

Table 2. Results of multilevel regression analyses.

Parameter	Perceived inclusion (mediator)			Absenteeism		
	B	SE (B)	t	B	SE (B)	t
Intercept	4.03	0.05	88.89**	9.80	1.75	5.58**
Gender (0 = female; 1 = male)	-0.05	0.06	-0.78	-1.96	0.56	-3.49**
Staff type (0 = support; 1 = education)	0.03	0.06	0.47	-1.22	0.55	-2.22*
Gender dissimilarity	-0.06	0.03	-1.81†	0.20	0.27	0.47
Perceived diversity climate	0.17	0.03	5.63**			
Gender Dissimilarity x Perceived Diversity Climate	0.07	0.03	2.28*			
Perceived inclusion				-0.98*	0.43	-2.30*
<i>Overall model statistics</i>						
Level 1 variance			0.34			27.41
Level 2 variance			0.01			0.26
-2LL			702.19			2,442.94

Note. Full maximum likelihood estimation was used ($N = 397$ individuals from 132 work groups). Table displays unstandardized regression weights.

† $p < .10$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

interaction term was construed based on these standardized scores (e.g., Cohen et al., 2003; Table 2 shows the results).

Our hypothesized model fitted the data well, $\chi^2/df = .58$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = 1.00. Confirming Hypothesis 1, this relationship was moderated by perceived diversity climate, $b = 0.07$, $t(260) = 2.28$, $p = .02$. An inspection of the simple slopes (see Figure 2) revealed that for group members who perceived their work group to have a negative diversity climate, gender dissimilarity was negatively related to perceived inclusion, $b = -0.12$, $t(260) = -2.77$, $p < .01$. For group members who perceived their work group to have a positive diversity climate, gender dissimilarity was unrelated to the extent to which they perceived to be included, $b = 0.01$, $t(260) = 0.29$, $p = .77$. There also appeared to be a positive main effect of perceived diversity climate on perceived inclusion, $b = 0.17$, $t(260) = 5.63$, $p < .01$.

Turning to the right pane of Table 2, we found that perceived inclusion was negatively related to absenteeism, $b = -0.98$, $t(260) = -2.30$, $p = .02$. This confirms Hypothesis 2. Because absenteeism was a transformed variable in our model, we performed an additional analysis to demonstrate

how perceptions of inclusion were related to the *actual* number of days that people were absent (i.e., the untransformed variable). For each point in the range of the inclusion scale (1–5), we calculated the corresponding number of (untransformed) absence days (assuming all other variables were kept constant) and plotted this in Figure 3.

In addition, the bootstrapping results indicated the presence of a conditional indirect effect, supporting Hypothesis 3. That is, for people experiencing a negative diversity climate, gender dissimilarity was positively related to absenteeism through lower levels of perceived inclusion, $g = 0.12$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.31]. For people experiencing a positive diversity climate, the indirect effect of gender dissimilarity on absenteeism through inclusion was not significant, $g = -0.01$, 95% CI [-0.11, 0.07].²

Finally, to test whether our estimated effects differed for men and women we conducted a multigroup analysis on our proposed model (Vandenberg, 2002). This is a two-step procedure. First, effect sizes are estimated separately for men and women. Second, the differences between these estimates are tested for statistical

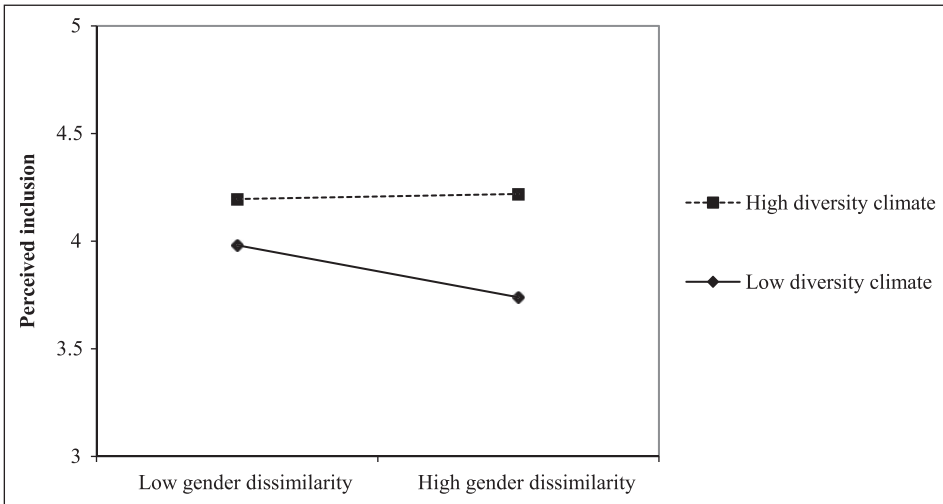


Figure 2. Perceived inclusion as a function of gender dissimilarity and perceived diversity climate.

