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The Role of Incidental Experiences of Leader Identity for Leaders' Well-Being

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DECLARATION

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Christine Elizabeth Mahoney

2025

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To my mother – Thank you for never letting me give up.

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1. ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the phenomenon of incidental leader identity as an understanding that incidental behaviors can shape leader identity. Three studies are presented that enhance our knowledge of incidental leader identity. Study 1 is an exploratory narrative analysis of 61 leadership stories of individuals in the Irish healthcare sector. This research expands our theoretical understanding of the ties between reluctant leadership, helping behavior, influences outside of work, Irish cultural context, and leader identity. As a result of these findings, questions and conditions for future research emerge within these themes.

Study 2 explores incidental leader identity as triggered through daily family helping behaviors. We examine the daily implications of helping family behavior in the morning, considering spill-over effects on the workday and back to the home domain in the evening. We integrate leader identity and construal level theory to examine spillover effects throughout the day. Helping family in the morning increases leader identity and associated construal level at work, reducing cognitive resource depletion at the end of the workday and work-family conflict in the home domain after work. Further, we theorize that authentic leadership acts as a person-level moderator that expands the benefits of helping behavior in the home domain. An experience sampling study with multiple measurements across ten working days (N = 175 leaders; N = 1172 days) supports our proposed model.

Study 3 extends research on family helping's benefit to leader's well-being by promoting leader identity. Study 3 asks, what type of helping may benefit leaders most - emotional helping or instrumental helping? To answer this focal question, we draw from theories of leader identity and implicit leader theory to propose that gender acts as a person-level moderator that shapes the effect of emotional and instrumental helping for leaders'

well-being (i.e., somatic complaints and vigor). In particular, we propose that women benefit more strongly from emotional helping, whereas instrumental helping is more beneficial for male leaders. An experience sampling study with 855 measurements across ten working days with $N = 140$ leaders suggests that emotional helping family behaviors positively impact leader identity and well-being for female leaders but not their male counterparts. In comparison, we do not find any benefits for instrumental helping behaviors for male and female leaders. This research expands our theoretical understanding of the type of family-helping behavior that spills over into work for female and male leaders but also holds practical implications of what type of morning helping is most beneficial to women leaders.

Overall, the three presented studies support a proposition that behaviors can incidentally shape leader identity and associated well-being for leaders. This study offers insights into potential incidental experiences of leader identity and other emerging themes. Studies 2 and 3 of this thesis support a conversation that is helping behaviors positively impact leader identity and family and individual well-being. This research finds that boundary conditions and mediations bind incidental leader identity. In particular, authentic leadership and gender. This thesis adds to the research by introducing incidental leader identity and identifying some of its boundary conditions.

Keywords: Leader Identity, Incidental Leader Identity, Helping Family Behaviour, Family Well-Being, Individual Well-Being

2. INTRODUCTION

"Great leaders don't set out to be a leader... they set out to make a difference."

- Lisa Haisha (Wells, 2024)

As calls for investigating leader identity grow, so does the need to understand the antecedents and consequences of changes in leader identity (Ainsworth & Grant, 2012; Lord & Hall, 2005; McInnes & Corlett, 2012). Research has agreed that leaders construct an identity through internal, relational, and interactional processes across time and situations (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

As interest grows in leader identity and how individuals think of their leadership (Day, 2000), so does the need for empirical research about antecedents and consequences.

Taking on a new leadership role, focusing on leader identity, generating distinct leader development narratives, and priming different aspects of a follower's self-concept have all been shown to increase leader identity (Hammond, Clapp-Smith & Palanski, 2017; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Lord et al., 1999). More recently, positive leader self-reflection has also increased leader identity (Lanaj et al., 2022). Much previous research has focused on deliberate actions that facilitate leader identity (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). Earlier studies, however, have not yet dealt with the idea that leader identity can also be changed unintentionally as the unconscious by-products of seemingly unrelated actions or thoughts.

This thesis introduces the idea of incidental leader identity as a nascent concept emerging from leader identity theory. As defined in this thesis, incidental leader identity is a

phenomenon of leader identity change that occurs as a by-product of a behavior or action that was not deliberately targeted to foster leader identity. Similar to incidental learning, a concept of learning that is unplanned or unintended which develops while engaging in a task or activity, incidental leader identity is a byproduct of other behaviors and can change as a result of a significant event or a series of small events, ideas or thoughts (Watkins et al., 2018). To better grasp the concept, consider the scenarios below where unintended leadership behaviors trigger identity through incidental action.

***Scenario 1:** Richard takes time out of his busy morning commute to help a lost stranger find their way to the next subway station.*

***Scenario 2:** Samantha helps her child gather his lunch and homework from around the house and puts them in his backpack each morning to prepare for school.*

***Scenario 3:** Rob brings groceries to his in-laws because the weather forecast is terrible, and they are wary of going to the store.*

These scenarios prompt the question: Could these small daily actions of support that are not intended leadership behaviors trigger leader identity similar to more deliberate reflections about one's leadership or engaging in training programs to develop leader identity?

This thesis focuses on whether there could be other more incidental and, thus, natural ways to facilitate experiences of leader identity compared to previous research on more deliberate ways to facilitate leader identity. This is an essential question as the last research

has convincingly demonstrated the benefits of leader identity for leaders' functioning and well-being, such as leader competence and leader civility (Lanaj et al., 2022), transformational behavior and enacted powers (Lanaj, Gabriel, & Jennings (2023) and burnout and loneliness (Krug et al., 2021).

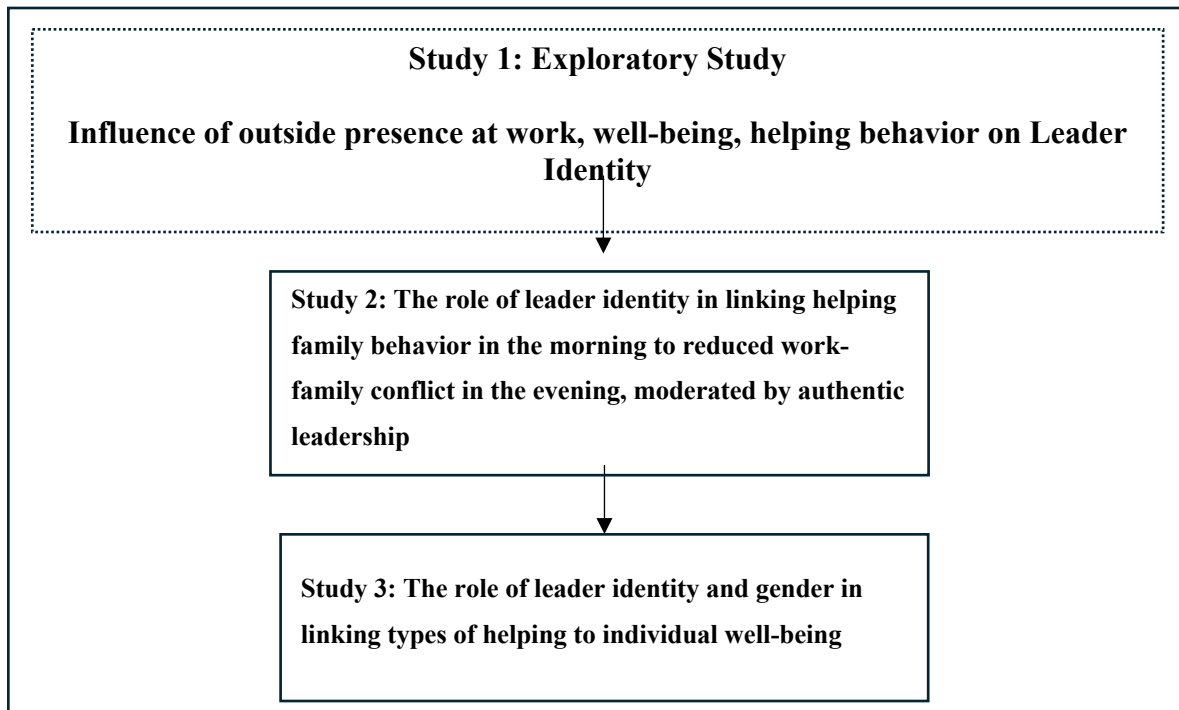
This thesis begins with exploring the antecedents and consequences of incidental leader identity. Some key characteristics of incidental leader identity are its emergent nature in situational experiences and its experience being driven by actions that are not deliberately focused on triggering leader identity. For example, a potential antecedent of incidental leader identity is if an individual listens to a friend and offers advice to solve their problem. This could trigger leader identity as the actions resemble what leaders do frequently when leading team members. While previous research has predominantly demonstrated the positive impact of leader identity on leaders' effectiveness, such as leader competence and leader civility (Lanaj et al., 2022), an emerging stream of research also suggests that leader identity can facilitate leaders' well-being (Lanaj, Gabriel, & Jennings, 2023; Krug et al., 2023; Hirschfeld, Bernerth, & Walker, 2021). Correspondingly, as a secondary aim, the present thesis will expand our understanding of the underlying psychological mechanisms linking leader identity to leaders' well-being.

Since incidental leader identity is a nascent concept, mixed-methods research was utilized to examine it. The overall goal of mixed-methods research is to provide an improved and deeper understanding of a topic by giving a complete picture that can enhance the description and knowledge of the phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Through the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, mixed-methods research can provide stronger inference than either approach. A mixed-methods approach helps to understand the holistic picture

from meanings obtained from interviews or observation to the prevalence of traits in a population obtained from surveys, which add depth and breadth to the focal research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

To study the phenomenon of incidental leader identity, each study that comprises this dissertation addresses focal research questions. Study 1 is exploratory in nature and aims to provide an understanding of the prevalence and incidence of incidental leader identity in the context of the Irish healthcare sector. The focal question of Study 1 is: What do narratives from the Irish Healthcare Service workers say about their leader identity? Delving into two emerging themes from Study 1, Studies 2 and 3 jointly focus on antecedents and consequences of incidental leader identity through helping family behavior. Study 2 raises the question of whether family-related helping behaviors can trigger leader identity at work and if they spill over into family well-being. Study 3 expands on these findings and asks which type of incidental helping behavior – emotional or instrumental is more effective in driving leader identity and well-being. There is a natural progression between the studies as they build upon the prior study's findings. The interrelations of the studies in this thesis are shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Interrelations of Studies



3. EPISTEMOLOGICAL GROUNDING

This research adopts a critical realist perspective. Critical realism is the middle ground between interpretative and positivist paradigms (Houston, 2001; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010), which seeks to explain events instead of predicting them (Wynn & Williams, 2012). In this way, critical realists view the world as “theory-laden, but not theory-determined” (Fletcher, 2017: 182). Critical realism is ‘critical’ in that it accepts that knowledge is limited and imperfect and that some perspectives are more accurate than others (Edwards et al., 2014; Wynn & Williams, 2012).

Critical realists believe the world operates on three levels (Fletcher, 2017). The first is the ‘empirical’ level; this level refers to events that people experience. Researchers use empirical measurements and ‘common sense’ to explain phenomena at this level. However, human interpretation always mediates events, so knowledge creation is considered an inherently human activity (Zachariadis et al., 2013). The second level is the ‘actual,’ wherein there is no filter of human experience; events occur independent of human observation, interpretation, or experience. As such, the world exists outside the researcher’s awareness zone. Therefore, the world is real and socially constructed (Parr, 2015). The third level, the ‘actual,’ is where causal structures and mechanisms exist and act to produce events.

Critical realism brings these three levels together to explain social events, and research under this umbrella aims to describe events that occur at the empirical level and reference causal mechanisms to explain why and how events occur. Critical realism operates as a general methodological framework and is not associated with a particular research method (Fletcher, 2017). In other words, it is methodologically inclusive and pluralist (Vincent & O’Mahoney, 2018). Therefore, the mixed methods employed in this thesis

(narrative intervention, literature review, and diary studies) are supported epistemologically. Further, this thesis utilizes flexible coding processes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) consistent with a critical realist perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fletcher, 2017). Critical realism is accepted as a practical philosophical lens through which social science research can be conducted (Wynn & Williams, 2012).

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature in this review sits at the intersection of the Identity and Leadership literature.

i The Development of the Identity Literature

To understand incidental leader identity, it is essential to look at the development of the identity literature as a stream of research that constitutes the origin of the leader identity literature. Identity has been studied as a formal subject for centuries, tracing its roots to ancient philosophical inquiries about the self and personal existence. Over time, the concept of identity has evolved, incorporating insights from various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Early philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle pondered the nature of the self and what it means to be an individual. Continually studying identity is crucial in helping navigate personal and collective experiences across diverse cultural and historical contexts (Gleason, 1983).

In his ‘second mediation,’ Descartes concludes that he is not “that set of limbs called a human body” and goes on to ask what he is: “What am I? A conscious being. What is that? A being those doubts, understands... is willing, is unwilling further that has a sense and imagination” (Gleason, 1983:35). This viewpoint of identity continued to inspire other scientists who agreed that a person is not a body. Still, the way a person thinks, or their mind indicates, in a very general way, what a person is (Gleason, 1983).

The development of identity theory is split between lineages of self-identity theory and social identity theories. The high-level seminal theories of self-identity theories are displayed in Table 1 below. These seminal theories by James, Erikson, & Marcia are founded on the idea that identity is internalized.

Table 1: Self-Identity Theories Foundations

Theorist	Time Period	Key Concepts	Main Ideas	Reference
William James	1890	"I" and "Me" Self	Distinguished between the "I" (subjective self) and the "Me" (objective self: material, social, spiritual); identity as dynamic, shaped by experience.	James, W. (1890).
			Psychosocial Development; Identity development occurs in stages; adolescence is a critical period for forming a stable identity amidst societal demands.	Maree, J. G. (2022).
Erik Erikson	1950	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Developed the concept of four identity statuses (Identity Diffusion, Foreclosure, Moratorium, Achievement) to describe different ways individuals explore and commit to an identity.	Marcia, 1966
James Marcia	1966	Identity Status Theory		

The first seminal theory of identity was credited to William James (1890), who believed that a person possesses many selves at once. They can display or refer to different

selves depending on the group of persons in which they interact. James chose the term identity to refer to each group-based self, asserting that people have as many identities as they occupy positions and play roles. The theory says that role choices are a function of identities so conceptualized that identities within the self are organized into a salience hierarchy or the probability that identity will be invoked across various situations or persons in each situation (James & Scott, 1986).

In the 1950s, Erik Erikson was known for his theory of psychosocial development (Schwartz, 2001). At that time, he emphasized identity formation during adolescence as a critical stage, coining the term "identity crisis." Other early identity development research focuses on adolescents and young adults. Erikson (1959) suggested a period of moratorium in which an individual explores possible roles and identities before deciding on a meaningful self-concept. "Who am I?" "How do I fit into this world?" Successful resolution of this period of moratorium creates identity achievement, in which an individual has a high sense of self and develops a set of ideals. Erikson also described the development of fidelity or loyalty to a particular societal identity. Theorizing has since moved away from the acceptance that an identity crisis needs to be in adolescence and linear. Still, it has retained the idea that people have identity crises where they contemplate who they are and where they fit. Current theories expanded upon below (identity theory, role theory, etc.) suggest that these crises can be triggered by any changes, such as a new role, a change in location, a new partnership, or even the passage of time (Schwartz, 2001). James Marcia expanded on Erikson's work by introducing the concept of identity status, which includes identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement.

James Marcia (1966) developed an empirical assessment of Erikson's theory focused on the future or "a sense of knowing where one is going" (Erikson, 1959, p. 118). Marcia conceptualized this process as having two components—exploration and commitment. Exploration is defined as examining different identity alternatives to which one might commit, and commitment is described as having assumed an identity—including ideologies and roles in various domains. Four statuses can be derived from the combinations of exploration and commitment, with the most advanced being identity achievement—those who have explored their potential ideological options and have subsequently chosen ideologies. Those who have not yet reached commitment and are still studying are in the moratorium status, whereas those who commit to ideals without a process of exploration are in foreclosure. Finally, those who are not actively engaged in the identity formation process are in diffusion. Although some have viewed Marcia's statuses as trait-like constructs because there are distinct relationships between statuses and personality profiles (Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992), he intended for them to be viewed as a snapshot of an individual at one moment (Marcia, 2001). There has been much empirical and theoretical work addressing the issue of continuity and change in identity statuses to address this issue of whether they are indeed snapshots of developmental processes or indicative of some stability (Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010; Meeus, 2011).

4. ii Social Identity Theories

Social identity theories diverged from self-identity theories. Mead (1934) described identity as only being understood through social interactions and understanding the "generalized other." In line with this viewpoint, Tajfel Turner (1978) pioneered Social

Identity Theory and later expanded it into In-group and Out-group Dynamics. Table 2 below summarizes a very short overview of these theories.

Table 2: Social Identity Theories

Theorist	Time Period	Key Concepts	Main Ideas	Reference
George Herbert Mead	1934	Symbolic Interactionism; "I" and "Me"	The self as a social process; identity formed through social interactions and understanding of the "generalized other."	Herbert, 2018.
Henri Tajfel and John Turner	1970s	Social Identity Theory; In-group and Out-group Dynamics	Identity shaped by group membership and social categorization; self-esteem derived from group affiliations and intergroup comparisons.	Tajfel & Turner, 1978

Social Identity Theories encompass perspectives that emphasize the social construction of the self through interactions, group affiliations, and societal dynamics. George Herbert Mead's Symbolic Interactionism (1934) posits that the self emerges from social processes, where individuals develop their identities through interactions with others and the internalization of societal norms and expectations—what Mead calls the "generalized other." This theory suggests that our self-concept is not fixed but continually shaped and reshaped by our social experiences and roles in various contexts. Building on this idea, Tajfel and Turner (1973) focus on how group memberships—such as those defined by race, nationality, or social class—significantly influence one's identity. This approach builds on the idea that we can think of ourselves and others not only as individuals in terms of personal identity (i.e., 'me' and 'you') but also as members of a group in terms of social identity (i.e., 'we' and 'us' Turner & Reynolds, 2003; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994; Steffens et al., 2014). According to theory, individuals derive self-esteem from their group affiliations, leading to a tendency to favor their in-group and discriminate against out-groups. This theory highlights the importance of social categorization in identity formation and explains the psychological mechanisms behind group dynamics, prejudice, and intergroup relations (Tajfel & Turner, 1973).

This thesis focuses more on self-identity theories than social identity theories. However, it acknowledges the importance of understanding how identities are constructed. Self-identity theories focus more on the self's highly personal and negotiated individualized meaning. For these reasons, self-identity theories may have certain advantages when understanding the subjective nature of leader identity and its construction.

Identity Theories explored through the lens of Incidental Identity

Incidental Leader Identity was inspired by incidental learning literature. Watkins and Marsick (1992) defined incidental learning by contrast with formal and informal learning: Formal learning is typically institutionally sponsored, classroom-based, and highly structured. Informal learning, including incidental learning, may occur in institutions. Still, it is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner. Incidental learning is a by-product of other activities, such as task accomplishment, interpersonal interaction, sensing the organizational culture, trial-and-error experimentation, or even formal learning. Incidental learning almost always occurs, although people are unaware of it.

This thesis suggests that identities can also be shaped by byproducts of everyday behaviors that were not originally meant as forms of identity change. This is called incidental identity change. For example, a person may start biking to work because their job location is quicker to get to on a bike than public transport, and they do not own a car or have a license. Over time, without consciously intending it, they begin to see themselves as an "environmentally conscious person." This new part of their identity emerges incidentally as a byproduct of their choice to bike, even though their original intention wasn't necessarily to change how they perceive themselves.

To understand how Incidental Identity change happens, we build on identity theory and how individuals take on roles or have them prescribed to them to form identities and propose that an identity is formed as a result of a process known as role internalization (Burke & Stets, 2009; Lührmann & Eberl, 2007).

In identity theory, Stryker focused on the role of structure in forming identity. He emphasized the concept of identity salience, where specific identities are more central to a

person's self-concept (Stryker, 1968). Identity salience is the probability that an identity will be invoked across various situations or persons in a given situation. Borrowing from cognitive, social psychology (Markus 1977), theorists understand identities as cognitive schemas-internally stored information and meanings serving as frameworks for interpreting experience. As such, they are cognitive bases for defining situations and increasing sensitivity and receptivity to specific cues for behavior. With the self thus specified, identity theorists hypothesized that the higher the salience of an identity relative to other identities incorporated into the self, the greater the probability of behavioral choices in accord with the expectations attached to that identity (Markus, 1977). In line with identity theory, incidental identity creates cognitive schemas internally from a series of incidents. From those schemas, the individual has a salience from which to operate. Furthermore, it is also known that how we perceive ourselves, our self-concept or identity profoundly affects how we feel, think, and behave and the things we aim to achieve (Leary & Tangney, 2003). Therefore, if incidental identity can change an individual's perception, it has significant consequences for organizational, work group, and individual functioning.

Embedded in identity theory is the concept of role theory. Role theory states that people tend to have clear conceptions of the self on some dimensions and rather vague or more schematic conceptions of the self on other dimensions. The more critical the particular dimension is to someone, and the more they believe they occupy an extreme position on the dimension, the more crystallized or clear self-conception is (Markus, 1977).

Role theory is particularly pertinent to leader identity, mainly regarding an assigned role. Assigned roles can be intentional but may also be incidental. For instance, an individual, William, finds himself as a caregiver for a relative due to an unexpected illness, even though

caregiving is not a part of his regular identity. As William learns more about personal care, medical care, and household tasks, he strengthens his caregiver's self-concept. The self-concept knowledge a person has about him or herself has changed, and with it, the knowledge of one's attitudes and values, likes and dislikes, and what one aspires to become changes (Markus, 1977). Once William begins to identify more as a caregiver, he builds on that caregiving identity. This is because each identity is a knowledge structure that helps people organize and give meaning to memory and behavior (Kihlstrom, Beer, & Klein, 2003). Over time, William begins to identify with his caregiving responsibilities, particularly the weight of responsibility in caring for another person. Information about the self changes when roles change (Klein & Kihlstrom, 1998). Incidentally, this increase in responsibility for another also increases William's leadership identity. This thesis argues that our idea of ourselves arises not only from how we react to the behaviors of others and how others react to us but also from how our incidental roles change our viewpoint of ourselves (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

A sub-theory of role theory is the Symbolic Identity theory. Symbolic Identity theory focuses on how people 'announce and enact' who they are in social interactions and the adoption, display, and manipulation of object symbols (i.e., tangible entities infused with meaning) (Burke, 1989). Individuals' identities are constructed in their choices of settings for formal meetings and informal encounters, who they interact with, their physical postures, emotional work, and facial expressions (Mangham, 1990). Considerable attention has centered on how gendered identities are performed through specific modes of etiquette, manners, comportment, gestures, walking, sitting, and working (Patriotta & Spedale, 2009). Other studies have examined how people claim identities through attire, choice of personal

possessions, commodities, corporate paraphernalia, anthems, and flags, or by shaping, marking, and coloring their bodies through their use of cosmetics, gender reassignment surgery, tattoos, and piercings and by wearing specific hairstyles, beards, and mustaches (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997). Symbolic theory is relevant to incidental identity because symbols such as job titles or offices may unintentionally drive an individual's understanding of their identity.

4. iii Identity Change

As part of identity theory, identity change has been conceptualized as a relatively stable and enduring entity yet driven by an underlying dynamic homeostasis operating continuously in a self-adjusting feedback loop (Burke, 1991). As mentioned above, this view of identity change is referred to as the identity verification process developed by Stryker (1980) and refined by Burke (2009). Identity verification is the process in which an individual perceives that others see them in a situation the same way they see themselves. Identity verification is occurring constantly. Often, it is unconscious, but it becomes more powerful when conscious (Burke, 2009).

According to Burke (2009), identity verification follows a series of steps. The identity verification process steps start with the identity standard of the baseline self-meaning that someone has about their identity. Next, perceptual input or meaning about the self is included based on how individuals see their reflected self in others. The person then compares the perceptual input with their identity standard. The identity verification process is a constant loop that helps individuals understand their identity in various settings. Even without intentional growth, the loop will change over time due to time-changing situations. It is

assumed that identity change is also ongoing; however, the amount of change and timeframe varies based on the circumstance (Burke, 2009).

