

Value for Diversity as a Moderator of Organizational Relationships

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Abstract

The relationships of job satisfaction, affective commitment, and intent to leave to perceived organizational fairness in dealing with diversity, to organization inclusion involving diversity issue, and personal value for diversity were investigated. Satisfaction and commitment were positively related to organizational fairness and inclusion. Intent to leave was negatively related to both. Personal value for diversity moderated the relationships of organizational commitment and intent to leave to both organizational fairness and organizational inclusion such that these relationships were stronger among those employees with higher value for diversity. Implications for diversity management issues are discussed.

Value for Diversity as a Moderator of Organizational Relationships.

The issue of diversity in the workplace has received extensive attention in the popular press for several decades. More organizations are becoming increasingly aware of diversity and its influences. Yet, there is little empirical evidence of effectiveness attributed to diversity as a business necessity. Theorists have discussed multiple frameworks for conceptualizing diversity management, from simply increasing the numbers of minorities and women within “corporate America” to gaining optimal performance from all employees (Cox, 1993; Thomas, 1990, 1992; Thomas & Ely, 1996). However, little empirical research exists that explores whether or not there is an established relationship between an organization’s climate for diversity and employee outcome variables. The focus of the current research is to examine whether a relationship exists between diversity management and individual outcomes of a particular ethnoracial minority group. More specifically, this research project focused on whether job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to leave were related to organizational fairness and inclusion among African American women and whether those relationships were moderated by personal value for diversity.

Managing Diversity

Managing diversity is a concept that stems directly from affirmative action and equal employment opportunity laws and guidelines (Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Thomas, 1992; Yakura, 1996). However, this concept is distinct from its predecessors in that it represents much more than simply efforts to increase diverse racial and ethnic representation within organizations (Thomas, 1992). Managing Diversity initiatives are efforts to create an environment that works naturally for *all* individuals within the organization (Thomas, 1992). Cox (1993) defines managing diversity as “planning and implementing organizational systems and practices to

manage people so that the potential advantages of diversity are maximized while its potential disadvantages are minimized” (p. 11). The underlying theme is to fully utilize the differences of all employees to make for the most effective organization. Although diversity is more inclusive than simply race and gender, the focus of this research is not to examine all facets of diversity, but use this point of departure in order to better understand diversity climate as a whole.

Benefits of managing diversity. The benefits of effective diversity management can include a positive effect on the organization through recruitment, increased business market growth, increased creativity and innovation, higher quality problem solving, enhanced leadership effectiveness, and more effective global relationships (Robinson & Dechant, 1996). Some researchers contend that in order to gain the most talented applicants means that organizations must attract, retain, and promote exceptional employees from groups of all backgrounds (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). It is suggested that as women and minorities increase representation in the labor market, organizations must compete and “win” the most talented individuals from those groups. The perception of how effective an organization manages diversity could provide a competitive advantage in terms of recruitment and retention.

Costs of diversity mismanagement. The costs of mismanagement of diversity can have a substantial impact on an organization’s bottom line. Robinson and Dechant (1997) list high turnover costs, high absenteeism rates, and lawsuits based on sex, race, and age discrimination as consequences of diversity mismanagement. “Costs due to recruiting, staffing, and training per person are estimated at \$5,000 to \$10,000 for an hourly worker and between \$75,000 and \$211,000 for an executive” (p. 23). These costs and others incurred by high turnover, absenteeism, and legal ramifications can affect the bottom line in any organization. With proper

management of diverse work-groups within organizations, absenteeism, turnover, and discrimination of any type should decrease.

Diversity as a Component of Organizational Climate

Organizational climate. Organizational climate is described as a phenomenon that links human behavior with environmental stimuli. It is theorized that such stimuli are able to “change” behavior patterns of its group members (Litwin & Stringer, 1968). This basic framework has been the foundation for more recent definitions and descriptions of organizational climate. Hellriegel and Slocum (1974) describe organizational climate as perceived attributes about an organization and/or its subsystems that are shaped by the manner in which the company organizes and works with its employees and environment. Naylor, Pritchard, and Ilgen (1980) state that organizational climate is a descriptive judgment process by which an individual forms global perceptions of an environment from perceptions of attributes of that environment.

