Article

The Effects of Workplace Inclusion on Employee Assimilation Outcomes

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Abstract
This study investigates the relationship between coworker inclusion and assimilation outcomes. To begin, this paper reviews components of assimilation and inclusion that are thought to co-occur in the workplace. In addition, employees of a large university in the Pacific Northwest were surveyed electronically to investigate the extent to which inclusion and assimilation outcomes are related. Finally, a discussion is offered that details the study's findings, that is, task- and social-based aspects of inclusion are related positively to assimilation outcomes (i.e., acculturation, job competencies, coworker familiarity, supervisor familiarity, member recognition, involvement, and role negotiation). Moreover, these conclusions remained generally the same for newcomers versus old-timers, as well as for student versus non-student samples.

To date, numerous research initiatives have shown that employee turnover is a substantial and costly problem. In a study of employee turnover in the hospitality industry, for example, Tracey and Hinkin (2008) discovered that costs to replace a productive employee can be "in excess of $12,000" (p. 24) for lower and entry-level employees. Similarly, a training industry report indicates that on average, organizations in the U.S. spent $1,075 per new employee in 2017, and on average "employees received 47.6 hours of training per year" (Training, 2017, p. 23). Turnover can also be costly to

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companies with regard to resources dedicated to recruitment, training, as well as lost productivity (e.g., excessive faculty meetings). As such, the extent to which employees are assimilated successfully to the organization is of decided interest, in part because successful employee adjustment is associated with a bevy of beneficial outcomes (e.g., employee retention; Bauer et al., 2007).

Organizational assimilation, which is defined as the ongoing process of successful organizational integration (Myers, 2005), is also valuable for other reasons. For instance, organizational members who are assimilated benefit from becoming familiar with important others and learning about critical expectations and normative social behaviors that are required for optimal functioning (Myers & McPhee, 2006). Moreover, assimilation is valuable to employees because it allows them to influence the organization by making changes to their specific role (Jablin, 2001; Myers & Oetzel, 2003). Indeed, successful assimilation allows for a more fruitful relationship between employee and organization (Myers, 2009). That is, successful assimilation is associated with higher job satisfaction, greater organizational identification, and intention to remain with the organization (Myers & Oetzel, 2003; see also Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Kramer & Miller, 2014; Manata et al., 2016; Wanberg, 2012).

To date, research indicates that social interaction is a vital component that facilitates organizational assimilation (Cranmer et al., 2017; Gailliard et al., 2010; Kramer & Miller, 2014; Levine & Moreland, 2006; Myers & Oetzel, 2003; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Scott & Myers, 2010). However, how social interaction facilitates assimilation outcomes remains unclear (Manata et al., 2016). In addressing this lacuna, this study investigates inclusion through social interaction as a possible facilitator of assimilation for organizational members. We begin by first reviewing components of assimilation and inclusion that are believed to co-occur in the workplace, and then describe a study that investigates the extent to which this co-occurrence is the case.

Organizational Assimilation

Organizational assimilation is an ongoing process of one's integration into the organization (Jablin, 2001). Specifically, successful assimilation promotes the facilitation of organizational membership, which culminates in an employee who feels integrated within and adjusted to an organization (Gailliard et al., 2010; Waldeck & Myers, 2007). As Myers (2009) notes, "when members assimilate, they become familiar with the culture and assume their roles as participating members of the organization" (p. 722).

Scholars contend further that organizational assimilation is a function of two general processes: *socialization* and *individualization* (Gailliard et al., 2010; Jablin, 2001). In the main, socialization is a process whereby employees learn "the ropes" of the organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211), familiarize themselves with their specific role, and learn the language, history, goals and values of the organization (Chao et al., 1994). Knowledge that is acquired through socialization is valuable in helping employees to perform their specific role. Specifically, socialization provides members with the organizational knowledge they need to exist within an organization

and reduce anxiety that may be associated with uncertainty about their organizational environment (Morrison, 1993; Waldeck & Myers, 2007). Moreover, well socialized individuals are more satisfied, more involved and adaptable, and have a better sense of personal identity than those who are less well socialized (e.g., Bauer & Erdogan, 2014; Kramer & Miller, 2014; Manata et al., 2016; Myers & Oetzel, 2003; Wanberg, 2012).

In addition to being socialized, organizational members assimilate through the process of individualizing their roles by becoming competent at performing their required tasks and by attempting to alter their assigned role (Miller et al., 1999). Attempts to influence how they enact their role, its purpose, or how they will be evaluated, are ways that individuals attempt to shape their role to meet their individual needs, abilities, and wishes (Jablin, 2001; Miller et al., 1999; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Consequently, it is noted that organizational members assimilate to their role through both organizational socialization practices and member individuality.

According to Myers and Oetzel (2003), there are numerous assimilation outcomes that are relevant to either type of process, that is, socialization or individualization. Critical components of organizational knowledge, which are presumed to come about by general socialization processes, include *acculturation, job competency*, and *familiarity with coworkers* and *supervisors*. In specific, Myers and Oetzel indicate that newcomer acculturation occurs through "learning and accepting the culture" (p. 443), which includes learning the cultural norms of how to behave in the workplace (e.g., Manata, 2019). Additionally, Myers and Oetzel recognize that job competency indicates that members understand how to perform their jobs adequately. Of note, other authors have made similar distinctions between organizational culture and elements of job competencies. Morrison (1993), for example, indicates that, initially, newcomers seek social feedback from their peers, but over time, employees shift their focus to feedback regarding their performance and their specific role from supervisors (see also Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Thus, upon entering an organization, assimilation is achieved by being socialized to and learning about the organization's culture and becoming familiar with others (e.g., Morrison, 1993), as well as learning how to perform one's job (Morrison, 1993; Myers & Oetzel, 2003; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).

