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A time-lagged investigation of the impact of coworker behavior on the effects of demographic dissimilarity

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Summary Although it is clear that coworker absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover can influence an employee's actions, scholars have yet to consider the impact of relational demography on the adoption of these behavioral norms. Inspired by social identity, situational strength, and attraction-selection-attrition theories, we proposed that individuals who differ from their coworkers in age, sex, or racioethnicity would feel threatened by their outnumbered status and subsequently motivated to be absent, tardy, or more likely to turnover. However, we expected coworker withdrawal behavior to moderate whether or not dissimilar personnel act on these desires. Results from hierarchical multilevel modeling analyses of data from 470 U.S. call center workers nested in 51 work groups revealed that racioethnic dissimilarity was positively related to time-lagged changes in absenteeism and tardiness as well as heightened turnover likelihood. These effects emerged only among employees whose coworkers engaged in greater withdrawal behavior. Importantly, racioethnically dissimilar employees working in more permissive climates (i.e., those with high levels of coworker absenteeism, tardiness, or turnover) exhibited the greatest increases in absenteeism and tardiness over three months and had the highest supervisor-rated turnover likelihood. Implications for diversity management are discussed. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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Census officials have projected that no single racioethnic group will represent a numerical majority of the United States within the next 30 years (Cooper, 2012). Coupled with slowed overall population growth and an increasing proportion of elderly citizens, the U.S. workforce will witness its greatest degree of demographic diversity in history. This increasing diversity naturally results in situations where individuals may find themselves outnumbered at work by people who are demographically different from themselves. Given these trends, additional investigations are needed to explore how relational demography (i.e., being demographically dissimilar from others in the work unit; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992) influences employee behavior. In the present study, we focus on the impact of demographic dissimilarity on three types of employee withdrawal—absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover likelihood.

Identifying predictors of employee withdrawal from the workplace is of particular interest to organizations, given the negative impact these behaviors have on employee performance and morale (Blau, 1995; Elicker, Foust, O'Malley, & Levy, 2008; Koslowsky, Sagie, Krausz, & Singer, 1997) as well as on the organization's bottom line (Armes, 2005; Sagie, Birati, & Tziner, 2002; Stewart, Ricci, Chee, Hahn, & Morganstein, 2003). To illustrate, tardiness is estimated to cost upwards of three billion dollars each year (DeLonzor, 2005), and absenteeism can cost up to 15 percent of an organization's total salary costs (Navarro & Bass, 2006). Disturbingly, these financial estimates

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often do not include the additional individual repercussions of lost promotion opportunities for the disengaged employee (Jamal, 1984).

Although many researchers have demonstrated that being different from others in the workplace can influence important outcomes such as counterproductive work behaviors, work-family conflict, and engagement (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007; Bhave, Kramer, & Glomb, 2010; Liao, Joshi, & Chuang, 2004), the findings from studies examining relationships with withdrawal behaviors have been inconsistent. On one hand, a number of studies have documented that demographic dissimilarity can reduce employees' organizational commitment and increase their propensity to be absent, tardy, or express turnover intentions (Avery, McKay, Wilson, & Tonidandel, 2007; Cunningham, 2007; Liao et al., 2004; Pelled & Xin, 1997; Perry, Kulik, & Zhou, 1999; Tsui et al., 1992). On the other hand, some studies have found either no main effect of dissimilarity or that demographically dissimilar individuals make even more of an effort to blend in or exceed colleagues' efforts on behalf of their organizations (Avery, Volpone, McKay, King, & Wilson, 2012; Chatman & Spataro, 2005; Chattopadhyay, 1999; Chattopadhyay, Tluchowska, & George, 2004; David, Avery, & Elliott, 2010; Kirchmeyer, 1995; Vecchio & Brazil, 2007). To detail one example of these mixed findings, McGinn and Milkman (2013) found that female attorneys with more female superiors were less likely to leave the organization and more likely to be promoted, whereas both men and women with same-sex and same-race peers were actually more likely to turnover. Although such discrepant results suggest a need to look for moderators that may explain this inconsistency, relatively few studies have done so.

In an attempt to build on current knowledge of the complex effects of relational demography, we propose that the behavior of coworkers (i.e., members of one's work group who share a common supervisor) acts as a moderator of the dissimilarity-withdrawal linkage. To inform our logic, we looked to the social identity management (Hewlin, 2003; Roberts, 2005), situational strength (Cooper & Withey, 2009; Mischel, 1977), and the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA; Schneider, 1987) frameworks to help describe the following: (a) why demographically dissimilar individuals are more motivated to be absent, tardy, and likely to turnover and (b) how coworker behavior serves to either constrain or foster this impulse. We present the hypothesized model in Figure 1. Compared with employees who are similar to others reporting to the same supervisor, we propose that demographically dissimilar employees (i.e., individuals who differ from coworkers in terms of sex, age, or racioethnicity) are more motivated to engage in withdrawal behaviors to avoid an identity-threatening environment at work. These behaviors might include not only more frequent absenteeism and tardiness, but also consist of outward indications that an employee is likely

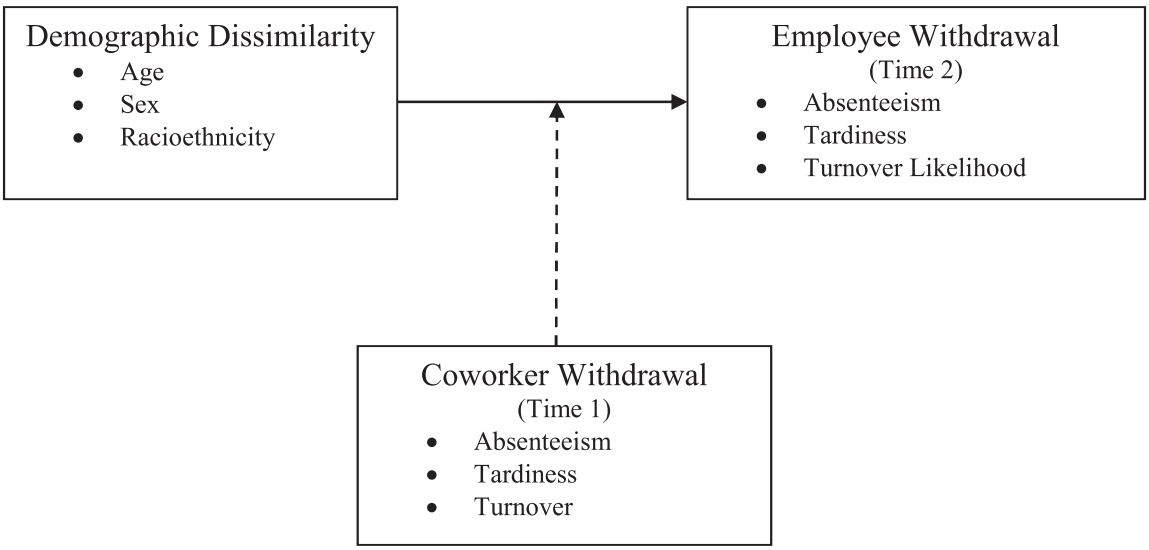

Figure 1. A multilevel time-lagged model linking relational demography with employee withdrawal behaviors

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to quit his or her job (e.g., dissatisfaction and disengagement). Whether or not they actually behave in this way, however, is possibly a function of their coworkers' behavior.