Diversity climate. Recent researchers have described diversity climate and the conceptual impact of diversity on individual and organizational outcomes (Cox, 1993; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998). Mor Barak et al. (1998) discuss perceptions of diversity climate through the use of two dimensions, personal and organizational. The organizational dimension is composed of two factors, organizational inclusion, which touches on training and programs designed to include women and minorities, and organizational fairness, which include discrimination and prejudice issues. The personal dimension is composed of two factors: personal comfort with diversity and personal value for diversity. What follows is a detailed description of each dimension as presented by Mor Barak, et al.

Organizational dimension of diversity climate. Mor Barak et al. (1998) describe organizational fairness and organizational inclusion as components of the organizational

dimension within the Perceptions of Diversity Scale (PDS). In describing their organizational fairness factor, Mor Barak et al. (1998) specifically address how managers treat subordinates as it relates to hiring, promotions, making layoff decisions, giving feedback, and interpreting human resource policies. In their study, differences were found between both gender and ethnoracial group perceptions on this factor. Men thought the organization treated women and minorities more fairly than did women. Additionally, Caucasians, Hispanics, and Asian Americans thought that women and minorities were treated more fairly than did African Americans and Others within the organization.

Mor Barak et al. (1998) also describe the organizational inclusion factor as a component of the organizational dimension in the DPS. The organizational inclusion factor assesses if management encourages employee network support groups, mentoring programs, and diversity awareness training. It also assesses whether traditional male nonminority (“good ole boy”) networks are prevalent within the organization (Mor Barak et al., 1998). They found that men thought the organization was more inclusive of women and minorities than did women. Further, Caucasian Americans thought that women and minorities were more inclusive than did African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Others.

Personal dimension of diversity climate. The personal value for diversity factor of Mor Barak et al.’s (1998) DPS assesses whether employees believe diversity is important and adds value to the organization. These researchers, as well as Kossek and Zonia (1993), found that women and racial/ethnic minorities expressed greater value of diversity. The personal comfort factor of Mor Barak’s scale addresses issues that deal with ease in working with individuals of diverse backgrounds. Mor Barak et al. found no significant differences between women and men on comfort with diversity. However, the diversity comfort factor produced significantly different

results for Hispanic Americans and African Americans ($M= 4.51$ and 4.61 , respectively), and Caucasians and Asian Americans ($M= 4.10$ and 3.91 , respectively).

Although not hypothesized by Mor Barak et al. (1998) the value for diversity factor may have profound results on the implementation of diversity management strategies. Logic would suggest that while the organization's diversity efforts would be important for people who value diversity, it would not be important for those who do not value diversity. This research proposes a moderator effect due to individual value of diversity. Specifically, the relationship of organizational fairness and inclusion with outcome variables (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment) will be positive for those who value diversity and negligible or even negative for those who do not value diversity. Although there may be a relationship between organizational fairness/inclusion and the outcome variables, those relationships may be moderated by the personal value for diversity. This issue was not addressed in the IMCD model as described by Cox (1993) or by Mor Barak et al. (1998). The current research proposes to investigate if such moderation exists.

Outcome Variables

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction has been found to correlate with a number of antecedent variables involving organizational climate (Downey, Hellriegel, & Slocum, 1975; Johnson & McIntye, 1998; Silver, Poulin, & Manning, 1997). For example, Johnson and McIntye (1998) found that the organizational climate components, communication, goals, creativity and innovation, and decision-making, were strongly correlated with overall job satisfaction. A positive correlation between perceived organizational control (pace of work, schedule of breaks, and development of policies and procedures in the workplace) of nurses and job satisfaction was found to be statistically significant. There is a paucity of research investigating the relationship

between perceived diversity climate (i.e., organizational and personal dimensions) and job satisfaction (Mor Barak et al., 1998). Mor Barak et al. (1998) suggest future research examine the relationship between perceptions of diversity climate and job satisfaction as well as other outcome variables (e.g., organizational commitment, organizational justice). Subtle connections made between diversity climate and job satisfaction could provide support for a link between diversity climate and job performance via job satisfaction.

