Understanding of Diversity and Inclusion in a Perceived Homogeneous Culture: A Study of Organizational Commitment and Job Performance Among Korean Employees

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ABSTRACT. There is growing evidence indicating that diversity and inclusion are critical predictors of organizational commitment and job performance. Social workers and managers who work with clients of diverse backgrounds as well as with immigrants need to have a clear understanding of diversity in its widest context. Utilizing a sample of 381 employees who were matched with their supervisors in a large Korean corporation, the article examined the relationships between diversity, inclusion, organizational commitment, and job performance. Gender, age, regional affiliation, education, and position within the organization emerged as diversity characteristics that were specifically related to employees' sense of inclusion. Specifically, men, older employees, and employees with higher position were more committed to the organization, while, inclusion had a significant impact on organizational commitment as

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well as job performance. We discuss implications for management initiatives that are focused on creating an inclusive work place.

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, there has been growing evidence indicating that diversity and inclusion are critical predictors of employee behaviors and outcomes (see, for example, Milliken & Martins, 1996; Mor Barak & Levin, 2002; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998; Mor Barak, 2005). Although the importance of diversity in the workplace has been recognized in the United States and in Europe, there exists a misconception that diversity is not a relevant aspect of understanding the workplace in other regions of the world, specifically in Asia. This misconception stems from the fact that, to outsiders, many Asian countries seem homogeneous. Korea is a prime example for this misconception because it is, indeed, rather homogeneous with respect to race and ethnicity. However, the country's diversity centers on other elements such as gender, educational attainment, organizational position, and regional origin. For social workers who work with immigrants and clients from various backgrounds, understanding the complexity of diversity in its widest context is particularly important. There is a great deal that social workers and social service managers alike can learn from studying diversity in other countries and contexts. The aim of this study is to examine diversity in the context of a perceived homogeneous culture and identify diversity categories that are relevant for employees' organizational commitment and job performance.

Historically, it has been difficult to study the organizational dynamics of Asian organizations, nonprofit and for-profit alike, because of their tendency to be secretive about their policies and practices. Korean organizations, in particular, have been closed and have not allowed researchers to observe their organizational culture or study their policies and practices. Consequently, there is a dearth of information regarding the effects of intra-cultural differences in perceived homogeneous cultures and their impact on employee perceptions and behaviors.

To address the limitations of previous research, we were interested in studying diversity within the Korean culture. We were fortunate to receive

permission to do our diversity research in one of the largest multinational Korean organizations. This was indeed a rare opportunity since, like most other organizations in Korea, this company had never allowed researchers to have access to its employees and internal culture. The specific objectives of this study were to: a) identify critical and unique diversity characteristics that were related to inclusion and commitment in the work context; b) examine the relationship between perceptions of inclusion and organizational commitment; and c) investigate the relationship between diversity, inclusion, and organizational commitment and job performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The social work profession has always focused on understanding clients in their contextual systems. However, in recent decades, the client's work system has been all but neglected. Helen Harris Perlman (1982) in her classic essay on the importance of work in clients' lives stressed the urgency for social workers to pay attention to the client's "overlooked role" as a worker. Since work plays a central role in everyone's life, particularly clients in social service agencies, understanding the role diversity plays in the lives of workers is of prime interest to social workers (Akabas and Kurzman, 2005). In recent decades, the client's ethnicity, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other diversity characteristics have received a growing attention within the social work literature. Social service managers also need to have a deep understanding of the role diversity plays in determining personal and organizational outcomes such as organizational commitment and job performance.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT FOR DIVERSITY

The scarcity in diversity research regarding ethnically homogenous countries such as Korea stems from a common misconception regarding diversity characteristics. Often, racial or ethnic homogeneity is misunderstood as lack of diversity and, as a result, diversity characteristics such as gender, religion, caste, and regional differences are overlooked. In fact, studying diversity in countries other than the United States can assist in explaining the concept of diversity beyond the Western-based focus on race and ethnicity.

The Korean culture provides a case study in diversity that is not focused on race or ethnicity. First, gender is an important diversity characteristic in the Korean context. Women often face the cultural assumptions that as newly hired employees they will soon marry, leave their jobs, and become full-time caregivers at home. This stereotypical perception impedes the recognition of women's contributions and prevents their advancement in the workplace. In addition, work-related discrimination against women is evident with regards to their job titles, job security, compensation, and promotion. Women are paid 64% of what men earn (Korea Development Institute, 2002), many of them are engaged in temporary, daily and home-based work, and married women are the first to be fired when employers consider lay-offs. According to Korean National Statistics (2002), women hold only 5% of management positions; 40% of 20- to 50-year-old women are employed, of whom only 27% are full time; and 20% of the college educated hold jobs. Although the Equal Employment Act issued by the Ministry of Labor in 1987 ensures equal opportunity and treatment for employed women and men, many women still face significant workplace obstacles. Burdens of child care, discriminatory hiring policies, and social prejudice based on Korean traditions hinder women from finding and keeping appropriate jobs.

