

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?



How can demographically diverse employees become friends?

Eleftheria Foka (2221967)

Utrecht University

Master Thesis Social, Health, and Organisational Psychology

Track: Work and Organisational Psychology

First reviewer: Dr. Melissa Vink

Second reviewer: Prof. dr. Toon Taris

Date: June 2022

Word count: 7926

May be made publicly accessible.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Contents

Abstract.....	4
Acknowledgments.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Theoretical Framework.....	8
Friendship at the Workplace	8
Diverse Workplace Friendship.....	9
Transformational Leadership and Diverse Workplace Friendship	10
Transformational Leadership and Inclusive Climate	11
Inclusive Climate and Diverse Workplace Friendship.....	12
Method	13
Participants and Design.....	13
Procedure.....	14
Measures.....	14
<i>Diversity in Organizations</i>	14
<i>Transformational Leadership</i>	15
<i>Inclusive Climate</i>	15
<i>Diverse Workplace Friendship</i>	15
Statistical Analysis	15
Results.....	16
Preliminary Analysis	16
Assumptions Check.....	18
Did Transformational Leadership Predict the Formation of Diverse Workplace Friendships?	18
Did Transformational Leadership Predict the formation of Inclusive Climate?.....	18
Did Inclusive Climate Predict the formation of Diverse Workplace Friendships?.....	18

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Did Transformational Leadership Predict the Formation of Diverse Workplace Friendships through Inclusive Climate?	19
Exploratory Analysis.....	19
Discussion.....	20
Implications.....	21
Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions	22
Conclusion.....	24
References.....	25
Appendix A: Information letter	32
Appendix B: Questionnaire.....	33

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Abstract

This research aimed to investigate how organizations can facilitate friendships among demographically diverse employees in the workplace. Such friendships can offer multiple benefits to employees and organizations and allow effective diversity management within the workplace. We hypothesized that transformational leadership would have a positive effect on diverse friendship formation through the creation of an inclusive climate. We collected survey data among 227 employees working in different organizations worldwide. Our results indicated that the perception of having a transformational leader could indeed facilitate friendship formation among diverse employees. More than this, we showed that the perception of working in an inclusive climate explains why employees who perceive their leader as transformational report more diverse workplace friendships. The present study demonstrates the importance of transformational leadership style and inclusive climate in helping organizations and employees navigate diverse organizations and reap both the benefits of friendship and those of diversity.

Keywords: diverse workplace friendship, transformational leadership, inclusive climate

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Acknowledgments

A special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Melissa Vink, for being there when I needed her support, reviewing my progress, and guiding me while conducting this thesis. I would also like to thank the Bequest “Spyr. F. Antipa in favor of Kefallinia” for the financial support and all the people who stood by my side throughout my studies.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Introduction

Friendships are essential to people's general well-being, providing joy and significance throughout their lives (Goldman et al., 1981; Rawlins, 1992). Individuals flourish when having a sense of belonging and connection to others, and workplace social ties are no exception (Ferris et al., 2009; Spreitzer et al., 2010; Spreitzer et al., 2005). Friendships in the workplace offer multiple work-related benefits, such as job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment (Nielsen et al., 2000). The way friendships are formed is that individuals voluntarily befriend people they perceive to be like themselves in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, attitudes, and/or opinions (McPherson et al., 2001; Sias & Cahill, 1998; Reid et al., 2017). However, the focus of this study will be on workplace friendships formed among employees who differ in age, gender, and ethnicity.

Several reasons point to the significance of studying diverse workplace friendships. Firstly, even though the combination of diversity and friendship can offer multiple benefits (Nielsen et al., 2000; Jayne & Dipboye, 2004), the existing literature has not deeply studied how we can facilitate such relationships in the workplace. Some studies suggest broader workplace aspects (e.g., leadership; Tse, Dasborough, & Ashkanasy, 2008) may influence friendship formation, but the research is limited (Nielsen et al., 2000; Sias & Cahill, 1988). Therefore, we deem it significant to explore how leadership may facilitate friendship formation in the current study. Secondly, the topic of diverse workplace friendships has not been explored deeply by scholars. Fasbender and Drury (2021) have investigated organizational outcomes of diverse-age friendships, but what has not been studied yet, is the antecedents that can predict and enhance diverse workplace friendships, and this is the gap that this research aims to fill in.

In contemporary societies, workplaces become increasingly diverse in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity due to several societal changes, such as women's increased labor market participation and the rise of multicultural societies (Hooghe et al., 2008; Buckley & Bachman, 2017). Some research indicates that diversity, if managed well, can lead to positive outcomes for organizations, such as higher creativity (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). However, it might also entail adverse outcomes for workplace relationships. Kammeyer-Mueller and colleagues (2011) suggested that organizational newcomers who perceive themselves as different from their coworkers are less proactive in building relationships. Also, Dumas and colleagues (2013) have concluded that when employees are visibly dissimilar from their

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

coworkers, integration behaviors (e.g., attending company parties) do not help them create close relationships with colleagues. Both studies indicate that visible dissimilarity can negatively affect the formation of work relationships, highlighting the need to find solutions to this issue.

To explain how diversity can negatively impact friendship formation, we will use an example of a diverse organization. In a diverse organization, friendships might be more easily formed among employees who look alike, for example, a group of friends of employees in their 20s and another one of others in their 40s (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Byrne, 1971). The members of each group might consider the remaining colleagues as very different from themselves and thus might not interact with them nor have opportunities to befriend them. In this way, their differences in terms of age may stand in the way of getting to know each other on a deeper level and finding out they could have the same opinions or attitudes, for example. Those deeper characteristics are more important than surface-level differences, like age, when building relationships and could lead to friendship (Sias & Cahill, 1998; Reid et al., 2017). For diverse organizations to overcome the hindrance that demographic dissimilarity brings and to benefit from all the advantages that friendships and diversity can offer, it is important to identify the factors that facilitate friendship formation in diverse workplaces.

The current study proposes a theoretical framework that highlights those factors. Research has established that a transformational leader (i.e., a leader who can inspire positive change among the followers) can manage workplace diversity (Nguyen, 2019). Furthermore, based on previous research, transformational leadership paves the way for friendship formation among employees (Kohan et al., 2018). Based on these findings, we propose that a transformational leader can facilitate the formation of diverse workplace friendships. Moreover, we propose that an inclusive climate (i.e., a climate in which employees feel equally welcome, respected, and valued despite their differences) mediates the relationship between the two, such that a transformational leader can nurture an inclusive climate in which diverse workplace friendships can flourish. The transformational leadership style has the potential to cultivate an inclusive climate through this leader's natural tendency to reshape perceptions and bring change successfully (Wang et al., 2017). Furthermore, the culture or the climate of an organization can influence whether the employees have the opportunity to become friends (Nielsen et al., 2000). An inclusive, compared to a non-inclusive climate would allow diverse employees to get close to each other and overcome

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

their differences, opening the road for friendship formation, hence enhancing diverse workplace friendships.

