators for their direct effect relationships. Therefore, the current study expands our knowledge of the ways in which racial and status similarity affect retention by including a measure of perceived organizational investment, a construct similar to those assumed to be a predictor of retention (e.g. perceived advancement opportunities) but not examined in prior studies (Brown et al., 2008; Zatzick et al., 2003). Revisiting the fact that African Americans and Hispanics have limited availability to others of their social group at work, they may indeed perceive fewer career opportunities than those of other racial groups. For example, Murray (1982) researched African American managers and discovered those who had White mentors early on were more dissatisfied with their career advancement than those who had other Black mentors (Jones et al., 2005; D.A. Thomas, 1993). Additionally, Thorpe-Moscon, J., & Pollack (2014) found that people who identified as "others" had lower career expectations than those who felt they were in-group members. Given that studies find rates of promotion for people of color under White managers to be lower than if they were under managers of color, and lower than other Whites under White managers (Giulano et al., 2011), such perceptions and dissatisfaction may be warranted and may impact individual outcomes.

Building off the rationale used in Zatick and colleagues' (2003) study, people of color a part of networks comprised of same-race individuals may perceive greater organizational investment due to having access to the resources provided for and by those

in the network. In support of this argument, Chrobot- Mason and Konrad (2006) state people of color in managerial roles may explicitly promote diversity related initiatives, further encouraging people of color to perceive there to be advancement opportunities available to them when same-race others are in positions of authority (Avery et al., 2007Chrobot-Mason & Konrad, 2006). African Americans, specifically, report needing interaction with and access to other Blacks in their organization, in addition to those of the dominant group (typically Whites), to receive adequate support and job-related resources (Ibarra, 1995). Again, this may be due to an assumption of congruent opinions about race (Brown et al., 2008) and also an understanding of who often holds organizational power. Consequently, Brown and colleagues' (2008) study did find the positive relationship between racial perspective congruency and psychosocial interaction to then lead to career benefits. Career benefits were then examined to predict satisfaction and commitment, correlates of retention (Brown et al., 2008).

Drawing again on similarity-attraction theory, if more same-race networks among people of color are formed, people of color may perceive the organization to be invested in their growth and development due to having built relationships and formed networks with similar others, resulting in added resources and potential opportunities. Additionally, the presence of similar others may signal the organization is invested in diverse talent. This perception of organizational investment may warrant people of color to wish to remain in the organization.

If people of color hold leadership positions, positions often kept for the dominant group in business settings (i.e. White employees), employees of color may perceive their organization to be intentionally investing in the growth and development of the

marginalized individuals who are often prevented access from such roles. With this exposure to people of color in supervisory roles, especially if assigned to a supervisor of one's same race or of another ethnic minority group, employees may perceive their organization to be equipping them to one day reach a leadership level. Such an investment may warrant employees of color to remain in this organization, where they are likely to one day be a supervisor as well.

### Diversity Climate

In addition to examining the mechanisms through which racial differences may affect retention, this study also considers boundary conditions for which these potential relationships exist. One construct often examined to better understand the conditions under which racial diversity influences individual and organizational outcomes is diversity climate. Diversity climate is defined as an employees' perceptions of an organization's employment practices and whether it promotes the inclusion of minority employees into the work environment (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; McKay et al., 2007), including at higher level positions and within numerous networks (Cox, 1994). Such a construct is important when considering the workplace experiences of people of color in light of bias and prejudice, workplace discrimination, and organizational structural barriers. When diversity climate perceptions are low, individuals may not perceive their organization and its members to value their presence and have their best interests in mind. When diversity climate perceptions are high, people of color have reason to believe the organization welcomes and encourages their full workforce participation due to the presence of resources and practices that would allow them to succeed. Used as a moderator, diversity climate is often found to buffer any negative

effects of diversity (Avery & McKay, 2010; Choi, 2012) and strengthen positive effects. In one study, McKay and colleagues (2009) examined over 600 sales units in a large organization and found increased performance at high levels of perceived diversity climate. Additionally, Gonzalez and DeNisi (2009) found African Americans to be more committed and to identify with the organization more when in positive diversity climates.

Hicks- Clarke and Iles (2000) developed a model of diversity climate and found their scale to be positively related to numerous individual outcomes, such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, satisfaction with manager, and satisfaction with career and future career. Additionally, McKay and colleagues (2007) conducted a field study sampling 6,130 retail employees and their managers and found diversity climate perceptions to be positively related to sales unit performance. Chrobot-Mason and Aramovich (2013) also found diversity climate perceptions to have a negative relationship with turnover intentions. Rather than examining diversity climate as a predictor, the current study assesses diversity climate as a moderator and contributes to the workplace diversity literature by examining the relationships between climate, perceived organizational investment, and actual retention.

Low diversity climate perceptions may imply inter-group conflict and an absence or dearth of behaviors and activities that foster inclusion for people of color (Friedman & Davidson, 2001). Coupled with being dissimilar from others, this may hold negative implications for perceived opportunities to progress up the organizational ladder in such an environment. Additionally, diversity climate may also impact the relationship between worker and supervisor. Regarding cross-race dyads, diversity climate may buffer potential negative effects on perceived organizational investment by influencing the

employee of color's perception that although he or she does not have a supervisor of the same race, the organization tries to promote initiatives and implement practices that positively impact people of color. Therefore, the individual could perceive steps are being taken in the direction toward the integration and advancement of people of color. For same-race dyads, a positive diversity climate would signal the continued support for and promotion of people of color in the organization.

Due to the critical role diversity climate has played in influencing the attitudes and outcomes of people of color, this study investigates its moderating role in the relationship between similarity and perceived organizational investment. With this rational, the following hypotheses were formed:

*Hypothesis 3a*: There will be a positive conditional indirect effect of worker-group racial similarity on retention through POI.

*Hypothesis 3b*: There will be a positive conditional indirect effect of worker-group status similarity on retention through POI.

*Hypothesis 4a*: There will be a positive conditional indirect effect of worker-supervisor racial similarity on retention through POI.

*Hypothesis 4b*: There will be a positive conditional indirect effect of worker-supervisor status similarity on retention through POI.

*Hypothesis 5a*: There will be a positive conditional direct effect of worker-group racial similarity on perceived organizational investment across levels of diversity climate perceptions.

*Hypothesis 5b*: There will be a positive conditional direct effect of worker-group status similarity on perceived organizational investment across levels of diversity climate perceptions.

*Hypothesis 6a*: There will be a positive conditional direct effect of worker-supervisor racial similarity on perceived organizational investment across levels of diversity climate perceptions.

*Hypothesis 6b*: There will be a positive conditional direct effect of worker-supervisor status similarity on perceived organizational investment across levels of diversity climate perceptions.

### *Moderating Role of Race*

The people of color in the study's sample are not members of a monolith group, but instead are a sample of individuals who identify as either Black or Hispanic. Although members of both social categories share the overarching description of a person of color, they may have different experiences due to their belonging to distinct racial groups. Because of this possibility, race is expected to act as a moderator in all proposed hypotheses and will be tested in the analyses conducted.
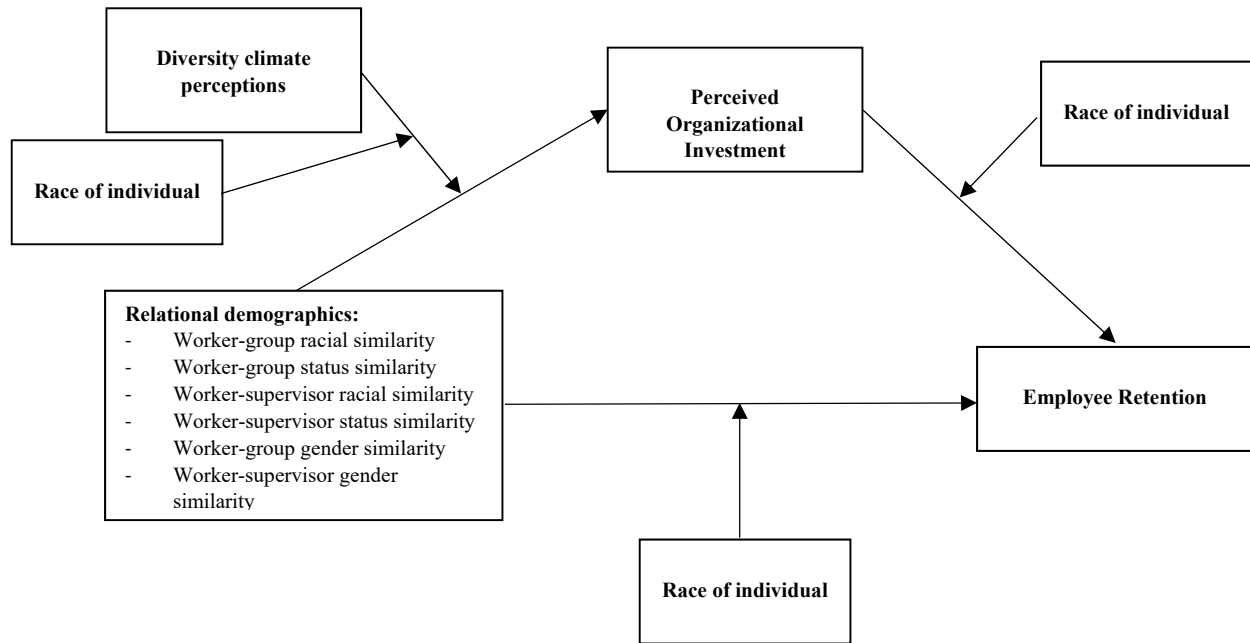
Figure 1: Full Model of Effect of Relational Demographics, Contextual Factors, and Race on Retention

**Examining People of Color Further**

The research thus far has focused on the experiences of low status people of color in corporate settings (i.e. Blacks and Hispanics), however, Asians have not yet been introduced. Members of this racial group are given a positive "model minority" stereotype (Alvarez et al., 2009; Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Rosette et al., 2008), leaving room to assume their level of ascribed status may differ from that believed of Blacks and Hispanics, possibly warranting fewer negative attitudes if proportions of other people of color in the work unit is low. Additionally, Asians' experience in the workplace may differ from that of other racial groups of color given that they are the fastest growing group in the U.S. (Bell, 2011; Holland, 2016) and due to their relatively high participation rate in the workforce compared to other people of color. Thus, their experiences in the workplace may differ from that of other racial groups of color.

With that stated, scholars have begun to note that even the positive stereotypes of Asians in the workplace may not be viewed as positive for Asians themselves and may hold negative implications for members of this group (Alvarez et al., 2009; Chou & Feagin, 2015). For example, the model minority stereotype may influence how an Asian person is perceived in a role, regardless if an individual has the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to perform. Rather than offering adequate support and guidance, an individual may be left to navigate their workplace environment without the needed tools due to false perceptions (Alvarez et al., 2009). In this scenario, negative attitudes and outcomes may result, such as negative perceptions regarding investment. Additionally, although the stereotypical leadership qualities have been found to be more aligned with the stereotypical characteristics of Asians more than with the qualities ascribed to other people of color (Rosette et al., 2008), there is still a low number of Asian workers in high status leadership positions in U.S. workplaces (0.3% of corporate offices; Sy et al., 2010). This lack of representation of Asians in leadership positions may affect the worker-supervisor and other leader relationships for Asian workers. Therefore, a set of exploratory analyses will be conducted on Asian employees to determine whether to include this group of respondents in hypothesis testing.

