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Racial Dissimilarity and Employee Attitudes and Behaviors: The moderating role of competitive work environment and social support

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RACIAL DISSIMILARITY AND EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS: THE MODERATING ROLE OF COMPETITIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

A Thesis

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Abstract

Racial diversity within public and private organizations is a controversial topic: many companies are encouraged to make their team racially representative of the general public while also maintaining productivity. At the same time, research suggests that increasing racial diversity may have a negative influence on desirable work-related outcomes, especially if employees perceive themselves to be racially dissimilar from their coworkers. In attempting to increase racial diversity, organizations may leave some of their employees experiencing negative consequences related to being the only employee of a particular racial minority group (e.g., Black). These types of circumstances and their negative consequences adds to the uncertainty surrounding racial diversity, suggesting moderating mechanisms may be at play. The aim of the current research is to examine the effect of perceived racial dissimilarity and, ultimately, how competitive work environment and social support moderate the relationship between perceived racial dissimilarity within one's workgroup and work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment. The present study has the potential to contribute to organizational literature by identifying conditions potentially influencing the associations between perceived racial dissimilarity and desirable employee outcomes. Additionally, this research may help organizations appropriately manage racially diverse teams so that both marginalized and nonmarginalized employees have an equal chance for success.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Over 80% of Americans agree that organizational leaders should strive for a racially representative labor force (Women and Men in STEM Often at Odds Over Workplace Equity, 2017). In the current social climate, organizations can receive negative attention for apparent imbalances of racially dominant and minority employees. Ethically, recruitment, selection, and training opportunities should be equally accessible to every individual no matter their racial background; however, simply increasing the number of employees who identify with underrepresented racial groups (i.e., racially nondominant employees) without utilizing effective, empirically supported human resource management strategies may lead to negative organizational outcomes (Mannix & Neale, 2005) including decreased task performance and increased employee turnover (Riordan & Shore, 1997; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992). On the other hand, the literature to date suggests there are critical group processes at play that may influence whether a high degree of racial diversity is beneficial or harmful for employee outcomes. Thus, focusing on work group processes (e.g., competitive work environment and social support) as they relate to racial composition may be associated with more desirable outcomes compared to focusing on performance alone (Mannix & Neale, 2005).

Although there is a plethora of research as cited by Mannix and Neale (2005) supporting the notion that increasing racial diversity should be standard practice, some scholars have theorized and found supporting evidence that racial diversity may have negative workgroup effects. In line with realistic group conflict theory, Hoffman (1985) found evidence that perceiving racial dissimilarity between oneself and one's workgroup (i.e., racial heterogeneity) may be associated with increases in group conflict, decreases in quality of communication, and less group cohesion. Research also suggests that some racially diverse work groups could

experience inferior performance, especially work groups with little training and/or a negative environment (Kochan et al., 2003).

On the other hand, there is also evidence that increasing racial diversity may be linked to positive outcomes (Thomas & Ely, 1996). For example, a high degree of racial diversity may be associated with a higher variety of perspectives, opinions, and ideas within an organization (Hoffman, 1985) and, subsequently, increase firm performance (Richard et al., 2007). Research conducted by Hoffman (1959) supports the *value-in-diversity hypothesis*, suggesting that coworker interactions may be challenged after increasing organizational diversity, but that the introduction of new perspectives will lead to increases in desirable work outcomes such as performance (Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991). Additionally, racial minority employees may offer a unique advantage by contributing input that helps the organization more effectively reach racially nondominant patrons (e.g.., Black and Latin-Americans). By approaching racial diversity as "the varied perspectives and approaches to work that [the] members of different identity groups bring" (Thomas & Ely, 1996, p. 80), organizations have a better chance of improving their overall creativity, insight, learning, growth, and renewal. To better determine the conditions under which increasing racial diversity may lead to positive outcomes, the current research examines the possible moderating influence of group processes (i.e., competitive work environment and social support) in the relationship between perceived degree of racial diversity (from the perspective of racial minority employees) and the work outcomes of work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment.

Research examining the negative effects of a competitive work environment suggests that the intrapersonal competition resulting from competitive work environments may lead to negative work group and individual outcomes. When employees' coworkers engage in

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destructive competitive behavior (e.g., sabotage) or when employees perceive organizational practices to be unfair, competition may lead to decreases in positive individual outcomes (Kim, 2010). On the other hand, there is some evidence suggesting that competitive work environments may be associated with desirable outcomes such as work engagement (Jones, Davis, & Thomas, 2017), task performance (Fletcher, Major, & Davis, 2008; Fletcher & Nusbaum, 2010; Swab & Johnson, 2018), and affective organizational commitment (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Fletcher, Major, & Davis, 2008). Still, there is little empirical work investigating whether competitive work environments interact with characteristics of the work group (i.e., perceived degree of racial dissimilarity) to negatively affect desirable employee outcomes.

The research that has been conducted examining the effects of competitive work environments suggests that it may lead to interpersonal competition, decreased social cohesion, and strengthened racial fault lines (i.e., racially segregated social groups) within work groups (Fletcher, Major, & Davis, 2008). In other words, racial minority employees perceiving a high degree of racial dissimilarity may fight harder than their White coworkers to obtain certain resources (Dumas et al., 2005). For example, racial minority employees perceiving a high degree of racial dissimilarity may find it more difficult to establish work relationships because employees tend to offer more social support to coworkers with whom they share the most similarities, including race. Therefore, racial minority employees experiencing high organizational racial dissimilarity combined with a competitive work environment may experience decreases in desirable work outcomes (i.e., work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment).

Research conducted by Dumas et al. (2005) suggests that the association between perceived racial dissimilarity and desirable employee outcomes (i.e., work engagement, task

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performance, and affective organizational commitment) may be weakened by coworker social support. Employees tend to share more personal resources with coworkers they perceive to be racially similar to themselves (Dumas et al., 2005). Racially similar employees may also be more likely to provide emotional support and to encourage each other's efforts on work-related behaviors (Dumas et al., 2005). Given the plethora of empirical evidence showing social support is related to increases in positive individual outcomes such as work engagement (Harrison, 1995), task performance (Morrison, 1993), and affective organizational commitment (Reichers, 1985), racial minority employees receiving greater levels of social support should also report greater levels of work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment compared to racial minority employees with less social support, regardless of their perceived degree of racial dissimilarity within their workgroup.

The aim of the current research is to examine whether competitive work environments strengthen the association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and individual outcomes as well as whether social support weakens the association between degree of racial dissimilarity and individual outcomes. Through the lens of social categorization theory, realistic group conflict theory, and intergroup contact theory, I examine the effect of racial diversity as an individual-level construct (i.e., from the perspective of racial minority employees), rather than as a group-level construct. In other words, the current research has the potential to contribute to the field's understanding of conditions potentially exacerbating and mitigating the negative effects of perceived racial dissimilarity or the degree to which members feel racially different from their workgroup. In sum, I hope to address whether a competitive work environment and social support moderate the relationships between the perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and the

positive outcomes of work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational

commitment.

Chapter 2. Literature Review and Hypothesized Relationships

It is natural for employees to assume that race denotes distinct differences in their coworkers' non-physical characteristics such as values and beliefs (McGrath et al., 1995); hence the importance of capturing racial diversity in organizational research. Although this assumption can contribute to interpersonal conflict within racially heterogenous groups in an organization, it may not be entirely false. Townsend and Scott (2001) theorize that being of a certain race in America is correlated with different sets of life experiences that affect racial minority employees' attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. For example, research suggests that due to differences in values across cultures (Hofstede, 1984), racial minority employees in environments they perceive to be racially dissimilar may feel uncomfortable expressing their own values, exhibit poorer performance and higher rates in turnover (Kirchmeyer, 1993).

Along the same line, there is mixed empirical evidence to suggest that having a racially diverse workforce increases an organization's financial or economic advantage over its competitors (Kochan et al., 2003; Miller & Del Carmen Triana, 2009; Demuijnck, 2009); still, organizations have a moral obligation to offer recruitment and hiring opportunities to every qualified individual no matter their race (Demuijik, 2009). At the same time, successfully managing the frequently complex interactions between demographically diverse employees is complicated and requires the consideration of multiple individual and situational factors (Mannix & Neale, 2005). To better understand when racial diversity in the workplace leads to desirable outcomes, the current research explores the moderating role of specific organizational characteristics (i.e., competitive work environment and social support) on the relationship between perceived racial dissimilarity and work-related outcomes. First, I review the literature on positive and negative consequences of perceived racial dissimilarity and its association with

the criterion variables: work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment. After reviewing the literature on each criterion variable, I will introduce the organizational characteristics proposed to moderate the relationships (competitive work environment and social support), then provide theoretical and empirical evidence for their moderating effects.

