Girls' and young women's leader identity development: a scoping review

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Abstract

Purpose – This scoping review aims to examine peer-reviewed literature related to girls' (age 0–18) and young women's (age 19–30) leader identity development.

Design/methodology/approach – This study uses a scoping review. A research librarian was consulted at the start of the project. Two sets of search terms (one for each age group) were identified and then used to find publications via our selected databases. The search results were uploaded to Covidence and evaluated using the determined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The final sample of articles for the review was analyzed using exploratory coding methods.

Findings – From the analysis, four domains were identified that influence girls' and young women's leader identity development: relationships, personal characteristics, meaningful engagement and social identities.

Originality/value – To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to solely explore girls' and young women's leader identity development. The factors and domains identified provide useful guidance for future research and practice. The findings reveal considerations about leader identity that can inform the creation of effective leadership development initiatives for girls early in their lifespan. These interventions

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could provide girls with a strong leadership foundation that could drastically alter their leadership trajectories in adulthood. Previous research has conveyed the advantages of having more women participate in leadership. Thus, this potential not only benefits girls and women but organizations and society at large.

Keywords Women, Leadership, Leader, Development, Identity, Girl, Young women, Leader identity development, Girls leadership development, Young women's leadership development, Leadership identity development, Scoping review, Covidence, Relationships, Personal characteristics, Meaningful engagement, Social identities

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

Although women engage in leadership across both the public and private sectors, they remain under-represented in high-ranking leadership positions in business, government, higher education and nonprofit organizations (Hoobler *et al.*, 2011; Rhode, 2016; Warner *et al.*, 2018). Disproportionate representation by women in leadership not only perpetuates the gender pay gap and limits decision-making perspectives but also can lead to collateral damage for organizations. Research indicates more engaged employees and improved job performance under women's leadership (Hougaard *et al.*, 2022; Zenger and Folkman, 2019). Given that research also suggests women leaders are more likely than men to focus on the welfare of others (Hoyt and Goethals, 2017), it is important to recognize the substantial positive influence women leaders have on society. Despite societal interest in leadership creating a multi-billion dollar leadership industry (Moldoveanu and Narayandas, 2019), and the significant surge in leadership research over the last half-century, persistent social inequalities between genders make it necessary to continue to study leader identity, particularly in girls and women.

Gender and leadership research has included attention to gender differences among leaders (Eagly, 2007; Arvate *et al.*, 2018), as well as the nuances between styles and traits that support obtaining formal and visible high-level leadership positions (Baker, 2014). Additionally, literature on leader identity for women in their careers has grown across education and business contexts wherein the enactment of professional leadership identities has been described (Cruz-González *et al.*, 2020; Davids, 2018; Jones, 2017; Nickens and Washington, 2017), in addition to the factors that influence the leadership journey such as one's view of self, interpersonal relationships and commitment to goals (Baldwin *et al.*, 2022; Haake, 2009; Longman *et al.*, 2019). However, this body of literature overwhelmingly represents leadership practiced in middle- to late-adulthood and that is contextualized in professional settings.

Hence, knowledge about how girls and young women develop as leaders is still sparse (Murphy and Johnson, 2011; Eva *et al.*, 2021). Few studies exist that address how girls and young women make meaning of early leadership experiences and develop their sense of self as leaders (i.e. their leader identity). This is of concern as research suggests that most developmental leadership processes do not occur early enough in one's lifespan to have optimal effects (Avolio and Vogelgesang, 2011). Adolescents and emerging adults between 14 and 25 exhibit "great flexibility and openness" (Flanagan and Sherrod, 1998, p. 448), and early years are critical for establishing leadership foundations and guiding trajectories for future leadership roles (Fertman and van Linden, 1999; Murphy and Johnson, 2011). Thus, there is significant opportunity in expanding knowledge within the discipline regarding leadership development in childhood, adolescence and early adulthood.

The impetus of this study came from discussions by the research team (the authors of this article) assembled by the International Leadership Association for the 2021 Advancing Research in Women and Leadership Academic Colloquium – *From Intent to Action*. Diverse groups of doctoral students, early career and established scholars were brought together to

engage in collective inquiry on how to advance the scholarship of women and leadership. Our team was created due to our interest in and experience with research on girls and young women. Through our praxis, that of discussion, reflection, inquiry and action, we arrived at our primary research question for this project: what research exists at the nexus of girls (age 4–18), young women (age 19–30) and leader identity that can inform our understanding of its development?

To address our research question, we identified the methodological approach of the scoping review to evaluate and synthesize current research on girls' and young women's leader identity development. Our goal was to focus exclusively on girls and young women to understand the complexity and diversity of their lived experiences and the ways those experiences contribute to their leader identity. Furthermore, the articulation of "leader identity" was intentional, to focus on how one developed the sense of "me as a leader" and how one considers the leader role as central to who they are (Day *et al.*, 2009; Haslam *et al.*, 2022). To inform our research, a review of the literature provided an overview of adjacent concepts to leader identity development for girls and young women: identity, girl identity, girls' and women's leadership, leader identity and intersectionality. The literature supported how we approached the search methodology for the scoping review, as well as the lens through which we interpreted the findings and presented considerations for future research and practice.

Literature review

In this section, we provide an overview of the salient aspects of the literature on identity and girls' and women's leadership. First, we define identity and review relevant foundational theories. Then, we explain girl identity and the socialization of girls. Next, we examine girls' and women's leadership. Finally, we discuss leader identity, how it relates to girls' and young women's leadership and the role of intersectionality.

Identity

Identity comprises all of the factors that contribute to one's sense of self (Steensma *et al.*, 2013). Identity formation is the process by which this occurs, which is a life-long exercise. It involves internal reflection and making meaning of interactions both with people and the surrounding environment (Renninger, 2009). We found two theories particularly useful to our framing of this review – identity theory (Stryker, 1968) and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). These theories evolved from different disciplines (sociology and psychology, respectively), but both address how one views the self (self-concept) and how a person derives ideas about the self from interactions with others (Hogg *et al.*, 1995).

Stryker (1968) believed identity was a way to describe different parts of the self through acknowledging one's participation in "structured social relationships" (p. 559). Stryker (1968) labeled these varying units of the self as role identities. Hence, identity theory involves the way an individual defines one's self from the social interactions that occur based on the roles one has in society (Hogg *et al.*, 1995). Roles can be many things such as mother, sister, doctor and lawyer and each role has prescribed behaviors. Identity theorists posit that one's self-esteem is influenced by whether or not others deem that a role is performed well. Identity salience is "the likelihood that the identity will be invoked in diverse situations" (Hogg *et al.*, 1995, p. 257). Thus, two people can occupy the same role but their behaviors will differ depending on their level of identity salience.

In social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), an individual's self-concept is heavily defined by one's membership in social groups. Such groups have common in-group perspectives and behaviors. Within this theory, individuals seek to embody their group's prototypes. This is known as depersonalization. Social identity theorists argue that "one's

self-esteem is enhanced by evaluating the in-group and the out-group on dimensions that lead the in-group to be judged positively and the out-group to be judged negatively" (Stets and Burke, 2000, p. 225). Social identity is also influenced by contextual factors (Hogg *et al.*, 1995).

