

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

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“DO I HAVE THE RIGHT TO LEAD?” IDENTITY WORK OF  
EMERGING RUSSIAN BUSINESS LEADERS IN A LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

CRANFIELD SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

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## **ABSTRACT**

Through a qualitative study of 30 Russian managers and entrepreneurs who graduated from an 18-month Master of Business Administration Programme (MBA) in Moscow, Russia, the research answers two questions: (1) what does leadership mean in the Russian context as described by emerging Russian business leaders? and (2) how do these leaders develop their leadership identity within a leadership development programme? Key research findings reveal that perceptions about effective leadership in Russia are changing, presumably due to a generational shift, and that the leadership identity work in a leadership development programme is fuelled by participants' efforts to promote their leader efficacy. The thesis contributes to social identity theory, implicit leadership theory, and identity theory. Social identity theory is enriched by proposing specific characteristics of Russian leadership identity and describing the challenges emerging Russian leaders face because of conflicting leadership prototypes for self-to-leader comparison. Implicit leadership theory benefits from the evidence that perceptions about Russian leadership characteristics are changing; emerging business leaders prefer a more participative, humane oriented, transformational approach over a transactional, directive and authoritarian one. Finally, identity theory is strengthened by establishing a link between leader efficacy and leadership identity work and by proposing a process model of leader efficacy development and leadership identity work within an educational programme. The study also indicates avenues for further research.

Keywords: leadership identity, identity work, Russian, leadership development programme, MBA

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

|          |                                                                           |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus disease 2019                                                  |
| DBA      | Doctorate in Business Administration                                      |
| EQUIS    | European Foundation for Management Development Quality Improvement System |
| HR       | Human Resources                                                           |
| HRD      | Human Resource Development                                                |
| MBA      | Master of Business Administration                                         |
| SJR      | Scientific Journal Rankings                                               |



# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Chapter introduction**

This thesis is concerned with the process of leadership identity work of emerging Russian business leaders in a leadership development programme. In Section 1.2, the rationale for this topic is discussed from business, theoretical and personal perspectives. Section 1.3 highlights key terms in this thesis. In Section 1.4, an overview of the research design and expected theoretical contributions are presented, and Section 1.5 outlines the structure of the thesis. The chapter is concluded with a summary in Section 1.6.

## **1.2 Research rationale**

In Russia, where the importance of leadership in society is very high (Kets de Vries et al., 2004), the development of the management education industry lags behind the societal and economic transformations that the country has been undergoing since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This can be justified by the fact that only two Russian business schools are accredited by the European Foundation for Management Development Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), compared to 26 in the UK and 22 in China (EFMD Global, 2021); and there are only two Russian business schools in the global Executive MBA or Executive Education rankings (The Financial Times, 2021).

The study is based on the proposition that, in order to improve leadership development programmes, business education professionals need to better understand the motivation and learning journey of programme participants, as well as the specifics of leadership in a national context. As leadership development programmes typically seek to align participants' identity and behaviours with the construction of a particular leader ideal (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014), Russian management education professionals need to understand what this "leader ideal" means in a national context. The study argues that simply replicating established leadership models makes little sense in Russia. Although scholars agree that leadership concepts vary greatly depending

on the national context (Hofstede, 1993; Welch, Javidan and House, 2002), the vast majority of leadership studies have been developed in a Western/North American context (Dickson et al., 2012; Scandura and Dorfman, 2004), which make them less effective in other cultures. As the study confirms, even the word “leader” (“лидер” [l'idēr]) is foreign and is not widely used in Russia, presumably because it was not in everyday use before the 1990s. One of the study's objectives is to define what kind of words and meanings emerging Russian leaders use to describe the phenomenon of leadership - to find the correct language for leadership development programmes - and it proposes several explanations. For example, the research indicates that one of the words that Russian leaders use when they think of leadership is responsibility, or ownership, depending on how one translates the Russian word *otvi'etstviennost* (“ответственность”).

Building an effective leadership development programme requires knowing who the programme participants are and how they develop their leadership identity — and the author argues that we lack this knowledge. While a vast body of literature describes the specifics of Russian leadership culture (Ardichvili and Gasparishvili, 2001; Dirani et al., 2015; Nguyen et al., 2015; Puffer, 1994), much of it belongs to an implicit group of leadership theories, which assumes that leadership is the process of being perceived by others as being a leader (Dorfman, Hanges and Brodbeck, 2004; Northouse, 2019). So, most of the research focuses on how perceptions of leadership differ across cultures, and what kind of values people share. At the same time, very few management and organisational behaviour studies have explored how leadership actually functions in different countries and what leaders actually think and do - particularly in Russia (Elenkov, 2002; Grachev, 2009) - and how they identify themselves as leaders. For example, Grachev notes a vast gap between the values and practices of Russian leaders: while Russian leaders are generally perceived as not performance-oriented, distant from their subordinates, and uncertainty-avoiding, their behaviour demonstrated the complete opposite: they were performance-driven, displayed a smaller power distance, and risk-taking.

Moreover, the study argues that the majority of Russia-related leadership research is largely outdated, as it was done in the 1990s-2000s (Gill and Negrov, 2021; Hofstede, 1980; Kets de Vries et al., 2004; Naumov and Puffer, 2000; Welch, Javidan and House, 2002) and focused predominantly on the previous generation of leaders: the "baby-boomers". The previous generation of leaders in Russia, like in many post-Soviet countries, developed and formed their identity in a political and social environment that was completely different from today's environment (Gill and Negrov, 2021). Presumably, the next generation of Russian leaders, aged between 27 and 40, developed its own perceptions of leadership and social leadership identity shaped by events and conditions that occurred in times of rapid social change (1985-1998), which could result in a significant change of values and attitudes (Mannheim, 1952; Pilcher, 1994). A similar rapid shift of values and attitudes was observed exactly one generation ago, in the 1990s, and was described in the literature; many authors claimed that there was a convergence of Russian and "Western" leadership perceptions and styles (Elenkov, 1997; Kets de Vries, 2001; Kobouloff-Dacremont, 2001; Puffer, 1994; Veiga, Yanouzas and Buchholtz, 1995).

As prevailing knowledge about Russian leadership from management literature cannot be relied on, this research focused on emerging Russian leaders, who, according to the literature review, were not systematically studied by leadership researchers, and, on the other hand, make up most of the workforce and management students in Russia today. To close the gap, leadership identity theory was applied to help the author step out from "classic" transactional/transformational and implicit leadership theories and look at the "inner theatre" of contemporary Russian business leaders. In this research, the generation of business leaders aged 27 to 40 is defined as emerging Russian business leaders (in 2019-2020, at the moment of the empirical research phase).

The author intends to create a contribution to theory and practice by answering the following questions: (1) What does leadership mean in the Russian context, as defined by business leaders themselves; and (2) How do emerging Russian business leaders develop their leadership identity, particularly in the context of a

leadership development programme. These particular questions are aimed at understanding the leadership prototype that emerging Russian business leaders think of when they enrol in a management development programme (their possible identity (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2008), or the “destination point”), as well as the process of their leadership identity development through their educational journey (their identity work). Answering the first question will help Russian business education institutions develop the necessary educational content for their programmes, while addressing the second one will help design a more effective leadership development path.

The author’s interest in Russian leadership identity and leadership identity work is fuelled by a desire to move to a full-time faculty position with a focus on leadership development. After ten years building a career in large energy and chemical companies in Russia and Europe, the author made a career shift and, in 2014, joined a leading Russian business school as an educational manager. Over time, an increasing passion emerged for research, teaching, and working with programme participants, specifically concerning their leadership development challenges, so the transition towards a faculty role is already taking place. Becoming more effective and efficient as a programme designer, instructor, and coach required a better understanding of who programme participants are and what kind of journey they pass through during their time on a management development programme.

Starting from the question of the key characteristics and traits of emerging Russian business leaders, the research migrated to the fascinating topic of leadership identity. Based on his personal experience of identity shift, the author shares the idea that leadership development is closely associated with identity work (Carroll and Levy, 2010; Clapp-Smith et al., 2019; Haynes et al., 2014; Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018), and the most valuable result of any long-term educational programme is presumably the “new self” that programme participants acquire. Before starting his doctorate research, the author empirically observed that most MBA graduates began the programme with instrumental aims (to acquire skills and develop their careers) and graduated with humanistic and

social results (new identity and network). Also, the author is undergoing a similar identity transition process himself. He is shifting his professional focus from management to academia, which presents many personal challenges and requires a lot of effort.

As someone who has completed several such programmes, including a full-time Master of Business Administration at one of Europe's leading business schools, the author was highly motivated to explore the hidden mechanisms behind this process and the role of the institution in crafting a new self. The author also presumes that the research outcomes will contribute to the promotion of the leadership development industry in Russia, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

### **1.3 Defining terms and relevant theories**

Four terms need to be defined to provide clarity on the core topic of the research. These are leadership, leadership identity, identity work, and Russian leadership identity.

#### **1.3.1 Leadership**

In leadership research over the past century, dozens of different classification systems have been developed to conceptualise the phenomenon of leadership. For example, one of the most recent classifications outlines 40 established theories and 26 emerging ones, and a wide variety of methodological approaches (Dinh et al., 2014).

Despite the discipline lacking a single definition of leadership (Bass, 1990; Bennis, 2007; Northouse, 2019; Yukl, 2010), there is a consensus understanding in the literature that leadership is (1) a process whereby an individual (2) influences (3) a group of individuals to achieve (4) a common goal (Northouse, 2019). However, the exact way in which this process of influence actually happens and why a group of people follow a leader is still debated by scholars.

This section outlines theories leadership and justifies the selection of identity theory for the current research.

Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, leadership research was concerned predominantly with determining what made certain people great leaders. There was a perception that great people were born with specific leadership traits, and a set of “great man” theories emerged, including trait theory as one of the most developed among them (Northouse, 2019; Rost, 1991)

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the rise of large organisations, the works of Taylor and Fayol in scientific management and administration explored processes of interaction between leaders and followers, yet they were focused mostly on operational efficiency, control, better training, matching workers with their jobs, and financial motivation (Fayol, 1916; Taylor, 1911). Following Taylor's and Fayol's ideas, in the first three decades of the last century, leadership was associated predominantly with command, control, centralisation, domination, administration, planning, obedience, loyalty, and the will of the leader.

In the 1930s, the emphasis of leadership had shifted from domination to influence, and the role of leadership traits reemerged: just as followers' activities be influenced by a leader, the group itself may also influence their leader (Rost, 1991). However, later research showed that an individual with certain traits who is a leader in one situation might not be a leader in a different situation (Stogdill, 1948). Thus, leadership was reconsidered as a combination of a person and a social situation, though several decades later it was claimed that certain traits might not correlate with leadership capabilities, but are strongly associated with an individual's perceptions of leadership (Lord, de Vader and Alliger, 1986).

In the 1940s, the time of the Second World War and post-war reconstruction, the group became an important element of research, and leadership came to be defined as the behaviour of an individual while involved in directing group activities (Hemphill, 1949). Following this focus, in the 1950s, leadership research was dominated by themes of a relationship that develops shared goals and the ability of a leader to influence group activities. At the same time, the emphasis of research shifted from traits to skills, trying to determine competencies that are possessed by effective leaders (Katz, 1974).

The 1960s were characterised by a focus on behaviour that influences people towards a shared goal and, in the 1970s - with the rise of large multi-national corporations - the group approach was followed by an organisational behaviour paradigm, and leadership came to be viewed as “initiating and maintaining groups or organisations to accomplish group or organisational goals” (Rost, 1991, p. 59). The behavioural approach started to explore the dichotomy between “task behaviour” and “people behaviour”, or concern for results and concern for people, which resulted in several frameworks, including Blake and Mouton's Managerial/Leadership Grid (Blake and Mouton, 1964).

Building on Blake and Mouton's work, Hersey and Blanchard developed the Situational Leadership theory and a framework which is still widely used in leadership training. The premise of this approach is that different situations demand different kinds of leaders and leadership behaviour, and effective leaders can adapt their leadership styles according to the competence and commitment of their followers (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). Another behavioural approach that was developed in the 1970s is the Action-Centred, or Functional Leadership theory by John Adair. It does not rest on the behaviour or leadership style of one person, but rather rests on the behaviours of individuals and teams as a whole. Therefore, any team member can take part in the leadership process, and a leader needs to consider the wider scope of interests in a social interaction (Adair, 1973).

In the 1980s, influence became one of the most commonly used topics in leadership literature, with a special emphasis on non-coercive influence. Hierarchical, authoritative and “command and control” leadership approaches were challenged by transformational approaches, which became one of the most widely used by scholar and practitioners (Burns, 1978) — they represented approximately one third of research articles published in the 1990s in *Leadership Quarterly*, one of the leading academic journals in the leadership field (Lowe and Gardner, 2000). The transformational leadership theory implies that leaders are change agents and role models who need to inspire and empower followers for achievement.

In the 1990s, researchers' interest moved from individuals and their behaviour to human relations and its underlying drivers, including psychological ones. Emerging theories of leadership in this decade included authentic leadership (emphasising the authenticity of leadership), spiritual leadership (focusing on values and calling), servant leadership (focusing on followers' needs), adaptive leadership (a leader encourages followers to adapt by confronting and solving problems), psychodynamic approach (looking at the underlying irrational processes and dynamics governing human behaviour), and many others.

Overall, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, leadership research followed the development of leadership practice: while at the beginning of the century a leader was considered as a foreman and the leadership concept was closely associated with hierarchy and authority, by the end of the century the role and power of followers had drastically increased, and pluralistic/participative models of leadership came into play. They are based on common goals, mutual agreement, shared values and compromise, but not on the conflict in groups or power (Kezar, 2000). However, the applicability of such frameworks and their efficiency depend on the context, including cultural context.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, researchers noticed that leadership approaches and practices vary in different regions of the world, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when global corporations entered newly opened emerging markets. Western/Anglo-Saxon leadership studies were challenged by the premise that leadership frameworks developed in the United States could not simply be replicated in other parts of the world. The question raised was whether we could talk about one universal model of leadership or whether there are many parallel approaches that can be effectively applied in various countries. Cross-cultural studies in leadership flourished, highlighting differences in leadership perceptions across various national cultures (Hofstede, 1993; Scandura and Dorfman, 2004; Welch, Javidan and House, 2002). A set of implicit leadership theories emerged, studying how (and why) leaders are perceived by followers, and what behaviours and values they should show to be authorised as leaders in various contexts.

In the twenty-first century, leadership theory continued to split into several research streams, each focusing on a certain element of the leadership process, examining leaders (traits, skills, behaviours, identity, psychological or physiological processes etc.), followers (needs, teams, groups, behaviours etc.), or context (organisational, social, national etc.). According to Dinh et al. (2014), the most prominent contemporary leadership theories may be grouped in several meta-categories: strategic leadership, team leadership, contextual/system/integrative perspective, leader emergence and leadership development, ethical/moral theories, creative leadership, identity theories, and numerous others.

The strategic leadership approach, which became the most prolific of the emerging leadership theories, addresses the theme of leadership in the upper echelons of organisations, including research on public leadership (professional politicians, chief executive officers, etc.) (Boal and Hooijberg, 2000).

Team leadership as a topic came back to the agenda of researchers and practitioners, given that much strategy formation and project delivery occurs in teams. Leadership research takes into account the social context in which the leader works, and the role of distributed leadership in teams grasped researchers' attention (Mehra et al., 2006).

Contextual, complexity, social, system and integrative perspectives on leadership attempt to capture a certain aspect of the contextual framework in which leadership phenomena unfolds (Osborn, Hunt and Jauch, 2002). For example, within these theories, leadership may be studied in a military or educational setting, or within turbulent environments.

Leader emergence and leadership development remains an underexplored topic for researchers (Day et al., 2014). This domain studies the pathways by which leaders come to possess leadership capabilities and follower recognition of their leadership status.

Ethical/moral group theories of leadership have their core focus on a leader's altruistic behaviours, moral priorities, values and authenticity, and include such

theories as authentic leadership, spiritual leadership, servant leadership and other (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Lord and Brown, 2001).

Researchers in the domain of leading for creativity, innovation and exchange investigate creative leadership processes from perspectives of innovation and organisational learning. They explore leaders' roles in organisational change through developing a vision, implementing changes, and influencing organisational culture (Jausssi and Dionne, 2003).

Other emerging leadership theories include emotions and leadership (Bono and Ilies, 2006; Dasborough and Ashkanasy, 2002), destructive/abusive/toxic leadership (Einarsen, Aasland and Skogstad, 2007), biological approaches to leadership (Lee, Senior and Butler, 2012), e-leadership (Avolio, Kahai and Dodge, 2000), leader error and recovery (Hunter, Bedell-Avers and Mumford, 2007) and entrepreneurial leadership (Cogliser and Brigham, 2004).

Finally, identity-based theories shift the focus towards self-concept and social identity, and this perspective has seen an impressive increase in interest in the new millennium (Dinh et al., 2014). This stream of research explores meanings that are associated with leadership and being as a leader by leaders, followers, and social systems.

As one can conclude from the above overview, leadership research is far from unanimity and consensus, and the selection of the most applicable theoretical framework for the research represented a challenging task for the author. Based on the proposition that the most applicable theory should (1) be relevant to the identified problem and (2) help to answer research questions, below is the justification for the selection of an appropriate theoretical lens for the research.

### **Selecting the relevant theoretical framework for the research**

Section 1.2 elaborates that the purpose of the research is to help develop more effective leadership development programmes in Russia. There are three outcomes of the leadership development process: skills, traits (personality) and self, with the latter being the least researched domain (Day et al., 2014). As discussed before and summarised in **Ошибка! Источник ссылки не найден.**,

various leadership theories concentrate on various elements of leadership, leadership development, and the leadership context (traits, skills, teams, values, emotions, behaviours etc.).

For this research, the notion of self, or the meaning that leaders have about themselves as leaders, is particularly interesting because (1) there is a growing conviction in the literature that a strong leader identity acts as a time-varying covariate of leadership effectiveness (Day and Sin, 2011), (2) leadership identity represents one of the least studied aspects of leadership (e.g. Day et al., 2014; Ibarra et al., 2014a; see also Literature Review), and (3) the identity aspect of leadership development resonates with the personal experience of the researcher.

Russia has a uniquely interesting context for leadership identity research because, arguably, there is a shift in leadership perceptions as the new generation of business leaders comes to the fore. Like many emerging leaders, they tend to benchmark themselves against “ideal leaders”, whether they represent real influential leaders or a more general image (Guillén, Mayo and Korotov, 2015), so it is interesting for the researcher to understand what kind of leadership models and prototypes they hold and how they develop their image of self as leaders.

Consequently, the research questions intend to determine (1) What does leadership mean in the Russian context, as defined by business leaders themselves; and (2) How do emerging Russian business leaders develop their leadership identity, particularly in the context of a leadership development programme?

As the research focuses on the meaning of leadership that emerging Russian leaders hold (“What does leadership mean...”), theories that put emphasis on leadership traits, skills, styles and behaviours are less relevant for this research, as well as team-, context- and communication-focused approaches. Table 1 summarises the relevance of predominant leadership theories to this research.

**Table 1. Relevance of predominant leadership theories to this research.**

| Theory/ Group of theories          | Focus of research              | Relevance to the current research                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Great Man                          | Traits                         | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Trait                              | Traits                         | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Skills                             | Skills                         | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Behavioural                        | Behaviour                      | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Situational                        | Behaviour                      | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Path-Goal                          | Behaviour                      | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Leader-Member Exchange             | Behaviour and teams            | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Transformational                   | Behaviour and followers' needs | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Authentic                          | Behaviour and self-image       | The study addresses the concept of self-image and the leadership development process                                                                                                         |
| Servant                            | Followers and their needs      | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Adaptive                           | Behaviour                      | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Psychodynamic                      | Psychological processes        | The study explores intrapersonal processes                                                                                                                                                   |
| Leadership Ethics                  | Values                         | The study explores the image of a leader that may contradict prevailing leadership perceptions in society, and therefore may provoke ethical questions (which leadership image is "better"?) |
| Team Leadership                    | Teams and groups               | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Culture & Leadership               | Perceptions and values         | The study relies on cross-cultural studies to compare contemporary perceptions of leadership with prevailing views from literature                                                           |
| Strategic                          | Behaviour                      | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Contextual                         | Context                        | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Complexity and systems             | Context                        | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Leadership emergence & development | Development process            | The study focuses on the leadership development process                                                                                                                                      |
| Leading for creativity and change  | Behaviour and skills           | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Emotions and leadership            | Emotions                       | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Destructive leadership             | Behaviour                      | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Biological approaches              | Physiological processes        | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| E-leadership                       | Behaviour in context           | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Leader error and recovery          | Behaviour                      | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Entrepreneurial                    | Behaviour in context           | Little relevance                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Identity-based theories            | Self-concept and meaning       | The study explores the meanings that emerging Russian leaders have about leadership and about themselves in the process of leadership development                                            |

Following many authors, the researcher believes that a person's development on an educational programme involves not only leadership skill development, but also a transformation of their image of self (Korotov, 2006; Kwok, Shen and Brown, 2021; Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017). In this sense, educational programmes are considered transitional spaces ("identity workspaces" or "identity laboratories") where so-called liminal experiences happen, characterised by feeling between identities (Haynes et al., 2014; Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016) and providing opportunities for identity experimentation, or imagining and testing new alternatives to their current situations and current identities (Korotov, 2006).

Therefore, the researcher applied an identity lens to explore what kind of meaning emerging Russian business leaders associate with leadership and how they experiment with their identities within a leadership development programme. Hence, the key objects for analysis are the meaning that emerging Russian leaders hold about leadership and themselves, and the process of development through which their leadership identity passes during their educational journey.

The study also referred to cross-cultural studies to explore the specifics of leadership perceptions in Russia and compare them with the self-image of emerging Russian leaders.

### **1.3.2 Leadership identity**

There is a compelling argument that leadership identity plays a critical role in a leader's emergence, continuous development, personal growth, self-efficacy and motivation to lead (Kets de Vries and Korotov, 2007; Lord and Brown, 2001), and that skills-based approaches alone cannot capture the complex nature of leader development (Miscenko, Guenter and Day, 2017). Many scholars argue that the development of a leader identity is one of the most important predictors of effective leadership and career development (Day and Harrison, 2007; Hall, 2004).

Identity (self) is defined as the set of meanings associated with a person by the self and others (Gecas, 1982) and typically includes a person's beliefs about their personality traits, abilities, physical features, behavioural characteristics,

ideologies, social roles, language affiliation(s), and group memberships (Simon, 2004). At the same time, some authors warn that identity may be an analytic fiction and a conceptual tool, rather than a “thing” or hard-wired mental structure (Simon, 2004). However, even if identity is a fiction, it may be “a highly useful analytic fiction in the search for a better understanding of human experiences and behaviours,” (Simon, 2004, p.3) so it is more promising to look at the psychological processes of self-definition and self-interpretation rather than at the essence of identity itself.

Given the multi-dimensionality of individual identity, a leader's identity is the sub-component of one's identity that relates to being a leader or how one thinks of oneself as a leader, which grounds leaders' understanding of who they are, their primary goals and objectives, and their personal strengths and limitations (Day and Harrison, 2007). Leadership competencies are developed through experiences that help develop and crystallise a leader identity (Day et al., 2012); and the leadership process can be defined as identity construction emerging from human interaction (Karp and Helgø, 2009). On the contrary, the inability to change one's identity from an individual contributor to a leader can be a barrier to a leader's success (Maurer and London, 2018). Thus, it is worth discussing leadership identity development rather than focusing only on skills, characteristics, and traits.

Based on the notion that leadership is the product of influence and relations within a group, various researchers argue that we need to better understand the coupling between identity and leadership and how this affects people's development and behaviours as leaders (Avolio, 2004; Day and Harrison, 2007; Ibarra, Snook and Guillen Ramo, 2008; Karp and Helgø, 2009; van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Lord and Hall, 2005). Based on the proposition that leadership identity is critical for leader development, leadership identity becomes a key unit of analysis in this research. The research aims to understand how emerging Russian business leaders view themselves as leaders and what kind of self-image they possess, as well as what their desired leadership self is. Therefore, Section 1.3.3 explores approaches to identity development and elaborates on

selecting the proper theoretical lens for analysis of leadership identity work within an educational programme.

### **1.3.3 Identity work**

Identity work is the activities that that people engage in to form, strengthen, maintain, repair, or revise the identities that define the self (Brown, 2015; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Normally, this process is triggered by role transitions (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010), tensions between different identities (Koerner, 2014; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), and challenging work environments (Reissner, 2010); as a result, individuals seek to maintain individuality, self-verification, and coherence (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018; ref. to Section 2.5.2 for more detail). Within identity work, an individual employs possible and provisional selves as the images one has about who one might become (the former) and trials for a possible but not fully elaborated new identity (the latter) (Ibarra, 1999).

Identity work happens in a setting which is called an identity workspace (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018) or an identity laboratory (Korotov, 2006), where an individual is involved in identity claims — an individual's verbal or non-verbal acts in social interaction with one or more other individual(s), aimed at being recognised as a leader (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). Based on feedback, an individual corrects their behaviour and self-image, and passes through three levels of leadership identity development: individual internalisation, relational recognition, and collective endorsement (DeRue and Ashford, 2010).

There are several theories of identity that reflect the various approaches to the process of identity work. Based on recent comprehensive reviews (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018; Corlett et al., 2017; Ibarra et al., 2014a), the approaches discussed most widely in the literature are identity theory (Stryker, 1987), social identity theory (Tajfel et al., 1979), narrative theory (Bruner, 1991), and critical theory (Foucault, 1980). Social identity theory and critical identity theory focus on collective identities, while the rest refer to individual ones.

Social identity theory, first introduced by Taifel and Turner (1979), and later developed by Hogg (2001) puts an emphasis on social identity, which is defined as the part of the self-concept that corresponds to knowledge of group membership together with the value and emotional significance of that membership (Spears, 2011). This theory suggests two ways in which identity work occurs. First, people engage in identity work as they change the degree to which they associate themselves with a collective (e.g. when their self-image as leaders or their view of how a leader should look and behave does not fit the shared collective understanding of leadership); second, individuals engage in identity work by changing the meaning that they associate with a group (e.g. when individuals working a so-called dirty job overcome the taint associated with the work that they perform) (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018). Thus, from a social identity perspective, identity work occurs through changing one's association with a collective or changing the meanings one associates with that collective. Within this process, the basic motives for identity work are self-enhancement, distinctiveness, and belongingness.

Critical theory, first proposed by Foucault (1980), assumes that people are engaged in identity work to maintain individuality as a response to controlling and discursive attempts from dominant institutions to shape identities. Critical identity scholars study identity work predominantly within organisational (or any other institutional) framework with a focus on the “power effects” of organisational practices and discourses and subjective experience of workplace identity dynamics (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014). According to critical identity theorists, emancipation is a primary motive for navigating the self, and the focus of research lies not within individual or collective differences in personality and style, but rather in power relations and diversity dynamics in organisations (Roberts and Creary, 2013).

While social identity theory is focused on the commonalities between people in different groups rather than what differentiates individuals from each other (Hogg, 2001), identity theory - introduced by Stryker (1982) - proposes that the key motivation for engaging in identity work is self-verification. According to this

theory, identity is strongly rooted in roles which are interpersonally negotiated, and the way an individual sees themselves depends upon the roles they hold and the expectations associated with these roles (Stryker, 1987). Self-verification is sought when a person enters a new role and faces new expectations from other people and their self. In this case, individuals engage in identity work by “taking steps to define themselves by a new role or to change a role partner’s perceptions of who they are and what should be expected of them in a role relationship” (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018, p.897). Identity work, in this case, is driven by a motivation to change the self to align with role expectations. Within the process of identity work, an individual may claim new roles, as well as be granted with roles by others (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). Therefore, identity theory explores both individual and relational levels of identity.

Narrative theory, which emerged in the 1990s (Bruner, 1991) and was later developed by many scholars (i.e. Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010), postulates that people engage in identity work to maintain coherence and plausibility through creating and updating stories that draw on personal histories and available discourses, particularly as a response to ambiguous or unexpected events.

### **Selecting the relevant theoretical framework for this research**

The selection of the most appropriate theoretical lens for this study was dictated by the aims and scope of the study. As discussed in the previous sections, the author intends to create a contribution to theory and practice by answering two research questions: (1) What does leadership mean in the Russian context, as defined by business leaders themselves; and (2) How do emerging Russian business leaders develop their leadership identity, particularly in the context of a leadership development programme?

Answering two research questions that address the “what” and “how” elements of the leadership development process is likely to require using two different theoretical frameworks in the study. This study will employ social identity theory and identity theory to explore the phenomenon of the leadership identity of emerging Russian business leaders in a leadership development programme. As these two theories have close areas of research and compatible underlying

assumptions, combining them may provide richer insights regarding the research aim (Okhuysen and Bonardi, 2011).

As the study aims to examine the leadership development process, it is worth considering one or more levels of it, as identity work can be described as strengthening three identity elements: self-internalisation (an individual's view of themselves as a leader), relational recognition (reinforcement in dyadic relations) and collective endorsement (recognition by a group or an organisation based on a shared perception) (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). The two different research questions address different levels of leadership identity development (social and individual) that are critical for identity work, which is often described as negotiations among different levels of identity (DeRue, Ashford and Cotton, 2009).

First, the study will explore the 'inner theatre' of programme participants and how they handle role transitions and identity tensions at the individual level (e.g. tensions between their current identity and expectations from their role). The process of self-verification, which happens within a leadership development programme, and the journey of crafting a new identity to comply with a new leadership role is better described by identity theory. Identity theory is widely used in empirical studies that explore the process of self-verification and identity work in professional and educational settings (e.g. Adams and Crafford, 2012; Brown and Coupland, 2015; Hay, 2014; Haynes et al., 2014).

Instead of focusing on role identities (identity theory), social identity theory explores collective identities and people's behaviour of attachment or detachment to those collective meanings. In this process, intergroup prototypes and comparisons are a key element of identity work, and identity work occurs through changing one's association with a group or changing the meanings one associates with that group. (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018).

Thus, this study aims to understand the collective meaning of leadership among emerging Russian business leaders (social/collective level) in order to understand what kind of 'ideal' leadership image they hold when they construct a possible identity on their journey. As this part of the research will explore the

collective meaning of leadership in Russia and the prototypes that emerging Russian leaders hold, it will refer to social identity theory, which appeals to leadership perceptions in a certain social group. Later, these perceptions will be compared with individual identities.

In this regard, the author is focused less on the stories that people tell themselves in response to events that happened to them along their leadership journey, and more on the changing self as a response to external identity threats.

Critical identity theory predominantly explores the link between individual identity and institutional discourse, and is largely concerned with the issues of power that constrain individuals' abilities to freely construct and negotiate identities in work organisations (Roberts and Creary, 2013). This study is less concerned with organisations and organisational discourse, and is more focused on exploring how a social group conceptualises leadership and differentiates itself from others, so social identity theory appears a more relevant theoretical framework through which to study collective identities than critical identity theory.

The study starts by exploring the collective social identity of emerging Russian leaders, also covering their understanding of what leadership means to the broader population in Russia. It then goes down to the individual identity level and explores the gap between personal understanding of effective leadership and collective perceptions. After this, the study unpacks the process of identity work in line with the identity theory, referring to findings from the previous phase. Within this process, the research comes back to social identity once more in describing identity tensions and collective endorsement.

Therefore, identity and identity work in the research will be analysed predominantly through the lenses of social identity theory (at the collective level) and identity theory (at the individual level). Social identity theory will help to answer research question #1 (collective perceptions of leadership in Russia as described by emerging Russian business leaders); identity theory will help understand an individual journey of a participant of a leadership development programme (research question #2).

The process of selecting an appropriate theoretical framework for the study is described in Figure 1.

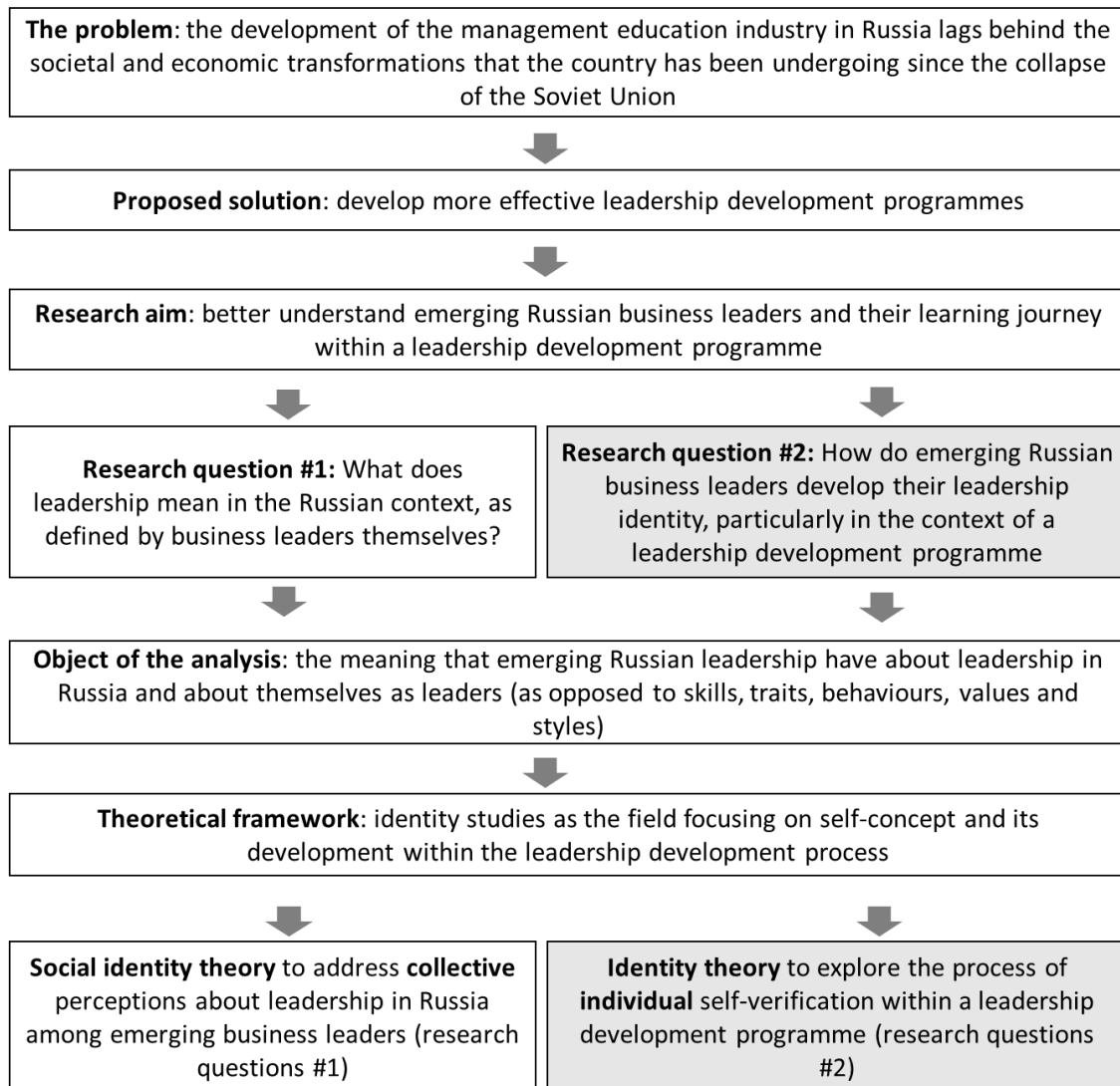


**Figure 1. The process of selecting an appropriate theoretical framework for the study**

On the one hand, the two research questions answer the literature’s call to undertake a multi-lens exploration of the leadership development process (Dinh et al., 2014; Pearce, 2007). The application of various theoretical frameworks within one study is required to make management studies more relevant to the world, sustain a healthy critique of it, prevent management theory from creating isolated “silos of knowledge” and, ultimately, create theories that are richer and more useful.

On the other hand, merging two or more theoretical approaches within one study presents certain challenges for the researcher. The biggest challenge is to establish a credible purpose for the combination of two theories, and the novelty of such a combination alone is not a convincing argument for it. The literature advises combining theoretical lenses when different empirical questions are addressed by the research (Okhuysen and Bonardi, 2011), which is the case in this study.

#### **1.3.4 Russian leadership identity**

Since the Second World War, globalisation has become one of the leading trends in the global economy, increasing interdependence between nations and the necessity of understanding how cultural differences affect leadership performance (Northouse, 2019). Culture has been studied by a variety of disciplines and has a number of definitions. For this research, it is essential to look at the cultural dimensions that are created to understand relations and differences between various cultures, specifically in the leadership domain. Many researchers argue that different types of leaders are more common or more effective in different countries, and that leadership cannot be understood separately from the historical context in which leaders arise and dominant societal values (Dorfman et al., 2012; Northouse, 2019; Ralston et al., 1997; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1993; Zander, 1997).

Based primarily on Hofstede's work (Hofstede, 1980) and cultural-values measures, several studies have explored leadership and managerial cultures worldwide, including in Russia. Russian leadership culture is often described as autonomous and self-protective (Welch, Javidan and House, 2002), collectivist and having high power distance (Bollinger, 1994; Hofstede, 1980; Naumov and Puffer, 2000; Ralston and Holt, 1996; Ronen and Shenkar, 1985), authoritarian (Ardichvili, Cardozo and Gasparishvili, 1998; Elenkov, 1998; Saidov, 2014), autocratic (Puffer and McCarthy, 2011; Suutari, 1998) and authoritative (Kets de Vries, 2001; Kets de Vries and Florent-Treacy, 1999), centralised (Puffer, 1994), paternalistic and focused on relations (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1993), hierarchical and top-down (Meyer, 2017), and closer to the transactional,

rather than transformational, leadership model (McCarthy et al., 2008; Puffer and McCarthy, 2011).

The GLOBE Project, probably the most representative and certainly one of the most widely cited cross-cultural research projects on leadership, indicates specific differences between Russian leadership scores and the “average” globe score for 62 countries (House et al., 2013). According to this data, Russian leadership culture has roughly similar scores in the Charismatic, Team Orientation and Self-Protection dimensions, a lower score in Participation, Humane Orientation, and a higher score in Autonomy. The study will explore how some of these disparities are questioned if we look at them through the eyes of emerging Russian leaders, specifically Humane Orientation, Participation and Autonomy.

A big challenge in evaluating the majority of cross-cultural leadership research is that it belongs to an implicit group of leadership theories, which assume that leadership is the process of being perceived by others as a leader (Dorfman, Hanges and Brodbeck, 2004; Gioia, Lord and Maher, 1993; Northouse, 2019). Few management and organisational behaviour studies have explored how leadership actually functions in different countries and what leaders actually do in Russia (Elenkov, 2002), and how they express themselves as leaders. Those that do identify a significant gap between perceived leadership values and actual leadership behaviours (Grachev, 2009), which raises questions about the implicit approach: it is not only about how leaders are perceived, but what they do. Thus, the conceptualisation of leadership through implicit theory alone is somewhat limited, as it focuses only on how leaders are perceived and ignores what they do, think and possess.

There is a claim in the literature that the new generation of Russian business leaders is looking for a different style of leadership: more relational and democratic, and that the overemphasis on “strong” leadership in Russia should be reconsidered as new leaders come to the fore (Gill and Negrov, 2021).

At the same time, research has neglected to look at Russian leadership identity, or how Russian leaders view themselves, and there is a call in the literature to do

this by looking at Russian leaders' "inner theatre" (Kets de Vries, Korotov and Shekshnya, 2008). Therefore, one of this study's research questions aims to explore Russian leadership identity as it is held by emerging Russian business leaders. By Russian leadership identity, this research means the set of meanings that emerging Russian business leaders have about themselves as leaders, including self-assessment of their leadership capabilities, efficacy, values and behaviours.

## **1.4 Overview of the research design and contribution**

This research studied Russian leadership identity and the process of leadership identity work in a specific setting — an 18-month Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme at a leading Russian management institution. The qualitative interpretive abductive study was designed using relativist ontology and social constructionist epistemology. 30 emerging Russian business leaders aged between 26 and 37 were interviewed, more than one thousand pages of interview transcripts were analysed, and specific contributions to theory and practice were proposed.

By answering its research questions, the study aims to contribute to social identity theory, implicit leadership theory, and identity theory. Social identity theory was enriched by the finding that emerging Russian business leaders face a conflict between self-to-prototype and self-to-leader comparison. Implicit leadership theory is challenged by the proposition that implicit Russian leadership characteristics are changing. Its major contribution to identity theory relates to discovering the link between leadership identity and leader efficacy, as well as proposing a process model of leadership identity work on a leadership development programme. These contributions are discussed in more detail in Section 6.2.

Engagement with practitioners helped identify potential areas for the practical implications of the research results. They include the personal and professional development of the researcher, contributions to design and delivery of new leadership development programmes, and application in organisations and executive coaching practice.

## **1.5 Outline of thesis**

This chapter has argued for the need to explore the process of the leadership identity work of emerging Russian business leaders in a leadership development programme. Key constructs were defined - leadership identity, Russian leadership identity, and identity work - some aspects of the theoretical underpinning were discussed, and the expected contributions were outlined.

Chapter 2 summarises the main findings from a systematic literature review of the key themes that inform this thesis, i.e. the self-concept/identity, leadership identity, and identity work. A detailed explanation of the review methodology is given, followed by descriptive and thematic analysis. Based on the literature review, two research questions are identified related to Russian leadership identity and leadership identity work in leadership development programmes.

Chapter 3 explains the research methodology, including its philosophical positioning, selecting the research method, sampling strategy, data collection, and data analysis process. The methodology of the empirical study is explained: it consists of 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews with emerging Russian business leaders.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from the empirical study. The findings revealed that emerging Russian business leaders have a conflict between their self-image as leaders and the prevailing leadership prototype. A strong connection between self-confidence and leadership identity is discovered. Four stages of identity work within a leadership development programme are identified: preparation, orientation, experimentation, and confirmation.

Chapter 5 analyses the research findings in line with previous work. The process model of leadership identity work in the leadership development programme is proposed.

Chapter 6 describes engagement with practitioners and suggests proposals to assess the impact of the research for practice.

Chapter 7 summarises the conclusions of the research, argues for its theoretical contributions, the implications for practice and limitations, and provides suggestions for future research.

## **1.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter has provided a rationale for the research topic, leading to a research question and outlined the author's personal motivation for studying the topic of leadership identity work. It defined the three main constructs of the thesis: leadership identity, Russian leadership identity and identity work. It also briefly discussed four theories in the field of identity work, justified selection of two as a theoretical lens, proposed the contribution and outlined the structure of the thesis.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Chapter introduction**

In accordance with the theoretical positioning, the literature for review was selected at the intersection of leadership studies and identity studies, with a particular focus on the topic of leadership identity.

Section 2.2. introduces the fields of literature that were reviewed, together with the review questions. In Section 2.3. the detailed methodology of the review is described, including the search strategy, selection criteria, quality appraisal and data extraction principles. A descriptive analysis of the literature is given in Section 2.4, followed by a detailed thematic discussion in Section 2.5. The chapter concludes with the implications of the literature review for the research.

### **2.2 Positioning the research, literature domains and review questions**

Before conducting this systematic review, a Positioning Study was performed and agreed with the Review Panel. The research was initially positioned within leadership theory, identity theory and cross-cultural management studies.

#### **Leadership theory**

First, the study critically reviewed leadership theory. From the literature, it was discovered that in leadership research over the past century, dozens of different classification systems have been developed to conceptualise the phenomenon of leadership. One of the most recent classifications outlines 40 established theories and 26 emerging ones, and a wide variety of methodological approaches (Dinh et al., 2014). Unsurprisingly, the discipline lacks a single definition of what leadership is (Bass, 1990; Bennis, 2007; Northouse, 2019; Yukl, 2010). Northouse (2019) claims that most leadership theories take either a process, personality, skill, behaviour, or power relationship, or a transformational perspective.

Historically, leadership research started from the trait theory, which linked personality and leadership, and provided an empirical foundation for the

argument that traits do matter in predicting leadership effectiveness (Judge et al., 2002; Zaccaro, 2007). As personality alone is a relatively poor indicator of leadership (Bass, 1990), scholars started to look at leaders' behaviour and interactions between people, which ultimately led to a broad array of theories (see Table 2). The most dominant model used in leadership research and leadership development today is the transactional-transformational model, which is claimed to be universal and effective across the world, including in Russia (Bass, 1990; Elenkov, 2002; Den Hartog et al., 1999; House et al., 2002; Michailova, 2000; Molodchik and Jardon, 2015).