2.1. Perceived Degree of Racial Dissimilarity

A high degree of racial dissimilarity occurs when one employee or a small group of employees of a particular minority race comprises a small percentage of the organization's racial breakdown (i.e., tokenism). The ratio of employees in the racially dominant and non-dominant group must be 15:85 or less for an organization to be categorized as racially skewed (Kanter, 2008). Furthermore, skewed racial groups may contribute to the stress experienced by the racial minority employees or *tokens* (Kanter, 2008). It is all too common for an organization to be racially disproportionate, such that 85% or more of employees are White, which can leave racial minority employees feeling considerably racially dissimilar from their workgroup. Jackson et al. (1995) suggest that tokenism is associated with several negative individual consequences such as performance pressure, boundary heightening (i.e., increasing segmentation between work and non-work roles), and role entrapment (Jackson et al., 1995). Additionally, in a study conducted by Hoffman (1985), racial minority employees that perceived a high degree of racial dissimilarity felt judged more harshly than coworkers of other races (mostly White) and unambiguously attributed these differences to their race. For the purpose of the current research, given the importance of considering the degree of racial dissimilarity from the individual perspective rather than actual racial composition (Shemla et al., 2016), I focus on perceived self-to-team racial dissimilarity (e.g., feeling racially dissimilar from other group members) rather

than team racial diversity as a whole (e.g., perceived level of racial diversity within the entire workgroup).

In congruence with Shemla et al. (2016), perceived degree of racial dissimilarity can be thought of as the degree to which members feel racially different from their workgroup, "as reflected in their internal mental representations of the unit's composition" (Shemla et al., 2016, p. 91). Social categorization theory posits that many employees likely group their coworkers on readily-identifiable traits, such as race (Turner et al., 1987), and that interacting with coworkers perceived to be in the out-group can lead to uncooperative behavior, conflicting perspectives, and less commitment to the group (Hogg & Terry, 2000). In a similar vein, racial minority employees perceiving a high degree of racial dissimilarity may feel their efforts are not being adequately rewarded due to racial prejudice which may lead to increased distress and decreased work engagement (Adams, 1965; Hu et al., 2013). Dreachslin, Hunt, and Sprainer (2000) found racial minority employees perceiving a high degree of racial dissimilarity attributed group conflict to racial differences while racial minority employees perceiving high racial diversity saw race as irrelevant. Research suggests that compared to racial minority employees in more racially diverse organizations, racial minority employees in less racially diverse organizations experience less attachment to their coworkers and less affective commitment to the organization (Tsui et al., 1992).

Although perceiving a high degree of racial diversity may have negative consequences (e.g., challenging interpersonal interactions and group conflict), many organizations set out to increase racial diversity to improve their problem-solving and innovation capabilities (Kirchmeyer, 1993). Certainly, perceptions of racial diversity, from the perspective of racial minority employees, can lead to positive outcomes like increased commitment to the group.

Along the same line, racial minority employees interacting in organizations with more balanced racial groups, such as ratios ranging from 35:65 to 50:50 (e.g., Black to White employees), may perceive a low degree of racial dissimilarity and, ultimately, experience better communication, better social integration, and less social isolation (Hoffman, 1985). Based on previous research regarding the effects of perceived racial dissimilarity and the mixed effects of actual racial diversity (Mannix & Neale, 2005), certain group processes, like competition and social support may help to explain these relationships.

2.2. Work Engagement

The degree of racial dissimilarity within an organization may have effects on desirable employee outcomes such as work engagement. Work engagement is frequently used in organizational research to predict individual contributions to the organization (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993; Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Work engagement or the amount of physical and psychological energy given by an employee (Kahn, 1990), is comprised of three critical dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). *Vigor* is the amount of energy demonstrated by an employee while completing job tasks, mental resiliency in the face of adversity, and represents the cognitive aspect of work engagement. *Absorption* is the emotional dimension of work engagement and represents the enjoyment or internal satisfaction employees derive from work. The drive and determination employees exhibit while completing work tasks, also referred to as *dedication,* is the motivational dimension of work engagement.

Work engagement is an independent psychological state and operates on a continuum (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Pure work engagement is simultaneously expressing one's preferred self and achieving work tasks by behaving in ways that show cognitive,

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emotional, and physical involvement. To be engaged at work, one is engrossed with their job tasks and focused on the goals of the organization. Pure personal disengagement is simultaneously withdrawing one's preferred self from work through behaviors that show cognitive, emotional, and physical absence. For example, an experienced nurse might make elementary mistakes due to inattention or refrain from building rapport with patients. Disengaged workers go about tasks automatically, without intrinsic drive, interpretation of the tasks, or innovation. Employees do not usually exhibit pure work engagement or disengagement; however, employees demonstrating low levels of work engagement are guided by role demands, job duties, and extrinsic motivators rather than intrinsic motivation.

Organizations with passionate and energetic employees may have an advantage over other organizations, as work engagement is associated with increases in job performance (Bakker, 2011). For example, implementing human resource strategies centered around work engagement may be associated with an increased competitive advantage for the organization (Albrecht et al., 2015), as well as increased loyalty, employee satisfaction, and organizational performance (Agarwal, 2013). Hiring the most talented employees is useless if they are not mentally and emotionally invested in their work. Employees high in work engagement may be more likely to express their individuality in their work and, therefore, may also be more likely to put in additional effort not required by their job duties with the intention to help the organization (Bakker, 2011).

Research suggests the level of work engagement an employee demonstrates is related to their job resources and job demands (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker, 2011). While job demands require an employee to give physical and psychological energy (Karasek, 1979; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), job resources contribute to the employee's intrinsic

motivation to achieve organizational goals and fosters their growth, learning, and development (Kahn, 1990). Research suggests that racial minority employees perceiving a high degree of racial dissimilarity feel a decreased sense of belonging and safety (Mannix & Neale, 2005). Evidence also indicates that racial minority employees perceiving a low degree of racial dissimilarity (i.e., interacting with coworkers of the same race) experience less work stress, less depressive symptoms, and have better overall psychological wellbeing (Jackson et al. 1995). This evidence suggests that perceiving a high degree of racial dissimilarity can serve as a job demand, thereby decreasing work engagement for racial minority employees. Thus, I hypothesize:

> Hypothesis 1. Perceived degree of racial dissimilarity will be negatively related to work
> engagement

2.3. Task Performance

Prior research highlights the impact of employee behavior on results or changes in the organization. However, because of an evaluative factor inherent in performance that stems from either the perspective of the employee, their supervisor, or peers, Motowidlo, Borman, and Schmitt (1997) theorize that employee performance may be distinct from employee behavior and resulting organizational changes. Empirical evidence suggests that performance evaluations submitted by a supervisor, or a peer may be biased due to racial prejudice (Oppler et al., 1992); therefore, self-report is likely to be the most appropriate way for the present study to measure performance. The present study utilizes employee performance as a criterion variable to capture the employee's rating of their own contributions to the organization that is required by their job role (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Thus, in addition to measuring work engagement, a criterion

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variable often motivating the employee to engage in productive behaviors, the present study also examines self-report task performance.

Research conducted by Borman and Motowidlo (1993) suggests performance should be separated into two types: task and contextual performance. *Task performance* or the amount of material and immaterial resources an employee contributes to their organization, can also include behaviors contributing to the internal functioning of an organization. For a teacher, examples of task performance to be evaluated by either themselves, their supervisor (i.e., the principal) or peers (i.e., other teachers) would be creating and implementing teaching plans, conducting parent teacher conferences, and grading assignments. For the occupation of police officer, examples of task performance to be evaluated would include controlling traffic, patrolling neighborhoods, arresting criminals, and drafting reports. *Contextual performance*, on the other hand, contributes to the overall environment and effectiveness of the organization. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) describe five main behaviors that fall into the category of contextual performance: completing tasks not required by the job role, completing own required tasks with enthusiasm, supporting coworkers, following inconvenient company procedure, and defending the organization.

Although evaluations of overall performance can include consideration of both task and contextual performance behaviors by the evaluator, researchers theorize task performance and contextual behaviors should be studied separately (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). Moreover, individual differences in knowledge, skills, abilities, education, and training may be associated more with task performance behaviors, whereas contextual performance behaviors (e.g., prosocial and citizenship behaviors) may be more related to interpersonal skills, personality, and motivation. Furthermore, experience factors (e.g., training performance, work orientation, and dependability) explain more variance in task performance,

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whereas personality factors explain more variance in contextual performance (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). One aim of the current research is to explore the effect that the perceived degree of racial dissimilarity has on racial minority employees' individual performance and, ultimately, the competitive advantage they provide to their organization. Employing high performing individuals is a well-known way for organizations to maintain efficiency and productivity. Research suggests that employees with a greater ability to perform the roles explicitly prescribed by their job title give their organization a distinct advantage over its competitors (Ely et al., 2012); therefore, task performance is the second outcome variable of interest.