In addition to the factors noted thus far, there remain other factors that are also considered critical outcomes of successful assimilation. *Role negotiation*, for instance, is essential to employee adjustment and innovation, as role negotiation allows individuals to familiarize themselves with their role and its expectations (Miller et al., 1999). Specific role negotiation attempts serve as evidence that an individual is making changes to the organization, often by performing their role in a new way that is more suited to the individual (Gailliard et al., 2010). Moreover, this is an effort on the part of organizational members to adjust their role to suit some sort of need or unique skill that they offer. Indeed, role negotiation gives individuals a chance to make changes to their role in practical ways, such as modifying processes to make them more efficient, and it also gives members a chance to employ their unique skills in ways that benefit themselves and the organization (Jablin, 2001). Similarly, Myers and Oetzel (2003) conjecture that organizational members monitor and assess the levels of *involvement* of other members to evaluate others' assimilation into the organization.

Moreover, and importantly, Myers and McPhee (2006) note that members' involvement is associated with the desire to become involved, which predicts organizational acceptance, that is, *recognition*, or being valued as an asset by the group (see Gailliard et al., 2010, p. 556).

In sum, organizational assimilation is the result of attempts made by the organization to socialize employees, as well as attempts made by employees to individualize their specific role (Jablin, 2001; Waldeck & Myers, 2007). Ultimately, understanding the process of assimilation is important because successful assimilation results in individuals who feel integrated with the organization (Gailliard et al., 2010; Jablin, 2001; Waldeck & Myers, 2007) and feel that they are valuable members of the organization (Myers & Oetzel, 2003). Moreover, assimilation allows members to identify and conform to the norms and expected behaviors of an organization, feel like an involved and contributing member, as well as define their roles and attempt to influence their organization (Waldeck & Myers, 2007). Indeed, assimilated individuals are valuable to organizations, as assimilation outcomes include lower turnover rates, greater job satisfaction, more organizational identification, and a favorable organizational culture (Myers & Oetzel, 2003).

Although it is generally accepted that successful assimilation occurs because of interactions with other organizational members (Cranmer et al., 2017; Gailliard et al., 2010; Kramer & Miller, 2014; Levine & Moreland, 2006; Morrison, 2002; Myers & Oetzel, 2003; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Scott & Myers, 2010), little is known about how this occurs (Manata et al., 2016). Zorn and Gregory (2005), for example, call for additional research that investigates how coworker interactions influence work experiences and sensemaking, especially as they occur within the context of organizational assimilation. Thus, to address this general call, the current study investigates the relationships and interactions among employees, their peers, and supervisors to discover how these interactions contribute to assimilation outcomes (e.g., organizational knowledge, role negotiation).

Coworker Interactions and Workplace Inclusion

Coworkers constitute a critical source of information for the newcomer (Miller & Jablin, 1991). Specifically, when new members arrive at an organization, they look to other organizational members to provide the information they need, either by inquiring directly, or by employing other, more covert methods such as observation or surveillance (Morrison, 1993). Moreover, in addition to providing tactical and organizational information regarding language, history, and politics, existing organizational members also provide social feedback. Notably, social feedback includes information regarding non-task behaviors (Morrison, 1993) and can contribute to satisfying work relationships (Chao et al., 1994). In addition, social relationships can provide support and a sense of belonging (Morrison, 2002). That is, social relationships facilitate the extent to which one feels included.

Inclusion is the "degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the workgroup through experiencing treatment that satisfies his

or her needs for belongingness" (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1265). Indeed, Shore et al. (2011) note that perceptions of inclusion constitute feeling as if one belongs and are unique to the group. This uniqueness is important because it allows individuals to feel as if they are valuable and not easily replaced by the group, that is, that they are included and that their membership is secure. Similarly, and importantly, Mor-Barak and Cherin (1998) consider perceptions of inclusion to be the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organizational processes through "involvement in work groups, and ability to influence the decision making process" (p. 48). Stated differently, Mor-Barak and Cherin contend that feelings of inclusion can occur in terms of both social and task dynamics.

Social inclusion is the degree to which members feel involved and a part of the social interactions and dynamics in their work groups, such as informal discussions, access to information, or feeling listened to by their peers. By feeling included socially, members may have access to the organizational information that they need to feel as if they belong to their group and become proficient at their specific role (Morrison, 1993). In addition, feeling included socially may allow members to feel that, should they attempt to make changes to their role or the organization in some way, these changes would be accepted by their peers. Stated differently, satisfying social relationships can facilitate socialization and assimilation outcomes (Chao et al., 1994), as assimilation occurs by interacting with others (Gailliard et al., 2010; Manata et al., 2016).

Alternatively, *task inclusion* is the degree to which members feel they are consulted or involved in influencing the specific tasks they perform. Specifically, organizational members feel integrated when their supervisors include them in the decision-making process (Ding & Shen, 2017). This ability to influence decision-making has been referred to as participatory decision-making (e.g., Redding & Sincoff, 1984). Participatory decision-making can be evaluated in terms of employees' involvement in decision-making (Cotton et al., 1988) as well as being informed about their job or task. Research has shown that participatory decision-making can have positive effects on productivity and performance, perceived influence, and involvement (Cotton et al., 1988). Moreover, individuals perceive that they hold high insider status when participatory decision-making is high (Ding & Shen, 2017). Miller and Monge (1986) also note that participation in decision-making is quite influential for job satisfaction and productivity when organizational members perceive there to be a participative climate. Thus, it is reasoned that if employees perceive they are included in decision-making processes, that is, that they are made privy to workplace tasks, then they may also feel free to make changes to their role or the organization at large. Moreover, task inclusion is expected to facilitate assimilation outcomes by providing employees with necessary organizational knowledge, and opportunities to make changes to their role or the organization and become familiar with others.

Hypotheses and Additional Research Questions

Given the preceding materials, it is predicted that organizational members who are included overall (i.e., both socially and via task inclusion) are more likely to feel

proficient at their job, acculturated to the organization, and familiar with others. Organizational members are also likely to feel comfortable when attempting to affect some sort of change within the organization, such as becoming involved and innovating their role. In the interest of exploring the extent to which these expectations are correct, the following hypotheses are offered:

> **H1:** Social inclusion is associated positively with assimilation outcomes (i.e., acculturation, job competency, coworker familiarity, supervisor familiarity, recognition, involvement, and role negotiation).
> **H2:** Task inclusion is associated positively with assimilation outcomes (i.e., acculturation, job competency, coworker familiarity, supervisor familiarity, recognition, involvement, and role negotiation).

