IDENTITY ORIENTATION, ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION, AND LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper relies on theories of authentic and relational leadership and the identity orientation model to study the drive behind leadership involvement. We propose that the extent to which organizational membership provides people with the ability to express who they are and to develop social relationships is associated with organizational identification and leadership. We operationalize the two variables as organizational membership-based self-expression and social cohesion. We further discuss how they satisfy personal and relational identification motives and influence organizational identification, a form of identification with a collective that mediates their effect on leadership involvement. This is tested in a sample of 210 professional association members—a non-work setting—which reduces the influence of extrinsic rewards on identification and leadership involvement.

KEYWORDS: Leadership; identity orientation; organizational identification

INTRODUCTION

Leadership theory considers the impact of leaders on their followers (Yukl, 2006). However, very little research has explored the factors that drive people to seek further engagement in their organizations by pursuing a leadership role. The present study explores how people become or emerge as organizational leaders when increased involvement in an organization provides intrinsic rewards, including an opportunity to express who they are and to socialize and develop relationships with like-minded people. Theories of authentic (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) and relational (Uhl-Bien, 2006) leadership and the identity orientation model (Brickson, 2000; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010) are used as theoretical bases.

Leadership theory emphasizes the status, respect, and power conferred by a leadership position (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Bass, Bass, & Bass, 2008). Given the high desirability for power and influence, it is easily assumed that a leadership role is something that most people value and, if not held, aspire to attain. The reality is that not everyone may desire the hardships associated with leadership. Leaders are burdened with the responsibility for the performance and survival of the organizations they lead. Also, they face high expectations for performance since their personal success and self-worth is vested in the success of such organizations. Even though leadership often provides extrinsic rewards, many people are content with following others and

do not aspire to become leaders. For this reason, the study of factors that motivate people to become leaders should be fruitful to leadership theory.

This study of the factors and characteristics of people who have the desire and who become leaders is not new. Early studies on leadership traits explored the characteristics of people who were likely to become successful leaders. However, the limitations of the trait perspective and subsequent theoretical developments on leadership behavior and contingency theories took a different focus for leadership (Yukl, 2006). Nonetheless, current models exploring the complex social dynamics behind leadership have taken a second look at leadership emergence and the role of the follower in the empowerment of leaders (Avolio et al., 2009). This can be helpful to see how the social context can incite leader emergence. It can allow scholars to take a second look at the social factors that encourage people to seek organizational involvement through leadership.

The present study takes a social identity approach (Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004) to explore how organizational identification drives leadership involvement. In particular, the identity orientation model (Brickson, 2000; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010) is used to explore how personal, relational, and collective conceptions of the self are related to personal goals that can be met through organizational membership. This study was carried out using a sample of members of a professional business association and a national scholastic business fraternity. This sample allowed us to seek implications for other similar organizations, such as volunteer, non-profit, and community service organizations (Schmid, 2006). It also presents important implications for traditional work organizations.

Organizational membership meets several social needs, such as belongingness (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Pursuing and attaining a leadership position also provides several rewards to their members, including added extrinsic rewards such as increased pay, which partly explains the drive behind leadership involvement. However, increased engagement in non-work organizations such as volunteer organizations and professional associations do not offer monetary rewards to their members. Many people join these organizations and spend time and effort in their activities and requirements. Understanding the factors associated with increased involvement and exertion of effort on behalf of these organizations, including assuming a leadership position, can help us understand the motivation behind these behaviors. People who adopt a leadership position are likely to spend more effort and have an increased vested role and interest in the mission of the organization. Thus, non-work organizations provide an ideal setting to study the impact of personal, relational, and collective goals on identification and leadership.

Social identity and emergent leadership

An incorporation of theories of the self and identity in leadership sheds new light on the influence leaders have on their followers and focuses on emergent leadership phenomena. It is also relevant to explain how people seek a leadership role when increased involvement and influence in the organization are consistent with their self-concept and identity.
A review of the role of the self-concept in leadership by van Knippenberg et al. (2004) was primarily concerned with the manner in which a follower's self-concept moderates and mediates the effect of leadership influence on leadership effectiveness. They highlighted a distinction

across personal, relational, and collective identity (Brewer & Gardner, 1996) and concluded that leadership is effective because of its influence on the follower's self-construal of membership of the organization—an identification with the collective—as well as identification with the leader's persona (see also Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; van Dick & Schuh, 2010). Leadership influences followers' self-esteem and self-efficacy, which are related to effort and effectiveness, as well as to their self-consistency, which stems from the sense of meaning derived from having a consistent past, present, and future organizational mission and goals.