**Considering the Intersection of Race and Gender**

While the main focus of the current study is on the impact of racial and status similarity on outcomes, it is also recognized that women are a part of these racial groups and may have unique, and even more marginalized, experiences in the workplace as well (Chang et al., 2016). In support of this argument, studies reveal women of color have been found to experience what is called "double jeopardy" as it relates to their

experiences as persons with dual-subordinate identities in the workplace (Rosette & Livingston, 2012). The double jeopardy hypothesis states that women of color face both sexual and racial prejudice, and subsequently harassment and discrimination, whereas White women and men of color experience prejudice to lesser extents due to their membership in dominant social categories (Rosette & Livingston, 2012). For example, in the Thorpe-Moscon & Pollack (2014) research study examining the workplace experiences of individuals in corporate and non-corporate organizations, it was found that when compared to their White and male counterparts, women of color were least likely to be mentored by senior executives, they lacked access to career advancing opportunities, their aspirations to reach higher level positions decreased, and they received fewer promotions (Thorpe-Moscon & Pollack, 2014). In an intersectional approach to research, these disadvantages and inequities are considered alongside identity and help to understand and analyze the effects of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and other social categories on a number of outcomes (Cole, 2009; Rosette et al., 2016). Crenshaw (1989) saw this approach to be a necessity due to prior researches examining race and gender independent of one another, ignoring the heterogeneity within groups (Rosette et al., 2016). Accounting for these within group differences, the current study examines the inner workings of race, gender, and work context on women of color's workplace experiences and outcomes.

Because women of color are less likely to be mentored by senior executives, who are often White males and hold much of the decision-making power in the organization (Catalyst, 2014), they may also receive inadequate levels of psychosocial support, partly due to the inability to relate to the supervisor (Thomas, 1990). An article written by

Maura Cheeks and published by Harvard Business Review (Cheeks, 2018) captures this

notion in the findings from Cheeks' study examining the workplace experiences of

women of color. It was found that for Black women, it is difficult to find sponsors to

advocate for them due to the inability to relate to others in the organization (Cheeks,

2018). This may hold negative implications for their advancement.

In addition to this barrier, women of color may not be able to relate to White

women or men of color who are their peers in the organization because of the dominant

identities members of these groups possess (i.e. being either male or White). This

circumstance may welcome feelings of "otherness" and negatively influence a woman of

color's attachment to an organization. One Black woman interviewed in the study

detailed in Cheeks' HBR article (2018) expressed her found confidence and

comfortability now that she was reporting to a Black female supervisor for the first time

in her career. Rather than having to code switch to feel less like an "other" and to relate

to others in the dominant culture, she was able to be her more authentic self and perform

better because of connection with the Black female leader.

Lastly, because women of color are often the least likely to receive promotions,

are underdeveloped, are compensated lower than their White and male counterparts, and

lack access to visible career promoting projects (Thorpe-Moscon & Pollack, 2014;

Morad, 2019), evidence of an organization rewarding women of color by giving them

access to leadership positions may show that the organization values them and is invested

in their careers. Furthermore, a same-race woman of color as one's immediate supervisor

could warrant feelings of investment because of the high levels of psychosocial support,

mentorship, and strengthened human capital that may arise from having this connection

(Chang et al., 2016; Kosoko-Lasaki et al., 2006). Some studies actually find evidence of female mentors putting a high focus on psychosocial support in their developmental relationships (Chang et al., 2016). Lastly, if "representation matters", the presence of women of color in high level positions may positively impact women of color's attitudes in their workplace environments. The female worker of color may then be more likely to remain with the organization. Testing these assumptions, moderating for race, will help discover if findings from the larger model are replicated for women of color.

In order to better understand how women of color's experiences, given their doubly marginal status (Chang et al., 2016), impact their careers, the model hypothesized will be examined separately for only women of color to determine if findings in the original model are replicated for this population of workers.

*Research Question:* What are the ways in which racial and gender similarity impact the workplace experiences (i.e. perceived organizational investment, diversity climate perceptions, retention) of women of color?

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

## **Participants and Procedures**

To examine the effects of racial similarity on employee retention, data were

obtained from a global healthcare organization headquartered in the United States.

Individuals who worked full-time and completed an employee engagement survey in the

year 2017 were included in the study. Respondents were organized throughout the

company in a variety of functions, including human resources, supply chain,

procurement, and medical devices. Various job levels were also represented, allowing the

examination of full-time professional level individual contributors, middle level

managers, and those in senior level positions. Additionally, the option of self-identifying

as a member of a specific racial group was given to those employees working in the US.

Therefore, the resulting total sample of respondents were U.S. only employees who work

full-time and responded to the question asking their racial category.

Of the roughly 25,000 individuals in the original sample, White employees

constituted the majority (71%), followed by Asians (13%), Hispanics (9%), and Blacks

(6%). The sample was 55% male and 45% female. The average tenure of an

organizational member was between 3 to 10 years, and the average age was 40.

Preliminary analyses were conducted to examine whether similarity affected the

experiences of White and Asian respondents, two racial categories assumed to have

workplace experiences that differ from those of Black and Hispanic employees. Because

no significant direct relationships were found between similarity and perceived

organizational investment (POI) and similarity and retention, these two groups were

excluded from further hypothesis testing. Therefore, from the individuals in the initial sample, only Black and Hispanic respondents were included to test the hypotheses. Eighty Black employees and 97 Hispanic employees had resigned from the organization since their perceptions of climate and organizational investment were last assessed. To increase sample size and to obtain comparisons for hypothesis testing, a 2 to 1 matched sampling method was utilized and 160 Black employees and 195 Hispanic employees who remained with the organization were added to the 177 Black and Hispanic employees who resigned. This resulted in a total of 532 respondents (45% Black and 55% Hispanic). Forty-eight percent of the respondents were female and 52% were males.

**Independent Variables**

**Worker-group racial similarity (WGRS).** Relational demography percentages were calculated at the individual level to reflect the percentage of same race others in one's work group (percentage included the respondent). The percentages that resulted from using this method ranged from 3 to 100 for employees of color and 4 to 100 for women of color. The higher the percentage, the more racially similar others there were in one's work group.

**Worker-group status similarity (WGSS).** Relational demography percentages were calculated at the individual level to reflect the percentage of people of color in a work group. The higher the percentage, the more people of color there were in the group. The percentages that resulted from using this method ranged from 2.9 to 100 for employees of color.

**Worker-supervisor racial similarity (WSRS).** Relational demography scores were used at the individual level to depict the racial similarity or dissimilarity within a supervisor

and worker dyad. A 0 indicated the worker's supervisor was not the same race as the respondent. A 1 indicated the supervisor and respondent were of the same race.

**Worker-supervisor status similarity (WSRS).** In a similar way relational demography scores were used for racial similarity within a supervisor and worker dyad, scores were also used to depict status similarity within dyads. A 0 indicated the supervisor was not a person of color, unlike the respondent. A 1 indicated the supervisor was also a person of color.

**Worker-group gender similarity (WGGS)-** To answer the research question for women of color, relational demography percentages were calculated at the individual level to reflect the percentage of women in a work group. The higher the percentage, the more women there were in the group. The percentages that resulted from using this method ranged from 7.14 to 100 for women of color.

**Worker-supervisor gender similarity (WSGS)-** In a similar way relational demography scores were used for racial and status similarity within a supervisor and worker dyad, scores were also used to depict gender similarity within dyads for women of color. A 0 indicated the supervisor was not a woman. A 1 indicated the supervisor was also a woman.

**Perceived organizational investment.** Five items were used to form a measure of perceived organizational investment. All items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). Similar to other measures, such as perceived career growth and advancement opportunities, this construct describes experiences that would suggest an organization acts in a manner recognized by employees as investing in their development, advancement, and professional goals. Sample items from the scale

read, "I have meaningful conversations with my immediate supervisor about my career development" and "I have the opportunity to grow and develop at my organization." The reliability of the scale is acceptable at α=.84.

**Diversity Climate Perceptions.** Perceptions of diversity climate were assessed using 5 items from the organization's employee engagement survey. Additionally, the items used to depict diversity climate in the current study are similar to those used in other validated diversity climate scales. These items are also representative of previously defined diversity climate facets, such as equal and fair treatment, leader support for diversity, and acknowledgement of diverse perspectives (Avery et al., 2006; Cox, 1994; Kossek et al., 1996). For example, the item, "My workgroup has a climate in which diverse perspectives are valued" focuses on acknowledgement of diverse perspectives (McKay et al., 2009) and is identical to an item on the diversity climate perceptions scale developed by McKay and colleagues in 2007. All items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). Sample scale items include, "My workgroup has a climate in which diverse perspectives are valued." and "Sufficient effort is made to get the opinions and thinking of people who work here." The reliability of the scale is acceptable at α=.86. The items depicting diversity climate perceptions were also discernable from items that loaded onto other scales, such as those on the perceived organizational investment scale.

**Dependent variables.**

**Retention.** To measure the dependent variable, data from the organization's personnel records were gathered. The data represented employees who had left the organization since the most recent employee engagement survey in the year 2017. Voluntary and

involuntary exits of any kind (e.g. layoff, retirement, termination) were distinguishable, allowing for voluntary exits to be coded as 1 and all other exits to receive a code of 0.

**Control variables.** To mitigate potential spuriousness, several variables were controlled for that could have a relationship with the independent and dependent variables. Variables were selected based on their theorized and evidenced relationships with the independent and dependent variables. Correlation coefficients from a correlation matrix provided further rationale for the selection for some of the controls. The variables are tenure, gender, age, job level, and work group size.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

**Preliminary Analyses**

The first set of analyses were done to screen the variables and confirm that the

descriptive characteristics align with what is known of the data. Table 1 details the

means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis of the full sample. The correlations

between all of the variables, including control variables and demographic variables, are

outlined in Table 2. Lastly, Table 3 shows the frequencies of values for the variables.

Next, simple moderation analyses were conducted to determine whether White

and Asian respondents should be included in tests of the proposed hypotheses. The

analyses were conducted in the statistical program SPSS. Using Hayes' PROCESS

macro, model 1, these tests examined whether race moderates the relationships between

the percentage of same race others in one's work group and retention and the percentage

of same race others in one's work group and perceived organizational investment (POI).