In addition, although it is likely that both task and social inclusion influence the extent to which organizational members gain organizational knowledge and individualize their roles, it remains unclear whether social or task inclusion constitute a bigger predictor of assimilation outcomes. For example, it may be that social inclusion is more vital in providing members with access to information necessary for acculturation and to become proficient at one's role. That is, by being included socially, individuals may be more likely to understand the social norms and expectations regarding behavior through exposure to those social norms simply because they are included in social interaction among other organizational members (Manata, 2019; Morrison, 1993; Myers & McPhee, 2006). Similarly, it may be the case that task inclusion provides more opportunity for individuals to have access to information necessary to proactively involve themselves, as well as to make changes to their role as they see fit. By being included in decision-making, employees have access to necessary information to form opinions, involve themselves in the decision-making process, and make appropriate adjustments to their role (Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998). Consequently, the importance of the inclusion variable may be contingent on the assimilation outcome in question. Alternatively, both aspects of inclusion may combine to impact assimilation outcomes in a non-additive manner, for example, better assimilation outcomes are realized when both task and social inclusion are high as opposed to low. In the interest of exploring these alternate scenarios, this study also seeks to investigate:

> **RQ1**: Is social or task inclusion a bigger predictor of assimilation outcomes?
> **RQ2:** Do social and task inclusion combine non-additively to impact assimilation outcomes?

Finally, given their relevance to assimilation and organizational communication research, two additional variables were considered in this investigation: organizational tenure and student-worker status. Regarding tenure, it has long been argued in the socialization and assimilation arenas that newcomers process information differently when compared to those that have been with the company for a longer period (e.g., Jones, 1983; Schein, 1964). Indeed, an implicit assumption made when conducting

socialization and assimilation research is that newcomers represent a unique population (e.g., Manata et al., 2016; Miller & Jablin, 1991). Nevertheless, despite these claims, this dynamic has been investigated rarely (for a notable exception, see Rollag, 2004). Indeed, Myers & Oetzel, 2003, for example, have criticized the assimilation corpus for its marked focus on newcomers, despite the general acknowledgment that assimilation constitutes a life-long process (Waldeck & Myers, 2007). As such, the extent to which assimilation processes differ when comparing newcomers to those with longer tenures remains unclear. Consequently, a research question was proposed that allowed for further investigation of this matter.

RQ3: Do the effects of inclusion on assimilation outcomes differ by tenure?

Relatedly, the extent to which student-workers' (e.g., Manata, 2020) assimilation experiences differ from non-student workers is also of interest. Student workers comprise an interesting sample in that their jobs are typically part- or half-time (Barron & Anastasiadou, 2009), and in that they must negotiate other important responsibilities (e.g., university obligations; Manata et al., 2017). To date, there is some research to suggest that part-time workers report lower levels of job involvement (e.g., Martin & Hafer, 1995) and affective commitment (Chang & Chelladurai, 2003). As such, it is reasonable to suspect that student-workers experience assimilation processes differently, such that attempts to assimilate them may be less successful. Alternatively, there is also reason to believe that successful assimilation processes will behave similarly among student samples. This contention speaks to the broader debate on the use of student samples when drawing statistical inferences in organizational research. In specific, it is believed generally that student samples should not be procured when conducting organizational research, in part because it is believed that student samples do not generalize to broader organizational populations (Miller, 2001; see also Peterson, 2001). Nevertheless, this belief is countered by those that suggest that there are cases in which the use of student samples represents a trivial concern (e.g., Druckman & Kam, 2011; see also Landers & Behrend, 2015). As such, the extent to which this remains an issue in the assimilation arena remains unclear. In the interest of probing this matter further, a final research question is offered:

RQ4: Do the effects of inclusion on assimilation outcomes differ by student-worker status?

Method

Sample

During the winter of 2018, this study recruited from the employee population of an urban university located in the Pacific Northwest ($N=251$).[1] Participants were full and part-time employees that occupy diverse roles (i.e., office staff, faculty, graduate student employee, advising, undergraduate student employee). Of note, there were 74

males (29.5%), 151 females (60.2%), and 5 who identified as "other" (2.0%). Participants who reported ethnicity self-identified as White/Caucasian ($n=187$, 74.5%), Hispanic or Latino ($n=8$, 3.2%), Black or African American ($n=4$, 1.6%), Asian/Pacific Islander ($n=14$, 5.6%), and the remainder of participants reported as "other" ($n=15$, 6.0%). Ages ranged from 19 to 81 ($M=41.36$, $SD=12.28$), and participants reported being an employee of the university for an average of 8.29 years ($SD=8.62$). Participants also reported having the role of faculty ($n=94$, 37.5%), office staff ($n=41$, 16.3%), graduate student employee ($n=49$, 19.5%), undergraduate student employee ($n=3$, 1.3%), advising ($n=9$, 3.9%) or reported as "other" or did not specify ($n=33$, 13.2%). Aside from tenure and student-worker status, the impact of these demographics on assimilation outcomes was no longer considered because their inclusion did not alter the substantive conclusions in a meaningful manner, and because their effects on each of the seven assimilation outcomes were largely non-substantial (i.e., $p>.05$).

Procedure

In soliciting responses, a digital survey link was distributed via email to university employees (e.g., faculty, office staff, and student employees). In addition, three reminder emails were sent during the 4-week data collection period (i.e., once a week). Of note, participant responses were solicited regardless of their organizational tenure (e.g., newcomers vs. old-timers). This decision was made because organizational members move through stages of assimilation at different rates (Gailliard et al., 2010; Jablin, 2001; Myers & Oetzel, 2003). Participants were offered a chance to receive one of four $50 electronic Amazon gift cards in exchange for their participation.

Measures

Assimilation. Gailliard et al.'s (2010) measure of organizational assimilation, which constitutes one of the more well-established measures of assimilation outcomes, was implemented to assess seven different outcomes of member assimilation. Each of these factors are described below. Unless otherwise noted, all items were positioned on 7-point Likert-type scales (*1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree*).