Second, strong regional rivalries and prejudices so evident in Korea's democratic politics are also reflected in the corporate setting. Korea is composed of nine regions: Hamkyung-do, Pyungan-do, Kyungki-do, Seoul, Kyoungsang-do, Cholla-do, Chungchung-do, Kangwan-do, Jaeju-do. Over the years, strong political conflicts have been especially evident between the Kyoungsang and Cholla regions. An interesting example for this regional imbalance is found in the ratio of ownership among Korean fortune companies: There are 232 owners from the Kyoungsang region compared to only 4 owners from the Cholla region (Kim, 1987). Even when considering the distribution of high-ranking officers in Korea's 100 largest companies, Cholla natives are outnumbered by a ratio of about 4 to 1. Those ratios show how the Kyoungsang region is favored compared to Cholla, especially considering that the population of those regions (relative to the entire Korean population) is 31.4% and 25.2%, respectively. Therefore, there are strong reasons for the indigenous people of Cholla to feel excluded two times more than the Kyoungsang with regard to corporate admissions and promotions (Choi, 1995).

Third, the highly competitive system for university admissions in Korea affects many aspects of society, including workplace diversity and

inclusion. Although more than 90% of high school students proceed to higher education, competition for the top-ranking schools is strenuous. Students face fierce competition for college admission with the test alone. With mounting pressure for maintaining family educational continuity and for saving family face, education for the younger generation is highly stressful. Success or relative failure in the entrance exams to the best universities has lifelong tracking and branding effects, and many companies consciously favor graduates of certain universities.

Finally, Korea's Confucian traditions also emphasize respect for seniority, elders and authority. The Confucian social order is based upon the five human relationships (*oryun*), a concept that has long dictated Korean behavior. Reverence and respect for elders is a long-held social tradition in Korea. Consequently, many Koreans highly value elders and seniority and expect that greater rewards (salary, status) should be given to the aged. Therefore, elders and seniority have vested rights in Korea.

Thus, Korean culture is a prime example for a society that seems homogenous but is actually quite diverse. Several hidden cultural factors influence people's values, attitudes, and behaviors, which either divide or unite various groups in the workplace. Being in the favored group or non-favored group within a certain organization has significant impact on people's feelings and experiences. Being in the same group, same school, and same region often makes people more committed and connected, while group divisions affect workplace diversity and exclusionary practices that might result from that diversity.

DIVERSITY CHARACTERISTIC IN THE WORKPLACE AS THEY RELATE TO EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION

Diversity characteristics vary from one culture or country to the other. Diversity in the workplace refers to distinct categories that have potentially harmful or beneficial effects on employment outcomes. These categories are based on common sense understanding within a specific cultural context (Mor Barak, 2005). Furthermore, each culture or nation is defined by its own unique diversity characteristics; theory also confirms this. According to Hofstede's *cultural theory* (1980; 1997), countries' work-related attitudes should be understood differently based on their cultural context.

The concept of diversity carries a different meaning in different cultures. For example, when Koreans hear the term "diversity," they think about individual differences in skills or personality that make them unique. However, when asked which factors create potentially harmful or beneficial employment outcomes (such as promotion opportunities or pay increases), most Koreans will point to regional origin and school ties. Educational favoritism is particularly evident in the positions held by the alumni who graduated from the top-ranking high schools and universities in Korea. For example, during the fifth and sixth republic of Korea, the alumni of Taegu-Kyoungbook High School were most often selected for high-ranking government positions. Similarly, until recently, the alumni of Kyoungki High School and Seoul National University have occupied the highest positions in both business and government throughout Korean society.

In the Korean cultural context, relevant diversity characteristics include gender, age, birth region, education, and position. Gender is a particularly important diversity characteristic because of the pervasive discrimination against women in employment. Age is also important, but it is likely to have a different impact in Korea compared to Western societies. Older employees are revered and expected to possess wisdom and virtue in Eastern cultures, in contrast to Western cultures that emphasize having up-to-date knowledge and being energetic, characteristics that are typically associated with youth. In the hiring stage, Koreans are more apt to employ younger employees, but regarding promotion opportunities and respect at work, younger employees are more likely to experience discrimination than older employees. Unlike the United States, the population in Korea is ethnically uniform; thus there is no ethnic diversity in Korea. However, given its regional rivalries and prejudices, this study views the place of birth as a unique factor that has an influence on employee perceptions and outcomes. Education and position are also considered unique and significant as markers of diversity, since the "brand" of one's educational degree, as well as his or her social rank, is what Koreans look at first and foremost.