This self-concept also includes a possible self or future ideal identity for which to strive. This is consistent with transformational leadership since it incorporates organizational change and the "development of a prophetic vision of the future… that resonates with the follower(s) beliefs and values" (Winston & Patterson, 2006: 14), as well as a shared, collective organizational identity with which followers can identify. This future ideal organizational image can increase engagement, cohesiveness, and commitment (Cicero & Pierro, 2007; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993).

A social identity perspective on leadership has implications for leader emergence. Aside from the traditional influence of leaders on followers, this perspective considers that leaders emerge from a social categorization process where followers come to see prototypical group members as leaders or where leaders assume such role (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011; Hogg, 2001; Klenke, 2007). This emphasizes the role of followers and considers leadership as a group phenomenon where influence occurs through depersonalized social attraction processes. It suggests that the people who best embody the characteristics and behavior of the group are the most likely to become leaders.

In this case, organizational members ascribe leadership attributes and the power to influence them to one or more people who are good exemplars of the organization. Prototypical group members are likely to be subjects of greater social attraction, to have their ideas more widely accepted, to identify more strongly with the group or organization, and to have more power and influence on others (Hogg, 2001). They are are also more likely to be perceived as charismatic and be effective as leaders (Haslam et al., 2010) and to be trusted and considered to have the interest of the group in mind (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). This implies informal leadership, but this influence is likely to be formalized by the organization.

This perspective highlights the role of self and identity to determine leader becoming at the group level. This perspective can also be applied to the study of the self-concept in the individual drive to pursue and accomplish attaining a leadership position. For instance, exploring the manner in which organizational identification drives people to become leaders, how an individual's self-conception as influential or powerful person drives him/her to try to influence others or set goals or direction for an organization, and how self-esteem and self-efficacy are related to seeking and succeeding in becoming a leader have not been investigated. Shamir & Eilam (2005) study is a notable exception using a qualitative research approach through narrative autobiographies to explore how a leader's self-knowledge, self-concept clarify, self-concordance, person-role merger, and self-expression were related to authentic leadership development. An

identity perspective can also include how organizational members conceive themselves as leaders and how this influences their self-concept and identity.

The identity orientation model (Brickson, 2000; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010) can help explore how people's self-concept can drive their leadership development. It suggests that identifying with an organization can motivate members to become more involved in the organization by taking on a leadership role or formal position. The model is based on the distinction among a personal, relational, or a collective identity based on the idea that people have an optimal level of distinctiveness that is derived from their needs for both belongingness and uniqueness. Thus, they are likely to define their self-concept using attributes that emphasize their persona as independent and autonomous, but also based on their relationships with specific others and membership in identity groups and collective entities (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Brewer & Gardner, 1996). This identity orientation drives their social identification targets and the extent to which they identify with such entities. People's social identification with the groups and collectives in which they are members are driven by several identity-related goals, including to be seen in a positive light, to have a consistent conception of the self, and to be true to this self. The extent to which association with groups and collectives meets members' identity goals drives their social identification with such groups and collectives (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010).

Organizational members who believe that their organization's image reflects their individual attributes or who perceive to be similar to other organizational members are likely to identify with such organization. Consistent with different identification motives according to identity orientation (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010), people with a personal identity orientation may identify with an organization that provides them an opportunity to express who they are, while people with a relational identity orientation identify with an organization that provides them an opportunity to develop social relationships and relatedness to others. Although these are two different motives, both can stimulate the development of a collective identity orientation as people identify with their organization if it provides them with pride and a reason for being.

The mediating role of organizational identification

Self-related experiences can influence leadership involvement in organizational members through organizational identification, a cognitive perception of oneness and shared destiny with an organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Organizational identification has been found to lead to organizational behaviors such as loyalty, retention, altruism, and exertion of effort on behalf of the organization (De Cremer, van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, Mullenders, & Stinglhamber, 2005; Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002). Organizational identification is an important manifestation of the self-concept since it is derived from social identification processes where a person defines him- or herself as a member of an organization. It is motivated by a perception of similarity with the organization or its members (Gonzalez & Chakraborty, 2012), as well as pride for being a member in the organization with a reputable image (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994) and a positive impact on their stakeholders and on society (Groves & LaRocca, 2011).

