Duo Status: Disentangling the Complex Interactions within a Minority of Two

Denise Lewin Loyd
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Judith B. White
Dartmouth College

Mary Kern
Baruch College, CUNY

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Abstract

Research and theory on diversity in organizations tends to examine relations between the majority and minority and to overlook relations within the minority. In this chapter we explore the dynamics within a minority that represents a token percentage (less than 15%) of the larger group (Kanter, 1977b). We argue that members of a minority sub-group are subject to inter-group and intra-group pressures and that these pressures are greatest for a minority of two. We introduce the term "duo-status" to describe this two-token situation and examine the positive, neutral, and negative dynamics that result depending on the coping strategy chosen by each member of the duo.
Increases in both the diversity of the American workforce and the use of groups in organizations have resulted in a larger number of diverse groups solving problems and making important decisions. Organizations have tried to understand how best to capitalize on and manage these changes (Ash, 2007; Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). However, the impact of diversity on groups is complicated as researchers have found benefits such as increased divergent thinking and information sharing, and challenges such as increased conflict (see Williams & O’Reilly, 1998 for a review; see also, Jehn, 1995; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999; Phillips, 2003; Sommers, 2006). In short, both empirical research and practical experience illustrate the complexity of managing a diverse workforce. In understanding the challenges facing diverse groups, much attention has been paid to the relationship between those in the minority and the majority and to the impact of increased diversity on the group as a whole (e.g., Allmendinger & Hackman, 1995; Chatman & Flynn, 2001). Less attention has been paid, however, to the processes at play within sub-groups as the organization becomes more diverse (but see Ely, 1994). In particular, we know relatively little about the dynamics between members of a minority sub-group within a larger group.

These dynamics are important to understand because the experience of those in the minority does not necessarily mirror that of those in the majority. Being in the minority can result in lower job satisfaction (Niemann & Dovidio, 1998) and lower performance (Spangler, Gordon, & Pipkin, 1978). To the extent that the experience of the minority as a whole is more negative than the majority, there may be more negative interactions between the members of the minority sub-group as well. This can have important implications for understanding the impact of diversity in groups.
One potential negative outcome that may occur for minority sub-group members is increased social pressure. Members of minority groups report increased performance pressure, social isolation pressure, pressure to conform to expectations and stereotypes, and pressure to be a role model for others in their minority group (Fontaine & Greenlee, 1993; Jackson, Thoits, & Taylor, 1995; Kanter, 1977a; Roberson, Deitch, Brief, & Block, 2003; Yoder & Berendsen, 2001). Empirical literature has examined each of these pressures independently, but no theory has been developed to integrate the sources and to explain the consequences of social pressure on members of minority groups or to make predictions about the dynamics inside a minority group.

As organizations become more diverse, there are more situations in which two or three individuals share a minority group identity within the larger workgroup. These members of the minority sub-group are subject to both inter-group pressures from those who are different from them (i.e., the majority) and intra-group pressures from those who are similar (i.e., other minority group members).

Previous theory and research has explored the dynamics of inter-group relations when members of a minority sub-group represent a token proportion (i.e., 15% or less) of a larger group (Kanter, 1977b). A second line of research has examined the effects on an individual when he or she is the only member of a minority group, in other words when he or she has solo status (Lord & Saenz, 1985; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2002, 2003). The question we ask in this chapter is what happens when there are exactly two members of a minority sub-group. What is the dynamic between them?

In this chapter, we introduce the term duo-status to define membership in a minority duo. Similar to research that uses the terms solo and solo status, we use the terms duo and duo status to focus attention on the number of minority group members in a workgroup, in this case exactly
two. We draw on social identity and social categorization theories to explain the development of the pressures that duos experience from the majority out-group and the minority in-group. We then explain why these pressures are at their peak for an individual who has duo status and discuss some possible reactions to these pressures by one or both members of the duo. In explicating the basic ideas, we first assume that 1) the minority duo represents a token part of the larger group (i.e., the group size is greater than six); 2) the majority sub-group is homogeneous; and 3) all group members (both minority and majority) are of equal status. We relax some of these assumptions when we discuss important moderating variables relevant for the types of demographic diversity experienced in organizations and implications for managing that diversity.

