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AUTHORITY OR COMMUNITY? A RELATIONAL MODELS THEORY OF GROUP-LEVEL LEADERSHIP EMERGENCE

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In this article I develop relational models leadership theory, which explains how shared cognition produces group-level leadership emergence effects. I propose that contextual features present early in a group's life can cause members to quickly converge on one of two cognitive relational models for leadership. Some groups adopt an authority ranking model, in which leadership influence is consolidated in the hands of a few high-status members. Others adopt a communal sharing model, in which leadership is the collective responsibility of all members. A positive feedback loop develops between group members' relational model convergence and leadership emergence such that members enact leadership in a manner consistent with their shared relational model, and these interactions reinforce the model. I also identify two types of "jolt" events that can radically shift group members' cognitions and actions related to leadership.

Leadership—commonly defined as a social influence process through which individuals determine a group's objectives, motivate task behavior in pursuit of these objectives, and influence group maintenance and culture (Yukl, 1989)—is one of the most pervasive and important phenomena in human social life. Anthropological evidence suggests that all collectives exhibit some form of leadership (van Vugt, 2006). In organizations, the nature of this leadership has been shown to have important consequences for the culture (Schein, 2004) and effectiveness (Burke et al., 2006) of groups, as well as for the performance (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003) and satisfaction (DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011) of their members. Thus, it is not surprising that leadership emergence—the process through which groups determine how their leadership responsibilities will be fulfilled—has received considerable attention from organizational scholars.

Scholarly approaches to understanding leadership emergence have been heavily influenced by the "great person" perspective (Borgatta, Bales, & Couch, 1954; Weber, 1968), which suggests that leaders influence others by virtue of their exceptional personal characteristics. Consistent with the great person view, researchers have concentrated on identifying the individual attributes (e.g., status characteristics [Bunderson, 2003], motivation [Chan & Drasgow, 2001], personality [Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002], leader prototypicality [Lord & Maher, 1991]) and behaviors (e.g., leadership "claiming" [DeRue & Ashford, 2010], participation [Mullen, Salas, & Driskell, 1989]) that are associated with a group member's emergence as a leader. Although recent research has revealed that differences in group-level configurations of leadership activity can have important consequences (e.g., Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007; DeRue, 2011; Wang, Waldman, & Zhang, 2014), scholarly explanations of the development of these configurations have continued to prioritize members' individual differences (e.g., DeRue, Nahrgang, & Ashford, 2015).

Individual-focused research has yielded many important insights about the role of group members' traits, behaviors, and prior experiences in the leadership emergence process. However, these individual attributes are, collectively, "only moderately successful" at explaining leadership emergence (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003: 244). For instance, in a meta-analytic review, Costa and McCrae (1992) revealed that the five-factor model of personality—which is seen as a fairly comprehensive taxonomy of individual differences (Costa & McCrae, 1992)—explains only 23 percent of the variance in leadership emergence and effectiveness (Judge et al., 2002). Similarly, the

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motivation to lead—a construct developed to capture the collective impact of the individual differences associated with leadership—explains only 12 to 21 percent of the variance in leadership emergence (Chan & Drasgow, 2001).

The modest success of existing leadership emergence research might be due to the fact that most theories of emergence suffer from three common limitations. First, they generally do not consider the potential for group-level dynamics in the leadership emergence process. Such dynamics likely exist and may be highly consequential. As Sandelands noted, "Groups include individuals, to be sure, but they are not constituted by individuals. Instead we see that the group is a life, a being unto itself with dynamisms of its own" (1998: 19). Similarly, Kozlowski and Klein pointed out that "people in groups and subunits are exposed to common features, events, and processes. They interact, sharing interpretations, which over time may converge on consensual views of the group" (2000: 10). Thus, the members of groups may develop unique patterns of thinking and interacting with regard to leadership that cannot be fully explained by their personal attributes.

Second, individual-focused leadership emergence research underestimates the importance of context, the "situational opportunities and constraints that affect the occurrence and meaning of organizational behavior" (Johns, 2006: 386). To the extent that contextual attributes appear in existing studies, they are generally viewed as contingencies that emergent leaders must adapt to and that influence these leaders' effectiveness (although see Shamir & Howell, 1999). Such an approach overlooks the potential for contextual features to directly influence the leadership emergence process. Indeed, given that group members are exposed to a common set of contextual pressures over time, to the extent that group-level emergence effects exist, they are likely contextually driven. Context can also change the nature and form of individual-level relationships (Johns, 2006; Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Tett & Guterman, 2000) such that contextual features might qualify the previously identified associations between group members' personal attributes and their emergence as leaders.

Third, the individual differences that are presently viewed as the main predictors of leadership emergence are relatively stable. As such, researchers generally assume that leadership activity in groups does not change once it has emerged. However, this assumption is at odds with empirical findings, including Gersick's (1988) observation that the development of problem-solving groups is characterized by a "punctuated equilibrium," in which groups quickly settle on an initial mode of coordination but later on can experience a concentrated burst of changes in their interaction patterns. Developing a contextually grounded, group-level theory of leadership emergence might enable scholars to better explain and predict such changes.

In this article I develop relational models leadership theory, which begins to address the issues identified above. The theory acknowledges that individual-level leadership emergence effects exist but proposes that there are also previously unappreciated group-level effects. Drawing from the literature on group development (Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1985; 1991; Gersick, 1988), relational models (Fiske, 1991, 1992; Fiske, Haslam, & Fiske, 1992; Haslam & Fiske, 1999), and self-categorization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brewer, 1991; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982), I posit that contextual features present early in a group's life can cause members to rapidly converge on one of two cognitive blueprints for leadership. Some groups converge on an *authority ranking* relational model, in which leadership influence is afforded to a small number of members who are perceived to possess the greatest individual leadership capabilities. Other groups converge on a *communal sharing* relational model, in which leadership is viewed as a shared group responsibility.

I further propose that whether a group converges on the authority ranking or the communal sharing relational model affects three critical aspects of leadership emergence. Specifically, I explain how the two relational models influence the individual attributes that group members who emerge as influential leaders are likely to possess, the types of leadership behavior that these emergent leaders are likely to exhibit, and the structure of leadership activity that is likely to develop. Furthermore, I suggest that group-level patterns of leadership stabilize over time, owing to a positive feedback loop between shared cognition and behavior. The loop is such that members' shared cognitive template guides their leadership interactions, and these interactions further reinforce the prevailing relational model. I

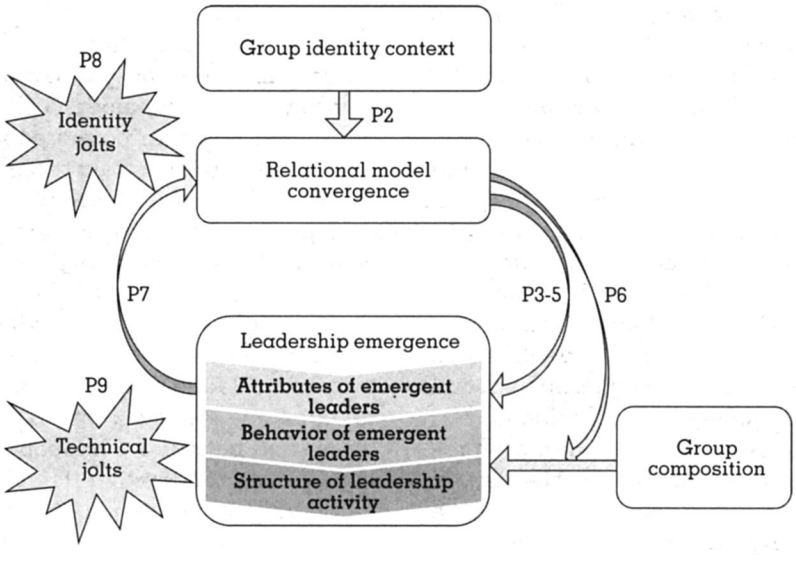
also consider how leadership emergence might differ in groups that face a weak identity context, and I identify two types of "jolt" events that can trigger a shift in group members' established relational models and patterns of leadership behavior. The major propositions of relational models leadership theory are depicted in Figure 1.