Organizational identification is a possible mechanism by which self-expression and social cohesion drive leadership involvement. Organizational identification is an important intervening variable and mediates the impact of authentic leadership on performance (Walumbwa, Avolio, & Zhu, 2008) and moderates the impact of servant leadership on organizational citizenship behavior (Vondey, 2010). Also, relational identification with a leader tha is prototypical and promotes the core values of the organization influences organizational identification (Sluss, Ployhart, Cobb, & Ashforth, in press). It is also possible that the organizational identification of the leader influences leadership emergence. Members who meet their identification needs and desires according to their identity orientation are likely to get involved, and pursing a leadership positions in one manner to in which greater involvement may be manifested.

People with a collective identity orientation are more likely to develop a sense of belongingness and oneness with a work organization, but this can also occur for people who hold a personal or relational identity orientation and who meet their identification motives through organizational membership. People who identify strongly with their organization tend to exhibit greater engagement and effort on behalf of it. Thus, they can emerge as leaders because they embody the characteristics of the organization, such as its values and goals (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008), or because they are ascribed influential roles by other organizational members (Hogg, 2001). The identity orientation model suggests several identification motives related to the opportunity organizational membership provides for self-expression and social relationships.

Self-expression, personal identity, and authentic leadership

The study of authentic leaders considers manner that leadership self-awareness shapes their influence on followers (Cicero et al., 2007; Shamir et al., 1993). Research on authentic leaders is based on positive psychology (Luthans & Avolio, 2003) and presents authentic leaders as those who are self-aware and true to their identity (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). Knowing oneself is an important leadership characteristic in this view (Bennis, 2009). Nonetheless, the opportunity for self-expression provided by organizational membership can influence a member's leadership involvement. This includes the expression of personal values, beliefs, and interests. In particular, people with a personal identity orientation (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010) will be able to meet their drives for self-enhancement and self-continuity and will exhibit higher organizational identification and leadership involvement.

Ilies, Morgeson, and Nahrgang (2005) stated that leaders who express their true self through their relationships and behavior provide meaningfulness to their lives. They used the Aristotelian concept of eudaimonia (Waterman, 1993) to argue that self-expression influences eudaimonic well-being— human happiness that stems from excellence of character and virtue that occurs when one is engaged in an activity consistent with one's true self—rather than hedonistic well-being. Ilies et al.'s (2005) approach to authentic leadership entails that leaders exert a positive influence on their followers' well-being and self-concept. They advanced a four-component model of authentic leadership that incorporates self-awareness, unbiased processing, authentic behavior/acting, and authentic relational orientation. This means that authentic leaders are self-aware, understand their personal values, motives, and goals, and behave in a consistent manner. Authentic leaders express who they are through their behavior. Also, they understand their skills,

abilities, and limitations and act, behave, and relate to other people according to their genuine persona (Gardner et al., 2005). Authenticity thus incorporates the opportunity to live one's life consistent with deeply held values, to pursue one's goals, and to uphold one's ideas.

Authentic leadership is related to identity and self-concept theories (Hogg, 2001; Klenke, 2007). For instance, the need to express and be consistent with one's true self is one of the drivers of social identification (Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004). People are likely to act in accordance and seek relationships that verify their thoughts and feelings about themselves. For this reason, self-awareness and self-consistency can account for leader emergence in a group or organizational setting. People who are able to express their persona through membership in a group are likely to seek further engagement. Leading and exerting influence on the behavior and goals of others is a natural manner to increase involvement since it provides the opportunity to influence and accomplish work through others and is a good manner to express this increased engagement. They would act in an authentic manner when membership meets their self-enhancement goals, consistent with a personal identity orientation (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). Identifying with prestigious groups provides people with a positive self-concept including high self-esteem and self-efficacy and an internal locus of control (Dutton et al., 1994; Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

The ability to express personal values, beliefs, and interests may be understood as a self-centered, egocentric or narcissistic approach to organizational identification and involvement, but this is not necessarily so. People may be able to express personal values and interest that are related to serving others and having a positive impact on society or the community. Maak and Pless (2006) considered leadership to be a moral, values-based and social-relational phenomenon and define it as the art of building and sustaining good relationships with stakeholders inside and outside the organization. Based on Platonic ethical concepts, they stated that the "leader's core task is *to weave a web of inclusion*" (104), which can be understood as a way to align their followers into a common vision of having a positive impact on the organization's stakeholders.

