# LEADING WITH DIVERSITY: A COMPREHENSIVE EXPLORATION OF INCLUSIVITY IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

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**Abstract**
Existing theories of leadership have failed to adequately address the issue of diversity. With the ongoing growth of the population in the United Kingdom and other countries, the leadership dynamics within institutions and communities will also experience a development in diversity. The focus on diversity extends beyond the mere inclusion of executives from various demographic backgrounds inside the leadership hierarchy. The consideration of diversity necessitates a re-evaluation of our existing leadership theories, resulting in a paradigm shift that promotes inclusivity. This entails integrating explanations that elucidate how various characteristics of diversity influence our comprehension of leadership. This concept refers to the act of acknowledging and considering the various perspectives and expectations of leaders from different backgrounds, as well as the impact of prejudice on the execution of leadership. Despite the evolution of leadership theories and their adaptation to different social circumstances, there is a notable absence of discourse regarding matters of fairness, diversity, and social justice within these theories. To uphold its pertinence in the 21st century, leadership theories must be formulated to encompass a wide range of diversities, while also considering the evolving social conditions, emerging global predicaments, and changing demographics of the population.
**Keywords:** Diversity, leadership, culture, social justice.

**Introduction:**
The 20th century witnessed the rise of social justice movements, including the movements advocating for women's rights, civil rights, and gay pride. These movements instilled a strong commitment to fostering diversity across various institutions and communities in our nation. Scholars specializing in psychology have diligently incorporated diverse attributes into their research methods and theoretical frameworks that pertain to the intricacies of human behavior. However, the existing body of literature on leadership has typically failed to integrate these concerns. The subject of leadership was thoroughly examined by the scholars (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2012; Hogan and Kaiser, 2005; Bolden, 2004; Daft, 2014). The examination

specifically concentrated on traditional paradigms that placed great importance on characteristics, circumstances, and structures. Nevertheless, the writers neglected to address the relationship between leadership and domains such as gender, race and and inclusiveness.

Leadership literature frequently discusses various models of leadership, assuming their relevance to individuals, subcategories, and varied societies. A search of literature on leadership resulted in 2500 references, with barely 215 of them incorporating an examination of culture. Certain scholarly works allocate a limited number of chapters to gender or culture, while most of the remaining chapters disregard the concept of diversity (Hollander and Julian, 1969).

This approach regards women and minorities as distinct populations, while perceiving culture as a characteristic possessed by others. This suggests a viewpoint on leadership centered around a particular ethnic group, in which it is understood to be a characteristic that is predominantly possessed by the upper class or the group that holds power (Day and Antonakis, 2012). The emphasis on inclusivity is occasionally restricted to issues related to the initial inclusion or the measurement of the presence of females and individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds in leadership roles (Mills, 2018). The prevailing leadership models that influence management procedures, behaviors, and outcomes have traditionally mirrored the hierarchical structures and mindsets of United Kingdom organizations, predominantly governed by caucasian and heterosexual males. The integration of culture in our understanding of leadership has been explicitly associated with corporate traditions, as delineated by (Duden, 2011). Academics have progressively integrated the examination of national or ethnic disparities into the comprehension of leadership (Hogg, Knippenberg, and Rast 2012; Van Knippenberg, 2011; Steffens, et. al, 2021; Ospina, Foldy, Fairhurst and Jackson, 2020). However, many studies still take an ethnocentric approach by comparing management and leadership practices in "foreign" countries to those based on U.K. leadership models (Mumford and Hemlin, 2017).

The presence of this method was apparent in the numerous research conducted on Japanese and other Asian management styles due to their divergence from conventional leadership ideas (Mills, 2005; Harsanto and Roelfsema, 2015). Previous studies have investigated the management practices of United States-based multinational businesses in foreign countries (Wilson, 1999; Paulienė, 2012). Numerous studies conducted by scholars have shown evidence of the presence of gender prejudice when obtaining leadership roles (Prentice, 2004; Bennis and Thomas, 2002). Perrakis and Martinez (2012) have accurately described the obstacles females encounter in their pursuit of leadership roles as a multifaceted and sophisticated maze. Several researchers have proposed that gender plays a crucial role in understanding leadership. Various theories that integrate gender and leadership have been introduced, including social role theory (Eagly, 1987), expectation theory (Berger, Wagner, & Zelditch, 1985), and status characteristics theory (Ridgeway, 1992). Nevertheless, the incorporation of these models into mainstream leadership theories has not yet taken place.