Specifically, we view coworkers' behaviors as a contextual cue that signals either a strong or weak situation. As previous researchers have noted (e.g., Cooper & Withey, 2009; Diestel, Wegge, & Schmidt, 2014; Meyer, Dalal, & Hermida, 2010; Meyer et al., 2014; Mischel, 1977), normative levels of coworker actions can indicate the amount of risk associated with engaging in a particular behavior. Groups wherein coworkers are consistently present at work, arrive on time, and have low levels of turnover represent strong situations where uniformity in behavior is encouraged given the negative repercussions associated with engaging in withdrawal behaviors. In this case, dissimilar employees are likely to conform to these behavioral norms in order to avoid standing out even more. Conversely, groups where employees are frequently absent, late, and more prone to quitting represent weak situations (i.e., the risk of these behaviors is low or unknown). In the absence of strong contextual cues, demographically dissimilar individuals likely feel greater freedom to act on their motivations. Thus, we predict that they will be much more likely to exhibit these behaviors than their demographically similar coworkers over time.

The Impact of Demographic Dissimilarity on Employee Withdrawal

Employee withdrawal refers to a family of behaviors in which an employee is psychologically and/or physically away from the workplace in some capacity. These behaviors vary in severity and range from working slowly, surfing the Internet, and taking unnecessary breaks to arriving to work late, being absent, or quitting altogether (Koslowsky, 2000, 2009). Some researchers have proposed that all withdrawal behaviors are indicators of a common underlying construct reflecting the desire to disengage from the workplace due to unfavorable job attitudes (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991; Hulin, 1991). Empirical studies, however, have shown that absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover likelihood have different antecedents (e.g., Iverson & Deery, 2001), and that meta-analytic correlations between the various withdrawal behaviors are small to modest at best (Berry, Lelchook, & Clark, 2012). More importantly, different theoretical frameworks exist for each of the behaviors. For example, Johns (2001) described a number of reasons why employees are absent ranging from illness to attending a family event. Many of these motives are unrelated to dissatisfaction with one's job, the organization, or its members (e.g., Halbesleben, Whitman, & Crawford, 2014). In contrast, turnover has been well documented to occur through an unfolding process whereby employees follow one of several psychological paths when leaving their jobs (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Lee, Mitchell, Holtom, McDaneil, & Hill, 1999). Notably, no such detailed map of decision points exists for tardiness or absenteeism. Overall, the empirical and theoretical evidence suggest that the aggregated withdrawal model is less viable than treating tardiness, absenteeism, and turnover likelihood as related, yet qualitatively unique, behaviors (Berry et al., 2012; Blau, 1998; Johns, 1998).

We use the term, "withdrawal," as a way to group these behaviors together (i.e., absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover likelihood all indicate that an employee is either physically away from the workplace or is considering exiting the organization) rather than to suggest a unified underlying construct. Accordingly, we examine these behaviors separately in order to better understand the nature of each. In later sections, we discuss the theory underlying why demographically dissimilar others are motivated to remove themselves from the workplace.

Demographic dissimilarity

The organizational diversity literature is composed of myriad studies that examine the effects of people working together who differ from one another in terms of specific attributes such as demographics, personality, or functional background (Guillaume, Dawson, Woods, Sacramento, & West, 2013). Traditionally, diversity has been explored from a work group or organizational composition standpoint and has been conceptualized in a number of ways.

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For example, Harrison and Klein (2007) delineated three types of unit-level diversity: separation (i.e., lateral differences in opinion or position), variety (i.e., differences in kind or category), and disparity (i.e., vertical differences in status). A drawback of this categorical approach, however, is that it assumes that all people in a given category or all employees in groups of a particular composition will act the same way regardless of the social context (Cunningham, 2007; Tsui & Gutek, 1999).

In response to this criticism, a subset of diversity researchers has shifted attention away from exploring the effect of group demographic composition to understanding the experience of the individual employee within groups (e.g., Buckley, Jackson, Bolino, Veres, & Feild, 2007; Choi, 2007; Stewart & Garcia-Prieto, 2008; Tonidandel, Avery, Bucholtz, & McKay, 2008). Relational demography theory states that individuals use demographic characteristics such as racioethnicity, sex, and age as sources of information regarding one's salient social identity (Tsui & Gutek, 1999). As people tend to integrate more readily and form friendships with others like themselves (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002; Tsui, Xin, & Egan, 1995), individuals who are visibly different from coworkers are excluded from such cliques. In-group members (i.e., similar coworkers) are perceived as socially attractive, trustworthy, cohesive, honest, likeable, and cooperative, whereas out-group members (i.e., dissimilar coworkers) are viewed as less socially attractive, sources of conflict, and therefore are excluded from group interactions and activities (Brewer, 1979; Goldberg, Riordan, & Schaffer, 2010; Hobman, Bordia, & Gallois, 2004; Liao et al., 2004; Riordan, 2000; Schaffer & Riordan, 2013; Tekleab & Quigley, 2014).

Several frameworks have been used to understand the effects of relational demography (e.g., social identity theory; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; self-categorization theory; Tsui et al., 1992; Turner, 1987; and social anxiety theory; Stephan & Stephan, 1985), most of which can trace their roots to the homophily principles espoused by the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1961, 1971). According to this theory, individuals who are similar in terms of attitudes, personality, and demographic characteristics are more attracted to one another than individuals who are dissimilar. Because people like to view themselves positively, heightened similarity with one's coworkers or supervisor often results in perceptions of a supportive working environment and, correspondingly, less discrimination (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Thus, workers who are demographically similar to their coworkers may feel more at ease when engaging in work tasks, leading to increased rapport and, ultimately, more positive work outcomes (Guillaume, Brodbeck, & Riketta, 2012; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999).

By contrast, dissimilar employees are apt to experience lower perceived similarity with colleagues, therefore resulting in reduced trust and interpersonal liking (Byrne, 1961, 1971). The lowered level of social integration makes employees question their future with the organization and perpetuates lower levels of attachment and higher turnover (Elfenbein & O'Reilly, 2007; Riordan & Shore, 1997; Tsui et al., 1992). The attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) model (Schneider, 1987) is useful for articulating why dissimilar personnel may be driven to withdraw from jobs and/or firms. According to this framework, organizations become more homogenous over time because of conscious and unconscious efforts to attract, hire, and keep employees who fit into the overall organizational culture (Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Smith, Taylor, & Fleenor, 1998). A by-product of this process is that people who are dissimilar from their coworkers, particularly in readily observable ways such as age, sex, and racioethnicity, may feel pressure to leave over time (Goldberg, 2003; Schaubroeck, Ganster, & Jones, 1998; Tekleab & Quigley, 2014).

Social identification processes might explain the heightened homogeneity among organizational members that the ASA framework describes (Goldberg, 2003; Westphal & Zajac, 1995). Social identity theory purports that people use group membership as a source of self-esteem and strengthened self-identity. If individuals are dissimilar from coworkers (and fail to be socially integrated as a result), then they may choose to withdraw from these groups in order to maintain positive self-regard. Accordingly, people look to others' salient characteristics, and the state of being demographically outnumbered can be "appraised as potentially harmful to one's social identity" (Major & O'Brien, 2005, p. 393). Research has demonstrated that being demographically dissimilar from coworkers draws attention to one's minority status (McGuire & McGuire, 1982; Pichevin & Hurtig, 1996), which can be both physically and mentally stressful (Beaton, Tougas, Rinfret, Huard, & Delisle, 2007; Niemann & Dovidio, 1998). For example, an older worker may feel comfortable and confident in the company of similarly aged others. When

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placed in a work group where coworkers are two decades or more his junior, however, he quickly becomes aware of how outdated his knowledge and tastes might seem. Because individuals strive to maintain and enhance their social identity, we suggest that being demographically dissimilar from one's coworkers creates a motivation to withdraw.

