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How do Inclusive Leaders Emerge? A Theory-Based Model

Abstract

Despite recent theoretical developments examining the emergence of several types of leadership, there is a paucity of research on the emergence of inclusive leaders. We sought to address this gap by proposing a theory-based conceptual model. We identify a paradox in leader emergence: Although there is evidence that inclusive leaders can improve organizational effectiveness, those who influence decisions about leader selection, both formal and informal, often overlook this evidence and instead select leaders who do not practice inclusion. Integrating expectation states theory and implicit leadership theory to explain leadership emergence, with social identity theory and social comparison theory to explain inclusion, we propose a conceptual model culminating with four propositions. The model suggests practices that can support inclusive leadership and how inclusive leadership can improve organizational effectiveness and employee well-being. We conclude with implications for policies to promote inclusive leadership emergence and propose avenues for future research.

How do Inclusive Leaders Emerge? A Theory-Based Model

Although leader emergence was examined in recent research and scholarly work (e.g., Acton et al., 2019; Badura et al., 2018, 2020; Kalish & Luria, 2016, 2020; Luria et al., 2019a, 2019b), there is a paucity of research on the emergence of *inclusive* leaders. This gap in the literature is particularly significant in light of recent theoretical developments related to leadership emergence that focus on several types of leadership, except inclusive leadership (e.g., Bandura et al., 2021; Hanna et al., 2021; Wellman, 2017). Concurrently, theoretical formulations on inclusive leadership have focused primarily on formal leadership and there is need for further conceptual development of processes of informal or *emergent* inclusive leaders (e.g., Mor Barak, Luria & Brimhall, 2021). We believe this significant gap can only be bridged by examining these two streams of theories together and integrating them into a coherent conceptual model

Inclusive leaders are defined as leaders who exhibit openness to new ideas and invite and appreciate others' contributions, particularly those from historically underrepresented groups (Carmeli et al., 2010; Mor Barak et al., 2021; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Samdanis & Ozbilgin, 2020). An organization that fosters the emergence of inclusive leaders provides opportunities for the emergence of leaders from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds by including gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and abilities, who possess inclusive leadership qualities, and who have typically been excluded from leadership opportunities. Thus, organizations that foster inclusive leadership are more likely to exhibit diversity among inclusive emergent leaders. In recognition of the interdependency between inclusive leader behaviors and demographic diversity among emergent inclusive

leaders, we examine inclusive leader behavior and demography together to create a deeper understanding of the emergence of inclusive leaders.

Despite rapid demographic changes globally and policy reforms aimed at fostering diversity and inclusion, there is still widespread reproduction of the old leadership elites, i.e., typical and prototypical leaders from dominant sociodemographic groups, and underrepresentation of more inclusive leaders and leaders from disenfranchised, disadvantaged, and underrepresented social groups (Samdanis & Ozbilgin, 2020). Despite significant evidence showing that inclusive leader behaviors correlate positively with leader effectiveness (Bourke & Espedido, 2019; Bourke & Titus, 2020) and that demographic diversity in positions of leadership increases organizational performance and effectiveness (Raithel et al., 2021; Sarhan et al., 2018), the emergence of inclusive leaders is slow. Although the positive effects of both inclusive leadership and increased diversity among leadership have been demonstrated, little is known about how inclusive leaders emerge and how to increase demographic diversity among inclusive leaders. We propose that leader emergence does not naturally produce inclusive leaders – neither in terms of leaders with inclusive behaviors nor inclusive leaders from diverse demographic backgrounds. Social movements such as the Me Too, Black Lives Matter, and LGBT movements have called for inclusive leadership behaviors both nationally and internationally (Ozbilgin & Erbil, 2021). Therefore, it is timely to explore how inclusive leaders emerge.

Here, we propose a theory-based conceptual model that describes the process by which inclusive leaders can emerge. We first explore and integrate two theories that explain leadership emergence (expectation states theory [EST] and implicit leadership theory [ILT]) with two theories that explain inclusion (social identity theory and social comparison theory). We then offer a conceptual model including four propositions on practices that support inclusive leader

behaviors and how inclusive leaders can improve organizational effectiveness and employee well-being. Based on the model, we conclude with implications for policy to promote inclusive leadership emergence and propose avenues for future research. We start with presenting ideas of inclusion and inclusive leadership emergence as well as emergent processes of less inclusive and more biased leadership. It is important to acknowledge the complex nature of studying inclusive leadership emergence, recognizing inclusive leadership exists on a spectrum of more or less inclusive leader behaviors and may be context specific such that a leader can behave in a less inclusive manner in one event and in a more inclusive manner in another.