Organizational commitment. Organizational commitment has been an area of interest in organizational research for many years, both as an antecedent and as an outcome (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Steers, 1977). Steers (1977) suggests a model of organizational commitment, incorporating personal characteristics (e.g., need for achievement), job characteristics (e.g., task identity, feedback, and optional interaction), and work experience (e.g., group attitudes, personal importance to the organization, and organizational dependability) as antecedents. More recent research has suggested personal characteristics, role-related characteristics, work experiences, and structural characteristics as antecedents to organizational commitment (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

A three component model of organizational commitment reflects its complex nature (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Allen and Meyer proposed three aspects of organizational commitment. Affective, normative, and continuance commitment suggest different psychological states as related to the topic. Affective commitment is described as the employee's emotional attachment or identification with the organization. Normative commitment refers to the employee's feelings of obligation or loyalty to remain with an organization. Continuance commitment reflects an employee's willingness to stay due to costs associated with leaving (e.g., limited alternative options). Although organizational commitment research has been extensive, there is still a lack

of knowledge concerning organizational commitment and its direct relationship with diversity, specifically diversity climate.

Intent to leave. Intentions to leave an organization have been found to be related to social support, organizational politics (Gilmore, Ferris, Dulebohn, & Harrell-Cook, 1996), absenteeism, job involvement (Van Yperen, Hagedoorn, & Geurts, 1996), and turnover. The significance of these findings suggests that supervisor and management support have a direct impact on employees' intent to remain with or leave an organization.

Van Yperen et al. (1996) investigated intent to leave and absenteeism as reactions to perceived inequity within the organization. Perceptions of inequity were determined by self-comparisons of each participant to others from within the company on specific job aspects (e.g., working environment, variety in the job, and autonomy and freedom). Intentions to leave were significantly related to perceptions of inequity. The current research examined if perceptions of organizational fairness and inclusion are related to intent to leave.

Current Research

Previous researchers have recorded differences in perceptions of diversity climate between racial and gender groups (Mor Barak et al., 1998). Although it is important to identify differences in perceptions of diversity climate between various groups (e.g., race, gender), some researchers have suggested that too much research has focused on between groups differences, rather than within group differences (Nkomo, 1992). However, there is limited evidence on individual differences within single ethnic minority groups. The purpose of this study was to investigate whether perceptions of organizational fairness and inclusion are related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to leave among a population of African

American women. This research further sought to determine if that relationship is moderated by personal value for diversity.

The above considerations lead to the following expectations. We expected that we would find positive relationships between both job satisfaction and affective commitment and the organizational climate factors, organizational fairness and organizational inclusion. Moreover, we expected that the personal climate factor, personal value for diversity would moderate both sets of relationships such that relationships would be stronger among those high on value for diversity. This expectation was based on the commonsense hypothesis that for those persons with a low value for diversity, the organization's efforts toward fairness and inclusion would be irrelevant. On the other hand, for those persons with high value for diversity issues, the organizations efforts toward fairness and inclusion would be more salient in determining both job satisfaction and affective commitment.

With respect to intent to leave, we expected that there would be a negative relationship between this outcome variable and organizational fairness and inclusion. And using the same commonsense argument as above, we also expected personal value for diversity to moderate these relationships such that the stronger negative relationship would be found among those with higher personal value for diversity.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were 202 African American women affiliated with a national organization. The purpose of this organization is to provide its members with professional and personal development through networking, making a business impact, understanding career planning/career success cycle, and mentoring members formally and informally. The participants

ranged in age from 19 to 61 (mean age = 29.62). Eighty-six percent were employed full-time and had average organizational tenure of 4.99 years (range of .5 to 30 years). The majority had undergraduate degrees (53%), while 33.7% had a master's degree and 5.9% had a doctorate.

Measures

The Diversity Perceptions Scale (DPS; Mor Barak et al., 1998) was used to assess perceptions of organizational climate for diversity. It includes 16-items representing four distinct factors. The four factors are organizational fairness (6-items), organizational inclusion (4-items), personal diversity value (3-items), and personal comfort (3-items). Previous research has cited reliability coefficients, ranging from .71 to .86 for the four scales, (Mor Barak et al., 1998). Items on the scale are answered using a 6-point Likert-type scaling ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Higher scores on each dimension of the scale indicated a more positive perception of the diversity climate. The personal value for diversity factor was used to test moderation between organizational fairness and inclusion and the outcome variables. The personal comfort factor was included for completeness, but was not analyzed in this research.

Job Satisfaction was measured using the Overall Job Satisfaction Scale by Taylor and Bowers (Hinton & Biderman, 1995). The scale was answered using a seven point Likert-type scaling ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied). Previous research has cited reliability coefficients of .77 (Hinton & Biderman, 1995). The items were summed to obtain an overall score of job satisfaction.

Affective commitment, the only dimension of organizational commitment used in the present study, was measured using a commitment scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). Allen and Meyer (1990) found that affective, reflected internal consistency with reliability coefficients of .87.