Relational models leadership theory offers several important contributions. First, whereas prior theories have largely explained leadership emergence as an individual phenomenon, relational models leadership theory suggests the potential for group-level effects and highlights the importance of shared cognition in producing these effects. Second, the theory proposes that the group context influences leadership emergence in a more fundamental way than has been previously appreciated. Third, unlike prior theories portraying leadership behavior as stable over time, relational models leadership theory begins to discuss the conditions under which leadership activity in groups might change after it has initially emerged. Fourth, scholars have tended to consider individual leader emergence, the styles of leadership behavior that group members enact, and the structure of leadership activity in groups as separate research topics. In contrast, relational models leadership theory proposes that all of these aspects of leadership emergence are interrelated and influenced by the group identity context. In this way it addresses calls to integrate across different paradigms of leadership research (Avolio, 2007; DeRue et al., 2011). The theory also has important implications for the practice and teaching of leadership, in that it suggests how organizational members might tailor their behavior to suit their group's prevailing relational model, or leverage jolt events to transform collective leadership dynamics.

FOUNDATIONAL ASSUMPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Relational models leadership theory considers leadership an emergent phenomenon. As such, it explains the formation of what I call "enacted leadership structures"—that is, patterned regularities in group members' leadership behavior. A group's enacted leadership structure encompasses both its formal leadership (leadership behavior enacted by group members who occupy a position of formal authority) and its informal leadership (leadership behavior enacted by group members who do not occupy a position of formal authority). Given that leadership behavior occurs in all collectives (van Vugt, 2006), even those without formally designated leaders, all groups develop an enacted leadership structure. However, the nature of these structures can vary dramatically from group to group. In this article I

FIGURE 1
Overview of Relational Models Leadership Theory



seek to account for this variation in organizational groups—"collectives who exist to perform organizationally-relevant tasks, share one of more common goals, interact socially, exhibit task interdependencies, maintain and manage boundaries, and are embedded in an organizational context" (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003: 334). Relational models leadership theory is most applicable to small groups whose members are colocated and interact in person, although some of its insights might be relevant to larger groups or virtual groups.

Consistent with prior research, I view leadership as a specific type of influence—one that is focused on accomplishing shared goals (Galinsky, Jordan, & Sivanathan, 2008; Yukl, 1989). In their conceptual review and empirical integration, Yukl, Gordon, and Taber (2002) determined that the behaviors that produce leadership influence generally fall into one of three "metacategories": task-oriented, change-oriented, and relations-oriented leadership behaviors. Task-oriented leadership behaviors facilitate the performance of group tasks and help solve task-related problems. They include defining task problems, assigning task roles, and determining and enforcing performance standards (Bass, 2008; Lord, 1977). Change-oriented leadership behaviors facilitate group adaptation. These behaviors entail developing and communicating a compelling vision of the future and encouraging innovative thinking. Finally, relations-oriented leadership behaviors foster strong interpersonal relationships within the group (Bass, 2008; Burns, 1978). They can involve, for instance, demonstrating respect and consideration for the needs of other group members, doing things to make it pleasant to be part of the group, and resolving interpersonal conflicts (Yukl, 2006).

Meta-analytic evidence supports the distinctiveness of these three metacategories of leadership behavior (DeRue et al., 2011). As such, I conceptualize enacted leadership structures as patterned regularities in group members' performance of task-oriented, relations-oriented, and change-oriented leadership influence behavior, and I distinguish these structures from other social structures that develop in groups, such as task work, advice, or communication networks (Brass, 2012; Crawford & LePine, 2013).

Finally, I view the emergence of enacted leadership structures as a form of group development. Although it has not addressed leadership specifically, the group development literature has examined how behavioral norms and patterns of interaction develop in groups, and it therefore serves as a useful point of departure. Early theories of group development (e.g., Hare, 1973; Tuckman, 1965) suggested that development occurs in a fixed sequence of four stages: forming, storming, norming, and performing. However, more recent research has shown that groups may not experience all of these stages or may not experience them in the same order (Bettenhausen, 1991; Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1985; Gersick, 1988). Instead, group development is now thought to be driven by four essential activities (Lau & Murnighan, 1998). The first is *sensemaking*, which occurs when group members form their initial impressions of one another and their work. Members' sensemaking drives them to adopt cognitive scripts—implicit ideas about how their work should be completed. The second activity is *interacting*, in which group members interact with one another on the basis of their scripts. Through their interactions, members' scripts become increasingly similar. The third activity is *challenging*, which occurs when a group's prevailing script is called into question. Finally, the fourth activity is *cementing*, which occurs when a group's shared script and patterns of interacting become institutionalized and resistant to change. As described below, relational models leadership theory incorporates each of these critical developmental activities.

RELATIONAL MODELS LEADERSHIP THEORY

The Authority Ranking and Communal Sharing Relational Models

Consistent with the group development literature, I propose that the enacted leadership structures that develop in groups are influenced by the cognitive scripts that members adopt based on their initial sensemaking. But what might group members' cognitive scripts for leadership look like? I draw on the literature on relational models to address this question.

Fiske and colleagues (Fiske, 1991, 1992; Fiske et al., 1992; Haslam & Fiske, 1999) introduced the concept of relational models based on extensive anthropological fieldwork across multiple cultures. Fiske proposed that groups can adopt four fundamentally different cognitive templates to

structure their social activities. These templates—the authority ranking, communal sharing, equality matching, and market pricing relational models—are "representations, grammars, or script-like schemata . . . that guide people in jointly generating meaningful action in coordination with others" (Fiske, 1991: 21). Subsequent empirical research has confirmed the distinctiveness and predictive power of the four relational models (e.g., Fiske, 1995; Fiske et al., 1992; Haslam & Fiske, 1994). Groups tend to converge on a single model to govern their interactions in a particular social domain such that members reflexively draw on the model to direct their own behavior and interpret and respond to others' behavior in that domain (Fiske, 1992). Below I describe each of the four relational models and explain how they might apply to the leadership domain.

The *authority ranking* relational model is based on a hierarchical ordering of group members. When authority ranking is used to govern a social activity, group members are implicitly ranked based on differences in valued individual attributes that serve as "status markers" (Fiske & Haslam, 1996: 725). This ordering then determines members' roles in the group with respect to the activity. Higher-status group members assume a dominant role in their interactions with lower-status members, directing their subordinates' activities and providing for their welfare. In contrast, lower-ranking members display loyalty and strive to please their superiors (Fiske, 1992). An authority ranking approach to leadership would involve implicitly ranking the members of a group on the social dimension(s) perceived to be most relevant to leadership. The highest-ranking group members would then fulfill the vast majority of the group's leadership responsibilities, while other members would focus on providing the leaders with relevant information and conforming to their orders, suggestions, and directives.

The *communal sharing* relational model is based on consensus, unity, and conformity among group members. When communal sharing is used to guide a social activity, group members "treat each other as all the same, focusing on commonalities and disregarding distinct individual identities" (Fiske, 1992: 690). Group membership, rather than individual attributes, becomes the primary criterion governing participation such that all members are expected to help the group complete the activity, without keeping track of inputs or predetermining specific responsibilities. A communal sharing approach to leadership would entail a system of widespread involvement, where many or all group members frequently engaged in leadership behavior. This behavior would likely focus on helping the group search for a joint judgment that was acceptable to all members, rather than advancing members' individual agendas and perspectives. It is important to note that even in groups adopting a communal sharing approach to leadership, some members would likely play a more active leadership role than others. However, the difference between the amount of leadership exhibited by the most and least active group members would likely be much smaller than in groups adopting an authority ranking approach.

