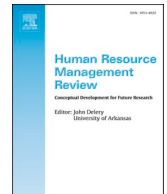




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Human Resource Management Review

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/hrmr

Enhancing leader inclusion while preventing social exclusion in the work group

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Leader inclusion
Leader exclusion
Diversity
Ostracism
Inclusion
Social exclusion

ABSTRACT

Research on inclusion and exclusion at work has grown in recent years, but for the most part has been treated as separate domains. In this paper, we integrate these literatures to build greater understanding of leader inclusion and leader exclusion. Leaders play a critical role in determining group member experiences of inclusion and exclusion through direct treatment of employees, and by serving as a role model (Bandura, 1977). According to social identity theory, when the leader is rewarded by the organization, this signifies that the leader is a prototypical organizational member who exemplifies the set of norms and behaviors most consistent with the organizational ideal (Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003). We argue that through both social learning and social identity mechanisms, the leader can encourage inclusionary and exclusionary behavior in their work group. We first examine leader inclusion and present the types of behaviors that will aid in creating inclusive team member experiences. By exhibiting these behaviors, a leader can be a role model, an advocate and an ally for building work group inclusion. Next, we present the negative roles of ostracizer and bystander adopted by leaders that indicate support for behaving in an exclusionary manner, which can lead to exclusion among coworkers. We then describe leader remedies for social exclusion. Finally, we discuss the implications of our model and directions for future research.

The concept of inclusion has had increasingly broad appeal among scholars and practitioners (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018). Recent social movements including Black Lives Matter and #MeToo have made issues of inequality and the need for inclusion in all areas of life much more salient. For organizations, the focus on inclusion underscores the challenges they are facing to address difficulties associated with diversity such as conflict and turnover, and inequitable opportunities for employees within their organizations (Shore et al., 2009). Even with the increased interest in inclusion, few studies focus on ways in which leaders establish an inclusionary work environment (Randel et al., 2018). This is a critical gap in the literature in light of the well-established impact of leaders on the work experiences of employees. Thus, one aim of this article is to describe roles that the leader can play that contribute to employee experiences of inclusion.

Even a smaller number of studies have examined the impact of the leader on experiences of employee exclusion. We contend that to create an inclusionary environment, the leader needs to monitor exclusionary treatment among work group members and manage

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2022.100902>

Received 14 August 2021; Received in revised form 22 February 2022; Accepted 3 March 2022
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their own behavior to avoid actions that are viewed as exclusionary. This is especially important for employees who are members of marginalized social identity groups such as people of color, women, the disabled, and LGBTQ. They are likely to be particularly aware of leader and coworker exclusionary behavior, since members of minoritized identity groups are more often excluded (Peterson, Stock, Monroe, Molloy-Paolillo, & Lambert, 2020; Tienari, Merilainen, Holgersson, & Bendl, 2013). Consequently, in this article we describe the behavior of leaders that increase exclusion experiences of employees in their workgroup.

Several important contributions are provided in this article as a result of integrating the inclusion and exclusion literatures. The literatures on inclusion and exclusion in the workplace have for the most part developed separately, creating questions about how these forms of employee treatment are overlapping or distinct. Through examining both literatures concurrently, we are able to offer more clarity to the issue of distinctiveness and provide the basis for an integrated literature on inclusion and exclusion going forward. In addition, we build on early-stage research that enumerates behaviors that are viewed as inclusive or exclusive, and link that literature to the leader's treatment of individual employees. We also describe how the leader may encourage or discourage inclusion or exclusion (acting as a role model, an ally, an advocate, a bystander, or an ostracizer) within their workgroup. Furthermore, we provide a conceptual basis for future research on leader exclusion and inclusion by presenting a testable model based on social role theory (Bandura, 1977) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In sum, we present an integrative model of leader inclusion and exclusion, with the goal of showing the mechanisms and importance of the dual roles of leaders for creating psychologically safe and inclusive work group environments (Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv, 2010; Hirak, Peng, Carmeli, & Schaubroeck, 2012; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006).

1. Theoretical underpinning

Our model of leader inclusion/exclusion builds on the work group inclusion framework developed by Shore et al. (2011). They define inclusion as (p. 1265) "the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness." This definition is theoretically grounded by optimal distinctiveness theory, an extension of social identity theory that is linked to inclusion (Brewer, 2012). Optimal distinctiveness theory contends that people have the need to be both similar and different from others concurrently (Brewer, 1991). Similarity increases the likelihood that an individual will be welcomed in a group and hence increase fulfillment of the need to belong, whereas difference is associated with recognition of ways in which a person is unique, increasing possible fulfillment of the need for uniqueness. To fulfill a fundamental human need for belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), people choose social identities with particular groups and seek acceptance into those groups. In a work setting, employee fulfillment of belongingness needs can occur through forming and maintaining strong positive relationships with the leader and with members of the work group. Being an acknowledged in-group member has advantages beyond fulfilling needs for belongingness, including the benefits associated with favoritism and in-group bias among members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

While such in-group membership affords advantages, it also can require a level of conformity that lessens the fulfillment of human needs for uniqueness (Hogg & Reid, 2006). As defined by Snyder and Fromkin (1980), uniqueness refers to the need to sustain a distinctive and differentiated sense of self. If members of groups are seen as too similar, then individuals become interchangeable and the need for uniqueness is unsatisfied (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). When this need becomes activated, individuals can define themselves in terms of category memberships that distinguish themselves from others by making comparisons within their group (e.g., I am dissimilar from others). Such unique personal identifications can include for example race/ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. A personal identification within a group reflects deindividuation, the ways in which individuals are distinct within a social context (Brewer, 1991). When these or other personal identifications are perceived to be devalued, then experiences of inclusion are undermined, and perceptions of exclusion are much more likely.

Leaders play a critical role in determining group member experiences of inclusion and exclusion through several mechanisms. The leader serves as a role model whose own behavior provides an example of behavior that is desired in their work group. Social role theory (Bandura, 1977) has established the importance of role models for behavior modeling and learning, and as argued by Toader and Kunze (2021), especially in the case of leaders who are viewed as having authority and legitimacy stemming from their formal role. A leader who operates in a manner that is conducive to experiences of inclusion is thus likely to inspire such behavior among members (Mathieu, Eschleman, & Cheng, 2019; Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009; Mor Barak, Luria, & Brimhall, 2021), especially if their inclusive behavior is consistent over time and across members of their team (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Inclusionary role modeling is more likely to be followed if it is also linked to favorable organizational outcomes for the leader (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Such positive rewards not only benefit the leader, but according to social identity theory, also signifies that the leader is a prototypical organizational member who embodies the set of norms and behaviors most consistent with the organizational ideal (Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003).

In a similar manner, the leader who behaves in an exclusionary manner with subordinates may also serve as a role model and prototypical in-group member of the organization (Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012; Mawritz, Mayer, Hoobler, Wayne, & Marinova, 2012; Toader & Kunze, 2021; Tu, Bono, Shum, & LaMontagne, 2018). We argue that such leaders may be especially likely to influence subordinates since not only is ostracism common in organizations (O'Reilly, Robinson, Berdahl, & Banki, 2015), it is used as a form of social control to promote member behaviors that support the goals of the work group (Hales, Ren, & Williams, 2016). Leaders who ostracize may not recognize the potential harm they may be inflicting (Nezlek, Wesselmann, Wheeler, & Williams, 2015), both on the target as well as encouraging ostracism among their subordinates through role modeling. And even if the leader does not engage in exclusionary behavior, if they ignore such incidents among their team members, the inherent damage associated with ostracism may occur (Rudert, Sutter, Corrodi, & Greifeneder, 2018). In other words, those leaders who have strong and positive relations with only

some, and not all employees, may inspire ostracism toward favored employees by those employees who are less favored by the leader (Wang & Li, 2018). As we will argue in this article, leader inclusion is a challenge considering the human propensity to engage in social exclusion (Hales et al., 2016).

