International Journal of Business and Management; Vol. 18, No. 2; 2023
ISSN 1833-3850 E-ISSN 1833-8119
Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education

Aligning Leaders and Organizations During Role Transitions: Addressing Issues of Competency, Role Identity, and Authentic Prototypicality

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Received: October 29, 2022 Accepted: December 10, 2022 Online Published: February 30, 2023

doi:10.5539/ijbm.v18n2p1 URL: https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v18n2p1

Abstract

This article offers a detailed framework for assessing and addressing three key areas of leader fit (i.e., competencies, role identity, prototypicality) based on an examination of extant theory and research. This paper was based upon an examination of literature about leader development, role identity and identity work, and leader prototypicality. A new Leadership Transition Assessment Framework was created, and its application was illustrated using de-identified examples. Although empirical research is needed to validate, confirm, and extend the use and application of the new framework within organizations, the new framework is anticipated to be particularly useful for current and aspiring organizational leaders for use in their own development as well as for hiring managers and talent professionals in evaluating and developing leadership candidates. While various approaches have been offered to improve selection and advancement decisions, this article emphasizes that a more holistic approach to leader selection and development is needed to create effective outcomes.

Keywords: hiring and selection, leadership, learning and development, prototypicality, role identity

1. Introduction

When individuals are hired into managerial roles, the general expectation is that they will be able to achieve the objectives for which they are hired—typically with little, if any, developmental feedback or support (Conger, 2012). Moreover, the higher the role level, the more visibility, accountability, and role demands they take on, combined with a shrinking allowance for on-the-job learning—even as these individuals face steep learning curves. Research indicates that virtually all leader hires face significant challenges during transition—regardless of insider/outsider status, sector, or organization size (Chastain & Watkins, 2020). Manager failure appears to be prevalent in organizations (Hogan et al., 2021). Data across industries and managerial levels indicate that managerial failure ranges from 30% to 65%, with an average of around 50% (Miller, 2017). The proposed approaches for stemming manager failure, such as candidate screening and performance appraisal (Conger, 2012) appear to favor a primarily cognitive process of assuring the candidate learns about the role and the organization and assesses and closes their skill and knowledge gaps. While these tasks are important, this article proposes that greater attention to the authentic alignment between the leader, their role, and their organization may further boost the leader's success during transition and, in turn, boost the success of their followers and their organization. Thwaite (2022) observed, "individuals engage in identity work at critical transition points during their careers and that it is essential for us to not only study how this work unfolds, but where it actually happens" (p. 57).

This article proposes that in addition to gauging a new leader's technical, administrative, and interpersonal competencies, a holistic selection approach is needed that addresses the identity of the individual assuming the new role. *Identity* has been defined as the "meanings that people attach reflexively to themselves in response to questions such as 'who am I?' and 'who do I want to be in the future?'" (Brown & Coupland, 2015, p. 1316). Role identity specifically relates to what the leader feels, thinks, and considers important as well as how they perceive reality (Ibarra et al., 2008). These concepts lead to several questions that should be considered by the individual transitioning to a new leadership role, such as: Do I see myself as a leader? Do I see myself in this new role? Do I see myself as a leader in this role in this organization? Who do others know me to be? Do the stakeholders of my new role (i.e., supervisors, subordinates, colleagues, customers) see me as a leader in this role in this organization?

Researchers have explored leader transition and development from various angles: For example, Lord and Hall (2005) discussed leaders' progression from an individually oriented identity to a relational identity and/or collective identity, Ibarra and colleagues (Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra et al., 2008) presented the concepts of identity work and identity play to illuminate how individuals develop identities specific to new leader roles, and Van Knippenberg and Hogg (2003) examined leader prototypicality to classify the degree to which leaders reflect core cultural features of their organizations. However, this body of literature requires further elaboration regarding how a transitioning leader develops an identity congruent with their role, their followers, and their organization.

The present article examines research on leader development, leader role identity, and leader prototypicality to propose a model for diagnosing and addressing competency, identity, and prototypicality issues involved in leader transition. It is the proposition of this article that such approaches need to be neither top-down (i.e., mold the leader to fit the organization) nor bottom-up (i.e., mold the organization to fit the leader). Instead, this article asserts that the process of aligning leaders with their followers and organizations needs to be person-centered—meaning that both the leader and the receiving organization and associated stakeholders need to approach each other with a spirit of high positive regard and a focus on understanding—accepting with this the possibility of being changed by the other (Rogers, 1961). As Rogers (1961) noted, it is when the conditions of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard are created that the parties to the relationship (in this case, the leader, followers, and organization) can become their ideal and most effective selves. The examination of literature begins with a typical starting point for leader development—identifying and addressing issues of leader competency.

2. Identifying and Addressing Issues of Leader Competency

Leaders typically need to adjust their competencies during transition, commensurate with the shift in knowledge, skills, and abilities required by the new role. This process is called leader development (McCauley & Van Velsor, 2004) and often requires attention to the interrelated competencies of (a) industry-, domain-, and job-specific knowledge; (b) professional, technical, administrative, and interpersonal skills; and (c) values, beliefs, and attitudes concerning oneself, the task, and others that reflect managerial competency (Badawy, 1983; Halliwell et al., 2022).

