

Study of Workplace Inclusion in the Legal Profession: Invitation to Participate

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Brief Overview

You're invited to join a study that examines how supervisor-employee relationships may contribute to employees' experience of inclusion, work motivation, performance, and well-being.

- The study involves only answering survey questions.
- It is for managers and employees they supervise.
- It will take about 5-10 minutes for supervisors and 10-15 minutes for employees.
- It focuses on lawyers and their professional staff working in the U.S. or for U.S. organizations.
- All responses will be kept confidential.
- Study response deadline: September 29, 2023
- **Survey Link:** https://cgu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7VQamg2CK05IyGy

Who is Conducting the Study?

The study is being conducted by [Anne M. Brafford](#) as part of her dissertation to complete a PhD in organizational psychology at Claremont Graduate University. Anne is a former Morgan Lewis partner who now consults with law firms on issues related to inclusion, well-being, engagement, and leadership.

Elements of the Study

There are separate surveys for supervisors and employees whom they supervise. Either employees or supervisors can start the process.

- **Supervisors' Survey:** For this study, "supervisors" are lawyers in managerial roles, with example job titles such as Partner, Senior Counsel, Counsel, and Of Counsel. Associates are classified as employees. Supervisors will be asked to identify 3-5 employees with whom they work regularly and to provide their names and email addresses. Supervisors will then complete a brief measure of performance for each employee they identify. They also will respond to a few questions about themselves. Supervisors' portion is quite brief.
- **Employees' Survey:** Employees identified by supervisors in Step 1 will receive an email inviting them to participate in a survey about their work relationship with the supervisor who identified them. (If employees start the process, their first step will be only to identify a supervisor with whom they work. An automatic email will be directed to that supervisor to continue the process.) Employees' survey will ask questions about their working relationship with the supervisor, work motivation, and well-being. The employee portion of the survey will be delivered in two parts, two days apart. (The two-day time separation is to address a methods issue that will help ensure accurate responses.)

Purpose of the Study

- The study's goal is to provide useful insights to inform the design of practical approaches that can strengthen legal employers' diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies.
- Although inclusion has become a popular topic in workplaces, there's no consensus on what it means, how to measure it, what its effects are, or how to create it. The main goal of my dissertation is to offer a new definition of the subjective experience of inclusion and then to test what types of

everyday behaviors in supervisor-employee relationships can foster or thwart it. My dissertation proposes that the experience of inclusion emerges from two things.

- First: Developing strong work identities/identifications that enable employees to feel organizationally embedded and socially effective and valued.
 - Second: Employees' ability to integrate their work identities with their important nonwork identities to achieve harmonized relationships among them such that their experience and behaviors derive from a more authentic, integrated sense of self.
 - "Work identities" capture our important roles, relationships, and groups that define who we are, what we do, and who we want to be at work.
 - "Nonwork identities" include our multiple, overlapping social identities (e.g., gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age), our individual identities (especially our core values) and our home/family role identities (e.g., spouse, parent).
- My dissertation proposes that employers and employees work together in a mutual adaptation process toward employees' greater identity harmonization. The goal is for employees to develop satisfying, effective work identities and harmonize them with important nonwork identities that enable employees to express and engage their identities through and at work.

The Problem Addressed

- The U.S. legal profession has been criticized for its lack of diversity and encouraged to take action to create more inclusive workplaces. But activities relating to diversity and inclusion, relationship development, and well-being are unpopular among supervising lawyers (Thompson Reuters, 2022). The unpopularity is, in part, due to their demanding workloads. Practical tactics that can fit into everyday work routines are needed to help develop managers' abilities to foster inclusion.
- Because the DEI field is relatively new, there are few evidence-based strategies that have been shown to contribute to desired outcomes. Multiple DEI studies have focused on the quality of leader-follower relationships, and multiple DEI scholars have recommended developing supervisory-level leaders' interpersonal effectiveness. A 2017 study concluded that, **if organizations "are serious about finding ways to increase inclusion among diverse workforces, then spending time and resources to improve the quality of leader-follower interactions needs to be a priority"** (Brimhall et al., 2017, p. 14).
- An ABA report on the topic of diversity recommended developing leaders who "communicate with empathy" and enable lawyers "to feel **valued, appreciated, and understood**" (Scharf & Lienberg, 2021, pp. 53, 59). A *Diversity Best Practices Guide* prepared by the National Association for Law Placement (NALP) advised that "[i]mproving individual leadership competencies necessarily contributes to a more inclusive and rewarding work environment" (NALP 2020, p. 7).

Benefits of the Study

- The goal of the research is to provide the foundation for developing evidence-based training and development programs to help supervisors and employees develop high-quality, inclusive relationships. Research reflects that the types of behaviors that are targeted in this research may advance not only organizational inclusion goals but also may foster employees' well-being, sense of work ownership, work motivation, engagement, and help avoid unwanted turnover.
- Anne will provide a copy of her final paper to any interested participants. For organizations that participate, Anne will discuss the potential of a webinar or live presentation related to the findings.

References

- Brimhall, K. C., Barak, M. M., Hurlburt, M., McArdle, J. J., Palinkas, L., & Henwood, B. (2017). Increasing workplace inclusion: The promise of leader-member exchange. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*, *41*, 222–239.
- National Association for Law Placement (NALP, 2020). *Diversity best practices guide*. Available [here](#).
- Scharf, S. A., Liebenberg, R. D., Gallagher, N. M., & Peery, D. (2021). *Practicing law in the pandemic and moving forward: Results and best practices from a nationwide survey of the legal profession*. Chicago, IL: American Bar Association.
- Thomson Reuters (2022, January 11). 2022 report on the state of the legal market: Despite a strong year, numerous & growing challenges confront law firms. Thomsonreuters.com. Available [here](#).