Diversity and Perception of Inclusion

Theory and research indicate an important link between diversity characteristics and inclusion in the workplace. According to *social identity theory*, individuals tend to categorize themselves by means of demographic characteristics such as age, gender, race, and various affiliation groups

(Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel, 1982). People validate their social identity by showing attachment to members of their own social category, and these attachments, in turn, determine the way they interact with others (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Individuals sharing a social identity have similar values and interests so they can communicate more easily and feel more empathy for each other than for members of other social groups (Brewer, 1979; Wilder, 1986). Thus, social identity theory connects diversity characteristics and perception of inclusion because it indicates that employees' perceptions of organizational actions and policies are influenced by their belonging to specific identity groups.

Several studies also document that demographic characteristics contribute to people's perception of inclusion/exclusion in Western culture. Researchers have demonstrated that employees outside the corporate mainstream, such as women and members of ethnic minority groups, are more likely to feel excluded from important workplace interactions and opportunities (Cox, 1994; Ely, 1994; Ibarra, 1993, 1995; Milliken & Martins, 1996). For example, in a series of organizational studies, Mor Barak and her colleagues found that men and Caucasians feel more included in the organizational decision-making processes and social networks than do women and non-Caucasians (Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2001; Mor Barak & Levin, 2002). Additionally, using cross-national samples, Mor Barak et. al. (2001) found that gender, education, and age were important diversity characteristic, and that older employees reported higher levels of perceived inclusion in both cultures.

Although there has been no study directly related to diversity characteristics and perception of inclusion in Korea, actual inclusion and exclusion as evidenced by discrimination due to diversity characteristics can easily be found. As previously noted, discrimination based on gender, region, and educational background is common in Korea's government and corporate settings: 30% of CEOs and 40% of high-ranking officers are graduates of Seoul National University, the top-ranked school in Korea, akin to the status accorded a Harvard graduate, for example, in the United States (*Monthly Chosun*, 12/03). Among the Samsung Group's 1,000 executives, only six of them are women, and the ratio between men and women is 3 to 1. To this day, no women have been employed as executives in the SK Group and Hyundai Motor, the fourth and fifth largest conglomerates in Korea (*Korean Times*, 10/03).

Hence while the context of diversity and its characteristics differs from one culture to another, individual perception of inclusion-exclusion is

significantly affected by being in the majority or minority in Korean organizations. Therefore, the study's first hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between diversity characteristics and perception of inclusion. More specifically:

1a. Korean men are more likely to feel included than women.
1b. Employees from the dominant region (Kyoungsang) are more likely to feel included than employees from the less dominant region (Cholla).
1c. Employees with higher education are more likely to feel included than those with lower education.
1d. Employees with higher positions are more likely to feel included than employees with lower positions.
1e. Older employees are more likely to feel included than younger employees.

DIVERSITY CHARACTERISTICS, EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION, AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Diversity and Organizational Commitment

Several diversity characteristics have received attention as predictors of commitment among U.S. employees. For instance, age has been positively related to commitment (Angle & Perry, 1981; Morris & Sherman, 1981; DeCotiis & Summers, 1987; Luthans, Baack, & Taylor, 1987; Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2001), and higher position has been linked to stronger organizational commitment (Salancik, 1977; Luthans, Baack, & Taylor, 1987). As with these U.S.-based samples, age and position were significant demographic antecedents for organizational commitment in Asian studies as well. From samples of Chinese employees, Chen and Francesco (2000) found that age and position were positively correlated with organizational commitment. Sommer, Bae, and Luthans (1996) found that age and position played the same role for Korean employees.

The findings regarding the connection between gender and organizational commitment are inconsistent. Although Schwartz (1989) found that men had greater commitment to their workplace than women, there is growing evidence that appears to support either no gender differences in

organizational commitment (Aven, Parker, & McEvoy, 1993; Bruning & Snyder, 1983; DeCotiis & Summers, 1987; Chen & Francesco, 2000) or greater commitment among women (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Wahn, 1998). Despite these inconsistent relationships, in this study we hypothesize that Korean men are more committed to their workplace than their female counterparts because of the Korean cultural context that emphasizes a woman's primary responsibility to her spouse and family.

While education has been negatively related to commitment (Koch & Steers, 1978; Angle & Perry, 1981; Morris & Sherman, 1981; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) or not related to commitment elsewhere (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987; Sommer, Bae, & Luthans, 1996; Chen & Francesco, 2000; Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2001), this may be questionable for Korean samples. Given the highly competitive system for its university admissions, individuals who possess university degrees may receive greater rewards and recognition. Contrary to previous findings, therefore, we can expect those who have obtained higher educational degrees to be more committed to their organizations.

Thus, the second hypothesis is:

> Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between diversity characteristics and organizational commitment. More specifically:
>
> 2a. Korean men are more committed to their organizations than women.
> 2b. Employees from the dominant region (Kyoungsang) are more committed to their organization than employees from the less dominant region (Cholla).
> 2c. Employees with higher education are more committed to their organization than those who are less educated.
> 2d. Employees with higher positions are more committed to their organization than those with lower positions.
> 2e. Older employees are more committed to their organization than younger employees.