In order for identity threat to occur, an individual must evaluate whether or not the situation is damaging presently, or will be viewed as such in the future (Major & O'Brien, 2005; Petriglieri, 2011). Next, he or she must conclude on the basis of a number of factors (e.g., identity importance and experience recurrence; Petriglieri, 2011) whether or not this damaging situation presents an actual threat to his or her personal identity. If a threat is detected, then the individual must then decide how to respond to the threatening situation (Smith, 1991). Researchers have proposed that employees are likely to respond to identity threats resulting from demographic dissimilarity by withdrawing from the threatening environment (Clair, Humberd, Caruso, & Roberts, 2012; Major & O'Brien, 2005). More generally, research has shown that absenteeism can be used as a means to escape from (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Rhenen, 2009) or protest against (Chadwick-Jones, Nicholson, & Brown, 1982) unpleasant situations at work.

Usually, societal prejudices against certain demographic groups are perceived as relatively long lasting and, therefore, tend to present identity-threatening situations (Gee, 2002; Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999). Considering that identities associated with demographic characteristics such as age or racioethnicity are among the hardest to devalue or change (Deaux, 1991), one might conclude that demographic dissimilarity could be particularly threatening to one's identity. Specifically, being demographically distinct from one's coworkers with regard to age, sex, or racioethnicity increases fears of being judged by prevailing stereotypes, or rejected outright on the basis of group membership (Roberson & Kulik, 2007; Shelton, 2003). Indeed, Bargh, Chen, and Burrows (1996) found that stereotypes based on sex and racioethnicity are so ingrained in society that they are almost immediately activated when a perceiver is making a judgment about a member of one of these groups.

Given the strong motivation to both maintain a consistent identity and a high level of self-regard (Shamir, 1991), theoretically, dissimilar individuals may wish to flee from the offending environment (Major & O'Brien, 2005; Volpone & Avery, 2013; Zatzick, Elvira, & Cohen, 2003). Empirical evidence, however, has shown that the main effects of demographic dissimilarity and withdrawal behaviors have been inconsistent (Joshi, Liao, & Roh, 2011; Perry et al., 1999), and that a variety of factors moderate the direction and magnitude of this relationship (Avery et al., 2012; Pelled & Xin, 1997). For example, Perry et al. (1999) reported that age dissimilarity with one's immediate supervisor was negatively related to absenteeism, whereas age dissimilarity with one's higher-level supervisor was positively related to absenteeism. In addition, Avery et al. (2012) found that employment status acted as a moderator such that only part-time employees demonstrated significant relationships between demographic dissimilarity and tardiness, absence, and intent to stay. Part-time employees of the same racioethnicity as their supervisors displayed lower levels of tardiness, absence, and turnover likelihood, whereas those with supervisors of the same sex were also absent less frequently; these relationships were nonsignificant among full-time employees (Avery et al., 2012). Underscoring these mixed findings, a recent meta-analysis has reported that there is considerable unexplained variance in the effects of demographic dissimilarity on withdrawal and productivity outcomes even after accounting for social integration (Guillaume et al., 2012).

We argue that whether demographically dissimilar employees elect to engage in withdrawal behaviors or choose another response depends on the nature of the situation. As a result of various conscious and unconscious decision points, similar identity-threatening situations may or may not result in identical outcomes for different individuals. For example, one study focusing on leadership style dissimilarity showed that being different actually lead to more citizenship behaviors and greater effort, but also more stress and irritability (Felfe & Schyns, 2004). This suggests that, although the individuals were internally unhappy and threatened by the dissimilar situation, they actually increased their efforts at work.

Given the equivocal nature of previous studies examining dissimilarity and withdrawal behaviors, and in line with existing research (Chattopadhyay et al., 2004; DiTomaso, Post, & Parks-Yancy, 2007), we highlight coworker behavior as a contextual cue that may determine when demographic dissimilarity has a negative, neutral, or positive effect on employee behaviors.

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Coworker withdrawal behavior

Researchers have long noted the profound impact of the social context on a given employee's actions (e.g., Bovard, 1948; Sherif, 1936). We propose that coworker behavior provides normative behavioral cues (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004; Johns, 2006) that make up either a strong or weak situation (Cooper & Withey, 2009; Meyer et al., 2010, 2014). In other words, working in an environment where coworkers are never absent or tardy creates a strong situation that communicates to employees that these behaviors are unacceptable, readily observable, and will be met with severe sanctions. Similarly, employees who observe low turnover among their coworkers are likely to infer that loyalty to the company is rewarded in some way. As such, these strong situations will influence employees to follow their coworkers' example and engage in low levels of withdrawal themselves, owing to the negative social and organizational consequences of not doing so (Asch, 1956; Bandura, 1977). Considerable empirical research supports this relation between coworker withdrawal behaviors and individual tardiness, absenteeism, and turnover likelihood (e.g., Bamberger & Biron, 2007; Blau, 1995; Brooke & Price, 1989; Eder & Eisenberger, 2008; Gellatly, 1995; Gellatly & Luchak, 1998; Lau, Au, & Ho, 2003; Mathieu & Kohler, 1990).

Despite clear evidence that coworker behavior impacts employee withdrawal in general, there is uncertainty regarding whether and how demographically dissimilar employees use coworker withdrawal behavior as a potential signal that governs their own (identity-protecting) rates of absenteeism, tardiness, and likelihood to turnover. For instance, what happens when a demographically dissimilar employee works with coworkers who regularly refrain from withdrawal? Will the penchant to protect one's self from identity threat trump the tendency to conform to behavioral norms or vice versa?

In its simplest form, an interaction can be represented by four quadrants combining the high and low conditions of the two independent variables.[1] Applied here, the two quadrants involving employees who are demographically similar to their coworkers have straightforward conclusions. Essentially, these individuals are prone to conform to the behavior of those surrounding them. Accordingly, they are likely to withdraw more when coworker withdrawal is higher and withdraw less when coworker withdrawal is lower.

What is equivocal, however, is how people who differ in age, sex, or racioethnicity from their coworkers respond to the prevailing social context (if at all). On one hand, it is conceivable that difficulties associated with being different supersede any motivation to act in concert with one's coworkers. This would entail behavioral norms only being relevant for employees who are similar to their coworkers (Gellatly & Allen, 2012). On the other hand, it is equally plausible that those who are more demographically dissimilar exhibit a greater awareness of and sensitivity to the behavior of those around them as they wish to avoid standing out any further. Indeed, research has shown that peripheral group members engage in more strategic behavior than more prototypical members (Hewlin, 2009; Jetten, Branscombe, Spears, & McKimmie, 2003; Jetten, Hornsey, & Adarves-Yorno, 2006; Van Kleef, Steinel, van Knippenberg, Hogg, & Svensson, 2007). If true, then the level of coworker absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover would condition the effect of demographic dissimilarity on individual behavior.

On the basis of the logic presented to this point, we favor the latter of these two competing explanations. Recall that dissimilarity is believed to promote withdrawal intentions because employees are attempting to avoid the identity threat of being outnumbered demographically. Proportional rarity heightens visibility for those in the numerical minority, which can call attention to one's distinctiveness and promote boundary heightening (i.e., the exaggeration of perceived differences between majority and minority group members; Kanter, 2006) and stigmatization (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Withdrawing from such situations may be perceived as a means of reducing the occurrence of this type of identity threat. However, if absenteeism, tardiness, or turnover is relatively uncommon within that particular

[1]It is important to remember that an interaction is simply a dependency between two variables. From a statistical standpoint, either coworker behavior or demographic dissimilarity could be considered the moderator and plotted as such (Aiken & West, 1991; Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). We have positioned the former as the moderator in the current study given its role as a contextual factor, but our hypotheses are compatible with other studies using different theoretical lenses that have employed demographic dissimilarity as the moderator.

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setting, the employee's withdrawal may amplify identity threat by drawing attention to her or his dissimilarity, thereby reinforcing others' negative stereotypes about her or his identity group.