Retention was regressed onto percentage of same race others in a group with

participant race acting as a moderator for this relationship. In the full model, there was no

relationship found between worker-group racial similarity and retention, $b$= -.01, $SE$=

.01, $p$= .10, CI [-.02, .00]. There were also no differences in retention when comparing

White respondents (reference group) with Asian respondents, $b$= -.07, $SE$= .70, $p$= .92, CI

[-1.44, 1.30]. A test of the effect of percentage of same race others in one's work group

and perceived organizational investment (POI) also resulted in no significant findings, $b$=

.00, $SE$= .00, $t$(2446)= 1.38, $p$= .17, CI [-.00, .004]. There was also no significant

difference in POI between White and Asian respondents, $b$= .22, $SE$= .18, $t$(2446)= 1.20,

*p*= .23, CI [-.14, .57]. There were no conditional effects of the worker-group racial

similarity on POI for any racial category other than Hispanic, *b*= ,01, *SE*= ,00, *t*(2446)=

3.17, *p*<.01, CI [.00, .01]. Because this preliminary analysis showed no significant

relationships for White or Asian respondents, and showed no differences between White

and Asians for any of the tested relationships, there was support for only including Black

and Hispanic respondents to test the proposed hypotheses. This was based on the

assumption of members of both groups being ascribed low status in comparison to their

White and Asian counterparts and follows research that suggests Black and Hispanic

individuals have unique experiences as marginalized people of color. However, research

questions examining the experiences of women of color included Asian respondents to

capture any unique experiences across all women of color in the organization.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations for Total Population

| Variable | Mean | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Status | .21 | .41 | 1.43 | .05 |
| DCP | 4.05 | .74 | -1.22 | 2.01 |
| POI | 3.87 | .79 | -.84 | .73 |
| Retention | 1.56 | .50 | -.26 | -1.93 |
| WGSS | 18.75 | 25.90 | 1.54 | 1.77 |
| WGRS | 69.64 | 29.80 | -.50 | -1.13 |
| WSSS | .15 | .35 | 2.01 | 2.04 |
| WSRS | .52 | .50 | -.09 | -2.00 |
| Gender | .44 | .50 | .25 | -1.94 |
| Age | 44.54 | 9.96 | -.15 | -.62 |
| Level | 2.57 | .54 | -.71 | -.64 |
| Team Size | 7.10 | 7.43 | 3.33 | 14.16 |
| Tenure | 3.46 | .95 | -.13 | -.95 |
| WGGS | 43.65 | 30.91 | .23 | -.88 |
| WSGS | .58 | .49 | -.34 | -1.89 |

N=1702-2542

Table 2. Correlation Table for All Races Across all Study Variables

| Study variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Status | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. DCP | -.048* | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. POI | -.014 | .725** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Retention | .108** | .164** | .194** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. WGSS | .650** | -.020 | .014 | .110** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. WGRS | -.439** | .022 | -.007 | -.093** | -.348** | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. WSSS | .176** | -.059* | -.005 | .019 | .260** | -.095** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 8. WSRS | -.397** | .013 | -.002 | -.037 | -.316** | .451** | -.245** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 9. Gender | .041* | -.039 | .008 | .060** | .032 | -.029 | -.004 | -.020 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 10. Age | -.010 | .009 | .013 | .475** | .014 | -.027 | -.015 | .039 | .015 | 1 | | | | | |
| 11. Level | .089** | -.150** | -.134** | -.218** | .093** | .001 | .115** | -.083** | .047* | -.174** | 1 | | | | |
| 12. Team Size | .124** | -.099** | -.033 | .066** | .192** | -.175** | .211** | -.080** | -.026 | .134** | .250** | 1 | | | |
| 13. Tenure | .085** | .099** | .097** | .706** | .110** | -.071** | .021 | .021 | .033 | .561** | -.237** | .058** | 1 | | |
| 14. WGGS | .02 | -.02 | .01 | .06** | .05* | -.01 | -.01 | -.04 | .62** | -.01 | .01 | -.06** | .02 | 1 | |
| 15. WSGS | -.01 | -.01 | -.02 | .04 | .00 | .04 | .02 | .00 | -.20** | .04 | -.01 | .02 | .03 | -.13** | 1 |

N=1702-2542 *p<.05 ***p<.001 level.

Table 3. Frequency Table for Key Variables

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Race | Black | 240 | 9.4 | 9.4 |
| | Hispanic | 292 | 11.5 | 20.9 |
| | Asian | 450 | 17.7 | 38.6 |
| | White | 1560 | 61.4 | 100 |
| Gender | Males | 1430 | 56.3 | 56.3 |
| | Females | 1112 | 43.7 | 100 |
| Level | Professional | 1503 | 59.1 | 59.1 |
| | Mgr/Dir | 980 | 38.6 | 97.7 |
| | VP+ | 59 | 2.3 | 100 |
| Employment Status | Resignation | 1106 | 43.5 | 43.5 |
| | Still Employed | 1436 | 56.5 | 100 |

## **Hypothesis Testing Results**

To test the hypotheses listed in Appendix A, a moderated mediation analysis was conducted using a custom model in Hayes'(2013) PROCESS in the SPSS statistical package. This custom model was created by modifying the matrices in the pre-programmed model 61 in Hayes' PROCESS macro. In the study's model, there is a moderated moderation in stage one, a moderation in stage two, and a moderation in stage three. Diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) were used as the moderator for the relationship between racial similarity and POI and status similarity and POI. Race was used as a moderator of the relationships between 1.) racial similarity, DCPs, and POI, 2.) status similarity, DCPs, and POI, 3.) POI and retention, 3.) racial similarity and retention, and 4.) status similarity and retention. PROCESS macro allowed for the measurement of a dichotomous outcome variable, using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to estimate the coefficients and logistic regression to estimate the model of Y ("The Process macro", 2019).

Hypotheses 1 through 6 were designed to test the effect of individual, work group, and dyad characteristics on perceived organizational investment (POI) and retention. It was expected that across all hypotheses, race would moderate the expected relationships. Hypotheses 1a-b and 2a-b all tested conditional direct relationships between worker-group racial and status similarity and retention and worker-supervisor racial and status similarity and retention. No evidence was found to support a direct relationship between worker-group racial similarity and retention for either racial group, $b$= .01, $SE$= .01, $p$= .53, CI: [-.01, .02]. Therefore, H1a was not supported. Additionally, no evidence was found to support a relationship between worker-group status similarity and retention for either racial group, $b$= .00, $SE$= .01, $p$=.60, CI: [-.01, .02], lending no support for H1b. There was also no evidence to support H2a which examined the relationship between supervisor-worker racial similarity and retention, $b$= .61, $SE$= .91, $p$= .50, CI: [-1.17, 2.38]. Similarly, H2b was not supported; there was no relationship found for supervisor-worker status similarity and retention, $b$= -.19, $SE$= .62, $p$=.76, CI: [-1.41, 1.02].

Hypotheses 3a and H3b were both partially supported. For Hispanic employees reporting low levels of diversity climate perceptions, there was a weak conditional indirect effect of worker-group racial similarity on retention through POI, $Z$= 3.25, $b$= .0039, CI: [.00, .01]. There was no conditional indirect effect for Black employees at any level of DCPs or for Hispanic employees at median or high levels of diversity climate perceptions. Therefore, H3a was partially supported. Perceived organizational investment was found to mediate the relationship between having other people of color in one's work group and retention, but only for Hispanic employees and when diversity climate perceptions were low, $Z$= 3.25, $b$=.0032, CI [.00, .01]. There was no conditional indirect

effect for Black employees or for Hispanic employees at median or high levels of diversity climate perceptions. Among Hispanic employees low in DCPs, the indirect effect of worker-group status similarity on retention through POI was positive. Therefore, H3b was also partially supported.

While hypotheses 4 and 5 were not supported, tests of H5a and H5b have interesting findings. A test of H5a did find diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) to moderate the relationship between worker-group racial similarity and perceptions of organizational investment (POI). The interaction effect of worker-group racial similarity and race is moderated by DCPs at lower levels of DCP, $Z= 3.25$, $b= .01$, $F(1, 500)= 4.16$, $p <.05$. Additionally, the positive interaction effect of worker-group racial similarity and race on POI suggests there are differences between Black and Hispanic employees, in that the effect of same race others and race on POI is greater for Hispanic employees, $b= .02$, $SE= .0,1$ $t(500)= 2.05$, $p < .05$, CI [.00, .04]. This conditional effect of worker-group racial similarity on POI is significant for Hispanic employees at low and high levels of DCPs. For this group of employees, there is a positive effect of worker-group racial similarity on POI at low levels of DCPs, $Z= 3.25$, $b= .01$, $SE= .00$, $p <.05$, however, the relationship is negative at high levels of DCP, $Z= 4.80$, $b= -.0035$, $SE= .00$, $p <.05$. There is also no conditional effect of worker-group racial similarity on POI at median levels of DCP. This suggests increased DCP decrease the conditional effect of worker-group racial similarity on POI. Therefore, the hypothesis is not supported (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The Conditional Effect of Worker-Group Racial Similarity on Perceived Organizational Investment as a Function of DCPs

A test of H5b found that the magnitude of the moderation of DCPs on the effect of worker-group status similarity on POI depends on race. This explains .8% of the variance in POI. The positive interaction effect of worker-group status similarity and race on POI suggests there are differences between Black and Hispanic employees, in that the effect of worker-group status similarity and race on POI is greater for Hispanic employees, $b= .03$, $SE= .01$, $t(500)= 3.14$, $p <.05$, CI [.01, .05]. Diversity climate perceptions moderate this interaction effect of worker-group status similarity and race on perceived organizational investment at low and high levels of DCPs, $Z= 3.25$, $b= .0062$, $F(1, 500)= 6.35$, $p <.05$; $Z= 4.80$, $b= -.01$, $F(1, 500)$, $p <.05$. For Hispanic employees, there is a positive effect of worker-group status similarity on POI at low levels of DCP, $Z= 3.25$, $b= .0046$, $SE= .00$, $t(500)= 2.91$, $p <.05$. The positive effect suggests having more people of color in one's group at lower levels of DCPs is associated with increased

POI. However, there is a negative effect of worker-group status similarity on POI at high levels of DCP, $Z$= 4.80, $b$= -.0034, $SE$= .00, $t(500)$= -2.24, $p$ <.05. This suggests that at high levels of DCPs, lower percentages of other people of color in a Hispanic employee's work group are associated with higher reported levels of POI. Therefore, the hypothesis is not supported, because the assumed direction of the effect of DCP is reversed (see Figure 3).
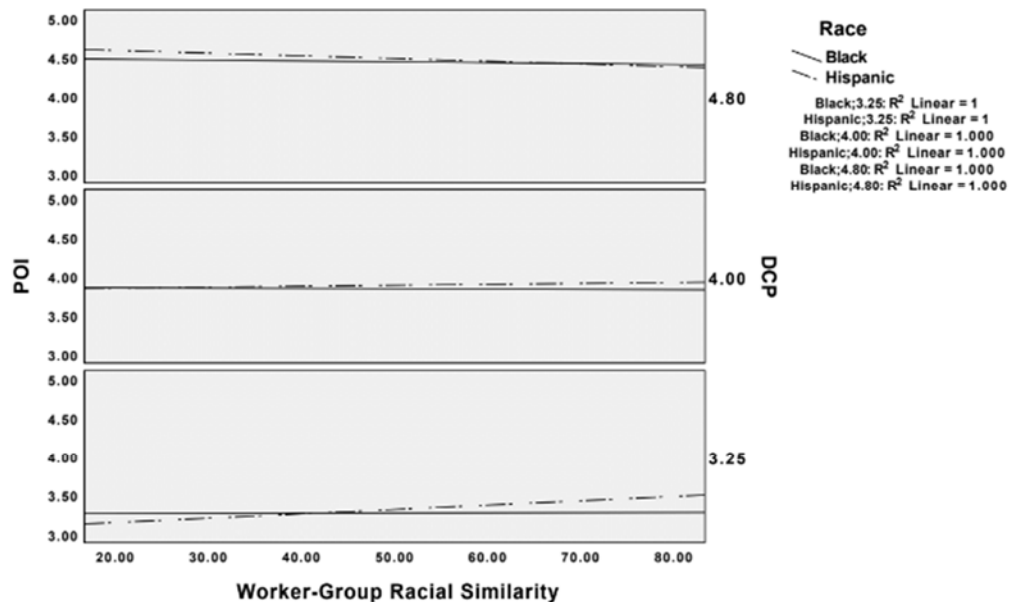


Figure 3. The Conditional Effect of Worker-Group Status Similarity on Perceived Organizational Investment as a Function of DCPs