Acculturation. To assess acculturation, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they were familiar with organizational values, standards, etc. Example items included, "I understand the standards of the organization," and "I think I have a good idea about how this organization operates."

Job competency. To assess job competency, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt proficient at their job. Example items included, "I can do others' jobs, if I am needed," "I have figured out efficient ways to do my work," and "I think I am an expert at what I do."

Familiarity with coworkers. To assess coworker familiarity, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt familiar with their coworkers. Example items included, "I consider my coworkers friends," and "I feel comfortable talking to my coworkers."

Familiarity with supervisor. To assess supervisor familiarity, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt familiar with their supervisor. Example items included, "my supervisor sometimes discusses problems with me," and "my supervisor and I talk together often."

Recognition. To assess recognition, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt valued by their supervisor. Example items included, "I think my supervisor values my opinions," and "I think my supervisor recognizes my value to the organization."

Involvement. To assess involvement, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they enjoyed and were involved with their work. Example items include, "I talk to my coworkers about how much I like it here," and "I talk about how much I enjoy my work."

Role negotiation. To assess role negotiation, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they have altered their position. Example items include "I have helped to change the duties of my position," and "I have changed some aspect of my position."

Social inclusion. Participants' perceptions of social inclusion were measured via Chao et al.'s (1994) *people* scale, made up of six items. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they were liked and thus included in social activities. Example items include, "I am pretty popular in my department," and "I believe most of my coworkers like me."

Task inclusion. Task inclusion was measured via the Mor-Barak and Cherin (1998) *influence in decision-making* four-item scale. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they were able to influence departmental decision, tasks, etc. Example items include, "I am able to influence work assignment directions," and "I am consulted about important project decisions."

Tenure. Organizational tenure was measured with a one-item measure that instructed the participants to "please enter the amount of time you have been employed by the University (in years)."

Student worker. A student worker status variable was created by dichotomizing the demographic variable that inquired about the participant's work position at the university. Participants that identified as either graduate student employees or undergraduate

student employees were coded as student workers (1), whereas participants that identified as either faculty, office staff, advising, or other were coded as non-student workers (0).

Results

Measurement Model

Before conducting the main analyses, confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were employed to examine the structural validity of the nine-factor measurement model that was stipulated a priori (Hunter, 1980; Hunter & Gerbing, 1982; Levine, 2005). These analyses were conducted using the lessR package in the R software environment (Gerbing, 2020; R Core Team, 2016). Centroid estimation methods were implemented to estimate factor loadings (see Gerbing & Hamilton, 1994), and internal consistency and parallelism theorems were used to calculate predicted correlation coefficients (Hunter & Gerbing, 1982). Model fit was investigated by examining the differences between these predicted coefficients and their counterpart, obtained coefficients (i.e., residuals). Items that evidenced large errors consistently were treated as invalid indicators of their respective latent constructs and were thus removed from the measurement model in the interest of improving structural validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Hunter, 1980; Hunter & Gerbing, 1982). Model fit was evaluated further with the comparative fit index (CFI) and standardized root mean residual (SRMR), both of which were calculated following the use of maximum likelihood estimation in the LAVAAN package in the R software environment (R Core Team, 2016; Rosseel, 2012; see also Gerbing & Hamilton, 1994; Hair et al., 2007). Moreover, if nested model comparison was necessary, the Akaike information criterion (AIC) was implemented as an additional index of model fit, with smaller values indicating better fit (Singer & Willett, 2003).

Analyses of the initial measurement model indicated a lack of adequate fit, $X^2(491) = 1104.95$, CFI = 0.85, SRMR = 0.07, AIC: 19535.71. Specifically, although SRMR values were adequate, the CFI was lower than is typically desired (Hair et al., 2007; Hu & Bentler, 1999). As such the residual matrix was inspected to specify the source of error. This inspection revealed numerous items that were creating large errors consistently (i.e., construct invalidity). Consequently, these items were removed, and a subsequent CFA was performed on the amended measurement model. Analysis of this amended measurement model produced decidedly better model fit, $X^2(173 = 277.17$, CFI = 0.96, SRMR = 0.05, AIC: 12360.31. Specifically, all four fit indices improved markedly. In consequence, the amended model was preferred moving forward, that is, each of the nine-factors were treated as distinct factors.[2] Correlation coefficients between each of the variables can be found in Table 1; variable means, standard deviations, and reliability coefficients (i.e., Cronbach's alpha) are also included in this table. Of note, Cronbach alpha values ranged from adequate to excellent (see Nunnally et al., 1967).

In investigating H1 and H2, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analyses were implemented (Cohen et al., 2014). These analyses proceeded by regressing the

Table 1. Variable Means, Standard Deviations, Cronbach's Alpha, and Uncorrected Correlations (listwise N = 187).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	M	SD
(1) Acculturation	(0.91)											5.23	1.27
(2) Job competency	0.35	(0.61)										5.54	0.94
(3) Coworker familiarity	0.29	0.24	(0.83)									5.46	1.17
(4) Supervisor familiarity	0.29	0.37	0.37	(0.85)								4.92	1.52
(5) Recognition	0.33	0.33	0.50	0.62	(0.95)							5.64	1.32
(6) Involvement	0.33	0.40	.58	0.34	0.47	(0.88)						4.51	1.51
(7) Role negotiation	0.24	0.48	.21	0.32	0.30	0.40	(0.85)					4.84	1.49
(8) Social inclusion	0.36	0.39	.44	0.29	0.48	0.47	0.37	(0.81)				4.91	1.06
(9) Task inclusion	0.35	0.39	.28	0.35	0.55	0.34	0.40	0.43	(0.90)			4.67	1.48
(10) Tenure	0.32	0.24	.09	0.14	0.16	0.02	0.19	0.11	0.20	(—)		8.29	8.62
(11) Student worker	−0.32	−0.32	.00	−0.10	−0.16	−0.16	−0.32	−0.28	−0.44	−.38	(—)	0.23	0.42

Note. Cronbach's alpha coefficients are included in the diagonals; Student worker is coded such that student worker = 1, and non-student worker = 0.