**Table 2. Major leadership theories (adapted from Northouse, 2019)**

| Theory                 | Time of emergence | Major contributors                                        | Major ideas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Trait                  | 1940s             | Zaccaro, Mann, Kirkpatrick, Locke, Stogdill               | Leaders are different from other people, they have special traits. Having a leader with a certain set of traits is crucial to having effective leadership. Five-factor model: extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, low neuroticism, agreeableness, and emotional intelligence.                                       |
| Skills                 | 1950s             | Katz, Bass, Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, Fleishman  | Effective leadership depends on three basic personal skills: technical, human, and conceptual. The importance of each skill varies between management levels. Five components of effective leader performance: competencies, individual attributes, leadership outcomes, career experiences, and environmental influences. |
| Behavioural            | 1940s             | Stogdill, Blake, Mouton                                   | Leaders engage in two primary types of behaviours: task behaviours and relationship behaviours. Five major leadership styles: authority–compliance, country-club management, impoverished management, middle-of-the-road management, and team management.                                                                  |
| Situational            | 1960s             | Hersey, Fiedler, Blanchard, Reddin, Zigarmi & Nelson      | Provides a model that suggests to leaders how they should behave based on the demands of a particular situation. Effective leadership occurs when the leader can accurately diagnose the development level of followers in a goal situation and then exhibit the prescribed leadership style that matches that situation.  |
| Path-Goal              | 1970s             | Evans, House, Dessler, Mitchell                           | Effectiveness depends on the fit between the leader's behaviour and the characteristics of followers and the task. It is the leader's responsibility to help followers reach their goals by directing, guiding and coaching them.                                                                                          |
| Leader-Member Exchange | 1970s             | Dansereau, Graen, Haga, Uhl-Bien, Liden, Wayne & Stilwell | It is important to recognise the existence of in-groups and out-groups within a group or an organisation. In-group members receive extra influence, opportunities, and rewards, out-group members receive standard job benefits. Leaders should try to develop high-quality exchanges with all of their followers.         |
| Transformational       | 1980s             | Bryman, Lowe, Gardner,                                    | Leaders need to understand and adapt to the needs and motives of followers. Leaders are recognised as                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

| Theory               | Time of emergence | Major contributors                                           | Major ideas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                      |                   | Antonakis, Bass, Riggio                                      | change agents who are good role models, who can create and articulate a clear vision for an organisation and empower followers to meet higher standards.                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Authentic            | 1990s             | Chan, Shamir, Eilam, Eagly, Avolio, Walumbwa                 | Complex process that emphasises the development of qualities that help leaders to be perceived as trustworthy and believable by their followers. It can be conceptualised intra-personally, developmentally, and interpersonally. Authentic leadership is influenced by a leader's positive psychological capacities, moral reasoning, and critical life events. |
| Servant              | 1970s             | Greenleaf, van Dierendonck, Hale & Fields, Spears            | Rather than using their power to dominate others, leaders should make every attempt to share their power and enable others to grow and become autonomous. Three-factor model: antecedent conditions, servant leader behaviours, and leadership outcomes.                                                                                                         |
| Adaptive             | 1990s             | Heifetz, Sinder, Laurie, Grashow & Linsky                    | Focuses on the adaptations required of people in response to changing environments and how leaders can support them during these changes. The six leader behaviours: get on the balcony, identify adaptive challenges, regulate distress, maintain disciplined attention, give the work back to people, and protect leadership voices from below.                |
| Psychodynamic        | 1980s             | Kets de Vries, Miller, Volkan                                | Psychological, social and emotional processes between leaders and followers have a great influence and need to be taken into consideration. Leaders need to recognise that people differ in their motivational patterns. Leaders should be able to use motivational patterns to influence others.                                                                |
| Leadership Ethics    | 1990s             | Kellogg, Ciulla, Johnson, Kanungo, Trevino, Brown & Hartman  | Two kinds of ethical theories: theories about conduct and theories about character. Ethical leadership is rooted in respect, service, justice, honesty, and community.                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Team Leadership      | 1990s             | Wageman, Gardner, Mortensen, Ilgen, Major, Hollenbeck & Sego | The critical function of leadership is to help the team accomplish its goals by monitoring and diagnosing the team and taking the requisite action.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Culture & Leadership | 1980s             | Adler, Bartholomew, Ting-Toomey, House & Javidan, Hofstede   | Culture is the commonly shared beliefs, values, and norms of a group of people. Six global leadership behaviours: charismatic/value-based, team-oriented, participative, human-oriented, autonomous, and self-protective.                                                                                                                                        |

Some scholars are beginning to argue that the focus of leadership research and leadership development should be greatly expanded beyond the widely used transactional-transformational framework to include a much broader set of behaviours and competencies (Pearce, 2007), or even leaders' biographies as a predictor variable (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009). For example, authentic leadership theory responds to this challenge by focusing specifically on the leader and their knowledge, self-regulation, and self-concept, which develop over a lifetime and are triggered by major life events (Gardner, William L. et al., 2005;

Gardner et al., 2011; George and Sims, 2007). The psychodynamic approach to leadership, in turn, shifts attention to the social and emotional processes between leaders and followers (Kets de Vries, 2013). Both these approaches pay special attention to the identity and self of the leader as a critical component of the leader's emergence.

In a comprehensive review of leadership theories, Dinh (2014) outlined several groups of emerging theories that are attracting more and more attention from researchers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Table 3).

**Table 3. Main emerging leadership theories in the 21st century (adapted from Dinh, 2014)**

| Theory                             | Representative authors                                                   | Focus of analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic                          | Boal, Hooijberg, Vera, Crossan                                           | Leadership phenomena at the highest levels of organisations and how executive leaders influence organisational performance.                                                                                                                                                    |
| Contextual                         | Osborn, Porter, McLaughlin                                               | Leadership in specific arenas, such as in military or educational settings, and how leadership practices often are constrained by contextual variables (i.e., period of time in organisational processes), or environmental characteristics (i.e., whether conflict pervades). |
| Complexity and systems             | Avolio, Balkundi, Kilduff, Marion, Uhl-Bien, Schneider, Somers, McKelvey | How complexity theory is useful in describing how leaders can be successful in turbulent environments.                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Team                               | Mehra, Smith, Dixon, Robertson, Zaccaro, Rittman, Marks                  | Teams and groups at the mid- and lower-level echelons of an organisation.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Leadership emergence & development | Day, Wolff                                                               | Pathways or processes by which leaders come to possess leadership capacity, follower recognition of leadership status, and a systems perspective of leadership development.                                                                                                    |
| Ethical/moral                      | Avolio, Gardner, Brown, Fry, Liden                                       | Leader moral priorities, including how an ethical orientation toward leadership is developed; how an ethical approach to leadership is important; and the consequences of ethical leadership and how it can be sustained.                                                      |
| Leading for creativity and change  | Denis, Lamothe, Langley, Jaussi, Dionne, Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, Strange | Creative leadership processes from a variety of perspectives, covering topics like innovation and organisational learning.                                                                                                                                                     |
| Emotions and leadership            | Bono, Ilies, Dasborough, Ashkanasy, Humphrey                             | Leaders' and followers' affect, and a variety of influences that emotions, positive and negative, have at all levels of leadership both on the leader and follower.                                                                                                            |
| Destructive leadership             | Einarsen, Aasland, Skogstad, Padilla, Hogan, Kaiser                      | Cases where leaders misbehaved, acted in ways contrary to the wellbeing of followers and/or the organisation, and the setting where they were leaders, including abusive leadership, toxic leadership, and followers' susceptibility and destructive followership as well.     |

| Theory                    | Representative authors                                 | Focus of analysis                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Biological approaches     | Boyatzis, Lee, Waldman, Balthazard, Peterson           | The genetic and environmental impacts on leadership emergence, development and effectiveness.                                              |
| E-leadership              | Avolio, Golden, Veiga, Dino                            | The leadership effects of task, technology and distance in a virtual space.                                                                |
| Leader error and recovery | Hunter, Tate, Dziewieczynski, Bedell-Avers             | The nature (e.g., action or inaction) and antecedents of leader errors.                                                                    |
| Entrepreneurial           | Cogliser, Brigham, Ruvio, Rosenblatt, Hertz-Lazarowitz | The convergence and intersection between leadership and entrepreneurship literature and how both streams of research can inform the other. |
| Identity-based theories   | Hogg, Van Knippenberg, Ibarra, Petriglieri             | Self-concept and social identity approaches to leadership.                                                                                 |

As can be seen from the review of the main established and emerging leadership theories, the selection of an appropriate lens for the research depends on the scope and focus of its analysis. On the individual level, this may be leadership skills, traits, values, behaviours, emotions, self-concept or even biological processes. On the relational level, it may be followers' needs and behaviours. On the contextual level, a wide set of variables including culture, institutions, organisations is available.

As discussed in Section 1.3.2, the focus of this study lies within the meaning that emerging Russian leaders hold about leadership and their leadership development journey. Therefore, the identity approach was selected as the core for further analysis.

### **Identity theory**

The second focus of the positioning study was on the identity literature. The initial literature review uncovered the fact that theories that link identity and leadership are relatively new: while the foundations for them were laid in the 1980s ((Stryker, 1987; Tajfel et al., 1979; Turner et al., 1987), they were not introduced to leadership research until the 2000s, so can be positioned within a group of emerging theories that require additional clarification (Dinh et al., 2014). A growing body of research suggests that we need to better understand the coupling between identity and leadership, and how this affects people's development and behaviours as leaders. (Avolio, 2004; Day, Harrison and

Halpin, 2008; Day and Harrison, 2007; Ibarra, Snook and Guillen Ramo, 2008; Karp and Helgø, 2009; van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Lord and Hall, 2005; Ramos, 2009).

Out of numerous theories and approaches to describe a person's identity, three distinct theoretical streams emerged with regard to understanding leadership identity phenomena: identity theory, which focuses on the roles that individuals adopt in their personal and professional lives; social identity theory, which focuses on social categories and processes of categorisation; and theories about how the self is constructed in social interaction that have focused on identity work (refer to Table 4 for more details).

**Table 4. Leadership implications of identity theories (adapted from Ibarra et al., 2014)**

| Theories                      | Major contributors                                                         | Major ideas                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Identity theory</b>        | Gecas, Ibarra, Day, Harrison, Halpin, Lord, Hall, Petriglieri, Karp, Helgo | Leadership as a social role: individuals take on the role or have it ascribed to them. Thus, the leader would be one possible role that, once internalised, would form a part of an identity. Development may occur through experimentation, personalisation and internalisation of the leader role, and through practice.                              |
| <b>Social identity theory</b> | Hogg, Terry, Haslam, Reicher, Platow, van Knippenberg.                     | Leadership as a social categorisation. The leader is the one who is seen as a leader: prototypical group members gain influence by embodying the characteristics that define the group's essence. Members may adapt behaviour to group prototypes to gain power; leaders may guide the group's identity to maintain prototypicality and preserve power. |
| <b>Social construction</b>    | DeRue, Ashford, Day, Harrison, Svenigsson, Alvesson, Ibarra.               | Individuals claim or are granted a leadership role in a given social interaction.<br>Leadership as a process of identity work, the central task of which is crafting, experimenting with, and revisiting identity narratives, or stories about the self.                                                                                                |

In any of the aforementioned theories, leadership identity construction involves both an introspective and a social process, and a leader's identity development

is not about focusing on his or her human capital, but on the interaction of leaders with followers. Lord and Hall (2005) postulate that, as a leader develops, there is a shift in focus from the individual to collective level identities, both for the leader's self-identity and the identities of followers. The more highly-developed a leader, the greater the number of leadership levels from which that leader can construct possible responses (Day and Harrison, 2007).

Individual-level identities emphasise one's uniqueness and differentiation of the self from others and can be built around traits or unique experiences (Lord and Brown, 2003; Lord and Hall, 2005). There is a belief that an individual leader identity can be pivotal to accelerating the leader development process (Day and Harrison, 2007). Relational identities define the self regarding specific roles or relations (Lord and Hall, 2005) and are based on relationships between the individual and important others (Day and Harrison, 2007). Collective identities define the self regarding specific collectives such as groups or organisations (Lord and Hall, 2005).

The Positioning Study also identified a lack of understanding of the role of identity mechanisms in leader and leadership development. It is still not clear how leadership identity changes within role changes and career transitions (Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra, Snook and Guillen Ramo, 2008; van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Popkova, 2012; Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006). The cultural context of identity development is to be explored, as it might impact narrative attributes and narrative processes (Barbulescu and Ibarra, 2008). Ibarra et al. (2014) claim that, as the identity development process is vastly defined by context, so "examination of the cross-cultural process of leader identity development, grounded in context-specific role interpretation and experimentation, may add explanatory depth to the process of becoming a leader in the transnational context." Finally, if identity emerges within social interaction, this process is largely shaped by language (Frimann and Hersted, 2016). Therefore, significant cross-cultural differences may exist between the factors that shape a leader's identity, which reinforced the rationale for the current research.

### **Russian leadership culture**

Third, the Positioning Study also looked at the cultural specifics of leadership and leadership identity. The vast body of papers dedicated to culture in leadership and specifically to Russian leadership culture was reviewed. It is widely accepted that leadership culture varies greatly across the world: different types of leaders are more common or more effective in different countries, and leadership cannot be understood separately from the historical context in which leaders arise and dominant societal values (Bass, 1990; Dorfman et al., 2012; Gardner, 1990; Kets de Vries, 2001; Northouse, 2019; Ralston et al., 1997; Schwartz, 2012; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1993; Zander, 1997).

Specific characteristics of Russian leadership culture were identified (mentioned in Section 1.3.4). Also, certain limitations of cross-cultural research in leadership were identified.

First, there is an obvious Western, or North American, bias in leadership literature, and non-Western ideas and research strategies are generally not incorporated into the research design (Dickson et al., 2012; Hofstede, 1993; Kobouloff-Dacremont, 2001; Scandura and Dorfman, 2004). Some even claim that Russians have a more polychronic view of time than Westerners (Hall and Hall, 1990), thus studying leadership in Russia should imply Russian leadership models, if these exist.

Second, the majority of such research belongs to an implicit group of leadership theories, which assumes that leadership is the process of being perceived by others as being a leader (Dorfman, Hanges and Brodbeck, 2004; Northouse, 2019). Relatively few management and organisational behaviour studies have explored how leadership actually functions in different countries and what leaders actually do in Russia (Elenkov, 2002), and how they express themselves as leaders. Those that do identify a significant gap between leadership values and leadership behaviours (Grachev, 2009);

Third, cross-cultural research tends to group countries in geographical clusters, which does not take into account differences between countries within one cluster (Ardichvili and Gasparishvili, 2001). For example, within the 'East and Central

European' cluster, there is a significant difference between leadership values and behaviours in Russia, the Baltic States, and the Caucasus countries.

Fourth, the majority of data on Russian leaders is grossly outdated (Van Genderen, 2011) or unreliable. For example, Hofstede collected data in the 1970s-1980s "based on imperfect replications or personal impressions" (Hofstede, 1993), and the GLOBE Project dealt with data collected in the 1990s, not taking into account the new cohort of Russian leaders (Grachev, 2009). Given the fact that in times of accelerated social and cultural change, basic attitudes need to change more quickly (Mannheim, 1952), many researchers noted that leadership values and styles in Russia were changing as members of the new generation joined the workforce (Ardichvili, 2001; Fey, Adaeva and Vitkovskaia, 2001; Kets de Vries et al., 2004; Koveshnikov et al., 2012; McCarthy et al., 2005, 2008; McCarthy, Puffer and Darda, 2010; Nguyen et al., 2015; Suutari, 1998; Veiga, Yanouzas and Buchholtz, 1995). For example, Elenkov (2002) claimed that Russian managers who displayed more contingent-reward leadership were more efficient in achieving organisational goals, Molodchik and Jardon (2015) highlighted that transformational leadership had a positive impact on organisational culture in Russia, Kets de Vries (1999) noticed that an authoritarian style was no longer preferred by followers, and McCarthy (2005, 2010) elaborated on the convergence of Russian and US managers and entrepreneurs, with the former demonstrating a more open leadership style. Many researchers argue that age is a very important factor which makes the Russian workforce heterogeneous (Elenkov, 1997; Kets de Vries, 2001; Korotov, 2008; Nguyen et al., 2015; Suutari, 1998; Veiga, Yanouzas and Buchholtz, 1995). Although it was noted that heterogeneity and the evolution of managerial styles in Russia remained relatively unexplored (Balabanova et al., 2015), the Positioning Study made the proposition that established models could be wrong in explaining Russian leadership values and behaviours, and therefore were not applicable in describing Russian leadership identity.

Finally, more research is needed to explore the 'inner theatre' of Russian leaders — the evolution of the Russian character and leadership style (Kets de Vries,

2001). Because individuals at the top of Russian organisations often play a larger-than-life role, understanding what makes them tick will be important for their business partners and subordinates (Kets de Vries et al., 2004).

The initial review of the literature within the Positioning Study allows the claim that cultural theories of leadership, despite providing a systemic overview of the perceived values, styles and behaviours of Russian leaders as they were in the 1990s-2000s, might not be relevant to emerging Russian leaders. This is because the next generation of Russian leaders, according to Mannheim (1952) and Pilcher (1994) could develop its consciousness, shaped by events and conditions that occurred in the USSR and then Russia in the 1980s-2010s, times of rapid social change. Therefore, a literature review should look not at how leaders are perceived in Russia but at leaders' self-definition and identity to understand how they emerge as leaders, and how they translate their leader identity into action.

### **Review questions**

As a result, the systematic literature review was designed to explore two literature domains: (1) leadership identity as a subset of leadership theory and broader identity theory and (2) self-images in identity studies. Therefore, the following review questions were identified:

- How do leaders build and develop their leadership identity? (What is the conceptual process of identity work?)
- What is the role of self-images/identity narratives in leadership identity construction and transformation?

## **2.3 Methodology of the literature review**

In conducting the systematic literature review, the approach suggested by Tranfield et al. (2003) and Petticrew and Roberts (2008) was applied. First, a positioning study was conducted to scope the field of review and to derive a relevant review question (Section 2.2). Then a review protocol was approved with the review panel. Finally, the review was implemented: the search strategy was developed, selection criteria identified, a quality assessment was performed, and data was extracted, synthesised, and analysed.

### 2.3.1 Search strategy

The following search process was agreed with the Review Panel:

1. Select keywords.
2. Form search strings.
3. Select databases and adjust syntaxes to these databases.
4. Apply search strings to databases.
5. Repeat steps 2-4 until search becomes relevant (based on the title) and returns no more than 1000 items for each database.
6. Combine search results from various databases and exclude duplicates.
7. Exclude irrelevant items based on title screening.
8. Exclude irrelevant items based on abstract screening.
9. Exclude irrelevant items based on full text screening.
10. Apply snowballing technique and add articles recommended by field experts.
11. Apply quality assessment criteria.
12. Define a shortlist of 60-80 papers.
13. After the research is finished, check new articles on the topic and update the literature review.

#### 2.3.1.1 Search strings

Search strings were developed based on keywords related to the review questions to address the following (ref to Table 5): (1) Leader or manager, as a subject holding leadership identity; (2) identity, as the main object of analysis; (3) narrative, as a way to represent self-image and leadership identity.

**Table 5. Search strings.**

|          | Keywords and search operators | Rationale                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| String 1 | (leader*) OR (manager*)       | Focus on articles that explore the field of identity in a corporate or business setting, particularly related to leader, leadership and managerial identity. |

|          |                                                                                                                             |                                                                                           |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| String 2 | (narrative*) OR ("story tell*") OR (storytell*) OR ("life stor*") OR (discours*)                                            | Identification of articles that deal with narratives in any form, including a life story. |
| String 3 | (identity N2 construct*) OR (identity N2 transform*) OR ("identity work") OR ("identity play") OR (identity N2 transition*) | Exploring the identity domain through the lens of identity construction transformation.   |

As the next step, search strings were further combined to address specific review questions, as described in Table 6.

**Table 6. Combinations of search strings.**

| Search strings                 | Rationale for inclusion/exclusion                                                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| String 1 + String 3            | Addressed Review question #1                                                      |
| String 2 + String 3            | Addressed Review question #2                                                      |
| String 1 + String 2 + String 3 | Addressed Review questions #1 and #2                                              |
| String 1+ String 2             | Excluded from the analysis — the focus is too broad and returns too many results. |

### 2.3.1.2 Databases

Given the topic of the literature review, four databases were selected for the search: the three most comprehensive business sources (EBSCO, ProQuest and Web of Science), and PsychINFO, as the topic has a connection to identity studies, which is normally positioned within the psychological domain. The initial search returned 4,564 articles from four databases, including duplicates, as described in Table 8.

### 2.3.1.3 Cross-references and Panel recommendations

On top of the database search, cross-referencing and panel recommendations were used, with specific attention paid to recommendations from field experts. This literature went through the same selection criteria and quality assessment to be finally selected for the systematic literature review.

### 2.3.2 Selection criteria for relevant studies

The search based on the aforementioned combined search strings resulted in 2,469 papers (Table 7). Then formal criteria were applied to identify which articles were selected for review (Table 6).

**Table 7. Search results (number of articles).**

| Search Strings   | EBSCO<br>Business<br>Source | PsychINFO        | ProQuest | Web of<br>Science <sup>1</sup> |
|------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|----------|--------------------------------|
| S1+S3 (Q1)       | 367                         | 479              | 362      | 297                            |
| S2+S3 (Q2)       | 551                         | 643 <sup>2</sup> | 543      | 783 <sup>3</sup>               |
| S1+S2+S3 (Q1+Q2) | 115                         | 177              | 113      | 134                            |

**Table 8. Inclusion/exclusion criteria (title and abstract screening).**

| Criterion | Inclusion                                                 | Exclusion                                                         | Justification                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Language  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other languages</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English is the universal and generally accepted language of the international academic community.</li> <li>Inability to fully understand content of articles in other languages.</li> </ul> |

<sup>1</sup> Due to the high number of results in each combination of search strings, String 3 was modified to ("identity construct\*") OR ("identity transform\*") OR ("identity work") OR ("identity play") OR ("identity transition\*").

<sup>2</sup> The original search string returned 2,502 Search strings. Strings were then modified to return 643 articles: String 2 (narrative\*), String 3 ("identity construct\*") OR ("identity transform\*") OR ("identity work") OR ("identity play") OR ("identity transition\*")

<sup>3</sup> The search was modified to include only the following fields of study: Business, Management, Interdisciplinary Social sciences, Sociology, Psychology, Educational research. The original string returned 1,435 items.

| Criterion                                   | Inclusion                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Exclusion                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Justification                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Relevance to the literature review question | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The title, the abstract, keywords address identity construction and transformation, with a particular focus on leader/leadership identity.</li> <li>• Full-text screening: (1) the objective of the article rightly aligned with the objectives of the SLR, and review questions; (2) a review of relevant literature is presented in the article.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irrelevant studies</li> <li>• Studies that refer only to broad general concepts of identity development</li> <li>• Studies on identity development not related to management or leadership studies.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The focus of the study is to understand how the literature answers the review questions.</li> </ul>                            |
| Field of study                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management studies.</li> <li>• Leadership studies.</li> <li>• Business related disciplines.</li> <li>• Social studies (sociology, psychology).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other fields of study.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research topic and review questions are positioned in these areas.</li> </ul>                                              |
| Type of publication                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articles in scholarly journals.</li> <li>• Academic work papers (only if quality criteria are met).</li> <li>• Academic books.</li> <li>• Theses.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General press articles.</li> <li>• Reports.</li> <li>• Conference papers.</li> <li>• Other non-academic papers.</li> </ul>                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic quality requirements.</li> <li>• General press articles do not meet the requirements of academic research.</li> </ul> |

### 2.3.3 Quality appraisal and selection

After title and abstract screening, the full texts of articles were examined according to the criteria of relevance, the ranking of the journal, and the academic quality of the article. Special attention was paid to journal rankings: both SJR (Scientific Journal Ranking) and AJG (Academic Journal Guide) were used to identify the most influential journals. Particular attention was paid to articles from top journals, while low-ranked journals were predominantly excluded from the list,

with nine exceptions which were particularly relevant to the review questions. Quality appraisal criteria are listed in Table 9.

**Table 9. Full text relevance and quality appraisal criteria.**

| # | Quality Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | What is the ranking/impact factor of the journal and the article? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SJR ranking;</li> <li>• AJG ranking (stars);</li> <li>• Number of citations.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 2 | Academic quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the research question of the article clearly formulated?</li> <li>• Does the paper present a clear methodology of research, data collection, sampling and analysis?</li> <li>• Are the findings explicitly formulated?</li> <li>• Does the discussion answer the research question and objectives of the paper?</li> <li>• Are the claims coherent with the limitations of the work and the generalisability of the work?</li> <li>• What is the overall quality of the paper and its contribution to knowledge?</li> <li>• Does the work appear to be free of value bias and author stance bias?</li> </ul> |

As a result of the selection process, 72 papers were selected for the systematic literature review (Table 10). A comprehensive list of selected articles is presented in Appendix A.

**Table 10. Selection process and results.**

| # | Selection stage                                                   | Number of items |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Application of search strings to four databases                   | 4,564           |
| 2 | Combine results from all databases and remove duplicates          | 2,469           |
| 3 | Exclude irrelevant items based on title screening                 | 357             |
| 4 | Exclude irrelevant items based on keywords and abstract screening | 90              |
| 5 | Apply snowballing technique                                       | 111             |

| # | Selection stage                                  | Number of items |
|---|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 6 | Include articles recommended by the Review Panel | 121             |
| 7 | Selection based on full text                     | 90              |
| 8 | Quality assessment                               | 66              |
| 9 | Adding newly published papers (2019-2021)        | 72              |

#### 2.3.4 Data extraction

After the final list of papers for the review was formed, the data was extracted to support the subsequent analysis and synthesis. The data extraction was done according to a standardised data extraction form for all studies (Table 11). It included the formal parameters of the paper (title, author, journal, year, abstract and key words) and its academic features, including type of research, epistemological approach, methodology (sample, data collection method), and evidential contribution.

**Table 11. Data Extraction Form for Descriptive Analysis.**

| Citation                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title                                                                            |
| Author(s)                                                                        |
| Journal                                                                          |
| Year                                                                             |
| Abstract                                                                         |
| Key words                                                                        |
| Study Background                                                                 |
| Type of research (conceptual, empirical - qualitative, empirical - quantitative) |
| Epistemological approach (positivist, relativist, social constructionist)        |

|                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Methodology</b>                                      |
| Sample selection, size and characteristics              |
| Data collection and analysis method(s)                  |
| <b>Evidential Contribution</b>                          |
| Research question/purpose                               |
| Key findings                                            |
| Limitations and scope for further research              |
| <b>Synthesis/Key contribution(s) to review question</b> |
| Leadership identity development                         |
| The self-image in leadership identity development       |

### 2.3.5 Synthesis

The information extracted from the final papers selected for the review was used to present a coherent synthesis. First, a descriptive analysis of the literature was performed (Section 2.4), followed by a detailed thematic discussion (Section 2.5). Guided by the positioning study, review questions and the information contained in the selected articles, the author developed a threefold structure for the synthesis and presentation of the findings. First, the literature investigated the concept of identity and current theoretical approaches concerning it, including the process of identity work. Second, the leadership identity development process (leadership identity work) was considered. Third, the notion of self-images (identity narratives) was considered with regard to identity work. Finally, the framework for leadership identity work was synthesised from the literature, and research questions were identified.

## 2.4 Descriptive Account of Literature

### 2.4.1 Journal Characteristics

In total, articles from 72 different journals were reviewed. All journals were ranked in accordance with the Scientific Journal Rankings (SJR). 40 articles out of 65 (excluding working papers, theses and book chapters) were published in top ranked journals with a SJR of more than 1.0. SJR distribution among the articles is shown below (Figure 1).

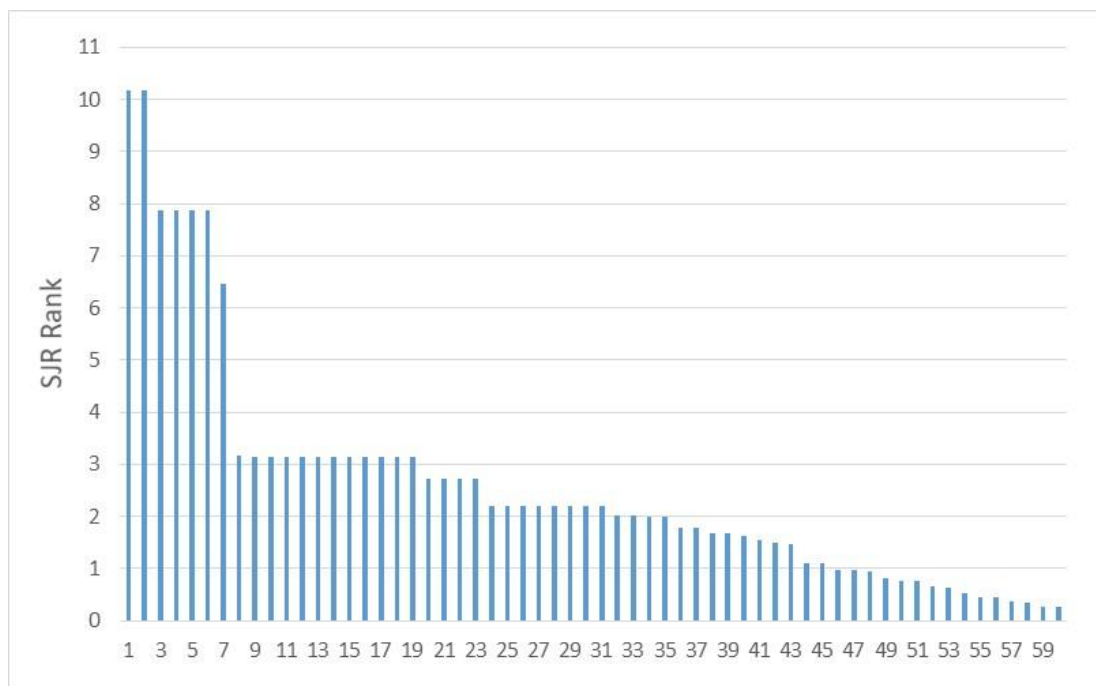


**Figure 2. SJR ranking of selected articles (not including work papers, book chapters and theses).**

42 out of 65 papers (not including theses, work papers and book chapters) were published in nine journals, with Leadership Quarterly the leading publishing platform (11 papers). Considering the quality of journals as per the Academic Journal Guide 2018, 33 contributions come from four-star journals, ten contributions from three-star journals, seven from two-star journals, three from one-star journals, and 12 from journals that were not ranked by the AGJ. All journals are peer-reviewed (Table 12), therefore it is possible to conclude that leadership identity has already found its place among other topics that are being actively discussed in leading leadership journals.

**Table 12. Journal occurrence and rankings (Academic Journal Guide 2018).**

| <b>Journal</b>                                                         | <b>Occurrence</b> | <b>Journal Star Rating (AJG)</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Leadership Quarterly                                                   | 11                | 4                                |
| Human Relations                                                        | 6                 | 4                                |
| Academy of Management Review                                           | 4                 | 4*                               |
| International Journal of Management Reviews                            | 4                 | 3                                |
| Administrative Science Quarterly                                       | 2                 | 4*                               |
| Leadership                                                             | 2                 | 2                                |
| Narrative Inquiry                                                      | 2                 | Not Ranked                       |
| Organization Studies                                                   | 2                 | 4                                |
| Social Psychology Quarterly                                            | 2                 | Not Ranked                       |
| Academy of Management Learning & Education                             | 1                 | 4                                |
| Accounting, Organizations & Society                                    | 1                 | 4*                               |
| Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior | 1                 | Not Ranked                       |
| Critical Perspectives on Accounting                                    | 1                 | 3                                |
| Entrepreneurship & Regional Development                                | 1                 | 3                                |
| Human Resource Development International                               | 1                 | 2                                |
| Human Resource Management Review                                       | 1                 | 3                                |
| International Coaching Psychology Review                               | 1                 | Not Ranked                       |
| International Journal of Managing Projects in Business                 | 1                 | 1                                |
| International Journal of Psychology                                    | 1                 | 1                                |
| Journal of College Student Development                                 | 1                 | Not Ranked                       |
| Journal of Leadership and Organisational Studies                       | 1                 | Not Ranked                       |
| Journal of Management                                                  | 1                 | 4*                               |
| Journal of Management Development                                      | 1                 | 1                                |
| Journal of Management Inquiry                                          | 1                 | 3                                |
| Journal of Organizational Behavior                                     | 1                 | 4                                |
| Journal of Organizational Change Management                            | 1                 | 2                                |

| Journal                                              | Occurrence | Journal Star Rating (AJG) |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|
| Journal of Vocational Behavior                       | 1          | 4                         |
| Management Communication Quarterly                   | 1          | 2                         |
| Management Learning                                  | 1          | 3                         |
| Organization                                         | 1          | 3                         |
| Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes | 1          | 4                         |
| Organizational Psychology Review                     | 1          | 2                         |
| Scandinavian Journal of Management                   | 1          | 2                         |
| Signs and Society                                    | 1          | Not Ranked                |
| Sociological Quarterly                               | 1          | Not Ranked                |
| Tamara Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry     | 1          | Not Ranked                |
| Theory & Psychology                                  | 1          | Not Ranked                |
| Book Chapters                                        | 3          | N/A                       |
| Work Paper                                           | 3          | N/A                       |
| Thesis                                               | 1          | N/A                       |
| <b>Total</b>                                         | <b>66</b>  |                           |

### 2.4.2 Chronology Distribution

An examination of the chronological distribution of publications (Figure 2Figure 3. Chronological distribution of reviewed papers.) reveals that all articles reviewed were published within the last 20 years, with two-thirds of articles published since 2010. Only a small number of papers was published before 2005. This underlines that the topic of leadership identity development is still an emerging area of research, and is attracting more and more interest from researchers, including the author of this study.

After the systematic review was finished, 20 new papers published between 2019 and 2021 were found using the same literature review protocol. Of these, six passed the quality and relevance check, but did not make a significant

contribution to the review. However, some parts of the review were updated with new input from these papers.

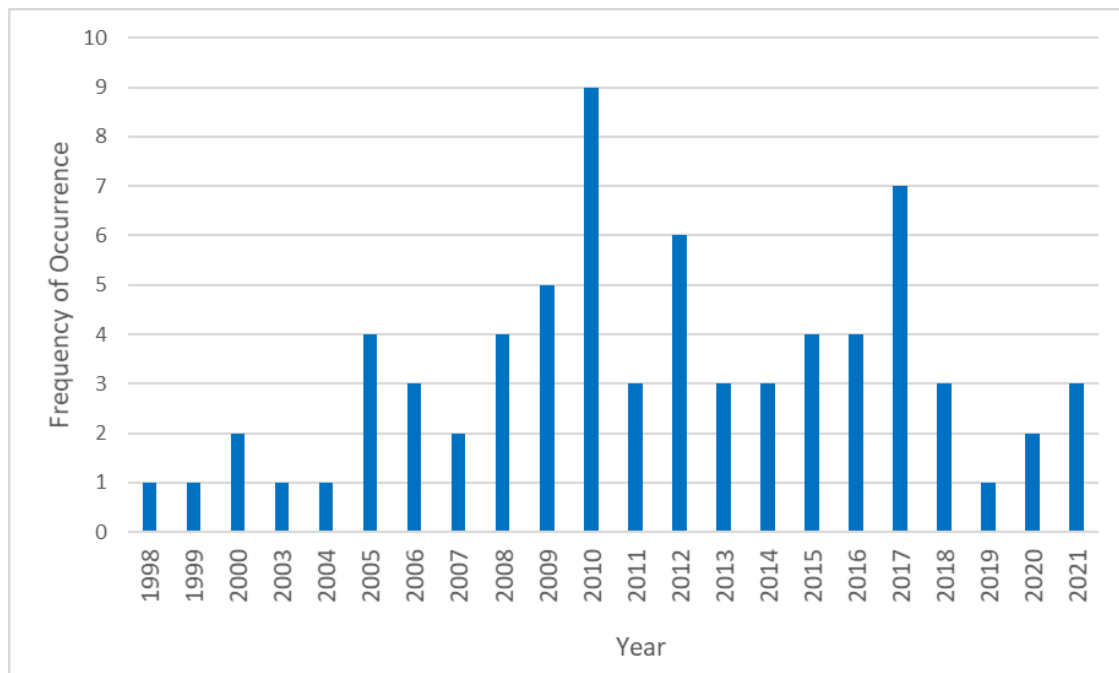


**Figure 3. Chronological distribution of reviewed papers.**

### 2.4.3 Key Authors

In total, 117 authors and co-authors contributed to the selected works. There are 21 authors who published more than one of the selected contributions. Day, Petriglieri (Gianpiero) and Ibarra are the authors or co-authors of five articles included in this review. Alvesson, Lord and Petriglieri (Jennifer Louise) are the authors or co-authors of three articles included in the review. An analysis of the author occurrence is presented in Table 13.

**Table 13. Author occurrence.**

| Authors                          | Contributions |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Day, Petriglieri (G), Ibarra     | 5             |
| Alvesson, Lord, Petriglieri (JL) | 3             |

|                                                                                                                                                                              |   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| Ashford (S), Bamberg, Brown, Burke, Carroll, Caza, De Cremer, DeRue, Guillien Ramo, Harrison, Haynes, Hogg, Miscenko, Svenningsson, van Knippenberg (D), van Knippenberg (B) | 2 |
| Other 114 authors                                                                                                                                                            | 1 |

Given that six authors published three or more articles on the topic, their papers were considered with more thoroughness and attention.

#### **2.4.4 Epistemological Stances and Theoretical Foundations Adopted**

Very few studies explicitly stated one of the three major epistemological stances: positivist, relativist and social constructionist (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008). An in-depth investigation of the papers indicated that most of them use a social constructionist approach, which is assumed to be the most viable stance for studying identity development, given the fact that identity is believed to be constructed in social interaction. This approach postulates that people experience and understand the world, and construct their reality in interaction with others (Light, Berger and Luckmann, 1967). The social constructionist approach in relation to this study is discussed in more detail in Section 3.2.

#### **2.4.5 Types of Research Methods Used**

39, or 54% of the selected contributions, are based on conceptual research. This supports the claim that the topic of leadership identity development is in the early conceptual phase of conceptualisation. 24, or 33% of the total, are empirical qualitative studies — the vast majority of all empirical studies (73%). This finding is in line with the conclusions of Miscenko and Day (2016), who identified that 79% of empirical studies on individual identities are qualitative (Figure 4). This indicated that a qualitative approach could be the most applicable type of research for the study.

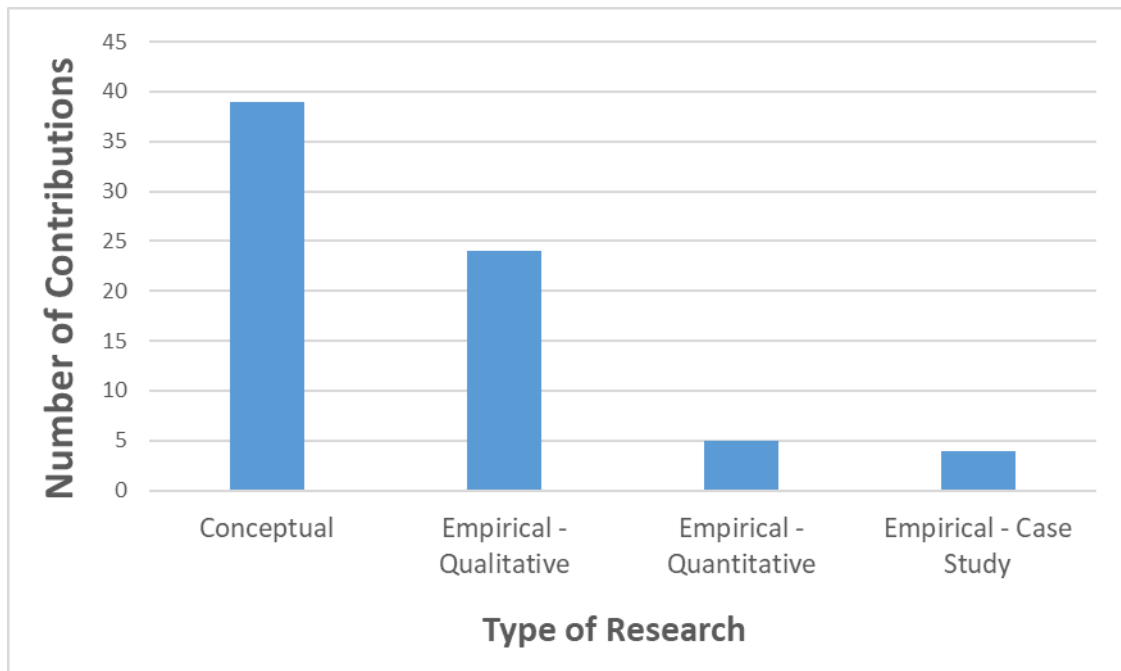


**Figure 4. Types of research applied by authors**

#### **2.4.6 Geographical Investigation**

Only 33 articles (less than half) explicitly mentioned the countries or regions where the research was conducted. Analysis shows that nearly all research on leadership identity development was conducted in a Western/European/Anglo-Saxon context (30 empirical studies, cf. Table 14). There are only three studies that include a sample from Russia and South Africa and one that mentions a 'global' scale. This supports the aforementioned proposition that leadership research is still dominated by a Western/North American origin (Dickson et al., 2012; Scandura and Dorfman, 2004).

**Table 14. Countries/regions investigated.**

| Region         | Countries                                                                       | Number of contributions |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Western Europe | Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Finland, France, Norway, Sweden, UK, Netherlands | 18                      |
| North America  | Canada, USA                                                                     | 7                       |

| Region                 | Countries                | Number of contributions |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Australasia            | Australia, New Zealand   | 2                       |
| Mixed                  | Canada, USA, UK          | 1                       |
|                        | Finland, Russia          | 1                       |
|                        | UK, South Africa, Russia | 1                       |
|                        | USA, Italy               | 1                       |
|                        | Global                   | 1                       |
| N/A (Conceptual Study) |                          | 38                      |
| <b>Total</b>           |                          | <b>71</b>               |

#### 2.4.7 Descriptive Thematic Contributions

62% of the articles cover the topic of managerial, organisational or leadership identity. Around 1/3 (30%) cover both self-image/narrative identity and broader leadership identity topics, with only a small minority (8%) dedicated specifically to self-image and identity narratives. The vast majority of papers (62%) are dedicated to leadership/managerial identity and its development (identity work).

**Table 15. Contributions by sub-theme.**

| Sub-Theme                                        | Number of Papers | %   |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----|
| Leadership/Managerial Identity and Identity Work | 45               | 62% |
| Self-image/Identity Narrative                    | 6                | 8%  |
| Both                                             | 22               | 30% |

## **2.5 Thematic Discussion of Literature**

### **2.5.1 Identity & Self-concept**

Many researchers note that a burgeoning stream of literature is considering identity as a critical component of leader and leadership development (Day and Harrison, 2007; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010; Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017). The growth rate in the number of publications on identity over the past 20 years is over 600% (Miscenko and Day, 2016).

In the literature, it is widely agreed that identity is the set of meanings associated with a person by the self and others, referring predominantly to the works of Gecas (1982). These meanings about self, or self-concepts, are usually derived from the social roles that a person holds by virtue of their membership in a social group, the role relations between the individual and significant others, such as partners, colleagues and friends, and personal characteristics, preferences, traits and aspirations.

It is believed that we are a combination of many sub-identities rather than a univocal self, and some people can have more identities than others, so there are individual differences in the structure of personal identity (Day and Harrison, 2007). Therefore, besides identity types (e.g. leader, parent, citizen), self-concept can be defined with regard to its level (Day and Harrison, 2007).

An individual self-concept normally focuses on traits and differentiates a person from others in a social interaction (Hammond and Clapp-smith, 2017). For example, a leader's identity might be constructed around the specific experiences or traits of a particular person, who believes that they are a leader because they are able to influence other people and reach a goal.

Relational identities are constructed in dyadic relationships with important others (Lord and Hall, 2005): in the case of leader identity, it can be developed as a result of leader-follower interaction.

Finally, collective identities are derived from common identification with some symbolic group and thus do not require personal relationships. A leader may

define themselves as a member of an organisation, or as a representative of a certain society, including a nation.

Responding to a call from the literature to apply a multi-level approach in leadership research (Day and Harrison, 2007), this research will use social and individual identity as the key lenses for analysis. First, it will focus on the collective meaning that Russian leaders have about leadership (collective/social Russian leadership identity). Second, it will explore the individual leadership identities of emerging Russian leaders. Relational identities will not be studied explicitly — only in the context of research participants' social interactions with each other within an educational programme.

In the reviewed literature, identity is commonly characterised as a dynamic entity which is constantly developing throughout an individual's life, adapting to their social environment and composed of a combination of sub-identities, including leadership identity (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018; DeRue and Ashford, 2010; Hammond and Clapp-smith, 2017; Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Because of this, identities are often referred to as living stories, or narratives, which give the self history and aspirations (Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017), link the past, the present and the future (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016; Brown, 2015; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010), and give structure as well as meaning to human behaviour (Miscenko and Day, 2016) but provide only a temporary answer to the question 'Who am I?' (Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006). Although individuals typically hold several sub-identities, only one is believed to be active at any given point in time (Lord and Hall, 2005; Miscenko and Day, 2016).

Although discussions of identity and the self originated in Plato's time (Brown, 2015), to this day the concept of identity itself lacks clarity and consensus in management literature. For example, Brown (2015) outlined the five most significant unresolved disputes in the field of identity studies: (1) are identities chosen by or ascribed to individuals; (2) are they generally stable, evolutionarily adaptive or fluid; (3) are they unified and coherent (narratives) or fragmented and

possibly contradictory; (4) are they motivated (or not) by a need for positive meaning; (5) are they framed (or not) by a desire for authenticity.

With regard to choosing or ascribing identities (unresolved question #1), most research acknowledges that identities are neither simply chosen nor allocated, but are outcomes of identity work (Brown, 2015), and the author supports the claim that individuals have the opportunity to accept, reject, reshape and transform their identities. The corresponding concept of identity work is reviewed in detail in Section 2.5.1.1.

The debate around the stability and fluidity of identities is probably one of the most lively in the literature. Social psychologists suggest that people require a relatively secure and stable understanding of selves in order to achieve a sense of stability (Petriglieri, 2011b). Discursive sociologists claim that people have a stable self-concept, psychoanalytic frames emphasise the fluidity of identities due to paradoxes of the unconscious, and post-modernists believe that stability is momentary, and selves are always provisional and are reassembled through discourse (Brown, 2015). After reviewing the literature, the author supports the idea that, although the self is believed to be constructed from a relatively stable set of meanings which do not change significantly over a lifetime, identities can be acquired, modified or lost.

Classic Western thinking and some streams of social psychology emphasise the coherence of personal identities, and identity work is taken to pursue this coherence, completeness and wholeness (Ybema et al., 2009). In particular, scholars from the narrative identity school argue that identity stories should hang together and integrate various aspects of identity and a person's life (Ricoeur, 1984). At the same time, alternative streams of research suggest that identities are rarely fully coherent or integrated, but instead are full of self-doubt, insecurity, fragility and inconsistency, particularly in organisational settings, where identity stories are often challenged, denied or ignored by others. Thus, identity studies are moving towards an understanding of identity work as leading to less coherent and divided identities (Brown, 2015).

Rooted back in Gecas' work (1982), a substantial portion of identity literature, predominantly modernist, holds the assumption that identity work is driven by a person's desire for positive meaning. Scholars from psychological, social, and humanitarian studies do not agree with this and claim that identity work in many cases is driven by struggles, fear of freedom, insecurities and coping strategies (Brown, 2015).

Finally, debate about the authenticity of identities divides scholars between those who believe in authentic core (Ybema et al., 2009) or 'real selves' (Ibarra, 1999) and those who believe that there is no 'true self', as the self is constantly evolving or constructed (e.g. Goffman, 1990). The current trend in identity research is to move from notions of 'authentic' or 'inauthentic' identities; even if "some versions of the self may be more preferred than others, such preferences are often unstable and ad hoc rendering notions," (Brown, 2015: 30).