The *equality matching* relational model is based on turn-taking, even balance, and reciprocity (Fiske, 1991). When equality matching is used to guide a social activity, group members are seen as distinct but equal partners in the activity. They become acutely aware of imbalances in their respective contributions and strive to reduce these imbalances as quickly as possible (Fiske, 1992). Applied to leadership, an equality matching approach might produce a system of what DeRue (2011) refers to as "distributed leadership," in which one group member at a time engages in leadership behavior, but the active leadership role rotates among members.

Finally, in the *market pricing* relational model, social interactions are based on rational economic calculations (Fiske, 1991). Rates are established for goods or services, and people supply these goods or services if the cost of doing so is justified by the compensation they receive. Thus, decisions about social behavior are based on prices, returns on investment, or other cost-benefit ratios. As Fiske noted, in market pricing "the interaction of supply and demand largely determines what people produce, how and where they produce it, to whom it is allocated, and how it is consumed" (1992: 707). If the market pricing model were used to guide leadership, groups might establish a price or other form of compensation for leadership behavior. For example, a group might agree to award a financial bonus to any member who proposed a more effective approach to assigning tasks. Members would then develop and share suggestions related to structuring the group's task activities if they perceived that the financial compensation they would receive for doing so would justify the effort required.

Although the members of a group might adopt any of the four relational models to guide their leadership interactions, certain models tend to be used more frequently for certain social activities (Fiske, 1992). Consistent with this insight, substantial evidence exists to suggest that the equality matching and market pricing models are unlikely to be functional when applied to leadership in most contexts, and, thus, they are uncommonly used. Most group tasks are too complex to enable a truly equal rotation of leadership contributions as would be required under the equality matching approach, and such a rotation is unlikely to offer groups a performance advantage (Fiske, 1992). Indeed, although groups occasionally rotate their formal supervisory roles in a manner that is consistent with equality matching principles (e.g., Erez, LePine, & Elms, 2002), equality matching is rarely the primary model used to guide leadership in groups (Udy, 1959). Similarly, for the market pricing model to operate, a single a priori metric (e.g., price or rate) must exist to guide members' decisions about whether to engage in leadership. However, groups seldom establish such metrics, and considering personal costs and benefits has been shown to be negatively associated with engaging in leadership behavior (Chan & Drasgow, 2001)—perhaps because of the effort and risks that leadership involves (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

In contrast, the literature is replete with examples of groups structuring their leadership activities in a manner that is consistent with authority ranking or communal sharing ideals. In keeping with an authority ranking approach, leadership in many groups is organized in a pyramid-like structure such that a relatively small proportion of members fulfills most of the groups' leadership responsibilities (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Members of such groups tend to be able to identify their respective ranks with regard to leadership quickly and with a high level of agreement (Schmid Mast & Hall, 2004), which suggests they are undertaking the hierarchical ordering process characteristic of the authority ranking model. Other groups develop communal sharing systems of leadership participation, where many members engage in leadership behavior and interactions are characterized by mutual respect and undifferentiated leader and follower roles (Carson et al., 2007; Denis, Langley, & Sergi, 2012; Pearce & Sims, 2002). Thus, I propose that the members of most groups converge on either the authority ranking or the communal sharing relational model to guide their leadership activities. This argument is consistent with DeRue and Ashford's (2010) suggestion that individuals' mental models of leadership structure are characterized by either hierarchical or communal principles.

> *Proposition 1: Group members are more likely to use the communal sharing or authority ranking relational model to guide their leadership activities than the equality matching or market pricing relational model.*

Selecting a Model: The Group Identity Context

Although the relational models literature identifies the four fundamental relational models and describes their properties, it does not explain what causes group members to adopt a particular model to guide a particular social activity. However, the authority ranking and communal sharing relational models suggest that the degree to which group members initially perceive one another to be similar is likely to influence which model they adopt to guide their leadership behavior. As Fiske noted, "Communal sharing relationships are based on the conception of some bounded group of people as equivalent and undifferentiated" (1992: 690). In contrast, authority ranking relationships, where members work to identify their respective status in their group's implicit hierarchy, entail a focus on differentiating personal characteristics (Bunderson, 2003). Group members must differentiate themselves to determine who is higher ranking. Thus, I propose that when the perceived similarity among group members is high, group members are likely to converge on the communal sharing relational template to guide their early leadership interactions, given that their initial sensemaking is consistent with core communal principles. If, however, group members initially perceive themselves to be different, their initial sensemaking is likely to suggest that some members are more qualified to lead than others, causing them to converge on the authority ranking relational model.

It is important to note that the critical differentiator between the authority ranking and communal sharing relational models is not group members' actual similarity but, rather, their *perceived* similarity. I propose that this perceived

similarity can be influenced in significant ways by contextual cues. This possibility is suggested by self-categorization theory—an offshoot of social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brewer, 1991; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982). Self-categorization theory proposes that contextual features can cause group members to define themselves either in terms of their personal identities—their distinguishing individual attributes—or their social identities—the distinguishing attributes of the group (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Turner, 1982). As group members increasingly define themselves in terms of shared group attributes, they undergo a psychological process known as depersonalization, through which they come to view one another not as unique individuals but as equivalent and interchangeable group members (Gecas, 1982; Hogg, 2001; Turner, 1982; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Thus, although a variety of individual differences are likely to be present in most groups (Carton & Cummings, 2012), members' initial sensemaking is unlikely to emphasize these differences unless they are made salient by the group context (Pearsall, Ellis, & Evans, 2008; Thatcher & Patel, 2012).

I draw on the self-categorization literature to identify a set of four contextual cues, which I refer to collectively as the group identity context, that can encourage group members to rapidly converge on a particular relational model for leadership. I selected these elements of the group identity context because they (1) originate from sources external to the group, (2) are likely to predict members' self-definitions, (3) are easily visible early in the group's life, and (4) are relatively stable. Thus, the group identity context is the stable backdrop present at the group's inception that influences members' perceived similarity and thereby influences their initial relational model adoption. Such a view is consistent with prior discussions describing context as the external environment that surrounds and illuminates a phenomenon (Cappelli & Sherer, 1991; Mowday & Sutton, 1993).

The organization in which a group is embedded can send important signals to members about whether they are similar or different. As such, the first two components of the group identity context originate at the organizational level. The first contextual cue is *formal hierarchical differentiation,* which occurs when group members are assigned formal job titles or leadership roles by others in the organization. When formal hierarchical differentiation is high, group members are likely to expect differences in experience, knowledge, and capabilities to exist between members with different job titles or levels of formal authority (Blau, 1970; French & Raven, 1959), encouraging them to focus on these differentiating individual attributes. *Organizational reward systems* can also cue members to adopt a particular relational model. These reward systems are the set of processes comprising goal setting, performance assessment, reward distribution, and feedback communication that are standardized throughout the organization. Reward systems can be designed to incentivize either individual or group performance (Wageman, 1995). Systems that incentivize individual performance may encourage members to focus on their personal skills and accomplishments, fostering an attention to individual differences and cuing the authority ranking relational model (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). In contrast, reward systems that recognize group performance are likely to encourage a sense of unity and togetherness, cuing the communal sharing model.

Self-categorization theory suggests that pressures at the intergroup level can also influence group members' perceived similarity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Thus, the next two components of the group identity context involve a group's standing vis-à-vis other groups. The first is *intergroup competition.* High levels of competition between groups reinforces awareness of one's group membership (Turner, 1982) and encourages self-definition in terms of the attributes of that group. A focus on shared, group-level attributes is likely to increase group members' perceived similarity and encourage them to adopt the communal sharing relational model. The other intergroup cue is the *exclusivity* of a group relative to other groups. High exclusivity occurs when membership in a group is relatively rare or difficult to achieve (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It can be created, for example, by a rigorous selection process or a demanding set of requirements that must be fulfilled before new members are admitted (Lalonde & Silverman, 1994). When exclusivity is high, members have an intrinsic incentive to define themselves in terms of their shared group membership, because doing so allows them to simultaneously see themselves as being part of a larger collective and as unique and distinct from the members of other groups (Brewer, 1991). In

contrast, when exclusivity is low, members are more likely to fulfill their distinctiveness needs by focusing on their individuating personal attributes, cuing authority ranking relational model convergence.

