Article:

Hardin, KL orcid.org/0000-0002-0826-7565, Kragt, D and Johnston-Billings, A (2018) Am I a leader or a friend? How leaders deal with pre-existing friendships. The Leadership Quarterly, 29 (6). pp. 674-685. ISSN 1048-9843

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2018.07.003

Am I a leader or a friend? How leaders deal with pre-existing friendships

To be published in The Leadership Quarterly

Kerrie L. Unsworth
Leeds University Business School
University of Leeds

Darja Kragt
UWA Business School
University of Western Australia

Amber Johnston-Billings
South32

We studied employees who were promoted into a leadership role from within their workgroup and explored how they dealt, psychologically, with being both a leader and a friend of their subordinates. In an inductive, qualitative study of 33 individuals from across three organizations (two mining companies and one childcare organization) we found that these people experienced psychological conflict that resulted in them feeling vulnerable to being exploited or being afraid to use their power over subordinate-friends. We identified five strategies that were used, namely abdicating responsibility, ending the friendship, establishing the divide, overlapping the roles, and using friendship to lead. We developed a model whereby the type of psychological conflict and the person's leader identity (either "the boss", just a role, or a weak or non-existent leader identity) leads to the choice of resolution strategy. This exploration into understanding pre-existing friendships demonstrates the ongoing need to consider those in a leadership role as "people" and not just "leaders".

Keywords: Leadership, friendship, leader identity, power, conflict

Transitioning from being a teammate to being the leader of the team is a big step. One minute, you are a friend, the next, you are a boss. This is a very common transition, and one that people regularly struggle with, as evidenced by this quote from Harvard Business Review, "It's hard for me to adjust to managing people who used to be my coworkers...I'm having a hard time drawing this line because we used to work at the same level," (Gentry, 2015). These psychological struggles may lead to reduced effectiveness and subsequent productivity losses as the leader adapts to the new relationship. To address this problem, our research explores how people experience and deal with being a leader when previously they were a friend.

Unfortunately, current theories do not provide us with much information regarding pre-existing friendships. Although some leadership theories, such as leader-member exchange and transformational leadership, explore relationships between leaders and subordinates we argue below that friendships are a specific type of relationship that are unique due to their equality of power: Friends are equals, a leader and a subordinate are not. Thus, previous theories cannot account for this phenomenon and we need an inductive study to understand how it manifests.

We approached the research with as few preconceptions as possible about whether the phenomenon occurred or not, about what "leader/friend conflict" actually was, and about the processes through which it emerged. Although we may have been able to make guesses a priori, they would have differed depending upon the specific angle we used – for example, a transformational theory lens might suggest a generally positive effect for building friendships but a leader-member exchange theory lens might suggest a generally negative effect; an identity lens might lead to identifying different strategies, while a power lens might have led to hypothesised differences based on the relationship itself; and so forth. Given that we know so little about the leader-friend phenomenon we felt it better to first understand the lay of the land and provide an outline enabling future researchers to engage in more specific deductive research moving forward separately with appropriate lenses. As such, not only does this work make a significant practical contribution, it also makes a substantive theoretical contribution through the exploration of this important area.

Friendships, Relationships & Leadership

Friendship has been defined as "the positive bond between two people…it involves a voluntary and amiable relationship that includes support for each other's social and emotional goals and a feeling of equality between members" (emphasis added) (Song & Olshfski, 2008). Friendship is based on a personalistic perspective whereby people see each other as "whole people" rather than occupiers of a particular role (Sias & Cahill, 1998). Having friends in the workplace has been linked to positive outcomes such as heightened norms of openness and inclusiveness between employees (Hays, 1989) and is often seen as a beneficial process (e.g., Balkundi & Harrison, 2006; Barley & Kunda, 2001; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Miller, Rutherford, & Kolodinsky, 2008; Payne & Hauty, 1955). However, a more recent study by Methot, LePine, Podsakoff, and Christian (2015) has found that although there are positive effects on performance from being both a colleague and a friend due to increased positive affect, there is also a negative effect on performance due to the exhaustion caused by maintaining the simultaneous colleague/friend relationship. Similarly, Berman, West, and Richter (2002) surveyed 222 managers and asked them to comment on what they perceived to be the consequences of having a friend in the workplace. Similar to findings from Methot and colleagues (2015), participants reported difficulties caused by maintaining the dual relationship; in this case, participants felt they could be more susceptible to office gossip, that it was a distraction from work-related activities and that in general, it could undermine merit-based decision making (e.g. hiring and promotion decisions).

We suggest that the difficulties identified by Methot and colleagues (2015) and Berman and colleagues (2002) are potentially even greater in leader-follower relationships given the power differentials. Leader-follower dyads are usually considered to be unequal in power (Dutton & Ragins, 2007; Shondrick & Lord, 2010), while an effective friendship dyad is typically one in which the individuals treat each other equally (Albrecht & Halsey, 1992; Song & Olshfski, 2008). This is supported by findings from Sias et al. (2004) who conducted a narrative study of 25 employed adults. They examined why workplace friendships deteriorated and found that promotion to a higher-level role, including a leadership role, was one of the five causes (alongside personality, distracting life events, conflicting expectations and betrayal); indeed friendship deterioration was seen by some participants as inevitable following a promotion.

In other research, potential drawbacks of leader-follower friendship included favouritism, manipulation, and time required to maintain the relationship (Taylor, Hanlon, & Boyd, 1992). Leader-follower friendship implies potential benefits to both parties, such as open communication, relaxed atmosphere, and increased ability to influence followers (Taylor et al., 1992). However, these benefits will deteriorate if the friendship becomes overly close or exploitive (Boyd & Taylor, 1998). Nevertheless, though this previous work identifies advantages and disadvantages of simultaneous friendship and leadership, it is focused on friendships that are developed while the person is already in the leadership role rather than pre-existing friendships; we argue that the latter may result in a different dynamic.

From the perspective of leadership theory, there is a long history of examining relationships. Fiedler’s contingency theory of the 1960’s considered the positivity of relations between the leader and his or her followers as comprising one of the three factors affecting situational favourableness (1964); however this was based on trust, confidence and respect, all of which are necessary but not sufficient for friendship using the above definition. Transformational leadership theory includes a sub-component of individualized consideration which involves individualized attention to each follower and developing one's followers (Bass, 1991; Rafferty & Griffin, 2004), presumably together creating a deeper relationship between the leader and the follower. Again, however, these characteristics of a general relationship are necessary but not sufficient for friendship.

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory explicitly recognizes the dyadic relationships that leaders have with each follower rather than the previously held assumption that a leader interacts consistently across all followers with "one best" leadership style (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). Furthermore, a meta-analysis showed that the quality of the leader-follower relationship, defined as whether the exchange is related specifically to the job or whether it extends beyond that (e.g., Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997), was significantly related to performance, satisfaction, commitment and turnover intentions (Gerstner & Day, 1997). However, Uhl-Bien, Graen, and Scandura (2000) suggest that LMX relationships, even though they extend beyond the job, should not be based on friendship due to the inequality of power. Other than Uhl-Bien and colleagues' (2000) advice, LMX does not consider what happens when friendships exist before the leader's transition.

Thus, current leadership theories help us to understand the leader-subordinate relationship but do not shed much light on a leader-friend relationship, particularly when the friendship was formed before taking on the leadership role. Given the centrality of power in the transition from friend to leader, we now turn to that literature for further insights.

Friendships & Power

Following Ragins and colleagues, we define power as "the influence of one person over others, stemming from an individual characteristic, an interpersonal relationship, a position in an organization, or from membership in a societal group" (Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989, p.485). Research has shown that those with higher power tend to have fewer friendships within the organization (Mao, 2006) and power distance has a noticeable influence on the formation of leader-follower friendships (Boyd and Taylor, 1998). Theoretically, this could be because of the effects of power on the leader, the follower or both.