Intent to leave was measured using three modified items from Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, and Meglino (1979). A five point Likert type scale was used for assessment, 1 indicating strong disagreement to 5 indicating strong agreement.

Background information included five demographic questions identifying the participant's age, educational background (i.e. high school diploma, undergraduate degree, master's degree, doctorate degree), state of residency, industry, and occupation. One-item assessed tenure within the organization.

Procedure

A cover letter from the first author encouraging participation from the organization was electronically mailed to members of a national association of African American women. The electronic mailing included a hyperlink to the survey site hosted by www.hrmtesting.com. The survey questions, as well as information about the primary researcher, were available from this site. Two forms of information were sent to perspective participants. One memo was viewed from the Web site and another message was mailed electronically with the hyperlink.

Results

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations, intercorrelations among the variables of interest in the study, with the reliabilities of scales listed on the diagonals. Age and education were included as controlling variable in the analyses. Education was dichotomized as bachelor's degree or less vs. MS or Ph.D. Affective commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and organizational fairness with diversity demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency with alpha coefficients of .80, .82, .85, and .81 respectively. Alpha for the organizational inclusion scale was .67. For the personal value for diversity scale it was only .35.

All the zero-order correlations between the scales reached traditional levels of statistical significance (i.e., $p < .05$) with the exception of those involving personal value for diversity, which did not correlate significantly with any of the variables investigated. The simple correlations between the outcome variables and the organizational climate variables were all significant and in the expected direction. That is job satisfaction and affective commitment correlated positively with organizational fairness and inclusion, while the corresponding correlations of intent to leave were negative. The correlations of job satisfaction and affective commitment with age were small and positive, while the correlations of intent to leave with both of the control variables were small and negative. Interestingly, the correlations of both the fairness and inclusion scales with age and education were negative, although only one, the correlation of fairness with age, reached a traditional level of statistical significance.

The moderation hypotheses were tested using moderated regression analyses. In these analyses, first the outcome variable was regressed onto the organizational climate variable (i.e., organizational fairness and organizational inclusion, separately), the personal value for diversity, age and the dichotomized education variable. Then, the product term of the organizational climate variable and the personal value for diversity measure was added. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 2. In all the analyses without the product term, the partial relationships of the dependent variable to the organizational climate variables, fairness and inclusion, were significant and in the expected direction ($p < .05$, one-tailed). We had no specific expectation for the relationship of outcome variables to personal value for diversity and found no significant simple or partial relationship involving that variable in the analyses without the product term. In these same analyses, the relationship of both job satisfaction and affective

commitment to age was significant and positive, while the relationship of intent to leave to both age and education was significant and negative.

We found evidence for the expected moderation in four of the six tests. Personal value for diversity moderated the relationship of affective commitment to both organizational fairness ($p=.007$, one-tailed) and inclusion ($p=.014$, one-tailed). There was some evidence that value moderated the relationship of fairness to intent to leave ($p=.053$, one-tailed), and stronger evidence that it moderated the relationship of intent to leave to organization inclusion ($p = .014$, one-tailed). The expected moderation was not found in the analysis of job satisfaction with fairness ($p = .212$, one-tailed) nor inclusion ($p = .464$, one-tailed). Figure 1 presents the relationship of affective commitment to perceived organizational fairness for groups high on value for diversity and low on value for diversity. Figure 2 presents the same relationship to perceived organizational inclusion.

Discussion

The results suggest that the organizational climate measures proposed by Mor Barak et al. (1998) may represent factors which should be a part of organizational processes in the management of diversity. We found positive relationships between these factors and the outcome variables affective commitment and job satisfaction, and negative relationships between both of the factors and intent to leave. The results also suggest, however, that heterogeneity among employees may affect the effectiveness of manipulations involving organizational diversity factors. Our results suggest that for those employees who valued diversity issues more the impact of organizational diversity management factors on commitment and to a lesser extent on intent to leave was stronger than on those who valued diversity less. An obvious implication of these results is that organizational diversity management initiatives may not be equally

effective across all employees. Therefore, it may prove beneficial for organizations to assess perceptions of diversity climate at both the organizational and employees' personal value for diversity levels as part of their diversity management implementation strategy.

