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There's More Than Meets the I(dentity): A Multidimensional View of Identity Threat

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THERE'S MORE THAN MEETS THE I(DENTITY): A MULTIDIMENSIONAL VIEW OF IDENTITY THREAT

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my children: Theo and Brynn. I was able to earn my PhD *because* of both of you. Theo, you entered the world during the 3rd year of my PhD program. Your relentless energy, curiosity, and silliness has literally and figuratively kept me on my toes and will for years to come. We spent a *lot* of time together during the COVID-19 pandemic. One whole year, in fact. There were many days where I worked during your nap times, while you were honing the virtues of independent play, and after you went to bed for the evening. You provided me with perspective on the important things in life, and motivation to keep going. Brynn, you and I have been through *a lot* together too. You came into this world a day after my birthday and right in the middle of the job market during my 5th year in the program. I ran analyses, conducted literature reviews, and researched schools during our many middle of the night nursing sessions and your nap times. Your strength, charm, and determination have also kept me on my toes; I am motivated to provide a strong example for you. My hope is that you both boldly and courageously pursue your dreams – whatever they may be and wherever they may take you.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation provides a multiple identity perspective to how people experience challenges towards their identities ("identity threats"). While research on identity threat has normally focused on identity threat in relation to a single identity, my dissertation challenges this assumption by examining how connections between multiple identities (e.g., professional, spouse) affect how people experience identity threats. I provide a review of identity threat research, after which I establish an intrapersonal identity network view of identity threat that considers how the centralization of a threatened identity, as well as the density of one's identity network in terms of enhancing and conflicting relationships, affect the relationship between identity threat and well-being. I then develop and validate an empirical measure of identity threat using a sample of entrepreneurs. I use that measure to provide a preliminary and partial test of my conceptual model with a sample of unemployed, married workers. Afterwards, I examine identity threat crossing multiple temporal domains with a sample of early career STEM academics. I consider how competency beliefs associated with a current identity (self-efficacy, imposterism) shape the rate that workers obtain a clear vision of their future professional identity. Findings from this dissertation most squarely contribute to the identity threat literature, accounting for the complex and multifaceted ways that workers' identities are connected within the identity threat process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> "Once DACA ['Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals'] ends, I will no longer have the work permit I need for my job. I am also an Uber and Lyft driver, but without a valid driver's license, that source of income will disappear, too. If we lost our house, we have no family in Nashville to stay with. I've been working toward my master's degree, but that would have to be put on hold, too…Even scarier is the prospect of deportation." – Mr. Cesar Virto (Virto, 2017).

Commonplace and one-off events can instigate identity threat, defined as "potential harm to the value, meanings, or enactment of an identity" (Petriglieri, 2011: 644). The quote above provides an example of an identity-relevant event (i.e., governmental reform or more specifically, DACA) capable of impacting one's ability to enact their professional identity. However, an identity-relevant event is also capable of simultaneously implicating other identities used to define oneself. In the quote above, Mr. Virto describes how the connections between his professional identity and his Uber, Lyft, student, and U.S. identities are interwoven into how he processes DACA.

Identity threat has been shown to produce negative repercussions for organizations (e.g., increased turnover; Trevor & Nyberg, 2008) and individuals within them (e.g., decreased well-being; Meister, Jehn, & Thatcher, 2014). Although research on identity threat has flourished over the past several decades, how the phenomenon of identity threat unfolds in light of one's multiple identities is less understood. Scholars

have traditionally focused on ways that one identity is negatively affected by an identity threatening experience and how individuals respond to that single threat (Brown & Coupland, 2015; Elsbach, 2003; Kyratsis, Atun, Phillips, Tracey, & George, 2017). A focus on identity threat in relation to a single identity is problematic for two key reasons. First, individuals inherently hold multiple identities (Liu, Park, Hymer, & Thatcher, 2019; Ramarajan, 2014); as a result, the experience of identity threat is unlikely to be constrained to one identity. Second, and relatedly, a scholarly focus on identity threat in relation to one identity overlooks ways that relationships between identities may impact the experience of identity threat. It is possible that relationships between the threatened identity and other identities used to define oneself may exacerbate or attenuate the relationship between identity threat and its outcomes.

The objective of this dissertation is to address these issues by providing a comprehensive understanding of identity threat that accounts for individuals' multiple identities. In this dissertation, I aim to answer the following research questions: (1) What is the current state of the identity threat literature? (2) How is identity threat experienced in light of one's multiple identities? (3) How do features associated with one's network of identities shape outcomes associated with identity threat? (4) How is identity threat experienced across multiple temporal domains? (5) What insights do the answers to these four questions give us about how managers should approach employees' identity threats? I now summarize how each of the chapters in this dissertation address my research questions.