assimilation outcomes onto the four independent variables. Standardized betas for each of the effects, as well as Bs and their respective 95% confidence intervals, are reported in Table 2 (on the advantages of reporting confidence intervals over *p* values, see Hunter, 1997; Schmidt, 2016). Additionally, the 95% confidence intervals produced in this analysis were used to determine whether the strength of both inclusion effects was equivalent, that is, RQ1. To explore the remaining RQs, that is, whether both inclusion variables combined non-additively to effect assimilation outcomes, and whether tenure or student-worker status combined non-additively with either of the inclusion variables to impact assimilation outcomes, interaction terms were created by standardizing all four independent variables and then multiplying them such that five separate two-way interaction terms were created; these product terms were treated as the non-additive effects of interest in a subsequent regression analysis. Of note, the effects of the independent variables were controlled for statistically when determining the magnitude of the non-additive effects. Also, standardized values were used during this portion of the procedure to attain standardized betas for the interaction terms (for technical details, see Cohen et al., 2014).[3]

Social and Task Inclusion

As is summarized in Table 2, analyses indicated that both social and task aspects of workplace inclusion were critical to facilitating all seven aspects of assimilation outcomes. Specifically, significant, positive effects were produced between reports of social inclusion and all seven assimilation outcomes; Bs ranged from 0.20 to 0.55 (see Table 2). Moreover, and similarly, task inclusion had significant, positive effects on all seven assimilation outcomes; Bs ranged from 0.16 to 0.56. As such, H1 and H2 received statistical support.

In exploring RQ1, that is, whether the strength of both inclusion effects on assimilation outcomes was equivalent, their 95% confidence intervals were inspected for numerical overlap. Notably, this analysis indicated that the strength of the task and social inclusion effects were equivalent across all seven assimilation outcomes, that is, their 95% confidence intervals evidenced numerical overlap, which makes them statistically indistinguishable in these data. The largest discrepancy in Bs emerged when considering the coworker familiarity variable (social inclusion, $B=0.47$, 95% CI [0.32, 0.62]; task inclusion, $B=0.20$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.36]), but this difference was deemed modest in that both confidence intervals overlapped. However, it is likely the case that procuring a larger sample will help in establishing this difference more firmly (Cohen et al., 2014; Hunter, 1997).

Regarding RQ2, that is, whether both inclusion variables combined non-additively to effect assimilation outcomes, additional interaction analyses indicated that three non-additive effects were evident in these data. Moreover, they were all in the same direction. Specifically, task and social inclusion combined non-additively in a negative manner to impact coworker familiarity, $B=-0.16$, 95% CI [−0.27, −0.04], supervisor familiarity, $B=-0.17$, 95% CI [−0.33, 0.01], and recognition, $B=-0.22$, 95% CI [−0.33, −0.11]. To visualize these effects, the effect of social inclusion on all three

Table 2. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Models.

	Model 1			Model 2		
	β	B	95% CI	β	B	95% CI
Acculturation						
Social inclusion	0.24	0.30	[.14, 0.47]	0.22	0.27	[0.09, 0.45]
Task inclusion	0.19	0.24	[0.06, 0.41]	0.22	0.28	[0.09, 0.47]
Tenure	0.21	0.27	[0.11, 0.44]	0.22	0.28	[0.09, 0.46]
Student worker	−0.06	−0.08	[−0.25, 0.09]	−0.08	−0.09	[−0.28, 0.10]
Social × Task inclusion	—	—	—	0.01	0.01	[−0.13, 0.14]
Tenure × Social inclusion	—	—	—	−0.04	−0.05	[−0.27, 0.16]
Tenure × Task inclusion	—	—	—	0.01	0.01	[−0.23, 0.25]
Student × Social inclusion	—	—	—	0.07	0.07	[−0.09, 0.23]
Student × Task inclusion	—	—	—	−0.09	−0.10	[−0.28, 0.08]
Job competency						
Social inclusion	0.23	0.21	[0.09, 0.34]	0.22	0.20	[0.08, 0.33]
Task inclusion	0.17	0.16	[0.03, 0.29]	0.20	0.19	[0.05, 0.33]
Tenure	0.12	0.11	[−0.01, 0.24]	0.15	0.15	[0.01, 0.28]
Student worker	−0.15	−0.14	[−0.27, 0.01]	−0.06	−0.05	[−0.19, 0.09]
Social × Task inclusion	—	—	—	0.10	0.08	[−0.02, 0.17]
Tenure × Social inclusion	—	—	—	−0.17	−0.19	[−0.34, −0.03]
Tenure × Task inclusion	—	—	—	0.04	0.04	[−0.14, 0.22]
Student × Social inclusion	—	—	—	0.11	0.09	[−0.03, 0.21]
Student × Task inclusion	—	—	—	0.07	0.06	[−0.07, 0.19]
Coworker familiarity						
Social inclusion	0.41	0.47	[0.32, 0.62]	0.37	0.42	[0.26, 0.58]
Task inclusion	0.17	0.20	[0.04, 0.36]	0.17	0.19	[0.02, 0.36]
Tenure	0.07	0.08	[−0.06, 0.23]	0.05	0.05	[−0.11, 0.22]