The four components of the group identity context may differ in their direction and/or strength. However, I suggest that the net impact of these cues produces one of three types of identity context. In the first type, termed a *strong individual identity context,* the majority of contextual cues align to highlight group members' personal identities and differentiating individual attributes. As depicted in Figure 2, a strong individual identity context might involve high levels of formal hierarchical differentiation, individual rewards, little intergroup competition, and low exclusivity. The second type of identity context, which I refer to as a *strong collective identity context*, occurs when most contextual features encourage members to define themselves in terms of shared group attributes (i.e., low formal hierarchical differentiation, group performance incentives, high intergroup competition, and many prerequisites for group membership).[1] Groups can also face a *weak identity context*, which does not clearly encourage self-definition in either individual or collective terms. As shown in Figure 2, this can occur either when authority ranking and communal sharing cues are equally balanced or when the available cues do not clearly suggest a particular mode of self-definition.

As Gersick noted, the members of many groups form "almost immediately a framework of givens about (their) situation and how (they will) behave" (1988: 17). Consistent with this observation and as shown in Figure 2, I suggest that when groups face a strong individual identity context, members are likely to converge rapidly and reflexively on the authority ranking relational model for leadership. Conversely, when groups face a strong collective identity context, members' initial sensemaking is more likely to emphasize shared attributes, encouraging the perception of similarity among members and convergence on the communal sharing relational model. When groups face a weak identity context, members are unlikely to converge on a common relational model. The implications of this lack of convergence are considered in more detail in a later section.

> *Proposition 2: The group identity context influences group members' initial convergence on a relational model for leadership. Members of groups facing a strong collective identity context converge on the communal sharing relational model. Members of groups facing a strong individual identity context converge on the authority ranking relational model. Members of groups facing a weak identity context do not converge initially on a relational model for leadership.*

Effects of Relational Model Convergence on Leadership Emergence

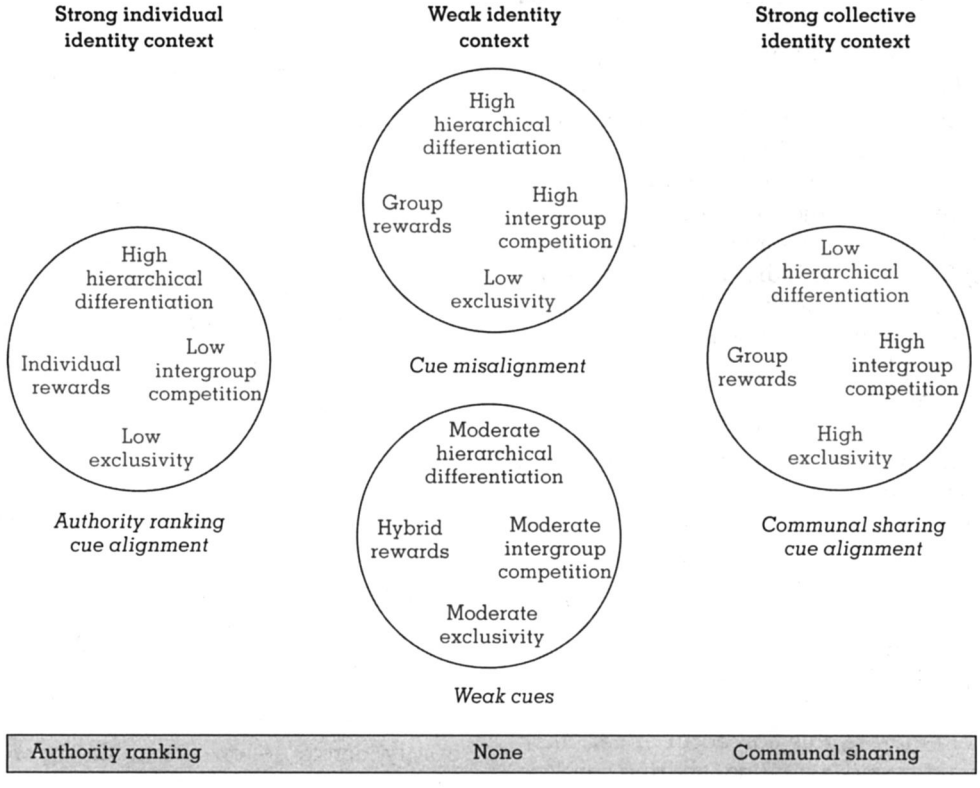
Relational models are cognitive templates that group members use to interpret environmental events, plan their activities, and respond to one another's behavior (Fiske, 1992). As such, when a group's identity context causes its members to rapidly converge on the authority ranking or communal sharing relational model for leadership,[2] this convergence is likely to have important implications for leadership emergence. Returning to Figure 1, I consider how relational model convergence influences three aspects of emergence that are particularly consequential for groups' subsequent effectiveness: (1) the personal attributes that are most predictive of members' emergence as unusually dominant leaders, (2) the style of leadership behavior that these emergent leaders engage in, and (3) the structure of group-level leadership activity (Carson et al., 2007; DeRue et al., 2011).

Personal attributes of emergent leaders. The emergent leaders in a group's enacted leadership structure are those members who most frequently perform leadership influence behavior. Information processing theories of leader emergence suggest that members of groups determine who is best suited to engage in

[1] For clarity of exposition, the examples of strong identity contexts in Figure 2 display perfect alignment between contextual cues. However, it is important to note that strong contexts can also occur in the presence of opposing cues as long as the majority of contextual features suggest a particular mode of self-definition.

[2] For parsimony, I will occasionally refer to groups that converge on the authority ranking and communal sharing relational models for leadership as "authority ranking groups" and "communal sharing groups," respectively.

FIGURE 2
Examples of Strong Individual, Weak, and Strong Collective Identity Contexts and Their Association with Group Members' Initial Relational Model Convergence



leadership through a prototype-driven comparison process (Lord & Maher, 1991). However, the relevant prototype may differ in authority ranking and communal sharing groups (Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). As noted, in authority ranking groups, leadership interactions are governed by an implicit status hierarchy. Members' location in this hierarchy is based on the extent to which they are judged to possess personal attributes that render them effective individual leaders. Research has shown that individuals develop implicit theories about the attributes associated with leadership effectiveness at an early age, and with a high level of consensus (Lord & Maher, 1991). In particular, intelligence, self-confidence, dedication, charisma, and formal authority are perceived by most observers to be leader prototypical (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984; Offermann, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994; Wellman, Mayer, Ong, & DeRue 2016).

As the members of authority ranking groups begin to interact, they are likely to implicitly evaluate the extent to which their own attributes are leader prototypical (Lord & Maher, 1991). Members who believe they possess attributes associated with effective individual leadership are more likely to infer that they hold a high rank in their group's leadership hierarchy and, therefore, that they should engage in a great deal of leadership behavior (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). In contrast, members of authority ranking groups who view themselves as less leader prototypical are less likely to attempt to lead and more likely to defer to others.

