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2 **Shared social identity content is the basis for leaders' mobilization of followers**

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Abstract

Objectives: There is growing research interest in the social identity approach to leadership in sport. Researchers have examined how leaders' representation of a shared social identity allows them to motivate group members but has neglected the role that identity content plays in this process. The present research addresses this issue in two experimental studies that examine the effect of sharedness in identity content (i.e., beliefs about what it means to be a member of a group) on leaders' mobilization of group members.

Design: A 2 X 2 experimental — between-participant — design, with two shared and two non-shared conditions.

Method: In Study 1, 160 athletes imagined themselves in one of four sport team scenarios and responded to measures of mobilization (e.g., willingness to invest time on task). In Study 2 (laboratory experiment), we manipulated sharedness and assessed 114 participants' behavioural mobilization and task performance.

Results: Study 1 supports the hypothesis that identity content that is shared (rather than non-shared) between leaders and group members increases members' willingness to invest time on a task. Study 2 replicates these results and also shows that increased effort among group members mediates the relationship between shared identity content and members' improved task performance.

Conclusions: The present research is the first to provide evidence that sport leaders' capacity to mobilize the effort of group members rests upon their ability to build shared identity content.

Keywords: Leadership; Followership; Mobilization; Performance; Social Identity; Group Dynamics

Shared social identity content is the basis for leaders' mobilization of followers

Leadership is ubiquitous in everyday life, and has a measurable impact on the extent to which would-be followers and the groups that they are part of perform (for reviews see Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014). In recent years one important strand of theorizing has sought to explain the influence process that is at the heart of leadership by emphasizing the importance of leaders' representation and promotions of the collective (group) that leaders and followers share membership in (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011). More specifically, the social identity approach to leadership (Haslam et al., 2011; Hogg, 2001) asserts that in a wide range of social contexts, individuals define themselves in terms of the characteristics of an in-group they identify with (i.e., seeing themselves not just as "I" but as one of "us"). This *social identity* is central to the influence process because it is a basis for both expecting to share ideas and viewpoints with others and being motivated to achieve this (Turner, 1991). When individuals perceive themselves to share a social identity, group members' cognitions and behaviors come to reflect the values, norms, and ideals that define a common in-group (Adarves-Yorno, Postmes, & Haslam, 2006; Livingstone & Haslam, 2008). Accordingly, the *content* of a salient social identity informs the nature and direction of group members' behavior by defining the specific behaviors, emotions, and cognitions that are characteristics of the group (Turner, 1999; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). For example, at the London 2012 Olympic Games the performance director of British Rowing drew on the tradition and heritage of British Rowing, and their history of performance excellence (Slater, Barker, Coffee, & Jones, 2015).

Speaking to the importance of these ideas for leadership and followership, it has been argued that leaders need to understand and manage the beliefs associated with a shared identity

to be able to create unity among group members and to channel their energies (Haslam et al., 2011). In sport, high-level coaches view effective followers as those who, amongst other things, have a collective orientation (i.e., they put the team first) that endorses shared values and principles relevant to the team (Benson, Hardy, & Eys, 2016). Further, such followership is contextually dependent. To illustrate, in time-limited performance situations such as a half-time intervals coaches often prefer acceptance and action from athletes (Benson et al., 2016). Moreover, from a dyadic-relationship perspective, the quality of the coach-athlete connection is crucial for the long-term development and success of both the coach and the athlete (for a review see Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016). Additionally, leadership research within the social identity tradition has reported that leaders who embody a group's identity (i.e., the first principle of identity leadership: being prototypical of a group; Hogg, 2001) are more likely to be supported (van Dijke & De Cremer, 2010), trusted (Giessner, van Knippenberg, & Sleebos, 2009), and perceived as effective (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005).

Researchers have proposed that social identity processes have implications for leadership not only in business and political contexts but also in sporting contexts (Slater, Coffee, Barker, & Evans, 2014), even though it's only recently that sport and exercise scholars have paid increased attention to the social identity approach (for a review see Rees, Haslam, Coffee, & Lavallee, 2015). For instance, in experimental and field studies examining athlete leadership, Fransen and colleagues (2015, 2016) found that when athlete leaders inspire confidence in their peers this increases their peers' sense of team identification and, in turn, sport task performance. Further, Stevens and colleagues (2018) have demonstrated that coaches and captain's perceived engagement in social identity leadership was positively associated with group identification, which in turn, promoted attendance at training sessions in amateur sport teams. In further

experimental research, Slater, Turner, Evans, and Jones (2018) found that high (vs. low) levels of relational identification (i.e., the extent to which a leader—follower relationship has psychological meaning; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007), with a hypothetical sports coach increased athletes' mobilization of effort (i.e., their willingness to dedicate more hours to a task asked of them by the coach). Collectively, these endeavors have demonstrated the promise of the social identity approach in enhancing our understanding of sport and exercise leadership but have overlooked the role of social identity content.

In the context of the London 2012 Olympic Games researchers observed that leaders frequently articulated team values in their media communication (i.e., related to the content of social identity) that impacted team functioning in several important ways. Foremost amongst these is the mobilization of group members towards the team's vision of optimal performance, as seen in the case of TeamGB (Slater et al., 2015). Mobilization can be defined as leaders' ability to galvanize group members in a way that energizes collaboration towards a collective goal, which "lies at the core to leadership research" (p. 1078; van Knippenberg, 2011). In this regard, one strand of research has proposed that to mobilize and direct the efforts of group members, leaders also need to act as *identity entrepreneurs* by cultivating a sense of social identity and defining identity content (i.e., what "us" means and does not mean; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). While it may be important for leaders to define identity content it is also important that this identity content is shared among group members (e.g., that coaches and athletes agree that close friendships reflect a defining value of our team). By definition, sharedness in identity content captures the extent to which people share beliefs about the meaning of the group. Such arguments marry with work on the collective mind hypothesis (Weick & Roberts, 1993; see also DeChurch & Mesmer-Magnus, 2010), which asserts that group

members' thought processes become aligned through "heedful inter-relating", whereby shared social cognition gives rise to a unitary cognitive system (Weick & Roberts, 1993). For example, shared values within a sport group focused on performance excellence may lead to a collective cognitive schema that facilitates the mobilization of athletes' effort towards the achievement of a collective vision (e.g., to achieve a designated medal target).