The working self

Identity work is another broad area of identity research with applications for leadership research. Identity work is generally understood as “people’s engagement in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising their identities” (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p. 626). From an identity work perspective, individuals can form and maintain a leader identity if and when it is of value to them in a particular context or time. Individuals work to create their leader identity by making claims for this identity, and they maintain it through ongoing negotiations with others (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Identity shifts turn dramatically and quickly in circumstances with significant, quick change. This event-driven identity change is most often related to new roles. An example of this type of change is if a person is promoted to leadership. Suppose an individual gets a promotion on a team. In that case, they will have to begin to differentiate themselves from their co-workers, think more strategically, and even potentially guide their previous peer’s work. This circumstance change is so dramatic that it causes an individual to do personal identity work for their true self to be present and accurately reflected in the new circumstance. This is also true of sudden incidental roles, as well.

In addition to utilizing identity work to construct identities, it can also be used to manage multiple identities (Kourti, Garcia-Lorenzo, & Yu, 2018). For example, a woman’s gender identity may contain elements of being nurturing and somewhat passive. Still, as a leader in a law firm, her identity at the firm includes the meanings of being aggressive and proactive. Unless she can compartmentalize being a woman from being a litigator, the two

identities will likely conflict and cause distress. Behaving in ways consistent with one identity will diverge from the meanings of the other identity. According to identity theory, this conflict is resolved, and distress is reduced by the meanings in each identity slowly moving toward each other over time and reaching some middle ground, often resulting in spillover in different areas of an individual's life (Burke, 2009).

The working self is a term used to discuss a more permanent understanding of the self that guides action and information processing moment-to-moment basis. The working self is a highly activated and contextually sensitive formation of the general self-concept (Day et al., 2008). Therefore, changes in the working self can change an individual's general self-concept and, eventually, their identity over time. Thus, identity formulation requires an individual to engage in "identity work," a concept taken up in the literature and formalized by Svenginsson and Alvesson (2003, p. 1165), who define identity work as individuals being engaged "in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness." Such "striving" is interactive, i.e., it involves social and organizational encounters with other people or contexts and is therefore always dialogic (Beech, 2008) and includes the performance of roles, routines, and acts that create a sufficiently permanent sense of self (Alvesson et al., 2008; Simpson and Carroll, 2008).

Purposeful Identity Change

More recently, attention has been focused on purposeful identity change (Lanaj et al., 2022). Purposeful identity change occurs in three phases (Ashford, 2001): separation, transition, and reincorporation. During the separation phase, individuals must detach from their sense of self. This is also called de-identification. The de-identification processes may

be distinct and more challenging during intense transitions such as those involving an exit from total institutions or de-identification from institutions. The dual nature of the identity processes that is prompted by the separation individuals must dissociate from their former self and construct a new identity, a process involving “flux” (Ashforth, 2001). The next phase is the transition phase. During the transition phase, individuals must create and test some narratives that might work for the new identity. The third and final phase is the reincorporation phase, which conceptualizes the desirable end-state identity and internalizes the new role to provide a new coherent sense of self (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Ibarra, 1999). Recent research has found that positive self-reflection exercises correlate with leader identity change through this process of purposeful identity change (Jennings et al., 2021; Lanaj et al., 2021).

4.iv Leadership Literature

The second anchor of this thesis is leadership. Leadership literature is firmly established as research from the early twentieth century. Yet, an organized social–scientific approach to studying leadership did not fully emerge until the early 1930s (House & Aditya, 1997). Older leadership theories (i.e., trait theory, path-goal theory, contingency theory) focused on the leader as an influencing individual according to a set standard of prescribed behavior. Over time, models of leadership evolved, focusing on the traits and personalities of leaders, the nature of leader-follower interactions, what constituted leader and follower cognitions, perceptions and attribution processes, situational factors and contingencies that moderated the effects of leadership, leader behaviors/styles, task and goal orientations, team and shared leadership, and transformational/charismatic leadership. As the twentieth century

drew to a close, there were attempts to integrate the various theories and models of leadership into a broader, more integrative framework called a “full range theory of leadership” (Avolio, Bass, and Jung 1999).

In this way, each person is considered a leader, conceptualizing leadership as an effect rather than a cause (Drath et al., 2008). Leadership development from this perspective consists of using social (i.e., relational) systems to help build commitment among community members of practice (Wenger, 1998). It is proposed that both individual and relational lenses are essential concerns. Figure 2 below shows the evolution of leadership theories. Leadership theories focus on subjective conceptual versions of leadership that differ individually and collectively (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009).

Figure 2: Leadership Theory Evolution adapted from Ramos, 2009

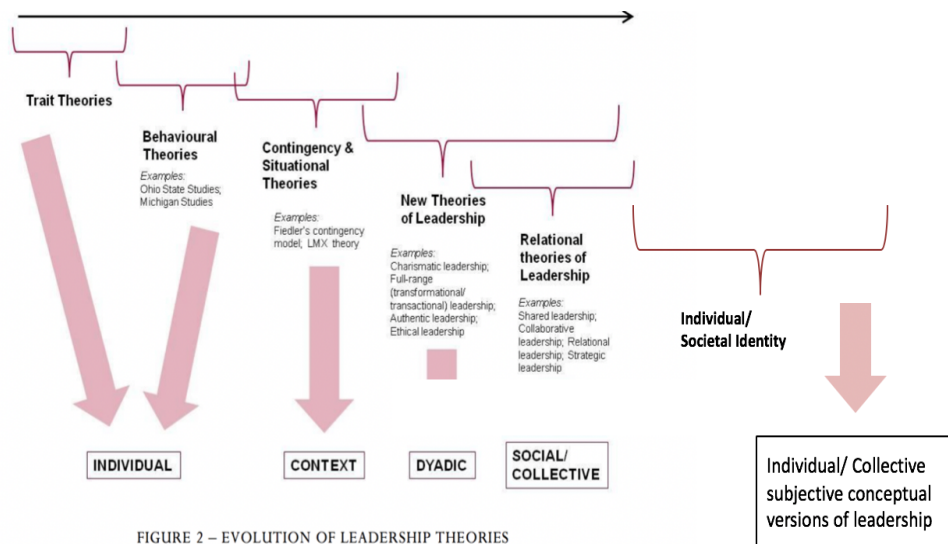


FIGURE 2 – EVOLUTION OF LEADERSHIP THEORIES

Compiled by author. MIAN SOURCES: Yukl, 2010; Northouse, 2007; Chermes, 2000; House & Aditya, 1997; Bass, 1990.

The evolution of leadership theories has seen leadership as individual, collective, subjective, and internalized. Understanding leadership through the viewpoint of a leader, identity theory ties with the emergence of individual leader identity as subjective and conceptual individualized versions of leadership. (Ibarra et al., 2014). Leader emergence through social construction involves individuals claiming or granting the leader role in a given social interaction (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

4.v. Emergence of Leader Identity

Leader Identity Emergence

The leader implications of identity theories are the foundations of leader identity theory. Leader identity refers to how leaders view and think of themselves in their leadership roles (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009). Literature has established that leaders develop a leader identity through positive leadership experiences both at work and outside of work (Day et al., 2009; Clapp-Smith et al., 2019) and through interpersonal processes that occur with their followers in everyday interactions at work (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

Leader Identity is a long-term developmental process.

Leader Identity is a cognitive schema that serves as a repository for information and knowledge attached to a leadership role (Lord & Hall, 2005) and directs an individual's behavior and interactions in leadership roles and processes (Day et al., 2009). Identity theory argues that a leader's identity develops when the leader internalizes the role (Ibarra, 1999). Social construction suggests positive spirals create a leader's identity (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

Leader Identity Development

Leaders' identities are constructed over time through relational processes of identity claims and reciprocal grants (Marchiondo et al., 2015). An example of making a direct claim for a leader identity could be an individual stating that they wish to lead a project. An indirect claim for a leader's identity could be an individual sitting at the head of the table during a meeting. For a leader identity to be constructed, individuals need to make claims for a leader identity and have these claims reciprocally granted by others. When other individuals grant these claims for a leader identity, they are, in turn, also claiming a follower identity. In response, the individual who has been granted a leader identity needs to reciprocate by granting a follower identity to the individual who granted them their leader identity claim. Over time, this reciprocal claiming and granting cycle leads to patterns of behavior that reinforce one's understanding of one's mutually recognized role as a leader, thereby leading to the construction of a leader identity.

Furthermore, DeRue and Ashford (2010) suggest that these types of scenarios can occur due to previous rounds of identity construction. For example, suppose an individual has made successful claims for a leader identity. In that case, this can lead others to perceive them as suitable for a leadership role and, therefore, lead to them granting a leader identity before additional leader identity claims are made. This example highlights the cyclical nature of the identity-claiming process. It is important to note that anyone can enter this process, regardless of their hierarchal position or organizational standing. Identities are internalized at the individual level, reinforced at the relational level, and endorsed at the collective level. According to DeRue and Ashford (2010),

Furthermore, Day et al. (2009) suggest the notion of identity development spirals that leader identity change could be positive or negative. In a positive identity development

spiral, individuals will exercise their leadership skills, receive confirmation for their leadership claims, and further align leadership behaviors with a leadership role, leading to stronger self-perceptions as a leader. This suggests the importance of positive identity development as it is somewhat self-perpetuating. The leader identity-construction process's recursive and mutually reinforcing nature can produce positive or negative spirals (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; DeRue, Ashford, & Cotton, 2009). On the positive side, receiving validation for one's self-view as a leader bolsters self-confidence, which increases one's motivation to lead (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Kark & van Dijk, 2007) and to seek new opportunities to practice leadership (Day & Harrison, 2007; Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009). As one's opportunities and capacity for exercising leadership grow, so does the likelihood of receiving a collective endorsement from the organization more broadly, such as assignments to formal leadership roles (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Recognition and affirmation strengthen one's self-identity as a leader, which fuels the search for new opportunities and growth.

Internalizing a leader's identity helps to sustain the level of interest and fortitude needed to develop and practice complex leadership skills (Lord & Hall, 2005) and to take the risks of experimenting with unfamiliar aspects of the emerging identity (Ibarra, 1999). In this positive spiral, the leader identity moves from being a peripheral, provisional aspect of the self, indicative of one's leadership potential, to a more central and enduring one, grounded in actual achievement (Lord & Hall, 2005). On the negative side, failing to receive validation for one's leadership attempts diminishes self-confidence as well as the motivation to seek developmental opportunities, experiment, and take on new leadership roles (Day et al., 2009), thus weakening one's self-identity as a leader (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

Short-term Leader Identity Change

In line with emerging research on identity theory, we purport that incidental leader identity can occur at different rates (Nieberle et al., 2024). Significant events theory (Hoffman & Lord, 2013) suggests that certain events can trigger internal changes. Events can disrupt routines, so individuals need to adjust their behaviors to the new requirements, as well as interpret and connect these new experiences with their previous ones (Hofman & Lord, 2013; Morgeson & DeRue, 2006; Wallace et al., 2021), as such events, and extreme events, are a promising avenue to explain change in leadership and identity processes (Bednar et al., 2020; Hofman & Lord, 2013; Morgeson et al., 2015). Event strength focuses on the impact that events have on individuals. Event strength is the extent to which an event is salient, commands attention, and stands out from the day-to-day routine (Morgeson et al., 2015). The stronger the event, the more it promotes controlled information processing and influences individuals' affect, cognition, and behavior (Crawford et al., 2019; Hofman & Lord, 2013; Morgeson & DeRue, 2006; Morgeson et al., 2015). Event strength is characterized by three features: novelty (i.e., the event differs from current or past experiences), disruptiveness (i.e., the event reflects a discontinuity), and extraordinariness (i.e., the event questions established orders). These three event features function independently, such that, for example, a novel event (e.g., meeting a new co-worker) is not necessarily disruptive. However, the event features combine in an additive fashion, such that their confluence determines the overall strength of an event and the impact it likely has on individuals (Morgeson et al., 2015)

Intense events have been referred to as awakening events (Seibert et al., 2021), trigger events (Bednar et al., 2020), or even shocks (Crawford et al., 2019; Hennekam et al., 2021; Lee & Mitchell, 1996). They can represent “significant points of tension, change, or

challenge” (Lanka et al., 2020, p. 382) for individuals’ self-perceptions as a leader. Strong events increase the need for sensemaking and reflection (Bednar et al., 2020; Crawford et al., 2019; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014), which in turn can be a source of leader identity change (Jennings et al., 2021; Lanaj et al., 2019).

Role changes are an example of a strong event. For example, a promotion to a formal leadership role is one mechanism by which an individual would increase their leader identity (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). This position allows leaders’ tendency to situationally claim a leader identity and followers’ tendency to recognize the leader’s role. This process may explain why, for people holding leadership positions, leader identity is a central component of their sense of self (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Hammond et al., 2017; Lester et al., 2017; Lord & Hall, 2005).

In contrast to leader identity change triggered through substantial events, emerging research has demonstrated the ebbs and flows of leader identity across time (McClean et al., 2019). This research conceptualizes leader identity as a momentary experience (Ashford & DeRue, 2012), as being created on-the-spot (Lord & Chui, 2017; Lord et al., 2016), frequently moving (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), and dynamically shifting across time within individuals (Epitropaki et al., 2017; Lord et al., 2020). Building on these perspectives, the term dynamics (or “ebb and flow”; McClean et al., 2019) is used to describe change processes over time (Lang et al., 2021) and specifically focus on describing and explaining small changes over shorter periods (Xu et al., 2020). Individuals are motivated to establish and re-establish both who they are (I am a leader) and who they are not (I am not a leader) (Watson, 2009).

As such, leader identities can be understood as equilibria that result from individuals' momentary sensemaking of the extent to which they do or do not feel like a leader. The equilibrium describes the individual's typical leader identity (Boker, 2015; Deboeck, 2013). Internal and external cues can move the identity-equilibrium state. The cues are integrated into the momentary self-concept to understand 'Who am I in this situation?' and 'What should I do?' (Epitropaki et al., 2017, p. 107). Accordingly, leader identities may change due to new situations or events that the individual encounters (Ashforth & Schinof, 2016; Lord et al., 2015). However, over time, the net effect of such changes is often the formulation of a new equilibrium of leader identity; this might closely follow the experience and sensemaking associated with strong events (Hofman & Lord, 2013; Morgeson et al., 2015)

This perspective extends leader identity theory across domains. For example, a leader who moves from one domain to another (i.e., goes to work or home) will experience natural shifts in leader identity. At the same time, it is clear that in some circumstances, pressure from one life setting (e.g., work or family) may spillover and undermine functioning in another; a parallel body of theory suggests that participation in multiple roles provides a more significant number of opportunities and resources to facilitate individual growth and better functioning (Barnett, 1996; Marks, 1977; Sieber, 1974). For example, empirical reports using various samples consistently indicate that marital quality is an important buffer for job-related stress, particularly for men (O'Neil & Greenberger, 1994; Weiss, 1990).

Scholars typically conclude that having the opportunity to talk through difficulties at work or having a partner sensitive to job-related pressures may help individuals handle the pressures associated with their jobs and consequently perform better (Barnett, 1996; Gattiker & Larwood, 1990; Weiss, 1990). Conversely, numerous reports from cross-sectional and

longitudinal analyses indicate that being employed and being a mother together with being a wife is associated with better physical and psychological well-being in contrast to being an unemployed wife, particularly among women who want to work or who are economically disadvantaged (Marks, 1977; Waldron, Weiss, & Hughes, 1998). Consequently, despite an almost exclusive focus on conflict, separate but related bodies of research suggest that the work-family interface can be characterized as both negative and positive.

Research on Antecedents of Leader Identity

If one does not immediately take on a new leadership role, empirical research suggests that focusing on one's identity as a leader may enhance leadership development (Clapp-Smith et al., 2019). Some theorize that an identity-based approach considers each individual's unique understandings and assumptions about leadership (Hammond, Clapp-Smith, and Palanski, 2017) and unique life experiences (Alvesson and Svingsson, 2003) to generate a distinct leadership development narrative.

Another mechanism by which an individual would increase their leader identity is through shared self-concept with their followers. Often, leadership identity literature focuses on the latter two levels of identity- the relational and the collective. Lord et al. (1999) suggest that leaders assert their leadership by priming different aspects of a follower's self-concept or identity. Self-concept is defined as one's frameworks, schemas, or cognitive structures that guide one's thought process on how one views oneself and the world. An individual's self-concept dramatically impacts a broad spectrum of psychological processes. It has been suggested that leaders can influence subordinate's self-concept. There is a clear logic that values and self-concepts mediate the effects of leadership activities. Values and identities are internal to followers and can be viewed as relatively enduring criteria for

evaluating behavior, cognitions, and affect. Empirical evidence indicates that values and identities are likely to mutually reinforce motivation (Lord & Brown, 2003).

An individual's self-concept has a dramatic impact on a broad spectrum of psychological processes, including a subordinate's self-concept (Lord et al., 1999). Interestingly, this suggests that leaders will be most effective when follower's self-concepts are consistent with the identity level stressed by leaders and the implications of the values that that leader stresses. This type of leadership is immediately effective if the followers happen to have the same self-concepts and values as the leader. For more long-term effects, leaders will need to develop new cognitive structures for both them and their followers. For example, leaders may need to create a sense of community among workers so that they may change the self-concepts and aspirations of followers through repeated priming. This all suggests that when values are active and reinforce identities, powerful self-regulatory processes related to effects, goals, and cognitions are engaged, but when values and identities are dissociated, weak, and inconsistent, self-regulatory processes do not work (Lord & Brown, 2001). More recent field study research has shown leader role self-compassion to be an antecedent of leader identity (Lanaj et al., 2022).

Most studies of purposeful leader identity development have only been carried out in a small number of areas. Research supporting identity-based leader development proposed that identity is acquired through knowing (gaining new perspectives), doing (producing new behaviors), and being (development of a leader's self-concept; Ibarra, Snook, & Ramos, 2010). Research has demonstrated an individual's identity as a leader grows from experiences in roles where there are encounters with other people in different social contexts (Ibarra et al., 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005). From narrative research, it is understood that the

other people could be a mirror of oneself through writing (Andrews et al., 2004). Others have examined the downstream effects of positive leader self-reflection and activated leader identity on leaders' perceptions of goal progress at work (Lanaj et al., 2022).

4.vi. Consequences of Leader Identity

Longitudinal evidence has shown a positive within person effect of leader identity on leadership effectiveness (Day & Sin, 2011). Through adaptation and growth into the role, one understands and lives up to expectations associated with role schemas and followers' specific needs (Gecas, 1982; Lord & Hall, 2005). With practice and exposure to different situational requirements, leaders are better able to judge what is needed by followers and adapt leadership styles to them (Lord & Hall, 2005)

Furthermore, leader identity may serve as a motivational mechanism that explains the effect of training on leadership effectiveness for less experienced leaders (Kragt & Guenter, 2018). Leader identity can also help build an individuals' confidence in interpersonal communication and decision making in a new and unpredictable circumstance (Baumeister, 1995). Leader identity is closely related to leadership skill development; thus, activating leader identity is crucial to the success of organizational leaders (Day & Harrison, 2007; Day et al., 2009; DeRue & Ashford, 2010;). Further, a leader identity influences the metacognition and self-regulation that underlie leader development processes (Lord & Hall, 2005). More recent field study research has shown self-sacrificial leadership to be a consequence of leader identity (Lanaj, Gabriel, & Chawla, 2021). As well as leader competence and leader civility (Lanaj et al., 2022), transformational behavior and enacted powers (Lanaj, Gabriel, & Jennings (2023).

5.STUDY1- EXPANDING THE EXPLORATION LEADER IDENTITY

A focal question remains: What are some of the factors that influence incidental leader identity? Given the nascent nature of this area, Study 1 is exploratory in nature. An exploratory study was chosen for the first study of this thesis to identify variables and relationships of incidental leader identity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). An exploratory research model can help identify the most relevant variables to the research question and understand potential relationships among these variables. This is crucial when the researcher has limited knowledge about which factors are most important (Babbie, 2016).

For the past ten years, calls for investigation of leader identity have grown as well as the need for understanding the antecedents and consequences (Ainsworth & Grant, 2012; Lord & Hall, 2005; McInnes & Corlett, 2012). Antecedents of leader identity such as taking on a new leadership role, focusing on leader identity, generating distinct leader development narratives, and priming different aspects of a follower's self-concept have all been shown to construct leader identity (Clapp-Smith et al., 2019; Hammond, Clapp-Smith & Palanski, 2017; Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Lord et al., 1999). Others have examined the downstream effects of positive leader self-reflection (Lanaj et al., 2022). Much of leader identity change brings the unconscious thoughts and ideas individuals have about their own leader self and bringing them into the conscious to be examined (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). Previous studies, however, have not yet dealt with the other unconscious by-products that may also play a role in changing one's leader identity. An exploration study was chosen to establish research priorities for the remainder of the thesis (and beyond). Since a doctorate has limited resources (time, money, etc.), exploratory studies help determine which areas

deserve more detailed investigation. This can save effort and costs by focusing on areas with the most potential impact (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

STUDY 1:

Who am I as a leader?

What Narratives Reveal about Antecedents of Leader Identity

ABSTRACT

To investigate leader identities, we examine the narratives of 61 healthcare professionals from diverse roles across the Irish Healthcare Service. This research aims to expand the understanding of how these workers perceive their leader identity as an amalgamation of their role, past experiences, and upbringing through narrative stories to help identify new avenues of leader identity research and understanding. Healthcare leadership is crucial for any health system's success; however, many professionals do not view themselves as leaders. This study aims to explore this issue and ask the following question. What do leadership narratives from Irish Healthcare workers reveal about leader identity and its relationship to aspects of work and life? This research expands our theoretical understanding of the ties between reluctant leadership, helping behavior, influences outside of work, Irish cultural context, and leader identity. Four themes were developed following thematic analysis. These included a reluctance to lead, the influence of outside presence on leader identity, cultural context, and the importance of helping. As a result of these findings, questions and conditions for future research emerge within these themes.

Keywords:

Leader Identity, Narrative Identity, Incidental Leadership, Family Spillover, Reluctant Leadership

INTRODUCTION:

Stories have been a fundamental part of human existence for centuries, serving as a means of entertainment and as powerful tools for self-reflection and understanding.

Storytelling allows us to connect deeply with the human psyche and underscores its role in shaping how we perceive ourselves and our place in the world. Through stories, we engage in a self-narration process that helps us interpret our experiences, values, and beliefs. By positioning ourselves as characters within these narratives, we create coherent personal identities that guide our actions and inform our understanding of life's complexities.

Research in psychology, sociology, and literature has consistently shown that stories help individuals construct and reconstruct their self-concepts, often revealing aspects of themselves that may otherwise remain hidden (McAdams, 1993). This narrative construction of self allows for integrating past experiences with present circumstances and future aspirations, offering a dynamic and evolving understanding of who we are (Bruner, 1990).

Much of leader identity change brings individuals' unconscious thoughts and ideas about their own leader self and brings them into the conscious to be examined (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). Previous studies, however, have not yet dealt with the other unconscious by-products that may also play a role in changing one's leader identity. By delving into the intricate relationship between storytelling and self-concept, this research aims to highlight the essential role that stories play in helping us make our leader identity and potentially other unconscious influences on that identity.

Narrative identity is the internalized and evolving story of oneself that a person constructs to make sense of their life experiences and give them meaning (McLean & Pasupathi, 2012). Previous narrative research has examined the degree to which one reports

gaining insights about oneself or the world (McLean & Thorne, 2003) and making explicit connections between oneself and past events (Pasupathi & Mansour, 2006). These insights and connections manifest reasoning processes (McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007). Therefore, narrative identity is a helpful tool to explore the unconscious by-products of leader identity.