In addition to evaluating their own attributes, members of authority ranking groups may observe other group members' behavior and draw inferences about the extent to which these members would make effective individual leaders. Members who are seen as leader prototypical are likely to be evaluated as having a great deal of

leadership potential, encouraged to engage in leadership behavior, and have their leadership attempts deferred to and supported (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Lord et al., 1984; Offermann et al., 1994). In contrast, members who are perceived to be less leader prototypical are less likely to receive positive responses if they attempt to lead. Instead, they may be ignored, criticized, or otherwise sanctioned for going against their group's implicit chain of command (Anderson, Ames, & Gosling, 2008). Thus, in authority ranking groups, possessing leader-prototypical attributes is likely to be positively associated with feeling responsible for engaging in leadership and receiving supportive responses to leadership behavior, which increases the likelihood that leader-prototypical members will emerge as influential leaders (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Because formal authority is highly leader prototypical, the formal leaders of authority ranking groups are likely to engage in a large amount of leadership behavior, but members without formal authority may also emerge as leaders if they possess other leader-prototypical attributes.

As in authority ranking groups, the members of communal sharing groups are likely to evaluate one another's behavior in light of their prototype-driven expectations. However, in communal sharing groups, members focus on "their common nature, common ancestry, or common substance" (Fiske, 1992: 697). Thus, members' cognitive prototypes of effective individual leaders may be less relevant to leader emergence. Instead, the emergent leaders of communal sharing groups are likely to possess personal attributes that are consistent with cognitive prototypes of the ideal group member (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Hogg, 2001). Group-prototypical members "capture the essence of the ingroup, and clearly differentiate the ingroup from relevant outgroups" (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003: 245). Given communal sharing groups' focus on the collective, group-prototypical members are likely to be seen as exceptionally prosocial—capable of forming close personal bonds and integrating other members into a cohesive social unit (Fiske, 1992). A large body of psychological research has established that individuals who are perceived as kind, helpful, understanding, emotionally expressive, and caring are likely to be evaluated as particularly communally oriented and, hence, highly group prototypical (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Bakan, 1966; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007; Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, & Kashima, 2005).

Because consensus and conformity are highly valued in communal sharing groups, members are likely to strive to align their thoughts and behavior with their group's emerging norms (Fiske, 1992). Members are therefore likely to be socially attracted to those they perceive as group prototypical, given that group-prototypical members embody the essence of the group (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Members may also model the behavior of those they perceive to be highly group prototypical in an effort to move closer to their group's shared ideals (Hogg, 2001). As a result, members of communal sharing groups are more likely to seek out, notice, and implement the suggestions and requests of group-prototypical members than those who are perceived to be less group prototypical, causing group-prototypical members to assume an unusually important leadership role (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Interestingly, because formal authority is not group prototypical, the formal leaders of communal sharing groups may be less likely than those in authority ranking groups to engage in unusually high levels of leadership behavior, unless they possess other group-prototypical attributes.

> *Proposition 3: Group members' relational model convergence influences the strength of the association between their leader- and group-prototypical attributes and their emergence as leaders. The positive association between leader-prototypical attributes and leader emergence is stronger in authority ranking groups than in communal sharing groups, and the positive association between group-prototypical attributes and leader emergence is stronger in communal sharing groups than in authority ranking groups.*

Behavioral style of emergent leaders. The style of leadership behavior that group members enact is typically portrayed as a function of their traits, motives, and prior experiences (e.g., DeRue et al., 2011; Van Iddekinge, Ferris, & Heffner, 2009). Relational models leadership theory acknowledges that the personal attributes of emergent leaders influence their behavior, but it proposes that relational model convergence also affects the type

of leadership that occurs in groups. Group members who have emerged as leaders are likely to adjust their leadership behavior to align with their group's prevailing relational model. Specifically, I consider how the authority ranking and communal sharing relational models influence the frequency with which emergent leaders display four forms of leadership behavior: initiating structure, vision communication, consideration, and intellectual stimulation. I selected these specific styles because of their clear alignment with the authority ranking and communal sharing relational models.

Initiating structure occurs when individuals assign other group members to tasks and establish task-related expectations (Stogdill, 1963). Representative behaviors include deciding what should be done and who should do it, acting in a directive way, and maintaining standards and deadlines for task completion (Bass, 2008). Because it is intended to facilitate the successful accomplishment of group tasks, initiating structure is a form of task-oriented leadership behavior (DeRue et al., 2011).

I propose that the members of authority ranking groups who emerge as leaders are likely to engage in more initiating structure behavior than the emergent leaders of communal sharing groups. In the authority ranking relational model, high-status group members direct and control the work of lower-status members (Fiske, 1992). This can involve assigning other group members to tasks and clarifying task performance strategies and expectations. Thus, when authority ranking is used to guide a group's leadership interactions, members who assume a prominent leadership role will expect that they should engage in a high level of initiating structure behavior toward other members, and lower-ranking members will look to higher-ranking members for this sort of guidance. In contrast, assigning others specific task responsibilities and monitoring their progress is inconsistent with the communal sharing relational template, where group members pitch in to complete tasks as they are able, without developing specific assignments or keeping track of inputs and outputs (Fiske, 1991).

Vision communication involves the "verbal communication of an image of the future, with the intention to persuade others to contribute to the realization of that future" (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013: 46; see also Carton, Murphy, & Clark, 2014). Vision communication is a change-oriented leadership behavior in that it introduces new ideas about what a group should be doing (Yukl et al., 2002). Although vision communication is a component of transformational leadership (Avolio, Bass, & Zhu, 2004), van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) proposed that, owing to empirical and conceptual issues with the larger transformational leadership construct, it may be helpful to develop theory pertaining to specific components. Thus, I consider vision communication independently.

Like initiating structure, vision communication is more consistent with the authority ranking than the communal sharing relational model. The members who emerge as leaders of authority ranking groups are thought to possess exceptional personal qualities, rendering them uniquely capable of directing the group to success (Fiske, 1992). These individuals are therefore likely to perceive that they are better suited than other members to lead, that other members are looking to them for guidance, and that they have an obligation to provide for their group's collective welfare (Fiske, 1991). This perception may encourage the high-ranking members of authority ranking groups to communicate to other group members what they see as an appropriate future direction and attempt to inspire confidence in the validity of that direction. In contrast, members of communal sharing groups are likely to view all members of the group as capable of engaging in leadership. The emergent leaders of these groups are therefore less likely to seek to impose their personal vision for the future on others, and more likely to seek out others' opinions in an effort to arrive at a shared consensus about what the group should do.

Whereas the authority ranking relational model is likely to be positively associated with the enactment of initiating structure and vision communication leadership behavior, the communal sharing relational model is likely to predict consideration and intellectual stimulation. *Consideration* occurs when individuals express concern for the needs and feelings of other group members and act in a friendly and supportive manner (Stogdill, 1963; Yukl, 2006). Given its emphasis on establishing strong interpersonal connections, consideration is a relations-oriented form of leadership behavior (Yukl et al., 2002). Examples of consideration involve listening to others' problems, treating others as equals, making special efforts to help others feel at ease, and

putting others' suggestions into operation (Bass, 2008).

The prosocial activities that comprise consideration leadership behavior are likely to be highly valued by the members of communal sharing groups. Treating all group members with kindness and respect is the essence of consideration and, as Fiske noted, "Communal sharing relationships ordinarily involve kindness" (1992: 699). Since the members of communal sharing groups perceive one another as equals, they are more likely than the members of authority ranking groups to view their groupmates as worthy of respect, care, and sacrifice. Consideration demonstrates such respect and creates strong bonds among group members, drawing them closer together and establishing the sense of "we-ness" that is valued in communal sharing groups. In contrast, the emergent leaders of authority ranking groups may be less likely to concern themselves with the desires of lower-ranking members. Indeed, leaders of authority ranking groups may at times behave cruelly toward lower-status members, particularly if the members do not obey the leaders' directives (Fiske, 1991). Thus, consideration leadership behavior is likely to be more prevalent in communal sharing groups than in authority ranking groups.

