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Running Head: UNEXPECTED LEADERSHIP

**Leadership and Social Transformation: The Role of Marginalized Individuals and
Groups**

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Abstract

Leadership is a process of influence, an omnipresent feature of human societies, and an enduring focus of research and popular interest. Research tends to focus on individual and situational factors that facilitate effective influence and leadership, and identify obstacles to leadership. One key obstacle is being perceived as not having appropriate leadership attributes or not possessing group-relevant attributes – being stigmatized as an outsider who is not suited to leadership. This article and issue of the *Journal of Social Issues* focuses on how and when people can overcome these obstacles to leadership – the emergence of marginalized, deviant, fringe, or minority group members as leaders even though it is unexpected. This article and issue discuss the challenges these leaders face, and identify conditions under which such leaders can, for example, exert influence to achieve social change. We cover various forms of marginal leadership, focusing on leaders who are marginal individuals (e.g., non-prototypical leaders), who belong to marginal minority subgroups (e.g., leaders from numerical minority groups), or who have marginal demographic status (e.g., female leaders). This article also introduces and frames the subsequent articles in this issue of the *Journal of Social Issues*, on the psychology of being a marginal leader.

Leadership and Social Transformation: The Role of Marginalized Individuals and Groups

Leaders are agents of influence within and between groups (Hogg, 2010). They wield considerable power and often are attributed with transforming our lives through social or organizational change, wars, recessions, recovery, and technological (or other) revolutions, be it for good or evil. Leadership can dramatically impact our lives. Historically, however, certain people and groups have had difficulty emerging or being perceived as leaders, and are therefore less able to exert influence. For example, social psychological research has found that women and ethnic minorities face obstacles both when being considered for a leadership position and when occupying a leadership role (e.g., Carli & Eagly, 2001; Rosette & Livingston, 2012). At the same time people such as Angela Merkel or Donald Trump, who are considered outsiders and do not fit the traditional mold of our leadership schema (Lord & Hall, 2003), are cast into leadership positions.

Although these two groups—people who face leadership barriers and those who do not fit leadership schemas—represent different examples, they both fall into a category we refer to as marginalized, deviant, fringe, or minority group leadership. In the past, we referred to these leaders as *unexpected leaders* (Rast, Hogg, & Randsley de Moura, 2015) but have decided not to do so here because the articles that follow use a wider range of more accurate terminology based on the theoretical perspective adopted. For instance, the social identity theory of leadership perspective uses the broad term non-prototypical to describe these individuals (Hogg, 2001). Although the papers in this issue use different terms to describe/define leaders who do not fit the typical mold of a leader, these terms broadly encompass leaders who were previously powerless or low status individuals or members of demographic minorities; marginal, fringe, or atypical

group members; members of minority subgroups, or factions within a larger group. In other words, people who emerge as leaders even though traditionally they are not normally accepted or cast into leadership positions, or where their leadership appointment cannot be readily explained using contemporary leadership theory.

The burgeoning social psychological research on marginal leadership is very exciting and timely. Leadership research in social psychology differs in several ways from that conducted in managerial studies and organizational behavior. Relevant to this issue, managerial studies and organizational behavior traditionally focuses on leaders as individual white, university educated men, who work in for-profit industries (for reviews, see Eagly & Heilman, 2016; Ospina & Foldy, 2009). Social psychological research extends this by studying leadership as a group phenomenon (Thomas, Martin, & Riggio, 2013) with an emphasis on social cognition (Lord & Hall, 2003). There are numerous present-day examples of marginal leadership that cannot fully be explained by existing leadership theory. For instance, Barack Obama falls into what we consider as a marginal leader: not only was he the first African-American U.S. President, and was elected to a second term despite staunch partisan rhetoric against him; he ran against political elites and insiders (Clinton and McCain), his place of birth and religion were questioned, and he was criticized for a lack of political experience. And, importantly, Obama was described as an “unknown” Senator who surprisingly won the Democratic primary over the so-called “inevitable nominee,” Hillary Clinton (Klein, 2008).

There are many examples of marginal leaders outside of politics as well. Angela Davis was a leading advocate of the civil rights movements in the 1960s, despite being a member of the Communist Party with close ties to the Black Panthers, and later being arrested and prosecuted for conspiracy—that is, she was considered a fringe outsider relative to her mainstream

contemporaries. Henri La Fontaine promoted social equity and peace with great success. He was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for being an “effective leader” of the European peace movement. Before this, though, La Fontaine fought for unpopular causes (at the time) such as pacifism and women’s suffrage, and was criticized for being a socialist—said differently, an ingroup deviant.