We have provided a cursory overview of two theories that offer different approaches to identity. Identity theory is based on what an individual does, whereas social identity theory focuses on who a person is (Stets and Burke, 2000). Both theories, however, underscore the fact that a person's identity is always in development due to the dynamic nature of the social interactions and contexts that influence the self (Miscenko and Day, 2016). We agree with the position that both viewpoints are needed to understand identity (Stets and Burke, 2000). As Ibarra *et al.* (2014) expressed, "an individual cannot be guided by role or group identities and have his or her personal identities unaffected by them" (p. 7). We illustrate this notion throughout the remainder of this section.

Girl identity

Girl identity relates to the facets that influence a girl's understanding of herself in light of messaging about the role and value of girls and women in society. Ideas about gender are introduced to children at birth, with gender stereotypes heavily intertwined with dominant culture (Cvencek *et al.*, 2011). While infants and young children are absorbing information about how to eat, walk and talk, they are also acquiring information about gender schemas and roles (Saygan and Uludağli, 2021). Most youth grow up modeling the gender expressions of family and close friends who share the same gender. This occurs subconsciously at first, with children becoming more active in the construction of their gender identity as their physical, cognitive and socioemotional abilities develop. Thus, girlhood and early-womanhood are stages when individuals negotiate how to honor their sense of self while choosing how to respond to societal gender expectations. These expectations are overwhelmingly heteronormative and represent the value placed on traditional masculinity over other gender expressions (Rogers *et al.*, 2021). Both identity theory (Stryker, 1968) and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) are useful when examining gender identity as the roles girls and women are expected to perform are derived from the group prototypes held of girls and women.

Pervasive gender bias means girls and young women are frequently exposed to gender discrimination. As a result, girls may silence themselves as they move through adolescence (Brown and Gilligan, 1993). Girls also experience anguish and defeat when they perform their role as girls to adhere to society's prototype in lieu of their true essence. In addition to gender biases, girls of color may have to navigate racism, classism and xenophobia. Consequently, this can have negative implications on the health and wellbeing of girls and women (Rogers *et al.*, 2021). For example, in the USA, heart disease is the leading cause of death for women (Catelli, 2000). The antecedents to this can be connected to the inequalities that stem from gender discrimination against girls. Patriarchal culture associates masculinity and manhood most closely with being human, with womanhood and femininity marginalized and considered "other" (Johnson, 2014). The dominance, persistence and pervasiveness of this system has historically kept women from visible positions of power and influence, as leadership itself has been gendered through identification with manhood (Johnson, 2014). Thus, when girls and women are in leadership positions, the interactions they have with others that inform how they perform their leader role (and their identity salience as leaders) are impacted by the gender prototypes people hold.

Girls' and women's leadership

Leadership is co-created through communication as a process of social influence (Barge and Fairhurst, 2008; Ruben and Gigliotti, 2016; Smulowitz, 2021). A gendered examination of leadership is necessary because one's ability to influence others is affected by their social identities. At the time of this manuscript's development, there are more women in leadership positions across the world than there have ever been, yet women are still underrepresented at the highest levels of leadership (Hoobler *et al.*, 2011; Rhode, 2016; Warner *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, prevailing stereotypes continue to exist regarding the ability of women to successfully navigate visible and powerful leadership roles (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Eagly and Wood, 2012; Rudman *et al.*, 2012).

Socialization around gender roles impacts girls' ideas about who can be a leader and how leaders should act (Salmond and Fleshman, 2010). Media representations of leadership may portray what is culturally (un)acceptable of women leaders (Mavin *et al.*, 2010). For instance, it has been noted that leadership is often equated with being male (Patterson *et al.*, 2012). The impact of this is pervasive. One illustration is a study that revealed female college students who held "traditional" views of feminine leadership styles had lower leadership aspirations and did not have a desire to be a leader or be identified as such (Boatwright and Egidio, 2003). Another is a finding that girls were eight times more likely than boys to anticipate the need to stop their career to stay home with children (Shapiro *et al.*, 2015). Existing research clearly identifies a gender bias toward men as leaders, wherein both teen boys and girls prefer a strong male leader, and mothers tend to show bias toward their sons over their daughters as leaders (Weissbourd and The Making Caring Common Team, 2016). Relatedly, more male figures and traits were depicted when participants were asked to draw a leader (Murphy, 2018). Researchers claimed that this finding stayed consistent no matter what group (college students, etc.) was asked to draw a leader. This aligns with leader prototype research in the USA that equates a "leader" with men or those who are more masculine (Heilman, 2012; Monzani *et al.*, 2015). Again, both identity theory (Stryker, 1968) and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) provide insight into these social dynamics. As men are predominantly seen as the leader prototype, people ascribe male characteristics to the group norms and behaviors of leaders. This categorization simultaneously makes anything feminine part of the "out-group". Therefore, when women are in leadership positions, the role expectations and judgements about their performances are evaluated according to male attributes. As a result, women receive messages about poor role performance based on exhibiting out-group behaviors, and essentially, not being men. In turn, these interactions can inform women's self-concept about their leader identity. The context we have just described is not absolute. Ideas about the social identity of leaders and who gets to occupy leader positions have changed and are still changing. Nonetheless, this context is prevailing and pervasive, and needs to be addressed so the leadership capacity of all people can be harnessed.

Foundational research from the 1980s indicated that girls begin to lose self-esteem, confidence and self-efficacy during middle school (Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Orenstein, 1995; Pipher, 2005). This stage of life is regarded as the beginning of the "gendered leadership gap", when girls realize that their appearance is valued more than their scholastic accomplishments (Holmstrom, 2004; Lopez-Guimera *et al.*, 2010). This gendered leadership gap could explain the lack of confidence, low self-esteem, lack of a leader identity and trouble attaining leadership positions due to structural and organizational barriers (Sandberg, 2013). As a result, many youth leadership programs focus on increasing girls' self-confidence, efficacy and self-esteem. This is done through a variety of ways. Some programs offer physical sport and activity (Voelker, 2016), while others are science,

technology, engineering and mathematics based (Modi *et al.*, 2012). These leadership development programs often include women role models and mentors, community outreach and engagement and exposure to career and higher education pathways. However, research is limited in terms of how gender and leader identity might be centered as part of leadership development. There is evidence that establishing strong leader identities in girls could affirm their capacity for leadership and assist them with overcoming the structural barriers that limit their leadership engagement (Levac, 2013).

Leader identity

Leadership is "a broader, mutual influence process independent of any formal role or hierarchical structure and diffused among the members of any given social system" (DeRue and Ashford, 2010, p. 627). Within each system, members are assigned a "leader" or "follower" status through claims and grants. As these identities are socially constructed, they undergo continual revision. Leader identity is "the sub-component of one's identity that relates to being a leader or how one thinks of oneself as a leader" (Day and Harrison, 2007, p. 365). Scholars have made the case that "leader development" is distinct from "leadership development", offering that one is intrapersonal and the other interpersonal (Day, 2000). Therefore, theorists have examined leadership and identity from a role-based perspective as "leader identity", and from a social group perspective as "identity leadership" (Haslam *et al.*, 2022). The focus of this review is leadership and intrapersonal identity development. However, we recognize that scholarship exists that use the terms "leader" and "leadership" interchangeably (i.e. Brungardt's (1997) assertion that leadership development is anything related to the growth of an individual's leadership potential, capacity and competence). As a result, in our review of the literature to frame this study and in our scoping review, we include works that reference leader identity and leadership identity, if the latter is used to describe intrapersonal development.

