Leadership in business meetings: Making requests and constructing identities

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Introduction

During the last few decades, the importance of identity for leadership has been increasingly acknowledged in the scholarly literature, and there has been a rich flow of theories and studies on the topic (DeRue and Ashford 2010; Carroll and Levy 2010; Lord and Hall 2005). The individual identity of being 'a leader' has been show to be important for individuals to take on leadership roles (Kark and van Dijk 2007) and for the effectiveness of acting in these roles (DeRue and Ashford 2010). Identities, or self-concepts, have been proposed as central in the leadership process where followers are mobilized and actions aligned. Studies of leadership interaction has further began to clarify how identities function as elements in the actual leadership process, rather than being only individually held conceptions. Identities are constructed and negotiated in a variety of subtle ways including positioning through storytelling (Clifton 2014), use of humour (Holmes 2007), display of expertise (Svennevig 2011; Nielsen 2009), and generally, through micro level categorization of participants (Larsson and Lundholm 2013; Fairhurst 2007a).

Leadership concerns, however, more than identifying who is a leader and who is a follower. Central to leadership are interpersonal influence (Yukl 2012), and organizing (Fairhurst 2007b; Larsson and Lundholm 2013). In essence, influence concerns gaining followership, that is readily seen as a central aspect of leadership (Grint 2005; Yukl 2012). Studies of leadership interaction are beginning to contribute to our understanding of how such influence and organizing is accomplished in practice. Clifton (2006) and Barnes (2007) have shown how summaries in team discussions work as influence devices by building consensus and clarify decisions. Cooren and Fairhurst (2004) has demonstrated how organizing is accomplished in interaction through use of a sequence of turns organized as a narrative structure. Interestingly enough, the very basic mechanism of a request, that is, asking someone to do something, has not so far been explored in a leadership context.
While these mechanisms clearly contribute to our understanding of interpersonal influence, identifying mechanisms as such says less about when and why they are effective, or in other words, wherein their influence effect lies. Identity has long been suggested as important to understand the influence process (Shamir, House, and Arthur 1993). To date, however, few studies have investigated identity together with influence processes in actual interaction.

This paper will attempt to explore precisely this. Through an examination of micro level interaction in business meetings, I will explore how the basic mechanism of making requests depend on identity constructions to achieve influence and organizing functions.

**Theory**

This paper addresses two issues that have been discussed in the leadership literature for some time: interpersonal influence, and identities. I will discuss these two concepts below, outlining the rationale for engaging with both in the current study.

Further, the importance of interaction as primary site for establishment of social order generally, and for the social processes of organizing in particular, is often acknowledged in the literature. Particularly for leadership, interpersonal interaction is seen as a central (but not the only) arena (Fairhurst 2007a; Yukl 2012). This paper shares this interest in interaction, and I will therefore pay specific attention to studies with a similar orientation in this section.

**Identity and leadership**

In the wider organizational literature, identity has been studies from a wide range of perspectives. (M. Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft, and Thomas 2008; Knippenberg et al. 2004) For instance, a critically oriented perspective, gaining broad interest, had been to see identity as a potential target for regulation and control (Mats Alvesson and Willmott 2002), normally through a perspective on power and regulation inspired by Foucault (1980). Discourses and various regulating forces are seen to provide the individual with specific identities, constructing and shaping subjectivities (Collinson 2003), thereby also regulating the individuals. Such control has been studied in relation to newcomers to an organization (Anderson-Gough, Grey, and Robson 2000), gender issues (Ashcraft 2005), middle management in times of reorganization (Thomas & xxx), and others. This perspective on identity as a device for control and regulation implies its relevance for leadership, understood as an influence process.

Turning to the more specific field of leadership studies, the processes of establishing and maintaining an identity as 'leader' has gained substantial interest. Sinclair (2011) identifies two
main trends in this interest: the first being critically oriented and focusing on the above mentioned regulation of identities; and the second being more prescriptive, attempting to foster more effective leadership through crafting of one's own identity.

More relevant for the study presented in this paper, another stream of literature has discussed identity processes as central to establishing leadership effects, in the sense of accomplishing influence and followership. Identity was positioned at centre stage in the leadership process through Shamir, House and Arthur's (1993) suggestion that a central mechanism in charismatic leadership was influence on follower self-concept. Similarly, conceptualizing identity as a ”working self-concept”, Lord and Brown (2001; 2004)) argued that leadership influence entails offering and triggering specific versions of the follower's self-concept, which in turn guides follower actions. The leadership process is thus seen to work through a follower accepting and enacting an appropriate self-concept, triggered and offered by the leader.

