

# Getting Closer at the Company Party: Integration Experiences, Racial Dissimilarity, and Workplace Relationships

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Using survey data from two distinct samples, we found that reported integration behaviors (e.g., attending company parties, discussing nonwork matters with colleagues) were associated with closer relationships among coworkers but that this effect was qualified by an interaction effect. Racial dissimilarity moderated the relationship between integration and closeness such that integration was positively associated with relationship closeness for those who were demographically similar to their coworkers, but not for those who were demographically dissimilar from their coworkers. Additionally, this moderation effect was mediated by the extent to which respondents experienced comfort and enjoyment when integrating. These findings highlight the importance of creating the right kind of interactions for building closer relationships between employees, particularly relationships that span racial boundaries.

*Key words:* diversity; boundary theory; racial dissimilarity; high-quality relationships; integration; segmentation

*History:* Published online in *Articles in Advance* February 28, 2013.

## Introduction

Relationships between coworkers are increasingly important in today's organizations, particularly given the collaborative nature of service and knowledge-based work. In fact, coworker relationships influence important organizational outcomes such as work group performance (Gruenfeld et al. 1996, Harrison et al. 2002, Jehn and Shah 1997), organizational citizenship behaviors (Kidwell et al. 1997, Podsakoff et al. 2000), attendance (Sanders and Nauta 2004), and turnover (Iverson and Roy 1994). The growing importance of coworker relationships is complicated by the increasing demographic diversity in today's workforce. The effects of diversity can vary, but demographic diversity, particularly racial diversity, is often associated with relational challenges including greater conflict, lower cohesion, and lower-quality communication (e.g., Hoffman 1985, Pelled et al. 1999, Tsui and O'Reilly 1989; for reviews, see Van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007, Williams and O'Reilly 1998). Recommendations both for improving workplace relationships and for managing diversity often entail encouraging employees to attend social events with coworkers, bring their family members to organizational events, or disclose information about their personal lives at work (Casey 1995, Ensari and Miller 2006, Finkelstein et al. 2000, Fleming and Spicer 2004, Pratt

and Rosa 2003, Roberson 2006). These behaviors are addressed from a number of research perspectives, all with the expectation that they will improve relationships. Boundary theorists have described behaviors such as attending social events with coworkers as integration practices because they allow activities, emotions, artifacts, and people commonly reserved for the nonwork domain to transcend the work–home boundary and enter into the workplace (e.g., Ashforth et al. 2000). Also, diversity researchers have included behaviors such as socializing with coworkers within their concept of “social integration” (e.g., O'Reilly et al. 1989). However, it is not clear whether integration behaviors actually lead to improved workplace relationships, particularly for those employees who are racially dissimilar from their colleagues.

We posit that integration behaviors have implications for workplace relationships that are underexplored in existing organizational research. In doing so, we draw from the emerging body of research on boundary theory, which has provided a great deal of insight into the ways that individual and organizational practices shape the temporal and spatial boundaries between employees' work and nonwork lives and identities (Kreiner 2006; Kreiner et al. 2006, 2009; Nippert-Eng 1996) as well as individuals' preferences for integration (Kreiner 2006,

Powell and Greenhaus 2010, Rothbard et al. 2005). Qualitative studies within this body of literature suggest that managers expect integration behaviors to have positive effects on relationships in the workplace (Nippert-Eng 1996, Pratt and Rosa 2003), but these studies did not theorize about or test these effects. Here, we challenge and test the expectation that integration behaviors will always improve coworker relationships and argue that racial dissimilarity may moderate this relationship.

Indeed, although organizational researchers are devoting increased attention to the ways that employees manage the boundary between their personal and professional lives through integration practices, the question remains as to how demographic differences in the workplace, particularly racial dissimilarity, might affect the dynamics of integrating one's work and nonwork lives. Boundary theorists suggest that people may benefit less from integration behaviors when values, expectations, and norms of behavior in their work and nonwork domains differ (Ashforth et al. 2000, Clark 2000). We posit that the demographic differences between employees and their colleagues may also affect outcomes associated with integration behaviors. Therefore we contribute by connecting research on boundary theory with research on demographic diversity.

We also contribute to research examining demographic differences in organizational contexts. Diversity research reflects the expectation that under specified circumstances, increased contact, information exchange, and personal interaction are solutions for interracial relational challenges (Allport 1954, Ensari and Miller 2006, Miller 2002, Pettigrew 1998, Tropp and Pettigrew 2005). Moreover, existing studies of diversity in organizations reflect the assumption that behaviors such as socializing with fellow workers (an integration behavior) and attraction among coworkers will necessarily covary positively (Harrison et al. 2002, O'Reilly et al. 1989). We directly address and test this assumption in our paper. In organizational contexts, people may voluntarily participate in social activities with their coworkers or even discuss non-work-related matters, and yet these behaviors can fail to reflect or yield closer relationships among colleagues, particularly when they are demographically dissimilar from each other. We propose that the potential positive effects of increased social interaction with and disclosure to coworkers (i.e., integration behaviors) will be attenuated by racial dissimilarity. We also examine the process by which this attenuation occurs. Specifically, we consider how the quality of the individual's experiences while integrating affects his or her relationships with coworkers, thus highlighting the fact that integration behaviors alone are not enough to produce closer relationships. Rather, employees' experiences when integrating are critical.

Addressing the effects of integration behaviors within demographically diverse settings has important implications for organizational efforts to improve employees'

working relationships. Also, understanding these dynamics will be helpful for interpreting the social interaction that is often observed in organizational settings. Ultimately, we aim to improve our collective understanding of how to build better relationships among employees, particularly those who are demographically dissimilar from their colleagues.

### **Integration Behaviors and Close Employee Relationships**

In considering workplace relationships, we focus on the extent to which employees view relationships with their coworkers as "close." We define closeness in coworker relationships as the extent to which people feel a sense of connection and bonding with their colleagues, or the extent to which their relationships go beyond the mere perfunctory tasks associated with their work (Bacharach et al. 2005). Given the importance of coworker relationships in organizations, a number of organizational scholars have studied similar concepts. For example, Ibarra (1995) examined what she called the "intimacy" of managers' organizational relationships by asking members how close they felt to each of the people listed in their organizational networks. Podolny and Baron (1997, p. 683) examined closeness among organizational members, which they defined as the degree to which respondents had "direct personal relations" or were "friends" with other organizational members. Likewise, Carmeli et al. (2009) studied the concept of bonding social capital, conceptualized earlier by Adler and Kwon (2002) and Onyx and Bullen (2000) as a measure of "high-quality relations" and "bonding" among employees, which included consideration of how "close" people felt to coworkers, as well as support, caring, and trust. Research addressing relationships between coworkers or task group members often reveals the expectation that close relationships would be reflected in behaviors such as socializing together (Harrison et al. 2002, O'Reilly et al. 1989) or sharing personal information (Bacharach et al. 2005, Fleming and Spicer 2004, Hurlbert 1991). Given this expectation, we felt it was important to examine the association between closeness and these types of behaviors—which we describe as integration behaviors—directly.

Integration behaviors are individual practices that blur the boundary between personal and professional life spheres (Ashforth et al. 2000, Clark 2000, Kreiner et al. 2009, Nippert-Eng 1996). Boundary theorists explain that "integration" entails creating a permeable boundary between multiple life roles and domains by causing overlap between them, and it also entails locating behaviors, emotions, people, and artifacts from different roles in the same time and space (Ashforth et al. 2000, Nippert-Eng 1996, Rothbard et al. 2005). In an ethnographic study, Nippert-Eng (1996) identified a number of behaviors and practices as "integrating,"

including participation in social activities with coworkers, bringing family members to work-related activities, displaying pictures of family and friends at work, or discussing nonwork matters with coworkers. For example, in describing one integrating employee, Nippert-Eng (1996, p. 9) wrote, “He brings the family to an annual workplace picnic . . . .” As conceptualized by boundary theorists, integration can be unidirectional or bidirectional; that is, employees may integrate from nonwork to work by allowing aspects of their personal lives to enter the workplace, from work to nonwork by allowing aspects of their work lives to enter their personal lives, or in both directions (Ashforth et al. 2000, Kossek and Lautsch 2012, Nippert-Eng 1996). Additionally, integration includes both interpersonal behaviors (e.g., socializing with coworkers or discussing personal matters in the workplace) and task-related behaviors (e.g., handling personal business at work, completing family-related tasks on the job, or taking work home) (Kreiner 2006, Nippert-Eng 1996, Olson-Buchanan and Boswell 2006). Because we are addressing implications for interpersonal relationships within the organization, we focus on integration behaviors that entail incorporating more of the employee’s personal life into the organization and that address the interpersonal aspects of integration.

When employees blur the line between their personal and professional lives through the kinds of integration behaviors described above, they may develop closer relationships with their coworkers. Although existing research documenting integration behaviors among employees has not explicitly focused on improved coworker relationships as an outcome, these studies generally support the idea that efforts to incorporate employees’ nonwork lives into the organization can help foster closer relationships among employees (Kirchmeyer 1995, Nippert-Eng 1996, O’Reilly et al. 1989, Pratt and Rosa 2003). Indeed, the O’Reilly et al. (1989) study of diversity and turnover in work groups assumed that this relationship was so strongly positive that they combined attraction to, satisfaction with, and socializing with coworkers into a single “social integration” index variable. Pratt and Rosa’s (2003) qualitative work suggests that when employees feel that the organization invites them to incorporate their non-work-related identities and roles into the organization, they feel a stronger connection to the organization and its members, because of their belief that all aspects of their identities are welcome in the organization, and a reduction in the feeling that their professional lives necessarily conflict with their personal lives. The idea that integration behaviors can enhance a sense of closeness to coworkers is also expressed well by Nippert-Eng (1996); she described a new employee’s adjustments to working in a department where integration behaviors were common and encouraged:

Now, along with several colleagues, she [Lauren] participates in the Lab’s ballroom dance club, her departmental volleyball team, post-workday medical seminars on

healthier lifestyles, tennis, and lunchtime “power walks,” exploring the local grounds while talking about so many different “home and work things.” (pp. 181–182)

Lauren was also surprised to see how people in her new work group talk about family and leisure concerns whenever they like. Brief phone calls to cross-realm others are assumed. . . . Lauren now feels free to make and receive such calls. Between this and the expectation that she’ll talk with coworkers about her outside interests, *Lauren’s previous feeling of estrangement in the workplace is abating.* (p. 182, emphasis added)

Integrating by participating in social events with coworkers can also provide the opportunity for employees to acquire additional information about each other, which is important for the formation of close relationships (Asch 1946). Joint participation in leisure activities helps to motivate the sustained interaction necessary to advance relationships because “playing together” creates a context for information exchange (Altman and Taylor 1973, Hays 1984, Segal 1979, Werner and Parmelee 1979). As explained and illustrated in the quotes above, integration behaviors also entail referencing nonwork roles or sharing personal information, which can increase the sense of connection and bonding with others in the workplace. Studies of self-disclosure demonstrate that sharing personal information makes people feel closer to each other and increases the extent to which people like each other (Cozby 1972, 1973; for a meta-analysis and review, see Collins and Miller 1994). This explains why sharing personal non-work-related information in the workplace may improve relationships between coworkers. It is important to note, however, that even if coworker interaction does not include direct verbal self-disclosure, joint participation in social activities can provide them with information about each other. As Stephens et al. (2011) explained, in the context of the workplace, social activities take employees out of their regular routines and interaction patterns, allowing them to see each other differently. This, in turn, can allow them to form closer relationships. Similarly, Ingram and Morris (2007) explained that parties and social mixers provide the opportunity for encounters that can cement friendships or serve as important first steps in forming close relationships in professional settings.