The aforementioned debates are not easily resolved, as they have predominantly ontological, ideological and epistemological roots. This makes identity researchers struggle, narrate, surf and self-doubt (Alvesson, 2010). Nevertheless, the literature review suggests that despite the relative novelty of the topic of identity in leadership studies and unresolved debates, the concept of identity work is widely accepted and used by researchers, though some nuances of the process depend heavily on the ontological position. The next section will review the process of identity work as it is described in literature.

## **Identity Work**

As discussed above, identities are mostly believed to be fluid and change with efforts and time. Identity work is the name given to the activities that people engage in to form, strengthen, maintain, repair, or revise the identities that define the self (Brown, 2015; Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Watson (2008) conceptualises it as a process whereby people strive to shape a coherent and distinctive notion of the self. Hammond and Clapp-Smith (2017) argue that it is "a cognitive, affective, and/or behavioural tactic undertaken by an individual to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept". Lord and Hall (2005)

describe it as a developmental process that suggests progression and acquisition of basic leadership skills plus development of self-understanding.

Normally, identity work is triggered by role transitions, tensions between different identities, critical events and challenging work environments (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016; Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018; Ibarra, 1999). When an individual assumes a new role, he or she engages in symbolic interactions with others to negotiate the meaning of these roles (Ibarra, 1999). This process of social interaction creates a consistent set of behaviours that reinforce the new identity (Stryker and Burke, 2000). If the role remains stable, the associated identity remains unchanged. Since many of the research participants have the intention of changing their roles, particularly to acquire the role of leader, it can be reasonably expected that their identities pass through a major transformation within 18 months of a leadership development programme.

In one of the most recent reviews of the identity work literature, Caza, Vough and Puranik (2018) identified four outcomes of identity work: (1) at the identity level: resolved identity tensions and threats and formation and strengthening of the identity; (2) at the personal level: better individual wellbeing and success at work; (3) at the relational level: more positive relations with a group; (4) at the organisational level: influence on the organisational structure, strategy, performance.

For research participants, these outcomes mean that identity work in a leadership development programme can be considered as performed if by the end of the programme participants (1) have an articulated leadership identity, (2) have a better image of themselves, their life and their performance, (3) have more positive relations with their peers and (4) have an impact on their organisations. Questions about these potential outcomes were embedded in the interview protocol.

While identity work is believed to be one of the most significant and useful concepts in the analysis of identity construction, there is little consensus on the basic concepts and processes of identity work, given the relatively early stage of theorising in this field of research (Brown, 2015; Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018).

For example, identity work is sometimes referred to as 'identity construction', 'identity quests', 'identity bricolage', 'identity projects', and even 'identity jiu-jitsu'. It is still unclear whether 'identity work' denotes a concept, a construct, a metaphor, a perspective, or some combination of these (Brown, 2017). One of the objectives of this research is to shed more light on the process of identity work in the context of a leadership development programme.

### **Identity and Organisational Identification**

In traditional careers, when an individual spends a significant amount of time in one organisation, identity is normally crafted in an organisation, so identity and identity work has traditionally been studied within an organisational context (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016; Brown, 2015; DeRue and Ashford, 2010; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), and was often linked to the concept of organisational identification (Miscenko and Day, 2016).

Although in some cases it is not distinguished from identity, identification normally refers to the meaning of a particular entity (i.e. role, organisation) that is internalised as part of the self-concept, in the form of a cognitive/psychological/emotional attachment. For example, organisational identification is defined as an alignment between individual and collective identities, resulting in a sense of unity between the person and their organisation (Brown, 2017). Another common concept linked to the organisational context is work identity, which is defined as self-meaning tied to participation in work-related activities, such as organisational, occupational, and role identities (Dutton, Roberts and Bednar, 2010).

In the context of contemporary careers which do not follow institutionalised paths in a single organisation or industry, and are characterised by discontinuities and non-codified transitions between organisations and industries (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010), organisations cannot be viewed as the only identity workspace for identity construction, and possible selves cannot be easily crafted. In contemporary work conditions, many employees need to create new work identities or revise existing work identities several times in their careers (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018). To respond to this challenge, Petriglieri, Petriglieri

and Wood introduced the concept of portable selves: “selves endowed with definitions, motives, and abilities that can be deployed across roles and organisations over time” (2017:14).

This study attempts to enrich the literature by exploring the process of identity work within a specific type of organisation - in a management education institution. As the research will demonstrate, programme participants develop a strong identification with the institution and the programme at which they were studying.

### **Possible, provisional and portable selves**

Building on the concept of identity work, researchers developed the concept of identity play (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2008). Whereas identity work is fundamentally aimed at the preservation of existing identities, identity play is concerned with inventing and reinventing oneself. While ‘work’ is often associated with compliance, rationality, logic and a means–ends orientation, ‘play’ implies a different set of potentially generative ideas relating to enjoyment, discovery, intuition, imagined others, spontaneity and fantasy (Brown, 2015).

As identity work and play are the processes that involve shaping one’s identity, they should actively refer to the possible self, or the images one has about who one might become, would like to become, should become, or fears becoming in the future (Ibarra, 1999). Possible selves are believed to be instrumental in the process of leadership development, particularly in experiential learning (Ibarra, 1999).

The process of identity shift is believed to start with observing suitable role models, creating a possible self, and further experimenting with provisional selves, which serve as trials for a possible, but not fully elaborated new identity (Ibarra, 1999). People create possible selves based on both external and internal definitions (Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017), and later start experimenting with provisional selves based on evaluating internal and external feedback.

Possible leadership selves of emerging Russian business leaders lie at the core of this research. Research question #1 directly addresses the desired leadership

prototype that they keep in mind while they are passing through the process of identity work.

### **Identity laboratories/workspaces**

If we accept the proposition that identity construction is a social process, then the social context of identity work is as important as the process. However, most researchers in the reviewed literature focused primarily on *how* leadership identity develops, as opposed to *where* — as of today, less work to date has focused on the settings in which identity work takes place. In psychodynamic literature, places where identity experimentation takes place, are called identity laboratories (Florent-treacy, 2009; Kets de Vries and Korotov, 2007; Korotov, 2006) or identity workspaces (Haynes et al., 2014; Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017; Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018).

As individuals cannot craft new identities on their own, and as identity work often involves experiences of uncertainty, destabilisation, fragmentation and anxiety (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), identity work is normally facilitated by an environment which is a safe space for elaborating, experimenting and consolidating meaning associated with the self. Such identity workspaces can be located within an established organisation: for example, a corporate management training scheme, or a leadership rotation programme (Ibarra et al., 2014a). However, the more individuals aspire to mobile and contemporary careers, the less likely they are to trust organisations as identity workspaces. Therefore, the role of business schools, leadership courses and development programmes rises, as they present a new set of identity meanings which motivate participants to reconstruct their currently-held meaning of leader identity, and this is manifested in a change in the strength of their leader identity (Miscenko, Guenter and Day, 2017).

Based on psychodynamic literature, Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2018) propose that the three major components of the identity workspace are social defences, sentinel communities, and rites of passage — they allow the institution to be experienced as a holding environment that facilitates sense-making in the process of identity stabilisation or identity transition.

Social defences are collective arrangements (an organisational structure, a work method or a prevailing discourse), created or used as a protection against disturbing affect from external threats, internal conflicts or the nature of their work (Halton, 2020). In business schools, participants of MBA programmes share an irrational belief that acquiring managerial skills and business knowledge will help them avoid the disturbing interpersonal experiences that they were exposed to in their roles before applying to the MBA programme. The study will demonstrate that research participants hope that the personal transformation they expect to happen to them as a result of the programme will lead to better performance at work and professional recognition.

Sentient communities are professional groups that individuals invest in, relate to and identify with (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018). Research participants share a strong loyalty to their business school, their programme, their cohort and even to their small project group — they call them “home” and “a family”. These groups help them reaffirm their identities, strengthen leader efficacy, and explore alternative roles.

Rites of passage are the rituals that symbolise transition from one role or identity to another (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018). In the case of business schools, rites of passage include separation from home and from the organisation, a series of ceremonies and rituals, both formal and informal, the presence of mentors and coaches, and reintegration into a social structure in a different role.

In this sense, business schools serve as the perfect example of identity workspaces, which allow participants to experiment and reflect upon the meanings associated with the self. Moreover, Petriglieri and Petriglieri argue that the primary task of business schools “is being redefined and enlarged to include creating and transferring knowledge, teaching professional skills, and providing an effective holding environment for the personal, as well as professional, identity work of managers,” (2018: 57). The study, equipped with the identity workspace concept, considers an MBA programme at a leading Russian management institution and therefore assumes that it provides opportunities for identity work for emerging Russian business leaders.

## 2.5.2 Theoretical approaches to identity work (summary)

Several literature reviews attempt to structure theoretical approaches to identity and identity work, and there is no consensus on how this field of study should be structured (Brown, 2017; Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018; Corlett et al., 2017; Ibarra et al., 2014b; Miscenko and Day, 2016). As discussed in Section 1.3.3, among major approaches and theories proposed by various authors, the following theoretical perspectives are considered as dominant to address the identity work theme: social identity theory, critical theory, identity theory, narrative theory (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018). This classification is very close to the classification proposed by Ibarra et al. (2014), who outlined identity theory, social identity theory and social construction theory. Table 16 summarises dominant identity theories and describes in which settings they are applied.

**Table 16. Dominant identity work theoretical perspectives (adapted from Caza, Vough and Puranik (2018) and Roberts and Creary (2013)).**

| Theory and representative authors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | What types of identities are worked on? | Definition of identity                                                                                                                                                                            | When/how do people engage in identity work?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | What motivates people to engage in identity work?                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Social identity theory</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foundational: Tajfel and Turner (1979)</li> <li>- Alvesson (2000)</li> <li>- Ashforth and Kreiner (1999)</li> <li>- Löwstedt and Räsänen (2014)</li> <li>- Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep (2006)</li> </ul> | Collective identities                   | Knowledge that one belongs to a social group or category and feelings associated with that membership                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When collective meanings are changed or challenged; when ingroup/outgroup distinctions become salient</li> <li>- People position themselves relative to ingroups and outgroups and change how they define groups in which they are members</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-enhancement</li> <li>- Distinctiveness</li> <li>- Belongingness</li> </ul> |
| <b>Critical theory</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foundational: Foucault (1980)</li> <li>- Alvesson &amp; Willmott (2002)</li> <li>- Brown &amp; Lewis (2011)</li> <li>- Boussebaa and Brown (2017)</li> <li>- Covalleski et al. (1998)</li> </ul>                  | Collective identities                   | Multiple, shifting, competing, temporary, context-sensitive, and evolving manifestations of the self that are shaped by socioeconomic, institutional, cultural, and historical boundaries between | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing process, in response to discursive attempts to shape identities</li> <li>- People resist and/or engage with attempts at control from dominant institutional discourses</li> </ul>                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emancipation</li> <li>- Maintaining continuity and individuality</li> </ul>     |

| Theory and representative authors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | What types of identities are worked on? | Definition of identity                                                                                                                                                             | When/how do people engage in identity work?                                                                                                                                                                                                             | What motivates people to engage in identity work?                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                         | identity groups                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                        |
| <b>Identity theory</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foundational: Stryker and Serpe (1982)</li> <li>- DeRue and Ashford (2010)</li> <li>- Jain et al. (2009)</li> <li>- Järventie-Thesleff and Tienari (2016)</li> <li>- Knapp et al. (2013)</li> </ul> | Role identities                         | Reflects how an individual develops a self-understanding that is coherent, distinct, and positively valued within the context of complex, ambiguous, and contradictory experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New roles/Self vs. other Expectations/ Multiple roles</li> <li>- Change self to align with role/change role expectations/change self or others' perceptions of roles</li> </ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-verification</li> </ul>                                  |
| <b>Narrative Theory</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foundational: Bruner (1991)</li> <li>- Beech and Johnson (2005)</li> <li>- Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010)</li> <li>- Watson (2009)</li> <li>- Wright et al. (2012)</li> </ul>                        | Personal identities                     | An emergent, interpretive process of becoming that is captured by an individual's storied self-understanding s                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing but heightened during transitions/change. As a response to ambiguous or unexpected events</li> <li>- Creating and updating stories that draw on personal histories and available discourses</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sense-making</li> <li>- Coherence and plausibility</li> </ul> |

As discussed in detail in Section 1.3, this research utilises two approaches to identity work to address two research questions: social identity theory and identity theory. The social identity theory lens is instrumental in exploring what leadership means in the Russian context as described by emerging Russian business leaders, while identity theory assists in understanding how these leaders develop their leadership identity within a leadership development programme. Mixing these two approaches in the research responds to the call in the literature to use different perspectives and tools to prevent the further divergence of different streams of identity research (Miscenko and Day, 2016).

The following section will review the leadership dimension of identity work, i.e. leader identity, its levels and the process of its development.

### **2.5.3 Leadership dimension in the identity development process (leadership identity work)**

As discussed in Section 1.3.1, over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, leadership studies moved from a top-down hierarchical understanding of leadership towards a broader, mutual influence process independent of a person's formal role in an organisation (Day, 2001; DeRue and Ashford, 2010).

In leadership literature today, there is a consensus understanding that leadership is (1) a process whereby an individual (2) influences (3) a group of individuals to achieve (4) a common goal (Northouse, 2019).

Based on the notion that leadership is the product of influence and relations within a group, many researchers argue that we need to better understand the coupling between identity and leadership, and how this affects people's development and behaviours as leaders (Avolio, 2004; Day, Harrison and Halpin, 2008; Day and Harrison, 2007; Ibarra, Snook and Guillen Ramo, 2008; Karp and Helgø, 2009; van Knippenberg et al., 2004; Lord and Hall, 2005; Ramos, 2009). There is a compelling argument that leadership identity plays a critical role in a leader's emergence, continuous development, personal growth, self-efficacy and motivation to lead (Kets de Vries and Korotov, 2007; Lord and Brown, 2001), and skills-based approaches alone cannot capture the complex nature of leader development (Miscenko, Guenter and Day, 2017).

Given the multi-dimensionality of individual identity, a *leader's identity* is the sub-component of one's identity that relates to being a leader or how one thinks of oneself as a leader (Day and Harrison, 2007). It "reflects a complex amalgam of experiences, leader conceptions, and self-conceptions that drive leader cognitions, affective reactions, and behavioural choices across a variety of situations," (Wallace, Torres and Zaccaro, 2021, p.8). Identity grounds leaders in understanding who they are, their major goals and objectives, and their personal strengths and limitations (Day and Harrison, 2007). Leadership competencies are developed through experiences that help develop and crystallise a leader identity (Day et al., 2012) and the leadership development process can be defined as identity construction emerging from human interaction (Karp and Helgø, 2009).

At the same time, the inability to change one's identity from an individual contributor to a leader can be a barrier to a leader's success (Maurer and London, 2018). Thus, it is worth discussing the development of leadership identity rather than skills, characteristics and traits.

Leadership identity and motivation to lead depends on the self-to-leader comparison, or the "extent to which individuals' views on attributes that characterise leaders match the attributes they ascribe to themselves," (Guillén, Mayo and Korotov, 2015: p.803). There are two types of self-to-leader comparison: self-to-prototype (comparison with respect to key leadership dimensions) and self-to-exemplar (comparison to specific influential leaders). The research will explore these two comparisons, with a special focus on the self-to-exemplar comparison.

Building on the notion of multi-level identity, Day and Harrison (2007) and later DeRue and Ashford (2010) developed multi-level models for leadership identity construction, which comprise individual internalisation, relational recognition and collective endorsement. The process of leader development is not just a promotion to a leadership role, but a process of social interaction which consists of developing leader/granting follower identity, engaging in leadership actions and decisions and experiencing their outcomes. Hammond and Clapp-Smith (2019) developed the model further and proposed four components of a leader's identity that develop through sense-making: (1) strength of identity, (2) integration within one's broader self-concept, (3) level of identity orientation, and (4) the meaning of being a leader. As a leader develops, they develop each component from an individual/splintered perspective ('I possess leadership ability, talent and skills', or taking charge of a situation) towards a collective/shared/integrated meaning ('I am a leader for the good of a group to which I belong', which brings leadership to the level of group members collaborating). As a result, the role shift from an individual contributor to a leader occurs (Maurer and London, 2018).

Another important point of a leader's self-view emphasised in the literature is leader efficacy, or an individual's confidence in their knowledge, skills and abilities associated with leading others. It is believed to be linked to outcomes such as

ratings of leader potential and motivation to lead, organisational commitment, simulated organisational performance and perceived leader performance (Hannah et al., 2012). However, it is not clear how leader self-efficacy develops in the course of a leadership programme (Kwok, Shen and Brown, 2021), and this research partially addresses this gap.

Leader identity is not simply the counterpart to a formally held leadership position, but rather evolves as a person internalises and tailors a leader identity, is confident in their ability to lead, and is recognised by others as a 'leader'. Through these processes, the leadership role becomes the basis for one's self-concept.

Leadership identity construction involves both an introspective and a social process, and a leader's identity development is not about focusing on their human capital, but on the interaction of leaders with followers. Lord and Hall (2005) postulate that, as a leader develops, there is a shift in focus from the individual to collective level identities, both for the leader's self-identity and the identities of followers. The more highly-developed a leader, the greater the number of leadership levels from which that leader can construct possible responses (Day and Harrison, 2007). Transitioning into leadership positions triggers emotional struggles (Hay, 2014). It requires changes in identity and self-understanding and openness to the exploration of what identity personalisation entails for both the leader and their followers (Ibarra et al., 2014a).

To summarise, leadership identity is a part of the individual's identity, which develops along with the development of leadership skills and requires internalisation and recognition at all three identity levels: individual, relational and social/collective. The process of developing leadership identity involves the creation of a possible identity, experimenting with provisional identities, claiming them by demonstrating different behaviour, getting feedback from other people, and making a role shift from an individual contributor to a leader.

#### **2.5.4 The Concept of Narrative in the Leadership Identity Process**

The narrative identity perspective claims that revising identity narratives is a central task in identity work (Ibarra et al., 2014a; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010).

Within this stream of research, identity is normally defined as the internalised and evolving story resulting from a person's selective appropriation of the past, present and future. The interaction of identity work and narrative leads to narrative identity work, "social efforts to craft self-narratives that meet a person's identity aims," (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010: 137). Such narrative identity work requires both introspective and social interaction (telling the story to oneself and others).

Most authors who work within the narrative identity framework refer to Ricoeur's definition of the self, which, following phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophical traditions, portrays the self as a "narrative project" through which individuals interpretively weave a story uniting the disparate events, actions, and motivations of their life experiences (Ricoeur, 1984). Through so-called *emplotment*, lived experiences are mediated in a narrative: it draws a meaningful story, brings together factors, and reveals a glimpse of the story as a whole, narrating towards a conclusion. Narrating is an active and mediated process of abstracting from memorable events to make sense of oneself (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016). While a narrative configures events and experiences, it is not determined by them (Ezzy, 1998).

Identity narratives are neither static, nor are they ever completed — specifically, they undergo revision and are more pronounced as individuals go through significant work transitions and change (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010; Mallett and Wapshott, 2012). People construct and revise their identity narratives to make sense of ambiguous events (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018). Without the narrative, such events are merely contingent (Sparrowe, 2005).

The major functions of the narrating process are coherence, legitimacy, and social validation (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). Narratives create a sense of desired stability: they link the past, the present and the future, even amidst change, though this coherence does not mean 'truth'. For example, in their study of former Arthur Andersen consultants, Gendron and Spira (2010) created a coherent, but very different interpretation of what had happened with the company.

In a seminal article on narrative construction of reality, Bruner defined ten features of narrative: diachronicity, particularity, intentional state entailment, hermeneutic composability, canonicity and breach, referentiality, genericness, normativeness, context sensitivity and negotiability, and narrative accrual (Bruner, 1991). Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010) narrowed the list down to three features that make up a self-narrative: (1) the plot — a three-part structure consisting of a beginning, middle and end; (2) the self as the protagonist — “I” as the actor of the story; and (3) the moral, which creates meaning about the protagonist.

Narratives are crafted not only for internal consumption but for external as well, thus they can be regarded as identity claims (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). Other people shape the 'plot' of the narrative identity, and validate them. By telling a compelling story, a leader receives feedback, and his or her claim is either accepted, rejected or challenged, after which he or she revisits the self-narrative (Ibarra et al., 2014a). Others serve as a source of imaginative variation in rewriting one's narrative identity and as persons with whom our own histories are intertwined (Sparrowe, 2005). We not only recognise ourselves in our own stories, but also within the stories of others (Mallett and Wapshott, 2012)

Given the multi-dimensionality of a person's identity, people have not one, but many stories, which is particularly relevant to people who are in the process of role transition (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). As people learn about new roles and meet more people associated with them, they practice telling their stories more, and adapt them. Telling and retelling a convincing narrative help the person incorporate new identities into a revised self-concept: “narrating the self changes the self” (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010: 150).

As a management development programme can be considered an identity workspace in which programme participants reconsider and rework their identity narratives (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018), the research is focused on the self-images/leadership identity narratives that emerging Russian business leaders develop about themselves over the course of a leadership development programme.

## **2.6 Directions from the Literature Review for Further Research**

Many researchers indicate that the field of study is still in the early phase of research, and provides many avenues for further investigation (Brown, 2017; Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018; Corlett et al., 2017; Miscenko and Day, 2016; Stryker and Burke, 2000). This section outlines the most significant theoretical gaps that were identified as a result of the literature review and how this research intends to address them.

First of all, the field of identity studies in management literature lacks a clear and aligned theoretical structure, which would bring diverse theories together. Moreover, there is an evident divergence of different streams of research along theoretical and methodological lines (Miscenko and Day, 2016). Within identity theory, there are a lot of unresolved theoretical debates, the most active of which is whether identity is dynamic or stable (Brown, 2015). This research will not address the meta-theoretical perspective. Instead, it will focus on individual and collective level identities.

With regard to leadership development, there is still lack of understanding of the coupling of identity and leadership skill development. Very few empirical studies address in depth the processes of identity work in relation to leadership (Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006). This study attempts to contribute to this understanding and will explore the link between identity work and leader efficacy, which is believed to have a strong relation to the motivation and ability of an individual to recognise different situations as opportunities to practice and develop leadership skills (Kwok, Shen and Brown, 2021).

Future research should push existing limitations and boundaries in analysing the context of identity work, predominantly from a cultural perspective. Whereas leadership across cultures has certainly been explored (i.e., Dorfman et al., 2012), an examination of a cross-cultural process of leader identity development, grounded in a context- and language-specific identity work process, may add depth to the process of becoming a leader in transnational contexts (Ibarra et al., 2014a). How might the identity construction process play out differently cross-

culturally? (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016). If the self is a social construction, the reasoning goes, it is largely shaped by language (Frimann and Hersted, 2016).

Most existing studies of identity work were done in a specific Western/Anglo-Saxon context, and research from other territories is needed to fully understand identity issues (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018). For example, it may be that identity work occurs differently in cultures that vary on such indexes as individualism/collectivism and masculinity/femininity (Brown, 2015; Hofstede, 1993). There are no studies dedicated to leadership identity in Russia. So, the research will address this gap by exploring how emerging Russian business leaders construct their provisional leadership selves and how they move towards them through a leadership development programme.

The issue of identity shift within role transitions is still underexplored in the literature (Miscenko and Day, 2016). Despite the presence of several seminal works by Ibarra (i.e., 2015), it is still unclear how individuals adapt their identities to change.

Very little research focuses on where identity work happens as opposed to how. Furthermore, there is very little empirical research focused on identity work in identity workspaces outside of commercial organisations (i.e., Haynes et al., 2014; Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017), so more research is needed to clarify the concept with regard to other types of holding environments, e.g. business schools and leadership development programmes. Following the literature call, the author argues that we need to better understand how people frame their stories in leadership development programmes and to develop a process model of identity work in identity workspaces (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018).

Finally, many researchers argue that most identity-related concepts (identity work, identity play, possible selves, portable selves) are to be studied and empirically tested with regard to contemporary careers, which assume non-linear trajectories and transitions between functions, industries and organisations (Brown, 2015; Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016; Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017). As organisations cannot serve as the only possible holding environments for

identity work any more, additional research is needed to understand where and how identity and role transition occurs. In the case of this study, that is in the setting of a leadership development programme in a management education institution.

## **2.7 Summary of the literature review and research questions**

The identity work process suggests that identity work is triggered by identity threats (specifically caused by role transitions), context, social interaction and cognitive efforts. The identity shift from an individual contributor to a leader happens at all three levels of identity: individual, relational and collective (Day and Harrison, 2007). Within the process of identity work, an individual first crafts a possible identity, or images one has about who one might become, would like to become, should become, or fears becoming in the future (Ibarra, 1999). This image largely depends on socially crafted perceptions of leadership, or social leadership identity (Hogg, 2001). Therefore, the first research question aims to understand what kind of possible identity emerging Russian leaders hold. Knowing their perceptions of effective leadership will presumably help craft more effective leadership development programmes.

Identity work is fostered by a special environment, which in the literature is called an identity workspace, or an identity laboratory. The identity workspace provides a safe space for elaborating, experimenting and consolidating meaning associated with the self (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018). Leadership development programmes serve as identity workspaces, where participants claim their provisional identities, receive feedback from others and craft their new leadership identities. However, the coupling between leadership skill development and self-concept has not been clarified yet, as it was discovered as a result of the literature review. Thus, the second research question considers the process of identity work within leadership development programmes and is aimed at a better understanding of how leaders pass through the process of identity work.

Based on the identified research gaps, the special contribution of the research to theory and practice was supposed to be created by answering the following questions:

- What does leadership mean in the Russian context, as defined by emerging business leaders themselves?
- How do emerging Russian business leaders develop their leadership identity, particularly in the context of a leadership development programme?

## **2.8 Chapter summary**

This chapter started by briefly discussing the main bodies of evidence on which this study is built. It reviewed the status of research in the domains of leadership identity and identity work, briefly discussed the main theoretical lenses, and introduced the aggregated process of identity work within an identity workspace as discussed in the literature. It also presented the methodology of the literature review, a descriptive and thematic analysis of the literature, and argued for specific theoretical gaps in the literature.



## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter presents the methodology of the study. It outlines the methodology's philosophical positioning, the selection of the research method, the logic behind constructing the interview protocol, the sampling strategy, data collection and data analysis processes, and ethical considerations.

### 3.2 Philosophical positioning

Descriptive analysis of the reviewed identity literature (Section 2.4) suggested that the vast majority of papers in leadership identity work use an interpretive/social constructionist approach, which contradicts the prevailing modernist/positivist paradigm in most leadership studies. This approach postulates that people experience and understand the world, and construct their reality in interaction with others (Light, Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Other research paradigms that were identified in the literature review include systems psychodynamics, as a spin-off from the interpretive (e.g. Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017) positivist (e.g. Guillén, Mayo and Korotov, 2015; Kwok, Shen and Brown, 2021), psychoanalytic, functionalist, critical and posthumanist feminist. The functionalist orientation looks at identity as a socio-cognitive construct; interpretivism has a meaning-centred focus, critical orientation focuses on power relations, and the psychoanalytical frame argues for exploring identity in embodied engagement with others (Corlett et al., 2017).

The interpretive approach suggests that social worlds and reality must be discovered and interpreted before researchers evaluate them. In contrast to positivists, interpretivism posits the view that people and their institutions are fundamentally different from the subject of the natural sciences, therefore the study of the social world requires a different logic. Instead of *explaining* human behaviour (positivist mentality), the interpretive approach focuses on *understanding* it (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The interpretive orientation assumes that interpretations of reality are culturally derived and historically situated and focuses on meaning that makes human actions meaningful (Cerulo, 1997).

The central part of the research is the meaning that emerging Russian business leaders give to leadership and the leadership development process. This meaning is relative and dependent on time, context and culture. Therefore, the research should avoid a positivist mentality and apply a meaning-centred interpretive stance.

Interpretivism is grounded in relativist ontology, which assumes that multiple and dynamic realities co-exist (Ozanne and Hudson, 1988). Realities are considered to be mental constructions and are based on meanings and understandings. In contrast to realism, which aims for the validity and authenticity of research, relativism aims to deconstruct and disrupt claims of narrative coherence (Finlay, 2012). In this context, knowledge is created in interaction between humans and their world and is developed and transmitted in a social context. Hence, researchers construct data or theories within interactions with their participants and emerging analyses.

According to social constructionists, identity formation can be described as “the negotiation between social actors and institutions, between the self and others, between inside and outside, between past and present” (Ybema et al., 2009, p.303). Not only were the leadership identities of research participants constructed in communication with other people and the world, but the meaning of their leadership self was co-constructed in conversation with them during interviews.

Based on the above, the research will follow the most commonly used path in identity studies and will employ an interpretivist approach, relativist ontology and social constructionist epistemology.

In the research, knowledge was supposed to be derived from language and narratives rather than from observing the world (induction strategy) or testing hypotheses (deduction strategy) (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). As multiple explanations of meaning can be possible, and moving from theory to data (deduction) or data to theory (induction) does not seem productive, an abductive approach was applied in the study, which meant moving back and forth, thereby combining deduction and induction (Suddaby, 2006). In a sense, the abductive

approach aims to resolve the issue of polarisation between deductive and inductive lines of research (Awuzie and McDermott, 2017).

In the case of this particular study, it was impossible to present a testable proposition concerning Russian leadership identity and identity work in a leadership development programme, so the reasoning started with reading of interview transcripts and making sense of them, trying to find repeating themes and patterns. Once these were found, the author came back to the literature to explain them and then back to data to create new conceptual possibilities and examine them afterwards, in line with abductive approach.

As described in the literature, abductive reasoning starts with a “surprising fact” that acts as the conclusion rather than a premise, after which a set of possible premises is determined and considered sufficient or nearly sufficient to explain the conclusion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). Abductive reasoning is utilised when research meets the following five characteristics (Awuzie and McDermott, 2017).

First, it is the centrality of the researcher’s observation pertaining to a certain phenomenon (in the study, the researcher co-created meaning together with research participants, i.e., the importance of leader efficacy for identity work in a leadership development programme).

Second, a hypothesis (proposition) should be developed based on this observation (i.e. specific propositions about the trajectory of leadership identity development in a management programme).

Third, the researcher should rely on a credible background theory in an attempt to explain the proposition (i.e. implicit leadership theory and social identity theory for discussing Russian leadership identity).

Fourth, the study should use deductively and inductively sourced data in validating the explanation of the proposition (i.e. reworking the coding structure to reflect the literature).

Fifth, new knowledge should be created based on the validation of the explanation of the initial proposition (i.e. finalising the leadership identity work process model and coming back to data to support the explanation with quotes).

Although the author would like to consider himself an outsider, he regularly communicated with people from the research sample and was conducting qualitative in-depth interviews, which supposedly impacted their identities, resulting in him becoming part of the research. As the author did not come to the research with clear theories (expert role), and both the researcher and the participants of the interpretive study may change (Klenke, 2008), in this research, he was an insider-learner (Blaikie, 2007). The position of an insider researcher normally creates certain challenges: minimising the potential for implicit coercion of the participants; acknowledging the desire for positive outcomes; ensuring tacit patterns and regularities were not taken for granted; and awareness of the potential conflicts of being an academic and researcher within the same context (Fleming, 2018). On the one hand, the position of insider adds additional depth to the research. On the other hand, it can involve bias. Section 6.4 discussed these challenges in more detail.

### **3.3 Selecting the research method**

In interpretive research, the researcher's goal is not to capture a pre-existing reality, but to understand meaning from qualitative data (Klenke, 2008). It was assumed that it would not be possible to obtain value-free data, which is typical for positivist studies (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016), and the author would use his preconceptions to guide the study, so conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews seemed the most applicable research method. In-depth interviews help avoid a positivist mentality in the research, as they give priority to the first-person subjective experience (Crozier, Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

Among a variety of interviewing techniques (structured, unstructured, semi-structured, focused), in-depth semi-structured interviewing was selected, which combines closed-ended and open-ended questions, and allows the option to either omit some questions or to introduce additional ones depending on the specific interview flow (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). The interview

protocol was developed around a list of topics without fixed wording or fixed ordering of questions (please refer to Section 3.4).

As the knowledge was intended to be co-constructed in communication, and the process of identity development is largely shaped by language (Crozier, Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), interviews were conducted in the Russian language. It was important to retrieve the participant's world by understanding their perspective in a language natural to them (Klenke, 2008), to grasp the meaning and construct identity narratives without distortion.

### **3.4 Interview protocol**

Based on the literature review, the initial interview protocol was developed, focusing on two major themes: (1) Russian leadership identity and (2) identity work within a leadership development programme (Appendix B). It was tested within a Pilot Study (six interviews) and further enhanced and reworked (Appendix C).

During the interviews, various parts of the interview protocol (i.e. “Leadership and Russia“ and “MBA journey“) were deliberately presented to research participants in mixed order to ensure the trustworthiness of the interview process. For around half of the participants, the “leadership“ part came first, and the “programme“ part came second, and vice versa for the other half. The rationale behind this was the intention to avoid potential distortion of answers if all interviews were to follow the same order. For example, if the “leadership“ part comes first, it might impact answers in the “leadership identity“ part of the interview, as it could frame participants for specific thinking about leadership development based on co-created meaning, and vice versa. So, the interview parts came in different orders for different participants.

### **3.5 Sampling strategy**

The researcher's objective was to construct a sample that would ensure validity, trustworthiness, and saturation. However, the challenge was that there are literally no guidelines for determining nonprobabilistic sample sizes in the literature (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006), and the concept of saturation is

hard to define (Ness and Fusch, 2015). So, in determining the final sample, the researcher applied the following logic.

First, the mean sample size of qualitative leadership research published in top management journals was identified, which is 26, with only five papers exceeding 35 and eight papers taking conclusions from a sample of six and below. 70% of papers studied a sample that was 30 and below. This analysis provided an initial rough number of interviews.

Second, in their analysis of a number of handbooks and meta-analyses on qualitative research, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson claim that most scholars do not provide substantial justification for their recommendations on sample size, which ranges from five to fifty (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006). At the same time, their own research claims that 12 interviews were enough for saturation to occur, and essential elements for meta themes occurred as early as in the sixth interview.

Third, according to a widely accepted methodological principle in qualitative research, saturation is reached when further data collection or analysis is unnecessary, and the decision about when to stop collecting the data is based on the researcher's sense of what they hear within interviews (Saunders et al., 2018). So, saturation should not be used as a means to saturate theory but as a point "when new information produces little or no change to the codebook" (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; p.65).

Fourth, saturation is believed to be not about sample size but the depth of the data (Burmeister and Aitken, 2012). It is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study (O'Reilly and Parker, 2013), when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006).

Based on the above, the initial decision was taken to first conduct six interviews for the pilot study, analyse and code them. The next step was then to conduct 19 more interviews (25 in total) and finalise the coding structure. Then, five more interviews would be conducted and notes taken if any new concepts appeared in

them. If new interviews do not add further information, the sample would be considered saturated (Klenke, 2008; Ness and Fusch, 2015). If no new concepts appeared in the five concluding interviews, the interview process would stop at 30 interviews, representing around 44% of the research population.

The sampling strategy followed a mix of theoretical and convenience logic (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Two cohorts of MBA participants who were believed to represent the population of emerging Russian business leaders were already formed, relevant to the study and easily accessible for research.

- Cohort 1: 29 participants, including ten women and two non-Russian nationals;
- Cohort 2: 39 participants, including ten women and two non-Russian nationals.

These particular cohorts were selected for the study because their involvement in the programme overlapped with the data collection phase (Cohort 1 finished their studies in August 2019 and graduated in September 2019, while Cohort 2 had their last course in October 2019 and were supposed to officially graduate in May 2020, but only received their diplomas in September 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic). Both cohorts had a similar academic programme, courses, structure, and instructors, with minor differences.

The average participant of the MBA programme was 30 years old (the youngest participant was 25 years old, the oldest was 36). They came from a wide variety of industries in the private and public sectors. Out of 68 participants of the programme, 27 were self-employed entrepreneurs or owners of a business (at the moment of applying for the MBA); the rest were corporate employees. 20 MBA participants were women (29% of the research population). 64 participants were originally from Russia and were born all around the country. Three came from Uzbekistan, Bulgaria and China; one participant had mixed Russian/German citizenship and never lived in Russia. They were not included in the sample.

To be admitted to the MBA programme, participants needed to demonstrate at least three years of managerial experience (seven years on average), submit two

reflective essays, pass quantitative and verbal tests, pass an admission interview and participate in a group discussion of business cases. Up to half of the programme participants obtained scholarships provided by the school - they won a competition with more than 500 applicants. Four research participants were granted scholarships after winning a nationwide contest called "Leaders of Russia" patronised by the Government of the Russian Federation. Participants had to demonstrate leadership capabilities, an entrepreneurial mindset, and social skills within both the scholarship competition and the "Leaders of Russia" contest.

Research participants attended a part-time MBA programme at a leading EQUIS-accredited Russian management school, consisting of 17 modules, each lasting from four to six days, so they did not leave their employers during the study. The academic curriculum of the programme consists of basic managerial disciplines that are specific for most global MBA programmes (corporate finance, financial accounting, managerial accounting, marketing, operations management, leadership, economics, general management, organisational behaviour, project management, negotiations, strategic consulting, digital transformation & innovation), as well as three out-of-residence modules in China (Hong Kong), United States (Silicon Valley) and the Kamchatka peninsula (Russia).

During the programme, MBA participants were exposed to multiple learning formats, including case discussions, project work, teamwork, reflective essays, simulations, leadership games, individual and group coaching, and many others. They also completed a dedicated leadership course, which consisted of four consecutive days on campus, two separate days of leadership simulations and group coaching, five three-hour evening sessions on leadership and management tools, and a closing six-day leadership retreat on the Kamchatka peninsula, which included outdoor activities and reflection sessions. The leadership course within the MBA programme covered mostly situational and transformational leadership concepts, though it had certain focus on identity development with a number of exercises and assignments that stimulated participants to consciously question, reflect on, and revise the way they

understood and presented themselves. The fact that participants of the study were exposed to certain leadership theories during their study could distort results - their understanding of leadership could be shaped by global/Western approaches. This is one limitation of this study, and is discussed in Section 6.4.

The final sample (Table 17) of the research included 30 MBA students with the following characteristics:

- Average age: 32 years at the time of interview;
- Average leadership experience: 7.4 years;
- 12 students from Cohort 1 (41% of the cohort population), 18 students from Cohort 2 (46% of the cohort population);
- 20 men and 10 women. Women represented 50% of the female participants of two cohorts, and 33% of the research sample. None of the participants identified themselves with any other genders.

**Table 17. Final research sample**

| Code | Gender | Cohort   | Age (at the time of interview) | Leadership experience, years |
|------|--------|----------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| M1   | Male   | Cohort 2 | 31                             | 7                            |
| M2   | Male   | Cohort 1 | 34                             | 12                           |
| M3   | Male   | Cohort 1 | 35                             | 3                            |
| M4   | Male   | Cohort 2 | 34                             | 10                           |
| M5   | Male   | Cohort 2 | 29                             | 5                            |
| M6   | Male   | Cohort 2 | 35                             | 10+                          |
| F1   | Female | Cohort 1 | 32                             | 5+                           |
| M7   | Male   | Cohort 2 | 35                             | 8                            |
| F2   | Female | Cohort 2 | 34                             | 7                            |
| F3   | Female | Cohort 2 | 34                             | 1                            |
| F4   | Female | Cohort 2 | 28                             | 6                            |
| M8   | Male   | Cohort 2 | 36                             | 12                           |
| M9   | Male   | Cohort 2 | 30                             | 7                            |
| F5   | Female | Cohort 2 | 31                             | 4                            |
| F6   | Female | Cohort 1 | 27                             | 1                            |
| F7   | Female | Cohort 1 | 35                             | 8,5                          |
| M10  | Male   | Cohort 1 | 34                             | 10                           |
| M11  | Male   | Cohort 1 | 30                             | 7                            |
| M12  | Male   | Cohort 1 | 31                             | 13                           |
| M13  | Male   | Cohort 2 | 26                             | 6                            |
| M14  | Male   | Cohort 2 | 37                             | 7                            |
| M15  | Male   | Cohort 2 | 31                             | 6                            |

| Code | Gender | Cohort   | Age (at the time of interview) | Leadership experience, years |
|------|--------|----------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| M16  | Male   | Cohort 1 | 31                             | 12                           |
| F8   | Female | Cohort 1 | 26                             | 4                            |
| M17  | Male   | Cohort 2 | 30                             | 12                           |
| M18  | Male   | Cohort 1 | 32                             | 11                           |
| F9   | Female | Cohort 2 | 26                             | 5                            |
| M19  | Male   | Cohort 1 | 36                             | 10+                          |
| F10  | Female | Cohort 2 | 32                             | 5                            |
| M20  | Male   | Cohort 2 | 34                             | 10                           |

### 3.6 Data collection

The research participants were contacted primarily via email and digital messengers (WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger) and phone. The purpose of the analysis was phrased broadly as “to research both the personal and professional development process of an individual during their MBA study.”

The interviews were conducted in-person or by phone in the Russian language. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, translated into English by a certified translation agency, checked for accuracy of translation by the author and the second coder and uploaded to nVivo coding software. Also, each interview was stored in bilingual format, with a side-by-side comparison of the Russian and English versions.

The pilot study was conducted in December 2019. It included six participants who were randomly selected. Based on the pilot study, the interview protocol was finalised and adapted - repeated questions were eliminated, and prompts and probes were added to the remaining ones. For example, the theme of communication/relations with other classmates appeared critical for leadership identity work, as well as topics of how research participants perceive the school and the programme (they used various metaphors). Also, in the pilot study, participants referred to role models in their leadership development and to their first leadership experience as important milestones. These topics were added to the updated interview protocol. Please refer to the original and the final interview protocols in Appendix B and Appendix C.

The first interview was conducted on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and the twenty-fifth on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Meanwhile, the author was reading interview notes and noted down all relevant concepts and critical ideas mentioned by the research participants: they became the basis for the Level 1 coding structure. The initial coding structure was ready by the end of March 2020. The remaining five interviews were conducted in April 2020: they did not bring new knowledge to the research (no new codes or nodes in nVivo), so the sample was considered saturated (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Klenke, 2008; Ness and Fusch, 2015).

Each participant signed a written interview consent form (Appendix D). On average, an interview lasted fifty-six minutes and covered all questions from the interview protocol. There were no questions that participants refused to answer, although they were informed in the consent form that they could skip any question, and participation in the research was voluntary.

As a result, nearly 1,000 pages of text in two languages was available for the analysis. A sample interview transcript is presented in Appendix E.

### **3.7 Data analysis and coding**

The interview text was considered the narrative, or story, which a participant gave about significant events that happened to them during the MBA programme. Therefore, the unit of analysis was the whole narrative as a story, as well as specific paragraphs, phrases and sentences.

Thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) and narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993) were the main methods of analysing the transcribed text. The analysis and coding were performed in the English language, primarily because nVivo software did not support Russian language at the moment of analysis, and also to ensure that the interview transcripts could be accessed and checked by English-speaking reviewers.

First, the entire text was read repeatedly to obtain a sense of the whole story/narrative. During this phase, for confidentiality purposes, all personal

names were deleted from interview transcripts and the name of the business school.

Second, the first tentative thematic coding structure was built around themes that were embedded in the interview protocol (i.e. “Pre-MBA identity“, “Russian leadership“, “MBA goals“, “Metaphor“ etc.), or appeared in interviews and were salient across many cases (“Kamchatka“, “Teamwork“, “Responsibility“) (ref. to Appendix F). These Level 1, or open codes (Yin, 2016), were intended to bring various opinions together, compare them and find connections between broader issues. For example, many participants mentioned the Kamchatka expedition as a highlight of the programme, which invoked many emotional struggles and was valuable for their identity work. Therefore, the Level 1 code was “Kamchatka“, which was further deepened with more detailed codes describing what happened to programme participants in Kamchatka (i.e. “Conflict“, “Feedback“, “Self-awareness“). Another example is the “Metaphor“ code, which included various metaphors that participants used to describe the school and the programme. Later, this code was deconstructed into several codes (see below). Normally, each interview included 30-45 Level 1 codes and 60-100 references to those codes.

Additionally, the Russian versions of interviews were read separately to ensure that the main themes were correctly identified and to cross-check the English language coding process.

The author coded six pilot interviews. The rest of the interviews were coded first by the second coder and then verified by the author. The second coder was a doctorate researcher in a leading Russian economics and management university. In case of disagreement, a face-to-face meeting was organised to resolve it. The sixth and seventh interviews returned around 75% intercoder agreement, and after the face-to-face meetings, the percentage of agreement rose to more than 90%.

Third, the analysis moved to an axial coding principle (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The author consolidated codes into categories and restructured them several times to achieve consistency between them, the literature and the research

objectives. For example, the “Metaphor” code was deconstructed into “Family and Community”, “Adventure, Exploration”, “Training (scout) camp”, and “Confirmation and Permission”. Many new codes emerged at this point, like “Self-confidence”, “Taking responsibility”, “Acceptance and rejection” and others.

Fourth, the data under new codes was analysed, keeping in mind the identity literature and major concepts. As dictated by the abductive approach, the data was analysed as it was collected, constantly moving back and forth among transcripts and literature (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). The coding structure was gradually reworked to reflect the process of leadership identity work which was described as a result of the analysis process. The final coding structure, including a number of files and references for each code, is presented in Appendix G.

Fifth, initial findings were consolidated in a narrative story and supported with quotes from interviews. Within the Russian leadership identity section, salient characteristics of Russian leadership identity were described; when comparing them with “to-be” leadership identity, it became clear that there was a conflict between archetypal characteristics of a Russian leader and the desired leadership identity of emerging Russian leaders. Within the identity work section, the findings were presented as the pathway of an MBA participant through the programme, highlighting key phases, trigger events and key elements of the programme that stimulated identity consolidation.

Finally, the findings were critically reviewed through the lens of literature, the process model of identity work within the programme was finalised, and a claim for their theoretical contribution was brought forward.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

The author is aware of the Cranfield Research Integrity Policy Statement (Stephenson, 2020) and shares the Cranfield imperative approach to recognising personal responsibility for developing and maintaining sound and rigorous research practices. In line with Cranfield University requirements, ethical approval of the study was obtained through CURES.

