

# An Examination of Façades of Conformity as a Social Mobility Strategy

**T. Nichole Phillips**

*Winston-Salem State University*

**Felice Williams**

*Louisiana State University at Shreveport*

**Dorothy Kirkman**

*University of Houston at Clear Lake*

This study examines the façade of conformity construct as a social mobility strategy employed by minority employees to enhance their social identity in organizations. Results from a survey of 102 African Americans employed in higher education indicate that demographic dissimilarity moderates the relationships between both perceived value of diversity and ethnic identity and facades of conformity. The creation of facades of conformity is positively related to work stress, and work stress is negatively related to job satisfaction.

Keywords: Facades of conformity, Relational demography, Social identity, Social mobility, African Americans

## Introduction

The impact of employee demographics on organizational operations is an area of research that has garnered much attention. As the demographic composition of the labor force continues to evolve, organizations are forced to explore ways to properly manage this diversity, implementing systems and practices designed to facilitate an environment such that the potential for achieving the positive outcomes associated with diversity is maximized, and the possibility of the negative minimized (Cox 1991; Roberts 2005). Properly managed diversity is believed to assist organizations in achieving advantages in the areas of cost, resource acquisition, marketing, creativity, problem solving, and flexibility (Cox & Blake 1991; Konrad 2003; Richard, Barnett, Dwyer, & Chadwick 2004).

Although understanding the organization's approach and outcomes is vital to the study of diversity management, it is equally essential for organizational leaders and researchers to explore the experiences of minority employees. Many studies have highlighted how organizational outcomes differ between minority and majority employees (e.g., Avery, McKay, Wilson, & Tonindandel 2007; Chattopadhyay 1999; Cox & Blake 1991; Stewart & Garcia-Prieto 2004); understanding those differences will increase the likelihood that minority employees will be highly committed to, perform highly for, and intend to remain with organizations (Cox & Blake 1991; Jackson et al. 1991). For our purposes, minorities are defined as employees who have salient features such as age, sex or race as well as other characteristics (i.e., beliefs, values) that are different from the majority of the organization (Ferris, Frink & Galang 1993; Hewlin 2009; Westphal & Milton 2000). According to the similarity-attraction paradigm, people tend to be drawn and attracted to those who are similar to them in terms of demographic characteristics, activities or attitudes (Byrne, Clore & Worchel 1966; Tsui & O'Reilly 1989). Dissimilarity, particularly demographic dissimilarity, is often interpreted as a reflection of conflicting attitudes and goals, ultimately resulting in lower levels of attraction toward and expectations of negative interactions with dissimilar others (Riordan 2000). Therefore, employees may anticipate negative

encounters, experience undesirable outcomes, and voluntarily leave the organization when they are dissimilar to others or perceive there is not a fit between their norms and those of the organization.

In this study, we draw upon the relational demography literature to assess the influence of demographic dissimilarity on employee behavior. Introduced by Tsui and O'Reilly (1989), relational demography examines the comparative demographic composition of relevant others with whom the employee has significant and regular interaction, thus providing additional insight into the particular mechanisms through which demography influences behavior and outcomes (Tsui & O'Reilly 1989). Commonly studied relevant others include supervisors, coworkers, and/or a work team (e.g., Chattopadhyay 1999; Liao, Joshi & Chuang 2004; Tsui & O'Reilly 1989). Relational demography builds upon the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne 1971) and social identity and self-categorization theories (Tajfel & Turner 1986) to understand the motivations and processes behind employee responses to dissimilarity (Riordan 2000; Stewart & Garcia-Prieto 2008). Social identity and self-categorization theories propose that individuals seek to build self-esteem and a positive image through a process of self-categorization, whereby they classify themselves and others into categories that are salient in a particular context and ascribe a value to each (Chattopadhyay, Tluchowska, & George 2004; Turner 1987). The categories to which the individual belongs constitute his/her in-group. A positive social identity is achieved when he/she holds their group in high regard and perceives it to be socially desirable (Stewart & Garcia-Prieto 2008; Tajfel & Turner 1986); however, they also recognize that others may not share that valuation. As minority employees have traditionally been relegated to a lower status in organizations (Amott & Mathaei 1991; Chattopadhyay et al. 2004; Konrad & Gutek 1987; Reskin, 1993; Reskin & McBrier 2000), employees in this category may seek to enhance their status by engaging in social mobility strategies in an attempt to pass from a low to high status group. For example, a female attempting to improve her status in a predominantly male organization may adopt the "norms, values, and attributes that characterize men" in order to receive positive organizational outcomes (Reynolds & Turner 2001, 166-167; Chattopadhyay et al. 2004).

An individual's social identity plays a large role in the type of social mobility strategy he or she selects to employ. For example, a Black person who has a low association with his black identity may engage in cultural inversion, choosing to accept that being black represents all that is not white, and therefore opt to idealize white culture and denigrate black culture in order to be accepted into white society (Cross, Parham, & Helms 1998; Chattopadhyay et al. 2004; Davis & Watson 1982; Ibarra 1995). In contrast, a Black person with a strong black identity may choose to adopt certain aspects of white identity only in particular contexts, such as the "relatively peripheral domain of work," in an attempt to achieve positive outcomes (Chattopadhyay et al. 2004 186). Providing the illusion of similarity to others in the organization can possibly serve to counter negative stereotypes and reduce the likelihood that one is considered to be an out-group member, possibly leading to more positive employment-related benefits (Major, Quinton, McCoy, & Schmader 2000; Roberts 2005). However, denying certain personal attributes and engaging in behavior that is inconsistent with one's self-concept can be emotionally demanding (Bell 1990; Hewlin 2009; Meyerson 2001; Meyerson & Scully 1995) and may also lead to negative personal outcomes (Hewlin 2003; Kelman 2006; Roberts 2005).