The failure of personal value for diversity to moderate the relationships involving job satisfaction are puzzling. The job satisfaction measure that was used (Hinton & Biderman, 1995) combined items involving multiple job facets into a single measure of job satisfaction. It has been suggested that job satisfaction must be viewed as being composed of affective and cognitive components (e.g., Brief & Roberson, 1989). It may be that the relationship between organizational climate and organizational outcomes is confined to those outcomes with a mix of affective and cognitive components which were not captured in the job satisfaction scale used here.

The implications of these findings are clear. They suggest that organizational efforts to increase fairness and inclusion will be associated with increases in both job satisfaction and affective commitment and decreases in thoughts of leaving. However, the moderation results suggest that such efforts may not be equally effective across the spectrum of employees. Instead they suggest that they will be more effective with those employees with greater value for diversity.

Two limitations of the present study that should be addressed in future work in this area involve the measure of personal value for diversity and the population of employees. In spite of the fact that it did serve as an effective moderator here, the estimate of reliability of the personal value for diversity scale was unacceptably low. The scale used here consisted of only three items. A more reliable measure of personal value for diversity is needed. Secondly, the population sampled here consisted of only African American females. Although a mono-race

sample is a good point of departure for gaining insights and a better understanding of diversity climate, we feel that an important addition to this literature would be provided by generalizing these findings to males and members of other ethnic groups.

Tables

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities.

Variable	OF	OIF	PV	JS	AC	IL	Age	Educ	Mean	SD
Organizational Fairness (OF)	.81	.605 ^c	-.026	.450 ^c	.435 ^c	-.305 ^c	-.173 ^a	-.073	4.116	1.116
Organizational Inclusion (OI)		.67	-.044	.432 ^c	.480 ^c	-.388 ^c	-.133	-.015	2.845	1.222
Personal Value for Diversity (PVD)			.35	.087	-.043	.054	.043	.063	4.790	0.884
Job Satisfaction (JS)				.82	.579 ^c	-.596 ^c	.113	.088	4.906	1.202
Affective Commitment (AC)					.80	-.669 ^c	.195 ^b	.090	2.918	0.836
Intent to Leave (IL)						.85	-.236 ^b	-.189 ^b	2.915	1.114
Age								.301 ^c	29.620	7.790
Dichotomized Education									0.396	0.490

^a p < .05; ^b p < .01; ^c p < .001 two-tailed

Table 2. Results of moderated regression analyses.

Job Satisfaction							
Measure	Standardized Coefficient	p ^a	R ²	Measure	Standardized Coefficient	p	R ²
Fairness	.475	.000		Inclusion	.457	.000	
Personal Value	.098	.062		Personal Value	.115	.037	
Education dichotomy	.060	.185		Education dichotomy	.035	.298	
Age	.180	.004	.241 ^b	Age	.175	.005	.198 ^b
Fairness	.429	.000		Inclusion	.449	.000	
Personal Value	.046	.304		Personal Value	.110	.101	
Education dichotomy	.061	.182		Education dichotomy	.036	.297	
Age	.184	.003		Age	.175	.005	
Fairness x Value	.086	.212	.244 ^c	Inclusion x Value	-.011	.464	.226 ^c
Affective Commitment							
Fairness	.466	.000		Inclusion	.507	.000	
Personal Value	-.034	.292		Personal Value	-.022	.362	
Education dichotomy	.052	.215		Education dichotomy	.024	.351	
Age	.264	.000	.252 ^b	Age	.260	.000	.293 ^b
Fairness	.327	.000		Inclusion	.313	.002	
Personal Value	-.191	.015		Personal Value	-.141	.042	
Education dichotomy	.054	.203		Education dichotomy	.033	.302	
Age	.272	.000		Age	.262	.000	
Fairness x Value	.260	.007	.275 ^c	Inclusion x Value	.261	.014	.310 ^c
Intent to Leave							
Fairness	-.351	.000		Inclusion	-.415	.000	
Personal Value	.064	.164		Personal Value	.053	.200	
Education dichotomy	-.159	.010		Education dichotomy	-.138	.019	
Age	-.252	.000	.095 ^b	Age	-.255	.000	.247 ^b
Fairness	-.256	.002		Inclusion	-.258	.010	
Personal Value	.170	.033		Personal Value	.150	.037	

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Education dichotomy	-.160	.009		Education dichotomy	-.145	.014	
Age	-.258	.000		Age	-.257	.000	
Product	-.176	.053	.208 ^c	Product	-.212	.041	.259 ^c

^a All p values are one-tailed..

^b R² for the four-variable model.

^cR² for the four-variable + product model.