When group members engage in *intellectual stimulation* leadership behavior, they push others to think differently and help solve problems the group is facing (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999). Representative activities include asking challenging questions, seeking others' ideas, and considering alternative perspectives (Bass, 2008). Like vision communication, intellectual stimulation is a change-oriented leadership behavior and a component of transformational leadership. However, whereas vision communication entails conveying one's own ideas and insights, intellectual stimulation involves drawing out the perspectives of others and engaging them to cocreate solutions.

I propose that intellectual stimulation is more prevalent in communal sharing groups than in authority ranking groups. According to Fiske, "In communal sharing decision-making, people seek the sense of the group, contributing ideas not as individual positions, but as part of a search for joint judgment that transcends the separate attitudes of participants" (1992: 697). The striving for consensus that Fiske describes is likely to be facilitated by intellectual stimulation behaviors that encourage other group members to generate solutions to shared problems. However, intellectual stimulation is inconsistent with the principles of the authority ranking relational model. In authority ranking groups, high-ranking emergent leaders are seen as uniquely qualified to lead and are expected to unilaterally dictate other members' activities. It would therefore be viewed as inappropriate for a high-status member of an authority ranking group to encourage others to generate creative new ideas, or to solicit suggestions about a path forward, because the higher-ranking member would be seen as optimally qualified to perform those activities.

> *Proposition 4: Group members' relational model convergence is associated with the style of leadership behavior that emergent leaders enact. Emergent leaders of authority ranking groups engage in higher levels of initiating structure and vision communication leadership behavior, and emergent leaders of communal sharing groups engage in higher levels of consideration and intellectual stimulation leadership behavior.*

Structure of leadership behavior. As some members of communal sharing and authority ranking groups emerge as leaders, and as these emergent leaders engage in leadership behavior consistent with their group's shared relational model, an enacted leadership structure begins to form. I propose that these structures are likely to take on different shapes in authority ranking and communal sharing groups. Scholars have described the group-level structure of leadership activity using concepts from social network analysis (Carson et al., 2007; DeRue, 2011; Mayo, Meindl, & Pastor, 2003; Mehra, Smith, Dixon, & Robertson, 2006). Two network concepts in particular—density and centralization—are commonly used to differentiate between enacted leadership structures.

The *density* of a group's enacted leadership structure describes the overall amount of leadership behavior that occurs within the group (Carson et al., 2007; DeRue, 2011; Mayo et al., 2003). Higher-density enacted leadership structures occur when group members frequently engage in leadership behavior, whereas lower-density

structures reflect a low level of leadership activity in the group. The *centralization* of a group's enacted leadership structure describes the number of members who regularly initiate leadership behavior (DeRue, 2011; Mayo et al., 2003). Highly centralized enacted leadership structures occur when a small number of members fulfill the majority of a group's leadership responsibilities, while structures low in centralization occur when leadership behavior is more evenly distributed across members.

I propose that the enacted leadership structures in authority ranking groups are likely to be higher in centralization and lower in density than the structures in communal sharing groups. As noted, the authority ranking model is based on a hierarchical system of command and control. This means that the members of authority ranking groups are likely to channel information and resources to their emergent leaders. These leaders are then likely to engage in initiating structure and vision communication leadership behavior that coordinates other members' activities. Lower-status members of authority ranking groups are likely to view their role as carrying out their leaders' directives, but not as challenging these directives or proposing new ideas. Thus, authority ranking groups are likely to develop highly centralized enacted leadership structures in which just a few members perform the majority of the leadership behavior. Moreover, the overall level of leadership in authority ranking groups may be lower than in groups that consistently receive leadership contributions from many or all of their members (Carson et al., 2007). As a result, authority ranking groups are likely to be relatively low in leadership density.

In contrast, when groups converge on the communal sharing relational model for leadership, many members are likely to play an active leadership role. A few individuals dominating all leadership interactions would be inconsistent with the groups' core relational principles, since this behavior would imply that the dominant individuals were unusually qualified or important, and would stifle other members' leadership contributions. Instead, the emergent leaders of communal sharing groups are likely to create high levels of trust among group members and draw out others' leadership contributions by engaging in consideration and intellectual stimulation leadership behavior. This is likely to produce more overall leadership activity and cause the leadership to be more evenly distributed among group members.

> *Proposition 5: Group members' relational model convergence is associated with the structure of group leadership activity. Authority ranking groups develop enacted leadership structures that are higher in centralization and lower in density than communal sharing groups.*

Alternative Influences on Leadership Emergence: The Role of Group Composition

I acknowledge that some groups may face weak identity contexts, where contextual cues do not clearly promote members' self-definition in either individual or collective terms. In such cases members' early sensemaking is unlikely to cause them to rapidly converge on a common relational model. Instead, as depicted in Figure 1, their initial leadership behavior is likely to be more heavily influenced by their personal tendencies regarding leadership, with a common model being implicitly (and more slowly) negotiated as the members interact over time (Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1985). Prior research has identified numerous individual characteristics that influence group members' likelihood of participating in leadership processes (e.g., trait dominance [Anderson & Kilduff, 2009], motivation to lead [Chan & Drasgow, 2001], extraversion, openness to experience, and conscientiousness [Judge et al., 2002]). Unlike the elements of the group identity context, these characteristics originate within the group and may not always be easily visible early in its life (Bunderson, 2003).

Although a comprehensive review of the individual attributes relevant to group members' likelihood of engaging in leadership is outside the scope of this article, I propose that when the identity context is weak, the distribution of these attributes across group members has a greater influence on groups' initial enacted leadership structures. In weak identity contexts, greater heterogeneity in group composition is likely to produce a pattern of group-level leadership behavior that is more consistent with the authority ranking model, because some group members will be more inherently inclined to assume a leadership role than others. In contrast, greater

homogeneity in group composition is likely to encourage a more egalitarian system of leadership that is consistent with the communal sharing model, given that all members will initially tend to engage in similar levels of leadership. To illustrate, consider a group in which one member is particularly knowledgeable regarding his or her group's primary task. This individual's disproportionate expertise is likely to cause him or her to play a dominant leadership role in the group's early leadership interactions (Aime, Humphrey, DeRue, & Paul, 2014; Bunderson, 2003). The individual might, for instance, engage in such activities as laying out a plan for what the group should be doing and assigning members to task roles, encouraging the development of an initial enacted leadership structure that is consistent with the authority ranking relational model. However, if expertise were more uniformly distributed across group members, many members might feel capable of helping to determine collective goals and motivating other members to pursue them, encouraging the development of an enacted leadership structure more consistent with the communal sharing relational model.

When groups face a strong individual or collective identity context, however, the association between group composition and enacted leadership structure emergence is likely to be diminished. In these cases group members are likely to quickly modify their natural behavioral tendencies to be consistent with their group's prevailing relational model. This argument is consistent with insights from conditional theories of personality (Mischel, 1977; Mischel & Shoda, 1995, Tett & Guterman, 2000), which suggest that strong situations can curtail the behavioral expression of personality traits. For instance, if the unusually knowledgeable individual discussed above were part of a communal sharing group, he or she would be less likely to attempt to dominate the group's leadership interactions and would focus instead on soliciting the perspectives of other members. Even if the member were part of an authority ranking group, he or she might not be particularly persistent or dynamic, tending to defer to other members who appear more "leader-like"—even if the other members have less task expertise (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009). In both cases the strength of the association between group composition and enacted leadership structure emergence would be reduced.

> *Proposition 6: The association between group composition and leadership emergence is stronger in groups that face a weak identity context than in groups that face a strong identity context.*

Enacted Leadership Structure Stability and Change

Consistent with the group development literature's concept of "cementing," I further suggest that the way group members behave toward one another in their initial leadership interactions solidifies their shared relational model. Members of groups whose strong identity contexts encourage the rapid adoption of an authority ranking or communal sharing relational model will see other members behaving in accordance with their dominant cognitive script for leadership, reaffirming its appropriateness. Members of groups that face a weak identity context will observe the trends in leadership behavior produced by group composition and begin to converge on the relational model that is most consistent with those trends (Weick, 1979). In addition to observation and social influence, members may also more explicitly encourage each other to behave in a manner consistent with their group's emerging leadership script. As Douglas noted, "Our social interaction consists very much in telling one another what right thinking is and passing blame on wrong thinking. This is indeed how we build the institutions, squeezing each other's ideas into a common shape" (1986: 91).