In sum, researchers studying the interface between employees’ work and nonwork lives suggest that integrating employees’ personal and professional lives will strengthen their bonds to the organization and fellow coworkers (Nippert-Eng 1996, Pratt and Rosa 2003). Moreover, classic psychological research on relationship formation supports the notion that participating in social events and sharing personal information will be associated with closer relationships among coworkers (Altman and Taylor 1973, Hays 1984, Werner and

Parmelee 1979). Thus, based on prior work that reflects the assumption that shared social activities are associated with closer coworker relationships, we expect that, in general, employees who integrate by attending social events with coworkers, bringing family members to these events, and discussing their nonwork lives in work contexts should feel closer to their coworkers. Therefore,

*HYPOTHESIS 1 (H1). Integration behaviors will be positively associated with close relationships among coworkers.*

### **Personal–Professional Domain Integration and Demographic Dissimilarity**

Overall, although we expect a positive relationship between integration behaviors and closeness among coworkers, this relationship may be weaker for those who are demographically dissimilar from their coworkers, in part because engaging in integration behaviors can actively highlight dissimilarity and also because merely being different from the majority may undermine the positive effects of integration behaviors (Bacharach et al. 2005, Phillips et al. 2009). Research on the effects of demographic dissimilarity draws primarily on social identity and self-categorization theories, which explain how people derive their sense of self or identity and esteem from group memberships and social categories (i.e., gender, race, religion) (Abrams and Hogg 1990, Tajfel 1981, Tajfel and Turner 1986). Additionally, the similarity attraction paradigm asserts that people are more attracted to those who are similar on salient dimensions and form relationships more easily with those who share their demographic characteristics (Byrne 1971, Riordan and Shore 1997). Moreover, relationships between those with different demographic characteristics are often associated with relational challenges including greater conflict, lower cohesion, and lower-quality communication (e.g., Jackson et al. 2003, Hoffman 1985, Pelled et al. 1999, Tsui and O'Reilly 1989; for reviews, see Van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007, Williams and O'Reilly 1998).

People's close relationships or friendships tend to be formed with those who are similar to them on demographic characteristics (e.g., Ibarra 1995, Mehra et al. 1998, Mollica et al. 2003, Reagans 2011). It is important to note, however, that when people perceive that relationships with dissimilar others will enhance their status, they may find it useful or preferable to form such relationships in organizational settings for instrumental reasons (Chattopadhyay 2003, Chattopadhyay et al. 2004). Indeed, Ibarra (1995) found that in work contexts, minorities often networked with dissimilar others for instrumental reasons, but they formed close relationships or friendships with those who were demographically similar, suggesting that there is less social interaction among those who are demographically dissimilar. Therefore, research on intergroup relations (Allport 1954,

Pettigrew and Tropp 2006) suggests that under certain conditions, increasing contact among dissimilar individuals will provide individuating information and help to uncover unobserved similarities, which should improve relationships. We argue, however, that even if people engage in integration behaviors (e.g., participating in social activities with coworkers, bringing family members to work-related activities, discussing nonwork matters with coworkers), closeness between dissimilar individuals may not increase as much as it will for those who are similar to each other.

Existing research suggests two reasons why the relationship between integration behaviors and closeness may be weaker for those who are demographically dissimilar from their coworkers. First, when dissimilar individuals acquire more personal information about each other through their integration behaviors, they may discover similarities, but their interaction may also highlight differences between them. The differences discovered may confirm the expectations of dissimilarity that accompany demographic dissimilarity (Byrne 1971). These differences are likely to loom large in employees' perceptions because people tend to give more weight to information that confirms their preexisting ideas or conclusions (Bazerman and Moore 2009, p. 28; Jonas et al. 2001). For example, when Phillips et al. (2006) attempted to increase group cohesion in a laboratory study by instructing participants to self-disclose and compile a list of attributes that they had in common, the researchers found that this exercise led to an increased feeling of similarity for members of homogeneous groups, but not for members of diverse groups.

Additionally, even when people are not directly exchanging or disclosing information about themselves, those who are demographically dissimilar from the majority often experience a heightened awareness of their own demographic category (Bacharach et al. 2005, Blau and Schwartz 1997, Chatman et al. 1998, Mehra et al. 1998, Riordan and Shore 1997). This can lead to an exaggerated sense of dissimilarity such that they feel more isolated (Jackson et al. 1995, Kanter 1977) and experience the organizational context differently than those who are demographically similar to the majority (Bacharach et al. 2005, Chatman et al. 1998, Flynn et al. 2001). As the proportion of similar others in the organization decreases, the distinction between in-group members (those who are demographically similar) and out-group members (those who are demographically different) becomes more salient to those who are in the numerical minority. Further, relationships with in-group members actually become closer and more prevalent (Bacharach et al. 2005, Mehra et al. 1998), whereas relationships with out-group members remain more superficial and instrumental (Ibarra 1995). Thus, because dissimilar individuals often feel a heightened sense of distinction from others, integration behaviors

may not lead to the expected positive effects on closeness for those who are dissimilar from their coworkers.

At first glance, these arguments appear to conflict with existing research on intergroup relations, which suggests that more interaction and information exchange between people in different demographic categories can ameliorate the problems associated with dissimilarity (i.e., Allport 1954; Ensari and Miller 2002, 2006). This existing research argues that under specified circumstances, greater interaction among members of different demographic categories provides individuating information that can serve to reduce prejudice by changing people's perceptions of those who are demographically dissimilar and by reducing reliance on stereotypes (Allport 1954, Ensari and Miller 2002, Miller 2002, Turner et al. 2007; for a review, see Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). It is important to note, however, that those intergroup relations arguments focus on the reduction of prejudice or discrimination, rather than the formation of close relationships, which is the focus of this paper. We acknowledge that the reduction of prejudice may be a precondition for the formation of close relationships across demographic differences, but the reduction of prejudice does not necessarily mean that close relationships between dissimilar individuals will occur. Additionally, as we noted earlier, some scholars suggest that providing opportunities for more intimate interaction and the exchange of personal, individuating information can help demographically dissimilar people feel similar to each other on deeper attributes (Harrison et al. 1998, 2002) and view dissimilar others more accurately and completely, which will allow them to work better together (Ensari and Miller 2006, Polzer et al. 2002). However, these studies assess both dissimilarity and its outcomes at the aggregate group level (e.g., Polzer et al. 2002; Harrison et al. 1998, 2002), thus leaving uncertainty as to how personal interaction may impact *individuals* differentially based on the demography of the context and whether the individual is in the numerical majority or minority, which is what we study here.

In sum, we recognize existing research suggesting that increased contact between dissimilar individuals can have positive effects for intergroup relations. However, a number of researchers show that even when dissimilar individuals seek to form close relationships, the challenges of communicating and interacting with out-group members can keep those relationships from becoming as close as relationships with similar others would be (Bacharach et al. 2005, Frey and Tropp 2006, Vorauer and Sakamoto 2006). Therefore, we argue that integration behaviors may not increase close relationships between dissimilar others as much as they do for those who are similar to one another. Indeed, Bacharach et al. (2005) suggested that casual contact among dissimilar individuals may help create superficial relationships but that creating close, supportive relationships among those

who are demographically dissimilar from each other is more difficult. Overall, although we expect that integration behaviors will be associated with closer relationships among coworkers, we also expect that this effect will be weaker for those who are demographically dissimilar to their coworkers.

*HYPOTHESIS 2 (H2). Demographic dissimilarity will moderate the relationship between integration behaviors and relationship closeness among coworkers such that integration behaviors will be positively associated with closer relationships for those who are demographically similar to their coworkers, but this relationship will be less positive for those who are demographically dissimilar from their coworkers.*

### **Quality of the Integration Experience**

Part of our objective is to test the underlying assumption that integration behaviors will be associated with closer relationships among coworkers, given our expectation that this relationship will be weaker for dissimilar individuals because, in essence, they have a different experience of engaging in integration behaviors. We define the quality of the integration experience as the extent to which employees enjoy themselves and feel comfortable when they are engaging in integration behaviors. This is conceptually distinct from relationship closeness. Closeness represents an appraisal of the overall relationship with others, whereas the quality of employees' experiences when integrating represents an appraisal of how they feel when integrating and interacting with others. This distinction parallels a similar distinction used in the Shelton et al. (2005) study of cross-race relationships between college roommates. They distinguished between "liking" one's college roommate and the affect experienced when interacting with that roommate. The quality of integration experience is a more targeted and specific dimension of a person's experience in the workplace, and it may contribute to overall relationship closeness. Additionally, Allport's (1954) original contact hypothesis considered the quality of contact to be an important factor for mitigating prejudice across different social categories. Similarly, Voci and Hewstone (2003) found that Italians' attitudes toward African immigrants were associated with the quality of their interaction rather than merely the amount of interaction. Therefore, we argue that the differential effect of integration behaviors on relational closeness for dissimilar versus similar employees will be explained by the quality of the experience they have when integrating.

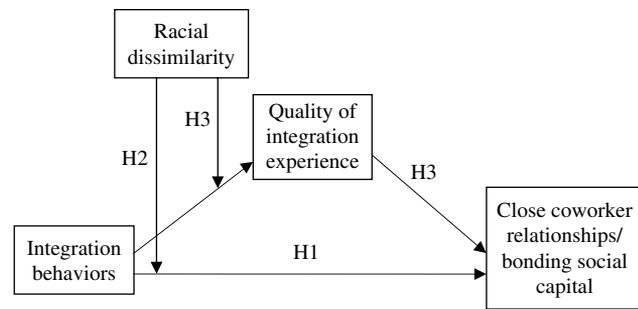
Research suggests that the quality of employees' experiences when engaging in integration behaviors will affect their sense of closeness with or bonding to their coworkers. Ingram and Morris (2007) found that people who attended professional mixers were more likely to talk with someone at a mixer if they had a prior positive relationship. Also, the business people attending the

mixer reported that they were most interested in forming relationships that were easy to maintain (Ingram and Morris 2007). It follows, therefore, that when people choose to engage in integration behaviors, they will feel more close to those with whom they have rewarding, enjoyable, comfortable interactions. This is consistent with Berscheid's (1985) earlier work on relationships in general, which suggests that people are more attracted to those who provide a positive ratio of rewarding experiences to nonrewarding or punishing experiences. Likewise, people consider the costs of any given interaction and are less attracted to interactions that are uncomfortable or require greater effort. Simply stated, social interactions will lead to closer relationships between people to the extent that the quality of that interaction experience is positive.

