
Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations

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CHAPTER 9

INCLUSION AT WORK

A Conceptual Model of Factors that Contribute to Climates for Inclusion

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Research on inclusion in organizations has yet to identify the primary factors that contribute to the development and maintenance of climates for inclusion. The present research addresses this gap through the development of a comprehensive conceptual model depicting the critical factors that contribute to inclusive climates, and their proposed relationships to each other. Factors were identified through a comprehensive literature review, and affirmed through input from organizational climate, leadership, and inclusion subject matter experts. The final model focuses on behaviors that are malleable, emphasizing the role of leader and group behaviors in shaping climates for inclusion. The importance of top-down cultural change to support the development and maintenance of specific climates is discussed, as are applications of the research at multiple levels (e.g., leader, group, and organizational). This research provides a foundation for future empirical research on the nature of relationships among factors that foster, maintain, and improve a climate for inclusion.

A climate for inclusion emerges when organizational members feel recognized for having a unique identity, integrated into the group, and valued for their contributions to the team (Ferdman, 2014, 2017; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011).

Inclusive climates have been identified as a way to leverage and reap the benefits of diversity within organizations (Cox & Blake, 1991; Stahl, Mäkelä, Zander, & Maznevski, 2010). Specifically, scholars suggest that climates for inclusion provide a means for diverse voices to be heard and used in decision-making, providing decision makers with access to a larger pool of knowledge, skills, and experiences (Homan, van Knippenberg, van Kleef, & De Dreu, 2007; Mitchell, Boyle, Parker, Giles, & Chiang, 2015; Nishii, 2013; Reagans, Zuckerman, & McEvily, 2004; van Knippenberg, & Schippers, 2007; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Furthermore, organizational members in inclusive environments—especially those who belong to historically marginalized groups—report higher feelings of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and general well-being (Mor Barak et al., 2016; Nishii, 2013). Due to the positive benefits for both organizations and individuals, research on fostering climates for inclusion is an important avenue for organizational researchers to pursue.

Although the importance of inclusion is clear, the factors which contribute to the growth and sustainment of a climate for inclusion have not been thoroughly identified. In general, much of organizational climate research has focused on identifying and measuring climate itself and the outcomes that follow, with less emphasis on the antecedents that cultivate and sustain climate. Thus, not much is known about what precedes the emergence of organizational climate generally (Ehrhart, Schneider, & Macey, 2014), or climate for inclusion specifically (Shore et al., 2011). To advance research on inclusive climates, the goal of the current research is to develop a conceptual model which identifies critical factors that contribute to inclusion, understand how those factors interact to create climate, and guide future research to test the relationships specified within the model.

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND INCLUSION

Organizational climate is “the shared meaning organizational members attach to the events, policies, practices, and procedures they experience and the behaviors they see being rewarded, supported, and expected” (Ehrhart et al., 2014, p. 69). Early climate research focused on molar, or generic organizational climates, which describe an overall sense of well-being at an organization. However, the study of molar climates led to inconsistent results and a general lack of theoretical clarity (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013; Schneider, González-Romá, Ostroff, & West, 2017). In 1975, Schneider advanced the field of climate research with the introduction of focused climates (Schneider, 1975). A focused climate communicates a clear message about what is important through the alignment of policies, practices, procedures, and reward systems (Ehrhart et al., 2014). Ongoing research on focused climates—or the study of climates “for” something—yields evidence for relationships to specific outcomes, strengthening the validity of climate research. Additionally, the study of focused climates highlights opportunities to enhance performance by identifying specific organizational practices and

behaviors associated with desired outcomes (Ehrhart et al., 2014; Lynn & Ratcliff, 2018; Schneider et al., 2013).

Climate for Inclusion

As previously stated, a climate for inclusion is a type of focused climate where organizational members feel recognized for having a unique identity, integrated into the group, and valued for their contributions to the team (Ferdman, 2014; 2017; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011). Within such an environment, people of diverse backgrounds are invited to bring their whole self to work as they contribute to the organization's mission (Ferdman, 2017). Thus, inclusion builds on traditional diversity efforts—with their emphasis on representation and equality (Kossek & Zonia, 1993)—to focus on the ability of all group members to be seen, heard, and have their capabilities leveraged.

Grounded in the “integration-and-learning” perspective adopted by Ely and Thomas (2001), inclusive environments value diversity as a resource for learning and adaptive change which, when leveraged, can lead to beneficial outcomes for individuals and organizations. Consistent with our view on inclusion, this perspective “emphasizes the value that people with a variety of differences bring to the organization (Ferdman, 2014), and not just the “rightness” of supporting equal opportunity” (Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018, p. 177). In 2011, Shore and colleagues proposed a framework for workgroup inclusion that built on Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT; Brewer, 1991). ODT states that individuals in groups strive to balance their need for belongingness and uniqueness through “an optimal level of inclusion” (Brewer, 1991, p. 477). Inclusion therefore satisfies competing needs to feel accepted by the group (via decision-making participation and information sharing), as well as valued and respected for one's uniqueness (via openness to different approaches, respect for differing cultural perspectives, and opportunity for voice in the workplace; see Boekhorst, 2015; Shore et al., 2011, 2018).

Research has long shown that organizations can implicitly make members, especially those who are also members of historically marginalized groups, feel rejected (e.g., by not sharing information or inviting input; see Morrison & Milkien, 2000). In contrast, inclusive organizations provide opportunities for all group members to be heard and have influence. Thus, an inclusive climate emerges when all employees possess access to need-to-know information (Mor Barak, 2015; Mor Barak & Daya, 2014; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999), believe that their ideas and perspectives are both influential and actively sought (Mor Barak, 2015; Mor Barak & Daya, 2014; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2018), and are given opportunities to contribute to the work of the group (Ferdman, 2017; U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, 2011; Shore et al., 2011). Additionally, feeling respected and valued is a theme that runs through most conceptualizations of inclusion (Boekhorst, 2015; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2018).