From the leader's side, motivation appears to play a role in friendship: Research has shown that power motivation is associated with large-group interactions and goal striving while intimacy motivation is associated with dyadic friendship interactions, concern, self-disclosure and listening (McAdams, Healy, & Krause, 1984). Extrapolating from this, a leader who is motivated to get and maintain power is less likely to be concerned with preserving his or her dyadic friendships but will instead move towards networking and broader group-based relationships.

From the follower's side, stereotypes of the leader may play a role. Ragins (1997) argues that stereotypes become distorted and more salient in unequal power relationships. Thus, if the stereotype of a leader in a particular organizational context is one which is task-focused and controlling then that stereotype will become extreme and carry more weight with the friend when the other person transitions to a leadership role. As the follower believes in and acts upon the stereotype due to the now unequal power relationship, Ragins (1997) argues that his or her behavior towards the leader will change, thereby affecting the friendship. Thus, a follower-friend may no longer want to be friends with the leader as she perceives her former friend to now be task-focused and controlling.

Finally, from both perspectives, the perceived similarity between two people is likely to interact with power differentials to affect the friendship. We are attracted and want to stay friends with those who are like us (Davis, 1981). By definition, though, a leader with high power is dissimilar to a follower with low power and this is likely to be exacerbated when power becomes salient such as situations involving task or resource allocation, follower requests or reprimands and punishment. Thus, the friendship might deteriorate due to an increasing dissimilarity between the leader and the follower. Overall, therefore, power could potentially affect the way in which a leader deals with being friends with former team-mates depending upon the leader's own power motivation, the leader stereotype in the organization, and the salience of the power differential.

Friendship & Leader Identity

Another literature we believe is relevant is leader identity. New leaders are likely to have unstable leader identities as they are still "trying the identity on" and getting feedback on its "fit" (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ibarra, 1999). A leader identity is defined as "an ambiguous personal identity that some but not all people come to internalize as part of their self-concept" (DeRue, Ashford, & Cotton, 2009: 4). DeRue and Ashford (2010) propose a process through which leader identities are developed. In large part, this comes from other people's expectations. It is only when followers grant the identity and endorse the leader that the identity becomes solidified. As such, the relationship between the leader and the follower becomes paramount.

Identities can be conceived of at the individual level (where the identity focuses on similarities and differences from others), at the relational level (where the identity focuses on one's relationships with others), and at the collective level (where the identity focuses on group membership) (Brewer & Gardner, 1996); and this is the case for leader identity as well. Moreover, these different levels of leader identity may create different motivations including focusing on achieving one's personal goals (individual-level identity), fulfilling other's expectations of one's leadership role (relational-level identity), or internalizing group norms and resourcing group needs (collective-level identity) (Johnson, Venus, Lanaj, Mao, & Chang, 2012). Interestingly, Lord and Hall (2005) argue that novice leaders will emphasize personal identities and their primary concern will likely be whether they are recognized and accepted as leaders by others.

New leaders, therefore, are likely to have unstable, individual-level leader identities. They will look to their followers for feedback and to grant them leadership. However, followers who are friends may be unlikely to grant that person a leader identity given the unequal power it implies. Alternatively, the insecurity inherent in the unstable identity may cause the leader to perceive a lack of granting behaviour regardless of the actual behaviour of the follower friend. Either way, because leader identity relies on granting leadership from the follower friend, the identity construction of the new leader is likely to be affected by any continuing friendships.

Multiple Identities & Roles

The final literatures we will examine are more general and focus on how people deal with having multiple identities and holding multiple roles. Identity conflict literature suggest three strategies, namely separation of identities, reinterpreting or aligning identities, and eliminating identities (e.g., Horton, Bayerl, & Jacobs, 2014; Unsworth, Yeo, & Beck, 2014). Role conflict literature has a similar but different set of strategies that comprises choice of one role over the other, compromise whereby the person attempts to keep both roles, and avoidance whereby the person removes oneself from both roles (e.g., van de Vliert, 1981). Unfortunately, we do not yet know whether leaders perceive pre-existing friendships to be an identity conflict or a role conflict (or no conflict). Furthermore, we do not know whether and why those in a leadership role would choose one strategy over another. Therefore, as noted earlier, an inductive study is required to determine how identity and role conflict may, or may not, play a role in this phenomenon.

In summary, our work takes a new perspective on academic theories of leadership by seeing these role-holders as “people” who are more than simply “leaders”. Our literature review and theoretical development have identified power (via power motivation, increased stereotype-salience, and decreased similarity), unstable leader identity and granting behaviour, and multiple roles and identities as possibilities in driving the psychological conflict between leader and friend roles. However, these arguments are tentative and we have little confidence that this is the totality of the phenomenon. Ibarra (1993; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010) has called for leadership research to consider the multifaceted and dynamic nature of an individual’s various selves or else suffer the consequences of drawing potentially incorrect conclusions regarding the nature of the dyadic working relationship. Thus, in our research, we address this by inductively asking the question, “How does someone in a leadership role deal with pre-existing friendships?”

METHOD

The purpose of the study was to develop theory about the process of being a leader while also negotiating a pre-existing friendship. As the objective was to generate rather than test theory, the study was qualitative and fuelled by inductive logic, and later refined as part of an iterative process between the extant literature and the raw data (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). We will now outline how we chose our research contexts and sample before detailing the interview method and analytical strategies.

Research Context & Sample

Theoretical sampling requires that qualitative research is conducted in samples (and contexts) that will help to explain the phenomenon (Pratt, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Research in adult friendship has shown significant differences between friendship patterns of men and women and between same-sex and cross-sex friendships (Adams & Blieszner, 1994; Sapadin, 1988; Wright, 1988). Furthermore, we needed contexts where leaders are often chosen to lead the team with whom they used to work. We therefore focused on same-sex friendships in both male-dominated and female-dominated workplaces and gained permission to interview staff in two mining organizations (male-dominated) and a childcare organization (female-dominated).

The two mining companies were large with a predominantly male workforce (Mining A approximately 80% male, Mining B, 74% male). The industry culture is traditionally masculine and personal problems are often met with comments like "toughen up princess" (observation and interview data). Both companies were described by the employees as being hierarchical, bureaucratic and old fashioned. The leadership structure was the same between companies. In each company a crew consisting of seven to nine tradesmen (in both companies they were all men) sat beneath a leading hand and supervisor who were both managed by a senior supervisor who oversaw two crews. The leading hand is considered "the link" between the crew and management and is the first leadership position after being a tradesperson. The second leadership step is a supervisor role who disciplines and grants leave to crew members. Finally, the senior supervisor role is the last before they would move into a different division of the business and are typically only approached with crew management problems if they are serious. Instead, most duties at this level involve liaising with the supervisor and leading hand to ensure resources, planning and other objectives are met.

The childcare organization (Childcare C) is a small to medium, non-profit enterprise with approximately 50 staff, most of whom are female (92% female). The organization is described by employees and customers as being friendly and the Director has an open-door policy. Each team in the organization looked after one room (children were assigned to specific rooms). The hierarchy was relatively flat with only some differences in qualification level. The role of "team leader" had only recently been introduced and employees had to apply for the position. Team leaders were responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of all the children in their room as well as signing off on the curriculum and generating ideas for early childhood education.

Using theoretical sampling (Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, & Rusk, 2007) we chose individuals who had been promoted to positions of leadership over their crews or teams. Thus, the chance that these leaders had worked alongside the individuals they were now managing was high, and therefore the chance that they had "old" friends on the crew was much greater. In the mining organizations, we interviewed 22 leaders (13 from Mining A, 9 from Mining B) working in the maintenance and operations divisions of each mine site. The interviewees at Mining A consisted of the entire maintenance leadership team (except two individuals who were on leave). At Mining B the interviewees were selected by a senior manager and a human resources representative according to who had been managing or involved with the same crew for the longest period (thus more likely to have friends in the crew) and who was available over the two days the interviews were to be conducted. Overall there were four leading hands, eight supervisors, and ten senior supervisors interviewed. All participants were male and ranged between the ages of 24 and 60 years old. In the childcare organization, all participants were female. We interviewed all the team leaders (n = 8) as well as three other team members to corroborate findings.