Considering all the above, the central research question of this study is: Does the perception of working in an inclusive climate explain why employees who perceive their leader as transformational are more likely to form diverse workplace friendships?

Theoretical Framework

Friendship at the Workplace

Friendships with coworkers offer multiple benefits to individuals and organizations. More specifically, the positive outcomes of workplace friendships include instrumental and emotional support, positive identity development, opportunities for growth, higher job performance, creativity and innovation, team cohesion, and organizational commitment (Berman et al., 2002; Colbert et al., 2016; Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Dutton et al., 2010; House, 1981; Fliaster & Schloderer, 2010; Nielsen et al., 2000; Lu et al., 2017; Riordan & Griffeth, 1995). Given all these benefits, it's valuable for both employers and employees to facilitate friendships within the workplace.

According to Berman, West, and Richter (2002), workplace friendships are informal relationships between employees at work. Their aim is mainly enjoyment and satisfaction rather than executing a specific work function or role. There are two ways in which they differ from other workplace relationships: they are holistic and voluntary. They are holistic or personalistic, meaning that individuals recognize their coworker/friend as a whole person with a life outside work. Voluntary because employees develop friendships with their coworkers, not because they are obligated to engage as part of their work tasks, but because they are freely willing to invest time and effort in the relationship (Sias et al., 2003).

Although employees voluntarily choose the colleagues they get close to and become friends with, this choice can be influenced by many factors that are contextual or personal (Sias & Cahill, 1998). The contextual factors are either related to the organization or external and include the organizational climate, human resources practices, leadership, workspace design, interdependency, life events, socialization, and external leisure activities (Dietz &

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Fasbender, 2021; Mao et al., 2009; Sias & Cahill, 1998). On the other hand, personal factors are associated with the befriended individuals: similarity, self-disclosure (i.e., revealing information about yourself to a colleague), and personality (Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018; Sias & Cahill, 1998). For a friendship to emerge, there should be a level of perceived similarity (McPherson et al., 2001). According to the *similarity-attraction theory* (Byrne, 1971), perceived similarity leads to the attraction between individuals, which leads to friendship formation (McPherson et al., 2001).

Diverse Workplace Friendship

Diversity in organizations can exist on many different levels. Researchers have distinguished between prominent surface-level characteristics that are immediately visible and underlying deep-level characteristics that emerge in teams over time (Harrison et al., 1998). The first refer to demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and ethnicity, whereas the second refer to attitudes, opinions, values, and personality. In the current study, we will focus on demographic diversity and not on diversity at deeper levels. Diverse workplace friendship will be seen as a specific type of workplace friendship that is reflected in the difference in age, gender, and ethnicity amongst the befriended employees. The deep-level similarity is more significant when befriending someone (Sias & Cahill, 1998; Reid et al., 2017). However, surface-level dissimilarity can act as a barrier to identifying deep level similarities that will lead to friendships among diverse employees (Standifer et al., 2013). This is the barrier we will try to overcome with this study.

The Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) proposes that individuals distinguish social groups based on surface and deep level characteristics and categorize themselves based on the social group they identify with. Meaning, that the members of the social group to which an individual perceives to belong will most likely share some surface and/ or deep level characteristics of such individual. Combining the Social Identity and Similarity-Attraction theories, when employees enter the workplace, they will get close to people who look alike and form subgroups (i.e., the "ingroup"). This means that coworkers who are visibly different will categorize each other into different subgroups, considering other subgroups as highly different from themselves (i.e., the "outgroup"; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This focus on their surface-level dissimilarities will negatively affect the development of diverse friendships, as they will not get the opportunity to discover underlying similarities (Berger et al., 1977). With the current study, we aim to identify how to buffer/prevent this

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

negative outcome by investigating factors that will help employees identify similarities among their coworkers that go beyond the surface-level similarities.

Transformational Leadership and Diverse Workplace Friendship

We propose that transformational leadership is the first factor leading to the development of diverse workplace friendships. Transformational leaders use their charisma and vision to inspire and intrinsically motivate their followers to make positive changes in their lives while making them feel supported and recognized for their efforts (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership involves inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994). More specifically, transformational leaders utilize their talent to adequately convey their vision in a way that is appealing to their followers; serve as role models to be mirrored; pay attention to their followers' needs and concerns by acting as mentors or coaches; challenge their followers to help them grow and reach optimal outcomes. Previous research has found that transformational leadership predicts friendship formation (Kohan et al., 2018). At the same time, it is crucial when managing diversity in the workplace (Reid et al., 2017). Different aspects of transformational leadership will contribute to diverse workplace friendship formation.

First, employers with a transformational leadership style create positive working conditions through their positive characteristics (Hannah et al., 2009), which in turn positively influence relationships at work (Oades et al., 2017). The fact that transformational leaders devote time to listening to their employees while valuing them and embracing their differences (Felfe et al., 2004) strengthens the positive feelings and emotions experienced within the workplace (Sechudi & Olivier, 2016). Those positive emotions lead to stronger feelings of connectedness amongst the coworkers and improvement of their social interactions (Oades et al., 2017). Besides this, research has shown that when leaders and followers interact with openness and honesty, social and emotional bonds are facilitated, and employee friendship is reinforced (Tse et al., 2008).

Second, transformational leaders can promote trust and fairness (Tombaugh, 2005), which is considered a significant element in friendship formation (Nielsen et al., 2000; Huang, 2016). Also, when team leaders communicate a compelling vision for the team and exhibit confidence in employees, trust and commitment among diverse employees are

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

increased (Joshi et al., 2009), as well as mutual respect and a sense of collective identity (Scandura & Lankau, 1996). In a study by Boehm and Dwertmann (2015), it was found that this type of leadership is thought to decrease the formation of subgroups and stereotyping among diverse employees who would otherwise face relationship disputes due to their demographic disparities. Thus, transformational leadership will allow employees to get closer to each other regardless of their visible differences and develop close relationships. Given all that has been mentioned, transformational leaders' behaviors create the right setting for employees to build diverse friendships.

H1: The more employees perceive that their leader has a transformational style, the more diverse workplace friendships they report to have.

Transformational Leadership and Inclusive Climate

We suggest that transformational leadership will facilitate friendship formation among diverse employees, and at the same time, transformational leaders will assist in the creation of an inclusive climate that will also lead to diverse workplace friendships. In an inclusive climate, individuals are fairly and unbiasedly treated, valued for who they are regardless of their differences, and involved in making important decisions (Nishii, 2013). Wang and colleagues (2017) claim that the transformational leadership style is especially effective in establishing an inclusive climate due to its nature of reframing perceptions and implementing organizational change. Besides, research indicates that transformational leaders can shift the beliefs and attitudes of the employees away from egoistic, individual goals and towards collective, superordinate goals (Podsakoff et al., 1990). This way, they can enhance unity and a sense of commitment to the team (Kearney & Gebert, 2009) and increase adaptability (Wang et al., 2017). These lead to an atmosphere where employees experience a sense of inclusiveness and are more open to others who differ from them.