**The rationale for integrating diversity into leadership theories.**

Given the increasing heterogeneity of the population in the United Kingdom and many countries worldwide, the environments in which leadership is exercised in institutions and communities will likewise become more varied. It is imperative for leadership theories to adopt an inclusive approach and encompass explanations regarding how various characteristics of diversity influence our comprehension of leadership. However, existing leadership theories have not adequately addressed the impact of diversity among leaders and followers on implementing leadership inside companies. Historically, political leaders in the UK and other nations have tended to align themselves with the prevailing majorities within their respective societies. In the United States, the dominant demographic group historically consisted of individuals who were White, heterosexual, Protestant males. The demographic makeup has led to the notion that society elite groups are predominantly homogeneous regarding race, ethnic background, and gender. Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2018) presented evidence that reinforces the idea that despite the rise in the representation of females and minorities in leadership roles, the power elite in the UK, which includes individuals who have control and managerial authority in businesses, finance electoral campaigns, and maintain designated positions of authority among politicians as constitutional and military figures, still displays a notable level of uniformity.

Despite the growing diversity observed among our leaders, the primary determinants for achieving top positions still revolve around possessing privileged social and economic backgrounds, as well as graduating from a select group of prestigious educational institutions. Furthermore, it is observed that leaders from various backgrounds tend to adopt strategies to demonstrate their willingness to conform to established norms and practices upon entering the power elite. This often involves downplaying or concealing visible markers of their ethnic heritage (Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 2018). The intentional control of their identity is intended to prevent any potential disruption to the established social structure.

**Enhancing Diversity in Our Leadership Positions**

Despite some progress in recent decades, women and individuals from non-White racial and ethnic backgrounds continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions. This underrepresentation is evident when comparing their numbers in the population to their presence in middle and upper management roles. Various studies and reports have emphasized the difficulty individuals face in advancing in the United Kingdom due to the existence of an insurmountable barrier. The UK's Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has acknowledged the presence of obstacles that specifically impact women and individuals from various ethnic origins. Although there has been significant advancement, inequalities continue to exist. As per the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2021), the current proportion of females in the country's workforce is 47%. Significant progress has been noted in managerial roles, as demonstrated by the growing presence of females and individuals from ethnic minorities in positions of authority inside major UK firms. The study conducted by Smith et al. (2021) reveals a persistent and positive trajectory in representing women and ethnic minorities in senior positions across FTSE 100 corporations. The survey demonstrates a significant increase in the representation of females and individuals from

varied ethnic backgrounds in CEO and other high-level leadership roles. The demographic composition of the UK is likewise experiencing modifications, reflecting patterns observed in the country. Nevertheless, evaluating the diversity of the UK's power elite experiences comparable difficulties to those encountered in the other countries. The lack of regular and reliable methods for collecting data makes it difficult to get facts about the presence of females and ethnic minorities in positions of influence. Similar to the United States, the United Kingdom also faces challenges in attaining transparency when it comes to disclosing the racial and female makeup of corporate boards, which has been a subject of scrutiny. Efficient monitoring and addressing of discrepancies need the use of techniques that provide complete and consistent information collecting.

In the year 2001, seven African American Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) existed inside the Fortune 1000 firms, all of which were male. In the year 2005, the representation of black decent on the boards of Fortune 500 firms amounted to 69 individuals, which accounted for a mere 1.4% of the total. Additionally, it is noteworthy to mention that there were 6 Latino CEOs inside the 400 businesses during this period, all of which were male. Among the 1000 businesses, the representation of Asians was minimal, with a mere 95 individuals, comprising both men and women, occupying a total of 127 seats. This figure accounts for less than 1% of the overall seats available. Although they appear to have higher education and achievements, individuals of Asian descent constituted fewer than 2% of the overall count of directors, employees, and administrators. Most Asian persons who have served as CEOs are mostly those who have founded their own firms, as demonstrated by prominent personalities.