These three examples cut across time, race, gender, and context to demonstrate how certain people seem to emerge as leaders against all odds. In each of these examples, the (eventual) leaders faced different obstacles, such as being oppressed by the majority group. Yet, the social conditions allowed each to gain influence and emerge as a leader. Presently, leadership scholars, psychologists, and laypeople alike are fascinated by another unexpected leader: Donald Trump. As these examples highlight, understanding marginal leadership has important social implications for the selection of women and ethnic minorities for leadership positions, the emergence of innovative, non-normative, or even extremist leaders, and the success of collective action and minority influence. It’s important to point out that the examples we provided are largely considered successful and positive leaders by historical standards. Marginal leaders, however, need not be positive. In fact, history is rife with examples of marginal leaders being authoritarian and causing more harm than good (e.g., Hitler, Stalin).

The nine articles¹ in this issue of *Journal of Social Issues* examine marginal leadership from different theoretical perspectives and at different levels of explanation, as well as a special commentary/closing article. The articles are grouped into three thematic sections. The first section focuses on *marginal individuals*. This section addresses how individuals who are treated as or occupy positions in the margins of a group, non-normative members, ostracized individuals, newcomers, dissenters, and so forth, can have influence over their group. The second section considers *marginal subgroups*. It addresses when numerical and/or power minorities can

influence the majority, and asks how large-scale social change can occur – is the psychology the same for deviant or marginalized subgroups as for individuals, or is it different, and if so, how? The third section examines *marginal demographic status*. It largely focuses on the unique leadership challenges, barriers, and backlash associated with leaders due to their demographic category. Finally, Alice Eagly provides a closing commentary and discussion pulling together these thematic strands through an historical overview of research and theory on leadership, and offers a broad view on the scope and policy implications of marginal leadership in the context of relevant social issues. All of the articles explore the policy implications of the theory and research discussed.

Leadership, Influence, and Psychology

Leadership is a broad topic that spans many disciplines, including psychology, organizational and management science, political science, communication studies, history, and so forth. This is because leadership is an indispensable feature of groups, organizations, and society (Hollander, 1985). Indeed, it is difficult to think of a group and not think about its leadership structure. The success of groups depends on the quality of leadership or is at least attributed to the group's leadership. When a group is successful, the leader is often attributed with responsibility for the success. Similarly, when a group fails, the leader is blamed for, and often expected to take responsibility for, its failure. Both of these are generally true even if the leader has no direct impact on the group's performance.

Because leadership is inextricable from influence, leadership has long been a focus of study for social psychologists. However, the prominence and popularity of the topic within social psychology has fluctuated over the years. This waxing and waning of interest can be observed in the *Handbook of Social Psychology* – for example, Hollander wrote “Leadership and Power” in

1985, but leadership was not included again for a quarter of a century, until Hogg's (2010) "Leadership and Influence" chapter. Thus, for many years research on influence rarely had, with some important exceptions, a focus on leadership. This was despite the clear connection between leadership and social psychological processes, such as inequality and power, status, obedience, deviance, culture, gender, and group processes.

There are many possible reasons for this period of leadership absence from social psychology: key perhaps being the ascendance of social cognition and the study of large-scale intergroup phenomena, and the well-documented relocation of research on small interactive groups to the organizational sciences (e.g., Moreland, Hogg & Hains, 1994). Of course, the study of leadership also has a natural home in the organizational and management sciences (e.g., Yukl 2012).

However, leadership is ultimately an influence phenomenon where, as Chemers (2001, p. 376) puts it, "an individual enlists and mobilizes the aid of others in the attainment of a collective goal". Social influence is a core focus of social psychology – the discipline has even been defined as "The scientific investigation of how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others" (Allport, 1954, p. 5). Perhaps, not surprisingly, this natural affinity between social psychology and the study of leadership has led to a surge in leadership research among social psychologists over the last decade (Hogg, 2007, 2012). This renewed interest has motivated leadership research on group processes (for overview see, Thomas, Martin, & Riggio, 2013), social identity (Hogg, van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012a), intergroup relations (e.g., Hogg, van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012b; Pittinsky & Simon, 2007), power (e.g., Fiske, 2010), gender (e.g., Carli & Eagly, 2001; Eagly & Carli, 2007), norm violation (Abrams, Randsley de Moura, & Travaglino, 2013; Randsley de

Moura & Abrams, 2013), and social cognition and social perception (e.g., Lord & Brown, 2004; Lord, Brown, & Harvey, 2001).