Hypothesis 6a predicted diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) would moderate the relationship between worker-supervisor racial similarity and POI, such that the relationship would be strengthened with more favorable climate perceptions and weakened when climate perceptions were less favorable. Results showed this hypothesis was not supported. Although DCPs were found to be positively related to POI, $b$= .78, $SE$= .07, $t(356)$= 11.54, $p$ <.05, CI [.64, .91], there was no conditional direct effect of worker-supervisor racial similarity on POI at any level of DCPs. The interaction of

worker-supervisor racial similarity, race, and DCPs on POI was also not significant, $b=$ -.31, $SE=$ .19, $t(356)=$ -1.64, $p=$ .10, CI [-.68, .06]. Although H6b was also not supported, the findings are worth discussing. There is evidence of a three-way interaction between worker-supervisor status similarity, DCPs, and race, $b=$ -.34, $SE=$ .16, $t(353)=$ -2.09, $p$ <.05, CI [-.67, -.02]. The magnitude of this moderation by DCPs on the effect of worker-supervisor status similarity on POI depends on race and explains .6% of the variance in POI. There is also an interaction effect between worker-supervisor status similarity and race on POI at low levels of DCPs, $Z=$ 3.40, $b=$ .48, $F(1,353)=$ 8.40, $p$ <.05. For Black employees, although there is no significant effect of worker-supervisor status similarity on POI, as DCP increases, the effect trends positively. Because it was assumed more favorable DCPs would strengthen rather than weaken effects, H6b was not supported (see Figure 4).
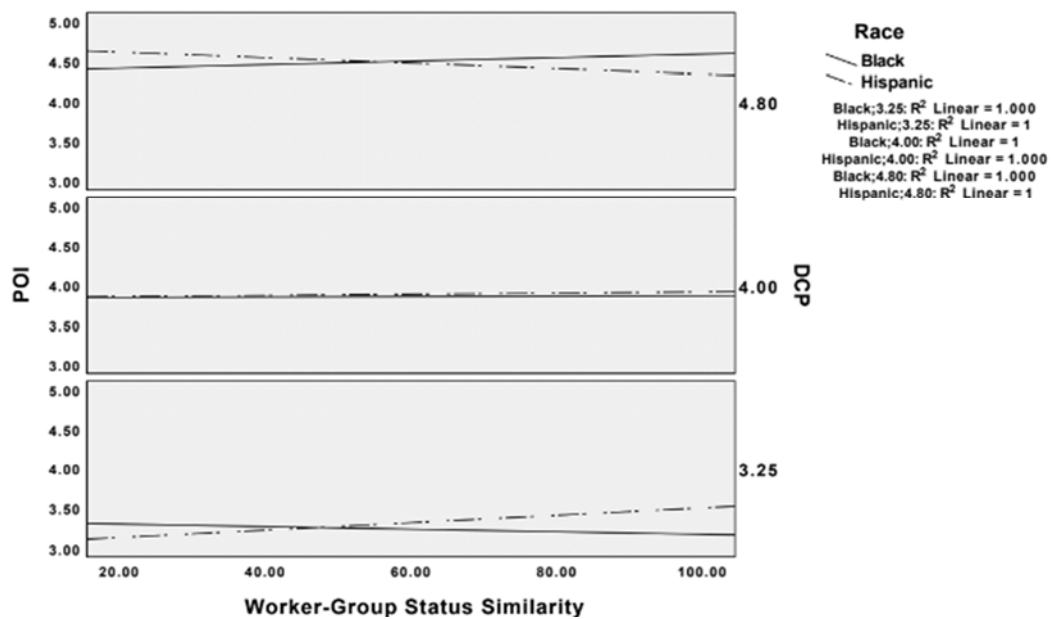


Figure 4. The Conditional Effect of Worker-Supervisor Status Similarity on Perceived Organizational Investment as a Function of DCPs

**Results from Women of Color Research Question**

To test the research question listed in Appendix B, a moderated mediation analysis was conducted using the same custom model in Hayes'(2013) PROCESS that was used to perform all hypotheses. The only difference in model inputs involved the coding of the race variable. To examine the experiences of women of color, Asian women were included in the sample along with Hispanic and Black female respondents. Regardless of the social status ascribed to individuals on the basis of race, it was speculated that all women of color may have unique workplace experiences due to the intersectional nature of their identities. Therefore, women from these three racial groups were assessed.

Conditional direct relationships between worker-group racial similarity and retention and worker-group gender similarity and retention were observed. There was no direct relationship found between worker-group racial similarity and retention, $b$= .01, $SE$= .01, $p$= .65, CI [-.02, .03]. There were also no differences observed among race. Similarly, there was no relationship between worker-supervisor racial similarity and retention, $b$= .27, $SE$= 1.27, $p$=.83, CI [-2.22, 2.76]. Additionally, relationships between gender similarity and retention were also examined. There was no relationship found between worker-group gender similarity and retention, $b$= .00, $SE$= .01, $p$= .92, CI [-0.02, .02] and no differences seen among races. There was also no significant relationship found between worker-supervisor gender similarity and retention, $b$= -.47, $SE$= .75, $p$=.53, CI [-1.94, 1.00]. These null findings also suggest there were no differences among racial groups.

For Hispanic women reporting low levels of diversity climate perceptions (DCPs), there was a weak positive conditional indirect effect of worker-group racial similarity on retention through POI, $Z= 3.40$, $b= .0048$, CI [.00, .01]. However, there was no conditional indirect effect for Black or Asian women at any level of DCPs or for Hispanic women at median or high levels of DCPs. Additionally, there were no conditional indirect effects of worker-supervisor racial similarity on retention through POI. Lastly, there were no conditional indirect effects of worker-group gender similarity or worker-supervisor gender similarity on retention through POI for Black, Hispanic nor Asian women at any level of DCPs.

A test of the research question did yield some interesting results regarding the role of diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) as a moderator. The magnitude of the moderation of DCPs on the effect of worker-group racial similarity on POI depends on race. This explains .6% of the variance in POI. The conditional effect of worker-group racial similarity on POI is significant at low levels of DCPs for Hispanic women, $Z= 3.40$, $b= .0046$, $SE= .00$, $t(435)= 2.05$, $p <.05$. This suggests increased DCPs weaken the conditional effect of worker-group racial similarity on POI (see Figure 5). Figure 6 shows that at low levels of DCPs, there was also a positive conditional direct effect of worker-supervisor racial similarity on POI for Hispanic women, $Z= 3.42$, $b= .36$, $SE=.16$, $t(346)= 2.22$, $p <.05$.
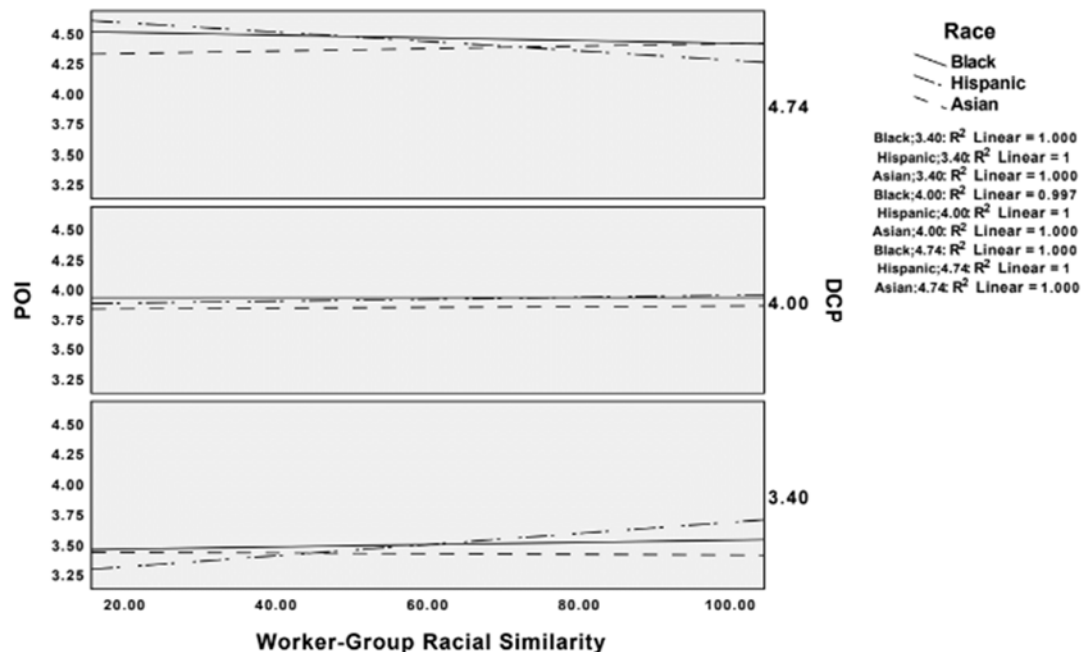
Figure 5. The Conditional Effect of Worker-Group Racial Similarity on Perceived Organizational Investment as a Function of DCPs for WoC
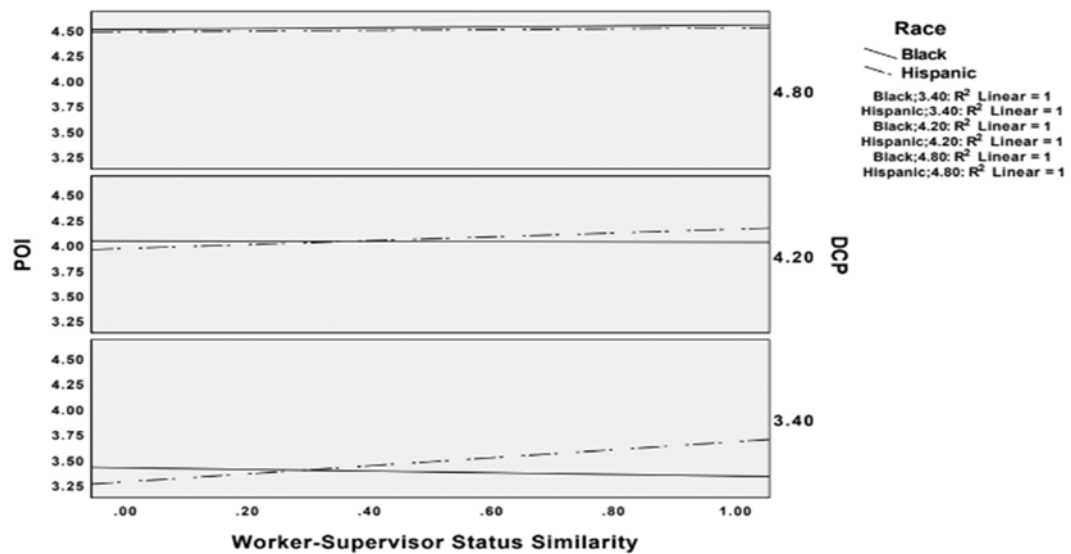


Figure 6. The Conditional Direct Effect of Worker-Supervisor Racial Similarity on Perceived Organizational Investment as a Function of DCPs for WoC

Lastly, diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) were also tested as a moderator for the conditional direct effect of worker-group gender similarity on perceived organization investment (POI) and for worker-supervisor gender similarity on POI. Differences between the three groups of women of color were also assessed. There were no conditional direct effects of gender similarity on POI through DCPs for any of the women.

