

Perceptions of Support for Diversity and Turnover Intentions of Managers with Solo-Minority Status

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Solo-minority managers' (N = 150) perception of support for diversity (PSD) and turnover intentions were examined with survey data. Solos' PSD were negatively related to racial separation from supervisors and peers. Exclusivity of minority status moderated the relationship between solos' PSD and their turnover intentions. A stronger negative relationship between PSD and turnover intentions was observed for exclusive minority solos, managers who are the only racioethnic minority (i.e., nonwhite) than race-specific solos, managers who are the only member of their racioethnic classification in their peer group but have peers from other nonwhite racioethnic groups.

INTRODUCTION

In the midst of considerable demographic changes in the population, organizations are becoming increasingly focused on managing diversity as a means to gain competitive advantages through their human resources. However, the process of managing diversity is fraught with challenges (Gottfredson, 1992; Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003; Katz & Miller, 1988). One challenge facing organizations is promoting the success and retention of solo-minority employees, especially in management positions. A solo is one who is perceptually distinct from other group members with regard to a salient characteristic such as race (Craig & Feasel, 1998). The retention of solo-minority managers may affect the success of diversity initiatives by impacting diversity-related beliefs and attitudes within the organization and the organization's attractiveness to prospective employees. However, the difficult social situation faced by solos may hinder efforts to retain them. Solos' *perceptions of support for diversity* (PSD) are likely to be associated with their turnover intentions. In an attempt to better understand the retention of solo-minority managers, this research investigated aspects of the work environment likely to be associated with solos' PSD and the relationship between solos' PSD and their turnover intentions.

Solo-minority managers face a number of social difficulties beyond those presented by their job responsibilities. Pettigrew and Martin (1987) suggest that a number of factors have detrimental effects on the attitudes and performance of solos, including extreme expectations (both high and low), biased performance evaluations, and exaggerated stereotypes. The difficulties faced by solos are accentuated by their uniqueness as a minority. Distinctiveness makes social categorization on the basis of the solo's unique characteristic (e.g., race) more likely (Fiske, 1987). Attributional processes are also impacted by distinctiveness (Taylor & Fiske, 1978). For instance, the solo's performance deficits are more likely to be attributed to characteristics of his or her demographic group than to situational factors associated with his or her status as a solo (Pettigrew & Martin, 1987).

The present study investigated the impact of being a distinct minority on the experience of solo-minority managers. In particular, two levels of minority exclusivity of solos were investigated. *Exclusive minority solos*, managers who are the only racioethnic minority (i.e., nonwhite), represent an extreme level of demographic distinction amongst their peers. A less extreme level of distinction is represented by *race-specific solos*, managers who are the only member of their specific racioethnic classification in their peer group but have peers from other nonwhite racioethnic groups. This research investigated whether minority exclusivity moderates the relationship between solos' PSD and their turnover intentions. The current study also examined whether minority exclusivity moderates the strength of the relationships between solos' PSD and likely predictors of PSD, including race separation with coworkers (supervisor, subordinates, peers) and coworkers' *diversity value judgments*

Predictors of Solo-Minority Managers' PSD

A solo's PSD is likely to be associated with his or her ability to identify with other people in the organization. Two factors that may influence the social identification of solos were investigated: race separation with coworkers (supervisor, subordinates, peers) and coworkers' diversity value judgments. Harrison and Klein (2008) describe separation as differences among members of a social unit in terms of some attribute (e.g., tenure, attitudes, demographics). Tsiu and Gutek (1999) suggest that people use demographic cues as social information to categorize themselves and others. Categorization of oneself and others leads to the use of stereotypes. As a result of this process, demographic separation from coworkers may lead solo-minority managers to perceive a lack of support for diversity in their work environment.

Coworkers' opinions regarding how diversity affects the organization (i.e., coworkers' diversity value judgments) are another factor that is likely to predict solos' perceptions of support for diversity. Social information processes are likely to convey co-workers' diversity value judgments to the solo-minority manager and influence his or her PSD. Favorable coworker diversity value judgments are likely to bolster solos' PSD whereas unfavorable coworker diversity value judgments are likely to diminish solos' PSD. This research tested whether the relationship between these predictors and solos' PSD is stronger for solos' with greater minority exclusivity (exclusive-minority solos) than solos' with less minority exclusivity (race-specific solos).

H1a: Race separation with coworkers (i.e., supervisors, peers, and subordinates) is negatively related to solo-minority managers' PSD.

H1b: Minority exclusivity (exclusive-minority vs. race-specific solo status) moderates the relationship between race separation with coworkers and solo-minority managers' PSD. There is a stronger relationship between race separation with coworkers and PSD for exclusive-minority solos than for race-specific solos.