Identifying as a leader is of vital importance to the development of leaders (Day and Harrison, 2007). The nuances of when, how and why people begin to identify as leaders are important "because these understandings can guide their information processing, motivation, goal setting, decision making, behaviors, and skill development" (Zheng *et al.*, 2021, p. 1181). Therefore, possessing a leader identity is often the impetus for engaging in leadership development (Priest and Middleton, 2016). Similarly, leader identity "motivates individuals to seek out developmental experiences and opportunities to practice relevant leadership behaviors" (Miscenko *et al.*, 2017, p. 606). In other words, the more an individual believes they are a leader, the greater their capacity to grow and engage in leadership. This supports findings that leadership self-efficacy is an antecedent to one's motivation to lead (Chan and Drasgow, 2001).

An individual can have multiple leadership identities, with different ones evoked by the situation the individual is navigating and their "knowledge, motives, and emotions" (Lord and Hall, 2005, p. 602). Brewer and Gardner's (1996) three-level depiction of self-identities has been used to claim that there are three levels of leader identities – individual, relational and collective. Individuals may use all three levels as part of their leader identity, thus allowing them to access components of any of them as needed (Day and Harrison, 2007). DeRue and Ashford (2010) took a slightly different approach with the three-level framework and proposed that all three levels inform the development of leadership identity. In their leadership identity construction theory, "individual internalization, relational recognition, and collective endorsement" (p. 629) are all necessary conditions that leaders and followers must meet to establish their relationship, and thus, their leadership identity. Another well-known theory of identity and leadership is the leadership identity development (LID) theory (Komives *et al.*, 2005; Komives *et al.*, 2006). The LID theory, and subsequent model, was created from a grounded theory study with undergraduate students. It includes six stages of

LID: awareness, exploration/engagement, leader identified, leadership differentiated, generativity and integration/synthesis. This theory highlights how role identities (Stryker, 1968) and social identities (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) both inform how individuals make meaning of their identities as leaders. In the first three stages, perspectives about leadership are framed by role identities (Stryker, 1968; Komives *et al.*, 2005). Through sustained engagement in leadership activities, individuals move toward internalizing a social identity of leadership characterized by congruence with values and self-confidence (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Komives *et al.*, 2005).

Leader identity and women

There are barriers to the leader identity process for women as they navigate "seeing themselves as leaders and being seen by others as leaders" (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013, p. 62). Simply developing leadership capacity through knowledge and skills may not be enough. Rather, safe and supportive spaces that allow women to develop their leader identity as well as organizational attention to gender bias and anchoring women's development in purpose rather than gender stereotypes, are ways in which to propel more women into leadership roles (Ibarra *et al.*, 2013). One model that does include a gender-based discussion is the Capacious Model of Leadership Identities Construction (Egan *et al.*, 2017). Here, researchers stated their goal was to "explore leadership identity experiences outside mainstream, male-centric leadership theory" (p. 123). This study used a systems approach and explored the way leaders' identities were created and recreated throughout time and in context. Researchers posited that there are four important influences that help shape the leader identity development of women. These include the following:

(1) Purpose and calling: women prefer to link their leadership to something meaningful for them and that provides a sense of purpose.

(2) Self-identities: describes who we are and the answer to this question informs our leader identity.

(3) Social identities: refer to the concept of "in-groups" and "out-groups". Our social identity is formed, in part, by the associations we have in our various groups.

(4) Relationships: women of all cultures find relationships significant to opportunities and leadership roles (Egan *et al.*, 2017, pp. 129-132).

These four influences are interdependent and represent intersections of systems significant to the study of leader identity development in women.

Intersectionality

Much of the early research on girls' leadership development (Brown and Gilligan, 1992) included White, middle- and upper-class girls in their population as dominant and representative of all girls regardless of race, gender and more, and therefore, has limitations. Girls and women are members of more than one social group and may experience advantages and disadvantages related to those groups. Instead of examining social identities such as race, class and gender as separate systems of privilege and oppression, intersectionality explores how these systems are interconnected and mutually construct one another (Hill-Collins, 2000; Tillapaugh *et al.*, 2017). Thus, an examination of leadership without a lens of intersectionality is incomplete (Kezar and Moriarty, 2000; Torres, 2003) and does not provide a means to contextualize the worldview of girls and women who have experienced racism, sexism, discrimination and marginalization (Crenshaw, 1989; Jean-Marie *et al.*, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Corlett and Mavin (2014) concur, stating that the

shaping of leadership and its various conceptualizations should include a consideration of how gender identity intersects with other identities and changes in different contexts and points in time.

Leadership paradigms (Brown, 2009) that are inclusive, intersectional and representational provide a broader view to integrate context and cultures in which girls can see themselves. Furthermore, leader identity, context and influences are essential in helping underrepresented people view themselves as leaders and for projecting this vision to others (Campbell *et al.*, 2019; Egan *et al.*, 2017; Fox, 2005). Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) concur noting that studying traditional and cultural norms is important as norms can perpetuate negative stereotypes that lead to questioning the competence of African women as leaders and managers. Other research confirmed and amplified this finding with intersectional identity markers (Smooth and Richardson, 2019) which send powerful messages to girls about their self-worth.

Methods

This research was exploratory in nature and the methodology of the scoping review was chosen to systematically map the literature related to girls' and young women's leader identity development. Scoping reviews are a methodology used to determine the scope or coverage of research on a topic as well as give an overview of its focus (Munn *et al.*, 2018). A scoping review can be conducted when researchers aim to identify key characteristics or factors related to a concept as well as identify knowledge gaps (Arksey and O'Malley, 2003; Munn *et al.*, 2018). Identified as a type of literature review (Grant and Booth, 2009), scoping reviews have been used broadly in health and medical practice research but have also been used in leadership research related to health care (Malila *et al.*, 2018), school leadership (Tintoré *et al.*, 2022) and early childhood education (Movahedazarhouligh, 2021). To conduct a scoping review, a research or review question is developed, inclusion and exclusion criteria for the literature is created, relevant studies are identified through a defined database search protocol, literature is included or excluded from the review by team members based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, selected literature is charted to extract relevant information from the literature and selected data/literature are analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis, and findings are presented (Arksey and O'Malley, 2003; Levac *et al.*, 2010; Colquhoun *et al.*, 2014). Our review was conducted between June 2021 and February 2022, and the research aims were to identify the scope and coverage of girls' and young women's leader identity in peer-reviewed publications to map key concepts in the literature and identify gaps in the research. Drawing from the scoping and systematic literature review methodological principles described in Arksey and O'Malley (2003), Haddaway *et al.* (2016) and Pham *et al.* (2014), we developed a process for searching, screening and reviewing relevant literature which is subsequently described.

Search parameters and data collection

The topic of leader identity is interdisciplinary and can draw from fields such as psychology, education, management and sociology; therefore, database parameters were needed to conduct a rigorous search. Through working with a research librarian at an R1 university, the following databases to conduct the search: Web of Science Core Collection, Scopus, Medline, CINAHL, Embase, APA PsycInfo, Business Source Complete, ERIC, Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson), SocINDEX and Women's Studies International. The search for literature was limited to peer-reviewed articles and book chapters using the terms "women AND leader* identity", "girl* AND leader* identity", "girl* AND adolescent AND leader* identity development", "women AND leader* identity development" and "female

AND leader* identity development". No additional parameters such as date ranges or geographical location were applied as the team aimed to pull all relevant literature, regardless of timeframe or geographical region.