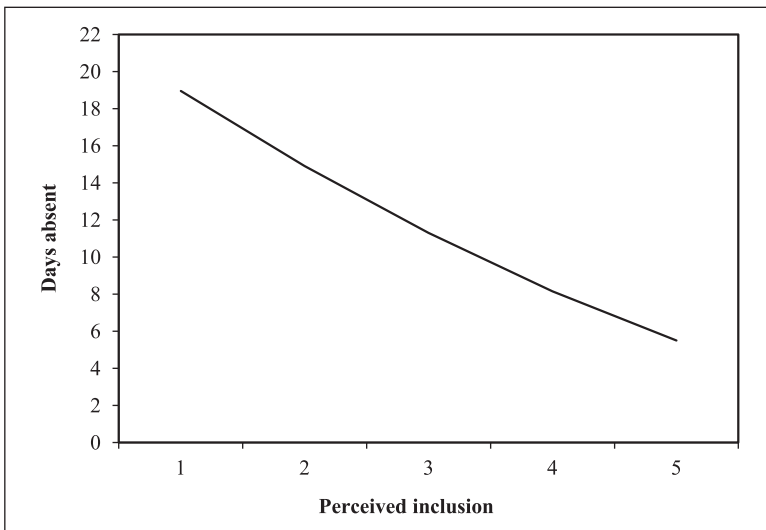


Figure 3. Days absent (untransformed) as a function of perceived inclusion.

significance. The results (see Table 3) indicated that all of the estimated effects were equivalent for men and women.

Discussion

Due to increased labor market participation of women, organizations are becoming progressively gender diverse (Bureau of Labor Statistics,

2012). While having both men and women represented in the organization may offer important benefits, research indicates that individual employees may struggle with being different from others (Pfeffer, 1983; Tsui & Gutek, 1999). The present study aimed to provide further insight into how and under which conditions being different from others in terms of gender may not be problematic.

Table 3. Regression coefficients for men ($N = 157$) and women ($N = 240$) separately.

Relationship	Men		Women		Z-difference
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	
Gender dissimilarity → Inclusion	-0.07	0.06	-0.05	0.04	0.23 <i>ns</i>
Perceived diversity climate → Inclusion	0.19	0.06	0.16	0.04	-0.37 <i>ns</i>
Gender Diss. x Perc. Div. Climate → Inclusion	0.08	0.05	0.05	0.04	-0.43 <i>ns</i>
Gender dissimilarity → Absenteeism	0.22	0.28	0.38	0.41	0.32 <i>ns</i>
Inclusion → Absenteeism	-1.16	0.37	-0.83	0.70	0.41 <i>ns</i>

Consistent with predictions derived from self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) we found that gender dissimilarity was negatively related to the extent to which employees perceived to be included in their work group. In addition, we found that this negative effect was more pronounced when the group was perceived not to be open towards and appreciative of gender differences (i.e., to have a negative diversity climate). Finally, we found evidence for a conditional indirect effect of gender dissimilarity on absenteeism through inclusion. That is, being different from other group members in terms of gender was associated with higher absenteeism through lower levels of perceived inclusion, but only when the group was perceived to have a negative diversity climate.

Implications

The present work extends previous research on gender dissimilarity in a number of ways. First, whereas existing dissimilarity studies have almost exclusively focused on how dissimilarity affects the extent to which the *individual* psychologically connects to the *group* (Guillaume et al., 2012), the current research suggests that dissimilarity may also affect the extent to which the *group* is perceived to be willing to include the *individual*. This is a crucial extension of previous dissimilarity research, as it explicitly focuses on the role that groups play in shaping individual group members' work experience. This novel focus is likely to improve our understanding of how being dissimilar affects individuals, and seems a promising road for future dissimilarity research.

Second, the present study offers further insights into under which conditions the negative effects of dissimilarity within work groups may be attenuated. Specifically, our results suggest that the perception of a positive diversity climate might help to overcome the potential negative effects of being dissimilar. This finding not only advances dissimilarity research, but also may inform organizations as to how to reduce employee absences. In this regard, results from the diversity literature suggest that organizations may establish a positive diversity climate by offering diversity awareness training programs (Homan, Buengeler, Eckhoff, van Ginkel, & Voelpel, 2015), setting up diversity task forces (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006), and including diversity in organizational mission statements (Rau & Hyland, 2003).