Moreover, transformational leadership promotes confidence, encouragement, innovation, and trust, which construct the ideal climate for inclusion initiatives (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2004). In particular, inclusion is endorsed when the leader challenges the employees to question the status quo, encourages them to contribute with their input, and shows appreciation for the alternative ideas they come up with (Nembhand & Edmondson, 2006). By fostering expectations and norms for authenticity and sincerity, leaders with a transformational style cultivate an inclusive climate within which meaningful relationships

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

are developed, and solidarity is nurtured (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2004). Because of the above, we propose that a transformational leader has the potential to cultivate an inclusive climate within an organization.

H2: The more employees perceive that their leader has a transformational style, the more they perceive the organizational climate as inclusive.

Inclusive Climate and Diverse Workplace Friendship

As stated above, an inclusive climate could create the right atmosphere for friendships among diverse employees. Research has shown that an inclusive climate can play a critical role in helping employees to see beyond the dissimilarities in surface-level characteristics (Jansen et al., 2017) and thus pave the way for friendship formation by allowing them to identify deep-level similarities. When a workplace is open towards and appreciative of differences, employees have more opportunities to engage with dissimilar others, which will allow them to develop a more differentiated and personalized understanding of their unique characteristics (Ensari & Miller, 2006). These opportunities, combined with inclusion in decision-making, are critical for reducing stereotypes and bias (Green & Kalev, 2008). This will open the road for employees to see beyond the surface-level characteristics of their coworkers and identify deep-level similarities that can lead to friendship formation (Sias & Cahill, 1998). We propose that employees who work in organizations with an inclusive climate will have more opportunities to form diverse workplace friendships.

H3: The more employees perceive their organization climate as inclusive, the more diverse workplace friendships they report.

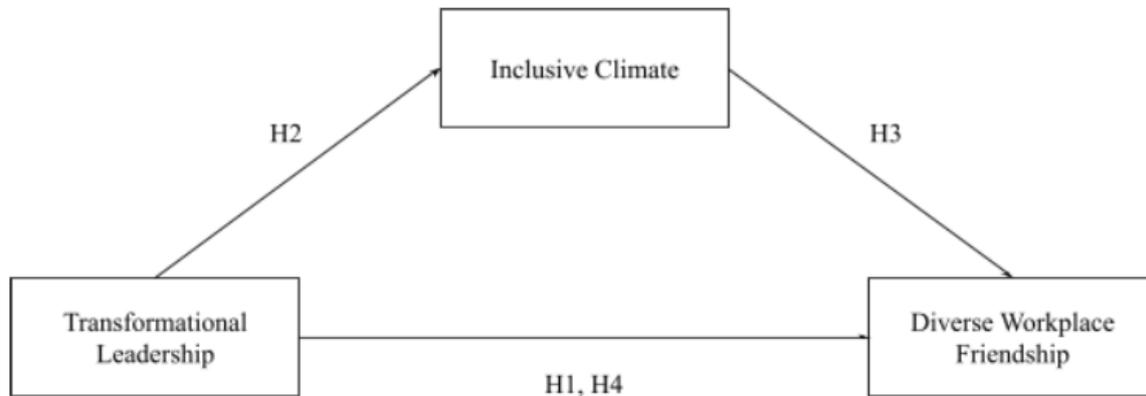
H4: Inclusive climate plays a mediating role in the relationship between transformational leadership and diverse workplace friendship, such that transformational leadership leads to the creation of an inclusive climate which in turn leads to the formation of diverse workplace friendships.

In sum, we expect that the transformational leadership style will facilitate friendship formation among diverse employees. Furthermore, we suggest that this relationship will be explained by creating an inclusive climate, which will mediate the relationship between the two.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Figure 1

Research Model including the Hypotheses



Method

Participants and Design

We performed a statistical power analysis in G* power to calculate the sample size needed for 80% power (Faul et al., 2007). Based on the assumption that there will be a small to medium effect size ($R^2 = .05$), the sample size needed was 187 participants for multiple linear regressions. In total, 355 participants filled out the questionnaire. Participants were excluded due to only filling in the background variables ($N = 120$) or because they did not meet the requirements of the study ($N = 8$), which were working adults with coworkers who work for a minimum of 16 hours per week. We chose this specific group because employees who work fewer hours might not have enough opportunities to get close to their coworkers on a personal level. The final sample consisted of 227 participants (163 female, 62 male, and two nonbinary) who consented to participate in the study and filled in at least one measure after the demographics.

Participants reside in Canada (28.2%), Serbia (24.9%), the Netherlands (22.8%), Greece (11.8%), or other countries (12.3%). The average age was 31.89 years old ($SD_{age} = 10.85$), and most participants had a bachelor's (48%) or a master's degree (36.9%). The participants worked 38.79 hours per week ($SD = 7.70$) and 28.16 hours per week, specifically in the office ($SD = 15.70$). As for how diverse they perceived their organization to be, the

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

responses indicated that the participants worked in somewhat diverse organizations in terms of age ($M=3.53$, $SD=1.14$), gender ($M=3.04$, $SD=1.18$), and ethnicity ($M=2.95$, $SD=1.53$). Since we measured diversity using a 5-point Likert scale, the above means fall around the scale's midpoint.

The study design was correlational since we measured the concepts involved instead of manipulating them.

Procedure

We collected the data from the 12th of March till the 14th of April 2022 in collaboration with colleagues who were also conducting research in the field of policy and social relationships in the workplace. A collective questionnaire, which contained ten measures, was created in Qualtrics and distributed via an online link to our networks. Only the measures and constructs relevant to this paper are described here. We invited the participants to consent to their voluntary and anonymous participation after providing them with an informed consent letter. In this letter, we informed the participants about the length and confidentiality of the questionnaire, the participation requirements, their rights, how the data will be treated, and the ethical approval the study had received. First, they were asked to fill out demographic background information, which included: gender, age, level of education, country of birth and residence, the field of industry, whether they held a leadership position, how many hours they worked per week (at the office or online), and how diverse they perceive their colleagues to be. The rest of the measures followed in this order: perceived transformational leadership, perceived inclusive climate, and diverse workplace friendship. After filling in the questions related to our independent, mediator, and dependent variables, participants were fully debriefed on our research goals and thanked for their participation.

Measures

All the scales included in this study were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with response options ranging from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*), unless otherwise mentioned.

