

## **Authentic Self: Personal Identity Conceptualizations for Leaders and Followers (An Interdisciplinary Study)**

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*The current study offers an interdisciplinary review of more than 100 scholarly articles and books on personal identity theories from primarily philosophical, psychological, and philosophical psychology literature to understand how the leader and the follower identities are formed and sustained over time. The study also aimed to bring the literature on personal identity theories and leadership studies together to better conceptualize the dynamic and interconnected nature of identity construct for leaders and followers from interdisciplinary perspectives. The review revealed that personal identity theories had not been fully integrated with or utilized by the interdisciplinary studies of leadership and followership. The study also noticed patterns and themes within identity research that have significant overlap with the leadership studies in the area of process-based understanding of the self and the leadership process. Recommendations are made to more fully integrate the dynamic and process-based identity theories, which stem primarily from process philosophy, with current understanding of process-based leader-follower-ship research. This study is limited to the review of person and personal identity theory literature. Due to the magnitude of the task, the role and social identity theories have not been included in this study.*

What makes one claim or assume that she or he is a leader? Or, what constitutes the origin of leader identity? Hewitt (1997) defines personal identity as “a sense of self built up over time as the person embarks on and pursues projects or goals that are not thought of as those of a community, but as the property of the person” emphasizes a sense of personal autonomy as opposed to community involvement (p. 93). Etymologically, the term *identity* (*n.*) means “sameness, oneness, state of being the same” (from Middle French *identité*).<sup>1</sup> The concept of “sameness,” from psychological and psychological continuity perspectives, has become one of the epicenters of *personal identity* debate ever since John Locke (1632—1704) introduced his view and interpretation on *personal identity* from the metaphysical stance. He associates one’s conscious state of awareness with the *self*.

Most traditional leadership theories that have been leader-centered and hold individualistic perspectives (Gronn, 2011) with little attention to the follower identity never challenged the above claim or addressed the origins of leader identity formation from an ontological perspective. For instance, scholars who tried to understand the leadership phenomenon for decades (Stogdill, 1948; Mann, 1959) as personality traits (Stogdill, 1974; Lord, DeVader & Alliger, 1986; Goldberg, 1990; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Alcorn, 1992; Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader, 2004; Zaccaro, 2007), characteristics unique to leaders (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Nadler & Tushman, 1989; Bass, 1990; Jung & Sosik, 2006), personal intelligence (Marlowe, 1986; Golman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1995, 1997; Shankman & Allen, 2008), skills (Katz, 1955; Bass 1990; Mumford, Zaccaro, Connelly, & Marks, 2000; Yammarino, 2000;

Mumford, Campion, & Morgeson, 2007), styles (Katz & Kahn, 1951; Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1978, 1985; Stogdill, 1963, 1974; Yukl, 1994), personal charisma & transformational qualities (Burns, 1978; House, 1976; Bass, 1985, 1998; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Bryman, 1992), situational factors (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969a, 1993; Blanchard, 1985; Vecchio, 1987; Graeff, 1997) and other contingencies for leader identification (Fiedler, 1964, 1967; Fiedler & Chemers, 1984; Evans, 1970; House, 1971; House & Dessler, 1974; Schriesheim & Neider, 1996) never agreed on what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders (Stogdill, 1948, 1974; Burns, 1978; Bass, 1981, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Hollander, 2009; Kellerman, 2012). Nor did the leadership scholarship discuss the ontological roots of identity claims to question the individualistic view of organizational psychology to leadership (Pfeffer, 1997) and the tendency of management theories to “celebrate the cult of the individual” (Haslam, 2015, p. 5).

Additionally, at the turn of the twentieth century, the term *leadership identity* has gained a momentum in leadership studies, particularly within social psychology, ever since Hogg and Associates introduced the *social identity theory of leadership* (Hogg, 2001, 2008; Hogg, Martin, & Weeden, 2003; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2004; Hogg, Martin, Epitropaki, Mankad, Svensson, & Weeden, 2005; Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011; Hogg, van Knippenberg, Rast, 2012; Platow, Haslam, Reicher & Steffens, 2015). For instance, researchers in the field of psychology and social psychology addressed issues of identity in leadership (Riley & Burke, 1995; Hogg, Terry, White, 1995; Hogg, 1996b, 2001; Hogg & Mullin, 1999; Burke, 2003; Haslam & Reicher, 2004; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005; Burke, 2006; Burke, Stets, & Cerven, 2007). Komives and Associates introduced a leadership identity development model from a grounded theory approach (Komives, Longersbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006). However, although research on *personal identity* from the fields of philosophy, psychology, philosophical psychology,<sup>2</sup> and organizational psychology has been growing since last century, *personal identity theories*<sup>3</sup> have not been fully integrated with the mainstream of leader-follower research<sup>4</sup>. This perhaps explains why *personal identity theories of leadership* are rare, if any, in most handbooks and textbooks on leadership (Bass, 1990; Bryman, 2011; Gill, 2011; Northouse, 2016; Stogdill, 1974).

This study attempted to bring the two literature together by reviewing, analyzing, and applying *personal identity theories* to leader-follower research to better understand how personal identities of leaders and followers are formed and sustained over time in various social contexts and situations. To engage in a full discussion on *identity* that incorporates major theories such as *identity theories, role identity theories, social identity theories, and social identity theory of leadership* is beyond the scope of this study. Thus, this study uses only *personal identity* theories developed primarily in the field of philosophy, philosophical psychology, process philosophy<sup>5</sup>, and social psychology from the Western perspective of the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

## REVIEW OF PERSONAL IDENTITY THEORIES

The *personal identity theories* are presented in this study under the following major thematic streams: (1) *person identity theories*<sup>6</sup>; (2) *physical and psychological continuity* of personal identity; (3) *general process theory and unique process-identity* under a broad themes of *process ontological theories of personal identity*; (4) *dynamic theories of personal identity* that incorporates *empirical theory of personal identity, personhood and identity, value conceptualization approach, and dynamic process-identities*; (5) *semiotic triad, an internal dialogue of the self* into an integrative paradigm of identity; (6) *independent and interdependent identities*; and (7) *narrative or life-story* model of personal identity.

The review of the literature on *personal identity theories* concerning leader or follower identity formation offers helpful insights to understand how biosocial uniqueness shapes one's identity and whether or not personal identities sustain over time as static or dynamic identities. The literature also sheds light on the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and socio-cultural aspects of self-perception, independent and interdependent personal identity constructs and how personal and social values and personal experiences of the past shape one's present and future personal identities.

The inquiry of the first two clusters of *identity theories* attempts to find proof for continuity and *persistency*<sup>7</sup> of one's identity (sameness) through series of life-changing physical, psychological, and social occurrences over time (Siakel, 2014). Scholars who endeavor in this examination seek possible static or constant elements within one's authentic self, either in the form of *physical* or *psychological* continuity that survives over time. This school of thought seems to align with traditional philosophical view of the *self* from cognitive and functional perspectives of Descartes' "I think therefore I am" (Skirry, 2019), Locke's "I" am a thinking thing, *res cogitans* (Connolly, 2019), and Buber's "I am what I do" (Scott, 2019).