Drawing on these existing definitions and research, we identified the following definitional elements from the climate for inclusion literature which served as a foundation for the current effort; for the purpose of this research, individuals in an inclusive climate are believed to share perceptions that all group members are: (a) valued, (b) integrated into the team, (c) recognized and leveraged, and (d) enabled to participate to their full potential.

Organizational Climate Antecedents and Existing Models of Inclusion

Existing conceptual models of inclusion antecedents highlight the role of leaders in influencing the development of climates for inclusion. Gotsis and Grimani (2016) posit that servant leaders instill feelings of belongingness and uniqueness among diverse employees by forming strong relationships with followers, building their self-confidence, attending to their needs, and encouraging their development. According to Gotsis and Grimani (2016), this orientation toward service prompts inclusive practices, which activate subordinate perceptions of workgroup inclusion, leading to higher levels of organizational identification, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), and feelings of psychological well-being. Similarly, Boekhorst's (2015) conceptual framework draws on social learning theory to emphasize the power of leader role-modeling in influencing followers and shaping climate. Boekhorst (2015) further explores the positive impact of reinforcing systems and processes on followers' vicarious learning of inclusive behaviors. Specifically, she suggests higher levels of vicarious learning will strengthen the relationship between leader role modeling and a climate for inclusion when (a) organizational reward systems prompt inclusive behaviors; (b) the group is large and diverse resulting in greater opportunity to practice and observe inclusive behaviors; and (c) authentic leaders and followers share goals related to inclusion which encourage inclusive actions by followers. Like Boekhorst (2015), Shore and colleagues (2018) emphasize the importance of an organization-wide commitment to inclusion. According to their model of inclusive organizations, a high commitment to inclusion practices and processes across the organization (i.e., psychological safety; involvement in the work group; feeling respected and valued; influence on decision making; authenticity; and recognizing, honoring, and advancing of diversity) will foster employee perceptions of inclusion, climates for inclusion, and retention and expansion of talent.

Unique Contributions of Present Research

There has been relatively little research on the antecedents that can be purposefully leveraged so as to intentionally activate inclusive climates (Ehrhart et al., 2014; Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009). Building on earlier work, this research adds specificity to existing conceptualizations of inclusion; in particular, we expand on prior identification of actions leaders can engage in to foster inclusive cli-

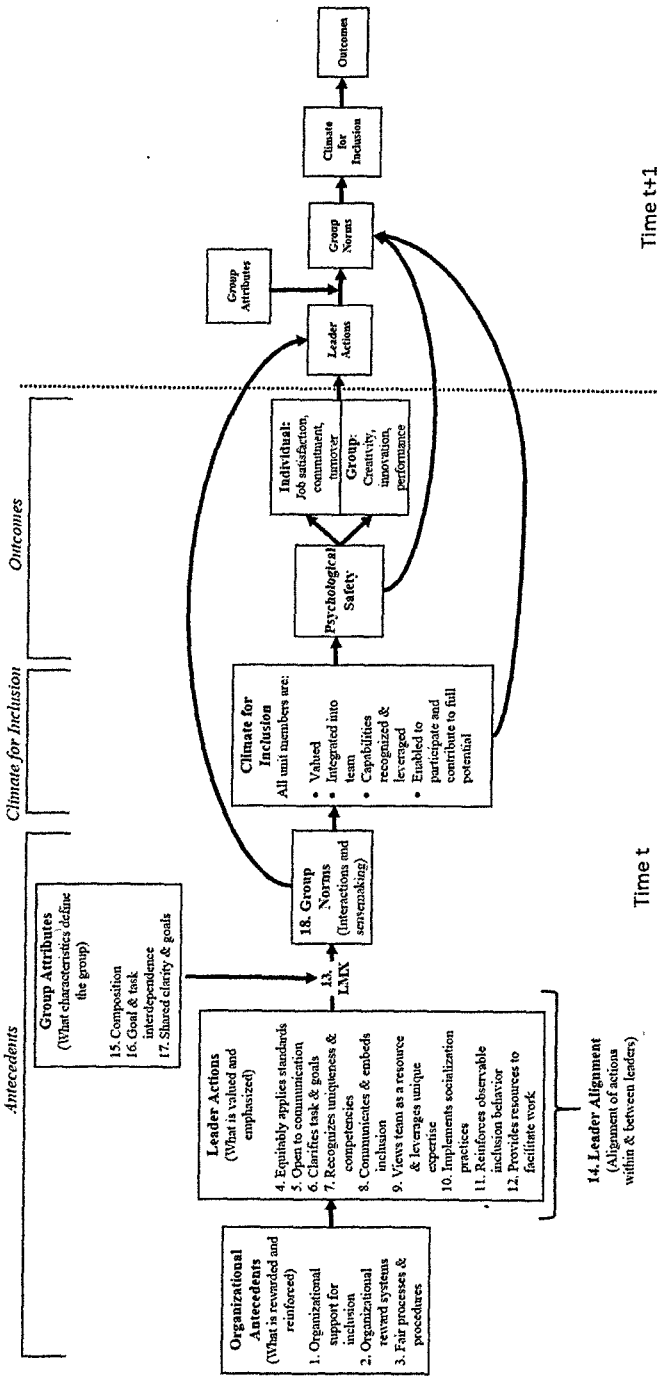


FIGURE 9.1. Climate for Inclusion Conceptual Model. Depicts proposed relationships between antecedents, climate for inclusion, and potential outcomes. Model also depicts recursive relationships as inclusive climates develop over time. Recursive effects on organizational antecedents are not depicted due to their relative permanence compared to other factors.

mates (Boekhorst, 2015; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016) answering calls for specificity in leader behaviors that are interpreted by employees as inclusive (Shore et al., 2018). Our proposed conceptual model also serves a unique purpose by focusing on behaviors and practices that are amenable to change. Thus, the model identifies the key antecedents of a climate for inclusion that can be leveraged to improve outcomes for individuals and organizations. Finally, unlike existing depictions of inclusion, our model illustrates the reciprocity that exists within the organization during the development of organizational climate, emphasizing the co-creation of climate by leaders and followers over time (see Figure 9.1).