The goal of this study is to identify some of the potential factors that may influence minority employees' decisions to enhance their status in organizations by utilizing a social mobility strategy and the potential outcomes of such behavior. We do not propose that the antecedents or consequences presented represent an exhaustive list of the factors that influence employee decisions and behaviors, but rather aim to provide a contribution to the emerging work in this area and to provide a basis on which future empirical work can build. Given the different facets of diversity (e.g., ethnic, religious, gender), all of which have the potential to influence employee and organizational outcomes, our analyses focus on racial and ethnic diversity. Specifically, we propose that the focal employee's ethnic identity, as well as his or her perception that the organization values diversity, will affect decisions to engage in facades of conformity, and that this effect will be moderated by the degree of racial similarity between the focal employee and his/her supervisor and coworkers. We further posit that work stress will mediate the relationship between facades of conformity and job satisfaction. A model of the hypothesized relationships is presented in Figure 1

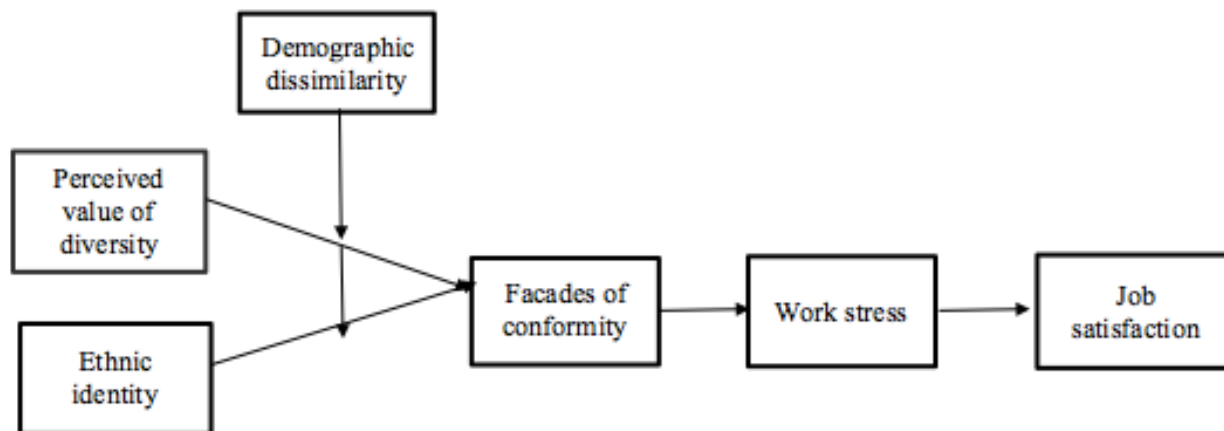


Figure 1. Model of hypothesized relationships

### Social Mobility as Social Identity Enhancement

The fundamental tenet of social identity theory is the achievement of a positive social identity (Chattopadhyay et al. 2004; Jackson et al. 1996; Tajfel & Turner 1979). When members of lower status (Chattopadhyay et al. 2004), or negatively distinctive (Jackson et al. 1996) in-groups seek to enhance their social identity, they use one of three possible strategies: social mobility, social creativity, or social change (Tajfel & Turner 1979). Social mobility refers to an individual's attempt to dissociate themselves from a lower status group and gain membership into a higher status group. Of the three, only social mobility specifically examines an individual's efforts to enhance his or her social identity (Chattopadhyay et al. 2004; Jackson et al. 1996) and is therefore most appropriate for our analyses.

As white and male employees have traditionally been afforded higher status in organizations, the categories of racial minority and female employees are often devalued (Baron & Newman 1990; Chattopadhyay et al. 2004; Konrad & Gutek 1987; Reskin 1993). In an attempt to enhance their status and achieve positive organizational outcomes, racial minority and female employees may adopt the norms, values and attributes that characterize higher status groups, altering their behavior to give the appearance that they are similar to the majority group in order to increase the likelihood of obtaining outcomes consistent with membership in the higher status group.

### Facades of Conformity

Facades of conformity (FOC) are defined as "false representations created by employees to appear as if they embrace organizational values" (Hewlin 2003). Conceptually distinct from similar constructs such as impression management, compliance and emotional labor (Hewlin 2003, 2009), FOC represent employee suppression of personal values and behaviors believed to be in conflict with those of the organization, outwardly expressing support in an attempt to navigate their work environments (Hewlin 2003).

In her empirical assessment of the conceptual model, Hewlin (2009) found that perceived nonparticipative work environments, minority status, self-monitoring, and collectivism were all significantly related to the creation of FOC. She also found support for emotional exhaustion as a consequence, mediating the relationship between FOC and employee intentions to turnover. This finding was consistent with her premise that employees who behave in a manner inconsistent with their true selves at work will experience negative personal outcomes (Hewlin 2003).

Stormer and Devine (2008) conducted an exploratory qualitative study designed to assess whether FOC existed in organizations and to identify its characteristics and behavioral implications. The results of their textual data analysis revealed that FOC can be described as either direct, i.e., employees conformed in both appearance and action, or indirect, i.e., they conformed in appearance but not in action (e.g., agreeing to

support but not following through behaviorally) (Stormer & Devine 2008). They further identified three thematic networks that provide more insight into the creation of FOC: 1. presence of FOC, 2. absence of FOC, and 3. the dynamic nature of FOC. Respondents in their study (university faculty members) reported creating FOC in response to the following issues: diversity, job demands, the market model of the profession and group membership. For example, some respondents reported creating FOC as a result of the sensitivity of the topics of equity and equality or using FOC to hide or exacerbate their enthusiasm for teaching given the demands of teaching, scholarship and service. The second theme reflects respondents who chose not to create FOC, many citing the nature of academic freedom and the professoriate. The third theme reflects situations in which respondents moved from expressing their opinions to withholding them, or vice versa. The results of their study provide valuable insight into the creation of FOC as well as support for the relationships originally proposed by Hewlin (2003).

As Hewlin (2009) called for more detailed analyses on the relationships proposed in her model, and consistent with the salience of diversity outlined by Stormer and Devine (2008), the present study seeks to further explore Hewlin's (2009) assertion of the importance of minority status in the creation of FOC by examining the experience of racial minorities. We chose to focus on racial minorities as previous research has indicated that racial minorities report high levels of work stress, often leading to heightened intentions to turnover (Sanchez & Brock 1996). As a result of their perceived minority status, employees may create FOC to minimize the salience of their differences, emphasizing that although they may be different on a surface dimension, they are ultimately supporters of the organization's values and norms, all in an attempt to gain acceptance in the workplace (Hewlin 2009).