H2a: Favorable coworker diversity value judgments (i.e., supervisors, peers, and subordinates) is positively related to solo-minority managers' PSD.

H2b: Minority exclusivity (exclusive-minority vs. race-specific solo status) moderates the relationship between coworkers' diversity value judgments and solo-minority managers' PSD. There is a stronger relationship between coworkers' diversity value judgments and PSD for exclusive-minority solos than for race-specific solos.

Solo-Minority Managers' Perceptions of Support for Diversity and Turnover Intentions

As stated previously, retention of solo-minorities can be a challenge for organizations. The attraction-selection-attrition framework of organizational behavior suggests that organizations are inclined toward homogeneity and that this tendency is detrimental to organizational functioning (Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). This theory would suggest that solo-minority managers tend to leave an organization because they do not feel that they fit in. Interestingly, research suggests that the effects of race separation on turnover intentions are non-symmetrical as a function of race, such that a stronger relationship between demographic dissimilarities and turnover intentions exist for whites than for non-whites (Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992). Nonetheless, minority racioethnic status is positively related

to intentions to turnover (Tsui & Gutek, 1999). Thus, other variables need to be identified to help explain solos' turnover intentions.

Solos' PSD are also likely to be associated with their perceptions of fit with an organization and their intentions to leave the organization. Jones and Olmedo (1986; as cited in Pettigrew & Martin, 1987) surveyed managers who left their positions and found that minority managers were more likely to cite prejudice and unfair treatment as a reason for leaving than non-minority managers. If solos perceive the organization as lacking diversity initiatives or as being intolerant of minority employees, their turnover intentions may be influenced through affective processes (e.g., negative emotions associated with perceptions of prejudice), cognitive processes (e.g., beliefs about the existence of institutional racism), and/or behavioral processes (e.g., the tendency to withdraw from situations that highlight out-group status). Thus, solos' PSD may predict variance in their turnover intentions beyond that accounted for by job satisfaction. The relationship between PSD and turnover intentions is likely to be moderated by minority exclusivity. Exclusive-minority solos are likely to experience a higher level of social isolation at work than race-specific solos. When exclusive-minority solos experience a lack of support for diversity they lack the social support provided by other racioethnic minorities and may have fewer ways to respond to their concerns. Thus, the relationship between PSD and turnover intentions was predicted to be stronger for exclusive-minority managers than for race-specific solos.

H3a: Solo-minority managers PSD is negatively related to turnover intentions. Solo-minority managers PSD predicts variance in turnover intentions beyond that predicted by job satisfaction.

H3b: Minority exclusivity (exclusive-minority vs. race-specific solo status) moderates the relationship between solo-minority managers' PSD and their turnover intentions. There is a stronger relationship between PSD and turnover intentions for exclusive-minority solos than for race-specific solos.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Survey responses and data from organizational records for 150 solo-minority sales managers from a national retail organization were examined in this study. Sixty-two percent of the participants were female whereas 38% were male. This sample of solo-minority sales managers accounted for approximately 10% of the entire population of minority sales managers in this organization. Participants voluntarily responded to a survey given annually at the organization. Items from this survey were used to measure sales manager race, *perceptions of support for diversity* (PSD), coworkers' diversity value judgments, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. Organizational records were used to identify: (a) race data for supervisors, peers, and employees; (b) sales managers' department and sex.

Measures

Minority Exclusivity

The exclusivity of minority status was measured by classifying solo sales-managers' as either *exclusive-minority solos* or as *race-specific solos*. Sixty managers were classified as exclusive-minority solos, managers who are the only racioethnic minority (i.e., nonwhite) amongst their peers (e.g., one African-American manager with six white peers [also sales managers]). Ninety managers were classified as *race-specific solos*, managers who are the only member of their racioethnic classification in their peer group but who have peers from other nonwhite racioethnic groups (e.g., an Asian sales manager with four white peers and 1 Native American peer).

Race Separation with Peers

Peer race dissimilarity was calculated using the Euclidean distance separation score described by Harrison and Klein (2008) and Tsui et al. (1995), the square root of the summed squared differences between sales managers value on a race variable (0= minority or nonwhite and 1=majority or white) and

the value on the same variable for every other sales manager in the store, divided by the total number of sales managers in the unit. Peer race separation provides unique information with respect to solo minority exclusivity because it captures both group size and composition. Scores on this variable ranged from .32 to .97 with higher numbers indicating greater race separation with peers.