The narrative approach offers a holistic framework for exploring how individuals construct meaning over time, making it particularly valuable for understanding complex, longitudinal experiences. Focusing on storytelling allows participants to articulate their experiences in their own words and structure, leading to rich, multi-layered data that captures emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Unlike interviews, narratives emphasize temporal and contextual insights, providing a deeper understanding of how events unfold and influence personal growth, identity, and self-concept (Riessman, 2008). Additionally, the narrative approach empowers participants by giving them control over their stories, creating an inclusive and participant-centered research process that aligns with the principles of qualitative inquiry (Frank, 2010).

In contrast, interviews (structured, semi-structured, or unstructured) are better suited for targeted investigations, particularly when comparability across participants is needed (Bryman, 2016). They efficiently collect focused data on specific themes, allowing researchers to probe for clarification or elaboration as necessary. While interviews are time-efficient and adaptable, they often lack narratives' richness and contextual depth. Researchers may choose the narrative approach over interviews when the study explores identity construction, meaning-making, or the interconnectedness of life experiences. In contrast, interviews are more effective for answering specific research questions across larger sample

sizes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Both methods have unique strengths, but the choice depends on the research objectives and the depth of understanding required.

Furthermore, this research focuses on the healthcare sector, as healthcare organizations are a particularly complex and dynamic structure in which leaders are weighed down with many competing demands and limited resources (Till, McKimm, & Swanwick, 2020). Healthcare leaders often find their leadership secondary to their healthcare duties as their job (Till, McKimm, & Swanwick, 2020). Leadership structures in clinical healthcare organizations are usually hierarchical and present challenges for healthcare professionals to see themselves as a leader if they do not hold specific hierarchical titles (Koskiniemi, Vakkala, & Pietiläinen, 2019; Croft et al., 2015).

This study offers three essential contributions to the current literature. First, it advances leader identity theory by introducing and linking the concept of incidental leader identity to helping behavior. Incidental leader identity refers to unintentional changes in one's sense of being a leader. This paper uniquely connects helping behavior to shifts in leader identity, without emphasizing traditional leader behavior. Based on the recollections of healthcare professionals that helping others triggered experiences of leader identity, we develop the concept of incidental leader identity that is leader identity fostered through incidental behaviors that are not deliberately targeted to enhance leader identity. In addition, we identify helping as a crucial incidental behaviour that facilitates incidental leader identity. Previous research has shown that individuals choose to help others for various interconnected reasons, often influenced by personal experiences and situational factors. For example, research has shown that individuals who have experienced personal hardship are usually motivated to “give back” as they have a sense of empathy and connection with others who

are suffering, driving them to help (Knight, 2013). Our study shows that through reflection on their helping behavior, healthcare professionals link their helping behaviors to identifying as leaders. Since many in the healthcare profession are drawn to helping, understanding the link between helping behavior and leader identity is an important outcome (Jansson, 2011).

Second, this paper advances Leader Identity theory by addressing the connection between leader identity and reluctance to lead, building on prior research that suggests reluctance to lead may arise from a low sense of leader identity (Epitropaki, 2018). Previous research linked low leader identity to reluctance to lead, and we tie reluctance to lead to reduced leader identity (Bucher & Korunka, 2024). This is a causal direction contribution suggesting that reverse causality may also apply here. This paper offers further insight into reluctance to lead and leader identity by demonstrating that reluctance to lead is tied with a decrease in self-reported leader identity.

Finally, this paper provides insight into the Irish healthcare sector, specifically the cultural context that Irish culture has on leader identity. A relationship exists between managers' values, leadership styles, and organizational culture (Sackmann, 1991; Schein, 2003). This research provides insight into Ireland's specific historical context of leader oppression and its relationship with the leader's own leader identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leader Identity Theory

Leader identity refers to how leaders view and think of themselves in their leadership roles (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009). Leaders develop a leader identity through positive leadership experiences both at work and outside of work (Day et al., 2009; Hammond,

Clapp-Smith, & Palanski, 2017) and through interpersonal processes that occur with their followers in everyday interactions at work (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Leader Identity is a cognitive schema that serves as a repository for information and knowledge attached to a leadership role (Lord & Hall, 2005) and directs an individual's behavior and interactions in leadership roles and processes (Day et al., 2009).

One's self-view as a leader is only one of multiple intersecting identities constructed and negotiated within social contexts (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Insight into how individuals construct their self-views and how those views enable and respond to processes like attention (self-awareness) and regulation (self-evaluation and enhancement) can help understand how identity contributes to leader developmental readiness. Individuals can hold multiple, distinct identities that include relatively stable and unchanging aspects of the self (core self-concept), as well as contextually specific aspects of the self (working self-concept) (Markus & Wurf, 1987). The number of identities one holds, as well as the content, centrality, and importance of each identity, differ among individuals and contexts. Identities may be related to distinct and various personal or social relationships (Stets & Burke, 2000) or associated with specific roles (Markus & Wurf, 1987). To sustain long-term interest and motivation for developing and practicing leadership, the leader role must become part of one's self-identity (Lord & Hall, 2005).

Due to the exploratory nature of his study, this study sought to understand potential antecedents of leader identity from many angles. Taking a "whole person approach," this paper considered that leaders may receive validation inside and outside the workplace (Avolio, 2011). This lens is handy as leader identities are inherently multidimensional and involve various spheres of one's life (e.g., work, community, friends, and family) as

individuals hold multiple situation-specific (including domain-specific) identities in the context of an overarching, relatively stable self-concept (Day & Harrison, 2007; Epitropaki et al., 2017; Lord & Brown, 2004).

Narrative Leader Identity

Narrative identity theory is founded on unconscious identity revealing itself through words. Our unconscious thoughts can affect us without awareness, which is quite a predicament. This means our unconscious thoughts and ideas can sabotage our conscious actions and decisions (Wilson, 2002). Wilson famously declares that the mind can be thought of as a cave, with consciousness constituting only those objects currently in the beam of the flashlight (Wilson, 2002). Freud first coined the term unconscious, and his outstanding contribution was to gather, elaborate, systemize, and refine these ideas to build a scientific approach to unconscious processing. Kihlstrom (1987) famously compared the mind to a computer and concluded that conscious awareness is unnecessary for complex psychological functioning. This new unconscious area is more concerned with affect, motivation, control, and metacognition than the old cognitive unconscious. Goals, motives, and self-regulation are prominent and cause the phenomenal experience of having intentions and free will (Hassin et al., 2004).

These scripted personality units appear in different guises and operate at varying levels of abstraction, from the scene to the script to the life story schema (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). Still, all these manifestations of narrative memory are the building blocks of ongoing identity. Singer and Bluck (2001) have defined this approach to organizing life experience as “narrative processing” or constructing storied accounts of past events ranging from brief anecdotes to fully developed autobiographies. These accounts rely on vivid imagery, familiar

plot structures, and archetypal characters, often linked to predominant cultural themes or conflicts. Once filtered, narratives can be analyzed with self-relevance to gain insight into our nature, values, and goals (Conway et al., 2004). The accumulating knowledge that emerges from reasoning about our narrative memories yields a life story schema that provides causal, temporal, and thematic coherence to an overall sense of identity (Bluck & Habermas, 2000).

Therefore, narrative interventions are a good way for individuals to understand their identity (Ricoeur, 1980) in various contexts (Ibarra, 1999). Self-narratives are particularly interesting because they provide insight into one's judgments about their past, current, and future selves and help them re-think their accuracy. They objectify and thus make explicit and tangible notions about themselves that remain difficult to recognize and build on (Kegan, 1982). Such narratives have been used in education, family psychology, community development, sociology, and medicine and continue expanding into other research areas (Wilson, 2009). By delving into leader identity narratives for healthcare leaders, this research aims to answer the research question:

What do employee narratives reveal about the leader identity of healthcare workers in the Irish sector?

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection/ Procedure

The study aims to capture the leader identity narrative in a sample of healthcare workers enrolled in a leadership certificate program at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin, Ireland, 2019. These participants were chosen as they were all employees within the Irish healthcare system at the time of enrollment. Participants were informed that they could

partake in the research upon self-selection into the study. Prior to submitting a leader identity story, individuals were asked to journal daily about their leadership experiences for four weeks. This was an open-ended journaling assignment to write about their leader experience uninterrupted for ten minutes. The purpose of this journaling was simply to activate the practice of writing about leadership and to prime the participants to notice their daily leadership.

Measurement was taken from the beginning of the assignment with one story. The objective of the assignment was to develop a personal leadership story utilizing the prompt: “Write a narrative leadership story and include a history of who you have been as a leader with a view to where you are heading as a future leader.” Participants were instructed to focus on themselves as the main protagonist of the leadership story, starting from their past leadership (from childhood) into their future ideal leadership. In this way, the study is ‘anchored in the worlds of lived experience’ (Denzin, 1997). Narrative research, as a qualitative research approach, focuses on lived and living experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Acting as a healthcare leader requires the skills for dealing with several managerial and relational dimensions within organizations (Witman et al., 2011). Thinking of oneself as a leader does not require a managerial position (Day et al., 2009). However, most doctors feel that they have the definitive responsibility for the patient (Nugus et al., 2010).

The use of storytelling to explore leader identity, while not entirely novel, remains a valuable approach in leadership research, as it provides rich, qualitative insights into how leaders understand and construct their identities over time. Existing literature has extensively highlighted the role of storytelling and narratives in leader identity. For example, Shamir and Eilam (2005) argue that storytelling is crucial for developing leader identity by enabling

individuals to make sense of their experiences, values, and decisions, fostering a coherent sense of self as a leader. This body of work suggests that storytelling is not only a tool for understanding identity but also for actively shaping and reinforcing it. Therefore, any research leveraging this approach should acknowledge and build on these foundational studies to ensure alignment with the broader scholarly discourse.

As a qualitative piece of research, the narrative stories were the source of our document analysis (O’Leary et al., 2014). The length of the stories ranged from 150 words to 1800 words.

Sample size

61 healthcare workers enrolled in a management certificate with the Royal College of Surgeons in 2019 - 46 female and 15 males. Details of the sample are in Table 1 below.

Participants were all given a pseudonym upon submission of their narrative to protect their identity.

Table 3: Participants’ Gender, Age, and Professional Identification

Participant #	Gender	Age	Professional Identification
1	Female	40 - 44	Doctor
2	Male	50 - 54	Medical consultant
3	Female	45 - 49	Education Specialist
4	Female	40 - 44	Lecturer/GP
5	Female	45 - 49	Nurse Manager
6	Female	40 - 44	Trainer
7	Female	35 - 39	Physiotherapist
8	Female	50 - 54	Nurse Specialist
9	Male	55 - 59	Medical consultant
10	Male	40 - 44	Consultant Physician
11	Female	40 - 44	Nurse
12	Female	35 - 39	Physiotherapist

13	Female	50 - 54	Consultant intensive care
14	Female	40 - 44	Doctor
15	Female	35 - 39	Manager
16	Male	40 - 44	Consultant
17	Male	50 - 54	ED Consultant
18	Female	30 - 34	Nurse
19	Female	45 - 49	Nurse
20	Male	40 - 44	Medical consultant
21	Male	45 - 49	Manager with clinical background in health sciences
22	Female	40 - 44	Pharmacist
23	Female	45 - 49	Manager
24	Female	55 - 59	Programme manager
25	Female	35 - 39	Senior medical officer
26	Female	45 - 49	Surveillance Scientist
27	Female	30 - 34	Senior Medical Social Worker
28	Female	40 - 44	CNM1 emergency nursing
29	Female	45 - 49	Medical Consultant
30	Female	45 - 49	Clinical nurse manager
31	Female	40 - 44	Scientist
32	Female	40 - 44	Medical Consultant
33	Male	40 - 44	Manager
34	Female	40 - 44	Pharmacist
35	Female	30 - 34	Nurse
36	Female	55 - 59	Clerical Officer
37	Female	60+	Manager
38	Female	35 - 39	Clerical Officer
39	Female	35 - 39	Midwife manager
40	Male	40 - 44	Surgeon
41	Female	30 - 34	Senior Respiratory Physiologist
42	Male	40 - 44	Manager
43	Male	40 - 44	Consultant
44	Male	50 - 54	Consultant in Anaesthesia
45	Female	30 - 34	Nurse
46	Female	40 - 44	Nurse
47	Female	40 - 44	Midwife Manager
48	Female	45 - 49	ICT
49	Male	40 - 44	Informatics Project Manager
50	Male	45 - 49	Medical Consultant
51	Female	40 - 44	Midwife Manager
52	Female	40 - 44	Nurse
53	Female	55 - 59	Medical Consultant

54	Female	55 - 59	Administration
55	Female	45 - 49	Chief pharmacist
56	Female	40 - 44	Medical consultant
57	Female	45 - 49	Medical Consultant
58	Female	40 - 44	Nurse Manager
59	Female	45 - 49	Medical Consultant
60	Male	55 - 59	Medical Consultant
61	Female	55 - 59	Medical Consultant

This study received ethical approval from the ethics committee within Trinity Business School on behalf of Trinity College Dublin. At the time, the researcher's supervisor-maintained access to healthcare professionals enrolled in a leadership certificate program at the Royal College of Surgeons. Participants could partake in the research voluntarily. During the intake process into the study, they were informed that their participation would not affect their certification progress. Throughout the data collection process, strict ethical guidelines were followed. Before data collection, participants were told the study details (by email or verbally). Respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary, that their responses would be made anonymous, and they could end their involvement at any time. Study details were revisited at the start of each focus group or interview, and participants were invited to ask any outstanding questions they might have. Participants were required to give their informed consent before taking part in the study and were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Thematic analysis was employed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following Braun and Clarke's six-stage process, data were first familiarized, then initial codes were generated to categorize them into meaningful groups. However, Braun and Clarke (2012) stressed the

importance of inclusivity; therefore, data were coded for as many potential themes as seemed significant. Doing so was particularly salient for this study, as some of the findings were surprising, resulting in an abductive turn.

Abduction is a process that individuals use when mental models cannot explain observed events (Hansen, 2008). Therefore, abductive theorizing is often used when an unexpected phenomenon is poorly understood by existing literature (Saetre & Van de Ven, 2021). Several suggested overlapping, non-linear steps for disciplined abduction include observing and confirming anomalies and creating and assessing plausible explanations, individually and with others (Saetre and Van de Ven, 2021). As such, the author engaged in in-depth discussions with colleagues, attended conferences to gain insights and returned to the literature to make sense of the findings.

Through this iterative process, literature on leader identity (Miscenko, Guenter, & Day, 2017; Lanka, Topakas, & Patterson, 2020), reluctant leadership (Newman, 2015), and helping (Behrendt, Matz, & Göritz, 2017) were used to help inform coding. Once coded, codes were combined to create candidate themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) while ensuring they were internally homogeneous and externally heterogeneous (Patton, 1990). Visualizations of the data were created to capture the relationships among data codes and themes. Examples of the candidate themes identified were: (1) collaborative/democratic leadership (2) reluctant leadership; (3) lack of trust in followers; (4) Insecure leader; (5) lack of role models; (6) helping others; (7) influences outside of work; (8) Cultural context and (9) incidental leadership. The entire data set was re-read, and data within candidate themes were reviewed to ensure that all data had been coded appropriately. This ensured candidate themes accurately represented the data set.

Next, memos were written to develop the overall “story” of each theme in response to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 92). To cross-check variation, NVivo’s crosstab query tool was leveraged to check the spread of coding across the cases. This led to identifying a subgroup that indicated the need to apply the comparative case method to investigate how and under what condition(s) responses differed. The comparative case study method systematically compares two or more data points to understand their variation (Kaarbo & Beasley, 1999). Through an iterative process of memo-writing, discussions, model-drawing, and re-reading the data, four themes were discovered: (1) Reluctance to Lead, (2) Influence of outside presence on Leader Identity, (3) Cultural Context, and (4) Helping Others. The themes were defined and named in line with abductive theory. The following section (Figure 1) presents our findings in more detail.

RESULTS:

Table 4: Themes/ Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	Illustrative Quotes
1 Reluctance to Lead	1.1. Understanding Reluctance to Lead	1.1 <i>"I am a reluctant leader. I am not born to be a leader. However, as a reluctant leader I listen to my conscience, I am not a crusader, I will never be carried away in righteous fervor."</i>
	1.2. Reluctance to lead in role	
	1.3. Reluctance to lead effect on wellbeing	1.2 <i>"With the occasion of the creation of the TOP service in Ireland I was appointed as the TOP lead obstetrician, partly having experience from working in the past in a system where abortions were allowed and partly because I think nobody really wanted to run the service."</i>
		1.3 <i>"I am a somewhat reluctant leader, in that although I am not merely a follower, I do not always recognize the leadership qualities in myself. I do not place myself on a pedestal and believe that teamwork truly does make the dream work moreover there is no 'I' in team. Professionally, I encourage positive practice and encourage others to improve and work with me this positively impacts on patient's experiences and outcomes. I strive to be a team member who is capable of leading, and I believe both my personal and professional life demonstrate traits of positive leadership and collaboration. I am me myself and I, not perfect but evolving, just like me as a leader."</i>

2. Influence of outside presence on Leader Identity	2.1 Influence of Family on Leader Identity	2.1 <i>“Having and giving regular feedback at work is common practice but not with family or friends. (When reflecting on my conversation with family) A common theme that came up for me was compassion. Compassionate towards my family and friends in different circumstances. On evaluation of the reflection as a whole I feel compassion (for me) in leadership creates stronger connections between people and colleagues within the healthcare setting and outside of it.”</i>
3. Cultural Context	3.1 Understanding childhood family dynamics on leader identity	3.1 <i>“I was born in Greece during the dictatorship. It was a difficult period for people and a lot of tensions in society. My dad was an army officer, last of 5 kids in a rural poor family and did not meet his dad. As he was the only one from the family who ‘succeeded’ in life, was taking care of the family and never stopped taking care of them.”</i>
	3.2 Understanding cultural and society effects on leader identity	3.2 <i>“I always felt that any respect should be earned, rather than assumed, and a title should not confer respect, as ingrained in the Irish from our history.”</i>
		3.3 <i>“Growing up in a traditional Catholic Scotch-Irish family with the strictest restrictions of Catholicism combined with the self-desertion nurtured by the Scotch Presbyterian church left little time to consider leadership.”</i>
4. Helping Others	4.1 Helping people motivates me as a leader	4.1 <i>“I think that all these affected me, and I decided to find a job that would allow me to help people. As a result, I chose to go to medical school and become a doctor and now I find myself in a leadership role”</i>
	4.2 Leader Identity as a by-product of helping	

4.3 Embracing the identity of leadership through helping

4.2 *“Listening to the concerns of the newer doctors at the organ transplant, in that movement, I felt it was important that I should comfort them and walk them through the procedure.”*

4.3 *“I displayed leadership that day as supported them, shared my experience with them, prepared them for the task in hand. They automatically looked to me that day as their leader and I believe I was a good role model for them.”*

Theme 1: Reluctance to Lead

Approximately one-quarter of the leaders expressed reluctance to lead, defined as hesitation about assuming leadership roles despite high potential (Epitropaki, 2018). These employees indicated a waning enthusiasm for identifying as leaders.

Some healthcare professionals expressed this reluctance outright. Maria¹ understood her reluctance and wrote, *“I am a reluctant leader. I am not born to be a leader. However, as a reluctant leader I listen to my conscience, I am not a crusader, I will never be carried away in righteous fervor.”* While Sara¹ explained her reluctance for a particular role,

“I am a somewhat reluctant leader, in that although I am not merely a follower, I do not always recognise the leadership qualities in myself. I do not place myself on a pedestal and believe that teamwork truly does make the dream work moreover there is no ‘I’ in team. Professionally, I encourage positive practice and encourage others to improve and work with me this positively impacts on patient’s experiences and outcomes. I strive to be a team member who is capable of leading, and I believe both my personal and professional life demonstrate traits of positive leadership and collaboration. I am me myself and I, not perfect but evolving, just like me as a leader.”

Finally, Ed¹ connected that his reluctance to lead affects his well-being.

“I am a somewhat reluctant leader, in that although I am not merely a follower, I do not always recognize the leadership qualities in myself. I do not place myself on a pedestal and believe that teamwork truly does make the dream work moreover there is no ‘I’ in team. Professionally, I encourage positive practice and encourage others to improve and work with me this positively impacts on patient’s experiences and

outcomes. I strive to be a team member who is capable of leading, and I believe both my personal and professional life demonstrate traits of positive leadership and collaboration. I am me myself and I, not perfect but evolving, just like me as a leader.”

Theme 2: Influences outside of work

This phenomenon is known as spillover (Ashforth et al., 2000). Boundary theory examines how boundaries or fences are established and maintained between multiple life domains such as work and family (Ashforth et al., 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996). Individuals may manage the relationship between these domains by sharpening boundaries, which leads to segmentation, or blurring boundaries, which leads to integration. Three factors reflect how individuals segment their roles: the flexibility and permeability of role boundaries and the contrast in role identities (Ashforth et al., 2000).

Mark said, “Having and giving regular feedback at work is common practice but not with family or friends. (When reflecting on my conversation with family) A common theme that came up for me was compassion. Compassionate towards my family and friends in different circumstances. On evaluation of the reflection as a whole I feel compassion (for me) in leadership creates stronger connections between people and colleagues within the healthcare setting and outside of it.”

Building upon other research on the boundaries of identity theory (Lanaj, Gabriel, & Jennings, 2023; Haslam et al., 2022), this paper offers further insight into the relationships outside work that influence leader identity.

Theme 3: Cultural Context

Hofstede (2001) suggested that people had different, sometimes directly opposing, values and beliefs depending on their country of origin. Cultural diversity in the workplace reflects the existent demographic, social, and cultural differences on a societal level (Gotsis and Korte 2015). Over one-third of the participants wrote about the influence of their cultural context on their leader identity.

Sinead¹ shares *“Growing up in a traditional Catholic Scotch-Irish family with the strictest restrictions of Catholicism combined with the self-desertion nurtured by the Scotch Presbyterianism church left little time to consider leadership.”* And Jess¹ shared a similar sentiment about her Irish upbringing by writing *“I always felt that any respect should be earned, rather than assumed, and a title should not confer respect, as ingrained in the Irish from our history.”*

Others have shown that a leader's identity is socialized by culture (van Dick, R., & Kerschreiter, 2016). This study contributes to research by extending the conversation on the social context of leader identity in the Irish culture. In particular, the history of Ireland as a country born out of its intolerance to tyrannical leaders informs a cultural context to internalized leader identity. Similarly, other childhood upbringings in other cultures informed leader identity as well. Markus wrote,

“I was born in Greece during the dictatorship. It was a difficult period for people and a lot of tensions in society. My dad was an army officer, last of 5 kids in a rural poor family and did not meet his dad. As he was the only one from the family who ‘succeeded’ in life, was taking care of the family and never stopped taking care of them.”

Theme 4: Helping Others

According to Podsakoff et al. (2000), helping behavior is comprised of the following traits: altruism, peacemaking, and cheerleading (Organ, 1988; Williams and Anderson, 1991) and interpersonal facilitation (Van Scotter and Motowidlo, 1996).

Heather¹ wrote, *“I think that all these affected me, and I decided to find a job that would allow me to help people. As a result, I chose to go to medical school and become a doctor, and now I find myself in a leadership role.”*

Finbar¹ shared similar sentiments when he wrote.

“During a routine operation a potentially fatal error was made. Thankfully there was no adverse outcome as the error was rectified during the surgery. The Clinical Governance Director convened an After-Action Review to assess the error and prevent any future recurrences. During the review a senior nurse became distraught and felt that he was being blamed for the error. Although I had nothing to do with the error, I explained that the responsibility was completely mine and mine alone. This reassured the nurse and gave him the confidence to speak freely at the review which led to a major change in our protocols and no further similar errors.”

DISCUSSION:

From this exploratory study on narrative leader identity emerges four themes: 1) Reluctance to Lead, (2) Influence of outside presence on Leader Identity, (3) Cultural Context, and (4) The importance of helping. Through these insights, we can understand more fully factors that may influence healthcare leader identity in the Irish culture.