Theoretical Background

Although diversity and inclusion are distinct constructs with independent definitions, they are codependent and complementary. *Diversity* refers to demographic differences among members, including both observable (e.g., gender, race, age) and non-observable (e.g., culture, cognition, education) attributes (Roberson, 2006). *Inclusion* refers to an individual's perception that their full participation within the group or organization's communication systems, decision-making processes, and informal networks is welcomed, and that their unique contribution to the unit is appreciated and provides them a true sense of belonging (Mor Barak, 2005; Shore et al., 2011). According to social identity and social comparison theories (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), employees strive to feel part of important work groups. Feeling valued and included as an important part of an organization can foster commonality among members. When members feel connected with their peers and sense that they are an important part of the group, their trust and acceptance of one another increase as well (Tajfel, 1982).

Inclusive leaders foster an environment in which all organizational members feel part of important work groups and in which diversity is valued, appreciated, and celebrated (Mor Barak

et al., 2021; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Randel et al., 2018). Promoting the value of diversity may attenuate the negative effects of human biases (Randel et al., 2018) and enhance openness to inclusive leadership and inclusive leaders from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. While not all inclusive leaders hail from diverse or underrepresented groups, and not all leaders from diverse and underrepresented groups are inclusive, research indicates that organizations that encourage inclusive leadership often have increased diversity representation among their leaders (Jin, et al., 2017; Brimhall, et at., 2017). Thus, to create environments that foster inclusive leaders, we must first understand how inclusive leadership emerges.

Integrating theories of leadership emergence with theories that explain inclusion, we identify a paradox in leader emergence: Although inclusive leader behaviors can improve organizational effectiveness and employee well-being (e.g., Cao et al., 2022; Korkmaz et al., 2022; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Mor Barak, 2022), many who make and influence decisions about leader selection, both formal and informal, tend to ignore evidence on the benefits of inclusive leadership in their daily decision-making. Exclusionary leaders discourage full participation of individuals from diverse backgrounds and different perspectives (either directly or indirectly), rarely invite input from those who are different from the mainstream, largely rely on their own opinions, and use threats of punishment to prioritize their own ideas and authority (Minehart et al., 2020). Research on organizational diversity highlights a connection between inclusion of individuals from different demographic backgrounds (e.g., gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, abilities) and positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and retention (Chung et al., 2020; Holmes et al., 2020; Mor Barak et al., 1998; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011). Yet, many organizations and groups fail to adopt inclusive practices and instead select leaders who are less inclusive or not at all inclusive. As a

result, the emergence of inclusive leadership remains a challenge (Feeney & Camarena, 2019; Van Dijk & van Engen, 2019). Inclusion and exclusion are not black-and-white binary constructs, but instead exist on a spectrum. Thus, we recognize the complexity of inclusion and exclusion, highlighting the continuum of inclusionary and exclusionary leadership behaviors.

Failing to adopt organizational practices that demonstrate positive outcomes is common in other workplace domains. For example, safety research indicates the importance of daily safety practices and procedures, such as wearing a hard hat or a face mask, in preventing accidents; however, most organizations struggle to implement such practices (Luria, 2016; Rispler & Luria, 2020; Zohar & Luria, 2003). During the COVID-19 pandemic, we witnessed a similar rejection of scientifically supported health safety practices, such as keeping social distance and wearing a face mask (Brody & Anderson, 2020; Ward, 2020). Reasons for these seemingly self-defeating behaviors are varied — from simply not knowing the facts, to refusing to believe the science, or refusing to follow the guidelines because they introduce feelings of discomfort or limitations on a perceived sense of self-determination (Hertwig et al., 2004; Luria, 2016; Zohar & Erev, 2007).

Similarly, people may resent the adoption of inclusive behaviors because of ignorance; for example, they may be unaware of the long-term benefits of inclusion, or may hold discriminatory opinions and beliefs and, as a result, choose to ignore the evidence. Changing these human tendencies is dependent upon a visionary, positive leadership that trusts evidence-based information on the benefits of inclusive behaviors and strives to implement practices and behaviors that yield better outcomes for individuals, groups, and organizations.

Leadership Emergence

Emergent leaders are team members who exert influence over their colleagues without having formal authority, often in the context of initially leaderless groups that are semi-autonomous or self-managed (American Psychological Association, 2020; Schneider & Goktepe, 1983). Compared to other group members, emergent leaders are more prominent, have more status, and are able to exert significant influence over the group (Taggar et al., 1999). The distinction between formal leaders (e.g., managers, commanders, and employees in a formal leadership role) and emergent informal leaders has been described in earlier work (e.g., Carson et al., 2007; Hollander, 1958; Wheelan & Johnston, 1996). Both informal and formal leaders receive credit from those who view them as able to exert influence over their followers (Hollander, 1958). However, the leadership behaviors of informal leaders may differ from those of formal leaders. For example, formally appointed leaders tend to be more task-oriented, whereas informal leaders are more relationship-oriented and communicative with their peers (Ahmad & Pengcheng, 2016; Oedzes et al., 2018; Wheelan & Johnston, 1996). A recent review regarding leadership emergence demonstrated that there is limited empirical research regarding behaviors of emergent leaders (Badura et al., 2022). Bandura et al. (2022) notes the limited studies on behaviors focused on participation in discussions, task behaviors, boundary-spanning behaviors, and perhaps most related to inclusion-social behaviors. We could not, however, find research on how inclusive behaviors are related to leadership emergence. Research on inclusive leaders has focused on formal leaders and has largely neglected to study informal leaders, as well as the process of *emergence* of leaders who behave in an inclusive manner.