Given the existing research supporting the similarity attraction paradigm, as well as the above-described explanations of the difficulties people face when interacting with dissimilar others (e.g., Chatman et al. 1998, Vorauer and Sakamoto 2006, Frey and Tropp 2006, Williams and O'Reilly 1998), it is likely that for those employees who are more demographically similar to their coworkers, attending social events will be positively related to an enjoyable and comfortable experience. Conversely, those who are demographically dissimilar from their coworkers may view the events primarily as opportunities to enhance their status or to gather information that will be helpful for their careers, rather than as activities to be undertaken solely for pleasure (Chattopadhyay 2003, Chattopadhyay et al. 2004, Ibarra 1995). Similarly, Phillips et al. (2009) theorized that in interactions with dissimilar others, people are strategic in their decisions about integration behaviors and may engage in self-disclosure specifically as a way to manage status perceptions rather than purely for social reasons. The work of these researchers supports the idea that for those who are demographically dissimilar from the majority of their coworkers, higher attendance at organizational social events or greater engagement in integration behaviors is less likely to be associated with the enjoyment of these activities than for those who are similar to their coworkers. Furthermore, the more people enjoy integrating, the closer they will feel to their fellow coworkers. Therefore we expect that the quality of the employee's experience while integrating will mediate the moderating effect of dissimilarity on the relationship between integration behaviors and closeness. In other words, the interaction of dissimilarity and integration will affect closeness among coworkers indirectly through the quality of their experience when integrating. Figure 1 depicts all of our hypothesized relationships.

**HYPOTHESIS 3 (H3).** *The moderating effect of demographic dissimilarity on the relationship between integration behaviors and closeness will be mediated by the*

**Figure 1** Conceptual Model of Hypothesized Relationships



*quality of the employee's experience when engaging in integration behaviors.*

We tested our hypotheses with two studies. For Study 1, we compiled data from three surveys of MBA students that were distributed as part of an organizational behavior class to facilitate discussion on their workplace experiences. Study 1 included data that allowed us to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. To replicate these findings and to test for the mediated moderation predicted in Hypothesis 3, we conducted Study 2, a survey of employed U.S. adults. Study 2 also allowed us to test our hypotheses on a broader population of workers, characterized by greater racial diversity. We describe each of the studies in more detail separately below.

## Study 1

### Sample and Procedure

We conducted surveys of first-year MBA students in their first academic term of classes at a Midwestern university. Both full-time and part-time students participated in the study. The surveys were administered in three rounds. The first survey, administered in the first week of classes, was a paper-and-pencil "getting-to-know-you" questionnaire that collected information on the respondents' demographic characteristics, family structure, and work tenure. The second survey, administered online four weeks later, included questions on respondents' integration behaviors (e.g., participation in social activities with colleagues). The part-time students were instructed to complete this survey based on their current work experiences, whereas the full-time students completed the survey based on experiences in the job they held immediately prior to enrolling in the MBA program. The third survey, administered separately but later in the same week as the online survey, collected data on the respondents' coworkers. This third survey required that respondents list up to 10 coworkers with whom they interacted on a daily basis. Respondents rated how close they felt to each of the individuals they listed and also provided characteristics of their coworkers (e.g., race). Thus, across three separate surveys, we collected information allowing us to determine the extent

to which respondents integrated by incorporating aspects of their nonwork lives into work, how close they felt to their coworkers, and how racially dissimilar they were from their coworkers.

A total of 228 respondents completed all three surveys for a response rate of 51%. Because our analysis focused on the demographic category of race, we omitted international students from our analyses, because the typical U.S. racial descriptors may hold different meanings for those from other countries. After filtering out the international students, and after listwise deletion for missing data, the final number of observations used in the analysis was 165. Of this final group of respondents, 38% were women. Ten percent of the respondents were underrepresented minorities (African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and “other” race or ethnic background combined), 13% were Asian American, and 77% were white/Caucasian. Forty percent of the respondents were part-time MBA students who were working full-time during the day. The average age of the respondents was 27.95. A comparison of this sample’s demographic characteristics to the population of respondents, based on statistics provided by the school, suggests that the sample is representative of the population.

### Dependent, Independent, and Moderator Variables

*Closeness.* Our dependent variable was respondents’ feelings of closeness to their coworkers, defined as connection and bonding. To capture this variable, we used a measure of average closeness, used in prior studies by Ibarra (1995), Podolny and Baron (1997), and Reagans (2011). These researchers asked respondents to indicate on a five-point scale how close they felt to each of their colleagues or fellow organizational members listed in a network survey. We followed their technique of asking respondents to indicate how close they felt to *each* of their listed coworkers on a scale of 1 (not at all close) to 5 (very close) and averaging the respondents’ ratings of their closeness with each colleague to determine their overall sense of closeness with their coworkers. Respondents answered this question for up to 10 different coworkers separately, depending on how many they listed. One of the advantages of this measure is that it allowed us to collect granular information about the respondents’ relationships with each of their coworkers. This measure was collected via the third survey.

*Integration Behaviors.* Our primary independent variable was integration behaviors. To capture this construct, we sought a measure that both (a) addressed behaviors that integrate by incorporating more of the employee’s personal life into the organization and (b) tapped into the interpersonal aspect of integration described by boundary theorists such as Nippert-Eng (1996). Existing integration scales typically consider whether employees blur

the boundary between their personal and professional lives more generally, but they often fail to distinguish the direction of integration (e.g., Desrochers et al. 2005). Other scales distinguish the direction but do not capture enough of the interpersonal aspect of integration that we sought to measure (e.g., Powell and Greenhaus 2010). Other measures focus on employees’ preferences for integration rather than asking about specific behaviors (Kreiner 2006, Rothbard et al. 2005). As a result, we developed three items to measure respondents’ reported integration behaviors. These items were based on the behaviors described by Nippert-Eng (1996) as integrating practices—that is, employee participation in company social events, inclusion of their families in such events, and discussion of their personal lives at work. Our measure is also consistent with the social interaction component of the social integration index used by diversity researchers (e.g., O’Reilly et al. 1989). Therefore, our items are as follows: “How much do you participate in company sponsored or informal social activities?” “To what extent do you take members of your family or nonwork friends and companions to company-sponsored or informal work-related gatherings?” And “How much do you talk about your nonwork life with coworkers?” The response scale ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (a great deal).

These items serve as formative (Edwards and Bagozzi 2000) or causal (Bollen and Lennox 1991) indicators. Note that items that comprise formative indices are not necessarily expected to be highly correlated with each other (Bollen and Lennox 1991, Edwards and Bagozzi 2000, MacKenzie et al. 2005). MacKenzie et al. (2005, p. 728) explicitly stated,

For formative-indicator constructs, the concept of internal consistency is not appropriate as a measure of reliability because the indicators are not assumed to be reflections of an underlying latent variable. Indeed, as noted by Bollen and Lennox (1991), formative indicators may be negatively correlated, positively correlated, or completely uncorrelated with each other. Consequently, Cronbach’s alpha and Bagozzi’s index should not be used to assess reliability and, if applied, may result in the omission of indicators that are essential to the domain of the construct.

Our integration behaviors items meet the criteria for formative indicator scales as described by MacKenzie et al. (2005) in that they represent defining characteristics that collectively explain the meaning of the construct, and the items each capture a unique aspect of the conceptual domain. For example, participation in social activities with coworkers and bringing family members to company-sponsored outings are both integration behaviors; however, these two distinct behaviors may not necessarily covary. Because the behaviors are related and fall squarely within the realm of integration behaviors specified by boundary theorists (Ashforth et al. 2000,

Nippert-Eng 1996), they can be combined to create a scale. MacKenzie et al. (2005) suggested that for formative indicators, the significance and strength of the factor loadings reflect item validity. Therefore, to test the validity of the items in this integration behaviors scale, we used a separate sample consisting of 109 MBA students from the same institution as the main study participants, but these separate respondents did not participate in the main study.<sup>1</sup> We conducted an exploratory factor analysis to determine whether these items loaded together on a single factor. The analysis yielded one factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1. The three items loaded onto the factor at 0.81, 0.69, and 0.78, respectively. To determine the significance of these factor loadings, we ran a confirmatory factor analysis that indicated that these items loaded significantly onto a single factor, with all  $t$ -values greater than 3.05 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Thus, we decided to combine these items into an index of integration behaviors. In the sample used for the main analyses in Study 1, the factor loadings for the integration behavior items were 0.69, 0.76, and 0.77, respectively. These all loaded significantly onto a single factor with  $t$ -values greater than 3.39 ( $p < 0.001$ ). This integration behaviors measure was collected in the second survey administered to the MBA students.

In addition, because this was a new measure, we included an open-ended question on the main survey to collect more specific information about the kinds of integrating activities or events that respondents were referring to when they responded to the item asking about their participation in company social activities. Participants were asked to “please describe the nature of the social gatherings you attend,” and they were provided with a multiline text field to type in their responses. Ninety percent of the survey respondents answered this question. For exploratory purposes, the open-ended responses were coded for the *number of different activities* listed, which we use as a control variable and discuss in more detail below. The responses were also categorized into different types of activities. We report these categories in the Results section.

**Racial Dissimilarity.** We examined racial dissimilarity as a moderator. Using the demographic data provided in the respondents’ list of coworkers, we computed the relational demography score as a measure of respondents’ racial dissimilarity from their coworkers (Tsui et al. 1992). The possible scores on this measure range from 0 to approaching 1, but not reaching 1. Higher numbers indicate that the respondent is more racially dissimilar from his or her coworkers, whereas lower numbers indicate that the respondent is more similar to his or her coworkers. This measure was constructed based on information collected in the third survey.

## Control Variables

We collected several variables to serve as controls in our data analysis to meet three objectives. First we wanted to control for established factors that affect an employee’s relationships with their coworkers. Second, we took into account individual characteristics of the respondent, including factors that are related to racial dissimilarity. Third, we wanted to control for the contextual factors that would be related to the respondents’ integration behaviors. Therefore, we sought to include control variables that could help eliminate potential alternative explanations for our effects and also address some of the more predictable questions that readers might have about our data.