The concept of identity is complex, and it has been used with a variety of definitions, focusing quite different phenomena. A common conceptualization differentiates between individual, relational, and collective identities (Brewer and Gardner 1996). Individual identity concerns individual's own self-understanding (that is, the self-concept used by for instance Lord & Brown, 2004). Relational identity concerns that aspect of identity that is negotiated in interaction, and where recognition by another is needed. Collective identity, finally, concerns membership in a social category of for instance leaders.

Building on this conceptualization, DeRue and Ashford (DeRue and Ashford 2010) argue that the relational recognition is central to establishment of leader and follower identities, and thus to establishment of a well functioning leadership relationship. They suggest that relational recognition works through iteractively claiming and granting leader and follower identities, potentially establishing agreement on these two related identities. Further, this relational recognition is expected to feed into both individual and collective identities.

In this paper, I will focus on this relational or interactional aspect of identity, for the moment leaving the individual and collective identies (Brewer and Gardner 1996) aside. Identity is thus taken to concern the answer to the question ”who am I” as this is established, negotiated, and constructed in interaction (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998; de Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg 2006).

Within the field of interaction studies, drawing on conversation analysis and interactional sociolinguistics, a range of studies has focused such establishment of leader identities. Holmes et al (Holmes 2007) showed leaders establishing a leader identity by using humour in different ways in a team context. (Nielsen 2009) showed how leader identities by interactionally acting as experts or teachers, informing their subordinates about the organizationally legitimate ways to label issues. Instead focusing storytelling in meetings, Clifton (Clifton 2014) showed an intricate interaction
between identities in three simultaneous levels: identities constructed in stories being told (as characters of the stories), in the interaction where the story is told, and in relation to macro level discourses concerning for instance the relationships between the organization and the environment (in terms of customer relationships, competition etc.).

Interactional identities not only concern who a certain actor is in a specific situation, but also contains a moral dimension of expectations for actions, responsibilities and constraints (Jayyusi 1984). For instance, claiming to be an expert carries expectations of display of relevant knowledge, the identity of a judge carries expectations of neutrality and so on. As pointed out by Larsson and Lundholm (2013), such expectations might work to organize actions. They show the leadership process to entail construction of specific interactional identities, containing specific expectations for the follower to perform future actions, for which he or she is accountable in relation to the leader.

Clearly, establishment of a leader identity is a rather complex process, and might involve more than then claiming and granting proposed by DeRue and Ashford. Further, the suggestion that identity has influence effects (Lord and Brown 2001; Lord and Brown 2004; Shamir, House, and Arthur 1993) is still left to explore. To be able to pursue this question of identity processes and influence, we first turn to how influence has been considered in leadership studies.

**Leadership influence**

Interpersonal influence is often seen as a central aspect of leadership (Fairhurst, xxxx; Yukl, xxx). For instance, Fairhurst sees leadership to be.....

Influence might in practice be accomplished in a variety of ways. In an early study, Kipnis et al (xxx) identified eight dimensions of influence. This list of tactics was gradually refined by later research (e. g. (Yukl and Falbe 1990), util Yukl, Seifertz and Chavez ((Yukl, Seifert, and Chavez 2008) finally extended the list to 11 types of tactics: rational persuasion, apprising, inspirational appeals, consultation, collaboration, ingratiation, personal appeals, exchange, coalition tactics, legitimating tactics, and pressure.

Such dimensions and classes of behaviors might in practice be realized in a number of ways, with attention to the specific situation, its possibilities and constraints. In interaction, a range of practical problems needs to be managed, such as creating legitimacy for a demand and finding ways to ensure that proposed actions will be carried out, while managing face ((Clifton 2009; Brown and Levinson 1987) for all participating and following the norms inherent in the local culture (Holmes 2007).

Various interactive and discursive tactics and mechanisms might be utilized to accomplish influence. Barnes (Barnes 2007) show how formulations, that is summaries of the gist of the
discussion so far, functions as a device for building consensus. When such formulations are created by a formal leader acting as a chair, they accomplish influence by establishing a legitimate account of a situation and what is to be done (Clifton 2006). Narratives might also fulfil influence functions (Clifton 2014) by constructing the environment of the organization as well as the role of the organization and its member in relation to this.

In everyday interaction, making requests and demands, that is, asking someone to do something for someone else (Curl and Drew 2008), is a common occurrence, and has as such drawn a considerable amount of analytic interestes from interactional scholars. However, no studies have so far examined the role of requests in leadership processes (however, see Larsson & Lundholm 2013 for some attention to requests). Clearly, this is a mechanism that is highly relevant for organizing actions, and it is the mechanism that will be focused in this paper.