Perception of Inclusion and Organizational Commitment

There is only limited research on the specific relationship between one's perception of inclusion and organizational commitment, but several studies consider certain variables related to these concepts in a broader sense. From samples of Korean employees, Sommer, Bae, & Luthans (1996) reported that those who received greater support, more autonomy,

and rewards felt more committed. DeCotiis and Summers (1987) found that level of commitment was positively related to autonomy, participative decision making, and access to communication and feedback.

Cumulative evidence also supports the connection between employees' perception of their acceptance by the organization and their commitment (Lawler, 1994, 1995; Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2001). Thus, the more employees feel that they are in the in-group, the more they are committed to their organizations. If they perceive that there is a large discrepancy between their desired and current organizational image, they may cease to be motivated and in turn, lose their commitment to the organization. Therefore, the study's third hypothesis is:

> Hypothesis 3: Perception of inclusion is significantly and positively related to organizational commitment.

JOB PERFORMANCE: ITS LINK TO DIVERSITY CHARACTERISTICS, PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION, AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Diversity and Job Performance

The relationship between diversity and performance may vary depending on the dimension of diversity and the organizational context (Ely, 2004). Consistent findings noted that individuals who differ from the group in terms of gender, race, age, or educational level in an organization tend to receive lower performance evaluations (Judge & Ferris, 1993; Milliken & Martins, 1996; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989; Tsui, Porter, & Egan, 2002; Sackett, DuBois, & Noe, 1991).

The influence of different dimensions of diversity on performance also requires some knowledge of their meaning in the organizational context. In an attempt to understand the inconsistent findings regarding how diversity affects behaviors and organizations, some researchers have begun to view organizational contexts as possible moderators. These organizational contexts include organizational culture (Brickson, 2000; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Jehn & Bezrukova, 2004), strategy (Richard, 2000; Jehn & Bezrukova, 2004), and human resource practices (Jehn & Bezrukova, 2004).

In general, one can conclude that demographic characteristics affect group performance and the relationship between the two should be understood

by noting the specific dimensions of diversity and the contextual characteristics. Based on the review of previous research and the Korean cultural context, this study assumes that men, older employees, employees from the dominant region (Kyoungsang), and those with higher education and higher position are in the corporate mainstream.

Perception of Inclusion and Job Performance

There is significant research that connects the concept of inclusion as well as similar concepts (e.g., participation) to the outcome of job performance. Denison (1990) found that higher levels of employee participation were related to better organizational performance. Stamper and Masterson (2002) suggested that perceived insider status was associated more with citizenship behavior and less with deviancy behavior. Although the specific outcome variables of their study differ from job performance, which is the focus of the current study, their work did illuminate the relation between perceived inclusion and work behavior. Mor Barak and her colleagues specifically identify the term "inclusion" as a "bridge," connecting different demographic characteristics with an individual's behavior in the organization (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998; Mor Barak, 2000). Therefore, once employees identify themselves in the corporate mainstream, they feel included and their perception of inclusion positively affects job performance.

Organizational Commitment and Job Performance

Although several studies have reported a small observed relationship between organizational commitment and job performance (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Cheng, Jiang, & Riley, 2003; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Riketta, 2002), researchers continued to pursue a strong relationship between the two. Some investigators insist that design shortcomings, difficulties in the measurement of performance, and other ambiguities may have contributed to null findings in several studies (Shaw, Delery & Abdulla, 2003). Several researchers have demonstrated that affective commitment is highly related to job performance (Angle & Lawson, 1994; Caruana, Ewing, & Ramaseshan, 1997), and Benkhoff (1997) also concluded that employee commitment is significantly related to performance but that the results vary depending on measurement techniques. From samples of citizens of an Arab country and guest workers, Shaw, Delery, and Abdulla (2003) found a strong relationship between organizational commitment and job performance for citizens, but found a much weaker relationship for the guest workers. Therefore, one can conclude that the organizational

commitment-performance relationship still exists, but we need to consider potential moderators, dimensions of performance, and situational factors. Taken together, our final hypothesis is:

> Hypothesis 4: Diversity characteristics, perceptions of inclusion, and organizational commitment are predictors of job performance. More specifically, diversity characteristics affect job performance, perception of inclusion, and organizational commitment, and all are positively related to job performance.

METHODS

Sample

The sample consisted of 381 employees ranging in age from 19 to 54 years (M = 31.88, SD = 6.28). Almost half the sample (48%) was in their thirties, followed by 38.9% in their twenties. Slightly more than half (54.3%) were men. A majority of the employees held a bachelor's degree: 66.7% had a bachelor's degree, 12.9% with a master's degree, and 0.3% had attained a doctorate. The majority of the study participants were individual contributors (70.3%), followed by 28.6% managers, and 1.1% were executives in the organization. Almost half (42.4%) of the employees were born in Seoul, the capital, 18.3% in the dominant region of Kyoungsang, and 13.5% in the less dominant region of Cholla. Table 1 indicates the main characteristics of the sample.