When exclusion is used as a form of social control and leaders ignore dissenting opinions, the value for uniqueness is diminished. That is, in order to experience belongingness, an individual's sense of being valued for uniqueness may be sacrificed. Research by Hewlin (2009) on facades of conformity point to the problems that occur when an individual suppresses personal values and pretends to embrace organizational values. She found that those who were perceived as minorities were more likely to have façades of conformity. Assimilation in which an individual hides an important aspect of who they are has the potential for harm, both to the individual and to the organization, especially if minority employees decide to leave the organization. While it could be argued that turnover of individuals who don't assimilate may be beneficial to the organization, increasing evidence shows the potential value of heterogeneity in the workforce (Andrevski, Richard, Shaw, & Ferrier, 2014; Post & Byron, 2015). To truly be inclusive, the leader must seek ways to exert social control that do not have the extent of harm found when exclusion is used (Howard, Cogswell, & Smith, 2020). If there is no social control, then there may not be any cohesion or normative behavior in the group. If there is too much social control in which exclusion is used to control differences of opinion or for perspectives that are in the minority, uniqueness will not be allowed to flourish.

Uniqueness is important as it allows individuals to be authentic (Hannah, Walumbwa, & Fry, 2011) and to be able to share dissenting opinions and bring up alternative views (Mor Barak, 2015; Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998). If uniqueness is suppressed then positive experiences of inclusion will be undermined and the benefits of having people in the group from different backgrounds and cultures is lessened (Shore et al., 2011). Leaders need to provide support that allows for uniqueness, especially those attributes that are related to personal identities such as race, age, sexual orientation and gender identity. These identities often represent essentialized social groups, those that are core to an individual's view of who they are (Bernstein, Sacco, Young, Hugenberg, & Cook, 2010).

2. Model of leader inclusion and exclusion

Fig. 1 shows our model of leader inclusion and exclusion. While our model builds on Shore et al. (2011) as described above, we focus on the two quadrants centered on inclusion (high belonging, high value in uniqueness) and exclusion (low belonging, low value in uniqueness). These two quadrants represent the types of behaviors that leaders commonly use in managing their group, often without a clear sense of how their inclusionary and exclusionary behaviors impact employees. In this article we seek to provide greater clarity of how these two types of leader behavior are distinct from one another, the ways in which leaders display behaviors in each of these two quadrants, and how their exclusionary and inclusionary behavior affects their work group. When describing exclusion, we largely present research from the ostracism literature as it is one of the more developed areas of exclusion. Although we acknowledge that exclusion is a broader concept that includes other forms of marginalization such as microaggressions and stigmatization, ostracism is one foundational way in which exclusion can occur and we use the ample research in that area to substantiate the effects of

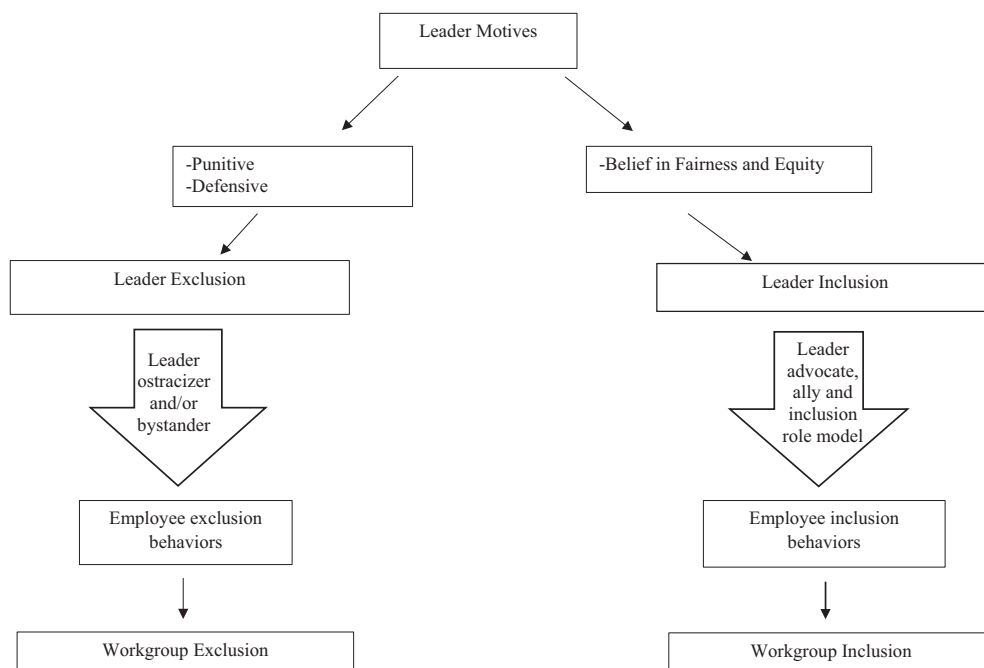


Fig. 1. Leader inclusion and exclusion model.

exclusion.

We propose that the integration of social learning theory and social identity theory provides the foundation for understanding the effects of leader inclusion and leader exclusion on members of their team. However, inclusion and exclusion are quite different. Inclusion involves active and visible efforts by the leader to make members feel valued, respected, and appreciated (Shore & Chung, 2021). In contrast, exclusion consists of leader shunning, avoiding, and ignoring so the employee understands that they need to either alter their behavior or otherwise suffer consequences including the possibility of being forced out of the group (Hales et al., 2016). Ostracism has been established as an exclusionary tool that is used in the workplace by coworkers (Howard et al., 2020) and by supervisors (Chang et al., 2019) to influence employee behavior. Ostracism is defined as “when an individual or group omits to take actions that engage another organizational member when it is socially appropriate to do so” (Robinson, O’Reilly, & Wang, 2013, p. 206). Specific examples of leader ostracism include not answering an employee’s greetings, overlooking an employee’s suggestions, or refusing to talk to them (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008). The leader behaviors associated with inclusion and exclusion and their impact on subordinates requires further conceptual development to show the distinctiveness of these two sets of leader behaviors, as well as provide a foundation for future empirical research.

Our model of leader inclusion and leader exclusion depicts the role of leaders in encouraging or discouraging inclusionary experiences of followers both through their direct treatment to individuals, as well as through their influence as a role model. We argue that inclusion and exclusion are distinct from one another, but that they have common elements. One common element of these two concepts is that both focus on in-groups and out-groups and associated belongingness needs. However, there are several distinctions between the two concepts that underlie our view. First, as shown in Fig. 1, the motives that inspire the behaviors associated with exclusion and inclusion are different. For exclusion, the ostracism literature has shown that there are two intentional motives including punitive and defensive ostracism (Williams, 1997). While both motives align with belongingness needs, punitive ostracism is focused on the interests of the group whereas defensive ostracism is focused on self-interest. Williams (1997) contended that punitive ostracism expresses who is currently in the out-group to provide other group members with information they can use to determine if their behavior is acceptable. Thus, out-group members are ostracized to emphasize group norms and reinforce compliance with those norms. Punitive ostracism aligns with social identity theory and efforts to encourage norms that support the group’s identity. In contrast, defensive ostracism is meant to improve the ostracizer’s own interests by shielding them from relationships that threaten their standing in the group (associating with out-group members) or undermine their self-esteem. In this case, the employee is motivated by a desire to protect or enhance belongingness for themselves.