While these studies show important mechanisms for accomplishing influence, they say less about when and where such attempts are successful, or why they work. Mechanisms as such say little about the interactional dynamics, that provide more or less fertile ground for the deployment of a certain mechanism. This is where I propose that an identity perspective is helpful. By attending simultaneously to the influence mechanisms and the evolving identity dynamics of interaction, we might gain a better understanding of how influence is accomplished in practice.

It is to this understanding of the dynamics of influence, as the core process of leadership, that this paper aims to contribute. The research question driving the inquiry is: how might requests work to accomplish influence in organizational settings, and what identity dynamics in such requests work to create the influence effect? We will utilize recordings of business meetings to explore this, focusing on instances where requests are made but become problematic and interactional work is done to gain acceptance of the request. For this analysis conversation analysis is utilized as a methodology, which is what we turn to in the next section.

**Method**

The empirical material for this study consists of audio recordings of 24 business meetings in a Swedish bank and a US hospital. In the meetings, between 5 and 8 persons were present, of which one held a formal leader position. The meetings in the bank concerned strategic planning, and the meetings in the hospital a quality development project. The meetings were been transcribed, and sequences where decisions seems to be made, actions were organized, or identities seemed to be at stake, were identified for closer analysis.

For the closer analysis, conversation analysis (Sacks 1992; Schegloff 2007b; Schegloff 2007a) was used as the methodological approach. The central interest within CA in the sequential organization
of conversation rests on the idea that each participant in an interaction makes sense of what has occurred before through crafting his or her current contribution. Each utterance gives meaning to the previous (for instance, treating it as a question), while providing a context for the next one. In other words, sensemaking is here studied as the sequential unfolding of an interaction, turn by turn ((Schegloff 2007a, ten Have, 2007).

The focus on sequential organization further illustrates the emphasis within CA on participant's own understandings (Sacks, 1992; (Schegloff 1997; Schegloff 2007a). Interactions unfold based on the evolving understandings of the participants, and if we wish to understand this unfolding process, we need to focus on how the participants visibly make sense of what goes on (through lexical choice, use of pronouns and categories, intonation, pauses, etc.(McHoul and Rapley 2001; Schegloff 1997).

A second important focus of CA concerns the situated use of categories, introduced by Sacks (1992) as Membership Categorization. Sacks argues that from the vast array of potential categories that can be utilized in every moment of an interaction, specific ones are chosen in a way that frames what has happened before and that is consequential for what might come next. Of specific importance are categorizations of persons, or in other words, identities-in-interaction (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998). Membership categories are proffered and negotiated in interaction (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998; de Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg 2006; Schegloff 2007b), and are consequential in terms of associated characteristics (Lepper 2000) or predicates (conventionally anticipated features; (Hester and Eglin 1997; Jayyusi 1984)), that might include actions as well as rights and obligations.

Sacks (1992) argues further that membership categories are supplied by so called Membership Categorization Devices (MCDs), consisting of conventionally available groups of categories. For instance, the MCD “family” includes the categories of mother, father and child, and implicitly might help to categorize a woman as a mother when someone else is categorised as a child. A similar function is filled by collections of categories (Hester & Eglin, 1997; Jayyusi, 1984), where categories are grouped on a more situated basis, as for instance by an organization (categories of people working in a bank) or more occasioned by a situation (categories of people in the same room or in a specific interaction).

Analysis within the CA tradition thus focuses on what is visible in the details of interaction, rather than on attempting to interpret underlying meaning or intentions. Instead of asking ”what does the speaker mean by this?”, CA asks “what is going on here?” (McHoul & Rapley, 2001). Even if there is an infinite number of possible interpretations of any social phenomena, some of these are seen as more relevant by participants (at a specific point in the interaction) than others (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 1997).

It is of importance to note that identities and categories established in interaction are central elements in the reflexive organization of the evolving interaction. They hold interactional
consequences, in the sense that they are related to by the participants and therefore contributing to shape the next step in the interaction.

Results

The analysis has focused on instances where requests are made and not immediately accepted in the meetings. The focus is on the interactional work done that finally results in acceptance of the request. Two extracts from the material will here be presented, to illustrate the mechanisms and the dynamics of these request problems and their management. These two extracts are illustrative of the full material, and chosen for their relative clarity and brevity.

Both extracts are from meetings in a branch branch. All employees (6-7 in each meeting) are present, and the topic is discussion and construction of a business plan for the next year, including specific actions and activities.