Sampling Procedures

Employees were asked to report their perceptions about the organization as well as their own work attitudes. To get valid job performance data, supervisors evaluated their employees' performance, and their reports were matched with those of the employees' questionnaires while maintaining strict confidentiality. Both employees and supervisors were asked to return the questionnaires in their sealed white and yellow envelopes, respectively. The color of the envelope allowed researchers to classify employee and supervisor versions of the questionnaire. To match the questionnaires, employees and supervisors were asked to complete a separate cover page with their identifying information. However, participants were assured that this information would be kept in strict confidence and used only for matching. Once the matching was completed, the cover

TABLE 1. The main characteristics of the sample (N = 381)

Characteristic	N	%	Characteristic	N	%
Age (mean = 31.88, s.d. = 6.28)			Marital Status		
10–19	1	.3	Married	200	52.6
20–29	146	38.9	Single	177	46.6
30–39	180	48.0	Divorced	2	.5
40–49	43	11.5	Living with partner	1	.3
50–59	5	1.3			
			Organizational Tenure		
Gender			(mean = 4.98, s.d. = 4.95)		
Female	174	45.7	Less than 1 year	33	8.8
Male	207	54.3	1 + through 5 years	225	60.2
Level of Education			5 + through 10 years	65	17.4
High school	33	8.7	10 + through 15 years	37	9.9
College	43	11.3	15 + through 20 years	8	2.1
University	254	66.7	More than 20 years	6	1.6
Master's	49	12.9	Position		
Ph.D	1	.3	Individual employee	263	70.3
Others	1	.3	Manager	107	28.6
Religion			Executive	4	1.1
None	171	44.9	Region		
Buddism	58	15.2	Seoul	160	42.4
Catholicism	53	13.9	Kyoungsang	69	18.3
Christianity	98	25.7	Chola	51	13.5
Other	1	.3	Other	97	25.7

pages were separated from the original questionnaire in order to maintain confidentiality. Three hundred and eighty-one questionnaires were completed out of the 600 surveys that were distributed, resulting in a 64 percent response rate. Of those, 320 were matched with performance data.

Measures

Diversity Characteristics

Participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, region, education, and position.

Inclusion

Perception of inclusion was measured using a 15-item scale by Mor Barak (2005). This scale was developed to measure the degree to which

individuals feel part of critical organizational processes such as work group engagement, connections to coworkers, access to information, and ability to influence the decision-making process. The scale was created by reverse-scoring three items, then adding all of the 15 items, whereby higher scores reflect perception of stronger inclusion in important organizational processes. It uses a six-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Examples of the questions asked are: "I am able to influence decisions that affect my organization," and "I feel that I have the cooperation of the people in my work group." The scale showed adequate convergent validity ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.05$) with Porter and Lawler's (1968) organizational satisfaction measure, and adequate discriminant validity ($r = -0.32$, $p < 0.05$) with Porter's work alienation scale (Price & Mueller, 1986) and high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83) (Mor Barak, 2005; Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998). The data obtained for the current study indicate high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha of .84.

Organizational Commitment

This variable was measured using Meyer and Allen's (1984) Affective Commitment Scales to assess employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization. The eight-item scale was scored on a six-point Likert scale, with three reverse-scored items to prevent response patterns. Examples of the items are: "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization," "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own," and "I feel emotionally attached to this organization." Studies of the psychometric properties of the ACS have supported its internal consistency. Meyer and Allen (1991) reported Cronbach alphas of 0.88 for library employees and 0.84 for female bank employees. Other previous studies also reported high reliability ranging from 0.81 to 0.85 (Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2001; Yousef, 2000). The scale had a reliability score of .86 for the current sample, indicating high internal consistency.

Job Performance

Job performance was measured with Williams and Anderson's (1991) in-role performance scale. Supervisors were asked to evaluate their employees' performance. The scale contains seven items ranked from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" on a seven-point Likert scale. Five items are positive, such as "This employee adequately completes assigned duties," and "This employee performs tasks that are expected of him/her."

Two items are negative and are scored in reverse, such as "This employee neglects aspects of the job he/she is obligated to perform." The scale was originally validated on 127 employees working in different organizations and showed internal consistency of alpha 0.91. The Cronbach's alpha for the current sample was .90.

Instrument Reliability and Validity

To ensure the content validity of the instrument items, all measures were translated by several Korean doctoral students and back translated by three Korean American doctoral students. Then questionnaires were pre-tested by several Korean doctoral students to test whether wording was appropriate for the Korean cultural context and to discover any items that could be misunderstood. Five employees from the organization were then asked to complete the questionnaire and comment on the clarity and appropriateness of its items. Modifications were made to the final questionnaire based on their comments. Through this process, the authors reworked all the questionnaires to make them applicable and to ensure appropriate wording for the sample and settings. In a reliability test shown in Table 2, Cronbach's Alphas ranged from .84 to .90—well above the recommended minimum value of .70 (Nunnally, 1978).