Data collection

Interviews. Thirty-three semi-structured interviews were conducted across the three organizations. Interviews typically lasted 40 minutes to over two hours. All participants consented to having the interview electronically recorded which allowed each one to be transcribed verbatim. Initially, our interview schedule was more general and the questions discussed relationships generally. Following Strauss and Corbin (1998), we modified our interview schedule as our analysis uncovered more of the leadership and friendship conflict resolution. The interview questions thus then focused on the participants' view of leadership and friendship, how they negotiated their leader and friend selves, any benefits or struggles that may arise due to this and how they dealt with these. Given the lack of consistency and solid definition surrounding what constitutes a friendship we followed Song and Olshfski (2008) and Nielsen, Jex, and Adams (2000) by allowing our participants to tell us whether they felt they had a friend/s. Full interview protocols can be found in Appendix A.

Observations. Two authors also engaged in unobtrusive observation at both Mining A and Mining B during 10 separate visits over a two-year period and one author was a regular visitor to the childcare organisation. The process allowed for close observation of the relationship dynamics between the leaders and teams, to understand the work design and company cultures and to build and develop personal relationships with the individuals interviewed. This is considered to be important in order to gain candidness from participants (Pratt, Rockman, & Kaufman, 2006). While each trip to the sites was valuable, one particular trip to Mining A allowed for an in-depth period of complete immersion. The author spent nine days on site alongside the maintenance crews as an observer working two swings (i.e., four 12-hour day shifts, then a "swing" to four 12-hour night shifts) as part of a crew. The author conducted multiple informal interviews wherein she asked about the problems or frustrations the leaders and crew members felt in their everyday work lives; the participants opened up personally and shared frank explanations of their attitudes and beliefs.

In line with Lofland's (1995) recommendations to increase the integrity of the data, after each visit to the organisation, each author wrote observation notes to record experiences and feelings of being on-site. For the long visit at Mining A, the author also carried an electronic recorder to capture her immediate thoughts in real time (Strauss, 1987).

Data Analysis

We analysed all of the qualitative data in an iterative fashion, by travelling back and forth between the data and a set of potential theoretical propositions (Draucker et al., 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1999; Parry, 1998) We conducted thematic analysis based on grounded theory (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and interpretative phenomenological approaches (Smith, 1996; Smith et al., 2009; Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999) because they both explicitly recognize the biases that may emerge from the data and the subjective interpretation to create meaning, yet they stay within a realist framework. This was our guiding philosophy, and thus, this analysis was conducted in three major steps with a number of qualitative "check and balance" tools implemented to help minimize bias (Smith et al., 2009). These tools will be discussed throughout.

First, we began by coding interviewee's responses via open coding and drew on similar statements to form provisional categories and first-order codes to condense the meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Coded text length for this study ranged from one sentence to multiple pages. When multiple phenomena were thought to occur within one passage of text, multiple codes were overlaid. Once all the data had been coded into first-order codes the full transcripts were reviewed to make sure that all relevant content had been coded and that the sub-codes in each coding structure "fit" their category. We also created codes which represented demographic and company qualities of the participants so we could later ask questions of the data, such as, whether role position had an impact on the individuals' resolution process.

Second, as we consolidated codes into themes they became more theoretical and abstract. That is, instead of merely adding similar themed codes into each other to create categories we began a process of relating categories to their subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, we began to organize the categories that were about cognitive friend/leader conflicts, versus categories that were about the behavioural strategies they implemented.

Finally, once we had the theoretical categories we examined them for meaning. To determine the relationships between categories, we relied on the grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1978; Kan & Parry, 2004) by asking a number of questions of the data about the causes, consequences, contexts, etc. of each data category. For example, by asking what causes leaders to use a particular conflict resolution strategy, we realised that often a specific strategy was used to resolve a specific type of conflict. We also identified other coding schemas—strategies (used to resolve conflict), types (of conflict), process (of conflict resolution), self-identity, and models. Throughout this coding process we often consulted extant literature to inform our interpretation of the data. For example, coding statements about the strategies individuals used to negotiate their leader and friend roles led us to see that individuals had a holistically different attitude from each other regarding what it meant to be a leader. We then consulted the literature on leader self-perceptions, including motivation to lead and leader identity. This helped us to refine and consolidate this category, while also realising that leader identity was a cause of the conflict resolution strategies.

On many occasions, we used the negative case analysis technique (Smith et al., 2009) in which we derived a tentative set of hypotheses from the data and sought to disconfirm these by writing out a model, matrices or propositions; then going back to the raw transcripts to see if the relationships occurred from the narrative perspective (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Throughout this process, categories were further compared and abstracted until we deemed all categories to be saturated, as no new categories emerged (Kan & Parry, 2004). Finally, we refined the set of themes which had emerged and built them into a coherent process model. When this was done, we deemed the data analysis complete.

Guba, Lincoln and Denzin, (1994) provide a list of methodological tools one can use to increase the trustworthiness of qualitative research results. The pertinent ones we used were inter-rater reliability checks, reflective memos, formal discussions and informal member checks. To begin, a research assistant also conducted coding at Step 1 of the data analysis and we obtained 92% inter-rater reliability for first-stage coding. A second research assistant reviewed the coded categories at Step 2 of the data analysis and we obtained 98% inter-rater reliability for that stage, indicating reliability of our higher-order categorization. All differences were discussed amongst the research team and decided upon accordingly – often those differences were due to the additional learning gained through the observations. We used reflective memos throughout the data coding process to capture our emerging understanding of the data; this allowed us to review different ideas retrospectively thus making any biases we may have been subject to apparent. We also met formally with colleagues not involved in this research but knowledgeable in other areas to debrief and gain knowledge about what could be occurring. Finally, member checks were conducted throughout the analysis. These were informal discussions with individuals in leadership positions in the mining and childcare industries to ensure that the findings were plausible and had face validity.

RESULTS

Our analyses showed that people experienced psychological conflict between being a leader and being a friend more often than not. As we discuss below, we found that our participants felt different types of psychological conflict and resolved that conflict in different ways. However, our results not only uncovered these two "lists", we also find a clear pattern - the way in which a person resolved the psychological conflict depended both on the type of conflict and the person's leadership schema.

Evidence of, and Types of, Psychological Conflict

To begin, we first examined whether being in a leadership role brought with it any challenges of having a pre-existing friendship. This, indeed, seemed to be an issue that haunted participants, as A2 puts it: "If you get dragged off from your area and become a group leader, they shouldn't put you in front of your own men again, they should put you somewhere else". We asked our participants to recall any issues they encountered, if at all, after being promoted to a leadership role among their peers. All interviewees were able to recall and describe at least one that they had encountered, with many reporting several incidents. As shown in Table 1, our participants identified seven types of psychological conflict. When examining these seven types, we discovered that they fall into two broader categories – vulnerability to exploitation and using power.

Vulnerability to exploitation encompassed four different sub-categories. Being taken seriously as a leader was an issue for many participants; for example, A3 said, "…a couple of guys who I played rugby with twenty years ago…actually they are the ones giving me the most grief, I thought I would get support from them, but it has been the opposite, they don't like to see me as being their boss, one in particular has given me a lot of headaches." Appealing for personal support also emerged as a conflict for our participants: "a friend asked me to bend a rule for him, and I said mate you know what I would be putting myself in for then? Because you would go back and everybody would know that I bent the rules for you and I would have everyone else come in and ask for the same situation and look like an idiot and look like I had lost control of the situation," (B10). Similarly, psychological conflict came from a perception that friends would expect better treatment ("some people would try to use it to their advantage. So you know, if you let them in close then they take advantage"; B11) or be accommodated for leave requests ("some of your friends will start taking advantage and asking to leave early because they have to do something for the wife, and because you know the wife you feel like you have to say yes," A4).