The preceding argument suggests that those in the demographic minority are apt to pay particular attention to coworkers' behavior to avoid engaging in behavior that might cause them to stand out even more (Chatman & Spataro, 2005). For that reason, lower levels of coworker withdrawal are likely to stifle dissimilar employees' greater proneness to withdrawal than their more similar counterparts. Stated alternatively, we view low levels of coworker absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover as strong situations signaling that everyone should act uniformly (Cooper & Withey, 2009; Mischel, 1977). Conversely, a weak social context characterized by high levels of coworker withdrawal sends conflicting messages about the deviance of withdrawal behaviors (Diestel et al., 2014). Given this ambiguity, such situations provide dissimilar individuals the liberty to act in accordance with their motivations and protect their valued identities. Consequently, these personnel will engage in the greatest increases in absenteeism and tardiness, and exhibit greater proneness to turnover.

Supporting this prediction, Biron and Bamberger (2012) found that employees who experienced job hazards perceived they had unspoken permission to take time off for recovery only when permissive behavioral norms prevailed (i.e., they worked in a group where their coworkers were frequently absent). Stated alternatively, rates of absenteeism were highest among employees experiencing job stressors who also worked in groups with lax social and formal sanctions against this behavior. In contrast, employees exhibited lower absenteeism, irrespective of their motivation to do so, when coworker absenteeism was uniformly low. Although coworker withdrawal behavior does not enhance or diminish the psychological experience of being different, we propose that it might encourage or discourage an individual's outward behavior. Therefore, we posit that demographically dissimilar individuals will conform to the behavior of others in strong situations (i.e., low coworker absenteeism, tardiness, or turnover) to avoid potentially exacerbating identity threat. In weak situations (i.e., high coworker absenteeism, tardiness, or turnover), they will have the highest increases in these behaviors. In the following sections, we outline how absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover behaviors fit within our proposed model.

Absenteeism

There are many reasons why a person chooses to be absent including negative job attitudes, job hazards, and personal or family-related illness (see Harrison & Martocchio, 1998, for a review). Importantly, researchers have demonstrated repeatedly that the absence behavior of coworkers also has a strong impact on individual absence behavior (Bamberger & Biron, 2007; Biron & Bamberger, 2012; Dello Russo, Miraglia, Borgogni, & Johns, 2013; Gellatly & Allen, 2012; Harrison, Johns, & Martocchio, 2000; Mathieu & Kohler, 1990). These studies often refer to an "absence culture" or "absence norms," which is indicative of how employees look to their colleagues to determine the permissibility of taking an occasional day off.

In the context of the present study, we suggest that coworker behavior has a strong effect on the relationship between demographic dissimilarity and absenteeism. As outlined earlier, dissimilar employees may be internally motivated to avoid their identity-threatening environment, but are likely to act upon such motives only when behavioral norms are permissive. In strong situations (i.e., low levels of coworker absence), dissimilar employees are likely to report for work despite their discomfort to avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes about themselves and their demographic group. In weaker environments, however, dissimilar employees may see taking a day off as an effective way to recover and build identity-protective resources while engaging in other activities (perhaps with demographically similar others). Supporting this idea, the recovery literature has shown that time away from work can have positive effects on stress reduction and burnout avoidance (Eden, 2001; Etzion, Eden, & Lapidot, 1998; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2005, 2006). As such, we predict that demographically dissimilar employees with coworkers who are absent frequently will have the greatest increases in absenteeism.

Hypothesis 1: Coworker absenteeism moderates the positive demographic dissimilarity–change in absenteeism relationship, such that it is stronger among workers whose coworkers have high versus low average rates of absenteeism.

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Tardiness

Tardiness refers to an employees' arrival to work later than the agreed-upon starting time. Antecedents of tardiness include individual variables such as job attitudes and work-family commitment, as well as practical concerns such as transportation, illness, and adverse weather conditions (Blau, 1994, 1995; Koslowsky et al., 1997). Similar to absenteeism, several studies have shown that the extent of coworker tardiness has a significant influence on the employee's choice to report to work late (Blau, 1995; Eder & Eisenberger, 2008; Elicker et al., 2008).

We liken tardiness among demographically dissimilar individuals to the procrastination behavior of a child who takes longer than necessary to report to school to avoid a school bully. The child will be more prone to behave in this fashion if she or he witnesses her or his brothers and sisters doing the same without parental repercussions. Similarly, a worker whose coworkers are frequently late will respond to the identity-threatening experience of being dissimilar by coming into work late. Although tardiness may not provide the restorative benefits of taking a whole day away from work, it is the most permissible of the three withdrawal behaviors. As Blau (1995) noted, organizations often have different expectations and policies for the number of absences and tardy arrivals allowed. Whereas employees may have a bank of absences from which they can draw as needed, tardiness tends to be addressed only when the behavior becomes excessive. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: Coworker tardiness moderates the positive demographic dissimilarity–change in tardiness relationship, such that it is stronger among workers whose coworkers have high versus low average rates of tardiness.

Turnover likelihood

We define turnover likelihood as a set of behaviors reflecting an interest in permanently leaving the organization. There is a robust history of examining proximal antecedents of turnover, including employee intent to quit (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Zimmerman & Darnold, 2009), turnover cognitions (Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell, & Allen, 2007), job search behaviors, and psychological mobility (Direnzo & Greenhaus, 2011). Researchers began to study these constructs with earnest after encountering difficulties in predicting actual turnover (i.e., leaving from or staying with a firm; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). In the present study, we examined employee likelihood to turnover as judged by employees' direct supervisors.

We contend that supervisors are uniquely positioned to judge whether an employee is likely to stay with or depart from a company. This is probable because factors such as job satisfaction, performance, and physical forms of withdrawal including absenteeism and tardiness are some of the best predictors of turnover (Carpenter & Berry, 2014; Griffeth et al., 2000; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). Supervisors can observe each of these factors either directly (in the case of performance and withdrawal) or indirectly through related behaviors (in the case of job attitudes). Also, supervisors typically are called upon to provide assessments of their subordinates as part of the formal performance appraisal process. Accordingly, we assert that supervisors have unique insight as to which employees are more likely to leave the organization. Supporting this idea, prior scholars have shown moderate empirical relationships between supervisor-reported and self-reported turnover intentions (e.g., Andrews, Witt, & Kacmar, 2003; Rosen, Harris, & Kacmar, 2009).

We propose that demographically dissimilar employees may voice desires to leave the organization as a result of the possible discomfort they encounter as the sole member of their group in the work setting. In terms of Lee and Mitchell's (1994) unfolding model of turnover decisions, we see being demographically different as fitting into one of two potential pathways. For some employees, being demographically different may come as a shock, causing the employee to leave the organization shortly after joining (i.e., Path 2). For others, being demographically different may present as a more chronic stressor that causes dissatisfaction to accumulate over time, leading to the search for alternatives and an expressed desire to leave (i.e., Path 4b; Harman, Lee, Mitchell, Felps, & Owens, 2007).

Although the desire to leave one's organization is quite a personal choice, research has demonstrated that job embeddedness (i.e., connections with others on and off the job; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007) as well as the actual

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job search behaviors of coworkers can influence an employee's decision to quit (Felps et al., 2009). This so-called turnover contagion occurs when workers compare themselves with coworkers, and notice that they are less engaged at work and looking for other jobs. Upon witnessing these behaviors, employees frequently conclude that they, too, deserve better and should consider looking for greener pastures elsewhere (Felps et al., 2009).

Consequently, we suggest that the turnover of one's coworkers will play a significant role in whether or not one formulates their own plans to leave the organization. Specifically, in groups where coworkers are frequently leaving for other opportunities, morale and support among the remaining members are likely to be very low, thereby further alienating the dissimilar member. In groups where few coworkers are turning over, however, incentives that stave off leaving may also help to mitigate the identity threat associated with being different. These factors increase the likelihood that dissimilar members will stay in the organization as well.