This responsible and moral approach to leadership provides different roles to the leader, including being a steward or guardian of organizational values. Thus, it considers leadership as not about being a grandiose hero, but about having the willingness and desire to support and care for others' needs (Maak, 2007). It is also based on values—important components of the self-concept—and makes it possible for organizational members to gauge their ability to express their authentic selves by serving others and having a positive impact on the organization's stakeholders. Further, it includes the possibility to influence and align others toward a common service goal by becoming a leader.

As described earlier, a social identity approach to leadership suggests that followers ascribe leadership power and legitimacy to prototypical group members who verify their own self-views (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). People who best hold the important and visible values of the group are likely to be seen as prototypical by other members and to be ascribed the power and legitimacy to speak for them, champion their causes, and influence the behavior of other members (Hogg, 2001; Lord & Brown, 2001). This means that people who are able to find meaningfulness and pride and who verify their self-view through their organizational

membership are likely to seek further involvement and engagement in the organization and make this evident through their behavior. They are also likely be ascribed a leadership a role by others. Through an influence on organizational identification, the opportunity that organizational membership provides to self-expression can influence leadership involvement. Therefore:

Hypothesis 1a: Self-expression through organizational membership has a positive association with organizational identification.

Hypothesis 1b: Organizational identification mediates the influence of self-expression on leadership involvement.

Social cohesion, relational identity, and relational leadership

People with a relational identity orientation have a locus of self-concept definition based on their relationships and connectedness to other people (Brickson, 2000; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). They are likely to define who they are using the roles they have with specific significant others. Consistent with this notion, people with a relational identity orientation are likely to seek further engagement when they value their relationship with other organizational members. This may be based on beliefs about the worth of such relationships as network contacts that are instrumental to obtain rewards, but also as positive supportive relationships.

Social cohesion can drive leadership involvement for people with a relational identity orientation. Theories of relational leadership (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan, 2000; Uhl-Bien, 2006) explain why. Like other leadership theories, relational leadership theory is also focused on describing the influence leaders have on followers. For instance, leader-member exchange (LMX) describes how the quality of the relationship followers have with their leaders influences follower attitudes and behaviors such as mutual trust and follower effectiveness (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Also, perceived similarity between leaders and followers influences LMX (Barbuto & Gifford, 2012) Similarly, the application of theories on the relational self (Brewer & Gardner, 1996) to leadership (Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg et al., 2004) can be used to describe how a follower's relational self-concepts incorporates his or her relationship with the leader and its impact on the follower's self-worth and identification with the leader. Nonetheless, relational leadership theory considers leadership to be "a social influence process through with emergent coordination (i.e. evolving social order) and change (e.g., new values, attitudes, approaches, behaviors, and ideologies) are constructed and produced" (Uhl-Bien, 2006: 655). This incorporates the influence followers have on leaders and sees the relationship as a "two-way street" where mutual goals can be accomplished.

Aside from LMX, a relational perspective also focuses on the quality of relationships among members. Aside from a focus on vertical dyad linkages, it can include horizontal exchange relationships. Aside from dyads, this perspective can also delve into networks, including the manner in which of friendship and acquaintance networks are used to create social capital and to obtain power and influence over others (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2006).

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A prototypical group member (Hogg, 2001) is likely to be successful at developing network connections inside and outside the organization and become a central person in a network. Such person is also likely to possess or develop network cognition (Balkundi & Kilduff, 2006), that is, to understand the friendship and acquaintance network ties that are present in the organization, including the quality of such ties, their characteristics such as whether they are based on kinship or friendship, their instrumentality in meeting organizational and mutual individual goals, and the number and quality of other internal and external linkages organizational members have. A successful leader may be able to use weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) and bridge structural holes and become a broker or relationships (Burt, 2005) to gain power and influence.