Other *identity theories*, mainly *process ontological theories*, and *dynamic identity theories*, including *semiotic triad*, *independent and interdependent self-identity* and *narrative identity* or *life-story model* seem to embrace the paradigm of *process philosophy* of the *self*, which opposes 'substance metaphysics,' as the dominant paradigm of Western philosophy since Aristotle. Scholars in this school of thought view individuals as *dynamic beings* with the notion of *becoming* the mode of being. They argue that personal identities are formed in a dynamic environment of ongoing personal and sociocultural changes that influence human self-perceptions, self-concepts, and individual and societal values. Below are highlights of the above-mentioned personal identity theories.

### **Person Identity Theory**

The *person identity* refers to personal uniqueness as a biosocial distinctive that sets one apart from others (Stets, 1995; Stets & Biga, 2003; Stets & Burke, 1994; Stets & Carter, 2011, 2012). "These meanings are not attached to roles or groups but are part of how individuals define themselves. They are always with the person and are relevant in most situations across groups and roles" (Stets & Burke, 2014, p.70). Burke (2004) expanded the discussion on *the salient hierarchy to person identities*. The qualities and traits of *person identities* are formed in cultural environments, whereby internalizing those cultural value expectations, the individual creates his or her own *person identity*. In turn, those cultural standards serve as guiding principles for identity verification (Burke, 2004; Burke & Stets, 2009).

Hogg (2006) uses the term "personal identity" and defines it as "idiosyncratic personality attributes that are not shared with other people" (115). One may have personal goals, apart from other goals associated with group membership, which may guide his or her behavior. During the socialization process, when one's "me" becomes "we" (Thoits & Virshup, 1997), the person does not lose his or her personality uniqueness or *person identity*. Rather, both identities (personal and social) "are unlikely to be operating at the same time" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.124).

*Person identity* deals with one's characteristics (Stets, 1995; Stets & Burke, 1994, 1996), morality (Stets & Carter, 2006; Stets, Carter, Harrod, Cervan, & Abrutyn, 2008), values (Gecas, 2000; Hitlin, 2003), and authenticity by being one's true self (Avolio & Reichard, 2008; Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005; Goffee & Jones, 2006; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Trilling, 1981). These meanings are culturally shared and verified to construct one's *person identity* by others in a given cultural context (Burke & Stets, 2009). Unlike role identities that are role-based, which can change from situation to situation, person identities are more or less static and operate across contextual situations. For instance, one's psychological type or strengths (e.g., Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, StrengthsFinder) remains mostly constant across social and cultural interactions (Jung, 1993, 1923/1989, 1971; Myers & Myers, 1995/1980; Rath, 2007).

Rosenberg (1979, 1981) distinguished three aspects of one's self-concept on how the person thinks and feels about him or herself: self-referring dispositions, physical characteristics, and identities. The first shapes one's attitude toward societal norms or values (e.g., patriotism, altruism). The second refers to physical appearance (e.g., tall, short, blind, deaf) and how people respond to it, which shapes one's behavior and social and psychological well-being. The third component of the self-concept is one's identity that takes individual, role, social categorization, and group-membership forms. The personal or individual identity deals with one's self-conception (e.g., "I am John Carter"). For Rosenberg (1979), someone who can say, "I am John Carter," must have an individual or personal conception of the self.

Since one's *person identity* is comprised of many identity components indicated above (i.e., values, characteristics, personalities), the person, much like in role identity theories, constructs a cognitive hierarchy of salience that is continuously activated or deactivated in various social contexts. As a result, the identity meanings in *person identity* may influence the meanings of the role and social identities (Burke & Stets, 2009). However, in closed societies, where the social norms restrict the person's freedom (e.g., which role to assume or group to belong to), one's group and *role identities* may influence his or her *person identity* (Burke, 2004).

### Physical and Psychological Continuity Approaches

Grounded primarily in philosophical psychology to explore physical and metaphysical realities, some *theories of personal identity* (i.e., physical and psychological continuity approaches) stress the importance of the human body as the physical and the mind as the metaphysical foundations. They form and sustain personal identities during the intrinsic and extrinsic physical and psychological changes of the human body and mind over time (Locke, 1961; Hume, 1896; Parfit, 1971, 1984; Williams, 1973; Johnston, 1987a). The defenders of the *physical continuity of personal identity* (Williams, 1973; Johnston, 1987a, 1992b, 1997; Inwagen, 1990b; Thomson, 1997; Olson, 1997b) deny the relevancy of psychology to *personal identity* formation to argue that one's life "stages belong to the same person if they are each stages of the same continuing body" (Sider, 2000, p. 3).

The advocates of the *psychological continuity of personal identity* (Locke, 1961; Parfit, 1971; Shoemaker and Swinburne, 1984) contend that it is the *psychological* continuity (self-consciousness and memory) through the stages of life that guarantees the survival of one's *identity*. The holders of this view, Locke (1961), and others are primarily concerned for the identity continuum (the sameness) or the identity persistency and survival on a conscience level over time (Siakel, 2014). The *personal identity*, according to Locke (1961), consists in one's identity of consciousness [reasoning, an ability to think, and reflection, an ability to memorize], not in the identity of substance, because "it is impossible to make personal identity to consist in anything but consciousness, or reach any further than that does." Reid (1969), on the other hand, insisted that *personal identity* was something other than personal memory due to the *transitivity*<sup>8</sup> of one's identity even though one may have forgotten some of her or his experiences of the past. Thus, it is "the overlapping chains of memories" and "overlapping chains of psychological connectedness" that construct one's identity (Parfit, 1984, p. 205). Parfit (1971), with his reductionist approach, was inclined to support the view that "psychological continuity provides a criterion for identity" (p. 12). For Parfit (1984) it is not one's body but the *psychological* attributes that guarantees one's identity survival in case of physical changes (e. g. brain transplant<sup>9</sup>).

The *psychological continuity* approach insists psychological continuity to personal identity through self-consciousness and memory (Locke, 1961) or transitivity of identity as a result of overlapping chains of psychological memories or connectedness (Reid, 1969) in a way that one sustains his or her leader or follower personal identity. (Locke, 1961) argued that only one's reasoning, reflection, and ability to think and memorize guarantees personal identity, without which the *biological substance* is unable to construct personal identity. In other words, one's physical appearance, without self-consciousness and memory (cognitive substance), does not solely guarantee one's identity. On the other hand, due to bodily and circumstantial changes in one's life, the *cognitive substance* does not guarantee Locke's desired *psychological continuity* for the personal identity to survive over time.

One may agree with Parfit (1971) that "psychological continuity provides a criterion for identity" (p. 12), even during the biological substance change, if that change is not as dramatic as described by Wiggins (1967) in his brain transplant analogy. Thus, both the *bodily substance* (observable physical reality) and the *cognitive substance* (the metaphysical reality of the mind) are essential for the establishment and survival of one's identity, which provide temporal *physical* and *psychological continuity* for personal identities to survive in normal circumstances.

By summarizing physical and psychological substance approaches, it is reasonable to agree with Locke (1961) and Associates that without *cognitive substance* (the metaphysical reality of the mind) it is impossible to construct personal identity due to the limitations of the biological bodily substance. On the

other hand, it is also reasonable to agree with Williams (1973) and Associates that the sameness of the biological bodily substance must be preserved to guarantee one's identity survival over time. This study takes both, the *physical* and *psychological continuity* approaches, into consideration concerning the leader and the follower identity construct to reach to a balanced understanding of the leader and the follower personal identity theorizing.