Our study offers three essential contributions to the current literature. First, this paper contributes to leader identity theory by linking incidental leader identity through helping behavior. Previous research on helping has shown that helping increases prosocial benefits

and well-being (Lanaj, Johnson, & Wang, 2016). Earlier studies, however, have not yet dealt with the other unconscious by-products that may also play a role in changing one's leader identity. This paper introduces the idea of incidental leader identity as a by-product of helping. As defined in this thesis, incidental leader identity is a phenomenon of leader identity change that occurs as a by-product of a behavior or action.. Key characteristics of incidental leader identity include its emergent nature, its development through situational experiences, and its unintended occurrence. Some leaders described their leadership experiences as stemming from happenstance or situational proximity. Mark¹ said, *"Listening to the concerns of the newer doctors at the organ transplant, in that movement, I felt it was important that I should comfort them and walk them through the procedure."*

In another example, May¹ displayed characteristics further down the chain of incidental leader identity by describing a time she embraced a leader identity in a surgical suite. She said *"I displayed leadership that day as supported them, shared my experience with them, prepared them for the task in hand. They automatically looked to me that day as their leader and I believe I was a good role model for them."* Previous research has shown that individuals choose to help others for various interconnected reasons, often influenced by personal experiences and situational factors. For example, research has shown that individuals who have experienced personal hardship are usually motivated to "give back" as they have a sense of empathy and connection with others who are suffering, driving them to help (Knight, 2013). Our study shows that through reflection on their helping behavior, healthcare professionals link their helping behaviors to identifying as leaders. Since many in the healthcare profession are drawn to helping, understanding the link between helping behavior and leader identity is an important outcome (Jansson, 2011).

Second, this paper contributes to the theory by bridging the gap between a leader's identity and reluctance to lead. The findings are in line with recent studies that indicate a potential trend of waning enthusiasm for identifying as a leader. Despite the assumption that being perceived as a leader is attractive to individuals (Zhang et al., 2020), in today's world, employees often choose lateral moves in organizations rather than a hierarchical career (Larsson et al., 2023). This global trend (Chan et al., 2011) of reluctant reluctance to take on leadership roles has spurred a new line of research focusing on the agentic perspectives in leader emergence and self-selection biases (Chan & Drasgow, 2001).

Reluctance to lead may stem from various factors. Some scholars theorize that reluctance to lead could stem from low leader identity salience (Epitropaki, 2018). Experiencing reluctance may share some commonality with the impostor syndrome, which is defined as persistent self-doubt about one's qualifications despite the evidence of competence (Clance & Imes, 1978). For instance, in a context where the inclusive organizational climate is low, individuals may perceive demographic factors (e.g., gender, race) as more related to status, leading them to think that they are more inclined to be evaluated primarily on their surface-level attributes rather than their leadership skills or potential. This may, in turn, accentuate their feelings of being an imposter as a leader (Epitropaki, 2018).

This aligns with previous research theorizing that reluctance to lead could stem from low leader identity salience (Epitropaki, 2018). Experiencing reluctance may share some commonality with the impostor syndrome, defined as persistent self-doubt about one's qualifications despite the evidence of competence (Clance & Imes, 1978). This paper offers further insight into a reluctance to lead and leader identity. These findings align with recent

studies that indicate a potential trend of waning enthusiasm for identifying as a leader.

Waning enthusiasm for identifying as a leader can arise from several factors, particularly in high-pressure fields like healthcare. Many Daily tasks overwhelm many individuals feel overwhelmed by daily tasks and, and they lack the time or training to develop leadership capabilities. In healthcare, clinical duties often take precedence in healthcare, leaving little room for leadership development. Moreover, the hierarchical structure in such professions limits upward mobility; for example, consultants are usually perceived as the pinnacle of their careers, making additional leadership roles less appealing. This is compounded by the stress and complexity of leadership positions, which many professionals prefer to avoid. Generational trends also contribute, as younger workers increasingly prioritize work-life balance over leadership responsibilities (Mintzberg, 2009; Fitzgerald & Ferlie, 2000; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Despite the assumption that being perceived as a leader is attractive to individuals (Zhang et al., 2020), in today's world, employees often choose lateral moves in organizations rather than a hierarchical career (Larsson et al., 2023). This global trend (Chan et al., 2011) of reluctance to take on leadership roles has spurred a new line of research focusing on the agentic perspectives in leader emergence and self-selection biases (Chan & Drasgow, 2001).

Additionally, the agentic perspective on leadership emergence highlights self-selection bias, where individuals with high agency (assertiveness, dominance) are more likely to pursue leadership roles, potentially discouraging those with communal or caregiving traits (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). This bias is particularly relevant in healthcare, where leadership roles might conflict with the communal nature of caregiving. Addressing this reluctance requires reframing leadership to emphasize collaboration and care rather than

solely agentic traits. Furthermore, healthcare organizations can mitigate these challenges by offering structured leadership training and support, helping individuals at all levels see leadership as an integral part of their professional identity (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Spurgeon, Clark, & Ham, 2011).

Finally, this paper provides insight into the Irish healthcare sector, precisely the cultural context of Irish culture on leader identity. Hofstede (2001) suggested that people had different, sometimes directly opposing, values and beliefs depending on their country of origin. Cultural diversity in the workplace reflects the existent demographic, social, and cultural differences on a societal level (Gotsis and Korte 2015). Over one-third of the participants wrote about the influence of their cultural context on their leader identity. Research provides insight into Ireland's specific historical context of leader oppression and its relationship with a leader's own leader identity. Specifically, the suggestion that the history of Ireland informs a culture of fear of leadership that has been internalized within some of the study participant's leader identities.

Irish culture, rooted in values like humility, collectivism, and interpersonal relationships, significantly shapes leadership styles and leader identity. However, a "culture of fear" in organizations, characterized by hierarchical structures, punitive management, and a lack of psychological safety, can hinder individuals from stepping into or embracing leadership roles. This environment often discourages open dialogue, innovation, and risk-taking, which are essential for developing authentic leadership. In Ireland, cultural norms that emphasize humility and avoiding self-promotion may further exacerbate reluctance to lead, fostering risk-averse behaviors and undermining confidence in leadership capacity (Geoghegan & Doran, 2016).

A culture of fear directly affects leader's identity by shifting focus toward self-preservation and away from organizational growth. Leaders in such environments may experience imposter syndrome or lack confidence in their leadership potential. Addressing these challenges requires creating a culture of trust and psychological safety, where leaders feel supported to take risks and develop their leadership identity. Encouraging open communication and reducing hierarchical barriers can enable leaders to balance Ireland's traditional values with the demands of modern, adaptive leadership (Hofstede, 2001; Edmondson, 1999).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS:

Our research also holds practical implications for healthcare organizations. The first implication suggests that healthcare organizations can use reflection-based exercises to reinforce leader identity among healthcare professionals, especially those without leadership responsibilities. Tailoring leadership training to highlight the natural leadership skills acquired through daily helping behaviors can increase leader identity salience. Furthermore, since reluctance to lead is associated with low leader identity salience and potentially imposter syndrome, organizations could implement mentorship and coaching to build confidence in leadership abilities. Structured mentorship could help employees feel supported and reduce self-doubt, making them more likely to step into leadership positions.

The study's focus on the Irish healthcare sector and the impact of Irish cultural context on leader identity has practical implications for leadership development that respects cultural factors. Understanding the historical context of leadership oppression in Ireland can help

organizations tailor leadership programs to be more culturally sensitive and empowering. Encouraging a culture where helping behaviors are recognized and rewarded can promote leader identity development among employees. Organizations could implement recognition programs or awards emphasizing leadership qualities emerging from altruistic actions, thereby nurturing an inclusive leadership culture.

This research offers more practical implications in the area of helping. Leaders can seek helping opportunities by proactively involving themselves in helping behaviors within their professional or personal environment. Whether mentoring a colleague, organizing team activities, or volunteering for challenging tasks, engaging in these activities will help strengthen a leader's identity. Additionally, volunteering for minor leadership roles, such as coordinating a project or leading a meeting, gradually becomes more comfortable with being seen as a leader.

Finally, narrating one's leader identity holds practical implications as it can significantly enhance leadership development by fostering self-awareness, confidence, and authenticity. (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Furthermore, narrating past challenges and successes cultivates resilience and a growth mindset, as individuals reframe difficulties as opportunities for learning and growth. By internalizing their leadership story, individuals build self-efficacy and authenticity, which are critical for inspiring trust and credibility in others (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

Through storytelling, one *also* develops effective practical communication skills that help engage and motivate their teams. Additionally, narrating a leadership identity strengthens social identity as a leader, helping assisting others to recognize and validate their leadership potential (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Integrating narrative-building exercises, especially with

pre-journaling before the assignment, built into leadership development programs and encouraging regular reflection can further support individuals in constructing and evolving their leadership identity over time, making it a dynamic and impactful tool for personal and professional growth (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

LIMITATIONS:

One potential limitation of this study is researcher bias due to its open-ended and flexible nature. However, steps have been taken to mitigate these biases. This study utilized a disciplined approach to abduction that involves systematically observing and confirming anomalies and collaboratively creating and assessing plausible explanations (Saetre & Van de Ven, 2021).

Through in-depth discussions with colleagues and attending conferences to gain diverse insights, this study helped reduce the risk of bias by incorporating multiple viewpoints and external validation. By reflecting critically on the research process and seeking input from others, researcher bias can be partially controlled, though it remains a potential limitation. Another possible limitation of this study is its inability to establish causal relationships. While some correlations have identified variables, exploratory research does not offer the experimental control necessary to prove causality. Although insights have been identified into potential relationships with culture, incidental leader identity, reluctance to lead, helping, and outside influences on leader identity, additional research is required to understand this relationship further (Saetre & Van de Ven, 2021).

Finally, replication is also challenging for this study as abductive methodology was applied. This limits the ability to validate findings across different populations or settings, raising concerns about generalizability. Despite these challenges, exploratory studies remain

essential to the research process, providing the groundwork for more structured and controlled studies to address these limitations (Saetre & Van de Ven, 2021).

FUTURE RESEARCH:

Table 5 below shows directions for future research. Due to its exploratory nature, this study contributes to future research by posing new directions in the areas of expanding upon the theoretical frameworks of reluctance to lead, expanding upon the influence of outside presence on leader identity, continuing conversations on the cultural context of leader identity, and highlighting the importance of helping to shape leader identity. Details of this future research are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5: Directions for Future Research

Areas for Future Research	Research Focus	Sample Research Questions
1 Establishing theory and understanding of Incidental Leader Identity	1.1 Antecedents of incidental leader Identity 1.1 Consequence of incidental leader Identity 1.2 Momentary incidental experiences of Leader identity 1.3 What are the boundary conditions for incidental leader identity? 1.4 What mechanism is involved in incidental leader identity change	1.1 What are the antecedents of incidental leader identity? 1.2 What are the consequences of incidental leader identity? 1.3 How do momentary incidental experiences of Leader Identity correlate with other variables? 1.4 What are the boundary conditions for incidental leader identity? Is there spillover? 1.5 How does incidental leader identity change?
2 Expanding upon the theoretical frameworks of Reluctance to Lead	2.1 Exploring the place of leader identity in reluctance to lead	2.1 How does leader identity development change reluctance to lead?
3 Expanding upon influence of outside presence on Leader Identity	3.1 Influence of Family on Leader Identity	3.1 How do family routines affect leader identity?
4 Continuing conversations on Cultural Context of Ireland on Leader Identity	4.1 Understanding Irish culture upbringing on Leader Identity	4.1 How does being raised in the Irish culture affect Leader Identity? 4.2 How does the externalization of leadership stereotypes affect the internalization of leader identity in Ireland?
5 Helping Others	5.1 Understanding the role of helping behavior in leader identity	5.1 How does helping behavior impact leader identity?

CONCLUSION:

This study sheds light on contributing to leader identity theory with the novel linking of incidental leader identity through helping behavior. Second, this paper contributes to the theory by bridging the gap between a leader's identity and reluctance to lead. Finally, this paper provides insight into the Irish healthcare sector, precisely the cultural context that Irish culture has on leader identity. Due to its exploratory nature, this research expands our theoretical understanding of the ties between reluctant leadership, helping behavior, influences outside of work, Irish cultural context, and leader identity. It sets out some pointed questions for future research.

¹ Names have been anonymized

Discussion of Study 1

After the completion of Study 1, there was a significant pause in this thesis (see Appendix A for further details). During this time, the field of leader identity had shifted. Researchers had begun to focus on momentary leader identity. Lanaj et al. (2022) demonstrated that activation of leader identity could vary daily, even for people holding formal positions of authority. They showed that leaders may identify more strongly with their leader role on some days than others, and we find that leader identity has critical downstream effects at work and home.

As noted in Table 5, Study 1 left many options for potential future research focus. The area that contained the most possibilities was the incidental leader identity through helping, as it was a completely novel concept that warranted attention for investigation. Study 1 raised additional questions about the influence of external factors on leader identity. Combined with a call for research to address the gap in leadership literature that overlooks the personal lives of leaders outside the workplace (Lanaj, Johnson, & Lee, 2016), this thesis explores incidental leader identity within the context of work-family dynamics and helping behavior. Combined with a changed personal preference and newly developing literature, Study 2 and Study 3 of this thesis shifted focus onto momentary experiences of leader identity, incidental experiences of leader identity, and spillover of leader identity. This shift in focus prompted a focus on the following selected research questions from study one below, tabling the remaining research questions to be explored later.

Research Questions of Interest for Studies 2 and 3

1. What are the antecedents of incidental leader identity?
2. Is helping an antecedent of incidental leader identity?
3. What are the consequences of incidental leader identity?
4. How do momentary incidental experiences of leader identity correlate with other variables?
5. What are the boundary conditions for incidental leader identity? Is there a spillover?

Studies 2 and 3 jointly explore two emerging themes from Study 1, focusing on the antecedents and consequences of incidental leader identity. Study 2 raises the question of whether family-related behaviors can trigger leader identity at work and, in turn, facilitate family well-being. Study 3 delves further into these findings and focuses on whether different types of incidental helping behaviors can facilitate leader identity and affect work-related well-being.

Mini Literature Review on Potential Consequences of Incidental Leader Identity

Family Wellbeing

Work-family research has been dominated by empirical inquiry into work-family conflict (Barnett, 1996) postulating, based upon structural-functionalist role theory (Marshall, Chadwick, & Marshall, 1991), that responsibilities from different, separate domains compete for limited amounts of time, physical energy, and psychological resources (Greenhaus &

Beutell, 1985; Small & Riley, 1990). Research using community and regional samples often finds that work pressure can undermine marital satisfaction and other family processes, and that family pressure or problems can undermine job performance and job satisfaction (Crouter, 1984; Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992a; MacEwen & Barling, 1994; Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk, & Beutell, 1996). Structural-functionalist role theory's deterministic perspective of role strain requires conceptualizing the work-family interface as a continuum ranging from minor to many conflicts between work and family. It postulates that positive aspects of work and family reduce levels of conflict or buffer the individual from conflict's undesirable consequences.

Multiple threads of evidence consistently indicate that conflict from work to family is distinct from conflict from family to work (for review, see Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997). Empirical reports Reconceptualizing the work-family interface - 6 from different samples indicate that work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict are, at best, moderately correlated (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Klitzman, House, Israel, & Mero, 1990; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). Theory and evidence also suggest that individuals can discern when work is interfering with family and when family is interfering with work (Barnett, 1996; Bromet, Dew, & Parkinson, 1990; Crouter, 1984). Therefore, work-family spillover appears at least two-dimensional (Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997).

Individual Wellbeing

Grant et al. (2007) identifies employee well-being as a multidimensional concept encompassing psychological, physical, and social well-being. Psychological well-being relates to job satisfaction, a sense of purpose, and opportunities for personal growth. Grant et al. (2007) suggest that organizations should carefully design workplace practices that balance

the different aspects of employee well-being to manage these trade-offs. To manage these trade-offs. Team-building activities, for instance, may enhance social well-being but might not suit employees who prefer independent work. Similarly, performance-driven incentives may boost productivity but increase stress and negatively impact physical well-being. By understanding these potential conflicts, managers can simultaneously implement strategies that enhance multiple aspects of well-being, ultimately fostering a more supportive and sustainable work environment.

Well-being is a broad category of phenomena that includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction (Diener, 1984). Theoretical models such as the effort-recovery model and conservation of resources theory (Meijman & Mulder, 2013) suggest that recovery and unwinding processes are important and essential to individual health and well-being. The effort-recovery model describes that spending effort during work leads to specific load reactions in the individual, such as psychological, behavioral, and subjective responses, which are reversible depending on work demands (Meijman & Mulder, 2013). As a result of the recovery process, fatigue and other effects of stressful situations are reduced.

The conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll & Wells 1998) assumes that people strive to obtain, retain, and protect their resources. According to this theory, stress occurs when an individual's resources are threatened or lost or when no resources are gained after a resource investment. Applied to the work context, the conservation of resources theory implies that unfavorable work situations threaten or harm an individual's resources, such as well-being. For example, during extended hours, vigor decreases, whereas tension and fatigue increase. Subsequently, individuals will strive to restore their resources. One must

invest in oneself with additional time or social support to fix one's resources. One experiences stress and will also be prone to further resource loss. Accordingly, people strive to obtain and protect a finite number of valued psychological characteristics (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy), objects (e.g., housing, clothing), energies (e.g., time, knowledge), and conditions (e.g., job security, social support) (Diener & Fujita, 1995; Hobfoll, 1998, 2001) to prevent potential suffering.

Study 2:

What Goes Around Comes Back Around: The role of leader identity in linking helping family behavior in the morning to reduced work-family conflict in the evening.

ABSTRACT

The morning routines of many leaders, not unlike other workers, involve dedicating time to their family members in the morning before work, such as preparing their children for school or taking care of their parents' groceries. This is a stark contrast to starting the day by checking one's emails and catching up with work-related matters before work. An interesting and important question that arises from these different ways to start a workday is whether dedicating time in the morning to help a family member may not only be beneficial for their families but also for leaders themselves. To answer this focal question, we examine the daily implications of helping family behavior in the morning, considering spill-over effects to on work- and returning to the home domain in the evening after work. To disentangle these spillover effects throughout the day, we integrate leader identity- and construal level theory to propose that helping family in the morning increases leader identity and associated construal level in the work domain, which in turn reduces cognitive resource depletion at the end of the workday and work-family conflict in the home domain after work. Further, we theorize that authentic leadership acts as a person-level moderator that expands the benefits of helping behavior in the home domain. This is because for those leaders who practice authentic leadership, helping behavior reflects a genuine act of leadership that facilitates the experiences of a leader's identity. An experience sampling study with three measurements across ten working days ($N = 175$ leaders; $N = 1172$ days) supports our proposed model. This

research not only expands our theoretical understanding of the mechanisms that explain how family-helping behavior spills over across domains but also holds practical implications of why it can be important for leaders to help family members in the morning.

Keywords:

Helping Behavior, Spillover, Work-family Conflict, Leader Identity

Introduction:

“In helping others, we shall help ourselves, for whatever good we give out completes the circle and comes back to us.” Flora Edwards (p. 267, 2018)

The five-to-nine before the nine-to-five has been an emerging trend online of individuals documenting their morning before they start work. The online trend allows others to share their morning online as an inspiration to themselves and to encourage others to start their day with good intentions and small actions with the hope that the effects will permeate throughout the day (Andrew, 2023). Such spillover effects (i.e., within-person across-domains transmission of strain from one area of life to another (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) to different morning activities and their influences on people’s experiences and behaviors in the work home domains is supported by an increasing body of recent evidence. More specifically, previous research has demonstrated that disrupting your morning routines can impact your energy allocations on different tasks during the workday (McClean et al. 2021). Furthermore, brief mindfulness meditation can facilitate employee well-being in the home domain (Hohnemann et al., 2023). While recent studies have begun to explore the spillover effects of leaders' experiences from home to work (Hu, Kim, & Lanaj, 2024), most existing spillover research on morning activities has predominantly focused on employees without leadership responsibilities (Sonnentag et al., 2020). This raises the question of whether leaders experience similar spillover effects, especially given that their work is highly

demanding and their boundaries between work and home domains are often more flexible (Kossek et al., 2023)

Furthermore, while previous studies have predominantly emphasized the role of routines and dedicated activities in the morning to improve employee well-being (Rothbard & Wilk, 2011), research on the spillover of morning helping behaviors in the home domain is scarce (Lin et al., 2017). This is particularly surprising considering that men spend 2.8 hours a day caring for their family in the home, and women spend almost double that (Ervin et al., 2023). For those with caring responsibilities, most of the behaviors in the morning are focused on supporting others, such as preparing children for school or listening to one's partner's worries and problems. These behaviors are often painted as an additional burden for carers who have full-time employment (Ervin et al., 2023). Our study builds on previous research, which has also highlighted the benefits of helping behaviors for the helper (Glomb et al., 2011; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010; Batson, 1990; Penner et al., 2005) aims to examine whether and how leaders' family helping behaviors before work can be beneficial for leaders in the subsequent work- and-home domain.

This study focuses on leaders' helping behavior. Helping behavior is discretionary behavior that assists another person and is not directly or explicitly rewarded (Organ, 1988). This study focuses on helping in the home domain, as the demanding nature of leaders' positions makes it particularly crucial to consider whether their focus on their family in their "five to nine" may have positive implications for their work role.

As the focal outcome of our study, we are particularly interested in the implications of morning helping behavior in the home domain for leaders' work-family conflict in the

evening. Work-family spillover is an essential outcome for leaders who, due to their more fluctuating boundaries between the home and the work domain, experience higher levels of work-family conflict (Voydanoff, 2005). Work-family conflict has also been demonstrated as detrimental to well-being and organizational functioning, which further substantiates its role as a crucial outcome. The domain spillover is compounded in leaders due to the highly demanding nature of their work (Kossek et al., 2023). Work-family conflict has been shown to have harmful effects on important individual outcomes such as depression, hypertension, and substance abuse (Burke & Greenglass, 1999; Frone, 2000; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997), and organizational outcomes such as absenteeism, effective organizational commitment, and turnover intentions (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Collins, 2001; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999).

Starting in the home domain with helping behavior, we expand our understanding of the focal psychological mechanisms underlying the proposed spillover of helping to the work- and back to the home domain after work with the integration of Leader Identity theory and Construal Level theory. Drawing on the notion that leader identity (i.e., how an individual thinks of themselves as a leader; Day, 2000) becomes more salient through corresponding leadership actions (Day, 2000; Batson, 1990; McGuire, 1994), we argue that on days when leaders engage in more family helping behaviors in the morning, they experience higher leader identity as these behaviors already reflect leadership action in the morning before work.

It is important to understand the psychological mechanisms that link helping at work-to-work family conflict. We further propose that an increased daily leader identity facilitates leaders' construal level, which refers to adopting an abstract or "big picture" view (Trope &

Liberman, 2003) because it steers cognition away from individual details, lower-level goals, and specific work tasks. To illustrate, a higher construal level focuses one's cognitions on how to achieve strategic goals through the integration of work tasks rather than focusing on completing the individual work tasks (Trope & Liberman, 2003). Though this cognitive change, we argue that on days where leaders adopt a higher as compared to a lower construal level, they require less cognitive resources because focusing on the details poses a higher cognitive burden (i.e., requires more attention and focus) than adopting a big picture view (Lyu et al., 2017). Finally, on days when leaders experience less cognitive depletion, they have more available resources to prevent work-family conflict back in the home domain after work. This is because work-family conflict is most likely to arise when leaders lack the cognitive resources to remove their cognitions from work and focus on their family after work (Germeys & De Gieter, 2018).

Furthermore, our study aims to answer the question of whether some leaders may benefit from helping their family before work more than others. Most conceptualizations of leadership authenticity refer to an alignment between one's internal sense of self and their external expression of it. We argue that for authentic leaders, leader identity is more contingent on leadership acts that they feel are authentic (Evans, 1993).