Two previous studies have examined contextual moderators of the relationship between demographic dissimilarity and the related constructs of intent to quit and turnover. In the first, Sacco and Schmitt (2005) found that, as a function of time, individuals who were demographically dissimilar from their cohort were more likely to turnover earlier in their tenure rather than later. In the second investigation, Gonzalez and DeNisi (2009) found a strong positive relationship between racioethnic dissimilarity and intentions to quit among Hispanic employees working in an adverse diversity climate (i.e., a work environment unsupportive of diversity); this relationship did not hold when diversity climates were perceived as supportive or among non-Hispanic employees. The results of these studies suggest that environmental and temporal factors can influence when and how relational demography impacts employee withdrawal.

Hypothesis 3: Coworker turnover moderates the positive demographic dissimilarity–turnover likelihood relationship, such that it is stronger among workers whose coworkers have high versus low average turnover rates.

Method

Research context

Participants were employees working in the in-bound call center of a private sector organization located in the United States. They performed customer service tasks (e.g., relaying information and explaining policies) and were not involved in selling. They worked in cubicles in close proximity to their coworkers who reported to the same supervisor. Whereas they used telephony technology to initiate calls and customer relationship software to access account and product information, they often relied on each other for information and advice on handling customer problems. In addition, employees were called upon to complete the work tasks of coworkers who were absent or tardy. Finally, periodic team meetings and training sessions provided formal opportunities for interacting with coworkers face-to-face. The three levels of management above the first-line supervisor did not change during the study period. Occasionally, workers were monitored by a quality control manager, who also was in place during the entire data-collection period. Furthermore, there were no major structural or technological changes. Hence, the work environment was relatively stable.

Sample and procedure

The data were collected from the human resource records of 470 of 703 (66.9 percent) employees (age $M = 30$ years; tenure $M = 3$ years). Although this particular organization is somewhat female dominated (72 percent), there is considerable racioethnic diversity (29 percent Black, 25 percent Hispanic, and 46 percent White). Workers were nested

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within 51 work groups, defined as a team of employees working together under a single supervisor. These groups ranged considerably in sex (0–100 percent female), racioethnic (0–86 percent Black; 0–100 percent Hispanic; 0–100 percent White), and age diversity (age *SD* range = 0.12–24.22). All of the variables (with the exception of turnover likelihood) were assessed at two time points: once at the close of the third month of the year (first quarter) and once again three months later at the close of the sixth month (second quarter). Supervisors rated the turnover likelihood of employees only at the second time point.

Measures

Absence and tardiness. All absence and tardiness values (coworker and employee) were acquired from the organization's human resource information system. Employee arrival times were automatically entered into the call center's shift management software database when employees logged into the computer system. An indicator of tardiness was automatically entered into the human resource information system (i.e., data sent from the shift management software) when an employee logged in more than five minutes later than the start of the shift. Absences from work were recorded by the shift management software and sent to the human resource information system when employees did not log onto the computer system on assigned work days. Time 1 values were for the first quarter of the year, and Time 2 values were for the second quarter. Absences ranged from zero to eight at Time 1 ($M = 0.53$; $SD = 1.32$) and from zero to 17 at Time 2 ($M = 0.86$; $SD = 1.94$); tardiness values ranged from zero to seven at both time points (Time 1 $M = 0.56$; $SD = 1.40$; Time 2 $M = 0.68$; $SD = 1.54$). As is commonplace in withdrawal studies, absence and tardiness values were skewed and truncated at zero. Consequently, we transformed these variables using natural log transformations to reduce the skew and kurtosis values to acceptable levels. Some researchers have opted to use generalized linear models, such as Poisson regression, to deal with the typical distribution of withdrawal behavior; however, such analyses assume that individual instances of withdrawal are independent from one another, which is often not the case (e.g., faulty transportation could lead to consecutive instances of tardiness).

To compute coworker values, we followed the convention of other researchers (e.g., Eder & Eisenberger, 2008; Gellatly & Allen, 2012; Glomb & Liao, 2003; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998), and summed the group members' Time 1 values, subtracted the value of the focal employee, and divided by the number of group members minus one. This produced the average absenteeism by all members of the group except the focal employee (i.e., coworker absenteeism). To compute employee values, we subtracted the transformed Time 1 value from the transformed Time 2 value. This produced the change in the focal employee's absence or tardiness from Time 1 to Time 2.

Average coworker turnover and turnover likelihood. To examine coworker turnover and individual turnover likelihood, we relied on multisource data. For coworker turnover, we computed the turnover rate for the group between Time 1 and Time 2 from the organization's human resources records ($M = 0.26$, $SD = 0.31$). For employees, supervisors of each work group completed a measure indicating how long they anticipated each of their employees to stay with the organization. Responses, which were collected at Time 2, were coded on a 6-point scale where 1 = more than one year, 2 = 10–12 months, 3 = six to nine months, 4 = three to five months, 5 = one to two months, and 6 = less than one month. Because supervisors did not complete this item for all employees, however, the working sample size for this variable was 268.

Demographic dissimilarity. Consistent with prior research (e.g., Bhave et al., 2010), we computed demographic dissimilarity using Euclidean distance, which captures the collective extent to which an individual is dissimilar to his or her coworkers. Separate values were calculated for sex, racioethnicity, and age with higher values indicating greater dissimilarity. For continuous variables such as age, the formula is the square root of the summed squared differences between an individual's age and the age for every other group member, divided by the total number of employees in the work group (Tonidandel et al., 2008, p. 621). For racioethnicity and sex, the formula is the square root of the proportion of coworkers who do not belong to the focal employee's demographic group (Tonidandel et al., 2008).

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Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
(1) Tenure	—										
(2) Age	.40**	—									
(3) Female	.15**	.08	—								
(4) Black	−.01	−.08	.15**	—							
(5) Hispanic	−.04	−.15**	−.12**	—	—						
(6) Sex dissimilarity	−.13**	−.14**	−.66**	−.05	.08	—					
(7) Racioethnic dissimilarity	.07	−.14**	−.02	.24**	.15**	.23**	—				
(8) Age dissimilarity	.21**	.52**	.06	−.03	−.17**	−.04	.06	—			
(9) Absenteeism	.08	.03	−.05	.05	.12**	−.01	.06	.09	—		
(10) Tardiness	.11**	.05	−.01	.03	.05	−.03	.09	−.05	.87**	—	
(11) Turnover	.05	.05	.08	.08	−.09*	.16**	.06	.01	−.32**	−.28**	—
Mean	2.85	30.75	.72	.29	.25	.56	.68	11.82	.33	.28	.38
SD	3.60	9.94	0.45	0.45	0.44	0.22	0.20	5.59	0.65	0.59	0.49

Note: $N = 470$. Absenteeism and tardiness are natural log transformed.
*$p < .05$ and**$p < .01$.

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Controls. Prior evidence (e.g., Harrison & Martocchio, 1998; Hom, Roberson, & Ellis, 2008; Jones, Ni, & Wilson, 2009; Martocchio, 1989; Patton & Johns, 2007; Scott & McClellan, 1990) has linked a number of demographic variables to withdrawal incidence. Consequently, we controlled for age, tenure, sex, and racioethnicity.