### **Demographic Dissimilarity**

Perceptions of a high level of distinctiveness can often lead individuals to experience isolation and stigmatization from majority group members and feelings of self-consciousness where they feel they are under intense scrutiny (Brewer 1991; Kanter 1977; Kramer 1998). One factor which may reduce the negativity of these situations is the similarity of the employee with his/her supervisor and workgroup, as similarity may affect the type of relationships that develop (Brouer, Duke, Treadway, & Ferris 2009). Although the empirical results have been mixed, researchers have found support for the argument that demographic similarity of subordinate and supervisor leads to higher quality exchanges (Dienesch & Liden 1986; Tsui, Xin & Egan 1995; Turban & Jones 1988). Demographic similarity refers to the "degree to which individuals in dyads or groups are similar in characteristics such as age, race, and gender (Tsui & O'Reilly 1989 403). These arguments state that by being demographically similar, there is an inherent assumption between parties that they also share similar beliefs and values, thus causing the managers and subordinates to feel comfortable, communicate easily with one another, view the other as more predictable and have more confidence in each other (Pelled & Xin 1997; Tsui & O'Reilly 1989; Tsui, Xin, & Egan 1995). Demographic dissimilarity has been found to predict negative attitudes towards supervisors, peers, workgroups, and organizations (Chattopadhyay 1999; Tsui et al. 1992). Chattopadhyay (1999) found that racial dissimilarity was negatively related to self-esteem and predicted employee engagement in citizenship behaviors.

In work environments where there is demographic dissimilarity, employees are likely to be "acutely aware" of their differences and will have to work hard to overcome the unfavorability of the relationship likely to exist as a result of the dissimilarity (Uhl-Bien 2003). As subordinates who are racially dissimilar from their supervisors and coworkers will likely have a more difficult time communicating and building quality relationships with organizational agents (Brouer et al. 2009; Stewart & Garcia-Prieto 2008), some beneficial attributes to navigate such situations include self-presentation, communication (Uhl-Bien 2003) and political skill (Brouer et al. 2009). Those with political skill are able to adjust their behavior to various situational demands in a manner that appears sincere and genuine (Ferris, Davidson, & Perrewe 2005). We argue that the creation of FOC reflects such political skill and posit that the decision to engage is often a function of the degree of dissimilarity of the focal employee from those in his or her immediate work environment.

## Hypotheses

### Antecedents

The context under which employees make decisions to create FOC is important to understanding the manner in which they navigate their professional environments. We explore ethnic identity and perceptions of the degree to which the organization values diversity, both influenced by demographic dissimilarity, as antecedents to the creation of facades of conformity.

**Ethnic identity.** Consistent with previous research, we argue that identity plays an important role in the method of social mobility exercised by minority employees (Chattopadhyay et al. 2004; Cross 1991; Cross, Parham & Helms 1998). An employee who does not strongly identify with their in-group will likely employ a social mobility strategy resulting in complete disassociation with the group, opting to adopt the behaviors of the aspirational outgroup in order to be accepted (Chattopadhyay et al. 2004; Ibarra 1995; Phinney 1989). Alternatively, an employee with a higher level of identity with the in-group will likely be more strategic in the approach taken to enhance their social identity. Specifically, the focal employee may selectively display behaviors within certain contexts believed to enhance his or her status with those in the out-group and ultimately the organization, in order to achieve an organization related goal (Chattopadhyay et al. 2004; Cross 1991).

Ethnic identity refers to an enduring, fundamental aspect of the self that includes a sense of membership in a particular ethnic group. It is generally seen as embracing various aspects of one's group, including self-identification, feelings of belongingness and commitment, and a sense of shared values and attitudes (Phinney 1996; Watts & Carter 1991).

As ethnic identity influences the manner in which individuals examine their environments and experiences (Cox & Finley-Nickelson 1991; Phinney & Kohatsu 1997), it is likely that employees with higher levels of ethnic identity will be keenly aware of the lower status of their category and therefore strategically seek to improve their position. We predict that there will be a positive relationship between ethnic identity and engagement in facades of conformity. We further argue that the degree of racial dissimilarity from an employee's supervisor and workers will influence this relationship such that the relationship will be stronger as the degree of dissimilarity increases.

*Hypothesis 1: Demographic dissimilarity will moderate the relationship between ethnic identity and facades of conformity such that the relationship will be stronger as demographic dissimilarity increases.*

**Perceived value of diversity.** The degree to which an organization values diversity serves as an indicator of support to employees (Avery, McKay, Wilson, & Tonindandel 2007), support that may be unavailable in work environments that are less diversity-friendly (Avery et al. 2007; Cox 1994).

According to Avery et al. (2007), employees develop perceptions of the degree to which their employing organization values diversity from "cues," or efforts or practices engaged in by organizations to create, promote, or maximize diversity. In organizations that engage in such activities, minority employees are likely to develop positive workplace affect (Avery et al. 2007; Cox 1994). However, when minority employees perceive that their organization does not value diversity, the reactions and resulting behaviors are likely to be more negative. Minority employees may perceive they have to create FOC to display a consistency with the organization's norms in order to be successful and receive positive organizational outcomes (e.g., positive performance appraisals, promotions, pay raises).

We posit that demographic dissimilarity will strengthen the negative relationship between perceptions that the organization values diversity and the creation of facades of conformity. For employees who perceive greater dissimilarity from their supervisor and coworkers, the value placed on diversity in their workplace is likely to be salient and serve as a gauge of the need to engage in facades of conformity to be successful.

*Hypothesis 2: Demographic dissimilarity will moderate the relationship between perceived value of diversity and facades of conformity such that the relationship will be stronger as demographic dissimilarity increases.*

## Outcomes: Work Stress and Job Satisfaction

Providing the illusion of similarity to others in the organization may serve to counter negative stereotypes and reduce the likelihood that one is considered to be an out-group member, possibly leading to more positive employment-related benefits (Major, Quinton, McCoy, & Schmader 2000; Roberts 2005). However, denying certain personal attributes and engaging in behavior that is inconsistent with one's self concept may also lead to negative outcomes (Hewlin 2003, 2009; Kelman 2006; Roberts 2005). In this study, we examine work stress and job satisfaction as consequences of the creation of FOC.

Stress is an inescapable reality of most working environments and results in a variety of psychological, physiological, and behavioral consequences for employees. Stress is defined as a state that results when individuals find themselves in a situation in which they perceive that they are unable to meet the demands facing them, and that the outcomes they will experience are a function of the degree to which they meet those demands (McGrath 1976). We argue that engagement in facades of conformity represents an additional role behavior beyond that of the general job position, and will therefore lead employees to experience work stress.

*Hypothesis 3: The degree of creating facades of conformity will be positively related to work stress.*

Job satisfaction reflects the degree of fulfillment an individual derives from their work (Spector 2000) and is considered to be one of the most influential variables informing behavior in organizations (Whitman, Van Rooy, Viswesvaran 2010). Studies have reported that workers who are satisfied are more likely to produce a higher standard of work performance (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton 2001) and remain with the organization (Tett & Meyer 1993). Saari and Judge (2004) argued that among the many factors believed to affect job satisfaction, person-organization fit is the most influential. A recent study evaluated the relationship between perceptions of employee and organization value congruence and job satisfaction of African Americans and reported that perceptions of fit explained variance in job satisfaction, accounting for 43% (Lyons & O'Brien 2006).