It is important to note the similarities and differences between shared identity content and leader prototypicality (Hogg, 2001; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001). On the one hand, they are related because when an individual perceives a leader to be prototypical (i.e., to represent and embody the values of the team), individuals are likely to infer some degree of shared identity content (i.e., believe that the leader has similar ideas about identity content). Similarly, when individuals perceive that they share beliefs with a leader about what the group stands for, then this is also likely to strengthen their inferences that the leader is representative of the group. In contrast, sharedness in identity content is distinguishable from leader prototypicality as the latter speaks to the extent to which leaders represent the ideal of the collective entity (e.g., "our" sport team, the broader sport club, or the national governing body). For example, an athlete may perceive that they share beliefs about identity content with a leader (i.e., believe that "we" have the similar ideas about the meaning of the group — for example — to be enjoyment-focused) but not believe that the leader lives up to this ideal (i.e., does not embody this enjoyment focus).

Scholars have suggested, but not yet demonstrated, that sharedness in identity content is likely to have an important and unique role to play in leaders' ability to inspire group members (Haslam et al., 2011; Slater et al., 2014). In an integrative review on vision communication and pursuit, Stam, Lord, van Knippenberg, and Wisse (2014) proposed that a collective vision (i.e., what we will become in the future) can be internalized by followers into their self-concept.

Crucially too, the extent to which group members *share* perceptions of the collective vision, informs the behavior of followers. In other words, it may be the *shared* aspect of "our" vision that motivates athletes to pursue it. Further, shared understandings of a group membership may have consequences for collective performance, since, as noted by Steffens, Haslam, Kerschreiter, Schuh, and van Dick (2014, p. 175), "group members' perceptions that they and their leaders are 'singing from the same song sheet' is central to leaders' ability to enhance group performance". Nevertheless, despite calls for empirical examination of the role that sharedness plays in facilitating leaders' influence attempts, to date, very little research has examined the extent to which sharedness in identity content influences group members' mobilization. Accordingly, in this paper we examine this issue in the context of sport.

A further contribution of our current research is to focus on mobilization as a leadership outcome. In this regard, Subašić, Reynolds, Turner, Veenstra, and Haslam (2011) argued that researchers need to move beyond studying followers' perceptions of leader effectiveness and instead to examine actual *followership* or followers' mobilization as an indicator of successful leadership (see also van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). This opportunity is also true of sport leadership literature that typically focuses on perceptions of leadership as indicators of successful leadership (see Slater et al., 2018). Accordingly, in broader literature, researchers have assessed followers' intentions to engage in collective action (Seyranian, 2014), and the amount of time followers would be willing to dedicate to a task assigned by a leader (Halevy, Berson, & Galinsky, 2011) or a sport coach (Slater et al., 2018). Building on these arguments, in the present research we examine how the degree of shared identity content affects group members' mobilization not only in terms of their willingness to spend time on a given task

(intentional mobilization; as in Slater et al., 2018) but also in terms of the objective effort they invest on a given task (behavioral mobilization), and task performance.

The Current Research

Our research involves two experimental studies that explore the proposition that leader's ability to mobilize group members is shaped by the degree to which their beliefs about group memberships are *shared* with group members. In Study 1, we investigate the extent to which identity content that is shared (vs. non-shared) between leaders and group members (i.e., athletes) affects leaders' capacity to increase followers' intentional mobilization. In Study 2 we examine the degree to which shared (vs. non-shared) identity content affects group members' intentional and behavioral mobilization, and their task performance. Here, we expect that behavioral mobilization leads shared identity content to be translated into improved task performance. In formal terms, we test the following hypotheses:

H1: Identity content that is shared (vs. non-shared) between a leader and group members will result in group members' increased intentional mobilization.

H2: Identity content that is shared (vs. non-shared) between a leader and group members will result in group members' increased behavioral mobilization and improved task performance.

H3: Behavioral mobilization will mediate the positive effect of shared identity content on task performance.

Study 1 examined H1 in a scenario-based experiment, while Study 2 aimed to replicate these findings and tested H2 and H3 in a laboratory experiment.

Study 1

In Study 1 we used experimental vignette methodology (EVM; Aguinis & Bradley, 2014) in which participating athletes imagined themselves as part of a sport team with a coach. EVM has been used in previous sport social identity leadership research (Slater et al., 2018: Study 1 and 2). We followed the nine recommendations suggested by Aguinis and Bradley (2014) and used a 'paper people study' approach. In accordance with Slater et al. (2018), we only diverted from Aguinis and Bradley's (2014) preference for within-participant designs by using a between-participant design. Primarily, this decision was taken to avoid participant overload. Nonetheless, to overcome the potential drawback of using a between-participant design, we adhere to suggestions to provide sufficient contextual information to participants and analyze data using analyses of variance (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014).

Regarding the identity contents chosen, to our knowledge only two studies have examined identity content in sport (Barker, Evans, Coffee, Slater, & McCarthy, 2014; Evans, Barker, Slater, & Turner, 2013). The authors proposed and demonstrated that results and friendships are two prevalent identity contents that athletes associate with their sport team. Therefore, we used these contents to create shared and non-shared conditions between the coach and the athletes. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (leader identity content: results vs. friendships) X 2 (group identity content: results vs. friendships) between-participant experimental design. This allowed us to investigate whether shared or non-shared identity content affects intentional mobilization (H1) and whether there are differences depending on the specified identity content (i.e., results vs. friendships).

Method

Participants and design. In total, 160 athletes (M_{age} = 20.03 ± 3.06; 124 males) completed the study. Participants were currently competing in sport ($M_{experience}$ = 9.50 years ±

4.10) at a recreational (an organized club with a coach; 49.4%) to international (competing for their country; 19.4%) level. The athletes represented a range of sports (including soccer n = 72, cricket n = 27, netball n = 14) and the majority (84%) were White British. The four experimental conditions of the 2 (leader identity content: results vs. friendships) X 2 (group identity content: results vs. friendships) design resulted in two shared conditions (i.e., leader/group shared results [LR/GR] or friendships content [LF/GF]) and two non-shared conditions (i.e., leader results/group friendships [LR/GF] and leader friendships/group results [LF/GR]).