The second category of psychological conflict came from having to use the power inherent in being in a leadership role. This appears to come most often from disciplining subordinates who had previously been friends. For example, U5 from childcare said, "In a really good friendship way I have had to pull a few staff aside…and that's really hard. It is hard to have to tell someone that they're not doing things properly…. It just makes me – not nervous but uncomfortable, yeah." Our participants also identified having to give directives as a conflict: "if you have someone who is a really, really strong friend, the hardest thing is being a leading hand, because one minute you are working on the tools helping them, and then the next week you are telling them what to do," (A1). Finally, a few people mentioned confidentiality as an area that caused conflict where they "Probably had to bite my lip a couple of times" (B2) because "sometimes friends may try to pump you for a bit of information," (A4).

Having established the presence of psychological conflict that those in a leadership role experience when managing their friends, we were interested to determine whether there were any differences between people that reported different types of conflict. Of the participants, 20 discussed both categories of conflict, while 7 discussed only the power-based conflict and 2 discussed only the potential to be exploited. In the child-care organisation, participants were more likely to discuss power-based conflict (71% of child-care participants), while in the mining organizations participants were more likely to discuss both types of conflict (all of company “A” participants, 84% of company “B” participants).

We examined the content of the interviews and observations to understand what was happening behind these numbers. We could not find any substantive differences between participants across the two mining companies. However, the data do suggest that those in childcare tended to not feel as vulnerable to being exploited as those in mining. In our observations we noted that a clear hierarchy was evident in the mining organization through formalized structures yet there were a lot of disrespectful comments made about management; on the other hand, we noted that although the structure in the childcare organization was quite flat we heard no disrespectful comments about management. It could be, therefore, that there was more perceived potential for exploitation (via disrespect) in the mining organizations. However, there are several differences between childcare and mining industries (e.g., gender balance, industry culture, formal organisational hierarchy) therefore we do not make any conclusions as to why our childcare participants felt less vulnerable than the mining participants; we simply note the finding and explore this issue in more detail in the Discussion.

Proposition 1: Two types of psychological conflict emerge for those in leadership roles with pre-existing friend-followers: 1) Vulnerability to exploitation; 2) Use of power.

How Psychological Conflict was Resolved

We identified five psychological conflict resolution strategies used by our participants: abdicating responsibility, ending the friendship, establishing the divide, overlapping the roles, and using friendship to lead. Those who abdicated responsibility for their leadership duties used two sub-strategies. The first was appealing to authority; for example, A5 said, “I will say [to a friend in my crew] that this is a directive that would come from upper management and don’t shoot me I am just the messenger and this is what the company wants, [so] really there is not a lot you can do about that,”. The second sub-strategy for abdicating responsibility was to forget about the leadership and focus solely on the friendship (e.g., “I don’t try to be the boss, I just try to be a normal mate”, A4).

The next two strategies for resolving the conflict between being a leader and a friend were based around separating the two selves. Ending the friendship meant not being friends with those you were now leading (e.g., “I don’t have beers with the guys after work and I don’t socialize with any of them after work, and even with my old crew in the plant, I used to hang around with a few of them before I became a group leader, but … I don’t get involved in the friendship side of things, I don’t play golf with them outside of work, I don’t see any of them outside of work,” A2). However, this did not mean that they were not approachable and outgoing while at work. For example, although one person ended his specific friendships, he suggested that acting friendly toward subordinates will make them happier: “They seem to enjoy their work and they do that because it is like a school kid. The teacher’s pet is normally the one that will do whatever he is asked”. Nonetheless, the outcome of this was that, over time, these participants no longer had friends on the crew they managed: “I used to, I don’t consider them friends now, it’s changed” (B3) and “I used to have friends in the crew, I don’t anymore, well I have some, but not close ones anymore" (A9).

A slightly different approach was taken by people who established a divide. In this separation strategy, people maintained both their friendship and their leadership but only allowed one to emerge at a time, usually self-defined as at-work and outside-work; for example, B1 put it succinctly as, "Work's work, home's home", while B3 said, "I just take the work cap off… The guys here, I can talk to them outside of work and… I'm not their boss outside work, I'm just me. But, when you're at work, the hat comes back on; when you walk out the gate, the hat's off". However, although the divide was often done at "the gate" it sometimes occurred within the workplace as well: B2 had a situation where "one of my mates, his young bloke got killed and I was right there and compassionate about that…but he took so long to recover from it…in the end that was the guy we ended up having to write up…that's where I had to take the friendship hat off, and then put the supervisor hat back on". For these participants, there were often high levels of perceived conflict. For example, when A9 had to discipline a friend he said he felt "like not doing it, because he [the friend] felt unsupported and I could see that…had to work within the role requirements, perform my role…that is what I am here for". He did not let the friend see that his friendship was making him upset, instead he continued maintaining the divide between his roles. Over time, most participants who used the separation strategy of establishing the divide reported still having friends on the crew they managed. However, three did not; one because of a crew change (B9), one because of increasing age differences (B6) and one because of the followers (he needed someone who could "walk the divide with you"; A11).

The fourth strategy we identified was one whereby the leader overlapped the leadership and the friendship at work; for example, U4 said, "Because we work in such close proximity and most of us are females here you have to play the friend card as well as the boss card," and B2 said "I would be feeding back to my supervisor that [friend on a crew] has got a family issue and he is trying to work through it, so I believe we should be cutting him a bit of slack on that, but not indefinitely,". Interestingly, in many of the instances where participants were being both a leader and a friend at work they referred to the organization or the context as allowing, encouraging or permitting the strategy to be used. For example, A6 said, "I can be a friend as well as someone's supervisor if something has gone wrong, because that is what you can do here,". Not surprisingly, all participants who reported having overlapping roles still had friends in their crew.

Finally, a few participants resolved the psychological conflicts by using their friendship to improve their leadership. For example, A9 said, "I was trying to get the guys, they didn't want to work back, because it was a horrible job, so I had to more or less be a friend to ask them…say, look you are now going to let me down? …Then they will go and have a chat and then they say, ok, righto I will stay back."

Proposition 2: There are five strategies for the leader to resolve leader-friend psychological conflict with pre-existing friendships: abdicating responsibility, ending the friendship, establishing the divide, overlapping the roles, and using friendship to lead.

Do people always use the same strategy or different strategies at different times?

Next, we sought to explore whether leaders always used the same strategy to deal with a leader-friend psychological conflict or whether they used different strategies depending on the context. In other words, is the conflict resolution strategy style-based or conflict-based? To begin, we examined when particular strategies were discussed at the same time as particular conflict types and found that there did seem to be an effect of the type of conflict.

Conflicts related to a fear of being exploited were often resolved by ending the friendship or abdicating leadership. For example, B11 said, “I think yeah you need to keep a certain amount of separation because otherwise it can make dealing with the conflict harder again” and B5 said, “When I had a friend that put me in a position on a regular basis, well… I had to ask what sort of friend is he really. So I wouldn't be friends with him,”); while B10 abdicated personal responsibility and relied on following the rules: “Last week one of the guys who I am a bit closer to… So I know he has issues at home … he has got to take the time off…But I regularly just utilize HR…I still got to follow the guidelines”.

Psychological conflict situations caused by the need to use power on friends, on the other hand, were more likely to be resolved by the separation strategies of ending friendships and establishing the divide. For example, establishing the divide resolved confidentiality conflicts, “Sometimes friends may try to pump you for a bit of information and that sort of thing … and sometimes you can just say, mate I don’t want to talk work outside of work and that’ll put a stop to it” (A4); and disciplining a subordinate, “If someone’s done something wrong at work, I’m quite happy to address it… maybe after work you’ll have a chat with them and say “Look, sorry about today, but I had this to achieve, this is what was expected of me, you weren’t giving me what I was needing to get that expectation in place, so that’s why I got a bit frustrated…” (B2).

Proposition 3: Psychological conflict due to vulnerability to exploitation is resolved through elimination (ending the friendship/abdicating responsibility). Psychological conflict due to using power is resolved through separation (ending the friendship/establishing the divide).