We controlled for demographic factors and characteristics of the respondents, which were collected in the first survey. Past research on work and nonwork roles has shown that men and women may have different experiences in the ways they approach their work and nonwork lives (Andrews and Bailyn 1993, Rothbard 2001, Rothbard and Brett 2000). Men and women also differ in their responses to demographic dissimilarity (Toosi et al. 2012). Therefore, we controlled for *sex* in these analyses. We also controlled for the respondents’ *age* as well as *parental status* and *marital status* because these factors all affect an employee’s experience of the relationship between their work and nonwork lives (Gordon and Whelan 1998, Martins et al. 2002). We controlled for the respondents’ *tenure* in their work organization because the length of time that people have worked with each other affects their relationships (Harrison et al. 1998, 2002; Riordan and Shore 1997) and can have a considerable impact in demographically diverse settings (Joshi and Roh 2009). We also controlled for whether the respondents were *full-time* or *part-time MBA students* in an attempt to capture and control for variance arising from the different employment status of the respondents. Finally, because our hypotheses focused on racial dissimilarity, we also controlled for the respondents’ race or ethnic background; this is important because these characteristics can affect an individual’s experience of demographic dissimilarity (Chattopadhyay 1999, Tsui et al. 1992). We included two dummy variables for race. The first race dummy variable coded all underrepresented minority categories (African American, Native American, Hispanic/Latino American, and other race) as 1 and all others as 0. The second race dummy variable coded all respondents who selected Asian American as 1 and all others as 0. We coded these groups separately, because these groups are known to experience the workplace differently and have different levels of status in American society that may affect integration behaviors (Leslie 2013, O’Reilly et al. 1998, Phillips et al. 2009). White/Caucasian was the omitted category.

In addition to controlling for the above-described demographic factors, we also sought to take into account a number of contextual and structural factors of the work setting that may affect coworker relationships. Accordingly, we controlled for the number of coworkers respondents listed on the third survey because group size has been shown to affect relationships among group members (Carron and Spink 1995, Chattopadhyay 1999). Additionally, we controlled for the demography of the work setting on characteristics other than race, so we included measures of the respondents' dissimilarity from their coworkers with regard to sex and status in the organization, both of which have been shown to affect relationships with coworkers and group outcomes in past research (Chattopadhyay 1999, Chattopadhyay et al. 2010). To measure *sex dissimilarity*, we used the same relational demography measure used for racial dissimilarity (Tsui et al. 1992). For *status dissimilarity*, when respondents listed their coworkers, they also provided information on whether each coworker listed was a peer, subordinate, or superior. From this information, we computed a measure reflecting the proportion of the respondents' colleagues who were different in status from the respondent (i.e., superiors or subordinates) consistent with the status proportion measures used by Ibarra (1995). A higher number on this measure indicates that the respondent is primarily different in status from his or her coworkers. We also wanted to account for the general *organizational norms for socializing*, so we asked respondents the following question: "How much does your company have social activities, either company sponsored or informal?" The response scale ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (a great deal), and this item was included as a control variable in our analyses. We also controlled for the *number of activities* respondents attended, using a count of the different types of social activities listed by the respondent in the open-ended question. This measure captured not the frequency of attending events but rather the breadth and variety of activities the respondents attended, which might mean they are having interpersonal contact with a broader set of colleagues, thus potentially affecting their sense of closeness.

### Analysis

To test our hypotheses, we used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis. We first entered the control variables and then the independent variables to assess main effects. We then entered the interaction term as a final step in the analysis to allow us to determine the change in variance explained by adding the interaction term. Given that we predicted interaction effects among continuous variables, we followed the procedure recommended by Aiken and West (1991) to assess the interaction effects. Specifically, we used centered variables to compute the interaction terms. Centering the

variables entails subtracting the means from the variable to remove the multicollinearity introduced by interaction terms. Furthermore, we used the regression coefficients to plot and interpret the form of each interaction (Aiken and West 1991).

### Results: Study 1

Table 1 includes descriptive statistics and correlations among our study variables. The correlation table reveals several interesting patterns. Single employees were less likely to report integrating work and nonwork. Compared with full-time students, part-time students listed a broader variety of organizational social events, were older, were more likely to be married, were more likely to have children, and listed more coworkers in their survey. Closeness was positively correlated with integration behaviors. However, not surprisingly, closeness was negatively correlated with the number of coworkers listed.

In addition, we found that respondents reported participating in a variety of social activities in their organizations. In response to the open-ended question requesting a description of the types of social activities they attended, respondents listed up to 11 activities, with the mean number of activities listed being 3.40 (SD = 1.82). For descriptive purposes, we categorized the activities into three different types of activities. They were (1) company-sponsored social events, comprising 50.25% of activities listed (e.g., holiday parties, company picnics, sporting events); (2) employee-initiated social events, comprising 41.45% of activities listed (e.g., going for drinks after work, baby/wedding showers, lunch with coworkers); and (3) company-sponsored development or service activities (e.g., team-building retreats, professional development seminars, community service), comprising 8.29% of activities listed. The three specific activities listed most frequently were happy hours/drinking outings with colleagues (35.27%), holiday parties (25.04%), and company-sponsored outings to sports or theater events (13.05%).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that those who reported higher levels of integration behaviors would report closer relationships with their coworkers than would respondents who reported lower levels of integration. As shown in Table 2, Step 2, this hypothesis was supported. Integration behaviors were positively and significantly related to closeness ( $\beta = 0.18, p < 0.05$ ).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that racial dissimilarity would moderate the relationship between integration behaviors and closeness. As shown in Table 2, Step 4, this hypothesis was also supported.<sup>2</sup> The positive main effect of integration on closeness is qualified by a negative and significant interaction between racial dissimilarity and integration ( $\beta = -0.18, p < 0.05$ ). Plotting the results and evaluating the simple slopes reveals that, as predicted, integration was positively associated with closeness only for individuals who were demographically

**Table 1 Study 1: Correlations Among Study Variables and Descriptive Statistics**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Sex (1 = female)	1															
2. Age	-0.23**	1														
3. Underrepresented minority <sup>a</sup>	0.07	0.05	1													
4. Asian American <sup>a</sup>	0.00	0.03	-0.13	1												
5. Marital status (1 = single)	0.17*	-0.27**	-0.07	0.04	1											
6. Parental status (1 = parent)	-0.14	0.53**	0.02	0.05	-0.35**	1										
7. Part-time/full-time MBA (1 = part time)	-0.05	0.23**	0.09	0.02	-0.34**	0.33**	1									
8. Tenure (in months)	-0.13	0.47**	0.06	-0.06	-0.14	0.17*	0.04	1								
9. No. of coworkers listed	-0.04	0.20*	-0.02	0.06	-0.23**	0.13	0.27**	0.16*	1							
10. Status dissimilarity	-0.09	0.11	0.00	-0.01	0.05	0.06	-0.05	-0.02	0.04	1						
11. Sex dissimilarity	0.40**	-0.10	0.10	0.01	0.04	-0.09	0.05	-0.08	0.22**	0.16*	1					
12. Org. socializing norms	0.06	-0.08	-0.09	0.05	0.07	-0.12	-0.11	-0.12	0.04	0.06	0.06	1				
13. Number of activities	0.05	-0.04	-0.02	0.09	0.03	-0.09	-0.24**	0.03	0.16*	0.08	0.12	0.37**	1			
14. Integration behaviors	0.09	-0.05	-0.15	0.08	-0.17*	0.02	-0.02	0.04	0.09	0.02	-0.01	0.40**	0.23**	1		
15. Racial dissimilarity	0.00	0.11	0.38**	0.55**	-0.13	0.15	0.08	-0.01	0.24**	-0.01	0.11	-0.09	0.02	-0.09	1	
16. Closeness	0.13	-0.15	-0.05	-0.01	0.08	-0.14	-0.09	-0.06	-0.19*	0.02	-0.10	0.13	0.08	0.21**	-0.11	1
Mean	0.38	27.95	0.10	0.13	0.57	0.10	0.40	40.34	8.90	0.60	0.53	4.25	3.28	4.32	0.40	3.51
SD	0.49	3.02	0.30	0.33	0.50	0.30	0.49	27.04	1.77	0.23	0.23	1.35	1.67	1.11	0.32	0.53

Note. N = 165.

<sup>a</sup>For the dummy variables for race, *underrepresented minority* is coded as 1 for African American, Native American, Hispanic/Latino American, and other race. *Asian American* is coded as 1 for all respondents who selected Asian American.

\*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01.

**Table 2 Study 1: Closeness Regressed on Integration Behaviors and Racial Dissimilarity**

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Controls				
Sex (1 = female)	0.18*	0.15*	0.15 <sup>†</sup>	0.16 <sup>†</sup>
Age	-0.08	-0.05	-0.05	-0.03
Underrepresented minority	-0.04	-0.02	-0.01	-0.03
Asian American	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	0.02
Marital status (1 = single)	-0.02	0.02	0.02	0.00
Parental status (1 = parent)	-0.08	-0.09	-0.09	-0.10
Tenure (in months)	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.00
No. of coworkers listed	-0.15 <sup>†</sup>	-0.16 <sup>†</sup>	-0.16 <sup>†</sup>	-0.19*
Status dissimilarity	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.06
Sex dissimilarity	-0.18*	-0.16 <sup>†</sup>	-0.16 <sup>†</sup>	-0.14
Org. socializing norms	0.09	0.02	0.02	0.00
Number of activities	0.08	0.06	0.06	0.06
Part-time/full-time MBA (1 = part time)	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.05
Main effects				
Integration behaviors		0.18*	0.18*	0.16 <sup>†</sup>
Racial dissimilarity			-0.01	-0.03
Interaction effects				
Integration × Racial dissimilarity				-0.18*
R <sup>2</sup>	0.03	0.05	0.05	0.07
ΔR <sup>2</sup>		0.03*	0.00	0.03*

Notes. *N* = 165. The coefficients reported in each column are standardized beta coefficients. The adjusted *R*<sup>2</sup> for each step of the equation is reported at the bottom of the table along with the Δ*R*<sup>2</sup> from adding each set of variables to the equation.

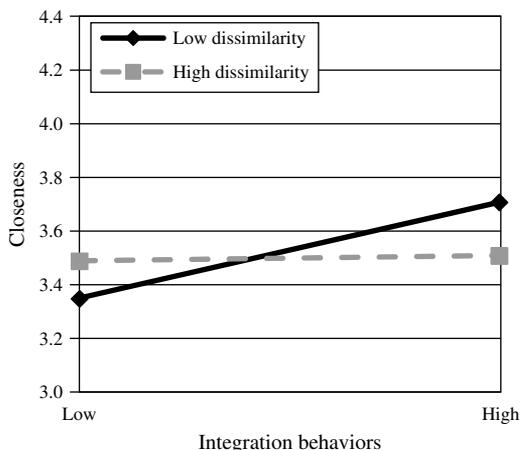
<sup>†</sup>*p* < 0.10; \**p* < 0.05.

similar to their coworkers (*t* = 2.12, *df* = 143, *p* < 0.05). In contrast, individuals who were dissimilar from their coworkers did not experience greater closeness when they integrated more (*t* = 0.07, *df* = 143, not significant), as illustrated in Figure 2.