Race Separation with Subordinates

A variable representing race separation with subordinates was also calculated using a Euclidean distance separation score indicating the race separation (i.e., differences in minority status) between the sales manager and his or her subordinates. Scores on this variable ranged from .22 to .98 with higher numbers indicating greater race separation with subordinates.

Race Separation with Supervisors

Race separation with supervisors was coded as 1 for solos with a white supervisor and coded 0 for solos with a nonwhite supervisor.

Peers' Diversity Value Judgments

This index represented the beliefs about the value of diversity held by the solo manager's peers. Peers responded to three items on the organization's annual employee survey and these scores were averaged into a composite score for his or her diversity value judgment (e.g., "I feel that hiring and retaining a diverse workforce will give [name of organization] a competitive business advantage."). Peers rated their agreement with these items on a five-point ratings scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree." Higher scores on this composite represent stronger beliefs in the value of diversity to the organization. Participants' responses to the 3 items measuring diversity value judgments exhibited internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .85$). The responses to the solo's peers were aggregated to form the peer diversity value judgments index ($r_{wg} = .81$).

Subordinates Diversity Value Judgments

This index represented the beliefs about the value of diversity held by the solo manager's subordinates. This variable was calculated in the same manner as peer diversity value judgments, except with the responses of the subordinates in the solo manager's department. The index also demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$) and rater consensus ($r_{wg} = .79$).

Supervisors' Diversity Value Judgments

This index represented the supervisor's support for the value of diversity. This variable was calculated by summing peer 360-degree feedback ratings of the supervisor on performance on three general competencies: valuing diversity, team skills, and interpersonal skills ($\alpha = .93$).

Perception of Support for Diversity (PSD)

Solo manager's PSD was measured by averaging their responses to three items on the annual employee survey (e.g., "Behaviors or language that reflect racial, ethnic, or sexist bias do not occur in my work group."). Solos rated their agreement with these items on a five-point ratings scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree" ($\alpha = .74$).

Job Satisfaction

Solo manager's job satisfaction was measured by averaging their responses to four items on the annual employee survey (e.g., "I like the kind of work I do."). Solos rated their agreement with these items on a five-point ratings scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree" ($\alpha = .78$).

Turnover Intentions

Solo manager's turnover intentions were measured by averaging their responses to two items on the annual employee survey. For one item, "I think about leaving my job at [name of organization]", solos responded on a five-point scale ranging from "Never" to "All the time." On another item respondents

were asked, “If you have your way, will you be working at [*name of organization*] two years from now?” They responded on a five-point rating scale ranging from “Definitely Yes” to “Definitely No.” Higher scores on this composite represent greater turnover intentions ($\alpha = .82$).

Control Variables

A set of dummy coded variables was created to represent the solo’s department (one of eight different departments within the store [e.g., home fashions, hardware, or electronics]). Another set of dummy coded variables was also created to represent the solo’s race (i.e., African-American, Asian, Hispanic, or Native American). These variables were used as control variables in the regression analyses described later.

RESULTS

The hypotheses were examined with correlation and regression analyses. Means and standard deviations of the variables studied (except the control variables) for all participants are presented in Table 1. Descriptive statistics were also calculated for each level of minority exclusivity. Means and standard deviations for exclusive-minority solos are presented in Table 2. Table 3 presents means and standard deviations for race-specific solos. Although not hypothesized, it is noteworthy that the exclusive-minority solos reported lower perceptions of support for diversity (PSD) than race-specific solos ($t(148) = 2.15, p < .05$).

TABLE 1
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATION, AND CORRELATIONS AMONG VARIABLES STUDIED
FOR THE ENTIRE SAMPLE

Variables	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Minority exclusivity	1.40	.49									
2. PSD	4.22	.71	-.17*								
3. Race separation - Supervisor	.71	.46	.20*	-.26**							
4. Race separation - Subordinates	.73	.25	.39**	-.04	.19*						
5. Race separation – Peers	.84	.13	.57**	-.21**	.39**	.58**					
6. DVJ – Supervisor	3.52	.44	.00	.06	-.06	.04	.15				
7. DVJ – Subordinates	4.48	.26	-.04	.25**	-.05	-.01	.01	.21**			
8. DVJ – Peers	4.47	.29	-.09	.16	-.09	-.02	-.01	.17*	.91**		
9. Turnover Intentions	1.84	.81	.03	-.46**	.04	-.04	-.02	-.00	-.07	-.05	
10. Employee Satisfaction	4.25	.65	.03	.36**	-.05	.10	-.01	.05	.17*	.08	-.45**

Note. PSD = perceived support for diversity, DVJ = diversity value judgments. N = 150.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