Illustrating the integration of LGBT individuals in positions of authority is a challenging endeavor. LGBT persons are more inclined to freely disclose their sexual orientations and seek greater exposure. An illustration of this may be seen in the LGBT leadership Institute, an organisation that openly documents and recognises the existence of LGBT supervisors. Obtaining data pertaining to individuals with incapacities poses a similar level of challenge, despite their persistent efforts to advocate for accommodations that facilitate their full integration into society. However, these ongoing advocacy endeavors hold the potential to bring about a transformative shift in data accessibility.

The extent of variety in political governance in the United Kingdom is constrained by significant limits, which parallel the issues encountered in the United States. The political establishment in the UK has seen a steady transformation in terms of the inclusion of persons from varied backgrounds. During the latest legislative bodies workout, the House of Commons had a limited presence of women. During the 2019 general election, women constituted 34% of the Members of Parliament, indicating advancement but also underscoring a persistent gender imbalance (UK Parliament, 2019). The gender representation in the UK Parliament is more favorable than that in the 111th Congress of the United States in 2010. Women held only 16.8% of the total 535 seats (Center for American Women and Politics, 2010). Conversely, the UK Parliament has exhibited a greater percentage of female representation, however further endeavors are required to narrow the current disparities. Racial and ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom likewise have a lack of diversity in political positions, which is like the situation in the United States. Based on data

provided by the UK Parliament, members of ethnic minority origins constituted around 10% of the Members of Parliament following the 2019 general election (UK Parliament, 2019). Although this signifies advancement, it still falls short of the entire population ratio of ethnic minorities, underscoring the necessity for more inclusiveness. The past context of the political establishment in the United Kingdom diverges from that of the United States. Although the United Kingdom has had various leaders, including female Prime Ministers such as Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May, the United States made history in 2020 by electing its first female vice president, Kamala Harris. However, both countries face the task of dealing with the issue of inadequate participation of racial and ethnic minorities in positions of power.

Assessing gender diversity globally poses issues that are comparable to those observed in the United States. As per the worldwide guide to females in leadership, the proportion of women in leadership positions within the United Nations, which includes 192 member nations, is roughly 10.4% (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2009). This highlights the ongoing worldwide difficulty of attaining gender equality in leadership positions.

The consideration of diversity, however, should not solely focus on the lack of representation. It should not be confined to merely identifying the existence or absenteeism of leaders from other clusters. The concept of diversity and leadership entails broadening the conventional models of leadership, which often focus on attributes, situations, and systems, to encompass individuals from diverse identification groups. This entails analyzing the potential variations in leadership styles that leaders from minority groups may bring compared to leaders from the majority group. It involves assessing the alignment between the perceptions and expectations of diverse individuals regarding leadership and those of conventional leaders.

Furthermore, it entails examining how leaders from various groups are impacted by their unique cultural backgrounds in their leadership approaches. Lastly, it involves broadening the range of traits and contexts that could be considered as indicators of effective leadership. Primarily, it entails the scrutiny of our leadership theories in order to ascertain their ability to effectively address the concept of successful leadership within a society that is constantly evolving, globally interconnected, and characterized by diversity.

**The Importance of Diversity in Our Society and Institutions**

In the United Kingdom, the mechanisms of influence and leadership demonstrate a changing comprehension of diversity. Although there may not be an exact curated compilation, the demographic changes in the UK, which reflect worldwide patterns, lead to a more varied and inclusive environment. The United Kingdom, like the United States, is currently undergoing a rise in diversity among its population. This is primarily influenced by causes such as movement of people, globalization, and the expansion of a multicultural society (ONS, 2021). This variety is amplified by international organizations and a global workforce, requiring leaders to actively interact with and negotiate diverse groups that encompass different cultural backgrounds and levels of diversity. In the United Kingdom, the study of important individuals and leadership dynamics is in line with the changing notion of diversity and participation. Studies conducted in