### Discussion: Study 1

The results of our first study supported both Hypotheses 1 and 2. Overall, there was a positive relationship between integration behaviors and closeness, which was

**Figure 2 Study 1: Effect of Integration Behaviors on Closeness Moderated by Racial Dissimilarity**



qualified by an interaction effect of racial dissimilarity. Integration behaviors were positively related to closeness only among coworkers who were racially similar to their colleagues; however, this effect did not hold for those who were racially dissimilar from their colleagues.

Our significant results in Study 1 raised questions that we wanted to explore further. First, one limitation in interpreting our central finding is that our sample included a small percentage of underrepresented minorities. Although we controlled for the respondents' race when testing our hypotheses, we remain aware that racial dissimilarity can have different effects on people based on their racial or ethnic background (Tsui et al. 1992). We ran additional analyses exploring potential three-way interactions between integration behaviors, each demographic group (i.e., Asians, Caucasians, underrepresented minorities) separately, and demographic dissimilarity. In other words, we wanted to determine whether the effects of demographic dissimilarity were different across racial groups. This supplemental analysis yielded no significant effects and therefore supports the idea that our findings are driven by racial dissimilarity rather than the experiences of a particular racial group. However, we sought to test our hypotheses with a second study using a sample with a higher percentage of underrepresented minorities. Second, we wanted to test our hypotheses with a richer operationalization of close relationships that would provide further insight into how integration behaviors and racial dissimilarity affect connections between coworkers. Third, and perhaps most importantly, we needed a second study with data that would allow us to test Hypothesis 3, which predicted that the quality of respondents' experience when integrating would mediate our significant interaction effect.

### Study 2

#### Sample and Procedure

For Study 2, we administered a survey to a panel of participants compiled by Qualtrics, an organization that provides software to host online surveys and also assists researchers in identifying research participants. Qualtrics has access to over six million U.S. adults who have expressed willingness to participate in research and are compensated by earning points that can be used to redeem products and services from online merchants. Similar to our first study, we administered the survey in rounds. The first round of the survey contained the independent, mediator, and control variables. The second round of the survey was administered two weeks after the close of the first round and contained the moderator and dependent variables.

We sought a survey administration that would yield a percentage of underrepresented minorities that is more representative of the U.S. population, and we requested that the survey organization distribute the survey to

a sample comprising at least 25% underrepresented minorities. We also specified that respondents to our survey must be full-time employees. Of the 10,544 people whom Qualtrics invited to participate, 1,178 opened the survey invitation message. Consistent with the Long et al. (2011) use of a Qualtrics sample, as well as Brown and Robinson's (2011) use of a similar online survey organization, we consider the response rate based on the number of participants who opened the survey invitation. Of those 1,178 individuals, 601 completed the first part of the survey for a 51% response rate. The second part of the survey yielded 429 responses, which is 71% of those who completed the first part of the survey. Thus, our overall response rate across both surveys was 36%. These response rates are consistent with both conventional and online survey response rates (Baruch and Holtom 2008, Cook et al. 2000, Long et al. 2011). After combining the responses for the two separate surveys (parts 1 and 2) and after listwise deletion for missing data across both surveys, the final sample included in the analysis is 141. Of this final group of respondents, 57% were women. Twenty-four percent were underrepresented minorities (African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and other race/ethnic backgrounds combined), 8% were Asian American, and 68% were white/Caucasian. The average age of the respondents was 40.14.

A comparison of the final sample with the population of members invited to participate reveals that they had comparable percentages of women and Asian Americans. Our final sample had fewer underrepresented minorities, which we intentionally oversampled, and our final sample was older than the invited population. However, we controlled for these factors in our analyses, and they did not affect the results. Additionally, we compared those who completed only the first part of the survey with those who completed both parts. There were no statistical differences in their responses to the independent and mediator variables.

### Dependent, Independent, and Moderator Variables

For our dependent variable, we captured closeness by using the *bonding social capital* scale developed by Carmeli et al. (2009).<sup>3</sup> They defined and operationalized this construct as close, caring, and supportive relationships among group members. The emphasis of their study was on “behaviors that might generate close and collaborative internal relationships within the group” (Carmeli et al. 2009, p. 1554). Therefore, this measure tapped into the notion of “closeness” that we measured in Study 1, but it also captured additional aspects of close coworker relationships. This four-item measure asked respondents to indicate (1) how close they feel to their coworkers, as did our initial average closeness measure from Study 1, but it is a broader scale also asking respondents to indicate how much they (2) can count on their colleagues, (3) get help from their colleagues, and

(4) feel a sense of caring for their colleagues at work. These items were measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great extent). The reliability for this scale was good ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

For our independent variable, we used the same *integration behaviors* scale used in Study 1. Recall that this is a formative index (MacKenzie et al. 2005). The factor loadings for the items in this sample were 0.87, 0.88, and 0.75, respectively. The confirmatory factor analysis showed that the items all loaded significantly onto one factor at a minimum of  $t = 11.83$  ( $p < 0.001$ ). For our moderator variable, *racial dissimilarity*, we used the same relational demography measure used in Study 1 (Tsui et al. 1992).

### Mediator and Control Variables

The data collected in Study 2 allowed us to test the mediated moderation predicted in Hypothesis 3, whereby the interaction of dissimilarity and integration behaviors would affect closeness indirectly through the quality of the respondents' integration experience. To measure the *quality of the integration experience*, we adapted the two-item scale from the study by Shelton et al. (2005) in which they assessed the degree to which their study participants enjoyed interacting with their assigned partners during the experiment. Specifically, we adapted these items to refer to respondents' interaction with their coworkers. Additionally, to create a more robust scale, we developed two new items and added them to the Shelton et al. (2005) scale. Specifically, the items ask (1) “How much do you enjoy getting to know your coworkers at these events?” (2) “How much do you enjoy the interaction with your coworkers at these events?” (3) “Do you enjoy participating in these activities?” And (4) “How comfortable are you with being there?” Responses were measured on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (to a great extent). We conducted an exploratory factor analysis on these items using a separate Qualtrics sample of 100 employed U.S. adults.<sup>4</sup> The analysis yielded factor loadings of 0.89, 0.90, 0.92, and 0.95, respectively. On the test sample, the reliability of the items was good ( $\alpha = 0.96$ ). Therefore we combined the items to create a scale. In the study sample, the reliability of the items was also good ( $\alpha = 0.97$ ). We used identical control variables across the two studies (with the exception of the inclusion of the part-time or full-time MBA student control in Study 1) because we wanted a consistent test of our hypotheses across the two samples.

Finally, to test for the discriminant validity of integration behaviors, quality of integration experiences, and bonding social capital, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses on the sample used for the main analyses in Study 2. We compared our three-factor model ( $X^2[41] = 190.34$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.97, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.05) to a one-factor model with the items from all three scales

loaded onto one latent variable ( $X^2[44] = 1,048.94$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI = 0.84, SRMR = 0.16). The one-factor model was a significantly worse fit to the data than the three-factor model ( $X^2$  difference,  $3df = 858.6$ ). We also compared our three-factor model to three different combinations of two-factor models to be certain that these three scales were distinct from each other. The first two-factor model separated the integration behavior items onto their own latent factor but combined the quality of integration experience and bonding social capital items together onto another latent factor ( $X^2[43] = 694.85$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI = 0.84, SRMR = 0.19). This two-factor model fit the data significantly worse than our three-factor model ( $X^2$  difference,  $2df = 504.51$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The second two-factor model separated the bonding social capital items onto their own latent factor but combined the integration behavior and quality of integration experience items together onto another latent factor ( $X^2[43] = 232.91$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI = 0.96, SRMR = 0.05). This model also fit the data significantly worse than our three-factor model ( $X^2$  difference,  $2df = 42.57$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The third two-factor model separated the quality of integration experience items onto their own latent factor but combined the integration behavior and bonding social capital items together onto another latent factor ( $X^2[43] = 1,005.15$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , CFI = 0.85, SRMR = 0.16). This two factor model was a significantly worse fit to the data compared with our three-factor model ( $X^2$  difference,  $2df = 814.81$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore the confirmatory factor analysis and nested model  $X^2$ -difference testing suggest that these three scales are distinct and tap into different constructs.

### Analysis

We used the same OLS regression procedure used in Study 1 to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. To test Hypothesis 3, the mediated moderation prediction, we used the PROCESS macro by Andrew Hayes (available for download at <http://www.afhayes.com>). Specifically, the PROCESS macro allowed us to test our mediated moderation by evaluating the indirect effect of the product of integration behaviors and racial dissimilarity on closeness mediated through the quality of the integration experience (see Model 8 in Hayes 2012). Accordingly, we entered all of our variables, including control variables, into the PROCESS syntax. We specified integration behaviors as our independent variable, racial dissimilarity as the moderator, bonding social capital as the dependent variable, and quality of integration experience as the mediator. The PROCESS command was run with bootstrapping specified at 5,000 samples.

### Results: Study 2

Table 3 contains the descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables. Similar to Study 1, we found that respondents reported participating in a variety of social activities in their organizations. In response

to the open-ended question requesting a description of the types of social activities they attended, respondents listed up to six activities, with the mean number of activities listed being 1.88 (SD = 0.97). Using the categories from Study 1 to group the activities listed by respondents, we found that 64.96% of activities reported were company-sponsored social activities (e.g., holiday parties and company picnics), 27.26% of activities were employee-initiated social events (e.g., going for drinks after work), and the remainder included a number of different types of activities including attending professional development seminars, spiritual activities, and affinity groups.