### **Process Ontological Theories of Personal Identity**

The *process ontological theories of personal identity* focus on processes as the building blocks of life. This approach sees one's identity not as the substance that "endures or predures" but as a dynamic phenomenon, where unity and continuity are the essential ontological qualities of one's identity (Siakel, 2014). Thus, the *process ontology* approach views the person as a "bundle of absolute processes" (Sellars, 1981, p. 87) out of which new identities emerge. Further, the identity discussion is more on *becoming* someone according to the *process ontology* as opposed to *being* someone according to the *substance metaphysics*. Under *process ontology* theories, the following distinct approaches have been identified regarding personal identities: *general process theory*, and *unique process-identity*.

#### *General Process Theory*

The *general process theory* within the *process ontological theories*, which focuses on processes as the building blocks of life, views individuals not mere *beings* of "substances or substance-like particulars" (Siakel, 2014, p. 7), but individuals who may *become* more than who they currently are due to dynamic internal and external processes (Alcorn, 1992; Cox, Plagens, & Sylla, 2010). Since processes may be infinite, consequently, individuals may develop countless process-based identities. According to *general process theory* (Seibt, 2000), *personal identity* involves a dynamic person as a collection of subjectless processes in any given time or cyclical moment. The persistence of one's *identity* means to survive interferences that occur during processes at different times.

#### *Unique Process-Identity*

The *unique process-identity* approach views individuals not only as dynamic but also as unique human beings. Therefore, identities that are created around dynamic individuals are also unique because each individual's mode of existence and the environment, in which unique experiences take place, makes him or her unique from others. For instance, Seibt (2000) holds that each person is a dynamic mode of existence who interferes with his or her environment that makes one functionally, qualitatively, and numerically distinct and unique from other entities or persons. Thus, Seibt (2000) sees one's existence as processes through which dynamic and unique identities emerge.

### **Dynamic Theories of Personal Identity**

The *dynamic theories of personal identity* seek to conceptualize the *personal identity* formation in the midst of changing human perceptions with infinite variations, unpredictable cultural and social situations, ever-changing self-concepts, non-static personal and societal values, and individuals' responses to and participation in multiple cognitive and social dynamic processes. The following *dynamic theories of personal identity* are reviewed in this section that stem primarily from the process philosophy: *empirical theory of personal identity*; *personhood and identity*; *value conceptualization*; *dynamic process-identities*.

#### *Empirical Theory of Personal Identity*

Hume (1896) stated that the *self* is no more than "a bundle or collection of different *perceptions*, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (p.134). For Hume (1986), *personal identity*, which has a human interactive or social origin that one ascribes to someone, "is only a fictitious one" (p. 137) due to its fluid and non-static nature. Unlike memory theorist like Locke (1961), who saw the basis of *personal identity* in one's conscious memory, Hume (1896) maintained that one could extend his or her identity beyond personal memory and that "identity depends on the relations of ideas; and these relations produce identity" (p. 139). The ideas of

self-perception, which are capable of producing imaginary identities, according to Hume (1896), are in continuous fluidity, movement, and rapid change.<sup>10</sup>

### *Personhood and Identity*

For Schechtman (1996), the individual is a social phenomenon according to whom “to be a person one must grasp the cultural conception of a person and apply it to oneself” (p. 132). Therefore, one’s self-conceptualization and self-awareness require acknowledgment by others (Plantikow, 2008). Schechtman (1996) goes on to say that the social aspect of *personhood* “demands that an identity-constituting narrative be responsible for how we are reidentified by others” (134). It is evident here that the construction of one’s *personhood* in society requires two-way identity-constituting narrative: the person and others in the community.

The *dynamic personhood* approach within the *process ontology theories*, views individuals as dynamic beings, who engage in “agency-purposive activities,” as opposed to “static thing-classifiers” (Rescher, 2000, p. 14), to become more than who they are. The former may satisfy the person, while that latter may seem “distasteful” (Rescher, 2000, p.14).

### *Value Conceptualization Approach*

An essential dimension of *dynamic theories of personal identity* is the consideration of *values* and their *conceptualization* for the formation of one’s *identity* concerning others. Cultural and social values play a vital role in the conceptualization and the establishment of one’s *identity* (Hitlin, 2003). In addition to socio-cultural values, one’s values shape her or his self-perception that give rise to *value-identities* (Gecas 2000). Further, values are perceived as “desirable transsituational goals... that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity” (Schwartz, 1994, p. 21) that guide one to desirable behaviors beyond specific situations (Schwartz 1992; Schwartz & Bilsky 1987). Hitlin (2003) argues that personal identities led by value experiences “lead to reflexive constructions of various role-, group-, and value-identities” (p. 122). Thus, personal, societal, and cultural values shape one’s “transsituated” personal identity and influence a person’s behavior.

Further, the *value conceptualization* approach makes a logical connection between value-identities and authenticity. For instance, one feels authentic when the person behaves according to her or his values because authenticity is the primary self-motivating factor (Gecas 1986, 1991) or a vital motivational force within the self (Erickson, 1995).

### *Dynamic Process-Identities*

Whitehead (1929/1978) maintained that what constitutes one’s personhood is not the *sameness* of an entity over time, since individuals “are not actual entities *per se*, but societies” (Leclerc, 1983, p. 66). Therefore relationships of diachronic continuity unify many processual entities through subjective forms to create new identities. In other words, one’s personal experiences that are comprised of a *synchronic unity* of personal experience and *diachronic continuity* of multiple personal experiences create *dynamic process-identities* (DPI) that focus on *becoming someone* as a result of the dynamic processes. Thus, the personal DPI, grounded in the *process philosophy*, argues that individuals find themselves in multiple occurrences, both on cognitive (Hume, 1896) and experiential levels (Whitehead (1929/1978). Their self-differentiated interactions and responses to intrapersonal and interpersonal incidents, which provide *synchronic unity* and *diachronic continuity* of dynamic processes, shape and mold their future *personal identities* as *dynamic process-identities* (DPI).

### **Semiotic Triad**

Wiley (1994) combined the internal dialogue of the self, proposed by Peirce (1989) and Mead (1934), into an integrative paradigm of “present-past-future,” and “I-me-you semiotic triad” identities (p. 13). For Mead (1934), the internal dialogue of the individual is between “I” of the present and “me” of the past. For Peirce (1989), the internal dialogue of the person takes place between “I” of the present and “you” of the future. Both versions, according to Wiley (1994), produce “a highly plastic semiotic self” (p. 13) but

not an integrated one. The advantage of Wiley's (1994) model is that it is a more inclusive semiotic process of constituting the self. Or, as MacKinnon and Heise (2010) put it, "like Peirce's (1989) sign-self-interpretant semiotic triad of thought, Wiley's "I-me-you" semiotic triad of the self is dynamic, depicting the self as a continual process of self-interpretation" (p. 180). The semiotic triad of interpretation of the self is not only self-reflexive, but also intrapersonal, a dialogue between "two free-standing persons," where the triad alternatively "could be called I-you-we" (Wiley, 1994, p. 157).