Interestingly, many of these topics were on the agenda of early social psychologists (Barlett, 1926; Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939) before leadership research fell out of favor in the field. The *Journal of Social Issues* was one of the first journals to link leadership with core social psychology variables (e.g., influence, power, status, group processes; Deutsch & Pepitone, 1948; Knickerbocker, 1948; see also Rast, Axtell, & McGlynn, in press, for discussion linking applied social psychology with leadership). Despite interest in leadership research waxing and waning over the years, many questions remain as to how traditionally marginalized (e.g., women, power or numerical minorities, innovative, deviant, non-prototypical, autocratic/toxic) leaders overcome the challenges they face when being considered for, or holding, a leadership position within their group.

There is an exciting, socially relevant and underexplored nexus of research and ideas – an integration of research connecting multiple domains including leadership, social identity, influence processes, mechanisms of authority and power, dynamics of deviance and disadvantage, social status and minority empowerment, and minority influence and social change. As such this is a timely topic that not only advances our science but also addresses a significant social issue with relevance to policy makers, practitioners and the general public.

Three Challenges for Marginal Leaders

Marginal Individuals

Contemporary leadership literature suggests that initiating and implementing change is a fundamental aspect of true leadership (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Conger & Kanungo, 1987). To achieve change, effective leaders are often expected to deviate from their group's normative

position to be innovative. The challenge for leaders is to be both centrally defined within their group while simultaneously facilitating change and innovation among their followers. However, prominent social psychology leadership theory, the social identity theory of leadership (Hogg, 2001; Hogg, van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012a), posits that when group membership is psychologically salient, prototypical leaders are more effective and influential than non-prototypical leaders. That is, prototypical leaders derive their influence because they are perceived as being group-normative and as representing the ingroup's norms and interests (e.g., Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2009; see also van Knippenberg, 2011). Therefore, one challenge for leaders is to be both centrally defined within their group while simultaneously facilitating change and innovation among their followers.

In the first section of this issue, four papers explore this challenge, focusing on how individuals who are treated as or occupy positions in the margins of a group, non-prototypical members, ostracized individuals, newcomers, or dissenters can emerge as leaders to have influence over the group. In the first article, Gaffney, Hogg, and Rast (**) present an overview of research drawing on the social identity theory of leadership and uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2007) to explain the conditions under which non-prototypical leaders can overcome the obstacle of being 'atypical.' They argue that in times of uncertainty, leaders provide an affirmation of one's social identity—they tell people how to behave, what attitudes to hold, they provide structure, etc. That is to say they subjectively reduce feelings of uncertainty about one's self-concept and social identity. When only a single leadership option is available, people find these anti-normative, non-prototypical, or 'nasty' leaders desirable in times of uncertainty.

In the second paper, Abrams, Travaglino, Marques, Pinto, and Levine (**) present a new model of leadership deviance credit. Building on the subjective group dynamics model (Abrams,

Marques, Bown, & Dougill, 2002) they investigate whether leaders who engage in anti-norm or pro-norm deviant behaviors are accepted, rejected, or sanctioned by their ingroups. Abrams and colleagues provide empirical evidence across four studies ($Ns = 81, 75, 58,$ and 60) for their deviance credit model of leadership. Across these studies, they show that a 'deviance credit' is either accrued or conferred on a leader based on his/her group prototypicality.

In the third paper, Packer, Miner, and Ungson (**) address a similar issue around when leaders can dissent from their group's normative position. They also provide a leadership model, but one focusing on promoting leadership diversity within groups. They predict that leadership diversity is suppressed in means-focused groups, which they define as groups that coordinate behavior around the group's norms and evaluate group members in terms of their relative prototypicality. Ends-focused groups—defined as groups focused on achieving shared goals and outcomes—encourage diversity and innovation, which require dissent. In the former, group prototypicality and normative conformity are valued, while in the latter non-prototypicality and normative divergence are fostered. They provide a thorough discussion around the strategies leaders can take to clearly articulate and reshape the group's goals and norms.

In the fourth and final paper of this section, Hales and Williams (**) present two experiments ($Ns = 51$ and 75) investigating the ways excluded or ostracized ingroup members attempt to reconnect with their group. They discuss how leaders can foster a group atmosphere of inclusion to minimize feelings of marginalization or ostracism. They close with a timely discussion around leadership strategies to reduce extremism and improve international relations.

Marginal Subgroups

Successful leaders must bring together multiple groups or subgroups of people to improve cooperation and collaboration, while reducing conflict (Hogg, van Knippenberg, &

Rast, 2012b). Although leaders often come from one of the subgroups they are leading, whether this membership is associated with a majority or minority groups is often overlooked by the leadership literature. However, the bulk of leadership research implicitly focuses on organizational leaders who are part of the higher status and majority group (e.g., Ridgeway, 2001). Relatedly, the minority influence literature rarely, if ever, mentions leaders as belonging to a minority or majority, or as sources of influence within the minority or majority group (cf. Crano, 2012).

