Perceived and Behavioural Consequences of Social Identity Leadership in Performance Settings

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The old model of ‘heroic’ leadership by individuals needs to adapt to become one that understands other models such as shared leadership both within organisations and across the many organisations with which the NHS has to engage in order to deliver its goals. This requires a focus on developing the organisation and its teams, not just individuals, on leadership across systems of care rather than just institutions, and on followership as well as leadership (The King’s Fund, 2011, pg. ix).

Background
The current programme of research was conducted in sport settings but judging by recent research from The King’s Fund the findings have significant potential for application in an NHS environment. Aligned with the observation by The King’s Fund above, the social identity approach to leadership asserts it is the shared connection between leader and group that forms the foundation of successful leadership (Haslam, Reicher and Platow, 2011). Specifically, within the social identity approach effective leaders are not individual heroes but lead in a manner that creates a unified team identity that group members feel a part of, and an emotional connection with (Hogg, 2001).

Aims
The purpose of the thesis was to primarily examine the effect of values associated with social identities (known as contents of identity; Livingstone and Haslam, 2008; Turner, 1999) on group members’ motivated action to achieve the leader’s vision (known as behavioural mobilisation; e.g., time spent practicing/on task) and task performance. The secondary aim of the thesis was to examine leadership techniques (i.e., power through vs. power over; Turner, 2005) to enhance effective leadership.

Methodology
Using a mixed-method approach five studies (two qualitative and three quantitative) were conducted in field and laboratory contexts using cross-sectional, controlled, and longitudinal designs. A range of participants included undergraduate and postgraduate students, together with amateur and elite athletes and coaches.

Results
Initially the thesis reported how elite leaders’ media communication focused on team identities, values, and visions to mobilise TeamGB athletes towards peak performance and motivate public support at the London 2012 Olympic Games. Next, a series of laboratory experiments indicated that shared values associated with group identity were found to increase perceived leadership effectiveness, behavioural mobilisation (i.e., time practicing), and task performance compared to contrasting values. Further, behavioural mobilisation
partially mediated the positive relationship between shared values and improved task performance. In addition, data showed under conditions of contrasting values leaders are better able to create shared values by adopting a power through, as opposed to a power over, approach and these positive effects were broadly maintained following failure. In a final study of all the rugby teams competing in one division, findings demonstrated the importance of multiple shared values, while group (e.g., strong team bond) individual-level (e.g., empowerment) factors linked multiple shared values to high levels of mobilisation across a season.

**Discussion**

Theoretical explanations of the findings relate to collective mind (Weick and Roberts, 1993), social support (Levine, Prosser, Evans and Reicher, 2005), and extend our understanding of leadership, whilst raising implications for health and social care. In light of observations by The King’s Fund and the role of leadership in health and social care, the social identity approach to leadership examined within a sport context here has clear utility and application. Specifically, in the context of this thesis, leadership at any level or grade that creates shared values within a group identity optimises followers’ mobilisation of effort to achieve the collective vision, whilst leadership *through* rather than over the group is most effective in creating shared values, which are maintain resilience during adversity.

**References**