Procedure. Following institutional ethical approval participants were invited to participate in a project titled: "Examining the effectiveness of leaders in motivating sports teams". Participants provided informed consent and demographic information before reading one of the four scenarios. In-line with EVM (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014), participants completed the study in their natural setting, following a training session at their regular training facility. A classroom or large meeting room was used, and participants completed paper copies of the questionnaires. All scenarios can be seen in the supplementary file. The scenario began: "You are part of a sports team where you feel a great sense of belonging and your team has a strong connection and bond with your coach." In the two shared identity content conditions [LR/GR and LF/GF], participants read on: "Your team and the coach feel that results [or friendships] are of utmost importance." In contrast, participants in the two non-shared identity content conditions [LR/GF and LF/GR] read: "Your coach feels that results [or friendships] are of utmost importance; however, what your team value the most are the friendships within the team [or the team's results]". Following the shared (vs. non-shared) identity content manipulation all participants were instructed that: "Your team has a match at the weekend and there is only one training session remaining before the game." Participants were then instructed that in-line with

their own identity content, the coach wanted to work on either: "the team's tactical strategy" [LR/GR and LR/GF] [or complete a team building activity; LF/GF and LF/GR] in the training session. Finally, participants read: "In preparation for the training session your coach has asked you to work on a task, related to the team's strategy [LR/GR and LR/GF] [or the team building activity; LF/GF and LF/GR]), that will take up to 15 hours to complete." Participants then responded to a range of dependent measures.

Measures

Manipulation checks. Four one-item measures were used to check the identity content manipulation (as used by Evans et al., 2013). These included four variants of the item "results/friendships are of most importance for the coach/group". Participants rated the extent to which they agreed with all items on 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 7 (*completely agree*). To ascertain whether we had successfully immersed participants in the scenario and following previous studies (e.g., Slater et al., 2018), we used a scale assessing participants' *group identification* (three-items; e.g., "Do you feel a strong connection with the group?"; Haslam, 2004; Postmes, Haslam, & Jans, 2013).

Mobilization. Participants completed the same two measures of mobilization used by Slater et al. (2018). First, a five-item scale assessed *intentional mobilization.* The items were: (1) "you are strongly motivated to engage in the final training session"; (2) "the final training session will be very effective"; (3) "you will exert very high levels of effort during the final training session"; (4) "you want to make a distinct contribution to the final training session to impress the coach"; and (5) "you are passionate and enthusiastic about the final training session". Items were preceded by the stem, "To what extent do you agree that…" with responses indicated on a scale from 1 (*do not agree at all*) to 7 (*completely agree*). As in previous studies (Slater et

al., 2018; $\alpha = .87$), the scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .83$). Second, a commonly used single item assessed participants' *willingness to invest time* on the assigned task (e.g., Slater et al., 2018): "How many hours [out of 15] would you be willing to dedicate to the preparation task set by the coach?"

Results

Preliminary analysis. To ensure consistency in participant characteristics between conditions, we ran two analyses of variance (ANOVA) and two Kruskall-Wallis H tests. No differences were found for age, $F(3, 151) = .15$, $p = .932$, years of experience, $F(3, 150) = .76$, $p = .518$, gender, $\chi^2(3) = 1.04$, $p = .791$, or level of competition, $\chi^2(3) = 2.11$, $p = .550$.

Manipulation checks. Four 2 X 2 factorial ANOVA were conducted on leader (results and friendships) and group (results and friendships) identity contents to confirm the manipulations. As expected, the first ANOVA on leader-results content indicated a significant effect for leader content, $F(1, 156) = 92.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .37$, with higher responses in both leader-results conditions (LR/GR: $M = 6.00 \pm 1.01$ and LR/GF: $M = 5.90 \pm 1.03$) than in the leader-friendships conditions (LF/GF: $M = 4.33 \pm 1.47$ and LF/GR: $M = 3.43 \pm 1.78$). A second ANOVA on leader-friendships content revealed a significant effect for leader content, $F(1, 156) = 109.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .41$, with higher responses in both leader-friendships conditions (LF/GF: $M = 5.60 \pm 1.06$ and LF/GR: $M = 5.78 \pm 1.21$) than in the leader-results conditions (LR/GR: $M = 3.93 \pm 1.62$ and LR/GF: $M = 2.95 \pm 1.48$).

Regarding group-results content, a third ANOVA suggested a significant effect for group content, $F(1, 156) = 23.53$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .13$, with higher responses in both group-results conditions (LR/GR: $M = 6.03 \pm 0.89$ and LF/GR: $M = 5.63 \pm 1.15$) than in the group-friendships conditions (LF/GF: $M = 5.28 \pm 1.15$ and LR/GF: $M = 4.43 \pm 1.74$). A fourth ANOVA on group-

friendships content revealed a significant effect for group content, $F(1, 156) = 19.59$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$, with higher responses in both group-friendships conditions (LF/GF: $M = 5.60 \pm 1.03$ and LR/GF: $M = 5.85 \pm 0.89$) than in the group-results conditions (LR/GR: $M = 5.28 \pm 1.40$ and LF/GR: $M = 4.38 \pm 1.68$). Finally, across the conditions participants reported strong group identification ranging from $M = 5.62$ (lowest: LF/GR) to $M = 5.96$ (highest: LR/GR) and no differences were observed between the conditions, $F(3, 156) = 1.22$, $p = .304$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. In sum, data indicated that the manipulations had successfully created two shared (LR/GR and LF/GF) and two non-shared (LR/GF and LF/GR) conditions.