It can be argued that inclusion, like punitive ostracism, is motivated by protecting or improving the interests of the group. However, the emphasis of inclusion is on a sense of belonging for all group members, rather than enforcing compliance with norms. While defensive ostracism research has shown that self-interest is a motive for ostracism, self-interest has not been hypothesized or demonstrated to be a motive for behaving inclusively. Rather, Shore et al.’s (2011) model of inclusion emphasizes the importance in today’s work environment with diverse teams to value ways in which people are unique so that these groups can work together successfully. As stated by Randel et al., 2018 (p. 199) “positive self-esteem, which is a motivating force in social identity theory, can be accomplished not only by feeling a sense of belonging to the group, but also by feeling valued for uniqueness.” Inclusionary behavior is thus motivated by a belief in fairness and equal opportunity (Nishii, 2013), and a desire to expand the in-group with associated belongingness for employees of a variety of social identities. A key element of fairness is a recognition of equity, ensuring that everyone has access to the same opportunities to grow, fully participate, and develop, regardless of their identity (Tan, 2019).

Proposition 1. *Leader motives for exclusion and inclusion are different.*

- a. *Leader exclusion can be precipitated by punitive or defensive motives.*
- b. *Leader motives for inclusion are based on beliefs in fairness and equity.*

This raises the question as to whether uniqueness is a motive for ostracism in the workplace. While this has not been studied, based on social identity theory and relational demography (Linnehan, Chrobot-Mason, & Konrad, 2006), we argue that this may be the case. For example, Schaffer and Riordan (2013) found that racial dissimilarity between an employee and their supervisor has a strong impact on employees’ perceptions of discrimination and exclusionary treatment. These findings provide support for the argument that dissimilarity in a visible demographic characteristic, such as race, may be particularly susceptible to in-group favoritism and out-group bias, and associated exclusion. While not argued in the ostracism literature, we hypothesize that uniqueness of the employee may be a precipitating element of exclusionary treatment. Demographics are one set of salient characteristics, but there are others as well that may make an individual unique relative to the leader or within the workgroup. Similarity among prominent characteristics can draw individuals together, favorably influence members’ sentiments about the relationship, and assist the interactive processes that contribute to the quality of relationships (Waismel-Manor, Tziner, Berger, & Dikstein, 2010).

The leader who behaves in a supportive manner to all employees and who encourages diverse contributions serves as a role model of inclusion for their subordinates (Randel et al., 2018). When the organization has an inclusive climate, the leader is rewarded for such inclusive behavior (Mor Barak et al., 2016) and so employees are likely to follow suit. However, some employees may not choose to be inclusive to coworkers due to concerns related to their standing with the leader. For example, employees may be envious if they are treated similarly to other employees even though they think they deserve better treatment due to experience, credentials, or performance. Likewise, the opportunity to “stand out” and be favored may be highly valued by employees who seek to get promoted. Thus, a competitive climate (Ng, 2017) or social comparison among team members (Wang & Li, 2018) may undermine leader efforts to create an inclusive environment for all employees in their team. This may also occur when there is a policy in place, such as affirmative action, that appears to favor a social identity group to which an individual does not belong (Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 2000).

Considering the evidence that exclusion behaviors such as ostracism are very common in work settings (Robinson & Schabram,

2017), as well as harmful (Howard et al., 2020), our model provides a conceptual basis for future research on leader inclusion and leader exclusion. We also seek to provide leaders with guidance to address these behaviors in their work settings through their inclusionary activities. Leaders play a key role in group member experiences of inclusion and exclusion, and hence we strive for further understanding of the many ways in which leaders can aid in creating inclusive environments and prevent the experience of exclusion among their group members. Below, we first discuss leader inclusion and present the types of behaviors that will aid in creating inclusive team member experiences. By demonstrating these behaviors, a leader can be a role model, an advocate and an ally for building work group inclusion. Following that, we discuss the negative roles that leaders adopt that signal social exclusion such as ostracizer and bystander which lead to possible ostracism by coworkers. Next, we describe leader remedies for ostracism and social exclusion. Finally, we discuss the implications of our model and directions for future research.

3. Leader inclusion

Studies of leader inclusion have found positive relationships with psychological safety (Carmeli et al., 2010; Hirak et al., 2012; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006), employee involvement in creative work (Carmeli et al., 2010), work engagement (Choi, Tran, & Park, 2015), work group inclusion (Chung et al., 2020) and enhanced unit performance (Hirak et al., 2012). Several studies suggest that inclusive leadership is particularly important when considering people who are members of marginalized groups or when there is diversity in the team. First, Randel, Dean, Ehrhart, Chung, and Shore (2016) found that in contrast to whites and men, only when there was consistency in support through a positive diversity climate and inclusive leadership for women and people of color was their helping behavior enhanced. Second, Nishii and Mayer (2009) found that the highest turnover occurred when only some, and not all members of diverse work groups had a high-quality relationship with the manager. A third study of diverse health care teams found that the relationship between leader inclusiveness and team performance was mediated by team identity and perceived status differences (Mitchell et al., 2015) such that increased team identity and lowered status differences enhanced team performance. Ashikali, Groeneveld, and Kuipers (2020) found that when team ethnic-cultural diversity is high, inclusive leadership also needs to be high to minimize the negative relationship that was shown between team diversity and inclusive climate. Zheng, Diaz, Zheng, and Tang (2017) found that leader inclusion was particularly crucial for enhancing OCB when deep-level similarity between the supervisor and subordinate was low.

While initial research on inclusive leadership shows generally positive results, much more work is needed especially in understanding the experiences of people who are minoritized (Bilimoria, Joy, & Liang, 2008). Specifically, research is needed that more clearly describes the leader behaviors that are interpreted by employees as inclusive, and that have positive influences on employee perceptions of work group and organizational inclusion. The immediate manager plays a critical role in creating experiences of inclusion, especially in the case of employees who are members of marginalized social categories or when similarity among team members or between the employee and supervisor is low. Consistency in positive signals from the leader and organization also seem particularly important for members of these groups (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Randel et al., 2016).

3.1. Supporting needs for belongingness

Randel et al. (2018) developed a model of leader inclusion and described leader behaviors that promote employee experiences of belongingness and uniqueness in the work group. They posed that leader inclusion behaviors that enhance *belongingness* involve (1) supporting individuals as group members, (2) ensuring justice and equity, and (3) sharing in decision making. Shore et al. (2018) further argue for the creation of conditions for inclusion which can be enacted by the leader including (1) providing access to critical information and resources (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998), and (2) displaying respect for the individual (Nishii, 2013; Sabharwal, 2014; Tang, Zheng, & Chen, 2015). We posit that these latter two behaviors also increase members' experience of belongingness.

3.2. Supporting needs for uniqueness

Randel et al. (2018) argued for two leader behaviors that would facilitate member experiences of being valued for *uniqueness*: (1) encouraging diverse contributions, and (2) helping group members fully contribute. Shore et al. (2018) suggested additional leader behaviors for enhancing member experiences of being valued for uniqueness including (1) prioritizing psychological safety for all team members, (2) displaying respect for employee identity groups, and (3) supporting displays of authenticity for themselves and for team members.

By doing the above-described behaviors that facilitate the fulfillment of belongingness and uniqueness needs of the target, the leader can create experiences of work group inclusion. The leader does this through three avenues: as a role model, an advocate, or an ally.