Even though this network perspective portrays social dynamics as instrumental to attain power and organizational goals, the quality of network ties in an organizational network is often based on positive interaction and social cohesion (Uhl-Bien, 2006). For instance, employees who are more central in the social network are more likely to experience social support based on friendship and are less likely to leave an organization (Feely, Hwang, & Barnett, 2008). This emphasizes the experience of positive supportive relationships of friendship, loyalty and trust. Although a deep personal connection between leader and followers is a form of influence, leaders can also experience a positive connection to followers and draw feelings of worth, a desire for a deep connection, and a motivation to take action (Fletcher, 2007). The development of friendship ties in an organization can stimulate a sense of belongingness and oneness with the organization, which can motivate engagement and greater social cohesion (Ferris, 2009).

People who have the desire and ability to develop and maintain good social cohesion with other people in a group and organizations should desire greater engagement and are more likely to be seen as leaders. They are likely to seek leadership involvement or may be followed by other group members as informal leaders or may be ascribed a formal leadership role. Thus, organizational members who are able to use such relationships to meet personal and organizational goal and who enjoy their friendship and collegial ties are likely to identify with the group and seek further engagement though leadership involvement. Thus:

> *Hypothesis 2a: Social cohesion in the organization has a positive association with organizational identification.*

> *Hypothesis 2b: Organizational identification mediates the influence of social cohesion in the organization on leadership involvement.*

Figure 1 below depicts the proposed conceptual model along with the hypotheses.

Figure 1

Proposed Conceptual Model with Hypotheses
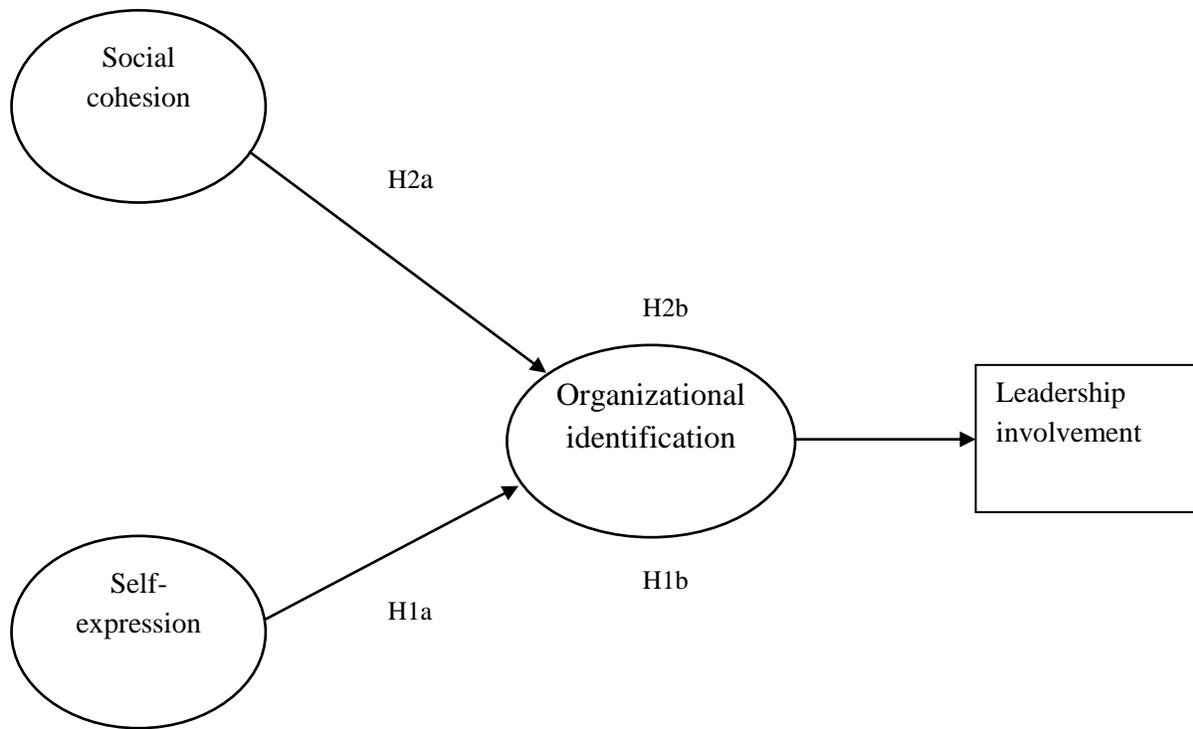
METHODS