Mobilization. Consistent with H1, a 2 (sharedness: shared vs. non-shared) X 2 (group identity content: results vs. friendships) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)[1] revealed a significant main effect for sharedness, Wilks' $\Lambda = .77$, $F(2, 152) = 22.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .23$, on intentional mobilization and willingness to invest time. There was a non-significant main effect for group identity content, Wilks' $\Lambda = .99$, $F(2, 152) = .58$, $p = .560$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, and a non-significant interaction between sharedness and group identity content, Wilks' $\Lambda = .96$, $F(2, 152) = 2.91$, $p = .058$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. As displayed in Figure 1, follow-up pairwise comparisons indicated that participants in the shared conditions reported: (1) higher intentional mobilization (LR/GR: $M_{likert} = 5.73 \pm 0.73$, LF/GF: $M_{likert} = 5.47 \pm 0.91$) than in non-shared conditions (LF/GR: $M_{likert} = 4.68 \pm 1.05$, LR/GF: $M_{likert} = 4.94 \pm 0.96$, $p < .001$, CIs: .50, 1.08); and (2) greater willingness to invest time on task (LR/GR: $M_{hours} = 12.14 \pm 3.51$, LF/GF: $M_{hours} = 10.10 \pm 3.63$) compared to non-shared conditions (LF/GR: $M_{hours} = 7.15 \pm 4.29$, LR/GF: $M_{hours} = 7.86 \pm 4.47$, $p < .001$, CIs: 2.35, 4.87). In sum, irrespective of the specified content (i.e., results or friendships), higher

[1] Three cases for willingness to invest time were excluded due to missing data. Adding competitive level as a covariate did not alter the pattern of results.

levels of mobilization (intentional and willingness to invest time) were reported by athletes when beliefs about identity content were shared rather than not shared by the leader and the group.

Discussion

Consistent with H1, when the content that leaders and group members associate with a salient social identity is shared, athletes reported greater intention to mobilize effort on behalf of the leader than when that content was not shared. Yet while this study provides encouraging support for our postulations, the study is clearly limited in a number of respects — most notably in involving a hypothetical scenario in which objective mobilization was not assessed. Although these methods have been proven to have validity in prior leadership research (e.g., Giessner et al., 2009; Halevy et al., 2011; Seyranian, 2014; Slater et al., 2018), Study 2 explored the manipulation of key variables in a laboratory experiment that assessed group members' intentional and behavioral mobilization, as well as their task performance.

Study 2

To address H2 and H3, Study 2 examined the effect of shared (vs. non-shared) identity content on group members' intentional and behavioral mobilization, and task performance. We employed the same 2 × 2 design (two shared and two non-shared conditions) used in Study 1 and replaced friendship identity content with enjoyment identity content for three reasons. First, to control for unintended effects we did not allow participants to interact with one another, meaning that the value of friendships did not fit the experimental context. Second, the procedure involved a ten-minute free period where participants selected activities they wished to complete, and thus activities were required that related to both identity contents (i.e., results and enjoyment). Activities that were enjoyment-focused were more practical to generate versus activities that were friendship-focused given that participants were in individual cubicles and we did not allow

peer interaction. Third, because we found the same pattern of results within both shared and non-shared conditions in Study 1. This finding suggests that the specified content (i.e., results or friendship) shared is of less importance than sharedness itself. Thus, changing the identity content to enjoyment and finding the same pattern of results in Study 2 would aid confidence in our hypotheses regarding the effect of sharedness on mobilization.

Method

Participants and design. Based on an effect size of $\eta_p^2 = .17$ (Slater et al., 2018), 23 participants per condition were required for sufficient power (Clark-Carter, 2010). One hundred and fourteen undergraduate students ($M_{age} = 20.43 \pm 3.97$; 44 males) from a British University were assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (sharedness: shared vs. non-shared) X 2 (group identity content: results vs. enjoyment) design. Accordingly, we created two shared conditions (leader/group shared results [LR/GR] or enjoyment-focused values [LE/GE]) and two non-shared conditions (leader results, group enjoyment [LR/GE] or leader enjoyment, group results [LE/GR]).

Procedure. Participants were invited to take part in a study titled "Examining the role of leadership in small groups". Students were made aware of the study in undergraduate lectures and received no incentive to participate. Participants gave informed consent before completing demographic and pre-screening questionnaires. At least a week following the pre-screening questionnaire, individuals were randomly assigned to attend the laboratory in groups of four. Participants sat in an individual cubicle in which they were unable to see or interact with one another. Each cubicle contained a laptop ready to complete one familiarization (Trial 1) lap on a rally driving video game (Colin McRae Rally for PC). After the familiarization lap, the leader (a

male confederate who also acted as the experimenter) recorded the time taken by each participant, but this information was not revealed to participants.

Next, social identity was made salient and the manipulation of shared/non-shared identity content was introduced. To strengthen identification with the group and leader, the fact that participants and the leader belonged to the same department at the same University was emphasized. To further strengthen this bond, all group members (i.e., the four participants and the leader) wore identification cards (lanyard) around their neck displaying the University's badge. Participants were informed that the leader endorsed results- or enjoyment-focused values, and this was emphasized at this stage by the leader putting on a badge that stated, 'Results' or 'Enjoyment'. To create the shared and non-shared identity content conditions, participants were told that they had been allocated to this group because they all indicated that they endorsed either results- or enjoyment-focused values on the pre-screening questionnaire. Next, participants were told that other groups endorsed different values to them (e.g., the GR conditions were told other groups endorsed enjoyment values). To further strengthen the manipulation, posters and cue words that signaled the group's identity content (results- or enjoyment-focused) were then placed in each cubicle. Finally, participants were asked to indicate which value their group endorsed by selecting and then wearing one of two badges that were on the table behind them. One badge stated, 'Results' and the other 'Enjoyment'. In sum, each group of participants endorsed either a results- or enjoyment-focused identity content and this was either shared or not shared with the leader's focus (which was also either results or enjoyment). Next, participants completed the attentional checks, and then Trial 2 of the video game, with their lap times recorded.