Although empirical evidence (Byrne, 1971; Tajfel, 1978; Hambrick, Cho, & Chen, 1996) suggests perceived racial dissimilarity in work groups can lead to undesirable group processes (e.g., group conflict) and individual outcomes (e.g., poor task performance), research shows these negative effects may dissipate over time (Watson et al., 1993). Furthermore, opposing empirical evidence suggests that racially diverse work groups can give organizations an advantage over competing companies by enhancing employee performance (Andrevski et al., 2014). Work groups with a greater degree of racial diversity, for example, may consider a wider range of perspectives and alternative solutions to problems because of possessing unique experiences and values. Work groups with a high degree of racial diversity may also be more likely to detect competitive threats and advancement opportunities for themselves and, ultimately the organization, potentially making them invaluable employees. Finally, racial minority employees in organizations with a greater degree of racial diversity may be more likely to perceive a higher degree of racial similarity and ultimately, feel their input is valued more compared to racial minority employees in organizations with a low degree of racial diversity. As a result, they may put more effort towards helping the organization accomplish its goals by

employing their unique skills, knowledge, and abilities to completing the roles explicitly prescribed by their job title. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2. Perceived degree of racial dissimilarity will be negatively related to task performance

2.4. Organizational Commitment

Organizations benefit from retaining high performing employees over time and may also gain an advantage over their competitors if their top performing employees feel tied or connected to their organization. By focusing on the degree to which an employee feels attached to an organization, or their organizational commitment, researchers and practitioners may be better able to predict which employees are likely to leave or stay. Meyer and Allen (1987) operationalized three separate components of organizational commitment: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Employees who remain with their organization due to an affective or emotional attachment is known as *affective commitment*; employees who remain with their organization because of the perceived costs of leaving reflects *continuance commitment*; employees who remain with their organization out of a sense of loyalty or obligation have *normative commitment*.

Although these three separate components of organizational commitment have been empirically supported, early research investigating organizational commitment and related outcomes considered it one general construct. However, more recent research has concluded that organizations concerned with increasing positive outcomes in addition to employee retention (e.g., innovation, commitment, and performance) may be more successful by focusing on a specific component of organizational commitment (i.e., affective commitment) rather than an indiscriminate combination of emotional attachment, personal investment, and sense of

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obligation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Unlike normative and continuance commitment, affective commitment reflects an employee's desire to remain with their organization without being influenced by factors external factors outside of the organization itself (e.g., the amount of time already put into the organization or the number of job alternatives). As the current research aims to expand upon the literature examining the effects that social qualities of the organization (i.e., degree of racial diversity) may have on positive individual outcomes, affective organizational commitment is the third outcome variable of interest.

Hollenbeck and Klein (1987) and Wech and colleagues (1998) theorized several situational variables that may influence affective organizational commitment such as reward structures, competition, social support, social influence and social cohesion. Although some researchers have theorized that affective organizational commitment is preceded by feelings of comfort and competency (Meyer & Allen, 1987), little research has explored the working conditions that facilitate feelings of comfort and, as a result, affective organizational commitment. The current research proposes that certain aspects of the work environment (i.e., degree of racial dissimilarity), from the perspective of racial minority employees, may affect the extent to which the employees commit to their work. Racial minority employees perceiving a high degree of dissimilarity may feel alienated because of their race and less connected to their organization compared to racial minority employees perceiving a low degree of racial dissimilarity. Moreover, McPherson and colleagues (2001) theorized that racial minority employees perceiving a low degree of racial dissimilarity may exhibit increases in positive outcomes such as affective organizational commitment as a result of the positive consequences potentially associated with high racial diversity (i.e., perceived fairness in organizational practices, an inclusive climate, and a sense of belonging). Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3. Perceived degree of racial dissimilarity will be negatively related to

affective organizational commitment

2.5. Competitive Work Environment

To date, only a handful of research has explored the impact of organizational conditions

on the relationship between perceived racial dissimilarity and employee outcomes. According to

realistic group conflict theory (RGCT), "the overall favorability of intergroup interactions is

determined by the reciprocal interests and goals of the groups involved (Sherif & Sherif, 1979, as

cited by Jackson, 1993, p. 3). Thus, situational characteristics such as competitive work

environments may lead to interpersonal competition and feelings of stereotype threat among

racial minorities, especially among racial minority employees perceiving a high degree of racial

dissimilarity. Consequently, a competitive work environment may strengthen the negative

association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and outcomes such as work

engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment.

Early research conducted by Kohn (1992) defines competitive work environments as

those in which "employees perceive organizational rewards to be contingent on comparisons of

their performance against that of their peers" (Brown et al., p. 89). Fletcher and Nusbaum (2010)

expanded on this research by operationalizing five dimensions of competitive work

environments: competition for tangible rewards, competition for nontangible rewards,

competition for recognition, competition for status, and competition inspired by coworkers. For

example, employees might *compete for nontangible rewards* (e.g., furthering education and

training) and *tangible rewards* such as retirement packages and bonuses. It can be also important

for employees to feel their efforts are being appropriately rewarded; thus, employees often

compete for recognition. Employees may also *compete for status* or high ranking within the

social hierarchy of the organization given high ranks may be associated with increased access to career opportunities and other rewards. Lastly, employees likely perceive an environment as highly competitive when they are surrounded by highly competitive people, reflecting *competition inspired by coworkers* (Fletcher & Nusbaum, 2010). Although separate dimensions of competitive work environment have been studied, the construct is typically examined at the general level (Deaconu & Rasca, 2008; Benndorf & Rau, 2012; Chen et al., 2014).

RGCT and empirical evidence suggests that the association between competitive work environments and positive outcomes is determined by how employees relate to their coworkers (e.g., racially) and how employees appraise their competitive work environment (i.e., as challenging or as threatening) (Murayama & Elliot, 2012). For example, believing one's success depends on the failure of coworkers (i.e., threatening) may lead to poor task performance, whereas believing everyone in the organization can be successful (i.e., challenging) may lead to increased task performance. In congruence with RGCT, racially dissimilar employees that are engaged in competition over organizational resources (i.e., tangible and intangible rewards, recognition, status, or competition inspired by coworkers) may be more likely to negatively stereotype each other and exhibit hostile behavior to outgroup members (Jackson, 1993). Because racial minority employees perceiving a high degree of racial dissimilarity tend to appraise competitive work environments as more threatening rather than challenging (Murayama & Elliot, 2012), it is expected that they will also show comparatively poor task performance. Furthermore, Chatman and Spataro (2005) found evidence suggesting that racial minority employees are less cooperative in groups they perceive to have a high degree of racial dissimilarity, and research shows uncooperative employees do not help their coworkers achieve goals despite potential sacrifices to their own pursuits (Swab & Johnson, 2018), a common

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dilemma faced by employees in competitive work environments. In sum, uncooperative behavior may increase the likelihood that the competitive work environment will be associated with increases in harmful interpersonal competition and decreases in positive outcomes such as work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4. The negative association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and work engagement will be moderated by competitive work environment, such that the relationship is stronger in greater competitive work environments

Hypothesis 5. The negative association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and task performance will be moderated by competitive work environment, such that the relationship is stronger in greater competitive work environments

Hypothesis 6. The negative association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and affective organizational commitment will be moderated by competitive work environment, such that the relationship is stronger in greater competitive work environments

2.6. Social Support

The environment of an individual's organization and ultimately the people they work with often has a considerable influence over employee attitudes and behaviors. Cohen and Wills (1985) theorize that positive relationships at work (i.e., social support) can mitigate job stress and even facilitate overall individual well-being. Along these same lines, intergroup contact theory posits positive interactions between demographically (e.g., racially) dissimilar individuals of equal status and who are not competing over resources can be linked to cooperative behavior and the formation of affective connections (Pettigrew, 1998).

Social support can be received in different forms, such as coworker, supervisor, or organizational support (Bailey et al., 1995). Additionally, social support can come in the form of emotional (i.e., relationship oriented) or instrumental (i.e., task oriented) encouragement and can be separated into three categories: social embeddedness (i.e., the connectedness of the individual and their coworkers), perceived support, and the actual behaviors used to express social support (i.e., enacted support) (Barrera, 1986). Although social support can represent social embeddedness and enacted support, empirical evidence suggests they are separate and distinct constructs from the social support an employee perceives from their coworkers (Barrera, 1981; Turner et al., 1983). Accordingly, the current research utilizes a measure of social support that captures both the perceived emotional and instrumental facets of coworker encouragement.