2.1 Models and Approaches for Addressing Leader Competence

Grigoryev (2006) proposed four steps for assessing and evaluating candidates' competencies, including (a) identifying the desired outcomes for the given role, (b) identifying the behaviors that produce the desired outcomes, (c) converting each behavior into a core competency, and (d) designing behaviorally based assessments (e.g., interview protocols, surveys) to evaluate candidates' competencies. Based on the candidate assessment and resulting competency deficits identified, the candidate can then be selected, declined, or identified for further development. While this approach can be helpful for identifying potential areas of concern, it is important to avoid being formulaic in simply identifying and addressing a candidate's competency issues without addressing the larger issue of whether the idea of *being a leader* needs to be important to them—to point of leadership becoming a central part of their self-concept.

Accordingly, leader development is an ongoing process of proactive and deliberate learning, practice, and evolution of behavioral, cognitive, and social skills (Day & Halpin, 2004; McDermott et al., 2011)—such as learning that occurs *in situ* (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007). Moreover, leadership development needs to address the deep personality and identity-level aspects of leadership (Lord & Hall, 2005), which are more fully discussed in the next section of this article.

McDermott et al. (2011) examined the nature of individual leader development processes, including the formative influences on and key learning experiences of successful leaders. Their findings aligned with a developmental model of leadership in which life experience contributes to the development of leadership behavior (e.g., Bass & Avolio, 1994). Participants in their study emphasized that they were often strongly influenced by events in their early childhood or careers. Interventions by individuals, key learning experiences, transformative experiences, and chance events were all described as critical incidents by the interviewees. In addition, the leaders were influenced by personal qualities and underlying drivers, including values, faith, and personal drive. Avolio (1994) posited that such underlying drivers are often influenced by the moral standards of parents and early role models. At the same time, antecedents of leadership skills, such as some aspects of personality (i.e., ambition and motivation as per Barbuto et al., 2000) may affect how an individual uses these opportunities or experiences. It follows that both identity and specific opportunities play salient roles in leader development. Therefore, what cannot get lost in the discussion of competency development trajectories, timelines, and approaches is that ongoing refinement of one's leadership skills requires the individual's interest, commitment, and motivation over years—and, likely, their entire career (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Lord & Hall, 2005). This reveals that leader development is something that the individual likely has been investing in for years, even before the leadership role transition occurred. Accordingly, traditional (often finite) leadership development efforts may have limited value absent the individual leader's personal identification with leadership and ongoing efforts to develop as a leader. Thus, while competency assessment and development efforts have value, they cannot be performed separately from consideration of the leader's identity.

Based on this body of leader development research, this article proposes that effective competency assessment and development—culminating in adequate role fit—requires (a) the leader's genuine interest and commitment to being a leader, which predates and continues through and beyond the leader transition (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Lord & Hall, 2005); (b) the leader's deliberate reflection on and attention to the unique attributes (Barbuto et al., 2000) and lifetime critical incidents, influences, and transformative experiences (McDermott et al., 2011) that have shaped their leadership; and (c) organizational attention to needed competencies for the role, assessment of the incoming leader, and provision of deliberate learning opportunities (Grigoryev, 2006; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007; McDermott et al., 2011). With competency issues addressed, concerns of leader role identity during the leadership transition may be examined.

2.2 Implications for Leaders

Leader competency is a key focus during leader transition and should be considered during moves up and down the organizational hierarchy. Many organizations have outlined competency models to guide their selection, development, and performance appraisal processes. While this is an important ingredient for leader success, additional areas of fit must be considered and are described in the remainder of this article.

3. Identifying and Addressing Issues of Leader Role Identity

Leader role identity is considered the "sub-component of one's identity that relates to being a leader or how one thinks of oneself as a leader" (Day & Harrison, 2007, p. 365). Ibarra et al. (2008) noted that a leader's identity concerns their professional identity, defined as a combination of personal and social identities comprising a relatively stable and enduring constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences by which people define themselves in a professional role (Schein, 1978).

Available research has concluded that individuals construct a leader role identity through both relational and interactional processes, which take place across time and situations (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; DeRue & Ashford, 2010). However, the nature and content of the relationships and interactions that play a role in leader role identity construction are underexplored, and there remain limitations regarding how individuals come to see themselves and come to be seen as leaders within organizations (Epitropaki et al., 2016).

Lord and Hall (2005) asserted that identity is central to leadership and leader development because (a) it provides an important structure around which relevant knowledge can be organized; (b) it is a source of motivational and directional forces that determine the extent to which the leader voluntarily puts themselves in developmental situations; and (c) it may provide access to personal material (i.e., stories, core values, etc.) that can be used to understand and motivate subordinates. Research interest in identity work has steadily grown, with an increasing evidence base emphasizing that identity and the psychodynamics surrounding it are central to leader development (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020; Yip et al., 2020). Miscenko et al. (2017) further found an association between leader identity and leadership skills, while Johnson et al. (2012) found that a strong identity was correlated with leader effectiveness (Johnson et al., 2012).