The second section of this special issue addresses this point by explicitly linking minority influence, power, and leadership. In the first paper of this section, Martin, Thomas, Hewstone, and Gardikiotis (***) test the differential effects of problem solving in groups where the leader is part of the numeric majority or minority. Building off the source-context elaboration model (Martin & Hewstone, 2008), two studies ($Ns = 102$ and 56) investigated if problem solving and creativity are impacted by numerical support (numerical majority vs minority) for a proposed solution and whether the leader was included in the source group or not. Majority endorsed solutions were more favorable only when a leader was part of the majority, indicating compliance. Minority endorsed solutions, however, were rated equally favorable regardless of whether the leader was part of the minority or majority. This indicated that minority endorsed solutions evoked greater consideration (divergent thinking) of alternative solutions, rather than the single solution endorsed by the minority. The authors discuss the implications of these findings in regards to teamwork and creativity.

Effective leadership entails the successful negotiation of differences and diversity within a group. The psychological processes underlying leaders' responses to group diversity are thus paramount to the study of leadership and are undoubtedly impacted by the faction of the group

from which the leader emerges. In the second paper in this section, Prislin, Davenport, Xu, Nicholls, and Honeycutt (**) present an experiment ($N = 141$) studying changes in a group's majority or minority status. That is, a majority becoming a minority group, or a minority becoming a majority group. They examined how this group status change affected leaders' (a) willingness to accept diverse positions within the group, and (b) tolerance of group diversity in the aftermath of social change. Participants in the status-quo and newly minted majorities conditions were less accepting of diversity than their counterparts, while tolerance increased with loss of majority status. Implications for leadership in times of social change and stability will be discussed in terms of cultural and ethnic minorities and political opposition.

The third and final paper of this section by Bligh and Blair (**) takes a more macro-level approach to discuss the relationship between culture, leadership, and dissent. Drawing on cultural tightness-looseness theory (Gelfand, Nishii, & Raver, 2006), they explore the role of cultural values and social norms in influencing whether a follower will be passive (conformity) or pro-active (dissent). They argue follower dissent will be constrained in high power and tightness cultures due to their hierarchical nature emphasizing compliance with the majority. They discuss how groups, organizations, and societies can modify their cultural tightness-looseness to alter followers' beliefs in co-production that can enhance innovation and promote social change. This has implications for when and if large scale social change may occur.

Marginal demographic status

One well-recognized contribution that social psychology has made to the study of leadership is its study of the role of gender, such as the glass ceiling or glass cliff effects (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). This research identifies many of the barriers women face when being considered for leadership positions. The *Journal of Social Issues* published an issue on "Gender,

Hierarchy, and Leadership” edited by Carli and Eagly in 2001, which provides an extensive overview of gender and leadership research. In this section, we sought to update and expand this discussion to include race and potential interventions to reduce stereotype biases toward demographic minority (e.g., females, African-Americans) leaders, as well as suggestions to overcome some of these biases.

The study of marginal demographic status and leadership is timely, given Barack Obama’s historic US Presidency or the record 104 women elected to Congress. However, these appointments, while historic, do not mean women or ethnic minorities are on a level playing field. For instance, Hilary Clinton was the early frontrunner against Barrack Obama in the 2008 Democratic primary, but quickly fell out of favor when she ‘cried’ during a campaign speech (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009). The penalty Clinton experienced is known as a backlash effect (Rudman & Glick, 2001) for violating incongruent gender and leader stereotypes.

The first paper in this section by Brescoll, Okimoto, and Vial (***) discusses this backlash phenomenon in depth. They consider the tightrope women leaders must walk, which requires them to simultaneously act in accordance with the traditional expectations of a woman (e.g., nice, warm) and a leader or man (e.g., dominant, assertive). These expectations are in conflict with one another resulting in a backlash effect whereby women are penalized for violating one or both of these expectations. Across three studies, they examined people’s emotional reactions to female leaders who display dominance or agency. Study 1 ($N = 194$) found that people experienced more morally negative affect when evaluating a dominant female leader, but less negative affect when evaluating a dominant male leader. In studies 2 and 3 ($Ns = 52$ & 86), disgust primes resulted in lower evaluation and likeability ratings for gender incongruent leaders (e.g., dominant female) compared to gender congruent leadership (e.g., warm female). The

authors provide recommendations to reduce the backlash effect in public and private settings, as well as at micro- and macro-levels.