Research suggests that the social support received from their coworkers can lead to changes in employees' motivation (Harrison, 1995), task performance (Morrison, 1993), and commitment to the organization (Reichers, 1985). The support (or lack thereof) received from coworkers can improve and/or undermine interpersonal interactions (e.g., interactions between coworkers of different races) (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). Moreover, coworkers may provide instrumental support in completing work tasks by helping with technical issues and achieving work goals, thereby potentially enhancing task performance. Social support from coworkers can include communicating critical information on functioning successfully within the organization's environment (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008), easing challenging interactions with other coworkers, and forming work friendships (Deckop, Cirka, & Andersson, 2003), thereby potentially enhancing affective commitment to the organization.

Empirical evidence suggests social support from coworkers has distinctive effects likely determined by the perceived racial composition of the workgroup (Dumas et al., 1995). Research

conducted by Dumas and colleagues (2005) supports the prior claim that social support can be influential, especially in racially diverse workforces (Jackson et al., 1995). For instance, some aspects of social support (e.g., sharing personal challenges and increased social contact) are more strongly positively correlated with group integration among coworkers who are racially similar compared to racially dissimilar workforces (Dumas et al., 2005). In other words, racial minority employees perceiving a high degree of racial dissimilarity may feel a weaker sense of belonging (Jackson et al. 1995; Riordan & Shore 1997; Bacharach et al. 2005). Furthermore, in organizations with a high demand for interdependence (i.e., success is dependent on cooperating with coworkers), social support from coworkers can be even more important for desirable outcomes (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). Put differently, perceiving a high degree of racial dissimilarity may lead to less group interdependence and, subsequently, less social support from coworkers in interdependent environments may lead to lower levels of work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 7. The negative association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and work engagement will be moderated by social support, such that the relationship is weaker for individuals experiencing greater social support

Hypothesis 8. The negative association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and task performance will be moderated by social support, such that the relationship is weaker for individuals experiencing greater social support

Hypothesis 9. The negative association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and affective organizational commitment will be moderated by social support, such that the relationship will be weaker for individuals experiencing greater social support

Figure 1. The Hypothesized Model
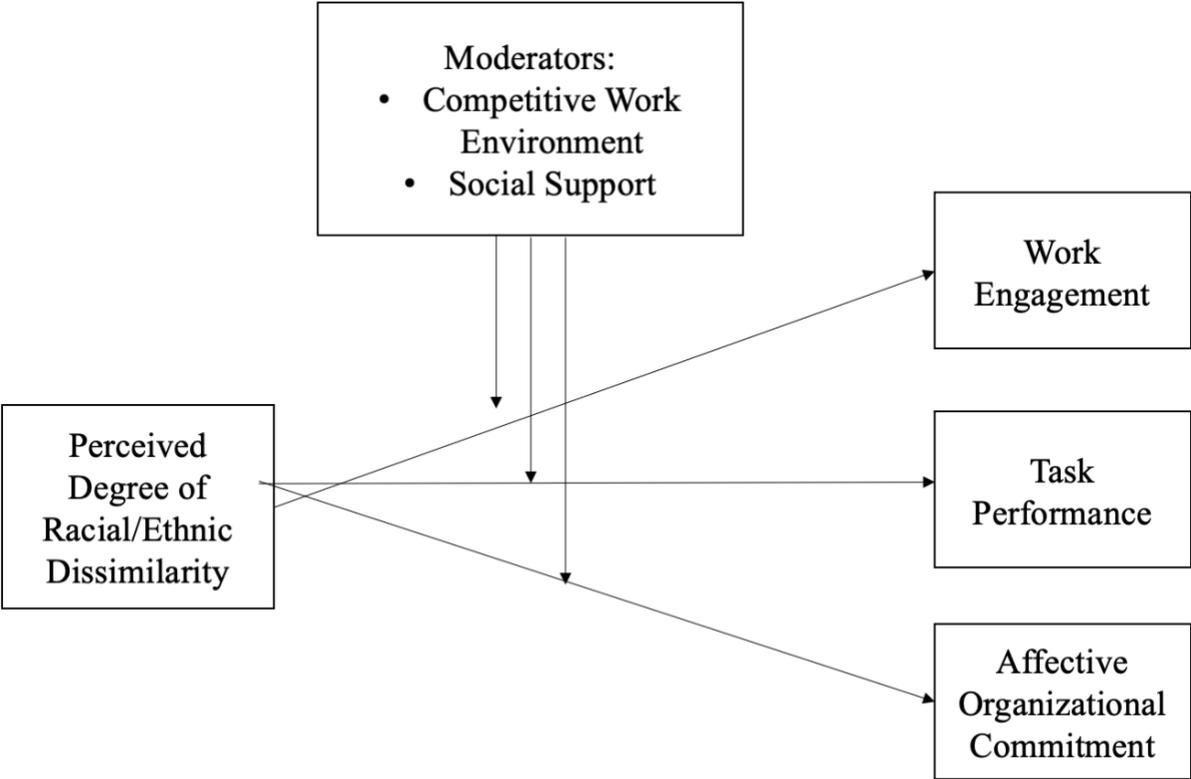
Chapter 3. Methods

3.1. Participants

According to preliminary power analyses using G*Power software, 132 participants are needed to reach a power level of .95 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007); however, we collected data from 250 participants to proactively account for the exclusion of unusable data. Three participants had their data excluded for failing to correctly answer the attention check during the survey, making the total number of observations included in the analyses N=247. All survey participants were recruited via the online survey platform Prolific, worked at least 31 hours per week, resided in the U.S., were at least 18 years of age, and identified as a racial minority (e.g., Asian, Hispanic, Black) or biracial (e.g., White and Black or Hispanic).

3.2. Procedure

The present study was funded by the Graduate Student Strategic Research Grant applied and received through Louisiana State University (LSU) that provided $1,000.00 towards compensating participants. The survey was administered via Qualtrics.co and began by requesting the participants Prolific.co identification number. Participants then completed the measures for perceived degree of racial dissimilarity within their work group, their work engagement, task performance, affective organizational commitment, competitive work environment, social support, organizational justice, and work interdependence in that order. Participants who successfully completed the survey received the same rate of compensation ($3.17) via Prolific.co, a research platform that connects researchers with participants.

3.3. Measures

Perceived degree of racial dissimilarity. The method for ascertaining the perceived degree of racial dissimilarity within the participant's work group was obtained from Cunningham

et al. (2008). Participants responded to four items on a 7-point Likert-scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Congruent with research conducted by Hobman, Bordia, and Gallois (2003), Cunningham et al.'s (2008) usage of the same items measuring perceived racial dissimilarity yielded convincing evidence of internal consistency ($\alpha = .90$). Example items include "Most of my workgroup members are of a different race than me," and "I feel that I am racially different from the other members of my workgroup." The perceived degree of racial diversity measure can be found in Appendix A.

Work engagement. Work engagement was measured with a shortened 9-item version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) measuring all three dimensions (vigor, dedication, absorption) developed by Schaufeli and colleagues (2002). Empirical research has observed convincing evidence of reliability ($\alpha = .92$) (Bruin & Henn, 2013). Bruin and Henn (2013) found strong correlations between each subscale (vigor, dedication, absorption), establishing evidence of construct validity. Evidence of predictive validity for the shortened version has also been established, in that it predicts job satisfaction and affective commitment, even beyond other measures of work engagement (Wefald et al., 2012). Example items include "at work, I feel bursting with energy" (vigor), "I am enthusiastic about my job" (dedication), and "I am immersed in my work" (absorption). All items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*). The work engagement measure can be found in Appendix B.

Task performance. Task performance was measured with 7 items adapted from Williams and Anderson (1991). This scale was originally developed to capture supervisor perceptions of employee's performance, so wording of items will be changed slightly to fit the self-report method of one's performance. An example of an item from the original survey developed by Williams and Anderson (1991) is "They [the employee] performs tasks that are

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expected of them," which I adapted to "I perform tasks that are expected of me." An example of an adapted reverse-scored item is "I neglect aspects of the job I am obligated to do." Williams and Anderson (1991) observed an internal consistency estimate of .91 for items measuring in-role behavior, providing strong evidence of reliability. Utilizing the task performance scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991), Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne (2003) found that task performance was positively correlated to organizational citizenship behaviors and negatively correlated with emotional exhaustion, providing evidence of convergent and discriminant validity. All items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*). The task performance measure can be found in Appendix C.