On the other hand, we also found that there appeared to be a “style” or trait-like element to the strategy used. Our findings suggest that many participants tended to use a primary strategy that they referred to most often. Although sometimes a more mixed profile emerged whereby two strategies appeared to be used equally or three or more strategies were discussed, most had a clear preference for using one strategy over the others. Nobody used abdicating as their primary strategy although it was used as a secondary strategy (that is, a strategy mentioned more than once but not as often as the primary strategy) mostly when the leader had overlapping roles as his/her primary strategy. Given these findings, then, it appears there is an element of "style" to the type of strategy used by leaders alongside a context-based resolution strategy.

What differentiated people who chose to resolve psychological conflict in different ways?

When we started examining why participants resolved the conflict with different strategies we noticed that they seemed to have different leader identities. We thus found a relationship between their resolution behaviors (strategies), their most common behavior (style) and the way that they viewed themselves as a leader (identity). Upon further examination, we came across three types of leader identities that the participants held: 1) being "the boss"; 2) their leadership as "just a role"; and 3) not seeing oneself as a leader.

The first group's leader identity encapsulated being task-focused and power-oriented; for example, "you are there to be the leader and tell them right from wrong and what your expectations of them are" (A6). Their leader identity was important to and defined who they felt they were as an individual and they typically referred to themselves as a 'leader' and/or 'boss' of the crew they managed. They often had clear goals regarding movement into higher positions of authority and leadership identity comments like "[I] suited a leadership role" (B2) were typical. These participants had a leader identity that was solely at the individual-level and appeared to have an affective motivation to lead (that is, wanting to be the boss).

The second group to emerge from the data had a leader identity that stemmed heavily from their perception of the role requirements, stating that it was "just a role" or "just a job". Role requirements were typically thought to be following the company rules and guidelines and enforcing directives from above even if you did not agree with them. The most common reason why individuals in this group said they accepted a leadership position was because they wanted to “get off the tools” which meant moving away from working on the machinery in a heavily physical capacity and spending more time performing “light” (office) duties. Other participants wanted “more money and a better lifestyle” and one wanted to please his partner (“the wife wanted me to show a bit of ambition”). Although this leader identity is akin to a relational leader identity and to a normative motivation to lead, its clear focus on the role rather than on the relationship between leader and follower makes it specific and different.

The third group that emerged did not seem to have a clear internalized leader identity. They did not consider themselves to be “a leader” or “a boss”. Some felt unsure of how to proceed if they were faced with a situation that required them to make a decision. For example, B8 said, “I would say… I can’t help you, this is what I have been asked to do. I am letting you know because it is not directly coming from me, it is coming from however high up the scale you want to go…I am not sure of the answers”. Others felt they were “friends with everyone” which seemed to lead to a non-existent leadership schema in that they had no boundaries between their leader identity and other aspects of the self. For example, B4 said, “I don’t try to be the boss, I just try to be a normal mate” and B1 said, “I know the things that will upset this person, and I know the things that this person has a problem with…which gives me a better understanding to help them do a good job…[but] when you know that about everyone it can be hard to know which blokes to put on what [jobs]”.

There were clear distinctions amongst people and very few people discussed more than one leadership identity. Therefore, we categorized the leaders by the leader identity that they held and then examined whether there were any patterns with the psychological conflict strategies that they used. We found this to be the case.

When the leader had a “boss” leader identity then he or she ended the friendships. There was only one participant who had this identity but who did not end friendships; in this case, he explicitly wanted to lead to be with people and he used ‘ending the friendship’ as his secondary strategy. Thus, those who want to appear to be the boss tend to cut off all ties with previous friends and no longer have any friend identity whether inside work or outside work.

Second, when a leader had a role-based leader identity then he or she tended to establish a divide. For example, B13 said, “if I go out with the guys, it is completely different to when I am at work.” However, two participants ended friendships instead and one used friendship to lead as his primary strategy although he used ‘establishing a divide’ as his secondary strategy. Thus, it appears that most participants whose leader identity was role-based wanted to keep hold of their friendships and therefore, instead of ending the friendship, made an inside/outside work distinction; however, because they are not heavily invested in being a leader they generally kept the leadership role more transactional rather than using friendship to lead.

When participants had a weak or non-existent leader identity then the results were more mixed. Some participants tried to create overlapping roles; for example, A7 said, “you can have friends but you have to make them part of everything.” Others tried to keep both roles by establishing a divide between work and home (e.g., “with my students [intern childcare workers], for instance, they know I have the authority in the classroom but once we’re out …we sometimes meet for coffee and things like that”, U5). Abdicating responsibility emerged only for this group and resolving the identity conflict by giving up the leader identity was not a primary nor secondary strategy for those who had a boss or role-based leader identity.

Proposition 4: Those with a boss identity resolve leader-friend psychological conflict by ending the pre-existing friendship. Those with a role-based identity resolve leader-friend psychological conflict by establishing the divide. Those with a weak leader identity resolve leader-friend psychological conflict by having overlapping roles, establishing the divide or abdicating responsibility.

DISCUSSION & THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

In this research we explored how those in a leadership role deal with also having pre-existing friendships with some of their followers – a phenomenon acknowledged in popular press but neglected in academic research. We build on our results below (and see Figure 1) but in summary, and in line with the anecdotal evidence, we found that this was indeed a problem for our participants causing internal psychological conflict. We identified five strategies that were used to resolve this conflict – one strategy that removed the “leader” from the self-concept (abdicating responsibility), one that removed the “friend” from the self-concept (ending the friendships), one that kept both but had them in separate “boxes” (establishing a divide), one that kept both and attempted to do both at the same time (overlapping roles), and one that kept both at the same time but also had one at the service of the other (using friendship to lead). Interestingly, the choice of resolution strategy appeared to be both stylistic and contextualized. We found that most leaders tended to talk predominantly about using one particular strategy; this primary strategy appeared to depend on their leader identity. On the other hand, there did appear to be differences based on the type of conflict being felt with vulnerability conflicts being resolved through ending the friendship or abdicating responsibility while power-based conflicts were resolved through establishing a divide or ending the friendship.

Figure 1 about here

At its core, this research highlights the prevalence of leader-friend conflict for leaders and the focus it places either on the self or on the relationship. Although it takes many forms, we found two underlying categories around feeling vulnerable and having to use one's power. Furthermore, these psychological conflict categories are both concerned with power – one is to do with losing power (that is, concerns that the friend will use the equality of power from the friendship to override the inequality of power in the leader-subordinate relationship), while the other is concerned with using power (that is, the effect of the inequality of power affecting the equal power friendship). Although we had considered power as a potential influence at the beginning of the research, there is little existing theory to help us understand how leaders deal with the power conflicts that emerge when they must lead people who used to be friends.

We first consider when a leader feels vulnerable to being exploited by friend-followers. In this situation, we posit that the focus is on the self and the effects that losing power would have on the self. When this is combined with a personal leader identity, such as the 'boss' identity we identified in our study, the vulnerability and fight for power becomes personalised. We suggest that a leader with an individual-level, 'boss' identity would become defensive because the potential loss of power could in turn create a loss of identity. If the follower-friend exploits them and does not respect the power differential, then are they really 'the boss'? And if they are not 'the boss', then who are they? Thus, we propose that a vulnerability conflict combined with an individual-level 'boss' identity will lead to identity threat that will be addressed by focusing on the leadership role and ending the friendship entirely.

On the other hand, a perceived loss of power by somebody with a weak or non-existent leader identity will not create an identity threat because there is no identity to threaten. In this situation, the leader will be willing to hand-over the power to the follower-friend simply to avoid the negative emotions inherent in the vulnerability conflict. The leader does not feel the need to defend the power differential and therefore abdicates from the leadership. The psychological power struggle is resolved by removing oneself from the field.