After Trial 2, participants were informed about a ten-minute free period in which they would individually choose activities they would engage in from a selection of tasks. The

activities were either results-focused (i.e., practicing the lap) or enjoyment-focused (i.e., playing a different video game, reading a newspaper or magazine, or completing word-search puzzles). Participants were free to change activities at anytime; however, they were instructed that if they wished to practice the lap they would have to select this first, and could then switch tasks. Put another way, participants could not select another activity and then change to the racing video game as it was participants' orientation towards the driving task that we aimed to assess in the free period (and avoid participants switching to the driving task from another activity because they were bored). Prior to this free period, in both LR conditions, the experimenter stated to the group: "Because I value results most, I think you should spend your time practicing the time trial lap." In both LE conditions, the experimenter stated to the group: "Because I value enjoyment most, I am able to see the fun in this task, and I think you should spend your time practicing the time trial lap." After the introduction of the free period, but before it started, participants completed an intentional mobilization measure (as in Study 1). Participants' choice of, and time spent on, each activity was recorded. Following the free period participants completed Trial 3 of the video game.

Measures. We used the same intentional mobilization measure as in Study 1. In addition, we made the following changes to adapt and improve the measures: (1) the identity content attentional check was adapted for the present study; (2) behavioral mobilization and performance measures were included; and (3) as the design and measures used in Study 1 related to a coach–athlete scenario, the term "coach" was changed to "leader". As in Study 1, the intentional mobilization measure had excellent reliability (α = .92).

Leader and group identity content. Participants responded to two questions ("Do you feel part of a group where results is of sole importance or enjoyment is of sole importance?", and

"Do you feel the leader believes results are of sole importance or enjoyment is of sole importance?") by circling one of two options (i.e., results or enjoyment).

Behavioral mobilization. A ten-minute free period assessed participants' choice of activity and the length of time spent practicing. For accuracy, participants were video recorded during the free period.

Performance. Task performance was measured as the time taken to complete one lap on the rally driving video game (i.e., Trials 1, 2, and 3). A lower score indicated better performance.

Results

Attentional checks. In all but seven cases, participants' categorical responses to their perceptions of the identity content endorsed by the leader and the group were as expected. Three participants from the LR/GR and the LR/GE, and one participant from the LE/GE condition responded in contrast to the manipulations. These seven cases were removed from subsequent analyses, leaving a sample of 107 (LR/GR = 26, LE/GE = 27, LR/GE = 26, LE/GR = 28). As expected, a 2 (sharedness: shared vs. non-shared) × 2 (group identity content: results vs. enjoyment) ANOVA indicated a non-significant main effect for sharedness, $F(1, 103) = .97$, $p = .327$, group identity content, $F(1, 103) = .01$, $p = .942$, and a non-significant interaction, $F(1, 103) = .50$, $p = .480$, on group identification. A 2 (sharedness: shared vs. non-shared) × 2 (group identity content: results vs. enjoyment) ANOVA indicated a non-significant main effect for sharedness, $F(1, 103) = .27$, $p = .606$, group identity content, $F(1, 103) = .07$, $p = .790$, and non-significant interaction, $F(1, 103) = .01$, $p = .909$, on familiarization (Trial 1) performance.

Mobilization. Consistent with H2, a 2 (sharedness: shared vs. non-shared) × 2 (group identity content: results vs. enjoyment) MANOVA indicated a significant main effect for sharedness, Wilks' $\Lambda = .81$, $F(2, 102) = 12.34$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .20$, on intentional mobilization

and time spent practicing (behavioral mobilization). There was a significant main effect for group identity content, Wilks' Λ = .91, $F(2, 102) = 5.28$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, and a non-significant interaction between sharedness and group identity content, Wilks' Λ = .98, $F(2, 102) = .87$, $p = .423$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$.

As displayed in Figure 2, follow-up pairwise comparisons indicated that participants in the shared conditions reported higher intentional mobilization ($M = 5.42 \pm 1.09$) than in non-shared conditions ($M = 4.77 \pm 1.20$, $p = .004$, CIs: .22, 1.10), and spent more time practicing ($M = 7.64 \pm 4.13$) compared to non-shared conditions ($M = 4.68 \pm 4.60$, $p < .001$, CIs: 1.39, 4.65). In addition, participants in the results group identity content conditions spent more time practicing ($M = 7.23 \pm 4.25$) compared to the enjoyment group identity content conditions ($M = 5.04 \pm 4.72$, $p = .007$, CIs: .65, 3.90). No differences were seen for intentional mobilization.

In sum, higher levels of intentional and behavioral (time practicing) mobilization were found when beliefs about identity content were shared rather than not shared by the leader and the group. Further, greater behavioral (but not intentional) mobilization was observed when participants' group identity content was results-focused, compared to enjoyment-focused.

Performance. Supporting H2, a 2 (performance: Trial 2 vs. Trial 3) × 2 sharedness: shared vs. non-shared) × 2 (group identity content: results vs. enjoyment) mixed-model ANOVA indicated a significant effect for performance trial, $F(1, 103) = 12.01$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$, and a significant interaction between performance trial and sharedness, $F(1, 103) = 4.24$, $p = .042$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, on Trial 3 performance. No other effects were significant. As displayed in Figure 3, follow-up pairwise comparisons indicated that there was no difference between the shared vs. non-shared conditions on Trial 2 (shared $M_{minutes} = 1{:}48.69 \pm 0{:}11.30$, non-shared $M_{minutes} = 1{:}48.23 \pm 0{:}10.00$), and that the non-shared conditions did not change over time (Trial 3 $M_{minutes}$

= 1:46.82 ± 0:09.00). However, participants in the shared identity content conditions performed the lap significantly quicker on Trial 3 ($M_{minutes}$ = 1:43.25 ± 0:07.84) compared to their own Trial 2 ($p < .001$, CIs: 2.67, 8.23), and the non-shared conditions Trial 3 ($p = .027$, CIs: .42, 6.88).

Mediation analysis. Using a bootstrapping procedure in AMOS version 24, a mediation model examined time spent practicing (behavioral mobilization) as a mediator of the relationship between experimental condition (sharedness) and performance in Trial 3, while controlling for performance in Trial 2. This model is presented in Figure 3 with condition as the predictor variable (IV), behavioral mobilization the proposed mediator (MV), and performance on Trial 3 the outcome variable (DV). Analysis indicated a significant direct path (c') from condition to performance in Trial 3 (β = -.22, p = .011). This path was non-significant when behavioral mobilization was included in the model (β = -.09; p = .306). Further, indirect effects showed a significant indirect effect of β = -.12 (CIs: -23, -.05). In sum, supporting H3, mediational analysis suggested that when leaders and their group shared identity content this enhanced performance on Trial 3 via increased behavioral mobilization (while controlling for Trial 2 performance).