3.3. Leader roles

3.3.1. Role model

The leader needs to serve as an inclusion role model in daily practice. Leaders should show that they embrace the principles of inclusion and will "walk the talk" when they interact with team members, peers, management, and customers. As a role model, the leader must listen carefully and often to learn about the experiences of people from different backgrounds and identities. As pointed out by Ely and Thomas (2001, p. 240) "the insights, skills, and experiences employees have developed as members of various cultural

identity groups are potentially valuable resources that the work group can use to rethink its primary tasks and redefine its markets, products, strategies, and business practices in ways that will advance its mission.” Through displaying a learning approach to discussions with team members of varied social identities, the leader can show that there is value in the different experiences and perspectives in their team (Ely & Thomas, 2020).

As Bandura's social learning model (Bandura, 1977) suggests, followers will often mimic the actions of the leader, so it is critical for leaders to role model inclusion behaviors. The leader needs to consistently act as a role model to build an environment where group members not only experience inclusion but are committed to creating that dynamic in their work group. Leaders should be vigilant about maintaining this role even during times of crisis or when the organizational situation is less than ideal.

3.3.2. Advocate

The leader is an advocate when they consistently promote belongingness and uniqueness behaviors in all aspects of group functioning. The leader has to be an advocate both for individuals and for the system (attitude and belief in the principles of inclusion). As such, the leader publicly supports, recommends, and argues for individuals as well as inclusion principles (Cheatham & Tormala, 2015). The leader defends and promotes another person's rights, needs, and interests as well as asserts the interests of an initiative, policy, or program.

The leader advocate also has to have certain skill sets such as being able to effectively communicate, convey interests, collaborate, and negotiate. They have to serve as both a coach and mentor who encourages group members to behave in an inclusive manner. Leader advocates emphasize the beneficial outcomes of inclusion for their team, for the organization, and for individuals (Guillaume, Guillaume, Dawson, Otaye-Ebede, Woods, & West, 2017). Finally, advocates manage upward so that diversity and inclusion are valued in all decisions.

3.3.3. Ally

Using Hebl, Cheng, and Ng's (2020) definition of ally as a starting point, we create our own definition of a “leader ally”: a person who is an esteemed member of the group, either because they are the leader or because they are in the dominant/majority portion of the work group, that acts to end exclusion through his or her support of, and as an advocate with and for, the ostracized individual. As a non-ostracized member of the group, the leader needs to be a partner in reducing exclusion in their work group. There are many ways that a leader ally can demonstrate his or her support for the ostracized group member: being present and listening, role modeling to the group, shedding light on ostracizing behavior occurring in the group, directly confronting instances of ostracism, educating group members, or asking the ostracizer(s) to behave differently (Ruggs, Martinez, & Hebl, 2011). According to Czopp and Monteith (2003), allies confronting discriminating behaviors are powerful because their actions may be viewed differently than actions of the targets themselves. Observers perceive confrontations from allies as more legitimate and less self-serving (Rasinski & Czopp, 2010).

Due to their increased influence and resources within organizations, allies in positions of higher power (e.g., leaders) may be more effective than those lower in power when providing support (Cheng, Ng, Traylor, & King, 2019). As previous research shows (Schneider, Wesselman, & DeSouza, 2017), leaders are particularly important as allies of marginalized groups and individuals and should be a critical component when designing ally interventions. As mentioned previously, ally behavior by the inclusive leader can include both support and advocacy (Sabat, Martinez, & Wessel, 2013). Similar to the typology of observer intervention behaviors espoused by Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005), leaders can offer supportive behaviors that provide both psychological and/or tangible resources for excluded individuals such as being present and listening. Alternatively, they can exhibit more action-oriented behaviors that include more outward displays of support such as directly confronting ostracism, interrupting an incident of ostracism, role modeling inclusive behavior, educating others, publicly speaking about unacceptable behavior, encouraging intervention behaviors from other group members, and creating practices and norms that discourage exclusionary behavior. These kinds of pro-social behaviors have been shown in the bystander intervention and ally intervention literature (McDonald, Charlesworth, & Graham, 2016; Rowe, 2018; Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011) to reduce the prevalence of exclusionary and harassing behaviors.

In sum, a leader needs to be a role model, an advocate, and an ally to be a wholly inclusive leader. All three roles are needed in order to truly build an inclusive environment where there is consistent messaging in the importance of inclusion, influence being exerted upward, downward, and laterally regarding inclusion, and an exemplar representing inclusion principles. Thus [proposition 2](#) is as follows:

Proposition 2. Leaders that act as role models, advocates, and allies through exhibiting inclusive behaviors that promote belongingness and uniqueness will be seen as an inclusive leader.

4. The challenge of social exclusion

Shore et al.'s model of inclusion is based on social identity theory (SIT). The self-categorization paradigm (SCT) is complementary to SIT, referring to the process by which people define their self-concept in terms of their memberships in various social groups. Applications of SIT and SCT to groups contends that group members establish a positive social identity and confirm their affiliation by showing favoritism to members of their own social category (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This unfairness and self-categorization, in turn, can disrupt group interaction in diverse groups (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). Social category membership can be associated with development of subgroups in work settings in which conflicts can emerge and disrupt group processes (Lau & Murnighan, 1998). Categorizing individuals into different groups can elicit antagonism within the work group and accentuate in-group and out-group membership. To the extent that a particular in-group membership is salient (e.g., gender), a person's perceived

similarity to the others in the in-group is increased (Brewer, 1979). Members of a salient group are more likely to cooperate with in-group members and to compete against out-group members (Wagner, Lampen, & Syllwasschy, 1986). This type of social categorization process can make it challenging for leaders to maintain experiences of inclusion within the workgroup.

One potential outcome of social categorization processes is social exclusion, which refers to being ignored, and/or rejected (Williams, 2007). When targets are socially excluded, they can feel as though the source does not consider them to be worthy of even minimal acknowledgment. A study by Bernstein et al. (2010) found that inclusion is more fulfilling to a person's basic belongingness needs when it comes from an in-group as opposed to an out-group member, and exclusion by an in-group member feels worse than exclusion by an out-group member. This is consistent with the SIT and SCT theoretical view that in-group and out-group membership influences people's interpretation of mistreatment by others.

As mentioned previously, a key element of Shore et al.'s (2011) theorizing is the need to belong to the work group. A core issue for an employee who is ostracized is the perceived threat to that person's sense of belonging (Robinson & Schabram, 2017). Ostracism thwarts the opportunity to build the social relationships that can lead to belongingness. Unlike other forms of workplace mistreatment such as bullying or harassment, ostracism suggests that the target is not important enough to interact with. Ostracism impedes social interaction unlike other forms of mistreatment. In fact, it is not always clear whether ostracism is intentional or what the underlying message is from the ostracizer (Williams, 1997). The target is often left feeling confused and hurt, but also believing that they don't belong. The ambiguity associated with ostracism suggests that, considering the significance of threats to belonging, the target is likely to ponder whether it occurred, why it transpired, and what it means (Wong & Weiner, 1981).

Past research has shown that ostracism can be an extremely painful experience. The social distress caused by ostracism has even been likened to physical pain (Eisenberger, 2012; Riva, Wirth, & Williams, 2011). In addition, ostracism can have a more negative effect than other detrimental workplace behaviors such as aggression and harassment (Williams & Zadro, 2001). Importantly, it has been discovered that targets who were ostracized by a higher-status authority such as a manager and whose external social support was limited suffered the most negative outcomes (Fiset, Hajj, & Vongas, 2017). While this points to the importance of understanding the effects of leader ostracism, as yet little attention has been given to this topic in the ostracism literature.