Interestingly, feeling vulnerable highlights the centrality of trust, defined as “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trust or, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995: 716). Given the salience of this conflict, it appears that many leaders do not trust their pre-existing friends to not take advantage of their position. Mayer and colleagues (1995) suggests that trust is formed when the trustor (in this case, the leader) has a high propensity to trust and perceives that the trustees (the follower-friends) are high in benevolence, competence and integrity. Research has previously shown that effective leadership, more specifically elements of transformational leadership, lead to increased trust of followers towards leaders and the rest of the team (see Burke, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas, 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Farrell, Flood, Mac Curtain, & Hannigan, 2005; Pillai, Schriesheim, & Williams, 1999; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996); but little research has considered the phenomenon of a leader trusting his or her followers. The research that has been done has generally examined outcomes rather than antecedents. For example, Salamon and Robinson (2008) found that feeling trusted by one’s supervisor is related to increased feelings of responsibility and Lau, Lam, and Wen (2014) found that showing trust by relying on subordinates was related to increased subordinate performance. It appears, therefore, that trusting subordinates and resolving the vulnerability conflict could lead to positive outcomes like that noted by Taylor and colleagues (1992). However, Lau and colleagues (2014) also found that a leader who displayed trust by disclosing personal and sensitive information did not engender greater performance and so confidentiality conflict may be the exception to this recommendation.

Trust is theorized to be dynamic such that experiences within the relationship affect the ongoing trust. This is particularly relevant as, in contrast to previous research (e.g., Boyd & Taylor, 1998; Taylor et al., 1992), our research looks at the dynamics of a pre-existing friendship. As such, it could be that the vulnerability conflict and the abdicating leadership strategy are intertwined – an uncertain leader who defers to superiors may be more likely to be taken advantage of which then decreases the trust and increases the perceived vulnerability which would then make one more likely to abdicate again. Thus, it is difficult to determine a simple direction of causality and a more likely explanation is a complex dynamic relationship between the vulnerability conflict and the resolution strategy used.

In contrast to losing power, using power meant that the focus was on the relationship with the follower-friend. While losing power was based on how power affected the leader's role and identity, the psychological conflict around using power is based on how the leader thinks that power will affect the follower-friend. A role-based identity is also more relational and therefore the match between the power concern and the identity means that maintaining the relationship becomes the key to the resolution. The leader will search for a way to maintain both the leadership and friendship roles.

On the other hand, if the concern over power is focused on the relationship, but the identity is focused on the self (that is, a "boss" identity) then a conflict arises as to the best solution. Cognitive dissonance is likely to arise because the leader is both concerned about the use of power on the relationship but also views him/herself as inherently holding more power than the follower-friend. This is similar to the cross-sectional quantitative study by McAdams, et al. (1984) in that we found that those with a power-oriented leader identity (i.e., seeing themselves as “the boss”) ended up with no friends at work. Our results therefore shed some light on why power motivation is associated with fewer friendships.

The emergence of leader identity in our study was a difficult one to interpret. Although it was clear that it had a strong effect on strategy choice, there were elements that were similar to both motivation to lead and to implicit leadership schema: the “boss” leader identity is similar to affective motivation and they all represent an implicit model. We felt that the construct, in general, more closely represented leader identity because no references were made to what other leaders should be like (implicit leadership schema) and fewer references were made to what motivated them to be a leader compared to how they saw themselves as a leader. Nevertheless, the overlap should not go undiscussed. One area of interest is Epitropaki and Martin's (2005) findings that show that the more a follower’s implicit leadership schema matched the leader’s actual leadership behavior, the better their commitment, job satisfaction and well-being. In our case, perhaps there is a within-person consistency that is sought where commitment and well-being come from the leader identity (e.g., “the boss”) matching the behavior (e.g., ending the friendship).

Another overlap we found was the resolution strategies which are similar to identity resolution strategies. Integrative reviews, such as those by Horton and colleagues (2014) and Unsworth and colleagues (2014) have categorised identity conflict resolution along different lines such as segmenting/prioritization, reinterpreting/alignment, and elimination which align with strategies discussed by our respondents. For example, Pratt and Foreman (2000) theoretically examined multiple organizational identities (the pluralistic faces of a company) and proposed that organizational identities were likely to be eliminated from the company when the synergy with other organizational identities was low. Although this is at the level of the organization, this is clearly analogous to ending the friendship (whereby the friend identity is eliminated) and abdicating responsibility (whereby the leader identity is eliminated). Similarly, there is comparability between our establishing the divide strategy and Kreiner and colleagues' (2006) research on Episcopalian priests. The strategy they called "flipping the on and off switch" is akin to our establishing the divide, and their "integration/blending" strategy is like our strategy of overlapping roles.

Our research builds on this work by first recognising that pre-existing friendships are indeed creating a type of identity conflict. In other words, although the conflict we identified was not explicitly around conflicting multiple identities it bears some similarities. It is likely, for instance, that when a friend is appealing for personal support in the workplace the leader's friend identity is strongly activated (as the friend's distress is the situationally relevant trigger which elicits the friend identity), however, their leader identity is also activated by being in a work context thus causing a high level of cognitive identity conflict. Identity theorists have generally proposed that although situational influences can affect the cueing and enacting of salient identities a person can only enact one identity at any given point in time (Horton et al, 2014; McCall & Simmons, 1978). Our research, on the other hand found that those in a leadership role report experiencing cognitive influence from their multiple identities at the same time, suggesting that, similar to thinking by Kreiner and colleagues (2006) and Unsworth and colleagues (2014), an individual can be cognizant of (and thus in possession of) both identities simultaneously.

What we did not find was any evidence of traditional LMX in-group/out-group relationships. To date, LMX is the key theory in leadership that has focused on relationships.

Although we did not go searching for LMX in our participants (using inductive analyses, we did not search for any one theoretical construct), we did expect to see at least some evidence of in-groups based on friendship. If anything, though, the vulnerability conflict and the separation strategies of ending the friendship and establishing a divide suggest that friendships can be harmful to the creation of an in-group. Thus, the advice suggested by Uhl-Bien et al. (2000) that LMX relationships not be based on friendships seems to be being heeded, unknowingly, by the participants in our study.

Given that the psychological conflict we found was so easily identified by participants and, particularly for some, was so strong, one might have thought that more traditional coping styles also may have played a role (e.g., anticipatory coping, emotion-focused coping, instrumental coping). However, we did not find any evidence of these coping styles.

Finally, we did not find many differences between those in leadership roles in the child-care organization and those in the mining organizations. Although men and women interact differently with the world (Croson & Gneezy, 2009), they appeared to deal with leader-friend conflicts similarly. The one substantive difference we found was that child-care leaders were more likely to feel power-based conflict than exploitation conflict. Why might this be the case? It could be because of the stereotype of women as caring and supportive; female leaders who need to use power on their friends may believe that they are violating this stereotype and be punished by others for doing so (e.g., Heilman, 2001; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004). This gender stereotype argument also works when looking at the reverse situation – those in a leadership role in mining were more concerned about vulnerability than those in child-care. Being vulnerable is a trait typically assigned to women and therefore may violate the male stereotype, highlighting and reinforcing the conflict. Alternatively, these differences may be due, not to gender, but to organizational structure and culture. The child-care organization was relatively flat and the leadership roles were new, while the mining organizations were considered to be hierarchical and the leader roles long-standing. It could be that those in the child-care organization were negotiating the space between the hierarchy implicit in a leadership role and the flatness implicit in the existing culture; and those in the mining organizations felt more vulnerable because they were in a precarious position in the imposed hierarchy. Further research across a range of different organizational cultures and structures would help to pinpoint why this finding emerged.

Practical Implications

Our research is one of the first steps into understanding how leaders deal with pre-existing friendships. It would therefore be presumptuous of us to delve too deeply into practical implications without further understanding of the boundary conditions and generalisability of our findings. However, there are some implications we feel are appropriate at this stage.

An awareness of the difficulty of leading people that used to be friends is a deceptively simple yet very important practical implication. Often when employees are promoted to leadership roles there is a tendency to see them as a “leader” and not to see them as a “whole person”. Organisations can take care to promote people into different areas or to provide them with emotional and instrumental support to help them identify appropriate strategies during the early stages.