3.1 Identity and Role Transitions

It has been long understood that people possess multiple identities (James, 1890). Effective identity negotiation requires intrapersonal internalization, social reinforcement, and collective endorsement of a leader role identity for it to remain and be effective (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Intrapersonally, individuals create and sustain leader identities when the identities offer value within a specific context. It is typical that among management-oriented individuals, leadership-related knowledge, skills, traits, goals, and behaviors become increasingly central to their sense of self (Chan & Drasgow, 2001), while ineffective or blatantly inauthentic identities are dismissed (Ibarra, 1999) in a process called identification with a leader role identity (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). Consistent with models of psychological transition (Bridges, 1991), the process of "becoming a leader" is believed to involve movement through phases of separation, transition, and incorporation (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007) whereby the individual disengages from central, behaviorally anchored identities befitting former roles and eventually integrates a new, alternative identity that fits the new role. In the process, old and new identities coexist as people try on provisional selves and gain deeper insight about themselves based on task, social, and emotional feedback (Ibarra et al., 2008; Lord & Hall, 2005). In this three-step process, leaders must first disengage from familiar work they did well. Next, they must negotiate a state of experimentation and limbo, which is fraught with identity ambiguity and conflict. Finally, they must internalize a new identity congruent with the role (Ibarra et al., 2008; Settles, 2004).

Relationally and collectively, identities are created, sustained, and shifted as needed through *identity work,* defined as “forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising [one’s] identities” through making and negotiating identity claims in relationship with others (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p. 626). This concept of identity claims (i.e., any action intended to assert an identity) and reciprocal identity grants (i.e., any action designed to bestow an identity onto another individual) is reflected in DeRue and Ashford’s (2010) Leadership Identity Construction Theory. The theory describes an interactive process of identity construction whereby the leader projects an image of being the leader, and others (i.e., followers, peers, superiors, other stakeholders) reflect and reinforce the leader image as being legitimate (Marchiondo et al., 2015). Whether the image is deemed legitimate is determined by others’ expectations of the leader, the perceived risks and rewards of leadership behaviors, and the institutional context. Identity claims and grants are asserted directly (e.g., “I want to lead this project”) or indirectly (e.g., sitting at the head of the table) as well as verbally or nonverbally. For the leader-follower relationship to gel into productive patterns of perceiving and behaving, these claims and grants need to be mutually ratified.

Identity shift is necessary when the role transition requires significant quantitative and qualitative leaps—such as in moving from a contributor to manager role, from a junior to senior professional role (Ibarra, 1999), or from more junior to more senior manager roles (Charan & Drotter, 2001; Lord & Hall, 2005). The actual process of identity adaptation unfolds as a negotiated process in which people exercise much leeway as they strive to improve the fit between themselves and their work environment (Ibarra, 1999; Schein, 1978). With experience, they improve their understanding of the new role and refine their emerging notions of who they want to be in that role (Bandura, 1977)—leading to substantive differences in what the leader feels, thinks, and values (Ibarra et al., 2008). In this process, leaders both adapt aspects of their identity to accommodate role demands and modify role definitions to preserve and enact valued aspects of their identity (Bandura, 1977). Although this process of identity adaptation is difficult, requiring substantial time, energy, and commitment, the identity shift is necessary for success in the new role.

3.2 Implications for Leaders

A leader’s identity has far-reaching implications for the leader, their followers, and their organization. Reicher et al. (2005) described identity as a model of “how the world is and of how it should be” (p. 564). Therefore, identity affects the leader’s access to knowledge, their motivations and drives, and their emotional states, all of which affect their performance (Lord & Hall, 2005). Leader transition often results in new claims being made on the self that require identity revision (Ashforth, 2001), development of new skills, abandonment of former competencies and identities, and dramatic shifts in time allocations (Charan & Drotter, 2001). Due to the many substantial shifts needed during leader transition, the potential for leader derailment is significant (Maurer & London, 2018). Moreover, as leaders perform novel tasks, exercise fledgling skills, and display nascent qualities befitting their new role, they tend to experience a sense of inauthenticity and may even struggle to value the work they now must do (Ibarra, 1999). Therefore, optimizing a leader’s role identity during leadership transition is no small task and typically requires significant unlearning and identity loss (Schein, 1996) as the leader makes room for new skills, behaviors, attitudes, patterns of interactions, and self-definitions (Ashforth, 2001). Given the powerful role that identity plays in how leaders exercise and develop their competencies, it is important to understand how leader role identity forms, how leader role identity affects and is affected by role transitions, and what the consequent implications are for leaders.

The final area of consideration during leader transitions is leader prototypicality, which indicates the degree to which leaders reflect core cultural features of their organizations. The next section discusses issues of leader prototypicality and how these issues arise during leader transition.