Diversity in Organizations

To measure how diverse the participants perceived their organization to be, we included three items: "My coworkers are of a different age than myself," "My coworkers are

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

of a different gender than myself," and "My coworkers are of a different ethnicity than myself."

Transformational Leadership

We included the Global Transformational Leadership scale (GTL; Carless et al., 2000) to measure transformational leadership. Seven behaviors of transformational leaders were captured: vision, staff development, supportive leadership, empowerment, innovative thinking, leading by example, and charisma. The scale contained seven items, and an example question is: "My leader gives encouragement and recognition to staff." Cronbach's alpha was high ($\alpha = .92$), indicating good internal consistency.

Inclusive Climate

The degree to which participants perceive their climate as inclusive was measured with the Climate for Inclusion scale (Nishii, 2013). The 10-item scale measures the integration of differences and inclusion in decision-making. An example item is: "Employees of this organization are valued for who they are as people, not just for the jobs that they fill." Cronbach's alpha indicated good internal consistency, $\alpha = .91$.

Diverse Workplace Friendship

We included a twelve-item scale by Nielsen and colleagues (2000) to measure diverse workplace friendship formation. The scale originally measured prevalence and opportunity for workplace friendships, but it was adjusted to measure *diverse* ones in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity. A sample item is: "I have the opportunity to get to know my coworkers who are of different gender, age, and ethnicity." The internal consistency of the scale was good ($\alpha = .86$).

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis was conducted using the IBM SPSS Statistics v.28. We run three linear regressions to test the direct effects (hypotheses 1, 2, and 3). For the mediation effect (hypothesis 4), the PROCESS macro SPSS package was used (Hayes, 2009). It allowed us to compute the regression coefficients, the indirect effect, and its bootstrapped confidence intervals by running Hayes' (2017) model 4.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Results

Preliminary Analysis

In order to check whether background variables influenced the three main variables (i.e., transformational leadership, inclusive climate, and diverse workplace friendship), we conducted a correlational analysis. These background variables did not significantly impact our variables of interest, and we decided not to include any as a covariate to keep our model concise (see Table 1).

Second, we checked the intercorrelations between the three variables in the research model of this study (see Table 1). The different sample sizes are because not all participants filled out all the questionnaires. The correlational analysis showed that there were indeed significant positive associations between transformational leadership, inclusive climate, and diverse workplace friendship. This indicated that the variables are related to each other, and we could move forward by investigating which variable can be used to predict which one using regression analysis.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Table 1*Means, SDs, and Correlations between the Variables*

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	227	1.29	.48	-						
2. Age	226	31.9	10.9	.03	-					
3. Level of education	225	4.21	.95	.12	.12	-				
4. Field of industry	226	6.81	4.04	-.05	.08	-.10	-			
5. Transformational Leadership	212	3.84	.89	.08	-.16*	-.08	-.15*	-		
6. Inclusive Climate	217	3.60	.81	.04	-.13	.09	-.09	.64**	-	
7. Diverse Workplace Friendship	210	3.98	.65	.06	.10	.11	-.01	.19**	.37**	-

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Assumptions Check

As PROCESS runs regression models, we manually computed variables to check the regression assumptions. Three outliers were found and excluded from the sample, as they were pointed out as outliers in at least two of the measures of distance (Mahalanobis, Cook's, Leverage values). The assumption of independence of residuals was met, as shown by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.79. Furthermore, the assumption of normality was met, as a normal distribution of the scores was visible through the histogram and the normal P-P plot of regression standardized residual. The assumption of linearity was also met, as no nonlinear relationships were visible in the scatterplot of standardized residuals vs. standardized predicted values. Collinearity tests did not indicate concern for multicollinearity, Tolerance = .67, VIF = 1.48. Lastly, an even spread of values was visible when checking for homoscedasticity at the scatterplot of standardized residuals vs. standardized predicted values, meaning this assumption was also met. As all assumptions were met, I continued with running the regression models and PROCESS.

Did Transformational Leadership Predict the Formation of Diverse Workplace Friendships?

In line with hypothesis 1, we indeed found that the more participants perceived that their leader has a transformational style, the more likely they were to report diverse workplace friendships, $\beta = .12$, $SE = .05$, $p = .020$. Transformational leadership explained 3% of the variance of diverse workplace friendship, which was a significant amount of variance, $F(1, 194) = 5.55$, $p = .020$.

Did Transformational Leadership Predict the formation of Inclusive Climate?

Consistent with hypothesis 2, we found that the more employees perceive that their leader has a transformational style, the more they perceive the organizational climate as inclusive, $\beta = .57$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$. Transformational leadership explained 40% of the variance of inclusive climate, $F(1, 199) = 131.26$, $p < .001$.

Did Inclusive Climate Predict the formation of Diverse Workplace Friendships?

In line with hypothesis 3, we found that the more employees perceive their organization climate as inclusive, the more diverse workplace friendships they report, $\beta = .27$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$. Inclusive climate explained 11% of the variance of diverse workplace friendship, which was a significant amount of variance, $F(1, 206) = 25.67$, $p < .001$.

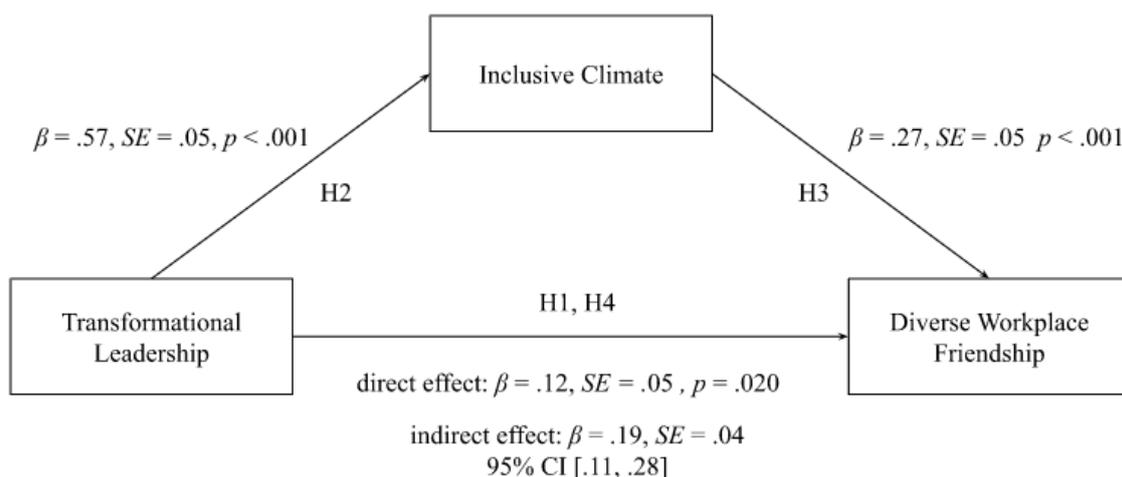
HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Did Transformational Leadership Predict the Formation of Diverse Workplace Friendships through Inclusive Climate?