Leadership Emergence and Inclusive Behaviors

Several theories of leadership emergence explain why group members more often select informal leaders from the majority group than from underrepresented or minority groups, as well

as why inclusive leaders are unlikely to be selected as leaders. EST and ILT are the two most frequently used theories in leadership emergence research. Both theories suggest that people select leaders based on a stereotype (or prototype) of an ideal leader. Because biases are known to influence stereotypes, these theories indicate that many individuals are influenced by their biases when selecting informal emerging leaders for their groups.

ILT (Lord & Maher, 1991) describes the process by which individuals come to view others as emergent leaders (Epitropaki et al., 2013; Shondrick et al., 2010; Shondrick & Lord, 2010). ILT suggests that people maintain a set of attributes that describe the "ideal" leader. Through a recognition-matching process, individuals observe leadership-relevant behaviors in others, and according to these behaviors, identify emergent leaders. According to ILT, people have preexisting abstract ideas of typical leader and follower attributes (Lord et al., 1986), which they use to classify group members as leaders or followers.

Studies have shown that the prototypes people use to select informal leaders are often not inclusive and can exclude people who do not fit those prototypes from leadership opportunities. For example, while people might know that scientific evidence suggests that gender should not determine who could be a leader, it has consistently been shown to affect leadership emergence, with several studies demonstrating men emerge as leaders nearly twice as often as women (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 1991). A recent meta-analysis of studies from the last few decades demonstrated that, despite some progress in the early twenty-first century, men are more likely to be selected as leaders than women (Badura, Grijalva, Newman, et al., 2018). Thus, it seems the prototype of a leader includes male gender as an attribute of leadership, and therefore women are less likely to be selected as leaders. Similarly, Luria and Berson (2013) demonstrated that individuals with learning disabilities were less likely to be selected as informal leaders than their peers without

learning disabilities, even though formal leaders with and without learning disabilities demonstrated similar levels of leadership effectiveness.

EST (Berger et al., 1977) suggests that individuals emerge as leaders because they possess high levels of leadership-relevant attributes, and thus elicit high levels of leadership expectations among other group members (Ridgeway, 2003). According to EST, as soon as a group forms, the group's shared focus on their common goal generates pressure to anticipate the relative quality of each member's contribution to completing the group's tasks. This anticipation for performance, called "performance expectation," is based on underlying attributes that group members perceive and associate with social value (Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000). A leadership-relevant attribute is one that differentiates group members and that members believe can contribute to completing the group's task (Berger et al., 1977).

According to EST, group members compare their expectations for any two members and assign an expectation advantage to the member who garnered higher expectations. Individuals with a greater expectation advantage are more likely to be granted opportunities to act, to be positively evaluated by perceivers, and to reject attempts by others to influence them (Kalish & Luria, 2016; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). As a result of such self-enhancing processes, these individuals gain status, prominence, and influence, and become increasingly likely to be perceived as leaders (Ridgeway, 2003). Thus, according to EST, attribute-based selection is the mechanism by which leaders emerge.

According to both EST and ILT, because leadership-relevant attributes ascribed to individuals can be biased (i.e., based on ignorance or traditional human tendencies), they may lead to the emergence leaders who are less-inclusive or who do not practice inclusion. A recent review of the literature on emergent leadership by Bandura et al. (2022) reported that most of the

studies on attributes of emergent leaders focused on traits, characteristics, and motivations of emergent leaders, yet little attention was dedicated to behaviors of emergent leaders.

A Theory-Based Conceptual Model of Inclusive Leader Emergence

Human Biases Influencing Leadership Emergence

We suggest that known biases influencing the formation of the leadership stereotype/prototype in the ILT, and the selection of leadership-relevant attributes in the EST, can explain the psychological mechanisms by which emergent leaders are selected. We focus on four such mechanisms: (a) melioration bias, (b) self-serving bias, (c) head-counting bias, and (d) diversity-on-trial bias.