Results

Because the participants were nested within work groups and this nesting accounted for significant variance in change in absenteeism (ICC[1] = .39, $F(52, 417) = 8.17$, $p < .01$) and tardiness (ICC[1] = .37, $F(52, 417) = 7.59$, $p < .01$), ordinary least squares analyses were deemed as inappropriate (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Consequently, we used hierarchical multilevel modeling (HLM6; Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, Congdon, & du Toit, 2004) to test our longitudinal and multilevel data. Specifically, we modeled all individual variables at Level 1, and the group level intercept modeled at Level 2. All predictor variables (except dummy variables) were grand-mean centered (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998). Although the nesting effect on turnover likelihood was not statistically significant ($p = .08$), we utilized HLM for those analyses as well for the sake of consistency. Consistent with the notion that some individuals would be freer to act upon their motivation to withdraw and protect their identities than others, none of the forms of demographic dissimilarity exhibited a significant relationship with changes in absence or tardiness. Descriptive statistics and correlations are provided in Table 1.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that coworker absenteeism moderates the effect of demographic dissimilarity on longitudinal changes in absenteeism. Specifically, we anticipated that the positive relationship between dissimilarity and absenteeism would be significantly stronger among workers whose coworkers engaged in higher as opposed to lower levels of absenteeism. Table 2 contains a summary of the multilevel analyses used to test this hypothesis. The interactions involving sex and age dissimilarity were not statistically significant, but the interaction concerning racioethnic dissimilarity significantly predicted change in absenteeism ($b = .29$, $p = .04$). As anticipated (and illustrated in Figure 2), the simple slopes (Aiken & West, 1991) indicate that the impact of racioethnic dissimilarity to one's coworkers on absenteeism was heightened when coworker withdrawal was higher as opposed to lower ($b = .36$, $p = .05$ vs. $b = -.17$, $p = .39$), thereby supporting Hypothesis 1 for racioethnicity.

Table 2. Summary of hierarchical linear modeling analyses predicting change in absenteeism.

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	.06 (.07)	.03 (.08)	.06 (.07)	.03 (.08)	.02 (.08)
Tenure	−.01 (.01)	−.01 (.01)	−.01 (.01)	−.01 (.00)	−.01 (.01)
Age	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Female	.00 (.04)	.09 (.06)	.00 (.04)	.09 (.06)	.09 (.07)
Black	.07 (.05)	.05 (.05)	.07 (.05)	.05 (.05)	.06 (.05)
Hispanic	.10* (.05)	.09 (.05)	.10* (.05)	.09 (.05)	.10 (.05)
Sex dissimilarity (SD)		.32 (.18)		.31 (.18)	.31 (.18)
Racioethnic dissimilarity (RD)		.12 (.15)		.11 (.15)	.09 (.15)
Age dissimilarity (AD)		−.00 (.00)		−.00 (.00)	−.00 (.00)
Coworker absenteeism (CA)			−.03 (.06)	−.01 (.06)	.02 (.06)
CA × SD					−.03 (.12)
CA × RD					.29* (.14)
CA × AD					−.00 (.00)
Δ R^2	.01	.03	.01	.03	.04
Pseudo R^2	.01	.04	.02	.04	.08

Note: N (Level 1) = 470; N (Level 2) = 51. Intercept is Level 2. Absenteeism is natural log transformed. We computed total R^2 using the formula provided by Bryk and Raudenbush (1992) combining within-unit and between-unit variance.
*$p < .05$ and**$p < .01$.

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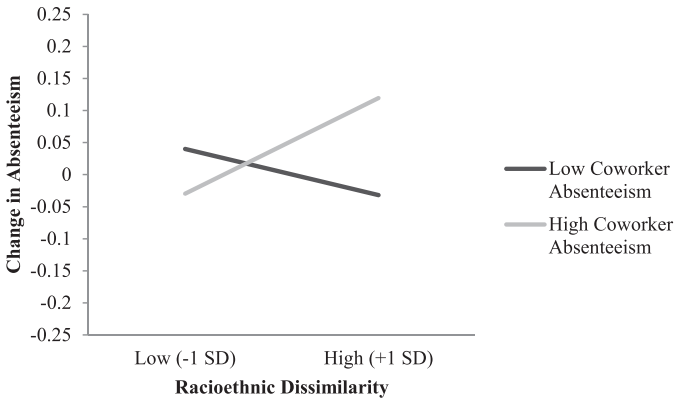

Figure 2. The moderating effect of coworker absenteeism on the racioethnic dissimilarity–change in absenteeism relationship

Hypothesis 2 predicted that coworker tardiness moderates the effect of demographic dissimilarity on longitudinal changes in tardiness. Specifically, we anticipated that the positive relationship between dissimilarity and tardiness would be significantly stronger when one's coworkers engaged in higher as opposed to lower levels of tardiness. Table 3 summarizes the test of this hypothesis. Again, the interactions involving sex and age dissimilarity were not statistically significant, but the racioethnic dissimilarity interaction with coworker tardiness significantly predicted change in tardiness ($b = .30$, $p < .01$). As predicted (and illustrated in Figure 3), the impact of racioethnic dissimilarity to one's coworkers on tardiness was heightened when coworker tardiness was higher as opposed to lower ($b = .40$, $p = .02$ vs. $b = -.25$, $p = .15$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was also supported for racioethnicity.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that coworker turnover moderates the effect of demographic dissimilarity on turnover likelihood. Specifically, we expected the positive relationship between dissimilarity and turnover likelihood to be significantly stronger among workers whose coworkers turned over more. The interactions involving sex and age dissimilarity were not statistically significant (see Table 4, for a summary of these analyses), but the racioethnic dissimilarity interaction with coworker turnover significantly predicted turnover likelihood ($b = 3.78$, $p = .01$). As

Table 3. Summary of hierarchical linear modeling analyses predicting change in tardiness.

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	−.05 (.07)	−.08 (.07)	−.03 (.06)	−.07 (.07)	−.08 (.07)
Tenure	−.02** (.01)	−.02** (.01)	−.02** (.01)	−.02** (.01)	−.02** (.01)
Age	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Female	.07 (.04)	.15** (.06)	.07 (.04)	.14* (.06)	.16** (.06)
Black	.06 (.04)	.05 (.05)	.06 (.04)	.05 (.05)	.05 (.05)
Hispanic	.07 (.05)	.07 (.05)	.07 (.05)	.07 (.05)	.07 (.05)
Sex dissimilarity (SD)		.31 (.16)		.29 (.16)	.31 (.16)
Racioethnic dissimilarity (RD)		.08 (.14)		.08 (.13)	.07 (.13)
Age dissimilarity (AD)		−.00 (.00)		−.00 (.00)	−.00 (.00)
Coworker tardiness (CT)			−.08 (.04)	−.07 (.04)	−.05 (.04)
CT × SD					−.14 (.09)
CT × RD					.30** (.10)
CT × AD					.00 (.00)
ΔR^2	.00	.01	.01	.02	.07
Pseudo R^2	.00	.01	.01	.02	.09

Note: N (Level 1) = 470; N (Level 2) = 51. Intercept is Level 2. Tardiness is natural log transformed. We computed total R^2 using the formula provided by Bryk and Raudenbush (1992) combining within-unit and between-unit variance.
*$p < .05$ and**$p < .01$.

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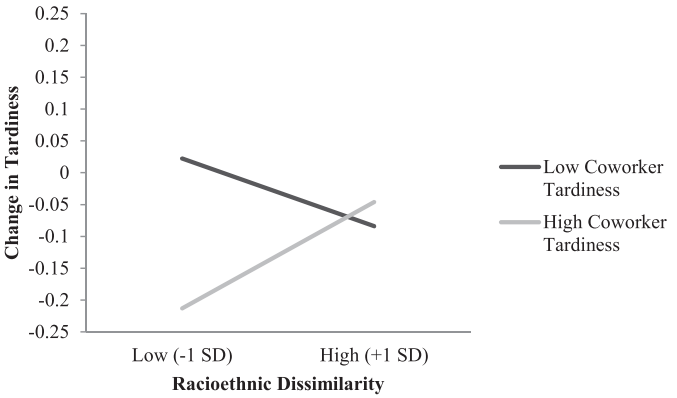

Figure 3. The moderating effect of coworker tardiness on the racioethnic dissimilarity–change in tardiness relationship

predicted (and illustrated in Figure 4), racioethnic dissimilarity to one's coworkers exerted a stronger effect on turnover likelihood when coworker turnover was higher as opposed to lower ($b = 2.51$, $p = .01$ vs. $b = -.22$, $p = .55$), thus corroborating Hypothesis 3 for racioethnicity.