A recent review of the ostracism literature concluded that there are three purposes of ostracism: (1) to shield groups from problematic members; (2) to indicate that a person's behavior needs adjustment to remain in the group; and (3) to get rid of deviant individuals who resist correction (Hales et al., 2016). These purposes suggest that leaders may well employ ostracism for the benefit of the work group (Williams, 1997), to defend themselves against a perceived personal threat (Wu et al., 2015), or may turn a blind eye to ostracism that occurs within the group. While ostracism is an effective social influence tool for the perpetrator, it often leads to harmful consequences for individuals who are the recipients (Ferris et al., 2008; O'Reilly et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2013), and may undermine the positive effects of an inclusive leader.

In a recent meta-analysis of ostracism at work (Howard et al., 2020), the authors found that perceptions of workplace ostracism by the employee was negatively associated with LMX and positively with abusive supervision and supervisor's ostracism behaviors. This suggests the importance of establishing positive relations between the leader and employee to prevent leader ostracism. Perceived social support was negatively related to ostracism, indicating that coworker relations are important for reducing ostracism. Overall, they found that ostracism is harmful in terms of its effects on employee well-being and emotions, performance, turnover, and attitudes.

The importance of leader prevention of ostracism in the work group while promoting inclusionary practices has not been examined. It is our contention that the leader will need to carefully manage ostracism among their work group members, personally avoid using ostracism as a control device, and actively apply inclusion behaviors to create an inclusive work group experience for their subordinates.

4.1. Ostracism by the leader

Research on workplace ostracism has rarely focused on the source of this treatment, even though ostracism by leaders and coworkers may have different effects on the target (Fiset et al., 2017). In an effort to address this undeveloped area of the literature, Zhao, Chen, Glambek, and Einarsen (2019) conducted a qualitative study of leader ostracism from the target's perspective. They found several leader ostracism behaviors: (1) ignoring, (2) neglect, (3) exclusion, (4) differential treatment, and (5) undermining. Ignoring occurs when the leader does not respond to attempts by the target to communicate. This can be, for example, not responding to greetings or ignoring the target's opinions. Neglect ensues when the leader does not respond to specific employee needs or when the situation otherwise entails an expectation about being given attention. This set of behaviors are related to unfulfilled role expectations for the leader such as not providing needed emotional support, not introducing the employee, or refusing to help the subordinate. Exclusion involves situations where the leader does not invite an employee to a social event such as lunch or after-work activities or does not share information about work-related events such as meetings or business trips. Differential treatment entails unfair or dissimilar treatment as compared with the treatment of other colleagues. This can involve in-group favoritism such as giving preferred employees more beneficial opportunities or out-group derogation such as being treated in a comparatively lesser manner. Undermining contains acts that involve "an immediate leader negatively manipulating a subordinate's social position and/or belittling his or her work contributions and potential in the job" (Zhao et al., 2019, p. 12). This can involve embarrassing and belittling the employee to other members of their work group or devaluation of the employee's working ability.

These direct leader ostracism behaviors can be particularly damaging to the employee who is the target, as the employee may interpret the ostracism as a lack of respect for and appreciation of the employee's contributions to the work group. However, unlike other forms of workplace mistreatment, ostracism involves avoidance of social engagement when such interaction would be expected. Since ostracism does not contain an inherently clear message as to what the employee has done that is a problem, the target may not be

sure how to interpret the ostracism. In fact, targets of ostracism who are not able to attribute the ostracism to a specific cause suffer greater threats to belongingness and self-esteem than those who understand the reasons for their treatment (Sommer, Williams, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2001). The ostracizer may actually intend to cause harm, to hurt the target for perceived wrongdoing (Nezlek et al., 2015). However, ostracism often occurs due to self- or group protection, such as to avoid conflict, uncomfortable interactions, or to protect the group from someone who may inflict harm (Robinson & Schabram, 2017). Given the lack of information that can be associated with acts of ostracism, such as the silent treatment or not answering a greeting, the employee who is the target may interpret the action in a manner that is not accurate. Therefore, the employee may infer a more problematic reason than is the case and may be more stressed than if the reason was understood.

Considering the lack of a clear message to the target that is usually associated with ostracism, the ostracizer can use it as a tool of subtle discrimination without the same consequences of overt discrimination. Unlike harassment or bullying that involve aggressive acts that are against the law if the target is a member of a protected group, ostracism behavior is much less likely to be actionable. The ostracizer can claim that their behavior was misinterpreted which may, in fact, be accurate. Plus, the target may be much less sure of the motives of the ostracizer, and hence less likely to act. Nonetheless, ostracism as a form of social exclusion may in fact be a type of subtle discrimination that prevents an employee from gaining certain opportunities in the organization (Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2016; Mor Barak, 2015).

Proposition 3. A leader who engages in ostracism behaviors will be seen as an exclusive leader.

4.2. Coworker ostracism

While the majority of workplace ostracism research does not specify who the ostracizer is (leader or coworker), a few studies have been conducted that focus specifically on coworker exclusion or working conditions that lead coworkers to engage in exclusion. Yang and Treadway (2018) found that coworkers' objective ostracizing behaviors are not associated with the victim's perceived workplace ostracism except for those employees with a high need for belongingness. This suggests that employees with high belongingness needs may be more sensitive to incidents of ostracism. Likewise, Scott, Zagenczyk, Schippers, Purvis, and Cruz (2014) found that coworker ostracism decreased organization-based self-esteem, increased job induced tension, and was unrelated to supervisor-rated performance. Finally, coworker ostracism has been found to have a negative effect on newcomers' information seeking and guanxi development, suggesting that exclusion undermines successful newcomer socialization (Liu, Zhang, Ji, & Wu, 2021). While ostracism may be viewed as a "kind" way to provide newcomers with subtle signals as to the importance of adopting group norms, the evidence is consistent with other research showing that ostracism is generally harmful in the workplace (Howard et al., 2020). Research is needed that focuses on exclusionary treatment at early stages of employment as compared with established organizational employees to determine whether the mechanisms underlying the negative effects of ostracism are distinct. Ostracism at early stages may be viewed by the newcomer as a rite of passage, akin to hazing in the Greek system of universities, or alternatively may be viewed as signifying an exclusionary organizational climate. In contrast, tenured employees who have been included but have more recently been ostracized may be inferring a change in their status from in-group to out-group member. These ideas of the link between stages of team identity formation and exclusion need to be further developed and studied empirically.

Several studies suggest that aspects of the work context may precipitate coworker ostracism due to envy or competition among coworkers. Peng and Weng (2017) found that in organizations that use 360-degree feedback, employees ostracized by coworkers were reported to show greater amounts of deviant behavior and a smaller amount of helping behavior. The authors interpreted this pattern as being potentially due to perceptions that coworkers may unfairly undermine an individual's performance evaluation. While not directly tested, their results suggest that 360-degree feedback may precipitate a competitive climate which could increase counter-productive work behavior including ostracism. Ng (2017) found that when employees witnessed developmental idiosyncratic deals (i-deals), whereby individual employees negotiated customized development opportunities different from their coworkers that this was associated with feelings of envy, a competitive climate, and subsequent perceptions of ostracism. Similarly, Wang and Li (2018) found that being envied by coworkers mediated the relationship between leader-member exchange and workplace ostracism. They argued that a high-quality relationship between the employee and the supervisor led to envy among coworkers due to social comparison processes resulting in ostracism of the favored employee.