Social Identity and Social Categorization

Part of each individual's identity comes from the knowledge that she or he is a member of different social categories or groups (Tajfel, 1982). According to social identity theory, we may have several different social identities (scholar, parent, chef), but the social identity that makes us distinctive in a particular context is more likely to affect how we perceive ourselves than a less distinctive identity (Cota & Dion, 1986). In most cases, distinctiveness is defined numerically: the fewer people who share an identity, the more distinctive the identity. In organizational work groups, however, other factors may influence the perception of distinctiveness, including the relevance of the identity to the task at hand. For example, in a predominantly male and micro organizational behavior department both being female and being a macro scholar are distinctive because these identities are in the minority among the faculty. However, if during a meeting the faculty is reviewing applications of candidates and the short list consists of two male scholars, one micro and one macro, then the micro/macro identity may be
most distinctive and most utilized. In contrast, if the short-list consists of two micro scholars, one female and one male, the gender identity is likely to be most distinctive and utilized. In general, however, the visible social identities such as gender and ethnicity, which are linked to what sociologists refer to as "master status," are more often used in categorization than other types of identities (Stangor, Lynch, Duan, & Glass, 1992).

A consequence of perceiving a social identity is that it becomes the basis for grouping people into categories, the process of social categorization. The categorization process is a basic one that allows us to simplify the world. However, social categorization often leads to stereotyping, where an individual is assumed to possess certain characteristics and/or behave in a certain manner simply because of her or his membership in a category (Schein, 1978). Further, individuals who have a distinctive social identity anticipate being categorized and stereotyped by others (e.g., Cohen & Swim, 1995; Roberson et al., 2003). In addition to categorizing others, individuals also self-categorize based on a salient social identity (Hogg & Turner, 1987; McGuire & Padawer-Singer, 1978). Self-categorization is a process in which an individual thinks and behaves more as a member of a social category or group, rather than as an idiosyncratic individual (Turner et al., 1987). Self-categorization can lead to self-stereotyping, in which an individual's self-views are influenced by the way their group is perceived by others (Sinclair, Hardin, & Lowery, 2006). Because distinctive identities are more likely to be used as a basis of categorization, minority sub-group members are more likely to be categorized both by members of the majority sub-group and by themselves in groups with skewed ratios of majority to minority members.

An important consequence of social categorization is the accentuation of inter-group differences and intra-group similarities (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Once the self and others have
been placed in categories, individuals begin to view similar others as in-group members and
different others as out-group members. Individuals perceive more variation within the in-group
and more homogeneity within the out-group, a phenomenon known as the out-group
homogeneity effect (Quattrone & Jones, 1980). Further, people generally tend to view in-group
members more favorably than out-group members and give more rewards to in-group members
(Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992), a phenomenon known as in-group
favoritism. Research has shown that people expect this behavior of others, that is, they expect
others to favor their in-groups and derogate their out-groups (Brewer, 1999). These expectations
put two types of pressure on individuals in diverse groups. There is inter-group pressure from the
out-group as individuals expect to be categorized, seen stereotypically, and treated less favorably
by out-group members. This is consistent with minority group members' feelings of social
isolation, assimilation to stereotype, and performance pressure as predicted by Kanter (1977b).
There is also intra-group pressure from the in-group as individuals expect to be categorized as
sharing an identity and to be treated more favorably by their in-group members.

Pressure on Minority Sub-Group Members and Sub-group Size

Minority sub-group members experience the pressures we describe above as expectations
about their own behavior held by other group members. There are dual sets of expectations held
on one hand by members of the majority out-group and on the other hand by members of the
minority in-group. Although these sets of expectations may differ, they overlap in one respect:
Both the members of the majority and fellow members of the minority expect the minority sub-
group member to favor other minority sub-group members over members of the majority sub-
group. Further, the minority sub-group members expect that the favoritism they extend to in-
group members will be reciprocated and that they will be treated better by other members of the minority sub-group than by members of the majority sub-group. Thus expectations about social support and preferential treatment of the minority in-group are a central part of the pressure experienced by minority sub-group members.

The size of the minority sub-group moderates the level of pressure experienced by a minority sub-group member. The inter-group pressure experienced by a minority group member is likely to increase as the size of the minority group gets smaller (Kanter, 1977b). The fewer members of the minority there are, the more likely they are to stand out to others in the group (Taylor & Fiske, 1975) and the more homogeneous they seem in comparison to the out-group. Further, the fewer the targets of a given amount of social pressure, the more pressure on any individual target (Lewin, 1951). Thus, inter-group pressure is assumed to be highest for individuals who are solos—the only member of their social category—in an otherwise homogeneous group.