4. Identifying and Addressing Issues of Leader Prototypicality

Leader prototypicality (also known as organizational identification) concerns the extent to which an organization member defines himself or herself by the same attributes that he or she believes define the organization (Dutton et al., 2010). Organizational identification differs from other types of identification (e.g., gender, religion) in three ways. First, organizations specify the terms and conditions of membership, and membership in the organization must be acquired (Whetten, 2007). Second, the degree of the leader’s inclusion and belonging to the organization varies based on questions of “Where, how, and when do I belong in the organization?” Third, unlike other social entities, organizations are authorized, as legally designated social actors in modern society, to act independently of their members. Thus, organizational actions can affect the meaning and nature of the leader’s organizational membership and, in turn, members' identification with the organization. Similarly, Tajfel (1972) noted that identification not only involves the individual's awareness of belonging to a particular social group, but also involves (a) the importance the individual places on that membership and (b) the congruence between the individual's and organization's beliefs, values, and identities.

4.1 Emergence of Prototypicality

Prototypicality develops when the leader's beliefs about their organization become self-referential or self-defining—typically resulting in attracting the leader to the organization or prompting the leader to adapt to become like the organization (Pratt, 1998). Dukerich et al. (2002) added that this dynamic of attraction and adaptation occurs when leaders "consider worthy the central, distinctive, and enduring values and goals of the organization and incorporate these into their sense of self" (p. 509). Self-categorization further solidifies identification through a cognitive sorting process whereby the leaders perceive themselves as "identical to some class of stimuli and in contrast to some other class of stimuli" (Turner & Onorato, 1999, p. 21), based on what they hold more central to their self-concept. Self-enhancement further aids identification as leaders increase~~s~~ their sense of self-worth as a result of identifying with the desired organization (Dutton et al., 2010).

Ascendance of prototypical leaders within the organizational context also may be active or passive. According to a passive approach, leaders wait until their position matches the prototype of "leader" within the organizational context. This approach leverages the tendency of followers to automatically defer to leaders who match given category prototypes (Reicher et al., 2005). According to an active approach, leaders deliberately define the category, themselves, and their projects to enhance their prototypicality—thus, becoming entrepreneurs of identity. Meanwhile, followers actively weigh and interpret the definitions the leader offers to them, resulting in either acceptance of the leader or rejection of a leader who violates their understandings of identity or social reality (Reicher & Haslam, 2006; Reicher et al., 2005). The leader's tasks are to interpret what it means to be "us" in a given context and then translate that into a specific and actionable plan, whereas followers must accept the leader's conceptualization of the common "us" and interpretation of the action in context (Turner, 2005). In this way, leaders and followers actively rely on each other to create the conditions for mutual identity and influence, thus, creating the possibility of leadership. Absent this shared identity, leadership and mutual influence disintegrate (for a demonstration of this, see Haslam and Reicher's [2007] BBC Prison Study).

Leaders' abilities to actively enhance their prototypicality improve with expertise (Lord & Hall, 2005). Lord and Hall explained that as leaders develop, they become increasingly able to access personal material, such as their identity and values. As leaders gain more and more experience with followers, they also cultivate a sense of the followers' level of development and, in turn, a sense of which aspects of their own leadership will be effective with which followers and under what conditions. Lord and Hall (2005) emphasized, "Expert-level leaders can learn to assimilate these differences with their own underlying values to create leadership that is sensitive to the follower context (including simultaneous interactions with followers at a variety of different developmental points) as well as being authentic" (p. 597). As a result, the leader's approach blends "internal qualities and abilities located not only within the leader but also within the followers" (p. 611). In turn, the leader's identity becomes more facile and their situational adaptation more effortless as the leader becomes more experienced.

Prototypicality can create a perception of interpersonal oneness that fosters trust and cohesiveness as well as improved relationships between leaders and followers (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Followers tend to exhibit the greatest liking toward the most prototypical leaders (Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003). Abrams et al. (2018) found in their research that when leaders are perceived as being prototypical, they are endorsed by followers even when engaging in behaviors otherwise perceived as deviant. Leader prototypicality also influences perceptions of leader fairness (Koivisto et al., 2013) and leader charisma (Steffens et al., 2014) as well as followers' endorsement of leaders (Ullrich et al., 2009) and their trust in the leaders (Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008). When prototypicality exists, strong affective connections between organizational action and the leader's motivation also emerge (Dutton et al., 2010), prompting leaders to personally value, defend, and respond to the organization's interests and actions (Heckman et al., 2009). Zhang et al. (2022) additionally found that when higher-level managers perceive that the team leader reporting to them exhibits optimal prototypicality, that both the team leader's self-efficacy and their team's collective efficacy are enhanced. These benefits underscore the importance of evaluating and addressing leader prototypicality as part of hiring, advancement, and development decisions.

4.2 Implications for Leaders

A leader's prototypicality affects their ability to motivate followers (Reicher et al., 2005) because social identities help define a shared identity, thus, binding leaders and followers in a common aim (Reicher et al., 2005). Leaders and followers thereby become entrepreneurs of identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2003) as they dynamically engage in crafting social identity and, through collective action, shape social reality. In this way, organizational identification can be harnessed to bring about desired change (Reicher & Hopkins, 2003). Reicher et al. (2005) added that the leaders' transformative potential is found in their ability to define and redefine their shared social identities (comprised of perceptions, values, and goals) that, in turn, mobilize followers and bring about change. This is critical, given that leaders have no direct social power to shape social reality (Turner, 2005).