TABLE 2
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATIONS OF VARIABLES FOR RACE-SPECIFIC SOLOS

Variables	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. PSD	4.32	.61								
2. Race separation – Supervisor	.63	.49	-.24*							
3. Race separation – Subordinates	.65	.27	.06	.21						
4. Race separation – Peers	.78	.13	-.21	.36**	.52**					
5. DVJ – Supervisor	3.52	.49	-.02	-.11	.04	.22*				
6. DVJ – Subordinates	4.48	.25	-.25*	-.01	.03	.04	.16			
7. DVJ – Peers	4.49	.27	.14	-.05	.01	.04	.13	.90**		
8. Turnover Intentions	1.81	.74	-.31**	-.06	-.14	-.09	.09	.05	.01	
9. Employee Satisfaction	4.23	.64	.37**	-.07	.19	-.04	-.05	.10	.09	-.45**

Note. PSD = perceived support for diversity, DVJ = diversity value judgments. N = 90. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

TABLE 3
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATIONS OF VARIABLES FOR EXCLUSIVE-MINORITY SOLOS

Variables	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. PSD	4.07	.82								
2. Race separation – Supervisor	.81	.39	-.26*							
3. Race separation – Subordinates	.84	.14	-.03	-.13						
4. Race separation – Peers	.93	.04	.01	.41**	.05					
5. DVJ – Supervisor	3.52	.36	.19	.02	.06	-.00				
6. DVJ – Subordinates	4.46	.28	-.24	-.10	-.03	.10	.33*			
7. DVJ – Peers	4.43	.32	.15	-.13	.06	.18	.26*	.92**		
8. Turnover Intentions	1.87	.90	-.61**	.17	.11	.10	-.14	-.19	-.10	
9. Employee Satisfaction	4.27	.68	.37**	-.05	-.15	-.03	.24	.25	.07	-.47**

Note. PSD = perceived support for diversity, DVJ = diversity value judgments N = 60. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Hypothesis 1a stated that the level of race separation with coworkers would be negatively related to solo-minority managers PSD. The correlations presented in Table 1 provide partial support for this hypothesis. Race separation with the supervisor and peers were negatively related to PSD. No correlation was found between managers' race separation with subordinates and PSD.

Hypothesis 1b stated that minority exclusivity would moderate the relationship between solo managers' race separation with their coworkers and solos' PSD. Three hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test this hypothesis, each regressing PSD on race separation (with supervisor, peer, or subordinate), minority exclusivity, and the crossproduct of the race separation variable and minority

exclusivity. In each analysis, race separation and minority exclusivity were entered on the first step and the crossproduct of race separation and minority exclusivity was entered on the second step. The analyses did not support the hypothesized interaction between minority exclusivity and race separation with coworkers ($\Delta R^2 = .01$ [ns] for supervisor dissimilarity x minority exclusivity; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ [ns] for peer dissimilarity x minority exclusivity; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ [ns] subordinate dissimilarity x minority exclusivity).

Hypothesis 2a stated that the coworkers' diversity value judgments would be positively related to solo-minority managers' PSD. The correlations presented in Table 1 provide partial support for this hypothesis. Subordinates' diversity value judgments were positively related to solos' PSD. However, peer diversity value judgments and supervisor diversity value judgments did not significantly predict solos' PSD.

Hypothesis 2b stated that minority exclusivity would moderate the relationship between coworkers' diversity value judgments and solo-minority managers PSD. Three hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test this hypothesis, each regressing PSD on diversity value judgments (of supervisor, peers, or subordinates), minority exclusivity, and the crossproduct of diversity value judgments and minority exclusivity. In each analysis, diversity value judgments and minority exclusivity were entered on the first step and the crossproduct of diversity value judgments and minority exclusivity was entered on the second step. The analyses provided no support for the hypothesized interaction between minority exclusivity and coworkers' diversity value judgments ($\Delta R^2 = .02$ [ns] for supervisor diversity value judgments x minority exclusivity; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ [ns] for peer diversity value judgments x minority exclusivity; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ [ns] for subordinate diversity value judgments x minority exclusivity).

Hypothesis 3a stated that solo-minority managers PSD would be negatively related to their turnover intentions. The significant negative correlation between PSD and turnover intentions supported this hypothesis (see Table 1). This hypothesis also stated that solo-minority managers' PSD would predict variance in turnover intentions beyond that predicted by job satisfaction. This analysis also controlled for solo-managers' department and their race, as it was believed that these variables would also influence turnover intentions. This aspect of the hypothesis was tested with hierarchical regression with turnover intentions being regressed on race (first step), department (second step), job satisfaction (third step), and PSD (fourth step). This hypothesis was supported with PSD predicting significant incremental variance in turnover intention beyond the variance accounted for by race, department, and job satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = .07$ [$p < .05$]).