Corresponding to hypothesis 4, results showed an indirect effect of perceived transformational leadership on diverse friendship formation via perceived inclusive climate, $\beta = .19$, $SE = .04$. This indicates that the perception of working in an inclusive climate explains why employees who perceive their leader as transformational are more likely to form friendships with diverse coworkers. Zero was not included in the confidence interval of the indirect effect, meaning that inclusive climate mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and diverse workplace friendship, 95 % CI [.11, .28]. The results also suggest that after accounting for the mediating role of inclusive climate, transformational leadership does not significantly affect diverse workplace friendship, indicating a full mediation, $\beta = -.07$, $SE = .07$, $p = .31$. This means that the perception of a transformational leader does not affect the formation of diverse workplace friendships directly, but only indirectly, through the perception of an inclusive climate. For a graphic representation of the results, see Figure 2.

Figure 2

Research Model including the Results of the Analyses (H stands for hypothesis)



Exploratory Analysis

Since the design of this study is correlational, it could be the case that the model does not only work the way we proposed, but it could also work the other way around. To further

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

investigate this, we switched the variables around. During this analysis, five more models got tested, and we will summarize the main findings from this analysis.

The model was still found to be significant when diverse workplace friendship was the independent variable, and transformational leadership was the dependent one. This means that the more diverse workplace friendships the employees report, the more transformational they perceive their leader to be, and this is explained by the formation of an inclusive climate, $\beta = .31$, $SE = .07$, 95 % CI [.18, .45]. This suggests that the variables are related to each other, but it is still unclear which one precedes the others.

There was no mediation in the models where the inclusive climate was treated as the independent variable. For example, the more inclusive employees perceive the climate to be, the more diverse workplace friendships they report, but this is not explained by transformational leadership, $\beta = -.05$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI [-.14, .05]. This suggests that inclusive climate affects the model as a mediator but does not really add to the knowledge of how the variables interact as an independent variable.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the positive effects of perceiving to have a transformational leader on forming friendships with diverse coworkers in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity. Furthermore, we investigated whether this relationship was explained by employees' perception of working in an inclusive climate.

In line with what was hypothesized, transformational leadership facilitated the formation of diverse workplace friendships. This means that the more transformational the employees perceived their leader to be, the more friendships with diverse coworkers they reported. This could be because transformational leaders are able to generate positive emotions in their employees, which increases their feelings of connectedness amongst them (Oades et al., 2017). Even more than this, transformational leaders foster the creation of common identities (Podsakoff et al., 1990), which could make diverse employees think that they are all a team with a common goal, and this would strengthen their relationships (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Our finding is supported by other studies, which have shown that the transformational leadership style can facilitate friendship formation and manage diversity in organizations (Kohen et al., 2018; Nguyen, 2019).

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

As expected, transformational leadership also facilitated the creation of an inclusive climate, meaning that the more transformational the employees perceived their leader to be, the more inclusive they perceived the organizational climate to be. The more a transformational leader provokes and endorses everyone's opinion and creates a trusting and safe environment, the more inclusive the climate is perceived (Nembhand & Edmondson, 2006), as employees feel appreciated for who they are and develop a sense of belonging in the team or organization.

Also in line with what was hypothesized, an inclusive climate led to the formation of diverse workplace friendships, meaning that the more inclusive the employees perceived the organizational climate to be, the more diverse workplace friendships they reported. In fact, the perception of working in an inclusive climate fully explained why employees who perceive their leader as transformational are also more likely to form diverse friendships at work. This could be because, in a non-inclusive climate, there could be factors that stand in the way of the diverse employees getting to know each other, even if the leader is transformational. For example, in such an environment, the impact of biases and stereotypes or organizational injustices could be higher, thus creating conflicts among or excluding diverse employees (Onyeador et al., 2021). Considering an organization with such a climate, even if the leader exhibits transformational behaviors, we argue that it will not be enough for diverse employees to become friends.

The presence of an inclusive climate is essential as in such a climate the employees are open and appreciative of each other's differences (Ensari & Miller, 2006). Moreover, there are fewer chances for biases to manifest that might hinder their opportunities to get to know one another on a deeper level (Green & Kalev, 2008). Exploring the other person and identifying those deep-level similarities (e.g., similarities in opinions, values, attitudes) are significant processes in friendship formation (Reid et al., 2017).

Implications

Little attention has been paid to diverse workplace friendships in the literature, which is a pity given the benefits that diversity and friendship can offer. With this study, we make a theoretical contribution by expanding the research on workplace friendships. This theoretical model contributes to broadening the research by identifying two antecedents (i.e., transformational leadership and inclusive climate) as factors that positively impact the formation of diverse friendships at work.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

The added value of diverse workplace friendships is significant both for organizations and their employees. Other than the fact that they can benefit from the multiple advantages workplace friendships can offer, namely increased well-being, job performance, and job satisfaction (Dietz & Fasbender, 2021), they can also reap the benefits of a diverse workforce, which include creativity, innovation, higher job performance if managed well (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Even though what diversity can offer is valuable, research shows that employees may find it challenging to navigate through diverse organizations (Onyeador et al., 2021). This means that diversity alone does not guarantee immediate, tangible benefits. Nevertheless, our findings implicate that stimulating friendship formation among diverse employees can be one way of enjoying the benefits of diversity and friendships in the workplace.

We show that organizations can facilitate diverse workplace friendships by adopting a transformational leadership style and creating an inclusive climate. In this regard, results from the literature suggest that organizations may establish a transformational leadership style by offering their managers training and coaching on transformational leadership and feedback (Abrell et al., 2011; Kirkbride, 2006). As for fostering an inclusive climate, research shows that recruiting diverse employees and establishing policies and procedures that increase the sense of belonging can be beneficial (Mor Barak et al., 2016; Nishii, 2013). Furthermore, organizations could conduct an initial assessment of the inclusive climate and define progress indicators to monitor the process. Last but not least, they could pay attention to fostering inclusion on all levels of the organization and minimizing structural inequalities, exclusionary decision-making, and norms that lead to one-sided views (Mor Barak et al., 2016; Nishii, 2013).

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

A strength of this study is that we found significant results on the topic of social relationships at work during a period when most human relationships were challenged. This study took place during a global pandemic outbreak (COVID-19). Data were collected in March and April 2022. This was almost two years after the first wave of the pandemic that obligated a large part of the population to work from home and thus prohibited them from being in direct contact with colleagues for a long time. Even though, in most countries, the COVID measures for working from home are lifted, it is observed that not everything has returned to normal. Many companies are still working fully online or are adapting to a hybrid

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

way of working. The lack of face-to-face interaction among colleagues could potentially influence their opportunities to become friends, as physical proximity is considered a factor that leads to their facilitation (Nielsen et al., 2000). However, the results of this study are pretty robust, and they suggest that diverse workplace friendships are not affected by whether colleagues see each other very often face-to-face.