  Affective organizational commitment. The 8-item Affective Commitment Scale (ACS) developed by (Allen & Meyer, 1990) was utilized to measure participants' affective commitment to their organization. Internal consistency reliability estimates obtained from previous research range from .84 to .88 (Meyer, Bobocel, & Allen, 1991). Utilizing the ACS, Shore and Wayne (1993) found that affective commitment was positively correlated with organizational citizenship behaviors, compliance, and altruism, providing evidence of convergent validity. An example item from the ACS was "I feel an emotional attachment to my organization." Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The ACS can be found in Appendix D.

  Competitive work environment. Participants' perception of the competitive work environment was measured with a 20-item scale from Fletcher and Nusbaum (2010), the Competitive Work Environment Scale (CWES). Jones and colleagues (2017) utilized the CWES and found an internal consistency reliability estimate of .93. Additionally, Fletcher and Nusbaum (2010) found that trait competitiveness was moderately correlated with the dimensions of the

CWES (*r* range = .24-.37), establishing evidence of convergent validity. They also found that the dimensions of the CWES had low correlations with impression self-management and self-deception enhancement, which provides evidence of discriminant validity. Examples items included: "My coworkers and I are compensated based on our performance relative to each other" (tangible rewards), "The amount of freedom and personal direction I get is based on performing better than my coworkers" (nontangible rewards), "I am acknowledged for my accomplishments only when I outperform my coworkers" (recognition), "My status at work depends on my performance relative to others" (status), and "My coworkers are very competitive individuals" (competitive coworkers). Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The competitive work environment measure can be found in Appendix E.

Social support. A 6-item scale developed by House and Wells (1978) was utilized to measures the social support received from participants' coworkers. Deeter-Schmelz and Ramsey (2001) found an internal consistency estimate of .91 utilizing the scale from House and Wells (1978). Research conducted utilizing this social support scale found that social support was positively correlated with positive attitudes towards students and sense of personal accomplishment, and negatively correlated with emotional exhaustion and burnout, providing evidence of convergent and discriminant validity (Russell et al., 1987). Scale items captured both dimensions of coworker social support: "How much do your coworkers listen to you work-related problems" (emotional), and "How much do your coworkers give you useful suggestions to get through difficult times" (instrumental). All items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*). The social support measure can be found in Appendix F.

3.4. Control Variables

Organizational justice. Organizational justice was included in the survey as a control variable given its empirically supported connection with one's overall perception of the organization and its association with employee outcomes such as work-related stress (Judge & Colquitt, 2004) and its association with competition in the workplace (Salin & Notelaers, 2020). The survey included the four-dimensional measure created and validated by Colquitt (2001). 4 items measured distributive justice, 7 items measured procedural justice, 4 items measured interpersonal justice, and 5 items measured informational justice. Example items included "My performance evaluation is justified" (distributive), "The procedures used in my organization uphold ethical and moral standards" (procedural), "My supervisor treats me with respect" (interpersonal), "My supervisor explains procedures thoroughly" (informational). Research shows internal consistencies of .84, .84, .96, and .90 for distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and interactional justice dimensions, respectively. Research shows the four dimensions included in the scale differentially relate to variables predicted to be associated with organizational justice (Colquitt, 2001). For example, evidence of an association between interpersonal justice and perceptions of transformational leadership provides evidence of construct validity (De Cremer et al., 2007). Colquitt and Judge (2004) provide support for the four-dimensional structure by showing that it was better fit for their data. Measure items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*). The organizational justice measure can be found in Appendix G.

Work interdependence. Research has suggested that a connection exists between the extent to which coworkers are dependent on each other (i.e., work interdependence) and the potential impact of competitive work environments on variables desirable to an organization (Fletcher, Major, & Davis, 2008) such as task performance and affective organizational

commitment (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). Thus, in addition to organizational justice, work interdependence was measured as a control variable. A five-item scale from the Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ), developed and validated by Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) was utilized to measure participant's perception of *initiated* and *received* work interdependence. Example items were "Other jobs depend directly on my job" (initiated), and "My job cannot be done if others do not do their job" (received). Research shows an internal consistency of .80 and .84 for initiated and received work interdependence, respectively. Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) established evidence of construct validity, in that they found a significant association between received work interdependence and social support which are theoretically linked constructs (Golden & Gajendran, 2019). All items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*). The work interdependence measure can be found in Appendix H.

     Demographics. At the end of the survey, participants answered several demographic questions (i.e., age, relationship status, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, education level, number of jobs, job tenure, total number of hours worked per week, job title and duties, and number of work hours spent physically at job site). The demographic survey can be found in Appendix I.

Chapter 4. Results

All analyses were conducted in the statistics software Jamovi including descriptive statistics of the data (i.e., means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and reliability estimates), confirmatory factor analyses, and hierarchical multiple regression analyses. To reduce the influence of multicollinearity among the main effects and the interactions (Aiken & West, 1991), I mean-centered the predictor (i.e., perceived degree of racial dissimilarity) and moderating variables (i.e., competitive work environment and social support). Descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and reliability estimates) were calculated first can be found in Table 1. To establish dimensionality for work engagement, competitive work environment, organizational justice, and work interdependence, results of the confirmatory factor analyses are discussed, followed by a discussion of the hierarchical multiple regression analyses. Proceeding the discussion of the associations between the predictor variable (i.e., perceived degree of racial dissimilarity within one's work group), the moderator variables (i.e., competitive work environment and social support), and the criterion variables (i.e., work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment), results of the simple slope analysis are discussed.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Intercorrelations, and Reliabilities

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. *PDRD*	4.78	1.50	(.90)							
2. *WE*	4.55	1.43	.11	(.95)						
3. *TP*	5.92	0.86	.18**	.27***	(.82)					
4. *AOC*	3.95	1.09	.06	.80***	.09	(.87)				

		M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5.	CWE	2.23	0.99	.07	.36***	-.15*	.33***	(.96)			
6.	SS	5.01	1.24	.02	.55***	.28***	.55***	.09	(.96)		
7.	OJ	5.07	1.24	.08	.62***	.32***	.57***	.17**	.66***	(.97)	
8.	WI	4.38	1.41	.13*	.19**	.08	.14*	.21***	.15*	.15	(.89)

Note. N = 247. Std. Dev. = Standard deviation, PDRD = Perceived Degree of Racial Dissimilarity, WE = Work Engagement, TP = Task Performance, AOC = Affective Organizational Commitment, CWE = Competitive Work Environment, SS = Social Support, OJ = Organizational Justice, and WI = Work Interdependence. Reliability values are in parentheses on the diagonal line going down.
* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analyses

First, to establish dimensionality for work engagement (i.e., vigor, absorption, and dedication), a one- and three-factor confirmatory factor model were estimated. In the three-factor model, items 1-3 were loaded onto the vigor dimension, items 4-6 were loaded onto the dedication dimension, and items 7-9 were loaded onto the absorption dimension. Based on Hu and Bentler's (1999) guidelines for well-fitting models (i.e., values of .06 or less for RMSEA, values of .95 or more for CFI, and values of .08 or less for SRMR), the results of the three-factor model provided a better fit to the data and support the dimensionality for work engagement (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation or RMSEA = .124, Comparative Fit Index or CFI = .958, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual or SRMR = .036). Exact estimates for the one- and three-factor model can be found in Table 2.

To establish dimensionality for competitive work environment (i.e., competition for tangible and intangible rewards, status, recognition, and competition inspired by coworkers), a one- and five-factor confirmatory factor model were estimated. In the five-factor model, Items 1-

4 were loaded onto the tangible rewards dimension of competitive work environment, items 5-8 were loaded onto the intangible rewards dimension, items 9-12 were loaded onto the recognition dimension, items 13-16 were loaded onto the status dimension, and items 17-20 were loaded onto the competition-inspired-by-coworkers dimension. The results indicated that the five-factor model provided a better fit to the data (RMSEA = .079, CFI = .953, SRMR = .052).

Next, to establish dimensionality for organizational justice (i.e., distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice), a one- and a four-factor confirmatory factor model were estimated. In the four-factor model, items 1-4 were loaded onto the distributive justice dimension, items 5-11 were loaded onto the procedural justice dimension, items 12-15 were loaded onto the interpersonal justice dimension, and items 16-20 were loaded onto the informational justice dimension. Based on Hu and Bentler's (1999) guidelines for well-fitting models, the results indicated that the four-factor model provided a better fit to the data (RMSEA = .080, CFI = .952, SRMR = .037).