Hypothesis 1, predicting that those who reported more integration behaviors would also feel closer to their colleagues, was supported. As shown in Table 4, Step 2, integration behaviors were significantly and positively related to bonding social capital ( $\beta = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Hypothesis 2, predicting that racial dissimilarity would moderate the relationship between integration behaviors and closeness among colleagues, was also supported.<sup>5</sup> As shown in Table 4, Step 4, the interaction term of integration behaviors and racial dissimilarity was significantly and negatively related to bonding social capital ( $\beta = -0.18$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).<sup>6</sup> Plotting the results and evaluating the simple slopes revealed that, as predicted, for individuals who were racially similar to their coworkers, integration behaviors were positively associated with higher bonding social capital ( $t = 3.79$ ,  $df = 125$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In contrast, for those individuals who were dissimilar from their coworkers, this positive effect was attenuated; integration behaviors were not significantly associated with higher bonding social capital ( $t = 1.27$ ,  $df = 125$ , not significant), as illustrated in Figure 3.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the quality of the respondents' experiences when integrating—how comfortable they felt and how much they enjoyed engaging in integration behaviors with their coworkers—would mediate the significant interaction effect, or that the interaction of dissimilarity and integration behaviors would affect the closeness of coworker relationships indirectly through the quality of the respondents' experiences when integrating. The PROCESS macro tests for mediated moderation by constructing the indirect effect of the interaction on the dependent variable via the mediator. For descriptive purposes, the PROCESS macro also provides tests of the effect of the interaction on the mediator and the effect of the mediator on the outcome variable. First, these results revealed a significant interaction effect of integration behaviors and racial dissimilarity on our mediator variable, quality of integration experience ( $B = -0.48$ ,  $SE = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Specifically, following the pattern that we saw in the test of Hypothesis 2, the relationship between integration behaviors and quality of experience was more positive for those respondents who were similar to their

**Table 3 Study 2: Correlations Among Study Variables and Descriptive Statistics (N = 141)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Sex (1 = female)	1															
2. Age	-0.07	1														
3. Underrepresented minority <sup>a</sup>	0.12	-0.17*	1													
4. Asian American <sup>b</sup>	-0.07	-0.25**	-0.16	1												
5. Marital status (1 = single)	0.15	-0.15	0.19*	-0.03	1											
6. Parental status (1 = parent)	-0.09	0.24**	-0.09	0.00	-0.41**	1										
7. Tenure (in months)	-0.08	0.51**	-0.12	-0.12	-0.05	0.08	1									
8. No. of coworkers listed	0.05	0.11	0.12	-0.13	-0.03	0.13	0.03	1								
9. Status dissimilarity	-0.08	0.02	-0.02	-0.18*	0.04	0.06	0.05	-0.01	1							
10. Sex dissimilarity	-0.05	-0.13	0.00	-0.17*	0.02	-0.10	-0.11	0.26**	-0.01	1						
11. Org. socializing norms	0.03	-0.18*	0.11	0.18*	0.00	0.18*	-0.11	-0.06	0.08	-0.08	1					
12. Number of activities	0.18*	0.09	0.02	0.12	-0.12	0.13	0.00	0.11	0.01	-0.09	0.30**	1				
13. Integration behaviors	0.08	-0.12	0.10	0.14	-0.05	0.23**	-0.01	0.05	0.14	-0.11	0.59**	0.27**	1			
14. Racial dissimilarity	-0.06	-0.22**	0.53**	0.14	0.00	0.03	-0.19*	0.24**	-0.02	0.15	0.12	0.12	0.18*	1		
15. Bonding social capital	0.18*	0.05	0.06	-0.08	-0.11	0.21*	0.13	0.17*	0.03	-0.11	0.27**	0.18*	0.40**	0.04	1	
16. Experience integrating	0.00	0.01	0.04	0.10	-0.22**	0.21*	0.01	0.13	0.10	-0.09	0.45**	0.26**	0.64**	0.13	0.63**	1
Mean	0.57	40.14	0.24	0.08	0.31	0.63	100.99	5.13	0.41	0.40	3.96	1.88	4.09	0.38	3.80	5.12
SD	0.49	11.00	0.43	0.27	0.47	0.49	86.42	2.77	0.34	0.31	1.58	0.96	1.35	0.35	0.81	1.42

Note. N = 141.

<sup>a</sup>For the dummy variables for race, *underrepresented minority* is coded as 1 for African American, Native American, Hispanic/Latino American, and other race. *Asian American* is coded as 1 for all respondents who selected Asian American.

\*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01.

**Table 4 Study 2: Bonding Social Capital Regressed on Integration Behaviors and Racial Dissimilarity**

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
<b>Controls</b>				
Sex (1 = female)	0.17*	0.15 <sup>†</sup>	0.15 <sup>†</sup>	0.15 <sup>†</sup>
Age	-0.09	-0.06	-0.06	-0.05
Underrepresented minority	0.00	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02
Asian American	-0.12	-0.14	-0.14	-0.11
Marital status (1 = single)	-0.08	-0.07	-0.07	-0.09
Parental status (1 = parent)	0.12	0.08	0.08	0.08
Tenure (in months)	0.18 <sup>†</sup>	0.15 <sup>†</sup>	0.15 <sup>†</sup>	0.16 <sup>†</sup>
No. of coworkers listed	0.17*	0.15 <sup>†</sup>	0.15 <sup>†</sup>	0.12
Status dissimilarity	-0.01	-0.04	-0.04	-0.01
Sex dissimilarity	-0.12	-0.10	-0.10	-0.07
Org. socializing norms	0.26**	0.11	0.11	0.12
Number of activities	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.03
<b>Main effects</b>				
Integration behaviors		0.30**	0.29**	0.33**
Racial dissimilarity			0.00	0.06
<b>Interaction effects</b>				
Integration × Racial dissimilarity				-0.18*
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.14	0.18	0.19	0.20
Δ <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		0.05**	0.00	0.02*

Notes. *N* = 141. The coefficients reported in each column are standardized beta coefficients. The adjusted *R*<sup>2</sup> for each step of the equation is reported at the bottom of the table along with the Δ*R*<sup>2</sup> from adding each set of variables to the equation.

<sup>†</sup>*p* < 0.10; \**p* < 0.05; \*\**p* < 0.01.

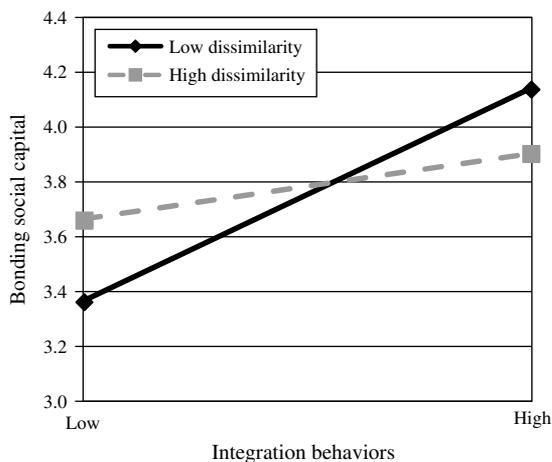
coworkers than it was for those who were dissimilar from their coworkers. Second, the mediator—quality of integration experience—had a significant positive relationship with the dependent variable, bonding social capital (*B* = 0.35, *SE* = 0.05, *p* < 0.01). Therefore, those who enjoyed themselves more when integrating reported closer relationships with their coworkers, as expected. However, the most important indicator of whether there is

mediated moderation is the indirect effect of the interaction term on the dependent variable through the mediator (Hayes 2012, Preacher et al. 2007). This indirect effect is represented mathematically by the product of the coefficients of the mediator and the interaction term in the equation predicting the dependent variable (Hayes 2012, Preacher et al. 2007). The results indicated that the magnitude of the indirect effect was -0.17. The 95% bootstrap confidence interval for this indirect effect did not include 0 (-0.34 to -0.05), indicating that this effect was statistically significantly different from 0, supporting our mediated moderation hypothesis.

### Supplemental Analysis

Given the finding that the relationship between integration behaviors and quality of integration experience was significantly more positive for those who were demographically similar to their coworkers compared with those who were demographically dissimilar, we conducted a supplemental analysis. In our data, those who were dissimilar from their coworkers actually reported engaging in integration behaviors more than those who were similar to their coworkers (*r* = 0.18, *p* < 0.05; see Table 3). Yet, as the mediated moderation shows, integration behaviors were not as positively associated with enjoyment for those who were dissimilar from their coworkers. One potential explanation for this effect is that dissimilar respondents may have been more inclined to engage in integration behaviors for externally motivated reasons than were similar respondents. To test this possible explanation, we regressed integration behaviors on respondents' extrinsic motivation for attending organizational social events using the Sheldon et al. (2004) four-item measure of extrinsic motivation. This measure asked respondents, "Why are you motivated to attend company-related social events?" It then instructed them to indicate their agreement with the items on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Example items were "because of the external rewards (such as status, good performance appraisals, good connections or money) that may come from attending these events" and "because my manager and/or coworkers want me to attend." We found that racial dissimilarity was significantly and positively related to extrinsic motivation for attending these events (*β* = 0.20, *p* < 0.01), meaning that respondents who were racially dissimilar from their coworkers were more likely to attend for external reasons than were respondents who were racially similar to their coworkers.

**Figure 3 Study 2: Effect of Integration Behaviors on Bonding Social Capital Moderated by Racial Dissimilarity**



### Discussion: Study 2

Our results from Study 2 fully replicated the results from Study 1 using a broader measure of closeness—bonding social capital—as our dependent variable. It is important to note that in our supplemental analysis, we

also replicated the results with the same average closeness measure used in Study 1. Study 2 also allowed us to replicate the findings with a different population of respondents that included a larger percentage of non-Caucasian respondents. The replication of these results with a different sample and a different dependent variable was important for establishing the robustness of our hypothesized effects. As in Study 1, integration behaviors were significantly and positively associated with closeness among coworkers, and this main effect was qualified by an interaction effect of racial dissimilarity such that the positive effect of integration behaviors existed only for those who were similar to their coworkers. As with Study 1, we ran a supplemental analysis to assess the effects of three-way interactions between integration behaviors, each racial group (i.e., Asians, Caucasians, underrepresented minorities), and demographic dissimilarity on the dependent variable. As in Study 1, we found no significant three-way interaction effects. Therefore, we remain confident that the experience of dissimilarity, rather than the experiences of a particular racial group, is what moderates the effect of integration behaviors on closeness in our data.

With Study 2, we also found support for Hypothesis 3, which predicted that the moderating effect of racial dissimilarity was mediated by the quality of the respondents' experience when integrating. This mediated moderation effect further explained why integration behaviors were not as strongly associated with close relationships for dissimilar individuals as for those who were similar to their coworkers, and it highlighted the importance of the quality of the interaction in the formation of close relationships among people who are racially dissimilar. Additionally, in another supplemental analysis, we found that those who were dissimilar from their coworkers reported more extrinsic reasons for engaging in integration behaviors—consistent with Ibarra's (1995) work showing that people in organizations form relationships with dissimilar others for instrumental reasons, whereas their close relationships or friendships are formed with those who are demographically similar. These findings shed additional light on the complex dynamics of forming relationships across racial differences in organizational settings.

## General Discussion

Our goal in this paper was to determine whether employees' integration behaviors increase closeness among coworkers and how the racial composition of the work context affects this relationship. We found across two studies with distinct samples that integration behaviors did increase closeness for employees who were racially similar to their coworkers. However, these benefits did not accrue to those employees who were racially dissimilar from their coworkers, and this difference in the effect

of integration behaviors was explained by the quality of employees' experiences when integrating. Specifically, the relationship between integration behaviors and enjoyment while integrating was stronger and more positive for those who were similar to their coworkers than for those who were dissimilar. Overall, our findings suggest that expected ways of improving relationships in the workplace—increased social contact and the exchange of individuating information—may not be equally effective for all employees in racially diverse settings, and they highlight the importance of the quality of that social contact. Indeed, the mediating effect of the quality of workers' experiences when integrating reveals that the dynamics of trying to build close relationships in a work setting are complex, particularly among those who are racially dissimilar.