Extract 1

BM: branch manager
M1: man 1
M2: man 2
W1: woman 1
W2: woman 2

1 BM: enough about winter darkness
2 I'd like to reconnect to what happened yesterday
3 we were talking about defining our market
4 but I think we only partly settled what kind of market we really have
5 I think we should try to dig a bit deeper
6 eh::: I was thinking like this
7 if (.). Henrik (.). and Birgitta takes responsibility for, until Friday
8 ??: mm=
9 BM: finding out (.). how many (.). potential customers (.).
10 customers we want to have (.).
11 are there on our business side
12 what is the magnitude of this >and also something about< (.).
13 the type of revenue it could bring (.). just roughly
14 ??: mm
15 BM: just roughly
W?: [mm] mmm
BM: I also wanted to ask you, Monica

(2.6)
we already know (.) the current level of >housing loans<
can you try to find out (.). just roughly (.). how many family
houses there are in our market
(1.0)
that must be possible to find out

(1.2)
if we assume that <every house> has a mean level of loans
(.). what level do you think that is <mean loan>
>we are talking mean loan level here< on our market

(1.5)
BM: It's difficult, isn't it?

Several: mm
BM: but you have everything from

W1: [( )
BM: these retired people ((noise, someone walking)) that have
almost no loans at all (.). to the newly rich
who wants to loan ninety per[cent on an]

BM: six million house

BM: I tried (.). just an estimate and (.). I'd say somewhere
around one point seven, one point eight millions, I [guess]

BM: that the mean loan level is

BM: and if we then calculate (1.5) taking the existing volumes
and divide them with one point seven millions
then we see roughly the stock of financed houses (.). and then we
can also see< roughly (.).
or do I get this wrong?

(2.6)
BM: roughly which potential we have

((17 turns omitted))

BM: but does this seem like a reasonable way to calculate it?
Because I I have (.). I'm trying to find a way to try to
M1: can be one way, right
BM: yes?
M1: we'll have to see how=
W1: =the difficult mm
M1: how (.). hard or easy it is to find out
about this [( )
BM: [no there is no way] that we can have that
This first extract contains a wealth of interactional detail, of which I wish to focus on how requests are made, and the role of interactional identities in the form of membership categories in these.

On line 1, the branch manager terminates the pre-meeting small talk and starts the formal meeting. He directly turns to the agenda and presents some things he has been thinking about, and a few tasks associated with these. These tasks are then negotiated in the rest of the extract.

Basically, what he wished is formulated in line 5 (?) as ”I think we should try: to dig a bit deeper”. In the terminology of conversation analysis, this can be seen as a base request, that is, the basis upon which further more specific requests can be made. It is self-directed in the sense of being addressed to the group – it is ”we” that should dig deeper. This makes the recipient somewhat ambiguous. Does it include all in the group, or how is this ”we” to be understood?

Before this base request, however, is a so called pre-request, in line 4 (?), that is, a reason for and an indication that a request will come. This provides legitimacy for the base request, and indicates to the recipients that what will come is to be heard as a request.

In line 7-10 a specification of the base-request in the form of a sub-request, that is, a more specific request heard as being part of the base request. The branch manager here asks two employees to take responsibility for a certain action. He outlines the specifics of the task and what he would expect in a prolonged turn.

In terms of turn organization, a request functions as the first part of an adjacency pair (Schegloff,
In line 15, the ”mm”, as an acceptance token, functions as such a second pair part. The ”mm” in previous line probably fills the same function, however, it is unclear who utters these. This token is produced without delay, and indeed before the subrequest is fully formulated (in overlap on line 15), reasonalby heard as a readiness and unproblematic acceptance.

In line 16, then, comes a second sub-request, this time addressed to Monica. This is clearly differently crafted than the first, something that is noticable for the participants and therefore also potentially of interest to the analysis. In contrast to the direct request to ”find out” (line xxx), here it is the somewhat more cautious ”try to find out”. This is probably heard as an orientation towards the contingecies of the request (Curl & Drew, 2008). The branch manager shows his awareness of a difficult and maybe unclear task. He asks her to engage with it, rather than the more demanding to solve it.

After this sub-request, we would expect a second pair part, in the form of an acceptance or rejection. Instead, there is a one second silence, hearable as a lack of acceptance.

In line 21, then, the branch manager launches an elaboration of some aspects of the request. Structurally, it is an insert sequence, inserted into the request-sequence already underway. It is hearable as a response to the lack of acceptance, evidenced in the one-second silence. The insert sequence focuses on one important contingency of the request, namely, how to find the relevant information. The shift from the sub-request as such to the question of how to find the information, is acknowledged and supported by a ”mm” on line 22. The branch manager goes on and in essence outlines how information could be found and how assumptions could be made to make the fulfillment of the request possible. This turns out to be a rather lengthy sequence, and in fact does not clearly end until turn 75 (?), with a return to the second sub-request, this time producing a hearable acceptance in line 78, where Monica suggests a way to find relevant information, thus visibly engaging with the task.