Two studies suggest that employees who are seeking to maintain relationships with their coworkers continue their helping behavior even when they have been ostracized. Xu, Huang, and Robinson (2017) reported that when group identification was strong, ostracism by the workgroup improved employees' helping behavior toward the group and reduced employees' social loafing. They also observed that when the employee had strong group identification and longer tenure, the positive relationship between ostracism and helping behavior was the greatest. Balliet and Ferris (2013) found that perceived ostracism from work colleagues was associated with reduced helping behavior, but only for employees who were not future oriented.

The set of studies on coworker ostracism are consistent with the view that social comparison processes may play a role in increasing coworker ostracism behavior. Most especially, leaders who favor some, but not all of their employees may increase the likelihood of coworker exclusion in their workgroup.

4.3. Leader as a bystander

An alternative path that a leader may adopt to deal with ostracism among the members of their group is by being a bystander. As a bystander, the leader does not commit the actual exclusionary behavior but also does not take any action to stop the behavior from

occurring among coworkers (Forbes, Stark, Hopkins, & Fireman, 2020). As research shows (Fischer et al., 2011; Latané & Darley, 1968), it is easier for bystanders not to say or do anything rather than act to intervene. However, we propose that the long-term effects of not counteracting exclusionary behavior can be detrimental as exclusionary behaviors can accumulate and become the norm. Research also shows that when there is more personal implication for an action (Chekroun & Brauer, 2002), an individual is more likely to act. Personal implication means that the individual has some personal liability in the situation. For example, a doctor is more likely to feel a personal implication to intervene in an emergency medical situation versus an individual that has no medical training. Similarly, a leader in particular will have a high level of personal implication since it is his/her group's functioning that is at stake if s/he doesn't take action. As Baumeister, Chesner, Senders, and Tice (1988) found, group leaders were more likely to intervene in emergency situations due to a sense of responsibility than other members in the group. Further, a leader should feel even more personal implication if the exclusionary behavior is brought to his or her attention either by other group members or by the target him or herself. In this case, the leader may be more compelled to intervene since he or she is no longer a passive observer. However, not all leaders act to discourage exclusionary behavior. It is much easier for the leader to avoid the situation and stay out of the conflict.

Proposition 4. Greater coworker ostracism will occur when the leader of the group is an ostracizer or when the leader acts as a bystander.

Proposition 5. Greater coworker-to-coworker exclusion will occur when leaders favor some group members over others.

4.4. Leader remedies for ostracism and social exclusion

In light of the harm that is often associated with ostracism for the target (Sommer et al., 2001) and for the ostracizer (Ciarocco, Sommer, & Baumeister, 2001; Legate, DeHaan, Weinstein, & Ryan, 2013; Zadro & Gonsalkorale, 2014), alternative ways of tackling issues between these parties is needed. Leader inclusion provides a foundation for strong dyadic relations between the leader and employee. But even so, the leader may engage in ostracism as a form of social control when an employee behaves in ways that do not align with workgroup norms. For that reason, the leader may view engaging in ostracism toward that employee as justified. However, the leader needs to consider the likely harm to the target that has occurred, and what can be done to undo the potential damage created.

Some behaviors have been suggested as antidotes when ostracism has occurred that can be used by leaders. Freedman, Williams, and Beer (2016) argue based on Williams's (2009) Need-Threat Model that targets of ostracism want a restoration of self-esteem, meaningful existence, belongingness, and control needs. Self-esteem is related to how much others value the relationship. The Need-Threat Model also describes social exclusion as affecting self-esteem through the potential ambiguity of the situation (Williams, 2009). For example, when the situation is ambiguous, targets may develop lay theories about the reason for the ostracism. Those lay theories may involve personal identities (DeSouza et al., 2019) such as race/ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation that contribute to turnover, a potential outcome of ostracism. Targets of exclusion who experience loss of self-esteem seek positive social interaction to reinstate their sense of self-worth. Thus, the leader can reassure the target and restore self-esteem by acting inclusively.

When targets are socially excluded, they can feel as though others do not consider them to be deserving of even a basic response. Targets may attempt to restore their diminished meaningful existence by engaging in attention-seeking behaviors, some of which may be aggressive or violent. Leader inclusionary actions, such as providing support, send a critical message of valuing the feelings and reactions of the target. The importance of being recognized as adding value is key to addressing this type of response by the target.

Following social exclusion, targets also attempt to restore their threatened sense of belongingness (e.g., Freedman et al., 2016). Exclusion takes away the sense that one belongs to the group or dyad. As a fundamental human need, loss of belongingness can have harmful effects (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). After exclusion, targets attempt to reestablish their sense of belongingness by seeking to make new friends and ingratiating themselves with others including by engaging in increased prosocial behavior (Xu et al., 2017). Leaders can emphasize that the target's efforts are appreciated through recognizing the enhanced helping behavior and communicating the value of the target's membership in the group.

Targets of social exclusion also want to restore their sense of control. Targets often attempt to reestablish control by performing fewer prosocial acts and behaving more aggressively (Buckley, Winkel, & Leary, 2004; Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Bartels, 2007; Warburton, Williams, & Cairns, 2006). However, targets are not likely to behave aggressively if they feel that belongingness is still possible (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007). It is only when belongingness is considered as no longer possible that targets will behave in disruptive ways (Maner et al., 2007). The leader can play a critical role in emphasizing that the target is a valued member of the workgroup by operating in an inclusive manner, and if need be, directly addressing the issue with ostracizers in the workgroup.

Leaders play a critical role in managing exclusion in their work group. Avoiding the urge to use social exclusion as a control device is one of the most crucial activities for the leader. Since the danger of ostracism is well established, the leader should communicate concerns directly to the employee rather than using ostracism or other tactics. Rudert, Hales, Greifeneder, and Williams (2017) found that participants in their research recovered better from ostracism after receiving acknowledgment of any kind (positive, neutral, or negative) compared with participants who were ignored altogether. Consistent with this research, Freedman et al. (2016) argue that when sources use explicit rejection, targets' hurt feelings will be lessened, their needs will be better shielded, and sources will experience "less backlash and emotional toil" (p. 1) than if sources use ostracism. Finally, Tang and Richardson (2013) found that excluded participants reported more hurt feelings, more anger, decreased positive mood, and increased negative mood; however, it was found that inclusion after exclusion improved all threatened states and emotions.

These studies suggest several avenues for leaders. First, to directly communicate concerning issues to employees rather than using

ostracism. Engaging in conversation lets the employee know that they are important enough to the leader to receive acknowledgement. Second, leaders can engage in inclusionary activity to remediate exclusion effects. This is particularly important when an employee has a minoritized identity, as ostracism can easily undermine the experience of being valued for uniqueness. The discrimination experienced by members of these social identity groups, often in subtle ways such as social exclusion, is likely to make these employees especially concerned. Third, when the leader discovers that social exclusion is occurring among members of the workgroup, they need to consider why it is occurring and how best to address the behavior.

Proposition 6. High inclusive leadership combined with prevention of social exclusion will lead to more positive employee outcomes and will mitigate negative employee outcomes.

Proposition 7. Inclusive leadership will be especially important in diverse work groups in terms of facilitating positive outcomes for employees.

Proposition 8. Leadership exclusion behaviors such as ostracism will be most detrimental in diverse work groups.

5. Discussion and future research directions

Leaders who behave inclusively and encourage such behavior in their team through consistent role modeling, serving as an advocate of inclusion, and when needed, an ally, can contribute to a work setting that increases inclusion more broadly. These inclusive leadership efforts in turn can serve to inspire team members to operate more inclusively by providing an environment in which employees from a variety of backgrounds and identities can contribute to the success of the work group and the organization. However, our theoretical arguments of social learning theory and social identity theory also point to the challenges faced by leaders who seek to establish an inclusive environment.