A MODEL OF INCLUSIVE CLIMATES

Overview of Conceptual Model

To develop the initial conceptual model, we conducted a large-scale literature review to identify the factors that are most likely to influence a climate for inclusion. Traditional research on diversity, organizational climate and culture, and inclusion were reviewed, as well as literatures that could expand our understanding of inclusion (e.g., ethical leadership). We organized this literature review by creating lines of inquiry (LOIs) based on known categories of organizational climate antecedents: individual, group, leader, and organizational factors¹. We examined 689 unique articles and identified approximately 70 factors that could potentially relate to a climate for inclusion. Based on input from a preeminent climate expert (Schneider, Personal Communication, July 18–19, 2017), we reduced these factors to a smaller subset of key factors which together inform the development of a climate for inclusion. As part of this process, we evaluated the overlap between factors, considered the degree of correspondence with definitional elements of inclusive climates (e.g., value, integration, recognition of capabilities, and enabled to participate to full potential), and narrowed our focus to observable group-level antecedents. The result was a draft conceptual model that identified 24 factors critical to the development of a climate for inclusion.

This initial model was then subjected to an iterative process of critique and consensus with an additional group of leading organizational climate, leadership, and inclusion experts². The end result is a revised list of 18 key-factors which

¹ Although antecedents of climate are generally understudied (Ehrhart et al., 2014; Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009), reviews of the climate literature suggest three general categories of factors that shape focused climates: individual, group, and organizational factors (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009). Additionally, leaders have been shown to have a strong effect across many climate types, and particular styles of leadership have been linked to the development of specific focused climates (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009; Schneider et al., 2017, p. 474). Given that leadership is one of the most researched predictors of organizational climate we view it as an additional category of climate antecedent, along with individual, group, and organizational factors.

² Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) were selected based on the number of publications in top-tier journals in specified areas, and their ability to demonstrate application of their research findings. The

are organized below by three³ of the common higher-level antecedent categories: organizational, leader, and group factors. The final conceptual model depicts relationships between antecedents, climate for inclusion, and proposed outcomes. Additionally, it attempts to capture the recursive nature of climate by illustrating changes in climate perceptions across time. Because climate emerges from interactions among factors across multiple organizational levels, it was difficult to draw precise relationships between factors. Given this, we only identify major relationships, and specified pathways need further exploration and validation. It is our intent for the final model to contribute to the limited literature on inclusive climates by generating viable research questions to be tested in future research. Contributions to practice are also anticipated as key-factors were selected, in-part, due to their potential for targeted intervention.

Antecedents

The following sections describe the primary antecedents we classified as contributing to inclusive climates, as well as specific theoretical predictions regarding how those factors interact to manifest a climate for inclusion.

Organizational Antecedents. Organizational antecedents originate from outside the group and are largely beyond the control of group members. These factors indirectly influence organizational climate because they provide a foundational context on which the workgroup operates and functions, and have the power to reinforce or impede a group's efforts to implement inclusive climate practices. Drawing on organizational climate and culture literatures (Ehrhart et al., 2014; Schneider et al., 2013), as well as diversity and inclusion literatures (Boekhorst, 2015; Mello & Rentsch, 2015; Meyer, Shemla, Li, & Wegge, 2015), we identified three primary organizational antecedents of climate for inclusion: (a) organizational support for inclusion (b) organizational reward systems; and (c) fair processes and procedures. These antecedents, as well as their specific effects on inclusive climates, are described below.

Organizational Support for Inclusion. The development of organizational climate necessarily relies on organizational emphasis and support. More specifically, research suggests that the tangible benefits and resources underlying organizational support serve as a foundation for the development of all types of focused climates (Wallace, Popp, & Mondore, 2006, as cited in Ehrhart et al., 2014). In the case of inclusive climates, organizational support may enable group members to share valued aspects of themselves that differ from the dominant culture (Shore et al., 2018). Organizational support may also increase a sense of belongingness

iterative analysis by SMEs led to additional model revisions based on the need to prioritize factors which can be used to inform interventions.

³ In order to create a model to inform interventions, we emphasized antecedents that were most amenable to change. Because many of the individual-level antecedents are relatively resistant to change (e.g. dispositions, see Staw & Ross, 1985), they were removed from the model.

leading to perceptions of insider status, a key aspect of inclusive climates (Stamper & Masterson, 2002, as cited in Shore et al., 2011). Input from organizational climate experts suggests that organizational support, in the form of resources to support inclusion, is particularly important for the development of inclusive climates (Schneider, Personal Communication, July 18–19, 2017; Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018). Resources such as time allotted to the development of inclusive climates, type of leader selected to shape organizational climate, and leader development support aimed at growing inclusive leaders are foundational to the development of climates for inclusion.

Proposition 1: By providing adequate resources (e.g., time, tools, technology, etc.) dedicated to developing an inclusive climate, and creating systems that enable discussion and decision-making, organizational support can facilitate the emergence of a climate for inclusion.

Organizational Reward Systems. Organizational reward systems include monetary and nonmonetary means of recognizing and promoting certain employee behaviors (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002; Podsakoff, Podsakoff, & Kuskova, 2010, as cited in Boekhorst, 2015). Reward systems elicit inclusive behaviors from employees themselves, while also supporting the vicarious learning of inclusive conduct by group members who observe others being rewarded and punished for their actions (Boekhorst, 2015). Prior research supports the proposed relationship between reward systems and inclusive employee behavior. For example, Ferrin and Dirks (2003) found that reward systems which supported collaborative knowledge sharing resulted in more information sharing among employees. By incentivizing certain leader and group behaviors, reward systems indirectly influence climate, affecting perceptions of what is valued and expected by the organization. According to climate experts, these reward systems are also important to sustaining the effects of inclusive leader training and interventions (Schneider, Personal Communication, July 18–19, 2017; Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018).