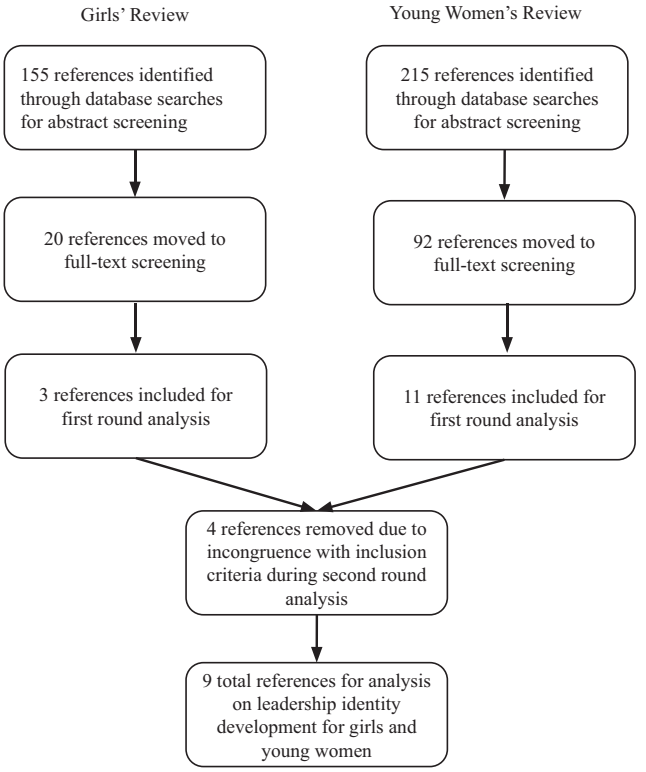
Screening, inclusions and exclusions

Titles and abstracts for all literature identified through the search terms were uploaded to Covidence for screening. Two reviews were created in Covidence to divide the work: girls' research (ages 4–18) and young women's research (ages 19–30). Covidence removed duplicate abstracts resulting in $n = 155$ for girls and $n = 215$ for women. Two members of the research team screened each reference using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria and either voted to include or exclude. If there was a conflict, a third reviewer screened. Both empirical and conceptual articles and book chapters were included, whereas those that focused on girls or women outside of the age ranges, lacked a connection between the concept of "identity" to leader or leadership, were program evaluations and/or did not distinguish the sample by gender were excluded. The full text of the remaining references from the abstract screening process, $n = 20$ for girls and $n = 92$ for young women, were uploaded to Covidence to undergo a second round of reviews using the same process as with the abstract screening but with full text. The research team did consider additional references from expert suggestions and those cited heavily in the literature, but none met the inclusion criteria, thus, resulting in $n = 3$ for girls and $n = 11$ for young women to move to the analysis stage. The flow of the scoping review is detailed in Figure 1.

Analysis

As scoping reviews can be used for different indications related to a concept such as to identify types of evidence, clarify key concepts or identify key characteristics or factors (Munn *et al.*, 2018), it was important that the research team revisit the purpose of the research before moving forward with analysis of the literature. Identifying the key concepts related to girls' and young women's leader identity, as well as gaps in the literature, informed the development of framework for working through the included literature. The framework for extracting data from the articles were citation; theoretical perspective; purpose; study design; key findings; and conclusions. Each team member was assigned two to three publications to review using the framework and data were recorded using a shared spreadsheet. The team then met multiple times to discuss each publication and identify the findings of the research. The purpose of the meetings was to reach consensus on the final sample of the scoping review. Of the $n = 3$ girls and $n = 11$ publications reviewed by the team, four were removed from the final sample due to being a program evaluation, no-research or included a mixed gender sample resulting in a final sample of $n = 9$.

From the final sample, factors that influenced leader identity development were identified through exploratory methods (Saldaña, 2016). First, holistic coding was used to review each of the nine articles. Eclectic coding was then used to refine and organize the numerous codes into factors. Once the factors were determined, pattern coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994) was used to categorize them into four domains: relationships, personal characteristics, meaningful engagement and social identities. Three team members took part in the coding process to bring multiple perspectives and strengthen the rigor of the analysis. Their analysis was then reviewed by the remaining team members for trustworthiness. The team intentionally chose "domain" to describe the overarching categories as the term best describes the breadth of experiences reflected within the nine articles. Each of the four



Source: Authors' own creation

Figure 1.
Flow of literature search and review

domains is expansive. While each one represents a related group of factors, the team recognizes that there is great variation in the specific processes, contexts, time periods and people that each factor denotes (Tudge *et al.*, 2009). The summary of publications and findings is listed in Table 1.

Findings

The nine articles that were selected as a result of the screening and selection process were published between 2008 and 2020. A majority, (89%) of the selected articles were qualitative studies and the common research design was phenomenological ($n = 2$), auto-ethnographic ($n = 2$) and grounded theory approach ($n = 2$) based on subject interviews. These qualitative studies used storytelling to amplify the process of leader identity development. The single quantitative study that was selected and facilitated by Offermann *et al.* (2020) used a quasi-longitudinal research design that followed 101 women college leaders that attended a conference in 1985. Additionally, a narrative approach and case study were the research design used in the remaining qualitative studies. From the selected literature, four essential domains were identified that influence the development of leader identity in girls and young women: relationships, personal characteristics, meaningful engagement and social identities (Table 2).

Parameter	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Topic: leader identity development	Explicit mention of leader or leadership identity formation	Articles about leader or leadership development without the word "identity". Articles with leader or leadership identity in the title but not specifically addressed within the text. Publications about identity development and leadership
Population	The unit of analysis in this review is women aged 30 or younger. Articles with women age 31 or older reflecting back on when they were 30 or younger	All populations that were not girls or women younger than 30. Articles that included data from multiple genders. Articles with women reflecting on past experiences that did not delineate the specific time periods they were reflecting back to. Articles that did not specify the gender of their samples
Method	Original qualitative and quantitative research	Theoretical articles, commentaries, synthesis articles
Language	English	Publications in any language other than English
Time	All time periods included	
Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters	Conference proceedings; books; dissertations

Notes: The age of 30 was selected as the cut-off for young women as scholarship varies on the definition of "youth". Prior research indicates that the brain does not reach full maturation until one's mid to late 20s
Source: Author's own creation

Table 1.
Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Relationships

Relationships represent the significant interpersonal connections girls and young women have with others that influence their leader identity development (family members, peers, mentors, teachers, etc.). Encouraging relationships with family were the connections most reported (Onorato and Musoba, 2015; Ricks-Scott *et al.*, 2017; Imm and Wahid, 2020; Swai and Moses, 2021). Families provided a foundation of values that girls and young women drew from when establishing their leader identity (Onorato and Musoba, 2015; Moorosi, 2020; Swai and Moses, 2021). Additionally, parents and siblings provided support and an encouraging influence (Imm and Wahid, 2020; Swai and Moses, 2021). Some women revealed that during their youth, their fathers sat them down and imparted "valuable lessons" regarding values, visions and goals (Imm and Wahid, 2020). For undergraduate women in Swai and Moses' (2021) study, it was their mothers who empowered them and contributed the most to their sense of worth. Furthermore, familial contexts were often the first time many girls and young women were given responsibilities and got to develop leadership skills with minimal risk (Le Ber *et al.*, 2017; Ricks-Scott *et al.*, 2017; Imm and Wahid, 2020). In their collaborative autoethnography, Ricks-Scott *et al.* (2017) noted "family relationships [. . .] provided us with the opportunity to practice leadership with siblings [. . .]. Elders uplifted us by inviting and offering engaging opportunities" (p. 280).