the UK has contributed essential knowledge into the interconnectedness of leadership, highlighting the importance of incorporating multiple perspectives. The study conducted by Singh and Rigg (2015) examines the intricacies of board diversity in the United Kingdom, emphasizing the need of having a balanced representation of genders and ethnicities in business leadership positions. Their research emphasizes the beneficial influence of varied leadership on creativity, decision-making procedures, and the business's overall success. Furthermore, research conducted by Burke and Mattis (2007) and Herring (2009) underscores the significance of having a variety of leaders in promoting inclusivity and questioning conventional power hierarchies.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2021) has provided evidence of demographic changes in the UK, indicating a clear trend towards greater diversity. The UK's diverse society, influenced by issues such as immigration and globalization, fosters a heterogeneous and all-encompassing social milieu. The corporate landscape reflects this diversity, with international firms and a widespread global work force. The study conducted by Kirton and Greene (2016) highlights the strong association between diverse leadership teams and organizational innovation within the UK setting. The study of prominent individuals in the United Kingdom corresponds to the worldwide conversation on diversity and leadership, emphasizing the vital role it plays in promoting creativity, questioning conventional standards, and improving overall organizational effectiveness.

What is the impact of this contact on the implementation of leadership? According to the literature on diversity, research on ethnic identity reveals that racial and ethnic groups frequently establish and uphold different identities that are separate from the collective, dominant, or institutional orientation (Helms, 1993; Phinney, 1990). Furthermore, there is a favorable correlation between ethnic identification and self-efficacy. Are leaders from different backgrounds with Robust and affirming ethnic backgrounds more likely to exhibit higher effectiveness, or do they face obstacles due to their less willingness to adapt their conduct to align with established leadership norms?

The existing body of research on identity has primarily focused on examining individual dimensions of identity. However, it has become evident that individuals frequently adopt and embody multiple dimensions of identity that intersect with one another. These dimensions include a range of factors such as ethnic background, racial background, gender, sexual preference, faith, and disabilities. This comprehension has been substantiated by investigations carried out by (Siordia, 2016; Chin, 2010; Hooijberg and DiTomaso, 1996; Chin, Desormeaux and Sawyer, 2016). When examining the role of leadership within one's identity, examining the potential influence of ethnic background, gender, and race on an individual's leadership identity is of utmost importance.

The field of hostile racism offers significant empirical support for the existence of unconscious prejudices towards racial and ethnic minorities, which may lead to biased actions and perspectives (Jones, 2019). Nevertheless, a significant deficiency exists in the current body of research exploring how these biases are evident in leadership behaviors and the consequent evaluations of leadership efficacy, specifically within the United Kingdom. Although there has been significant research on the effects of aversive racism on individual interactions, there is still less exploration

of its precise consequences for leadership dynamics. When comparing the United Kingdom to the United States, where the difficulties encountered by leaders of ethnic backgrounds have been analyzed, it becomes evident that the United Kingdom offers a distinct and exceptional setting. The election of Barack Obama in 2008 in the United States highlighted the intricate and difficult aspects of leadership and racial identity. While not prioritizing racial identity as a central theme in his campaign, Obama's leadership faced initial obstacles that required him to publicly confront the subject. The examination of Obama's racial identification raised inquiries over his ability to meet the criteria of being sufficiently Black for the Black community or, on the other hand, excessively Black for the White community (Rosenthal and Lobel, 2016). Applying this situation to the United Kingdom, where diversity dynamics and racial identity have significant impacts, requires an examination of how aversive racism can affect perceptions of leadership. It is essential to analyze these prejudices in the leadership landscape of the UK, given the diverse makeup of the society and the ongoing discussion on diversity and inclusion. Investigating aversive racism and its impact on leadership actions and evaluations is a crucial field of study that demands emphasis in the United Kingdom. Analyzing these biases within the UK context would provide useful insights into the convergence of leadership, racial identity, and societal standards.

The sociocultural landscape of the 21st century has undergone significant transformations. Currently, we are focused on addressing the difficulties presented by global warming, terrorist activities, the attainment a worldwide harmony, and the spread of weapons of destructive devices. The current issues are contrasted with the historical context of the Great Depression, the Cold War, the imminent nuclear danger, and the armaments ethnicity that defined the preceding decades.