As a role model, leaders need to behave consistently and clearly to provide a learning opportunity for their team members (Bandura, 1986). Leadership behavior that strengthens team member experiences of both belongingness and uniqueness are critical to being an effective inclusion role model (Randel et al., 2018). When a leader's behavior emphasizes support for belongingness without uniqueness this can promote assimilation, in which employees with stigmatized identities experience pressure to "fit in" (Shore & Chung, 2021). This leadership approach can be harmful, especially for diverse teams, as assimilation is associated with increased stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination (Leslie, Bono, Kim, & Beaver, 2020). Likewise, leaders who engage in differentiation, encouraging uniqueness without belongingness, may believe in the business case for diversity (Robinson & Dechant, 1997; Shore & Chung, 2021), and lack awareness of the experience of low belongingness they have created for the recipient of this leadership approach. When a leader has a differentiation orientation, employees are more likely to feel that they are a "token" (Kanter, 1977), where they have been hired or given certain projects because they are in a particular social category (e.g., gender and race) but experience limited belonging by members of the organization (Leroy, Buengler, Veestraeten, Shemla, & However, 2021; Shore & Chung, 2021). Thus, leaders need to not only commit to behaving inclusively, but become aware of how their treatment of employees is interpreted if they do not consistently engage in behavior that promotes both belongingness and uniqueness experiences of their team members.

The diversity literature has used social identity theory as a foundation for arguing about the role of identification in creating in-groups and out-groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Group members generate a positive social identity and prove their connection to a group by showing favoritism to members of their own social category (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Identification with social categories such as race, gender, and age, can result in minoritized employees being considered out-group members who are treated less positively (Joshi, Liao, & Jackson, 2006). For leaders to promote experiences of inclusion in their work group, they need to be aware of these potential dynamics among their team members. While the ostracism literature has not systematically examined whether being unique in the workgroup precipitates such treatment, we argue that based on social identity theory and relational demography, research is needed to address whether ostracism is a subtle form of discrimination. Serving as an ally can help address this issue, but in addition, the leader can consistently promote the broader identification with the work group (Mitchell et al., 2015) through highlighting the valuable contributions made due to varied perspectives and backgrounds.

Having upper management support for inclusion is also important, as the leader who operates in a manner consistent with organizational norms, and who is rewarded for such behavior, will be more likely to be chosen as a role model (Hogg, 2001). As pointed out by Mor Barak et al. (2021), inconsistency between the policies established at the CEO level and practices engaged in at the supervisory level can be problematic for creating an inclusionary environment. Likewise, research has shown that leader abuse can be associated with trickle-down effects from higher levels of management to lower levels, and in turn to negative employee behavior (Mawritz et al., 2012). It may be very difficult for a leader to maintain an inclusionary work environment if destructive forms of leadership are present in higher levels of the organization. Women and people of color look for consistency in the support for diversity between the leader and the organization, so a poor climate can mitigate against the effectiveness of the inclusive leader (Randel et al., 2016).

While abusive leadership is more aggressive than ostracism, we contend that the same trickle-down effects (Mawritz et al., 2012) can occur with ostracism. It has been argued that such exclusionary effects may cause more psychological damage than the more aggressive mistreatment of abusive supervision (Robinson & Schabram, 2017). Exclusionary treatment suggests that the recipient is not worthy of the effort that is required for aggressive mistreatment. Thus, future research needs to address whether leader ostracism has trickle-down effects, and whether exclusionary and abusive climates increase the likelihood of such effects.

As argued in Shore et al.'s (2011) model of inclusion, the experience of being valued for ways in which an individual is unique is

critical to feeling included in the workgroup. Many employees have chosen to hide stigmatized identities that are not visible in order to avoid rejection at work (Ragins, 2008). Such a choice is likely to be associated with lower inclusion experiences but may be essential to the individual who senses that they will otherwise be excluded. Those who have visible identities that are reflective of membership in a group that has a history of discrimination, especially when the employee is in a numerical minority, may fear that they will not be valued for their identity and consequently experience lower belongingness (Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, & Davis, 2002).

Since fulfilling belongingness needs is a critical aspect of group membership (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), many minoritized employees will essentially live a “double life” in which they engage in ways that fit with the cultural majority at work (McCluney & Rabelob, 2019) but go home to their community so that they can be their authentic selves (Bell, 1990). These individuals manage their identities by code-switching or “shifting” to downplay their race in order to conform to workplace norms that might devalue all their social identities (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik, & Jun, 2016). Employees who do not have the opportunity in their workgroup to be their authentic selves are likely to feel less included. But when an employee experiences ostracism, this has the danger of moving from a perception of lower inclusion via assimilation or hidden identities to an experience of exclusion. If the employee infers that the exclusion they experience is probably due to their minoritized membership, this is likely to lead to a breakdown in the relationship with workgroup members and to the organization more broadly.

A study by Schneider, Hitlan, and Radhakrishnan (2000) points to the importance of considering the potentially differential effect of exclusion on employees in various identity groups. These authors found that targets of ethnic harassment and exclusion had more negative effects in terms of their well-being when exclusion was the sole form of discrimination they experienced as compared with when it was accompanied by harassment. They argued that since targets did not necessarily know which of their status characteristics to attribute the exclusion to (i.e., race, gender, or age), that this uncertainty may result in extremely harmful effects on their well-being. Such attributional ambiguity may cause the target to infer that the exclusion is due to prejudice against their identity group, rather than being deserved (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991). Individuals who regard their stigmatized social identity as a central part of their self-identity are more likely to see themselves as targets of discrimination especially when cues for the treatment they receive are ambiguous (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Ostracism, which involves omission rather than commission, increases the likelihood that minoritized employees perceive this behavior as due to their social identity.

While somewhat understudied, the role of social identities in relation to ostracism and social exclusion needs more development. Particularly needed is research that considers the roles of status and power in relation to exclusion. In organizations, minoritized employees are typically in fewer positions of power and influence (Sy, Tram-Quon, & Leung, 2017). As a result, feeling included at work poses a challenge for marginalized employees. Marginalized employees tend to manage their work identities in an effort to maximize belongingness in order to fit normative expectations. When marginalized employees do show high levels of distinctiveness at work, they often incur feelings of isolation and exclusion (McCluney & Rabelob, 2019). Ostracism and social exclusion often signal to the employee whose social identity is marginalized that they are not going to receive desired career opportunities (Mor Barak, 2015).

We advocate that the leader define and implement core social norms having to do with behaviors that contribute to vital group performance (e.g., meeting deadlines, cooperation, helping other team members) but reduce norms having to do with conformity that are not relevant or are counter-productive for effective group performance. Clarifying performance norms while still avoiding ostracism as a form of social control is one way to encourage employees to work together successfully without exclusion. At the same time, if norms established for group discussions or decision making encourage conformity, ostracism may be used for such a purpose by coworkers. Thus, the leader needs to not only proactively support sharing of a diversity of perspectives and experiences, but also acknowledge team members for encouraging such sharing. These nonconformists because of their diverse viewpoints often add tremendous value to discussions and creative solutions based on their unique attributes (Mannix & Neale, 2005; McLeod, Lobel, & Cox Jr., 1996; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993).