Aside from family members, other caring adults important to the leader identity development of girls and young women were teachers, mentors, coaches and the staff/advisers of extracurricular organizations. Ricks-Scott *et al.* (2017) identified such people as "advocates" and stated they provided "powerful affirmations of value, competence, and self worth" (p. 278). This validation was often the spark girls and young women needed to become conscious of their leader identity and to take steps to explore it further (Hoyt and Kennedy, 2008;

Table 2.
Summaries of review publications

Author (year)	Type of publication	Purpose of selection	Factors that influence leader identity
Hoyt and Kennedy (2008), the USA	Qualitative journal article; grounded theory approach; interviews with high school girls ($N = 10$)	Identified several themes related to leadership self-identity	Role models; supportive environments to practice leadership; self-confidence; self-efficacy; responsibility to empower others; leadership involvement; safe spaces; awareness of social inequalities
Imm and Wahid (2020), Malaysia	Qualitative journal article; hermeneutical phenomenological approach; interviews with women in high-ranking business roles ($N = 7$)	Examined antecedents to the leadership identity construction of the participants	Influential relationships; resilience; perseverance; courageousness; resourcefulness; personal developmental experiences
Le Ber *et al.* (2017), Canada, New Zealand and the USA	Qualitative book chapter; collaborative autoethnography of adult leadership scholars ($N = 7$)	Traced precursors of leadership during childhood and adolescence	Family dynamics; attention from caring adults and peers; validation of leadership skills; role models; peer groups; strong sense of self; finding one's voice; resilience; leadership involvement; experiential learning; responsibility as a result of giftedness; salience of other social identities; awareness of gender inequalities
McKenzie (2018), the USA	Qualitative journal article; grounded theory approach; interviews with undergraduate students ($N = 20$)	Created a leadership identity development model for female college students	Relational influences; self-confidence; awareness of leadership skills (delegation, ability to empower, etc.); meaningful involvement; gender stereotypes
Moorosi (2020), Botswana, Lesotho and South Africa	Qualitative journal article; narrative approach; interviews with leaders of primary and secondary schools ($N = 3$)	Explored origins to women's leader identity construction	Role models; resilience; confidence; need for achievement; early childhood responsibilities; gender socialization
Offermann *et al.* (2020), the USA	Quantitative journal article; quasi-longitudinal approach; women who attended a national women's leadership conference in 1985 ($N = 101$)	Used Chan and Drasgow's (2001) 9-item leadership affective-identity measure	Sponsorship; explicitly being named and acknowledged as a leader; seeing oneself as a leader; valuing leader roles; positive leadership experiences (particularly ones that allow for external recognition and acknowledgment of leader abilities)

(*continued*)

Table 2.

Author (year)	Type of publication	Purpose of selection	Factors that influence leader identity
Onorato and Musoba (2015), the USA	Qualitative journal article; constructivist approach through a bounded setting case study; collegiate women student leaders of Hispanic descent ($N = 11$)	Used Komives et al.'s (2005) LID model	Encouraging relationships; self-reflection; meaningful experiences; role of gender and ethnicity
Ricks-Scott *et al.* (2017), the USA	Qualitative book chapter; collaborative autoethnography of adult leadership scholars ($N = 6$)	Purpose of study was to explore how early life experiences influenced their leadership identity as adults; Used Komives et al.'s (2006) LID model	Advocates; community and family; confidence; venue for leadership practice
Swai and Moses (2021), Tanzania	Qualitative journal article; phenomenological approach; undergraduate women student leaders ($N = 6$)	Examined the lived-experiences of participants as it related to leadership identity and development	Role models; supportive family members, peers and teachers; leadership attributes; affirmation of leadership abilities; opportunities to practice leadership in religious institutions; valuing leadership as a beneficial developmental activity; obligation to serve; gender bias

Notes: Only factors relevant to girls and young women were included in this table. These publications may contain insight into leader identity development beyond the developmental age group that is the focus of this review
Source: Author's own creation

Onorato and Musoba, 2015; Le Ber *et al.*, 2017; Offermann *et al.*, 2020). For example, an undergraduate student was inspired to be a leader by her father who used to call her "a politician (in meaning that someone who speaks for others)" (Swai and Moses, 2021, p. 42). School employees (teachers, club advisors, etc.) saw "abilities, potential, and qualities in [. . .] girls and gave them a chance to excel in some form of leadership responsibilities where they took on leadership roles" (Imm and Wahid, 2020, p. 208). Peers provided similar encouragement, support and affirmation (Le Ber *et al.*, 2017; Imm and Wahid, 2020; Swai and Moses, 2021).

In addition to providing emotional support, adults also served as leadership role models (Moorosi, 2020; Hoyt and Kennedy, 2008; McKenzie, 2018) and parents were sometimes considered the first role models (Moorosi, 2020). By witnessing and learning about how adults engaged in leadership, high school girls were able to broaden their ideas about what qualifies as leadership and identify themselves as leaders (Hoyt and Kennedy, 2008). This was extremely empowering for the girls with one stating, "I never thought that women could do such great things" (p. 215). The fact that some women had overcome obstacles the girls were currently facing was also inspiring. College students had similar experiences with role models and saw them "as examples of what they could accomplish and felt comfortable with their own choices as a result of their newfound confidence" (McKenzie, 2018, p. 9). Middle-aged women in senior leadership positions admired their fathers' characteristics of being ethical, visionary and goal-oriented when they were young, and sought to emulate the same values and behaviors in their own leadership practice (Imm and Wahid, 2020). These women also shared that a personal relationship with God (a divine being) as both a role model and source of spiritual values was vital to their leader identity development (Table 3)

Personal characteristics

Personal traits, skills and values influence leader identity development in girls and young women. Many of the participants from our review articles believed they were leaders because they possessed certain traits. They also sought to cultivate particular traits to strengthen their leader identity. Resilience was noted as an important formative characteristic (Le Ber *et al.*, 2017; Imm and Wahid, 2020; Moorosi, 2020). Imm and Wahid (2020) observed that enduring hardships led to their participants becoming "resilient, persevering, courageous, and resourceful" (p. 211). Moorosi (2020) claimed the hardships one woman went through early in life "shape[d] her resilience and strength as a leader [. . .] [and ultimately her] quest to do her best", (p. 5). Similarly, Le Ber *et al.* (2017) stated that being "grounded in purpose and intention and having a sense of resilience kept [their] leader identities intact" (p. 233) as they progressed through childhood and adolescence.

Confidence was also mentioned in several studies. For girls and young women, increased confidence led to an increased self-efficacy and, in turn, a stronger leader identity (Hoyt and Kennedy, 2008; Ricks-Scott *et al.*, 2017; McKenzie, 2018). Skills such as motivating others to complete goals, delegating tasks, conflict resolution and ability to manage relationships with others additionally contributed to leader identity development (McKenzie, 2018; Swai and Moses, 2021). Le Ber *et al.* (2017) stated that from an early age, they had "a predilection toward taking charge, directing others, and influencing action" (p. 232). Furthermore, Onorato and Musoba (2015) alluded to their participants' ability to self-reflect and continually make meaning of their experiences as a skill that contributed to their leader identity. Offermann *et al.* (2020) stated that the ability for college age women to "[see] oneself as a leader and [value] leader roles" (p. 12) was vital to their LID.