Proposition 2: By rewarding inclusive behaviors, leaders and group members learn what is valued by the organization and shift their behaviors to align with a climate for inclusion.

Fair Processes and Procedures (Standardized for All Group Members). Policies and standard operating procedures that are fairly implemented also contribute to perceptions of inclusion. Specifically, when members perceive all are treated equitably (e.g., members perceive that rewards and promotions are fairly distributed across group members), it signals to employees that groups within the organization have similar social value and are not disproportionately valued as a result of diversity-based status differentials (Nishii, 2013). In her 2013 article, Nishii argued that fair treatment of employees is a foundational requirement for inclusive environments, as the elimination of arbitrary status hierarchies enables

employees to fully disclose aspects of their identity and thinking, and facilitates positive interactions across groups within the organization (Nishii, 2013).

Proposition 3: By instituting fair processes and procedures that treat members equitably, arbitrary status hierarchies are mitigated allowing for free participation in the group.

Leader Antecedents and Processes. As noted previously, leaders have a strong influence on the development and maintenance of organizational climates (e.g., Ehrhart et al., 2014; Schein, 2010; Wasserman, Gallegos, & Ferdman, 2008). Forming the central core of groups, leaders drive action within groups (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003), influencing group interactions, guiding group problem-solving, and coordinating the collective action of group members (Boehm & Flack, 2010; Keltner, Gruenfeld, Galinsky, & Kraus, 2010; Maner & Mead, 2010; van Vugt, 2006; Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001). Leaders shape climate by communicating the importance of specific initiatives through their words and actions. Leaders also serve as gatekeepers for the implementation of policies and procedures by prioritizing particular goals, role modeling expected conduct, and reinforcing desired behaviors via rewards and recognition (e.g., Barling, Loughlin, & Kelloway, 2002; Ehrhart et al., 2014; Hong, Liao, & Jiang, 2013; Schein, 2010; Zohar & Luria, 2005).

Inclusive Actions and Behaviors. The inclusive actions of leaders serve as social cues to the group regarding what behaviors are appropriate within that group (Boekhorst, 2015). Although vicarious learning may occur with or without conscious intent from leaders or followers, effective leaders understand the importance of purposeful role modeling in shaping the team's climate (Boekhorst, 2015). Drawing on research on *inclusive leadership* (e.g., Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv, 2010; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006), as well as *authentic* (e.g., Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008), *servant* (e.g., Gotsis & Grimani, 2016; Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008; Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010), *ethical* (e.g., Walumbwa et al., 2011; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009), *mindful* (e.g., Good et al., 2016), *transformational* (e.g., Kearney & Gebert, 2009; Peterson, Walumbwa, Byron, & Myrowitz, 2009), and *culturally-competent* (e.g., Yuengling, Parks, & McDonald, 2011) leadership types, we propose that leaders can promote and maintain an inclusive climate by modeling specific inclusive actions (See Table 9.1). These specific actions extend past research which has generally described inclusive leadership as leaders who are open and accessible, and who value group members by inviting their unique input in group decision-making processes (e.g., Carmeli, et al., 2010; Hannum, McFeeters, & Booysen, 2010; Mor Barak, 2008; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

Proposition 4: Leaders act as the primary gatekeepers and architects of a climate for inclusion. Their decisions to reward inclusive behaviors; enact inclusive policies

TABLE 9.1. Specific Leader Actions Proposed to Influence the Development of Climates for Inclusion

Leader Action	Example
Applying standards equitably across all group members	Treating everyone fairly, without preferential treatment
Showing an openness to communication	Allowing group members to ask questions and provide opposing viewpoints without punishment; proactively encouraging the input of group members, listening, and taking action
Clarifying tasks and goals	Ensuring group members know the task at hand and how it serves a greater purpose for the organization; enabling proactive contributions from group members by providing the “bigger picture”
Recognizing individual uniqueness	Being open to differences; recognizing diverse perspectives
Talking about inclusion	Expressing the importance of inclusion to achieving organizational success
Treating the team as a valuable resource and leveraging unique expertise to accomplish tasks	Utilizing unique differences to accomplish organizational objectives
Articulating and reinforcing socialization practices for inclusion	Establishing processes for integrating new members into the group and setting expectations for how the group functions inclusively
Providing feedback on, and reinforcement of, observable inclusion behaviors	Providing feedback on behaviors that support micro-affirmations, empathy, perspective taking or impede micro-aggressions, incivility inclusion
Providing resources to facilitate work	Allocating resources in alignment with the organization’s and leader’s espoused inclusive policies

and procedures; allocate resources to support inclusion; and apply standards equitably across group members fosters inclusive climates.

Leader Member Exchange (LMX). An important aspect of inclusive leadership is the quality of exchange between leader and followers, also referred to as leader-member exchange (LMX; see also Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). It is through strong exchange relationships that leaders and followers build emotional bonds, and the leader learns the needs, desires, abilities, and potential of their followers (Bambale, 2014; Kearney & Gebert, 2009). Past research suggests that strong LMX is necessary for employee-perceived organizational inclusion. Specifically, Brimhall and colleagues (2016) found that high quality LMX relations between supervisor and employee were associated with increased feelings of inclusion six and twelve months later. Supplementing this finding, climate SMEs suggested

that inclusive climate emerges when there are high levels of LMX with followers across diverse demographics, with little differentiation among members of a work group or team (Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018; see also Nishii & Mayer, 2009).

Proposition 5: High levels of LMX with followers across diverse demographics will invite bi-directional feedback and input from all group members, thus fostering a climate for inclusion.