With respect to intra-group pressure, research has shown that in-group pressure is stronger when the relative size of the sub-group is smaller (for reviews see Hewstone, Rubin & Willis, 2002; Mullen, Brown, and Smith, 1992). For example, pressure to conform to group expectations and the consequences of violating those expectations (e.g. the Black Sheep effect; Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988) are greater when the group is relatively small. Thus, we suggest that members of small minority sub-groups would be more likely to experience intra-group pressure than members of large minority sub-groups. We believe that these pressures are likely to be greatest when the minority sub-group consists of two similar individuals because two is the smallest number of individuals possible for intra-group pressure to play a role.
Combining Inter-group and Intra-group Pressure

We argue that social pressure on members of minority sub-groups takes the form of behavioral expectations held by minority in-group and majority out-group members, and that these expectations are brought on by the processes of social categorization and inter-group differentiation. Therefore, we believe that pressure on the minority group members is greatest when the minority sub-group consists of exactly two individuals. Pressure from the majority sub-group (i.e., inter-group pressure) is highest for a minority solo. However pressure from the minority sub-group (i.e., intra-group pressure) is highest for a minority duo. Thus we propose that the total pressure peaks when the number of minority sub-group members is exactly two. We call the case of a sub-group where \( n = 2 \), duo-status, and feel this is a special case of token status that is not well understood and warrants further exploration. In the remainder of the chapter, we begin this exploration by discussing the dynamics within a minority of two and some important possible moderators.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Dynamics of Duo-Status: Within a Minority of Two

We believe members of a minority duo experience more combined social pressure (i.e., pressure from the out-group and the in-group) than members of the majority or of any other sized minority group (i.e., one, three, or more). Not only is the force of social pressure greatest on members of a minority duo, the different sources of the pressure may exert influence or "pull" members of a duo in different directions, making coping strategies more difficult. Indeed, individuals with duo status may feel they have to choose between conforming to one, the other,
or neither type of social pressure. Individual differences as well as the situational context affect how a particular individual responds to such pressure, and there are consequently different ways to respond to duo-status. Focusing on the relationship within the duo, however, enables us to simplify and enumerate the potential dynamics that may emerge within a minority of two. In the simplest case, a member of a minority duo can either accede to intra-group conformity pressures and give the expected other duo member social support or choose not to accede and not provide the other duo member the expected social support. The behavior chosen and who enacts it (i.e., both or only one member of the duo) leads to positive, neutral, or negative dynamics between the members of the duo.

Positive Dynamics

Despite the increased pressure, duo-status may have some positive benefits for members of the duo. In what we call a balanced positive dynamic, both duo members give and receive the social support expected by the other by acknowledging their shared status, helping, or otherwise agreeing with each other.

A balanced positive dynamic may have particular advantages for duos in a decision-making group, when the minority sub-group members also share a minority opinion. Receiving support from an in-group member increases the cohesiveness of the minority duo and thus may reinforce the influence of the duo in the larger group. Some minority influence research has shown that there is a linear relationship between the relative size of the minority and its influence on the rest of the group such that increasing the number of minorities holding a consistent attitude or opinion increases their influence on the majority (Wood, Lundgren, Ouellette, Busceme, & Blackstone, 1994). Other work on conformity in groups suggests that the presence of even one other minority group member reduces pressure to conform. Classic research by Asch
(1951) showed that the presence of even one person who disagreed with those in the majority helped a minority opinion holder resist pressure to conform to the majority opinion. This benefit may only hold, however, when the duo represents a small percentage of the larger group as some recent empirical work found no benefit for opinion agreement among two socially similar group members in a 4-person group (i.e., the duo represent 50% of the larger group; Philips, Mannix, Neale, & Gruenfeld, 2004).

A balanced positive dynamic also has the potential to disadvantage the minority duo over the long term. Kanter (1977a, p. 238) described a situation in which a training group of twelve individuals contained ten men and two women. The two women, she wrote, were automatically assumed to be a pair, and moreover were assumed to look after one another, thereby relieving members of the majority from providing support or assistance. In a balanced positive dynamic, where the members of the minority duo actually are supporting each other, if the support is evident, the members of the majority may be even more likely to naturally direct their attention and support to their own in-group members. This deprives their minority colleagues of resources, including networking and peer support, which could prove to be critical for success.