Next, Randsley de Moura, Leicht, Gocłowska, and Crisp (**) summarize the leadership biases under-represented people experience. They argue and present evidence across two experiments ($Ns = 83$ & 166) that counterstereotypic thinking can mitigate these biases against norm incongruent leaders. They showed counterstereotypic thinking increased flexible cognition and promoted divergent thinking and source elaboration in a manner that results in contesting social norms and reduces biases toward norm incongruent leaders. It also induces tolerance for leaders who promote social change and innovation. They close by discussing how interventions contesting stereotypes can be used to enhance source elaboration, thus promoting norm incongruent leaders from a wide range of groups, and how this in turn can stimulate social change and transformation.

Commentary article

This issue closes with broad and insightful commentary by Eagly (**), which summarizes key theories and speaks to the importance of understanding the emergence and maintenance of marginalized leaders and leadership structures. Eagly provides compelling discussion about the myths, realities, and advantages of marginal leaders.

The Importance of Understanding How Marginal Individuals and Groups Lead Social Transformation

Leadership is one of the most studied phenomena in the behavioral and social sciences. Despite this, leadership is often under-explored in social psychology, even though leadership is defined partially as a process of social influence. Instead, discussion of and research on leadership is largely left to organizational and management scholars, who tend to focus on

business leadership (e.g., CEOs) or leader development in organizations, with little connection to the social psychology of leadership or to the domain of public leadership. Rather than examining the impact of CEO compensation on organizational performance, or on how organizations can exploit their human capital, the integration of leadership research in social psychology tends to be linked to societal issues: how to increase the number of women selected for leadership positions, identifying when leaders of minority groups gain influence, examining the role of leadership in collective action and social movements, understanding the conditions that enhance the leadership capacity of immoral, unethical, autocratic, or transgressive leaders, etc.

The goal of this issue is to motivate discussion and research around the topic of marginal or marginalized leaders, specifically focusing on how traditionally ‘unexpected’ (e.g., women, minorities, innovative, non-prototypical) leaders overcome the challenges they face when being considered for a leadership position within their group. This is a timely topic that not only advances our science but also addresses a significant social issue with relevance to policy makers, practitioners and the general public.

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Footnotes

1. The majority of contributions were selected from a wider group of papers presented at a small conference on unexpected leadership and social transformation that we (Rast, Hogg, and Randsley de Moura) organized at the University of Sheffield, UK in July 2015. The meeting was sponsored by the European Association of Social Psychology, and received generous support from Sheffield University Management School, Claremont Graduate University, and the School of Psychology at the University of Kent.

Author Biographies

David Rast, III is an Assistant Professor of Social Psychology and Leadership at the University of Alberta. David's research draws extensively on social identity and self-categorization theories, as well as related subtheories. First, extending the social identity theory of leadership, he is interested in understanding how leaders elicit or incite social and organizational change by going against their group's norms. Second, drawing on the theory of intergroup leadership, he explores how leaders can bridge profound intergroup divisions to build a unified identity and achieve a joint goal. Other research foci are related to these two themes, exploring the processes and implications of political identity, minority influence, deviance, intergroup cooperation/conflict, leader rhetoric, and organizational behavior. David currently serves as Associate Editor for the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* and as a Consulting Editor for *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* and Editorial Board member for *Self & Identity* and the *Journal of Theoretical Social Psychology*.

Michael Hogg is Professor and Chair of the Social Psychology Program at Claremont Graduate University, an Honorary Professor at the University of Kent, and a former President of the Society of Experimental Social Psychology. He is a Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science, the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, the Society of Experimental Social Psychology, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, and the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. Michael Hogg's research on group processes, intergroup relations and self-conception is closely associated with the development of social identity theory. He has published extensively on these topics and was the 2010 recipient of the Carol and Ed Diener Award in Social Psychology from the Society for Personality and Social Psychology. He is

foundation Editor-in-Chief with Dominic Abrams of the journal *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, Associate Editor of *The Leadership Quarterly*, and a former associate editor of the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. Current research foci include leadership and influence, uncertainty and extremism, exclusion and marginalization, and structural relations within groups.

Georgina Randsley de Moura is an Associate Professor (Senior Lecturer) at the University of Kent. Georgina's research interests focus on areas of leadership and innovation, she specifically considers what happens when leaders do not meet their group's expectations, for example by breaking the rules or proposing radical change. Most recently Georgina has been considering how individuals, groups, and organizations identify and react to leadership potential. She also currently serves as the Head of the School of Psychology. Georgina currently serves as Section Editor for the Group and Intergroup Processes Section of *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*.