Research has reported that work stress and job satisfaction are interconnected, with the same characteristics influencing both outcomes (Cordes & Dougherty 1993; Lee & Ashforth 1996; Schaufeli & Enzmann 1998). The majority of research on these variables noted a negative relationship wherein employees who experienced higher levels of stress reported lower levels of job satisfaction (Hollon & Chesser 1976; Kemery, Mossholder, & Bedeian 1987; Miles 1976). As employees are likely to create facades of conformity as a result of a perceived lack of congruence between their norms and those of the organization (Hewlin 2003), we predict that work stress will mediate the relationship between facades of conformity and job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 4a: The degree of creating facades of conformity will be negatively related to job satisfaction.*

*Hypothesis 4b: Work stress will mediate the relationship between facades of conformity and job satisfaction.*

## Methods

### Procedure and Sample

Although this topic is of interest and applicable to other groups (i.e., other ethnic minority groups, women, religious groups), African Americans were chosen for this study due to their unique experiences in organizations relative to conformity expectations and pressures (Cox & Nkomo 1986). Also, the historical experiences of African Americans, specifically related to the ability to maintain and practice aspects of their culture (Domm & Stafford 1972), renders this group a

relevant sample on which to test the relations in the model. The participants in this study were African Americans employed in higher education. The final sample size was 102, 72.5% female with an average age of 41 (SD = 12). Fifty-four percent held a bachelor's degree or higher, and the average tenure with their current employer was 8 years (SD = 7.7). Fifty-three percent were employed in professional positions, 27% in clerical, and 19% in administrative positions.

## Measures

Survey data were collected to test the hypotheses in this study. All measures in this study utilized a 7-point Likert-type response format. With the exception of work stress, which had anchors of 1 – *never* to 7 – *always*, measures had anchors of 1 – *strongly disagree* to 7 – *strongly agree*.

**Perceived value of diversity.** Perceptions of the degree to which the organization values diversity were assessed using Avery et al.'s (2007) 5-item Perceived Value of Diversity measure. A sample item is "I believe that my company is adequately striving for diversity in the workplace." The Cronbach alpha estimate for this measure was .84.

**Demographic dissimilarity.** For race similarity, a difference score was created, with 0 representing racial similarity to both supervisor and coworkers, 1 indicating difference from the supervisor or coworkers, and 2 indicating difference from both supervisor and coworkers (Brouer et al. 2009). Information on supervisor, coworkers, and participant race were reported by the participant on the survey. Participant reports of the race of his or her supervisor and coworkers reflect his or her perception of similarity and therefore inform how they will react to their work environment (Pelled & Xin 1997; Stewart & Garcia-Prieto 2008; Turban & Jones 1988).

**Ethnic identity.** Ethnic identity was assessed using 14 items from Phinney's (1992) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Questionnaire. A sample item is "I have a strong sense of belonging to my ethnic group." The Cronbach alpha estimate for this measure was .85.

**Facades of conformity.** FOC was assessed using Hewlin's (2009) 6-item Facades of Conformity Measure. A sample item is "I withhold personal values that conflict with organizational values." The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this measure was .71.

**Work stress.** Work stress was assessed using 15 items from the Job-Related Tension Index (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal 1964) where participants were asked to rate how often they had certain experiences in their work roles. A sample item is "Feeling that you have too little authority to carry out the responsibilities assigned to you." The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this measure was .88.

**Job satisfaction.** Job satisfaction was assessed using Hackman and Oldman's (1975) 6-item General Satisfaction Scale. A sample item is "Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job." The Cronbach alpha estimate for this measure is .80.

## Results

Means, standard deviations, scale reliabilities and correlations of the study variables are included in Table 1. Work stress and facades of conformity as well as work stress and job satisfaction were negatively and significantly related. Similarly, perceived value of diversity and demographic dissimilarity were negatively and significantly related to each other.

**Table 1**  
*Means, Standard Deviations, Scale Reliabilities and Correlations*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Ethnic Identity	85.18	10.10	(.85)					
2. Perceived Value of Diversity	24.96	6.60	-.118	(.84)				
3. Facades of Conformity	18.43	6.27	.058	.153	(.71)			
4. Work Stress	40.94	14.87	.005	-.122	-.320**	(.88)		
5. Job Satisfaction	34.43	6.15	.051	.142	-.072	-.392**	(.80)	
6. Demographic Dissimilarity	2.00	1.68	-.035	-.293**	-.020	.110	-.120	

Note. N = 102. Internal consistency reliability coefficients (alphas) appear in parentheses along the main diagonal.

\* p < .05. \*\* p < .01.

Perceived value of diversity and ethnic identity, which are proposed antecedents to facades of conformity, were not significantly related to the outcome. Table 2 shows the relationships between perceived value of diversity and ethnic identity with facades of conformity. Hypotheses 1 and 2 predicted that demographic dissimilarity would moderate the relationship between the antecedents of perceived value of diversity and ethnic identity with the facades of conformity. These hypothesized relationships were explored using two models of hierarchical multiple regressions with mean-centered variables (Aiken & West 1996). In the first model, the main effect terms (demographic dissimilarity, perceived value of diversity, and ethnic identity) were entered into the regression equation. The second model included the main effect and interaction terms (demographic dissimilarity x perceived value of diversity and demographic dissimilarity x ethnic identity). In both models, the dependent variable was facades of conformity. Table 3 shows that both demographic dissimilarity x perceived value of diversity and demographic dissimilarity x ethnic identity had a significant relationship with facades of conformity. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were therefore supported by the results.



**Table 2**  
*Regression Results for Predicted Antecedent Variables of Facades of Conformity*

Predictor	$\beta$	SE
Ethnic Identity	.058	.062
Perceived Value of Diversity	.153	.094
$R^2$	.030	
Adjusted $R^2$	.001	
F	1.018	

Note. N = 102.

**Table 3**  
*Moderated Regression Results (Hypotheses 1 and 2)*

Variable and Statistic	Facades of Conformity	
	Model 1 $\beta$	Model 2 $\beta$
Perceived Value of Diversity (PVOD)	.172	-.001
Demographic Dissimilarity (DD)	.033	-.180
Ethnic Identity (EID)	.079	.141
PVOD x DD		.326*
EID x DD		-.244*
F	1.018	2.968*
$R^2$	.030*	.134
Adjusted $R^2$	.001	.089
$\Delta R^2$	.030	.104

Note.  $p^* < .05$ .