Melioration bias describes people's tendency to assign greater weight to short-term rather than long-term results when choosing among alternative actions (Herrnstein et al., 1993). We suggest that melioration bias can explain why individuals do not select leadership attributes based on evidence of effectiveness; instead, they select available, easy-to-notice attributes that produce short-term results (Kalish & Luria, 2020). For example, people select leaders based on attractiveness of appearance (Antonakis & Eubanks, 2017; Hosoda et al., 2003; Todorov et al., 2015), an attribute that is unrelated to an individual's ability to serve as a smart and ethical leader who will make good decisions and improve the group's long-term outcomes. Selecting leaders based on appearance may also reflect historical and traditionally biased views of leader behaviors, particularly when selecting potential leaders who are members of minority and underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation) and who are not phenotypically similar to the majority. Similarly, despite evidence showing that inclusive leader behaviors lead to better long-term outcomes for the group, melioration bias may lead to the

selection of leaders who are less inclusive or who do not practice inclusive behaviors, as these behaviors are more common.

Self-serving bias describes an individual's tendency to perceive others' states, attributes, and behaviors as consistent with their own self-impressions (Human & Biesanz, 2011; Krueger & Clement, 1994; Kunda, 1999; Kunda & Spencer, 2003). Studies have shown that people consider self-serving criteria that enhance their self-esteem when selecting leaders, and often will select leaders who are similar to themselves as a means of self-enhancement (van Quaquebeke et al., 2011). Such biases suggest that members of the majority, or dominant group, are more likely to be selected as leaders than are members of minority groups. As a result, group members who wish to select more inclusive leaders may encounter opposition, because inclusive behaviors and the demographic characteristics of inclusive leaders are atypical among leaders. Likewise, an inclusive leader who would serve the long-term goals of the group may be underestimated due to melioration bias, with their leadership potential further undermined by self-serving bias.

Head-counting bias affects the selection of outgroup or atypical members as leaders (Samdanis & Ozblgin, 2020). Once an atypical leader (e.g., a woman, member of an underrepresented group, or leader with more inclusive behavior) is elected, the chances of selecting another atypical leader soon after are diminished, as group members view that atypical candidates are overrepresented in leadership. Conversely, if the candidate is from a typical background (e.g., a White man or less-inclusive leader), the same judgement is not applied.

According to *diversity-on-trial bias* (Samdanis & Ozblgin, 2020), if an atypical leader is selected and fails, the entire identity group is compromised. For example, if a woman leader fails, their failure is attributed to all women leaders. In contrast, when a man fails, their failure is perceived as personal and is not attributed to all men leaders. Similarly, if a leader with inclusive

behavior fails, all inclusive behavior is judged negatively; however, this would not be the case if a less inclusive or non-inclusive leader were to fail. Thus, as a result of ignorance expectations, the likelihood of another demographically or behaviorally atypical leader being selected after a leader with similar characteristics has failed is diminished.

In summary, due to the mechanisms of melioration, self-serving, head-counting, and diversity-on-trial biases, group members are more likely to choose emergent leaders from over-represented demographic backgrounds and who exemplify less inclusive or non-inclusive leader behaviors, despite evidence that inclusive leader behaviors better serve group goals, especially in the long term.

Our theory-based model is presented in Figure 1. The first proposition in our model focuses on the relationship between the four mechanisms of biases in attribute selection noted above and describes how reliance on historical or traditionally biased leader behaviors contributes to leadership emergence.

Proposition 1: The natural processes of leadership emergence are based on bias, and therefore do not produce more inclusive leaders.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Inclusive Leader Behaviors

Current organizations are increasingly more diverse, with workforces characterized by a variety of employee differences in terms of race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, education, experience, abilities, and sexual orientation (Roberson & Perry, 2021). Given increased workforce diversity, leaders have been challenged to find ways for valuing and leveraging unique employee characteristics to improve organizational functioning (Roberson & Perry, 2021). Inclusive leadership has emerged as an evidence-based approach for channeling

workforce diversity into positive organizational outcomes, particularly in diverse workforces (Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020; Mor Barak et al., 2016; Randel et al., 2018; Roberson & Perry, 2021); however, little is known about how inclusive leaders emerge.

Several descriptions of inclusive leader behaviors have emerged in an effort to provide leaders with an approach for effectively managing today's organizations. Inclusive leader behaviors have been defined as the "words and deeds by a leader or leaders that indicate an invitation and appreciation for others' contributions" (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006, p. 947). Involving employees of different professional backgrounds in important work-related decisions, particularly when their voices might otherwise be absent, is critical. Evidence indicates that when leaders treat employees as valued in-group members, such as trusting them with important work-related information, employees' feelings of inclusion increase (Brimhall et al., 2017).

Inclusive leader behaviors have also been described as "a set of leader behaviors that are focused on facilitating group members' feeling part of the group (belongingness) and retaining their sense of individuality (uniqueness) while contributing to group processes and outcomes" (Randel et al., 2018, p. 191). When employees feel that they are important members of the group and appreciated for their unique individual characteristics, feelings of inclusion increase (Shore et al., 2011), as well as employee job satisfaction, engagement, well-being, and performance (Mor Barak et al., 2016; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011).