These results shed light on some of the ways in which women of color respond to the contextual factors in their workplace environments. While an exploration of direct relationships showed no significant findings, the examination of conditional direct and indirect effects revealed perceived organizational investment (POI) and diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) play a role to some extent in impacting women of color's workplace experiences and outcomes. Further implications for the findings are discussed in the following section.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

**<u>Discussion of Findings</u>**

This study represents one of the first relational demography studies to identify

ways that racial and status similarity to others impact individual workplace attitudes and

outcomes. Relational demography theory posits that with greater demographic similarity

to work-group members, more positive attitudes and outcomes will result. Additionally,

while prior empirical studies examine how racial similarities between an individual and

members of his or her work group or supervisor affect retention, many omit the

mechanisms through which these relationship exist. Most other studies also do not

consider the role of status, a social construct often ascribed to individuals based on racial

group identification. Therefore, the goal of the research presented was to develop and test

a model that gave further explanation for how worker-group and worker-supervisor

demographic similarities influence workplace attitudes and outcomes. With the inclusion

of psychological constructs not previously studied and considering contextual factors,

key findings and implications for today's diverse workforce were drawn.

While current relational demography research provides evidence to support

demographic similarity reduces turnover, findings from the current study show that

demographic similarity affects members of various racial groups differently. Results of

the study also suggest there are boundary conditions for which similarity impacts

employee attitudes and behaviors. Racial, status, and gender similarity to others did not

on their own significantly impact employee retention. When levels of diversity climate

perceptions (DCPs) were considered, however, similarity's effects on perceived

organizational investment (POI) and retention were evident. Interestingly, these effects were most often significant for the Hispanic respondents in the sample only. Further discussion and possible rationale for these findings are discussed below.

**The Role of Context**

*Hispanic Employees in Work Groups*

The purpose of the current study was to evaluate how racial and status similarities interact with individual perceptions to influence retention. Prior to the current study, relational demography studies drew conclusions about the nature of direct relationships without further examining the mechanisms through which the relationships exist. For example, Zatzick and colleagues (2003) argued that a greater proportion of same race others in one's work group should be positively related to retention due to greater perceptions of advancement, however, their model did not include this construct as a mediator. The current study included a similar construct, perceived organizational investment (POI), to assess the potential of indirect effects.

Results from several analyses revealed that there were numerous conditional effects found for Hispanic respondents. While there was no conditional indirect effect of worker-group racial similarity on retention through POI for Black employees, there was a positive significant interaction relationship for Hispanic employees at low levels of diversity climate perceptions (DCPs). The lack of significant indirect effects found for Hispanic employees who perceived more favorable diversity climates suggests the mediating effect of POIs disappears as Hispanic employees' perceptions of their diversity climate become more positive. The same was observed for the effect of worker-group status similarity on retention through POI; DCPs influenced the impact of worker-group

status similarity on retention. The current study's initial hypotheses was that with a more favorable diversity climate, both worker-group racial similarity and worker-group status similarity would interact with POI to positively influence retention. The rationale behind this assumption was that if one's perception of the diversity climate was favorable, that perception would be compounded with the positive attitudes of being among similar others, resulting in even greater perceptions of organizational investment. Perceived investment would then positively influence employee retention. However, it seems that worker-group racial similarity and worker-group status similarity both lose their effect when diversity climate indicators, such as valuing diverse perspectives, contributions, and knowledge, signal a favorable climate. Perhaps it is the case that in favorable climates, Hispanic employees don't consider their work group composition when determining whether they'll stay or leave, but they *are* more attentive to worker-group similarity when climate is less favorable. A study conducted by Gonzalez & DeNisi (2009) found similar results; Hispanics were more likely to quit when in groups with dissimilar others and under conditions of adverse diversity climates. There was no effect of similarity on intent when DCPs were favorable. These researchers concluded that adverse DCPs may trigger demographic identity salience for disadvantaged groups in contexts where they are outnumbered by dissimilar others (Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009). The current findings also lend support for this argument.

Moreover, the findings from testing the conditional direct effects of similarity on POI at levels of DCPs show that for Hispanic employees, worker-group similarity, with respect to both race and status, was positively associated with POI at low levels of DCPs, but that the association was negative under high levels of DCPs. This suggests Hispanic

employees may react negatively to the heightened attention to diversity (ie., high diversity climate) when in already diverse work groups. There may be a concern of limited opportunities for oneself due to more people of color likely to reap benefits (e.g. attention, advancement opportunities, career guidance, etc.) in an environment focused on diversity. It is also possible that these individuals feel their placement in groups with similar others is solely due to their social identity or the organization's image and not because they are valued (D.A. Thomas & Ely, 2001).

A study of relational demography conducted by Riordan and Shore, (1997) found unique results for the Hispanic respondents in their sample as well. When placed in work groups comprised mostly of people of color, Hispanic respondents perceived lower levels of productivity and were less committed than those who were in groups that were 50/50 people of color and White. While DCPs were not accessed, the organization from which the sample was drawn was racially diverse, with people of color comprising roughly 35% of individuals in the sample. Therefore, a similar rationale for the negative relationship between similarity and attitudes can be applied here. When greater emphasis is placed on diversity, and as the percentage of people of color in one's immediate surrounding is increasing, it is possible that Hispanic employees may feel other group members of color are a competitive threat (Riordan & Shore, 1997; Zatzick et al., 2003).

It is also important to note here that Hispanic employees in the current study can refer to individuals who may racially identify as White or Black, but who ethnically identify as Hispanic. In the current study, if an individual identified as Hispanic, they were categorized by their ethnicity and not by their racial identity. In other words, not all Hispanic people identify as people of color. This substitution of ethnicity for racial

identity could have had implications for the current findings. Having a salient characteristic that welcomes more favorable stereotypes and treatment than what is given to individuals easily identified as people of color may influence one's self-perception about their relative position in the power hierarchy. Hispanic employees who racially identify as White may react negatively due to feeling that working with people of color is working with dissimilar others. This assumption may explain the negative effects of a greater percentage of people of color in one's group on POI at high levels of DCPs. It may also explain the positive effects when in less favorable diversity climates.

While future research is needed to further uncover the complexities of these relationships, and although all effects in the current study were very weak, it is still evident here that context is important in understanding the boundary conditions in which the effects of demographic similarity exist for Hispanic employees. It is also possible that racial identity is a bigger contributor to these unique findings.

### Black Employees in Work Groups

In contrast to what relational demography theory would suggest, there was no significant effect of racial nor status similarity on perceived organizational investment (POI) or retention regardless of context for Black employees. While diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) at low and high levels played a role in the relationships between demographic similarity and retention through perceived investment for Hispanic employees, it had little influence on the workplace experiences for Blacks. Racial nor status similarity to others in one's work group affected POI across levels of DCPs. Additionally, worker-group similarity had no impact on retention through perceived investment at any level of DCPs. There are a few potential explanations for the lack of

significant findings. While this may suggest the need for a greater sample of Black

employees, other potential explanations for the null findings are worth mentioning.

One reason for the lack of similarity effects on perceived investment and retention

across levels of DCPs may involve the issue of racial identity development. Racial

identity theory describes the idea of a group being integral to one's self concept

(Chrobot-Mason & K. M. Thomas, 2002; Hoggs & Abrams, 1998); it assumes a person's

self-concept is depicted greatly by his or her categorization into a particular racial group

(Phinney, 1992). Racial identity development has been found to play a role in people of

color's workplace attitudes, as it has been shown to be positively related to their

endorsement of organizational cues and messages that suggest an appreciation of and

value in diversity (McKay et al., 2007). This may suggest that individuals high in racial

identity may prefer and positively react to a positive diversity climate and being among

similar others. Likewise, individuals less developed in their racial identity may be less

affected by their contextual environment or may attend less to the racial composition of

their work groups or relationships. Because not all Black employees are alike (nor are

members a part of other groups), there are likely variations among them with respect to

racial group identification. These potential differences may have implications for their

attitudes about their workplace environment (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002). While

racial identity was not measured in the current study, it is arguably an important unknown

that could have influenced the study's findings.

Lastly, perhaps no level of DCPs affected work group similarity's influence on

POI, because worker-group similarity is not a major determinant in the experiences of

members of this group. Riordan and Shore (1997) also found no relationship between

demographic composition of a Black employee's work group and advancement opportunities (similar to investment perceptions) and suggested Black employees may use the larger labor force as a determinant of advancement opportunities. For example, if Black employees are not well represented in work groups due to their low percentage make up in the organization, they may draw upon their larger network of similar others beyond their work group members. Connections with similar others across multiple work streams and levels may lend more insight into one's perceived investment, perceptions of advancement opportunities, and subsequently, retention (Ibarra, 1995).

### Worker-Supervisor Relationships

While there were several conditional effects of worker-group racial and status similarity for Hispanic employees, worker-supervisor similarity had minimal effects on employee attitudes and behaviors regardless of context and regardless of racial identification. Of the four hypothesis tests examining the role of contextual factors, there were two positive conditional direct effects of worker-supervisor status similarity on POI at low and median levels of diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) for Hispanic employees. Being similar with respect to status to one's supervisor increased individual attitudes about perceived investment, but only when the organization's value for diversity was not highly felt. Similar to the findings from examining the effects of worker-group similarity for Hispanic employees, DCPs introduce boundary conditions for how worker-supervisor similarities impact attitudes and outcomes.

Having a supervisor of the same race or a supervisor of color showed no conditional indirect effects on retention through perceived organizational investment (POI) at any level of diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) for Hispanics nor Blacks.

Similarity- attraction theory would suggest that the presence of a similar other in a leadership position may warrant a worker of color to experience greater feelings of attraction and have an easier time integrating due to the expectation of increased opportunity that is to come of the connection. Similarly, D.A. Thomas (1999) argues that Black leaders are more likely to provide access to networks and resources to low positioned Black workers and increase their likelihood for success. Therefore, the nonsignificant findings contradict the assumption and theory that suggests greater similarity to those in higher positions contributes to more positive perceptions, which in turn is likely to lead to positive outcomes, such as employee retention. Again, the lack of significant findings may be contributable to the dearth of Black and Hispanic employees in leadership positions in the organization from which the sample was extracted. Inadequate statistical power may have influenced the findings, and thus, future research with a larger sample of supervisors of color is needed.

Another rationale for the lack of significant effects of worker-supervisor similarity centers around the idea that workers of color in same-race or same-status relationships are likely to share their supervisor with multiple others (K.M Thomas et al., 2019). Roughly 15% of the supervisors in the sample are people of color. Furthermore, these few leaders of color are likely sharing their resources, such as time, attention, insight, and social networks, with all their subordinates. This has implications for the impact of worker-supervisor similarities on retention through perceived organizational investment. With limited access to supervisors of color, and also sharing them among work-group members, including the other work group members of color, the effect of being in a same-race or same-status worker-supervisor relationship on perceptions of

investment may be small, regardless of DCPs. They may feel having a similar supervisor may not mean they're receiving investments, because their supervisor has to distribute resources to others, including other people of color, which could decrease one's chances of filling one of the few leadership positions accessible for people of color. A worker of color may also feel having a similar supervisor does little to help one's career growth, because few people of color are in leadership positions, leaving only room for a few. Regardless of context, this sentiment may be felt.

Lastly, the length of time that a worker-supervisor dyad has been established may play a role in how much of an impact similarity has on attitude and outcomes. Research suggests that for individuals who have spent more time together, and thus have shared more information and built a stronger interpersonal connection, the less demographic diversity matters. Psychological similarities are then more influential than surface-level demographic commonalities (Harrison et al., 1998). If Black or Hispanic employees have held the same supervisor for a long period of time, this may have impacted findings. Further information regarding the dyad relationships in the sample is needed to better understand potential reasons for these null effects.