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

	Model 1			Model 2		
	β	B	95% CI	β	B	95% CI
Student worker	0.22	0.25	[0.10, 0.41]	0.15	0.17	[0.00, 0.34]
Social × Task inclusion	—	—	—	-0.17	-0.16	[-0.27, -0.04]
Tenure × Social inclusion	—	—	—	0.01	0.01	[-0.18, 0.20]
Tenure × Task inclusion	—	—	—	0.07	0.09	[-0.13, 0.31]
Student × Social inclusion	—	—	—	-0.01	-0.01	[-0.16, 0.13]
Student × Task inclusion	—	—	—	-0.10	-0.10	[-0.26, 0.06]
Supervisor familiarity						
Social inclusion	0.18	0.25	[0.04, 0.47]	0.15	0.21	[-0.02, 0.44]
Task inclusion	0.30	0.44	[0.21, 0.68]	0.26	0.38	[0.12, 0.64]
Tenure	0.10	0.15	[-0.07, 0.36]	0.13	0.20	[-0.04, 0.44]
Student worker	0.12	0.17	[-0.06, 0.39]	0.11	0.16	[-0.08, 0.41]
Social × Task inclusion	—	—	—	-0.14	-0.17	[-0.33, 0.01]
Tenure × Social inclusion	—	—	—	0.08	0.13	[-0.14, 0.40]
Tenure × Task inclusion	—	—	—	-0.12	-0.22	[-0.55, 0.12]
Student × Social inclusion	—	—	—	0.05	0.06	[-0.14, 0.26]
Student × Task inclusion	—	—	—	-0.07	-0.09	[-0.32, 0.15]
Recognition						
Social inclusion	0.31	0.36	[0.22, 0.51]	0.28	0.32	[0.17, 0.47]
Task inclusion	0.47	0.56	[0.40, 0.73]	0.43	0.51	[0.34, 0.68]
Tenure	0.10	0.12	[-0.03, 0.26]	0.14	0.17	[0.01, 0.32]
Student worker	0.17	0.19	[0.04, 0.35]	0.10	0.12	[-0.05, 0.28]
Social × Task inclusion	—	—	—	-0.24	-0.22	[-0.33, -0.11]
Tenure × Social inclusion	—	—	—	0.02	0.03	[-0.15, 0.21]

Table 2. (continued)

	Model 1			Model 2		
	β	B	95% CI	β	B	95% CI
Tenure × Task inclusion	—	—	—	-0.11	-0.16	[-0.38, 0.06]
Student × Social inclusion	—	—	—	-0.05	-0.05	[-0.18, 0.09]
Student × Task inclusion	—	—	—	-0.17	-0.17	[-0.33, -0.02]
Involvement						
Social inclusion	0.37	.55	[0.36, 0.75]	0.35	0.52	[0.31, 0.73]
Task inclusion	0.23	0.36	[0.15, 0.56]	0.25	0.38	[0.16, 0.61]
Tenure	-0.03	-0.04	[-0.23, 0.15]	-0.06	-0.09	[-0.31, 0.12]
Student worker	0.09	0.13	[-0.07, 0.33]	0.06	0.10	[-0.13, 0.32]
Social × Task Inclusion	—	—	—	-0.01	-0.01	[-0.17, 0.15]
Tenure × Social inclusion	—	—	—	0.05	0.09	[-0.17, 0.34]
Tenure × Task inclusion	—	—	—	0.05	0.09	[-0.20, 0.38]
Student × Social inclusion	—	—	—	0.05	0.06	[-0.13, 0.25]
Student × Task inclusion	—	—	—	-0.03	-0.04	[-0.25, 0.18]
Role negotiation						
Social inclusion	0.23	0.29	[0.15, 0.64]	0.23	0.26	[0.12, 0.54]
Task inclusion	0.23	0.16	[0.13, 0.54]	0.23	0.19	[0.12, 0.56]
Tenure	0.10	0.03	[-0.04, 0.34]	0.10	0.03	[-0.06, 0.37]
Student worker	-0.09	-0.19	[-0.33, 0.07]	-0.04	-0.23	[-0.28, 0.17]
Social × Task inclusion	—	—	—	0.02	0.01	[-0.13, 0.18]
Tenure × Social inclusion	—	—	—	-0.01	-0.01	[-0.27, 0.23]
Tenure × Task inclusion	—	—	—	0.00	0.00	[-0.28, 0.29]
Student × Social inclusion	—	—	—	0.07	0.16	[-0.10, 0.28]
Student × Task inclusion	—	—	—	0.07	-0.16	[-0.12, 0.30]

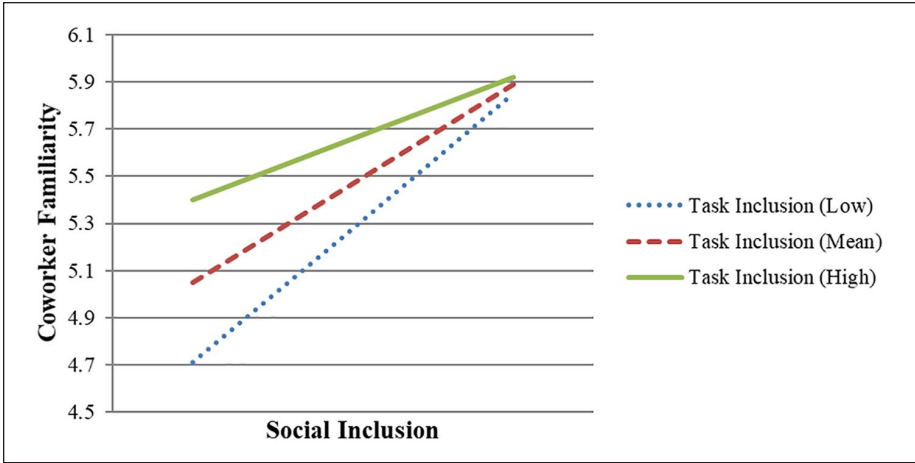*Note.* All independent variables and their respective interaction terms are standardized.

Figure 1. Social × Task Inclusion non-additive effect on coworker familiarity.
Note. Coworker familiarity is the dependent variable. When task inclusion is low: $B = 0.57$; medium (mean): $B = 0.42$; high: $B = 0.26$.
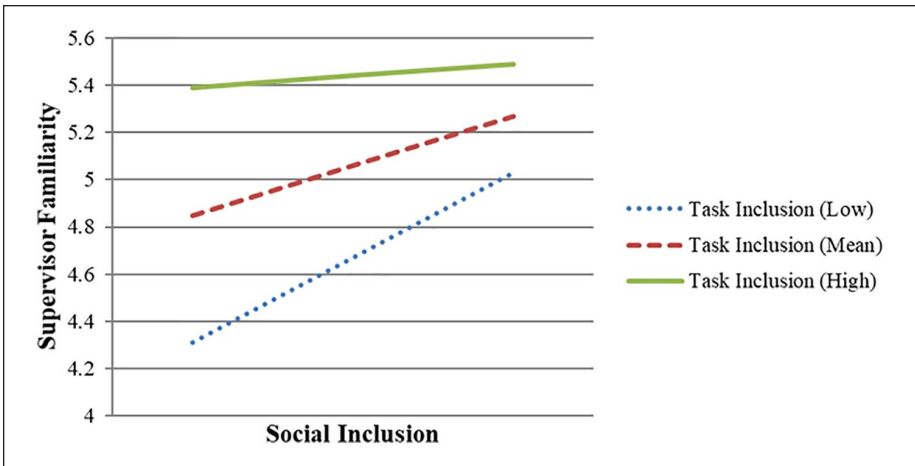

