



Leadership Identity Development in Sport

According to Salicru (2019), the world is currently experiencing a leadership crisis, which is further identified as a lack of deliberate results in various leadership industries. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA, 2016) indicates that more than three million American students between the ages of 14 and 19 compete annually in high school athletics, which can be an avenue to provide youth with opportunities to learn and develop leadership-related identities (Hall, 2015). As such, the terms leader and leadership are not interchangeable. A leader is the individual, and the development of a leader focuses on their capacity and identity, whether they have authority or not, to engage with the leadership process (Guthrie, Bertrand Jones, Osteen, & Hu, 2013). In contrast, leadership is a concept that refers to the process of the group and the relationships between group members (Hall, 2015). To simplify, the differences between the terms are seen in either position or in process, the latter providing the individual with a choice to commit. Hall's (2015) Leadership Identity Model (LID) (presented here) depicts how leadership identity development can emerge throughout an athlete's sporting career.

Stage 1: Awareness

An individual identifies that leadership is around them. Becoming aware of how some people lead and influence others.

Stage 2: Exploration/Engagement

Typically in elementary and middle school, they begin to have experiences as a member of a team or group.

Stage 3: Leader Identified

Fully involved in the team or group. Holds a belief that the positional leader leads and the rest of the people follow.

Stage 4: Leadership Differentiated

Recognizes that leadership comes from all around in a team or group. As a positional leader, seeks to be a facilitator and practices shared leadership.

Stage 5: Generativity

Is concerned about the sustainability of the team and seeks to develop others. Concerned with personal passion to leave a legacy and have one's actions make a difference.

Stage 6: Integration/Synthesis

Leadership capacity is an internalized part of oneself and part of the perspective one brings to all situations.

Importance of Leadership Identity Development in Sport

Lord and Hall (2005) found that leadership developed through sport competition has the potential to transcend performance and permeate other life domains. Nurturing growth in leadership identity as an athlete has potential to facilitate transferability of such traits into jobs, public service, and other personal or professional activities after their competitive careers have concluded. Developing leadership identity requires time commitment, navigation of autonomy-supportive environments, exposure to leadership development opportunities, and access to individuals demonstrating skills that promote opportunities to gain experience and learn leadership processes. Identifying and encouraging athlete participation in leadership-driven initiatives is key.

Steps to Developing Social Identity Leadership

A **social identity approach** to leadership views leaders as a part of the group or team they are leading. A leader is more likely to be supported by followers when they represent the group, and they can follow the Haslam et al.'s **5 R's** (presented right) to ensure their leadership is aligned with the group's values, identities, and goals.

Fransen et al. (2014, 2016) proposed four different leadership roles (presented below) that can increase two types of team confidence in sports teams: **collective efficacy**, which refers to athletes' confidence that their team has the ability to function well, and **team outcome confidence**, which refers to athletes' confidence in the team's chances to obtain a favorable outcome (e.g., win the game).



Readying (Why does 'we' matter?): Consider why it is important for leaders to recognize and understand the group and its social identity.

Reflecting (Who are we?): Identify team members' important sub-group memberships (e.g., on-field positions, rookies, veterans) and areas for growth.

Representing (What are we about and what do we want to be?): Clarify group values, behaviors, and aspirations.

Realizing (How do we become what we want to be?): Implement strategies to achieve group goals and embed group identity.

Reporting (Are we becoming what we want to be?): Monitor progress towards group goals and troubleshooting.

How Can Practitioners Help Athletes Develop Leadership Identity?

- Identify leaders for each of the four leadership roles on a team. Both team captains *and* informal leaders can fill these roles, and some leaders may fill multiple roles (Fransen et al., 2014; Fransen et al., 2016).
- Coach athletes on leadership in addition to physical and technical skills. Offer constructive criticism for tactical instructions, praise effective motivation, or offer ideas for promoting social cohesion off the field.
- Utilize Haslam et al.'s (2017) 5 R's to guide conversations with leaders about their leadership.

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