**Relational Demography Direct Effects**

*Lack of Effects of Worker-Group Similarity*

A few hypotheses predicted that similarities with members of one's work group would have a positive direct impact on retention. None of these direct effect hypotheses were supported, which comes as a surprise due to previous studies finding direct relationships between demographic similarity and retention (Zatzick et al., 2003). Potential reasons for the lack of significant findings are discussed below.

It is possible that in a large healthcare organization in which people of color are largely underrepresented relative to the workforce participation of people of color, there may be low expectation of having similar others, with respect to race and status in one's work group. In a previous study conducted by Zatzick and colleagues (2003), the researchers found there to be a direct relationship between worker-group similarity and retention, such that greater racial similarity was related to lower turnover. Their sample consisted of people of color employed at a large service organization, which happens to be a setting where people of color are often disproportionately represented (BLS, 2019; Grandey, 2018). In environments where people of color are underrepresented, such as in a large corporate healthcare organization, workers of color may be less affected by work group demographics because they expect to work with dissimilar others. Individuals may not be hyper attentive, and therefore influenced, because the homogenous setting is typical. Without an expectation for racial and status similarity, working alongside dissimilar others on its own may not impact individual attitudes or behaviors.

Additionally, the current study assumes work-group members, defined as those reporting to the same supervisor, have greater contact with one another than do workers not connected through supervisor assignment. Similarity- attraction theory suggests that when this interaction is between similar others, pleasant workplace attitudes and behaviors may arise, such as workplace satisfaction, feelings that the organization values people of color, cooperation, willingness to communicate, commitment, and performance (Byrne, 196; Ibarra, 1995; Zatzick et al., 2003). The relationships likely to form with similar others in this way could lead to attraction to the group and organization, thus influencing one's decision to remain (Zatzick et al., 2003). However, when individuals of

color are regularly interacting with dissimilar others, they may experience feelings of otherness and out-group membership due to the natural connectedness of others in the group with racial commonalities. They may also be subject to tokenism and may involuntarily take on the role of being a representative of all members of their race due to their salient difference. Because there is no information available to better understand the level of contact between work group members, the assumptions that form the basis of these theories are difficult to confirm in the current study. It may be that work group members have a varied level of contact or perhaps not all work group members are ever together at one time. This scenario may impact the relevance and importance of work group demographics for people of color. If there is minimal to no contact with some group members or with the entire group at any given time, individual attitudes may be influenced by factors other than salient characteristics, as was seen when contextual factors were assessed.

Relational demography research has focused not only on the effects of having same-race others in one's work group, but a few studies focused on people of color having other people of color in their work relationships. Zatzick and colleagues (2003) found an increase of other people of color in one's group and an increase of other people of color one level above one's own level did not significantly affect employee retention. For the current study, this type of comparison was drawn to depict status similarity. The experiences of and attitudes held towards Black and Hispanic individuals in the U.S. are both a result of and a continued influence for the lower ascribed status members of these two racial groups are assigned relative to their White counterparts. Other people of color, such as Asians, are perceived more favorable and have fewer negative stereotypes than

people of color who identify as or are perceived to be Black or Hispanic (Alvarez et al., 2009). Because of the shared experiences with prejudice and discrimination between Black and Hispanic employees, there was expected to be a positive relationship between worker-group status similarity and retention and worker-supervisor status similarity and retention. The presence of other people of color in one's group and in leadership positions could suggest to a person of color that the organization values individuals like them. However, the absence of a significant relationship between worker-group status similarity and retention and worker-supervisor status similarity and retention does not lend support to this assumption.

A potential reason for the lack of significant direct effects is that the assumed shared experiences between Black and Hispanic workers may be more nuanced than originally thought. While members of both groups are negatively stereotyped and marginalized in general society, and are underrepresented in many industries, the presence of other people of color outside of one's own race may not on its own have much bearing on one's decision to remain with an organization. Status similarity may not signal the belonging or attraction that would influence retention, but instead mediators and boundary conditions for the relationship may be key to uncovering this complex relationship, as seen for Hispanic employees.

Lastly, there may be other determinants of retention that matter more to workers of color than worker-group similarity, such as experience with racism and discrimination (Nunez et al., 2009), diversity climate perceptions (McKay et al., 2007), employment alternatives, and social networks outside of one's work group. Workers of color deal with racism and discrimination (Chrobot-Mason, 2013), such as receiving low compensation

relative to their White counterparts, hitting barriers to climbing the career ladder

(Friedman & Holtom, 2002), and being the targets of microaggressions and overt forms

of prejudice and racism. Because of the prevalence of employment discrimination and

injustice, with a greater amount of literature focused on the Black worker experience,

workers of color may be more attentive to their treatment in the workplace more so than

their representation. A concern for equity and just treatment may overshadow being

surrounded by similar others. Similarly, although diversity climate perceptions (DCPs)

were assumed to moderate the effect of worker-group similarity on POI, DCPs may be a

greater contributor than similarity. Lastly, employment alternatives may matter more to

people of color than worker-group racial and status similarity. Oftentimes, an individual

who has exited the workforce and wishes to reenter, relies on social capital for future job

placement (Massey, 2007; McDonald, 2011). Compared to members of other racial

groups, Black and Hispanic workers have fewer social capital resources, thus making it

more difficult to find employment opportunities (McDonald, 2011). Because people of

color who have exited an organization run the risk of long terms of unemployment,

evidenced in higher unemployment rates of Black and Hispanic workers compared to

members of other groups, they may choose to remain with their organizations regardless

of other factors.

As noted, there are several potential determinants of employee retention that

could explain the null effects of worker-group similarity. The work place experiences of

people of color are dynamic, which warrants further investigation into factors influencing

one's decision to remain with an organization.

*Lack of Direct Effects of Worker-Supervisor Similarity*

The findings from testing the effects of racial and status similarities with one's supervisor showed worker-supervisor similarity does not significantly affect retention. Worker-supervisor racial similarity was assumed to be an indicator of retention for people of color because of the assumption that individuals would feel valued by the organization due to seeing similar others in levels above one's own, in positions that carry with them power, influence and resources. However, that assumption did not hold true in the current study; no relationship was found. Zatzick and colleagues (2003) tested a similar hypothesis and found like results. The percentage of racially similar others one level above one's own position did not affect employee retention. This finding may suggest other factors play a role in any positive outcomes that would result from worker-supervisor similarity.

Infrequency of conversation and interaction between supervisor and worker may be one factor that would contribute to insignificant findings. If there is minimal communication or exposure to one's supervisor, any positive effects due to relational demography may be lost. Another explanation for this finding is that people of color hold very few leadership positions in today's corporate organizations, which is evident by the low representation of senior leaders of color in the current sample (n=3 for Hispanic VPs and higher; n=3 for Black VPs and higher). Few leaders of color may also suggest workers of color rely more on leaders other than, or along with, one's immediate supervisor. This was evidenced in D.A. Thomas' (1990) study, which found that a large portion of Black workers' mentor-mentee relationships are with leaders outside of one's immediate leader. Therefore, worker-supervisor racial and status similarity may hold

little power in affecting retention on its own. A greater sample of Black and Hispanic leaders may be needed to better examine the effects of same race supervisor-worker dyads on retention.

Hypothesis 2b examined the effect of having a supervisor of color on retention and found no relationship. In this case, perhaps dissimilarities in race prevent recognition or assumptions of shared experiences. Literature suggests that in mentoring relationships, career and psychosocial support and multicultural competence are all needed to properly care for, educate, train, and develop the mentee (Alvarez et al., 2009; D.A. Thomas, 1990). This may leave it challenging to connect with someone who may not be able to lend the psychosocial support or have the ability to understand one's culture and provide guidance from a place of relatedness. Although Black and Hispanic individuals may share low social status compared to their White and Asians counterparts, their potential differences in cultural backgrounds may create barriers to the supervisor being able to provide the appropriate psychosocial support needed. Therefore, the expected effects of relational demography would not be realized. These factors need to be considered when examining the role of status and shared experiences for people of color.

**Dissecting the Experiences of Women of Color**

While the current study's main focus is to examine the relationship between racial and status similarity and retention for people of color generally, the experiences of women of color are also worth investigating. A research question was posed to uncover how worker-group and worker-supervisor racial and gender similarity impact perceived investment and employee retention for these groups of women. Prior relational demography studies provide evidence to support that racial and gender similarity to

others affect attitudes and outcomes for people of color and women. The current study poses the question of whether women of color have unique or similar experiences. The analysis performed in pursuit of answering this research question revealed contextual factors play a key part in the relationships between racial and gender similarity, perceived organizational investment (POI), and diversity climate perceptions (DCPs). Although there was no evidence to support a direct relationship between racial or gender similarity and employee retention, the inclusion of POI and DCPs in the statistical model yielded significant conditional effects for both Black and Hispanic women.

Due to the growing number of scholars taking an intersectional approach to understanding workplace issues, a stream of diversity research has developed over the years that focuses on the workplace experiences of women of color. However, relational demography studies do not seem to be following the same trend, as there are few studies exploring the effects of group composition for women of color. While relational demography studies report effects of racial similarities (Chatman & Spataro, 2005, Gonzalez & DeNisi, 2009, Hall et al., 2018, Tsui et al., 1991) and gender similarities (Dasgupta et al., 2014, Dennehy & Dasgupta, 2017, Lemoine et al., 2016, Yang et al., 2019), the inter-relationship of race and gender has been largely neglected. The current study's findings may lend insight into how those with multiple marginalized identities respond to their structural environments. Researching the relationship between demographic similarity and outcomes for women of color may push the needle forward and help engage with how we think about "similarities" when understanding group and dyad dynamics. For women of color, who are doubly marginalized (K.M. Thomas, 2019),

it is also worth investigating if gender or racial similarity to others has greater impact over the other. Findings from the analysis provide a complicated answer.

**The Role of Context**

*Hispanic Women in Work-Groups*

Although the absence of significant direct effects did not help to understand how racial and gender similarities differentially impact the workplace experiences of women of color, contextual changes in the environment revealed interesting findings. Racial similarities did seem to influence the attitudes of Hispanic women, but only in certain contexts. When diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) were low, worker-group racially similarity did influence retention through perceived organizational investment (POI). Similar to how Hispanic employees in general responded, Hispanic women were less impacted by racial similarity when DCPs were viewed as moderate and high, but were positively affected by a connection to racially similar others when in low DCPs. This may suggest women in this racial group prefer being around similar others if their perception is that the organization is not particularly keen to hearing the perspectives of diverse individuals or valuing their knowledge and contributions. In low climates, not only did racial similarity to others indirectly positively influence retention, it also increased perceptions of investment. Hispanic women may feel that in low DCPs, if there could be racially similar others in an environment where diversity is not championed, this must imply a personal investment on the part of the organization and supervisor. On the other hand, if the diversity climate is high and there is a growing number of racially similar others, this increase may be indicative of the organization simply flooding the workplace with Hispanic women to show signs of a presence of diversity. This presence

may not equate to investment or value, however, and may be perceived as a competitive

disadvantage for Hispanic women.

### Black Women in Work-Groups

Similar to the racial similarity findings for Black employees, there were no

significant effects of racial nor gender similarity on perceived investment or retention for

Black women. Diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) did impact similarity's effect on

retention through POI for Hispanic women, but the same influence was not seen for

Black women. The unique double minority position Black female workers occupy may

shed light on the absence of significant findings.