To minimise ethical risks, the following ethical issues were considered:

- Informed consent to participate in the research was sought and obtained from each participant (Appendix D).
- Within the research, participants shared information about their personal and professional lives, including details about their relationships with other people. Therefore, the data was held confidentially. Nobody else was present at any of the interviews.
- No participant's personal data is available to third parties (i.e. their names, as well as any indication that could lead to the disclosure of their identities, were either deleted or replaced with codes, i.e. M1 or F10).
- Audio recordings of the interviews were erased within 14 days after the interviews.
- During the interviews, the author ensured that the interviewees were protected from physical, emotional, psychological, or any kind of damage. Interviews were taken predominantly in participants' offices or at the business school. All premises had strict health and safety policies in place, and each interview started with a short safety instruction.
- Participants had the right to skip any question and to freely withdraw at any stage of the process. In this case, all their data would have been deleted and excluded from the research. At the time of thesis submission, none of them had used any of these options.

The researcher conducted all interviews either in person or via voice communication (phone call/Skype/WhatsApp call). From March 2020 onwards, interviews were taken only via voice communication to ensure anti-COVID-19 safety. Health and safety issues prior to collecting data were considered in accordance with the Cranfield Health and Safety Policy statement.

### **3.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter discussed how the author adopted an interpretivist ontology and a social constructionist epistemology in designing the empirical study. It was outlined how an abductive research strategy was chosen and the stance of insider and learner was taken by the researcher. Further, the qualitative

methodology was explained, including its sampling strategy, resulting in 30 semi-structured interviews. Finally, data collection and analysis were discussed in detail, followed by ethical considerations.



## **4 FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Chapter introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the empirical study. As there were two angles in the research reflected in two research questions and the interview structure, this chapter is also structured around Russian leadership identity and identity work within a leadership development programme. Section 4.2. discusses the components of Russian leadership identity, how emerging Russian leaders identify themselves, and how their identity corresponds with prevailing views about Russian leaders. Section 4.3. explores how leadership identity changes throughout the programme and which factors play a critical role in this process. Section 4.4 puts special emphasis on management education institutions and their role in the identity work process.

### **4.2 Russian leadership identity: “What does it take to be a leader?”**

#### **4.2.1 The word “leader” is not internalised by emerging Russian leaders**

Out of 30 respondents, not a single one mentioned the word “leader” while answering the question “Tell me about yourself briefly. Who are you?”. Although these people graduated from a globally-accredited English-speaking MBA programme, completed a specialised leadership development course, demonstrated leadership behaviour, and led teams of people on average for more than seven years at the moment of study, they did not think of themselves as “leaders”. Their dominant identities related to their occupation (“entrepreneur”, “manager”), family situation (“father”, “husband”), hobbies (“triathlete”, “hiker”) or professional and educational background (“marketing expert”, “engineer”, “computer scientist”). They simply did not use this word in their language:

[During the programme] I was asked: are you a leader? I said... “Yes”. I just never put it into categories like that – I just worked. (M8)

As the process of identity construction is largely shaped by language (Frimann and Hersted, 2016), this finding may be shaped by the linguistic context in which

emerging Russian leaders developed their consciousness, particularly related to the absence of this word in the Russian language.

Despite being bombarded with leadership concepts throughout the MBA programme, some participants were not even sure that they wanted to be “leaders”. Not only did they avoid using the word, but they were not even very attracted to the concept of leadership in general, or indicated that they were “comfortable being number two” (F7):

I feel so awkward. “Leader, leader, leader... “I don't feel it yet. I'm still on my way. I'm just learning. (F8)

#### 4.2.2 Main themes arising from data

As instructed by Gioia methodology (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013), the data from interviews was structured using 1<sup>st</sup> order concepts, 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes, and aggregate dimensions.

The main dimensions that were identified as a result of coding and analysis were “leadership is about people” (36 mentions in 19 interviews), “having a vision and a goal” (17 mentions in 14 interviews), “taking responsibility/ownership” (27 mentions in 12 interviews) and “having confidence and inner strength” (20 mentions in 12 interviews).

Other less salient characteristics of a leader in Russia were “authenticity” (6 participants mentioned), “delivering results” (6), “toughness” (5) and “building context” (4). Below is the table which summarises mentions of various leadership concepts by research participants in their leadership narratives.

**Table 18. Most frequently mentioned leadership characteristics of a leader in Russia.**

| Aggregate dimension/ theme | Number of participants to mention | % of the sample | Number of mentions | Sample quotes (with code of the respondent)                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leadership is about people | 19                                | 63%             | 36                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “[Leadership development] is an internal transformation in relations with people.” (M6)</li> </ul> |

| Aggregate dimension/<br>theme        | Number of<br>participants<br>to mention | % of<br>the<br>sample | Number<br>of<br>mentions | Sample quotes (with code of the<br>respondent)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                      |                                         |                       |                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Leadership is the process of moving forward when someone willingly follows you.” (F1)</li> <li>• “Leadership is the right understanding and immersion into the people who surround you” (F3)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                |
| Having a vision and a goal           | 14                                      | 47%                   | 17                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “A leader is a person who is a visionary and has enough energy to lead other people” (F2)</li> <li>• “[A leader] is a person who has their own goal” (F4)</li> <li>• “Leadership means seeing the path and having the courage to follow it so that others want to follow you.” (M18)</li> </ul>                         |
| Taking responsibility/<br>ownership  | 12                                      | 40%                   | 27                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Leadership means taking responsibility for decisions that I and my team will implement” (M2)</li> <li>• “Leadership is an opportunity to take responsibility” (M9)</li> <li>• “Leadership is readiness to take responsibility and an opportunity to bring value.” (F6)</li> </ul>                                      |
| Having confidence and inner strength | 12                                      | 40%                   | 20                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “They are not afraid to be different from somebody else and can express their own point of view without fear”. (M4)</li> <li>• “The first thing in a leader is their inner aura, this is inner confidence, an inner core” (M6)</li> <li>• “Leadership is presence of emotional and internal strength”. (M10)</li> </ul> |
| Authenticity                         | 6                                       | 20%                   | 7                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Everyone chooses the method that suits them the most”. (M3)</li> <li>• “They are not afraid to be different from somebody else”. (M4)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Delivering result                    | 6                                       | 20%                   | 9                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “A leader is a person who can ensure the team’s achievement of a result”. (M3)</li> <li>• “Leadership work is about showing the result.” (M8)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                |
| Toughness                            | 5                                       | 17%                   | 9                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “They can make some unpopular decisions, but they are necessary”. (M4)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Building context                     | 4                                       | 13%                   | 4                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Leadership is about creating an environment in the team around you and conditions when people start doing what you want them to do”. (M14)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                  |

Sections 4.2.3. – 4.2.8. dive deep into the four main characteristics of leadership as described by emerging Russian business leaders.

#### **4.2.3 A leader is one who takes responsibility (ownership) for themselves and people around**

When discussing leadership, the concept of responsibility/ownership (Russian: “ответственность”, [*otvi’etstvienost*]) was one of the most frequently mentioned characteristic of either the leadership process or the leader's personal traits. 12 participants said it explicitly when they were asked about leadership; many others implicitly meant responsibility/ownership as a key leadership trait.

An entrepreneur developing her own startup in the fashion industry summarised: “Leadership is about taking responsibility” (F2). Her classmates elaborated that a leader is the only one who “does not take a victim stance...and is a hundred per cent responsible” (M16), “to yourself and to other people” (M2), “here and now” (M4). One participant even tried to trace this back in Russian history and culture, arguing that responsibility is not a typical Russian trait; hence anyone who takes it gains authority by default:

[As a leader, one has to play] the role of the father in a sense, and responsibility for the society in which you live, which you serve. It is not due to a sense of duty, but due to a sense of a strong position, that is, it is caring. (M12)

When talking about their first leadership experience, 13 participants highlighted the moment when they took responsibility for the first time. In many cases, this situation happened in their childhood - whether it was an attack by a wild dog, a hike in the woods, or the death of a father. So, the study suggests that, for more than a third of research participants, leadership development is closely associated with the ability to take responsibility for decisions and for other people. A serial entrepreneur frames it this way:

Leadership is an opportunity to take responsibility. It's when you can find resources within yourself and an understanding that right now your actions will lead people along and that you will be responsible for the results. If you are responsible for the results and, understanding that, you accept this responsibility, that means that you are a leader, among other things. It's not in any way

connected to an ability to talk passionately, to motivate people. You just have to see the results. You are not sure what to do next, and no one is, but one person stands up and says, “Listen, I think I know what we should do”. (M9)

Most of the research participants had already graduated from the MBA programme at the moment of interview, so their answers could have been framed by their experience in the programme, as it could have a certain leadership stance. For example, the leadership course in the programme could have an emphasis on taking responsibility as a core leadership behaviour. Though the author is aware of the programme that the participants had in their leadership course, and the responsibility concept was not among core components of the programme (it was based predominantly on the situational leadership concept and self-awareness tools), this limitation is discussed in detail in Section 6.4.

#### **4.2.4 Leaders are confident in who they are and what they do**

Research participants were nearly unanimous - a leader is a person who is confident in themselves and in their direction. Taking responsibility requires a lot of inner strength and solid confidence, including in oneself. “Having a backbone” (M2) and an “inner aura, inner core” (M6) is crucial to respecting oneself first, then respecting others and not asserting oneself at the expense of other people. Although a leader is “a person who can see further than others” (M8), whose job is to “see the path” (M18), “inspire and form a vision” (F5), they need this type of confidence when they come to communicating this vision to other people. 14 participants (nearly half of the sample) mentioned a clear vision:

Leadership means seeing the path and having the courage to follow it so that others want to follow you. (M18)

I think that a leader is a kind of magician, a person who can create that image... People start to believe in it, and it materialises. This idea becomes so tangible that it attracts a great number of people and begins to really exist. Leadership is the strength level of that magic. (M19)

At the same time, 12 participants mentioned confidence and ‘inner strength’ as core leadership competences. Moreover, they share this confidence with other people, so others readily follow them:

They are very self-confident. In a good sense. That is, they do not try to assert themselves at the expense of other people. (M11)

[Leadership] is about transferring this confidence to other people. (M20)

They know what they want. They have enough inner strength and energy to realise what they want. (F9)

#### **4.2.5 A leader maintains the right balance between human relations and business results**

Though Russian management culture is often characterised as lacking participation and humane orientation (House et al., 2013), the research suggests that emerging Russian business leaders have started to emphasise the relational aspect of leadership and value empathy and care to people:

Leadership is the recognition of the fact that you can implement new ideas and realise complex tasks by people surrounding you. And the people surrounding you are ready to follow you. (M6)

Although 12 respondents explicitly mentioned that “leadership is measured as a result” (M3), half of the total sample (15) suggested that the result should be balanced with building relations. A top manager in a real estate company argued that one has “to be result-oriented and respect your team [at the same time]” (F7). A manager at a leading Russian research university went further:

Talking about leadership, I realised that people are the most important thing and always will be, no matter what. I mean, not even people, but relationships — you should be generous investing in relationships, because they are the only thing that endures. (M10)

The study suggests that being attentive to people, demonstrating empathy and caring about them while being tough at the same time (“[A leader] can make some decisions, which are unpopular but necessary” (M4)) are the characteristics of the archetypal leader which are embedded in the leadership identity of emerging



for them, and they even divided leaders into 'them' and 'us' in their language. They preferred not to associate themselves with the 'traditional' Russian leadership model which, they believed, was very authoritarian, lacked empathy and a focus on people, welcomed a top-down and hierarchical approach, and implied centralisation, paternalism and over-usage of power:

In the Russian context, the leader is the pushiest person, often an alpha male. <...> It seems to me that after the Soviet Union, the Russian mentality implies the idea that there is someone who is big and who can 'beat' us. But his beating is a sign of love. (M18)

In this culture, being 'soft' and 'not being able to knock on the table' were considered weaknesses (M11), emotions were not welcome and the 'divide and conquer' principle (F7), multiplied by a tendency to avoid responsibility, led to the attractiveness of an authoritarian management style:

If we are talking about the older generation, I could say that they use an almost military approach, like hierarchy is above all else for them, and what the commander-in-chief has said must be done, even if you believe that he is wrong (F5).

#### **4.2.7 Russian leadership identity is changing and converging with the 'Western' one**

Although research participants demonstrated a rather negative attitude towards traditional Russian leadership culture, they were nearly unanimous that it is undergoing significant transformation as part of a generational change that is happening now (22 respondents explicitly mentioned this during their interviews).

At the same time, one person out of 30 believed that the authoritarian leadership style was not changing with generations, though they did give the new generation the chance to develop an alternative leadership model:

We are going back to [the old] model. The new generation of managers growing up - who are 25 years old - they are more Soviet in style than those who are 35 or 40 because they are going back to the system where everything is distributed from the top. I expect that the styles of leadership in Russia are going to become

very polarised in the future. The majority of the managers (I think that mostly they are concentrated in the government sector now) are going to be of the 'Soviet' type ... (M7)

Still, most emerging leaders believed that leaders in Russia were becoming less rigid and more open to feedback, new behaviour, and new experiences:

People who grew up in the USSR are all about power, rigidity, and unwillingness to change, but I think that each new generation is becoming progressively more open. (M9)

Four research participants explicitly mentioned openness as one of the key differences between 'old' and 'new' leaders, for example:

The younger generation is becoming more open, less hierarchical, and rigid. Speaking on the whole, I believe that you could see the new generation of leaders on our programme. It's way less important for them which rung of the ladder you are on compared to the contribution you make to the group with your thoughts and actions. I think though that it's like that everywhere, not only in Russia. We are all becoming less hierarchical and more open societies. (F6)

If we consider people over 45, I think that the border is somewhere there, then the older generation is not open to something new. If they learn something in a certain way, they try to act in the same way. Even more, they try to involve others. If someone does something differently, they consider it wrong. It is very difficult to put any new models or approaches into their heads. Young people appear to be more open and ready for experiments, and they easily switch from one style to another. They are more flexible. (F2)

Openness brings a variety of interests, and emerging leaders believed that representatives of the younger generation were better at maintaining a proper balance between various parts of their lives. It is not about working around the clock; they wanted to spend time with their families, have time for a hobby and for sport, and "to achieve something without fanaticism" (F2).

Simultaneously, the stereotype of "authoritarian and directive Russians" (Ardichvili, Cardozo and Gasparishvili, 1998; Elenkov, 1998; Saidov, 2014)

seems to be transforming, with task delegation and democratic management becoming the new normal:

I understand clearly that we have an older generation - aged 35 and over - that is heavily squeezed, and their vision of leadership is a military one, where if a person is soft, can't knock on the table and kick everyone's ass, then they are not a leader. What about the younger generation? They don't work that way. (M11)

Five research participants spoke about a less authoritarian management style and a tendency for building a less hierarchical structure. For example, a 36-year-old entrepreneur from the construction industry said:

People have become freer inside, and they do not tolerate the authoritarian style any more (M8),

A 26-year-old manager from a large state-owned industrial corporation agreed:

Our generation already wants to give more creativity and see the initiative in our employees (F8),

Adding emotional and relational components to the national leadership equation was also a big topic mentioned in the interviews. Trust and partnership were big themes around which emerging Russian business leaders have started to build their leadership practices:

I can say that trust is becoming very important here. Before, nobody talked about it at all, and now, if a company does not trust its employees, it is not a modern company. (M8)

When they talked about their own leadership styles, 19 participants explicitly described themselves as more people-centric and their leadership style as a 'soft' one, which once again stresses the proposition that Russia's prevailing leadership style is undergoing a major transformation.

The perception of communication with people has changed a lot, the aggression in communication has gone, the pressure, the persistence and the desire to control everything has gone — a drastic change. I think this was a negative factor of my personality in the past. (M6)

The study suggests that perceptions about effective leadership styles in Russia are changing — at least if we look at things through the eyes of two-thirds of emerging leaders who attended a selective MBA programme. At the same time, the research indicates that there is a gap between Russian social leadership identity (the archetypical image of a leader in Russian culture) and the provisional leadership identity of emerging Russian business leaders (who they want to become based on their personal role models and concrete examples), which creates internal tension. They feel that their leadership values, behaviours and styles are very different from those of the previous generation, and they see more and more encouraging examples of their peers who are transforming the leadership culture in the country.

As recommended by Cloutier and Ravasi (Cloutier and Ravasi, 2021), to ensure the trustworthiness of the research, Table 19 summarises the difference in perceptions about leadership in Russia as described in the literature and as described by emerging Russian business leaders.

**Table 19. Characteristics of leadership in Russia: comparison.**

| <b>Characteristics of leadership in Russia as described in the literature</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Characteristics of the 'old' generation of Russian leaders as described by emerging Russian business leaders (brackets introduce number of mentions/interviews)</b>                                               | <b>Characteristics of effective leadership as described by emerging Russian business leaders (brackets introduce number of mentions/interviews)</b>                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• autonomous and self-protective (Welch, Javidan and House, 2002),</li> <li>• collectivist and having high power distance (Bollinger, 1994; Hofstede, 1980; Naumov and Puffer, 2000; Ralston and Holt, 1996; Ronen and Shenkar, 1985),</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authoritarian and hierarchical (14/11),</li> <li>• powerful and aggressive (10/7),</li> <li>• strong and rigid (8/6),</li> <li>• paternalistic/supporting (5/3).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• care about people (36/19),</li> <li>• have a vision and a goal (17/14),</li> <li>• take responsibility/ownership (27/12),</li> </ul> |

| <b>Characteristics of leadership in Russia as described in the literature</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Characteristics of the 'old' generation of Russian leaders as described by emerging Russian business leaders (brackets introduce number of mentions/interviews)</b> | <b>Characteristics of effective leadership as described by emerging Russian business leaders (brackets introduce number of mentions/interviews)</b>                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• authoritarian (Ardichvili, Cardozo and Gasparishvili, 1998; Elenkov, 1998; Saidov, 2014),</li> <li>• autocratic (Puffer and McCarthy, 2011; Suutari, 1998),</li> <li>• authoritative (Kets de Vries, 2001; Kets de Vries and Florent-Treacy, 1999),</li> <li>• centralised (Puffer, 1994),</li> <li>• paternalistic and focused on relations (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1993),</li> <li>• hierarchical and top-down (Meyer, 2017),</li> <li>• transactional, rather than transformational, leadership model (McCarthy et al., 2008; Puffer and McCarthy, 2011).</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have confidence and inner strengths (20/12),</li> <li>• authentic (7/6),</li> <li>• deliver a result (9/6),</li> <li>• tough (9/5),</li> <li>• build context (5/5).</li> </ul> |

This dichotomy between the picture of an ideal leader and national archetypes creates anxiety and limits their development — they were hesitant about which pattern to apply to themselves. For example, despite criticising toughness and controlling behaviour, some of them wanted to become more rigid and more controlling:

One of my weaknesses is a lack of control. <...> I don't like being controlled, and it is difficult for me to control; but I should give feedback, systematic feedback. That would be really cool. (M2)

Based on the above, the study suggests that the journey through the MBA programme was an opportunity for research participants to develop their own leadership identity and seek role models and leadership prototypes. Table 20 summarises the main leadership characteristics that are believed to reflect an emerging Russian social leadership identity and their relevance to prevailing leadership theories.

**Table 20. Main characteristics of Russian leadership as described by emerging Russian business leaders**

| <b>Aggregate dimension/<br/>theme</b> | <b>% of the sample</b> | <b>Definition</b>                                                                                                                                 | <b>Relevance to existing theories</b>                                  |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leadership is about people            | 63%                    | A leader is attentive to other people, understands them, demonstrates empathy and cares.<br>A leader builds strong bond with followers and peers. | Trait theory (Stogdill, 1948)                                          |
| Having a vision and a goal            | 47%                    | A leader has a clear orientation on achieving a goal and, respectively, has a clear vision of a result.                                           | Transformational leadership (Bass, 1990)                               |
| Taking responsibility/ownership       | 40%                    | A leader takes responsibility for decisions, actions, oneself, and other people.                                                                  | Trait theory (Stogdill, 1948; Northouse, 2019)                         |
| Having confidence and inner strength  | 40%                    | A leader has strong confidence and self-efficacy.                                                                                                 | Trait theory (Northouse, 2019)<br>Identity theory (Mayo, 2012)         |
| Authenticity                          | 20%                    | A leader is true to their personality and values.                                                                                                 | Authentic leadership (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; George and Sims, 2007) |
| Delivering result                     | 20%                    | A leader is someone who cares about results and effectiveness above all.                                                                          | Behavioural approach/ Managerial Grid (Blake and Mouton, 1964)         |

| Aggregate dimension/<br>theme | % of the sample | Definition                                                                          | Relevance to existing theories                                                                             |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                               |                 |                                                                                     | Situational leadership (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969)                                                        |
| Toughness                     | 17%             | A leader is ready to take tough decisions and actions that may impact other people. | Ethical leadership (Heifetz, 1998)                                                                         |
| Building context              | 13%             | A leader creates an environment in which followers achieve their top performance.   | Servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970; Mittal and Dorfman, 2012)<br>Transformational leadership (Bass, 1990) |

#### 4.2.8 Outliers: bringing more opinions to the discussion

This research does not profess to provide a comprehensive competence model for leading in Russia. Based on the interviews, a list of the most appealing leadership characteristics was developed, though there was a number of outliers which do not fit into the presented model. Based on a pluralistic approach to leadership, the assumption that there should be common understanding of leadership and that there is one 'right' image of a leader is challenged by modern researchers, and we have to hear and integrate different voices (Kezar, 2000). That is why it is important to quote some responses and images that stand out from the prevailing leadership discourse of emerging Russian business leaders.

First of all, at least two participants explicitly stated that there is no shift in leadership perceptions in Russia, that leaders remain authoritarian and directive, and that this trend is not going to change within next few decades, because the context is not changing, and the new generation keeps working the same way as the previous one.

I think that everything we call purely Russian methods: the teams, the bosses and so on, it's all still there. <...> I expect that styles of leadership in Russia are going to become very polarised in the future. The majority of the managers (I

think that everything is concentrating in the government sector now) are going to be of the 'Soviet' type: kind of arrogant guys... (M7).

Second, seven participants initially defined leadership as a set of personal traits, which is in line with the trait theory of leadership (described in Section 1.3.1). These traits were not exactly in line with the 'characteristics' approach selected by the researcher. For example, charisma was mentioned more often than other traits (nine times), in relation to both leadership traits and to describing the most appealing leadership prototypes.

For me, a leader is not necessarily a person who must have some skills, they do not necessarily have any knowledge in this process. Nevertheless, they have an inner core, charisma, which makes people follow them (M6).

A leader is a charismatic person. Yeah, they have charisma and they are persuasive, i.e. they are a good speaker. I mean all those intangible things (F5).

Although in most cases charisma was mentioned with the implicit understanding that it is an inborn quality, further in interviews, participants contradicted this and came to the conclusion that one may develop oneself as a leader.

Third, there was some disagreement between participants with regard to a leader's 'inner peace'. Six participants mentioned authenticity as the core trait of a leader, twelve said that confidence and the inner core are critical for leadership, but one person insisted that leadership emerges from an 'inner conflict':

Leaders are people with the most powerful internal conflict. The basis for this conflict is the gap between where this person really is and where they want to be, and this gap does not give them any peace, and an energy mechanism is launched when they start to close this gap. And when this mechanism starts, they feel increased anxiety, and this anxiety makes them sleep poorly. At night they think about all sorts of things, maybe, some new ideas, some new startups... It's a genetically programmed mechanism (M19).

Fourth, there was no unanimity concerning the gender aspects of leadership. Although it was not the main aim of the study, gender issues arose in several interviews, and opinions about 'male' and 'female' leadership diverged. While ten

participants mentioned specific leadership traits and behaviours that differentiate women from men (e.g. thoroughness, attention to detail, warmth, better soft skills, more emotional), five respondents clearly said that there is no difference between gender when it comes to leadership:

Female leaders are more interesting and thoughtful than men. If a woman becomes a leader, she can become a better leader than a man. Women, in my opinion, have a certain intuition, better feelings and imagination. A man is often quite straightforward and less cunning, thoughtful, more impulsive than a woman. A woman in this regard is more thoughtful and less impulsive, which gives her an advantage as a leader (M6).

I guess there is no difference if we are talking about leadership. Yes, of course, there are a lot of differences, but if we talk about leadership, then a woman as well as a man can be a great leader (M8).

Fifth, there was variation in opinions on the topic of the context of leadership in Russia: from a very different environment compared with the West to just a “variation of the norm.” For example, five participants noted that, in Russia, leadership is exercised in a rough and aggressive environment, where one needs to “push elbows” (M6), accept violence (M10) and use swear words (F4) to be respected, heard and understood:

In Russia, leadership is [executed in] quite an aggressive environment where you need to constantly study, move, push your elbows at some point or vice versa, be flexible enough to get ahead (M6).

Finally, one participant even questioned the whole research idea, because he was not sure that there were leaders in Russia aged twenty-five to forty. According to his view, they developed their consciousness in the times of rapid economic growth of 2000s and were not ready for times of recession and turbulence:

I do not see [new leaders in Russia]. There are individuals who do their projects, solve their problems, and they have their own businesses being quite successful. However, leaders, if comparing these same people with the founders of the school, they do not have the same vision and scale. They are leaders only in their

industry, in their company, in their business. The founders of the school have a more global vision of leadership in terms of mentoring, philanthropy, community formation, and communication with the authorities. They developed their leadership at a completely different time. They developed leadership in a period of fairly good trust between people. Now, unfortunately, in my opinion, there is no trust between people, or it is discounted very much compared to what it was in the 1990s and 2000s (M6).

As can be seen in Section 4.2 and specifically in 4.2.8., there was variation in responses and opinions about leadership in Russia. Different people pointed out the various traits, styles and behaviours of Russian leaders, which initially created challenges for the researcher. However, incorporating more diverse voices in the research helped to demonstrate that in any social group there are multiple leadership perspectives that need to be considered (Kezar, 2000) and supported literature which claims that an effective leader needs to be capable of executing paradoxical leadership, i.e. integrating various styles of leadership (Pearce et al., 2019).

### **4.3 The identity development journey on the MBA programme: “Do I have the right to lead?”**

Analysis of participants’ narratives suggests that over 18 months of the MBA journey most of them passed through four phases of identity work: preparation (30 participants mentioned various elements of it), orientation (25 participants), experimentation (30 participants), and confirmation (30 participants).

#### **4.3.1 Preparation phase: “Am I good enough?”**

Participants recall that the beginning of the programme was a time of uncertainty. 15 (half of them) felt insecure and lacked confidence in themselves, with anxiety the primary emotion they experienced as they did not know what to expect in the upcoming 18 months of their MBA journey. Although most of them (22 respondents) explicitly expressed that their main goal in enrolling in the MBA programme was to acquire new knowledge and skills, they had an implicit desire to change themselves because they felt that their current identity was not aligned with their aspirations. Half of them (15) wanted to make a change in their life,

seven participants mentioned an intention to start their own business, 13 wanted to make a step up in responsibility within their existing careers, and they hoped that the programme and the institution would help them. Table 21 and Figure 6 summarise the data structure for analysis of the Preparation Phase of identity work.

**Table 21. Data structure for the Preparation Phase analysis**

| 2 <sup>nd</sup> order theme                 | 1 <sup>st</sup> order concept | Number of respondents and % of the sample (in brackets) | Sample quotes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Self efficacy at the start of the programme | Low leader efficacy           | 15 (50%)                                                | <p>"I thought that I wasn't competent enough." (M1)</p> <p>"It seemed that I was in the wrong place. Well, I was just ashamed that I was among such successful people." (M3)</p> <p>"I became outdated personally, as did my knowledge and the pace of life." (F2)</p> <p>"On the second module, I realised that I was probably the weakest student compared to the other guys." (F3)</p> <p>"I used to think that I wasn't good enough." (M17)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                             | High leader efficacy          | 10 (33%)                                                | <p>"At the beginning of my leadership experience, I had quite a big crown on my head. I thought I was the centre of the world." (M2)</p> <p>"I was very self-confident and very aggressive in communication. Also, I was very persistent." (M6)</p> <p>"I used to think that, in general, I knew a lot about management because I had a certain experience. I thought that, generally, I had a good chance of being one of the best students in on the course, in terms of results." (M7)</p> <p>"I've always thought that I may have some innate, natural leadership skills." (M11)</p> <p>"I had a feeling that I could do anything, that I was ten feet tall." (M12)</p> |
|                                             | "I was fine"                  | 1 (3%)                                                  | "I conceptualised myself just fine." (M9)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Initial aim of enrolling                    | Acquire knowledge             | 22 (73%)                                                | "Initially, I viewed my studies just as a matter of skills, namely acquiring of knowledge." (M5)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| 2 <sup>nd</sup> order theme | 1 <sup>st</sup> order concept | Number of respondents and % of the sample (in brackets) | Sample quotes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| on the MBA programme        |                               |                                                         | “One thing that was important for me was to strengthen certain basic knowledge and skills forming the foundation that lets me move forward as a manager.” (M7)                                                                                                                                                                           |
|                             | Make a change                 | 15 (50%)                                                | <p>“I decided to enrol in the MBA course because I faced a difficult choice and did not dare to make it.” (M2)</p> <p>“It was important for me to leave the comfort zone that I’d got used to.” (M7)</p> <p>“I saw external changes and I thought I had to apply to the programme.” (M11)</p>                                            |
|                             | Develop network               | 14 (47%)                                                | <p>“The main issue for me was that I literally had no network.” (M3)</p> <p>“I basically thought that when I joined the MBA, I would widen my circle of acquaintances.” (F1)</p>                                                                                                                                                         |
|                             | Explore options               | 13 (43%)                                                | <p>“My main goal was to try to find answers to the internal questions that I had.” (M4)</p> <p>“I decided to do the MBA because at some point I realised that, primarily, I had got a little bored of jurisprudence.” (F1)</p> <p>“When I started, there was no clear idea of where I saw myself at the end of the programme.” (M13)</p> |
|                             | Start own business            | 7                                                       | <p>“I specifically wanted to start my own business again, to establish some kind of startup.” (F2)</p> <p>“My goal was, first of all, to implement [my own] project.” (F3)</p> <p>“I’m one of those people who came to the programme with the idea of starting my own business.” (F6)</p>                                                |

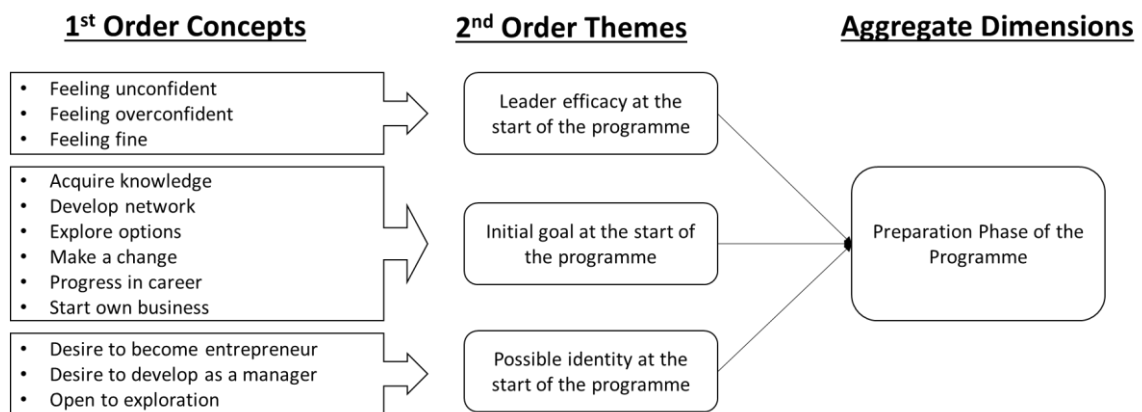


**Figure 6. Data structure for the Preparation Phase analysis**

***Dual objective at the start of the programme: achievement vs exploration***

22 research participants mentioned a perceived lack of business knowledge and managerial skills as their primary goal in enrolling in the MBA programme. Statements like “[My goal was] to strengthen certain basic knowledge and skills forming the foundation to let me move forward as a manager” (M7) and “I needed the knowledge to use specific tools to understand where to start” (F2) were ubiquitous in their attempts to explain their primary motives. In their words, they needed this knowledge because they either wanted to end up somewhere they had never been before, like management consulting, or expected that it would help them completely change their professional path.

While some participants had straightforward career and business objectives, others considered this year a journey and an opportunity for professional and personal exploration (ten participants). For example, as the school is famous in Russia for its entrepreneurial focus, about a third of participants mentioned the dilemma between corporate and entrepreneurial careers, hoping that the school would help them solve it. Thus, at the start of the programme, many of them did not have an articulated identity that they wanted to achieve by the end of their MBA studies, and wanted to use this opportunity to test new identities (in particular, an entrepreneurial one — six research participants considered this a possible identity at the end of the programme).

In most cases, these exploratory motives were informed by personal and emotional factors. Some participants were experiencing struggles in their current careers (“It seemed to me that I should get out of this environment, away from the structure of vertical management, and look for options of working in more flat structures.” (M6)), while others just wanted to try something new: “[For me it was] an opportunity to try myself as an entrepreneur. Because ever since I was a child <...> my dad always told both my sister and me that our family would not be good in business,” (F7).

Though it was not very salient at the start of the programme, identity exploration was already among the top reasons to join the MBA programme: one-third of research participants mentioned it as one of their primary driving motivators for joining the programme. For example, a former actor stated: “My goal was to change my life” (F3), and a manager in a large industrial corporation framed it:

I was at some fork in the road, and I probably needed fresh air, as well as a new external opinion about me. <...> My main goal was to try to find answers to the internal questions that I had. (M4)

As in the case of other top-ranked MBA programmes, participants sought not only new knowledge and new careers, but also new acquaintances and an expansion of their personal and professional network (13 participants mentioned this as one of their primary goals). This new network would bring “new friends”, “new clients”, “something new for myself” (F1) and, more importantly, they wanted to use it “to break away, to get into another circle,” (M7).

### ***Identity struggle: does my identity fit my aspirations?***

Despite the variety of goals that participants pursued at the start of the programme, they shared one common characteristic: they had the feeling that their current identity did not fit the professional goals they had set. Despite all their achievements before the programme, they were afraid that they lacked something, be it objective knowledge or subjective self-confidence.

The notion of self-confidence was explicitly repeated by participants in interviews on multiple occasions, without any intended questions; it therefore, became the

main focus of this research and will be thoroughly analysed in the discussion chapter.

Participants can be roughly divided into two groups based on a subjective self-assessment of their self-confidence.

First, there were participants who reported a relatively low level of self-confidence at the start of the programme and thought they did not have sufficient knowledge and skills and could not call themselves leaders (15 respondents).

Second, there were participants who came to the school with relatively high confidence in themselves and their leadership skills and hoped to acquire additional knowledge, skills and connections to move their businesses and careers further (ten respondents).

Only one respondent said that he was “just fine” (M9) and did not have any sentiments about his confidence and leader efficacy at the start of the programme.

Representatives of the first group of participants (the ones who lacked self-confidence at the start of the programme) mentioned that they felt a lot of anxiety during the programme’s first modules. They admired their classmates’ vast business experience and wanted to be friendly with everyone, even with people who demonstrated “toxic” behaviour, and experienced a whole range of emotions. They were also seeking external confirmation that they could achieve the aims they set for themselves, and hoped that the programme would assist them.

For example, one participant who had graduated from leading Russian and UK institutions and was at the start of a successful corporate career, but was the youngest in the group, recalled: “I had a certain trembling in my knees until the last interview with the School president; I did not understand how much I fit the level of an MBA student.” (F8). Another participant, an actress in cinema, shared such sentiments:

I did not believe that a person from a completely different field who has no economic education could be accepted to the most prestigious school in Russia... [If not for the scholarship], I would have never gone there by myself because I didn't believe I could. (F3)

Participants from the second group ("overconfident" ones) recall that they had the identity of a well-rounded professional and leader who just wanted to achieve more in their life and career at the start of their MBA journey. Unlike in the aforementioned case, their previous experience fuelled them with confidence in their leadership skills. The vice-president of a large real estate development company said that she "used to have such a high opinion of myself like I was President of Earth," (F7). A manager from a large chemical company backed her: "I had the feeling that I lived in some kind of world where I understood and knew everything, and there was nothing globally new around me," (M4).

These participants noted that they were somewhat disappointed to see who they would be studying with; they were not happy about the level of the network in their class and were even "very aggressive in communication" (M11). A manager from a big multinational corporation was sure that he "had a good chance of being one of the best students on the course in terms of results" (M7). However, within the first three months, they found out that they had to align their subjective self-image with the relational and social image that they produced.

Representatives of both groups considered the MBA class a reference group. They started their MBA journey by benchmarking themselves against their peers straight away, at the networking event which took place on the very first day of the programme:

On the first evening, I felt that it was a completely different world for me, and everyone was so cool, and I tried to understand who I was compared to them. (M4)

This process continued during the first group assignments and exercises, including leadership development ones. Looking at themselves through their peers eyes, participants started to question their leadership identities even more,

and this identity struggle (“Am I good enough?”) became one of the driving forces behind the identity work that took place during the programme.

#### **4.3.2 Orientation phase: “Who am I?”**

As already discussed in Section 4.1, many participants questioned their leadership identities within the programme's first month. Starting from “euphoria” (F2) and the “wow effect” (F9), they quickly began asking questions regarding who they were and what they were capable of. Having found themselves in a cohort of ambitious business leaders, they started to benchmark themselves against them and reconsider their previous experience and achievements. Reflecting on this process, they argued that the strong cohort composition, teamwork, group simulations and leadership experiences were critical to igniting this process.

Being accepted by the larger group became one of the primary goals of the programme's first months: 12 participants mentioned a fear of rejection and need to belong to the group. Participants felt that they needed to adjust their behaviour to be recognised in this new setting:

For me, it was pretty hard and probably took a module or three to fit into the group. <...> I remember asking myself after every first module if I was ready to go to the next one. (M2)

This fear of not being accepted was additionally fuelled by initial unsuccessful attempts to claim leadership within smaller groups. Times when other people did not recognise them as a leader were often mentioned as low points of the programme; eleven participants spoke about such moments in interviews. Although negative emotions prevailed, these problematisation moments became turning points in the leadership development journey because they ignited a desire to change behaviour to be accepted and recognised:

I realised that people didn't just accept what I was doing. I thought about the reason, and then I looked at it more closely. I found that everyone had some competencies which were not so developed in me. (M8)

In many cases, these low moments were a big blow to the self-esteem of participants who had come to the programme with high self-confidence. Suddenly they realised that they had a strong peer group which they could use as a source of feedback and benchmarking.

Concerning identity work, other classmates played a dual role: first, the cohort was considered a second family and a sentinel community in which participants passed through certain rituals and a developmental journey (see below in Section 4.4); second, other programme participants were the ones who provided honest feedback on behaviour and leadership claims (13 mentions), served as role models for leadership development (14 mentions), and gave a sense of psychological safety and support within the process of identity work (nine mentions).

As summarised by a top manager from a metallurgical corporation, professors and formal education are just “the tip of the iceberg, but what is hidden underwater is the part of the education that is given by your peers,” (M13). The most crucial part of this is giving feedback about helping to answer the question “Who am I?”:

What's the advantage of the MBA programme? It's that open feedback when people say what they really think of you. (M9)

The research suggests that the feedback research participants received within the first several modules of the programme helped them adjust their self-image and discover areas for leadership development. Those who did not feel enough confidence started to notice their strengths, while the second group (overconfident participants) began to doubt their leadership capabilities and skills and noticed areas for improvement. As a result, their self-image began to change because of external feedback, either structured or unstructured, through 360-degree surveys, off-campus communication, and coaching sessions.

Each participant had a chance to participate in group coaching sessions: the first one was introduced during the second or third month of the course and was later followed by two more group coaching sessions and two individual ones. 18

participants mentioned these sessions as a milestone that helped them problematise themselves and discover avenues for further leadership development in the programme:

[Group coaching] brings you closer to the guys; secondly, it allows you to dig into yourself, it's this psychoanalytic work, I mean, it was wonderful. (M8)

Opening up, receiving and giving feedback and engaging in the coaching process requires a climate of psychological safety, participants noted in interviews. Although at least 18 participants explicitly mentioned various in-group conflicts and emotional struggles that arose in communication with other people, most of them considered their coaching home groups as secure bases that provided them with courage and confidence:

[My home group] gave me that basis of confidence. I mean, here you are in the group, and the group serves as a buffer, and you know that no matter how bold your opinion is, you can voice it all the same. You are not afraid to speak up because you know that you have that buffer of people who have your back no matter what. What I'm saying is they wouldn't leave you alone, ever. (F5)

The research suggests that it is not enough to have bright classmates — there should also be a space to work together on a shared task in order to be involved in identity play behaviour. 18 research respondents mentioned conflicts and tensions that arose within teamwork and subsequent feedback as critical components of their identity work. Particular moments that were mentioned several times were the Kamchatka discovery expedition (16 mentions), a strategic consulting project in a real company (eight mentions) and a marketing module (eight mentions), each of which had intensive collaborative teamwork elements.

What was important was the opportunity to see oneself through the eyes of other people not in a conceptual setting, but in a dynamic collaboration:

[I attribute my discoveries] to those team tasks set at the beginning of the programme. The ones which break a person down and then reassemble them. Namely, it's this process of sufficiently tough interaction within the team, which, perhaps, naturally occurs. (M6)

When participants started to explore their identity with the help of their peers, they suddenly found that this self-exploration and self-development became one of their primary goals, in contrast to their initial goals for the programme (knowledge acquisition, career development and networking). 12 participants mentioned that their goal for the programme has changed within the first several months of it, and they even began to measure the overall programme effectiveness by achieving these new self-development goals:

[Before [the programme] I did not understand myself, I did not understand what kind of person I was. Now, after 18 months of studying, I do not know how it has happened. (F3)

Table 22 presents the data structure and additional direct quotes to support findings.

**Table 22. Data structure for the Orientation Phase analysis**

| 2 <sup>nd</sup> order themes           | Number of respondents and % of the sample (in brackets) | Sample quotes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Euphoria at the start of the programme | 4 (13%)                                                 | <p>"It was, if not a kind of shock, then certainly a bright moment." (M1)</p> <p>"The first part was the euphoria. Everyone was open, kind, and cool. That was really amazing." (F2)</p> <p>"At first we felt a bit of a wow effect." (F9)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Acceptance and rejection               | 12 (40%)                                                | <p>"It was the first time for me when it was hard enough, probably a module or three, to blend in the group." (M2)</p> <p>"I didn't even want to participate in one module because I had some thoughts that "I will meet them, they will discuss some nonsense here again." (M4)</p> <p>"I even got banned from the group chat. The dynamic was the same: I polarised the group." (M7)</p> <p>"I could not find a common language with anyone." (M17)</p> |
| Changing goal for the programme        | 12 (40%)                                                | <p>"In the process of my studies there was a certain transformation. I started wanting more meaning, more fame, and more money." (M1)</p> <p>"I somehow changed my views: I realised that in general neither one goal nor the other really bothered me." (F4)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                         |

| 2 <sup>nd</sup> order themes | Number of respondents and % of the sample (in brackets) | Sample quotes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              |                                                         | <p>"I realised that those reasons were absolutely not the main ones. I mean, to get some extra push for my corporate career, or to launch my own business project was not the main narrative." (F6)</p> <p>"I got completely different 'benefits' for myself, which I didn't even expect to see." (M17)</p>                                                                                                            |
| Problematisation experience  | 11 (37%)                                                | <p>"It was a hit to my over-inflated self-esteem, and it was a moment when I could finally figure out the true meaning of the expression 'attitude defines results.'" (M1)</p> <p>"Then I realised that I was not a leader. That is, if I want to lead my people, lead them somewhere, I need to change my behaviour." (M11)</p> <p>"I began to cast doubt on my knowledge more and more often than before." (M20)</p> |

#### 4.3.3 Experimentation phase: "Do I have the right to lead?"

After having a first impression about themselves, their strengths and areas for improvements, programme participants became involved in the process of identity renegotiation with themselves and with their classmates. Within this process, they were involved in testing new behaviour, claiming a new leadership identity, conflicting with their peers, extensive social interaction, and various group processes (refer to Table 23 for detail).

**Table 23. Data structure for the Experimentation Phase analysis**

| 2 <sup>nd</sup> order themes | 1 <sup>st</sup> order concepts and number of mentions (in brackets) | Number of respondents and % of the sample (in brackets) | Sample quotes                                                                                  |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Importance of classmates     | Role models (14)                                                    | 27 (90%)                                                | "It was useful for me to communicate with the guys, they gave me a lot of feedback. I slightly |

| 2 <sup>nd</sup> order themes | 1 <sup>st</sup> order concepts and number of mentions (in brackets)                                                                          | Number of respondents and % of the sample (in brackets) | Sample quotes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              | <p>Feedback (13)</p> <p>Value in itself (10)</p> <p>Support and safety (9)</p> <p>Different perspective (6)</p> <p>Business partners (4)</p> |                                                         | <p>changed myself with respect to other guys. I considered the world in general." (M4)</p> <p>"I was given quite fast and correct feedback." (M6)</p> <p>"It was the expansion of the general view about the world and all the opportunities which might be implemented by my peers." (F1)</p> <p>"When you meet different bright and actively working people who strive for any professional and personal development to a varying degree - gathered in one place, it is very inspiring and surprising." (F2)</p> <p>"I managed to change my social circle and expand it substantially. I got a lot of business opportunities. Some guys became my business partners." (M15)</p>                              |
| Interaction with others      | <p>Friendship (14)</p> <p>Informal communication (13)</p> <p>Overseas trips (8)</p> <p>Getting closer (6)</p>                                | 23 (77%)                                                | <p>"We are all still friends, I'm still in touch with those people, we are doing business together with some of them, some joint projects, family meetings, we spend a lot of time together and so on." (M1)</p> <p>"We got used to each other. We were together for three weeks. We went through completely different events." (F8)</p> <p>"Thanks to the school and the programme, I made a lot of new friends." (M15)</p> <p>"It is all about informal meetings with classmates, It was just close communication, sincere communication when we managed to get together in a small fraternity of 3-5 people, when you could talk about important topics, when you could discuss personal topics." (M16)</p> |
| Conflicts                    |                                                                                                                                              | 18 (60%)                                                | <p>"He offended me, he offended my son, he offended my mother-in-law with this event. I didn't speak to him. And then we talked, and I understood many things. I mean, I realised that it was my choice, and he didn't mean to hurt my feelings." (M2)</p> <p>"First, she irritated me, but now I admire her. I think sometimes: 'She's so cool! How does she do it?! Well done!' I mean that my irritation</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

| 2 <sup>nd</sup> order themes | 1 <sup>st</sup> order concepts and number of mentions (in brackets) | Number of respondents and % of the sample (in brackets) | Sample quotes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              |                                                                     |                                                         | <p>evolved into a kind of admiration for the person.“ (F1)</p> <p>“In general, our group is not friendly because there are enough conflicts between different people. It’s hard to unite.” (F2)</p> <p>“This story strengthened me, as it probably only lasted for about four months, from summer to October. I even thought about giving up, because people strongly affected me when they spread some nasty rumours.“ (F3)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Bonding and separation       |                                                                     | 15 (50%)                                                | <p>“I partly dislike the fact that our group falls apart by interests, opportunities, and income.“ (M2)</p> <p>“We have a lot of these connections within the group; we have two people communicating, three people communicating, too, and at the same time we do not have a division into mini-groups, that is, when this or that group discusses something around the corner.“ (M8)</p> <p>“We were also very clearly divided by wealth in the US. I mean literally some were renting a Porsche, and others were renting nothing, and it was essential.“ (M10)</p> <p>“There was a clear subdivision into inner groups that stayed like that until graduation and still endure now if we look at social networks.“ (F7)</p> |
| Testing new behaviour        |                                                                     | 11 (37%)                                                | <p>“There was a moment when I realised that I had to try different approaches, and I started seeking them out on purpose.“ (M1)</p> <p>“There was a feeling of really overcoming yourself, your discomfort. You feel embarrassed, but you still carry on. That was the first bright, memorable highlight.“ (M9)</p> <p>“What I’m saying is, let’s say, you are able to look at yourself as if from a distance and try some experiments, like: what if I do this now, because I’ve never done anything like that in my life before?“ (M10)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Group identity               |                                                                     | 8 (27%)                                                 | <p>“We are a very special, truly special group.“ (F3)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

| 2 <sup>nd</sup> order themes | 1 <sup>st</sup> order concepts and number of mentions (in brackets) | Number of respondents and % of the sample (in brackets) | Sample quotes                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              |                                                                     |                                                         | "It was such a moment of unity, the feeling that there were stars at the top, you were drunk on vodka, you understood that something would come further." (M12) |

### **Gaining new experience through testing behaviour**

For many participants, the programme became a place where they could experiment with their behaviour and observe the consequences of unusual behavioural patterns: eleven research respondents mentioned this deliberate practice. Based on the initial feedback and keeping in mind the image of an effective leader (Section 4.1), they started to change the way they interacted with other people by "trial and error" (M15), analysing feedback, revising, and trying again. Learning to communicate with people differently became one of the key goals for the rest of the programme.