A limitation of this study derives from its design, which is correlational, meaning that we cannot point out causal relationships between the variables. Because of that, we conducted an exploratory analysis where we switched the variables around to examine if the model could work the other way. The outcomes of the analysis showed that that was indeed the case, indicating that the more diverse workplace friendships the employees reported, the more they perceived the organizational climate as inclusive, and in turn, the more transformational they perceived their leader to be. Based on this, we know that the variables correlate with each other, but the causal relationships amongst them are not clear. A causal research design would be more fitting to investigate which variable causes which. A suggestion for further research is to conduct a longitudinal experiment with two similarly diverse teams. The first team should be assigned a transformational leader, whereas the second one a non-transformational leader, and it should be observed if an inclusive climate and workplace friendships emerge in each case. All the other conditions should be controlled to make sure that transformational leadership is the factor influencing the other two. Suppose people perceive the climate to be more inclusive in the group of the transformational leader compared to the group of the non-transformational leader. In that case, we could conclude that it is the effect of transformational leadership that precedes the inclusive climate and friendship formation. If the effect is the same in both groups, then we could conclude that it is not the transformational leadership that precedes the other two, and further experiments will be required.

An additional recommendation for further research is to examine other organizational or personal factors that could facilitate diverse workplace friendships. This can increase the understanding of how these relationships can be strengthened in the workplace.

Organizational factors could be HR-related practices (e.g., extensive training programs, employee participation; Avery & McKay, 2010), workspace design (e.g., opportunities for interaction, interdependence), and personal factors could be attitudes toward diversity and motivation for forming friendships. Another direction would be to study the outcomes of diverse workplace friendships, like innovation, creativity, openness to new experiences, and

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

how the creation of such relationships can shift an individual's attitudes and beliefs. By identifying the antecedents and outcomes of diverse workplace friendships, we will have a better understanding of how to facilitate them, and what it is exactly they can offer.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we showed that diverse organizations could benefit from diverse workplace friendships by training or employing leaders with a transformational leadership style and by enhancing a climate for inclusion. This way, organizations can buffer the hindrances that dissimilarity in terms of visible differences like gender, age, and ethnicity can bring in the formation of diverse friendships.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

References

- Abrell, C., Rowold, J., Weibler, J., & Moenninghoff, M. (2011). Evaluation of a Long-Term Transformational Leadership Development Program. *German Journal Of Human Resource Management: Zeitschrift Für Personalforschung*, 25(3), 205-224. doi: 10.1177/239700221102500307
- Avery D. R. McKay P. F. (2010). Doing diversity right: An empirically based approach to effective diversity management. In Hodgkinson G. P. Ford J. K. (Eds.), *International review of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 227–252). Indianapolis, IN: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1994). *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational Leadership* (2nd ed.). Psychology Press.
- Berger, C. R., Weber, M. D., Munley, M. E., & Dixon, J. T. (1977). Interpersonal relationship levels and interpersonal attraction. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 1(1), 245–261. doi:10.1080/23808985.1977.11923684
- Berman, E. M., West, J. P., & Richter, M. N. (2002). Workplace relations: Friendship patterns and consequences (according to managers). *Public Administration Review*, 2, 217–230.
- Boehm, S. A., & Dwertmann, D. J. G. (2015). Forging a single-edged sword: Facilitating positive age and disability diversity effects in the workplace through leadership, positive climates, and HR practices. *Work, Aging and Retirement*, 1(1), 41–63. doi:10.1093/workar/wau008
- Buckley, P., & Bachman, D. (2017). Meet the US workforce of the future: Older, more diverse, and more educated. *Deloitte Review*, (21). Retrieved from <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/deloitte-review/issue-21/meet-the-us-workforce-of-the-future.html>
- Byrne, D. (1971). *The Attraction Paradigm (Personality and Psychopathology, 11)* (1st ed.). Academic Press.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Carless, S. A., Wearing, A. J., & Mann, L. (2000). A short measure of transformational leadership. *Journal of business and psychology, 14*(3), 389-405.

Chiaburu, D. S., & Harrison, D. A. (2008). Do peers make the place? Conceptual synthesis and meta-analysis of coworker effects on perceptions, attitudes, OCBs, and performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 93*, 1082–1103. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.93.5.1082

Chrobot-Mason, D., Ruderman, M. N., & Nishii, L. H. (2014). Leadership in a Diverse Workplace. *Oxford Handbooks Online*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199755615.013.034>

Colbert, A., Bono, J., & Purvanova, R. 2016. Flourishing via workplace relationships: Moving beyond instrumental support. *Academy of Management Journal, 59*(4): 1199-1223.

Demetriou, C., Ozer, B. U., & Essau, C. A. (2015). Self-Report Questionnaires. *The Encyclopedia of Clinical Psychology, 1–6*.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118625392.wbecp507>

Dietz, L., & Fasbender, U. (2021). Age-Diverse Workplace Friendship: A Systematic Literature Review and Recommendations for Future Research. *Work, Aging and Retirement*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/workar/waab028>

Dumas, T. L., Phillips, K. W., & Rothbard, N. P. (2013). Getting Closer at the Company Party: Integration Experiences, Racial Dissimilarity, and Workplace Relationships. *Organization Science, 24*(5), 1377–1401. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1120.0808>

Dutton, J. E., Roberts, L. M., & Bednar, J. 2010. Pathways for positive identity construction at work: Four types of positive identity and the building of social resources. *Academy of Management Review, 35*(2): 265-293.

Ensari, N., & Miller, N. 2006. The application of the personalization model in diversity management. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, 9*: 589- 607.