Lastly, to establish dimensionality for work interdependence (i.e., initiated work interdependence and received work interdependence), a one- and a two-factor confirmatory factor model were estimated. In the two-factor model, items 1-3 were loaded onto the initiated work interdependence dimension and items 4-6 were loaded onto the received work interdependence dimension. The results indicated the two-factor model provided a better fit to the data (RMSEA = .123, CFI = .973, SRMR = .030). Estimates for each confirmatory factor model can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Estimate of Fit Indices for Confirmatory Factor Models

Model	X^2	df	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	RMSEA 90% CI
Work Engagement						

	X^2	df	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	
One-factor model	195.000***	27	.922	.047	.159	[.138, 180]
Three-factor model	115.000***	24	.958	.030	.124	[.102, .147]
Competitive Work Environment						
One-factor model	1969.000***	170	.657	.095	.207	[.199, .215]
Five-factor model	405.000***	160	.953	.052	.079	[.069, .088]
Organizational Justice						
One-factor model	1513.000***	170	.750	.074	.179	[.171, .187]
Four-factor model	421.000***	164	.952	.037	.078	[.070, .089]
Work Interdependence						
One-factor model	278.000***	9	.757	.106	.348	[.313, .384]
Two-factor model	38.000***	8	.973	.030	.123	[.086, .164]

Note. $N = 274$. X^2 = Model fit, df = Degrees of freedom, CFI = Comparative Fit Index; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.
* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

4.2. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses

All hypotheses were tested through two sets of hierarchical multiple regression analyses: the first set tested competitive work environment as the moderator and the second set tested social support as the moderator. The results of the first set of hierarchical multiple regression analyses, which tested Hypotheses 1-3 in conjunction with Hypotheses 4-6 (moderator competitive work environment), can be found in Table 3. In the first step of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis, the control variables (i.e., organizational justice and work interdependence) were added due to research indicating a possible link between competitive work environment and organizational justice (Salin & Notelaers, 2020) as well as work interdependence (Fletcher, Major, & Davis, 2008). In step 2, the main effect of the predictor variable (i.e., perceived degree of racial dissimilarity) was entered. Hypotheses 1-3 posited that

perceived degree of racial dissimilarity would be negatively associated with work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment, respectively. Perceived degree of racial dissimilarity showed an insignificant association with work engagement ($\beta = .04$, $p = .38$), a significant positive association with task performance ($\beta = .09$, $p < .05$), and an insignificant association with affective organizational commitment ($\beta < .00$, $p = 1.00$). Thus, the results of step 2 were not supportive of Hypotheses 1, 2, or 3.

In step 3, the moderator variable competitive work environment was entered, and the main effect of the moderator variable was analyzed. In step 4, the interaction term was entered, and the test of moderation was analyzed. Hypotheses 4-6 posited that the negative association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment, respectively, would be strengthened by greater competitive work environments. Competitive work environment exhibited a significant positive association with work engagement ($\beta = .36$, $p < .001$), which became non-significant once the interaction term was entered ($\beta = .49$, $p = .07$). The interaction term was not significant ($\beta = -.03$, $p = .61$), thus, Hypothesis 4 was not supported. Competitive work environment exhibited a significant positive association with task performance ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .001$), which became non-significant once the interaction term was entered ($\beta = -.37$, $p = .06$). The interaction term was not significant ($\beta = -.03$, $p = .38$), thus, Hypothesis 5 was not supported. Competitive work environment exhibited a significant positive association with affective organizational commitment ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$), which became non-significant once the interaction term was entered ($\beta = .37$, $p = .09$). The interaction term was not significant ($\beta = -.02$, $p = .60$), thus, Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

Table 3. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses (Competitive Work Environment Moderator)

Criterion Variables	Work Engagement				Task Performance				Affective Organizational Commitment			
Predictor Variable	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Covariates												
OJ	.71***	.70***	.66***	.66***	.22***	.21***	.24***	.23***	.49***	.49***	.46***	.46***
WI	.13**	.13*	.08	.08	.03	.02	.05	.05	.07	.07	.03	.04
Predictor												
PDRD		.04	.03	.08		.09*	.09**	.03		<.00	-.01	.04
Moderator												
CWE			.36***	.49			-.21***	-.38			.26***	.37
Interaction												
PDRD X CWE				-.03				.03				-.02
ΔR^2		<.00	.06***	<.00		.02*	.05***	<.00		<.00	.05***	<.00
F		0.78	25.62	0.27		6.0	15.18	0.77		<0.00	19.88	0.31

Note. $N = 247$. PDRD = Perceived Degree of Racial Dissimilarity, WE = Work Engagement, TP = Task Performance, AOC = Affective Organizational Commitment, CWE = Competitive Work Environment, OJ = Organizational Justice, and WI = Work Interdependence.
* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .005$

The results of the second set of hierarchical multiple regression analyses, which tested

Hypotheses 1-3 in conjunction with Hypotheses 7-9 (moderator social support), can be found in

Table 4. Following the procedure from the first set of hierarchical multiple regression analyses,

the control variables (i.e., organizational justice and work interdependence) were added in the

first step. In step 2, the main effect of the predictor variable (i.e., perceived degree of racial

dissimilarity) was entered. Perceived degree of racial dissimilarity exhibited a non-significant

association with work engagement ($\beta = .04$, $p = .38$), a significant positive association with task

performance ($\beta = .09$, $p < .05$), and a non-significant association with affective organizational

commitment ($\beta < .00$, $p = 1.00$).

In step 3, the moderator variable (i.e., social support) was entered, and the main effect of

the moderator variable was analyzed. In step 4, the interaction term was entered, and the test of

moderation was analyzed. Hypotheses 7-9 posited that the negative association between

perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and work engagement, task performance, and affective

organizational commitment, respectively, would be weakened by greater social support. Social

support exhibited a significant positive association with work engagement ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$),

which became non-significant once the interaction term was entered ($\beta = .18$, $p = .26$). The

interaction term was not significant ($\beta = .02$, $p = .56$), thus, Hypothesis 7 was not supported.

Social support exhibited an insignificant association with task performance ($\beta = .07$, $p =$

.14), which became significant once the interaction term was entered ($\beta = .33$, $p < .01$). The

interaction term was also significant ($\beta = -.05$, $p < .05$); however, the direction of the association

between the interaction and task performance (i.e., negative) was incongruent with Hypothesis 8,

which posited that the negative association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and

task performance would be weaker for individuals experiencing greater social support, thus,

Hypothesis 8 was only partially supported. Social support exhibited a significant positive association with affective organizational commitment ($\beta = .23$, $p < .001$), which became non-significant once the interaction term was entered ($\beta = .11$, $p = .38$). The interaction term was not significant ($\beta = .02$, $p = .30$), thus, Hypothesis 9 was not supported.

Following recommendations by Aiken and West (1991), the simple slopes of the significant interaction between perceived degree of racial diversity, social support, and task performance was graphed for clarity (Figure 2). Counter to expectations, perceived degree of racial dissimilarity significantly predicted increased task performance at low ($\beta = .15$, $p < .001$) and average ($\beta = .09$, $p < .01$) levels of social support, but was unrelated at high levels of social support ($\beta = .03$, $p = .491$). The results of the simple slope analysis suggest social support weakens the positive association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and task performance.

Table 4. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses (Social Support Moderator)

| Control Variables	Work Engagement				Task Performance				Affective Organizational Commitment			
Predictor Variable	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Covariates												
OJ	.71***	.70***	.51***	.50***	.22***	.21***	.16**	.17**	.49***	.49***	.32***	.31***
WI	.13**	.13*	.10*	.11*	.03	.02	.01	.01	.07	.07	.05	.05
Predictor												
PDRD		.04	.05	-.03		.09*	.09*	.34**		<.00	.01	-.11
Moderator												
SS			.26***	.18			.07	.33**			.23***	.11
Interaction												
PDRD X SS				.02				-.05*				.02
ΔR^2		<.00	.04***	<.00		.02	.01	.02		<.00	.05***	<.00
F		0.78	16.36	0.34		5.96	2.25	5.70		<.00	19.82	1.08

Note. N = 247. PDRD = Perceived Degree of Racial Dissimilarity, WE = Work Engagement, TP = Task Performance, AOC = Affective Organizational Commitment, SS = Social Support, OJ = Organizational Justice, and WI = Work Interdependence.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .001$