To further examine the effect of demographic dissimilarity on the creation of FOC, we calculated the contributions of ethnic identity and perceived value of diversity at both high and low levels (Schoonhoven 1981). Figures 2 and 3 present the predicted values of facades of conformity at one standard deviation above and below the means for both independent variables. Although support for demographic dissimilarity as a moderator of the relationship between ethnic identity and FOC was significant and in the predicted direction for employees who perceived lower levels of dissimilarity, its effect for employees who perceived higher levels of dissimilarity was contrary to our prediction. Employees who perceived they were more racially dissimilar from their workgroup and had higher levels of ethnic identity were less likely to engage in FOC.

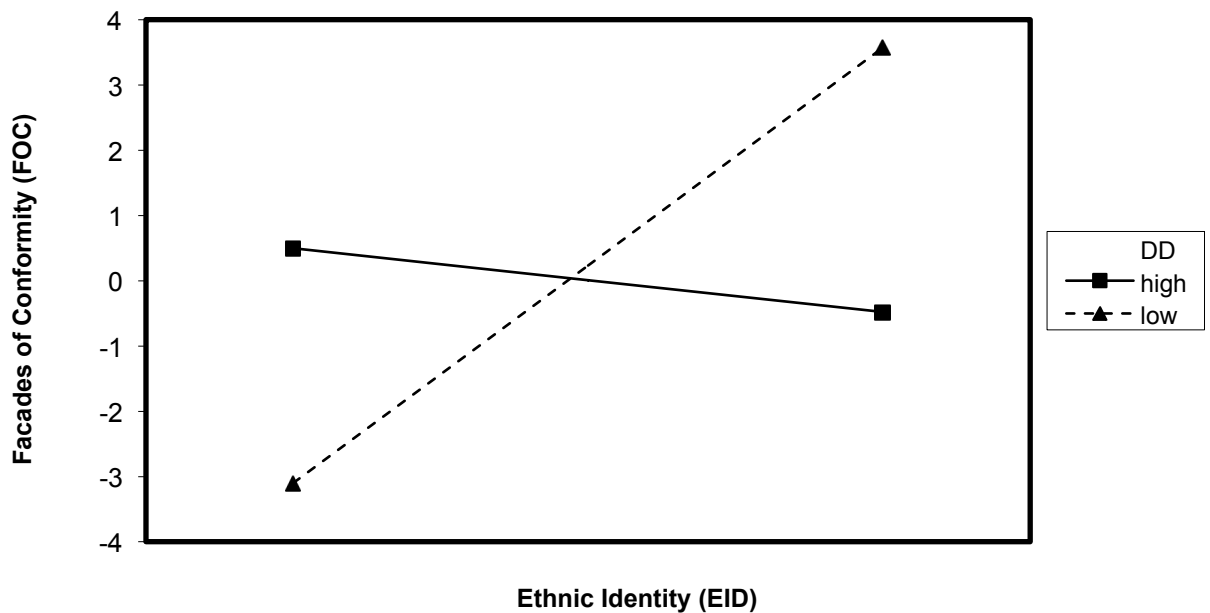
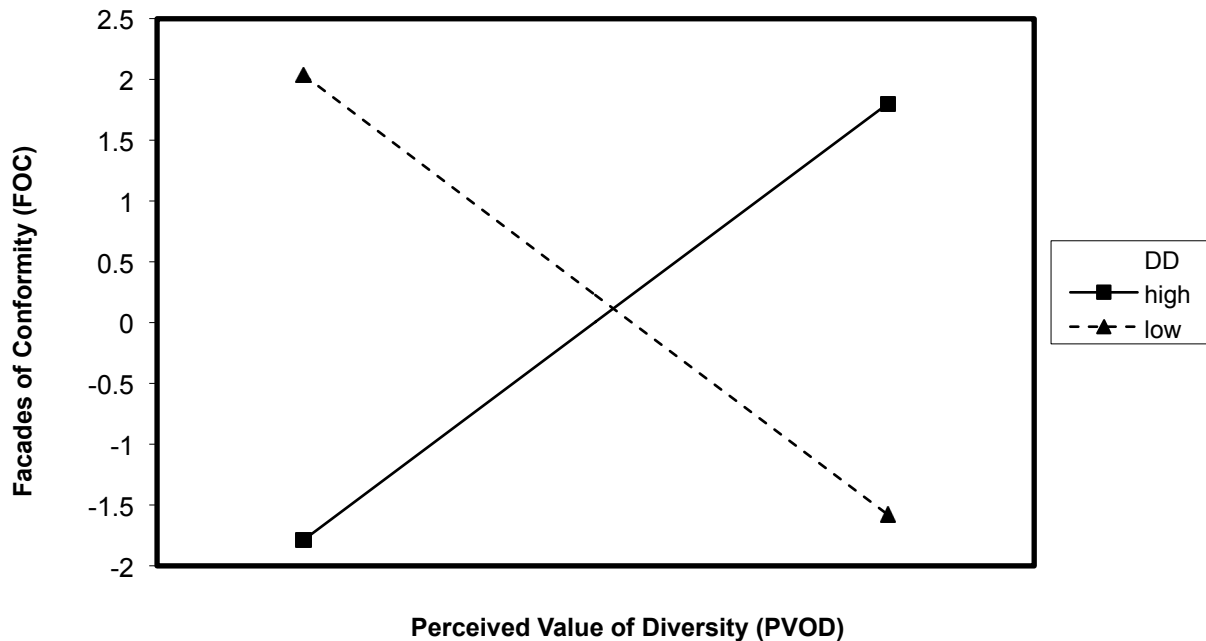


Figure 2. Joint effect of ethnic identity and demographic dissimilarity on facades of conformity



**Figure 3.** Joint effect of perceived value of diversity and demographic dissimilarity on facades of conformity

Similarly, the effect of demographic dissimilarity as a moderator for the perceived value of diversity and FOC relationship was consistent with our prediction for employees who perceived lower levels of dissimilarity. Employees who perceived that they were more similar to their workgroup were less likely to engage in facades of conformity as perceptions that the organization valued diversity increased. However, the relationship was opposite for employees who perceived higher levels of dissimilarity, as the likelihood of engaging in facades of conformity increased as perceptions that the organization valued diversity increased.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that the degree of creating facades of conformity would be positively related to work stress. Ordinary least squares regression was used to test this relationship and support was found for the relationship where facades of conformity was significantly and negatively related to work stress, thus providing support for hypothesis 3.