I started to test [a new] leadership style. The effect was really profound and surprised me very much because I realised that using specific limited behavioural patterns was stagnation. (M15)

Testing new behavioural patterns was not smooth: it was associated with "emotional struggles" (F1), "inner restrictions" (F2), "hesitation and fear" (F3), "stress" (F4), "overcoming yourself" (M9), "laziness" (F10), and other unpleasant emotions. However, respondents considered these a side effect in building confidence in communication with other people and developing their personal leadership skills.

### **Unstructured out-of-class social interaction as an important part of the programme**

Quite surprisingly, non-academic communication and joint activities (i.e. parties and other social events) were considered crucial elements of the programme's leadership development process, as noted by 13 programme participants.

Identity struggles that overwhelmed many participants over the course of the programme were discussed during long conversations with their peers, one-on-one or in small groups of three to five people. This type of sincere communication created a sense of “fraternity” (M16) and fuelled confidence with a desire to keep on testing new behavioural patterns:

These are endless sleepless nights up to 3am or 4am when you are sitting in a room, studying out every single case in detail. And the guys say to your face, “Listen, here you need to think like this, and here like that.” That is, in the process of communication, in the process of exchanging experience, when guys older than you, more experienced, say, “Listen, we went through the same thing ten years ago, everything is fine.” (F8)

### **Off-site study modules and discovery expeditions (Silicon Valley, China, Kamchatka) as identity work stimulators**

Among the programme's highlights, nearly 100% of participants mentioned at least one so-called “discovery expedition” or study module that took place outside of the school campus: in the United States (Silicon Valley, 17 mentions), China (Hong Kong, 13 mentions) and Russia (the Kamchatka peninsula, 19 mentions). Although there were many questions regarding the academic content of the modules, to which the participants did not attribute a lot of value, they said that these trips were critical components of their leadership journey:

Getting out and breaking out of everyday life, worries, just disconnecting from the world must be a block of any programme that allows a person, a student to rethink what is happening. (M6)

Programme participants believe the major factors stimulating identity work during these trips were a different context (national, social, linguistic, natural, economic), remoteness from their job, family and day-to-day life (thanks to the time difference), time to get to know each other better, deep one-on-one conversations during the trip, emotional excitement (“off-campus modules make feelings stronger” (M11)) and multi-dimensional communication within the class, including wealth-based segregation and interpersonal conflicts.

Various trips with fellow students are critical, because [on campus] it is not possible to open up, and during these trips many people say “Oh, but I didn't know that you might be this or that.” It's also essential for me to fuel my inner confidence that I'm actually good, that is, that I mean something. Because it's not about modesty, but about insecurity. (M3)

### **The process of bonding and separation: shaping individual and collective identity**

As a result of intense communication and social interaction both within the academic context and outside of it, programme participants started to build stronger social bonds (14 participants mentioned friendship as one of the most valuable outcomes of the programme), and cohorts began to develop their group identities. Groups began to describe themselves as though they were living organisms, using words like “tough” (M14), “dominant” (M15), “not friendly” (F2), “amazing” (M8), “truly special” (F3), and many more. Strong affiliation with their own group created a sense of security and belonging.

At the same time, the larger group started to segregate into smaller sub-groups based on wealth, geography or personal interests (15 mentions). At the very beginning, this process provoked a lot of anxiety and tensions, and participants were afraid of it, but towards the end, as their self-confidence and self-awareness became more robust (see below), they accepted this fact and either joined (or formed) one of the sub-groups, or took a conscious decision not to belong to any of them (“I decided to stay with those whom I was interested in and not with those whom I was not interested in.” (M16)). In many cases, this process of bonding and separation was finalised during the overseas trip to China, which normally took place closer to the end of the programme.

What was memorable to me about that trip was that it helped cement our group in my eyes. I mean, some of my people, some of the people who were not mine, and our group merged, there was clear subdivision into inner groups that stayed like that until graduation and still endure now if we look at social networks. (F7)

#### 4.3.4 Confirmation phase: “Yes, I have permission to lead.”

By the end of the MBA programme, participants had nearly forgotten about their initial goals. However, many had formally achieved them — they were delighted with the level of academic knowledge they had received and their network. For two-thirds of the sample (19 participants), the entrepreneurial identity became dominant: they explicitly referred to themselves as such while answering a cold call asking “Who are you?”; most of the rest made a change in their professional careers. But, in their words, the most valuable outcome for them was the transformation of their inner self in terms of their self-awareness, self-confidence and their leadership self. Table 24 summarises the data structure and selected quotes to support the analysis of the Confirmation Phase.

**Table 24. Data structure for the Confirmation Phase analysis**

| 2 <sup>nd</sup> order themes    | Number of respondents and % of the sample (in brackets) | Sample quotes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Articulated leadership identity | 30 (100%)                                               | <p>“I began to understand more clearly what I wanted. I grew up during this programme and became a more holistic person.” (M2)</p> <p>“I believe that I’ve moved to a new level, as I wanted to. That is, I am now very different in the scale of things that I can do, and understand these things too.” (M8)</p> <p>“I think the most important change was related to my identity.” (F7)</p>                                                           |
| Self-awareness                  | 23 (77%)                                                | <p>“Well, I realised that was my primary driving force in life that I hadn’t noticed before.” (F6)</p> <p>“For me it was an opportunity to look in the mirror, and from the point of view of my perception, I became sympathetic to myself.” (M12)</p> <p>“As the programme developed, I began to see myself from the other side, my strengths and weaknesses.” (M13)</p> <p>“I began to understand what kind of picture I actually carried.” (M17).</p> |
| Aligned leader efficacy         | 22 (73%)                                                | <p>“I’m not afraid of difficulties now.” (M4)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

| 2 <sup>nd</sup> order themes | Number of respondents and % of the sample (in brackets) | Sample quotes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              |                                                         | <p>"I like my feeling of a clear understanding of what I need to do, such certain confidence in the steps and in the whole picture that I wish to reach." (F2)</p> <p>"The main thing is that now I have boldness that I've never had." (M8)</p> <p>"I have become bolder, I've said earlier that I grew aggressive, but the truth is that I've grown more confident." (F5)</p>                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Relational awareness         | 19 (63%)                                                | <p>"I learned to accept people with all their strengths and weaknesses and focus on the positives instead of the negatives." (M1)</p> <p>"I understand that those people who are around me, they will certainly reach these goals and objectives, and there is no need to control them." (M6)</p> <p>"Those group situations, they mean a lot to me, because they make me understand that completely different behaviour is possible." (M10)</p> <p>"In the middle of the programme, I formulated this idea that every person has a superpower." (M16)</p> |

### **Self- and relational awareness as an unexpected result of the programme**

23 research participants noted that one of the most important outcomes of their MBA study was a better understanding of themselves and other people. The cycle of opening up, testing new behaviour, receiving feedback, reflecting, correcting behaviour and experimenting again allowed MBA participants to "discover themselves in a different way" (F1), "understand oneself better" (M7), become "aware of weaknesses and strengths" (M8, F3, F7), "understand what I can and what I cannot do" (M9) and "realise my primary driving forces in life" (F6). This self-awareness gave participants a lot of courage to keep experimenting with leadership behaviours and styles:

You start seeing yourself differently, with a different depth of focus. If you didn't really think about yourself all that deeply before the MBA, your thoughts take a much more definite shape. <...> You can look at yourself as if from a distance and try some experiments, like what if I do this now because I've never done

anything like that in my life before? What will happen if I do that? What if I look that way, or move that way? <...> Now I have more courage to experiment with myself. (M10)

Being more aware of oneself helped to articulate clearer goals: eight participants mentioned that now they knew exactly what they wanted, including their plans for the next ten to 20 years, and certain steps that they needed to take in their careers or their businesses:

I feel that I've gone through a tremendous internal transformation. Roughly speaking, it was my understanding of myself, my place in life, my goals. Plus, after finishing the programme, I got a very deep feeling, confidence in who I was, independent of what I was going to do in my life. (F6)

A better understanding of other people was noted as another of the major outcomes of the programme (19 mentions). If at the start of the programme many participants were self-focused, by the end they had rediscovered their classmates and found out that they could value their opinions, trust them, respect their differences and accept them with all their weaknesses and imperfections:

I finally allowed myself to realise that the people around me have strengths too. I'm laughing now, but I'm not saying that sarcastically. I learned to accept people with all their strengths and weaknesses and focus on the positives instead of the negatives. The programme taught me that. (M1)

### **Aligning self-confidence as the major goal of the programme**

As discussed in Section 4.3.1, programme participants started their MBA journey by benchmarking themselves against their peers. It was a painful exercise for two-thirds of them — they thought they were not good enough, while the other third had the opposite conviction: that they had come to the wrong place, somewhere that did not meet their high standards. Over the course of the programme, both groups experienced an emotional rollercoaster which helped them align their self-image with a relational and social one. During the first few modules of the programme, the emotional problematising experience ignited further identity work, which resulted in either empowerment or grounding of participants' self-image.

Participants who lacked confidence used the school and other programme participants as a source of developmental feedback, support and validation:

One must have something to continually fuel his or her confidence, for example, on trips when people know you more and say “Listen, you're a smart guy,” or “You’re such a good friend,” or something like that. It is important. (M3)

22 respondents explicitly mentioned “confidence” and “self-confidence” as significant outcomes of the programme. For example, they said that, as a result, they started to believe in themselves (F2), overcame their impostor syndrome (M1), realised that everything was in their hands and that they had a solid grounding to stand on (M3), acquired boldness that they had never had before (F3), lost their fear of implementing large projects (M9), or started to consider themselves as managers or entrepreneurs who could work at a higher level of responsibility. So, for this group, leadership identity work was driven mostly by exploration of their own potential and rebuilding self-confidence:

I came with trembling legs and graduated standing firmly on the ground. I was not reborn, but I got more internal strength. (M3)

Programme participants who embarked on the MBA journey with an overinflated self-image also benefited from the programme, as most of them experienced an emotional hit to their self-confidence at different points of the programme:

I was very self-confident when I applied, but literally, during the next module after entrepreneurship, I realised that I was probably the weakest student compared to the others. (F3)

For this group, leadership identity work was driven by exploring oneself in communication with other people and grounding self-confidence (“bringing down to earth” (M17)) to align it with the external view:

[Speaking about personal changes] my opinion of myself deflated a bit. Definitely. The programme brought me down to earth, meaning that I saw how people achieve their goals, and my pride in my achievements was checked a little. On the other hand, my opinion about my potential got higher. (M7)

25 research participants out of 30 mentioned the word “confidence” (“уверенность”, [uvi’erienost]) in their interviews without being explicitly asked about these concepts. Also, during interviews it was visible that they became very emotional when speaking about this, which indicates the subjective importance of this theme. The research indicates that a desire to build inner confidence became a primary goal for the programme, the major component of desired leadership identity and the main driver for leadership identity work:

[For me, the MBA programme was] alignment...alignment of my knowledge, my self-evaluation, my identity. (M18).

### **Articulating new leadership identity by the end of the programme**

Finally, by the end of the programme, most participants had come to internalising the new leadership identities they had been developing throughout their 18-month journey. 29 out of 30 participants were unanimous in saying that their self-image as leaders has changed as a result of the programme. Although many of them were rather unique, there were some common elements that they held.

Besides higher self-confidence, there was a stronger focus on people and their emotions and needs, more trust and delegation, openness, a better focus on results, a broader view and, for some participants, even a considered choice not to be a leader. For most participants, self-awareness and aligned self-confidence boosted their leadership identity, and they started to think about themselves as leaders.

Simultaneously, as discussed before, Russian leaders do not use the word “leader” to describe their leadership identity. When describing their self-image after the programme, they predominantly used concepts such as “responsibility” (“ownership”) and “confidence”, as well as a whole variety of leadership behaviours and attitudes (i.e. attention to people, focus on results, authenticity and others).

#### 4.3.5 Summary of data structure for process modelling

Based on findings from the interview analysis, Table 25 below summarises the data which became the basis for process model generation.

**Table 25. Data structure for the process model**

| <b>Phases</b>                                                           | <b>Critical elements (brackets indicate the number of respondents to mention them)</b>                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Outcome / requirement for transition to the next phase</b>                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Phase 1. Preparation</b><br>("Am I good enough?")                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definition of instrumental goals (30);</li> <li>• Assessment of own leader efficacy and related anxiety (22);</li> <li>• Developing possible identity and facing identity tension (21).</li> </ul>           | Identity tension (self-to-exemplar vs. self-to-prototype)                                                                                                         |
| <b>Phase 2. Orientation</b><br>("Who am I?")                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problematising experiences (11);</li> <li>• Acceptance and rejection of leadership claims (12);</li> <li>• Changing goals for the programme – from instrumental to developmental (12).</li> </ul>            | Following problematising experience, the goal for the programme has shifted from instrumental (career, network, skills) to developmental (changing identity/self) |
| <b>Phase 3. Experimentation</b> ("Do I have the right to lead?")        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflicts with peers (18);</li> <li>• Testing new behaviour (11);</li> <li>• Interaction and bonding with classmates (23);</li> <li>• Grouping and separation (15).</li> </ul>                               | Development of a provisional leadership identity and self-image to claim                                                                                          |
| <b>Phase 4. Confirmation</b><br>("I have the permission to lead")       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing articulated leadership identity (30);</li> <li>• Reflecting and gaining self-awareness (23);</li> <li>• Aligned self-confidence (22);</li> <li>• Developing relational awareness (19).</li> </ul> | A leader has strong confidence and self-efficacy.                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Critical elements of the programme that are spread across phases</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership retreat in Kamchatka (Russia) (19);</li> <li>• Coaching (18);</li> </ul>                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                   |

| Phases | Critical elements (brackets indicate the number of respondents to mention them)                                                                                                                                                      | Outcome / requirement for transition to the next phase |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
|        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discovery expedition to Silicon Valley (United States) (17);</li> <li>• Team work, simulations, games (14);</li> <li>• Consulting project (8);</li> <li>• Marketing project (6).</li> </ul> |                                                        |

#### 4.4 The role of the institution: a family, an adventure, a training camp or a confirmation agent

The research indicates that the institution plays a critical role in the leadership identity development process. It acts not only as a place where formal education takes place, but also as a holding environment and a playground for personal and leadership development. In their narratives, research participants used many metaphors to describe the institution; the most common were connected to a family/community, an exploratory adventure, a training (or scout) camp, and a confirmation agent. These images are not mutually exclusive — the same participant can attribute two or more roles to the institution (54 interview files were distributed between these four node groups, while there were 30 participants). Table 26 summarises the data structure and selected quotes to support the analysis of the Confirmation Phase.

**Table 26. Data structure for analysis of the role of the institution**

| 2 <sup>nd</sup> order themes | Number of respondents and % of the sample (in brackets) | Sample quotes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Family, Community            | 18 (60%)                                                | <p>“Today, the school is a large part of my life, as well as everything that is related to it. &lt;...&gt; It is not even just a part, it became a kind of web covering all areas of life: friendship, communication, etc.” (F1)</p> <p>“First of all, the business school for me is a community of people.” (M7)</p> |

| 2 <sup>nd</sup> order themes | Number of respondents and % of the sample (in brackets) | Sample quotes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              |                                                         | <p>"The school is a place you want to go back to, that is, it is a place where you feel comfortable. I mean, this is a place associated only with positive memories." (M8)</p> <p>"It's a family. For a year and a half, I realised that if there had been no school in my life, if it had not come to my life in time, and if I had not studied with my nine people, then my life would have been 100% different." (F3)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Adventure, Exploration       | 16 (53%)                                                | <p>"It was a kind of sea voyage, or rather, a sea voyage with storm and calmness." (M4)</p> <p>"It's like a miner going down the mine, here he is taken deep down by the elevator, several kilometres down." (M6)</p> <p>"It was a path of intense self-reflection and at the same time getting to know some of the most motivated and creative people in my life." (F6)</p> <p>"It's like a spacewalk. I'm flying on. I'm going somewhere else, because everything is different, that is, the style of teaching, communication, and processes." (M14)</p> <p>"Adventure, challenge, emotions. It's not even a metaphor, but this great adventure." (F8)</p> |
| Confirmation, Permission     | 12 (40%)                                                | <p>"It was permission...A certificate, proving that I would understand how to do things right, I would learn how to act in accordance with standards." (M12)</p> <p>"The school is a place of power, and the programme is a great source of inspiration and life energy." (F6)</p> <p>"It is a foundation. I mean I don't need a house foundation to start living there, I need walls. But if I don't build a foundation, then there will be problems with the walls." (M18)</p>                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Training/ scout camp         | 8 (27%)                                                 | <p>"It is the place where I've learned how to do business." (M8)</p> <p>"It was like a scouts' camp." (F5)</p> <p>"It's like children's summer camp, where they take you away, something happens there and then you come back." (M10)</p> <p>"It is like a sports camp. It is not just a vacation where you stay at your grandmother's eating cookies... &lt;...&gt; [Here] you have a schedule, you have a workout in the evening, in the afternoon and so on. It brings you into shape, but at the same time you are recovering your health too, and you are disconnected from some ordinary activity, routine, which sucks your energy." (M12)</p>        |

### **The institution as a community and a second family**

18 participants explicitly called the school and the programme their “second families” and viewed the school as a community of people first of all. This community created a sense of security and belonging, “it is a place where you feel comfortable” (M8). It is also a network of people who keep on providing external feedback and become friends and business partners. They believe that without being accepted to this school’s family, they would never have reached this network and created such social and emotional bonds.

### **The institution as a provider of an exploratory adventure**

16 participants treated their MBA study as an adventure that brought them to new discoveries, particularly related to themselves. This journey implied extreme emotional struggles, also related to self-confidence:

If I charted a graph, it would be a curve that goes up and then down. Now I’m at a point that’s higher than the one I was at when I came here. Still, qualitatively speaking, I’m in a different place entirely, with an absolutely new perception and understanding of myself. That transformation was the most important discovery that I’ve made about myself in many, many years. (M1)

This exploratory adventure looked like “a sea voyage” (M4), “going down a mine” (M6), “a journey to another world” (F1), “a path of intense self-reflection” (F6), “digging for gold” (M13), “a spacewalk” (M14), “mount-climbing” (M16, F10), “a rollercoaster” (M17), “an explosive flow” (F9). These metaphors indicate that for many participants, the MBA programme was not only about knowledge acquisition and career progression, but also about exploration of the self and personal transformation.

### **The institution as a training/scout camp**

Given that more than half the participants came to the programme with an articulated objective to obtain knowledge and practical business skills, many of

them viewed the programme as a training camp, with some elements of social interaction (eight participants mentioned such metaphors):

It's like having a workout, going to a training camp to train in martial arts. You enter a new gym or arrive at a new training camp where there are many people. <...> That means, on the one hand, they teach you something there, and on the other hand, there are many people you don't know. (M7)

On the other hand, "It is not just a vacation where you stay at your grandmother's eating cookies", as noted by a technology entrepreneur (M12) - it had a schedule, certain structured activities, an educational component, authorities and a lot of teamwork. Also, participants valued the fact that they were isolated from their "other life" during their study, whether this was their business, corporation, or family. This remoteness, particularly during off-campus trips, made it feel even more like a scout camp.

### **The institution as a confirmation agent**

Besides the community, training, and exploration functions, the business school plays the critical role of an institution that "gives permission" to lead. As discussed above, many MBA participants come to the programme lacking self-confidence. Over the programme's 18 months, they learn how to overcome this. Once they develop a new, more confident leadership identity, they need other people to recognise them, and they need an institution as an agent which will permit them and validate their new self-image. 12 of them mentioned this function of the school and the programme:

[For me, the programme was] permission... I thought I would get a certificate, that I would understand how to do things right <...> but I got permission saying that anything could be done in any way. Actually, for me, the school became the permission I needed to do things differently, because there is no correct solution. (M12)

Programme participants considered their personal and leadership transformation as "a breakthrough" (F2), "rebirth" (F3, M20) and "the driver for adulting" (M13). Thanks to the programme, their self-image changed dramatically, and the school

became a place that let them manifest another, more confident leadership identity:

[I came to the programme] tense, stiff, looking at my feet and moving rigidly. And here I straightened my shoulders, and my movement became freer, faster, and I began to look ahead and to the sides, calmly turning my head. (M2)

The metaphors that research participants used to describe the institution indicate that they look at it as a holding environment and that the context of leadership identity work plays a very important role in the leadership development process.

#### **4.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter summarised findings from the empirical research, namely what leadership identity emerging Russian business leaders hold and how they develop it on the leadership development programme.

First, the study revealed they do not call themselves “leaders”: they prefer to use constructs like “responsibility (ownership)”, “confidence”, “care” and “result”.

Second, it became clear that emerging leaders feel a gap between their perception of effective leadership and the prevailing leadership prototype in Russia, which might indicate that the leadership identity in Russia is gradually changing.

Third, the chapter discusses the role of self-confidence in the process of leadership identity work in a leadership development programme. The journey of participants of a leadership development programme was reconstructed from interview narratives, which consists of four phases: preparation, orientation, experimentation, and confirmation. All participants of the research passed through those four phases and, as a result, acquired self- and relational awareness and a more articulated leadership identity by the end of the programme.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Chapter introduction**

Researching 30 participants of an MBA programme in Russia helped answer two research questions: (1) what does leadership mean in the Russian context as described by emerging Russian business leaders? and (2) how do these leaders develop their leadership identity within a leadership development programme? This chapter discusses how the findings from the research contribute to theory and practice in the domains of Russian leadership identity and leadership identity work in the leadership development programme.

### **5.2 Russian leadership identity**

What does leadership mean in the Russian context, as defined by emerging business leaders themselves?

First of all, it needs to be said that, as described in Section 4.1, the study discovered that emerging Russian business leaders do not internalise the word “leader” as part of their leadership identity. Arguably, this is still not fully internalised in the Russian language, as it came to it less than 30 years ago with Western management literature after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The findings show that Russian leaders anchor their leadership identity in such constructs as responsibility, self-confidence, results, and relations.

At the same time, the leaders in the research claimed that their understanding of effective leadership conflicts with prevailing leadership perceptions in the country. However, most research participants (22) argued that, because of a natural generation shift, leadership practices in Russia are changing — leaders are becoming more open and less authoritarian and have started to promote trust and partnership.

The research suggests that understanding of the leadership phenomenon in Russia is to be updated and requires a more thorough investigation. Looking at what emerging Russian business leaders think about effective leadership “from inside”, the authoritarian (Ardichvili, Cardozo and Gasparishvili, 1998; Elenkov,

1998; Saidov, 2014) and centralised (Puffer, 1994) model is fading out, and elements of transformational leadership have started to prevail, i.e. having a vision and using intrinsic motivation (Bass, 1990), although the paternalistic element (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2020) is still relatively strong. The study indicates that the notion of a leader as a “parent” who cares for his or her subordinates is still typical for Russian culture.

The study also suggests that emerging Russian leaders face a leadership development challenge because their understanding of leadership contradicts archetypical perceptions of Russian leadership. As described in the literature, motivation to lead depends on two types of self-to-leader comparisons: self-to-exemplar and self-to-prototype comparisons (Guillén, Mayo and Korotov, 2015). Emerging Russian leaders face conflicting self-to-exemplar and self-to-prototype comparisons, so they have difficulties developing possible identities on their leadership development path. Emerging leaders in Russia are hesitant about which leadership image to take as a potential role model for themselves. On the one hand, they observed “old” leaders who were authoritarian and directive and claimed in many cases that Russia's environment still favours such a leadership style. On the other hand, the best leadership examples they saw in their practice differed.

The findings indicate that scholars who study Russian leadership should take a step away from the traditional authoritarian/centralised leadership model (Section 1.3.4) and take a broader look at what emerging Russian leaders think about leadership. From the data collected from 30 emerging Russian leaders, it could be suggested that, in Russia, the notion of leadership includes four key characteristics: (1) confidence, (2) taking responsibility, (3) inspiring for a result, and (4) caring and building relations. These are reviewed in detail below.

### **5.2.1 Confidence**

First, the data collected in the research indicates that confidence is perceived as one of the key leadership traits as described by emerging Russian business leaders. 25 respondents mentioned confidence either as a key leadership characteristic or as a trait they developed as leaders during their MBA study (22

and 12 mentions, respectively). This surprising discovery required a return to the literature, as the abductive approach instructs.

According to the literature, self-confidence “reflects people's perception of control over themselves and their environments, and it is based on a personal history of successful goal-directed behaviour.” (Mayo et al., 2012, p.632). Although there is still a debate in the literature on whether self-confidence is associated with leadership and can predict a leader's emergence (Kolb, 1999), some researchers believe that self-confidence is perceived to be one of the key leadership competencies (Mayo et al., 2012). The study supports this claim and suggests that a person with higher self-confidence is more likely to be perceived as a leader in Russia. This leadership trait was not explicitly mentioned in previous research on Russian leaders, which brings the Russian understanding of leadership closer to the Western one, in which self-confidence is considered to be one of the major leadership traits, according to the trait theory (Northouse, 2019). Further research is required to unlock such aspects of confidence as self-efficacy, self-respect, self-reliance, self-discipline and others in relation to Russian leadership identity.

### **5.2.2 Taking responsibility/ownership**

Second, the study suggests that emerging Russian leaders associate leadership with taking responsibility for decisions, oneself, and other people. The word “responsibility” is one of the most commonly used across all interview transcripts. This enriches the literature on leadership traits, in which responsibility as a key leadership trait was mentioned in many meta-analyses of leadership traits performed by Stogdill and other leadership scholars, starting from the first ones in the middle of the twentieth century (Northouse, 2019; Stogdill, 1948). The study demonstrates that, in Russia, leadership is closely associated with taking responsibility (for oneself, for other people, for an organisation) — most research participants mentioned this trait first when they started to talk about effective leadership in the Russian context.

However, it is worth noting that the Russian word *otvi'etstvienost*, which research participants mentioned, has a much broader meaning than the English word “responsibility” and also includes such meanings as “ownership”, “charge”, “duty”,

“obligation”, “blame” and “accountability”. This finding enriches responsible leadership literature, which suggests that responsible leaders’ personal accountability goes beyond serving the needs of employees, owners and other stakeholders (Doh and Quigley, 2014).

Also, this finding raises the importance of language in leadership studies and supports the claim that the identity development process is largely shaped by language (Frimann and Hersted, 2016). In this particular case, the meaning of “responsibility” in Russia is much broader, so how can we blindly apply Western leadership concepts in Russia if they have a different meaning in the Russian language? Sensitivity to differences in language is needed to explore context-bound leadership approaches successfully.

### **5.2.3 Inspiring for result**

Third, among the key characteristics of an effective leader, 14 emerging Russian business leaders mentioned a clear orientation on achieving a goal and, respectively, having a clear vision of a result. Typically for the transformational leadership concept (Bass, 1990), a leader's vision is critical for followers' inspirational motivation. This contradicts the prevailing view on Russian leadership culture as transactional rather than transformational (McCarthy et al., 2008) and demonstrates that there might be a convergence in leadership styles between Russia and the West, already suggested by previous research, particularly in terms of collaboration, participation and dispersed leadership (Gill and Negrov, 2021; McCarthy, Puffer and Darda, 2010). At the same time, these findings support the GLOBE Project's claim that Russian leaders are high on the Charismatic dimension, which includes inspiring others, motivating, expecting high performance, and promoting a vision (House et al., 2013). According to the GLOBE results, Russia scores “average” on the Charismatic dimension, so this may change as the new generation of leaders comes to the fore. Also, visionary aspects of leadership may indicate that Russian leadership culture is becoming more transformational rather than transactional.

Although the study indicates that many emerging Russian leaders do not look at leadership through authoritarian or transactional models any more, some respondents believed that the authoritarian model of leadership in Russia is sustainable. For example, five research participants mentioned that a leader in Russia still should be “tough”, and one research participant (M7) claimed that many representatives of the youngest generation of leaders (20 to 25 years old), who work for large state-owned corporations, are much closer to the “old” authoritarian and directive leaders than the generation in their thirties. Given that the sample of the research was relatively small and not representative, the finding about the convergence of Russian and Western leadership styles needs to be supported by further research.

#### **5.2.4 Caring and building relations**

Fourth, although Russian leadership culture is often portrayed in the literature as non-participative and not humane-oriented (House et al., 2013), the data from the research suggests that emerging Russian leaders tend to put people first. 19 interviewees said that leadership is about people, and balancing results and relations is key to effective leading in Russia.

The dichotomy between a task and relationship focus is typical for leadership literature (Northouse, 2019) and has already been mentioned in research papers studying Russian management culture (Fey, Adaeva and Vitkovskaia, 2001). This dichotomy is also noticeable in the leadership identity of emerging Russian business leaders, who believe that building relations with followers is a critical component of effective leadership.

Russian leadership culture is described as “diffuse” in the literature, meaning that a leader should aim to build good relations before focusing on business objectives (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2020). Emerging Russian leaders describe “relations” differently. They see them as a psychological and emotional bond between a leader and a follower and a driver for the follower’s effectiveness rather than a personal acquaintance with a stakeholder, as perceived in previous research. Keeping in mind the remaining task orientation (leadership is about delivering a result), the proposition can be made that Russian leadership culture

is moving closer to a more humanistic and participative approach and, again, getting closer to global perceptions. Therefore, the results of massive cross-cultural studies (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2020; Hofstede, 1980; House et al., 2013) may not be relevant in describing the new generation of Russian leaders and may not be helpful for expatriate managers working in Russia.

### **5.2.5 Russian leadership identity as described by emerging leaders: characteristics**

The study does not aim or claim to develop a comprehensive model that would explain all the nuances of the Russian leadership model. As discussed in Section 4.2, it is based on a majority of opinions and perceptions and represents a consolidated view of a studied group of managers. As in any qualitative research, there is variation in responses and outliers that do not fit in the model (discussed in Section 4.2.8). Below is a summary of the prevailing characteristics of a prototypical leader as described by emerging Russian leaders.

First, a leader has solid inner confidence or effectively focuses on themselves and on the task (“I have the right to lead, and I can achieve a result”). This correlates with the trait theory of leadership which brings confidence to the core of a leader’s personality (Northouse, 2019). Further research is required to unlock such aspects of confidence as self-efficacy, self-respect, self-reliance, self-discipline and others in relation to Russian leadership identity.

Second, a perceived leader in Russia has a clear vision and inspires followers with it (focus on task and others). This trait corresponds with the Charismatic dimension of the GLOBE Project study (House et al., 2013). According to the GLOBE results, Russia scores “average” on the Charismatic dimension, so this may change as the new generation of leaders comes to the fore. Also, visionary aspects of leadership may indicate that Russian leadership culture is becoming more transformational rather than transactional.

Third, a leader takes responsibility, or ownership over the situation (task/other focus). The literature on responsible leadership may be expanded with specific

aspects of responsibility as, in the Russian language, this word had a much broader meaning than in English.

Fourth, a leader in Russia cares about people and builds relations with them (relations/other focus). This contradicts implicit leadership literature that portrays Russian leadership culture as lacking a participative and humane orientation.

In conclusion, the study indicates that Russian leadership culture is becoming more charismatic, transformational, participative, humane-oriented and people-centred and less transactional, authoritarian and directive. This finding proposes that perceptions of leadership in Russia are changing: this proposition is discussed in the following section.

#### **5.2.6 Conflicting identities: self-to-exemplar and self-to-prototype comparison**

The study suggests that emerging Russian leaders face the challenge of conflicting leadership identity. Their self-to-leader comparison is driven by a conflicting self-to-prototype comparison (archetypical Russian leadership characteristics: authoritarian, paternalistic etc.) and self-to-exemplar comparison (specific influential leaders of the past or present: visionary, caring etc.).

In the case of emerging Russian business leaders, they tend to believe that leadership is about a more participative, humane oriented and less authoritarian and directive approach. In contrast, the prevailing leadership prototype demonstrated by the previous generation of leaders seems to be different. So, they face identity tensions: their individual perception of their possible leadership identity is different from the collective one. This controversy may stimulate identity work (Koerner, 2014), and they may come to a business school with a desire to find an answer to the question of what kind of a leader they want to be. Such identity tensions are likely to be caused by changing leadership perceptions in the country.

Based on the above, we may be observing the transformation of the leadership prototype, but this claim needs to be supported by a more extensive study involving a larger sample of various emerging leaders in Russia.

### **5.3 Leadership identity work in a leadership development programme: a process model**

In line with an abductive research strategy, after the initial findings, the research turned back to the literature to align “surprising facts” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016) with previous research, specifically in relation to leader efficacy. Then, findings were updated through the lens of new theoretical knowledge and structured in a process model.

The findings reveal that striving for more inner confidence and leader self-efficacy are the main drivers that guide programme participants to craft a new leadership identity. Accordingly, the MBA's role as a leadership development programme is to align personal leader efficacy (as part of an individual leadership identity) with external recognition (relational and social leadership identity).

The study discovered two parallel paths that participants of the MBA programme take. The first is anchored in the lower level of leader efficacy, which brings participants to the empowerment pathway and leads to internal recognition of their leadership self. The second is anchored in the higher level of leader efficacy, which points toward the grounding pathway and leads to their leadership identity's external alignment. As a result of the programme, both pathways lead to a more aligned leader efficacy and leadership identity, which assumes individual internalisation, relational recognition and collective endorsement (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). As leader identity is a sub-component of one's identity that relates to being a leader or how one thinks of oneself as a leader, the study argues that the journey through the MBA programme may be considered a process of leadership identity and leader efficacy renegotiation and calibration. Also, the study proposes four phases of leadership identity work within a leadership development programme: preparation, orientation, experimentation and confirmation.

#### **5.3.1 Business schools as holding environments**

The study supports the research on business schools as holding environments, or places where sense-making happens in the process of identity stabilisation or

identity transition (ref. to Section 2.5.1). The way that research participants described their school and the programme (family, community, training camp, exploratory journey, confirmation agent) indicates that business schools do provide social defences, sentient communities and rites of passage. The data suggests that leadership development programmes make a positive impact on leader identity and leader efficacy and enriches the literature with describing how the process of this positive development happens. Also, it describes alternative pathways: “empowering” and “grounding” ones, driven by the process of leader efficacy development within the programme.

A small number of academic papers look at management development programmes as a place where identity work happens. The seminal ones are the works of Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2018), Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood (2017) and Korotov (2006, 2016), who started to explore educational programmes as an “identity workspace” or an “identity laboratory”, as well as the paper of Kwok, Shen and Brown (2020), who studied the trajectory of leader efficacy in a formal leadership development programme.

Petriglieri and Petriglieri proposed that individuals are likely to invest an institution with the function of an identity workspace “when it provides a coherent set of reliable social defences, sentient communities, and vital rites of passage” (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018, p.44). Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood built their findings on identifying two developmental pathways within the programme — adaptive and exploratory (“hunters” and “explorers”) — and emphasised business schools as holding environments to craft portable selves: “selves endowed with definitions, motives, and abilities that can be deployed across roles and organisations over time” (Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017, p.1).

Kwok, Shen and Brown (2021) argued that leader identity and leader efficacy normally increase as a result of a formal leadership development programme. However, they did not explore how this process happened and called for more research in this area. This study sheds light on that process.

### **5.3.2 Leader efficacy as driving force for leadership identity work**

The findings indicate that leadership development programmes foster positive leader efficacy and identity development. This supports recent research in this field (Kwok, Shen and Brown, 2021) and confirms that self-confidence has a positive effect on a person's leadership capabilities (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2010) and is grounded mainly in people's relations with others (McCallister et al., 2002). Also, the study claims that leader efficacy as one of the confidence-related constructs plays a critical role in an individual's motivation to enter the process of leadership identity work.

In the literature, self-confidence is described as a belief in one's capability to be successful, and self-perceptions of competence in knowledge, skills, and abilities (Shipman and Mumford, 2011); and can be measured only based on subjective self-assessment. One construct closely related to self-confidence is self-efficacy, or belief in one's capability to perform a specific task (Gist, 1987). Leader efficacy and leader identity are believed to have a strong relation to the motivation and ability of an individual to recognise different situations as opportunities to practice and develop leadership skills (Kwok, Shen and Brown, 2021).

The study claims that progress in leader efficacy becomes the primary goal of participants of a leadership development programme, as they clearly associate their leadership identity with their self-confidence as leaders. This also correlates with one of the four key characteristics of Russian leaders, so their self-to-leader comparison implies an assessment of their own leader efficacy or inner ability to lead.

### **5.3.3 Four phases of identity work in a leadership development programme**

The study indicates that the leadership identity development trajectory in a management development programme unfolds in four phases: preparation, orientation, exploration and confirmation. There are similarities with the work of Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood (2017) in terms of a phased approach, but, unlike in that research, emphasis is placed on how programme participants progress in

developing their leader efficacy and how the programme helps them with this. The study enriches the leadership identity literature with a link to leader efficacy and the process of its calibration in a leadership development programme.

**The preparation phase** unfolds before the formal start of the programme and during the first days of the programme. At this stage, programme participants, driven by leadership identity tensions, define a set of manifested and often conflicting aims for the programme. This supports the literature which associates the start of identity work with identity tensions due to new roles (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). Typically, these aims are driven by career or business ideologies, but they will change for more developmental ones during the following phases, which also supports the literature on identity workspaces (Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017). The main question that participants ask themselves seems to be “**Am I good enough to achieve these goals?**” Based on the first pre-programme interaction with their future classmates, they develop the original image of their self in the programme, which brings them to a point between low self-efficacy or high self-efficacy regarding their leadership capabilities.

**The orientation phase** lasts for the first several months of the programme. It relates to emotional struggles critical for identity destabilisation, trying new testing behaviour and crafting new possible selves. There is consensus in the literature that identity work is triggered by role transitions, tensions between different identities, critical events and challenging work environments (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016; Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018; Ibarra, 1999), and the research findings confirm this. Subsequently, programme participants enter extensive social interaction with their peers within this phase and face multiple problematising experiences within it. The data suggests that, passing through rejection and acceptance, they try to answer the question “**Who am I?**” and reflect on past experiences, which is a critical component of self-exploration within a process of identity work (Korotov, 2006). Receiving feedback that was often not in line with their self-image reduced their self-perceptions of their leadership competencies, which confirms the findings of Mayo et al. (2012). As a

result, programme participants lower the priority of career and business aims and start setting new developmental goals that typically include better self-awareness and higher leader efficacy. At the same time, they are struggling with the leadership prototype they would like to adopt as a role model: the study identified a difference between the “traditional” Russian leadership prototype and the prototype of an effective leader that emerging leaders have in mind based on their experience. This tension fuels anxiety and forces participants of the programme to enter the next phase of their leadership development, which implies experimenting with various possible selves.

**The experimentation phase** unfolds in the middle of the programme when participants begin actively testing new behavioural patterns. Through experimentation and feedback cycles, they close the gap between their current leadership identities and desired/possible selves, as already described by Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood (2017). In Russia, this process becomes even more challenging as there is a conflict between the possible identities to which emerging leaders might strive to achieve (discussed above). Asking themselves the question “**do I have the right to lead?**”, passing through rejection and acceptance by individuals, smaller groups, a large group and a broad community, they progressively move towards crafting a new definition of themselves as leaders, shaped by social interaction.

**The confirmation phase** unfolds straight after participants formally end their education and await graduation, which typically takes place within six months after completing the last course. During this phase, participants seek validation and endorsement of their newly-crafted identities. Finally, they resolve identity tensions and threats (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018), feel greater inner confidence, have clear goals for further development and claim that their relational and self-awareness have reached a new level, minimising incongruities between their self and social identities (Koerner, 2014). “**Yes, I have the right to lead**”, they tell themselves finally, as the institution and their peers have validated their leadership claims. After this, they start manifesting their new leadership identity outside of the institution, and sometimes end up changing jobs and even

locations. Within this process, they often come back to the school or their peers seeking support and reinforcement of their self-image.

Meanwhile, the study confirms that other programme participants play a crucial role in identity work, and the process of identity work happens only in social interaction. They act as a group that provides support and acceptance, as role models for crafting possible selves (Ibarra, 1999), as feedback providers (Mayo et al., 2012), as actors for social interaction that provoke conflicts and a problematisation experience, and as validators of leadership claims.

At the same time, the institution also plays a critical role in the identity work process. First, it serves as a family or community, which gives a sense of support and belonging. Second, it is a training or scout camp, which assists in experimenting and developing. Third, it is an exploratory journey, which involves intense self-reflection and personal transformation. Fourth, as a confirmation agent, it provides “permission to lead”, or endorsement of new leadership identity. These four roles enrich the literature on identity workspaces (Haynes et al., 2014; Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018) and roles of an institution given by Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood (2018): the institution as an opportunity (platform and retreat), the institution as a microcosm (training ground and magnifying glass), and the institution as a process (fast track and inner journey). The study explores the notion of an institution as a holding environment/identity workspace from a different angle and looks at it as at a place where participants not only craft portable selves but also promote their leader efficacy. Therefore, when building new leadership programmes, academic directors should consider opportunities for participants to build their leader efficacy besides exploring formal academic curriculum implications.

#### **5.3.4 The process model of leadership identity work**

As was found in the research, leadership identity in a leadership development programme evolved over time (18 months) through specific activities and events. This process could hardly be captured by variance theorising. Additionally, this study operates with *the meaning* of self, as it looks at the leadership concept from within and through the narratives of research participants. It relies on narratives

rather than on logico-scientific models of knowing, and tries to reflect the world from within based on lived experience as opposed to capturing abstract generalisations from outside, which are better captured by process models (Cloutier and Langley, 2020).

Also, process modelling is more applicable for this research because it fundamentally postulates that the world is continually becoming and is made up of ongoing processes, as opposed to substantive ontology, which gives priority to things and entities (Cloutier and Langley, 2020). As leadership and leadership development are not entities but processes (Northouse, 2019), as well as identity work (ref. to Section 1.3.3), process theory is a key lens through which to frame the theoretical contribution.

Therefore, as the result of the study, the process model was developed as a narrative storyline that reveals the mechanisms by which events and activities played out over time (Cornelissen, 2017).

Despite multiple calls in the literature to develop conceptual contributions in the form of process models, the literature does not offer clear guidelines about how to achieve this, particularly in cases when there is no numerical data collected specifically for this research (Cloutier and Langley, 2020). From the four suggested approaches to process theorising (linear, parallel, recursive and conjunctive), a linear approach was applied, because (1) the dominant aim of the research was to better understand the process of identity work and further define the mechanisms underpinning it; (2) the findings led to clear consecutive stages of identity work in a management development programme, and explained how transition between stages happened (this made recursive and conjunctive styles of theorising not relevant); and (3) the proposed model builds on previously developed models, e.g. DeRue and Ashford (2010) and Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood (2017), which is also typical for a linear style of process theorising.

In the literature over the past 20 years, the process models of identity work were related to the general leadership identity construction process (DeRue and Ashford, 2010), to the evolution of narrative repertoire and consequences for work role transitions (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010), to becoming more authentic

in an organisation (Dutton, Roberts and Bednar, 2010), to building a relationship between the external world and the internal self-system (Lord and Brown, 2003), to making a role identity shift from an individual contributor to a leader (Maurer and London, 2018), and to the crafting of portable selves in a temporary identity workspace (Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017).

Based on the aforementioned findings and discussion, the model shown in Figure 5 suggests that the process of crafting an aligned leadership identity and leader efficacy unfolds in the four stages described above. Each stage features certain events and factors that trigger identity work.