Neutral and Negative Dynamics

Two possible dynamics may emerge when one or both members of a minority duo do not provide the expected level of support to one another. In one case, which we call a balanced neutral dynamic, neither member provides social support above and beyond what might be expected if they did not share a minority social identity. In the second case, which we call a negative dynamic, one or both members provide less support to the other duo member than they provide to members of the dominant majority.
There are several reasons why an individual member of a duo might resist the pressure or expectation to provide increased support to the other duo member. At the individual level, people differ to the extent that they identify with a particular category, and this may impact the degree to which they are likely to self-categorize and see a similar other as an in-group member (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997). Thus, social support may not be provided because they do not feel any more similar to the other minority group member than they do to the majority.

We believe, however, that there is a larger structural variable that influences when a member of a minority duo will not provide in-group support to the other duo member. Members of minority sub-groups face both inter-group (i.e., out-group) and intra-group (i.e., in-group) pressure. Inter-group pressure can include expectations that minority group members will assimilate to (often negative) stereotypes and behave in a stereotypical manner. When the inter-group pressure exerted by the majority is relatively greater than the intra-group pressure exerted by the minority, a member of a minority duo may act in response to the greater inter-group pressure.

Two coping strategies are likely in the face of inter-group pressure. First, if permitted by the majority, a member of a minority duo may try to assimilate to the majority out-group in order to escape inter-group pressures. A woman who acts like "one of the guys" may succeed in reducing inter-group pressure from the dominant male majority. However, she may have a legitimate concern that her status as "one of the guys" will be threatened if she provides extra support to another woman (i.e., a member of the majority's out-group), and so she is not likely to extend that support. Further, if inter-group pressures are sufficiently strong and negative, a member of a minority duo who chooses an assimilation strategy might actually feel pressure to provide preferential treatment and support to members of the dominant majority and to treat the
remaining duo member in a relatively negative manner. In fact, negative actions toward the other duo (now a *former* “in-group” member) may act as a kind of litmus test for “entrance” into the majority group (Kanter, 1977a).

A second strategy to cope with inter-group pressure may be to resist categorization based on the duo's minority identity. Whereas an assimilation strategy maintains the basic social categorization, but requires the minority group member to join the majority (e.g., a woman may become "one of the guys") the second strategy is to resist the original categorization and make it less relevant. A duo member may use re-categorization or cross-categorization to make the duo's minority identity a less relevant categorization in the particular work context. For example, a member of a gender duo may claim a different central social identity ("I am first and foremost an engineer"), or seek out and emphasize identities that create cross-categorization such as similar organizational tenure or shared educational background. This strategy requires a member of a minority duo to de-emphasize the minority duo's shared social identity and shared social category (e.g., gender). To further resist categorization based on the minority duo's shared status, a member of a minority duo may be motivated to treat the other member of the duo just like anyone else in the larger work group, with no special support or preference that might call attention to fact that the duo share a social category membership.

In a balanced neutral dynamic, both members of a minority duo respond the same way to duo status, and keep their distance. To avoid being categorized by the dominant majority and subjected to the pressures associated with tokenism, they both use either assimilation or resisting categorization strategies. Both types of strategies result in de-emphasizing the minority duo's shared social identity, and when the shared social identity is not salient we do not expect
members of a social category to show in-group favoritism or to provide increased social support to one another.

A balanced neutral dynamic has advantages and disadvantages. An advantage is that it minimizes inter-group pressures on members of a minority duo and may lead to greater individuation of all group members, particularly if it is the outcome of a successful re-categorization that benefits both members of the original minority duo. Ultimately, if all members of a work group are individuated by their peers rather than subjected to social categorization pressures, a balanced neutral dynamic has long-term advantages for the individual group members and for the group as a whole. A disadvantage of the balanced neutral dynamic is that duo members forego social support that they might have had from one another in a balanced positive dynamic. However, if the dynamic is not balanced, and one member of the duo uses a support strategy while the other uses an assimilation or resisting categorization strategy, a negative dynamic develops that may be the worst possible outcome for one if not both members of the duo.