Third, our study advances existing dissimilarity research by demonstrating that gender dissimilarity, under conditions of a negatively perceived diversity climate, is positively related to the number of days that people are absent from work. As such, we established that gender dissimilarity not only relates to self-reported outcome measures (as has been demonstrated in previous research; see Guillaume et al., 2012), but is also associated with an objectively assessed work outcome. This finding further underlines the importance for organizations to effectively manage gender differences at work.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

A notable strength of the present research concerns our research design. We were able to

combine responses to our questionnaire with data from the organization's personnel administration. Such a multiple-source dataset greatly reduces the likelihood of common method variance, allowing for drawing more valid conclusions about the relationships between our measures (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

In addition, having access to the organization's personnel administration allowed us to operationalize dissimilarity in an objective and precise manner. Whereas in other studies (e.g., Hofhuis et al., 2012; Jansen et al., 2015) a dichotomous, and arguably rather unsophisticated, distinction is made between majority and minority members (or between racial groups, e.g., McKay et al., 2007; Wolfson et al., 2011), in the present research we operationalized dissimilarity in a more precise manner by calculating for each respondent how much he or she is different from his or her direct colleagues in terms of gender. We consider this an important adaptation, as this allowed for a more refined test of our hypothesized relationships.

While the multisource nature of our data is a considerable strength, at the same time one may posit that our data were cross-sectional, inhibiting our ability to draw conclusions regarding the causality of the relations examined. For example, whether our respondents were more absent and as a result felt less included in their work group, or whether lower levels of perceived inclusion resulted in more absences cannot be determined with our data. As such, we believe that future research may elaborate on our findings by adopting a longitudinal or experimental research design.

Furthermore, while the results of our multi-group analysis indicated that all of the estimated effects were equivalent for men and women, they also revealed that most regression weights for men and women separately were not significant. This could be due to a loss in statistical power. Accordingly, we think that future research may more adequately test the separate effects for men and women by sampling a larger number of respondents.

In addition, future studies may further clarify under which conditions dissimilarity effects may be stronger for men or women. As already hinted

at earlier, previous research is inconsistent as to whether dissimilarity effects are stronger for men than for women (cf. Chattopadhyay et al., 2015). Interestingly, both the prediction that men are more affected by dissimilarity than women and the opposite prediction that women are more affected by being dissimilar than men depart from the same assumption: men are a higher status group than women. Researchers predicting that dissimilarity is more consequential for men than for women continue to posit that members of high-status groups may feel more threatened when they are more dissimilar (Chatman & O'Reilly, 2004; Tsui et al., 1992). In contrast, researchers predicting that dissimilarity has a stronger impact on women than men continue the argument by positing that members of low-status groups, when placed in a numerical minority, are subject to higher visibility, scrutiny, and performance standards than members of high-status groups (Roth, 2004). As already mentioned, in the present research we did not find any gender differences in our hypothesized relationships. Considering the previous arguments, this could be because in our specific sample, there were no perceived status differences between men and women. Yet another explanation is that the two processes described before may have operated at the same time. That is, while for men dissimilarity may have been positively associated with perceived levels of threat, for women being more dissimilar could have been accompanied with increased concern for how one is evaluated. Thus, future dissimilarity research may further clarify under which conditions being dissimilar will be more consequential for either men or women, by measuring the extent to which men and women are perceived to differ in status and by simultaneously considering how dissimilarity is related to threat and concern for evaluations by others.

Related to this, dissimilarity research may be further refined by taking into account the moderating role of occupational demography. In this respect, research assuming a compositional approach to diversity has found that occupational gender composition moderated the negative effect of team gender diversity on performance,

such that the effect was weaker in gender-balanced occupations (Joshi & Roh, 2009). A similar effect may be expected with regard to gender dissimilarity. That is, dissimilarity may have a stronger impact on employees in professions that are less gender-balanced. Applying this prediction to the present research, we can expect that the dissimilarity effects we found would have been even stronger if we had focused on an organization that operates in a less gender-balanced sector than the specific one we considered (i.e., higher education). In addition, whereas in male-dominated occupations one might expect that being different from others in terms of gender is especially consequential for women, in female-dominated occupations gender dissimilarity is likely to have the strongest effects for men. Future research may provide an adequate test of these predictions by systematically sampling respondents from different occupational settings.

Together, the present research substantially enhances our understanding of how individual employees are affected by gender dissimilarity. It demonstrates that being different sometimes implies being more absent, and highlights that establishing a positive diversity climate is essential to make gender diversity beneficial to organizations and their employees.

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Notes

1. Considering that absenteeism is a count variable, which is typically not normally distributed, scholars (e.g., Bacharach et al., 2010) have argued it is most appropriate to estimate a Poisson model. Yet, because we performed a square-root transformation and used multilevel modelling, which allows to treat count variables as continuous variables (B. O. Muthén, 2011), we decided not to estimate a Poisson model.
2. We also estimated an alternative model to check for the presence of feedback effects. Specifically, we assessed whether a model in which inclusion and absenteeism were switched in their position provided a better fit to the data than our hypothesized model. The results indicated that this alternative model yielded a significantly worse fit to our data than our hypothesized model, $\Delta\chi^2 = 37.82, p < .01$. In addition, the bootstrapping results indicated that, this time, there was no conditional indirect effect. That is, regardless of the level of perceived diversity climate, gender dissimilarity was not related to inclusion through absenteeism. These results suggest that feedback effects did not play a substantial role in our model.

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