To summarize, actions are here organized and leadership performed in the sense of one party (the bransch manager) influencing others to take on responsibility for and start working on tasks, for the common good. We have seen how this is accomplished through requests, drawing on the machinery of adjacency pairs in the specific organization of the interaction. The structure is:

1. pre-request (line ),
2. base-request (),
   1. sub-request 1,
   2. acceptance,
   3. subrequest 2,
      1. expansion on contingency,
      2. return to sub-request 2,
4. acceptance

The first sub-request was readily accepted, while it took a rather lengthy insert sequence to accomplish acceptance of the second. In the end, both were accepted.

However, there are more features of the interaction that can shed light on the question of how these acceptances are produced. The notion if identities-in-interaction, analyzed as membership categories, is useful for throwing light on these.

The first notable membership category in this extract is constructed by the bransch manager in line 3-5, where he effectively categorizes the present group as "bankers going deeper in defining the market". It is offered to the group in the pre-request and the base-request, in the sense that acceptance of the request implies categorizing oneself as member of this category. The bransch manager clearly categorizes himself as member of this category, as this is what he wants to do.

With the first sub-request, new categories come into play. It is formulated in third person, which in this context reasonably is heard as an utterance directed not only to the two recipients of the sub-request, but to the whole group. It functions as much as an announcement to the group, as a request to the two employees. A sub-category of the first category is created, that can be glossed as 'banker working on a specific task” as part of the larger, collective, task. The first category essentially is treated as a collection of categories, where this is the first instance.

The categories provide not only descriptive identities, but also rights and obligations (Jayussi, xxx). In creation of this subcategory, the two employees can be seen to be endowed with obligations towards the group, since they are categorized as a subset of the group, for accomplishing the task.

The second sub-request is formulated in second person, as opposed to the first. In doing this, the bransch manager interactively creates a category of ”you and me”, that is, the branch manager and a selected employee, selected in clear view of the others. This categorization endows Monica with obligations not only toward the group, but also toward the manager, as the other part of the ”you and me” category. This subcategory can thus be understood as a persuasive device, in the sense that is is more difficult to reject a request within this category since it holds more complex obligations. It is to be noted that this ”you and me” presumably is an interactional realization of the influence tactic that (Yukl, Seifert, and Chavez 2008) call personal appeal.

This tactic on behalf of the manager can be understood as an orientation to the contingencies of the task. That is, he orients towards Monica’s presumed hesitation in taking on the task, and thereby both attempts to overcome it, and demonstrates awareness of the complexity of what he asks of her.

Despite this, there is no acceptance. The silence in line XX can be heard as an hesitation to take on
the offered identity as part of the collection "you and me", as well as to take on the obligation to engage with the task.

The branch manager then launches the lengthy insert sequence and expansion on how to engage with the task. In doing this, he essentially enacts a new category with himself as incumbent. In line 25, he actively engages with the problem, and works with analyzing and constructing a strategy to solve it. In working with the task (rather than describing it for someone else to work with), his actions place him in a category that can be glossed 'banker working to identify market for home loans”, as a part of the collection 'bankers going deeper in defining the market'. In line 28, he adds a characteristic to the category by acknowledging "It's difficult, isn't it?”. Members in this category thus work with difficult and challenging tasks. This formulation also invites others to join in and help him, by acknowledging and by suggesting ways to solve the difficulties. In line 43, another characteristic is added, by “or do I get this ✅ wrong?”, indicating that members of this category are not afraid of being wrong. As a question to the others, this again functions as an invitation to join him and claim membership in the same category.

In line 76, then, he directly addresses Monica again, offering membership in this category 'banker working to identify market for home loans”. Her response in line 78 is hearable as a claim to membership in this category, by actively and visibly engaging with the task.

In summary, the identity dynamics clearly play into how the requests are crafted and in what they accomplish. Requests seem to be offered from specific identity-in-interaction, and include an offer of membership in a certain membership category. The elaborate work of the branch manager in the insert sequence concerns not only outlining a strategy for solving the task, but also crafting a quite specific membership category that is offered to Monica, with a range of attractive characteristics, including engaging with difficult tasks, not being afraid of being wrong, that in all seems to offer an attractive professional identity. The membership category thus functions as a persuasive device, both in terms of offering an attractive individual identity to Monica, and in terms of the obligations toward the group and the branch manager.