Although the experiences of women of color are often cited, it is critical that an

intersectional lens be used to examine the women within this heterogeneous social group.

The documented experiences of Black women suggest they have a difficult time

operating and advancing in the workplace compared to other racial minorities (Holder et

al., 2015) and are victims of negative stereotypes that negatively impact their workplace

relationships, such as being portrayed as crazy, angry and incompetent (Griffin, 2012;

Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008; Rosette et al., 2008). Black women also report feelings of

invisibility due to being ignored and excluded (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). Lastly,

Black women are often the least represented in leadership positions in comparison to

their White and male counterparts (K.M. Thomas et al., 2013; K.M. Thomas et al., 2019).

They are perceived as unqualified and unprofessional, damaging both their image and the

potential for key relationships that would carry with them resources and further

opportunities for development (K.M. Thomas et al., 2019). Therefore, having a Black

woman or female supervisor may not warrant perceptions of investment due to the likely

chances that these connections aren't powerful enough to garner access to promotion opportunities and other preferences the Black female worker may have. Regardless of the climate for diversity or an increased presence of similar others, if Black women are aware that an increase of women of color in the workplace, and in one's work group or worker-supervisor dyad, may not alter how they are treated or viewed, racial and gender similarity may have little impact on perceptions of career development opportunities or retention. Instead, this group of women may lean more on their external support systems, they may practice self-empowerment strategies, or they may utilize other tools that could have greater influence on their experiences (Holder et al., 2015). Numerical representation may not be enough to affect their attitudes of outcomes.

### *Asian Women in Work-Groups*

While the results of testing the research questions helped to uncover answers for Hispanic women, there were also no significant effects for the third group, Asian women. Null results across all tests for this group of women may suggest their workplace experiences as women of color differ from those assumed to have lower status on the basis of race. Asian women, a group assumed to be more similar to White women than the other women of color in the study, may be unaffected by the presence of other Asian women or other women of color due to contrasting stereotypes and workplace treatment. It is possible that the gender and racial composition of one's work group is not critical, because of the positive stereotypes, such as high intelligence and performance, ascribed to this group of women. Additionally, stereotype threat, likely to arise when one is among dissimilar others of more perceived power and status, may not surface if one's identity (e.g. that of a model minority) is favored (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). More

literature is needed that includes Asian women in the assessment of other women of color to further dissect the experiences of this group of women and within group differences as well.

### *Worker-Supervisor Relationships*

While worker-group similarity had an impact on attitudes and outcomes across levels of DCPs, worker-supervisor similarity was not influential in understanding experiences for any of the groups of women. Supervisors of color made up a substantially small number of the sample; therefore the lack of significant findings could be an issue of statistical power. Frequency of interaction was also assumed, but not known. In the case that worker-supervisor interaction is infrequent, similarity effects may be minimal. Additionally, if female supervisors of color are also seen as marginalized and likely experience racial and gendered discrimination at work, workers may know to rely on other resources to shape favorable workplace environment for themselves.

### Relational Demography Direct Effects

### *Lack of Direct Effects of Worker-Group and Worker-Supervisor Relationships*

Tests of direct effect relationships revealed that for women of color, racial and gender similarities between oneself and others in either a group or in a worker-supervisor dyad did not directly influence employee retention. The absence of a direct influence of similarity conflicts with relational demography literature, but it leaves room for dissecting the complex work lives of these groups of women. Like studies investigating the workplace experiences of people of color, studies focused on women of color found that these groups of workers often rely on coping and emotional labor strategies to combat the unwanted feelings and attitudes they experience at work as doubly

marginalized employees (Holder et al., 2015). The coping mechanisms these women often employ are confiding in loved ones and community, relying on one's spirituality, and overexerting oneself in work (Bacchus, 2008). Women of color are also likely to use such strategies and others when in predominantly White male work environments, such as in the corporate setting of which the current study is based. In the study, women of color make up only 18% of the individuals in the sample, which may help to explain the lack of significant findings as well. Therefore, perhaps the racial and gender composition of one's group and worker-supervisor dyad is insignificant to women of color here, because instead they are focused on managing the environment they're in. It is also possible that worker-supervisor similarity matters little if it is known that women of color make up a small percentage of those in leadership positions. Because of the understanding that having a similar supervisor may not be sufficient for career success, other resources may have more of an impact on attitudes and outcomes, such as quality of one's social network, employment alternatives, and connectedness of one's supervisor.

These results for women of color shed a small light on their workplace lives and in what contexts they fair best. One's experience as a person of color belonging to a particular racial category may intermingle with one's experience as a woman. The role of intersectionality is evident here, but much more is left to be discovered to better understand the workplace lives and perspectives of individuals within these groups.

## Implications for Research and Practice

Relational demography research has sought to uncover the effects of racial and gender similarity on the workplace experiences and outcomes of people of color. However, in previous research, scholars often neglected to use an intersectional approach

to understanding how both race and gender interrelate, resulting in a unique experience for women of color. Previous studies either examined the impact of racial similarity for people or color or gender similarity for women, but did not isolate women of color, a population of individuals with multiple marginalized identities. The current study sought to examine any potential effects using an intersectional approach.

The current study is also one of the first of its nature to investigate the mechanisms through which racial and gender similarity with one's work group and supervisor affect employee retention for people of color. While previous studies found racial similarity to have a positive direct relationship with retention, the current study suggests the positive effects of similarity occurs for certain groups and only in certain boundary conditions.

Diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) were found to alter the relationships found in the study, such that low levels of DCPs seemed to be critical for the majority of the relationships found for Hispanic employees. This signals that one's contextual environment does matter, and differentially among groups of employees. Therefore, researchers and practitioners should work to find the optimal environment for not just people of color in general, but they should consider the preferences of members of different racial groups separately, and assess the women of color in these groups as well. It is also important that practitioners not solely focus on placing people of color in work groups with one another, but the climate for diversity and racial and gender composition should be considered together to evoke positive attitudes and outcomes for both the employee and organization.

Additionally, evidence has now been found to support the notion that individuals cannot be clumped together when examining the effects of their demographic similarity to others on their workplace experiences. In this study, racial and status similarity affected the experiences of Hispanic employees across various levels of DCPs, but there were no effects for Black employees. It was also evidenced that at low levels of DCPs, racial similarity positively impacted retention through POI for Hispanic women, but no group was affected by gender similarity. This means that future research should not only consider differences between people of color from various racial groups, but also the characteristics within groups (e.g., racial identity, gender identity, and skin complexion) that may influence individuals' perception of their environment, and subsequently their behaviors. Future studies should also investigate the organizational context best suited for members of various groups.

Because the population of people of color in the workplace will continue to increase (Colella et al., 2017), it is imperative relational demography scholars employ an intersectional approach to understanding the workplace environments in which these groups of employees thrive. Those with multiple marginalized identities experience multiple forms of oppression, often played out at work. Therefore, it is important that practitioners are equipped with the knowledge and tools to improve upon and implement diversity related practices and policies, while also attending to the organization of work groups to emphasize the organization's commitment to and investment in its diverse talent. Without using an intersectional lens to examine how one's multiple identities affect attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes, diversity science and relational demography research will not effectively inform organizational practices.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

Like other studies, the current study was not free of limitations. First, some of the data are cross-sectional in nature and was collected via a single organizational survey. Most of the variables were all collected at the same point in time using the Likert-type scale method. Therefore, it is possible common method bias occurred and inflated relationships (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To that point, relationships between study variables were examined, and were related in a way that is consistent with theoretical rationale, thereby minimizing the concern of common method bias. Additionally, collection of the retention variable differed from that of other variables, as it was collected at a later date and was recorded by the organization's human resources department as opposed to being self-reported. This divergence in data collection methodology assuages some concern of common method bias as well. Future studies should control for this limitation by collecting data from multiple sources (e.g. interviews, peer reports, supervisor reports, etc.) and with temporal distance between variable measurement.

Second, the manner in which racial identity and ethnicity was recorded and coded from the organization's survey instrument results may have welcomed biases in the data. Individuals who selected Hispanic as their ethnicity and also selected a racial identity (e.g. Black or White) were only coded as Hispanic. In other words, those individuals whose ethnic background is Hispanic, but who self-identify as White, and therefore may also have workplace experiences similar to White European Americans, were included as people of color in the study. Therefore, people of color could have been overrepresented. This may also help to explain the negative effects an increase in people of color in one's work group had on retention at high levels of diversity climate perceptions (DCPs).

Future studies examining within race differences for Hispanic employees are needed to uncover potential differences among the people of color and non-people of color with this ethnic group.

This study was also conducted in a single healthcare organization, which could have affected the study's results in numerous ways. It is possible that the diversity climate perceptions (DCPs) were influenced by the organizational culture, reducing variation in responses. Although psychological climate was assessed, rather than organizational climate, individuals were arguably still evaluating the same workplace environment. Future research could examine the impact of similarity on outcomes given one's contextual environment (i.e., DCPs) across multiple organizations. Such an analysis could warrant stronger relationships between similarity (racial, status, and gender), DCPs, perceived organizational investment (POI), race, and retention for both racial groups and for all groups of women or color. Additionally, there was a very low turnover rate (4%) at this particular organization relative to others. This poses questions of external validity of the findings. The organization may have a unique culture that motivates 96% of its workforce to remain for at least two years and longer (retention data gathered two years after survey distribution). Future research across multiple organizations is needed to assess generalizability.

Another limitation was the use of a diversity climate perceptions scale and a perceived organizational support scale without measures of comparison to determine construct validity. To mitigate this issue, items were included on the scales in the study that were similar to those from validated scales in other diversity research (McKay et al., 2007; Weng & Elroy, 2012). Additionally, findings from the current study were

consistent with those from other studies that used diversity climate perceptions in a similar manner, both as a focal predictor and as a moderator. In the future, it would be worthwhile to examine whether the study's findings replicate for other diversity climate measures and for measures similar to perceived organizational investment.

## CONCLUSION

This article began with the proposal of a few relationships that could lead to a better understanding of how demographic similarity with others could lead to employee retention. Given previous relational demography research provides evidence that employees of color benefit from the presence of similar others at work, the current study sought to investigate the environments that appear optimal for these groups of workers, specifically Black and Hispanic workers. Study findings suggest that the answer to this question is complex, with one's contextual environment playing a critical role in understanding employee attitudes and behaviors. To this end, the results of the study also imply literature on women of color is not as accurate as previously assumed; further development is needed to continue unpacking the experiences of women within different racial groups.

Again, context was a major component to understanding similarity's effects for people of color. In fact, low levels of DCPs was necessary for any positive effects of similarity on outcomes. Specifically, Hispanic employees who reported low levels of DCPs and who were in work groups with racially and status similar others were retained more than those in groups with dissimilar others, because they perceived more organizational investment (POI). While these associations were positive at low levels of DCPs, there was a negative moderated effect of racial and status similarity on POI at high

levels of DCPs. Additionally, there were minimal worker-supervisor effects, but at low and median levels, DCP moderated the relationship between worker-supervisor status similarity and POI. Interestingly, all associations mentioned were only present for Hispanic employees.