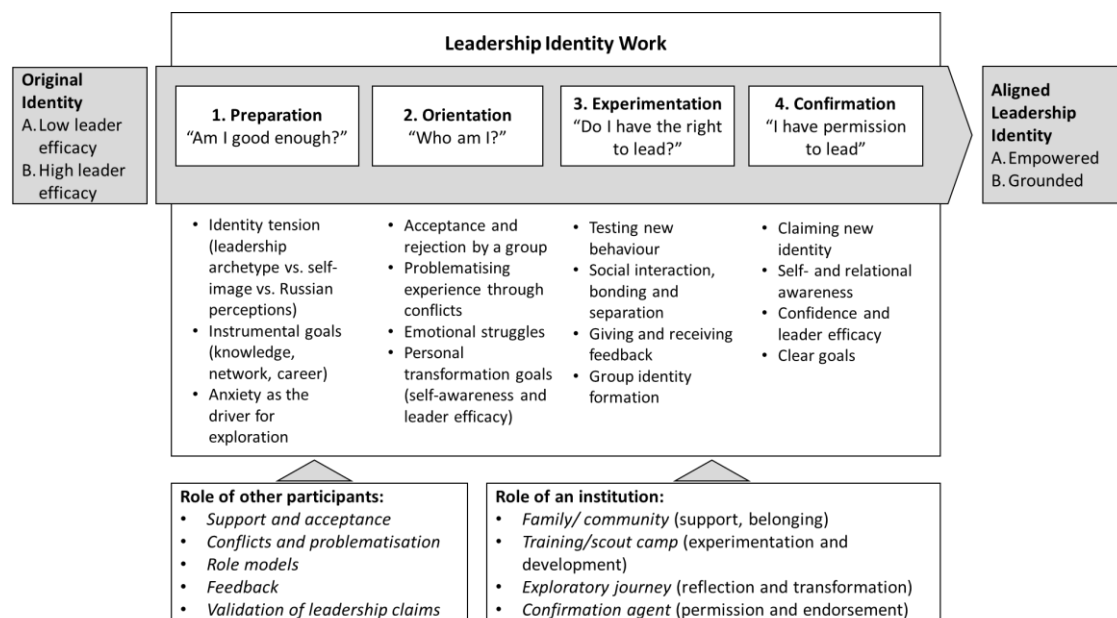


**Figure 7. The process model of leadership identity work within a leadership development programme**

The process model of identity work represents the main contribution to theory and practice that the author claims in this study. Answering the literature call to explore how the process of identity work happens in identity workspaces (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018), the process model integrates the previous research on the topic and enriches it with empirical data collected during this research.

The proposed process model enriches the literature with nuances related explicitly to leader efficacy and the process of how it is developed through a leadership development programme. DeRue's and Ashford's process of claiming and granting leader identity (2010) was supported by this research, as well as Petriglieri's view (2011a) on the business school as a holding environment. What was added is a detailed description of the four stages that programme participants pass through to develop their leader efficacy as a core component of leader identity.

Finally, it is worth saying that, although the proposed process model reflects the journey that the majority of participants took within the programme, it is not intended to (and does not claim to) fit all leaders who engage in identity work. Programme participants' individual development journeys may be influenced and shaped by individual variables, such as learning orientations, stages of adult development, personality traits and cultural trends (Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017). Given the variance in responses (e.g. eight participants did not explicitly mention aligned self-confidence as a result of the programme), further research is needed to verify the model in various settings.

#### **5.4 Multi-level connections: synthesising the research questions**

As discussed above, to answer its two research questions, the study employed two interconnected theories in identity studies: social identity theory and identity theory. Referring to both theories would help to explore the process of identity work at different levels: both collective and individual.

At the social (collective) level, the phenomenon of Russian leadership was explored. First, the literature was reviewed to understand what the meaning of leadership in Russia is as described by cross-cultural studies. The claim that most cultural research on the topic is outdated was brought forward. Second, emerging Russian business leaders were interviewed to understand the meaning that they associate with leadership and leaders. As a result, Russian leadership characteristics were identified based on this meaning, and differences between what general perceptions about Russian leadership are and what emerging

Russian leaders think about it were highlighted. The conflict between their image of a leader and collective perceptions as described in the literature was discovered.

At the individual level, a model of leadership identity work in a leadership development programme was developed. It was noticed that emerging Russian leaders face identity tension because of conflicting leadership prototypes: their desired image (self-to-exemplar) and the socially acceptable prototype (self-to-prototype). Dealing with the anxiety caused by unclear expectations of themselves, they entered the programme and, with the help of critical programme elements (feedback, formal and informal communication, coaching, teamwork etc.), passed through the identity work journey.

The link between questions and identity levels is summarised in Figure 8.

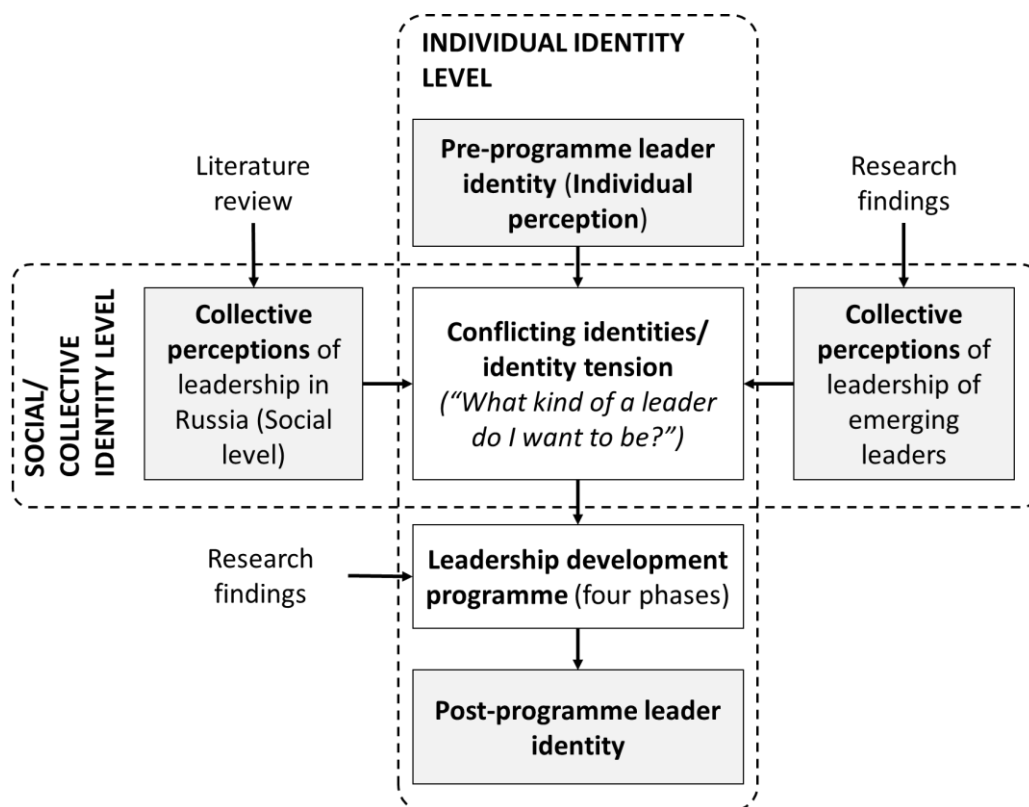


**Figure 8. Multi-level connections between identity levels in the process of identity work**

Thus, synthesis of the two research questions and corresponding identity theories helped to explore identity work journey at two levels: social and

individual. The conflict between them ignites and fuels the identity work that happens within an educational programme.

## **5.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter positioned study findings within the current literature. It explored characteristics of Russian leadership as it is perceived by emerging Russian leaders, investigated the trajectory of leadership identity and leader efficacy within a management development programme and proposed a process model comprising of four phases.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Chapter introduction**

This chapter summarises the thesis by outlining contributions to theory (Section 6.2), contributions to practice (Section 6.3), limitations (Section 6.4) and implications for future research (Section 6.5).

### **6.2 Contribution to theory**

Whereas leadership across cultures has undoubtedly been explored (i.e., Dorfman et al., 2012), the research made an attempt to examine leader identity development, grounded in context- and language-specific identity work processes, which arguably may add depth to our understanding of the process of becoming a leader in transnational contexts (Ibarra et al., 2014a). The study of 30 emerging Russian business leaders who attended an 18-month Master of Business Administration programme at a leading Russian management school claims several theoretical contributions to the leadership literature within social identity theory, implicit leadership theory and identity theory.

First, the findings of national specifics of leadership in Russia enrich both social identity theory and implicit leadership theory with a better understanding of what leadership means in the Russian context. The study explored Russian leadership identity as described from within and brought a new lens to the country's leadership phenomenon by highlighting significant components of leadership identity as emerging Russian leaders understand it: confidence, taking responsibility, inspiring for a result, caring and building relations. Though these were already explored by leadership scholars (ref. to Section 5.2.), these four traits were not considered critical characteristics of a leadership prototype in Russia. The research suggests that a person who possesses these characteristics is more likely to be perceived as a leader in the contemporary Russian management context, which partially contradicts prevailing views on Russian leadership culture. The aforementioned traits can also be potentially used as context variables in cross-cultural studies. For example, the role of confidence and responsibility in Russian culture may be significantly higher than

in others. While this was salient in the interviews, it needs to be validated by more extensive research.

In the implicit leadership domain, the research claims that understanding Russian leadership culture within existing frameworks (i.e. Hofstede, 1993; House et al., 2013; Scandura and Dorfman, 2004) may not fully reflect what leadership means in Russia. Narrowing it down to such characteristics as authoritarian (Ardichvili, Cardozo and Gasparishvili, 1998; Elenkov, 1998), paternalistic (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2020), hierarchical (Meyer, 2017), transactional (McCarthy et al., 2008; Puffer and McCarthy, 2011) and centralised (Puffer, 1994) might not be relevant when considering the new generation of Russian business leaders. Instead, they prefer a more participative, humane-oriented, transformational and less authoritarian approach. This contradicts the widely cited GLOBE research, which portrays Russian management culture as authoritarian and lacking a participative approach and humane orientation (House et al., 2013).

Within social identity theory, the research explored the process of a social leadership identity shift in Russia. It highlighted the challenges that emerging Russian leaders face in selecting a leadership prototype for self-to-leader comparison, which is believed to be a key driver for motivation to lead (Guillén, Mayo and Korotov, 2015). The study suggests that the archetypical Russian leadership identity (self-to-prototype comparison) conflicts with the identity emerging leaders would like to develop to become efficient leaders (self-to-exemplar comparison). This conflict provokes identity struggles and makes them validate their possible and provisional selves with the help of a management development institution and other people. Although the study did not imply a large-scale analysis of the leadership perceptions of emerging Russian business leaders, the research sample demonstrated salient hostility towards “archetypical” leadership perceptions in Russia.

Second, the contribution enriches identity theory by strengthening the link between leader efficacy and leadership identity. The study argues that leadership identity work is stimulated by a desire to promote leader efficacy and describes the process of its calibration within a leadership development programme. Also,

the study also suggests that leader efficacy development is one of the main results of a leadership development programme, besides achieving formal educational goals.

As a result of the study, a process model of identity work within a leadership development programme was developed. It proposes four stages: preparation, orientation, experimentation and confirmation, and two alternative pathways that programme participants could take within an institution as a holding environment depending on their subjective assessment of their leader efficacy at the start of the programme: the empowering pathway and the grounding pathway. Within both pathways, participants can consider the institution as a family/supporting community, an exploratory journey, a training camp and a confirmation agent. This contribution responds to a literature call for developing a process model for leadership identity work within an identity workspace (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018). It builds on the works of DeRue and Ashford (2010) and Petriglieri et al. (2017) and offers more nuance on leader efficacy as a critical driver for leadership identity work and its development throughout a programme. Also, the research stresses that a long-term educational programme serves not only as a place to acquire knowledge and skills but also as an identity laboratory/workspace. Therefore, management education has a vital psychological function.

### **6.3 Contribution to practice: recommendations for implementing research results**

The study has rich potential for practical implementation at the business school where the author works and for broader practice. Practical implications are discussed in detail in Section 7.3; a summary is below.

For business schools, the research provides food for thought and indications on enriching skill-based leadership development programmes with an identity development component. Based on the developed identity work process model, specific proposals for the MBA programme are discussed in Section 7.3.2 and other programmes that are supposed to accommodate the research findings. Recommendations include introducing more teamwork to the programme, fostering peer-to-peer feedback, redesigning the leadership development course

to make it more identity-focused, adding more off-campus study modules and making changes to the assessment of programme results (for example, adding identity-focused questions to the exit survey after the programme). Programme management may also consider changing its communication strategy to emphasise identity transformation and to promote it as a strong value proposition for future programme participants.

For business leaders, the study proposes an alternative view on Russian leadership identity and the traits required to be recognised as a leader in Russia today. Understanding the leadership phenomenon in Russia may assist leaders in overcoming identity struggles, particularly closing the gap between their personal understanding of “ideal” leadership and prevailing leadership practices in the country. An assessment tool can also be developed based on the proposed framework, so leaders in Russia can assess themselves and identify areas for development. For expatriate managers working in Russia, the most applicable part of the research concerns Russian leadership characteristics: based on the findings, they can adapt their leadership style to be recognised as leaders by their Russian peers and subordinates.

For organisations, the research findings may be instrumental in onboarding new managers and employees and helping them build leader efficacy and leadership identity. The proposed process model of identity work and factors that impact leader efficacy development could be instrumental in designing and delivering in-house onboarding and leadership development programmes.

For executive coaches, the link between leadership identity and leader efficacy may become a focus for their work with clients to boost their leadership effectiveness.

## **6.4 Limitations**

Given the chosen philosophical position and methodology, the research has several limitations.

First, the limited time for the doctorate research did not permit a longitudinal study, which prohibited interviewing the same research participants before and

after the MBA programme. There is a call in the literature that studies of the human developmental process should be performed via a longitudinal research design requiring substantial time and resources (Leung, 2008). As leadership identity and leader efficacy can only be measured subjectively as self-assessment, the study missed the opportunity to make such measurements at the start and end of the programme. However, as the study's objective was to reconstruct meaning about leadership and leadership development rather than track the progression of leadership skills, and the dominant research paradigm was interpretive, conducting retrospective research seems to be a reasonable approach to avoid a positivist mentality in the study.

Second, the fact that the MBA programme is selective (i.e. admissions are based on English language proficiency, leadership experience and numerical and verbal tests), the study excluded from the research some emerging Russian business leaders who did not qualify for admission to the programme. To extrapolate results on a national level, the results should be assessed on leaders from other areas and domains (i.e. regional politicians, leaders of non-government organisations, informational technology entrepreneurs etc.). Future research may imply quantitative testing of selected results on a broader population of Russian leaders.

Third, as the sample was not randomised, and participants were free to join or leave the study, there is a possibility that they may be more aware of the leadership identity formation process. Also, participants' perceptions of leadership could have been impacted by the leadership development programme they were attending. Most of the research participants have already graduated from the MBA programme, so there is a probability that their perceptions of leadership could have substantially changed as a result of their education.

Fourth, the research is based only on analysing interviews with programme participants and previous relevant literature without involving any empirical data from other sources, e.g. reporting, essays, or interviews with professors or supervisors. On the one hand, it contributed to an enhanced understanding of context. On the other hand, this approach limits the array of data and its analysis

methods so may limit identity formation perspectives, as it literally excluded the relational and social components of leadership identity. Further research should involve more sources like interviewing members of the teams that leaders are supervising and to using longitudinal diaries in order to better trace critical incidents and the leadership identity development process.

Fifth, the research included participants of two different cohorts of MBA students at slightly different stages of their study. Although the programmes were very similar in terms of academic content, they had some differences in terms of design, sequence and content, and group dynamics and interpersonal relations within the cohort, which might impact the results.

Sixth, as interviews were conducted in the Russian language, some meaning may be disguised or lost within the translation and analysis. As language objectivates shared experience and becomes a depository of collected meanings (Light, Berger and Luckmann, 1967), translating interviews into English could be a reason for converging Russian and Western leadership paradigms. To prevent this and double-check the validity of results, additional analysis of Russian versions of the interviews was conducted on top of the study.

Seventh, the research implied only interviews without measuring leadership effectiveness, leadership skill progression and career progression. The study operated with meaning and self-narratives rather than objective data, dictated by the selected research philosophy. This approach limits its findings to the self-image only, and results should not be extrapolated to the leadership skills development process.

Eighth, while offering a process model of identity work, the research findings remain the result of immersion in one setting. The research was done in one business school in Russia and involved only Russian nationals, so it is hard to say which parts can be replicated in other cultures and which have a specific Russian national context. Comparing settings with different cultures may shed some light on a real difference or convergence between Russian leadership identity and the Western one.

Ninth, the research was focused on social interaction, but the process of leadership identity development might also be dependent on stages of adult development (Kegan, 1999) and personality traits as well as cultural trends (Petriglieri, Petriglieri and Wood, 2017).

Finally, the researcher may not have been free of bias, as he was involved in the MBA programmes as an instructor and a coach. However, he is aware of this and tried to maintain as much objectivity as possible, with the help of panel reviews, communication with supervisors, co-raters and external advisors.

## **6.5 Directions for future research**

As already described in the study, the research led to several new propositions that further research should examine in more detail.

The discovery that emerging Russian leaders do not call themselves “leaders” could become a starting point for research exploring the socio-linguistic aspects of the word “leader” in the Russian language and its consequent meanings in an organisational context. Future research may examine the meanings and definitions that Russian leaders and followers associate with the leadership process (i.e. what constructs they use when they internalise leadership identity) to implement them in leadership development programmes without copying English terms and vocabulary.

The framework describing the core traits of a Russian leader should be validated via a large-scale quantitative study involving not only students of a selective MBA programme but a range of business leaders from different organisations and industries. Additionally, the framework can be tested in other cultural contexts to test which variables are Russia-specific and which can be applied globally (for example, an international business school with diverse programme participants).

The generational shift of Russian leadership perceptions may attract the attention of researchers. First, the convergence of Russian and Western perceptions about the most effective leadership styles may be explored with more focus on the diminishing authoritarian/directive style and a more humane and participative

orientation. Second, salient characteristics of Russian leadership that are changing with generations can be identified, and the ones remain intact.

The coupling between leadership identity work and leader efficacy must be better understood, particularly in the organisational context. The study discovered that calibration of leader efficacy happened within a leadership development programme and proposed a model that describes this process – but it needs further verification in various contexts.

Finally, the relationship between leadership identity and leader efficacy should be explored, particularly concerning formal leadership development programmes. Future research should focus on how leadership skills progress along the leadership identity development process.

## **6.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter discussed contributions to theory and practice, limitations of the research and its findings, as well as implications for future research.

## **7 IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

### **7.1 Chapter introduction**

This chapter discusses how the research findings can be applied to practice and how the potential impact of the research can be assessed. Section 7.2. describes the groups of practitioners that were engaged during the research. Section 7.3. summarises the personal and organisational impact of research. Section 7.4. proposes ways and channels for the dissemination of the study. The chapter concludes with Section 7.5., which outlines plans for impact evaluation.

### **7.2 Engagement with practitioners**

Following the Deliverable V: Impact Plan, the following groups of practitioners were involved in discussing the research: professors/instructors of leadership development programmes, managers in the education industry, human resources professionals, executive coaches, management students and business leaders.

Within the preparation phase of the research (problem formulation, positioning study and literature review), practitioners were contacted to better shape the problem and review/research, questions and to ensure that the research was relevant to management practice (refer to Appendix H for the engagement journal). The engagement took place predominantly in email exchange and one-on-one conversations. As a result of engagement with academics and practitioners, as well as of moving along the Cranfield DBA process, the topic and focus of the research shifted several times:

- August 2017 (Research Proposal): The new generation of Russian business leaders: what change do they bring to prevailing leadership models in Russia?
- October 2017 (Updated Research Proposal): Understanding the prevailing leadership styles of new Russian (business?) leaders.
- December 2017 (Problem Formulation): Understanding the personal and professional leadership identity of new Russian business leaders

- August 2018 (Positioning Study): The development of leadership identity as narrative construction: findings from emerging Russian business leaders
- January 2019 (Systematic Literature Review): The narrative identity work of emerging Russian business leaders: the case of a leadership development programme as an identity workspace.
- September 2019 (Research Design): The identity work of emerging Russian business leaders: findings from a leadership development programme.
- January 2021 (Empirical Study): “Do I have the right to lead? Identity work of emerging Russian business leaders in a leadership development programme.

Within the research planning and design phase, the research plan and interview protocols were shared selectively to validate the research direction and potential for practical impact. Also, practitioners were contacted to provide insight into their leadership development experience from the programme development and programme participant perspectives. Please refer to Appendix I for the engagement journal.

Within the empirical phase of the research, practitioners were directly involved in the study as its participants. 30 interviews with MBA participants as emerging Russian business leaders were conducted.

Within the dissemination phase of the research, practitioners were contacted to discuss the study’s findings and their potential impact. This was done predominantly via sending out selected chapters of the empirical project and collecting written feedback via various communication channels (email, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger). As a result, 33 practitioners provided their feedback, which assisted in the development of the exploitation plan, particularly in applying the research findings in the organisational context (ref. to Section 7.3. for a detailed description).

The comprehensive engagement journal is presented in Appendix H and Appendix I. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, most of the engagement with practitioners in 2020-2021 took place via online channels (Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype). The vast majority of feedback and testimonials were collected after a call for feedback was posted on the author's social networks, which have more than 7,000 subscribers.

Six written testimonials were collected from business school executives (including the president of the management school the researcher is working for), executive coaches and business leaders (refer to Appendix J).

### **Professors/instructors of leadership development programmes**

This group of practitioners was engaged to assess the proposition that the research would equip them with an empirically-tested understanding of who participants of leadership development programmes are in Russia and how they shape their leadership identity within those programmes. The challenge of communicating with this group of practitioners was related to the fact that instructors of leadership development programmes usually have an academic background and have challenges separating their academic view on the research results from the practical one. This challenge was addressed with a clear definition of the topic of engagement – academic aspects of the research were discussed mainly at the preparation, design and empirical phases of the study, while practical ones were tackled after the study was finished.

### **Business school executives and managers in the education industry**

Unlike teaching professors and instructors of leadership development programmes, managers from the educational industry were mainly interested in making long transformational programmes more appealing to their target audience and making them more effective in achieving learning outcomes and personal aims. Therefore, most of the discussions with them were about how existing programmes could be improved and what types of new programmes could be launched based on the research results. The topic of leadership identity was discussed as the potential cornerstone for designing new leadership

development programmes, and personal transformation and self-confidence were assumed to be included as primary aims in communication about leadership development programmes.

### **Human Resource (HR) and Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals**

Human resources professionals were contacted in the final phase of the research to discuss how the research could be instrumental in developing emerging leadership within organisations. If the study considers the longitudinal management education programme as place where leadership identity work takes place (an “identity laboratory”), it is supposed that an organisation can be regarded as such a “laboratory” too, and the research findings can be applied in an organisational context. Therefore HR professionals might apply the developed framework in their organisations and assist new organisational leaders in building their leadership identity and leader efficacy.

### **Executive coaches**

Representatives of this group of practitioners are the ones who work with emerging Russian business leaders predominantly one-on-one, and they are in the best position to speak about their “inner theatre”. The feedback that the author was seeking from them related to leadership identity in Russia, the process of leadership identity work, and the potential impact of this research on their executive coaching practice.

### **Business leaders**

Business executives, entrepreneurs and line managers were contacted to evaluate the potential impact on their daily leadership practice. They could reflect on their leadership identity work in the past, better focus on certain avenues for development, and discuss how they could better structure their work with leaders from the new generation.

## **Management students**

Finally, MBA graduates from cohorts who did not participate in the research and current MBA students were addressed. They provided their perspective on how the research results may be translated into designing and delivering a more effective MBA programme. They also shared their reflections on how they would select their next management development programme based on what they learned from this research.

The aforementioned practitioners provided rich feedback on the research results, which helped the author develop an implementation and dissemination plan, and start bringing it to practice. Section 7.3 discusses the outcomes of engagement with practitioners and specific actions that were already taken by the author as of March 2022.

## **7.3 Learnings and implications for practice**

As instructed by the Cranfield DBA Programme Handbook, the Deliverable IV should explicitly examine the potential or actual economic (practical) or societal impact of the research. Economic and societal impact is defined as fostering global economic performance, increasing public services and policy effectiveness, and enhancing quality of life, health, and creative output. There are three major types of potential DBA impact: instrumental, conceptual and capacity building. In this paper, the impact is discussed in relation to the researcher's own practice (personal impact), with the researcher's organisation (organisational impact) and wider practice/policy. In all cases, steps were taken to ensure that this impact is realised.

Given the nature of the research (studying identity work within a leadership development programme), most of the impact discussed with practitioners was related to improving management education programmes.

### **7.3.1 Personal impact**

First of all, the research helped the author thoroughly explore and better understand the topic of leadership development. His previous research work was

primarily concerned with economics, and the DBA journey helped switch to the “human side” of management. Before the DBA, the author mainly relied on his experience and the implicit knowledge which existed in his organisation. After he passed through all research phases, performed a systematic literature review, discovered a fascinating identity theme, and conducted an empirical study within a live educational programme, the author structured his thoughts. He believes that he can now better understand the roots and causes of what is going on in a longitudinal leadership development programme. As a result, he became much more confident when he speaking about new leadership development programmes or entering the classroom to give a teaching session on leadership.

Second, a deep dive into the academic ocean of leadership strengthened the author’s self-confidence as a researcher. Just like research participants and their journey, the author’s DBA journey became, in a sense, an attempt to find an answer to the question “Do I have the right to lead?”. As a result, the author’s leadership scholar identity became more robust; he started speaking the same language as academics without hesitation and learned to defend his position. Thus, the DBA became a significant milestone in the author’s journey towards an academic career and profession.

Third, the DBA programme strengthened the author’s critical thinking and scientific approach to reality. Now he cannot bear not to mention sources of data or quotes on slides; he cross-checks data before presenting it; he understands that there are many conflicting ontologies and that it really depends on which one you take. The author believes that he started to think more broadly, more deeply and more conceptually.

Fifth, the author appreciated the written format of communication. He realised that a statement is worth discussing when it is formulated and written, and started to pay more attention to the things that he writes, including on social networks.

Sixth, the research opened many opportunities for networking with business leaders and practitioners, which led to many insights and new projects. The author learned that being an academic helps open doors and build relations with people.

Finally, the author gained fundamental knowledge to assist in the development of new leadership development programmes. He has already implemented some of the research findings in existing programmes in his organisation and is currently working on some new ones (see below).

### **7.3.2 Organisational impact**

From an organisational perspective, the most significant impact is expected to lie within the leadership programme development, namely improving the MBA programme, which was extensively studied within this research. Moreover, the research results may assist the organisation in rethinking its communication with current and prospective students and improving its programme assessment.

#### **Redesign and improvement of the Master of Business Administration Programme**

According to the original plan, the process of MBA redesign should have started in 2020, immediately after the empirical phase of the research. However, the COVID-19 pandemic did not let this happen, and the plans were put on hold. At the moment of thesis submission, the author was working as a member of an academic team designing the new MBA programme, considering findings from the research. The new programme design should rely heavily on the leadership identity transformation process.

First, more opportunities for teamwork and social interaction should be created within the programme. Since social interaction is key to leadership development, each and every course of the programme should contain an opportunity for teamwork via action learning assignments. For example, structured work on entrepreneurial projects was introduced in the programme curriculum along with new electives on group dynamics and teams.

Second, programme participants should receive more peer feedback. As the MBA programme is a space where individual self-confidence meets relational recognition, it should accommodate space for structured peer-to-peer feedback, which is to follow group assignments and teamwork. 360-degree feedback is to be introduced first at the beginning of the programme (after the first four

modules), and at the end, after a four-month strategic consulting project. The feedback is to be discussed at structured coaching sessions led by an experienced executive coach to mitigate the potential adverse effects of such feedback on participants' self-confidence and leadership identity development journey.

Third, the integrated leadership development course will be redesigned based on the identity work phases: preparation, orientation, experimentation and confirmation. No structured events will take place at the preparation phase to give participants space for uninterrupted reflection. The leadership module is planned to kickstart the orientation phase to boost the problematising experience. After this, participants will write an essay describing their leadership challenges and plans for the rest of the programme. The off-campus Kamchatka expedition will be moved from the confirmation to the experimentation phase to allow participants to experiment with new leadership identities.

Fourth, the programme is considering adding more off-campus courses and discovery expeditions to stimulate transformative learning. Unfortunately, current international travel restrictions do not permit this change in the upcoming programme, so the programme management is discussing other extra-curricular discovery expeditions in Russia for present MBA groups and MBA alumni. Running such modules outside Moscow will encourage identity play, testing behaviour, identity claims and reflection.

Fifth, proposals are made to implement changes to the assessment of the programme results. The exit survey, typically run after formal graduation, is proposed to include questions related to leadership identity, self-confidence, and self-awareness.

### **Design and delivery of new leadership development programmes**

The research findings may be instrumental in designing and launching a new open enrolment leadership development programme for emerging Russian business leaders. In 2017-2019 the author was involved in creating and bringing

to the Russian market three open enrolment leadership development programmes that partially accommodated findings of his research:

- **LIFT: Leadership Identity Foundations and Transformation.** The programme was launched jointly with IMD Business School (Switzerland) in 2018. In October 2021, it welcomed its fifth intake. Leadership identity development is placed at the academic core of the programme.
- **Leadership Development Programme (LDP).** In September 2020, the author co-instructed a three-day module of the programme, partially dedicated to leadership identity work.
- **reStart: New Self in a New World.** Launched in September 2020, this online/live programme is intended to deepen self-awareness and kickstart identity work. The programme starts with several reflective exercises that help participants explore their role identities, including leadership identity.

### **Communication with current and prospective programme participants**

The research stressed the proposition that learning is becoming (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2018), and identity work within a leadership development programme is one of the core processes that define the outcomes of the programme. Thus, the school might change its communication strategy and emphasise this side of management education. In a world where knowledge is easily accessible via online courses, identity transformation may become a strong value proposition when bringing new programmes to the market.

### **7.3.3 Impact for wider practice**

The author called for feedback on the research predominantly via social networks. As LinkedIn is blocked in Russia, many business leaders use Facebook for professional reasons, so he made a post on Facebook describing the research and requirements for reviewers. More than 70 people responded to the call, and the author shared selected parts of the Deliverable VI: Empirical Project with them. 33 practitioners provided verbal or written feedback, including six formal testimonial letters. Below is a summary of their input with an indication of how the research may impact practice. A detailed engagement journal is

provided in Appendix H (engagement with academics and practitioners during the design and planning phases of the research) and Appendix I (engagement with practitioners in March-April 2021, when the Empirical Project was completed).

Based on the feedback collected, the impact of the research on practice lies within the following domains: better awareness of the Russian leadership model, impact on and through leadership development programmes, the applicability of the research findings in the organisational context, and the relevance of results to executive/leadership coaching practice.

### **Awareness of Russian leadership and its changing nature**

Many practitioners mentioned that the research, first of all, raises the issue of transforming perceptions about leadership in Russian culture. It helps leaders think about what leadership is and how it is defined, the key characteristics and behaviours of a leader, and how they are different in Russia compared to the rest of the world.

A Swiss-based executive coach who often works with Russian management students commented:

Your analysis of Russian leadership identity helps me better understand the Russian leaders I am coaching as part of international programmes. I do notice in my practice cultural differences, and clearly what you describe matches my experience. I find the part on conflicting identities particularly interesting to help my Russian coachees.

A cross-cultural consultant and coach who works across Russia, Europe and the Middle East supports this notion:

The research can be seen as a resource aimed at helping both existing and emerging Russian leaders and international researchers to understand the phenomenon of the modern Russian leadership and how it evolved. It could be an excellent source filling existing voids, as well as giving practitioners and academics alike a set of tools to understand the transformations that 'leadership' has undergone in Russia and will continue to go through in the future.

At the same time, practitioners view the research as a source of helpful hints on how to build more effective communication between “old” and “new” Russian leaders. A member of the board of one of the largest Russian agricultural companies framed it as follows:

[In the research], you may find some keys that may help you to build an effective communication and collaboration strategy with “new” and “old” leaders or make the mediation in between. I learned some hidden strings which would be pretty helpful to build better relations with our holding’s new growing top management.

Finally, understanding the leadership phenomenon in Russia may assist leaders themselves in overcoming identity struggles, particularly the gap between their personal understanding of “ideal” leadership and prevailing leadership practices in the country. An executive coach summarises:

Publishing this work will help new Russian leaders and their mentors/bosses/companies identify the problem, make it visible, and therefore, possible to solve. Stressing its impact on leaders’ potential will contribute to considering identity work as a crucial element for leaders’ development. It will make skills/competencies work, which is a much more common subject of leadership training, secondary to identity work, and thus, more relevant to the actual needs and aspirations of the leader.

### **Impact on and through leadership development programmes**

Since the research is concerned with the MBA programme, most practitioners viewed its application in leadership development programmes. First of all, all former and current MBA participants who looked through the research results confirmed the relevance of the developed process model to their personal experience:

Although I haven’t completed many modules so far, I can support most of the claims, for example, I became aware of how my self-image has been changing during the programme, and in many ways, it was related to my self-confidence. (President, Belgorod Rugby Federation)

What I found very relevant to my experience on the MBA programme was the description of group dynamics. If I knew this before, I would have taken it less

seriously and have been more aware of group processes. (Head of Project Management Office, Philipp Morris)

It looks very similar to what I feel and think so far on the MBA programme. (HR Director and career coach)

Leadership instructors and business school managers noted that the proposed process model of identity work could be instrumental in designing and delivering new leadership development programmes. Many of them confirmed that identity processes are more critical in the leadership programme than knowledge acquisition and suggested that they would pay more attention to them in their future educational projects:

I plan to refer to the research not only when I will develop new leadership programmes but also when I will be explaining to programme participants what happens with them” (Independent executive coach and consultant).

Also, the findings about the nature of Russian leadership may be transformed into educational content and taught on leadership courses at Russian management schools. For example, certain aspects of the research findings were already included in the academic curriculum of the MBA programme at Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO and presented to the class as part of the Leadership module from 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

### **Applicability in the organisational context**

Leadership development happens not only in management schools but also in organisations. Many HR experts and business executives see potential to apply some of the research findings to develop leaders more effectively in the organisational context. Notably, the process model of identity work can be replicated in an organisation to help emerging leaders build self-confidence and take ownership over new projects. The organisational development director at a large Russian retail bank commented:

The process model has excellent potential for implementation in corporate practice. Developing organisational leadership identity may serve as a consolidation activity as well as a talent retention instrument.

Practitioners mentioned coaching, peer feedback, 360 surveys, teamwork and off-site expeditions as necessary instruments for their corporate practice.

### **Applicability of findings in executive/leadership coaching practice**

Executive coaches who assist leaders in achieving their goals were predominantly interested in the link between self-confidence and leadership. The study's conclusions may assist practitioners in this field to guide their coachees through the process of leadership identity work. This quote is from an international executive coach and narrative psychologist:

I was struck by a similarity between the MBA journey undertaken by the programme participants to the core of their leadership as researched by Andrey to that of coaching clients in senior leadership positions being coached on developing their leadership identity. I found it particularly helpful to see proof and examples quoted in the project arguing that “identity is fluid and may change“. I also consider findings on “learning as becoming“ extremely valuable for anyone engaged in leadership training and developmental practices.

## **7.4 Dissemination and exploitation**

### **7.4.1 Initial dissemination channels**

The dissemination and exploitation process for this research was carried out via several channels, including publications in practitioner-targeted journals, seminars/round tables, educational programmes and social media.

#### **Publications in practitioner-targeted journals**

Between January 2018 and May 2020, the author published 19 practitioner articles and opinion columns in leading Russian and international business media, including Forbes Russia, the Harvard Business Review - Russia, The Entrepreneur and others (refer to Appendix K). Most of the published articles related to leadership development. On average, each piece was read by 5,000 – 40,000 readers. At the moment, he plans to publish two articles emerging from the research: one on Russian leadership identity and one on leadership identity

work within a leadership development programme. The target media for both is the Harvard Business Review - Russia.

### **Seminars and round tables**

In May 2019, the interim status and results of the research (problem formulation, literature review, preliminary research design) were presented at a regular internal seminar hosted bi-weekly by various professors and management school departments to discuss recent developments in research and teaching domains. The participants mainly were professors, lecturers and educational managers (programme managers and programme directors) and totalled around 30 people. In March 2021, the results of the empirical project were presented at a similar seminar, but online, to a similar audience of around 20 people.

### **Educational programmes**

Between January 2020 and December 2021, the author spent more than 200 hours (ca. 25 days) as an instructor and more than 300 hours (ca. 37 days) as a facilitator/coach on leadership development programmes. During this time, he presented and discussed some of the findings with programme participants. This included core characteristics of Russian leadership identity and the role of self-confidence in the leadership development process.

### **Social media**

Some aspects of the research results were disseminated through social media channels, predominantly Facebook (ca. 7,247 subscribers as of 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021), Instagram (2,046 followers as of 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021) and Telegram (907 subscribers as of 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021). These three social networks were selected as in Russia they are used not only for personal communication but also for professional purposes. In Telegram, the author created a dedicated channel focused on practitioners interested in leadership development and leadership studies.

### **7.4.2 Exploitation plan**

Most of the exploitation of the research results will happen through the development of leadership development programmes and the publication of

academic papers (described above). On top of that, there are the following potential areas for research exploitation.

### **Publications in academic journals**

Not specifically related to practitioners, this step will assist in reaching academics who are also involved in the design and delivery of leadership development programmes. As in the case of practitioner publications, the author intends to publish two articles: one on the Russian leadership identity and one on identity work. Target journals include *Leadership Quarterly*, *Human Relations* and *Leadership*.

In August 2022, the author presented findings of the research at the 82nd Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management. The abstract was published in the *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Shapenko, 2022).

**New teaching sessions** will be developed with a focus on the specific characteristics of Russian leaders, particularly on self-confidence. The author has already introduced concepts of leadership identity, self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-esteem in teaching sessions (for example, a two-hour session on building self-confidence on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021, with participant evaluation of 9.5/10).

**New leadership development programmes** will be developed based on the identity work process model proposed in the research. At the moment of this thesis submission, the author is working on the development of a new leadership programme, which is to be launched in Q2 2022.

**Teaching cases** for leadership development programmes to be developed based on research findings and research frameworks. For example, the concept of leadership identity has been already implemented in a published teaching case “Yuliana Slashcheva: Is There Such a Thing as 'Female Leadership'?” Two more teaching cases are under development.

**A book** focused on the new generation of Russian business leaders. There is a lack of management literature in Russia that describe Russian leadership characteristics. After publication in a peer-reviewed journal, the author intends to

work on a book that would highlight the process of changing leadership identity in Russia. The book's target audience may include managers, practitioners, executive coaches, and anyone else interested in developing their leadership identity and skills.

## **7.5 Plan for impact evaluation**

As described in the introduction (problem formulation part), the project's ultimate objective is to assist the Russian management education industry in developing more effective leaders. There are several ways to record this type of impact.

First, further engagement with practitioners is required. Collecting and structuring feedback from them helps to evaluate the relevance of the research to practice and its actual impact.

Second, redesigned and newly created leadership development programmes should be thoroughly assessed after completion to test the impact of the implemented changes on participants' leadership identity and compare them with the previously held programmes. This will require adjustment of the assessment criteria and modification of the assessment process.

Third, the author will continue to engage practitioners via regular posts on social networks and record their feedback on published articles and blog posts.

Fourth, feedback sessions with programme participants should be organised regularly to cross-check the validity of findings, further explore the process of identity work and evaluate the impact of the implemented changes to the MBA programme.

## **7.6 Implication of context for findings and their implications for practice**

As instructed by the research methodology, this study was done in Russia, with only Russian nationals as participants of the management development programme. Limiting the context of the research, on the one hand, responds to the research rationale (to better understand Russian leaders in order to build more effective leadership development programmes), but on the other hand, it

limits the potential application of the research findings outside of Russia. Below are the study's major contextual considerations.

First, linguistic context often creates ambiguity in leadership research, because the identity development process is largely shaped by language (Frimann and Hersted, 2016). Interviews were conducted in the Russian language, which is why some findings are not easily translated into English. For example, the Russian word *ovyetsstvyennost*, which was one of the most frequently mentioned characteristics of leadership in Russia by participants, may be rendered in English as “responsibility”, “ownership”, “accountability” and even “guilt”. Even the word “leader” is not internalised in Russian leadership identity, and there is a clear difference between the words “leader” and “manager”, unlike in the English-speaking world (i.e. it is not impossible to write “Project Leader” or “Team Leader” on a business card in Russian). Therefore, while the findings for the first research question (Section 4.1) are only relevant in Russia, they may also be considered by cross-cultural leadership studies.

Second, national and cultural context definitely play an important role in forming participants' perceptions of leadership and the leadership journey. All research participants were born in Russia and were raised with Russian cultural archetypes. Therefore, their understanding of concepts like “conflict”, “care”, and “friendship” may vary compared with that of representatives of other cultures. For example, Russian culture is described as conflicting and very direct (Meyer, 2017), so a situation which may be characterised by a Western observer as a “conflict” may not be perceived as such by a Russian leader. This explains why some participants could not recall any inter-group conflicts even if they were involved in one.

Third, the educational context has specific features that differentiate it from an organisational context. Organisations have core activities, products, hierarchies, processes, and formal communication. In educational institutions, where leaders do not have formal contractual obligations, roles and responsibilities (e.g. they do not have job descriptions and are not paid for achieving results), they are more open to identity play (Korotov, 2006). Moreover, as was discovered by the

research, many research participants deliberately enrolled in the programme to change their self, which is not normally the case when an individual joins an organisation. Also, organisations often have strong discourses that play an important role in identity formation and transformation, and identity work in organisations is often associated with resistance against these discourses and reparation of an individual's sense of identity (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Thus, the direct application of these findings for leadership development in organisations may not be as effective as expected.

Fourth, we have to consider the social context. The research participants graduated from a leadership development programme at one of Russia's leading management schools, which holds prestigious international accreditation. To gain admission to the programme, they had to complete a strict admissions process, which included logical, verbal, and English tests, and even an assessment of applicants' leadership and social competencies. Therefore, the social context in which they developed their leadership identities was carefully constructed to ensure that programme participants were of the highest possible standard. They are likely to know more about leadership than other leaders in Russia, and they are likely to be familiar with "Western" leadership concepts, including those which were taught to them on the programme.

Fifth, historical context plays a critical role in developing the consciousness and identity of a whole generation (Mannheim, 1952; Pilcher, 1994). Most research interviews were conducted in 2019-2020, while at the time of submission of this thesis, the world was witnessing tremendous international turbulence as a result of the crisis in Ukraine, with severe social, economic, cultural and political consequences for Russia and many other countries. Such events may become trigger points, or "crucibles" for the identity development of emerging Russian business leaders (Bennis, 2004) and may impact the results of the study. The research claims that emerging Russian business leaders differentiate themselves from "old" leaders, partially because they developed their consciousness after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Now, when the political and international context

has changed, there may be an impact on the next generation of leaders, who are now in their twenties.

Finally, individual intra-group contextual factors have to be considered when assessing the results of the study. Participants of the research came from different backgrounds and regions. Russia consists of a multitude ethnic and religious groups, some of which were represented in the sample (Russians, Tatars, Bashkirs, Ukrainians, Belarusians). They included both corporate employees and entrepreneurs, as well as those who had moved from a corporation to a startup, or vice versa. The age of participants ranged from 26 to 36 years old, and one-third of research participants were women. Their family backgrounds and income also varied greatly, from those from very poor neighbourhoods in remote towns to heirs to large family businesses. Other differentiators worth mentioning are participants' industries (mining, construction, energy, information technology...), functions (strategy, marketing, legal, sales...) and educational background (humanitarian, technical, arts...). All these factors may have impacted the inter-group dynamics and individual identity work trajectories within the programme.

As we can see, linguistic, national, cultural, social, organisational, individual and even historical context plays an important role in leadership identity formation and transformation. Therefore, the research findings should be tested and verified in various contexts.

## **7.7 Chapter summary**

This chapter proposed several areas for the practical implications of the research findings. It discussed how leadership development programmes can be improved in order to stimulate the identity work of their participants. A potential impact on organisational practice was also mentioned, as well as dissemination channels (media, programmes, seminars, papers), an exploitation plan, and the implications of context.

## **8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The research was driven by a desire to better understand the leadership development process and contribute to the leadership development industry. The topic of leadership identity was selected as the main focus, as it plays a critical role in a leader's emergence, continuous development, personal growth, self-efficacy and motivation to lead (Kets de Vries and Korotov, 2007; Lord and Brown, 2001).

The research objective was to explore the leadership identity work of participants of an 18-month-long MBA programme at a Russian management school based in Moscow who are believed to represent a cohort of emerging Russian business leaders. 30 in-depth interviews with graduates of the programme were conducted to answer two questions: (1) what does leadership mean in the Russian context as described by emerging Russian business leaders? and (2) how do these leaders develop their leadership identity within a leadership development programme? The research implied an interpretive stance, relativist ontology and social constructionist epistemology.

As a result, salient characteristics of Russian leadership identity were identified: confidence, taking responsibility, inspiring for a result, caring and building relations. The absence of the word "lead" in Russian leadership identity was noted, as well as the conflict between self-to-prototype and self-to-exemplar comparisons. A proposition was made about changing the perception of what effective leadership is in the Russian business context due to a new generation of leaders coming into the scene: they prefer a more participative, humane-oriented, transformational and less authoritarian leadership style.

The study also indicated that a process of leader efficacy calibration stimulated leadership identity work and proposed a process model of identity work within a leadership development programme. The model implies four phases: preparation, orientation, experimentation and confirmation. Two alternative pathways were identified that programme participants could take within an institution as a holding environment depending on their subjective assessment of

leader efficacy at the start of the programme: the empowering pathway (anchored in lower leader efficacy) and the grounding pathway (anchored in higher leader efficacy). As a result, both pathways lead to a more aligned leadership identity, which assumes individual internalisation, relational recognition and collective endorsement.

The study brought several theoretical contributions to leadership identity research within identity theory, social identity theory and implicit leadership theory. It also highlighted avenues for future research and suggested the practical implications of its findings. The research results are intended to be implemented predominantly in new identity-driven leadership development programmes.

For the author, the study was not only a challenging step in his academic career but also an identity development journey, full of anxiety, ups and downs, and made a significant impact on his efficacy as a researcher. Much like the participants of the study, the author passed through all phases of identity work, and the Cranfield DBA programme served a perfect identity workspace for him, as it provided social defences, a sentient community and rites of passage. As a result, not only was new knowledge created at the end of this study, but also a new researcher.