**Extract 2**

BM= Branch manager  
W= woman  
M= Man

1 BM: I received a great list of all our private customers (.) we could (.)
   work our way through that

2 W1: start in the lower corner ( ) this afternoon
BM: yes (.) I mean \( \uparrow \)this list (.) that I got, it is actually (.) sorted according to customer profitability and that is really precisely what we should think about first that we take the three four hundred best customers and make sure there is an account manager for them and also that we look at (.) which are our least \( \uparrow \)profitable customers and then distribute account managers to them also to them (2.0) \( \uparrow \)yes, that was yet another issue >now now it looks messy here< ((on the whiteboard)) but you'll have to take this the way it looks less:: profitable ((writes))

M1: but this ((system name)) ( ) can you call it ((system name)) slash account management

W2: mm=

BM: =yes

M1: because that is a bit

BM: yes

W2: we received some lists from you some time ago BM, and Eva has entered them= ((into the system))

W3: =yes I have

W2: [but] it doesn't seem like everyone has entered that list=

BM?:[( )]

W3: =I have [ ( )

BM: [I have [done it to some extent]

W2: [there are many more to go]

BM: [I have] not done it to a hundred percent

W2: [ye:s]

BM: so I am myself an accomplice to this

W2: ye:s

BM: but there must be more people to blame((more scapegoats?))

[I] can't be the only one

W2: [ye:s]
BM: but I know that in relation to an earlier ((bond construction)) I entered a load of these anyway

W?: have entered all mine

W: yes so have I

BM: mm

W: those (.) that you distributed later

BM: yes

W: mm?

BM: but then it's really needed that we do this review, actually

W?: mm

M1: but not prof I mean prof profitable AND not profitable customers

BM: yes because not profitable customers is a specific (.) a specific business area

and we need to have a strategy there

for how to handle this

(1.0)

so it it I see it as two different issues, really (.) [even if]

Just like in the previous extract, we will here focus on the requests. In turn 1, he branch manager tells about a list he has received. This effectively works as a pre-request, signalling an upcoming action to be formulated. This comes in a first, quite vague way, in the same turn, as "we could (...) work our way through that". Turn 2 contains an immediate acceptance, and then the branch manager continues and develops his request in turns 5-7. In this specification of the task, one of the administrative IT-systems of the bank enters, namely the one where an account manager is assigned to customers. The association with the system brings some new complexities to the task, introduced in turn 12 by Man1. Structurally, this works as an insert sequence, between the formulation of the request and the takup or rejection of it. This insert sequence consists of an expansion on the system, that presents some problems. In turn 19, Woman2 points out that a previous list have not been properly treated, "it doesn't seem like everyone has entered that list", possibly making the information in the system incorrect, and potentially pointing to a reluctance to engage with the system. The branch manager engages with this issue of previous lists, commenting on his own way of treating this, finally returning to his request in turn 38: "it's really needed that we do this review". This time Man1 responds by clarifying that it concers both profitable and non-profitable customers, indicating an engagement with the task. This is reasonably heard as an as an acceptance of the request, and the topic shifts to other issues.
Structurally, the sequence could be described as:

1. pre-request
2. base-request
3. specification of base-request
   1. Insert sequence on a contingency, working with the administrative system
   2. Return to base-request
4. Acceptance of base request

To understand more of what the insert sequence concerns and what kind of work is accomplished there, to enable the uptake and acceptance of the base request, we will look at the categorization work being performed. A first categorization is being performed by the branch manager in the base request and the subsequent specification of it. It concerns a "we" that is expected to be concerned with profitable customers. This collective identity could be glossed 'bankers working to increase profit'. It aligns closely with the notion of the bank as a profit-driven business, where increasing profit is an important value.

In turn 12, Man1 picks up on account managers, and connects this with the administrative IT system. He begins to comment on the system (turn 15). Woman2 picks up his unfinished comment (turn 17) and tells about information that has not been entered in the system. In essence, Man1 and Woman2 here works up a category of 'bankers working an administrative system', that is more connected to the bank as an administrative unit, than a profit-seeking business. Further, in turn 19, Woman2 notes that "it doesn't seem like everyone has entered that list". This works to establish a third potential membership category, that can be glossed 'bankers not doing their tasks with the administrative system", as a subset of the previous category.

This last category clearly has negative connotations. To be a member in this category means to not fulfill your obligations, and in that way be morally lacking. It is a negatively loaded membership category for bankers who strive to do their job, be professional and trustworthy. No one has so far been identified as a member of this category, but through Woman2's description, it is clear that someone is. In other words, the introduction of this identity category presents an identity threat to all present, that has come into being and has been made relevant through the request made by the branch manager.