Inclusive leader behaviors also develop shared motivations, norms, and accountability structures among employees, which communicate what inclusion means and how employees can benefit from it. Through words and actions, inclusive leaders can reduce ambiguity in expectations related to day-to-day inclusive behaviors and establish expectations for employees to align their behaviors with those that promote inclusion (Nishii & Leroy, 2020). In essence,

inclusive leader behavior reinforces the value of inclusion and encourages employees to view inclusive behavior as leadership attributes. This approach to leadership reflects a lack of traditional sources of leadership bias, ensuring that individual identity-group status, such as being from a minority group, is unrelated to access to resources or power and is not a determinant of success in achieving individual, group, and organizational goals (Mor Barak et al., 2021). In other words, inclusive leadership necessitates that all individuals have the ability to meaningfully contribute to shared goals regardless of group memberships, and can do so without assimilating to traditionally biased or established norms or relinquishing any of part of their identity (Ferdman, 2014). This redefines how employees view leadership attributes and who are selected as emergent leaders. For example, inclusive leaders focus on bringing together input from employees of different perspectives to generate synergetic performance outcomes, such as greater creativity and innovation and higher-quality knowledge work performance (van Knippenberg & van Ginkel, 2022), all of which can be viewed as valuable leader attributes.

Recent work has also highlighted that more inclusive leaders are individuals who, through their interactions with others, help employees feel respected and valued members of an organization who can fully express themselves professionally and personally (Roberson & Perry, 2021). When interactions are open, transparent, and authentic, feelings of inclusion increase and may signal that employees are trusted and respected (Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020; Roberson & Perry, 2021). Leader behaviors that engender employee trust, respect, and inclusion are positive leader attributes that enhance employee job satisfaction, commitment, and performance (Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020; Randel et al., 2016, 2018). Thus, relying on evidence-based views of inclusive leader behavior, as opposed to traditionally biased leader behaviors, can contribute to inclusive leadership emergence.

Proposition 2: Leadership emergence processes that promote inclusive leader behaviors will produce more inclusive leaders.

Contextual Factors and Social Identity

A key factor in inclusion is the categorization and identity of group members (Mor Barak, 2022; Mor Barak, Cherin & Berkman, 1998). Self-categorization theory suggests the context plays a role and affects group members' definition of themselves in terms of their personal identities and their social identities (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Turner, 1982). Social identity refers to the distinguishing attributes of the group based on the way group members define themselves. This is important to inclusion because, although a variety of individual differences are likely to be present in most groups (Carton & Cummings, 2012), some groups do not notice these differences due to a sensemaking process that overlooks these differences (Pearsall, Ellis, & Evans, 2008; Thatcher & Patel, 2012). Therefore, it is expected that a group that employs a sensemaking process that makes salient specific attributes in a relevant context would be inclusive toward group members who share those attributes but exclusive toward those who do not.

Wellman (2017) draws on the self-categorization literature to identify group identity context that can influence group members' leadership behaviors, and suggested that the group identity context is "the stable backdrop present at the group's inception that influences members' perceived similarity" (p. 602). Such group identity context will significantly influence behaviors that relate to inclusiveness in the group. As a result, group members are likely to select a leader who behaves according to the group identity context. As "Relational models leadership theory proposes that all of these aspects of leadership emergence are interrelated and influenced by the group identity context" (Wellman, 2017, p. 598).

Proposition 3: Contextual conditions characterized by a shared social identity that is inclusive to a variety of group members can reduce human tendencies to select leaders who fit the dominant leadership stereotype and create a context in which inclusive behavior is the expected behavior of those who are selected to lead.

Intentional Interventions That Encourage Inclusive Leadership Emergence

Research indicates that inclusive leadership is essential to ensuring diverse work groups reach their positive full potential (Mor Barak et al., 2016; Nishii & Leroy, 2020; Randel et al., 2018). Unfortunately, given the historical and traditional tendencies for individuals to accept and trust those they perceive to be similar to themselves (based on the social identity and social comparison theories; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and to favor those who fit the dominant leadership stereotypes (i.e., men are perceived to have more influence than women, and people of color are perceived to have less influence than White individuals; Manago et al., 2019), the traditional trend in leadership emergence has been biased toward historically dominant leadership attributes (Minehart et al., 2020). Thus, intentional interventions that can help disrupt the traditionally biased processes of leadership emergence are needed to create an alternative route to inclusive leadership emergence.

Inclusive leadership values diversity and strives to create heterogeneous work groups, wherein employees feel appreciated in the group for their unique characteristics and perspectives while being treated as important in-group members (Nishii & Leroy, 2020; Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2011). Given that embracing and valuing the differences of others is not necessarily traditional human behavior (Bernstein et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), inclusive leaders must intentionally strive to increase knowledge, understanding, and competence around various aspects of diversity; this entails challenging dominant leadership stereotypes to encourage a more

inclusive view and approach in developing informal and formal leadership. For example, the historical domination of leadership positions by men has meant that the idea of what constitutes a leader has traditionally been shaped by stereotypically masculine traits, such as aggression and toughness (Johnson & Williams, 2020). Research demonstrates that dominant leadership stereotypes influence which attributes are seen as valuable leadership traits and whether certain employees are seen as emergent leaders. For example, individuals who rely on traditional leadership biases tend to view masculine traits as necessary for effective leadership, whereas relational leader characteristics, such as empathy and caring, are devalued (Dolan & Lynch, 2016; Johnson & Williams, 2020).