Data Analysis

For hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2, a number of t-tests, one-way ANOVAs, and correlations were conducted to examine group differences with regard to inclusion and organizational commitment. For hypothesis 3, the relationship between perception of inclusion and organizational commitment was tested using simple linear regression. For Hypothesis 4, a three-step hierarchical regression analysis was performed for job performance with diversity characteristics, inclusion, and organizational commitment as independent variables. In the first step, five diversity characteristics were entered; in the second step, inclusion was entered; and in the third step, organizational commitment.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations

Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations among the continuous measures. Perception of inclusion

TABLE 2. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among continuous variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Perception of Inclusion	56.89	9.98	1			
2. Organizational Commitment	30.94	6.27	.401**	1		
3. Job Performance	38.23	6.19	.244**	.113*	1	
4. Age	31.88	6.28	.133*	.160**	−.135*	1
Number of items			15	8	7	
Reliability (Coefficient alpha)			.84	.86	.90	

*p < .05, **p < .01.

was significantly and positively related to organizational commitment ($r = .401$, $p < .01$) and job performance ($r = .244$, $p < .01$). Organizational commitment was positively related to job performance ($r = .113$, $p < .05$).

Hypotheses Testing

The results of hypotheses 1 and 2 can be found in Table 3. Hypothesis 1 essentially predicted that there would be relationships between five diversity characteristics and the perception of inclusion. The t-test revealed that men (M = 59.28) and managers (M = 59.99) are more likely to feel included than women (M = 54.08) and individual employees (M = 55.53) (Gender: t = 5.17, df = 369, p = .000; Position: t = 3.98, df = 362, p =.000). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the relationship between region and inclusion indicated marginal differences (F [3, 363] = 2.84, p = .04), with residents of the dominant region (Kyoungsang) feeling most included (M = 58.10), followed by the less dominant regions of Seoul (M = 57.31), Cholla (M = 54.69), and other regions (M = 54.13). ANOVA also detected a significant relationship between education and inclusion (F [2, 368] = 19.84, p = .000). As hypothesized, employees with higher education are more likely to feel included than those with less education. The ANOVA post-test, Tukey HSD (honestly significant difference), indicated that significant differences existed among non-bachelor, bachelor, and graduate degree employees, with the latter feeling most included (M = 63.60), followed by bachelor (M = 56.96) and non-bachelor degreed individuals (M = 52.34). Age was significantly and positively related to perception of inclusion ($r = .133$, $p < .05$). Thus, hypothesis 1 was fully supported.

TABLE 3. Inclusion and organizational commitment by gender, position, region, and education

	N	Inclusion Mean (SD)	Organizational Commitment Mean (SD)
Total	381	56.89 (9.98)	30.94 (6.27)
Gender	381	t = 5.17*** (df = 369)	t = 3.18** (df = 373)
Female	174	54.08 (10.12)	30.49 (6.46)
Male	207	59.28 (9.24)	32.63 (6.52)
Position	374	t = 3.98*** (df = 362)	t = 4.54*** (df = 366)
Manger	111	59.99 (9.49)	32.84 (5.25)
Individual employee	263	55.53 (9.94)	29.95 (5.70)
Region	377	F = 2.84* (df = 3,363)	F = 1.74 (df = 3,367)
Seoul	160	57.31 (9.61)	31.13 (6.79)
Kyoungsang	69	58.10 (10.19)	32.07 (6.89)
Chola	51	58.02 (9.70)	33.39 (6.12)
Other	97	54.69 (10.38)	31.16 (6.18)
Education	381	F = 19.84*** (df = 2,368)	F = 2.54 (df = 2,372)
Non- bachelor	76	52.34 (9.54)	31.04 (6.52)
Bachelor	254	56.96 (9.70)	31.45 (6.57)
Graduate	51	63.30 (8.45)	33.53 (6.49)

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Hypothesis 2 predicted the association between diversity characteristics and organizational commitment. As hypothesized, men (M = 32.63) and employees with higher positions (M = 32.84) are more committed to their organization than women (M = 30.49), and employees with lower positions (M = 29.95) (Gender: t = 3.18, df = 373, p = .003; Position: t = 4.54, df = 366, p = .000). Older employees are more committed to their organization than younger employees (r = .160, p < .01). However, no significant differences were found among employees from different regions and different educational backgrounds. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

The result of simple linear regression supported hypothesis 3. Perception of inclusion was significantly and positively related to organizational commitment (β = .401, p = .000) and accounted for 16% of the variance in the outcome variable of organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that diversity characteristics, perception of inclusion, and organizational commitment would be related to job performance.

Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to assess the association of job performance with five diversity characteristics, perception of inclusion, and organizational commitment. In the first step, age ($\beta = -.211$, $p < .001$) and position ($\beta = .167$, $p < .01$) were found to be significant predictors of job performance among the five diversity characteristics. The equation for these variables was significant (F [7,291] = 2.727, $p < .01$), and they accounted for 8% of the variance. In the second step, perception of inclusion was entered, and the results showed a significant increase to R^2 (F [8,290] = 4.552, $p < .001$). Perception of inclusion ($\beta = .347$, $p < .001$) emerged as the strongest predictor of job performance. These variables explained an additional 11% of the variance, and thus the model at this step accounted for 19% of the variance. In the final step, organizational commitment was added, resulting in a non-significant one percent increase to the R^2. Overall, the regression model was statistically significant (F [9,289] = 4.059, $p < .001$) and explained 20% of the variance.

Age ($\beta = -.213$, $p < .001$) was strongly but negatively related to job performance. As hypothesized, position ($\beta = 0.173$, $p < .01$) and perception of inclusion ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < .001$) were positively related to job performance. Contrary to the hypothesis, the association between organizational commitment and job performance was not significant. Thus, younger employees, employees with higher position, and employees who had a stronger sense of inclusion performed better. The results of hierarchical regression are reported in Table 4.

DISCUSSION

The goals of this study were to identify critical and unique diversity characteristics that are related to inclusion and commitment, to examine the relationship between perceptions of inclusion and organizational commitment, and to investigate how these elements influence job performance in the Korean cultural context. The study's findings indicated that diversity characteristics were indeed significantly related to perceived inclusion and organizational commitment. Gender, position, and age were commonly related to perception of inclusion and organizational commitment. Education and region were related to perception of inclusion but not to organizational commitment. Generally, men, older employees, employees from the dominant region (Kyoungsang), and employees with higher education and higher position felt that they were in the corporate mainstream. Also, men, older employees, and employees with higher

TABLE 4. Hierarchical regression analysis for job performance

Independent Variables	Job Performance			
	β	T	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1			.08**	.08**
Gender (Female = 1; Male = 2)	.041	.627		
Region (dummy-coded)				
Seoul or not	−.131	−1.849		
Kyoungsang or not	−.009	−.129		
Chola or not	−.017	−.250		
Education	.028	.447		
Position	.167	2.372**		
Age	−.211	−3.304***		
Step 2			.19**	.11**
Gender	.009	.140		
Region (dummy-coded)				
Seoul or not	−.130	−1.878		
Kyoungsang or not	−.038	−.566		
Chola or not	−.046	−.716		
Education	.030	.481		
Position	.174	2.495**		
Age	−.213	−3.418***		
Perception of Inclusion	.347	6.053***		
Step 3			.20**	.01
Gender	.008	.131		
Region (dummy-coded)				
Seoul or not	−.127	−1.813		
Kyoungsang or not	−.038	−.567		
Chola or not	−.048	−.741		
Education	.029	.467		
Position	.173	2.473**		
Age	−.213	−3.409***		
Perception of Inclusion	.254	4.095***		
Organizational Commitment	.325	1.585		

**p < .01 ***p < .001.

position were more committed to the organization. Consistent with previous findings, men (Ely, 1994; Ibarra, 1993, 1995; Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2001; Mor Barak & Levin, 2002) and employees with higher education (Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2001) felt more included than women and employees with lower education. For Korean employees, gender and position emerged as critical diversity characteristics, and region and position emerged as unique diversity characteristics. In addition,

some diversity characteristics had direct effects on job performance. Among the five diversity characteristics, age had a negative effect on job performance while position had a positive effect on job performance.

As in Western cultures, gender was found to be an important diversity characteristic in the Korean cultural context. Although position was not often mentioned as an important diversity characteristic in the West, it was positively related to all three variables for the Korean sample. It is interesting but not surprising when we consider the hierarchical nature of the Koreans' culture. Age was also commonly related to all three variables, but it had a negative effect on job performance. This effect was contrary to our hypothesis, but we must draw definite conclusions cautiously since most samples were clustered in the 20–39 year olds.

One of the most important findings was that the perceived level of inclusion was strongly predictive of both organizational commitment and job performance. This result highlights the importance of inclusion in the work place, as indicated by previous studies (Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2001; Mor Barak & Levin, 2002). In line with this previous work, the concept of inclusion truly connects diversity characteristics to employees' commitment and performance. People identify themselves based on their diversity characteristics, and this actual diversity would then affect their perception of inclusion.

In sum, people's perceptions about their organizations can be influenced by their actual diversity characteristics, even though diversity characteristics differ from one culture to another. The way employees feel about their overall work environment may affect their organizational commitment and eventually their performance. The findings suggested that when individual workers feel their values and norms are supported and that they are treated fairly with inclusion in various organizational processes, their sense of commitment increases and their job performance improves.