Political situations have a higher level of intricacy than those previously described by binary oppositions such as individuality vs collective thinking, democratization versus socialism, and the capitalist system versus socialist systems. The global consequences for leadership have been caused by the decline in the U.S. economy, which was initiated by the mortgage lending crisis in the property sector. The United States was once regarded as the preeminent global power, a designation that is currently being contested due to the emergence of other nations that possess significant military and economic capabilities. For instance, it is noteworthy that Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and China collectively exert influence over approximately 32% of global oil production, as the Central Intelligence Agency reported in 2008a. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that China and India, two prominent nations, maintain a significant presence in the global manufacturing sector, with their combined labour force accounting for approximately 42% of the world's total, according to the Central Intelligence Agency in 2008.

The evolving social environments currently challenge previously held beliefs regarding the uniformity of American society and the ethnocentric tendencies inside the United States. In the modern era, leadership on a global scale was mainly defined by a philosophy centred around the pursuit of colonization and imperialism. In the process of conquest, Western nations established colonies and subsequently assumed positions of power and authority inside the newly acquired territories, constituting the dominant elite of those nations. In the contemporary era, there has been a notable shift in the prevailing mindset known as colonial mentality. The transition has occurred

due to the firm calls for independence from developing countries, together with the significant increase in output witnessed in impoverished nations, approaching that of advanced Western economies. The global market has witnessed the rise of global companies which have successfully established their dominance and impact in various locations. To effectively manage the diversity among their subordinates and inside their organizations, global leaders of countries and businesses must embrace new leadership perspectives.

 For followers to have a sense of empowerment and for leaders to achieve effectiveness, it will be necessary to reinvent management methods and organizational cultures.


**Expanding Leadership Theories to Include Diversity**

The presence of diversity within institutions and among leaders presents both obstacles and prospects for the advancement of leadership theories and the execution of leadership practices. The conceptualization of leadership has evolved alongside societal progress. While there are multiple descriptions of leadership, nearly all classifications acknowledge the ensuing elements as fundamental: Leadership can be defined as a dynamic process that involves exerting influence within a group setting, with the goal of achieving specific objectives. According to (Nohria and Khurana, 2010), leadership can be described as the process through which an individual exerts influence over a group of individuals in order to achieve a shared objective collectively. Previous descriptions of leadership emphasized elements of management, authority, and direction within the concept of leadership (Pendleton and Furnham, 2016; Gill, 2011; Avery, 2003). However, contemporary definitions of leadership have redefined power within the context of effective leadership as shared power (Edwards and Schedlitzki, 2021), shared leadership (Adair, 2009), and the leader assuming the role of a servant (Spears, 1996). Present definitions of leadership place a greater emphasis on actively involving followers, as can be observed in various leadership theories such as transformational leadership (Avolio, Bass and Jung, 1999; Stewart, 2006), charismatic leadership (House, 2015),  participative management (Nemaei, 2012) and team leadership (Morgeson, DeRue and Karam, 2010). In each of these instances, the leader assumes the role of a catalyst for enthusiasm and drive among their subjects. The modifications in the notion of leadership correspond to and reflect the changes in the cultural spirit of the times.

The post-World War II era witnessed significant responses to power abuse in leadership, prompting scholarly investigations into the contrasting forms of authoritarian and democratic leadership. In the 20th century, there was a critical examination of the aristocratic leadership systems in theological and paramilitary institutions. These structures were seen as incompatible with civilian life. This resulted in a transition towards placing a higher importance on promoting empowerment and fairness, specifically advocated by females, groups of races, and other varied segments of society. Inspired by the civil rights campaigns that arose in the 1960s, several groups, feeling disenfranchised by the prevalent focus on uniformity and rejection from affluent groups, started to argue for different methods of leadership.

At present, the existing leadership models that have been developed based on conventional paradigms lack comprehensive insights into matters of fairness, social justice, and diversity. These

models do not actively pursue inclusiveness or the elimination of obstacles. An analysis of cultural beliefs (Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson, 2017) and worldviews (Sergiovanni, 1998) can offer valuable perspectives on leaders' difficulties in novel and evolving circumstances. Yergler (2012) posits that culture and leadership are closely intertwined, indicating a strong interconnection between the two notions. Leadership involves the initial creation of attitudes throughout the organizations and groups. Once created, these organizational cultures ascertain the standards by which leadership is assessed and appoint individuals to managerial roles. A leader's effectiveness hinges on their ability to establish an organizational culture attuned to the social expectations of the workers they supervise.