In addition, when women leaders display traditionally biased leadership traits, such as aggression or toughness, they are often misunderstood or devalued in comparison with their male counterparts who display these same traits (Dolan & Lynch, 2016). For example, men who share ideas on how to improve things are more likely to gain status in their groups and emerge as leaders than are women who share similar ideas (McClean, Martin, Emich, & Woodruff, 2018). Despite evidence suggesting that gender-diverse leadership groups lead to improved organizational performance (Moreno-Gomez, Lafuente, & Vaillant, 2018), dominant leadership stereotypes continue to exclude women or those who exhibit atypically biased leadership traits, such as empathy and caring, from informal and formal leadership roles (Minehart et al., 2020).

Similarly, employees from minority backgrounds are often not viewed or selected as emergent leaders (Gundemir et al., 2017). In their study on recruitment agencies in the United Kingdom, Ozbilgin and Tatli (2007) showed that lack of diversity and inclusion competencies among headhunters and recruitment agents, combined with absence of licensing requirements in this sector, lead to selection biases and more frequent selection of less inclusive rather than more

inclusive leaders. Thus, part of the problem with leader emergence is the traditional leadership biases that dictate who is seen and viewed as a potential leader. For inclusive leaders to emerge, the traditionally biased processes of leadership emergence need to be intentionally disrupted to eliminate selection biases and dominant leadership stereotypes. For example, leaders who role modeled inclusive practices and intentionally crafted organizational mission statements to express value in diversity (inclusive leadership), helped employees from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds view themselves as leaders and increased their willingness to apply for leadership positions (Gundemir et al., 2017).

Increasing diversity in leadership positions will necessitate a paradigm shift in our traditional theories of leadership regarding which traits are seen as leadership worthy and who is viewed as an emergent leader. Such a shift can shape our understanding of leadership and how traditional biases influence not only who is seen as a leader, but the emergence and exercise of leadership (Chin, 2010). Role modeling inclusive behaviors not only involves efforts to attract, build, motivate, and retain diverse workforces (Roberson & Perry, 2021), but must also involve intentionally encouraging and valuing diversity in leadership positions. Recognizing individuals' skills and talents and matching them to specific work opportunities can enhance employees' potential to contribute to critical work processes and decision-making (Roberson & Perry, 2021), which can then provide opportunities for other group members to view these individuals as emergent leaders.

In addition, inclusive leadership development programs can encourage nontraditional leadership emergence (e.g., women and members of racial and ethnic minority groups). For example, leadership and mentorship programs designed to promote inclusive leadership can be used to help individuals gain an understanding of effective leadership and value diversity

(Sugiyama et al., 2016). Additionally, leadership development programs designed to increase cultural competence and facilitate open communication can help ensure all voices are heard and that employees have an opportunity to fully and meaningfully contribute to the organization, thereby creating an inclusive workplace (Roberson & Perry, 2021). Leadership programs that enable opportunities for emergent leaders to acknowledge and appreciate individual employee's unique needs, and provide individualized consideration and coaching for each employee, help engender feelings of inclusion (Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020). Likewise, leadership strategies that aim to seek diverse perspectives in critical work-related decision-making help increase feelings of inclusion (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Strategies may involve developing inclusive work-related policies and practices for how important work-related decisions are made.

Without intentional interventions, such as creating inclusive policies and procedures, individuals tend to allow traditional leadership biases to influence their selection of emerging leaders. There is evidence indicating that social and coercive legal regulations and well-crafted interventions are necessary for organizations to take account of diversity and inclusion (Ozbilgin & Tatli, 2011; Ozbilgin et al., 2016; Tatli et al., 2012). Thus, for inclusive leadership to emerge, intentional interventions are needed to help eliminate biased leadership stereotypes, increase understanding and knowledge about the value of diversity, role model inclusive practices, and create leadership development programs that support inclusive leadership emergence. Given traditional human behavior tendencies toward biased leadership stereotypes and processes, intentional interventions are essential to fostering inclusive leadership.

Proposition 4a: Intentional interventions, such as changing leadership stereotypes and increasing knowledge, could help counterbalance traditional biases and leadership

expectations toward promoting an understanding of inclusive leadership for achieving the group's goals.

Proposition 4b: Intentional interventions, such as inclusive leadership development and role modeling, could help lead to inclusive leadership emergence.