5. Leadership Transition Assessment Framework

5.1 Components of the Framework

Based on the synthesis of extant literature described above, this article proposes that the success of leadership transition relies upon consideration of three areas of fit: leader competencies, leader role identity, and leader prototypicality (see Figure 1). This section describes the steps of assessing and addressing each area of fit. Although these steps can involve an exhaustive and time-intensive process, the degree to which issues of competency, identity, and prototypicality are assessed and addressed depends upon the level of the role (i.e., higher-level roles are subject to more due diligence because of the risk and responsibility associated with such roles), the organization size (i.e., larger organizations tend to have more resources to dedicate to leader selection and screening), and transition type (e.g., newness of the organizational setting and the role).

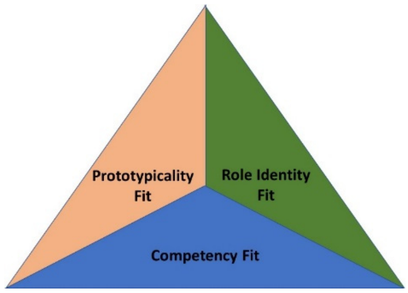

Figure 1. Leader transition assessment framework: needed areas of fit

5.1.1 Assessing and Addressing Competency

The central concern underlying questions of leader competency during leader transition is: Does the leader have the needed knowledge, skills, experiences, and abilities to be effective in the role? Competency assessment and development that culminates in role fit require certain actions from both the leader and the organization. Specifically, the leader requires:

1. Genuine interest and commitment to being a leader (Lord & Hall, 2005).

2. Deliberate reflection on and attention to the unique attributes (Barbuto et al., 2000) and lifetime critical incidents, influences, and transformative experiences (McDermott et al., 2011) that have shaped their leadership.

Organizations can assess the leader's interest and encourage their reflection through effective hiring practices, including but not limited to behavioral interviewing; validated assessments of personality, drive, and motivation; coaching; and developmental experiences. To further assess a leader's competency fit for a given role, organizations need to:

1. Identify the competencies needed in the role, typically through competency models that guide recruitment, selection, performance appraisal, development, high potential identification, and succession planning (Stone et al., 2013).

2. Assess the prospective leader's competencies, typically using the competency model as a guide (Stone et al., 2013).

3. Provide learning opportunities to help close any leader competency gaps (Grigoryev, 2006; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007; McDermott et al., 2011).

Although addressing issues of competency is critical during leadership transition, more deeply discussing the tools, techniques, assessments, and approaches for development relative to competencies is not the focus of the present article. However, a vast body of literature is available to guide these efforts (e.g., Campion et al., 2020; Shet et al., 2019; Stone et al., 2013).

5.1.2 Assessing and Addressing Role Identity

The central concerns underlying questions of leader role identity during leader transition are: Does the leader feel, think, and perceive reality in ways consistent with what is needed in this role? Does the leader spend their time on and consider important those tasks and issues critical to success in this role? These concerns are particularly critical when an individual is leveling up (or down) in an organizational hierarchy, as the scope of their focus and nature of their activities will need to shift to fit the new role (Bandura, 1977; Ibarra et al., 2008).

Evaluating and aligning a leader's role identity with the new role could begin with inventorying the attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences needed in the role as well as those possessed by the new leader to identify any areas of dissonance between (a) identity claims endemic to the role and (b) identity claims attributable to the new leader. A 360-degree assessment also could be used to gain insights about others' expectations for the leader, as reflected in the leadership claims and grants surrounding the role and the new leader. To resolve differences and enhance alignment, it is typical for both the role itself as well as the leader's role identity to be adapted.

5.1.2.1 Adjusting the Role

While it may be tempting for organizations to focus on fitting the incoming leader to the role, identity adaptation more often is a negotiated process that also includes modifying role definitions to preserve and enact valued aspects of the new leader's identity (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, after identifying the areas of identity claim dissonance, it will be important to consider whether adapting the leader, adapting the role, or adapting both would lead to the most optimal outcomes.

Adjusting the role may be aided by Rockwell's (2019) 3A model, originally designed to evaluate and align an organization's identity with its strategic direction based on a resource-based framework. According to this model, for each area of identity claim dissonance, the identity claim associated with the role would be evaluated to determine whether it is valuable, rare, inimitable, and capable of being leveraged. Identity claims that do not help exploit opportunities or neutralize threats faced in the role or, conversely, claims that increase weaknesses and risks faced in the role should be retired or reimagined. Retirement involves unlearning and releasing the identity attribute from the role (Rockwell, 2016), while reimagination involves recreating the claim in a new form to yield the most benefit in the role.