Another interesting finding was that some girls did not see themselves as leaders because they did not have characteristics that matched their leader prototype like

Table 3. Salient factors that influence leader identity development in girls and young women categorized by domain

Author (year)	Relationships	Personal characteristics	Meaningful engagement	Social identities
Hoyt and Kennedy (2008), the USA	Role models; supportive environments to practice leadership	Self-confidence; self-efficacy; responsibility to empower others	Leadership involvement; safe spaces	Awareness of social inequalities
Imm and Wahid (2020), Malaysia	Influential relationships	Resilience; perseverance; courageousness; resourcefulness	Personal developmental experiences	
Le Ber *et al.* (2017), Canada, New Zealand and the USA	Family dynamics; attention from caring adults and peers; validation of leadership skills; role models; peer groups	Strong sense of self; finding one's voice; resilience	Leadership involvement; experiential learning; responsibility as a result of giftedness	Salience of other social identities; awareness of gender inequalities
McKenzie (2018), the USA	Relational influences	Self-confidence; awareness of leadership skills (delegation, ability to empower, etc.)	Meaningful involvement	Gender stereotypes
Moorosi (2020), Botswana, Lesotho and South Africa	Role models	Resilience; confidence; need for achievement	Early childhood responsibilities	Gender socialization
Offermann *et al.* (2020), the USA	Sponsorship; explicitly being named and acknowledged as a leader	Seeing oneself as a leader; valuing leader roles	Positive leadership experiences (particularly ones that allow for external recognition and acknowledgment of leader abilities)	
Onorato and Musoba (2015), the USA	Encouraging relationships	Self-reflection	Meaningful experiences	Role of gender and ethnicity
Ricks-Scott *et al.* (2017), the USA	Advocates; community and family	Confidence	Venue for leadership practice	
Swai and Moses (2021), Tanzania	Role models; supportive family members, peers and teachers	Leadership attributes (lead others/keep things toward the goal, ability to resolve conflicts, commitment, etc.)	Affirmation of leadership abilities; opportunities to practice leadership in religious institutions; valuing leadership as a beneficial developmental activity; obligation to serve	Gender bias

Note: Factors and domains were identified through an exploratory coding process
Source: Author's own creation

assertiveness (Hoyt and Kennedy, 2008). The girls' adopted leader identities when they were introduced to a paradigm of leadership that they could see themselves in – one where they could be leaders.

Meaningful engagement

Meaningful engagement represents involvement in leadership activities that provide pathways for advancing leader identity development in girls and young women. This domain involves both the act of engagement and where these experiences are located. Le Ber *et al.* (2017) delineated multiple outcomes from such transformative spaces such as the ability to motivate and encourage others, skills to organize activities and people and reinforcing behaviors that aligned with their values. These spaces also provided girls and young women with definitions of leadership that were more inclusive than traditional concepts (Hoyt and Kennedy, 2008). Home was often the first place women got to practice their leadership (Imm and Wahid, 2020; Swai and Moses, 2021). By doing chores and helping support other family members, they had the opportunity to lead through their responsibilities. Le Ber *et al.* (2017) described these roles as "early holding space for [their] leader identity development" (p. 231). One woman "grew up helping [her father the village chief] manage community issues", (p. 6) which contributed to her engaging in leadership in other spaces as well (Moorosi, 2020).

Religious institutions, schools and volunteering were other contexts that provided meaningful opportunities that increased girls' and young women's identities as leaders (McKenzie, 2018; Imm and Wahid, 2020; Swai and Moses, 2021). These environments allowed girls and young women to practice leadership skills in multiple settings and, thus, strengthen their leadership competence (Onorato and Musoba, 2015; Imm and Wahid, 2020). College students in McKenzie's (2018) study found being elected to leadership positions by their peers as affirming to their leader identities. Offermann *et al.* (2020) suggested that providing opportunities for women to attend leadership conferences in college "can serve to externally recognize and acknowledge them as leaders and encourage that self-identification as well as the development of needed leadership skills" (p. 13).

Also, success in leadership activities was found to be important to the continued leadership motivation of girls and young women (Swai and Moses, 2021). Like the college students in Swai and Moses' study, students in Onorato and Musoba's (2015) study valued "being involved at [their] university [as a way] to develop their full potential" (p. 24). However, the conditions within these spaces played an important role in how girls and young women were able to engage. Ricks-Scott *et al.* (2017) explained "context played a role in [. . .] how the perceptions that existed about us in these environments affected how we saw ourselves as leaders", (p. 281). For example, being pushed aside as leaders in male-dominated spaces, provided the impetus for some college students to determine how their voices could be heard (McKenzie, 2018). In contrast, the safe space cultivated for high school girls in Hoyt and Kennedy's (2008) study empowered them to be engaged in participatory action.

Social identities

Social identities represent the awareness and realities of membership within socialized groups that influence leader identity in girls and young women. Race, ethnicity and gender were mentioned in six of the nine articles as factors that played a role in how girls and young women saw themselves as leaders (Hoyt and Kennedy, 2008; Onorato and Musoba, 2015; Le Ber *et al.*, 2017; McKenzie, 2018; Moorosi, 2020; Swai and Moses, 2021).

Many girls and young women received encouraging messages about their ability to succeed in adulthood. However, their leader identities varied according to how they accepted these messages in light of the unfavorable ones they received about the role of girls and women in society. For high school girls, negative stereotypes about women were a "primary [area] of impediment" (p. 213) to them seeing themselves as leaders (Hoyt and Kennedy, 2008). College students in McKenzie's (2018) study wrestled with what it meant for them to be leaders in light of prevailing stereotypes of women leaders. Some struggled to use their voice "in the presence of others they perceived as strong leaders (typically males)" (p. 8). In Swai and Moses' (2021) study, an undergraduate student recalled her father did not value her achievement or ability because she was a girl, which negatively affected her leader identity. Interestingly, women in Moorosi's (2020) study discussed having to take on "male responsibilities" at a young age, which led to them cultivating leadership skills and traits. Moorosi implied that these women may not have had the opportunity to engage in such positions in their early years if there were boys around to do them instead.

High school girls in Hoyt and Kennedy's (2008) study also described how prejudice and expectations based on their race and ethnicity made it difficult for them to identify as leaders. Le Ber *et al.* (2017) shared that "discrimination based on race, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, disability, divorced parents, and social economic status" (p. 234) contributed to their resilience, which heavily impacted their leader identity. Additionally, one co-author stated that the exploration of her sexual orientation identity superseded her leader identity development for several years. College students interviewed by Onorato and Musoba (2015) noted they were leaders in spite of enduring instances of gender bias and being raised in cultures with traditional gender roles. The students also discussed that some of their motivations for being leaders stemmed from expectations of having to be "'a good Hispanic woman' and having it all in leadership and career" (p. 26). Their ethnicities also influenced their approach to being leaders who had an ethic of care and fought against injustices.

Discussion

We conducted a deep dive into the literature to examine how leader identity development for girls and young women has been addressed. Through our scoping review, we identified several factors that influence this topic that we categorized into four domains: relationships, personal characteristics, meaningful engagement and social identities.

Relationships matter. Relationships contribute to many aspects of development in girls and young women. Thus, it was not surprising that close interpersonal connections were mentioned in each of our review articles. This supports findings that relationships (especially with influential figures, peers, mentors and family) influence the leader identity development of adolescent girls (Archard, 2013) and emerging adults (Yeager and Callahan, 2016).