Leader Alignment with Inclusive Practices. An additional challenge associated with inclusive leadership is the need for leaders to align their actions and words to develop focused climates. Alignment refers to congruence between words and actions within individual leaders (i.e., the leader walks and talks inclusion), as well as between leader teams across levels of the organization (Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018). Congruent alignment ensures that followers perceive consistent reinforcing messages that inclusion is valued by the organization (Aarons, Ehrhart, Farahnak, & Sklar, 2014). It is important to note that leaders in organizations comprised of multi-team systems often experience competing goals, motivations, and objectives (e.g., superior outcome expectations and subordinate work realities), which can impede alignment between leaders (Way, Simons, Leroy, & Tuleja, 2018). Therefore, leader alignment is an important antecedent for organizations to examine for assessment and potential intervention.

Proposition 6: Alignment of leader’s actions and words—both across leader levels, and within the leaders themselves—will influence the strength and direction of a focused climate.

Group Antecedents. The attributes and processes of the group are perhaps the most proximal antecedents influencing organizational climates (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Muhammed, 2012; Schneider et al., 2013). Because climate emerges from shared perceptions developed from interactions with other group members (Ehrhart et al., 2014), how people interact, and the factors that shape these interactions are important for climate development. Based on our findings, characteristics of the group (e.g., composition, goal and task interdependence, and shared clarity and goals) and social norms that govern group member interactions (See Table 9.2) are primary group antecedents that influence the emergence of climate for inclusion.

Group Attributes. Group attributes are factors that describe the compositional makeup of the group as well as the structures which govern how the group functions on a regular basis (e.g., the scheduled frequency by which group members interact, collaborate, and meet regarding goals, projects, and tasks). These group characteristics influence a leader’s capacity to foster inclusive climates in specific ways, as described in propositions 7–9.

TABLE 9.2. Specific Group-Level Antecedents Proposed to Influence the Development of Climates for Inclusion

Group Antecedent	Example
Composition	The degree and types of diversity present within a group
Goal and task interdependence	The amount of collaboration and participation among team members who share a common goal
Shared clarity and goals	The degree to which team members understand the specific objectives to be accomplished and how they can achieve them as a team
Group interaction norms	Interactions within the group are characterized by open, respectful, task- and social-communication

Composition (to include tenure within the work unit). The composition of a team can be described as the configuration of member attributes within a team including surface-level characteristics that are readily apparent (e.g., age, race, gender), as well as less visible, deeper-level characteristics (e.g., work-group tenure, education, personality). Both surface- and deep-level diversity have been shown to influence group processes and outcomes (Thatcher & Patel, 2011; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). Given this, we propose that the composition of member traits will influence the ability of the leader to build a climate for inclusion.

Although greater team diversity has been hypothesized to contribute to perceptions of inclusion (Boekhorst, 2015), we assert that these differences are more likely to contribute to divisions within the group (i.e., faultlines). Faultlines emerge within the group when there are sufficient combinations of differences among group members (e.g. African American females within a predominantly Caucasian male work-group), such that subgroups become salient, leading members to identify more with the activated subgroup than the superordinate workgroup (Lau & Murnighan, 1998; van Knippenberg, Dawson, West, & Homan, 2011)⁴. Strong faultlines, when activated, are likely to produce sub-optimal outcomes, to the possible detriment of the climate. In contrast, when subgroup faultlines are less apparent (for a review, see Thatcher & Patel, 2011) and the superordinate group identity is predominant (van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007), then members are likely to perceive themselves and others as members of a cohesive whole whose individual contributions and perspectives are vital to group functioning.

Although climate for inclusion is more difficult to achieve when faultlines exist, once reached, existing inclusive climates can also mitigate potential negative effects of increased group diversity. Research demonstrating a moderating effect of inclusion on the relationship between increased diversity and individual and organizational outcomes supports this assertion. Specifically, a climate for inclusion has been shown to enhance information sharing and employee information

⁴ This is sometimes referred to as faultline distance: “the extent to which subgroups diverge as a result of accumulated differences between subgroups.” (Thatcher & Patel, 2012, p. 978).

elaboration (Li, Lin, Tien, & Chen, 2017), as well as reduce task and relationship conflict (Nishii, 2013) in units with higher levels of diversity. Our assertion also aligns with the integration and learning paradigm which maintains that organizations will experience better outcomes in terms of group functioning if they embrace diversity as a means to accomplish work processes, tasks, and strategies (Ely & Thomas, 2001 as cited in Boekhorst, 2015).

Proposition 7: Increased group diversity that activates faultlines may impede the initial development of inclusive climates. Once in place, existing inclusive climates will mitigate the potential negative effects of increased diversity.

1. *Goal & Task Interdependence.* According to the contact hypothesis or Intergroup Contact Theory, attitudes and behaviors toward a particular social category will become more positive after interpersonal interaction with people from that social category (Miller & Brewer, 1984). Decades of research on this subject have shown this relationship to be robust across multiple cultures, groups, and forms of diversity (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). However, not all contact results in positive change, thus much research has been devoted to understanding the necessary conditions under which positive change occurs. One such condition is the presence of a mutually interdependent relationships, or the necessity of cooperation in the achievement of joint goals (Sherif, 1966). Given this, we assert that both goal and task interdependences are important antecedents to inclusive climates, particularly in situations where it is necessary to overcome social distance or dislike among subgroups. In particular, goal interdependence, or the degree to which a leader and follower's goals align with one another, has been hypothesized to foster inclusive climates (Boekhorst, 2015). This alignment likely facilitates vicarious learning of inclusive behaviors and feelings of belongingness by (a) maximizing incentives to cooperative while minimizing incentives to compete (Boekhorst, 2015) as well as (b) connecting each member's contributions to the broader team goals, thus fostering a sense of feeling valued and integrated within the team (Hogg & Abrams, 1999). According to climate experts, goal interdependence precludes passive participation of group members, and ensures that members actively leverage the unique talents of their team (Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018).

Proposition 8: Alignment of goals among group members will facilitate vicarious learning of inclusive behaviors by group members, as well as perceptions of belongingness, leading to the development of inclusive climates.