Fasbender, U., & Drury, L. 2021. One plus one equals one: age-diverse friendship and its complex relation to employees' job satisfaction and turnover intentions. *European*

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 1–14.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432x.2021.2006637>

- Felfe, J., Tartler, K., & Liepmann, D. (2004). Advanced Research in the Field of Transformational Leadership. *German Journal of Human Resource Management: Zeitschrift Für Personalforschung*, 18(3), 262–288.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/239700220401800302>
- Ferris, G. R., Liden, R. C., Munyon, T. P., Summers, J. K., Basik, K. J., & Buckley, M. R. 2009. Relationships at work: Toward a multidimensional conceptualization of dyadic work relationships. *Journal of Management*, 39(6): 1379-1403.
- Fliaster, A., & Schloderer, F. (2010). Dyadic ties among employees: Empirical analysis of creative performance and efficiency. *Human Relations*, 63, 1513–1540.
doi:10.1177/0018726710361988
- Green, T. K., & Kalev, A. 2008. Discrimination-reducing measures at the relational level. *Hastings Law Journal*, 59: 1435-1461.
- Goldman, J. A., Cooper, P. E., Ahern, K., & Corsini, D. A. 1981. Continuities and discontinuities in the friendship descriptions of women at six stages in the life cycle. *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 103(1): 153-167.
- Hannah, S. T., Woolfolk, R. L., & Lord, R. G. (2009). Leader self-structure: a framework for positive leadership. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 30(2), 269–290.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/job.586>
- Harrison, D. A., Price, K. H., & Bell, M. P. (1998). Beyond Relational Demography: Time and the Effects of Surface- and Deep-Level Diversity on Work Group Cohesion. *Academy of Management Journal*, 41(1), 96–107. <https://doi.org/10.5465/256901>
- Hayes, A. F. (2009). Beyond Baron and Kenny: Statistical Mediation Analysis in the New Millennium. *Communication Monographs*, 76(4), 408-420. doi: 10.1080/03637750903310360
- Hooghe, M., Trappers, A., Meuleman, B., & Reeskens, T. (2008). Migration to European countries: A structural explanation of patterns, 1980–2004. *International Migration Review*, 42(2), 476–504. DOI: 10.1111/j.1747- 7379.2008.00132.x
- House, J. S. (1981). *Work Stress and Social Support*. Addison Wesley Publishing Company.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

- Huang, S. P. (2016). A study on the effects of emotional intelligence and workplace friendship on job satisfaction and performance of employees in micro-enterprises. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Mathematics*, *19*(3), 567–583.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09720502.2016.1196050>
- Jansen, W. S., Otten, S., and Van der Zee, K. I. (2017). Being different at work: how gender dissimilarity relates to social inclusion and absenteeism. *Group Process. Intergr. Relat.* *20*, 879–893. doi: 10.1177/1368430215625783
- Jayne, M., & Dipboye, R. (2004). Leveraging diversity to improve business performance: Research findings and recommendations for organizations. *Human Resource Management*, *43*(4), 409-424. doi: 10.1002/hrm.20033
- Joshi, A., Lazarova, M. B., & Liao, H. (2009). Getting everyone on board: The role of inspirational leadership in geographically dispersed teams. *Organization Science*, *20*, 240–252.
- Kammeyer-Mueller, J. D., Livingston, B. A., & Liao, H. (2011). Perceived similarity, proactive adjustment, and organizational socialization. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *78*(2), 225–236. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2010.09.012>
- Kearney, E., & Gebert, D. (2009). Managing diversity and enhancing team outcomes: The promise of transformational leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *94*, 77–89.
- Kirkbride, P. (2006). Developing transformational leaders: the full range leadership model in action. *Industrial And Commercial Training*, *38*(1), 23-32.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/00197850610646016>
- Li, C.-K., & Hung, C.-H. (2009). The influence of transformational leadership on workplace relationships and job performance. *Social Behavior and Personality*, *37*(8), 1129-1142. doi:10.2224/ sbp.2009.37.8.1129
- Lu, J. G., Hafenbrack, A. C., Eastwick, P. W., Wang, D. J., Maddux, W. W., & Galinsky, A. D. 2017. “Going out” of the box: Close intercultural friendships and romantic relationships spark creativity, workplace innovation, and entrepreneurship. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *102*(7): 1091-1108.
- Mao, H. Y., Chen, C. Y., & Hsieh, T. H. (2009). The relationship between bureaucracy and workplace friendship. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, *37*(2), 255–266. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2009.37.2.255>

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

- McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. M. 2001. Birds of a Feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27: 415-444.
- Mor Barak, M., Lizano, E., Kim, A., Duan, L., Rhee, M., Hsiao, H., & Brimhall, K. (2016). The Promise of Diversity Management for Climate of Inclusion: A State-of-the-Art Review and Meta-Analysis. *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*, 40(4), 305-333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2016.1138915>
- Nielsen, I. K., Jex, S. M., & Adams, G. A. (2000). Development and validation of scores on a two-dimensional workplace friendship scale. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 60(4), 628-643.
- Nishii, L. H. (2013). The benefits of climate for inclusion for gender-diverse groups. *Acad. Manag. J.* 56, 1754–1774. doi: 10.5465/amj.2009.0823
- Nguyen, T. (2019). “Working together with difference” in an Australian multicultural workplace. *International Journal of Sociology*, 49(4), 282–297. doi:10.1080/00207659.2019.1634827
- Oades, L. G., Steger, M.F., Fave, A.D., & Passmore, J. (2017). *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of the Psychology of Positivity and Strengths-Based Approaches at Work*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons.
- Onyeador, I., Hudson, S., & Lewis, N. (2021). Moving Beyond Implicit Bias Training: Policy Insights for Increasing Organizational Diversity. *Policy Insights From The Behavioral And Brain Sciences*, 8(1), 19-26. doi: 10.1177/2372732220983840
- Pillemer, J., & Rothbard, N. P. (2018). Friends Without Benefits: Understanding the Dark Sides of Workplace Friendship. *Academy of Management Review*, 43(4), 635–660. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2016.0309>
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Moorman, R. H., & Fetter, R. (1990). Transformational leader behaviors and their effects on followers' trust in leader, satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 1(2), 107–142. doi:10.1016/1048-9843(90)90009-7
- Rawlins, W. K. 1992. *Friendship matters: Communication, dialectics, and the life course*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

- Reid, C. A., Davis, J. L., Pollack, J. M., & Coughlan, R. S. (2017). Balance theory revisited: Relationship issue relevance affects imbalance-induced tension in workplace relationships. *The Journal of Psychology, 151*(6), 547–565.
doi:10.1080/00223980.2017.1372342
- Riordan, C. M., & Griffeth, R. W. (1995). The opportunity for friendship in the workplace: An underexplored construct. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 10*, 141–154.
- Şahin, O., van der Toorn, J., Jansen, W. S., Boezeman, E. J., & Ellemers, N. (2019). Looking Beyond Our Similarities: How Perceived (In)Visible Dissimilarity Relates to Feelings of Inclusion at Work. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00575>
- Scandura, T. A., & Lankau, M. J. (1996). Developing diverse leaders: A leader-member exchange approach. *Leadership Quarterly, 7*(2), 243–263.
- Sechudi, O., & Olivier, B. (2016). The influence of transformational leadership on organisational citizenship behaviour in a South African combat military unit. *Journal of Psychology in Africa, 26*(4), 363–367.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2016.1208948>
- Sias, P. M., & Cahill, D. (1998). From coworkers to friends: The development to peer friendships in the workplace. *Western Journal of Communication, 62*, 273–299.
- Sias, P. M., Smith, G., & Avdeyeva, T. (2003). Sex and sex-composition differences and similarities in peer workplace friendship development. *Communication Studies, 54*, 322–340. doi:10.1080/10510970309363289
- Spreitzer, G. M., Lam, C. F., & Fritz, C. 2010. Engagement and human thriving: Complementary perspectives on energy and connections to work. *Work engagement: A handbook of essential theory and research*, 132-146.
- Spreitzer, G., Sutcliffe, K., Dutton, J., Sonenshein, S., & Grant, A. M. 2005. A socially embedded model of thriving at work. *Organization Science, 16*(5): 537-549.
- Standifer, R. L., Lester, S. W., Schultz, N. J., & Windsor, J. M. (2013). How age similarity preference, uncertainty, and workplace challenges affect conflict. *Human Relations, 66*(12), 1597–1618. doi:10.1177/0018726713482012