A negative dynamic emerges when the strategies used by members of the duo are not balanced. This occurs when one member views the duo as sharing a distinctive social identity and thus belonging to the same in-group and supports the other member of the duo, while the other seeks to de-emphasize the shared social category or does not identify with it and does not support the other member of the duo. The negative dynamic is likely to have especially harsh effects on the duo member whose expectations of social support from a perceived in-group member, including shared opinion, preferential treatment, and preferential access to resources, are violated. Individuals have been shown to react more negatively to disagreement from a socially similar rather than dissimilar other (Heider, 1958; Newcomb, 1968). Recent work by
Phillips (2003) found that individuals reacted with more surprise and irritation to opinion disagreement from a socially similar versus dissimilar group member. Likewise, violation of expectations of general social support should lead to negative reactions by the holder of the expectation. This is both because of the unexpectedness of the action and the fact that it results in less total social support in the group.

We argue that overall a negative dynamic is disadvantageous for members of the minority duo. In a negative dynamic, one member of the duo expects and offers social support consistent with a norm of in-group preference, but the other member withholds support and may even treat the in-group member less favorably than she or he treats members of the majority sub-group. This has a clear negative implication for the group member who is not receiving the expected support, and it may be particularly problematic if the majority sub-group assumes that the minority duo members are supporting each other and withdraws its support. The group member who does not provide support may also experience remorse as a result of rejecting an in-group member who wanted his or her support. Further, he or she is likely to be viewed in a very negative light by the other member of the duo.

Two Potential Moderators of Duo-Status Dynamics

The dynamic that emerges between two members of a minority duo depends on many factors. Two factors deserve particular attention, and we predict these factors influence which of the three dynamics—balanced positive, balanced neutral, or unbalanced negative—will emerge in a minority duo. Earlier, we assumed for simplicity's sake that all group members had equal status, and that the majority was homogeneous. Now we revisit these assumptions. First, the status of the minority duo's shared social identity relative to that of the majority should influence
whether duo members develop a positive dynamic on the one hand, or a neutral, or negative dynamic on the other. Second, the existing faultlines (Lau & Murnighan, 1998) in the work group should influence whether a dynamic that is not positive becomes either a balanced neutral dynamic or a negative dynamic.

We have argued that individual members of a minority duo are more likely to engage in coping strategies that lead to a neutral or negative dynamic when they are trying to avoid inter-group pressure from the majority. This pressure is likely to be greater and more negative in cases in which the minority duo's sub-group status is low relative to the majority sub-group's status. When a minority group has low status, performance expectations tend to be negative and social isolation of the group tends to have more negative consequences (Betancor, Rodriguez, Rodriguez, Leyens, & Quiles, 2005; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). At the same time, the rewards for conforming to intra-group pressure and providing support to an in-group member are low when the in-group’s status is low. Inter-group pressures and not intra-group pressures may be more likely to drive the duo member's coping strategy. Thus, when the minority duo has low status, a neutral or negative dynamic is more likely to emerge than a balanced positive dynamic.

When the minority duo's status is high relative to the majority, the members of the minority duo are more likely to develop a balanced positive dynamic. When a minority sub-group has high status, performance expectations tend to be positive, and social isolation of the group tends to have fewer negative consequences (Betancor et al., 2005; Fiske et al., 2002). Two men in a majority female group, we argue, are more likely to support one another, to share opinions, and to preferentially share resources than two women in a majority male group. This is because the rewards for being a conforming member of a high status group are relatively
positive, compared to the inter-group pressures that can be exerted from a lower status group, even when the lower status group is in the numerical majority.

When the minority duo's group status is low relative to the majority, the existing group faultlines (Lau & Murnighan, 1998) may influence whether a balanced neutral or negative dynamic emerges. Faultlines are hypothetical dividing lines that split a group into one or more subgroups based on social categories. Consider a project team with weak faultlines, in which two members of a minority duo have low status because they are newcomers and therefore have short organizational tenure relative to the rest of the team. The faultlines are weak because one newcomer shares a division affiliation with two senior team members, while the other newcomer shares functional expertise with one of the aforementioned senior members plus two other senior team members. In addition to tenure, division affiliation, and functional expertise, the team members differ on the dimensions of nationality and gender. Each shared category cuts across the others; no two members of the team are the same on more than one dimension. In this case, the members of the minority duo are both likely to de-emphasize the fact that they share newcomer status, in part because the weak faultlines make the newcomer identity less distinctive in the group. We propose that a balanced neutral dynamic will emerge, such that the newcomers will treat one another with no special favoritism or in-group support that might signal that they share a common low-status minority identity.