Discussion

It was our aim to consider the prospective role of coworker absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover as contextual indicators of when it is acceptable or unacceptable to withdraw from an identity-threatening situation (i.e., when one is demographically dissimilar from coworkers). We expected low rates of coworker withdrawal behaviors to act as strong situations that constrain employee behavior to be concordant with their colleagues. Weak situations characterized by high withdrawal, irrespective of formal policies against it, introduce ambiguity concerning the

Table 4. Summary of hierarchical linear modeling analyses predicting supervisor-rated turnover likelihood.

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	1.72** (.15)	1.74** (.17)	1.57** (.15)	1.55** (.17)	1.59** (.17)
Tenure	−.00 (.02)	−.01 (.02)	−.00 (.02)	−.00 (.02)	.00 (.02)
Age	−.01* (.01)	−.01 (.01)	−.01 (.01)	−.01 (.01)	−.01 (.01)
Female	−.25 (.14)	−.24 (.18)	−.29* (.14)	−.32 (.18)	−.36* (.18)
Black	.10 (.15)	.08 (.16)	.17 (.15)	.16 (.15)	.11 (.15)
Hispanic	.14 (.16)	.12 (.17)	.17 (.16)	.16 (.16)	.12 (.16)
Sex dissimilarity (SD)		−.02 (.38)		−.08 (.35)	.09 (.40)
Racioethnic dissimilarity (RD)		.28 (.35)		.20 (.32)	−.28 (.37)
Age dissimilarity (AD)		−.00 (.00)		−.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Coworker turnover (CT)			.75** (.24)	1.22** (.33)	1.18** (.45)
CT × SD					−2.14 (1.63)
CT × RD					3.78** (1.47)
CT × AD					−.00 (.01)
ΔR^2	.03	.03	.04	.04	.02
Pseudo R^2	.03	.03	.07	.07	.09

Note: N (Level 1) = 268; N (Level 2) = 45. Intercept is Level 2. We computed total R^2 using the formula provided by Bryk and Raudenbush (1992) combining within-unit and between-unit variance.
*$p < .05$ and**$p < .01$.

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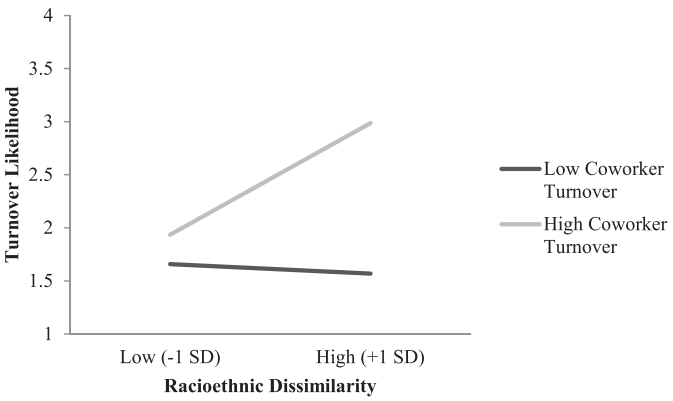

Figure 4. The moderating effect of coworker turnover on the racioethnic dissimilarity–turnover likelihood relationship

acceptability of such behavior. Under these conditions, we expected demographically dissimilar individuals to act in alignment with their motivations to withdraw and do so at the highest levels. Our results confirmed these hypotheses with respect to racioethnic dissimilarity, but not for sex or age dissimilarity. Racioethnically dissimilar employees, who ostensibly were motivated to withdraw as means to cope with potential stigmatization, only acted on this motivation and increased their frequency of absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover likelihood when such behavior was condoned socially (i.e., coworkers engaged in high levels of these behaviors).

The marked increases in absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover likelihood among racioethnically similar employees in permissive climates are notable given the high logistical and financial costs associated with these behaviors (Blau, 1995; Elicker et al., 2008; Stewart et al., 2003). Increases in absenteeism and tardiness could be particularly detrimental to organizations if employees use this time to act on their intentions to leave, and engage in job-seeking behaviors such as interviews and site visits (Hale, 1998; Sagie et al., 2002).

Another important takeaway from these findings is the importance of considering the social and organizational context when studying the effects of relational demography and withdrawal. In the present study, racioethnic dissimilarity's relation to changes in absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover likelihood depended on coworker behavior. These results echo the findings of previous researchers suggesting that employees look to others' behavior when deciding whether or not to act on internal motivations to withdraw (e.g., Bamberger & Biron, 2007; Biron & Bamberger, 2012; Diestel et al., 2014; Gellatly & Allen, 2012). Accordingly, we suggest that researchers place a stronger emphasis on the context or else mixed findings will continue to abound (e.g., Joshi et al., 2011; Perry et al., 1999). Furthermore, we encourage future research to identify and measure the theoretical underpinnings of these relationships.

The results of our study potentially contribute to the relational demography and withdrawal literatures in at least three key ways. First, we answered calls for more investigations into complex predictors of withdrawal (Johns, 2006; Koslowsky, 2000) as well other contextual factors when studying demographically diverse groups (Chatman, 2010; Chattopadhyay et al., 2004; DiTomaso et al., 2007). When examining the longitudinal changes in tardiness and absenteeism, we found that, contrary to previous research, there was no significant main effect of coworker behavior. When considering relational demography and the social context together, however, we were able to predict a sizeable proportion of variance in our outcomes. There was both similarity and uniqueness in the pattern of results across the different forms of withdrawal. They were similar in that the moderating effects of age and sex were not significant and the conditional effects of racioethnic dissimilarity were significantly positive when coworker withdrawal was high. The effects differed in that the high coworker withdrawal conditional effect was markedly higher than the low coworker withdrawal conditional effect (as would be expected) for absenteeism and turnover, but not tardiness. This further supports the notion that such behaviors should be examined individually.

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Second, we joined a growing number of researchers (e.g., Liao et al., 2004) studying the impact of demographic dissimilarity on work outcomes in response to increasing workforce diversity. As noted earlier, previous studies have relied primarily on a variation of the similarity-attraction paradigm to explain how people will be generally attracted to those who are similar and wary of those who are different (e.g., Gellatly & Allen, 2012; Guillaume et al., 2012; Pelled et al., 1999). We contend that, although this may describe the psychological effects of demographic dissimilarity, the social context will determine whether individuals act on these motivations. Hence, the mixed effects of relational demography found in previous studies might follow from a failure to consider coworker behavior as a moderating factor. We surmise that demographically dissimilar individuals may self-regulate their behavior in the face of interpersonal cues (Guillaume, van Knippenerg, & Brodbeck, 2014). Specifically, only among those employees working in weak situations (i.e., situations where people were absent, tardy, and quitting more frequently) did dissimilarity exert its effects. One implication of our findings, then, is that we must consider the dominant behavioral norms of an organization when studying the effects of relational demography.

Third, we used longitudinal data to pinpoint how previous coworker behaviors impact changes in employee absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover likelihood over time. Following Dello Russo et al. (2013), we went beyond simply assessing the effects of absenteeism norms or concurrent coworker behaviors on individual behavior. Instead, we present evidence that the withdrawal behaviors of one's coworkers can influence an employee's subsequent decisions to be absent or late more frequently, as well as to their perceived likelihood of leaving the organization. Importantly, the effects for absenteeism and tardiness held over and above the individual's rate of these behaviors at Time 1, enabling us to isolate the change in these behaviors resulting from observing coworker actions. Moreover, our measures were objective in nature and not as susceptible to perceptual biases that often plague self-report questionnaires (e.g., Johns, 1994).