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour. In Worchel, S. & Austin, W. G. (Ed.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Nelson-Hall.
- Tombaugh, J. R. (2005). Positive leadership yields performance and profitability. *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal*, 19(3), 15–17. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14777280510590031>
- Tse, H. H. M., Dasborough, M. T., & Ashkanasy, N. M. (2008). A multi-level analysis of team climate and interpersonal exchange relationships at work. *Leadership Quarterly*, 19(2), 195–211. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.01.005>
- Valenzuela, M. A., Jian, G., & Jolly, P. M. (2020). When more is better. *Employee Relations*, 42(2), 507–524. doi:10.1108/ER-05-2019-0202
- Wright, S. (2009). In a lonely place: The experience of loneliness in the workplace. In R. Morrison & S. Wright (Eds.), *Friends and enemies in organizations: A work psychology perspective* (pp. 10–31). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Appendix A: Information letter

Dear participant,

To help you make an informed decision regarding your participation, this letter will explain what the study is about and your rights as a research participant. If you do not understand something in the letter, please ask one of the researchers prior to consenting to the study.

You are invited to participate in a study which is conducted as part of the master's program Social, Health and Organizational Psychology, Utrecht University. You will be asked questions about your workplace, relationships with your coworkers, and workplace policies.

Participation in the study consists of filling in an online questionnaire which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Information gathered will be anonymous and will be treated confidentially. Thus, no identity will be disclosed in the study, and your responses cannot be linked back to you as a person. Your answers will be aggregated with the answers of other participants. Access to the collected data will be given to students conducting this research and their supervisor.

In order to participate, you must be over 18 years old, working for at least 6 months for at least 16 hours per week, and have coworkers.

Your participation in the research is entirely voluntary. You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide by not submitting your responses. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not incur any penalty.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Utrecht University's Ethics Review Board of the Faculty of Social & Behavioural Sciences. If you have questions for the Ethics Review Board, you may contact them through their website:

<https://ferb.sites.uu.nl/contact-us/> .

In any case that you have questions regarding this study in general or your role in the study, you may contact us via a.m.czerniecki@students.uu.nl / j.bojovic@students.uu.nl / e.foka@students.uu.nl, or our supervisor Melissa Vink via m.vink1@uu.nl.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Appendix B: Questionnaire**Demographics**

1. What gender do you identify as?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Non-binary
 - d. Prefer not to answer
2. What is your age?
3. Please specify your country of birth:
4. In which country do you currently live?
5. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
 - a. Some High School
 - b. High School
 - c. Bachelor's Degree
 - d. Master's Degree
 - e. Ph.D. or higher
 - f. Trade School
 - g. Prefer not to say
6. In which field of industry do you work?
 - a. Architecture and engineering
 - b. Arts, culture, and entertainment
 - c. Business, management, and administration
 - d. Communications
 - e. Community and social services
 - f. Education
 - g. Science and technology
 - h. Installation, repair, and maintenance
 - i. Farming, fishing, and forestry
 - j. Government
 - k. Health and medicine

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

1. Law and public policy
7. Are you holding a leadership position?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
8. Do you have a leader to whom you report in your organization?
9. How many hours do you work per week?
10. Looking back into last month, how many hours on average did you work in the office per week?
11. Are you coworkers of a different age than yourself?
 0. 5-point Likert (1=strongly disagree-5=strongly agree)
12. Are you coworkers of a different gender than yourself?
 0. 5-point Likert (1=strongly disagree-5=strongly agree)
13. Are you coworkers of a different ethnicity than yourself?
 0. 5-point Likert (1=strongly disagree-5=strongly agree)

Scales

Global Transformational Leadership scale (GTL) by Carless et al. (2000)

My leader:

1. communicates a clear and positive vision of the future.
2. treats staff as individuals supports and encourages their development.
3. gives encouragement and recognition to staff.
4. fosters trust, involvement, and cooperation among team members.
5. encourages thinking about problems in new ways and questions assumptions.
6. is clear about his/her values and practices what he/she preaches.
7. instills pride and respect in others and inspires me by being highly competent.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

Measured in 5-point Likert (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

Climate for Inclusion by Nishii (2013)

1. My organization is characterized by a non-threatening environment in which people can reveal their "true" selves.
2. My organization values work-life balance.
3. My organization commits resources to ensure that employees are able to resolve conflicts effectively.
4. Employees of my organization are valued for who they are as people, not just for the jobs that they fill.
5. In my organization, people often share and learn about one another as people.
6. My organization has a culture in which employees appreciate the differences that people bring to the workplace.
7. In my organization, employee input is actively sought.
8. In my organization, everyone's ideas for how to do things better are given serious consideration.
9. In my organization, employees' insights are used to rethink or redefine work practices.
10. Top management in my organization exercises the belief that problem-solving is improved when input from different roles, ranks, and functions is considered.

Measured in 5-point Likert (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)

Adjusted Workplace Friendship scale by Nielsen et al. (2000).

1. I have the opportunity to get to know my coworkers who are of different gender, age, or ethnicity.
2. I am able to work with my coworkers of different gender, age, or ethnicity to collectively solve problems.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE EMPLOYEES BECOME FRIENDS?

3. In my organization, I have the chance to talk informally and meet others who are of different gender, age, or ethnicity.
4. Communication among employees of different gender, age, or ethnicity is encouraged by my organization.
5. I have the opportunity to develop close friendships with employees of different gender, age, or ethnicity at my workplace.
6. Informal talk is tolerated by my organization as long as the work is completed.
7. I have formed strong friendships with coworkers of different gender, age, or ethnicity at work.
8. I socialize with coworkers of different gender, age, or ethnicity outside of the workplace.
9. I can confide in people of different gender, age, or ethnicity at work.
10. I feel I can trust many coworkers of different gender, age, or ethnicity a great deal.
11. Being able to see my coworkers of different gender, age, or ethnicity is one reason why I look forward to my job.
12. I do not feel that anyone I work with of different gender, age, or ethnicity is a true friend. *-Reversed item*

Measured in 5-point Likert (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)