The relationships described in our articles (Imm and Wahid, 2020; Swai and Moses, 2021) gave people the opportunity to grant girls and young women with a leader identity, which, in turn, led to girls and young women claiming the identity themselves (DeRue and Ashford, 2010; Lanka *et al.*, 2020). In some cases, the grant was confirmation of a leader identity that was already claimed (Le Ber *et al.*, 2017). In others, the grant was made before girls and young women even saw themselves as leaders (Lanka *et al.*, 2020). Granting was sometimes verbal and direct (DeRue and Ashford, 2010) like in the example Ricks-Scott *et al.* (2017) described where an elementary school teacher told one of the authors that she was appointed to a leadership role and the reasons why she was selected. Grants also came indirectly, for instance, through the form of "earned respect" (Moorosi, 2020, p. 5). Regardless, there

appeared to be a high level of trust within these relationships as the granting tactics used were deemed credible by girls and young women (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). Many of the relationships we identified were familial connections (Moorosi, 2020; Swai and Moses, 2021). This makes sense due to the duty families have to provide nurture and guide development, especially during the early and highly formative years of an individual's life. The responsibilities bestowed upon girls and young women by their families were some of their earliest crystallizing events (Lanka *et al.*, 2020) that led them to consider themselves as leaders for the first time. Thus, we share the position that "it matters who supports or does not support one's leader identity construction process" (Lanka *et al.*, 2020, p. 386). Girls and young women need close and trusting relationships with others, preferably from multiple spheres in their lives, to advocate for them and affirm their leader identities. Validation from people significant to them appears to give girls and young women permission to see themselves in the same light. This is likely due to the fact that trustworthy individuals give girls and young women positive messages about their role performance as leaders or their potential to succeed in the enactment of leader roles (Hogg *et al.*, 1995). Also, the opportunity families have to instill ideas about values and allow the practice of leadership behaviors cannot be overstated.

Exposure to role models, particularly women leaders, was also significant to the leader identity development of girls and young women. Such exemplars not only provided examples of leader behaviors to imitate but also showed girls and young women that it was possible for someone who looked like them to be a leader (Hoyt and Kennedy, 2008). This helped girls and young women to identify as leaders but also empowered them to want to engage in leadership in the future. This aligns with the idea that role models increase "confidence to succeed as a leader" (Guillén *et al.*, 2015, p. 816). It also underscores the importance of representation. When possible, girls and young women should be introduced to role models who share their same social identities. People are often emotionally invested in their social categories and behaving like members of the in-group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Being acquainted with group prototypes in leader positions could provide motivation for girls and young women to develop leader identities as they could associate leadership with in-group behavior.

Trait theory and the skills approach remain relevant. It is impossible to identify a finite list of traits or skills that makes someone a leader. However, whether or not people possess certain traits and skills is often used when evaluating their leader status. People grant leader identities to others based on if those individuals match their perspectives on what leaders should do and who leaders should be (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). This occurs consciously and unconsciously. We found that girls and young women attributed leader identities to themselves in the same manner. The more girls and young women believed their personal characteristics matched their standard of leadership, the more they identified as leaders (Ricks-Scott *et al.*, 2017; Swai and Moses, 2021). Guillén *et al.* (2015) expressed this same notion by claiming, "if [an individual's] self-image matches how they perceive the role, they may hold favorable perceptions of leadership and see themselves as leaders" (p. 804). Therefore, it is pertinent that girls and young women hold inclusive views about leaders and leadership, where variation in social identities is valued and celebrated.

Decades of research have made it clear that leadership and leaders cannot be reduced to merely traits or skills. Nonetheless, traits and skills appear to be valuable to the ability of girls and young women to identify themselves as leaders (Archard, 2013). Leader identity development initiatives should help girls and young women to strengthen traits like confidence and resilience, and develop skills such as decision-making and conflict management. Proficiency in salient leader competencies could strengthen the role

identities of girls and young women as it increases the likelihood they will receive positive evaluations of their role performance (Stryker, 1968; Hogg *et al.*, 1995). This is a vital takeaway for leadership educators, especially those who teach learners in their early years of girlhood, where simplistic ideas about leadership and leaders are developmentally appropriate.

Meaningful engagement is transformative. Our finding that meaningful engagement and environments influence the leader identity of girls and young women aligns with previous research (Renn and Lytle, 2010; Archard, 2013; Shea and Renn, 2017). Priest and Middleton (2016) asserted that there is a "reciprocal and recursive relationship between leader identity and leader development" (p. 44) and that leadership engagement increases "identity and skill" (p. 45). The notion that increased leadership competence led to a stronger belief in one's leader identity was expressed in several of our review articles (Imm and Wahid, 2020; Moorosi, 2020; Swai and Moses, 2021). We also noted that those who were affirmed in their leader identities were more motivated to continue their leadership involvement (McKenzie, 2018; Ricks-Scott *et al.*, 2017; Haslam *et al.*, 2022). This is consistent with ideas about how the cyclical nature of grants and claims construct leader identity (DeRue and Ashford, 2010), and positive identity development spirals (Miscenko *et al.*, 2017).

This domain is similar to "identity workspaces [. . .] social settings that are conducive to the development and maintenance of leaders' identities" (Ibarra *et al.*, 2014, p. 10). It is impossible to examine leader identity without also looking at the contexts and spaces that individuals are inhabiting. It was evident that the communities and contexts that surrounded girls and young women influenced their worldview and, relatedly, their identification as leaders. In addition to school settings, religious institutions were an identity workspace that girls and young women reported had significant influence on the development of their leader identities (Swai and Moses, 2021). One explanation for the influence of this domain could involve "provisional identities" (Ibarra, 1999). Ibarra posited that people take on temporary identities during their exploration of new roles. New behaviors are tested during this time with people keeping the behaviors that lead to the best outcomes while discarding the rest. Thus, the opportunities girls and young women had to engage in leadership could have allowed them to negotiate and receive feedback on their roles as leaders (Lanka *et al.*, 2020), before deciding upon the leader identity that best suited them. Contexts that permit provisional identities to be exercised are also valuable due to the fact that leader identity claims may be made without any immediate grants following (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). Such situations could give girls and young women the ability to test their leader status and attribute their own meanings to their leader identities in low-stakes environments (Le Ber *et al.*, 2017; Ricks-Scott *et al.*, 2017; McKenzie, 2018). Consequently, this gives girls and young women the opportunity to work through and resolve any dissonance they may experience in leader roles, and adopt (their characterization of) in-group norms of leaders (Hogg *et al.*, 1995).

Identity is greater than the sum of its parts. Individual characteristics and social identities inform how a person sees one's self as a leader, and thus, their leader identity (Day and Harrison, 2007). The sentiments expressed in our review articles confirm our assertion that leadership cannot be examined apart from other aspects of social identity (Onorato and Musoba, 2015; Swai and Moses, 2021). Ultimately, girls and young women have to make sense of what it means to be a leader in a society that has pervasive traditional and narrow views about gender roles and prototypes. This reality gets more complex for girls and young women who have to navigate prejudice based on membership in multiple social groups and the biases that result from the way the groups intersect.

Directions for future research

In relation to the age of leadership as a discipline, research on leader identity is fairly young, especially regarding girls and young women. Thus, there is much still to learn about leader identity development and its connection to leadership practice. We suggest that the following topics should be explored.