Shared Clarity and Goals. In addition to an interdependence of goals, we also propose that a shared understanding of the group's roles, tasks, and goals facilitates a climate for inclusion. Tasks and goals must be clear so that mem-

bers can successfully align the unique perspectives and capabilities of personnel with group needs (Dickson, Resick, & Hanges, 2006; Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009; Ostroff et al., 2012). Similarly, the roles of group members must be clear so that members know who is best suited for a given task to ensure efficiency in achieving group goals (e.g., Chen & Bliese, 2002). When members clearly understand the duties and roles of group members, and how it all comes together to achieve group goals, they better understand how they and others can play a unique yet integral part in the success of the group. Within such an environment, followers are more likely to know how to leverage each other's unique expertise without prompting from leaders (Lee, Gillespie, Mann, & Wearing, 2010), resulting in a unique contribution by followers to shared perceptions of inclusion.

Proposition 9: Shared clarity regarding duties and roles of group members will enable leaders and followers to collaboratively align group member capabilities with given tasks, further fostering the development of inclusive climates.

Group Interaction Norms. Although leaders are generally seen as the architects of climate, group members also contribute to the development of climate through their actions and words. Over time, group member interactions and meaning-making, guided by group interaction norms⁵, can foster, sustain, and strengthen shared perceptions of the organizational environment. We propose that group interaction norms will facilitate perceptions of inclusion when these norms are grounded in openness and respect of others. Mirroring behaviors modeled by the leader, and transmitted through LMX (see Brimhall et al., 2016), inclusion is likely to be fostered when members are open to new ideas and allow others to express their perspectives, grievances, and identity without reproach (Carmeli et al., 2010; Edmondson, 1999; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Martins, Schilpzand, Kirkman, Ivanaj, & Ivanaj, 2013; Singh, Winkel, & Selvarajan, 2013). Furthermore, an inclusive climate is likely to emerge when group members socialize newcomers to inclusive standards for behavior, and when guidelines for social interaction enable group members to fully get to know one another (Feldman & O'Neill, 2014; Schneider, Personal Communication, July 18–19, 2017; Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018). These norms are hypothesized to impact inclusion by increasing awareness of the unique perspectives and capabilities of other group members, allowing for individuals to leverage and trust one another in the execution of tasks (Lee et al., 2010).

Proposition 10: The strong relationship between group factors and a climate for inclusion is reflected in their proximity to one another (see Figure 9.1). In particular, group member interactions, driven by well-articulated norms, mediates the effect of leader actions on climate perceptions.

⁵ The traditions, behavioral standards, and unwritten rules that govern how members function as a group are codified into a set of group norms. Group norms have the potential override individual proclivities and encourage deference to the team (Terry & Hogg, 1996).

Outcomes

Although diversity has been linked with both beneficial and adverse outcomes, a climate for inclusion has been consistently associated with positive outcomes (Mor Barak et al., 2016), suggesting that fostering inclusive climates is an effective strategy to manage diversity. Climates for inclusion have been linked to outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, OCBs, job performance, creativity, psychological safety, turnover intentions, and well-being, among others (for a review and meta-analysis, see Mor Barak et al., 2016). Thus climate for inclusion has a sphere of influence broader than just the individuals within the workgroup, enabling improved outcomes for teams and organizations as well. This paper focuses on a subset of these outcomes that we believe are associated with inclusion through its relationship to psychological safety.

Psychological Safety. The climate-related construct of team psychological safety is defined as “a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking,” and is characterized by “interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people are comfortable being themselves” (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354). Although there is significant overlap between inclusion and psychological safety (Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018; Shore et al., 2018), we believe the focus of these two constructs is somewhat distinct (i.e., feeling safe to contribute, versus being invited to contribute and have influence). Research supports this distinction, as inclusive practices have been shown to contribute to employee perceptions that it is safe to take risks and to speak up in the work environment without fear of negative interpersonal consequences (Nemphard & Edmondson, 2006). Further, psychological safety has been shown to mediate the relationship between inclusive leadership and employee creativity (Carmeli et al., 2010), and to influence the relationship between leader inclusiveness, learning from failure, and subsequent work unit performance (Hirak, Peng, Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2012).

Proposition 11: The outcome that is most directly, and strongly, influenced by climate for inclusion is psychological safety. Psychological safety then mediates other, more distal outcomes (e.g., creativity and performance).

Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and Turnover Intentions. Evidence of a relationship between perceptions of inclusion and higher levels of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and lower turnover intentions, has emerged in recent years. In a study of child welfare workers, Hwang and Hopkins (2015) demonstrated that higher perceptions of inclusion resulted in significantly higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, the latter of which was associated with reduced intention to leave. Similarly, Nishii’s (2013) study of over 1,300 employees at a biomedical company revealed that climate for inclusion significantly increased satisfaction and commitment, and reduced turnover intentions [intentions to quit]. Finally, studies examining elements of

Mor Barak's model of inclusion (2000, p. 344) reveal the robustness of the relationship between inclusion to increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, as well as decreased turnover intentions, among other factors (Brimhall et al., 2016; Findler, Wind, & Mor Barak, 2007; Hopkins, Cohen-Callow, Kim, & Hwang., 2010; Hwang & Hopkins, 2012; Mor Barak, Levin, Nissly, & Lane, 2006). Although more research is needed to determine how inclusion fosters these beneficial outcomes, we hypothesize that inclusive climates reduce work related anxiety by fostering perceptions of psychological safety resulting in a more enjoyable work experience. For more information about the relationship between psychological safety and beneficial attitudinal outcomes, see Frazier, Fainshmidt, Klinger, Pezeshkan, & Vracheva (2017).

Proposition 12: By eliciting a shared sense of psychological safety, higher levels of inclusion will increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as reduce intentions to leave the organization. These effects will be most prominent for individuals who otherwise would have felt marginalized by the dominant attitudes of the workforce and afraid to be themselves without negative repercussions.