The current study also sought to employ an intersectional approach to examine the influence of racial and gender similarities with others at work. Women of color were the focal group of interest given the likelihood that their belonging to multiple marginalized social groups shapes their workplace experiences, attitudes, and outcomes (Cole, 2009). It was evidenced that racial similarity had a larger impact than gender similarity, but only for Hispanic women. No effects were evidenced for neither Black nor Asian women. To this end, further examination all groups is needed to understand the key determinants of their experiences as double minorities in the workplace.

These findings and the relationships proposed in this study contribute to relational demography research and diversity science more broadly by uncovering findings not previously known until the focus was placed on women across racial groups. It also emphasizes the challenges that arise when grouping individuals based on socially constructed social categories, such as Hispanic or person of color. Being demographically similar to others may suggest to an individual of color that he or she is invested in, but not for all people of color and only across certain contexts. Therefore, greater intentionality and a consideration of the interplay between identity, power, and disadvantage should be utilized as scholars and practitioners continue to understand the workplace experiences of marginalized workers. To show they truly embrace diversity and wish to retain their diverse talent, organizations should foster a positive diversity

climate, mitigating employees' need to depend heavily on others to create an atmosphere in which they wish to remain. Doing so will benefit both the employees and ultimately the organization.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. List of Hypotheses and Results

| Hypotheses | Results |
|---|---|
| Hypothesis 1a: There will be a positive relationship between worker-group racial similarity and retention. | Not supported |
| Hypothesis 1b: There will be a positive relationship between worker-group status similarity and retention. | Not supported |
| Hypothesis 2a: There will be a positive relationship between worker-supervisor racial similarity and retention. | Not supported |
| Hypothesis 2b: There will be a positive relationship between worker-supervisor status similarity and retention. | Not supported |
| Hypothesis 3a: There will be a positive conditional indirect effect of worker-group racial similarity on retention through POI. | Not supported |
| Hypothesis 3b: There will be a positive conditional indirect effect of worker-group status similarity on retention through POI. | Not supported |
| Hypothesis 4a: Perceived organizational investment will mediate the positive relationship between worker-supervisor racial similarity and retention. | Not supported |
| Hypothesis 4b (H4b) predicted POI would mediate the relationship between a respondent having a manager of color and retention, such that the positive relationship between having a manager of color and retention would be due to POI. | Not supported |
| Hypothesis 5a: Diversity climate perceptions will moderate the relationship between worker-group racial similarity and perceived organizational investment, such that the relationship will be strengthened with more favorable climate perceptions and weakened when climate perceptions are less favorable. | Not supported |
| Hypothesis 5b: Diversity climate perceptions will moderate the relationship between worker-group status similarity and perceived organizational investment, such that the relationship will be strengthened with more favorable climate perceptions and weakened when climate perceptions are less favorable. | Not supported |
| Hypothesis 6a: Diversity climate perceptions will moderate the relationship between worker-supervisor racial similarity and perceived organizational investment, such that the relationship will be strengthened with more favorable climate perceptions and weakened when climate perceptions are less favorable. | Not supported |
| Hypothesis 6b: Diversity climate perceptions will moderate the relationship between worker-supervisor status similarity and perceived organizational investment, such that the relationship will be strengthened with more favorable climate perceptions and weakened when climate perceptions are less favorable. | Not supported |
| Hypothesis 7: Across all hypotheses above, race will moderate the expected relationships. | Partially supported |

Appendix B. Research Question

| Research Question | Results |
|---|---|
| What are the unique experiences of women of color at work? | |

Appendix C. Study Scale Items

| Scales in current study | Items from Comparable Scales |
|---|---|
| Diversity Climate Perceptions | |
| 1. Sufficient effort is made to get the opinions and thinking of people who work here.<br>2. My workgroup has a climate in which diverse perspectives are valued.<br>3. My immediate supervisor values my knowledge and contribution to the business.<br>4. I feel free to speak my mind.<br>5. My immediate supervisor treats employees with respect. | 1. Workgroup has a climate that values diverse perspectives (DCP; McKay, 2007)<br>2. Respect perspectives of people like me (DCP; McKay, 2007)<br>3. I think that diverse perspectives add value (DP; Mor Barak et al., 1998) |
| Perceived Organizational Investment | |
| 1. I have meaningful conversations with my immediate supervisor about my career development.<br>2. I can see a clear link between my work and the organization's goals and objectives.<br>3. I can achieve my career goals at my organization.<br>4. I have the opportunity to grow and develop at my organization. | 1. My head of department helps me to develop career plans.<br>2. The organization strongly considers my goals and values. (POS; Eisenberger et al., 1986)<br>3. My organization values my contributions (Eisenberger et al., 2002)<br>4. My present job moves me closer to my career goals (OCG; Weng & McElroy, 2012)<br>5. My present job encourages me to continuously gain new job-related skills (PCG; Weng & McElroy, 2012)<br>6. My present job is relevant to my career goals and vocational goals (CG; Weng et al., 2010) |

Appendix D. Additional Tables

| Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, and Kurtosis for People of Color | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | Mean | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis |
| Race | .55 | .50 | -.20 | .21 |
| Low status | 1 | 0 | | |
| DCP | 3.99 | .80 | -1.22 | 1.71 |
| POI | 3.85 | .82 | -.85 | .59 |
| Retention | 1.67 | .47 | -.72 | -1.49 |
| WGSS | 51.59 | 28.21 | .51 | -.93 |
| WGRS | 44.21 | 27.65 | .83 | -.37 |
| WSSS | .26 | .44 | 1.09 | -.82 |
| WSRS | .15 | .36 | 2.00 | 1.90 |
| Gender | .48 | .50 | .09 | -2.00 |
| Age | 44.34 | 10.01 | -.12 | -.74 |
| Level | 2.66 | .50 | -.96 | -.44 |
| Team Size | 8.89 | 10.15 | 2.52 | 6.66 |
| Tenure | 3.62 | .95 | -.26 | -.84 |
| WGGS | 44.95 | 30.49 | 1.00 | -.90 |
| WSGS | .57 | .50 | -.29 | -1.93 |
| N=378-532 | | | | |

Table 5. Correlation Table for People of Color Across all Study Variables

| Study variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Race | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. DCP | .030 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. POI | .029 | .759** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Retention | .005 | .200** | .216** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. WGSS | .161** | .044 | .039 | .040 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. WGRS | .200** | .062 | .051 | .072 | .888** | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. WSSS | .085 | -.102* | -.016 | -.003 | .154** | .118* | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 8. WSRS | .093 | -.112* | -.041 | -.033 | .068 | .075 | .707** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 9. Gender | -.101* | -.058 | -.005 | .024 | -.035 | -.010 | -.064 | .002 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 10. Age | -.013 | .036 | .038 | .527** | -.043 | -.001 | .022 | -.005 | .050 | 1 | | | | | |
| 11. Level | .067 | -.130** | -.135** | -.165** | -.012 | -.031 | .133** | .063 | .068 | -.079 | 1 | | | | |
| 12. Team Size | .226** | -.174** | -.109* | .080 | .014 | -.038 | .306** | .101* | -.068 | .158** | .284** | 1 | | | |
| 13. Tenure | .047 | .123** | .106* | .702** | .042 | .065 | .031 | .011 | -.006 | .612** | -.141** | .123** | 1 | | |
| 14. WGGS | -.122*** | -.015 | -.015 | -.035 | .057 | .060 | -.074 | -.031 | .617** | -.064 | .003 | -.030 | -.017 | 1 | |
| 15. WSGS | -.074 | .003 | -.004 | .066 | .070 | .059 | .042 | -.022 | -.162** | .029 | .010 | .051 | .047 | -.107* | 1 |

N= 378-532  *p<.05 level, **p<.001 level.

Table 6. Frequency Table for Key Variables for People of Color

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Race | Black | 240 | 45.1 | 45.1 |
| | Hispanic | 292 | 54.9 | 100 |
| Gender | Males | 278 | 52.3 | 52.3 |
| | Females | 254 | 47.7 | 100 |
| Level | Professional | 358 | 67.3 | 67.3 |
| | Mgr/Dir | 168 | 31.6 | 98.9 |
| | VP+ | 6 | 1.1 | 100 |
| Employment Status | Resignation | 176 | 33.1 | 33.1 |
| | Still Employed | 356 | 66.9 | 100 |

Table 7. Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, and Kurtosis for Women of Color

| Variable | Mean | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Low status | .54 | .50 | -.16 | -1.98 |
| DCP | 4.01 | .74 | -1.28 | 2.31 |
| POI | 3.88 | .76 | -.83 | .88 |
| Retention | 1.69 | .46 | -.83 | -1.31 |
| WGSS | 32.26 | 31.12 | .76 | -.38 |
| WGRS | 48.28 | 29.21 | .69 | -.81 |
| WSSS | .16 | .37 | 1.86 | 1.48 |
| WSRS | .24 | .43 | 1.25 | -.45 |
| Gender | 1 | 0 | | |
| Age | 45.50 | 9.98 | -.13 | -.64 |
| Level | 2.58 | .53 | -.72 | -.69 |
| Team Size | 7.89 | 9.41 | 2.62 | 7.08 |
| Tenure | 3.57 | .91 | -.30 | -.72 |
| WGGS | 66.65 | 23.94 | -.06 | -.91 |
| WSGS | .47 | .50 | .11 | -2.00 |

N=375-470

Table 8. Correlation Table for Women of Color Across all Study Variables

| Study variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Status | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. DCP | -.048* | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. POI | -.014 | .725** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Retention | .108** | .164** | .194** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. WGSS | .650** | -.020 | .014 | .110** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. WGRS | -.439** | .022 | -.007 | -.093** | -.348** | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. WSSS | .176** | -.059* | -.005 | .019 | .260** | -.095** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 8. WSRS | -.397** | .013 | -.002 | -.037 | -.316** | .451** | -.245** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 9. Gender | .041* | -.039 | .008 | .060** | .032 | -.029 | -.004 | -.020 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 10. Age | -.010 | .009 | .013 | .475** | .014 | -.027 | -.015 | .039 | .015 | 1 | | | | | |
| 11. Level | .089** | -.150** | -.134** | -.218** | .093** | .001 | .115** | -.083** | .047* | -.174** | 1 | | | | |
| 12. Team Size | .124** | -.099** | -.033 | .066** | .192** | -.175** | .211** | -.080** | -.026 | .134** | .250** | 1 | | | |
| 13. Tenure | .085** | .099** | .097** | .706** | .110** | -.071** | .021 | .021 | .033 | .561** | -.237** | .058** | 1 | | |
| 14. WGGS | .02 | -.02 | .01 | .06** | .05* | -.01 | -.01 | -.04 | .62** | -.01 | .01 | -.06** | .02 | 1 | |
| 15. WSGS | -.01 | -.01 | -.02 | .04 | .00 | .04 | .02 | .00 | -.20** | .04 | -.01 | .02 | .03 | -.13** | 1 |

N= 375-470 *p<.05 level, **p<.001 level.

Table 9. Frequency Table for Key Variables for Women of Color

| Variable | Category | Frequency | Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Race | Black | 128 | 27.2 | 27.2 |
|  | Hispanic | 126 | 26.8 | 54.0 |
|  | Asian | 216 | 46.0 | 100 |
| Gender | Males | 0 | 0 | 0 |
|  | Females | 470 | 100 | 100 |
| Level | Professional | 283 | 60.2 | 60.2 |
|  | Mgr/Dir | 178 | 37.9 | 98.1 |
|  | VP+ | 9 | 1.9 | 100 |
| Employment Status | Resignation | 145 | 30.9 | 30.9 |
|  | Still Employed | 325 | 69.1 | 100 |