To examine the model of the outcome and mediated relationships as predicted by Hypotheses 4a and 4b, Shrout and Bolger's (2002) approach to test mediation was employed. To utilize their methodology, the relationship between the distal predictor (facades of conformity) and outcome (job satisfaction) must first be supported theoretically. Second, the distal predictor (facades of conformity) must have a significant relationship with the mediator (work stress). Third, the mediator (work stress) must have a significant relationship with the outcome (job satisfaction) after controlling for the distal predictor (facades of conformity). Lastly, if the relationship between the distal predictor (facades of conformity) and the outcome (job satisfaction) is not significant in the presence of the mediator (work stress), the relationship is fully mediated. If both relationships are significant, then the relationship is partially mediated. As shown in the correlation table (see Table 1), although the relationship is in the hypothesized direction, facades of conformity and job satisfaction are not significantly correlated. Work stress and facades of conformity are significantly correlated. Given that the initial relationship between the distal predictor and outcome was unsupported, hypotheses 4a and 4b are unsupported. The regression results for testing mediation are reported in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
*Mediation Test – Linking Facades of Conformity and Job Satisfaction via Work Stress*

Factor	Job Satisfaction $\beta$	$R^2$
Facades of Conformity	-.072	.005
Work Stress	-.392***	.154

Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## Discussion

The present study contributes to the organizational management and workplace diversity literatures through the examination of facades of conformity as a means for minority employees to enhance their social identity. As the workplace becomes more diverse, a better understanding of employees’ ability to be authentic at work could provide insight into outcomes such as turnover rates, employee morale and citizenship behaviors. As our study focused on the experiences of African American professionals, additional research is needed to determine whether the relationships evaluated are generalizable to other identity groups. Hewlin’s (2009) study focused on a primarily Caucasian sample, for which minority status was significant in the creation of facades of conformity. As her study assessed perceived minority status on various dimensions as a direct effect, we chose to focus on racial dissimilarity as a specific type of minority status, as well as its role as a moderator, to further examine the decision to create FOC.

Consistent with Hewlin’s (2003, 2009) argument and finding that employees who display behaviors or values inconsistent with their own are likely to experience negative emotions and tensions, the present study found a significant positive relationship between FOC and work stress. Contrary to our predictions, a relationship was not found between FOC and job satisfaction, thus negating the argument that work stress would mediate that relationship. These findings suggest that minority employees may consider FOC as essential to overcoming the liability of being different in any organization and thus not sufficiently significant to impact the overall level of satisfaction. Consistent with prior research, work stress was positively related to job satisfaction.

Of most interest is racial dissimilarity having differential effects on the creation of FOC at the higher and lower levels of similarity. When evaluating the effects of both ethnic identity and perceived value of diversity on the creation of FOC, the results were diametrically opposed to our predictions in the case of higher dissimilarity and these results are therefore the focus of our assessment. When levels of ethnic identity were higher, those who were more dissimilar were less likely to engage in FOC. As employees with strong ethnic identities often have a desire to incorporate their ethnicity into their professional images and organizational roles (Bell & Nkomo 2001; Chrobot-Mason, Button, & DiClementi 2001; Luijters et al. 2006), the inauthenticity associated with FOC may be perceived as a threat to their identity, resulting in a resistance to engage in such behaviors. In contrast, employees who perceive more similarity and a lower value of diversity may use FOC to help distinguish themselves from others in their workgroup.

Employees who perceive greater dissimilarity and report higher perceptions that their organization values diversity may use FOC as a means to overcome the lower status and potential negative assertions associated with being different from the majority of their workgroup. Although organizations that value diversity engage in practices to create, promote, or maximize diversity (Avery et al. 2007), employees who perceive they are different from others in their workgroup may sense that they are under a microscope and scrutinized more than their counterparts (Brewer 1991; Kanter 1977) and may therefore engage in FOC in an attempt to increase the appearance of similarity of others and alignment with the organization’s norms.

The nonsignificant main effects of ethnic identity and value of diversity lead us to infer that, given that these variables are very specific to the topic of diversity management and experiences of minority employees, the FOC construct and measure may not accurately capture these occurrences. Future research could focus on the role of cultural assimilation in assessing minorities' creation of FOC. Further analyses can be conducted to determine whether the results vary significantly from the FOC measure, thus warranting the examination of both in assessing the manner in which minority employees navigate their work environments. Additionally, perceived minority status implies that an individual's status on that dimension is salient to them, and thus their perception of their status is likely to influence the degree to which they create FOC. For example, if a minority employee is familiar with and comfortable navigating in a white male-dominated corporate world, he or she may not see race as a salient challenge simply as a result of being in the numerical minority. Therefore, future research in this area could examine the salience of the minority category in order to more accurately assess the role it plays in the creation of FOC. Similar to previous research which examined the role of political skill in overcoming minority status (Brouer et al. 2009), future studies could also examine the power of social networks as another potential moderator.

## Conclusion

Our goal in this paper was to examine FOC as a social mobility strategy, focusing on racial minorities as the population of interest. We also expanded on Hewlin's (2003) model by presenting additional antecedents to the creation of facades of conformity (demographic dissimilarity and perceived value of diversity) as well as additional consequences (work stress and job satisfaction). In addition, we presented demographic dissimilarity as a moderator to the antecedent relationships, resulting in opposite effects for those with higher and lower perceptions of dissimilarity. Given the novelty of this topic, it is our hope that our findings will help guide further research in this area, further examining the relationships proposed by Hewlin (2003) and presenting additional moderating variables to aid in the promotion of this very important phenomenon of employees behaving inauthentically and the resulting consequences for both employees and organizations.

## References

- Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1996). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Amott, T., & Matthaei, J. (1991). *Race, gender and work*. Boston: South End.
- Avery, D., McKay, P., Wilson, D., & Tonindandel, S. (2007). Unequal attendance: The relationships between race, organizational diversity cues, and absenteeism. *Personnel Psychology, 60*, 875-902.
- Baron, J. & Newman, A. (1990). For what it's worth: Organizations, occupations, and the value of work done by women and nonwhites. *American Sociological Review, 55*, 155-175.
- Bell, E., & Nkomo, S. (2001). *Our separate ways: Black and White women and the struggle for professional identity*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Bowler, R., Rauch, S., & Schwarzer, R. (1986). Self-esteem and interracial attitudes in Black high school students: A comparison with five ethnic groups. *Urban Education, 21*, 3-19.
- Brewer, M. (Ed.). (1991). *Ethnocentrism and its role in interpersonal trust*. New York: Jossey-Bass.
- Brouer, R., Duke, A., Treadway, D., & Ferris, G. (2009). The moderating effect of political skill on the demographic dissimilarity - Leader-member exchange quality relationship. *The Leadership Quarterly, 20*, 61-69.
- Byrne, D. (1971). *The attraction paradigm*. New York: Academic Press.
- Byrne, D., Clore, G.L., Jr. & Worchel, P. (1966). The effect of economic similarity-dissimilarity as determinants of attraction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 4*, 220-224.