Figure 2. Interaction of Social Support Moderator in the Perceived Degree of Racial Dissimilarity – Task Performance Relationship
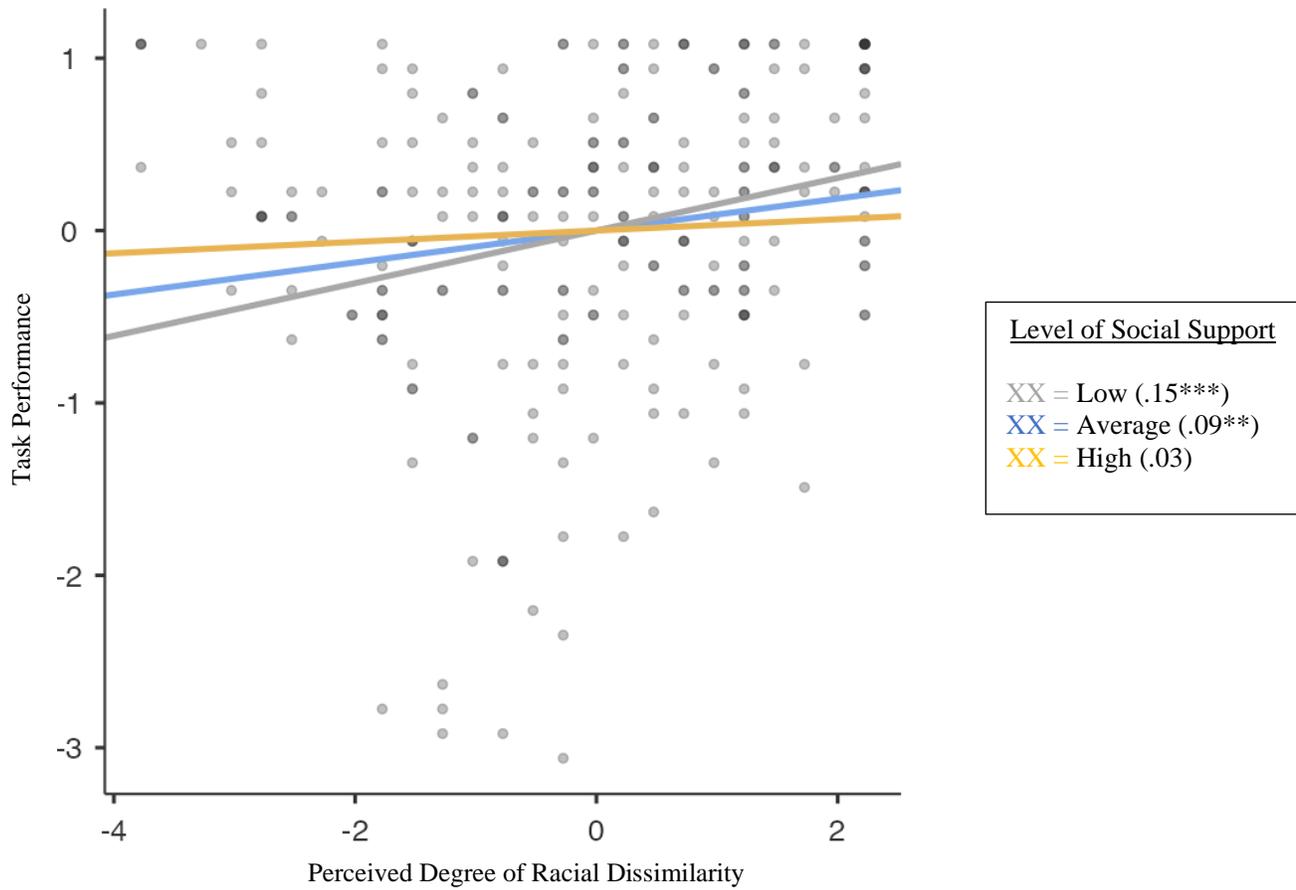
Note. Estimates of the slope for each line are in parentheses.
* *p* < .05
** *p* < .01
*** *p* < .005

Chapter 5. Discussion

The aim of the present research was to examine the association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and work outcomes and, ultimately, to test the moderating influence of a competitive work environment and coworker social support. Unlike the majority of research examining the effect of the relational demography (e.g., degree of racial diversity) of the entire organizations on outcomes like firm performance (Richard et al., 2007), the present research utilized workgroup racial composition from the perspective of the individual (i.e., racial dissimilarity). The results of the present research, though mostly unsupportive of the hypothesized associations, shed more light on the complex relationship between organizational racial diversity and employee outcomes. The significant association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and task performance indicates that racial identity does impact individual-level outcomes, providing support for SCT. The results of the present research also suggest that the interaction effect of competitive work environment and perceived degree of racial dissimilarity may be more complex than expected. For instance, considering the interaction effect for competitive work environment and perceived degree of racial dissimilarity was non-significant for work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment, no inferences could be drawn regarding RGCT.

RGCT and prior research indicate that interacting with racially dissimilar employees likely leads to less cooperation and social cohesion, which, logically, should lead to decreases in desirable outcomes. Task performance, however, was positively associated with perceived degree of racial dissimilarity. Most auspiciously, the results of the present research suggest that the positive association between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and task performance is significant for racial minority employees receiving low social support and non-significant for

racial minority employees receiving greater social support. In line with SCT, racial minority employees in predominantly White workgroups may conceivably feel an increased drive to succeed and, consequently demonstrate higher task performance due to fear of embodying negative racial stereotypes, being pre-judged, or being terminated. Congruent with intergroup contact theory, the results of the current research indicate that receiving greater levels of social support from their coworkers can mitigate said drive to succeed among racial minority employees in predominantly White workgroups. Researchers should exercise caution regarding these findings, as more research is needed to investigate this unexpected finding.

5.1. Practical Implications

The primary aim of the current research (i.e., exploring whether certain characteristics of an employee's organization can have a significant effect on work outcomes for racial minority employees) may have practical implications. Unexpectedly, results indicated that perceiving a high degree of racial dissimilarity is associated with greater task performance. Organizations are warned against utilizing the results to justify the exclusion of racial minority individuals, as the results also indicate that social support, arguably an important job resource, weakens the association. These results suggest that the increased pressure to perform and, perhaps, other negative consequences possibly associated with perceiving a high degree of racial dissimilarity are mitigated by receiving social support from coworkers. Furthermore, in light of prior research suggesting that competitive work environments may have unique consequences for racial minority employees (Kochan et al., 2003), future research should continue to explore organizational factors' influence on perceived racial diversity and work outcomes.

Given the recent social movements regarding the elimination of racially biased treatment in the United States (e.g., fatal police force towards Black Americans), organization leaders may

feel added pressure to demonstrate their acceptance and advocacy for racial minorities, which

may include employing a racially diverse workforce. Therefore, the first characteristic to be

explored (perceived degree of racial dissimilarity) and its association with individual outcomes

such as work engagement, task performance, and affective organizational commitment, has

important social relevance. Because increasing the degree of racial diversity is frequently the

goal for organization leaders, an important aim of the current research was to better understand

the potentially complex interaction between degree of racial diversity, competitive work

environment, and coworker social support.

5.2. Limitations

Similar to other studies, there are potential limitations in the current research that need to

be considered. Arguably the most important potential limitation of the current research is related

to utilizing one data collection method (i.e., common method bias). Richardson et al. (2009)

found that post hoc techniques for the remediation of common method bias (i.e., correlational

marker technique, confirmatory factor analysis marker technique, and unmeasured latent method

construct technique) can identify non-existent bias and even fail to detect known bias, therefore,

no post hoc statistical techniques were conducted. Moreover, according to Siemsen et al. (2010),

the significant interaction effect found between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity, social

support, and task performance was unlikely to be a factor of common method bias.

Although the existence of common method bias is unknown (Spector, 2006), the inherent

nature of self-report measures may have impacted the results, thus, the survey administered to

participants was designed to reduce the potentially biasing effect of utilizing a single source. For

example, the statements proceeding each scale were checked for phrasing that could prime or

lead the participants and the items included in the survey were both positively and negatively

worded (Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 2001, as cited by Jakobsen & Jensen, 2015). Additionally, directive statements and measure items utilized unambiguous language and all of the response options were labeled for each measure (Makenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).

Another limitation is that the current research utilized a single-source, cross-sectional rather than a multi-source, time-lagged or longitudinal design. Although single-source, cross-sectional designs have the potential to provide valuable inferences as well as savings in various resources, multi-source and multi-wave studies are designed to better provide evidence of causality and to reduce common method variance. Therefore, although the associations between the moderator variables and the criterion variables were significant and the interaction between perceived degree of racial dissimilarity and social support was significantly linked to task performance, we are unable to infer directionality between the variables. In other words, it is possible that the criterion variables (i.e., work engagement, task performance, affective organizational commitment) influenced the competitiveness of the work environment or the level of social support received from coworkers instead of being influenced by them. The last limitation of note is the generalizability of the current research. The finding's applications are limited to racial minority employees with similar cultural background and racial socialization (i.e., perceptions of the unique behaviors, values, and attitudes of various races) to the sample that was surveyed.