In contrast, identity claims that pose advantages in terms of being valuable, rather rare and difficult for others to imitate, or which can be leveraged for efficiency and effectiveness should be reclaimed, if they have been somewhat neglected; reaffirmed, if still active within the role; or regenerated, if currently atrophied. When a leader's role identity fails to align with such role claims, it is important to adjust the leader's role identity, as discussed in the following section.

5.1.2.2 Adjusting the Leader's Role Identity

Adjusting role identity means that the leader needs to shift their values and behaviors as they transition into the role and encounter new claims on the self. Adjusting role identity may require identity revision (Ashforth, 2001), development of new skills, abandonment of former competencies and identities, and dramatic shifts in time allocations (Charan & Drotter, 2001). Due to the many substantial shifts needed during leader transition, the potential for leader derailment is significant (Maurer & London, 2018). Moreover, as leaders perform novel tasks, exercise fledgling skills, and display nascent qualities befitting their new role, they tend to experience a sense of inauthenticity and may even struggle to value the work they now must do (Ibarra, 1999). Therefore, adapting one's role identity is no small task and typically requires significant unlearning and identity loss (Schein, 1996) as the leader makes room for new skills, behaviors, attitudes, patterns of interactions, and self-definitions (Ashforth, 2001).

Deliberate role identity work involves separating from the old role and identity so that transition and incorporation of the new role-based identity could ensue (Ibarra et al., 2008). Experiential learning, including experimentation, reflection, and evaluation also could aid this process (Kolb, 1984). This effort also should include deliberately acknowledging what identities, values, and time allocations must be released (Schein, 1996), what new success metrics need to be implemented, and what satisfactions, bases of expertise, and sources of reputation may be possible in the new role. Rockwell's (2019) 3A process may again be useful as a guide for how the leader's role identity claims may be retired or reimagined or, conversely, reclaimed, reaffirmed, or regenerated.

5.1.3 Assessing and Addressing Prototypicality

The central concern underlying questions of leader prototypicality during leader transition is: Does the leader share the core, distinctive, and enduring attributes that define the organization (Dutton et al., 2010)? Given the influence of prototypicality on leader, follower, and organizational outcomes, evaluating and addressing leader prototypicality as part of hiring, advancement, and development decisions are final, critical steps of optimizing fit. Prototypicality forms within the organization's social context, given that identities evolve over time through experience and meaningful social feedback, which allow people to learn about who they are (Lord & Hall, 2005). Identities, therefore, represent a complex understanding of the self that evolves in part through interaction with others and across contexts. Addressing and assessing prototypicality begins with assessing the leader's prototypicality followed by dual actions of the leader shaping shared identity and leader adjusting their own prototypicality.

5.1.3.1 Assessing Prototypicality

As with previous areas of fit, the first step of optimizing prototypicality is gauging the leader's degree of prototypicality. This can be done using a process similar to that described in the previous section, whereby the leader's and the organization's identity claims are inventoried. To do so, it is important to find explicit and tacit articulations of what has been central and distinctive to the leader and to the organization over time. For leaders, this may be accomplished by examining identity claims made (a) on the leader's social media, resume, and other documents and (b) personal statements, speeches, and other professional communications. A 360-degree assessment also could produce insights about what others perceive to be core, distinctive, and enduring about the leader.

Organizational identity claims can be isolated by (a) examining identity claims made by members and agents of the company documented in internal and external websites, legal documents, meeting minutes, strategic plans, employee handbooks, and company brochures (Corley et al., 2006); (b) analyzing crises and "fork-in-the road strategic choices" (Rekom & Whetten, 2007, p. 22); (c) reviewing externally produced documents such as media coverage; (c) conducting interviews with organizational stakeholders; and (d) capturing observable manifestations of identity within the organizational environment to ascertain members' embodied cognition of identity; and (d) capturing observable manifestations of identity within the organizational environment to ascertain members' embodied cognition of identity.

This discovery process is likely to generate a substantial volume of data; therefore, the final step of assessment is distilling the process into a manageable set of valid identity claims. Discussing the steps of qualitative analysis is beyond the scope of this article; however, the resulting list of claims tends to be a lengthy account of explicit and tacit claims that vary in strength.

Once both the leader's and the organization's identity claims have been assessed, they can be compared to determine the leader's degree of prototypicality (i.e., mutually exclusive, embedded, holistic, complementary; Blader, 2007). Blader (2007) speculated that complementary identities, where individuals and the organization share common space and also have their own exclusive space, may be the most stable degree of prototypicality, leading to strong associations between the individual and the organization. Therefore, the steps of shaping shared identity and adjusting leader prototypicality will be even more important in the event that the identities are found to be mutually exclusive, embedded, holistic, or minimally overlapping. Optimizing prototypicality by creating complementary identities typically requires adjustment to both the organization's and the leader's identity.

5.1.3.2 Shaping Shared Organizational Identity

Research by Reicher, Hopkins, and colleagues has argued that the construction of shared identity and associated notions of prototypicality are both negotiable and actively constructed by leaders (Reicher et al., 2005). Reicher and Hopkins (2003) added that leaders routinely need to act as identity entrepreneurs such that their words and deeds serve to craft a sense of shared identity among followers.