It is also reasonable to assume that the increased understanding of the types of psychological conflict a leader/friend dyad will face can be shared and taught to other leaders who are managing friends. Increased awareness of potential interpersonal conflict has been shown to help individuals overcome differences in less time, with more positive outcomes

(Takano, Sakamoto, & Tanno, 2011). Thus, as part of leadership training, leader/friend conflict scenarios could be included to help individuals better understand their leadership schema and thus adopt effective negotiation strategies (Runde & Flanagan, 2006).

Limitations and Future Research

A clear limitation of this research lays in its gender homogeneity as all dyads observed and interviewed were of the same sex. It could be, and most likely is the case, that leaders who have follower-friends of the opposite sex may feel different types of psychological conflict and behave differently when trying to resolve that conflict. Future research should therefore investigate this situation. Another area for future research is to get a broader understanding of the prevalence of the different types of conflict and the different resolution strategies. Our research took an inductive approach and we chose to collect rich data, going into depth to examine how leaders deal with previous friendships, however the downside of this approach is that we cannot ascertain a picture of the population. To what extent are these results generalizable? Are the proportions of conflict and resolution strategies the same in other contexts? Do the same findings occur for friendships that emerge once a leader is in the role or is it only for pre-existing friendships[1]? Do other factors play a role such as age, length of time in role, or temporal orientation? For example, if a person in a leadership role is thinking about the future, does that change his or her relational identity with a follower compared to somebody thinking about the past[1]? Unfortunately our data does not allow us to follow these interesting avenues but we hope that others will do so. Finally, understanding the leaders' dilemma and behavior from the followers' perspective would also be worthwhile. For example, research could examine the effects that different leader strategies have for the followers and strategies that the followers

[1] We are indebted to two friendly reviewers for these suggestions.

themselves engage in to deal with any conflict they feel.

In summary, we took an initial step into understanding how people lead those who used to be their friends. Our research supports the anecdotal evidence that this is a significant problem for leaders and identifies ways in which those in a leadership role deal with the psychological conflict. Although our findings did not “fit” existing leadership theories, we were able to draw on other organizational theories, such as identity and trust, to develop our theorizing. We built a new model that showed how the conflict type and the leader’s identity led to the particular resolution strategy. In general, we believe it is time to consider those in leadership roles not just as “leaders” but as “people”.

REFERENCES

Adams, R. G., & Blieszner, R. 1994. An integrative conceptual framework for friendship research. **Journal of Social and Personal Relationships**, 11(2): 163-184.

Albrecht, T., & Halsey, J. 1992. Mutual support in mixed status relationships. **Journal of Social and Personal Relationships**, 9: 237-252.

Balkundi, P., & Harrison, D. A. 2006. Ties, leaders, and time in teams: Strong inference about network structure's effects on team viability and performance. **Academy of Management Journal**, 49(1): 49-68.

Barley, S. R., & Kunda, G. 2001. Bringing work back in. **Organization science**, 12(1): 76-95.

Bass, B. M. 1991. From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision. **Organizational dynamics**, 18(3): 19-31.

Berman, E. M., West, J. P., & Richter Jr, M. N. 2002. Workplace Relations: Friendship Patterns and Consequences (According to Managers). **Public Administration Review**, 62(2): 217.

Boyd, N. G., & Taylor, R. R. 1998. A developmental approach to the examination of friendship in leader-follower relationships. **The Leadership Quarterly**, 9(1): 1-25.

Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. 1996. Who is this" We"? Levels of collective identity and self representations. **Journal of personality and social psychology**, 71(1): 83.

Burke, C. S., Sims, D. E., Lazzara, E. H., & Salas, E. 2007. Trust in leadership: A multi-level review and integration. **The Leadership Quarterly**, 18(6): 606-632.

Croson, R., & Gneezy, U. 2009. Gender differences in preferences. **Journal of Economic literature**, 47(2): 448-474.

Dansereau, F., Graen, G., & Haga, W. J. 1975. A vertical dyad linkage approach to leadership within formal organizations: A longitudinal investigation of the role making process.

Organizational behavior and human performance, 13(1): 46-78.

DeRue, D. S., & Ashford, S. J. 2010. Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organizations. **Academy of Management Review**, 35(4): 627-647.

DeRue, D. S., Ashford, S. J., & Cotton, N. C. 2009. Assuming the mantle: Unpacking the process by which individuals internalize a leader identity. In L. M. Roberts, & J. E. Dutton (Eds.), **Exploring positive identities and organizations: Building a theoretical and research foundation**: 213-232. New York: Taylor & Francis.

Dirks, K. T., & Ferrin, D. L. 2002. Trust in leadership: meta-analytic findings and implications for research and practice. **Journal of applied psychology**, 87(4): 611.

Draucker, C. B., Martsolf, D. S., Ross, R., & Rusk, T. B. 2007. Theoretical Sampling and Category Development in Grounded Theory. **Qualitative Health Research**, 17(8): 1137-1148.

Dutton, J. E., & Ragins, B. R. 2007. **Exploring positive relationships at work: building a theoretical and research foundation**: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Epitropaki, O., & Martin, R. 2005. From ideal to real: a longitudinal study of the role of implicit leadership theories on leader-member exchanges and employee outcomes. **Journal of Applied Psychology**, 90(4): 659.

Farrell, J. B., Flood, P. C., Mac Curtain, S., & Hannigan, A. 2005. CEO Leadership, Top Team Trust and the Combination and Exchange of Information1. **Irish Journal of Management**, 26(1): 22.

Fiedler, F. E. 1964. A contingency model of leadership effectiveness. **Advances in experimental social psychology**, 1: 149-190.

Gerstner, C. R., & Day, D. V. 1997. Meta-Analytic review of leader–member exchange theory: Correlates and construct issues. **Journal of Applied Psychology**, 82(6): 827.

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. 2013. Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. **Organizational Research Methods**, 16(1): 15-31.

Glaser, B. G. 1978. **Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory**. Mill Valley, CA: The Sociology Press.

Guba, E., Lincoln, Y., & Denzin, N. 1994. Competing paradigms in qualitative research, **The Handbook of Qualitative Research**: 105-117: Sage.

Hays, R. 1989. The day-to-day functioning of close versus casual friendships. . **Journal of Social and Personal Relationships** 6: 21-37.

Heilman, M. E. 2001. Description and prescription: How gender stereotypes prevent women's ascent up the organizational ladder. **Journal of social issues**, 57(4): 657-674.

Heilman, M. E., Wallen, A. S., Fuchs, D., & Tamkins, M. M. 2004. Penalties for success: reactions to women who succeed at male gender-typed tasks. **Journal of Applied Psychology**, 89(3): 416.

Horton, K. E., Bayerl, P. S., & Jacobs, G. (2014). Identity conflicts at work: An integrative framework. **Journal of Organizational Behavior**, 35(S1), S6-22.

Ibarra. 1993. Personal networks of women and minorities in management: A conceptual framework. **Academy of Management Review**, 1(18): 56-87.

Ibarra, & Barbulescu, R. 2010. Identity as a narrative: Prevalence, effectiveness and consequences of narrative identity work in macro role transitions. **Academy of Management Review**, 35(1): 135-154.

Ibarra, H. 1999. Provisional selves: Experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation. **Administrative Science Quarterly**, 44(4): 764-791.

Johnson, R. E., Venus, M., Lanaj, K., Mao, C., & Chang, C.-H. 2012. Leader identity as an antecedent of the frequency and consistency of transformational, consideration, and abusive leadership behaviors. **Journal of Applied Psychology**, 97(6): 1262-1272.

Kan, M. M., & Parry, K. W. 2004. Identifying paradox: A grounded theory of leadership in overcoming resistance to change. **The Leadership Quarterly**, 15(4): 467-491.

Kram, K. E., & Isabella, L. A. 1985. Mentoring alternatives: The role of peer relationships in career development. **Academy of management Journal**, 28(1): 110-132.