Creativity, Innovation, and Unit Performance. Empirical studies also support a relationship between inclusion, creativity, innovation, and unit performance. For example, Li, Lin, Tien, and Chen (2017) examined culturally diverse teams and found that a high inclusion climate enhanced team information sharing, which was associated with team creativity. Mitchell et al. (2015) found that inclusive leadership increased identification with the team and reduced perceptions of status differences, which were associated with enhanced team performance. We propose that inclusive climates foster team-based outcomes via the outgrowth of perceived psychological safety that allows employees to feel safe to voice novel ideas and engage experimentation (Brimhall & Mor Barak, 2018; Carmeli et al., 2010). Results of Carmeli and colleagues' (2010) study support this assertion; they found that inclusive leadership is positively related to psychological safety, which, in turn, was related to employee involvement in creative work.

Proposition 13: Higher levels of inclusion will yield greater levels of psychological safety. Individuals who believe they are in safe work environment will take more risks and generate more ideas, leading to increased creativity, innovation, and improved performance.

The Recursive Nature of Climate

A climate's strength refers to the degree to which climate perceptions are similarly shared across all group members (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009). We propose that strong inclusive climates emerge from a cyclical process involving the previously described antecedents and outcomes (see Figure 9.1). As an example, the perceptions of the organizational context that develop from leader and group member interactions, when shared amongst members, serve to reinforce future

leader and group actions and subsequent climate emergence (James et al., 2008; Ostroff et al., 2012; Weick, 1995; Zohar & Hofmann, 2012). Stated more simply, an inclusive current climate will facilitate the emergence of a stronger, more inclusive future climate in downstream measurements of the organizational environment (Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018).

Proposition 14: There is a co-evolution of climate and group behavior over time where the leader and group member behaviors, along with leader and group member perceptions, increasingly converge, yielding a stronger, and more highly inclusive organizational climate.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Implications

A wide-reaching review of the literature and input from climate experts reinforces the role of important theoretical constructs underlying a climate for inclusion. These include insights from literatures related to social learning (i.e., role modeling, vicarious learning); social exchange [i.e., LMX, organizational support theory, and positive organizational support (POS)]; and social identity theory (i.e., ODT, superordinate group identities).

Similar to prior theoretical conceptualizations of climate for inclusion, our model draws on social learning theory (Bandura, 1999) to describe how inclusive behaviors, when role-modelled by leaders and group members, give rise to a climate for inclusion. Extending work on inclusive leadership (Boekhorst, 2015; Gotsis & Grimani, 2016), we posit that climate is co-created by leaders and followers through daily interactions, and reinforced by the emerging climate itself. As the behavioral and attitudinal alignment between the leader and group members increases, so does the strength of the emergent climate, contributing to the cyclical development of collective perceptions of the work environment.

Our model also draws from social exchange theory to propose that strong exchange relationships between leaders and group members (i.e., LMX), as well as members and organizations (i.e., POS) are essential to the development of organizational climate. In the case of inclusive climates, we assert the importance of strong exchange relationships across group members, with little differentiation among members of a work group or team. We further suggest that these strong and equitable exchange relationships will lead to increased effort (e.g., unit performance) and loyalty (e.g., commitment) from unit members (see also Kurtessis et al., 2017).

Finally, our model is grounded in optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer 1991), an extension of social identity theory which posits that perceptions of inclusion rely on satisfaction of competing needs for belongingness and uniqueness. According to the social identity literature, individuals contribute and commit more fully to groups where they feel admired or respected (De Cremer & Tyler, 2005; Sleebos, Ellemers, & De Gilder, 2006; Tyler & Blader, 2002). Given this,

we posit that inclusive climates will foster mutual respect and enhanced feelings of psychological safety, which will result in increased organizational commitment, satisfaction, and performance.

Practical Implications

After identifying factors related to inclusive climates, we identified tangible and malleable antecedents to inform potential intervention targets to shape and sustain a climate for inclusion. Group norms, leader actions, and organizational narratives were seen by SMEs as high-value targets for intervention and training (Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018). According to SMEs, interventions and trainings should encourage both leaders and group members to take personal responsibility for climate creation/engineering, and should foster a shared understanding of norms and expectations. SMEs argued that persistent interventions, delivered and reinforced over multiple iterations and integrated into employees' daily tasks and roles, could be an effective strategy for leaders to build a shared understanding of their desired climate (Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018).

Leader Actions. Leaders are a primary vehicle through which an organization's policies, practices, and procedures are conveyed to groups of employees (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989; Walumbwa et al., 2010). More specifically, leaders shape climates by role-modeling and reinforcing desired behaviors via rewards and recognition. Leaders also shape climate by communicating the importance of specific initiatives through the prioritization of specific goals, as well as through direct and frequent communication of the leader's strategic vision for a particular climate type (Barling et al., 2002; Ehrhart et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2013; Schein, 2010; Schneider et al., 2013; Zohar & Luria, 2004, 2005). Given this, leaders are a logical first-line target for intervention and training, and our model provides guidance on specific inclusive leader actions with the greatest potential to shape inclusive climates.

Group Norms. Interventions targeting group norm formation may be one method to quickly influence inclusion perceptions, particularly if these interventions target both leaders and group members. Co-creation of group norms via team-based communication ensures there is agreement among team members on how the group will function, leading to greater ownership and accountability for upholding group standards (Ferdman, 2014). Fostering norms for open, respectful communication is relevant to developing and maintaining inclusive climates (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Nishii, 2013; Porath, Gerbasi, & Schorch, 2015). We propose that social interaction norms which highlight the competencies everyone brings to the group, is another intervention target likely to foster perceptions of inclusion.