Our study makes three significant contributions to the current literature. First, it expands on the emerging discourse about specific behaviors individuals can engage in during their personal time to enhance their work performance and well-being (Andrew, 2023). Furthermore, our study may highlight the beneficial spillover of leaders' family helping behaviors in the subsequent work and home domains. Considering that for many individuals, helping reflects a dominant behavior in the morning (Ervin et al., 2023), our study may

reshape the way individuals and organizations think about this behavior. Helping may offer immediate benefits for their loved ones through direct support and indirectly benefits the leader's identity as a form of leader functioning and work-family conflict as a form of home functioning here. (Day, 2000; Balston, 1987; Batson et al., 1988; McGuire, 1994; Lyu et al., 2017).

Second, by integrating Leader Identity (Ibarra et al., 2014; McGuire, 1994) and Construal Level theory (Trope & Liberman, 2003; Venus et al., 2019), our study helps to provide a more comprehensive picture of the psychological processes underlying the spillover effects of leaders' daily helping family behaviors in the home domain to daily reduced work-family conflict after work. Understanding the focal mechanisms of leader identity and associated higher construal levels that link family helping to leaders' daily work-family conflict allows us to enable those leaders who do not have the opportunity to help family in the morning at home to still reduce their work-family conflict through targeting the focal mechanisms through other means than family helping (DeRue et al., 2009). One of these leadership behavior changes is thinking big picture (Fujita, 2008), focusing on higher-level tasks, thus reducing the cognitive burden of completing detail-oriented tasks. This change in mindset allows for reduced cognitive depletion in the work domain (Lyu et al., 2017) and more available resources to prevent work-family conflict back in the home domain after work (Germeys & De Gieter, 2018).

Third, our study also contributes to the current literature on leadership by utilizing a between-person comparison of authentic leadership. From this comparison, we determined that the more a leader preferred an authentic leadership style, the more effective it was for helping family before work, translating to benefits at work and back home. This is supported

by authentic leadership theory, which states that authentic leaders need work tied to behavior based on values, connectedness to relationships, and compassion (Cooper et al., 2005). We suggest that with an authentic leadership preference, leaders are in touch with their values and sense of self, which lowers the threshold that helping behavior in the morning has on activating leader identity.

Our research also holds practical implications by supporting a mindset shift for leaders that helping a family in the morning benefits their family life and their leader identity at work. Currently, the literature is unclear about small steps and actions leaders can take beyond training and gratitude/reflection that might stimulate their leadership. This may help leaders' morning task allocations when considering all the competing demands on a leader's morning. Organizations may also make practical recommendations to employees regarding how to shape their morning routines to improve work-family conflict and work-related outcomes, such as reduced absenteeism and turnover intentions (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Collins, 2001; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999).

Theoretical Development

The spillover of helping family members in the home domain to the work domain

The “five to nine” is an expression that refers to working people's hours in the morning before the workday officially begins. Most working people's “five to nine” is not dictated explicitly by their company role. Helping family in the morning would not be explicitly rewarded at work, but there is some theoretical evidence that it might be promoted.

Therefore, in our view, helping family in the morning during this time is a choice leaders can make each day.

More recent research has also demonstrated benefits for the helper (Glomb et al., 2011; Smith, Kim, Carter, 2020). Some benefits to the helper are increased well-being and satisfaction (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010; Lanaj, Johnson, & Wang, 2016; Clary et al., 1998). Our study aims to expand on this research. Extending upon these established views, helping the family in the morning will benefit family members and positively impact the helping leader.

We draw on leader identity theory to expand our understanding of the positive effect of helping behavior. Leader identity theory stems from identity and self-perception theories (Kegan, 1982 & Bem, 1972). According to the Leader identity theory, changes in self-perception result in changes in leader identity (Miscenko, Guenter, & Day, 2017). Leader identity theory argues that leaders construct their identities through self-reflection, interpretation of experiences, and interactions with others. This construction is ongoing and dynamic, influenced by various factors such as personal values, beliefs, experience, and social context (Day, 2000; Day & Harrison, 2007). The theory further denotes that certain aspects of a leader's identity become more salient or prominent in different situations. Identity salience is integral to leader identity theory as it explains the change process in leader identity. Contextual factors, organizational norms, and individual preferences can influence the salience of specific leader identities. Both theory and empirical evidence predominantly propose organizational factors as antecedents of leader identity, but those factors outside the organization are not considered for the most part (Day & Harrison, 2007). For example, a leader may emphasize their expertise in strategy in a steering committee meeting but prioritize their role as a helper during coaching sessions with subordinates (Guillén, Mayo, & Korotov, 2015). Through this phenomenon, we argue that

helping behavior triggers changes in self-perception at the daily level because helping emphasizes the parts of a leader's identity that are responsible for taking charge, caring for others, and making decisions.

Leader identity is not solely an internal process but also involves claims and grants from others. Leaders make claims about their identity through interpreted words and actions, and these claims are granted by their environment. When leaders claim that they can help others, when that claim is reflected to them by others, it is made more potent in their identity (Standish, 2023). By helping others daily, notions of identity that include taking charge, caring for others, and making decisions are reflected or granted to the leader to strengthen their daily leader identity.

An increased daily leader identity at the start of work has been shown to have downstream effects on leadership behavior (Day et al., 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005; Rus et al., 2010). Starting the day with increased leader identity allows leaders to identify more strongly with their leadership role (Lanaj, Gabriel, & Jennings, 2023). Leader identity theory predicts leaders with enhanced leader identities will seek opportunities to enact leadership behaviors (DeRue & Wellman, 2009). When leaders identify strongly with their leadership role, they think differently (Lord & Hall, 2005).

Additionally, leader identity theory suggests that leaders' sense of identity influences their leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes. Leaders with a strong and integrated identity are more likely to inspire trust, motivate followers, and foster a sense of belonging within the organization. Conversely, leaders who experience identity fragmentation or inconsistency may struggle to establish credibility and connect with their teams (Day, 2000).

Although we don't have causal evidence, empirical evidence suggests that helping lends itself to an increase in leader identity at the day-to-day level. Despite uncertainty about the causality, there is evidence that if a leader helps, they change their leader identity at the micro-level. Lanaj et al. (2021) found that when leaders identified more strongly with their leadership role, they put the interests of others above their own and self-sacrificed more. Others suggest they may help more because their sense of self becomes inclusive of others (Day & Harrison, 2007; Lord & Hall, 2005). Furthermore, there is indirect evidence that leader identity can spill over between the home and work domains (Hu, Kim, & Lanaj, 2024).

Suppose leaders with high leader identity put interests of others before their own at a daily level. In that case, we propose the following: A leader who helps family and, in turn, views themselves as a helper who invests in the interests of others will identify more strongly with their leadership role (Lanaj et al., 2021). Based on empirical and theoretical evidence, we propose the following hypothesis: Daily morning behavior is positively associated with leader identity before work.

Furthermore, family plays a pivotal role in shaping a leader's identity, mainly through the early socialization of values, behaviors, and interpersonal skills. As the first environment where individuals learn core values like responsibility, empathy, and communication, family influences how leaders approach challenges, engage with teams, and make decisions. Research highlights that emotional intelligence, a critical trait for leadership, is partly developed through family interactions (Goleman, 1998). Families also provide early role models of behavior—parents or caregivers demonstrate leadership qualities such as resilience, conflict resolution, and ethical decision-making, which individuals often adopt in

their own leadership practices (Kets de Vries, 2006). These foundational experiences shape not only how leaders function in professional settings but also their broader worldview, affecting their approach to power, authority, and responsibility.

Moreover, family structures influence how individuals relate to others and develop their leadership style. For instance, individuals raised in collaborative family settings may favor democratic leadership, while those from hierarchical family environments may lean towards authoritative approaches (Northouse, 2018). Families also provide essential emotional support, fostering resilience and a sense of duty that is crucial for leadership effectiveness (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Additionally, the family can instill a strong sense of legacy and responsibility, motivating leaders to serve their communities and future generations. Thus, the familial environment not only shapes personal identity but is also instrumental in forming the emotional and psychological attributes necessary for effective leadership (Miller, 2008).

Hypothesis 1a:

Daily morning helping behavior is positively related to leader identity.

Hypothesis 1b:

Daily morning helping behavior is positively related to leader identity at work.

From the work back to the Home Domain- How leader Identity at work reduces work-family conflict

Leader identity theory suggests that viewing oneself as a leader has downstream implications for behaviors and cognitions, such as increased quality of communication, meta-

cognitive processes, and emotional regulation (Day et al., 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005; Rus et al., 2010). Specifically, activated leader identity motivates congruent behaviors that reinforce that identity (Day et al., 2009; DeRue & Ashford, 2010). To expand our understanding of the implications of leader identity for employees at work, we integrate Leader Identity with Construal Level theory. The construal-level theory explains how we transcend from the present to imagine the future, see things from another person's perspective, and consider hypothetical realities by forming abstract mental representations of psychologically distant objects (Trope & Liberman, 2010). Low-level construal of actions, events, and objects are concrete, unstructured, and contextualized representations with subordinate features. In contrast, high-level construal is abstract, schematic, and decontextualized representations that include only superordinate, central, and core features. Low-level construal directs attention to concrete details and the "how" of situations, lower-level goals, the proximal future, and specific and local outcomes.

In contrast, high-level construal directs attention to the big picture and the "why" of situations, to enduring and meaningful goals and values tied to people's self-concepts, the distant future, and uncertain, abstract, and nonlocal outcomes. For example, a high-level construal of performing one's job might include "creating a company vision," whereas a low-level construal might consist of "paying out employee compensation" (Rosen, Koopman, Gabriel, & Johnson, 2016).

At their core, leader identity theory and construal level theory emphasize specific mind frames associated with corresponding cognitions and behaviors (Rehbock et al., 2023). Whereas Leader Identity Theory focuses on how strongly one perceives oneself as a leader, Construal Level Theory emphasizes mind frames that reflect the psychological temporal and

special distance to objects or situations. Integrating Leader Identity and Construal Level Theory thus allows us to combine two interrelated mind frames and unpack how leaders think and behave. More specifically, we argue that leader identity is automatically associated with a higher construal level. As high levels of leader identity facilitate the mind frame of viewing oneself as a leader, an individual in that mind frame is more likely to see the bigger picture, get a sense of the direction you are heading, and you can see more into the distances. Accordingly, we propose that a higher leader identity immediately shapes how one sees temporal, spatial, and psychological distance.

Firstly, at the center of this theoretical integration is leadership identity formation. When individuals construe their future selves as leaders, they may mentally represent this role at a psychologically distant level, focusing on abstract goals and values associated with leadership rather than immediate tasks or concerns (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2008). Leaders with a high-level construal may develop a more abstract and overarching leader identity focused on core values, principles, and long-term goals. In contrast, leaders with a low-level construal may create a more concrete and context-specific leader identity concentrating on day-to-day tasks and situational demands (Venus et al., 2019).

Leader identity and construal are also integrated at the leadership behavior and decision-making level. Construal level theory proposes that individuals' construal influences their decision-making processes and behaviors. When individuals construe their leadership roles at a psychologically distant level, they may exhibit behaviors aligned with broader leadership goals and values rather than immediate concerns or tasks. This broader construal of leadership roles, influenced by Leader identity theory, may lead to more strategic decision-making. There is evidence that this phenomenon is heightened for those in a leadership role.

For leader identity, operating as a leader is central to a leader's self-concept (e.g., Lord & Hall, 2005). Leaders who identify strongly with their leadership role can be described as thinking strategically and big picture (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2008)—thinking strategically as a leader requires thinking about the distant future (Goldman, 2012).

Therefore, when leaders experience higher levels of leader identity and think more strongly of themselves as leaders, we expect that this facilitates a higher daily construal because the mind frame associated with high leader identity requires leaders to see beyond the immediate events to see how their choices today will affect the future (Trope & Liberman, 2010; Venus et Al., 2019).

Construal level is a dynamic phenomenon of mind frame change in which specific mind frames can tax or drain leaders' cognitive energy at different rates (Trope & Liberman, 2010; Hyland & Feys, 2020). Suppose a leader looks at the big picture through increased leader identity and high construal level. In that case, this will remove the leader from focusing on details, a cognitively burdensome task that taxes energy at a higher rate than a mind frame of focusing on details (Fujita, 2008; Lyu, Lai, & Liu, 2017). When individuals are focused on the big picture, they reduce the amount of energy they drain instead of concentrating on detailed tasks (Fujita, 2008).

High-level construal thinking can also facilitate cognitive regulation by promoting a more detached and objective perspective. This can help leaders maintain stability and make more rational decisions because their self-regulatory resources are less depleted (Kouchaki et al., 2021). Fujita et al. (2006) found that high-level construal (abstract thinking) helps with self-control by reducing the influence of immediate temptations and aligning behavior with long-term goals. Conversely, Friedman & Liberman (2004) found that concrete, low-level

construal activates a detail-oriented processing style, which requires more excellent attentional resources and cognitive energy.

Based on empirical and theoretical evidence, we propose the following hypothesis: Daily morning helping behavior is negatively associated with cognitive depletion, mediated through leader identity and a high construal level.

Benefits From Work Back to the Home Domain

The reduction of the impact on the family is vital to both home and work life. Impact on family can be described as work having a negative conflict on family life due to time constraints or stress spillover (Gross, 1998). Research on the impact on family has found that it negatively influences leaders' long-term outcomes, including psychological distress, job satisfaction, organization commitment, turnover, and life satisfaction (O'Driscoll, Ilgen & Hildreht, 1992). Therefore, reducing the impact on the family is crucial to career success. Our theoretical framework suggests that helping family in the morning positively reduces family conflict in the evening after work (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999).

Cognitive resources can help reduce work-family conflict (Rothbard, 2001). It has been shown that leaders require cognitive resources to refocus on their home domain after work (Byron, 2005). Self-regulation theory posits that individuals actively control their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to achieve personal goals, often by monitoring progress and adjusting actions accordingly (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). This process involves setting standards, evaluating discrepancies between current and desired states, and exerting effort to bridge the gap, which is particularly relevant in leadership contexts where self-regulation supports adaptive decision-making and goal persistence (Carver & Scheier, 1998). For

example, employees who experience more burnout on the job are more likely to experience interference from their work into their family lives.

Focusing on family responsibilities despite concurrent work demands requires resources. If these resources are less drained by less taxing mind frames, leaders can dedicate themselves to concentrating on work-related aspects. On days with less cognitive depletion, leaders can better contribute to reducing family conflict by controlling thoughts about work while at home. The boundary between work and family requires leaders to regulate the emotions that they experience (i.e., emotion regulation; Gross, 1998). By suppressing negative emotions from work and/or expressing positive emotions to family members, leaders sort through family challenges that arise after work and reduce the overall impact on the family (Gross, 1998).

Hypothesis 2:

The daily relationship between leader identity in the work domain and work-family conflict in the home domain after work is mediated through daily construal level and cognitive resource availability.

Integrating Hypotheses 1 and 2, we propose Hypothesis 3:

Hypothesis 3:

The daily relationship between family helping behaviors in the morning in the home domain and work-family conflict in the home domain after work is serially mediated through daily leader identity, construal level, and cognitive resource availability.

The Moderating Effect of Between-Person Authentic Leadership on Helping Behavior's Effect on Leader Identity

The consequences of helping family behavior impact the family are stronger for leaders who are higher in authentic leadership. Authentic leaders tend to be individuals who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values, moral perspective, knowledge, and strength; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and high on moral character (Avolio et al., 2004).

Most research on authentic leadership (Avolio, Gardner et al., 2004; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Shamir & Eilam, 2005) identify models that incorporate self-based constructs (e.g., self-awareness, self-regulation, self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-verification, self-concept clarity, self-certainty, self-determination, self-congruence, self-consistency, self-concordance, self-expression) and identification processes described by social psychologists (Leary & Tangney, 2003). In addition, reflections on authenticity from other disciplines, including hermeneutic philosophy, reflect a profound self-knowledge. Individuals with a strong leader identity will also have a profound authentic leader construct from which to pull actions (Ricoeur, 1976). Authentic Leaders can deeply connect with their mind frame as they can leverage their deep self-knowledge.

We argue that for leaders who consider themselves more authentic, the act of helping a family in the morning has a lower threshold to activate leader identity. This is because there is already internal alignment between a sense of self and expression of it, and there is less effort needed for actions or behaviors to bring internalized change. Authentic leaders, already more aware of their internalized self, can sense a change with less effort and begin to operate

on that internalized change (Evans, 1993). Based on this argument, we propose authentic leadership as a contingency that increases the daily benefits of the family helping behavior in the subsequent work (i.e., increasing leader identity) and home (i.e., reducing work-family conflict) domain (Cooper et al., 2005).

One of the authentic leader's key contributions is fostering relational transparency and ethical leadership, which creates an environment where leader-like behaviors, such as helping others, are validated and encouraged. In such an environment, individuals who identify as leaders may feel more compelled to enact leader-like behaviors, including supporting colleagues and engaging in prosocial actions (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Furthermore, Authentic leadership is linked to psychological safety, which allows employees to express leadership behaviors—including helping others—without fear of negative repercussions (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). In contrast, in workplaces where Authentic Leadership is lacking, employees may hesitate to engage in helping behaviors due to unclear leadership expectations or concerns about social backlash, limiting the emergence of organic leadership and prosocial organizational behaviors.

Based on this argument, we propose authentic leadership as a contingency that increases the daily benefits of the family helping behavior in the subsequent work (i.e., increasing leader identity) and home (i.e., reducing work-family conflict) domain (Cooper et al., 2005). Because our focal constructs of interest (i.e., helping behavior, leader identity, construal level, ego depletion, and work-family conflict) have been demonstrated to exhibit considerable variation across days, we examine the proposed moderated mediation model in a daily diary study with leaders across ten workdays (Lanaj et al., 2022; Gabriel et al., 2018).

The consequences of helping family behavior on impact on family are stronger for leaders that are higher in authentic leadership at the between person-level.

Hypothesis 4:

Person-level authentic leadership moderates the relationship between daily family-helping behavior and leader identity. This relationship is stronger for individuals with high levels of authentic leadership.

Integrating Hypotheses 3 and 4, we delineate Hypothesis 5:

Hypothesis 5:

Person-level authentic leadership moderates the indirect relationship between family-helping behaviors in the morning in the home domain and work-family conflict in the home domain after work through daily leader identity, construal level, and cognitive resource availability. The daily relationship between family-helping behaviors and work-family conflict is stronger for individuals with high levels of authentic leadership than for individuals with low levels of authentic leadership.

Study Methods:

Participants. The data for this study was collected via Prolific Academic UK—an online provider that offers access to participants and guarantees high-quality data (Peer et al., 2017). We recruited leaders in January and February 2023 using a screening criterion for

individuals who have leadership responsibilities in their work, are currently employed, have a direct supervisor that they report to, are above age 18, have English proficiency, and live with another person (i.e., family member or roommate). Walter et al. (2019: 425) have shown that data collected via online providers “possess similar psychometric properties and produce criterion validity that generally falls within the credibility intervals of existing metanalytic results from conventionally sourced data.” Compared with participants recruited via other platforms (e.g., Mechanical Turk, Crowd Flower), participants recruited via Prolific Academic are more diverse and are suggested to provide higher-quality data (Palan & Schitter, 2018; Peer et al., 2017).

After consent was given, each participant received a pre-survey, which measured demographic characteristics and stable variables such as Authentic Leadership preference. After that, participants’ surveys started on the following Monday for consecutive weeks (10 workdays). Subsequently, for each workday (Monday- Friday) during the selected period, participants indicated the estimated time they finished work. Each participant received three surveys per day: A morning survey one hour after an individual starts working, an afternoon survey one hour before an individual ends working, and an evening survey two hours before an individual goes to bed. A reminder was sent if participants did not respond within the first hour after receiving the survey. The surveys were automatically deactivated if the participant did not respond within two hours after they received a survey. Compensation was awarded for participation.

The initial sample of participants who completed the pre-survey consisted of N=263 individuals. After that, we opened the survey to the first 200 participants who were interested in participating. Of the 200 individuals given the opportunity to complete the 10-day study,

we excluded participants who did not complete any surveys, which resulted in a sample of $N=175$ (person-level response rate of 88%) who completed 1172 daily surveys (day-level response rate of 66%). These person- and day-level response rates align with previously published daily diary studies (Fisher and To, 2012). The average completion times for daily surveys were 10:15 AM, 6:05 PM, and 9:18 PM. Participants were employed in different sectors (Finance/Insurance 7%, Construction 8%, Education 15%, Hospitality 2%, Healthcare 14%, IT 11%, Arts 3%, Agriculture 1 %, Public Administration 4%, Production and Industry 8%, Traffic 1%, Science 4%, Other 22%), their age ranged from 20 to 70 years ($M= 40$; $SD= 11$), the rate of female participation was 46%. Out of all participants, 48% indicated that they had flexible time arrangements and their main tasks at work were computer work (indicated by 29%), interactions with others (indicated by 54%), physical labor (indicated by 16%), and artistic and creative activities (indicated by 1%; selection of more than one activity was possible).

As in our study, we person-mean-centered our within-person predictors and controls (Hofmann et al., 2000). We used random slopes for hypothesized paths (Beal, 2015) and fixed slopes for control paths (Shen et al., 2011). To test indirect effects, we estimated bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals using Monte Carlo simulations with 20,000 replications in R, accounting for all direct effects (Preacher et al., 2010).

Measures:

In the pre-survey, we assessed *authentic leadership* with an eleven-item scale developed by Neider & Schriesheim (2011). The following statement introduced the scale. Please rate the following statements regarding your leadership actions in general. A sample

item is ‘I resist pressure to do things contrary to my own beliefs.’ (1= ‘strongly disagree’ to 5= ‘strongly agree’). Authentic leadership style measurement was coded so that high numbers indicate a strong tendency toward authentic leadership style.

In the morning, we measured *helping family behavior*. Helping family behavior is operationalized as the social, assisting, and cooperative behavior of the employee directed toward team members. The four-item scale was based on an altruism scale developed by Goodman and Svyantek (1999) to measure the attitude of employees toward helping team members. The following statement introduced the scale. Please answer how your attitude and actions were today. A sample item is ‘I took time to listen to my family when they had to get something off their chest.’ (1= ‘strongly disagree’ to 5= ‘strongly agree’). Helping Family Behavior was coded so that high numbers indicate a strong tendency to helping family.

Leader identity was measured at work with a four-item scale developed by Hiller (2005). The following statement introduced the scale. Please rate the extent to which the following statements describe you today. A sample item is ‘I am a leader.’ (1= ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘strongly agree’) Leader Identity was coded so that high numbers indicate a high leader identity.

Additionally, at work, we measured *construal level* and *cognitive depletion*. The construal level scale consists of three items developed by Trope & Liberman (2010). The following statement introduced the scale. Please rate how you identify with the following statements right now. A sample item is “At this moment, I am focused on the big picture rather than the details” (1= ‘strongly disagree’ to 5= ‘strongly agree’). Construal Level was coded so that high numbers indicate a high construal. The cognitive depletion scale

consists of five items and was developed by Christian & Ellis (2011). We introduced the scale with the following statement. Please rate the following statements regarding how you feel right now. A sample item is “Right now, it would take a lot of effort for me concentrate on something” (1= ‘strongly disagree’ to 5= ‘strongly agree’). Cognitive Depletion was coded so that high numbers indicate a low Cognitive Depletion.

In the evening, we measured *work-family Conflict* using a thirteen-item scale designed by Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2000). The prompt for the scale was “Today...” A sample item is “My job prevented me from participating in my family activities as much as I wanted” (1= ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘strongly agree’). Work-family conflict was coded so that high numbers indicate a high conflict.

Controls:

We included organizational citizen behavior as a control variable. We measured organizational citizen behavior using ten items each from the Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale (Anderson, 1991). Participants indicated how they felt right at that moment on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal). An example item is “I helped others at work.”