Leaders actively develop shared identity by defining values, norms, and goals and ideals that give a group shared meaning for its members. More specifically, leaders need to work to create and maintain a coherent sense of 'we' and 'us' and also to define what 'us' means (and does not mean) for followers (Steffens et al., 2014).

Leaders additionally shape shared identity by establishing structures, implementing practices, formalizing rituals, and organizing events that serve to embed and naturalize a shared sense of 'us', thereby giving weight to the group's existence and making it matter in the world at large. Specifically, leaders may initiate group structures, practices, and activities that are oriented to both (a) the organization's internal reality, allowing its members to live out and derive meaning from group membership and (b) the organization's external reality, allowing the group as a whole to be effective and successful and to have an impact on other groups and the world at large (Haslam et al., 2011). These structures facilitate and embed shared understanding, coordination, and success. Moreover, these activities provide a physical reality for the group by creating group-related material and delivering tangible group outcomes as well as making the group matter by making it visible not only to group members but also to people outside the group (Steffens et al., 2014).

5.1.3.3 Adjusting Leader Identity

In addition to shaping shared organizational identity, the leader's identity may need adjustment to optimize prototypicality. Any initial lack prototypicality can even be beneficial if the incoming leader initiates a process of adaptive staying, wherein they recognize and adapt their qualities, skills, and attitudes to resolve the identity incongruence. As mentioned earlier, determining which identity attributes to shift may be aided by Rockwell's (2019) 3A model, which involves an evaluation of whether a given identity claim enables the exploitation of opportunities and neutralizing threats or, conversely, increases weaknesses and risks. This analysis may yield three possible outcomes, leading to differential recommendations (see Table 1). Retained identity claims may be reclaimed, reaffirmed, regenerated, or reimagined depending on their strength, whereas omitted claims should be retired (Rockwell, 2016, 2019).

Table 1. Recommendations based on prototypicality evaluation

Claim's Impact on Leader	Claim's Impact on Organization	Recommendation Action
Positive	Positive	Retain in leader and shared identity
Positive	Negative	Retain in leader identity, omit from shared identity
Negative	Positive	Retain in shared identity, omit from leader identity
Negative	Negative	Omit from leader and shared identity

5.2 Transition Types

In addition to the level of the role and factors of the organization (e.g., size, age, structure, resources), transition type affects the degree of assessment and intervention needed related to the three areas of leader fit. Integrating a leader into a new role requires consideration of two key questions. Relative to the leader's most recent or most customary role:

- How similar is the new position's scope of action? (Newness of Leadership Scope)
- How similar is the organizational context? (Newness of Organizational Setting)

As shown in Figure 2, answers to these two core questions yield four types of role transitions, which are described in the following sections.

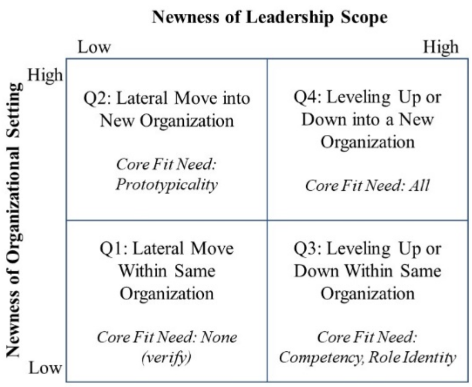

Figure 2. Types of leadership transition

5.2.1 Q1 Transition: Lateral Move Within the Same Organization

In a Q1 transition, the leader is moving to a similar role within the same organization. In such cases, the leader is transitioning to a position with a familiar leadership scope within a familiar organizational setting. The core need in this type of transition tends to be minor, compared to other transitions, and involves verifying that the leader's competencies, role identity, and prototypicality fit the unique challenges, opportunities, and nature of the new role and setting. In such cases, only micro-level adjustments to leader competencies and prototypicality generally are needed (see Figure 3).

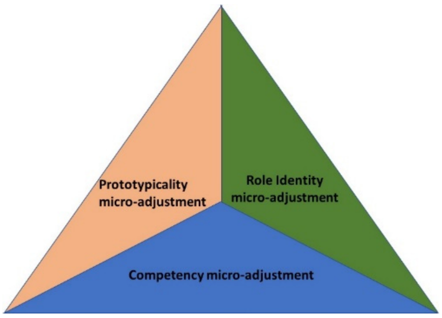

Figure 3. Q1 Transition—micro assessment

For example, consider the case of "Sarah," Senior Manager of IT Support for the northwest region of her company. When her partner transferred to Miami, she decided to apply for the Senior Manager of IT Support for the southeast region of the same company. While this transition did involve overseeing new teams, direct reports, and clients, Sarah's move into the role was rather seamless.

5.2.2 Q2 Transition: Lateral Move into New Organization

In a Q2 transition, the leader is transitioning into a relatively familiar role but to a new organizational setting—whether it is a different division in a large organization or an entirely different organization or industry altogether. In such cases, only micro-level adjustments to the leader's competencies and role identity may be needed; however, more extensive effort is needed to assess the leader's identity, the shared identity, and to intervene accordingly (see Figure 4).