## Theoretical Contributions

*Boundary Theory.* Our studies contribute to existing literature in several ways. We contribute to boundary theory by considering how integration behaviors impact relationships between coworkers. In doing so, we extend boundary management theorizing beyond a focus on work–family conflict or work–life balance, and we also directly address the outcomes of a specific set of integration behaviors. Most existing research focuses on employee choices to manage the work/nonwork boundary with the objective of easing the transition between work and nonwork or reducing the prevalence of interruptions or conflict between the two domains (Ashforth et al. 2000, Clark 2000, Powell and Greenhaus 2010). Accordingly, much of this research has examined the construct of integration in very general terms without addressing the effects of specific behaviors (e.g., Desrochers et al. 2005) or the impact of integration on employee relationships. Our choice to study the effects of specific integration behaviors on employee relationships was informed by qualitative work that provided rich descriptions of employees' and organizations' attempts to include employees' personal and family lives into the organization (Nippert-Eng 1996, Pratt and Rosa 2003). This existing research reflects the expectation that integrating employees' nonwork lives into the organization would have positive effects on relationships in the workplace. By questioning and directly testing this expectation, we help to refine theorizing around employees' choices for managing the boundary between their work and nonwork lives. Our paper presents an explanation for how and why socializing with coworkers and sharing personal information in the workplace can increase closeness among employees. Also, by examining integration behaviors in concrete terms, our work enriches the body of research that has studied integration more generally.

We also contribute to boundary theory literature by introducing demographic dissimilarity as a factor to

consider in understanding outcomes related to the permeability of the work/nonwork boundary as enacted through integration behaviors. Although boundary theorists and the rich qualitative work in this tradition suggest that people respond positively to feeling that their personal lives and families are welcome in the organization, these studies do not explicitly consider demographic differences or the dynamics and challenges dissimilar people face when being encouraged to include more of their personal lives and identities in the workplace. Specifically, racial dissimilarity may shape employees' experiences of a permeable work/nonwork boundary, as well as the more distal outcomes of their chosen boundary management strategy such as their overall relationships with coworkers. Even when racially dissimilar employees encounter encouragement and opportunities to integrate their personal lives into the organization, existing research would suggest that because they perceive a relatively small number of similar others in the organization, they may still doubt whether they really belong (e.g., Bacharach et al. 2005, Jackson et al. 1995, Riordan and Shore 1997). Indeed, those who are dissimilar from their coworkers are often more concerned with how others will react to learning more personal information about them (Hewlin 2003, 2009; Phillips et al. 2009; Roberts 2005) and can feel even more dissimilar after engaging in integration behaviors (Phillips et al. 2006). These dampening effects of demographic dissimilarity may not be strong enough to reverse the positive effects of integration behaviors, but in our studies, racial dissimilarity does nullify the positive effects of integration on closeness to others. Therefore, our moderation findings add to the boundary theory literature and suggest that for those who are in racially diverse settings, the experience of blurring the boundary between work and nonwork domains may be different such that these employees do not reap the benefits from integrating in the way that their colleagues in racially homogeneous settings do. Additionally, our mediated moderation finding shows that integration behaviors alone are not sufficient for achieving closer relationships between racially dissimilar colleagues or even those who are racially similar. Rather, employees' experiences when enacting a permeable boundary are critical. This particular insight contributes to both boundary theory and research on demographic diversity in organizations.

*Demographic Diversity.* We also contribute by connecting the diversity literature with research on boundary theory. These two bodies of literature address similar concepts relatively independently of each other. In this paper, we focused on a specific set of integration behaviors—attending social events with coworkers, bringing family members to these events, and discussing personal matters in work contexts. Some of these behaviors are also addressed in diversity research, which

assumes that socializing with group members will necessarily be associated with cohesion and attraction for individuals who are interacting with dissimilar others (O'Reilly et al. 1989). Within the diversity literature, numerous researchers study “social integration” as a desired outcome for coworkers and work groups. They define and measure this construct as a combination of factors including socializing with and attraction to fellow group members (Harrison et al. 2002, O'Reilly et al. 1989, Polzer et al. 2002, Smith et al. 1994). We unpacked these factors, both theoretically and empirically, thus allowing us to consider how they affect each other.

Likewise, research on intergroup relations asserts that increased contact, information exchange, and personal interaction are solutions for interracial relational challenges both generally (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006) and specifically in work contexts (e.g., Ensari and Miller 2006). Our findings show that this is not necessarily the case and that the individual's experience of contact is a critical factor in shaping their relationships. Specifically, our theorizing and findings contribute by showing that integration behaviors alone are not enough to produce closer relationships, but rather they can help bring people together when the quality of the integrating experience is positive. This finding harkens back to Allport's (1954) assertion that the quality of intergroup contact matters. Our study brings this important factor back to the forefront in research addressing intergroup relations.

### **Organizational Implications**

As organizations continue to foster integration of employees' work and nonwork lives, it is imperative that they develop a better understanding of how integration affects all members of the organization. Our results across both studies reveal that those who were racially dissimilar from their coworkers were either just as likely (Study 1) or more likely (Study 2) to engage in integration behaviors with coworkers as were employees who were similar to their coworkers. However, racially dissimilar employees may have integrated primarily for external rewards or because of a sense of obligation and the pressures of social norms. This idea is supported by our supplemental analysis showing that those who were racially dissimilar from their coworkers reported attending company social events for extrinsic reasons significantly more so than respondents who were similar to their coworkers. Thus, the mere attendance at organizational social events and self-disclosure in the workplace are not necessarily indicators that employees are developing closer relationships. Rather, if employees are participating in social activities simply because they believe they must, their attitudes toward and goals for that interaction may nullify the potential relational benefits of attending the events. Moreover, strategic self-disclosure that serves to convey a preferred image may be a powerful motive for those who are interacting with demographically dissimilar coworkers and may actually create

a barrier to developing closer relationships in diverse environments (Hewlin 2003, 2009; Phillips et al. 2009). This is a critical factor for organizations to consider when encouraging employees to integrate more, particularly through sponsored social events (Falconi 1997).

In addition to considering employees' motives for integrating, organizations must also consider the complex relational dynamics at play in interracial interactions. Vorauer (2005) and Vorauer and Sakamoto (2006) explained that intergroup contact is riddled with miscommunication, particularly miscommunication regarding intentions for forming friendships. In these studies, overtures toward cross-group friendships were often misunderstood, leading people to feel uncomfortable and unable to get closer to each other (Vorauer 2005, Vorauer and Sakamoto 2006). These findings, along with Reis and Shaver's (1988) theory on intimate relationships, may further explain the lack of a positive effect from integrating for dissimilar coworkers. When people socialize with their coworkers, exchange personal information, and engage in self-disclosure, it is important that they feel heard and that the recipient of the disclosure understands and responds appropriately (Reis and Shaver 1988). Similarly, Davidson and James (2007) explained that when people encounter different perspectives or behaviors in the course of interacting with someone who is demographically dissimilar, the response to those differences will determine the quality of the relationship moving forward.

Dissimilar employees face challenges when they attempt to incorporate their unique perspectives and experiences into their workplace social interactions. Consistent with Vorauer and colleagues' work, their coworkers may be likely to misunderstand them, which may lead these employees to conclude that their efforts to integrate are futile. Indeed, a recent study found that many employees, particularly women and underrepresented minorities, who are often dissimilar to others in their work settings develop valuable work skills through their leadership roles in civic and community organizations, yet they fail to tell others at work about their civic involvement (Hewlett et al. 2005). Similar to the respondents in our study, respondents in the study by Hewlett et al. (2005) may have perceived no benefits to sharing their nonwork selves at work. The comments of one of their respondents revealed a sense of futility and frustration. A woman in the organization they studied remarked, "When I do try and open up personally, people just don't get it... So you stop trying" (Hewlett et al. 2005, p. 78). This quote also illustrates the importance of the employees' experiences when attempting to integrate and share more of themselves in the workplace.

Our findings, although suggesting that it may be more difficult for racially dissimilar individuals to attain closeness through integrating activities, should not be interpreted to indicate that people who are racially

different cannot work together effectively or form close, supportive relationships. Rather, organizations may have to think beyond actions that directly encourage personal interaction to foster high-quality relationships among employees. Indeed, our findings regarding the importance of positive integration experiences suggest that organizations must examine multiple ways to craft an environment where employees from many different backgrounds can feel comfortable. When organizations sponsor social activities for their employees, care should be taken to ensure an atmosphere where employees are likely to feel comfortable and respected and have a good experience. Research examining organizational culture (Ely and Thomas 2001, Nishii 2013) provides guidance along this dimension and suggests that if organizations can establish a culture where individuals are respected for the knowledge, background, and insights they can provide, workplace relationships are indeed improved. Ramarajan et al. (2008) found that an increased culture of respect was associated with structural changes to the organizational hierarchy and increased employee involvement in company problem solving. Additionally, Bacharach et al. (2005) found that when work unit norms encouraged a general climate of support, or the overall expectation that coworkers would provide each other with both emotional and instrumental support, respondents reported closer interracial relationships.

Moreover, organizations should consider increasing closeness among employees through work-based strategies because they may be more effective in demographically diverse settings (Knouse 2006). For example, a sense of group efficacy can have a positive impact on group cohesion (Mullen and Copper 1994). Additionally, greater task clarity and task focus have a positive impact on cohesion in work settings (Forrester and Tashchian 2006). Therefore in diverse settings where close relationships are more difficult to build, if managers place a greater emphasis on task-related successes and competencies, they may achieve the kind of positive working relationships that are so valuable in organizations. It is in the best interest of organizations to consider seriously their strategies for helping employees improve relationships in the workplace, because supportive working relationships and closeness among coworkers have positive effects on many critical organizational outcomes such as employees' satisfaction (Repetti 1987), beliefs that their work is significant (Hodson 1996, 2004), and creativity (Albrecht and Hall 1991, Perry-Smith 2006).

It is important to note that we are not advocating a restriction in employees' ability to share aspects of their nonwork lives at work. Some employees have a clear preference for blurring the boundary between their personal and professional lives (Kreiner 2006, Powell and Greenhaus 2010, Rothbard et al. 2005), and employees should feel free to express themselves authentically in the workplace (Hewlin 2009, Roberts 2005). Rather than

suggesting that organizations limit integration practices, our findings suggest that organizations should acknowledge that integrating may not be helpful for all employees and that the experience people have when integrating is critical for its success. Regardless of the good intentions behind organizational initiatives that encourage the integration of employees' work and nonwork lives, it is clear that these efforts are not consistently helpful in improving coworker relationships, especially when people are dissimilar from their coworkers.

Last, our findings may have implications for diversity training programs. Research on these programs yields a variety of results that are consistent with the findings of the present study. For example, Roberson et al. (2001) found that among participants with prior experience with diversity training, those who attended sessions with a homogeneous group of participants reported more positive responses to diversity training programs than did those whose sessions included a more diverse group of participants. Similarly, Ely (2004) failed to find support for her predicted positive effect of diversity training on work group performance. In fact, in her study of bank branch employees, she found that among the branches with the greatest gender diversity, greater participation in diversity education was associated with lower performance. Our finding regarding the importance of the quality of employees' experiences when integrating may shed additional light on factors affecting the success of diversity training programs. Specifically, in addition to gaining organizational buy-in and top management support (Rynes and Rosen 1995), perhaps those implementing diversity training initiatives could also benefit from attending more closely to the experiences of participants, because this may have an influence on the effectiveness of the training.

### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

We acknowledge several limitations of the current study. First, our Study 2 data were collected through a third-party organization, which afforded us less control over the survey administration, sample, and response errors. However, our response rates are consistent with those in published surveys using standard survey administration (Baruch and Holtom 2008), online survey administration (Cook et al. 2000), as well as similar third-party research organizations (Long et al. 2011). Moreover, our Study 2 results replicate those of Study 1, where we had much more information about and control of the sample and survey administration. Second, the data consisted of all self-report measures. Because the respondent was the best source of the critical variables we address in this study—the individual's own integration behaviors, quality of experience while integrating, and sense of closeness to his or her coworkers—the self-report measures were appropriate for collecting these data. Nonetheless, we acknowledge the limitations of

self-report data, most notably the potential for common method and consistency biases (Podsakoff and Organ 1986, Podsakoff et al. 2003). However, because the critical variables were collected at different points in time from different instruments, the data are less subject to these biases. Furthermore, our central hypothesis predicts an interaction effect, which cannot be produced by common method bias—and could in fact actually be attenuated by the presence of common method or consistency bias (Evans 1985).

Moreover, we are careful in this paper not to claim strong causal relationships among the constructs examined here. Although our interpretation suggests that engaging in and enjoying integration behaviors has an impact on feelings of closeness, one might also argue just as convincingly that the causal arrow should go in the other direction—that because people feel closer to their coworkers when they are racially similar to one another, they engage in more integration behaviors and enjoy them more. However, even in our cross-sectional data, this alternative argument is challenged by the fact that in Study 1 there were no significant differences in the reported levels of integration between dissimilar and similar respondents. Additionally, in Study 2, dissimilar respondents reported integrating more than similar respondents, yet enjoyment was not as positively associated with integration behaviors or closeness among coworkers for dissimilar respondents as it was for similar respondents. Another relationship that also might have reciprocal causality is the relationship between enjoying organizational events and feeling close to coworkers. Those who feel closer to their coworkers are likely to enjoy integrating more, and those who enjoy integrating are more likely to feel closer. To try to rule out this alternative, we ran the mediation analysis in the reverse direction with enjoyment as the dependent variable and closeness as the mediator, but because of the correlational basis of these tests, this effect was also significant. In our study, we tried to establish temporal precedence by measuring the enjoyment variables on a survey administered two weeks before the collection of our closeness dependent variable data. However, given that we asked participants about their general enjoyment of these types of events, this temporal separation may not have been sufficient to establish clear causality. Therefore we were not able to fully rule out a reciprocal relationship or a third variable affecting both enjoyment and closeness. Future research should gather data where more definitive conclusions about causality can be drawn, because there is likely a feedback loop between these relationships over time within the context of continuing relationships.

Additionally, in this study we focus on racial dissimilarity. However, we acknowledge that the dynamics of dissimilarity and integration may operate differently depending on the focal person's actual demographic

category (Chatman and O'Reilly 2004, Jehn et al. 1999). In our study, we controlled for these factors, and our supplemental analyses provided valuable additional information about these effects in our sample. But future research should consider this further. Also, our research was limited to U.S. respondents. Sanchez-Burks (2002, 2005) found that U.S. norms and expectations regarding the boundary between employees' personal and professional lives are unique compared with norms in Latin American and East Asian cultures. Considering how the dynamics we have addressed may differ according to the focal person's demographic category or the national cultural context would be a fruitful avenue for future research.

Last, in considering dissimilarity, we focused on only one dimension of dissimilarity, race. However, we acknowledge that sex dissimilarity may also shape employee integration experiences, and we expect that sex dissimilarity might present even more complexity in considering the effects of integration behaviors on relationships among employees. There may be additional normative relationship factors (e.g., dating, marriage) when considering the dynamics of sex dissimilarity, integration behaviors such as socializing at the company party, and closeness to others in work settings. To test the effects of sex dissimilarity, we ran supplementary analyses and indeed found that the effects for sex dissimilarity were more complex than the findings for racial dissimilarity. In both our Study 1 and Study 2 samples, there was no significant moderating effect of sex dissimilarity. However, in our Study 2 data, we did find a significant three-way interaction effect of the respondent's sex, sex dissimilarity, and integration on closeness. More specifically, in evaluating the form of the interaction, we found that gender dissimilarity mattered more for men than for women, such that when men were dissimilar rather than similar to their coworkers on the dimension of sex, they felt more close to their coworkers the more they integrated, whereas there was no such effect for women. This result is consistent with past work that suggests that men who have numerical minority status are more likely to be integrated and treated with respect when in a group dominated by women (as they are seen as having higher status), but the opposite is less likely to be true (women in male-dominated groups are less likely to be welcomed when they attempt to integrate) (Kanter 1977, Konrad and Gutek 1987, O'Farrell and Harlan 1982, Schreiber 1979).

There are several reasons that the effects for sex dissimilarity might differ from the effects of racial dissimilarity. For Study 1, the sample comprised MBA students. In this particular population, men and women may be much more accustomed to socializing together, thus minimizing the effects of sex dissimilarity. Also, people generally have more intimate cross-gender social interaction (dating, marriage, opposite-sex siblings, opposite-sex parents) than cross-race interaction, and there may

be mutual attraction between the sexes that would likely dampen sex dissimilarity effects (Konrad and Gutek 1987, Chattopadhyay 1999). Therefore, different patterns of social interaction across gender differences may explain why sex dissimilarity did not moderate the effect of integration on closeness. Moreover, respondents may differ in how they interpret "closeness" when considering cross-sex versus same-sex coworker relationships. We believe that further unpacking the dynamics of sex dissimilarity would be an interesting direction for future research.

## Conclusion

As demonstrated with this study, some of the popular strategies for fostering closer coworker relationships, including company-sponsored social outings and team-building self-disclosure exercises, may not be as effective as expected for those employees who are racially dissimilar from their coworkers. In particular, these practices may be especially ineffective at helping to assimilate the employees who are arguably most in need of help in forming relationships with their coworkers—those employees who are demographically dissimilar from the majority. In light of this finding, we believe that organizations should work to ensure that all employees feel that they have a choice regarding integration behaviors, such as socializing with coworkers or disclosing personal information at work. Moreover, managers should pay attention to the quality of employees' experiences when integrating. Managers can do so by fostering a culture that is able to accept, respect, and assimilate differences.

Practitioners and organizational researchers must continue to explore strategies that can lead to improved relationships among coworkers consistently. This study begins to shed light on the intricate processes at play in the relationship between demographic diversity, integration behaviors, and coworker relationships in organizations. Working to understand these processes is an important first step that practitioners and researchers must take to answer definitively the question of how to better develop and maintain close relationships among coworkers in today's increasingly diverse organizations.

## Acknowledgments

The authors thank Patricia Hewlin, Charles O'Reilly, Jill Perry-Smith, Ashleigh Rosette, and Steffanie Wilk for their helpful suggestions on earlier drafts of this paper. Charmine Hartel, Anne Tsui, and other participants of the Academy of Management GDO Division Diversity Publishing Workshop also provided useful comments. Additionally, seminar participants in the Ohio State University's Management and Human Resources Department as well as the Organizational Studies Group at the MIT Sloan School of Management provided useful comments. The authors thank Michelle Buck, Keith Murnighan, William Ocasio, and Lauren Rivera for providing

access for data collection. Furthermore, they thank senior editor Batia Wiesenfeld and three anonymous reviewers for their superb feedback. An earlier version of this manuscript was presented at the 2007 Academy of Management meeting.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>The mean age of these respondents was 28, and on average, they had worked in their current jobs for 3.5 years. Twenty-five percent of the respondents were women, 11% were underrepresented minorities, and 23% were Asian American.

<sup>2</sup>We also ran the analysis without control variables. In this MBA student population, the main effect of integration behaviors on closeness is positive and significant without controls ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). For the interaction effect, the pattern remains the same when omitting control variables, but parental status must be included as a control for the moderating effect of racial dissimilarity to reach conventional levels of significance (controlling only for parental status,  $\beta = -0.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). None of the other control variables had an impact on the significance of the interaction effect. The reason it may be important to control for parental status in this MBA student sample is that reported closeness to coworkers was lower overall for those respondents with children (mean = 3.22, SD = 0.53) than for those respondents without children (mean = 3.51, SD = 0.55,  $F = 5.82$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Also, although reported integration behaviors did not differ significantly for respondents with children (mean = 4.30, SD = 1.03) compared with respondents who did not have children (mean = 4.31, SD = 1.15,  $F = 0.00$ ,  $p = 0.961$ ), there is a relationship between parental status and racial dissimilarity that is likely impacting the interaction. Respondents with children were significantly higher on racial dissimilarity (mean = 0.57, SD = 0.07) than were those respondents without children (mean = 0.40, SD = 0.02,  $F = 5.78$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Because of these relationships, the interaction effect of racial dissimilarity and integration on closeness is likely suppressed when run without the parental status control variable. However, this effect is particular to this sample of MBA students and, as will be shown, does not recur in our second study, where we survey a more general population of working adults.

<sup>3</sup>Because one of our goals for Study 2 was to replicate the results of Study 1 fully, we also computed the average closeness measure used in Study 1 and used it as the dependent variable in a supplementary analysis.

<sup>4</sup>The mean age of these respondents was 39, and on average, they had worked in their current jobs for 5.8 years. Half of the respondents reported their highest level of education attained as a bachelor's degree, and 42% reported having attended or completed graduate school as their highest level of educational attainment. Nearly half (47%) of the respondents were women, 38% were underrepresented minorities, and 18% were Asian American.

<sup>5</sup>As with Study 1, we also ran these analyses without control variables. The main effect of integration behaviors on both closeness ( $\beta = 0.33$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and bonding social capital ( $\beta = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) remains positive and significant without controls. The only control variable needed to replicate the interaction effect seen in the full table was the number of social activities based on open-ended responses. When controlling for this variable alone, the interaction effect is significant on average closeness ( $\beta = -0.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and bonding

social capital ( $\beta = -0.18$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Supplementary analyses showed that this likely served as a filter in that when running an analysis including only those who provided valid open-ended responses, no control variables were needed to replicate the interaction effect seen in the full table.

<sup>6</sup>As a supplemental analysis, we replicated the Study 1 results by testing Hypotheses 1 and 2 using the same average closeness measure used in Study 1 as the dependent variable. In this analysis, we found a significant positive effect of integration behaviors ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and a significant interaction effect of integration behaviors and racial dissimilarity ( $\beta = -0.23$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) on closeness. This analysis fully replicated the Study 1 results and showed that the effects of Hypotheses 1 and 2 were robust across two different measures of closeness (i.e., the average closeness and bonding social capital measures).

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