Limitations and opportunities for future research

We emphasize three limitations of the current study. First, contrary to expectations, dissimilarity in age and sex did not interact with coworker withdrawal to predict any of the individual-level employee withdrawal behaviors. In accordance with the ethnic prominence hypothesis (Levin, Sinclair, Veniegas, & Taylor, 2002), racioethnic dissimilarity may be more influential because this marker tends to be a more salient and powerful basis for categorization, segregation, and mistreatment than other demographic categories (e.g., Ito & Urland, 2003; McCall & Simmons, 1978; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Hence, the different types of demographic dissimilarity may engender disparities in stigma consciousness. Another potential explanation lies in research suggesting that some individuals are more conscious or aware of their stigmatized status (Brown & Pinel, 2003; Pinel, 1999, 2002). Differing levels of stigma consciousness may have acted as an additional moderator, masking the results of our hypothesized relationships for sex and age dissimilarity. Finally, we note that our sample had a rather high percentage of women,[2] which meant that men were disproportionately more likely to find themselves in the minority when focusing on this demographic trait. Perhaps, asymmetric effects were operative wherein being the lone male in a group of women presented lower levels of identity threat than being the lone female in a group of men. Such effects have been demonstrated in previous research (e.g., Chatman & O'Reilly, 2004; Jackson et al., 1991). Given the relatively young sample, a similar argument could be made for age dissimilarity. Namely, age-dissimilar individuals may have been overwhelmingly older rather than younger employees, and therefore equipped to utilize their expertise and tenure to buffer against identity threat. We invite future researchers to test these possibilities.

Second, we did not measure employees' actual feelings of identity threat, anxiety, or discomfort with being a demographic minority. Owing to the potential impact of stigma consciousness discussed previously, we may have found even stronger (or, with sex and age dissimilarity, significant) effects had we been able to identify the

[2]We thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

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individuals who were most aware and negatively impacted by their outnumbered status. We encourage further investigation to explore how this additional construct potentially changes the nature of our hypothesized interactions.

Finally, we measured supervisors' assessments of employees' turnover likelihood. It is likely that many employees who are contemplating turnover may not share these sentiments explicitly with their boss or coworkers. Supervisors, therefore, are likely to be imperfect judges of who will turnover or remain with the organization. Consequently, we urge caution in generalizing our results given this limitation. We maintain that this measure is perhaps an underestimation of the true relationships between dissimilarity, coworker behavior, and turnover likelihood. Notwithstanding, replication using self-reported turnover intentions and actual turnover behavior is warranted.

In terms of future research, we call for more studies investigating whether or not the interaction between coworker behavior and demographic dissimilarity demonstrates a similar relationship when predicting other withdrawal behaviors such as production deviance and turnover. We are also intrigued by the implication this study may have for presenteeism, which refers to employees attending work even when suffering from a medical or mental illness that should keep them at home (Aronsson, Gustafsson, & Dallner, 2000; Gosselin, Lemyre, & Corneil, 2013). It stands to reason that, in organizations with strong presenteeism norms, demographically dissimilar employees may feel compelled to come to work despite suffering from more mental and physical health hazards as a result of not fitting in. We encourage future researchers to explore this possibility, particularly given recent studies suggesting that presenteeism (a) may be even more costly to organizations than absenteeism (Goetzel, Hawkins, Ozminkowski, & Wang, 2003; Schultz & Edington, 2007), and (b) is at least partially determined by the others' behavior in the workplace (e.g., Halbesleben et al., 2014). Finally, we also urge impending work that explores how demographic dissimilarity impacts the unit-level relationships observed between satisfaction and commitment with group-level withdrawal (e.g., Hausknecht, Hiller, & Vance, 2008).

Practical implications

From a practical standpoint, we recommend that employers take several preemptive measures to reduce the amount of absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover likelihood in their organizations. Our findings add to a body of work that has demonstrated that withdrawal behaviors are heavily influenced by sociocultural characteristics (Bamberger & Biron, 2007; Blau, 1995; Eder & Eisenberger, 2008; Gellatly, 1995; Gellatly & Luchak, 1998; Lau et al., 2003; Mathieu & Kohler, 1990). Given this influence, organizations are advised to establish cultures that foster high levels of satisfaction and engagement in order to encourage all employees to be more mentally and physically present at work. By making an effort to communicate the importance of high-quality work and inclusion, as well as by providing support and challenging assignments, managers can ensure that behavioral norms of enthusiasm, embeddedness, and absorption emerge rather than widespread disinterest and withdrawal (Sarangi & Srivastava, 2012; Tomlinson, 2010).

Aside from the general social context effects, our findings also imply that special attention should be paid to applying diversity management strategies to ensure that demographically dissimilar individuals are integrated into work teams as quickly and effectively as possible. As (Kulik, 2014, p. 131) noted, "workforce diversity can deliver organisational benefits but only if it is effectively managed." We propose that simply attracting and hiring people of different demographic backgrounds is insufficient. Additional steps must be taken to facilitate racioethnically dissimilar personnel's full integration into their work teams and the overall organizational culture. Taking such steps will reduce their motivations to skip work, arrive late, or voice desires to quit.

We encourage organizations to employ mentoring and team-building practices to help employees move past surface-level demographic observations and focus on deep-level similarity (i.e., values, work styles, and personality). Research has suggested that implementing fair human resources practices and instituting company-wide activities designed to increase awareness and promote social integration can enhance diversity climate perceptions (Kim & Gelfand, 2003; Kossek, Markel, & McHugh, 2003; McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2008; Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998). By bolstering these inclusive messages, organization can help affirm dissimilar workers' identities,

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buffer against feelings of passive conformity, and thereby, motivate them to serve company interests (McKay et al., 2007; McKay et al., 2008).

Finally, the ASA framework (Schneider, 1987) suggests that the best way to prevent employee withdrawal is to increase employee fit with the organization. For obvious strategic, ethical, and legal reasons, selecting for demographic similarity is not a prudent option. A better way to effectively achieve increased fit is through the socialization processes of onboarding new employees (Chatman, 1991; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). For example, Allen, Eby, Poteet, and Lentz (2004) described how mentoring can act as a form of socialization that helps to integrate newcomers by exchanging information (i.e., knowledge acquisition) and encourage the social learning of organizational norms and customs. This form of socialization was linked to a variety of positive outcomes including increased job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Allen et al., 2004). Because demographically dissimilar individuals are more prone to turnover early in their tenure (Sacco & Schmitt, 2005) and demographic dissimilarity effects wane over time (Harrison et al., 2002), early efforts to ensure that dissimilar newcomers feel supported and integrated are especially important.

Corroborating our previous logic, Harrison et al. (2002) outlined two major means of social integration in teams to overcome the negative effects of surface-level and deep-level diversity. These authors noted that paying attention to deep-level characteristics of employees may be particularly useful when making decisions about team composition. One strategy they recommend is to leverage "differences in knowledge, skills, and abilities, while minimizing differences in job-related beliefs, attitudes, and values" (Harrison et al., 2002, p. 1042). Fostering deep-level connections among employees could be crucial particularly because value similarity has greater influence on employee withdrawal behaviors than demographic similarity (Joshi et al., 2011). Linking formal rewards to team performance and collaboration was also offered as a potential solution for motivating dissimilar team members to establish common ground more quickly (Harrison et al., 2002).

Conclusion

In summary, despite prior evidence documenting the independent effects of demographic dissimilarity and coworker withdrawal on individual employee withdrawal, this study demonstrated that these effects are intertwined, at least with respect to racioethnicity. Specifically, racioethnic dissimilarity only results in changes in absenteeism and tardiness, and heightened supervisor-rated turnover likelihood if coworker withdrawal is high. In other words, when social norms were permissive, racioethnic dissimilarity exhibited the greatest increases in absenteeism and tardiness over time, and the highest perceived likelihood of turnover.

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