Lau, D. C., Lam, L. W., & Wen, S. S. 2014. Examining the effects of feeling trusted by supervisors in the workplace: A self-evaluative perspective. **Journal of Organizational Behavior**, 35(1): 112-127.

Liden, R. C., Sparrowe, R. T., & Wayne, S. J. 1997. Leader-member exchange theory: The past and potential for the future. **Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management**, 15: 47-120.

Lofland, J. 1995. Analytic Ethnography. **Journal of contempory ethnography**, 24: 30-67.

Lord, R. G., & Hall, R. J. 2005. Identity, deep structure and the development of leadership skill. **The Leadership Quarterly**, 16(4): 591-615.

Mao, H.-Y. 2006. The relationship between organizational level and workplace friendship. **The International Journal of Human Resource Management**, 17(10): 1819-1833.

Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. 1995. An integrative model of organizational trust. **Academy of management review**, 20(3): 709-734.

McAdams, D. P., Healy, S., & Krause, S. 1984. Social motives and patterns of friendship.

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 47(4): 828.

McCall, G. J., & Simmons, J. L. 1978. Identities and interactions: An examination of human associations in everyday life (Rev. ed.). **New York, ao**.

Methot, J. R., LePine, J. A., Podsakoff, N. P., & Christian, J. S. 2015. Are Workplace Friendships a Mixed Blessing? Exploring Tradeoffs of Multiplex Relationships and their Associations with Job Performance. **Personnel Psychology**: n/a-n/a.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. 1999. **Qualitative data analysis**: Sage Publ.

Miller, B. K., Rutherford, M. A., & Kolodinsky, R. W. 2008. Perceptions of organizational politics: A meta-analysis of outcomes. **Journal of Business and Psychology**, 22(3): 209-222.

Nielsen, I. K., Jex, S. M., & Adams, G. A. 2000. Development and validation of scores on a two-dimensional workplace friendship scale. **Educational and Psychological Measurement**, 60(4): 628-643.

Parry, K. W. 1998. Grounded theory and social process: A new direction for leadership research. **The leadership quarterly**, 9(1): 85-105.

Payne, R., & Hauty, G. 1955. Effect of psychological feedback upon work decrement. **Journal of Experimental Psychology**, 50(6): 343.

Pillai, R., Schriesheim, C. A., & Williams, E. S. 1999. Fairness perceptions and trust as mediators for transformational and transactional leadership: A two-sample study. **Journal of management**, 25(6): 897-933.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., & Bommer, W. H. 1996. Transformational leader behaviors and substitutes for leadership as determinants of employee satisfaction, commitment, trust, and organizational citizenship behaviors. **Journal of management**, 22(2): 259-298.

Pratt, M. G. 2000. The good, the bad, and the ambivalent: Managing Identification among Amway Distributors. **Administrative Science Quarterly**, 45: 456-493.

Pratt, M. G., & Foreman, P. O. 2000. Classifying managerial responses to multiple organizational identities. **Academy of Management Review**, 25(1): 18-42.

Pratt, M. G., Rockman, K. W., & Kaufman, J. B. 2006. Constructing professional identity: The role of work and identity learning cycles in the customisation of of identity among medical residents. . **Academy of Management Journal**, 49: 235-262.

Rafferty, A. E., & Griffin, M. A. 2004. Dimensions of transformational leadership: Conceptual and empirical extensions. **The leadership quarterly**, 15(3): 329-354.

Ragins, B. R. 1997. Diversified mentoring relationships in organizations: A power perspective. **Academy of Management Review**, 22(2): 482-521.

Ragins, B. R., & Sundstrom, E. 1989. Gender and power in organizations: A longitudinal perspective. **Psychological bulletin**, 105(1): 51.

Salamon, S. D., & Robinson, S. L. 2008. Trust that binds: the impact of collective felt trust on organizational performance. **Journal of Applied Psychology**, 93(3): 593.

Sapadin, L. A. 1988. Friendship and gender: Perspectives of professional men and women. **Journal of Social and Personal Relationships**, 5(4): 387-403.

Shondrick, S. J., & Lord, R. G. 2010. Implicit leadership and followership theories: Dynamic structures for leadership perceptions, memory, and leader-follower processes **International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology**, 25: 2-34.

Sias, P. M., & Cahill, D. J. 1998. From coworkers to friends: The development of peer friendships in the workplace. **Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports)**, 62(3): 273-299.

Sias, P. M., Heath, R. G., Perry, T., Silva, D., & Fix, B. 2004. Narratives of workplace friendship deterioration. **Journal of Social and Personal Relationships**, 21(3): 321-340.

Smith, J. A. 1996. Beyond the divide between cognition and discourse: Using interpretative phenomenological analysis in health psychology. **Psychology and Health**, 11(2): 261-271.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. 2009. **Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method and research**: SAGE.

Smith, J. A., Jarman, M., & Osborn, M. 1999. Doing interpretative phenomenological analysis. In M. Murray, & K. Chamberlain (Eds.), **Qualitative Health Psychology: Theories and Methods**. London: Sage.

Song, S.-H., & Olshfski, D. 2008. Friends at work: A comparitive study of work attitudes in Seoul City government and New Jersey State government. **Administration and Society**, 40: 147-169.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. 1998. **Basics of Qualitative Research** (2 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A. L. 1987. Qualitative analysis for social scientists: Cambridge University Press.

Takano, K., Sakamoto, S., & Tanno, Y. 2011. Ruminative and reflective forms of self-focus: Their relationships with interpersonal skills and emotional reactivity under interpersonal stress. **Personality and Individual Differences**, 51(4): 515-520.

Taylor, R. R., Hanlon, S. C., & Boyd, N. G. 1992. Can leaders and subordinates be friends? A classroom approach for addressing an important managerial dilemma. **Journal of Management Education**, 16(1): 39-55.

Uhl-Bien, M., Graen, G. B., & Scandura, T. A. 2000. Implications of leader-member exchange

(LMX) for strategic human resource management systems: Relationships as social capital for competitive advantage. **Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management**, 18: 137-185.

Unsworth, K., Yeo, G., & Beck, J. (2014). Multiple goals: A review and derivation of general principles. **Journal of Organizational Behavior**, 35(8), 1064-1078.

Van de Vliert, E. (1981). A three-step theory of role conflict resolution. **The Journal of Social Psychology**, 113(1), 77-83.

Wright, P. H. 1988. Interpreting research on gender differences in friendship: A case for moderation and a plea for caution. **Journal of Social and Personal Relationships**, 5(3): 367-373.

Table 1. Evidence for Types of Conflict

Type of Conflict	Example of Evidence
VULNERABLE TO BEING EXPLOITED	
Being taken seriously as a leader	A couple of guys who I played rugby with twenty years ago and actually they are the ones giving me the most grief, I thought I would get support from them, but […] they don’t like to see me as being their boss, one in particular has given me a lot of headaches (A3)
Leave requests (Not mentioned by child-care participants)	I would say occasionally […] some of your friends will start taking advantage and asking to leave early (A4)
Friends appealing for personal support	I have had to be a mentor, a counselor and all this and I have had a friend go through marriage bust-up’s and stuff like that where as a friend you can advise them (A9)
Friends expecting 'better' treatment	I think you can sometimes get too close, and then they start asking favours of you or start taking advantage (A3)
POWER-BASED CONFLICT	
Confidentiality	I happened to know that someone was going to move into the leading hand role and I was down at the pub and I couldn't tell him because I knew that if I told him what was going on he would tell other people and I would look like a bit of an idiot and people wouldn't trust me for sharing confidential information (B9)
Discipline	…it can be somewhat difficult having to draw the line with friends occasionally. I think they appreciate it though, I think they appreciate

	that sometimes I have to do that, it is probably the most difficult thing for me as a forward (A4)
Giving directives	But you know you can become friends with those people because they are at the same level but not with the ones below you. If you do, no-one has respect for you, you just can't have friends with guys who you have to tell what to do it doesn't work, you have no credibility (A2)

Figure 1. Model of Leader-Friend Psychological Conflict