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is closely related to helping behavior, as both concepts involve voluntary actions that go beyond formal job requirements to benefit others within the organization (Organ, 1988). OCB often includes behaviors such as helping colleagues with tasks, offering support in team settings, and demonstrating general prosocial conduct, which are key components of helping behavior (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Including OCB as a control variable in studies is justified because it can significantly influence

workplace outcomes like job satisfaction, team dynamics, and overall organizational effectiveness (LePine et al., 2002).

By controlling for OCB, we can ensure that the effects observed in their study are not confounded by employees' tendencies to engage in prosocial behaviors. This is particularly important when the study focuses on work-related behaviors, such as performance or commitment, where OCB could independently shape or moderate the relationship between primary variables (Organ, 1988). While demographic factors like age or gender are also common standard controls, OCB is often more directly relevant in explaining variations in employee outcomes, particularly when the research centers on interpersonal or organizational behavior (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Thus, controlling for OCB helps to isolate the effects of other key variables, providing a clearer understanding of the relationships being studied.

Data Analysis:

Due to the nested data structure (Level 1: Helping Family Behavior, Leader Identity, Construal Level, Cognitive Depletion, work-family conflict; Level 2: Authentic Leadership style), we used multi-level structural equation modeling based on maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors with Mplus 8.4 (Muthen & Muthen, 2017) to test our conceptual model (see Figure 3). In doing so, we account for the interdependence of both levels (Hox & Maas, 2002). This method allows for analyses on multiple levels and has advantages compared to traditional approaches to multilevel model analysis (e.g., multilevel modeling; Preacher et al., 2010).

First, we specified the relationships corresponding with the proposed mediation model, whereby we first specified family to help predict leader identity. After that, family

helping and leader identity were linked to the construal level, and all three aforementioned variables were related to ego depletion. Finally, all focal variables were specified to predict work-family conflict. To account for authentic leadership's moderating effect, the relationship between family helping and leader identity was defined as a random slope, which varied across individuals. This random slope was, in turn, predicted by authentic leadership at the between-person level. All remaining relationships in the mediation model were specified as fixed slopes, as our model did not focus on between-person variations in these variables (Fasbender et al., 2024). Following the suggestions of Ohly et al. (2010), we centered all exogenous day-level variables around each person's means ('group-mean centering') and grand-mean-centered authentic leadership as the between-person variable.

Because bootstrapping cannot be applied to multilevel modeling (Preacher & Selig, 2012; van der Leeden et al., 2008), we used a Monte Carlo approach to estimate the confidence intervals for the 1-1-1-1-1 mediation model (Preacher & Selig, 2012). Specifically, we computed bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effects based on 20,000 resamples using the software provided by Selig and Preacher. An indirect effect is present if the confidence interval of the indirect effect does not include zero (Preacher et al., 2007). We extended this approach to examine the proposed moderated mediation by estimating the confidence intervals for the conditional indirect relationships linking helping behaviors to work-family conflict through leader identity, construal level, and regulatory resources.

Results:

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are shown in Table 6. The results of our multilevel path model are in Table 7, and the indirect effects of our model are presented in Table 8. Table 6 provides an overview of descriptive statistics, internal consistencies (Geldhof et al., 2014), and correlation estimates for the assessed variables. For the within-variables, we additionally calculated Intra Class Coefficients (ICCs) to assess the ratio of between- and within-person variance (Hox, 2002), which indicated a sufficiently large proportion of within-person variation in our focal variables to justify the application of multilevel analyses. Along the diagonal, in italics, the within-person omegas on the within level are displayed. Correlations below the diagonal are person-level correlations ($N = 175$). Correlations above the diagonal are day-level correlations ($N = 1172$). Numbers in bold, $p < 0.05$. Between-person level variables are in italics.

Table 8 provides a summary of indirect effects observed in our multi-level path model. In support of hypothesis 1, which predicts that helping behavior towards one's family in the morning before work will spillover from home to work and lead to a higher leader identity at work, we found a relationship between helping family behavior and leader identity ($b = 0.27$, $SE = 0.12$, 95% CI [0.08; 0.46]) supporting this hypothesis.

As hypothesized in 2, our finding supports an indirect effect of leader identity on work-family conflict through cognitive resources availability and associated regulatory resources as indicated by the corresponding 95% CI not including zero ($b = -0.29$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI [-0.38; -0.20]).

Testing Hypothesis 3. We examined helping the full proposed mediation model linking helping behavior and work-family conflict through the serial mediators leader

identity, construal level, and regulatory resources. As predicted by hypothesis 3, there was an indirect effect of helping behavior on work-family conflict through the proposed mediators as the corresponding 95% CI did not include zero ($b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [0.05; 0.16]).

Hypothesis 4 proposed that person-level authentic leadership moderates the relationship between daily family helping behavior and leader identity. Corresponding with this hypothesis, there was a significant relationship between person-level authentic leadership and the random slope linking family helping behaviors and leader identity. Plotting the interaction and examining the simple slopes (Figure 4) indicate that the daily relationship between family helping behavior and leader identity is stronger for individuals with high as compared to low levels of authentic leadership. As shown in Figure 4, for leaders with lower levels of authentic leadership (-1 SD), the effect of helping behavior on leader identity ($\gamma = .03$, $SE = 0.34$, $p = .72$) was not significant. However, for leaders with higher levels of authentic leadership (+ 1 SD), the relationship between authentic leadership and helping behavior was positive and significant ($\gamma = .31$, $SE = 3.6$, $p = .00$).

Finally, testing Hypothesis 5, we examined the indirect effects of helping behaviors to work-family conflict through leader identity, construal level, and regulatory resources for higher and lower levels of person-specific authentic leadership. The corresponding 95% CIs reveal that the proposed indirect relationship is significant for individuals with high levels of authentic leadership as the corresponding 95% CI does not include zero (95% CI [0.00; 0.00]). However, the indirect relationship is not significant for individuals with lower levels of authentic leadership as the corresponding 95% CI does include zero 95% CI [-0.00; 0.00]). In sum, these results support Hypothesis 5.

Discussion:

Leaders who find themselves in a position to be helping their family in the five to nine before their workday starts may benefit from reduced leaders' work-family conflict in the evening in the home domain. This daily relationship is serially mediated through daily leader identity, construal level, and cognitive resource availability. Therefore, the spillover effect of helping morning activities can strongly influence leaders' work and home domains (McClean et al. 2021). Given that a leader's time during the five to nine is full of competing demands, we examined whether helping behavior is beneficial for a leader (Kossek et al., 2023). This study focuses on leaders' helping behavior as the demanding nature of their position makes it particularly crucial to consider whether leaders' focus on their family in their five to nine may have positive implications for their work role. Starting in the home domain with helping family, this study examines how leaders' morning helping spills over into the work domain and back into the home domain to reduce work-family conflict in the evening. More specifically, our study integrates leader identity theory and construal level theory to explain the mechanisms that underlie the day-specific spillover of helping behavior and the reduction of evening work-family conflict. Furthermore, our data support a positive spillover helping behavior in the morning to reduce the impact on a family in the home domain in the evening. Hence, despite competing demands, helping family in the morning is beneficial to leader's work role and home role.

Theoretical contributions:

Our study makes several significant theoretical contributions by integrating literature on helping behavior and work-family conflict via leader identity, construal level, and

cognitive depletion. First, this paper extends the focus of the emerging conversation in the literature on specific behaviors that leaders can engage in their morning to improve their work performance and well-being (Andrew, 2023). Our study expands on the beneficial spillover of leaders' family helping behaviors for the subsequent work and home domains. Considering that for many leaders, helping reflects a dominant behavior in the morning (Ervin et al., 2022), our study may reshape the way leaders and organizations think about this behavior as it may not only offer immediate benefits for their loved ones through direct support but also indirectly benefits the leader who is engaging in family helping increasing their leader identity in the work domain, which is associated with reduced cognitive resource depletion as well as higher leader effectiveness (Day, 2001; McGuire, 1994; Lyu et al., 2017). It is easy for leaders to check smartphone alerts, including emails, before even getting out of bed and starting their workday from the home domain (Pitichat, 2013). With work as a direct competition for time and attention in the morning, this paper argues that leaders should take time to help their family in the morning to actualize the benefits of helping family on their entire day. Based on the investigation of the effects of helping family in the morning that can be easily integrated into individuals' morning routines, we demonstrate that even with limited time in the morning, helping family can reduce work-family conflict in the home domain after work.

Second, by integrating Leader Identity (Ibarra et al., 2014; McGuire, 1994) and Construal Level theory (Trope & Liberman, 2003; Venus et al., 2019), our study provides a more comprehensive picture of the processes underlying the spillover effects of leaders' helping family in the home domain to reduced work-family conflict after work. Helping family behavior allows leaders to act on leadership before work and set in motion a change in

mindset so that leaders seek opportunities to enact leadership behaviors (DeRue & Wellman, 2009). One of these leadership behavior changes is thinking big picture (Fujita, 2008), focusing on higher-level tasks, thus reducing the cognitive burden of completing detail-oriented tasks. This change in mindset allows for reduced cognitive depletion in the work domain (Lyu et al., 2017) and more available resources to prevent work-family conflict back in the home domain after work (Germeys & De Gieter, 2018). Our study extends the conversation in the literature about the mind frame shift of leader identity and its linkage to the construal level in leadership, which helps us understand how a leader thinks.

Third, our study also contributes to the current literature on leadership by utilizing a within-person comparison of authentic leadership. From this comparison, we were able to determine that the more a leader preferred an authentic leadership style, the more effective it was for helping family before work, translating to benefits at work and back at home. This is supported by authentic leadership theory, which states that authentic leaders need work tied to behavior based on values, connectedness to relationships, and compassion (Cooper et al., 2005). We find that with an authentic leadership preference, leaders are in touch with their values and sense of self, which lowers the threshold that helping behavior in the morning has on activating leader identity.

Practical Implications:

Our research also holds practical implications by allowing leaders to make more informed decisions about whether investing time in helping family in the morning is worth the morning time allocations when considering all the competing demands made on a leader's morning. It is easy for leaders to check alerts on smartphones, including emails,

before even getting out of bed and starting their workday from the home domain (Pitichat, 2013). With work as a direct competition for time and attention in the morning, this paper makes the argument for leaders to take time to help their family in the morning in order to actualize the benefits of helping family on their entire day. In addition, our study may also highlight that these benefits for the focal leader spill over back into the home domain after work to reduce work-family conflict. Organizations may also make practical recommendations to employees in terms of how to shape their morning routines to improve work-family conflict and thus reduce absenteeism, affective organizational commitment, and turnover intentions (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Collins, 2001; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999).

Additionally, this research has more practical implications for family support. By contributing to family responsibilities early on, individuals may experience a greater sense of support and appreciation from their family members. This perceived support acts as a buffer against work-related stress and reduce the likelihood of work-family conflicts arising. This can help leaders achieve more balance and harmony between work and personal life and strike a better work-life balance. The benefits of an increase work-life balance can lead to an increased productivity, better time management, improved personal physical and mental health and wellbeing, reduction in sickness and absenteeism, and an overall state of reduced stress (Chimote, & Srivastava, 2013; Ahamad et al., 2023).

Leader Identity is a positive and important “side effect” of helping behavior. Leaders engage in ongoing identity work to construct, maintain, and revise their leader identities. This involves various processes such as identity exploration, identity, construction, identity reinforcement, and identity adaption. If leaders would like to be seen by others as more authoritative, they may actively adopt different personas, such as telling others what to do,

expressing ideas with confidence. Identity work is essential for leaders to maintain authenticity, adaptability, and resilience in complex organizational environments (Day & Harrison, 2007; Lord & Hall, 2005). For those leaders with families at home, helping family in the morning is a convenient way to engage in daily leader identity work, as it is easily assessable and can be adapted for various lengths of time depending on the need of the family.

Finally, these results hold implications for the family-work facilitation area. Family-work facilitation refers to the positive interaction between family and work roles, where resources, skills, or experiences gained in one domain enhance functioning in the other (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Unlike family-work conflict, which emphasizes clashes between these domains, facilitation focuses on their complementary potential. For instance, qualities developed in family life, such as empathy, patience, and conflict resolution, can improve interpersonal relationships and productivity at work. Similarly, emotional support from family members can boost energy and confidence, enabling better work performance. This bidirectional process underscores how engagement in one area can foster personal growth and generate resources that enrich the other, promoting a more holistic sense of balance and well-being (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). For those leaders with family at home, this paper supports the importance of family-work facilitation and its relevance to leaders' identity at work.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research:

Despite its contributions, we have to discuss several limitations of our study that may inform future research. Our study primarily relied on self-reported measurements to assess helping behavior, leader identity, construal level, cognitive depletion and work-family

wellbeing, which may be susceptible to common method bias and memory bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, some have found that in daily diary studies, additional reports may not be required (Gabriel et al., 2019). However, we implemented multiple measurement points per day in our diary study to reduce potential memory bias. Self-reported measurements have a secondary drawback, which is we were only able to measure helping family behavior and work-family conflict from the perspective of the leader. Future research should expand upon this concept by capturing the experience of the family members.

Secondly, helping behavior is still a broad definition. Defined as individual behavior that is discretionary towards another person as aid (Organ, 1988). The various activities of helping can vary and certain types of helping behavior activities may be more beneficial than others. In the context of this paper, exploring the family roles in the definition may also help gain a perspective around the power dynamics of helping and receiving help (Savundranayagam, 2014). Potentially, the significance of the effect of parents helping children may vary from spouses helping each other. For those individuals without family members in the household, it would be interesting to capture if morning helping behavior benefits could extend to a roommate relationship or even the community at large outside the home domain. Future research should expand upon these concepts by capturing the nature of the leader's relationship with the individual whom they help.

Thirdly, as mentioned, leaders engage in ongoing identity work to construct, maintain, and revise their leader identities over time (Day & Harrison, 2007; Lord & Hall, 2005). Helping family in the morning is a convenient way to engage in daily leader identity work. As leader identity is measured at the daily level in this study, further research would be

required to determine the long-term change in leader identity with ongoing helping identity work.

All participants in this study are current residents of the United Kingdom. However, participants were born in countries that differ culturally, such as Singapore, Nigeria, Iraq, and Italy. Although gender-role beliefs have been measured in a variety of ways, researchers have found that in some countries, women report less traditional and more egalitarian gender-role beliefs than men (Berkel, 2004 & Van De Vijver, 2007). For some cultures, gender can carry a strong expectation for helping, especially in the family unit. For example, in Chinese culture, women are expected to be the sole carer in the home. Future research should consider both the culture of the individual in relation to their gender and role as expectation of helping may influence the discretionary piece of the role (Levine, Norenzayan, & Philbrick, 2001).

There may be other incidental behaviors that facilitate leader identity besides helping. Future research should explore the impact of exercises such as mindfulness and positive self-talk as personal strategies that leaders can employ to enhance their leader identity at the start of their day. Engaging in physical activity may boost energy levels and foster a sense of accomplishment, thereby positively influencing how leaders perceive their capabilities. Mindfulness practices, such as meditation or focused breathing, can aid leaders in cultivating self-awareness, reducing stress, and promoting a calm and centered mindset, which are crucial for effective leadership. Additionally, positive self-talk can reinforce a leader's confidence and resilience, allowing them to approach challenges with a constructive and empowered outlook. By investigating these strategies, future studies could provide valuable

insights into how daily practices can shape and strengthen leader identity, ultimately leading to improved leadership effectiveness and well-being (Day et al., 2021).

Conclusion:

This study sheds light on the day-specific effects of morning helping behavior on reduced work-family conflict in the evening. Integrating the literature on leader identity theory and construal level theory, our results suggest that helping family in the morning in the home domain can support leader identity and construal level in the work domain. Reduced cognitive depletion in the work domain facilitated the spillover of reduced work-family conflict in the home domain in the evening. Based on these results, considering spillover effects between the work and home domain, leaders may choose to allocate their time in the morning to helping family in order to benefit with reduced work-family conflict after work. This research not only expands our theoretical understanding of the mechanisms that explain how family-helping behavior spills over across domains but also holds practical implications of why it can be important for leaders to help family members in the morning.

Appendix:

Figure 3:
Theoretical Framework

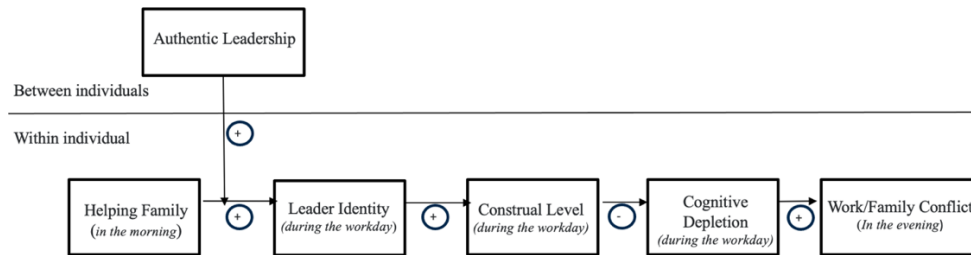
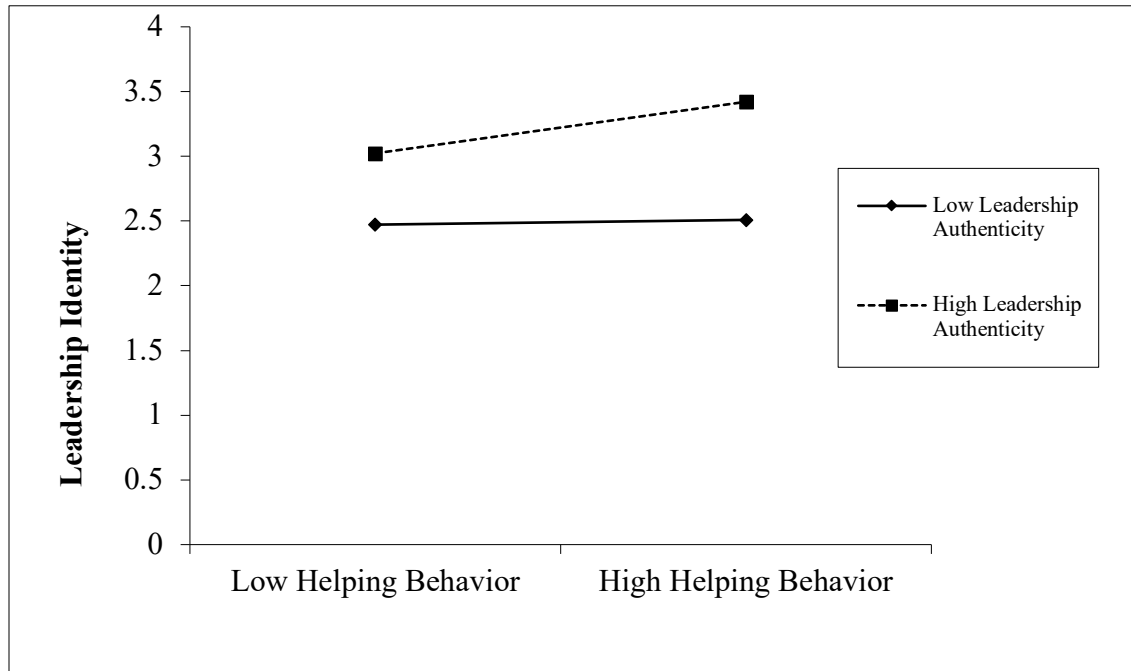


Figure 4:
Cross-level moderating effect of authentic leadership on the relations between leader identity and helping behavior



Note. For leaders with lower levels of authentic leadership (-1 SD), the effect of helping behavior on leader identity ($\gamma = .03$, $SE = 0.343$, $p = .732$) was not significant. However, for leaders with higher levels of authentic leadership (+ 1 SD), the relationship between authentic leadership and helping behavior was positive and significant ($\gamma = .31$, $SE = 3.6$, $p = .00$)

Table 6:*Mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha, ICCs, and correlations*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Helping Family	<i>.97</i>	0.18	0.11	-.08	-0.08			
2 Leader Identity	0.31	<i>.96</i>	0.13	-0.12	0.07			
3 Construal Level	0.18	0.60	<i>.70</i>	-0.27	0.03			
4 Cognitive Depletion	-0.07	-0.15	-0.15	<i>.95</i>	0.14			
5 Work Family Conflict	0.19	0	0.05	0.59	<i>.92</i>			
6 Authentic Leadership	.20	0.34	0.40	-0.27	-0.20			
7 Gender	-0.08	-0.24	-0.03	0.18	-0.09	-0.17		
8 Age	0.16	0.23	0.15	-0.28	-0.13	0.17	-0.13	
<i>M</i> (between)	3.1	2.85	2.5	3.31	1.79	3.86	1.42	41.21
<i>SD</i> (between)	0.91	1.01	0.77	0.52	0.63	0.48	0.5	10.01
<i>SD</i> (within)	0.69	0.714	0.73	0.73	0.47	0.69		
ICC (1)	0.64	0.67	0.53	0.34	0.64			
ICC (2)	0.93	0.93	0.75	0.87	0.91			

Note. Gender coded as 1 (male) and 2 (female). ICC (1) reflects the proportion of within-person variance. Correlations on the between-person level are presented below the diagonal ($N = 175$). Correlations on the within-person level are presented above the diagonal ($N = 1172$). Along the diagonal, in italics, the within-person omegas on the within level are displayed. Lower triangular: Within-Group, Upper triangular: Between-Group. Statistically significant coefficients $p < 0.05$ are bold (Lai, 2021).

Table 7:

Multilevel Path Model Estimates predicting leader identity, construal level, cognitive depletion, and work-family conflict

Predictor	Helping Family (morning)		Leader Identity (morning)		Construal Level (midday)		Cognitive Depletion (midday)		Work Family Conflict (Evening)	
	γ	<i>SE</i>	γ	<i>SE</i>	γ	<i>SE</i>	γ	<i>SE</i>	γ	<i>SE</i>
Intercept	0.171**	00.05	2.86**	0.07	-0.00**	0.00	0.00**	0.81	-0.00**	0.31
Level-1 predictor and control variables										
Leader Identity					0.10**	0.03	-0.06	0.04	0.29	0.21
Construal Level							-0.27**	0.06	0.04	0.04
Cognitive Depletion									0.11**	0.03
Control Variable OCB			0.59	0.02						
Residual Variance			0.43	0.04	.43	.05	.413	0.04	0.18	9.55
Level-2- predictor										
Authentic Leadership			.70	0.14**						

Note. *Leve-1* *N*=1172; *Level- 2 N* = 175; Direct effects on the within-person level are shown. Level 1 variables were person-mean centered. To ascertain the practical significance of our model, we calculated the variance explained by each predictor using model likelihood statistics, following the formula of Klein et al. (2021). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Table 8:*Indirect and Conditional Indirect Effects*

Indirect effect	Authentic Leadership	Estimate	SE	95% CI
Helping Family → Leader identity	-	.27*	0.12	(0.08; 0.46)
	Low	0.00	0.01	(0.02; -0.01)
	High	0.34**	0.02	(0.07; 0.01)
Helping Family → Leader identity → Construal Level	-	0.10	0.32	(0.046 0.15)
	Low	-0.00	0.00	(0.01; -0.01)
	High	0.25**	0.01	(-0.10; 0.10)
Helping Family → Leader identity → Construal Level → Cognitive Depletion	-	-0.29	0.06	(-0.38; -0.20)
	Low	-0.00	0.08	(-0.03; -0.13)
	High	-0.07	0.03	(-0.10; 0.10)
Helping Family → Leader identity → Cognitive Depletion → Work Family Conflict	-	0.11	0.03	(0.05; 0.16)
	Low	-0.00	0.00	(0.00; -0.00)
	High	0.00	0.00	(0.00; 0.00)

Indirect effects were calculated based on Monte Carlo. LL = Lower Limit. UL = Upper Limit.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Study 3

Listening to problems or carrying the bags?

The moderating Role of Gender in linking emotional and instrumental helping family behavior in the morning to leader well-being in the evening through leader identity.