In other words, the contingency to the request that this insert sequence engages with, concerns an administrative system that might contain faulty or insufficient data on the one hand, and the identity threat posed by the category of 'bankers not doing their tasks with the administrative system”. The insert sequence offers an arena for managing the contingency so as to enable acceptance of the base request. What the branch manager does next, can be seen as precisely this: management of the
identified obstacles to fulfilling the request.

In turn 24, he confesses that he has not done what he should, in an overlap with Woman2, that works as an acknowledgement of his confession (repeated in turn 27). He goes on in line 26 to categorize himself as an "accomplice". He thus actively claims membership in the category of 'bankers not doing their tasks with the administrative system”, while simultaneously, through the hyperbole of the notion of "accomplice", distances himself from the negative connotations. In essence, he brings something of an ironic distance to the administrative system to the table. This is followed by two women claiming to have fulfilled their obligations (turns 32-33), thereby also distancing themselves from the threatening identity of not fulfilling ones obligations.

Thus having engaged with the identity problems, the branch manager returns to the base request in line 38. Here he emphaizes that it is "really needed” to do this review. This is reasonably heard as 'needed by the goal to increase profitability'. The request is thus reconnected to the membership category of 'bankers working to increase profit', now in contrast to 'bankers working an administrative system'. The uptake, in the form of a acceptance token in line 39 and then an elaboration of the task in turn 40, works to claim to membership in this category.

In summary, the insert sequence here seems to concern management of a problematic identity implication, arising from the need to engage with an administrative IT-system. Acceptance of the request is made available when the threatening identity has managed through a subtle move of at once accepting it and using hyperbole to distance oneself from it. Again, the basic mechanism of requests depend for its fulfilment on a certain amount of identity work, including collective identities (such as 'bankers working to increase profit') as well as individual (such as branch manager making a request).

Discussion

This paper has set out to explore some of the connections between leadership influence and identity processes. Analysis of two illustrative extracts from the empirical material has revealed an interplay between the straightforward influence mechanism of making a request, and interactional identity work to accomplish acceptance of this request. In this section, we will draw out some aspects of the analysis and discuss in relation to the extant literature.

First of all, the interest in identity displayed in this paper is distinct from the line of research focusing establishment and management of a leader identity as such (Sinclair 2011). Rather than focusing on the individual identity of a leader or a follower we are focusing on the level of identity
that DeRue and Ashford (2010) call relational, and that concerns the ongoing identity negotiation between at least two parties. While the identity as leader and follower is of importance for a smooth leadership relation (DeRue & Ashford, 2010), it is unclear how these identities as such contribute to leadership effects, that is, influence and organizing of action. Our aim here has been to contribute to this understanding of how identity processes might contribute to influence effects and organizing.

To do this, we have focused on the social action of making a request in a team setting, and on problems in getting acceptance for it. Previously, research has identified a range of interactional influence mechanisms, including various types of summaries (i.e., formulations, Barnes 2007; Clifton 2006). The interest here in requests thus adds to the repertoire of potential interactional influence, discussed in a leadership context.

Requests are commonly created with a delicate attention to the specific interactional context, for instance the degree of entitlement of the requester to make the specific request, and to potential problems for the target of the request in fulfilling it, so called contingencies (Curl & Drew, 2008). In our analysis, such attention is clearly demonstrated in extract 1, where the branch manager makes his second subrequest in a quite different manner than the first, seemingly aware of now making a request for a more difficult task. He thereby attends not only to the task but also to the interpersonal dimension of the interaction, and mitigates the potential bluntness of his wish. Making requests are interpersonally sensitive, and to maintain legitimacy, this sensitivity needs to be carefully managed.

The bank manager also demonstrates a deep knowledge of the business of the bank in attending to the contingencies. In a sense, he demonstrates awareness of the intricacies of the task and of why this task is different from the one in the first sub-request. He portrays himself not only as a banker, but as a competent professional. Again, this is readily seen to contribute to maintaining legitimacy of his request. It is to be noted that knowledge of the business and possibly technical knowledge thus here contributes at least as much to managing legitimacy, as to solve the actual problem.

The requests in our analysis run into trouble, in the sense of not being immediately accepted. Instead, insert sequences are launched, in which these problems are worked with. We have mainly analyzed these problems and the interactional work in relation to them in terms of identities. The analysis shows an delicate construction of membership categories, that is, identities-in-interaction, and negotiation about membership in these categories. The details in the analysis supplants the model proposed by DeRue and Ashford (2010), but also in some aspects provides a contrast to it.