Now consider a project team with strong faultlines. The two newcomers are both female and share division affiliation, functional expertise, and nationality. The senior members are all male and share a different division affiliation, functional expertise, and nationality. In the team with strong faultlines, re-categorization or cross-categorization becomes difficult and assimilation to the majority group is the only remaining strategy for members of the minority
due to avoid inter-group pressures. Because an assimilation strategy increases the chances that a
duo member will treat the remaining member negatively relative to a member of the dominant
majority, we argue that members of a minority duo in a group with strong faultlines are more
likely to develop a negative dynamic.

Faultlines tend to be weaker in teams with greater heterogeneity, or diversity. In addition,
social categories tend to be less relevant to group norms when the overall organizational culture
emphasizes egalitarianism rather than a formal status hierarchy. For these reasons, we would
predict that a team with more diversity, on more dimensions, is less likely to foster a negative
dynamic between members of a minority duo than a team with less overall diversity. Similarly,
an organizational culture that values diversity and strives for equal status among groups is less
likely to foster a negative dynamic between members of a minority duo.

Conclusion

Organizations are becoming increasingly more diverse, a trend that will continue in the
global twenty-first century. Part of the rationale for encouraging diversity comes from research
showing the positive benefits of diversity in groups for critical thinking and sharing unique
However, there are social category groups that are unlikely to ever comprise more than a token
number in a work group due to their representation in the general population. As such, it is even
more important to understand the experience of minority duos and the steps that can be taken to
minimize the pressures on them so that organizations can truly maximize the benefits of their
diversity.
In this work, we extend theory on token status (Kanter, 1977a) and small group dynamics (e.g., Phillips & Loyd, 2006) to derive a set of possible dynamics that may emerge when there are exactly two members of a minority group in a larger group, or two individuals with duo status. In some cases, we find that duo status may be even more stressful and isolating than solo status, an outcome that seems at once both counterintuitive and yet discouragingly real. If duo status is commonly perceived to be less stressful than solo status, it may be because we tend to focus on the inter-group social pressure on members of minority groups. We have thus far failed to consider and to include in our models of diversity in groups a second source of social pressure, that from the minority member's in-group. Adding a second minority group member to a work group may reduce inter-group pressure, but at the same time it may add intra-group pressure to a minority group member. The sum of social pressure may actually increase, and now include pressure in the form of expectations that the members of the duo can and will support each other.

We believe it is important to understand this issue because of the impact the negative experience of increased group diversity (moving from minority solos to minority duos in groups) has for increasing the overall diversity of organizations. The individuals who are in the numerical minority in organizations play an important role in increasing the potential for more diversity in the organization. They act as ambassadors to similar others outside of the organization who see them as examples of what is possible to achieve within the organization. Outsiders may also solicit token members’ opinions about the value of joining the organization and the experience the outsider can expect. If duo status can feel worse than solo status then these individuals may reasonably report having a negative experience in the group. Further, if duo status feels worse, it may limit incentives to increase diversity on the part of the individual in
the minority, and the minority group member may be more hesitant to encourage similar others to join.

We explain the dynamics that arise within a minority duo as being in large part a function of the amount and type of pressure the minority experiences from the majority. When members of the minority experience what is commonly referred to as "tokenism," with the associated visibility and performance pressure, social isolation, and assimilation to negative group stereotypes, it generally signals negative inter-group pressure and stress associated with being in the minority. We have argued that this pressure also decreases the chances that members of a minority duo will conform to in-group pressure to provide social support to one another. In other words, tokenism decreases the chances that a balanced positive dynamic will emerge between members of a minority duo. As the band “Three Dog Night” expressed in their hit song,

One is the loneliest number that you'll ever do
Two can be as bad as one
It's the loneliest number since the number one

Harry Nilsson (1968)

While it may be counterintuitive, anecdotal evidence suggests that even though one seems to be the loneliest number for a minority group member, sometimes two can be worse than one. The dynamics between members of a minority duo have not been examined empirically, in part because little theory has been developed within which to test specific hypotheses. In this chapter we extend theory to propose a framework for understanding these dynamics, and for understanding why and when two can be the loneliest number since the number one. For organizations to better understand how to manage and leverage their diversity they must focus not only on inter-group dynamics, equal attention must be paid to intra-group dynamics as well.
References


Figure 1

Inter-group, intra-group, and combined social pressure as a function of the number of token members of the group.

Footnote: This figure is for illustrative purposes only. The lines are not meant to be representative of the actual amount of pressure or the proposed slope.