Discussion

In this paper, we proposed that the natural processes of leader emergence have not produced inclusive leaders. We focused on behavioral as well as demographic forms of inclusive leadership, as these are intricately interrelated. To explain this phenomenon, we examined two prominent theories of leadership emergence—EST and ILT—and two prominent theories that explain inclusion—social identity theory and social comparison theory. Integrating these theories, we offer a theory-based conceptual model of *inclusive leader emergence* that aims to address a glaring gap in the leadership-emergence literature. Rapid demographic changes in countries around the world in the past two decades, coupled with increased attention on diversity and inclusion in the organizational and business literature, highlight the urgent need to address this knowledge gap (Ahmed et al., 2020; Ashikali et al., 2020; Fang et al., 2019; Mansoor et al., 2021; Mor Barak et al., 2021; Randel et al., 2018).

Our model focuses on the emergence of inclusive leaders and demographic diversity among emergent inclusive leaders. We examined the process that produces leaders who promote effective organizational practices which value, seek input from, and involve individuals with diverse perspectives and backgrounds in decision-making and leadership opportunities (Carmeli et al., 2010; Minehart et al., 2020; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Specifically, our model indicates the natural processes of leader emergence typically breed leaders who are less inclusive or not inclusive, and informal leaders who emerge from these processes are more likely to

represent the majority or dominant demographic group (Feeney & Camarena, 2019; van Dijk & van Engen, 2019). Therefore, organizations cannot expect more inclusive leaders to emerge naturally in informal groups. Instead, they must disrupt natural leadership emergence processes by implementing intentional interventions, such as changing education and knowledge, changing leadership stereotypes, and introducing role models who change discriminatory practices.

From Inclusive Leadership Emergence to Emergence of Formal Inclusive Leadership

Understanding the process of inclusive leadership emergence is important because previous research has indicated that informal emerging leaders are likely to develop into formal leaders in organizations (Luria & Berson, 2013; Luria et al., 2019a). Becoming a leader is a process in which the emergent leader develops an identity of a leader (Day & Harrison, 2007; DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Studies have demonstrated that leadership emergence score (i.e., the number of other group members who selected an emergent leader) influences an emergent leader's self-view as a leader (Emery et al., 2011). According to relational recognition theory, leader and follower identities are socially constructed. That is, emergent leaders actively claim an identity of a leader; others see themselves as followers and affirm or grant leader identity to the emergent leader (Bartel & Dutton, 2001). Based on these findings, we contend that intervention in the early stages of leadership formation will be more effective than intervention in a later stage after informal leaders have already solidified their identities and become formal leaders.

The informal, natural process of leadership emergence accommodates the reproduction of old leadership elites and more exclusionary leaders. Yet, Samdanis and Ozbilgin (2020) caution that emergent atypical leaders may also join the exclusionary prototypical leadership game if they are not empowered. Such empowerment may arise from meso-organizational or macro-legal

interventions for accountability and governance of leadership selection. Importantly, our model suggests that an effective way to help change the reproduction of old leadership models is to intervene in the initial stages of leadership emergence. That is, one starts to change organizational formal leadership in the early stages of leadership emergence by allowing diverse members of the group and leaders with an inclusive outlook to emerge as informal leaders. These deliberate interventions can eventually result in the selection of emergent inclusive leaders for formal leadership roles and can produce increasingly diverse and inclusive formal leadership.

Methodological Aspects of Inclusive Leader Emergence

Most studies of leadership emergence measure the concept by following existing procedures in which participants are asked to indicate who they perceive as a leader in their group (Goktepe & Schneier, 1989; Kalish & Luria, 2016, 2020; Luria et al., 2019a & b; Neubert & Taggar, 2004; Taggar et al., 1999). By aggregating reports from group members, researchers capture the extent to which individuals are perceived as leaders in the groups to which they belong. Researchers also capture the perception of individuals as leaders in laboratory conditions using leaderless group discussions (for review, see Ensari et al., 2011). As early as the 1970s, researchers used indirect behavioral measures of leadership emergence, such as observation of group members who sat at the head of a table (Nemeth et al., 1976). However, recent studies have used direct measurement based on other group members' reports. For example, a recent meta-analysis by Badura and colleagues (2018) included only direct measures and did not code indirect measurements (see also Grijalva et al., 2015; Judge et al., 2002). This type of leadership emergence measurement necessitates collecting data that includes the identities of group members (i.e., not anonymous measurement), which could serve researchers who focus on inclusion. Once group members are identified as leaders, it is possible to cross the selected

members with their demographic identifiers to ascertain the diversity characteristics of emergent leaders. Having this information would allow researchers to examine the extent to which leadership emergence is still reproducing the same types of leaders, and the extent to which it is allowing atypical leaders from diverse backgrounds to be considered as potential formal leaders.

