



# Identifying and Developing Inclusive Military Leaders

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# Introduction

- **Background:** The U.S. Army's mission necessitates trust, commitment, and shared understanding across Soldiers and within units
- **The Challenge:** Increased mission complexity and a more functional and demographically diverse force make such positive outcomes increasingly difficult to obtain
  - An organization's ability to both manage and leverage diversity for positive organizational outcomes is variable according to research
  - The Army must embrace diverse perspectives, skillsets, and people to enhance mission readiness and success
- **The Solution:** An inclusive organizational climate is believed to moderate the relationship between diversity and desired outcomes and can be shaped by military leaders



# Climate for Inclusion



- An inclusive climate is an aspect of a larger positive organizational climate
- Within the U.S. Army, inclusive climates emerge when members of a team share the perception they are valued and integrated into the team, and their capabilities are recognized and leveraged



# Leaders and Climate



- Leaders are thought to play a pivotal role in developing and sustaining the climate within the groups they lead
- Leaders facilitate how organizational policies are implemented, model what values are practiced, and determine what behaviors are rewarded and punished
- These actions shape the shared perceptions developed by unit members



# Inclusive Leadership



- Inclusive leadership is a leadership style where leaders make their followers feel like they belong and are valued for who they are (Randel et al., 2017)
- Research on inclusive climates in the U.S. Army provides some insight into how leaders might foster perceptions of inclusion,
  - By treating subordinates fairly,
  - Helping them integrate into the unit,
  - Developing a shared understanding through open, two-way communication.
  - By being open to differences, and
  - Leveraging their team members' unique perspectives.



# The Present Study



- Prior research on inclusive leadership describes how leaders act inclusively at a broad level
- However far less is known about the specific actions that inclusive leaders take to foster inclusive environments
- This research will lead to the development of a validated measure of detailed inclusive leader actions for military environments
- The measure will be used to provide developmental feedback to military leaders



# Development of the Items



- Created an extensive list of inclusive leader actions
  - Reviewed literature
  - Conducted focus groups with Soldiers
  - Collected survey responses from Soldiers
- Refined list
  - Reviewed items against framework
  - Deleted redundant/ambiguous items
  - Content validation exercise
- Proceeded to data collection with 68 inclusive leadership actions



# Measure Development



- Administered survey to a variety of NCOs and officers
  - Asked Soldiers to think of their immediate leader
  - Indicate the extent that they agreed or disagreed that their leader performed each action
  - Examples:
    - “My leader urges unit members to share different views when discussing hard topics.”
    - “My leader avoids showing favoritism when assigning tasks.”
- Utilized item analyses and factor analytic methods to reduce the number of items
- EFA produced a fairly clean 3 factor solution with 19 items
  - Valuing differences
  - Shared understanding
  - Fair treatment





# EFA Results



Item	VD	SU	FT
1. Allows less popular viewpoints to be respectfully expressed.	0.96		
2. Urges unit members to share different views when discussing hard topics.	0.83		
3. Promotes understanding of similarities and differences among unit members.	0.76		
4. Acknowledges unit member ideas even if they are not included in the final decision.	0.75		
5. Identifies common ground that can help unite unit members.	0.75		
6. Publically appreciates unit members' unique views.	0.71		
7. Urges unit members to build on other unit members' views during unit discussions.	0.69		
8. Urges unit members to think about how others might view the problem.	0.66		
9. Shows respect for unit members personal opinions.	0.66		
10. Urges unit members to speak up when their views differ.	0.65		
11. Checks to see if unit members are tracking information.		0.84	
12. Ensures critical information reaches the entire unit.		0.74	
13. Communicates information clearly to unit members.		0.72	
14. Promotes information sharing across the unit.		0.68	
15. Is available to unit members to clarify tasks.		0.62	
16. Enforces standards equally across all unit members.			0.81
17. Addresses all unit members in the same way to avoid perceptions of preferential treatment.			0.75
18. Avoids showing favoritism when assigning tasks.			0.65
19. Ensures unit members are disciplined in the same manner.			0.59



# Measure Development (cont.)



- CFA confirmed the 3 factor model fits the data well. And does so better than a single factor model.
- Highly reliable ( $\alpha \approx .9$ )
- Initial validation results-
  - Positively related to other important constructs
    - Unit commitment ( $r$ 's = .37-.42)
    - How included they feel in their unit ( $r$ 's = .36-.47)
    - How included they have felt across their career ( $r$ 's = .28-.40)
    - Psychological safety ( $r$ 's = .49-.60)
    - Commitment to the Army ( $r$ 's = .37-.42)



# Conclusion

- Initial development of the first inclusive leadership measure designed specifically for use in the military
  - Short assessment that can be used to develop leaders who are more inclusive and able to handle the challenges of leading diverse teams
  - This measure is an advancement over other measures in the literature which focus mainly on leaders being available to their team
- Remaining issues/questions-
  - High correlations among dimensions ( $r$ 's  $\approx .7 - .8$ )
  - Relationship with other leadership measures
  - Incremental validity over established measures
  - Move beyond individual-level research and apply to units



# Future Directions



- Application of Inclusive Leadership measure in multinational environments
  - Multinational teams are diverse by definition, so how can we ensure they are also inclusive?
  - Implication: Inclusive leaders in multinational operations ensure increased participation of coalition partners, and thus increased access to a larger pool of knowledge, skills, and experiences to apply to complex problems (Mitchell, Boyle, Parker, Giles, & Chiang, 2015)
- Relationship of Inclusive Leadership measure to adaptability
  - What is the relationship between Inclusive leadership to military team adaptation in complex environments?
  - Implication: Inclusive leadership should result in shared mental models, increased transactive memory, and team learning, which have been linked to dynamic and adaptable teams (Burke, Stagl, Salas, Pierce, & Kendall, 2006; Rosen et al., 2010)

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