### **Independent and Interdependent Self-identities**

Some scholars observe two types of identities under self-identity: *independent* and *interdependent* (Banaji & Prentice, 1994; MacDonald, Sulsky, & Brown, 2008; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994) to describe one's shift in focus from "I" to "We" (Taylor & Dube, 1986; Turner et al., 1994). The independent self-identity is perceived as self-differentiation from others through one's uniqueness and autonomy (Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Through the interdependent self-identity, however, the person sees her or himself less differentiated from the social context (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

### **Narrative Identity Approach**

The *narrative* or *life-story model of identity* seems to integrate the physical and psychological continuity theories with *process ontology theories* of personal identity. In other words, the narrative identity approach is built on one's conscience memory of the past on "who I was" as well as who the person is now and may become in the future shaped by the past (Palus, Nasby, & Easton, 1991). The *life-story model* consists of nine elements: narrative tone, early childhood images, ideological setting, nuclear episodes, images, scripts, narrative complexity, and life review (McAdams, 1989, 1990), all of which may be viewed, to a certain degree, as dynamic and forward-looking elements. For instance, the early childhood images may well motivate a person today and provide ideological settings for the future as one continuum toward further development of one's childhood, adulthood, and midlife *narrative identities* (Levinson, 1978; Kegan, 1982; Gutmann, 1987).

## **THE STUDY METHOD**

This study employed a review and integration of the primary and most relevant body of literature on personal identity theories with leadership and followership research to advance knowledge for personal identity construct for leaders and followers. The process approach to Methodology of Interdisciplinary Research (MIR) was used (Kumar, 1999; Tobi & Kampen, 2018) to integrate "concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice" (National Academy of Science, 2005, p. 2).

Digital library databases were utilized (i.e., Google Scholar search engine, Amazon books, EBSCO Information Services, Social Science Database, ProQuest Central, Education Database, Directory of Open Access Journals, Full-Text Finder, and JSTOR) to review peer-reviewed journal articles and books on personal identify theories, concepts, and perspectives. More than 110 scholarly articles and books on personal identity theories, developed primarily in the interdisciplinary fields of philosophy and philosophical psychology, were selected and analyzed in conjunction with current leadership and followership research from the fields of sociology, psychology, and social psychology. The goal was to integrate the above literature to find patterns and themes to more fully understand and conceptualize the process of identity formation for leaders and followers over time. The following research questions are posed:

- (1) How do leader and follower identities form and sustain over time?
- (2) How do *personal identity theories* align or not align with current understanding of leadership and followership?

- (3) From the perspective of *personal identity theories*, would leaders and follower's identities be static or dynamic?
- (4) From the perspective of *personal identity theories*, can one's leader and follower personal identities exist independently (parallel) or interdependently (symbiotic) over time?

## FINDINGS

The study revealed eight major patterns in *personal identity theories* and how they apply to leadership and followership research for identity construct: static and non-static identity, dynamic processes, dynamic identity, semiotic triad, independent and interdependent identity, value-based identity, and narrative identity patterns.

### Static Identity Pattern: Personal Uniqueness

One's *uniqueness* through traits, characteristics, strengths, physical appearance, psychological preferences, and intelligence as idiosyncratic personality attributes, may contribute toward an identity construct that can be viewed as static over time. Psychologists have created various personality assessment instruments, such as Intelligence Quotient, Emotional Quotient, Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), StrengthsFinder, and other, to measure human unique strengths, psychological preferences, and intelligence as "idiosyncratic personality attributes that are not shared with other people" (Hogg, 2006, p.115).

Further, one's biological bodily substance (i.e., physical appearance, skin color, ethnicity, other), reinforced by socio-cultural norms, provides a ground for *person identity* development by differentiating and self-categorizing her or him from others. The way this process shapes one's *person identity* is through the internalization of cultural value expectations to serve as cultural standards and guiding principles for identity verification. During the external identity verification process, the individual's unique personality and biosocial distinctiveness as an internal identity framework also play a crucial role in leader and follower identity attainment.

Considering Rosenberg's (1979, 1981) approach to one's self-referring dispositions, physical characteristics, and self-concept, it can be assumed that first, the personal attitude or disposition toward social norms and values may create certain self-conceptions. Second, the physical appearance, as mentioned earlier, may become an advantage or disadvantage for an individual to act as a leader or a follower in the group or social settings. The physical appearance shapes not only one's behavior and social and psychological well-being but also self-perception. Third, one's self-perception may turn into self-conception of *person identity*.

### *Application to Leadership and Followership*

The study of the personal uniqueness that makes one different from others has been widely studied in leadership research under leadership traits, characteristics, and skills or abilities (Stogdill, 1948, 1974; Mann, 1959; Lord, DeVader, & Alliger, 1986; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004). *Personal uniqueness* also relates to *the psychodynamic approach* to leadership studies (Northouse, 2016) where personalities of leaders and followers are assessed to determine personality characteristics through Berne's (1961) transactional analysis and Jung's (1993) personality type theories.

Additionally, biological bodily substance, such as physical appearance and gender identification, may generate specific culturally defined identities. For instance, how a leader should look like and what people's implicit ideas, images, or expectations about leaders should be (*implicit leadership theory*), is a cross-cultural phenomenon. In some cultures and societies the image or the appearance of the leader is associated with physical strength, brutal force, willpower, masculinity, maleness, being tall, and other bodily attributes, while followers are perceived as physically weak, being short, and less attractive. (Graves & Powell, 1982; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Offermann, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994; Schyns & Meindl, 2005). Thus, one's biological uniqueness may contribute toward a leader or a follower identity construct for some time.



### **Non-static Identity Pattern: Biosocial Distinctiveness**

From the perspective of *physical and psychological continuity*, personal identities may survive over time if the person has not experienced dramatic physical and mental traumas. According to *physical continuity* approach, personal identities develop over time as a result of the advantages or disadvantages of one's physical body (biological substances). These identities may survive as long as the internal and external changes of the biological bodily substances are not dramatic (e.g., a brain transplant, physical traumas). Without the physical body, no identity can be developed and maintained. Thus, due to life-changing circumstances, static *personal identities* are not guaranteed, even though the sameness of one's physical body may last for years.

Furthermore, according to the *psychological continuity* approach, personal identities develop over time as a result of positive or negative cognitive occurrences in human self-consciousness and memory (psychological substance). These identities may survive through an overlapping chain of memories as long as the internal and external changes of the psychological substances are not dramatic (e.g., a complete loss of consciousness or self-consciousness as a result of brain transplant or physical traumas). Without the human conscience and memories, either positive or negative about self and others, the *biological substance* alone is unable to construct *personal identity*. Thus, human reasoning, reflection, and ability to think and memorize, even about one's physical attributes, is the intrinsic component of the personal identity establishment.

#### *Application to Leadership and Followership*

Physical and psychological continuity approaches to personal identity have not been taken into account by leadership research, whereas personal identity theories have developed a century-long data that may be used to address complex processes of leader and follower identity formations and how they sustain or not sustain over time. The physical and psychological continuity approaches indicate that despite physical bodily and psychological sameness over time, one's leader or follower identity is not static and is contingent upon internal and external physical, psychological, and social changes.

