The Role of White Support in Predicting Racial Minorities' Feelings of Inclusion and Retention

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Introduction

Importance of White Individuals Engaging in Allyship in the Workplace

- People of Color (PoC) often report feeling lowered sense of well-being from pressure to assimilate to the expectations of dominant culture. This can result in feelings of exclusion in the workplace.[1]
- White allyship behaviors are actions taken to demonstrate solidarity with the concerns and welfare of PoC together with an empathic understanding of their unique struggles in negotiating the demands of dominant culture.[2]

White Support for Coworkers of Color (WSCC)

- This study represents a first step in developing and testing a measure in which employees of color rate their white coworkers on their openness to learning about: (a) the harmful effects of systemic racism and (b) how to take actions to mitigate those effects.

Hypotheses

- H1: WSCC positively predicts employees of color on: (a) perceptions of an inclusive work environment and (b) intent to stay in their job.
- H2: WSCC positively predicts intent to stay through the mediating mechanisms of: (a) enhancing PoC's feelings of inclusion and (b) fewer racial microaggressions in the workplace.
- H3: WSCC is negatively associated with microaggressions reported by PoC in the workplace.

Theoretical Frameworks

Facades of Conformity Theory

- People of color often feel pressured to assimilate to the status quo, and their health is often negatively impacted as a result.[3]

Critical Race Theory

- Whiteness, meritocracy, and capitalism are regarded as the defaults in the U.S. culture and labor market. All other people, paradigms, and practices are (often implicitly) considered "outside the norm".
- To realize true inclusion in our institutions and workplaces, dominant narratives and existing power structures must be consistently challenged.[4,5]

Method

Participants

- *N* = 287
- Recruited online from Prolific and Mturk
- *Male: N = 145; Female: N = 142*

Inclusion Criteria

- Employed full-time or part-time
- Age 18+
- Live in United States
- Identify as a member of a racial minority group
- Worked at a physical location at least part time

Measures

- White Support for Coworkers of Color (WSCC) (1 = *I have never observed this* to 5 = *I always observe this*).
- Perceived Group Inclusion Scale (1 = *strongly agree* to 5 = *strongly disagree*).[6]
- Racial and Ethnic Microaggression Scale (0 = *I did not experience this event* or 1 = *I experienced this event at least once in the past six months*).[7]
- Intent to Stay (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly disagree*)[8]

*Components of the WSCC Scale:

Please rate the frequency with which the White individuals in your immediate work group generally demonstrate the behavior indicated on the following scale:

Factor 1: Sociocultural Context

- **Definition:** Openness to learning about sociocultural context factors that impact PoC
- **Example item:** Demonstrate openness to learning about how my ethnic group is generally regarded in U.S. culture.

Factor 2: Solidarity

- **Definition:** Openness to learning how to take meaningful action in solidarity with the concerns and priorities of coworkers of color
- **Example item:** Demonstrate an openness to learning on how to accept corrective feedback when they behave (either intentionally or unintentionally) in racially inappropriate ways.

- *74% Cumulative Variance Explained by Both Factors*

Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Intent to Stay	2.09	1.36	(.91)				
2. Inclusion	3.80	0.91	.57**	(.98)			
3. Microaggressions	10.85	3.56	.29**	.22**			
4. WSCC: Sociocultural Context	2.65	1.04	.18**	.31**	-.03	(.96)	
5. WSCC: Solidarity	3.89	1.60	.27**	.38**	.28**	.26**	(.94)
6. Gender	0.52	0.53	-.10	-.10	-.07	-.01	.06

Note. Gender coded 0 = male and 1 = female. WSCC = White Support for Coworkers of Color. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; all nondirectional tests. Cronbach's alphas are on the diagonal.

Regression Results for Mediation: WSCC - Sociocultural Context, Inclusion, and Intent to Stay

	Mediator Model (DV = Inclusion)			
Predictor	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Constant	3.06	0.14	22.14	0.00
Sociocultural Context	0.27	0.05	5.59	0.00
	Outcome Model (DV = Intent to Stay)			
Predictor	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Constant	-1.16	0.29	-3.96	0.00
Sociocultural Context	0.00	0.07	0.01	0.99
Inclusion	0.86	0.07	11.32	0.00

	Boot Indirect Effect	Boot SE	95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Indirect Effect	0.23	0.04	0.15	0.32

Note. *N* = 292. *SE* = standard error. *CI* = confidence interval. WSCC = White Support for Coworkers of Color.

Regression Results for Mediation: WSCC - Solidarity, Inclusion, and Intent to Stay

	Mediator Model (DV = Inclusion)			
Predictor	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Constant	2.96	0.13	22.81	0.00
Solidarity	0.21	0.03	6.96	0.00
	Outcome Model (DV = Intent to Stay)			
Predictor	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Constant	-1.23	0.29	-4.31	0.00
Solidarity	0.05	0.04	1.21	0.23
Inclusion	0.82	0.08	10.60	0.00

	Boot Indirect Effect	Boot SE	95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Indirect Effect	0.18	0.03	0.12	0.24

Note. *N* = 292. *SE* = standard error. *CI* = confidence interval. WSCC = White Support for Coworkers of Color.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that WSCC may be a critical factor in predicting feelings of workplace inclusion and turnover intentions for racial minorities. Interestingly, 72% of participants indicated that they could name at least one white co-worker who provided some type of WSCC function. This is both encouraging and an indication that we have additional work to do in the realm of diversity and inclusion. Each of the hypotheses were supported apart from H3 where microaggressions was unrelated to the *sociocultural context* dimension of WSCC and was unexpectedly positively associated with the *solidarity* dimension.

Future Research

- Capture a combination of self and other-reported WSCC behaviors to obtain convergent validity.
- Continued validation efforts for the WSCC scale to ascertain if our results can be replicated.
- Employ creative ways (e.g., vignette method) to manipulate WSCC and observe its effects on various outcomes such as applicant attraction to a hypothetical work group.
- Identifying and employing strategies for mitigating white fragility in the workplace.

References

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