Procedure and respondents

The sample consisted of professional association members of a local chapter of a national professional business management association and three local chapters of national scholastic business fraternities of a university in the southwestern United States. Participation in the survey was voluntary and no rewards were given. The organizations involved followed a democratic procedure for leader selection where all members vote to elect their leaders or officers. Thus, consistent with leader emergence processes, becoming a leader in these organizations required the public statement of the desire to pursue the position and involved the influence of followers in formalizing a leadership position.

Data were collected through paper-based surveys administered by the authors. In total, we received 210 completed surveys out of 320 that were sent out (a 65.63% response rate). None of the responses had any missing data. The final sample consisted of 147 participants belonging to a business fraternity and 63 participants belonging to the business association.

Measures

Self-expression. Self-expression was assessed with a three-item measure developed for this study. Respondents were asked to use a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) to indicate their agreement with the following statements: "The opportunity that members have to express their values and ideals through their membership is central to this organization," "The people in this organization have a central role in defining the organization's goals and practices," and "This organization is particularly important for me because of what it does for the school or community." The measure had acceptable reliability (α = .72).

Social cohesion. The potential to develop good social relationships was assessed with a three-item seven-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) measure developed for this study. The items included "I have or I would like to have a good relationship with the leaders of this organization," "I do not really want to develop good and lasting friendships with members of this organization" (reverse-scored), and "I do not really want to develop a good relationship with the leaders of this organization" (reverse-scored). The measure had good reliability (α = .82)

Organizational identification. Organizational identification was measured using a modified version of Mael and Ashforth's (1995) five-item scale. We deleted one item in order to improve the reliability and discriminant validity of the measure. Response options were on a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Items included were "If someone were to criticize this organization, it would feel like a personal insult"; "When I talk about this organization, I say 'we' rather than 'they';" "This organization's successes are my successes" and "If someone were to praise this organization, it would feel like a personal compliment." The measure had good reliability (α = .80).

Leadership involvement. We used a one-item measure to directly measure involvement in organizational leadership by asking whether he or she held an office in the organization. We dummy coded the responses into two binary categories and assigned a 1 if respondent held a leadership office and a 0 otherwise.

STATISTICAL ANALYSES AND RESULTS

Measurement model and descriptive statistics

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the full information maximum likelihood method with AMOS (version 20) to establish the appropriateness of the measurement model before analyzing a structural equations model to test the hypotheses. We used the Chi-square test and fit indices derived from established standards (Hu & Bentler, 1999; MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). We selected the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), also known as the non-normed fit index, because it is a conservative measure that does not have a penalty for the number of parameters estimated (Tucker & Lewis, 1973). CFA results of the specified three latent factor model demonstrated good fit with an insignificant chi-square statistic and indices

indicating good fit: χ^2 (30) = 54.50, p = .001; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = .05, TLI = .95, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .07. All indicator items loaded significantly on their specified latent construct (p < .001 for all), Mean standardized factor loadings for each latent construct ranged from .72 to .84 and the mean was .76. We computed the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each latent variable—the variance of the items comprising a specific latent construct— which was more than 50% and higher than the corresponding latent variable correlations in the same correlation matrix row and column, suggesting convergent and discriminant validity. Means, standard deviations, scale reliabilities (coefficient alphas), AVE square roots, and correlations for all variables are reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: Means, Standard Deviations, Scale Reliabilities, and Correlations of Study Variables

	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3
Social cohesion	5.78	1.16	**(.82)** *(.84)*		
Self-expression	5.47	0.89	.47**	**(.72)** *(.72)*	
Organizational identification	5.39	1.13	.61**	.52**	**(.80)** *(.74)*
Leadership involvement	0.46	0.50	.29**	.17**	.30**

Note. N = 210. Correlations reported for first three variables are Pearson's correlation coefficients while those reported for Leadership involvement are Kendal's tau b coefficients. Boldface entries in parentheses along the diagonal are scale reliabilities (Cronbach's α); entries in italicized parentheses along the diagonal are the square-root of AVE. * p < .05, ** p < .01.