Limitations and Strengths

The first limitation of this study stems from the limited external validity of the sampling methodology. The study sample consisted of employees from one of the largest corporations in Korea. Considering that this corporation has typically favorable work conditions, and its employees' income levels are relatively higher than those of other Korean employees, these results may not be generalizeable to smaller corporations and may not be indicative of the overall Korean culture. Moreover, the study

participants were relatively young with limited organizational tenure, and the majority of them held university degrees of bachelor or higher. These unique characteristics with limited distributions of values can make it difficult to uncover relationship between variables.

Second, the study was limited to five demographic differences without considering other individual differences and organizational characteristics. Some observers note that social science researchers often measure only demographic differences and fail to assess other individual differences such as personality, skills, personal identities, and cognitions of team members (Jackson & Joshi, 2004). Recently, researchers supported the moderating effects of organizational context (Jackson & Joshi, 2004; Jehn & Bezrukova, 2004) in the relationship between diversity and performance.

Finally, the cross-sectional nature of this study limits our ability to make causal inferences from the data. Koeske and Kirk (1995), however, note that specifying relationships *a priori* can improve the ability to draw causal inferences from cross-sectional data. The hypotheses tested in this study were based on existing theoretical literature and the Korean cultural context, and were specified *a priori*, therefore allowing somewhat more confidence in the findings than might otherwise have been possible. Furthermore, the results of the current study were generally consistent with those of similar work in other countries (Mor Barak, Findler, & Wind, 2001; Mor Barak & Levin, 2002; Mor Barak et al., 2003), suggesting good reliability and cross-cultural relevance.

Despite these limitations, the present study has strengths that may offer important research contributions to the study of diversity, and to our understanding of multicultural and occupational social work. The study provides a valuable opportunity to explore a relatively uncharted territory in social work: understanding what Helen Harris Perlman called "the forgotten role of work" in social work (1982), with particular emphasis on cross-cultural differences. Moreover, due to the traditional secrecy of Korean organizations and the perceived homogeneity of the country, the information obtained here provides a rare window into the diverse nature of the Korean work force. Thus, this work helps develop the knowledge base with regards to the experiences and needs of Korean employees, an understudied population. In addition, the objective measure of job performance makes it possible to overcome the limitations of mono-method bias. Mono-method bias (common method error variance) can result when the same individual serves as the source of subjective data for both the independent and dependent variables. In this study, to obtain valid job

performance data, supervisors were asked to evaluate the employees' performance. Thus, using an objective measure of job performance strengthens the validity of this study.

Implications for Organizations and for Social Work Managers

The results have important implications for organizations and management in work settings. Considering that organizational commitment and job performance have long been key factors to organizational effectiveness, the results provided rationale for organizations to implement more conscious efforts to meet the needs of employees of diverse backgrounds in order to enable them to perform better. Organizational diagnosis, such as the one conducted here, can assist managers in understanding what they need to do to improve their organizational climate. This is in line with the definition of occupational social work: the utilization of social work expertise in meeting the needs of workers, and in serving the broader goals of the work organization (Akabas & Kurzman, 2005).

Highlighting the importance of truly inclusive and supportive work environments, the results suggest that organizations should incorporate and practice social work values to become successful. The findings provided helpful policy recommendations for the government and corporations to implement more conscious efforts to promote inclusive and fair workplace policies and practices (Mor Barak, 2005).

The study found significant diversity differences within the Korean cultural context that are related to inclusion and commitment. With the growing relevance of international social work, it is important for social workers to have a broad understanding of what diversity means in different countries. Managers who work with a diverse workforce and/or in environments that are different from their own need to understand how individual differences rooted in the local culture may affect the workers' perceptions as well as their work behaviors and which types of differences are most consequential. Based on this understanding, managers will have to initiate a deliberate effort to accommodate the needs of diverse groups and to design human resource practices so that various groups can be valued and coexist and, as a result, individuals from diverse backgrounds will be able to contribute their best and be recognized for their excellence.

Implications for Future Research

Several avenues for future research appear promising. Given the limitations of generalizability, replication of this study utilizing samples from

other types of organizations is needed. Research that compares employees from public and private organizations as well as employees from small and large corporations in the same culture is of interest. Future research needs to examine the effects of various individual differences and to consider elements of the organizational context as possible moderators and mediators. In addition, future research needs to employ longitudinal designs to determine whether variables effect change over time and, if they do, whether this change is different across different cultures.

The current project employed a supervisor-rated measure of in-role performance. Future research might incorporate multiple measures of both subjective and objective performance, since performance is a multifaceted variable. Studies that examine the relationship between organizational commitment and extra role performance and that compare supervisor-rated performance with self-rated performance are needed. Finally, it would be important for future research to explore the antecedents to inclusion and to focus on the relationships within the dyad of the supervisor and employees and its impact on job satisfaction, commitment and performance.

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