While DeRue and Ashford focus on construction and negotiation of individual relational/interactional identities of leader and follower, the analysis here demonstrates that the influence process also contains another important identity, namely a collective identity including both the leader and the follower. It is important to distinguish this from DeRue and Ashford's use of the concept of collective identity. While it in their work denotes membership in a broader collective (for instance of
leaders), not present in the current interaction, the concept is here used to denote an identity encompassing two or more individuals actually present in the interaction. This situated collective identity, for instance of "bankers going deeper in defining the market" in extract 1, provides a container within which leader and follower, that is, situated individual, identities are specified. The model suggested by DeRue and Ashford can thus be extended by identification of such a situated collective identity as the container within which the further identity work takes place. These temporary and situated collective identities are seemingly crucial for the basic mechanism of requests to work to establish accepted obligations to comply. For instance, in extract 1, it takes a fair amount of work to establish a category of "banker working to identify market for home loans", and adding attractive features to this category, before clear claims to membership in this category are produced by the subordinates.

The importance of a collective identity for leadership processes has been emphasized by (Boas Shamir, Arthur, and House 1994; Gardner and Avolio 1998), and more recently by (Taylo and Van Every 2010) and (Wodak, Kwon, and Clarke 2011). In contrast to these studies, our analysis shows a collective identity that is both situated and task-based. It is not just a question of “we”, but of “we working on this task”, and is thus deeply situated. It is made visibly by the ability of micro-level discourse studies to bring the practical task into the analytical field of attention (Fairhurst, 2007a).

Secondly, the identities show to be at play in the interactions analyzed here, does not concern "leader" and "follower" as such, but rather task-oriented versions of the professional identity of bankers. While it is true that the labels are not formulated by the participants but by the analyst, the analysis demonstrates that the orientation of the participants are far more toward the tasks and the various contingencies, possibilities and problems related to these, than with the labels and categories of leader and follower as such. It could be argued that the categories of leader and follower are more of a concern for the analyst than for the participants. Of course, participants can on reflection orient towards these categories, but in that case they do it as temporary analysts, reflecting on interaction rather than engaging in it. This suggests that in practical work, identities negotiated might be far more task-oriented than what is suggested by DeRue and Ashford, and that the labels of leader and follower are far less practically useful for the participants, than analytically useful for us as researchers.

Turning to the notion of influence, that has been a longstanding interest in leadership studies (Yukl, Seifert, & Chavez, 2008), the kind of micro level analysis presented here has the capacity to identify some of the forms of interactional realization of previously identified tactics, such as for instance how "personal appeal" might be accomplished in a team context. Further, exploration of the identity dynamics of influence provides us with a deeper understanding of what this concerns. Influence clearly concerns power, but to the extent that it involves establishing obligations, it has a clear moral dimension (Jayyusi, 1984).
Broadening the perspective, the identity negotiation studied here clearly draws on an existing repertoire of categories and a shared understanding of the moral dimensions of obligations and rights. This shared repertoire can at least partly be seen as a product of the available discourses on professionalism and moral conduct in the workplace. Such a shared ”member's knowledge” of categories and their implied characteristics, can be understood partly as identity discourses, studied in the critically oriented literature. The demonstrated repertoire of categories or identities thus provides a potential link between the micro oriented studies of identity in interaction, and the more meso and macro oriented studies of identity regulation. While Alvesson and Willmott (2002) suggest identity work as the process through which a viable self-identity is constructed in the face of various regulating forces, the micro level analysis presented here shows a more complex dynamic. Indeed, practice and work are strikingly absent from their model and their discussion, while the micro level analysis shows a practical work to be of paramount importance to the participants.

The micro level analysis of identity processes might thus contribute to a fuller understanding of identity regulation. While various discursive forces potentially shape the repertoire of identities available (along with the moral dimensions of obligations and rights), the actual negotiation of identity in interaction includes consideration of task accomplishment as well as navigation of the dynamics of interaction as such. Identity work might thus possibly be understood as consisting of at least two layers: one discursive process shaping of the available identity resources, and another more interactional process shaping the actual identities established in practice.

**Conclusion**

This article adds to the leadership literature by:

1. Demonstrating how the basic mechanism of requests might function as a mechanism for leadership influence.

2. Showing how the influence effects of a mechanism such as requests depend on and is intertwined with identification processes. This influence function of identity goes beyond the previously emphasized role of identity as a mechanism for establishing a smooth relationship (DeRue & Ashford).

3. Of crucial importance for the influence effects of requests in this context, seems to be the construction of collective, situated, identities, within which obligations are established and in a sense leader and follower identities might emerge.
4. The influence effect of identity is connected more to task bound identities, such as '…..', than to identities such as "leader" and "follower". These latter more an analysts concern, than a participant's concern.

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