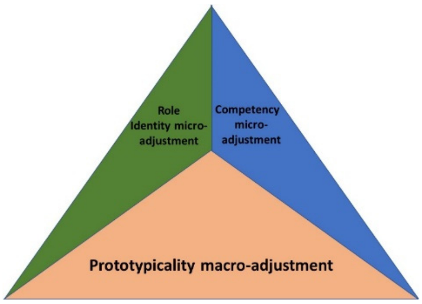

Figure 4. Q2 Transition—authentic prototypicality

"Darnell" experienced a Q2 transition when he left behind his role as Public Relations Account Director for a medium-sized company that served digital media startups. In his new role as Public Relations Account Director at a much larger company that served Fortune 500 clients, he needed to significantly adjust his prototypicality to fit a more formal environment with clients who expected account directors with a more dignified persona than his former clients desired. At the same time, Darnell was hired to inject fresh ideas and youthfulness into the role; therefore, the organization identity also was somewhat adapted accordingly. While Darnell's competencies already were aligned with the new role, his role identity did require some adjustment to release activities important to his former clients (e.g., showing he was fun, cool, and always "on-trend") in favor of activities important to his new clients (e.g., exhibiting poise and discretion).

5.2.3 Q3 Transition: Leveling Up or Down Within Same Organization

In the third type of role transition, the leader is moving within the same organizational setting, which indicates a need for only micro-level adjustments to prototypicality. However, because the leader is leveling up or down, they often need to consider their competencies and role identity to assure that they are prepared to operate at the needed scope of action (see Figure 5).

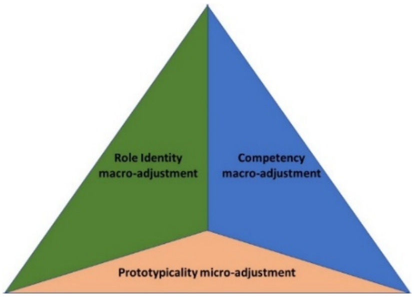

Figure 5. Q3 Transition—competency and identity alignment

"Maria" experienced a Q3 transition when she moved from Senior Manager to Director of Audits. In her new role, her responsibilities changed significantly. She was no longer able to be as involved in overseeing her direct reports and providing on-the-job mentoring, or in helping them develop their competencies. In her new role, she was responsible for providing strategic oversight and governance, establishing policies, and presenting to the executive team and external stakeholders. These activities required her to develop some additional competencies related to public speaking and also necessitated a release of her focus on nurturing the development of her staff in favor of attending to strategic issues affecting the department. At the same time, she adapted the role a bit to fit her own unique nature and leadership approach.

5.2.4 Q4 Transition: Leveling Up or Down into a New Organization

In the fourth, final, and most extreme type of transition, the leader levels down or up into a new organizational setting. In such cases, the leader must consider and address their competencies, their role identity, and their prototypicality within the new setting. Similar to the previous type of transition, the leader often needs to do some identity work and consider their competencies to assure that they are willing and able to operate at the needed scope of action due to the shift in their role level. Moreover, the leader may need to adjust their own identity and shape the shared identity for suitable prototypicality to emerge (see Figure 6).

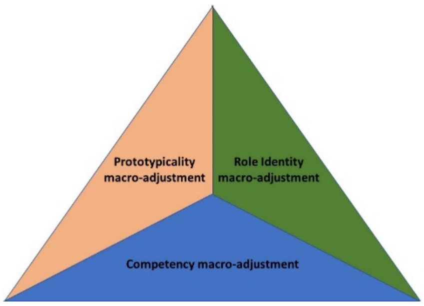

Figure 6. Q4 Transition—Macro Assessment

"Sanjay" experienced a Q4 transition when he left his role as Senior Project Manager at a Fortune 500 company to assume the role of Director of Project Management at a smaller firm. In his new role, he made it a priority to learn and adapt to the new organization's culture. Moreover, the move from a large, well-resourced firm to a smaller firm required him to learn how to navigate the unique constraints of the new environment while introducing tools and approaches to help the new organization elevate their own performance. Additionally, he dedicated time to assessing and filling his competency gaps and further evaluated the tasks and ways of being he needed to adopt to effectively perform at the director level.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Poor management hires and poor advancement decisions impose steep costs for organizations, leaders, and employees (Anderson et al., 2012). Given the current state of the talent management and extreme staff shortages faced in many industries, the costs of poor leadership selections may produce adverse impacts from which organizations may not rebound. While various approaches have been offered to improve selection and advancement decisions, this article emphasizes that a more holistic approach to selection and leader development is needed. It is anticipated that more favorable leader, staff, and organizational outcomes will be achieved during and following leader transition by assessing and addressing three key areas of leader fit (i.e., competencies, role identity, prototypicality). Research is needed to validate and further refine the proposed Leader Transition

Assessment Framework as well as to document its applicability.

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