ABSTRACT

Initial research has shown that family helping can benefit a leader's well-being by promoting leader identity. But what type of helping may benefit leaders most - emotional helping or instrumental helping? To answer this focal question, we draw from theories of leader identity and implicit leader theory to propose that gender acts as a person-level moderator that shapes the effect of emotional and instrumental helping for leaders' well-being (i.e., somatic complaints and vigor). In particular, we propose that women benefit more strongly from emotional helping, whereas instrumental helping is more beneficial for male leaders. An experience sampling study with 855 measurements across ten working days with $N = 140$ leaders suggests that emotional helping family behaviors have a positive daily impact on leader identity and leader well-being for female leaders but not their male counterparts. In comparison, we do not find any benefits for instrumental helping behaviors for both male and female leaders. This research not only expands our theoretical understanding of the type of family-helping behavior that spills over into work for female and male leaders but also holds practical implications of what type of morning helping most benefits women leaders.

Keywords:

Helping Behavior, Spillover, Wellbeing, Leader Identity

Introduction:

Multigenerational living has grown sharply over the past five decades and shows no sign of peaking (D’Vera et al., 2022). When asked why they share their home with relatives, many give practical reasons related to finances or family caregiving. According to an analysis of census data, a third of adults in multigenerational households say caregiving is a major reason for their living arrangement, including 25% who cite adult caregiving and 12% who cite childcare (D’Vera et al., 2022). Moreover, these caregiving responsibilities tend to fall primarily on women worldwide. According to the International Labour Organization, globally, women perform an estimated 7.6 times more unpaid care work than men daily. This translates to a staggering 12.5 billion hours of additional care work shouldered by women annually (Zalis, 2024).

Adult caregiving and childcare are two large categories of family helping that can be broken down into many family helping behaviors that extend within that category and outside of it. Helping behavior is defined as discretionary behavior to assist another person (Organ, 1988). This study differentiates between instrumental and emotional family helping behaviors at home. Instrumental helping is defined as assistance focused on the practical aspects of tasks. Many family members extend help to those living in their house through instrumental helping behaviors such as managing practical elements of household responsibilities, including organizing playdates, shopping, and planning activities. Emotional family helping is defined as listening to and consoling the family. This includes listening to a complaint about a friend, calming things down if the kids are acting up, or worrying about how they are managing at school.

Helping has been shown to benefit the helper as well as the helped (Glomb et al., 2011), manifesting in increased individual well-being and satisfaction (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010; Lanaj, Johnson, & Wang, 2016) as well as benefits to the family (Jiang & Fung, 2022). Recent studies have suggested that helping family behaviors benefits leaders by increasing leader identity and reducing work-family conflict (Mahoney & Rivkin, 2025). Since family caregiving requires both emotional and instrumental support, it is essential to determine which type is more effective in benefiting leaders. Our study builds on previous research, which has also highlighted the benefits of helping behaviors for the helper (Jiang & Fung, 2022; Glomb et al., 2011; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010) and aims to examine both emotional and instrumental families through the lens of gender differences. As the focal outcome of our study, we extend a body of work that has focused on leader well-being (Byrne et al., 2014; Gabriel, Lanaj, & Jennings, 2021). We focus on the implications of each type of morning helping behavior in the home domain for leaders' well-being evening in the home domain measured by somatic complaints and vigor. Leader wellbeing is an essential outcome for leaders in their own right as well-being can lead to quality of life and long-term career success (VandenBos, 2007; Hall et al., 2012).

Starting in the home domain with emotion and instrumental helping behavior, we expand our understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying well-being by separating the effects of emotional helping and instrumental helping by gender on leader identity. To unravel this, we examined the difference between male and female leaders through the lens of implicit leadership theories (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000) and leader identity (i.e., how an individual thinks of themselves as a leader; Day, 2000). Implicit leadership theories suggest that female leaders focus on emotional support and communicate their vision

effectively, empower and mentor subordinates, and approach problem-solving more flexibly and creatively. In contrast, male managers are less likely to bond or connect with their subordinates (Eagly & Karau, 2002). There is some existing evidence that men believe that good leaders have masculine qualities (e.g., Atwater, Brett, Waldman, DiMare, & Hayden, 2004; Schein, 2001), and therefore, evolutionary tendencies of men tend to focus more on providing instrumental support with problem solving (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Leader identity theory suggests that behaviors most aligned to one's leader identity will trigger leader identity (Day, 2000). From this perspective, we propose that emotional helping, which involves recognizing and supporting others' significant personal needs, fosters a stronger leader identity in female leaders when performed in the morning. Conversely, we argue that instrumental helping behaviors, which focus on providing direction and task-related support, enhance leader identity in male leaders when carried out in the morning. It is important, next, to extend this research to understand the downstream effects of emotional helping and instrumental helping behavior on the leader after the workday and at home. We further propose that an increased daily leader identity facilitates leaders' well-being (Hirschfeld, Bernerth, & Walker, 2021). Both leader Identity and well-being have been shown to fluctuate daily (Lanaj et al., 2021; Sonnentag, 2001). Identity theory asserts that leader identity helps build individuals' confidence in their leadership ability and allows leaders to execute leadership work tasks with more ease (Hirschfeld, Bernerth, & Walker, 2021). Furthermore, once leaders execute leadership with more ease, their leader identity is accentuated in a positive "spiral" that reinforces how they see themselves as leader (Day et al., 2009).

Our study offers three important contributions to the current literature. First, this study extends the conversation in the literature on helping behaviors to distinguish between

emotional and instrumental helping. Considering that for many individuals, especially in multi-generational homes, both emotional and instrumental helping behavior opportunities are present in the morning (Ervin et al., 2022), our study may reshape the way leaders choose to allocate their time and energy. Since both emotional and instrumental helping offers immediate benefits for their loved ones, leaders may find it important to determine specifically which type of helping can be most beneficial for their family and themselves.

Second, through the integration of leader identity theory and implicit leadership theories, our study helps to provide a more comprehensive picture of the psychological processes underlying the spillover effects of daily emotional and instrumental helping family behaviors in the home domain to daily leader well-being (Ibarra et al., 2014; McGuire, 1994). By understanding the focal mechanisms of leader identity and implicit leadership theories, we are able to gain a better understanding of the mechanism that underly leader identity fluctuation on a day-to-day basis.

Third, our study holds implications for the spillover of helping well-being through the role of gender. When considering all the competing demands on a female leader's morning, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities, women need to understand the opportunity cost of those behaviors. Understanding the focal mechanisms of leader identity, implicit leadership theories, and gender linking emotional family helping to women leaders' daily well-being allows us to target the focal mechanisms through other means than emotional family helping in the future (DeRue et al., 2009). There may be different processes involved in linking different types of helping to well-being for female vs. male leaders (Hirschfeld, Bernerth, & Walker, 2021). By understanding gender-specific processes, leaders may be able to execute leadership with more ease and reinforce their leader identity (Day et al., 2009).

Theoretical Development

The role of emotional and instrumental helping family members in the home domain to the work domain moderated via gender

Research has shown the benefits of helping behavior for the helper as well as the helped (Glomb et al., 2011; Podaskoff, Whiting, & Bloom, 2009). Some benefits to the helper are increased well-being and satisfaction (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010; Lanaj, Johnson, & Wang, 2016). Our study aims to expand on this research. Extending upon these established views, we posit to understand the effects of instrumental versus emotional helping through the moderation of gender. Instrumental helping is defined as assistance focused on the practical aspects of tasks. An example of instrumental helping a family member is a parent assisting with homework help with their child. On the other hand, emotional helping is more focused on assisting a family member through listening and consolation. An example of emotional helping for a leader is if they cheer up their partner after they have had a tough day at work. The leader might simply listen to their partner or offer verbal encouragement. Helping in the home domain is an important topic as the demanding nature of leaders' position makes it particularly crucial to consider whether leaders' focus on their family in the morning may have positive or negative implications for their work role.

We draw on leader identity theory to expand our understanding of the positive effect of helping behavior. Leader identity theory stems from identity theory (Kegan, 1982 & Bem, 1972). According to the leader identity theory, changes in self-perception result in changes in leader identity (Miscenko, Guenter, & Day, 2017). Leader identity theory argues that leaders construct their identities through a process of self-reflection, interpretation of experiences, and interactions with others. This construction is ongoing and dynamic,

influenced by various factors such as personal values, beliefs, experience, and social context (Day, 2000; Day & Harrison, 2007). The theory further denotes that certain aspects of a leader's identity become more salient or prominent in different situations. Identity salience is an important part of leader identity theory as it explains the process of change in leader identity. The salience of specific leader identities can be influenced by contextual factors, organizational norms, and individual preferences. Both theory and empirical evidence predominantly propose organizational factors as antecedents of leader identity, but factors outside of the organization are not considered for the most part. (Day & Harrison, 2007). For example, a leader may emphasize their expertise in strategy in a steering committee meeting but prioritize their role as a helper during coaching sessions with subordinates (Guillén, Mayo, & Korotov, 2015). Through this phenomenon, we argue that helping behavior triggers changes in self-perception at the daily level because the act of helping emphasizes the parts of a leader's identity that are responsible for taking charge, caring for others, and making decisions.

Leader identity is not solely an internal process but also involves claims and grants from others. Leaders make claims about their identity through interpreted words and actions, and these claims are granted by their environment. When leaders make a claim that they can help others, when that claim is reflected to them by the other, it makes their identity stronger (Standish, 2023).

Emotional Helping

Emotional helping is defined as assisting a family member through listening and consolation. Implicit leadership theories suggest that women focus more on emotional support (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Schyns et al., 2011). Previous literature has shown that

women tend to take on listening roles as opposed to their male counterparts and are perceived to be better listeners (Burke & Collins, 2001; Borisoff & Merrill, 1998; Barker, Pearce, & Johnson, 1992; Borisoff & Hahn, 1992; Brownell, 1990). Furthermore, literature suggests that as opposed to their male counterparts, women listen to the issue but also listen for content and delivery and do not “just hear words” (Heath, 2006). Borrowing from psychology literature, Collar (2005) revealed that female psychological counselors were good listeners as they understood effective or ineffective psychological reactions better than male psychological counselors. Additionally, Collins (2006) stated that women, when compared to men, may be better at interpreting emotion, as well. Based on workplace culture literature, male and female managers have different beliefs about listening and approach how they listen based on their own beliefs (Schein, 1992). In a more recent study of gender differences, it was found that female managers indicate they use more time listening than male managers do (Welch & Mickelson, 2013). It is argued that women give more attention to the speaker, paraphrase messages, and ask questions, showing they may display more effective listening behaviors than their male counterparts (Levitt, 2001; Trenholm & Jensen, 2004; Devito, 2007). Therefore, emotional help through listening and consolation may become easier for women as it aligns with their natural listening and leadership skills.

Therefore, we propose that emotional family helping is an effective daily behavior for female leaders because it enables cognitive restructuring by nudging leaders to be kind and gracious in relation to the challenges of others (Allen & Leary, 2010; Gnilka et al., 2017). By engaging in emotional helping behavior, female leaders may regard a family’s hardships as “just part of being human” and view them with an attitude of understanding. As they get to work, they may view their employees’ hardships with an attitude of understanding, as well,

rather than as a threat to their leadership, making it easier to view themselves as a leader on a day-to-day basis. Thus, emotional family helping may enhance leader identity by making leaders feel more comfortable adopting the leader role despite some of the challenges inherent to this role. Thus, engaging in emotional helping in the morning may make leader identity more salient and encourage leaders to embrace their leader identity more readily. Hence, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 1:

Daily morning emotional helping behavior is positively related to leader identity at work. This daily relationship between emotional family helping behavior and leader identity is stronger for females.

Instrumental Helping

Instrumental helping is defined as assistance focused on the practical aspects of tasks. Leaders who focus on transactions or the tasks that must be accomplished usually prefer risk avoidance and emphasize process rather than substance as a means for maintaining control. They are also likely to be effective in stable and predictable environments in which monitoring current activity against prior performance is the most effective strategy (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramanian, 1996). Men, more than women, believe that good leaders have masculine qualities (Atwater, Brett, Waldman, DiMare, & Hayden, 2004; Schein, 2001). Implicit leadership theories suggest that men tend to provide instrumental support with problem solving in line with their masculine qualities (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and prefer to manage stable and predictive environments (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramanian, 1996).

Therefore, we propose that instrumental family helping is an effective daily behavior for male leaders because it aligns with their internal perception of leadership (Atwater, Brett, Waldman, DiMare, & Hayden, 2004). By engaging in instrumental family helping behavior, male leaders are able to give direction and execute problem-solving strategies. Thus, instrumental family helping may enhance leader identity by allowing males to prime their leader behaviors in the morning before work. Thus, engaging in instrumental helping in the morning may make leader identity more salient and encourage male leaders to embrace their leader identity more readily. Hence, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 2:

Daily morning instrumental helping behavior is positively related to leader identity at work.

This daily relationship between instrumental family helping behavior and leader identity is stronger for males.

From the work back to the home domain- Leader identity mediator between emotional and instrumental family helping and leader wellbeing

Well-being is a multi-faceted construct that includes emotional responses to daily circumstances and judgments of life satisfaction (Diene, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999) and includes happiness, relationship, and health outcomes (Van de Voorde et al., 2012; Kilroy et al., 2016).

Over time, well-being is associated with flexible and creative thinking, pro-social behavior, and good physical health (Huppert, 2009). Therefore, the well-being of leaders is crucial to the workplace and home. An increased daily leader identity at the start of work has been

shown to have downstream effects on leadership behavior at work (Day et al., 2009; Lord & Hall, 2005; Rus et al., 2010). When leaders identify strongly with their leadership role, they think differently (Lord & Hall, 2005). For leaders, increased leader identity allows them to identify more strongly with their leader role (Lanaj, Gabriel, & Jennings 2023). An increased leader identity in a leadership role will result in reduced threats to perceived self-worth (Cresswell et al., 2005; Keough, 1998). As leader identity increases, the increase in self-worth a leader experiences creates a positive identity spiral where they connect more with their leader identity (Miscenko, Guenter, & Day, 2017). Positive leader identity change motivates individuals to exercise their leadership skills, receive confirmation for their leadership claims, and further align leadership behaviors with a leadership role (Miscenko, Guenter, & Day, 2017). This behavior will, in turn, lead to stronger self-perceptions as a leader. With strong self-perceptions of leadership in a leader role, less energy is allocated to working on leader identity, and more energy is retained for other things. This positively influences leaders' own well-being (Hobfoll, 1989).

Well-being can appear in the form of physical health and physiological health (Sonnentag et al., 2017). Therefore, we measured both a physical and psychological well-being indicator. First, well-being was measured through somatic complaints. A decrease in physical health (e.g., having a headache) can affect the ability to work (e.g., making more errors because of the inability to concentrate while working) but also can decrease life satisfaction (Sonntag et al., 2017). Secondly, we chose to measure well-being through vigor. Vigor is a much-studied concept that captures the energy specifically directed at work (Reis et al., 2016). Vigor is characterized by “high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face

of difficulties” (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Therefore, we propose that if a leader’s leader identity that is more aligned with collaboration and active listening, as it is for females, emotional helping behavior with family before work will lead to higher leader identity at work increasing leaders’ well-being both physical and psychological (Zwingmann, Wolf, & Richter, 2016; Lin, Ma, & Johnson, 2016). If a leader’s identity is more aligned with task assignment and direction giving, as it is for males, then instrumental helping before work will lead to higher leader identity at work, increasing both physical and psychological well-being. Thus, we propose hypotheses 3 and 4:

Hypothesis 3:

The daily relationship between emotional family helping behaviors in the morning in the home domain and leaders’ wellbeing in the home domain after work is mediated through daily leader identity and moderated through gender

Hypothesis 4:

The daily relationship between instrumental family helping behaviors in the morning in the home domain and leaders’ wellbeing in the home domain after work is mediated through daily leader identity and moderated through gender

Study Methods:

Participants. The Trinity Business School Ethics Committee approved this data collection prior to the start of the study. The data for this study was collected via Prolific Academic UK—an online provider that offers access to participants and guarantees high-

quality data (Peer et al., 2017). We recruited leaders in June, July, and August 2024 using a screening criterion for individuals who have leadership responsibilities in their work, are currently employed, have English proficiency, and live with another person (i.e., family member or roommate). Prior to data collection, participants were informed by email of the study details. Respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary, that their responses would be made anonymous, and that they could end their involvement at any time. Study details were revisited at the start of data collection, and participants were offered an opportunity to opt out of the study at any time. Walter et al. (2019: 425) have shown that data collected via online providers “possess similar psychometric properties and produce criterion validity that generally falls within the credibility intervals of existing metanalytic results from conventionally sourced data.” Compared with participants recruited via other platforms (e.g., Mechanical Turk, Crowd Flower), participants recruited via Prolific Academic are more diverse and are suggested to provide higher-quality data (Palan and Schitter, 2018; Peer et al., 2017).

At the start of the study, participants received a pre-survey, which measured demographic characteristics as well as stable variables such as remote work. After that, participants received daily surveys, starting on the following Monday, for two consecutive weeks (10 workdays). Subsequently, for each workday (Monday- Friday), participants indicated the estimated time at which they finished work and their bedtime. Each participant received three surveys per day: A morning survey one hour after an individual starts working, an afternoon survey one hour before an individual ends working, and an evening survey two hours before an individual goes to bed. If participants did not respond within the first hour after receiving the survey, a reminder was sent. The surveys were automatically

deactivated if the participant did not respond within two hours after they received a survey. Participants received £0.50 for each completed survey. Moreover, they were awarded a bonus of £0.50 if they completed surveys on seven or more days (Gabriel et al., 2019).

The initial sample of participants who completed the presurvey consisted of N=170 individuals. We excluded participants who did not complete any of the daily diary surveys throughout the study period which resulting in a sample of N=140 (person level response rate: (person-level response rate of 82%), who completed 855 daily surveys (day-level response rate of 61%). These person- and day-level response rates are in line with previously published daily diary studies (Fisher and To, 2012). The average completion times for daily surveys were 9:53 AM, 6:20 PM, and 9:05 PM. Participants were employed in different sectors (Agriculture 1%, Construction 5%, Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate 9%, Manufacturing 7%, Mining 1 %, Public Administration 11%, Retail trade 9%, Professional Services 28%, Transportation, Electric, Gas, and Sanitary Services 2 %, Other 26 %), their age ranged from 21 to 71 years (M= 37; SD=10), the rate of female participation was 46%.

Measures and Control Variables:

In the morning, we measured *Helping Family Behavior*. Helping family behavior is operationalized as the social, assisting, and cooperative behavior of the employee directed toward team members. We adapted the model to a non-work context to show helping behavior directed at family in the morning. Helping family behavior was split between emotional helping and instrumental helping and measured using the scale adapted from Shakespeare-Finch & Obst (2011). An example of emotional helping was, “This morning, I listened to my family’s problems.” An example of instrumental helping was “I helped my

family with their responsibilities when they were unable to fulfill them.” For both measures, leaders rated the extent to which they agreed with each item right now on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

We assessed *Leader Identity* using four items from Lee, Sonday, and Ashford (2016). Leaders rated the extent to which they agreed with each item right now on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The items were: “Being a leader is very important to my sense of self;” “I see myself as a leader;” “I feel like I possess the characteristics of a leader;” and “It is important to my sense of self that others see me as a leader.”

In the evening, we measured *Well-Being* using two measurements that capture both physical and psychological well-being. Somatic complaints and vigor were chosen as the outcome variables in this study because they demonstrate the breadth of well-being implications as somatic complaints are physiological outcomes and vigor is a psychological outcome.

Somatic Complaints were measured through a list developed by von Zerssen et al. (1970). We presented participants with a list of ten complaints and asked to what extent they experienced each complaint in the last few hours on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *rarely or never*; 4 = *Most if not all the time*). Some exemplary complaints are: Having headaches, heavy or tired legs, upper and lower back pain, and neck or shoulder pain. We obtained an overall measure of somatic complaints by computing the mean across all complaints.

Vigor at work was assessed both at the trait and at the day level with three items from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Mäkikangas et al., 2014). The wording was changed to correspond with this distinction: “Today at my job, I felt bursting with energy.” The five-point response scale ranged from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree) (Mäkikangas et al.,

2014). Additionally, a control variable of remote work was utilized by asking the participants about the location of their work each day.

Data Analysis:

Due to the nested data structure (Level 1: Instrumental Helping Family Behavior, Emotional Helping Family Behavior, Leader Identity, Somatic Complaints, Vigor; Level 2: Gender), we used multi-level structural equation modeling based on maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors with Mplus 8.4 (Muthen & Muthen, 2017) to test our conceptual model (see Figure 5). In doing so, we account for the interdependence of both levels (Hox & Maas, 2002). This method allows for analyses on multiple levels and has advantages compared to traditional approaches to multilevel model analysis (e.g., multilevel modeling; Preacher et al., 2010).

First, we specified the relationships corresponding with the proposed mediation model, whereby we first specified an emotional family to help predict the leader's identity. Next, we specified the relationships corresponding with the proposed mediation model, whereby we first specified instrumental family helping to predict leader identity. After that, both instrumental and emotional family helping and leader identity were linked to somatic complaints and vigor. To account for the moderating effect of gender, the relationship between emotional family helping and leader identity was specified as a random slope, which varied across individuals. Next, this was repeated for the relationship between instrumental family helping and leader identity. This random slope was, in turn, predicted by gender at the between-person level. All remaining relationships in the mediation model were specified as fixed slopes as our model did not focus on between-person variations in these variables (Fasbender et al., 2024). Following the suggestions of Ohly et al.. (2010), we centered all

exogenous day-level variables around each person's means ('group-mean centering') and grand-mean-centered authentic leadership as the between-person variable.

Because bootstrapping cannot be applied to multilevel modeling (Preacher & Selig, 2012; van der Leeden et al., 2008), we used a Monte Carlo approach to estimate the confidence intervals for the mediation model (Preacher & Selig, 2012). Specifically, we computed bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals for the indirect effects based on 20,000 resamples using the software provided by Selig and Preacher. An indirect effect is present if the confidence interval of the indirect effect does not include zero (Preacher et al., 2007). We extended this approach to examine the proposed moderated mediation by estimating the confidence intervals for the conditional indirect relationships linking instrumental and emotional helping behaviors to vigor and somatic complaints conflict through leader identity.

Results:

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are shown in Table 9. The results of our multilevel path model are in Table 10, and the indirect effects of our model are presented in Table 11. Table 9 provides an overview of descriptive statistics, internal consistencies (Geldhof et al., 2014), and correlation estimates for the assessed variables. For the within-variables, we additionally calculated Intra Class Coefficients (ICCs) to determine the ratio of between- and within-person variance (Hox, 2002), which indicated a sufficiently large proportion of within-person variation in our focal variables to justify the application of multilevel analyses. Along the diagonal, in italics, the within-person omegas on the within level are displayed. Correlations below the diagonal are person-level correlations ($N = 140$). Correlations above the diagonal are day-level correlations ($N = 855$). Numbers in bold, $p < 0.05$. Between-person level variables in italics.

Table 11 summarizes the indirect effects observed in our multi-level path model. In support of hypothesis 1, which predicts that emotionally helping behavior towards one's family in the morning before work will spillover from home to work and lead to a higher leader identity at work, we found a relationship between emotionally helping family behavior and leader identity, moderated by gender ($b = -0.04$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [-0.10; -0.04]) supporting this hypothesis.

Testing hypothesis 2, which predicts that instructional helping behavior toward one's family in the morning before work will spill over from home to work and lead to a higher leader identity at work, we found no relationship between instrumental helping family behavior and leader identity, moderated by gender ($b = -0.11$, $SE = 0.57$, 95% CI [-0.20; -0.02]). This hypothesis was supported.

In support of hypothesis 3, we examined helping the full proposed mediation model linking emotional helping behavior and well-being through the mediator leader identity. As predicted by hypothesis 3, there was an indirect effect of emotional helping behavior on somatic complaints and vigor through the proposed mediator as the corresponding 95% CI did not include zero somatic complaints ($b = -0.10$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI [-0.170; -0.038]), vigor ($b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI [0.36; 0.23]). This hypothesis was supported.