Scholars in the field of leadership are currently in the process of establishing a set of standards for effective leadership in the 21st century. One of the key characteristics identified thus far is the ability to exhibit adaptability in one's thinking to effectively navigate a dynamic and evolving global landscape. Wilson (2016) presented a theoretical framework for leadership in the post-industrial era, specifically tailored for the 21st century. He characterized leadership as a dynamic association between leaders and followers, wherein both parties strive to effect substantial transformations that align with their shared objectives. The emphasis above led to the broadening of the investigation into leadership attributes, shifting the attention towards the dynamic relationship between leaders and their subordinates, as demonstrated by leader-member exchange theories (Winkler and Winkler, 2009). The emphasis on teams, including different types of teams, the dynamics and processes within teams, and the variety of team members (Parker and Ritson, 2005), has gained more prominence in leadership and management education.

When examining the different situations in which leadership is used, it is essential to consider the possible influence of gender, ethnic origin, and sexual preference on the execution of leadership and the subsequent opinions and demands of the leader. Could a female leader exhibit diminished combative and assertive inclinations in periods of crisis, or would she resemble Margaret Thatcher, who was widely recognized for her endurance and assertiveness? Did the fear that emerged following the September 11, 2001, attacks (Galea et al. 2002) result in an increase in the demands for leaders to exhibit legitimate and charming attributes, as suggested by Weber (1925/1968) and indicated by studies that influenced levels of risk (Kosloff, Greenberg, and Solomon, 2010)? Do persons with a multicultural experience have the capacity to be more adaptable since they can see things from numerous implications (Hong, Morris, Chiu and Martinez, 2000), and therefore, show less rigidity in their leadership style? Could the prioritization of relationships in collectivistic cultures, such as the Chinese culture (Kincaid, 2013), lead to different types of leadership behaviour comparable to the focus on the presence of individualism observed in the United Kingdom and other Western societies?

The writers of this particular edition focusing on diversity and leadership present inquiries and concerns about urging leadership researchers to integrate diversity into their comprehension of leadership. Addressing these inquiries could potentially enhance psychologists' ability to accurately forecast individuals who will exhibit successful and efficient leadership qualities, as well as the specific circumstances in which they would excel. The authors present leadership

models that exhibit greater inclusivity towards the diverse range of leaders and followers, hence broadening the existing paradigms of leadership.

In their study, Rajadhyaksha and Aycan (2015) examine the integration of gender and culture within established leadership theories. They emphasize the significance of these dimensions as the social backdrop that shapes the interaction between leaders and their followers. The authors present a comprehensive leadership model that considers the intricate dynamics and variations within cross-cultural and cross-national collectives. In his study, Hoyt (2010) investigates identity's complex and interconnected aspects, specifically focusing on race and gender and how these influence leadership. The primary focus of this study is to examine the obstacles faced by women and racial minorities in their pursuit of leadership positions. Specifically, the study aims to explore the barriers to access encountered by these groups and the impact of stereotypical evaluations of their leadership performance on their overall effectiveness as leaders.

The primary focus of their research lies in examining the dynamic relationship between individual characteristics, cognitive processes, and contextual elements that contribute to effective leadership. The authors put out an alternative leadership model that functions within a "gendered culture" framework that establishes societal norms and expectations for women in leadership positions. In his article published in 2010, Pittinsky discusses the concept of national diversity as both a factual reality and a significant area of exploration within the context of organizational life. The author presents a theoretical framework for intergroup leadership, which encompasses the inclusion of individuals from various identification groups as well as their own subgroups or communities. The model highlights the significance of preserving individuals' subgroup identities while simultaneously establishing a collective group identity referred to as "we." The author considers this concept to be of utmost importance when examining leadership from a global perspective.

In his article published in 2017, Morton proposes a positive framework for comprehending the leadership qualities exhibited by persons who identify as sexual minorities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. Klein and Wang (2010) assert that the integration of existing theories and research on diversity and leadership is essential to establish effective recommendations for enhancing leadership in modern businesses and nations. When considering the matters of diversity and leadership within a dynamic global context, the authors present inquiries that encourage scholars to broaden the range of their leadership frameworks to foster more inclusivity.

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