SEM analysis and hypotheses

We tested the structural model in Mplus (version 4.21) (Muthen & Muthen, 2007) in order to manage the binary outcome variable through the weighted least squares means and variances adjusted (WLSMV) estimator. WLSMV is a robust weighted least squares approach that yields accurate estimates and standard errors under a variety of conditions (Flora & Curran, 2004). Mplus generates a polychoric correlation matrix based on underlying theoretical normal distributions of categorical variables derived from bivariate distributions of the original variables (Bollen, 1989) and an associated weight matrix (Muthen & Muthen, 2007). Four observations with high Mahalanobis D^2/degrees of freedom ratio statistic values were considered outliers and excluded from the structural path analysis.

The SEM analyses showed good fit for the hypothesized model: χ^2 (19) = 46.66, p < .001; TLI = .95, RMSEA = .08. We also verified two alternate models with different paths between the variables. In first alternate model we tested with direct paths from social cohesion to leadership involvement and from self expression to leadership involvement in addition to the hypothesized

relationships in the proposed model. The results obtained; χ^2 (20) = 50.72, p > .05; TLI = .95, RMSEA = .09 showed that model fit was worse than that obtained for the proposed model. In the second alternate model we tested with direct relationships between leadership involvement and the three antecedent variables: social cohesion, self expression and organizational identification. The results obtained; $\chi2$ (20) = 50.72, p < .001; TLI = .95, RMSEA = .09 showed that model fit was again worse than the proposed model. Since the hypothesized model always showed the best overall fit, we discarded the alternate models.

Figure 2

Structural Equation Model with Standardized Path Coefficients

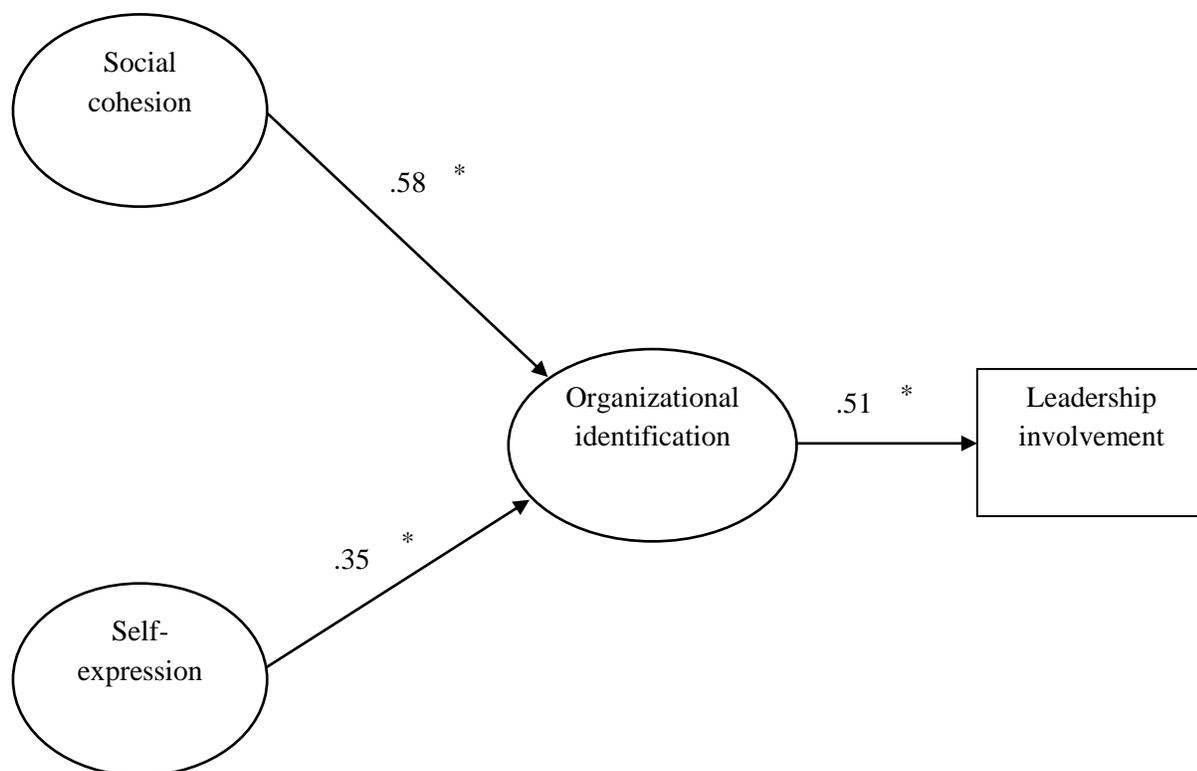*Note.* N = 206. χ^2 (19) = 46.66, p < .001; TLI = .95, RMSEA = .08.* *p < .05.*