As pointed out by Robinson et al. (2013) diversity and dissimilarity may lead to nonpurposeful (unintentional) ostracism since people tend to develop the strongest social bonds with others who are similar to themselves. When an employee possesses a valued identity group that is rare in their work setting, they may be left out simply because they are different. One of the challenges for leaders of creating an inclusive workgroup is the human propensity to create in-groups and out-groups. As argued by Greenwald and Pettigrew (2014), in-group favoritism, rather than out-group discrimination, may be the core challenge for managing diversity in a positive manner at work. As we have suggested here, in-group favoritism that is associated with the rejection of minoritized workgroup members contributes to exclusion experiences at work. One possible approach for inclusive leaders is to build “superordinate identities” (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), in which all members of the workgroup, regardless of social identities, are considered in-group members. While people are going to inevitably place others into social categories, Gaertner et al. (2016) suggest recategorization as a strategy for less focus on in-groups and out-groups (p. 8) “in which members of two or more groups are induced to perceive the aggregate as members of the same, more inclusive group.” Inclusive leaders who engage in behaviors that promote the experience of belongingness and uniqueness for all workgroup members provides an environment in which members are likely to feel that they are part of the in-group. When leaders avoid engaging in ostracism and other exclusionary behaviors, and serve as advocates, role models and allies they are likely to increase the perception that all workgroup members, regardless of their social identities, are valued and deserve inclusive treatment.

While we have integrated the exclusion (and in particular, ostracism) and inclusion literatures in this article, theoretical and empirical research is needed to establish their degree of distinctiveness more fully. We believe that they are on two separate continua/dimensions, similar to Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959). In support of this view, our model described the different motives for leader inclusion and exclusion, and we also presented the distinctive behaviors that are highlighted in each of these domains. Another reason for this view is that diversity is an integral element of the inclusion literature (Mor Barak, 2015; Shore et al., 2011), but not of the ostracism literature, contributing to the distinctiveness of these concepts. While experiences of people with minoritized

identities is not incorporated into the ostracism literature, we recommend future research to understand the potential role of this type of exclusion more fully. The ostracism literature may be a valuable complement to other exclusionary concepts within the diversity literature such as the covert elements of microaggressions (e.g., being treated as a second-class citizen; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007), and subtle discrimination (e.g., low amounts of eye contact and smiling; Walker, Corrington, Hebl, & King, 2021). A final reason why we view inclusion and exclusion as separate dimensions is that low inclusion is different from exclusion. Low inclusion occurs when a leader does not actively exhibit behaviors that promote inclusion in the workgroup. On the other hand, low exclusion is where the leader acts as a bystander. There is exclusion occurring in the group, but the leader is not doing anything to curb these incidents. High exclusion is where the leader acts as an ostracizer him or herself and actively engages in exclusion. In the case of both low inclusion and low exclusion, a laissez-faire leadership style may be present in which there is an avoidance or absence of leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland, & Hetland, 2007) and lack of role modeling by the leader to guide employee behavior.

Another component of our model that needs greater theoretical development is employee perceptions of benefits and harms of inclusion and exclusion. While leaders serve as role models for followers, the choice as to whether followers model their behavior to align with that of their manager depends on several elements. First, the leader's behavior is much more impactful if it is consistent and is displayed where the follower can observe this behavior. If the leader regularly ostracizes employees, or if the leader observes such ostracism occurring frequently among coworkers but ignores it, then the members of their team understand that the leader finds exclusionary behavior acceptable. The choice to engage in exclusion is still one made by individual employees, and we argue that several factors influence this choice. First, if the employee views their manager as prototypical and a valued and rewarded in-group member of the organization, then the manager's behavior may be viewed as appropriate, and the employee may imitate it to increase their own success. Second, this is especially likely if the employee has a high-quality relationship with the manager (Hu et al., 2021), in which they are treated as an in-group member with associated favoritism (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012). Third, an employee who observes ostracism of another may seek to make a judgment of whether the exclusion was deserved (internal versus external attribution for the recipient of the ostracism; Bernstein, Chen, Poon, Benfield, & Ng, 2018), and may choose to also ostracize the target if they think it is justified. Fourth, the employee may assess the benefits and harms of ostracism based on their beliefs or their similarity to targets of leader ostracism. Some employees may view exclusionary behavior as mistreatment, causing harm to others, and hence avoid ostracizing coworkers.

We have described some possible individual differences and context effects that may be important sources of influence for employees in choosing whether to operate in an inclusionary or exclusionary way toward coworkers such as social comparison and envy (Breidenthal, Liu, Bai, & Mao, 2020; Liu, Liu, Zhang, & Ma, 2019; Ng, 2017). However, social identities may also influence employee decisions to follow the leader in excluding or including coworkers. Perceived similarity between supervisor and subordinate has been shown to influence many outcomes for the employee (Turban & Jones, 1988) and may impact employee decisions to follow the leader's inclusionary and exclusionary behavior. Likewise, research shows that some identities are more advantaged than others in leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Espina & Foldy, 2009), and may thus have greater influence with followers. Likewise, those with minoritized identities may recognize that behaving in a manner similar to the leader is necessary for enhancing their careers (Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008). Clearly there are likely many other possible elements to choices that employees make when "following the leader" that need to be more fully developed and tested to understand how leaders influence exclusion and inclusion in their workgroups.

Finally, empirical research is needed to determine if leader inclusion and leader exclusion both operate in a trickle-down manner due to mechanisms associated with role modeling and social identification. Our model proposes such mechanisms, and based on past research, we expect support for these effects. Likewise, the differential motives of leader inclusion and leader exclusion, and their cascading effects on their group members are key elements of our model that merit future research. These motives underly our framing of the differentiation of leader inclusion and leader exclusion, and merit both testing and further development of the related, but distinct domains of these two concepts.

6. Conclusion

Our review shows that much more research is needed on leader inclusion and exclusion. At present, the research on leader inclusion is in early stages. Randel et al.'s (2018) model of inclusive leader behaviors provides more conceptual clarity than has been the case previously. However, their model and the extensions suggested (Shore et al., 2018; Shore & Chung, 2021) highlight the need for scale development and empirical testing. Such research will help move the literature forward considerably.

The research on leader exclusion is even more underdeveloped (Shore & Chung, 2021). The ostracism literature provides a valuable starting point for theorizing and testing of the ideas presented in this article. Of particular note is that ostracism is viewed as a valuable and commonly used social control tool (Hales et al., 2016) while concurrently it has been established that it causes harm for the target in work settings (Howard et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2013). The leader may be unaware of the harm caused by ostracism especially since this behavior is not always socially sanctioned or punished. Alternatively, the leader may be aware of causing harm to the target but personally benefit from ostracizing by creating more compliance among employees.

While research is limited, there is some evidence that the style of leadership may influence the extent to which ostracism occurs in a workgroup. Specifically, research shows that employees are less likely to experience ostracism when their supervisor has a transformational leadership style and are more likely to report being ostracized when their supervisor has an authoritarian or transactional leadership style (Kanwal, Lodhi, & Kashif, 2019). Leaders who engage in these latter styles may lose the benefits of having a diverse workgroup because of signaling through ostracism that uniqueness is not valued. In fact, those with authoritarian personalities have

been shown to have stronger outgroup bias (Pettigrew, 2011), supporting the argument that exclusion and devaluing of uniqueness may be related.

Leaders need to be aware of the potential undermining effects of ostracism, and their role in encouraging or preventing exclusion. As a representative of the organization and as an immediate proximal influence on subordinates, leaders play a critical role in creating inclusive workplaces. The leader can make specific role choices that engender less ostracism and more inclusion, and as a result, inspire a work setting in which both belongingness and uniqueness needs are fulfilled through members experiencing an inclusive work group environment.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Lynn M. Shore: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Beth G. Chung:** Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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