The author intends to continue studying the topic of leadership identity with more focus on leader efficacy, as it will presumably assist him in building more effective leadership programmes.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A SELECTED LITERATURE FOR REVIEW

| Article Title                                                                                                                                              | Authors                                                                                         | Journal Title                                                                                         | Year |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 'I don't know what I am doing!': Surfacing struggles of managerial identity work                                                                           | Hay, Amanda                                                                                     | Management Learning                                                                                   | 2014 |
| A multilevel, identity-based approach to leadership development                                                                                            | Day, David V.; Harrison, Michelle M.                                                            | Human Resource Management Review                                                                      | 2007 |
| A Two-Year Stretch: The Functions of an Identity Workspace in Mid-Career Identity Work by Management Academics                                             | Haynes, Kathryn; Grugulis, Irena; Spring, Martin; Blackmon, Kate; Battisti, Giuliana; Ng, Irene | Journal of Management Inquiry                                                                         | 2014 |
| Am I a leader? Examining leader identity development over time                                                                                             | Miscenko, Darja; Guenter, Hannes; Day, David V.                                                 | Leadership Quarterly                                                                                  | 2017 |
| Articulating identities                                                                                                                                    | Ybema, Sierk; Keenoy, Tom; Oswick, Cliff; Beverungen, Armin; Ellis, Nick; Sabelis, Ida          | Human Relations                                                                                       | 2009 |
| Assuming the mantle: Unpacking the process by which individuals internalize a leader identity                                                              | DeRue, D. Scott; Ashford, Susan J.; Cotton, Natalie C.                                          | Book: Exploring Positive Identities and Organizations: Building a Theoretical and Research Foundation | 2009 |
| Authentic leadership and the narrative self                                                                                                                | Sparrowe, Raymond T.                                                                            | Leadership Quarterly                                                                                  | 2005 |
| Behind the scenes in the identity laboratory: Participants' narratives of identity transition through group coaching in a leadership development programme | Florent-Treacy, Elizabeth                                                                       | International Coaching Psychology Review                                                              | 2009 |
| Beyond (just) the workplace: a theory of leader development across multiple domain                                                                         | Hammond, Michelle; Clapp-Smith, Rachel; Palanski, Michael                                       | Academy of Management Review                                                                          | 2017 |
| Change, meaning and identity at the workplace                                                                                                              | Reissner, Stefanie C.                                                                           | Journal of Organizational Change Management                                                           | 2010 |

| Article Title                                                                                                                             | Authors                                                                                               | Journal Title                                                | Year |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Constructing leadership identities through stories                                                                                        | Hersted, Lone;<br>Frimann, Søren                                                                      | Tamara Journal for<br>Critical Organization<br>Inquiry       | 2016 |
| Developing a Leadership Identity:<br>A Grounded Theory                                                                                    | Komives, Susan R.;<br>Owen, Julie E;<br>Longerbeam, Susan<br>D; Mainella, Felicia<br>C; Osteen, Laura | Journal of College<br>Student<br>Development                 | 2005 |
| Development of outstanding<br>leadership: A life narrative<br>approach                                                                    | Ligon, Gina Scott<br>Hunter, Samuel T.<br>Mumford, Michael D.                                         | Leadership Quarterly                                         | 2008 |
| Exploring the Registers of Identity<br>Research                                                                                           | Corlett, Sandra;<br>McInnes, Peter;<br>Coupland, Christine;<br>Sheep, Mathew                          | International Journal<br>of Management<br>Reviews            | 2017 |
| Fantasies of leadership: Identity<br>work                                                                                                 | Sveningsson, Stefan;<br>Larsson, Magnus                                                               | Leadership                                                   | 2006 |
| Fast Tracks and Inner Journeys:<br>Crafting Portable Selves for<br>Contemporary Careers                                                   | Petriglieri, Gianpiero;<br>Petriglieri, Jennifer<br>Louise; Wood, Jack<br>Denfeld                     | Administrative<br>Science Quarterly                          | 2018 |
| From Individual Contributor to<br>Leader: A Role Identity Shift<br>Framework for Leader<br>Development Within Innovative<br>Organizations | Maurer, Todd J.;<br>London, Manuel                                                                    | Journal of<br>Management                                     | 2018 |
| Global careerists' identity<br>construction: A narrative study of<br>repeat expatriates and<br>international itinerants                   | Näsholm, Malin H.                                                                                     | International Journal<br>of Managing Projects<br>in Business | 2012 |
| I can, I am: Differential predictors<br>of leader efficacy and identity<br>trajectories in leader development                             | Kwok, N., Shen, W.,<br>& Brown, D. J.                                                                 | Leadership Quarterly                                         | 2020 |
| Identities and Identity Work in<br>Organizations                                                                                          | Brown, Andrew D.                                                                                      | International Journal<br>of Management<br>Reviews            | 2015 |
| Identity and identification at work                                                                                                       | Miscenko, Darja;<br>Day, David V.                                                                     | Organizational<br>Psychology Review                          | 2016 |
| Identity as narrative: prevalence,<br>effectiveness, and consequences<br>of narrative identity work in macro<br>work role transitions     | Ibarra, Herminia;<br>Barbulescu, Roxana                                                               | Academy of<br>Management Review                              | 2010 |
| Identity matters: Reflections on<br>the construction of identity                                                                          | Alvesson, Mats;<br>shcraft, Karen Lee;<br>Thomas, Robyn                                               | Organization                                                 | 2008 |

| Article Title                                                                               | Authors                                                  | Journal Title                                                                                              | Year |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| scholarship in organization studies                                                         |                                                          |                                                                                                            |      |
| Identity narratives under threat: A study of former members of Arthur Andersen              | Gendron, Yves; Spira, Laura F.                           | Accounting, Organizations & Society                                                                        | 2010 |
| Identity Processes in Leader Development                                                    | Day, David V.; Harrison, Michelle M.; Halpin, Stanley M. | Book: An Integrative Approach to Leader Development: Connecting Adult Development, Identity, and Expertise | 2012 |
| Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory                                                  | Stets, Jan E .; Burke, Peter J                           | Social Psychology Quarterly                                                                                | 2000 |
| Identity under construction: How individuals come to define themselves in organizations     | Ashforth, Blake E.; Schinoff, Beth S.                    | Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior                                     | 2016 |
| Identity undoing and power relations in leadership development                              | Nicholson, Helen; Carroll, Brigid                        | Human Relations                                                                                            | 2013 |
| Identity Work and Organizational Identification                                             | Brown, Andrew D.                                         | International Journal of Management Reviews                                                                | 2017 |
| Identity Work and Play                                                                      | Ibarra, Herminia; Petriglieri, Jennifer L.               | Work Paper                                                                                                 | 2008 |
| Identity work in organizations and occupations: Definitions, theories, and pathways forward | Caza, Brianna Barker; Vough, Heather; Puranik, Harshad   | Journal of Organizational Behavior                                                                         | 2018 |
| Identity work of science-based entrepreneurs in Finland and in Russia                       | Karhunen, Päivi; Olimpieva, Irina; Hytti, Ulla           | Entrepreneurship & Regional Development                                                                    | 2017 |
| Identity Workspaces for Leadership Development                                              | Petriglieri, Gianpiero                                   | Work Paper                                                                                                 | 2011 |
| Identity workspaces: The case of business schools                                           | Petriglieri, Gianpiero; Petriglieri, Jennifer Louise     | Academy of Management Learning & Education                                                                 | 2010 |
| Identity, deep structure and the development of leadership skill                            | Lord, Robert G.; Hall, Rosalie J.                        | Leadership Quarterly                                                                                       | 2005 |
| Identity-Based Leaders Development                                                          | Ibarra, Herminia; Snook, Scott; Guillen Ramo, Laura      | Work Paper                                                                                                 | 2008 |

| Article Title                                                                                                               | Authors                                                                              | Journal Title                                              | Year |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Individual-level Foci of Identification at Work: A Systematic Review of the Literature                                      | Atewologun, Doyin; Kutzer, Roxanne; Doldor, Elena; Anderson, Deirdre; Sealy, Ruth    | International Journal of Management Reviews                | 2017 |
| Is leadership a part of me? A leader identity approach to understanding the motivation to lead                              | Guillén, Laura; Mayo, Margarita; Korotov, Konstantin                                 | Leadership Quarterly                                       | 2015 |
| Just what do we think we are doing? Learning outcomes of leader and leadership development.                                 | Wallace, D. M., Torres, E. M., & Zaccaro, S. J.                                      | Leadership Quarterly                                       | 2021 |
| Knowing me, knowing us: Personal and collective self-awareness enhances authentic leadership and leader endorsement.        | Steffens, N. K., Wolyniec, N., Okimoto, T. G., Mols, F., Haslam, S. A., & Kay, A. A. | Leadership Quarterly                                       | 2021 |
| Leader role crafting and the functions of leader role identities                                                            | Gjerde, S., & Ladegård, G.                                                           | Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies             | 2019 |
| Leadership and followership identity processes: A multilevel review                                                         | Epitropaki, Olga; Kark, Ronit; Mainemelis, Charalampos; Lord, Robert G.              | Leadership Quarterly                                       | 2017 |
| Leadership and Identity Construction: Reframing the Leader-Follower Interaction from an Identity Theory Perspective         | Luehrmann, Thomas; Eberl, Peter                                                      | Leadership                                                 | 2007 |
| Leadership and identity: An examination of three theories and new research directions                                       | Ibarra, Herminia; Wittman, Sarah; Petriglieri, Gianpiero; Day, David V.              | Book: The Oxford handbook of leadership and organizations. | 2014 |
| Leadership as identity construction: The act of leading people in organisations: A perspective from the complexity sciences | Karp, Tom; Helgø, Thomas I. T.                                                       | Journal of Management Development                          | 2009 |
| Leadership Development as Identity Construction                                                                             | Carroll, Brigid; Levy, Lester                                                        | Management Communication Quarterly                         | 2010 |
| Leadership development as identity formation: Middle managers' leadership learning from MBA study                           | Warhurst, Russell P.                                                                 | Human Resource Development International                   | 2012 |

| Article Title                                                                                                                           | Authors                                                                             | Journal Title                       | Year |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------|
| Leadership, self, and identity: A review and research agenda                                                                            | van Knippenberg, Daan; van Knippenberg, Barbara; De Cremer, David; Hogg, Michael A. | Leadership Quarterly                | 2004 |
| Linking narrative and identity construction: using autobiography in accounting research                                                 | Haynes, Kathryn                                                                     | Critical Perspectives on Accounting | 2006 |
| Making up leaders: Reconfiguring the executive student through profiling, texts and conversations in a leadership development programme | Meier, F., & Carroll, B.                                                            | Human Relations                     | 2020 |
| Managing managerial identities: Organizational fragmentation, discourse and identity struggle                                           | Sveningsson, Stefan; Alvesson, Mats                                                 | Human Relations                     | 2003 |
| Mediating ambiguity: Narrative identity and knowledge workers                                                                           | Mallett, Oliver; Wapshott, Robert                                                   | Scandinavian Journal of Management  | 2012 |
| Narrating career, positioning identity: Career identity as a narrative practice                                                         | LaPointe, Kirsi                                                                     | Journal of Vocational Behavior      | 2010 |
| Narrative as construction and discursive resource                                                                                       | Taylor, Stephanie                                                                   | Narrative Inquiry                   | 2007 |
| Narrative identity construction in times of career change: Taking note of unconscious desires                                           | Hoyer, Patrizia; Steyaert, Chris                                                    | Human Relations                     | 2015 |
| Narrative leadership: Storying leaders in the executive business school classroom                                                       | Trester, Anna Marie                                                                 | Signs and Society                   | 2015 |
| Narrative, life story and manager identity: A case study in autobiographical identity work                                              | Watson, Tony J.                                                                     | Human Relations                     | 2009 |
| Pathways for positive identity construction at work: four types of positive identity and the building of social resources               | Dutton, Jane E.; Roberts, Laura Morgan; Bednar, Jeffrey                             | Academy of Management Review        | 2010 |
| Provisional Selves: Experimenting with Image and Identity in Professional Adaptation                                                    | Ibarra, Herminia                                                                    | Administrative Science Quarterly    | 1999 |
| Research in leadership, self, and identity: A sample of the present and a glimpse of the future                                         | van Knippenberg, Barbara; van Knippenberg, Daan;                                    | Leadership Quarterly                | 2005 |

| Article Title                                                                                                  | Authors                                                                        | Journal Title                                        | Year |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------|
|                                                                                                                | De Cremer, David;<br>Hogg, Michael A.                                          |                                                      |      |
| Rethinking Organizational Leader Identity Development: A Social Network and Ethnographic Approach              | Lemler, Russell P.                                                             | Thesis                                               | 2013 |
| Self-doubters, strugglers, storytellers, surfers and others: Images of self-identities in organization studies | Alvesson, Mats                                                                 | Human Relations                                      | 2010 |
| Social-cognitive, relational, and identity-based approaches to leadership                                      | Lord, Robert G.;<br>Gatti, Paola; Chui,<br>Susanna L.M.                        | Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes | 2016 |
| The Lack of Power or the Power of Lack in Leadership as a Discursively Constructed Identity                    | Driver, Michaela M.                                                            | Organization Studies                                 | 2013 |
| The making of autobiographical memory: Intersections of culture, narratives and identity                       | Fivush, Robyn;<br>Habermas, Tilmann;<br>Waters, Theodore E A;<br>Zaman, Widaad | International Journal of Psychology                  | 2011 |
| The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory                                                            | Stryker, Sheldon;<br>Burke, Peter J.                                           | Social Psychology Quarterly                          | 2000 |
| The stories that make us: Leaders' origin stories and temporal identity work.                                  | Zheng, W., Meister, A., & Caza, B. B.                                          | Human Relations                                      | 2021 |
| The Unwanted Self: Projective Identification in Leaders' Identity Work                                         | Petriglieri, Gianpiero;<br>Stein, Mark                                         | Organization Studies                                 | 2012 |
| Theorizing narrative identity: Symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics                                        | Ezzy, Douglas                                                                  | Sociological Quarterly                               | 1998 |
| Who am I? Narration and its contribution to self and identity                                                  | Bamberg, Michael                                                               | Theory & Psychology                                  | 2011 |
| Who Will Lead and Who Will Follow? A Social Process of Leadership Identity in Organizations                    | DeRue, D Scott;<br>Ashford, Susan J                                            | Academy of Management Review                         | 2010 |
| Why narrative?                                                                                                 | Bamberg, Michael                                                               | Narrative Inquiry                                    | 2012 |

## Appendix B THE INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

| #                                  | Questions                                                                     | Probes and Prompts                                                                                                                                                        | Reference to Theoretical Concepts (Validity Check) |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Pre-MBA journey</b>             |                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                    |
| 1                                  | Tell me about yourself. Who are you?                                          | What is your education/ profession/hobby/family situation? Where were you born?                                                                                           | Identity (self), Identity Narrative                |
| 2                                  | Why did you decide to get an MBA?                                             | What was your primary objective?<br><br>What about money/career/glory/ meaning/fear?                                                                                      | Context, Possible identity, Narrative              |
| 3                                  | What was your post-MBA picture of yourself before the start of the programme? | What kind of career/life/ network/skills did you expect to achieve?                                                                                                       | Possible identity, Provisional identity            |
| <b>Russian Leadership Identity</b> |                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                    |
| 4                                  | How do you define the word “leadership”?                                      | How would you define a person who you would call “a leader”?                                                                                                              | Leadership                                         |
| 5                                  | What factors or events have influenced your understanding of leadership?      | How did those events happen: were they initiated by yourself, or did they happen by accident? Any context related factors? (e.g. relocating to a different city/country?) | Leadership, Crucibles                              |

| #                  | Questions                                                                                        | Probes and Prompts                                                                                      | Reference to Theoretical Concepts (Validity Check) |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 6                  | Which of these factors or events has been most important in your leadership development journey? | Could you rate the importance of these factors/events on a scale from 1 to 10? Why were they important? | Sources of identity, Identity work, Crucibles      |
| 7                  | Have there been any constraints or barriers to your leadership development?                      | If so, what were these? How did you react to and deal with them?                                        | Identity work, Identity threats                    |
| 8                  | How would you describe yourself as a leader today?                                               | Why do you think so?                                                                                    | Leadership identity                                |
| 9                  | What kind of leader would you like to become today?                                              | Do you have any role models?                                                                            | Possible identity                                  |
| <b>MBA journey</b> |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                         |                                                    |
| 10                 | What are three highlights of your MBA journey, for you personally?                               | Why is this important for you?                                                                          | Identity threats, Crucibles, Identity work         |
| 11                 | What are three lowlights of your MBA journey?                                                    | Why is this important for you?                                                                          | Identity threats, Crucibles, Identity work         |
| 12                 | What kind of personal and professional changes did the MBA programme bring to you so far?        | Why?                                                                                                    | Identity work                                      |
| 13                 | What is your post-MBA picture today?                                                             | How did it change and why?                                                                              | Possible identity, Provisional identity            |

| #                                                              | Questions                                                                                                      | Probes and Prompts                                          | Reference to Theoretical Concepts (Validity Check)   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Identity Work within a Leadership Development Programme</b> |                                                                                                                |                                                             |                                                      |
| 14                                                             | If you compare your self-definition before the MBA programme and today, what kind of differences do you see?   | What was the difference?                                    | Provisional identity, Identity work                  |
| 16                                                             | What were the major transition points/critical events in your development within the MBA programme?            | Why did you change your original vision?                    | Identity threats, Identity work, Sources of identity |
| 17                                                             | What was the role of the school/ professors/peers/other elements of the MBA social system in your development? | Who/What played a major role in your leadership transition? | Identity workspace                                   |
| 18                                                             | Which metaphor would you use to describe your development journey in the MBA programme?                        | Please think of a story/movie/ picture...                   | Identity workspace                                   |
| 19                                                             | What has changed in your self-definition as a leader as a result of the programme?                             |                                                             | Identity (self), Identity work                       |

## Appendix C THE FINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- **Introduction**

1. In which cohort of MBA are you studying or have been studying, and which stage of the programme are you passing through at the moment?
2. How old are you?
3. How many years of leadership experience do you have?

- **Pre-MBA journey**

4. Tell me about yourself briefly. Who are you?
  - Education, profession, hobby, family, birthplace...
5. Why did you decide to get an MBA?
  - Did you have a specific formal objective?
6. What was your post-MBA picture of yourself before the start of the programme?
  - What kind of career/life/network/skills did you expect to achieve?
7. What was your picture of yourself at the start of the programme?

- **MBA journey**

8. What are the school and the programme for you? Describe them in your words.
9. What are three highlights of your MBA journey, for you personally?
  - Maybe, 3-5 other essential things?
  - Anything out of the curriculum?
10. What are three lowlights of your MBA journey?
11. What kind of personal and professional changes did the MBA programme bring to you so far?
  - What new things did you learn about yourself?
  - Can you attribute this transformation to any component of the programme or any specific event?
12. What is your post-MBA picture today?
  - If you compare the picture you had of yourself before the programme and now, what kind of changes do you see?
  - How did you learn about it?
13. How did your relations with your classmates develop through the programme?
  - The group as a whole - which emotions?
  - You vs the group
  - Any conflicts?
14. What was the role of the school/professors/peers/other elements of the MBA social system in your development? Who did play the significant role?

15. What was missing in the programme in terms of your development and achieving your goals?
  16. Which metaphor would you use to describe your development journey in the MBA programme? What did it look like?
  17. What has changed in your self-definition as a leader as a result of the programme?
    - What has changed in the way you communicate with other people?
  18. Did you get what you expected? Did you achieve your objective?
  19. If you could come back to the start of the programme, what kind of advice would you give yourself? What would you do differently?
- **Leadership in Russia**
    20. How do you define the word “leadership”?
      - How would you define a person who you would call “a leader”?
    21. How do people become leaders?
    22. What factors or events have influenced your understanding of leadership?
      - When did you have your first leadership experience?
      - How did these events happen: were they initiated by you, or did they happen by accident?
      - Any context-related factors? (e.g. relocating to a different city/country?)
      - Did you have any role models? What was unique about them?
    23. Which of these events were the most important in your leadership journey?
      - Why?
    24. Any significant events/conflicts/failures that shaped your leadership?
      - How did you react to struggles?
    25. How would you describe yourself as a leader today?
      - Any impact of the MBA programme on this?
    26. What kind of a leader would you like to become today?
      - Do you have any role models?
    27. How do you define success?
    28. Do you think there are differences in leadership:
      - Russian leaders vs foreign
      - Old generation vs young generation
      - Men vs women
  - **Closing question**
    29. Is there anything we did not mention but which you would like to add with regard to leadership or your MBA journey?

## Appendix D CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

### Consent Form for Participants in Research Studies

**Title of Study: IDENTITY WORK OF EMERGING RUSSIAN BUSINESS LEADERS: FINDINGS FROM A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

Please Initial or  
Tick Boxes

- The nature, aims and risks of the research have been explained to me. I understand what is expected of me. All my questions have been answered fully to my satisfaction. ☐
- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researcher(s) involved and be withdrawn from it immediately without having to give a reason. I also understand that I may be withdrawn from it at any time, and that in neither case will this be held against me. ☐
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulations 2018, except where there has been a disclosure of criminal nature (which will be reported to the authorities) of the following types:
  - Where a person has information relating to act of terrorism
  - Where a person has information about suspected instances of money-laundering
  - Where a person has information about the neglect or abuse of a child☐
- I agree to volunteer as a participant for the study and give full consent. ☐
- This consent is specific to the particular study mentioned above and shall not be taken to imply my consent to participate in any subsequent study or deviation from that detailed here. ☐
- I understand that interviews will be recorded on a digital voice recorder and will be transcribed, after which the audio file will be destroyed not later than 14 days. ☐

Participant's Statement:

I .....

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information for Participants about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Researcher's Statement:

I, Andrey Shapenko, confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the Participant.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Name and Contact Details of the researcher:

Andrey Shapenko, [andrey.shapenko@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:andrey.shapenko@cranfield.ac.uk)

Name and Contact Details of Research Supervisor:

Professor Michael Dickmann, [m.dickmann@cranfield.ac.uk](mailto:m.dickmann@cranfield.ac.uk)

## Appendix E SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**In what MBA class did you study or are you studying and at what stage of the programme are you?**

MBA-9, we've almost finished 18 modules, so we are already at the finish line.

**How old are you? How many years of managerial experience do you have today?**

I am 34 years old, with almost a year of managerial experience.

**Please, tell a few words about yourself. What do you do?**

You mean my full name?

**No, just what do you do and how you define yourself.**

I am a performing artist by education; I graduated from the All-Russian Cinematographic University. I have worked in cinema and theatre for many years. Basically, this is my education. I am now engaged in a new story, an insanely interesting story, it is me who creates a platform for film actors that is called the New Stage. I and some guys from the MBA are organising a contest: Russia - Land of Opportunities. That is, it is a competition similar to the Leaders of Russia, but only for actors, which will be called the New Stage. I've been engaged in these projects for a year now.

**So, you're an entrepreneur?**

Yes, I am. In fact, I came to [THE SCHOOL] with a big issue, with a presentation. I won the grant competition, and my presentation was devoted to the fact that we need to change the acting world, we need to create a platform for film actors. I received a large grant, and only this grant pushed me to study, I mean, I did not believe that a person from a completely different field who has no economic education could get accepted to the most prestigious school in Russia, which I have heard about for several years, and was just passing it by. Some of my friends kept saying that I should have probably tried. I just knew that I would never handle this in my life, but subconsciously I wanted to, because I thought that anyone is capable of anything.

When everyone around me, I mean, in the acting world began to talk about big problems, they began to talk about the fact that the same people get roles, and it is insanely hard to work in the cinema industry. Why don't we have a trade union. One day I was talking to [name], he graduated from MBA-7. He said that my story was cool and I should have

tried to apply for [THE SCHOOL]. I told him, “[Name], look, where am I, and where is [THE SCHOOL]?” Well, he said I should have tried it because I could do it. So, basically, I wrote the presentation, defended it, and only the grant pushed me to go to the school, because I would have never gone there by myself, because I didn’t believe I could.

**Well, why did you eventually decide to go? What was your goal?**

My goal was, first of all, to implement the project, that is, that was the first goal. The second goal was to change my life, because it seemed to me that I could do much more than go to these auditions, run from one TV show to another, fly between Kiev and Belarus, and other cities. I also understood that I had a daughter growing up, who needed to be properly educated. I realised that I lacked education, that is, I realised that I could do much more. Yes, that was what people around me mostly talked about.

Then, when I came to [THE SCHOOL], I did not understand how everything would be here, how all this was organised, what kind of education this was. That is, I came here like a blank canvas due to the fact that I had no managerial experience, nothing except a background in the acting world with the people who surrounded me. For two years I had been observing how the Zvezda TV channel and Channel One work. I did not know how to build a business, I did not understand anything in the field of entrepreneurship and marketing. My dad is a financier, he understands mathematics a little, but I’ve never shown any interest in that.

But if we talk about how it was here, I think I lit up in the third module, that is, on leadership. My whole consciousness changed after the third module or the second one - whenever we studied leadership and marketing. These were two modules that affected me just cosmically. I was lucky in leadership with our coach. When we were talking about ourselves, at that moment [lead coach] came in. So he went to the back end of the room, or rather squatted down, and he began to bombard me with all sorts of questions. He did it so professionally, of course, I could not have stood it, we all cried as a group, probably, he hit the most painful points. Me, of course, it was, let's just say...

For about four days I could not talk to anybody, I dug into myself, I finally got an idea of what I really wanted, of who I am. Well, everything seemed so simple and banal before. In general, before [THE SCHOOL] I did not understand myself, I did not understand what kind of a person I was... Well, yes, of course, I was so sociable, lively, handsome, but I did not fully realise what I really wanted in life. But now, after 18 months of studying, I do not know how it has happened...

I have just been re-reading my entry essay that we wrote first, before leadership. I have been reading and thinking “what nonsense!” So, there are eight pages...it seemed to me then that I described everything very deeply, and there was such fancy wording at the same time. But now I realise that it had nothing to do with me, that I’m just a completely different person now.

**If we dig a little deeper, what did you actually think about yourself, I mean, how did you describe yourself, what was your image of yourself?**

Well, when I applied, if you compare me with other guys with whom I shared my emotions before entering, everyone had the feeling that we were going to the best of the best, and for some reason I had this perception that I was an actress, I was cool, I was from another world, and everybody should have perceived me as someone special. I was very self-confident when I applied, but literally during the next module after entrepreneurship, I realised that I was probably the weakest student compared to the others. That is, they were talented and brilliant, and how they sort out all those cases was impressive. There were some new terms that I had never heard before in my life. I had to read about all of it, try to understand the terminology. I was trying to catch up, because I knew that I had got stuck, I was failing. For a very long time I just kept my head down.

The only thing that I really want to say is that it was a miracle that we had the Mini-6 group. I mean, it was such a legendary group. Throughout the course, a lot of people were biased, the guys were joking about us, saying your Mini-6, your seven is this and that, and that we should have stopped meeting. This Mini-6 group was formed accidentally, and I just wonder how it happened, who divided us into those groups. There it was - the very first one!

**Was it you?**

Well, it was us, together. In fact it happened by chance.

We are still friends, it turns out that there is no one closer and better, and we help each other. We meet regularly, discuss all sorts of deep topics. Personal or other things, and we also discuss psychological questions. We were also united by the fact that we all had something in common. After we talked, it turned out that we were all from different cities and from ordinary families. None of us had a rich background, I mean, financial support from parents. We all achieved what we have based on our life experience, pursuing the right human values. Many of us have faced some difficulties. We united around this core

which we didn't really understand, and became a very strong and cohesive team, a real family. We tried to reflect all this into our general group, we tried to communicate with everyone. It seemed to me that we had a very good impact on the guys, that is, our Mini-6 had a positive influence. We did not unite to stay away from the others, to have our own self-sufficient gang. No, on the contrary, we wanted to help everyone, unite in some other ways.

I came up with this idea with theatres; we go to theatres in this group of nine of us. We come up with some trips for the general group. Our Mini-6 gave me some sort of inner confidence, because it felt so great to be a part of it.

Then we had Zhenya\*, who also studied with our group. I believe he made huge progress, because he came to us very downtrodden, someone who was afraid of everything, worried, he didn't talk to anyone. Now he has become such a leader, such a lucky and happy guy, a true macho man in our group. Well, I mean, it was kind of a thrill, because we realised that he needed to hear as much as possible about how cool he was, to praise him, to consult with him.

**Look, you've said you came here with a perception of yourself as an actress, so you were very confident about yourself, weren't you?**

Yes, I was.

**Could you imagine at that very moment what kind of person you would become when you finished the programme? Did you have any ideas about that?**

I heard that people change and it gave me some cosmic emotions, as it seemed that I would graduate a completely different person, although I did not understand how it would happen. I thought I would have a very good understanding of business, and that I would be able to create this platform. It all seemed like that, but I did not know how it would all happen, and whether I would really learn something or not. Well, everyone was talking about it, and that was the dream I had.

When I came to [THE SCHOOL] I did not know whether I would continue to pursue the acting profession. Because for some reason I wanted to change everything in the beginning, to quit acting, to go in a different direction. But if we talk about how things are now, I realise that I want to do everything in parallel, and we can say that it is possible when there is the right team.

**What do the school and the programme mean to you in general? How would you describe them?**

Well, as of now, as cliché as it may sound, it's a family. For a year and a half, I realised that if there had been no school in my life, if it had not come to my life in time, and if I had not studied with my nine people, then my life would have been 100% different. I would have lost myself for sure, because I was on the verge of not knowing where to go next, as this whole acting thing was getting to me, nothing changed, and I wanted to go on. Nevertheless, I had no idea where to go, I didn't understand what I wanted.

This grant kicked me right into the school, and after that, the stars aligned. If it hadn't happened, I would be wearing myself out somewhere for sure. But now, especially after Kamchatka, I am inspired by the guys' support, and I really like to watch everyone, I mean, I constantly watch people, how they transform. Now I know exactly what I want. The main thing is that now I have boldness that I've never had. That is, I was uncomfortable all the time, I was shy, embarrassed to ask for or do something. Even Belukhin told me that I was totally different inside and outside, because I looked like a flamboyant girl who could open any door. But inside I was doubting myself, I was kind of lost. Now, thanks to [THE SCHOOL], I have such boldness, that is, I can easily lie to someone, ask for help. I finished off [name] because for three weeks...he was busy all the time, but I got that meeting. I went to that meeting, ending with the money for the project.

Then in August, [name] arranged a meeting with [name] for us. So we went to Russia - Land of Opportunities and spoke about the project, the competition. [name] told us that we needed to finish two paragraphs, but approved it. Now you understand that, in general, everything is possible, but the main thing is to come with the right request, with what you really want, and not just what someone has told you. People start believing you and supporting you. I used to sit and didn't even realise that it was possible. Yes, in fact, the main thing here is to communicate correctly.

**You have already said something, but could you please either repeat it briefly or name something new, what were the three highlights of [THE SCHOOL] MBA for you personally? I mean, what were the three most important memorable moments that changed you?**

The first moment was leadership, when we were talking about ourselves. I mean, that was the day when we were playing dress-up, making movies.

### **Do you mean coaching?**

Yes, and that was the first time I looked at myself from inside. So we were lucky to have our coaches, and I was lucky with the guys, because a lot really depends on those around you. We all opened up 150%, we started to trust each other, be compassionate and listen to each other. I remember this coaching...I will never forget, here he stands in front of me, and here comes [lead coach]. We had been working this way for a very long time, but, in fact, it was necessary to do it, but only with those with whom it felt comfortable, so that you were as open as possible. After that, we gathered together, worked through all our internal problems.

Here's the second moment - it was during marketing, when we ...our...his name was...

### **[Name]?**

Yes, [name] offered to work through, come up with some projects of our own. Then I approached the guys, and I did it very hesitantly, and with the support of [name]. She said, "Why don't we take your project?" I said that it was not very fair because everyone wanted to work their project through. There was [name], and I was scared to even approach him, because I thought he would never support me, because he was such a snob. But she insisted, said, "Let's work on your project". So, I plucked up the courage, came up and said, "Guys, help me with the project, please, let's tackle it as a marketing story". They all supported this project of mine. For two days we were working until 5 a.m., creating this cartoon with a platform. In fact, it turned out that all of them had lit up. We, following all the marketing rules, dug deep inside, worked through all the issues. We made a very cool presentation, and after that I began to understand the project. That is, if there were no marketing, then, probably, I would think for a very long time about how I could make a story with a cinema-platform. I mean, I had an idea, but I didn't know how to implement it. So they helped me, everything began to come together.

But the third moment was Kamchatka. I've heard as much as all of us about this Kamchatka experience, and about the hiking. For some reason we didn't realise that we would have this intellectual immersion, I mean, such a powerful sense of it. I really regret this, and I've told [name] about it. I mean, we didn't fully understand where and what we were signing up for, I think we missed that moment. We could have dwelled even more on all these topics, and worked them through. Well, because it was very interesting, it brought people together, and you could work through it further.

Then there was Kamchatka, climbing the Ostry Tolbachik volcano, for which I was perhaps ready mentally, but not physically. On the first two volcano climbs, I came 8th or 9th, not in the top five. Then something happened on the ascent of Tolbachik, some strange energy, confidence and uncertainty in those ten hours came to live within me. I went there with thoughts...

"Power of Siberia, don't let us down!" We were all laughing! Yes, of course we will, all of us will do it. I decided to be there first, because I was somewhere at the end, I was lagging behind. I mean, I felt like a loser, like I didn't know what I was doing there on the course. Then I realised that this was probably my last chance to prove myself. The fact that I could safely reach the destination, without any hesitation, and I wanted to arrive there among the first five and I did it.

After that, I mean, after the month of Kamchatka, I didn't even post photos, because I couldn't look at them, I felt so blown away. The only person I could have talked to was [name], we texted each other endlessly, because he felt the same as I did. I began to think about what we all lived for, and what I lived for. Why did I do so little? I began to think about our course, about the fact that so many people could not stand it and left, and after that I realised that... I even wanted to meet with the guys to talk about the problems that made them leave, and in most cases they were obvious.

**What do you mean saying "they left"?**

Well, some of them did not come, for example, [name].

**You mean they left Kamchatka?**

Yes, those who could not handle it left Kamchatka, there were some cases. The question which has been bothering me ever since Kamchatka is: "What is my purpose in this world?" Because I don't want to just have a good job, a family and money, I want to do something for the future of the country, for the state, for education. I understand that I still don't have enough competencies, but at the same time there are some other qualities that I can implement, embody, but I just need to have the right team, inspire them to some achievements. That is, I need to work 100% further and I shouldn't stop. I want to take Volkov's programme in a year, because I know that time is passing, and I am not satisfied with what is happening now...I mean, I am fine with what is happening now in my life, and before that I knew it wasn't interesting. Therefore, I can say that [THE SCHOOL] completely turned my mind upside down. So, when people ask me, they say,

"What about your [THE SCHOOL], did you learn how to do business there?" There is another banal question, "Did you really develop any partnerships with anybody?" I say that it's difficult for me to answer, because [THE SCHOOL] does not just give you knowledge, it changes you, and people don't understand this. I mean, unless you go through it, you won't understand, because I've become a completely different person. I'm sure of it. I even decided to stop communicating with some people I used to communicate with, because they are people from the past, and I do not want to waste my time on unnecessary information. Although I used to be a very open person, I always helped everyone, listened to endless phone conversations, and went to some meetings. I have a small circle of people with whom I want to go further in life, and now I want to leave them, and then develop my story, my business, invest in these people, and I do not need anything else.

**Do you have any three moments that are opposite? Were there are any disappointments when it was hard for you, when you were sad? Did you have any negative emotions?**

Yes, I did. I had one very unpleasant moment with one of my groupmates. She probably felt competition, because she, too, was from another world, I mean, not from the world of business. At the very beginning, as soon as we arrived, she began to turn everyone against me. She used to say, "What's this actress doing here, who is she, why has she come here, what business has she got being here?" After a while she turned her inner circle against me, and because I was such an open and emotional person, I began to feel and experience it all. Because I didn't understand what I'd done wrong, and people kept looking at me strangely, or stopped talking to me. Sometimes it turned out that someone who used to talk to me very openly started ignoring me and didn't even say "hi". There was some strange, unpleasant gossip and rumours that I discussed only with Mini-6. They told me not to worry...Yes, of course, I realised that I should have just ignored it.

This story made me stronger, as it probably only lasted for about four months, from summer until October. I went to [THE SCHOOL] with tears in my eyes, I even thought about giving up, because people strongly affected me, when they began to spread these nasty rumours. That was just the human factor, and I got through it. However, later, everyone who treated me that way, with contempt, or with these thoughts, they all came to me and apologised. They said that the girl tried to buddy up, but I did not react, and I just listened to all of them, it was all clear to me. Well, I suppose I actually didn't

understand, but I thought that I had to get over it, because most likely if I didn't get over it by myself, the same thing would happen to me, but I might not be able to cope with it. So, I pulled myself up, and at that moment, perhaps, even thanks to it, I became even stronger and more confident.

As a result, everything fell into place. It was probably a personal emotional topic for those people. Another moment was disappointment in Kamchatka, that we didn't put enough into it, I mean us, in our group. We could have done more, but we had moments when we, the responsible girls, were just sitting there, not even understanding anything and falling asleep. We were sitting there, because we couldn't let our [name] down, but the guys changed all the time. I mean, some of them went to sleep, others joined, and I did not really like their attitude. If we had been a little bit more focused and responsible, we would probably have done more! It seemed to me that if we had been more determined before Kamchatka, we would have had a very strong and deep study of some global topics, and maybe we would have reacted differently. But then, when we were already there, we didn't really understand why it was necessary. You're still trying to slip away, to find some slack, because the main thing is to get to the top, not to work through your issues. But in fact, everything mattered there, we had to get mobilised, do everything with the best possible result, and that was where I felt it wasn't fair.

**Did you find out anything new about yourself during the programme?**

Anything new? Well, the coolest thing I learned about myself is that I can't do business now, but I can handle a project. I mean, I know how to do it, what team I need. Thanks to [THE SCHOOL], I've learned what I am capable of, and that I have a strong quality - to unite people. I mean, to gather, unite and lead people. Then, the resources of my team start to play their role, i.e. who assumes this or that responsibility. But it is to unite, light up, develop compassion for the project - that's what I can definitely do! I've proved it several times. If we talk about what it used to be like for me, I didn't realise that before. I realise it now, because it's happened several times in a row, but I didn't realise it before, it was easy for me to make friends, and that was all. Now I realise that if I continue to work like this, it seems to me that we will implement more than one project. Nevertheless, if we talk about leadership, then I can say that I'm definitely confident, and I'm steady on my feet.

But then, when I came to [THE SCHOOL], I doubted myself, I was scared of everything, embarrassed and worried. Now I have such boldness, I mean, the right boldness, which

I've always wanted to have, and I've never had enough of it. It's very cool, it's such an internal quality, and before I used to think that I couldn't acquire it.

**Listen, speaking about the changes you experienced, could you somehow relate them to any particular elements of the programme, aside from what you've already told about? I mean, what was it in the programme that helped you do this? What was the source of that boldness, why and at what point did it happen?**

At what point? Well, it probably happened at the moment when we started working on a consulting project, because we had a pretty nuanced team. There was a girl who was the leader of our consulting project, and she also saw me as a competitor, and I did not want to compete with her, so I took a different position. It seemed to me that we...

The part that I was assigned in the consulting project, it seemed to me that I did a great job, because I hadn't faced tasks like that before. I was given the task to make a presentation from scratch, and as soon as it all worked out, I made all my slides. Yes, of course, I spent a lot more time than the other guys, because it was rather hard for me to do it. That was when it all started to come together, when I came up with different ways...

When we were working with Yasnoye Pole, I came up with ways to raise the company exactly how I felt would be best for it. These ways worked, and Dmitry gave credit to us. These things, of course, spurred me on, I mean, I came up with the idea, I implemented it, and it was possible. Yes, the leadership module was probably the most important one, as well as working with coaches. In fact, nothing would have happened without that, either.

The Mini-6 was crucial, I mean, you need people to encourage you all the time. These people point out your weaknesses and strengths. That's because we meet, we talk them over. Then you go away with it, you dwell on it, and by doing so you work on improving yourself. If there hadn't been this good unity in our group, I mean, our Mini-6 which we had, I probably wouldn't have changed. We talked a lot about each other's weaknesses, but we also discussed good qualities. Yes, of course, you can take offence at some people and not take it at others. But then, when you leave, you start working, respectively, you work and grow.

**So, besides your schoolmates and the professors who taught you, you've also mentioned your coach. Are there any other elements of the big [THE SCHOOL]**

**ecosystem that have had a positive impact on you? I mean, alumni, employees, anyone else.**

Well, I really like the fact that we communicate with different MBA groups. In each group you find people who are very close to you in spirit, like kindred spirits. It doesn't just happen in your group, it happens to everyone. We communicate within one community, we have chats, and then we are tightly brought together by sports, by our running group. Again, thanks to many [THE SCHOOL] alumni, who are examples for you in terms of sports achievements. Accordingly, you also begin to somehow run faster and catch up with them, set some new goals, and I was very much spurred on.

The parties we all have together now are also important, because that brings us closer together, too. Thanks to this, I'm now working, I've engaged two more MBA 8 alumni into my project, those guys help me with marketing. Well, in fact, without [THE SCHOOL], I definitely wouldn't have found or met any of them, I'm 100% sure.

**If we talk about the goals that you've set for yourself at the beginning of the programme, the ones you've already mentioned, have you achieved them?**

Yes, in fact, I've achieved even more. Besides my project, I have a cool team that changed throughout the year, and I couldn't start for a long time due to lack of experience. Well, I mean, I gathered everybody together, I got about eight people, and they all tried to count their chickens before they were hatched. Then it all fell apart, we didn't get together for a while. Just three months ago four of us united, these are the people who, I'm sure, will stay with us, I mean, it has happened. There's this new competition, thanks also to one of the alumnus, a MBA-10 student, who suggested this idea to me. It turns out that we are already entering the country scale as Russian leaders. I think it's going to be a tough year, but if we succeed, there's going to be a cool new story in our country. In fact, I wouldn't have even dreamt about it, and I wouldn't have even thought about it, if I hadn't had all these acquaintances, some working moments, meetings, of course, parties that unite everyone, although you feel very bad in the morning, but in the evening you come together, come up with some cool things, stories, ideas.

It turns out that I've completely changed my life. I even starred in a movie, and all the filmmakers say, "Forget about [the school], why do you need it? Star in movies!" On my birthday people wished me a lot of projects, an Oscar, but I realised that I don't need it anymore. I mean, I came to the location, rattled off the text, starred in a costume in a

movie, but my heart wasn't in it any more. It's what feeds you, brings you some money, and you don't want to move a big rock in the state administration. I can say that even my mind has changed.

I mean, I used to think that movies, the Nika Awards, Golden Eagle, Bondarchuk and all that were so cool. But I don't feel the same now, I mean, they're just passing by. Ah, hello, this not my story, not what I'm about. Everybody around me asks questions, and even [name] already knows about it. We were invited to some private event. He came up and said, "[Name], you're an actress. What's that story with [THE SCHOOL]? What are you doing, what's your project? I've heard a lot about it!" There are people who don't even know you, but already approach you, ask questions, show interest.

**Well, if [name] asks questions, then that means a lot.**

Yeah, I mean, wow, that's cool.

**Look, what does "success" mean to you then?**

Oh, what a question! Success? It seems to me that I've never known what success is, because I've always wanted to do something new. Well, success. I recently starred in a very cool film, but that's not success for me. Before, a year ago, for example, it would have been a big success, but now I don't consider it success. I graduated from [THE SCHOOL]. In general, it can be called a success. But if I make this programme, hold a competition, yes, probably, it will be a part of this success. While there is a desire to continue to work, I don't even want to think about this success, because for me success is kind of a sad ending. Well, it's just success.

**Yes, of course, everything sounds so positive, but maybe there was something in the programme that wasn't enough for you to achieve even more, a greater goal, or something that would make the process more effective?**

Not enough? Yes, I didn't have much time to get enough sleep during the programme, but I'm joking, of course. I probably didn't have enough modules with [professor], and I also looked at the dynamics of the group, so I'm not just speaking for myself. It seemed to us that this man could help us understand more about ourselves; we listened to him excitedly, and wanted to spend more time with him to level ourselves up, to get to know him better. For me, as someone not from the business industry, but just an actress who came to study, for me it was such an overdose of knowledge and experience. Having

this knowledge and resources, I would right now, probably more consciously, study further. Yes, really, I can't say anything about what was lacking.

**If you were to go back to the beginning of the programme now, knowing what you know, what would you start doing to achieve a better result?**

I would read up beforehand. The truth is that very often you read a lot in the first two days, and later, on the third or fourth day you start slacking off. Of course, I know I'm losing a lot because, basically, trading is a wildly interesting topic that could be studied and delved into more deeply. It's our education, and I treated it so carelessly, I regret that...

We laugh about it all the time, pre-reading, "to read or not to read", and I would probably tell students who are about to join the MBA: do it. Otherwise you'll lose so much, like I did, of course, it's all my fault. I ignored the pre-reading, and, of course, this is a great omission of mine, and I regret it very much.

**Okay. What metaphor would you use to describe your path on the [THE SCHOOL] MBA, what was it like?**

I guess my rebirth, because even though it happened fairly late, I was reborn because of everything that happened to me. I feel so much energy, strength and opportunities. I feel like a happy person, just like I have everything. Yes, I have a lot of ambitions, a desire to win, to work with this team, to inspire people. Yeah, actually, it's different here, I'm happy that all this happened.

**Is there anything else? There is a second set of questions about leadership. I mean, have you got anything else to say about the programme that we haven't covered but you think is important? And then we can go on.**

About the programme? Well, the only thing I wanted to add is about Kamchatka. Now, if I, and I've said it, if I knew we'd have that kind of experience there...

We were just told there was going to be an intellectual contest, and that wasn't enough for me. If only I'd been told that we would have five people, cool experts, coaches, supervisors, assistants, who are just the most powerful people in our country. That we needed to work with them, tear them apart and communicate, and if I knew all this, I would have treated it very differently, but I needed to know it in advance. It turned out

that we had just lost a certain amount of time. Yes, unfortunately that's what happened, and that's the only thing I can note.

**Okay. The second set of questions. How do you define “leadership”, regardless of any academic definitions? I mean, what is it for you personally?**

Leadership is... Well, I used to think that a leader is a person that everyone would follow, the smartest person. But now I realise that leadership is the right understanding and immersion into the people who surround you. If you are so right, and at the same time you offer such a spiritual and emotional exchange, so as to unite a certain number of people, five or ten people, you must not just be the smartest or the richest person or have a good education, but you must give all of you to these people. As soon as you have this exchange of internal and spiritual, there's chemistry, then all this will work, respectively, people will follow you, because they'll completely trust you.

**If you ask the same question a little differently, how can you describe a person you would call a leader? What are they like, what do they do and what don't they do, what are their values, character traits, etc?**

For me this is Sergey Efimov, he's such a great man. All this spiritual and deep stuff is very close to me, and I will follow a man like this anywhere. This trust, I mean, a person should be attentive to the people around them, and they should be erudite and educated, have a core, show empathy and at the same time be quite tough. They shouldn't lose focus, they need to be tough. And for me a leader is [name].