Testing hypothesis 4, we examined helping the full proposed mediation model linking instructional helping behavior and well-being through the mediator leader identity. There was no indirect effect of instructional helping behavior on somatic complaints and vigor through the proposed mediator as the corresponding 95% CI did not include zero somatic complaints [-0.01; -0.01]), vigor CI [0.01; -0.01]). This hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 5 proposed that gender moderates the relationship between emotional daily family helping behavior and leader identity. Corresponding with this hypothesis, there was a significant relationship between person-level gender and the random slope linking emotional family helping behaviors and leader identity. Plotting the interaction and examining the simple slopes (Figure 6) indicate that the daily relationship between low emotional helping and high emotional helping and leader identity is more substantial for females than males. As shown in Figure 6, for male leaders (-1 SD), the effect of emotional helping behavior on leader identity ($\gamma = -0.04$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = .392$) was insignificant. However, for female leaders (+ 1 SD), the relationship between emotional helping behavior and leader identity was positive and significant ($\gamma = -0.11$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .05$).

Discussion:

Female leaders who find themselves in a position to offer emotional support to their family before work may experience a day-level positive relationship to leader identity at work. Male leaders, however, who find themselves able to offer emotional support to their family before work may not experience a day-level positive relationship to leader identity at work. Furthermore, this study found no correlation between instrumental helping family before work and increased leader identity independent of gender.

For female leaders, this daily relationship is mediated through leader identity, and the spillover effect of emotional family helping morning activities correlates with well-being, which is understood through the thorough integration of leader identity theories and implicit leadership theories. An increased daily leader identity at the start of work has been shown to have downstream effects on leadership behavior at work (Day et al., 2009; Lord & Hall,

2005; Rus et al., 2010). When female leaders identify strongly with their leadership role, they think differently (Lord & Hall, 2005). This behavior will in turn lead to stronger self-perceptions as a leader. With strong self-perceptions of leadership in a leader role, less energy is allocated to working on leader identity, and more confidence is gained (Hobfoll, 1989). This allows for female leaders to have both physical and physiological well-being (Sonnentag et al., 2017).

Theoretical contributions:

Our study makes several significant theoretical contributions by integrating literature on emotional helping behavior and leader wellbeing via leader identity and gender. Our study offers three important contributions to the current literature. First, this study extends the conversation in the literature on helping behaviors to distinguish between emotional and instrumental helping for male and female leaders. Considering that for many individuals, especially in multi-generational homes, both emotional and instrumental helping behavior opportunities are present in the morning (Ervin et al., 2022), our study may reshape the way leaders choose to allocate their time and energy. Since both emotional and instrumental helping offers immediate benefits for their loved ones, leaders may find it important to determine which type of helping has the most significant correlation with increased leader identity and individual well-being (Day, 2001; Balston, 1987; McGuire, 1994; Lyu et al., 2017). Our study suggests that female leaders who engage in emotional helping family behavior through leader identity theory and implicit leadership theories find it easier to view

themselves as leader on a day-to-day basis. Interestingly, our study found no correlation between instrumental helping behavior for males and leader identity.

Second, through leader identity theory, our study helps to provide a more comprehensive picture of the psychological processes underlying the spillover effects of leaders' daily emotional helping family behaviors in the home domain to daily leader wellbeing (Ibarra et al., 2014; McGuire, 1994). By understanding the focal mechanisms of leader identity linking emotional family helping to leaders' daily well-being allows us to target the focal mechanisms through other means than emotional family helping in the future (DeRue et al., 2009). We argue that on days where leaders adopt a higher as compared to a lower leader identity, they gain confidence in their leadership (Day et al., 2009). We propose that this increase in ability allows leaders to execute leadership work tasks with more ease (Kipnis & Lane, 1962). Furthermore, once leaders execute leadership with more ease, their leader identity is accentuated in a positive “spiral” that motivates them to lead (Day et al., 2009). This sets the leaders on a path of momentum of positive reinforcement that increases their daily well-being.

Third, our study holds implications for the spillover of helping to well-being through the role of gender. When considering all the competing demands made on a female leader's morning, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities, it is important for women to understand the opportunity cost of those behaviors. In particular, if a variety of caretaking duties are required, women leaders may be drawn to spend more time on emotional helping in the morning and save instrumental helping for another part of the day. Organizations may also make practical recommendations to employees by encouraging female leaders to focus on emotionally helping their family at home and not beginning work until the start of their

workday. This detachment will allow them to find fulfillment in their family duties and increase their leader identity at work (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Collins, 2001; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999).

Practical Implications:

Our research also holds practical implications by allowing female leaders to make more informed decisions about whether investing time in emotional or instructional helping family in the morning is better for their leader identity considering competing demands made on a leader's morning, even at a family level. With multi-generational living on the rise, there are many helping behavior opportunities for most leaders to choose from before work (D'Vera et. al, 2022). This study may help female leaders to prioritize emotional helping tasks in the morning as they may align with increased day-level leader identity and well-being.

The second practical implication for this study is for policy support to help women gain and maintain leadership roles. In the United States, studies by the Center for American Progress show that caregiving-related job losses cost the U.S. economy billions of dollars annually in lost productivity and tax revenue. Businesses lose valuable talent and expertise, while the tax base shrinks due to reduced income from women leaving or scaling back their careers (Zalis, 2024). This study can help change the conversation for women about what productive work-life balance looks like. Women in leadership roles may feel pressure to conform to traditionally masculine leadership stereotypes, which emphasize instrumental, task-focused behaviors such as decisiveness, assertiveness, and performance orientation, to be seen as competent leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hoyt, 2010). This phenomenon is rooted in societal expectations and organizational cultures that often value male-dominated traits for leadership effectiveness (Schein, 2001). As a result, women may adopt more instrumental

behaviors to align with these expectations and gain credibility (Carli, 2001). However, while they may enact these behaviors to meet stereotypical standards, women leaders can also blend instrumental and relational (communal) behaviors, which has been shown to be effective in promoting both task achievement and employee satisfaction (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Eagly & Carli, 2003). The extent to which women engage in such behaviors depends on the organizational context and the dominant leadership norms (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). ser

A 2020 study estimates that closing the gender care gap could add a whopping \$2.5tn to the global GDP by 2025 (McKinsey, 2020). Nordic countries like Sweden, Norway, and Finland exemplify progressive parental leave that fosters gender equality and boosts labor market participation. For instance, Sweden allows parents to share up to 480 days of leave, supporting economic stability for families and gender balance in caregiving. These nations also offer universal, subsidized childcare; in Sweden, costs are capped relative to household income, enhancing accessibility. Such policies not only retain talent but also drive economic growth, demonstrating a sustainable model of family support. This study highlights additional benefits of caregiving to women leaders helping to provide evidence for benefit of these types of arrangements. Furthermore, flexible work arrangements, on-site childcare, Eldercare support, and life stage accommodations will help to balancing women's work and personal life and help them achieve and sustain leader identity and eventually positions of leadership.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research:

Despite its contributions, we have to discuss several limitations of our study that may inform future research. Given limitations with surveying subordinates, and our focus on

leaders' personal perceptions of their helping behavior, leader identity and individual well-being, which may be susceptible to common method bias and memory bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, some have found that in daily diary studies, additional reports may not be required (Gabriel et al., 2019). For example, it is unlikely that observers (e.g., subordinates) would have been able to provide ratings of several of our focal variables, including leader identity, daily relaxation, somatic complaints, and vigor. That said, we encourage future research to investigate how behaviors impact leader identity directly pertains to subordinates. In particular, we invite future research to use family ratings of leader's emotional helping behavior. For leader identity vigor and somatic complaints, we felt that leaders were the most adept at providing these ratings (Gabriel et al., 2019).

In this study, we tested self-control, but other theoretical frameworks could recommend other frameworks such as self-determination theory. Future research should look into linking leader identity to well-being through a self-determination theory framework.

Finally, future studies may go beyond the scope of our research by examining further incidental predictors of leader identity. Leader identity is a positive and important "side effect" of emotional helping behavior. Theoretical arguments suggest that other behaviors will correlate with incidental leader identity.

Conclusion:

We advance research on leader identity and well-being by examining the daily work implications of emotional and instrumental helping. As expected, we found emotional family helping behaviors in the morning moderated through gender allowed leaders to identify with the leader role at work. Conversely, we found instrumental family helping behaviors in the

morning moderated via gender had no effect on leaders' identity in their role at work. We found that for female leaders, the benefits of emotional family helping in the morning were linked to leaders' well-being after work mediated by leader identity. Having established the importance of emotional family helping behavior for leader identity and leader well-being in women, we are hopeful that our work will motivate future research.

Appendix:

Figure 5:

Theoretical Model

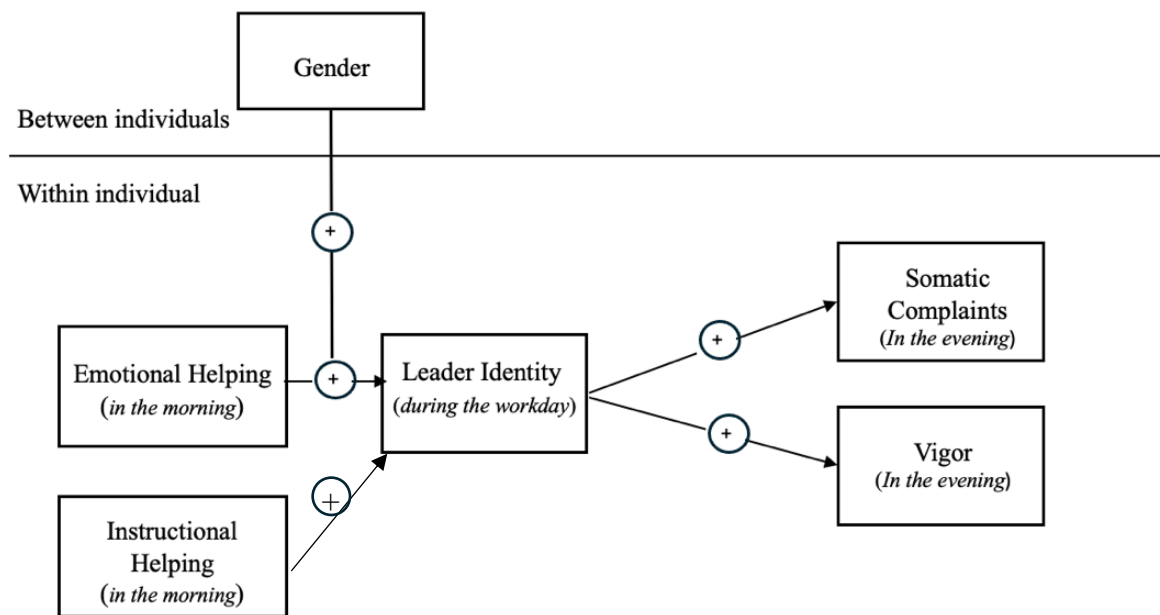


Table 9:*Mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha, ICCs, and correlations*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Giving Instrumental Support (Family)	<i>.90</i>	0.47	0.11	-.08	-0.08		
2 Giving Emotional Support (Family)	0.13	<i>.92</i>	0.06	0.05	0.01		
3 Leader Identity	0.07	0.05	<i>.90</i>	-0.15	0.11		
4 Somatic Complaints	-0.01	0.03	-0.09	.88	-0.32		
5 Vigor	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.04	<i>.93</i>		
7 Gender	-0.02	0	-0.07	0.11	0.06	0.08	
8 Age	0.14	0.13	0.16	0.09	0.13	1	
<i>M</i> (between)	2.95	2.78	3.53	1.74	2.65	1.46	37.7
<i>SD</i> (between)	0.91	0.7	0.69	0.36	0.48	0.48	10.6
<i>SD</i> (within)	0.86	0.66	0.22	0.14	0.41		
ICC (1)	0.51	0.52	0.76	0.71	0.54		
ICC (2)	0.86	0.86	0.95	0.93	0.87		

Note. Gender coded as 1 (male) and 2 (female). ICC (1) reflects the proportion of within-person variance. Correlations on the between-person level are presented below the diagonal ($N = 140$). Correlations on the within-person level are presented above the diagonal ($N = 855$). Along the diagonal, in italics, the within-person omegas, on the within level are displayed Lower triangular: Within-Group, Upper triangular: Between-Group. Statistically significant coefficients $p < 0.05$ are bold (Lai, 2021)

Table 10:

Multilevel Path Model Estimates predicting leader identity, somatic complaints, and vigor mediated by gender.

Predictor	Leader Identity (midday)		Somatic Complaints (Evening)		Vigor (Evening)	
	γ	<i>SE</i>	γ	<i>SE</i>	γ	<i>SE</i>
Intercept	0.05*	0.06	0.01*	0.04	0.02*	0.59
Level-1 predictor and control variables						
Emotional Family Helping morning x Gender	-0.11	0.06				
Instrumental Family Helping morning x Gender	-0.0	0.06				
Control Variable (Remote Work)	0.001	0.063	0.07	0.06	0.00	0.09
Residual Variance	0.20	0.04	0.12	0.02	0.33	0.05
Level-2- predictor						
Gender	.696	0.143**				

Note. Level-1 $N=855$; Level- 2 $N=140$. Direct effects on the within-person level are shown. Level-1 variables were person-mean centered. To ascertain the practical significance of our model, we calculated the variance explained by each predictor using model likelihood statistics, following the formula of Klien et al. (2021). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Table 11:*Indirect and Conditional Indirect Effects*

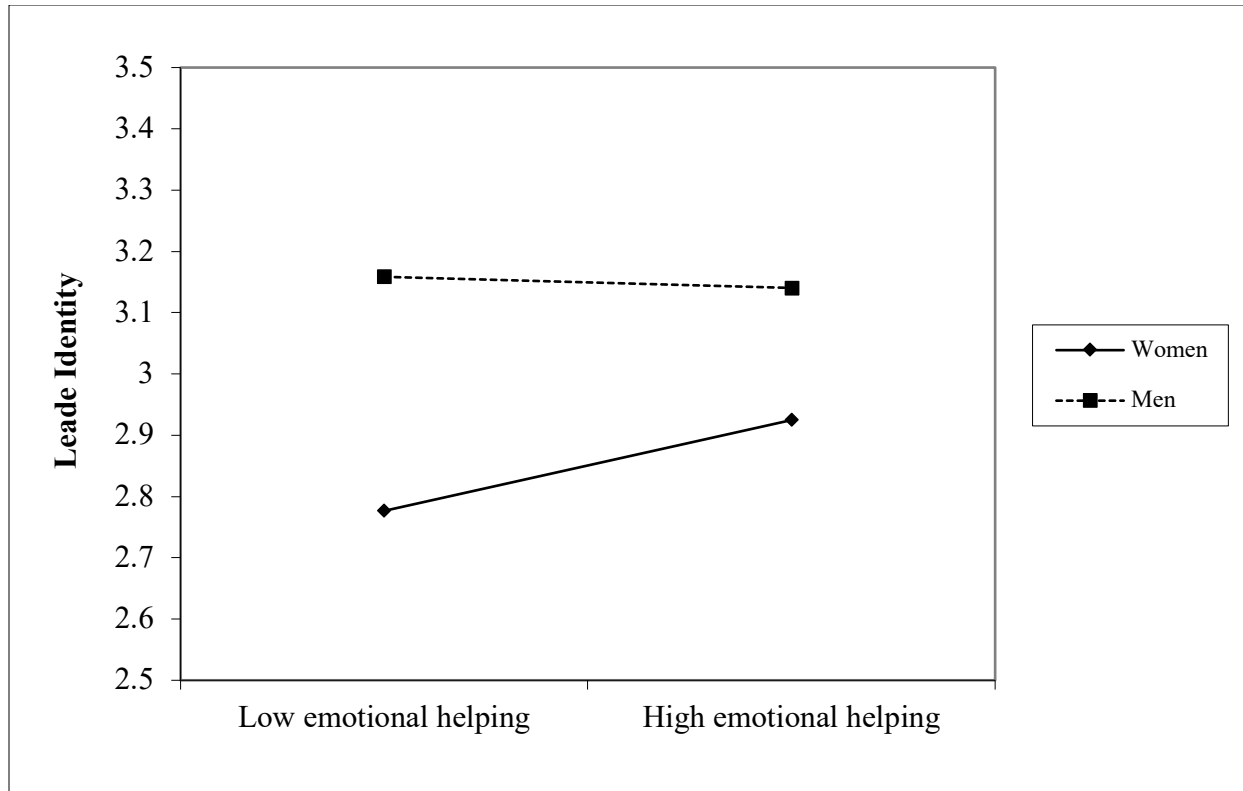
Indirect effect	Gender	Estimate	SE	95% CI
Emotional Helping Family → Leader Identity → Somatic Complaints	Female	-0.004*	0.003	(-0.010; 0.001)
	Male	0.001	0.004	(0.01; -0.007)
Instrumental Helping Family → Leader Identity → Somatic Complaints	Female	-0.002	0.003	(0.003; -0.01)
	Male	0.001	0.003	(0.006; -0.007)
Emotional Helping Family → Leader Identity → Vigor	Female	0.005*	0.005	(-0.003; 0.015)
	Male	-0.001	0.006	(0.011; -0.013)
Instrumental Helping Family → Leader Identity → Vigor	Female	0.002	0.004	(0.013; -0.004)
	Male	0.001	0.004	(0.009; -0.008)

Indirect effects were calculated based on Monte Carlo. LL = Lower Limit. UL = Upper Limit.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Figure 6:

Cross-level moderating effect of gender on the relations between emotional family helping and leader identity



Note. For male leaders (-1 SD), the effect of emotional helping behavior on leader identity ($\gamma = .03$, $SE = 0.343$, $p = .732$) was not significant. However, for female leaders (+ 1 SD), the relationship between high emotional helping and leader identity was positive and significant ($\gamma = .31$, $SE = 3.6$, $p = .00$)

Implications and Summary of the Studies:

This thesis focuses on whether there could be other more incidental and thus natural ways to facilitate experiences of leader identity compared to previous research on more deliberate ways to facilitate leader identity. This thesis adds to the research by introducing incidental leader identity and identifying some of its boundary conditions. As defined in this thesis, incidental leader identity is a phenomenon of leader identity change that occurs as a by-product of a behavior or action that was not deliberately targeted to foster leader identity. Similar to incidental learning, a concept of learning that is unplanned or unintended which develops while engaging in a task or activity, incidental leader identity is a byproduct of other behaviors and can change as a result of a significant event or a series of small events, ideas or thoughts (Watkins et al., 2018).

Study one contributes to leader identity theory with the novel linking of incidental leader identity through helping behavior. Second, this paper contributes to the theory by trying to bridge the gap between a leader's identity and reluctance to lead. Finally, this paper provides insight into the Irish healthcare sector, specifically the cultural context of Irish culture on leader identity. Due to its exploratory nature, this research expands our theoretical understanding of the ties between reluctant leadership, helping behavior, influences outside of work, Irish cultural context, and leader identity and sets out some pointed questions for potential future research.

Study 2 sheds light on the day-specific effects of morning helping behavior on reduced work-family conflict in the evening. Integrating the literature on leader identity theory and construal level theory, our results suggest that helping family in the morning in the home domain can support leader identity and construal level in the work domain.

Reduced cognitive depletion in the work domain facilitated the spillover of reduced work-family conflict in the home domain in the evening. Based on these results, considering spillover effects between the work and home domain, leaders may allocate their time in the morning to helping family to benefit from reduced work-family conflict after work. This research not only expands our theoretical understanding of the mechanisms that explain how family-helping behavior spill over across domains but also holds practical implications of why it can be crucial to for leaders to help family members in the morning.

In Study 3, we advance research on leader identity and well-being by examining the daily work implications of emotional and instrumental helping. As expected, we found emotional family helping behaviors in the morning mediated through gender allowed leaders to identify with the leader role at work. Conversely, we found instrumental family helping behaviors in the morning mediated via gender had no effect on leaders' identity in their role at work. We found that for female leaders, the benefits of emotional family helping in the morning linked to leaders' well-being after work via leader identity. Having established the importance of emotional family helping behavior for leader identity and leader well-being in women, we hope our work will motivate future research.

In conjunction these studies form the initial investigation into incidental leader identity research. These studies demonstrate boundary conditions to incidental leader identity and moderators to incidental leader identity, such as authentic leadership and gender. This thesis demonstrates key characteristics of incidental leader identity, such as its emergent nature in situational experiences and that its experience is driven by actions not deliberately focused on triggering leader identity. Correspondingly, as a secondary aim of the present

thesis, we expand our understanding of the underlying psychological mechanisms linking leader identity to leaders' well-being.

Limitations and Future Research:

Future research should continue to explore Incidental Leader Identity and seek to identify additional boundary conditions of incidental leader identity, as well as new moderators.

It is worth mentioning that two of the studies in the thesis were daily diary studies. Given the limitations of surveying subordinates and our focus on leaders' perceptions of leader identity and individual well-being, we may be susceptible to common method bias and memory bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Furthermore, we believe the best source for rating a leader's identity and well-being. These self-perceptions require one's inner life and are difficult for others to rate due to their low observability, rendering other reports problematic. Nevertheless, work family conflict and helping behavior could be measured by one's family members at home, and we invite future studies to use reports from others for this measure. Additionally, experimental studies comparing incidental and purposeful leader identity could lead to stronger evidence for the importance of incidental leader identity.

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APPENDIX I:

A BRIEF OVERVIEW AND MOTIVATIONS OF THE STUDIES

In 2017, I was working at Bank of America Corporation in New York City as a Senior Vice President and I found myself attending and helping to run leadership trainings where all the response and participation in the training was formulaic and individuals seemed to be “checking the box” or parroting the desired response for the company. Reading into this further, it was clear that leadership programs were failing. I always wanted to help leaders connect with their leadership and self in a meaningful way and I met Dr. Martin Fellenz of Trinity College, Dublin over email and we shared many of the same viewpoints. We both were passionate about positive affirmations, manifestation, and understanding oneself as a means of true growth. I applied for a scholarship under Dr. Martin Fellenz and started my PhD in leadership in the fall of 2018.

Like many PhD journeys, my research process was not linear, and I experienced many twists and turns that ultimately resided in the presented thesis. I now proceed by discussing this iterative journey and how each study came to fruition and interconnect with each other. Figure 1 graphically illustrates how the studies build off each other. I started my PhD in September 2018, along with my supervisor, I had an opportunity to work at the Royal College of Surgeons leadership program where used narratives to help leaders uncover their leader identity. These findings opened the door to a host of new research questions, one of which was addressed in the second study.

Unfortunately, in May of 2019 as I was collecting data for study one my mother was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Naturally, during this time a large personal shift occurred

for me to focus on family. My mother subsequently passed from cancer in April of 2020, and I took a leave of absence from my PhD program to be with my family in the United States. During this time, the COVID-19 virus broke out and like many others, my supervisor, Martin Fellenz had the opportunity to reflect on what was best for him and he took a new role in a different country.

When I returned to resumption of my PhD, so much had changed. I was lucky to be able to connect with Wladislaw Rivkin who agreed to supervise the remainder of my PhD. Before my experience with grief of my mother, I was always trying to improve myself and was drawn to positive affirmations in leader identity similar in line with conversations started by Lanaj et al. 2022. When I returned to my PhD, however, my life had become more complicated and space for positive building of anything for me felt very slim. Revisiting the abductive process that I undertook for study one, one line of exploration that piqued my interest was how incident, family and outside forces could shape leader identity. For the personal reasons explained above, I was drawn to explore incidental leader identity for leaders who have competing priorities outside of work.

Therefore, building upon the themes of the first study, the second study is a multilevel study identifying incidental leader identity experience as a unique focus of research, using experience sample method to capture incidental leader identity its antecedents and outcomes. This study identifies family helping as a focal antecedent of incidental experiences of leader identity that can help promote it. The third study builds on findings in the first study and contributes to literature by disentangling the role of different types of helping. Additionally, the third study demonstrates the role of incidental leader identity for employee well-being.