Discussion

Consistent with Study 1 data (and H1), the findings of Study 2 indicated that where a leader shared (rather than did not share) identity content with their group this increased their capacity to mobilize group members to practice on a task that helped advance the group in ways envisaged by the leader. In addition, greater behavioural — but not intentional — mobilization was observed when the group was results-focused compared to enjoyment-focused. Furthermore, H2 was supported by evidence that shared identity content also led to improved task performance in Trial 3. Aiding our understanding of the potential mechanism of change in this study, H3 was

supported by mediation analyses which showed that shared identity content led to improved Trial 3 performance because shared identity content was a basis for enhanced behavioral mobilization on the part of team members (i.e., in the form of time spent practicing).

General Discussion

Our present studies contribute to growing research examining the social identity approach to leadership in sport by providing evidence from two experimental studies that when identity content is shared between leaders and group members this provides the basis for leaders to mobilize group members. Across the studies, results show that shared (rather than non-shared) identity content leads to greater intentional mobilization (H1), greater behavioral mobilization and task performance improvements (H2) on the part of group members. Results-focused (vs. enjoyment-focused) content also lead to greater behavioural — but not intentional — mobilization in Study 2. Finally, Study 2 shows that increased behavioral mobilization, in turn, contributes to group members' increased task performance (H3).

Despite limited attention from leadership researchers per se and those in sport psychology, when individuals psychologically connect with groups, the content of an identity (in terms of values and meanings) is important because it underpins the nature of group members' cognitive schema. Evidence has shown that group members' attitudes and behaviors will be steered towards and guided by those thoughts and actions that define a group (i.e., the content of a social identity; e.g., Haslam & Reicher, 2007). Additional findings have indicated, in the context of the Olympic Games, that leaders actively construct identity content in their media communication (Slater et al., 2015). Our findings further this body of knowledge and extend previous work on collective mind (Weick & Roberts, 1993) and identity leadership (Haslam et al., 2011) by providing evidence that congruence in identity content between leaders and group

members allows leaders to mobilize the group in a manner that helps realize their collective vision (e.g., through increased effort). Aiding confidence in our findings, the two studies employed contrasting populations (i.e., athletes and students) and manipulated contrasting comparisons of identity content (i.e., Study 1: results vs. friendships and Study 2: results vs. enjoyment).

Our results indicate that group members are motivated to engage in particular forms of behavior (as specified by the content of an identity) to the extent that ideas about identity content are shared. We therefore suggest that a synergy in cognitions and behaviors (e.g., practicing and performing) between the leader and group members arise from a common conception of identity content within a group. Collectively, our present results advance knowledge by demonstrating that the collective mind or single cognitive schema originates not only from social identification with a given group but also from ideas about what it means to be "one of us" (Postmes, Haslam, & Swaab, 2005; Turner-Zwinkels, Zomeren, & Postmes, 2017). In short, it appears that while identity content provides direction (e.g., Haslam & Reicher, 2007), sharedness in identity content between leaders and group members contributes to a sense of collective mind that structures and directs content-congruent mobilization, thereby improving task performance. In other words, coach or peer influences alone are not enough to achieve peak performance, there could be a need for coherence between the two (coach, athletes) for high performance.

In Study 2 we found that behavioral mobilization was greater for results-focused (vs. enjoyment-focused) content. This demonstrates that it could be particularly influential to share results-focused values, between group members and leader, for behavioural mobilization on this particular driving task. Indeed, the driving task we used lacks transferability to natural settings and the results can be interpreted further in the context of minimal group paradigm (Diehl,

1990). We assert that shared content provided the basis for participants' mobilization because they wanted to do it for "us", but there are different interpretations. Previous researchers have found that whether individuals in minimal groups (i.e., groups that have no meaning beyond the laboratory) favor their own group versus an out-group depends on multiple factors (e.g., accessibility of social scripts such as loyalty or equality; Hertel & Kerr, 2001). In light of our findings, one explanation could be that participants in the shared conditions in Study 2 assumed that the others in their group (that were in the same room but could not be seen) would reciprocate the investment of effort. Furthermore, we do not know how these effects would play out in established or new teams in natural settings (e.g., competing sport teams) outside of the experimental context. Equally, too, precisely because participants were in separate cubicles and did not interact with one another may mean that participants cared less about their own contribution to the group (Diehl, 1990). Yet as identified by Diehl (1990), social identity processes have a substantial tradition of being successfully applied to group processes in many natural settings, and accordingly our current findings do have implications for practice in sport.

Practical Implications

Our results show that beyond self-categorization, when group members endorse an identity content that aligns with the leader this is a central ingredient of leaders' capacity to mobilize their followers. Thus, our data suggests that leaders in sport may aim to create a team identity based upon shared identity contents to optimize athletes' mobilization of effort and performance. We propose that a useful starting point for leaders is to understand the varied and diverse contents that group members associate with their identity before then working with these ideas with a view to establishing consensus among athletes, staff, and key stakeholders. This approach is likely to generate (i) traditional values associated with the team and (ii) new ideas for

group values proposed by staff and athletes. For example, Personal-Disclosure Mutual-Sharing (e.g., Barker et al., 2014; Evans et al., 2013) could be a useful intervention through which athletes' and coaches' gain understanding of each other's identity content and vision for the team. Then, embedding shared identity content can be facilitated through the 3Rs (Reflect, Represent, Realise; Haslam et al., 2011). The first application of the 3R leadership development model in elite sport has reported promising results, with medium to large effect size increases in identity leadership and social identification (Slater & Barker, 2019).