Thus, as shown in Figure 1, relational models leadership theory specifies a positive feedback loop between relational model convergence and leadership emergence. The loop is such that group members' increasing convergence on a relational model produces greater stability in the group's enacted leadership structure, which further cements the shared model. Over time, the virtuous cycle (Weick, 1979) between members' shared cognition and leadership interaction is likely to cause the group's prevailing relational model and enacted leadership structure to become normative and taken for granted (Giddens, 1986; Ranson, Hinings, & Greenwood, 1980). Once this has occurred, members who engage in

behavior that is inconsistent with the group's shared ideas about leadership are likely to be ostracized or sanctioned (Biddle, 1986). As a result, changes in the group's enacted leadership structure may become increasingly incremental over time. Such incremental adjustments might involve, for instance, an implicit increase in the rank of a member of an authority ranking group based on newly revealed skills and competencies, or the collective decision among members of a communal sharing group to adjust their performance strategy. Although such changes may be meaningful at the individual level, they are unlikely to shift the "deep structure" of leadership activity at the group level (Gersick, 1991).

> *Proposition 7: Group members' enactment of relational model–consistent patterns of leadership behavior is positively associated with relational model convergence.*

I further propose, however, that the mutually reinforcing feedback loop between relational model convergence and leadership emergence can be disrupted. Such disruption is likely to occur when events in the life of the group call members' fundamental assumptions and action patterns into question, causing them to consciously reflect on their leadership system and rendering them more open to dramatic changes (Roberts, Dutton, Spreitzer, Heaphy, & Quinn, 2005). The potential for such disruption is suggested by the literature on self-categorization (Burke, 2006; Roberts et al., 2005) and the literature on institutional theory (Barley, 1986; Meyer, Brooks, & Goes, 1990), which suggest that exogenous shocks can change taken-for-granted patterns of cognition and action. As shown in Figure 1, relational models leadership theory identifies two types of "jolt" events that can serve as catalysts for rapid, radical change to group members' shared relational models and enacted leadership structures (Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1991; Gersick, 1988). Unlike the components of the group identity context, which are present early in the life of the group, remain fairly constant, and originate from external sources, jolt events may occur later in a group's life, be caused by internal sources, and be relatively short-lived. The impact of jolts, however, can be profound and enduring.

Identity jolts. The first type of jolt occurs when the members of a group experience an event that dramatically alters the extent to which they see themselves as similar or different. Because such events influence members' self-perceptions, I refer to them as *identity jolts*. Many events in the life of a group might serve as identity jolts. For instance, if the members of an authority ranking group receive intensely negative performance feedback, they might question the qualifications of their high-ranking members and come to perceive one another as more similar. In contrast, an influx of diverse new members into a communal sharing group or the experience of a traumatic conflict might increase members' perception that significant differences exist between them (Chrobot-Mason, Ruderman, Weber, & Ernst, 2009). In both cases the change in perceived similarity induced by the identity jolt may cause group members to question the appropriateness of their prevailing cognitive template for leadership and increase their likelihood of being open to a fundamentally different relational model.

Identity jolts may also make members more likely to actively strive to modify their group's current approach to leadership by engaging in what the group development literature refers to as challenging behavior (Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1985). Such behavior might involve a member of an authority ranking group disputing a supervisor's request, or a member of a communal sharing group seeking to unilaterally impose his or her own agenda on the other members of the group. When such actions occur concurrently with identity jolts, they have the potential to change a group's prevailing relational model and enacted leadership structure in dramatic ways.

> *Proposition 8: Identity jolts change groups' shared relational models and enacted leadership structures.*

Technical jolts. I refer to the second type of jolt event as a *technical jolt*. Technical jolts occur when an exogenous shock changes the equipment, materials, or programs that a group uses to complete its tasks (Bettenhausen, 1991; Goodman, Ravlin, & Schminke, 1987). This could involve, for instance, a requirement to use a new computer program for reporting task progress, or a change to the procedure for manufacturing a product. Whereas identity jolts act initially on members' relational models, technical jolts directly encourage behavior that dramatically departs from the group's established enacted leadership structure.

For instance, a new task reporting system that provides the members of authority ranking groups with more visibility of one another's work or increases their task interdependence might encourage higher levels of intellectual stimulation behavior and a denser, more decentralized leadership structure (Burkhardt & Brass, 1990). Conversely, a change in work procedure in a communal sharing group might require greater initiating structure behavior by the team members charged with implementing the new procedure, while other members may be reluctant to provide suggestions for improvement, reducing the density and increasing the centralization of the group's leadership activity. As group members observe themselves engaging in new patterns of leadership in response to shifting technical demands, they may modify their cognitive scripts for leadership to reflect the new patterns (Weick, 1979). In this way, technical jolts may also cause enduring changes in groups' shared relational models and patterns of leadership interaction.

Proposition 9: Technical jolts change groups' shared relational models and enacted leadership structures.

DISCUSSION

Despite the fact that leadership is an inherently social phenomenon, the literature currently advances a very individualistic narrative about how certain group members emerge as leaders. In this article I challenge that narrative by developing relational models leadership theory, which proposes that the group identity context and shared cognition can produce group-level leadership emergence effects. Specifically, I explain how strong identity contexts can cause group members to rapidly converge on the authority ranking or communal sharing relational model for leadership. These models then influence the attributes members use to determine who should engage in leadership, the styles of behavior these emergent leaders enact, and, ultimately, the structure of group-level leadership activity. When groups face a weak identity context, group composition has a larger effect on members' initial leadership activities, and these activities drive relational model adoption. Whether a group's initial enacted leadership structure emerges in a top-down fashion owing to a strong identity context, or in a bottom-up fashion as the result of a weak identity context, a positive feedback loop develops between members' leadership behavior and relational model convergence. After this has occurred, identity jolts and technical jolts can cause members to question the appropriateness of their group's approach to leadership, producing rapid and dramatic shifts in group-level leadership activity.

Implications for Research

As one of the first theories to focus on the group-level processes underlying leadership emergence, relational models leadership theory unlocks several new avenues of study. First, it suggests that context should be featured more prevalently in leadership emergence research. The components of the group identity context have been examined in prior empirical studies (e.g., Battilana & Casciaro, 2012; Ellemers, van Knippenberg, DeVries, & Wilke, 1988; Erev, Bornstein, & Galili, 1993; Pearsall, Christian, & Ellis, 2010), and scholars could build on this work to quantify the effects of contextual attributes on group-level leadership dynamics.

Additionally, the existing literature on the cognitive underpinnings of leader emergence has largely focused on individual cognitions—for instance, individuals' implicit leadership theories or mental models of effective leadership structure (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Lord & Maher, 1991). My theorizing suggests how this literature could be extended to consider the role of shared cognition. For example, scholars could assess how the strength of a group's identity context influences the extent to which members converge on a common relational model for leadership or assess the implications of relational model convergence or divergence on subsequent leadership dynamics. Haslam and Fiske (1999) have developed scales that assess the extent to which social relationships are guided by a particular relational model that might be used in an adapted form to address these and related questions.