Figure 2. Social × Task Inclusion non-additive effect on supervisor familiarity.
Note. Supervisor familiarity is the dependent variable. When task inclusion is low: $B = 0.36$; medium (mean): $B = 0.21$; high: $B = 0.05$.

variables was modeled at different levels of task inclusion (i.e., $-1\ SD$, mean, $+1\ SD$; see Cohen et al., 2014). As is shown in Figures 1, 2, and 3, the effect of social inclusion on coworker familiarity, supervisor familiarity, and recognition becomes *weaker* as task inclusion increases. This suggests that, although social inclusion is critical to
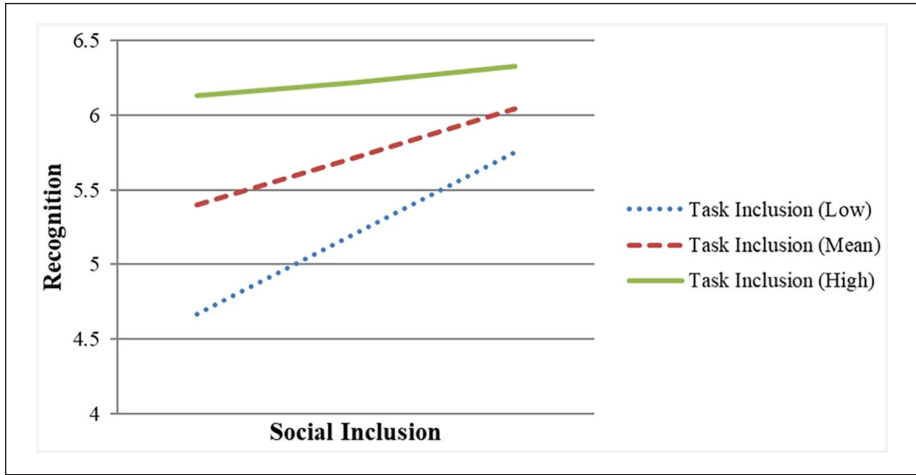
Figure 3. Social × Task Inclusion non-additive effect on recognition.

Note. Recognition is the dependent variable. When task inclusion is low: $B = 0.54$; medium (mean): $B = 0.32$; high: $B = 0.10$.

facilitating these three aspects of assimilation, it becomes less critical as aspects of task inclusion are introduced (i.e., task inclusion acts as a substitute). Alternatively, these figures also suggest that, in the absence of task inclusion, social inclusion is decidedly critical to facilitating familiarity with coworkers and supervisors alike, as well as facilitating general elements of supervisor recognition.

Tenure and Student Workers

In exploring the extent to which the effect of inclusion on assimilation outcomes differed by either tenure or student-worker status, that is, RQs 3 and 4, the magnitude of the additional non-additive effects was inspected (see Table 2). In general, only two substantial interaction effects emerged, both of which were in the same direction as those described previously, that is, negative non-additive effects. Specifically, organizational tenure and social inclusion combined non-additively to impact job competency in a negative manner, $B = -0.19$, 95% CI [-0.34, -0.03], and student-worker status and task inclusion combined non-additively to impact recognition in a negative manner, $B = -0.17$, 95% CI [-0.33, -0.02]. These negative interaction terms indicate that the effect of social inclusion on job competency trends negative as tenure increases, and that the effect of task inclusion on recognition also trends negative for student workers. It is important to emphasize, however, that all other non-additive effects were largely trivial, thus indicating that the effects of both inclusion variables on assimilation outcomes remained largely equivalent across these different portions of the sample. Stated differently, when considering the tenure and student-worker status

non-additive effects, only 2/28 interactions emerged as substantial (~7%), thus indicating that these significant effects likely constitute type-1 errors.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that organizational members rely on social interactions with other organizational members to acquire necessary information about how to perform their roles (Chao et al., 1994; Cranmer et al., 2017; Gailliard et al., 2010; Korte, 2009; Morrison, 1993; 2002; Myers & McPhee, 2006; Scott & Myers, 2010). Indeed, the extent to which organizational members feel that they were included, both socially and while performing tasks, impacted all assimilation outcomes in a positive and roughly equal manner. Moreover, although there were certain conditions under which social inclusion was decidedly critical to facilitating familiarity and recognition between coworkers and supervisors, that is, when task inclusion was essentially non-extant, both types of inclusion were generally critical to promoting a variety of assimilation outcomes (see Table 2).

When inspecting the extent to which assimilation processes differed across different portions of the sample, that is, tenure and student-worker status, conclusions remained largely the same. In specific, although two interaction effects emerged, results indicated that the effect of social and task inclusion on assimilation outcomes remained largely unaffected by either tenure or student-worker status, two variables which are considered generally to impact socialization and assimilation processes. Stated differently, aside from some very specific conditions, the positive effects of inclusion on assimilation are expected for newcomers versus old-timers, as well as student versus non-student employees.

Ultimately, these results are important because they indicate that different types of inclusion are essential (Ferdman, 2014; Mor-Barak & Cherin, 1998) and could provide reason for corporations to create an inclusive atmosphere and culture to create conditions for employees to assimilate to the organization. By incorporating and formalizing practices that create conditions where employees feel included, employers may also influence directly the extent to which their employees assimilate to the organization, thus presumably precluding lower turnover rates, increasing job satisfaction (Cranmer et al., 2017), and promoting organizational identification (Myers & Oetzel, 2003). These results are encouraging, as assimilation is important for employees because it allows them to engage in a dynamic relationship with their organization (Myers & Oetzel, 2003). Moreover, this dynamic relationship allows members to conform to the organization, feel involved, but also attempt to define their role and influence the organization (Waldeck & Myers, 2007).