- Chattopadhyay, P. (1999). Beyond direct and symmetrical effects: The influence of demographic dissimilarity on organizational citizenship behavior. *Academy of Management Journal*, *42*, 273-287.
- Chattopadhyay, P., Tluchowska, M., & George, E. (2004). Identifying the ingroup: A closer look at the influence of demographic dissimilarity on social identity. *Academy of Management Review*, *29*, 180-202.
- Chrobot-Mason, D., Button, S., & DiClementi, J. (2001). Sexual identity management strategies: An exploration of antecedents and consequences. *Sex Roles*, *45*, 321-336.
- Cordes, C. L., & Dougherty, T. W. (1993). A review and integration of research on job burnout. *Academy of Management Review*, *18*, 621-656.
- Cowan, K., Saufley, R., & Blake, J. (1979). *Through the hour glass (darkly): Summary of an exploratory analysis of the "new student" at a traditional university*. Santa Cruz: University of Southern California at Santa Cruz.
- Cox, T. (1991). The multicultural organization. *Academy of Management Executive*, *5*, 34-46.
- Cox, T. (1994). *Cultural diversity in organizations: Theory, research and practice*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
- Cox, T., & Blake, S. (1991). Managing cultural diversity: Implications for organizational competitiveness. *Academy of Management Executive*, *5*, 45-56.
- Cox, T., & Finley-Nickelson, J. (1991). Models of acculturation for intra-organizational cultural diversity. *Canadian Journal of the Administrative Sciences*, *8*, 90-100.
- Cox, T., & Nkomo, S. (1986). Differential performance appraisal criteria: A field study of Black and White managers. *Group and Organization Studies*, *11*, 101-119.
- Cross, W. (1991). *Shades of black: Diversity in African American identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Cross, W., Parham, T., & Helms, J. (1998). Nigrescence revisited: Theory and research. In R. Jones (Ed.), *African American identity development* (4-72). Hampton, VA: Cobb and Henry.
- Davis, G., & Watson, G. (1982). *Black life in corporate America*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Dienesch, R., & Liden, R. (1986). Leader-member exchange model of leadership: A critique and further development. *Academy of Management Review*, *11*(3), 618-634.
- DiTomaso, N., Thompson, D., & Blake, D. (1988). Corporate perspectives on the advancement of minority managers. In D. Thompson & N. DiTomaso (Eds.), *Ensuring minority success in corporate management* (119-136). New York: Plenum Press.
- Domm, D., & Stafford, J. (1972). Assimilating blacks into the organization. *California Management Review*, *15*, 46-51.
- Ferris, G., Davidson, S., & Perrewe, P. (2005). *Political skill at work: Impact on work effectiveness*. Mountain View, CA: Davies-Black Publishers.
- Ferris, G., Frink, D., & Galang, M. (1993). Diversity in the workplace: The human resources management challenge. *Human Resource Planning*, *1*, 41-51.
- Hackman, J., & Oldham, G. (1975). Development of the Job Diagnostic Survey. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *60*(2), 159-170.
- Hewlin, P. (2003). And the award for best actor goes to...: Facades of conformity in organizational settings. *Academy of Management Review*, *28*(4), 633-642.
- Hewlin, P. (2009). Wearing the cloak: Antecedents and consequences of creating facades of conformity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *94*(3), 727-741.
- Hollon, C., & Chesser, R. (1976). The relationship of personal influence dissonance to job tension, satisfaction, and involvement. *Academy of Management Journal*, *19*, 308-314.
- Ibarra, H. (1995). Provisional selves: Experimenting with image and identity in profesional adaptation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *44*, 764-791.

- Jackson, S., Brett, J., Sessa, V., Cooper, D., Julin, J., & Peronin, K. (1991). Some differences make a difference: Individual dissimilarity and group heterogeneity as correlates of recruitment, promotions, and turnover. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 76*, 675-689.
- Judge, T., Thoresen C., Bono J., Patton G. (2001). The job satisfaction-job performance relationship: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Psychological Bulletin, 3*, 376-407.
- Kahn, R., Wolfe, D., Quinn, R., Snoek, J., & Rosenthal, R. (1964). *Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Kanter, R. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kelman, H. (2006). Interests, relationships, identities: Three central issues for individuals and groups in negotiating their social environment. *Annual Review of Psychology, 57*, 1-26.
- Kemery, E., Mossholder, K., & Bedeian, A. (1987). Role stress, physical symptomatology, and turnover intentions: A causal analysis of three alternative specifications. *Journal of Occupational Behavior, 8*, 11-23.
- Konrad, A. (2003). Defining the domain of workplace diversity scholarship. *Group and Organization Management, 28*, 4-17.
- Kramer, R. (1998). Paranoid cognition in social systems: Thinking and acting in the shadow of doubt. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 4*, 251-275.
- LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H., & Gerton, J. (1995). Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory. In N. Goldberger & J. Veroff (Eds.), *The culture and psychology reader* (489-535). New York: New York University Press.
- Lee, R. T., & Ashforth, B. E. (1996). A meta-analytic examination of the correlates of the three dimensions of job burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 81*, 123-133.
- Liao, H., Joshi, A., & Chuang, A. (2004). Sticking out like a sore thumb: Employee dissimilarity and deviance at work. *Personnel Psychology, 57*, 969-1000.
- Luijters, K., van der Zee, K., & Otten, S. (2006). Acculturation strategies among ethnic minority workers and the role of intercultural personality traits. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, 9*, 561-575.
- Lyons, H., & O'Brien, K. (2006). The role of person-environment fit in the job satisfaction and tenure intentions of African American employees. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 53*, 387-396.
- Major, B., Quinton, W., McCoy, S., & Schmader, T. (2000). Reducing prejudice: The target's perspective. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), *Reducing prejudice and discrimination* (211-237). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- McGrath, J. (1976). Stress and behavior in organizations. In M. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (1351-1395). Chicago: Rand McNally.
- Meyerson, D. (2001). *Tempered radicals: How people use difference to inspire change at work*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School.
- Meyerson, D., & Scully, M. (1995). Tempered radicalism and the politics of ambivalence and change. *Organization Science, 5*, 585-600.
- Miles, R. (1976). A comparison of the relative impact of role perceptions on ambiguity and conflict by role. *Academy of Management Journal, 19*, 25-35.
- Nkomo, S., & Cox, T. (1990). Factors affecting the upward mobility of Black managers in private sector organizations. *Review of Black Political Economy, 18*, 39-58.
- O'Reilly, C., Caldwell, D., & Barnett, W. (1989). Work group demography, social integration, and turnover. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 34*, 21-37.
- Pelled, L., & Xin, K. (1997). Birds of a feather: Leader-member demographic similarity and organizational attachment in Mexico. *The Leadership Quarterly, 8*(4), 433-450.