The present theory also encourages a more event-based and dynamic approach to the study of leadership emergence. In particular, much leadership emergence research focuses on the very early stages of a group's life and assumes leadership activity remains relatively stable during subsequent stages. By introducing the notion of jolt events, relational models leadership

theory suggests how such stability might be disrupted, rendering groups susceptible to radical shifts in their patterns of leadership. Indeed, the theory is consistent with punctuated equilibrium models of change, in which long stretches of incremental modifications are disrupted by quick bursts of extreme upheaval (Gersick, 1991). These insights could help scholars extend prior research focusing on inertia in group leadership structures (e.g., Hollenbeck, Ellis, Humphrey, Garza, & Ilgen, 2011) by exploring whether certain events in the life of a group might lessen inertial pressures. It might also be interesting to compare and contrast the types of events that can inspire radical versus incremental changes in a group's enacted leadership structure.

Finally, the model developed here advances the social network–based leadership literature (Carter, DeChurch, Braun, & Contractor, 2015). To date, few compelling theoretical explanations have been offered for why groups develop particular leadership network structures. As such, structure typically is used as an independent variable in network studies, with scholars exploring how the density and/or centralization of leadership networks predicts group performance (e.g., Carson et al., 2007; Mehra et al., 2006). This article provides a theoretical foundation for the examination of leadership network structure as a *dependent* variable. Additionally, it suggests that such examinations should consider structural features alongside the personal attributes of individuals who occupy specific network positions and the type of behavior that is exchanged in leadership ties. Future research might explore, for instance, whether the emergent leaders of groups with more distributed leadership structures have different attributes than the emergent leaders of groups with more centralized structures, or whether different forms of leadership behavior predominate in these groups. In addition to enriching network studies, such an approach would also help scholars integrate across what have historically been distinct paradigms of leadership research (DeRue et al., 2011).

Implications for Practice

Relational models leadership theory also has important implications for organizations seeking to encourage systems of leadership consistent with a particular relational model. Although both the communal sharing and authority ranking approaches to leadership have benefits and drawbacks (Anderson & Brown, 2010), communal sharing leadership dynamics have been highlighted as a means through which groups can meet the challenges posed by complex and ambiguous environments (Pearce, 2004). Currently, a major piece of advice given to organizations seeking to promote more communal leadership systems is to implement "self-managing" teams without formal leaders. However, the present theory suggests that eliminating formal leadership positions may not have the desired effects if group members receive conflicting signals from other elements of the identity context. Thus, organizations interested in encouraging distributed leadership might also consider downplaying formal job titles and establishing group-based reward systems. Additionally, such organizations might foster the perception of group membership as important and exclusive and encourage competition between groups. This might be accomplished by creating specialized selection criteria or entrance requirements for groups, or by publishing scorecards tracking groups' respective performance.

Members of organizations can also draw on the present theory to acquire increased leadership influence within their groups. The theory suggests that it is critical for aspiring leaders to gauge very early on whether they are part of an authority ranking or communal sharing group. This could be done by surveying the identity context and observing other members' initial behavior. Early interactions in authority ranking groups are likely to involve establishing personal leadership credentials and explaining to others how they should perform their work. In contrast, early exchanges in communal sharing groups may involve ensuring that all members feel welcome and included and soliciting ideas about how the group should approach its task. Members who can accurately assess their group's dominant relational model can then tailor their subsequent activities to the model. For members of authority ranking groups, highlighting one's leader-prototypical attributes and/or engaging in initiating structure or vision communication might result in increased leadership influence. In communal sharing groups, members could signal sensitivity and generosity and/or engage in consideration or intellectual stimulation. However, members should be alert to the possibility of repercussions if they misjudge their

group's dominant relational model. Members of authority ranking groups who engage in communally oriented behavior may be perceived as unqualified to lead, whereas members of communal sharing groups who highlight their individual skills and accomplishments may be seen as dangerously self-centered.

The theory developed here further suggests that organizational members who perceive that their group is exhibiting counterproductive patterns of leadership might leverage jolt events to disrupt these patterns. Such individuals should be alert to events in the life of their group that might cause others to question the appropriateness of the prevailing relational model. During such times, members may be particularly receptive to suggestions that the group might benefit from a new approach to leadership, or they may be more willing to support unconventional initiatives. Although technical jolts are typically imposed on groups by external forces, it may be possible for members to intentionally create identity jolts through their behavior. In authority ranking groups, this might involve emphasizing the role of all group members in contributing to prior successes, or highlighting hidden similarities among group members. In communal sharing groups, this might involve inciting conflict or competition. It is important to note, however, that attempts to disrupt a group's dominant relational model are most likely to be effective if they occur during event-based "windows of opportunity" (Reay, Golden-Biddle, & Germann, 2006).

Finally, relational models leadership theory suggests that in addition to developing the skills and abilities associated with effective individual leadership, instructors might consider providing students with guidance on how to read, respond to, and redirect collective leadership dynamics. Such guidance could involve discussing the contextual and behavioral markers of the authority ranking and communal sharing relational models and explaining which styles of leadership are most likely to be effective in authority ranking and communal sharing groups. Instructors could also teach leaders how to use jolt events to encourage the desired collective leadership dynamics.

Opportunities for Theoretical Extension

There are several ways relational models leadership theory might be further extended. First, I focus on the two relational models—authority ranking and communal sharing—that the leadership literature suggests groups use most commonly to structure their emergent leadership activities. I further assume that group members use only one relational model to guide their leadership interactions and base my propositions on pure type descriptions of these models. These assumptions are consistent with prior theorizing, but the reality of relational model adoption and use is undoubtedly more nuanced than as described here. For instance, the literature on hybrid organizational forms and the literature on hybrid identities (e.g., Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997) suggest that some groups might develop hybrid relational models and enacted leadership structures that feature a blend of authority ranking and communal sharing properties. Future research could explore the conditions under which such middle-ground relational models might develop or how groups that converge on such models manage the tensions associated with simultaneously relying on competing relational principles. Scholars could also investigate the circumstances under which a group's relational model for leadership might incorporate properties of the equality matching and market pricing relational models and how such properties influence group-level leadership emergence.

Additionally, it would be valuable for future research to further integrate existing individual-focused theories of leadership emergence with the group-level perspective offered here. For instance, scholars could explore whether the group identity context influences the prevalence of styles of task-oriented, change-oriented, and relations-oriented leadership behavior beyond those I have considered. Future studies might also develop and test models that include both individual and contextual predictors of leader emergence and assess the relative strength of individual- and group-level effects.

Finally, although I have begun to discuss temporal dynamics in the theory presented here, there are several questions related to such dynamics that could be further unpacked. For instance, researchers could examine whether groups are especially susceptible to jolt events at particular points in time. Gersick (1988) noted that many groups experience a dramatic change in their mode of operating near the midpoint of their life, suggesting this may be a time when members are particularly open to considering a different system of leadership. Temporal models of team processes suggest that the transition period

between discrete units of work may be another time in which jolt events are particularly influential (Marks, Mathieu, & Zaccaro, 2001). Researchers could also adopt longitudinal designs to explore whether and how the length of time that a group has been using a particular relational model for leadership influences the magnitude of the jolt necessary to shift it to a different model or whether a succession of smaller jolts might have a similar impact as a single large event.

CONCLUSION

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn (1962) described an episodic model of scientific discovery in which the adoption of a common set of assumptions enables steady progress in a given field, until this progress is interrupted by a revolution that forces scholars to adopt new ways of thinking. I believe that the field of leadership is in the midst of such a revolution. Until recently, the widely held assumption that designated managers were the only consequential leaders in groups enabled scholars to accumulate valuable knowledge about the traits and behaviors associated with individual-level leadership emergence and effectiveness. However, it is now increasingly understood that individual-focused theories cannot fully account for the dispersed, dynamic realities of leadership in modern organizations (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). This has created a need for new leadership models that acknowledge that leadership is socially constructed between the members of a group and is shaped in fundamental ways by the group context. I hope that the present theory will facilitate the development of such models and allow scholars to achieve new insights into one of the most ubiquitous and important phenomena in organizational life.

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