Organizational Narratives. During analysis of the model, SMEs highlighted the degree of influence organizational context exerts on the group, and affirmed the necessity of an organizational culture that values inclusion to foster and sus-

tain inclusive climates (Schneider, Personal Communication, July 18–19, 2017; Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018). However, when this alignment is not explicit, SMEs recommended leaders frame inclusion goals in a manner that is consistent with an organization’s history, values, and existing narrative. This communication strategy was seen as a potential organizational intervention in support of a climate for inclusion.

Research Implications

Research into the antecedents of climate for inclusion is in a nascent state, leading researchers to infer relevant factors and their relationships from the limited research on inclusive climates, or from research on other climate types. Based on feedback and input from SMEs, the final model depicted in Figure 9.1 is not only an accurate reflection of the current state of the literature, but also adds to existing theory regarding how a climate for inclusion emerges from organizational, leader, and group characteristics and processes. Research is needed to empirically test the relationships identified in the model, and to further examine the links between antecedents, climate for inclusion, and individual and organizational outcomes. Additional research questions relevant to climate for inclusion are identified below.

Exploration of Moderators and Mediators. The present model does not fully illustrate the moderators and mediators that influence the development of inclusive climates. Instead we depict higher-order relationships between a limited set of antecedents believed to be crucial to the formation of inclusive climates. Although this decision was intentional, and informed by input from organizational climate SMEs and the intended purpose of the model (i.e., to inform interventions), it is likely that this model simplifies the true relationships between antecedents, outcomes, and climates for inclusion. In general, more research on the moderators and mediators that influence the development of inclusive climates—and their impact on associated outcomes—is warranted.

Evaluation of the Relationship Between Climate and Culture. Also requiring more research is the association between organizational culture and climate. Apart from a few seminal works exploring these constructs and their relationships, this area is largely unexplored (Schneider et al., 2013). We propose that absent an organizational culture that emphasizes the value of inclusion, any attempts to foster a climate for inclusion could not be sustained. Additionally, based on our findings, the development of inclusive climates will be influenced by the degree to which espoused organizational policies and procedures (a potential linking mechanism between climate and culture) align with enacted leader and group practices (Zohar & Hofmann, 2012). Both are areas for further study.

Examination of Workgroup Assimilation Versus Inclusion. Similar to the balance of uniqueness and belongingness faced by individuals in ODT (cf. Brewer, 1991; Shore et al., 2011), groups also must balance the competing goals of individual expression and belongingness to shared group ideals (i.e. balancing assimilation and inclusion needs of the group/organization). If fundamental

aspects of the group are not assimilated by individual members (e.g., standards for professional behavior and dress), the group may have difficulty coalescing together. By contrast, if there is too much assimilation enshrined in group policies, optimal organizational functioning may not be achieved (e.g., group becomes less innovative, faultlines become clear for those who diverge from the “standard”). Understanding the proper balance for assimilation and inclusion at the workgroup and organizational level is an area where more research is needed.

Exploration of Relationships Between Similar Climate Types. It has been recognized that multiple climates may exist at the same time and that these climates may act in a collaborative or competitive manner (Ehrhart et al., 2014). Currently, there is a shortage of research into the interplay of simultaneous climates (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009; Zohar & Hofmann, 2012). Given this, more research is required to determine the specific relationships between climate types similar to a climate for inclusion. In particular, the relationship between conceptually-related climates (e.g., trust, respect, and psychological safety, and inclusion) and potentially conflicting climates (e.g., safety versus performance) should be explored in order to better understand factors that support or impede climate development.

Evaluation of Interventions to Sustain or Enhance Climate for Inclusion. Research is needed on the types of interventions that affect the development of a climate for inclusion, especially given inconsistent evidence as to the effectiveness of traditional diversity training in bias reduction (Broockman & Kalla, 2016; Lai et al., 2014; 2016; Paluck, 2006). Due to the predominance of correlational evidence in the literature, more systematic research is needed on specific climate interventions, particularly those targeting organizational antecedents, leader actions, and group attributes and interaction norms that foster climates for inclusion.

Examination of Selection for Inclusive Predispositions. Finally, workshop participants discussed the importance of leader selection and promotion as a key reinforcing element for fostering inclusive leader behaviors (Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018). Given that individual dispositions and attitudes are difficult to influence (Staw & Ross, 1985), additional research is warranted on the selection of leaders with dispositions conducive to fostering and sustaining climates for inclusion⁶. This should include consideration of current organizational selection processes of leaders, and explore whether organizations inadvertently select for characteristics that undermine inclusion (Creary et al., Personal Communication, April 23–24, 2018).

⁶ Findings from the present research suggest that openness, humility, empathy, self-awareness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and agreeableness are individual dispositions likely related to the development of inclusive environments.

CONCLUSIONS

The development of a conceptual model of climate for inclusion, informed by evidence from the broader climate literature and feedback from experts, adds to the nascent body of literature on this focused climate. The proposed model provides a starting point for future empirical research on the nature of relationships among factors that foster, maintain, and improve a climate for inclusion, and is intended to help organizations identify targets for intervention that could impact climates for inclusion. Encouraging the development of inclusive climates is especially prudent in an increasingly diverse workforce and is anticipated to improve outcomes for individuals, teams, and organizations.

AUTHORS' NOTE

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14. ABSTRACT Research on inclusion in organizations has yet to identify the primary factors that contribute to the development and maintenance of climates for inclusion. The present research addresses this gap through the development of a comprehensive conceptual model depicting the critical factors that contribute to inclusive climates, and their proposed relationships to each other. Factors were identified through a comprehensive literature review, and affirmed through input from organizational climate, leadership, and inclusion subject matter experts. The final model focuses on behaviors that are malleable, emphasizing the role of leader and group behaviors in shaping climates for inclusion. The importance of top-down cultural change to support the development and maintenance of specific climates is discussed, as are applications of the research at multiple levels (e.g., leader, group, and organizational). This research provides a foundation for future empirical research on the nature of relationships among factors that foster, maintain, and improve a climate for inclusion.					
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