- Pfeffer, J. (Ed.). (1989). *A political perspective on careers: Interests, networks and environments*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Phinney, J. (1989). Stages of ethnic identity development in minority group adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 9*, 34-49.
- Phinney, J. (1992). The multigroup ethnic identity measure: A new scale for use with diverse groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 7*, 156-176.
- Phinney, J. (1996). When we talk about American ethnic groups, what do we mean? *American Psychologist, 51*, 918-927.
- Phinney, J., Horenczyk, G., Liebkind, K., & Vedder, P. (2001). Ethnic identity, immigration, and well-being: An interactional perspective. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*, 493-510.
- Phinney, J., & Kohatsu, E. (1997). Ethnic and racial identity development and mental health. . In J. Schulenberg, J. Maggs, & K. Hurrelman (Eds.), *Health risks and developmental transitions in adolescence* (420-443). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Reskin, B. (1993). Sex segregation in the workplace. *Annual Review of Sociology, 19*, 241-270.
- Reskin, B., & McBrier, D. (2000). Why not ascription? Organizations' employment of male and female managers. *American Sociological Review, 65*, 210-233.
- Reynolds, K., & Turner, J. (2001). Prejudice as a group process: The role of social identity. In M. Augoustinos & K. Reynolds (Eds.), *Understanding prejudice, racism, and social conflict* (159-178). London: Sage.
- Richard, O., Barnett, T., Dwyer, S., & Chadwick, K. (2004). Cultural diversity in management, firm performance, and the moderating role of entrepreneurial orientation dimensions. *Academy of Management Journal, 47*, 255-266.
- Riordan, C.M. (2000). Relational demography within groups: Past developments, contradictions, and new directions. In M. R. Buckley, J. R. B. Halbesleben, A. R. Wheeler (Eds.), *Research in personnel and human resources management* (Vol. 19, 131-173). Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier Science, Inc.
- Roberts, L. (2005). Changing faces: Professional image construction in diverse organizational settings. *Academy of Management Review, 30*, 685-711.
- Rodriguez-Calcagno, M., & Brewer, E. (2005). Job stress among Hispanic professionals. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 27*, 504-516.
- Saari, L. M., & Judge, T. A. (2004). Employee attitudes and job satisfaction. *Human Resource Management, 43*, 395-407.
- Sanchez, J., & Brock, P. (1996). Outcomes of perceived discrimination among Hispanic employees: Is diversity management a luxury or a necessity? *Academy of Management Journal, 39*, 704-719.
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Enzmann, D. (1998). *The burnout companion to study and practice: A critical analysis*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Schoonhoven, C. (1981). Problems with contingency theory: Testing assumptions hidden within the language of contingency theory. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 26*, 349-377.
- Shrout, P. E., & Bolger, N. (2002). Mediation in experimental and nonexperimental studies: New procedures and recommendations. *Psychological Methods, 7*, 422-445.
- Spector, P. E. (2000). *Industrial and organizational psychology: Research and practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Stewart, M., & Garcia-Prieto, P. (2008). A relational demography model of workgroup identification: testing the effects of race, race dissimilarity, racial identification, and communication behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 29*, 657-680.
- Stormer, F., & Devine, K. (2008). Acting at work: Facades of conformity in academia. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 17*(2), 112-134.



- Suen, H. (1983). Alienation of Black college students on a predominantly White campus. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 24, 117-121.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1986). The social identity theory of group behavior. In S. Worchel, & W. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (7-24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Tett, R. P., & Meyer, J. P. (1993). Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention, and turnover: Path analyses based on meta-analytic findings. *Personnel Psychology*, 46, 259-293.
- Tsui, A., & O'Reilly, C. (1989). Beyond simple demographic effects: The importance of relational demography in superior-subordinate dyads. *Academy of Management Journal*, 32, 402-423.
- Tsui, A., Egan, T., & O'Reilly, C. (1992). Being different: Relational demography and organizational attachment. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 37, 549-579.
- Tsui, A., Xin, K., & Egan, T. (1995). Relational demography: The missing link in vertical dyad linkage. In S. Jackson, & M. Ruderman (Eds.), *Diversity in work teams: Research paradigms for a changing workforce* (97-129). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Tung, R. (1993). Managing cross-national and intra-national diversity. *Human Resource Management*, 32, 461-477.
- Turban, D., & Jones, A. (1988). Supervisor-subordinate similarity: Types, effects and mechanisms. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 73, 228-234.
- Turner, J. (1987). A self-categorization theory. In M. Hogg, P. Oakes, S. Reicher, & M. Wetherell (Eds.), *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory* (42-67). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Uhl-Bien, M. (2003). Relationship development as a key ingredient for leadership development. In S. Murphy, & R. Riggio (Eds.), *The future of leadership development* (129-145). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Watts, R., & Carter, R. (1991). Psychological aspects of racism in organizations. *Group and Organization Studies*, 16, 328-344.
- Westphal, J., & Milton, L. (2000). How experience and network ties affect the influence of demographic minorities on corporate boards. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 45, 366-398.
- Whitman, D., Van Rooy, D., & Viswesvaran, C. (2010). Satisfaction, citizenship behaviors, and performance in work units: A meta-analysis of collective construct relations. *Personnel Psychology*, 63, 41-81.

**T. Nichole Phillips** is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Management and Marketing at Winston-Salem State University. She received her Ph.D. in Business Management from the University of Central Florida.

**Felice Williams** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Management and Marketing at Louisiana State University Shreveport. She received her Ph.D. in Business Management from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

**Dorothy M. Kirkman** is an Associate Professor of Management at the University of Houston—Clear Lake. She received her Ph.D. in Organizational Management from Rutgers -The State University of New Jersey.