The results of this study provide a substantial contribution to the study of organizational assimilation, as those who participated occupied many different roles within the organization and evidenced a greater variety of tenure than is usually captured. Because assimilation research has been critiqued for focusing too heavily on newcomer experiences (Myers & Oetzel, 2003), even though it is an ongoing process that can be spurred by organizational change and turbulence (Chao et al., 1994; Gailliard

et al., 2010; Myers & Oetzel, 2003), these data represent a substantial contribution to this corpus in that they generalize across tenure, positions, and organizational roles. The results of this investigation are also noteworthy in that they begin to unpack the specific interpersonal processes responsible for successful member assimilation, namely, inclusion.

Future Research

This research agenda may be extended by specifying the unique conditions that help create a genuine, inclusive environment. Ghorpade et al. (2006), for example, contend that participatory decision-making requires that employees participate. Stated differently, not all employees may be inclined to participate or be inclusive when working with others. Ultimately, creating genuine inclusive climates will likely involve hiring those that are inclusive by nature (see Schneider, 1987), pairing similar others together in the interest or promoting member liking (e.g., Manata, 2016), or by creating an inclusive climate of considerable strength such that members' behaviors are constrained to behave in a similar manner over time (Manata, 2019; see also Manata et al., 2016). These factors will be especially important to consider when employee participation is not formal or standardized by the organization (Ghorpade et al., 2006), for example, when employees have a large degree of autonomy and low accountability, or when inclusive practices have not yet been formalized.

By extension, scholars may also investigate whether disingenuous attempts at facilitating inclusion undermine an inclusive atmosphere. For instance, even in contexts where task inclusion is valued or even formalized through participatory decision-making practices, the inability to influence decision-making in earnest may neutralize or even undermine the beneficial effects of inclusion attempts. Future research could thus consider the degree to which organizations are able to facilitate task and social inclusion, but also how sincere those attempts are and how organizational members at different levels perceive them.

Limitations

There are three limitations worth discussing. First, this study was conducted with the employee population of a university in the Pacific Northwest. Although we argue that the diverse nature of this sample represents a decided contribution to this corpus, we concede that the results may not generalize to other, more limited contexts. For example, the extent to which these results will replicate in other organizational settings, such as that of a retailer or other types of corporate businesses, remains unclear. Similarly, the extent to which these results replicate in other, more virtual environments, where member interaction is less frequent and thus less interpersonal, also remains unclear. On the one hand, such conditions may render opportunities for genuine inclusion decidedly important. On the other, inclusion attempts may have less of an impact because they are more difficult to realize and thus taken less seriously. In consequence, scholars are encouraged to investigate the extent to which social and

task inclusion are critical to facilitating assimilation outcomes across myriad contexts. Future research of this ilk could also entertain the conditions under which assimilation outcomes are attained despite a lack of social or task inclusion.

A second limitation involves the problem of causality. Although a certain causal nature is assumed throughout this manuscript, and although this causal inference is supported by extant theory, the causal nature of these variables cannot be established using cross-sectional data. As such, the causal nature of these organizational phenomena remains necessarily unclear. The severity of this limitation could be mitigated with longitudinal research designs (e.g., Boster, 2012; Hunter & Gerbing, 1982), wherein the causality of the relationship between these variables could be explored. The severity of this limitation could also be mitigated by using experimental designs to investigate the general process of assimilation to groups (e.g., Moreland, 1985; see also Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

Finally, although not a serious problem in this investigation, the job competency measure implemented herein evidenced substantial measurement error ($\alpha = 0.61$; see also Myers & Oetzel, 2003). Although this type of measurement error may be corrected for manually, this limitation could be addressed by adding items to future iterations of this assimilation measure (Nunnally et al., 1967). As noted by others in this arena (e.g., Manata et al., 2016), if drawing valid inferences with some degree of consistency is of concern to assimilation scholars, then additional measurement work is of decided importance (see also Levine, 2005, 2015; Levine et al., 2006).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the inclusion of organizational members is essential to promoting assimilation outcomes in organizations. Specifically, the results of this study indicate that employees who feel included both interpersonally and while accomplishing tasks are more acculturated to the organization, competent in their roles, more likely to become involved in the workplace, negotiate important changes in their roles, and so on. Given this, organizations are encouraged to invest in practices that facilitate organizational members' inclusion, so that they are better able to assimilate to the organizational landscape and enact positive changes in the workplace.

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Notes

1. A traditional power analysis was not performed because there was no known effect size information by which to estimate statistical power (i.e., because there are no known studies that investigate the associations produced between inclusion and assimilation outcomes, it was not possible to estimate how large the sample would have to be in order attain sufficient statistical power). Nevertheless, in procuring our sample, we assumed that $r = 0.20$ constituted a typical effect size in the social sciences (e.g., see Gignac & Szodorai, 2016). Under such conditions, $N = 200$ renders a power value of ~0.81 (see Cohen et al., 2014), which was deemed sufficient for our purposes.

2. The validity of an alternate model was also of interest, namely, a model in which coworker familiarity and social inclusion were treated as one factor, and where supervisor familiarity and task inclusion were treated as one factor. The validity of this alternate model was investigated given the conceptual similarity evidenced between each pair of factors. Of note, this model failed to fit the data, $X^2(188) = 599.88$, CFI = 0.85, SRMR = 0.10, AIC: 12653.02. An additional model was also investigated in which task inclusion and recognition were treated as one factor. This model also failed to fit the data, $X^2(188) = 676.74$, CFI = 0.82, SRMR = 0.09, AIC: 12729.87.

3. Additional tests for each of the 7 regression models were performed in order to confirm that the residuals were both normally distributed and homoscedastic, that is, two critical assumptions that underly multiple linear regression. These analyses confirmed these assumptions. The data were also probed to ensure that multicollinearity was not a problem, which was also confirmed (i.e., all VIFs <5). For technical details, see Cohen et al. (2014).

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