Figure 1

Affective Commitment vs. Perceived Fairness for Low and High Value for Diversity Groups.

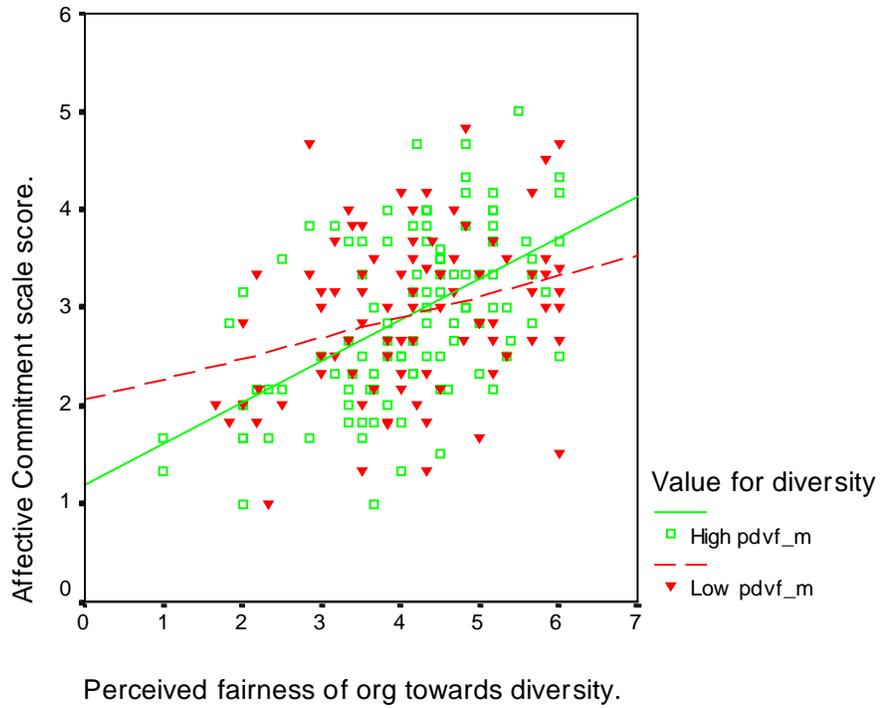
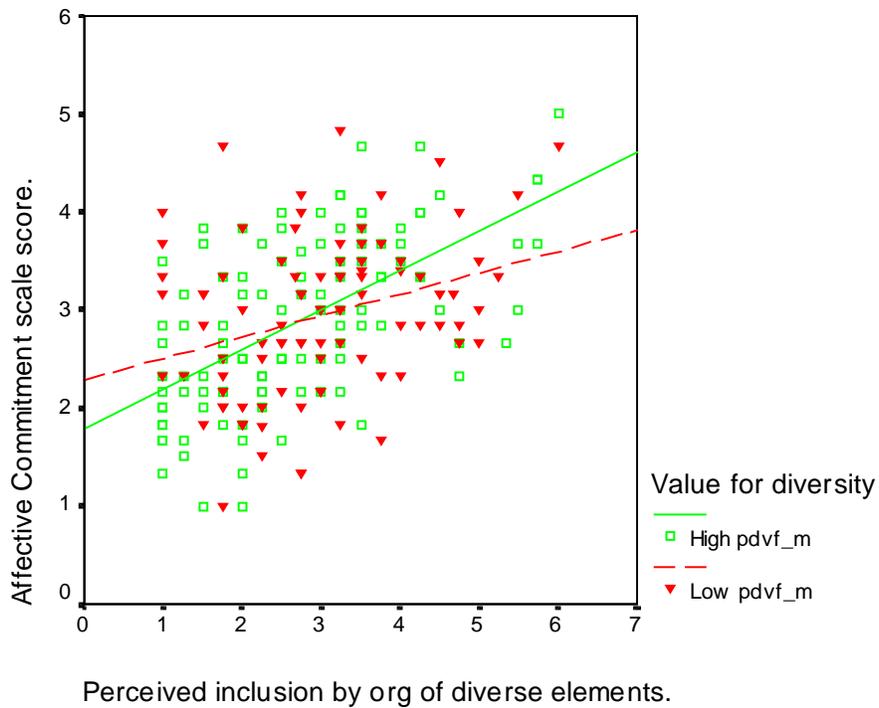


Figure 2

Affective Commitment vs. Perceived Inclusion for Low and High Value for Diversity Groups.



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