Limitations and Future Research

The present studies are not without limitations. First, in-line with previous leadership research (e.g., Giessner et al., 2009; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005) and research in sport examining the social identity approach to leadership (e.g., Slater et al., 2018), we combined scenario-based and experimental designs. Indeed, a strength of the current research is that these different paradigms yielded consistent pattern of results across Study 1 and 2. Here too, experimental methodology gives the studies high internal validity (providing evidence for causal links between focal variables) and, by following Aguinis and Bradley's (2014) best EVM practice recommendations, maintains some external validity. Nevertheless, external validity is a limitation and there is scope for future researchers to extend the present findings by examining these relationships in field contexts with competing sport teams as well as across domains (e.g., politics, business). One particular focus could be to investigate how shared identity content influences actual sporting performance (e.g., via team and individual performance parameters) over time. In addition, the positive influence of shared identity content for behavioral mobilization and task performance raises the question of how leaders can best create a sense of shared identity content under conditions where it is initially not shared (e.g., as discussed by

Reicher et al., 2005). There is value in applied investigations to address this issue (e.g., via the 3Rs; Haslam et al., 2011).

Conclusion

Leaders' ability to mobilize group members to achieve to collective goals lies at the heart of leadership and followership (van Knippenberg, 2011). Results from the current studies demonstrate that shared identity content is the basis for leaders' ability to mobilize group members. Furthermore, results show that the increased mobilization of group members that flows from shared identity with leaders, in turn, improves their objective task performance. In short, leaders are best placed to mobilize followers to reach group goals when they share with them beliefs about what it means to be a group member. More broadly, then, the leadership process can be seen to hinge on a leaders' capacity to appeal to, and build on, this sense of shared identity content.

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Figure Captions

Figure 1. Study 1: Participants' reported intentional mobilization (left panel) and willingness to invest time (right panel) in the 2 (sharedness: shared vs. non-shared) X 2 (group identity content: results vs. friendships) design.

Figure 2. Study 2: Participants' reported intentional mobilization (left panel) and behavioral mobilization (right panel) in the 2 (sharedness: shared vs. non-shared) X 2 (group identity content: results vs. enjoyment) design.

Figure 3. Study 2: Task performance (time taken in minutes and second) for the shared and non-shared identity content conditions in Performance Trials 2 and 3.

Figure 4. Study 2: Time spent practicing (behavioral mobilization) as a mediator of the relationship between leader-group shared identity content (condition) and performance on Trial 3. *Notes.* All coefficients presented are standardized; R^2 figures detail the proportion of variance explained; * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

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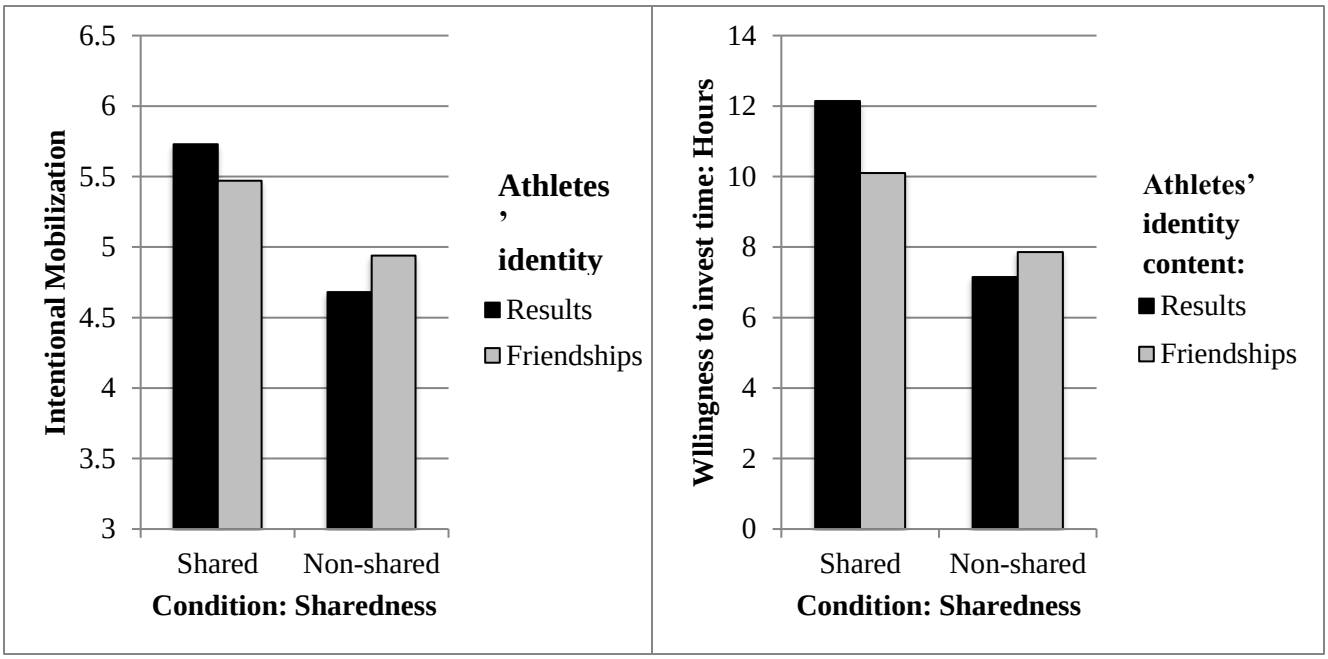

2

3 *Figure 1.* Study 1: Participants' reported intentional mobilization (left panel) and willingness to
4 invest time (right panel) in the 2 (sharedness: shared vs. non-shared) × 2 (group identity content:
5 results vs. friendships) design.