Future Research

Given the recent focus in the organizational and business literature on inclusive leadership and its effectiveness (Ahmed et al., 2020; Ashikali et al., 2020; Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020; Fang et al., 2019; Mansoor et al., 2021; Mor Barak et al., 2021; Randel et al., 2018; Zeng et al., 2020), more research examining how inclusive leadership emerges in both formal and informal leadership positions is needed. More specifically, research is needed to uncover how members from historically marginalized groups, such as women and members of racial and ethnic minority groups, emerge as formal and informal inclusive leaders. Several barriers to diverse members achieving leadership positions, such as discriminatory leadership stereotypes and selection and network biases in leadership development programs, have been identified (Gipson et al., 2017). Thus, there is a need to examine how minimizing these barriers could affect who emerges as both formal and informal leaders. In addition, leadership development research is needed to guide potential leaders on how to become more inclusive. For example, a recent conceptual study posited that diversity intelligence (i.e., recognizing the value of workplace diversity and using this information to guide thinking and behavior) is a key factor in helping emergent leaders use an inclusive leadership approach (Das, 2019). Examinations of inclusive leadership emergence as a manifestation of policy-practice decoupling in organizations are also needed (Mor Barak et al., 2021). Most large organizations in North America and Europe have specific policies declaring their commitment to diversity and inclusion, although their

practices do not always follow their declared policies. However, if emergent leaders are diverse and exhibit inclusive behaviors, then members of an organization likely would conclude that the organization truly embraces inclusion (Mor Barak et al., 2021).

Policy and Practice Implications for Management Learning

Our model posits that without intentional interventions, such as changing education and knowledge, eliminating discriminatory leadership stereotypes, role modeling inclusive leader behaviors, and creating and implementing inclusive organizational policies, programs and processes, and supportive legal changes, exclusionary leadership will continue. We acknowledge that disrupting deeply entrenched forms of systemic bias, inequalities, and vested interests in the status quo will not be easy. Yet, we subscribe to Antonio Gramsci's notion of "pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will" for social change (1994). In our case, optimism resides in deliberate interventions to disrupt the status quo, even if challenging.

Organizations cannot expect inclusive leaders to emerge in informal groups, given that the natural processes of leadership emergence typically breed homogenous and exclusionary leadership (i.e., leaders who are likely to be part of the majority or dominant group; Feeney & Camarena, 2019; van Dijk & van Engen, 2019). Because formal organizational leaders are typically selected from informal emergent leaders (Luria & Berson, 2013; Luria et al., 2019a), intentional interventions must be utilized in the early stages of the leadership emergence process. For example, changing leadership stereotypes through training, mentoring, and role modeling (to include women and members of racial and ethnic minority groups), and providing education about the long-term benefits of valuing diversity and diverse leadership representation (elements of inclusive leadership), could expand organizational members' expectations of who emerges as informal leaders. Organizations that model inclusive practices can help employees from

nontraditional leadership groups view themselves as emergent leaders and strive for formal leadership opportunities (Gundemir et al., 2017).

Early intentional, organizational interventions that aim to educate and transform leadership stereotypes can help disrupt the reproduction of exclusionary and discriminatory leadership, by changing how others perceive leadership and who is expected to emerge as leaders. Ultimately, we propose that an effective way to help change the reproduction of exclusionary leadership and old leadership elites is to intervene in the initial stages of leadership emergence with inclusive organizational interventions. Essentially, cultivating inclusive leadership is a promising approach to create diverse leadership representation and promote beneficial outcomes for employees and organizations (Mor Barak et al., 2021; Nishii & Leroy, 2020; Randel et al., 2018). Leaders who value diversity, who role model inclusive practices, and who create organizational policies that express value in diversity, promote diverse leadership representation (Gundemir et al., 2017) and can foster inclusive leadership emergence. The emergence of informal leaders and selection of formal leaders from diverse minority backgrounds can be indications that an organization has genuinely embraced inclusion. Emergent leadership can be viewed as an outcome, or manifestation, of the organization's true values with respect to diversity and inclusion. Truly inclusive leaders minimize potential gaps in the organization's stated, or espoused, policies and its actual, or enacted, practices by clearly articulating workplace expectations and role modeling inclusive behaviors, thereby reinforcing inclusive behaviors in the organization (Mor Barak et al., 2021).

Summary and Conclusion

In our theory-based model, we demonstrate that the natural processes of leader emergence breed less inclusive or non-inclusive leaders and that informal leaders who emerge

from these processes are likely to be part of the majority or dominant group (e.g., Feeney & Camarena, 2019; van Dijk & van Engen, 2019). Therefore, organizations cannot expect more inclusive leaders to emerge naturally in informal groups. Instead, organizations need to disrupt the natural leadership emergence process by implementing intentional interventions such as promoting education and knowledge, changing leadership stereotypes, and introducing role models who change discriminatory practices. Given that emerging leaders often progress into formal leaders (Luria & Berson, 2013; Luria et al., 2019a), we propose that intervening in the initial stages of leadership emergence can be an effective way to disrupt exclusionary leadership.

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