Figure 2 provides a summary of structural model relationships with standardized coefficients presented for each hypothesized path. We found support for all the three hypothesized relationships. In support of Hypothesis 1a, self-expression predicted organizational identification (γ = .35, p < .05). Specifically, supporting Hypothesis 2a, the objective indicator of social cohesion predicted organizational identification (γ = .58, p < .05).

Mediating effects of organizational identification

We considered whether organizational identification mediated the relationship between the independent variables (self-expression and social cohesion) and the outcome variable (leadership involvement). Mediation was assessed using a product of coefficients test based on Sobel's (1982) first-order standard error computation. The results indicate a significant Sobel's test statistic (p < .001) for all the paths - from self-expression to leadership involvement ($z_{\alpha\beta} = 3.66$), supporting H1b; from social cohesion to leadership involvement ($z_{\alpha\beta} = 2.76$), supporting H2b. Thus, these results are in line with our above SEM path model results.

DISCUSSION

Based on a social identity approach to leadership (Hogg, 2001; van Knippenberg et al., 2004) and the identity orientation model (Brickson, 2000; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010), we explored the propositions that personal and relational self-conceptions can drive organizational identification and increased leadership involvement. These theories allowed us to acknowledge the role of followers in leadership emergence. Also, we relied on theories of authentic and relational leadership to describe how opportunities for self-expression and social relationships made available through organizational membership motivate organizational members to become leaders. We tested this in a non-work setting with a sample of professional association members, which diminishes the direct influence of extrinsic rewards.

The results supported the idea that self-expression and social cohesion were related to leadership involvement through their effect on organizational identification. These results corroborate the idea that the opportunity to express personal values, interests, and goals through organizational membership is an important motivator for increased engagement through leadership. Moreover, as social beings, people have a need for belongingness, including belonging in groups with relationships that are related to work or other goals that can be accomplished in organizational life. The ability to develop friendships and close relationships with others is related to identification and leadership involvement.

As in all studies, a number of limitations should be acknowledged to best interpret the results and to find opportunities for future research. This study employed a cross-sectional design. This presents problems with common method variance since the three antecedent variables and the mediator were measured through the same instrument. The selection of a one-item measure with objective qualities as the dependent variable does avoid some problems with common method variance. However, future studies could also explore leadership influence, as provided by a leader's followers or external stakeholders, and other possible measures related to satisfaction and self-conception as a leader. Moreover, a cross-sectional design prevented us from assessing whether organizational identification would increase after an individual becomes a leader. For future studies, a longitudinal design that explores organizational identification and self-expression, social relationships, and stakeholder service before and after people become leaders would shed more light into the process of leadership becoming and the role of identity and the self-concept. In addition, we relied on a tripartite conceptualization of identity to explore how

different identity orientations would relate to organizational membership goals. However, we did not measure identity orientation or differentiate across people with a dominant identity orientation. Identity orientation is also related to gender, values, and other individual characteristics (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010), which could be studied in future studies.

The results of this study offer a number of implications for theory and practice. This includes the study of identity processes in emergent leadership with the goal of better understanding the antecedents of leadership involvement. By taking an identity orientation approach, we explored factors that appealed to the personal, relational, and collective identity of leaders; namely the opportunities that organizational membership and increased involvement through leadership would provide for self-expression and social relationship development. This highlights the scholarly need to understand the factors that surround people's decisions and exertion of efforts to pursue a position of leadership and influence in organizations. This stems from the fact that while leadership is usually related to both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, it also does take hard work and increased responsibility. In many organizational circumstances, leadership may be associated with service and sacrifice rather than extrinsic rewards associated with power and influence. The study of non-work professional association and business fraternities with goals other than profit allowed us to explore these relationships in a setting close to these circumstances.

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