**OK. How do you think people become leaders?**

It seems to me that you can become a leader, but it's partly a natural feature that can be developed. If you dig deep into yourself, discuss your strengths and weaknesses with people you trust, and don't argue with them, but accept everything you're told, you'll know what you need to work on. You'll be improving and developing yourself, and, perhaps, you can then become a leader. It seems to me that it's more about natural skills; I don't know whether it's possible to develop them. It seems to me that it is possible, but only if you're open to communicate with people who will show you your strengths and weaknesses so that you can improve yourself. Well, I think so. You also need to learn non-stop, and besides communicating with people, you need to read, take courses, meet people, and hang out in [THE SCHOOL]. That is, you need to get...

This common energy of [THE SCHOOL], it feeds you, and it gives strength and confidence. Well, at least it did for me.

**On your way of understanding all that you've said to me, what formed these thoughts? Were there some events, or did you have your own experience, I mean the development of your own leadership style? Again, based on what you've said, were there any events, moments, low points?**

Yes, there was an epic fail, when we put together a team after marketing, and I made a big mistake there. Again, without experience, and it was the third module, I still didn't understand anything in business. I said, "All right, let's do it, who wants to join me to do a cinema project?" Well, the guys, of course, were interested in this cool cinema project, and we formed a team of eight people. "What shall I do with them now?" I had no idea, everyone expected something from me, and I didn't understand what they expected, how to distribute responsibilities between them. There was a person from our course who told me not to worry, that he would help me, that he was a great businessman and he would tell me all the things that needed to be done. So he advised me on some things, and none of it helped. I noticed that people started feeling disappointed and I realised that everyone was expecting something from me, but I didn't know what to do.

Then we began attending meetings with developers, and we were dragged by this whole team of 5-7 people, and all we had was some discussions about nothing. Of course, I realised what a complete disappointment I was; I wasn't a leader at all...

**Were you disappointed?**

Yes, I was disappointed and so were the guys, I mean, they thought that Zhenya wouldn't make it. That was due to the fact that everybody was disappointed in me, and most importantly, I didn't believe in myself. At some point, after about seven months of training, I wanted to quit, forget about this project, because I couldn't see how I would do it. I thought that I definitely wouldn't be able to do it, because I could not say anything about who would do what. Nobody knew what to do! So the team fell apart.

But in late or early August, we began to gather with the guys again, I met with [name] and we had a talk. He asked what was going on there. I said that it was a total failure, because we had got money and needed to do something. He said that at that time he was finishing with the company and he didn't know for sure what to do next. He said that he would join our team, and we would get things going.

As soon as there was a person who inspired me and urged me forward, everything immediately worked out for me. I got the strength to break up the old team, as it was also uncomfortable for me. I realised who was hogging the blanket and who was stopping us, but I was afraid to do something. Everyone told me to go and talk to him, and I said that I couldn't... Because he was so open, he believed me, that we would make a great story. But I realised that I didn't want to, I felt some kind of rejection, and he started to annoy me. Finally, I gained the strength and courage, broke up the team and talked to everybody. I said, "Guys, we're not going to make it, I'm going to have a new story with a new team".

Now, it's just the four of us: me, [name], [name] and [name], we are so aligned. Zvezda TV company gave us an office, everybody was helping us. I say I've become much more confident and bold since I have a person who's urged me forward and inspired me. In turn, I do the same for our guys.

Why have I talked about that chemistry? Because I've experienced it by myself. Until you have this experience, this internal interchange, nothing will happen. As soon as you start to trust, to tell the truth, to discuss everything openly, everything immediately comes together, and we can do something great together.

**How can you describe yourself as a leader now?**

How can I describe myself? I'm a very soft leader. I would not call myself a leader, although the guys tell me I'm some kind of special leader as I can make everyone fall in love with the process, with my story, so that people don't even care about money or development. Everyone just follows you because you know how to do it. It seems to me that it's just some kind of energy; of course, I don't have enough competencies, but the energy and the desire to create, probably, these are the two most important features, two leadership qualities of mine, and I feel it. I mean, I'm 100% sure I have it now, but I didn't have it before. Now I know for sure that I'll go forward like a tank with my guys, and we'll succeed. It's the right kind of energy.

**Would you like to change anything in yourself? What kind of leader would you like to become, or are you satisfied with everything?**

No, I'm not satisfied and I want to know a lot more. Yes, certainly, since I don't understand many things, I have to study a lot. I mean, when I'm sitting with Klever's CEO, and he starts to tell me something...I realise that I'm very far from it, even though I should

know it all. So I just need to be educated, work on myself. When it comes to charge, to inspiration, I have it in abundance, but the leadership foundation is the knowledge I really lack.

**If you've had experience of working with representatives of other cultures, could you please highlight any features of the Russian model of effective leadership or not? What is the difference between Russian leaders, who are doing well, and their colleagues?**

I need to think. I'll think about this question, I don't know yet, but I feel something, I just can't formulate it right away.

**Okay. Do you think there is a difference between the older generation and the younger one?**

Yes, there is a difference, and our generation now...we're not afraid of anything, we take risks, we are kind of restless. I like the fact that we want to obtain knowledge, that is, we've become greedy for knowledge, for communication. We have become freer, because if you look at the older generation, I mean people over 50, they are more conservative. Even when they were our age, everything in their lives was according to some pattern, work, family, theatre and cinema. What we have now resembles some crazy marathon; our generation is keen on health, everyone wants to live, everyone wants to develop. It seems to me that now the financial aspect is less important for the younger generation, because some time ago everyone wanted to earn. If you take the entire Forbes, you'll see that money used to be above everything else, but that's not the case for us - we want to create. Everyone's thinking about how to develop, create, bring some good to the future, to themselves, their families and also to the country. At the same time there's some crazy desire to live, in fact, it's just bliss.

**The last question on this subject. Do men and women differ somehow in leadership or not?**

They do, personally I would only follow a man. I believe that...

I don't support the whole feminism thing, which is about female power. I like when a man is a leader and when he leads. It seems to me that generally a man is much more talented

than a woman; I mean a woman should work on it. I know there are a lot of successful women, but a woman is a woman and a man is a leader in life.

**Okay.**

A woman should inspire such leaders to make the right stories.

**I've run out of questions, is there anything else that you've remembered or maybe you want to add something to any of the topics that we've discussed?**

I'm actually interested in the fact that ...you've talked to a lot of the guys, about what we have in common.

**Is it off the record? Is there anything else you want to say for the record?**

For the record? I want to add that it seems to me that [THE SCHOOL] falls behind on some PR issues. If it's about [THE SCHOOL], is it for the record?

**Let's record it.**

People treat [THE SCHOOL] ambiguously, a lot of people. Maybe there should be people who... Well, I've already faced it and I know what this is about, what [THE SCHOOL] has changed in my personality. We need people who will properly convey the correct information to students, applicants and for those who want to be in [THE SCHOOL], I mean the reasons why it's important. [THE SCHOOL] changes people considerably, in our course, it changed about 80% of people. Even those who didn't want to change, they still changed. Now we've finished it, I see that almost everyone regrets that they didn't do a lot of things during the course. They regret that they could not...

There were a lot of groups, there were internal politics, and everyone wasted a lot of time on all these internal showdowns, who and what, who and with whom, some nonsense, childish stuff, and they wasted a lot of time on it.

Even now that we've finished, we chat, call each other, talk. A lot of them are depressed, I mean, really suffering from depression, because we've finished; the ones who didn't waste time, I'm talking about myself and those around me; it was just a blast for us! We realise that we've finished, but we're not breaking up as we have a lot of plans. About 30-40 percent of the guys feel some kind of yearning as they realise it's all over. Some people have united and become a real family, and what about us? We left with this education, but at the same time there was a feeling that we had wasted some time. For

example, they try to call, wanting some meetings, of course, we all go, but it's just interesting to see those who haven't had enough. If we go back to the programme itself, we can say that they behaved very brightly, openly, showed some leadership qualities, but in the end there were too many people who...

I want to say that there were some internal arguments, showdowns, then these boards and criticism of the school. All the people who constantly criticised the school, they eventually realised that they were doing the wrong thing. Because it's all gone, what about that food issue? Oh my God, those issues with the wrong food just blew my mind. I mean, there were some stupid things. Everything was very interesting, if you look at each of us.

**Nevertheless, in general, if you look at the class, what emotions within the group prevailed during the programme?**

Emotions? Well, first of all, the fact that the group...I don't know if everyone or not everyone says this, but it's a very special, truly special group. We have a few people who are negative in life, but they have their own truth. I mean, they're just different, and they have their own truth, and they argue it, like, they're right; there are still people whom I have never encountered in my life, but I've also learnt a lot from them. Overall, we had an awesome group because we were all different, we had bright personalities, and we had some negative stories. There were also closed people, but at the same time you learnt something from all of them, you watched them, and then you saw how they had all transformed and grown, changed before your eyes. Thanks to these people you were changing, too. You saw how all of them were openly communicating and wanted to help you. Every time it was a blast, and there were these moments I've told you about that were a bit annoying, when some strange stories were told about me, but in all other respects it was bliss, and our endless parties were proof of that.

**Thank you very much for participating in my study.**

Thank you too, I had a great time.

## Appendix F INITIAL THEMATIC CODING STRUCTURE

| Name                                         | Files    | References |
|----------------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| <b>Identity</b>                              | <b>5</b> | <b>11</b>  |
| Archetypes                                   | 0        | 0          |
| Explorers                                    | 3        | 3          |
| Hunters                                      | 6        | 10         |
| Entrepreneurial identity                     | 16       | 24         |
| Post MBA identity at graduation              | 18       | 34         |
| Post MBA identity before start (expectation) | 21       | 32         |
| Pre-MBA identity                             | 18       | 30         |
| Self-awareness                               | 24       | 37         |
| Self-confidence, Self-esteem                 | 27       | 119        |
| Success                                      | 22       | 36         |
| <b>Identity Work</b>                         | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>   |
| Choice as a trigger                          | 3        | 5          |
| Feedback                                     | 12       | 20         |
| Identity Shift                               | 19       | 37         |
| Identity Struggle                            | 2        | 2          |
| Insult                                       | 5        | 5          |

| Name                        | Files     | References |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| New behaviour               | 13        | 22         |
| New experience              | 6         | 7          |
| Openness                    | 6         | 6          |
| Psychological safety        | 8         | 11         |
| <b>Leadership</b>           | <b>28</b> | <b>58</b>  |
| Authenticity                | 8         | 10         |
| Awareness                   | 9         | 12         |
| Becoming a leader           | 23        | 35         |
| Female leadership           | 23        | 40         |
| Leader's characteristics    | 27        | 65         |
| Leadership Identity         | 28        | 63         |
| Leadership skills           | 4         | 4          |
| Leadership traits           | 13        | 13         |
| Responsibility              | 10        | 19         |
| Role of other people        | 18        | 30         |
| Russian leadership          | 0         | 0          |
| Generation shift            | 22        | 31         |
| Russian leadership identity | 21        | 35         |
| Task-Relations              | 6         | 6          |

| Name                      | Files     | References |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Toughness                 | 5         | 7          |
| <b>MBA goal</b>           | <b>6</b>  | <b>14</b>  |
| Career objectives         | 12        | 18         |
| Exploration               | 7         | 8          |
| Goal shift                | 12        | 15         |
| Knowledge acquisition     | 22        | 40         |
| Making change             | 14        | 20         |
| Networking                | 12        | 14         |
| Starting a business       | 7         | 11         |
| <b>Programme Elements</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>   |
| China                     | 13        | 23         |
| Coaching                  | 18        | 38         |
| Consulting                | 8         | 17         |
| Kamchatka                 | 19        | 39         |
| Marketing                 | 6         | 8          |
| Simulation                | 2         | 3          |
| Team work                 | 14        | 24         |
| USA                       | 17        | 30         |
| <b>Role of the school</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>25</b>  |

| Name                         | Files     | References |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Academic Content             | 21        | 38         |
| Career transition            | 12        | 16         |
| Community                    | 10        | 24         |
| Discoveries                  | 26        | 47         |
| Metaphor                     | 30        | 66         |
| Outcomes                     | 17        | 35         |
| <b>Social interaction</b>    | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>   |
| C-graders                    | 8         | 11         |
| Conflicts                    | 18        | 37         |
| Cruelty                      | 4         | 6          |
| Group Identity               | 4         | 4          |
| Loneliness                   | 3         | 5          |
| Segregation                  | 8         | 11         |
| Social bonds                 | 13        | 24         |
| Social interaction           | 27        | 81         |
| Time together                | 16        | 28         |
| Value of Classmates          | 22        | 58         |
| <b>Sources of Leadership</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>19</b>  |
| Childhood                    | 6         | 11         |

| Name             | Files | References |
|------------------|-------|------------|
| First leadership | 11    | 22         |
| Obstacles        | 6     | 10         |
| Role models      | 25    | 45         |
| Father           | 11    | 17         |

## Appendix G FINAL ANALYTICAL CODING STRUCTURE

| Name                                          | Files    | References |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| <b>0. Russian Leadership Identity</b>         | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>   |
| Feeling and taking responsibility             | 12       | 27         |
| Building context                              | 4        | 4          |
| Being confident                               |          |            |
| Confidence and inner strength                 | 12       | 20         |
| Having a vision and a goal                    | 14       | 17         |
| Being authentic                               | 6        | 7          |
| Empathetic strongman                          |          |            |
| Being tough                                   | 5        | 8          |
| Leadership is about people                    | 19       | 36         |
| Balancing task and relations                  | 6        | 6          |
| Delivering results                            | 6        | 9          |
| Conflicting identity and generation shift     |          |            |
| Russian leadership model                      | 0        | 0          |
| Generation shift/ conflict with the old model | 22       | 31         |
| Convergence with the West                     | 1        | 1          |
| Creativity                                    | 1        | 1          |
| Empathetic                                    | 1        | 1          |
| Less authoritarian                            | 5        | 5          |
| More positive                                 | 1        | 1          |
| No change                                     | 1        | 1          |

| Name                                          | Files | References |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Not afraid                                    | 4     | 4          |
| Openness                                      | 4     | 4          |
| Trust and partnership                         | 3     | 3          |
| Work-life balance                             | 2     | 2          |
| 'Old' leaders                                 | 0     | 0          |
| Aggressive power                              | 5     | 7          |
| Authoritarian and hierarchical                | 11    | 14         |
| Lack of emotions                              | 1     | 2          |
| Power distance and status                     | 2     | 3          |
| Rigidity                                      | 1     | 1          |
| Strongman                                     | 4     | 5          |
| Supporting and caring                         | 3     | 5          |
| CODES NOT USED                                |       |            |
| Becoming a leader                             | 0     | 0          |
| Family and childhood                          | 13    | 18         |
| Father as the role model                      | 12    | 19         |
| Inborn traits                                 | 12    | 13         |
| Taking responsibility while facing challenges | 13    | 22         |
| Role models                                   | 21    | 33         |
| Trying new behaviour                          | 4     | 6          |
| Female leadership                             | 0     | 0          |

| Name                                          | Files    | References |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| No gender difference                          | 5        | 5          |
| Soft side of leadership                       | 10       | 10         |
| Thoroughness                                  | 2        | 2          |
| <b>1. Preparation</b>                         | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>   |
| 1.1. Professional aspirations                 |          |            |
| MBA goal                                      | 6        | 14         |
| Acquire knowledge                             | 22       | 46         |
| Develop network                               | 13       | 15         |
| Explore                                       | 10       | 11         |
| Make a change                                 | 15       | 22         |
| Progress in career                            | 14       | 20         |
| Start a business                              | 7        | 11         |
| Possible Identity                             | 0        | 0          |
| Entrepreneur                                  | 6        | 6          |
| Manager                                       | 7        | 7          |
| Open to exploration                           | 9        | 9          |
| 1.2. Identity struggle: leader efficacy level | 0        | 0          |
| I am fine                                     | 1        | 1          |
| Low confidence                                | 15       | 30         |
| Overconfident                                 | 10       | 13         |
| <b>2. Orientation</b>                         | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>   |
| 2.1. Euphoria                                 | 4        | 4          |

| Name                                          | Files    | References |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| 2.2. Acceptance and Rejection                 | 12       | 19         |
| 2.3. Problematisation experience              | 11       | 13         |
| 2.4. Changing goal for the programme          | 12       | 15         |
| <b>3. Experimenting</b>                       | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>   |
| 3.1. New experience through testing behaviour | 11       | 23         |
| 3.2. Interaction                              |          |            |
| Conflicts                                     | 18       | 49         |
| Group identity formation                      | 8        | 8          |
| Grouping & Separation                         | 15       | 25         |
| Bonding                                       | 0        | 0          |
| Friendship                                    | 14       | 15         |
| Getting closer                                | 6        | 6          |
| Informal communication                        | 13       | 19         |
| Overseas trips                                | 8        | 10         |
| Sharing and receiving                         | 2        | 3          |
| 3.3. Role of classmates                       | 0        | 0          |
| Business partners                             | 4        | 4          |
| Different perspectives                        | 6        | 7          |
| Feedback                                      | 13       | 25         |
| Role models and benchmarks                    | 14       | 19         |
| Support and safety                            | 9        | 12         |
| Value in itself                               | 10       | 12         |

| Name                                       | Files    | References |
|--------------------------------------------|----------|------------|
|                                            |          |            |
| <b>4. Confirmation</b>                     | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>   |
| 4.1. Reflecting and gaining self-awareness | 23       | 35         |
| 4.2. Developing relational awareness       | 19       | 22         |
| 4.3. Aligning self-confidence              | 22       | 70         |
| 4.4. Developing articulated Identity       | 0        | 0          |
| Clear goals                                | 8        | 14         |
| Definition of success                      | 22       | 36         |
| Entrepreneurial identity                   | 19       | 28         |
| Managerial identity                        | 4        | 4          |
| New leadership identity                    | 29       | 90         |
| Taking decision to change career           | 13       | 17         |
| <b>5. Role of the Institution</b>          | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>   |
| Adventure, Exploration                     | 16       | 18         |
| Breakthrough                               | 2        | 2          |
| Confirmation and Permission                | 12       | 14         |
| Crucial Programme Elements                 | 0        | 0          |
| China trip                                 | 13       | 23         |
| Coaching                                   | 18       | 40         |
| Consulting project                         | 8        | 17         |
| Kamchatka trip                             | 19       | 39         |
| Marketing project                          | 6        | 8          |

| Name                     | Files | References |
|--------------------------|-------|------------|
| Teamwork and simulations | 14    | 25         |
| USA trip                 | 17    | 32         |
| Family and Community     | 18    | 28         |
| Training (scout) camp    | 8     | 9          |

## Appendix H THE JOURNAL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH ACADEMICS AND PRACTITIONERS (DESIGN AND PLANNING PHASE)

| Name                  | Organisation                                   | Title                                           | Relevance to this research                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stephen DeKrey        | Hong Kong University of Science and Technology | Director of Executive MBA for Eurasia           | Former Director of #1 Executive MBA programme in the World (Kellogg/ HKUST). Director of Russia-China EMBA programme (HKUST/ SKOLKOVO). Leadership expert. |
| Sheila Puffer         | Northeastern University                        | Distinguished Professor, International Business | One of the leading international scholars on Russian leadership, author of top-tier academic papers.                                                       |
| Gianpiero Petriglieri | INSEAD                                         | Associate Professor of Organisational Behaviour | Published on Leadership Identity Development, specifically within MBA programme; author of identity workspace concept.                                     |
| Konstantin Korotov    | ESMT Berlin                                    | Professor; Director, Executive Education        | Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Faculty Lead of the Executive MBA Programme, ESMT Berlin;                                                        |

| Name                 | Organisation | Title                                               | Relevance to this research                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                      |              |                                                     | author of top-cited article on leadership identity and identity laboratories.                                                                                           |
| Jack Denfeld<br>Wood | CEIBS, IMD   | Professor, Leadership                               | Leadership instructor at CEIBS, IMD, Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO (Executive MBA programmes); author of articles on leadership identity in top-ranked journals. |
| Susan<br>Goldsworthy | IMD          | Affiliate Professor,<br>Leadership and<br>Change    | Co-author of the book <i>Care to Dare</i> . Leadership coach. Director of open enrolment leadership development programmes.                                             |
| Alexey<br>Ulanovskiy | Ward Howell  | Consultant of<br>Leadership<br>Development Practice | Published on leadership development in Russia, co-author of the book <i>Athletic CEOs</i> about top-performing Russian CEOs, consultant in leadership development.      |

| Name            | Organisation                            | Title                               | Relevance to this research                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Maxim Belukhin  | Private consultancy                     | Executive Coach                     | One of the leading leadership development experts in Russia, published in HBR Russia on the topic, executive coach of Top-100 Russian CEOs.         |
| Elena Vitchak   | Private consultancy                     | HR Consultant and Trainer           | Director of HR Business Partner open enrolment programme at a leading Russian business school. Executive coach on MBA and Executive MBA programmes. |
| Tatiana Sosnova | Private consultancy                     | HR Consultant and Executive Coach   | Executive coach to C-level executives, lead coach on MBA programmes, leadership trainer and consultant.                                             |
| Irina Kuligina  | Moscow School of Management<br>SKOLKOVO | Director, Open Enrolment Programmes | Architect and director of open enrolment programmes at one of the leading Russian management schools.                                               |

| Name             | Organisation                            | Title                       | Relevance to this research                                                                                                                       |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Andrey Sharonov  | Moscow School of Management<br>SKOLKOVO | President                   | Former Deputy Federal Minister, Vice-Mayor of Moscow, top manager and board member of Top-100 Russian corporations. Executive coach and advisor. |
| Egor Pereverzev  | Moscow School of Management<br>SKOLKOVO | Director, Degree Programmes | Business school executive who leads MBA and Executive MBA programmes and teaches international business.                                         |
| Maxim Feldman    | SkillBox                                | Advisor, MBA Programme      | Former Director of MBA/EMBA Programmes at Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO; coach and consultant.                                            |
| Elena Rossoskaya | Vimpelcom                               | HR Director                 | Expert in HR and leadership development, certified coach.                                                                                        |

## Appendix I THE JOURNAL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH PRACTITIONERS (MARCH-APRIL 2021)

| Name                 | Group               | Position                                                                                         | Key quotes from engagement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Alexey Dolinskiy     | Business executives | Founder, Coursealitics - the Executive Education Marketplace                                     | "I notice the mentioned traits in Russian leaders, particularly being tough to yourself and to other people."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Anastasis Gerasimova | Business executives | Business developer, Kaiser Estate GmbH                                                           | "I asked several leaders in Russia who they are - no one called themselves a leader."<br>"We need to promote teamwork within leadership development programmes."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Anton Khodarev       | Business executives | Board Member, Agrocom Group                                                                      | "I learned some hidden strings which would be quite helpful to build better relations with our holding's new growing top-management."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Elena Bachinskaya    | Business executives | Medical Director, Sandoz Russia                                                                  | "A potential practical implication could be in promoting self-awareness in the first half of the MBA programme."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Igor Goundobin       | Business executives | Member of the Board, Sun Group Russia; Member of the Board, Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO | "Better understanding of the issues has a very pragmatic meaning as it provides instruments for a clearer reading of Russia-originated businesses in an intertwined global economy, their motivation and line of behaviour of Russia-bred (whatever ethnic origin or cultural diversity) business leaders. The conclusions and assumptions may help to develop more productive and fruitful strategies in various spheres, from practical business negotiations to the development of joint global programs for the planet's sustainable development."<br>"The project results may be really useful for the group being researched itself and its peers as it may help in the process of self-identification, assessment and evaluation in the context of self-positioning in a global competitive environment and building self-development as well as from a business expansion perspective." |

| Name               | Group                      | Position                                        | Key quotes from engagement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mikhail Pikalov    | Business executives        | Managing Partner, MarketProfi Consulting Group  | "The process model of identity work could be useful not only for educational programmes but also for project work, for example, in management consulting. The role of self-confidence is often underestimated, we think more about hard skills, responsibility, etc. But if we take it as core leadership characteristics, we can tremendously increase the effectiveness of leadership development efforts."                                                                         |
| Nadezhda Zhuk      | Business executives        | Partner, Hultin Partners, Ltd                   | "Research results can be instrumental in developing leadership programmes for Russian participants, or bringing foreign leadership programmes to Russian soil."<br>"Peer feedback and more teamwork can be nurtured not only in leadership development programmes but also in organisations."                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Natalia Belokoneva | Business executives        | Medical Director, Pfizer                        | "The research findings can inform future educational initiatives."<br>"Interesting observation on the conflict between how Russian leaders perceive good leadership and what they thought to be common practice in the country. Russian leaders might rethink their leadership behaviour."                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Ruslan Yusuf       | Business executives        | Managing Partner, MINDSMITH                     | "MINDSMITH think tank expresses interest in utilising the research results within the framework of the existing educational initiatives of the company, and also expresses readiness to cooperate with Andrey Shapenko in order to identify the Russian specifics of the nature of leadership, conduct a comparative analysis with foreign approaches to develop leadership skills and develop a teaching methodology adapted to the Russian context leaders of the digital economy." |
| Vera Gavrilova     | Business executives        | CEO, MyMentoring                                | "What I see in my programmes, the group and the programme do transform a person's identity. We should take this into account when we design new programmes."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Andrey Sharonov    | Business school executives | President, Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO | "Learning as becoming is the key finding that may help us look at our programmes differently."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

| Name              | Group             | Position                                                                              | Key quotes from engagement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                   |                   |                                                                                       | "We should consider developing more identity-centric leadership development programmes."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Alexey Kapterev   | Executive coaches | Independent consultant and coach                                                      | "Very clear practical implications for MBA programmes"<br>"Learning as becoming is a concept that I can apply to my programmes."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Gabrielle Ortais  | Executive coaches | Independent leadership consultant, executive coach                                    | "I coach many Russian leaders. The research assists me in understanding better myself what is happening for my Russian coachees, and therefore being able to articulate better for them what I am noticing and conversations around it."<br>"The process model does ring a bell."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Inna Gorbulevko   | Executive coaches | Executive and Systemic Team Coach<br>IDC Master Coach in Leadership and Communication | "I was struck by a similarity between the MBA journey undertaken by the programme participants to the core of their leadership as researched by Andrey to that of coaching clients in senior leadership positions being coached on developing their leadership identity. I found it particularly helpful to see proof and examples quoted in the project arguing that 'identity... is fluid and may change'. I also consider the findings on 'learning as becoming' extremely valuable for anyone engaged in leadership training and developmental practices."<br>"I was fascinated by the richness of the group dynamics described in the paper as a shift 'from self-focused to rediscovery of other people'. This observation definitely provides another lens on what might be happening within a team in the process of team coaching and is something to reflect upon." |
| Irina Ponomarchuk | Executive coaches | President, Group Relations Conference Russia                                          | "The more business leaders are aware of the different historical and social parts of their identity, the more they can accept and then transform themselves and their organisational context. And the need for this awareness is very high, otherwise - how is it to be led by someone who is not even aware of their leadership identity?"<br>"Analysis of the 18-month programme shows a big shift in programme participants' leadership identity perception, which means that this study approach could be implemented in the organisational context and help to shift and bring awareness to Russian business society."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

| Name                  | Group             | Position                                                                       | Key quotes from engagement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Maxim Skryabin        | Executive coaches | Independent Consultant in Learning Design and Analytics                        | "I liked the finding that self-confidence should neither be too low nor too high. It makes sense not only for the MBA participants but for business executives too."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Tatiana Ezhova        | Executive coaches | Independent organisational consultant                                          | "I plan to refer to the research not only when developing new leadership programmes but also when I will be explaining to programme participants what happens with them."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Yuliya Chukhno        | Executive coaches | Executive & feedback coach, Center for Creative Leadership                     | "I agree that for many participants the desire to build self-confidence is the key driver to apply for the MBA programme."<br>"My personal experience tells that in Russian management practice the culture of self-reflection and self-awareness is in a very early stage of development."                                                                                                                                       |
| Anastasia Khrisanfova | HR professionals  | Organisational Development Director, SBER eApteka                              | "Great potential for implementation in corporate practice. Developing organisational leadership identity may serve as a consolidation activity as well as a talent retention instrument."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Andrey Konstantinov   | HR professionals  | Independent executive consultant, HR expert; ex-HR Director, Mriya Resort      | "The research highlights the importance of psychological instruments in leadership development."<br>"The school might reconsider how it promotes its programmes: more emphasis can be made on identity development."<br>"HR professionals may replicate the process model of identity work within their organisations to develop new leaders."<br>"Coaching seems to be a rather effective instrument in leadership development." |
| Olga Litvinova        | HR professionals  | HR Director, Member of the Management Board, Pulkovo Airport, Saint Petersburg | "I have no questions about the practical implications: they are well-articulated in the research."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

| Name              | Group                                | Position                                                                                                                                               | Key quotes from engagement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pavel Rulev       | HR professionals                     | People and Culture Manager, Nokian Tyres                                                                                                               | "As someone who is responsible for talent development, I fully agree with the Russian leadership competence model. However, I would prefer to use the word "ownership" rather than "responsibility"."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Alexander Didenko | Leadership instructors and academics | Project team facilitator, The Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration under the President of the Russian Federation | <p>"The leader always combines something impossible and the opposite - caring for people and business interests, long-term and short-term goals, analytical and synthetic thinking, etc. In this sense, this combination of new "teal" and archaic "red" values can be the very dramatic bar that modern Russian management needs to deal with. There is room here for both a new research programme and a special training course."</p> <p>"It would be interesting to compare the model proposed by the author with how leadership identity work unfolds in other similar settings, in particular, integrated programmes with a project track for corporations and government officials, startup acceleration programmes, etc."</p>                                                              |
| Irina Shreyber    | Leadership instructors and academics | Head of a scientists' leadership school, Russia; Senior researcher, CERN, Switzerland                                                                  | "The research could be interesting for large global organisations (like CERN) where the role of Russian leaders is rather significant but limited, also because of cultural misunderstandings. It may help align understandings of the word "leader" among different cultures."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Maria Tiunova     | Leadership instructors and academics | Instructor, Creating Leading course, MADS; Executive coach                                                                                             | "The most important takeaway from this work is that it identifies a clear problem: The dichotomy between the picture of an ideal leader and national archetypes creates anxiety and limits leaders' development - they are hesitant about which pattern to apply to themselves." "Publishing this work will help new Russian leaders and their mentors/bosses/companies identify the problem, make it visible, and therefore, possible to solve. Stressing its impact on leaders' potential will contribute to considering identity work as a crucial element for leaders' development. It will make skills/competencies work, which is a much more common subject of leadership training, secondary to identity work, and thus, more relevant to the actual needs and aspirations of the leader." |

| Name               | Group                                | Position                                                                                                                                                                                          | Key quotes from engagement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Marina Dzhashi     | Leadership instructors and academics | Cross-cultural management consultant, speaker, lecturer                                                                                                                                           | <p>"The research can be seen as a resource aimed at helping both existing and emerging Russian leaders, as well as international researchers, to understand the phenomenon of modern Russian leadership and how it evolved."</p> <p>"The research could be an excellent source filling existing voids, as well as giving practitioners and academics alike a set of tools to understand the transformations that 'leadership' has undergone in Russia and will continue to go through in the future."</p>                                                                             |
| Olga Kovbasyuk     | Leadership instructors and academics | PhD, Associate Professor, I. Kant Baltic Federal University, Russia                                                                                                                               | <p>"The concept of an identity laboratory/workspace is vital for current management education."</p> <p>"The process model of identity work will make a positive difference to teaching leadership."</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Svetlana Sidorkina | Leadership instructors and academics | Associate Professor, Psychology and Human Development, Financial University under the Government of Russian Federation<br>Director for organisational design and talent acquisition, Tele2 Russia | <p>"MBA programmes may rethink how they form participants' expectations for the programme."</p> <p>"Currently, leadership identity development in the MBA programme happens spontaneously. The research provides a roadmap to make it more systemic and effective."</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Tatiana Makhinova  | Leadership instructors and academics | Assistant Professor, University of Alberta                                                                                                                                                        | <p>"First, one of the fundamental concepts that should be reinforced to all leadership educators and those who facilitate the development of such skills is the importance of inner work and self-observation in leadership identity formation. Professor Shapenko's work discovered and nicely summarised the four phases of leadership identity work that should be taken into consideration by educators. I believe that ensuring that students/trainees/coachees have an opportunity to mindfully go through these stages will effectively integrate leadership development."</p> |

| Name                       | Group                                | Position                                                                                                                        | Key quotes from engagement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            |                                      |                                                                                                                                 | <p>Second, with regards to the previous point, this work also emphasised the importance of the “identity laboratory/workspace” approach in the development of leadership skills. Further evidence and examples on how to facilitate this type of environment would be worthwhile.</p> <p>Third, one of my personal takeaway messages from this work on identity is the importance of continuous reflection and self-observation.”</p> |
| Vyatcheslav Boltryukevitch | Leadership instructors and academics | Associate Professor, Department of Operations Management and Logistics, Graduate School of Business, Higher School of Economics | <p>“My personal observations support the claim that we are witnessing the transformation of leadership perceptions in Russia.”</p> <p>“My experience tells me that off-campus study modules are important for identity work and do not require strong academic content; they should be emotionally charged.”</p>                                                                                                                      |
| Anna Nikitina              | MBA participants                     | HR Director, InterSearch; Career Coach                                                                                          | <p>“Looks very similar to what I feel and think so far on the MBA programme.”</p> <p>“For companies, this research means that if you send a person to an MBA programme, you should be ready either to give them more responsibility after, or say goodbye to them.”</p>                                                                                                                                                               |
| Maria Kalmakova            | MBA participants                     | Head of Project Management Office, Philip Morris International; Participant of MBA programme                                    | <p>“Managers in Russia really are changing – they are becoming less tough and starting to think about developing themselves and other people.”</p> <p>“What I found very relevant to my experience on the MBA programme is the description of group dynamics - if I had known it before, I would have taken it less seriously and been more aware of group processes”</p>                                                             |
| Tatiana Mukhina            | MBA participants                     | President, Belgorod Rugby Federation; MBA student                                                                               | <p>“Although I haven’t completed many modules so far, I can support most of the claims - I witnessed how my self-image has been changing during the programme, and in many ways it was related to my self-confidence.”</p> <p>“Coaching and peer feedback really works.”</p>                                                                                                                                                          |

## Appendix J TESTIMONIALS FROM PRACTITIONERS



### Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO

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### To Whom It May Concern

I want to thank Andrey Shapenko for conducting and presenting his doctoral research "Do I have the right? Identity work of emerging Russian business leaders in a leadership development programme". The study explores a crucial topic of leadership development within the Russian business context, and it has clear practical implications for the Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO.

SKOLKOVO's mission is to empower and support leaders on their path to success. To accomplish this mission, the school needs first to understand who leaders are and what kind of leadership identity they hold. Andrey's research highlights the changing nature of leadership perceptions in Russia and identifies the conflict between self-to-prototype and self-to-exemplar comparisons. This is particularly important for a management development institution, as we notice more and more participants from a younger generation at our leadership development programmes.

The most important outcome of the research relates to learning as becoming instead of just knowledge acquisition. It can potentially make the school look at its educational programmes differently and emphasise the identity development process. The most apparent changes are supposed to happen within the MBA programme, which was thoroughly studied within the research and currently is being re-designed with Andrey's involvement. Also, SKOLKOVO, jointly with IMD business school, has already launched a new leadership development programme with the leadership identity concept at its core: LIFT: Leadership Identity Foundation and Transformation. Some other identity-focused programmes are under development at the moment, and the proposed model of identity work may be used within programme design and delivery.

I firmly believe that the research results have the potential to be implemented at Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO though it will take time to assess their actual impact on practice.

06.05.2021



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Moscow, April 21, 2021

To Whom it may concern

It was with a great deal of interest that I read Mr. Andrey Shapenko's work "DO I HAVE THE RIGHT?" IDENTITY WORK OF EMERGING RUSSIAN BUSINESS LEADERS IN A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.

The researcher has chosen for his project an important and definitely underexplored issue of the Russian leadership identity.

It has a significant practical importance for a better understanding of various processes in Russian business, political life, society and their impact on various global developments.

In-depth analysis of a modern day's Russian research participants' group with their self-assessment, ambitions and aspirations, paradoxes of a specific country business people group life (as observed and described by A.Sh.) is a really valuable and educating piece of knowledge on its own both for the educators, business leaders proper and people dealing with HR and behavioral issues at large.

Further comparative analysis of a contemporary leadership identity and Russian traditional interpretation of it (perception of a «бокоро» like in 'bear-leader' or 'ringleader' for example) may have a significant scientific and practical application potential. Ethnic, cultural and historic diversity of the society which affected the target group development and breeding, briefly referred to in a circumstantial manner in the project, may open a way to further exploration. Even a slight hint in the direction of the Russian novelist Feodor Dostoevsky (Crime and Punishment) in a Q raised by participants of the project: "Do I have the right?", - adds certain extra dimension to the whole product.

Better understanding of the issues has a very pragmatic meaning as it provides instruments for clearer reading of Russia-originated businesses in an intertwined global economy, their motivation and line of behavior of Russia-bred (whatever ethnic origin or cultural diversity is) business leaders. Conclusions and assumptions may help to develop more productive and fruitful strategies in various spheres, from practical business negotiations to the development of joint global programs for sustainable development of the Planet.

The project results may be really useful for the group being researched itself and its peers as it may help in the process of self-identification, assessment and evaluation in the context of self-positioning in a global competitive environment and building self-development as well as business expansion perspective.

Andrey Shapenko's project opens a broad horizon for further research of an interesting subject of Russian leaders future as captains of global non-Russian businesses and global organizations.

This work and associated materials obviously deserve to be considered as an integral part of the Leadership MBA and custom-tailored tuition programs by Business schools and universities.

Member of the Board  
SKOLKOVO School of Management, Russia

23 April 2021

## Letter of Recommendation: Empirical Project by Andrey Shapenko

### To whom it may concern

The study *"Do I Have The Right?" Identity Work Of Emerging Russian Business Leaders in A Leadership Development Programme* prepared by Andrey Shapenko examines an exceptionally relevant topic and can be attributed to the pioneering developments in the systematization of leadership identity vectors, implicit leadership theory and the nature of emerging Russian business leaders in the context of the realities of Russian professional business education. In the context of the large-scale expansion of the educational initiatives of the government of the Russian Federation in the field of digitalization, innovative technologies and the fourth industrial revolution, Andrey Shapenko's research makes an exceptionally valuable contribution to knowledge and to the evaluation of current problems in the area of business education and identifying the future leaders of the digital transformation of the Russian economy.

The submitted qualification paper provides a broad overview of relevant academic landscape and is based on a deeply developed scientific framework in the context of identity theory, social identity theory, implicit leadership theory and leadership development theory. The study examines in detail the current approaches to the study of leadership development and proposes the concept of adapting scientific approaches within the Russian contextual and linguistic identity.

It is also worth noting the elaborate approach to the formation and structuring of the sample of respondents in the context of cohort analysis, as well as the impressive sample size of 68 respondents.

The author rightly notes such limitations of the study as inability to perform a longitude study, absence of a control group and the non-randomized sample. For these reasons there is considerable interest in the possibility of testing the research findings in practice. MINDSMITH think tank expresses interest in utilizing the research results within the framework of the existing educational initiatives of the company, and also expresses readiness to cooperate with Andrey Shapenko in order to identify the Russian specifics of the nature of leadership, conduct a comparative analysis with foreign approaches to develop leadership skills and develop a teaching methodology adapted to the Russian context leaders of the digital economy.

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On practical implications of Andrey Shapenko's empirical project "Do I have the right?" identity work of emerging Russian business leaders in a leadership development programme:

My background is being Head of Strategy and then Head of People and Culture at Leo Burnett Russia and Eastern Europe. I am leading a course Creating Leading in MADS creative school, course Physics of Leadership as a part of Cultural Reboot program at MPTI, as a Founder of Reconnect doing corporate workshops and courses on leadership and also private counseling developing personal career tracks for leaders in creative industries.

I believe the most important outcome from this work is that it identifies a clear problem: The dichotomy between the picture of an ideal leader and national archetypes creates anxiety and limits leaders development - they are hesitant about which pattern to apply to themselves.

I came across not willingness to use the word leader and having that limiting anxiety among established leaders in creative class, but also among the new gen of leaders at PhysTech school.

I believe this is one of the most important struggles in Russia overall - constant negotiation between the old ethics and the new ethics. This is true for other areas of life as well - parenting, relationships, etc.

For leadership it is particularly dramatic as the current political leadership clearly embodies the old leadership models.

I believe publishing this work will help the new Russian leaders and their mentors/bosses/companies identify the problem, make it visible, and therefore, possible to solve. Stressing its impact on the leaders potential will contribute to considering identity work as a crucial element for leaders development.

It will make the skills/competencies work, which is a much more common subject of leadership training secondary to the identity work, and thus, more relevant to the actual needs and aspirations of the leader.

The identified competencies of the preferred leadership identity (self-confidence, taking responsibility, inspire for result, caring and building relations) can become the key areas for leadership growth.

I can't wait until the work is published and is being shared among the Russian leadership circles.

I believe it will facilitate the growth and power the impact of the emerging Russian leaders.

Founder of Reconnect  
Author and Leader of MCL at MADS  
Member of Faculty at Re-Authoring Teaching

To whom it may concern

The paper **'Do I Have the Right? Identity Work of Emerging Russian Business Leaders in a Leadership Development Programme'** written by Andrey Shapenko covers a subject that is extremely compelling for those who are directly engaged in any developmental efforts within contemporary Russian businesses. Leadership development is a hot topic, and there is a real demand for up-to-date research based on Russian material with an emphasis on the process of evolution, rather than final outcomes.

While reading the research I was struck by a similarity between an MBA journey undertaken by the programme participants to the core of their leadership as researched by Andrey to that of coaching clients at senior leadership positions being coached on developing their leadership identity. I found it particularly helpful to see proofs and examples quoted in the project arguing that 'identity... is fluid and may change'. I also consider findings on 'learning as becoming' extremely valuable for anyone engaged in leadership training and developmental practices.

Another practical implication of this paper lies in dwelling upon 'the dichotomy between the picture of an ideal leader and national archetypes [that] creates anxiety and limits their [leaders'] development'. This observation is extremely helpful in understanding the nature of an inner conflict that manifests itself in lack of confidence, or impostor syndrome, or indecisiveness etc. in some of my coaching clients.

As a systemic team coach I was fascinated by the richness of group dynamics described in the paper as a shift 'from self-focused to rediscovery of other people'. This observation definitely provides another lens on what might be happening within a team in the process of team coaching and is something to reflect upon.

Overall I believe this research is a rich contribution to a yet scarce corpus of leadership studies based on Russian experience and practice as well as valuable reading and a source of inspiration for leadership practitioners and leaders themselves.

19<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Executive and Systemic Team Coach

IDC Master Coach in Leadership and Communication

ОБЩЕСТВО С ОГРАНИЧЕННОЙ ОТВЕТСТВЕННОСТЬ  
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In modern Russia business culture I see slowly upcoming revolution on the grounds “old leaders cannot make it new way , while new leaders don’t want to take it old way”. I see it not only in business around but hear at the informal meetings as one of the key demands for change in the Russian entrepreneur culture.

This is the reason behind I find professor Shapenko new study «DO I HAVE THE RIGHT?» IDENTITY WORK OF EMERGING RUSSIAN BUSINESS LEADERS IN A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME» very informative and practical.

The well based study shows you the reasons behind the gap and if you are not lazy to get through the academic language you may find some keys that may help you to build and effective communication and collaboration strategy with “new” and “old” leaders or build the mediation in between.

I was positively surprised that my own observation on the new leaders generation (especially their seek of permission) has the scientific and logic grounds behind it.

Personally I learned some hidden strings which would be quite helpful to build better relations with our holdings new growing top-management.

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## Appendix K SELECTED PUBLISHED PRACTITIONER ARTICLES AND CASES

### Teaching cases:

Shapenko, A., Lobanova, E. (2020). Yuliana Slashcheva: Is There Such a Thing as 'Female Leadership'? CaseCentre. <https://www.thecasecentre.org/educators/products/view?id=167707>

### Books and book chapters:

Casse, P., Ryazanskiy, S., Shapenko, A. (2020). Space Leadership: Learning from the International Space Station.

Shapenko, A. (2018). Seven delusions of Russian business leaders. *In Casas I Klett, T., Ponomareva, Y. The Life of Russian Business:(re) cognising,(re) activating and (re) configuring Institutions*. IAP.

Shapenko, A. (2018). The Russian inability to communicate: How Culture and Hierarchies Interfere with Doing Business. *In Casas I Klett, T., Ponomareva, Y. The Life of Russian Business:(re) cognising,(re) activating and (re) configuring Institutions*. IAP.

### Articles/opinion columns in practitioner journals:

Shapenko, A (2017). The burden of change, Harvard Business Review – Russia. <http://hbr-russia.ru/management/upravlenie-izmeneniyami/p23471/>

Shapenko, A (2018). How do adults learn? Four steps to new mindset, Ideanomics. <https://ideanomics.ru/articles/15633>

Shapenko, A (2018). The Impostor Syndrome: how not to be afraid of your own success. Ideanomics. <http://ideanomics.ru/articles/12502>

Shapenko, A (2018). The President of the new generation. What kind of a leader was born in 1980s? Republic. <https://republic.ru/posts/89865>

Shapenko, A (2018). Why C-graders are the best leaders? Ideanomics. <http://ideanomics.ru/articles/13243>

Shapenko, A. (2018). Why only those who embrace change become champions in business. Entrepreneur. <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/325347>

Shapenko, A. (2019). Companies are run by narcissists, relations are not sincere: why business literature is not relevant to the real life, Forbes. <https://www.forbes.ru/forbeslife/380893-kompaniyami-upravlyayut-narcissy-v-otnosheniyah-carit-dvulichie-pochemu-biznes>

Shapenko, A. (2019). Five qualities leaders need in the modern world. Entrepreneur. <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/332868>

Shapenko, A. (2019). Four trends that will change directors in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, General Director. <https://www.gd.ru/articles/10232-4-trenda-kotorye-izmenyat-direktorov-v-xxi-veke>

Shapenko, A. (2020). How online games may assist in developing leadership identity <https://trends.rbc.ru/trends/education/5ffc1dcf9a79477dda33b235?from=newsfed>