### **Process Identity Pattern**

Individuals, as a result of the socialization processes (*general process theory*), are capable of acquiring process-identities. The process-based *personal identities* are contingent upon the intrapersonal cognitive and interpersonal, interactive processes that individuals continuously involve. Moreover, from the *process ontology* perspective, one may develop multiple identities over time due to the dynamic process of human interaction and experiences. These multiple identities are formed through the *synchronic unity* and *diachronic continuity* processes of one's thoughts, experiences, and behaviors (Hume, 1896; Whitehead, 1929/1978). For instance, an individual may develop parallel and independent identities such as a "coffee drinker," "runner," "swimmer," and in our case, "leader" and "follower."

#### *Application to Leadership and Followership*

The *process philosophy*, on which the *process ontology* theories rest, aligns with post-structuralist definition of leadership as complex relational processes between leaders and followers (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Dvir & Shamir, 2003; Haslam & Platow, 2001; Hollander, 1986, 1993; Howell & Shamir, 2005; Northouse, 2016; Reicher, Haslam, Hopkins, 2005; Sy, 2010; Uhl-Bien, Graen, & Scandura, 2000) out of which process-based leader and follower identities may emerge. Thus, the *process ontology* seeks to understand personal identity formation beyond one's uniqueness and personal qualities or traits (*being* a leader or a follower) but rather in the dynamic processes through which individuals acquire unique process-identities (*becoming* a leader or a follower). Additionally, the *unique process-identity* theorizing confirms Stogdill's (1974) assertion that there may be as many definitions of leadership as there are people due to infinite situations and processes.

## Dynamic Identity Pattern

The concepts of non-static and dynamic identities are present in the literature on *personal identity theories*. Whitehead (1929/1978) and Leclerc's (1983) assertion that individuals "are not actual entities *per se*, but societies" (Leclerc, 1983, p.66), may lead one to assume that the bigger those conceptual "societies" are, the larger his or her social world may become. Since the human body and thoughts experience constant change, one may observe the non-static nature of self-perceptions, experiences, and social interactions. Subsequently, identities that emerge within dynamic and unique conceptual and social environments may also be dynamic and unique. Additionally, the *process philosophy* makes almost inconceivable the existence of static identities. Thus, individuals construct their unique identities through life experiences and social processes and may be subject to a continuous change.

The *value conceptualization* (Hitlin, 2003) adds an essential component to identity development. Personal and social values drive one's behavior and shape one's identity. For instance, if a person holds a worldview that sees leading and following as equally valuable human functions that are necessary for any human interaction and finds social support and verification, the person may develop leader and follower identities.

### *Application to Leadership and Followership*

The *dynamic theories of personal identity* help to conceptualize the development of leader and follower identities as separate or co-existing interactive identities. The *dynamic personhood* approach within the *process ontology theories* provides a theoretical rationale for individuals' engagement with multiple "purposive activities" (Rescher, 2000, p.14). For instance, one may engage in a self-regulatory process of leading and following functions (Kark, 2007; Lord, 2008).

Hume's (1896) empiricist theory of *personal identity* opens up another possibility of seeing oneself as a leader in one and a follower in another situation due to one's social interactivity and self-perception. Once individuals purposefully exchange activities and experiences, Hume (1896) believes that dynamic identities may emerge. Thus it is more likely that individuals develop dynamic and interactive leader-follower identities if they intentionally internalize and relate leading and following activities or functions to their experiences in social interactions.

Additionally, if one's *personhood* and identity is contingent upon the identity-constituting narrative of the self and others, who affirm one's self-concept in social context either as a leader or a follower, then the emerging personal identities seem non-static due one's dynamic and ever-changing interactions and experiences (Alcorn, 1992). Thus, the way one may ascribe a leader-follower identity to oneself is to admit that "I am John and, as a member of the Rotary Club, I lead and follow in various situations."

The *value conceptualization* approach seems to align with authentic and value-based leadership theories to describe how personal values construct leadership identities. For instance, in the United States, even though individuals engage in both leading and following behaviors in their every-day life, it is more likely that people engage in more leading than following behavior because the societal value perception about the following is less favorable than leading.<sup>11</sup> School children and college students are encouraged to become leaders, not followers. Consequently, individuals seem to engage more in leading than following behaviors as a result of the social value conceptualization. Contrary, if the value propositions about leading and following behaviors equalize in the United States, people may genuinely engage in both leading and following behaviors. In this case, followers may feel content and perhaps feel less inferior as followers.

## Semiotic Triad Pattern

*Semiotic triad* offers an open and dynamic system of self-reflexive, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social dialogue between the self and society for identity development. The *semiotic triad* approach to identity formation, which fosters personal exchange between who the person was, is ("I-me" of the past and present), and may become through intrapersonal interactions ("I-you" of the future) adds the interpersonal social interactions with others ("I-you-we" of togetherness) toward the development of

dynamic leader and follower identities. The semiotic triad is an ongoing process of self-interpretation and self-discovery, which leads on to unlimited future identity self-discoveries and growth.

#### *Application to Leadership and Followership*

To apply the *semiotic triad* approach to leader-follower personal identity conceptualization, one may see possibilities of moving from the self-perception of a follower identity to a leader identity and vice versa as a result of intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions. Unlike most leadership theories that do not consider the process of the identity development from leader to follower or from follower to leader, both roles have been mechanically separated as independent and parallel identities due to the industrialization (Rost, 1993). Wiley's (1994) dynamic model opens up possibilities to think that one's identity is not a static but rather a dynamic being who is capable of becoming someone else through dynamic processes. In other words, the *semiotic triad's* positive and hopeful nature of identity conceptualization integrates one's past leading and following experiences and present roles ("who I was and am") with future possibilities of moving from an identity of being "I-me" to becoming an "I-you-we" dynamic leader-follower identity. Thus the *semiotic triad* approach with its open and dynamic system of self-reflexive, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social dialogue between the self and society may liberate one from the traditional understanding of a static identity of being (e.g., "I am a follower") to an identity of becoming ("I will become a leader").

#### **Independent & Interdependent Identity Patterns**

A person may develop *parallel independent* or *symbiotic interdependent* identities as a result of socio-cognitive interactivity of ideas and experiences. Similar to the *semiotic triad*, individuals may develop independent or interdependent self-identities by developing themselves from "I" to "we" identity dyad. The *symbiotic interdependent* approach allows individuals to shift their independently self-identities to interdependent and co-existing identities. In such interdependent relationships, individuals may decide to project themselves as less differentiated independent identities by functioning out of interdependent identity paradigm toward personal wellbeing, satisfaction, and group benefits.

#### *Application to Leadership and Followership*

The *symbiotic interdependent* approach to personal identity formation opens up new horizons for interdependent leader-follower identity development. One may develop symbiotic interdependent or parallel independent leader-follower identities as a result of socio-cognitive interactivity of ideas and experiences. For instance, one may develop skills and dispositions to lead and follow in different situations. Alternatively, one may interchangeably lead and follow as interdependent and symbiotic behavioral functions (Hollander, 1992).

#### **Narrative Identity Pattern**

From the perspective of a *narrative identity* or *life-story model*, individuals may acquire narrative identities, which is comprised of the past static conceptualizations, dynamic challenges of the present reality, and the images of the prototypical future roles they play in society. It brings static and dynamic aspects of personal identities into a balanced interplay, where one's identity lies not only in the memories of human conscience, but also in the present reality on who the person *is* now and, at the same time, who she or he may *become* in the future (Frisina, 2005).