5.3. Future Directions & Conclusion

Given the increasing diversification of U.S. workforces, understanding the conditions in which high degrees of surface-level diversity (e.g., race, sex, or age) among employees can be linked to desirable organizational and individual-level outcomes may be incredibly beneficial. Perceiving a low degree of racial diversity or racial similarity may be expected to lower the

quality of the work environment for racial minority employees, which may still be true. Future research should explore the impact of perceived racial dissimilarity on variables related to employee well-being in addition to task performance and other job-related variables (e.g., work engagement and organizational commitment). Task performance, however, unlike work engagement and affective organizational commitment may increase due to an unknown factor. Future research should also continue to explore potential mediators and moderators in the association between perceived racial dissimilarity and different individual outcomes.

Appendix A. Perceived Racial Dissimilarity

On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

1. Most of my work group members are of a different race than me
2. I feel that I am racially different from the other members of my work group
3. In general, my teammates and I are of the same race (R)
4. The members of my work group are racially dissimilar to me

(R) indicates a reverse-scored item

Appendix B. Work Engagement

On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy
2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous
3. I am enthusiastic about my job
4. My job inspires me
5. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work
6. I feel happy when I am working intensely
7. I am proud of the work that I do
8. I am immersed in my work
9. I get carried away when I'm working

Items 1-3 measure the vigor dimension of work engagement, items 3-6 measure the dedication dimension of work engagement, and items 7-9 measure the absorption dimension of work engagement.

Appendix C. Task Performance

On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

1. I adequately complete assigned duties
2. I fulfill responsibilities specified in my job description
3. I perform tasks that are expected of me
4. I meet formal performance requirements of the job
5. I engage in activities that will directly affect my performance
6. I neglect aspects of the job that I am obligated to perform (R)
7. I fail to perform my essential duties (R)

(R) indicates a reverse-scored item

Appendix D. Affective Organizational Commitment

On a scale of 1 (never) to 7 (always), please indicate the frequency with which you identify with the following statements.

1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization
2. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it
3. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own
4. I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one (R)
5. I do not feel like 'part of the family' at this organization (R)
6. I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization (R)
7. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me
8. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization (R)

(R) indicates a reverse-scored item

Appendix E. Competitive Work Environment

On a scale of 1 (never) to 7 (always), please indicate the frequency with which you identify with the following statements.

1. My coworkers and I are compensated (e.g., pay, bonuses) based on our performance relative to others
2. I receive higher pay when I perform better than my coworkers
3. I am offered incentives (e.g., higher pay, bonuses, time off) to perform better than my coworkers
4. I am given rewards (e.g., bonuses, gifts, vacation time) for performing better than my coworkers
5. The amount of freedom and personal discretion I get is based no performing better than my coworkers
6. The best performers are offered additional working opportunities that are not available to all employees (e.g., assignments, responsibilities, scheduling)
7. Having freedom and personal discretion at work is based on performing better than coworkers
8. Assignments (e.g., choice of tasks) are based on performance relative to others
9. I am acknowledged for my accomplishments only when I outperform my coworkers
10. My coworkers and I are acknowledged for our accomplishments only when we outperform each other
11. My accomplishments are only recognized if they are better than those of my coworkers
12. Good performance is only recognized when it is better than someone else's performance
13. My status at work depends on my performance relative to others
14. I am only able to obtain high status if I outperform my coworkers
15. My standing is based on my performance relative to others
16. Rank and privilege are based on outperforming others
17. My coworkers are very competitive individuals
18. My coworkers work hard to outperform each other
19. My coworkers are constantly competing with one another
20. Everyone at work wants to win by outperforming their coworkers

Items 1-4 measure the tangible rewards dimension of competitive work environment, items 5-8 measure the intangible rewards dimension of competitive work environment, items 9-12 measure the recognition dimension of competitive work environment, the 13-16 items will measure the status dimension of competitive work environment, and items 17-20 measure the competitive coworkers dimension of competitive work environment.

Appendix F. Social Support

On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

1. My coworkers listen to my work-related problems
2. My coworkers show concern towards my work-related problems
3. My coworkers give me aid in dealing with my work-related problems
4. My coworkers give me tangible assistance to deal with my work-related stress
5. My coworkers give me sound advice about problems encountered on the job
6. My coworkers give me useful suggestions in order to get through difficult times

Appendix G. Organizational Justice

On a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), please the frequency with which you can identify with the following statements.

1. The evaluation of my performance provides a good assessment of the effort I have put into my work
2. The evaluation of my performance provides an appropriate assessment of the work I have completed
3. The evaluation of my performance assesses what I have contributed to the organization
4. My performance evaluation is justified, given my performance
5. I am able to express my views and feelings about my organization's procedures
6. I have influence over the assessments made as a result of my organization's procedures
7. The procedures used in my organization have been applied consistently
8. The procedures used in my organization are free of bias
9. The procedures used in my organization are based on accurate information
10. I am able to appeal the assessments made by procedures used in my organization
11. The procedures used in my organization uphold ethical and moral standards
12. My supervisor treats me in a polite manner
13. My supervisor treats me with dignity
14. My supervisor treats me with respect
15. My supervisor refrains from improper remarks or comments
16. My supervisor is candid in their communication with me
17. My supervisor explains procedures thoroughly
18. My supervisor's explanations regarding procedures are reasonable
19. My supervisor communicates details in a timely manner
20. My supervisor tailors their communication to my specific needs

Items 1-4 measure the distributive dimension of organizational justice, items 5-11 measure the procedural dimension of organizational justice, the 12-15 items will measure the interpersonal dimension of organizational justice, and items 16-20 measure the informational dimension of organizational justice.

Appendix H. Work Interdependence

On a scale of 1 (never) to 7 (always), please indicate the frequency with which you identify with the following statements.

1. The job requires me to accomplish my job before others complete their job
2. Other jobs depend directly on my job
3. Unless my job gets done, other jobs cannot be completed
4. The job activities are greatly affected by the work of other people
5. The job depends on the work of many different people for its completion
6. My job cannot be done unless others do their work

Items 1-3 measure the initiated dimension of work interdependence and items 4-6 measure the received dimension of work interdependence.

Appendix I. Demographics Survey

1. Age: _____

2. What is your relationship status?
   ☐ Single
   ☐ Married
   ☐ Divorced/Widowed

3. Please indicate your gender
   ☐ Male
   ☐ Female
   ☐ Transgender Male
   ☐ Transgender Female
   ☐ Gender diverse / Gender non-conforming
   ☐ Other; I self-identity as (please specify): _____

4. What is your sexual orientation?
   ☐ Asexual
   ☐ Bisexual
   ☐ Gay/Lesbian
   ☐ Pansexual
   ☐ Straight
   ☐ Other; I self-identity as (please specify): _____
   ☐ Prefer not to answer

5. What is your race/ethnicity? (mark all that apply)
   ☐ White   ☐ Latino(a) / Hispanic
   ☐ Black / African American   ☐ American Indian / Alaska Native
   ☐ Asian / Asian American   ☐ Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
   ☐ Other; I self-identify as: _____

6. Assign 10 points in any combination to the racial or ethnic groups you identify with. Assign more points to those you identify more with, less points to those you identify less with, and no points to those you do not identify with at all. Make sure to assign all 10 points.
   ☐ White   ☐ Latino(a) / Hispanic
   ☐ Black / African American   ☐ American Indian / Alaska Native
   ☐ Asian / Asian American   ☐ Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
   ☐ Other; I self-identify as: _____

7. What is your highest level of education?
   ☐ Less than high school

☐ High school/GED
☐ Some college
☐ 2-year degree (associates)
☐ 4-year degree (B.A., B.S.)
☐ Master's degree
☐ Doctoral degree
☐ Professional degree (M.D., J.D.)

8. How many jobs do you have?

   _____

9. Please indicate the amount of time in years that you have been in your current position:

   _____

10. How many hours (total) do you work per week?

    _____

11. What is your job title?

    _____

12. How would you describe your position/job (What are your duties/responsibilities)?

    _____

13. Do you formally supervise any employees?
☐ Yes
☐ No

14. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, what percentage of your weekly hours were spent physically at your job site?

    _____

15. After the COVID-19 pandemic, what percentage of your weekly hours were spent physically at your job site?

    _____

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VITA

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