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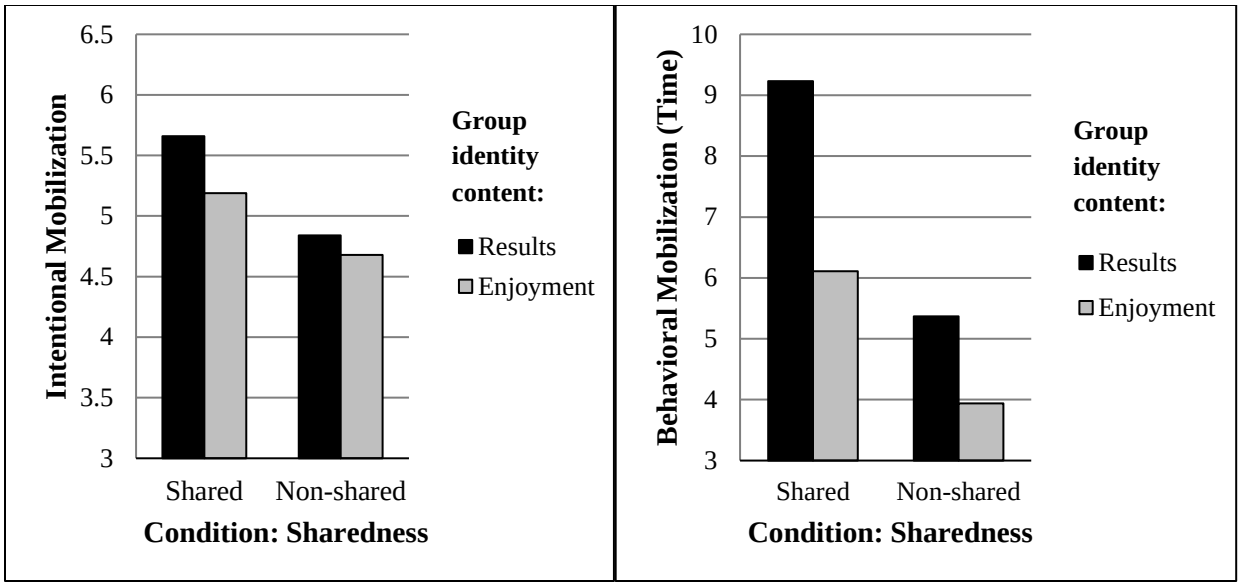
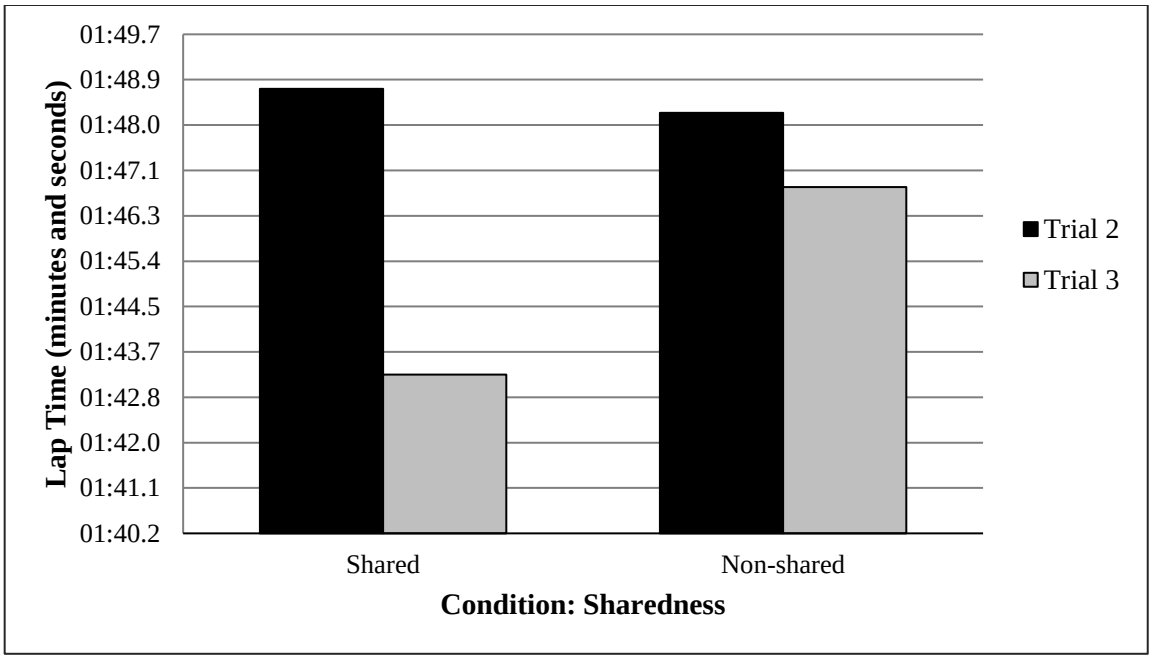


Figure 2. Study 2: Participants' reported intentional mobilization (left panel) and behavioral mobilization (right panel) in the 2 (sharedness: shared vs. non-shared) × 2 (group identity content: results vs. enjoyment) design.



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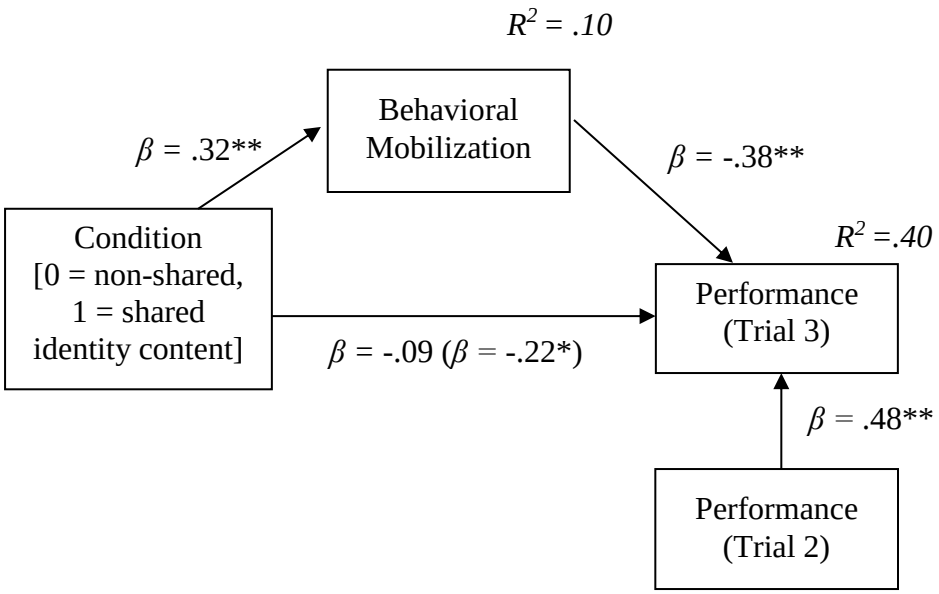

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Notes. All coefficients presented are standardized; R^2 figures detail the proportion of variance explained; * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$