Access and opportunity

Research should be conducted to understand barriers and opportunities for developing leader identity in girls and young women. Our review points to four areas to be further explored. Positive caring relationships appeared to play a significant role in cultivating a leader identity. How these interpersonal connections are formed and maintained should be examined. Many girls and young women stated that having a supportive family was fundamental to their leader identity development. However, girls cannot choose the families they are born into. Future studies should investigate the impact of adverse family experiences on leader identity development. It is also important to better understand the influence of other contexts as well. How girls and young women find spaces with encouraging adults and opportunities to practice their leadership is vital to discover. Additionally, how girls and young women develop the personal characteristics that strengthen their leader identity despite the spaces they occupy and relationships they have should be explored. Furthermore, frameworks and models regarding the leadership development of girls and young women already exist. Such work should be revisited to understand how they differentiate between developing leader identity and leadership skills.

Methods and instruments

Future studies need to also examine dominant theories and concepts of leader identity and to see if they fully relate to girls and young women. Existing measures may need to be retested using populations of girls and young women to see if they really capture and reflect their experiences. All but one of the nine articles included in our review used qualitative methods to explore their research questions. In each of the studies, data were gathered through interviews and the sharing of personal narratives. This constructivist approach is unsurprising as identity formation is a complex psychosocial process. It would be difficult for any instrument to accurately capture the nuances of identity development. Consequently, our results reveal that narrative inquiry is an important method to illuminate what occurs during leader identity development. To increase our knowledge of how girls and young women come to see themselves as leaders, we must take the time and care to listen to their stories and unearth their rich lived experiences. While this method does not allow for generalizability, it can lead to "working hypotheses" that can be explored in future studies. We agree with Yannuzzi *et al.* (2020) that it is important for leadership researchers to move beyond our heavy reliance on the lens of psychology and consider methods of inquiry often used in other disciplines (i.e. ethnographies, auto-ethnographies and discourse analysis).

Addressing intersectionality

More research needs to be conducted that explores intersectionality and girls and young women. Specifically, scholarship needs to focus on the way social identities (e.g. social class, sexual orientation, race, ability, age and others) influence leader identity development (Tillapaugh *et al.*, 2017). Onorato and Musoba (2015) noted "[t]he separation of gender and ethnicity into distinct topics is artificial [. . .] [their participant's] identity as women was not understood outside of being Hispanic women". (p. 25). As such, they maintain that leadership is not "other" neutral and should include an examination of the intersection of

ethnicity, race, gender and other socially constructed identities. Further identification and understanding of the lived experiences of girls and women and their identities beyond gender can provide a broader picture to help spark social change and equity in the systems in which they participate (Tillapaugh *et al.*, 2017).

Implications for practice

As a result of our findings, we propose the following be incorporated into future girls' and young women's leader identity development programs:

Addressing prior concepts of leadership and empowering spaces

Having girls and young women think about and then share their current understandings of leadership and what it means to be a leader is an important first step in their leader identity development (Gregor and O'Brien, 2015). Through this review, we identified personal characteristics that appear to strengthen leader identity in girls and young women. Addressing prior beliefs (Deans for Impact, 2015) on what it means to be a girl or woman and a leader is vital before introducing new ideas about leadership. Specific actions related to their conceptualizations should also be discussed so girls and young women have concrete examples of the variety of behaviors that constitute leadership. This meaning-making should be revisited on a consistent basis to account for the evolving understanding of leadership with increased life experience (i.e. from positional to self-created) (Onorato and Musoba, 2015; Smith and Suby-Long, 2019). This idea is supported by Zheng *et al.* (2021) and their study of 92 top-level managers. They claimed reflexivity is vital to leader identity development. Furthermore, such discussions should include opportunities for girls and young women to share how their gender and their other social identities influence their leader identity and leadership practice. Such spaces can be empowering as girls and young women become aware of how some structures and systems are biased and contribute to discrimination. It is extremely important for them to know that their personal characteristics and identities are not flawed but that prejudices may be held against them based on their membership in specific identity groups.

Opportunities to engage in leadership

Avenues and spaces to practice leadership are important (Ricks-Scott *et al.*, 2017). The act of participating in leadership activities strengthens one's internal beliefs that they are a leader. Due to the discriminatory messages girls and young women receive about the value of their gender and what makes an archetypal leader, practitioners should initially involve them in opportunities where they are likely to succeed to strengthen their leader identity. The activities and roles should gain complexity in direct proportion to the leader identity development of girls and young women. Such events should include opportunities to help others. Participating in activities related to service could be motivating to girls and young women to continue to engage in leadership, ultimately strengthening their leader identity. These opportunities would also allow for girls and young women to create connections with caring adults outside of their homes such as mentors, coaches, faith-based officials, teachers and community-based leaders.

Family and community-based education

Programs should be offered to parents and caregivers about how leader identity is cultivated and reinforced within the home and community-based settings. We identified families as a preliminary source of skill and character building and support that influenced

leader identity development in girls and young women. Parents, family members and other caregivers are influential in how girls and women understand, see themselves and model leadership for others. Additionally, research shows that protective caregiving factors (e.g. a secure attachment style) are indicative of future engagement in leadership roles (Popper and Mayseless, 2003). Caregiver education programs can be used to introduce adults to new parenting styles and techniques to support leader identity development in their children.

Training for leadership educators

Leadership is vast and no one curriculum captures everything an individual needs to know to develop their leader identity and leadership skills. Therefore, leadership educators have a duty to curate formative experiences that meet the specific needs of their students. The factors within our social identity domain reveal leader identity should not be considered without including other aspects of identity. Educators need to adopt culturally responsive teaching practices and become reflective practitioners. Educators need to become aware of their own assumptions about leadership and social identities to create inclusive learning spaces (Tillapaugh *et al.*, 2017). Relatedly, educators should ensure leadership trainings are context-specific and suits the environments in which they are implemented. For example, Blaney (2020) found that undergraduate women in a computer science course self-reported that they were good leaders but did not believe this would be the case once they started to work in the field. Thus, a leader identity program for collegiate women pursuing careers in computer science might focus less on individual skill development and more on how to navigate situations and environments where they would be one of the few women in the room.

Limitations

This review has several limitations. The first limitation is the possibility of database searches not being exhaustive. All authors participated in database searches for publications. We used universal online databases, some of which had hundreds of indexed journals. As we attend or work at institutions of higher education that differ in size, Carnegie Classification and budget, we may have had varying access to publishing companies and their inventories. Consequently, there may be published works on girls' and young women's leader identity development that failed to populate in our search results.

Second, we conducted abstract screenings to determine which texts to review in full. If an abstract did not convey an explicit connection between identity and leadership development, it was excluded. Thus, additional texts may exist that address our research question. Third, we included several studies where the participants were adult women who reflected back on their girlhoods and emerging adulthood experiences. These studies were not longitudinal and there could be errors in recall. Fourth, we included studies with a wide range of methods, context and age groups which could lead to differences that were not accounted for. Finally, as with other scoping reviews, the team makes no claims regarding causal effects. They are beyond the purview of this review method and this article.

Conclusion

We believe this article is the first to solely explore the current state of literature related to girls' and young women's leader identity development. Through our scoping review, we have identified four salient themes related to the process of leader identity formation: relationships, personal characteristics, meaningful engagement and social identities. Our search yielded few articles but the commonalities across the key concepts are promising evidence that they do play a role in the leader identity development of girls and young

women. The findings from our review are significant because leader identity development directly impacts engagement leadership as an adult, both in formal positions and informal roles. For women, this affects their elevation to high-level positions within their careers, thus influencing their earning potential (Offermann *et al.*, 2020; Gregor and O'Brien, 2015; Zheng *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, we outlined steps for both practitioners and researchers to continue to advance the scholarship on women and leadership and create effective programs to develop successful girl and women leaders.

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