

Abstract

This study examined how an organization's decision to implement a diversity program affects people's perceptions of that organization. More specifically, is a simple commitment to diversity enough to elicit institutional trust and organizational commitment from its members, or do trust and commitment depend upon the motive for adopting that initiative? Specifically, this study focused on moral motives ("It is the right thing to do") as compared to pragmatic motives ("It is the practical thing to do"). Adapted versions of the Affective Commitment Scale (Meyer & Allen, 1990) and the Trust in Organization Scale (Robinson, 1996) were used to measure organizational commitment and institutional trust. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions in which they were asked to read 1) a hypothetical policy supporting diversity implementation for a moral reason, 2) a hypothetical policy supporting diversity implementation for a pragmatic reason, or 3) a hypothetical policy supporting the implementation of a policy unrelated to diversity. They were asked to answer questions about their perceptions of the organization's decision and motives, as well as their support for the proposed hypothetical policy. It was hypothesized that a moral motive for diversity implementation would elicit greater commitment and trust than a pragmatic motive, and that the diversity policy would elicit more support (regardless of the motive) than the control policy. Additionally, participants were asked to answer questions regarding their attitudes toward diversity (Fuentes et al., 2000). It was hypothesized that attitudes toward diversity would be positively associated with participant support for the diversity policy, regardless of the motive for the policy. This hypothesis was partially supported, as attitudes toward diversity were only significantly associated with the diversity policy using the pragmatic motive. All other hypotheses were not supported by the data. Keywords: *organizational commitment, institutional trust, moral, pragmatic, diversity*

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