#### *Application to Leadership and Followership*

The *life-story model* seems to align with theories of ego development concerning leadership development (Broughton & Zahaykevich, 1998; Marcia, 1966), which has not been extensively studied and utilized in leadership scholarship (Murphy & Riggio, 2003; Vincent, Ward, & Denson, 2013).

The *life-story model* may describe how the personal identity of the leader or the follower is formed through the past conscious memories, the present reality, and the future becoming of the self. This approach may also explain how the leader and follower narrative identities may exist through separate or

unified images of the past, present, and the future if the social context facilitates either the parallel or the interdependent paradigm of self-perception. In both cases, *the narrative or life-story model of identity* is integrative and developmental for understanding and envisioning leader-follower identity development from the past to the present and from the present to the future identity construct.

## DISCUSSION

This study sought to understand how the leader and follower identities form and sustain over time from the perspective of *personal identity theories*.

### Leader and Follower Identity Formation and Sustainability

The *personal identity theories* were integrated with the leadership studies to address the impact of personal uniqueness on identity formation for leaders and followers and how these identities sustain over time (Research Question One). The study shows that the particular aspect of one's personal identity, such as personality preferences, strengths, and behavioral types, may stay the same over time if the circumstances are favorable to one's physical and psychological continuity and wellbeing. However, no empirical data seems to indicate that specific sets of personal uniqueness contribute to the leader identity and others to the follower identity formation. For instance, despite sense-making assumptions, it is hard to argue that one's extroversion personality preference guarantees the development of her or his leader identity. Nor does introversion personality preference makes one a follower or hinders her or him from becoming a leader.

On the other hand, it has not been uncommon to observe tendencies within societies and cultures to ascribe leadership identities to those who possess certain personality traits, characteristics, physical appearances, and personal qualities ascribed to leaders. For instance, in some cultures, the bodily expressions (e.g., physical strength, brutal force, or willpower) and appearances (e.g., being tall, handsome or beautiful) are associated with leadership qualities and societal expectations, and thus may have contributed toward the development of the leader identities.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, historically, human bodies, despite their appearances such as size, shape or color, have performed both leading and following behavioral functions.<sup>13</sup> As for gender differences, although one's masculine or feminine gender does not make one a leader or a follower, historically, females have been primarily viewed as followers in most masculine societies. Also, the high power distance and hierarchical relationships between male and female continue to be determining factors in the formation of personal identities formation across cultures (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Lewis, 2006; Malakyan, 2013a, 2013b). Nevertheless, those who lead and those who follow have the same anatomic and biological substances as humans, and one's biological uniqueness seems insufficient for the formation of the leader or the follower identity. After all, multiple and decades-long attempts to differentiate leaders from non-leaders based on one's unique characteristics or traits have not been successful (Bass, 1981; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Stogdill, 1974).

However, it is important to note that one's biosocial distinctiveness may contribute toward the leader or follower identity construct. Stets' (1995) definition of *person* seems to assert two meanings: biological distinctiveness (i.e., personal characteristics, traits, qualities) and sociological distinctiveness (i.e., morality, values, authenticity). In the leader or follower case, one's biological meaning may generate cognitive self-perception (e.g., "I am a leader because I am a male and strong"), but that meaning requires a sociocultural verification. In other words, the leader identity formation requires both self-awareness (possible biological distinctiveness) as well as social verification (social distinctiveness) to validate one's self-perceived leader identity. Additionally, while individuals' biological uniqueness may remain constant for the time being (i.e., personality, characteristics, physical appearances), they are also capable of embracing "we" social identities (Thoits & Virshup, 1997), which may or may not be the same as individuals' cognitive self-conceptions.

No research is found in leadership studies in the areas of *physical and psychological continuity* of one's leader identity over time. For instance, what happens to leadership identities of those who experience physical and mental traumas (e.g., student or professional athletes, military and law

enforcement personnel, firefighters, and others) who stop functioning as leaders and lose their self-concept as leaders? Alternatively, would the person's body change (e.g., aging, accident, or surgical procedures) influence her or his authentic self-perception as a leader? Identity theories, on the other hand, provide theoretical ground to conceptualize the process of identity change over time. An Olympic champion, for instance, after becoming physically disabled to compete in sports due to a physical injury, may experience the leader identity change as argued in the theory of biosocial distinctiveness (Stets, 1995), or embrace her or his new “we” follower identity (Thoits & Virshup, 1997) by becoming a member of disabled athletes.

### **Personal Identity Theories and Current Understanding of Leadership and Followership**

Regarding the Research Question Two as to how *personal identity theories* align or not align with current understanding of leadership and followership theories, this study shows a significant overlap between process-based identity theories and leadership and followership studies as the relationship processes between leaders and followers. The current literature on personal identities indicates that *process identity theories* align with the process-based understanding of leadership. Thus, some integrated and collaborative research opportunities between *personal identity* and *leadership theories* are worth noting here.

First, the process-based leader-follower identity emergence as a result of unique processes and personal characteristics has not been considered in leader-followership studies. In other words, individuals may engage in intentional leading and following process behaviors due to the dynamic and interactive human nature of sociability, which may generate process-based a *leader-follower personal identity*. For instance, by treating leading and following behaviors as dynamic cognitive and social processes, which provides identity continuity as the essential ontological qualities of one's functioning (Siakel, 2014), a person may develop a leader-follower dyadic identity to lead and follow simultaneously or interchangeably.

Second, the *general process theories* have not been fully integrated with process-based leadership research. Both fields of study may study dynamic individuals as the collection of subjectless processes in any given time or cyclical moment (Seibt, 2000), which may enable them to function as leaders and followers (Cox, Plagens, & Sylla, 2010; Malakyan, 2015). For instance, according to Seibt (2000) who sees one's existence as *processes* through which dynamic identities emerge, the individual may maintain his or her leader-follower identity as long as he or she is engaged in these processes. The moment the process of leading and following interactions with oneself and others stops, the dynamic leader-follower personal identity ceases to exist. In other words, dynamic identities exist and continue to expand as long as the dynamic processes of relationships and interactions continue cognitively and experientially (Alcorn, 1992). Thus, the integration of the leader-followership research with *process philosophy*, which views individuals as processes, may lay new grounds for dynamic process-identity conceptualization. Leaders and followers' past, present, and the future conceptualizations and experiences, as unique individuals and processes, may generate uniquely dynamic and process-based leader-follower identity. The dynamic process approach may also move the research from “*being* someone” to “*becoming* someone else” mode of inquiry.

Third, significant overlap between personal identity and leadership theories is the *value based identity* theorizing and *value-based leadership theories* (e.g., authentic, servant, transformational, charismatic, ethical, moral leadership and others) to describe the relationships between personal values and leadership or followership identity development. The *value-based identity* theories may describe why, for instance, individuals in the United States are more likely to activate their leader identity due to personal and social values of leadership being superior and followership being inferior human quality.

Fourth, the integration of *narrative identity* or *life-story model* with the theories of leadership development may enhance understanding of how one's past conscious memories and experiences, the present state of being, and future possibilities of becoming may enable one to reconstruct her or his present and future identity as a leader or a follower.