Hypothesis 3b stated that minority exclusivity would moderate the relationship between solo-minority managers' PSD and their turnover intentions. This hypothesis was tested with hierarchical regression, with turnover intentions being regressed on race (first step), department (second step), job satisfaction (third step), PSD and minority exclusivity (fourth step) and the crossproduct of PSD and minority exclusivity (fifth step). Support for this hypothesis was indicated by the significant increment in variance accounted for by the interaction of PSD and minority exclusivity ($\Delta R^2 = .02$ [$p < .05$]). To follow up this interaction separate regression equations were calculated for the exclusive-minority and race-specific subsample with turnover intentions being regressed on race (first step), department (second step), job satisfaction (third step), and PSD (fourth step). The results of these analyses (see Table 4) indicate that exclusive-minority solos' PSD exhibited a strong, negative relationship with their turnover intentions, even after controlling for race, department, and job satisfaction. For race-specific solos, PSD did not account for unique variance in turnover intentions beyond that predicted by race, department, and job satisfaction.

TABLE 4
REGRESSION ANALYSES OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSD AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS FOR EXCLUSIVE-MINORITY AND RACE-SPECIFIC SOLO MANAGERS

Minority Exclusive Solos (<i>n</i> =60)			Race-Specific Solos (<i>n</i> =90)		
Variables Entered	ΔR^2	β	Variables Entered	ΔR^2	β
Race	.04		Race	.03	
Department	.19		Department	.09	
Job Satisfaction	.17**	-.28*	Job Satisfaction	.16*	-.38**
PSD	.15**	-.44**	PSD	.01	-.11
	$R^2 = .54^*$			$R^2 = .25^*$	
	Adj. $R^2 = .43$			Adj. $R^2 = .13^*$	

Note. PSD = Perceived support for diversity, * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$. β represents the standardized regression coefficients from the model with all variables entered.

DISCUSSION

In an effort to better understand factors associated with the retention of solo-minority managers, this research investigated aspects of the work environment likely to be associated with solos' *perceptions of support for diversity* (PSD) and the relationship between solos' PSD and their turnover intentions. Partial support was found for the hypotheses that demographic differences with coworkers would be negatively related to solos' PSD and that coworkers' diversity value judgments were positively related to solos' PSD. Race separation with peers and supervisors were negatively related to solos' PSD. Subordinates' diversity value judgments were positively related to solos' PSD. Furthermore, solos' PSD was negatively related to their turnover intentions, and PSD accounted for variance in turnover intentions beyond that accounted for by job satisfaction.

This research also investigated the impact of being a distinct minority on the experience of solo-minority managers. In this study, minority exclusivity referred to two types of solo-minority status that can exist in an organization: *exclusive-minority solos* (managers who are the only racioethnic minority amongst their peers [high minority exclusivity]) and *race-specific solos* (managers who are the only member of their racioethnic classification in their peer group but have peers from other nonwhite racioethnic groups [low minority exclusivity]). In particular, it was hypothesized that minority exclusivity would moderate the relationship between solos' PSD and (a) race separation with coworkers (supervisor, subordinates, peers) and (b) coworkers' diversity value judgments. No support was found for these hypotheses. However, the hypothesis that minority exclusivity would moderate the relationship between solos' PSD and turnover intentions was supported. A stronger negative relationship between PSD and turnover intentions existed for exclusive-minority solos than for race-specific solos. Furthermore, race-specific solos reported a higher level of PSD than exclusive-minority solos.

A number of practical implications for managing diversity can be derived from this research. Pettigrew and Martin (1987) suggest that organizations should avoid placing minority employees throughout the organization in an effort to maximize (and publicize) diversity. Instead, organizations may better promote diversity by clustering minority employees to avoid the negative implications of being a highly distinctive minority. The results of this study lend support to this argument. When clustering is unfeasible, organizations may consider utilizing formal or informal mentoring systems to provide social support for solos. Moreover, the relationship between subordinates' diversity value judgments and solos' PSD suggest that diversity training initiatives should be targeted at the coworkers of solo minority managers. Finally, when organizations assign a manager to a work group where he or she is the exclusive-minority solo, the solo's PSD is strongly related to whether that manager will remain with the

organization. Evaluating and promoting support for diversity in the work groups occupied by exclusive-minority solos should be an important consideration for managing diversity.

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