As for the current disconnect between leadership and identity research, physical and psychological continuity approaches to personal identity have not been extensively used in leadership studies. Personal identity theories may help leadership practitioners to address complex relationship processes between leaders and followers and how these processes shape, sustain or not sustain leader and follower identities over time. Perhaps the fluidity of leader-follower identity in various social contexts may help individuals to cope with physical and psychological discontinuity threats or be prepared to face unpredicted physical, psychological, or social changes by activating or deactivating their leader or follower identity behaviors for future opportunities for self-actualization.

### **Leaders and Follower Identities: Static or Dynamic?**

To the Research Question Three, whether or not leaders and followers' identities are static or dynamic, it can be said that despite physical and psychological continuity argument, personal identities are dynamic because the intrapersonal cognitive and interpersonal socialization processes are dynamic (e.g., self-perceptions, experiences, and social interactions) and thus leader and follower identities may sustain over time. From the perspective of *process philosophy* and *process ontology theories*, it is clear that in order personal identities form two components seem necessary: the intrapersonal cognitive and interpersonal socialization processes that are dynamic. Subsequently, identities developed in such dynamic environment would be process-based and dynamic identities.

The leader or the follower process-identities may not be generalized because the dynamic processes vary from person to person and from context to context. Nor can the leader or follower identities survive over an extended period as static and parallel identities. Thus process-identities seem future-looking and developmental that opens new possibilities for leaders and followers to move from *being* to *becoming* new authentic identities. Humans as dynamic beings, who go through physical and psychological changes over time, may purposefully engage in leading and following behaviors that cultivate multiple and symbiotic leader and follower identities.

The *dynamic process-identities* (DPI) are formed through the processes of *the synchronic unity* of one's cognitive and *diachronic continuity* of multiple experiences over time. In the case of leaders and followers, when the individual's intrapersonal occurrences through *the synchronic unity* of cognitive conceptualizing of leading and following encounters his or her *diachronic continuity* of multiple leading and following experiences (subjective forms) in the social context, a leader-follower *dynamic process-identity* (DPI) may emerge. For example, one's self-differentiated interactions and responses to internal cognitive occurrences (lead and follow), according to Hume (1896), ("I should drink coffee"), followed by external occurrences (lead and follow) on experiential levels, as argued by Whitehead (1929/1978), ("I am drinking coffee"), may shape and mold the person's DPI as "a coffee drinker," if the dynamic process guarantees the process of *diachronic continuity* of drinking coffee. In other words, one may develop a leader and follower personal identity through (a) intra-leading and following cognitive occurrences (synchronic unity) and (b) a continuous leading and following experiences over time (diachronic continuity).

### **Leader and Follower Independently or Interdependently Identities**

As for the Research Question Four, whether or not one's leader or follower personal identity exists independently parallel or interdependently symbiotic over time, the *personal identity theories* align with leadership research to argue that one may develop symbiotic interdependent or parallel independent identities as a result of socio-cognitive interactivity of ideas and experiences. Therefore, one may lead or follow separately and interchangeably in one and lead and follow interdependently and symbiotic in another situation.

On the one hand, a person may self-differentiate her or him from others as either a leader or a follower through unique personal sets of traits, skills, and preferences (independent self-identity). On the other hand, the person may also decide to portray her or him as a less differentiated leader or a follower in a social context by functioning both as a leader and a follower depending on the needs of the situation. Ability to shift from independent self-differentiation of "I" to interdependent social adaptation of "we"

leader-follower identities, one may find it personally satisfying and beneficiary for the group or the organization. Much like in *semiotic triad*, where the future *becoming* is a possibility, the *symbiotic interdependent dyad* may unleash new human capacities to lead in one and follow in another situation, thus making the leader and follower identities interconnected and dynamic.

The *value conceptualization* describes how value conceptualizations on leading and following behaviors are socially constructed. One's identity may change if the value paradigm toward leading and following behaviors changes in society. Perhaps the value conceptualization explains why one would not necessarily develop a personal identity of a follower in the Western cultural context, particularly in the United States, because unlike leadership, followership has neither been a personal or social value (Kelley, 1988, 1992; Kellerman, 2008, 2012; Chaleff, 2008, 2009; 2015; Malakyan, 2015). The *value conceptualization* also explains why the leader and the follower identities may be developed independently and parallel due to societal values. The integration of the value conceptualization approach with leader-follower-ship research may bring the desired social change in the area of social stratifications between the superiority of leaders and inferiority of followers in social interactions.

The *narrative identity approach* explains how one may well be motivated to lead through his or her own narrative identity inspired by perhaps past nuclear episodes, images, or scripts of being a leader or a follower. The *narrative identity*, which integrates one's past, present, and the future possibilities, may not only generate positive emotions but also help to make discoveries of life-story patters toward affirming one's dynamic identity of leading and following. Reasonably, the same argument can be made from the perspective of the negative memories and emotions and their negative impact on one's narrative identity formation for the present and the future. For instance, one's early childhood images of leaders may motivate or discourage a person to engage in the leading or the following behavior. One's life experiences may also provide ideological criteria toward the development of an independent or interdependent narrative identity that has been shaped by the past, challenged by the present, and motivated for the future (Levinson, 1978; Kegan, 1982; Gutmann, 1987).

## CONCLUSION

The personal identity theories provide useful theoretical ground and empirical data to argue and advocate for dynamic and process-based identity construct for situational leaders and followers. To envision an interdependently symbiotic leader-follower identity formation to challenge the leader-centered conceptualization of identity formation to continues to develop independent and "toxic leaders" and leader identities (Kellerman, 2012; Kelley, 1992, 2008; Lipman-Blumen, 2005, 2008), is consistent with current trends of the process-based leadership and followership research. Leadership is no longer about the static role of the leader, but rather the dynamic process of leader-follower relationships through which individuals discover their future interdependent identities.

Due to the industrialization, the workplace has been stratified between leaders and followers, managers and subordinates and as a result, pseudo-leader and pseudo-follower identities emerged at the expense of human creativity, self-expression, and collaboration. The integration of personal identity theories with leader-follower-ship research may open new horizons for the conceptualization and the development of multiple and dynamic leader-follower identities for personal and group effectiveness in today's post-industrial era.

## LIMITATIONS

The selected literature for this study, housed primarily in the fields of philosophy, psychology, and philosophical psychology, was limited only to *person identity* and *personal identity* theories. Only available *personal identity* theories that applied to personal identity theories for leaders and followers had been selected. Thus, the list of *personal identity* theories introduced in this paper is not an exhaustive collation of theories in this field. Other identity theories such as identity, role identity, social identity, and

social identity theories of leadership from the fields of sociology, psychology, and related interdisciplinary areas, have not been included in this study.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

*Person identity and personal Identity* theories offer some helpful insights for further development and conceptualization of interdisciplinary understanding of leader and follower identities in leader-follower research. The following recommendations are made for future research:

### Leading-Following in Process Philosophy

If there is one theme that was consistently reoccurring within the *personal identity theories* discussed in this paper is the concept of the *process*. Influenced by *process philosophy*, most personal identity scholars defined personal identity as a dynamic and evolving process. One's identity is contingent upon the intrapersonal cognitive and interpersonal experiential, social processes. Personal identities may change or turn into multiple DPIs if the person finds him or herself in the midst of dynamic various social processes. Thus, the *process philosophy*, which has not been extensively used or integrated into leader-follower research, may open up new prospects for understanding leading and following behaviors, leader-follower relationships, and leader-follower process identity theorizing. The *process philosophy* approach aligns with the current trends of leadership studies as complex systems of intrapersonal (individuals as "societies") interpersonal, and organizational processes of the past, present, and future realities.

### Leading-Following as Personal Process

Leadership and followership research has been primarily concerned with the interpersonal, group, and organizational aspect of leading and following behaviors. The *personal identity theories* provide a rich conceptual framework for leadership studies to expand the discussion to intrapersonal processes individuals find themselves in their inner social world. Subsequently, one leads and follows not only through the substance metaphysics (what it *is*), but also through unpredictable and dynamic processes (what it *will be*).

### Leading-Following as Dynamic Intrapersonal Energy

More research seems necessary to integrate *process ontology* theories of personal identity with leader-follower research to explore further the so-called *dynamic intrapersonal energy* that emerges from one's intrinsic conceptualization and extrinsic socialization as dynamic processes. Individuals, as societies, contain *dynamic intrapersonal energy* capable of creating new dynamic process-identities.

## ENDNOTES

1. Definition of identity (n.): c. 1600, "sameness, oneness, state of being the same," from Middle French identité (14c.), from Medieval Latin identitatem (nominative identitas) "sameness," ultimately from Latin idem (neuter) "the same" (see idem). [For the discussion of Latin formation, see entry in OED.] Earlier form of the word in English was idemptie (1560s), from Medieval Latin idemptitas. Term identity crisis first recorded 1954. Identity theft attested from 1995. Identity politics is attested by 1987. Retrieved on November 21, 2018, from [https://www.etymonline.com/word/identity#etymonline\\_v\\_1484](https://www.etymonline.com/word/identity#etymonline_v_1484)
2. Philosophical psychology is "*the area of study where psychology and philosophy intersect, focusing on metaphysical and speculative problems in the study of mental processes*. One of the central questions in philosophical psychology has been the relationship between the mind and body, a perennial area of inquiry throughout the history of philosophy. Other topics considered in this discipline include memory, perception, and consciousness; the nature of the self; the existence of free will; the relationship between thought and emotion; and so-called irrational phenomena, such as self-deception." Retrieved from *Psychology Encyclopedia / Branches of Psychology* on November 21, 2018: <http://psychology.jrank.org/pages/489/Philosophical-Psychology.html>



3. Principal contributors to *personal identity theories*: Locke, 1961), Hume (1896), Whitehead (1929/1978), Parfit (1971, 1984), and Williams and Associates (1973).
4. The terms *leadership* and *followership* are used to indicate the body of scholarly literature on leadership and followership as separate research endeavors. The term *leader-follower-ship* refers to the theories of followership and leadership as one continuum. Subsequently, the term *leader and follower identities* (plural) refer to separate and parallel identities, while the term *leader-follower identity* (singular) carries a meaning of a reciprocal or symbiotic identity that is both following and leading.
5. “*Process philosophy* is based on the premise that being is dynamic and that the dynamic nature of being should be the primary focus of any comprehensive philosophical account of reality and our place within it.... For process philosophers the adventure of philosophy begins with a set of problems that traditional metaphysics marginalizes or even sidesteps altogether: what is dynamicity or becoming—if it is the way we experience reality, how should we interpret this metaphysically?... In order to articulate a process view of reality, special theoretical efforts are required, however, since the standard theoretical tools of Western metaphysics are geared to the static view of reality.... Process philosophy centers on ontology and metaphysics, but it has full systematic scope: its concern is with the dynamic sense of being as becoming or occurrence, the conditions of spatio-temporal existence, the kinds of dynamic entities, the relationship between mind and world, and the realization of values in action.... Process philosophy opposes ‘substance metaphysics,’ the dominant research paradigm in the history of Western philosophy since Aristotle.... In contrast to the substance-metaphysical snapshot view of reality, with its typical focus on eternalist being and on *what there is*, process philosophers analyze the *becoming* and *what is occurring* as well as *ways of occurring*. In some process accounts, *becoming* is the mode of being common to the many kinds of occurrences or dynamic beings. Other process accounts hold that being is ongoing self-differentiation; on these accounts becoming is both the mode of being of different kinds of dynamic beings *and* the process that generates different kinds of dynamic beings” (Process Philosophy, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, First published Mon Oct 15, 2012; substantive revision Thu Oct 26, 2017. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/process-philosophy/> Retrieved on October 17, 2015.
6. Principal contributors to *person identity theories*: Mead (1934), Goffman (1963a), Stryker (1968), McCall & Simmons (1966), Blumer (1969), Heise (1979), Burke (1991, 2003, 2004, 2006), Stets & Burke (1994, 1996, 2014).
7. Siakel (2014) refers *persistency* to personal identity as “what is it for a person existing at one time to be identical to a person existing at another?” (p. 5).
8. *Transitivity* means personal identity survival through transitive memories. Reid (1969), in his famous example of a boy, who became a general later in life, in between time, he may have forgotten some incidences when he was at school, argued that through transitive memories, one may claim to be the same person over time. Thus, despite the memory interruptions, Reid (1969) argued that the boy and the general is the same person.
9. *Brain transplant*. For a more detailed discussion on the brain transplant example between the two individuals and how the outcome of the surgery affected identity survivals for two surgical patients, see Wiggins’ (1967) *Identity and Spatio-Temporal Continuity* and Parfit’s (1971) *Personal Identity*, reflections on the importance of the psychological continuity for identity survival.
10. The empirical findings of the psychological and psychiatric research provide ample examples of mental disorders or illnesses specifically related to one’s identity and personality (e.g. dissociative disorders: identity, multiple personality, depersonalization; schizophrenia; neurocognitive disorders; personality disorders; narcissism, psychopathic personality, and others) that should be considered in leadership studies. Thus, one’s self-perception to be a leader based on personal intuition (Williams 1970; Tversky & Kahneman, 1983) may not be sufficient to trust that person to lead groups, organizations, or countries.
11. The most recent literature on followership seems to view *followership* as a priori or self-conscious choice (Cox, Plagens, & Sylla, 2010) or a reactive choice to intelligently disobey nominal or toxic leaders (Lipman-Blumen, 2008; Chaleff, 2009, 2015) or become toxic themselves (Offerman, 2004). However, a paradigm shift for the Western mind to claim ownership to *followership* as a part of one’s conscious self or identity (Cohen, 1995; Feser, 2005) is yet to occur. Therefore, the cognitive and social integration between leaders and followers remains, partly due to the continuous hierarchy of value conceptualization that exists in Western society between leadership as superior and followership as inferior identities.
12. For centuries, leadership and heroism have been associated with physical strength and brutality for Kings and army commanders before and after the Common Era. Examples: Narmer or Menes (c. 3200 B.C.);

Gilgamesh (c. 2500 B.C.); King David I (c.1035 - 972 B.C.); Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.); Marcus Aurelius (121-180); Attila the Hun (405-453); William the Conqueror (1027-1087); and others).

13. Some historical leaders were neither tall nor physically strong (e.g., Napoleon Bonaparte, Winston Churchill, V. I. Lenin, Mahatma Gandhi, Rosa Park, Martin Luther King Jr., and others). Indeed, other personality and social-cultural factors contributed toward their identity construct on who they were and what they have done or said that made them influential leaders.

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