In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the identity threat literature. In doing so, I organize research on identity threat by examining the sources, outcomes, and resolution

of identity threat. From my review, I identify important areas for future identity threat research, which inform chapters 3, 4, and 5 of my dissertation.

Through my review of the identity threat literature, I find that identity threat is largely understood in relation to one identity and that extant identity threat research has not accounted for interdependencies between identities during the identity threat process. My dissertation challenges this precedence by providing an intrapersonal identity network view of identity threat. In Chapter 3, I draw from Ramarajan's (2014) intrapersonal identity network approach to unpack how relationships between identities within one's intrapersonal identity network shape the relationship between identity threat and a relevant outcome, well-being. Ramarajan (2014) uses a network lens for describing workers' sets of identities and the connections between them. I propose that the negative relationship between the presence of identity threat and well-being is enhanced when the threatened identity is more centralized within one's intrapersonal identity network and when one's intrapersonal identity network is dense with conflicting relationships. I further propose that when one's intrapersonal identity network is dense with enhancing relationships that the negative relationship between the presence of identity threat and well-being is attenuated.

In Chapter 4, I provide a preliminary test of part of my conceptual model from Chapter 3. To do so, I first develop and validate a measure for the presence of identity threat using a sample of entrepreneurs through two pilot studies. I then test my hypotheses in a main study using a sample of unemployed workers, with unemployment serving as an identity relevant event capable of producing identity threat. Rather than consider workers' entire intrapersonal identity networks, I focus exclusively on two

identities (professional, spouse). Thus, I consider the role of enhancing and conflicting spouse identities on workers' experiences of identity threat. I run several additional supplemental analyses that unpack these relationships further.

In Chapter 5, I examine how an identity threat and identity construction efforts involving a current identity shape how workers think about their future identity. Future identities are cognitive representations of who one sees themselves becoming, with future identities increasing in clarity as workers gain more solid perceptions of who they are becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman & James, 2011; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006; Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012). I suggest that workers with high levels of imposterism experience less positive future professional identity clarity trajectories. I also suggest that workers' approaches to constructing their current professional identity shape their future professional identity clarity trajectories. I hypothesize that future professional identity clarity increases more for individuals engaging in non-committal, exploratory identity activities (i.e., identity play; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010) and less for those engaging in proactive identity construction processes aimed at advancing their current professional identity (i.e., identity work; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). I test my hypotheses using a sample of early career STEM academics participating in a program that facilitates collaboration between academia and early stage start-ups.

The COVID-19 pandemic occurred halfway through my data collection and produced widescale economic shocks that were difficult to ignore within my data. I ran a series of supplemental analyses to test the impact of COVID-19 as an identity threatening event on participants' future professional identity clarity trajectories. I anticipated that

COVID-19 resulted in less positive post-COVID-19 future professional identity clarity trajectories than pre-COVID-19 future professional identity clarity trajectories. In the supplemental analyses, I considered participants' competency beliefs associated with their current professional identity as representative of professional identity threats. I analyzed the impact of self-efficacy and imposterism on participants' pre-COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 future professional identity clarity trajectories. I suggest that individuals who perceive themselves as an imposter with regard to their current professional identity will have less positive pre-COVID-19 change trajectories for future professional identity clarity. Furthermore, I anticipated that self-efficacy strengthens participants' pre-COVID-19 future professional identity clarity trajectories. I further anticipate that imposterism exacerbates decreases in future professional identity clarity trajectories after COVID-19, whereas self-efficacy attenuates these decreases.

In Chapter 6, I provide a conclusion to my dissertation and answer my fifth research question: What insights do the answers to the previous four questions give us about how managers should approach employees' identity threats? I begin by providing a summary of each chapter and key contributions of my dissertation. Then, I discuss the theoretical and practical implications of my conceptual model and empirical studies.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF THE IDENTITY THREAT LITERATURE?

The objective of this dissertation is to provide a multidimensional view of workers' experiences of identity threat. Therefore, in this chapter, I review research on identity threat to provide a foundation for this dissertation.

2.1 AN OVERVIEW OF IDENTITY THREAT

Identity threat is defined as an experience "appraised as indicating potential harm to the value, meanings, or enactment of an identity" (Petriglieri, 2011: 644). Upon experiencing an identity relevant event (regardless of source), individuals appraise it to determine the presence of identity threat. Scholars have identified several individual differences and situational characteristics of identity-relevant events that influence one's identity threat appraisal. Petriglieri (2011) proposes that individuals are more likely to perceive events as threatening if they are directed towards an important identity. She also highlights event recurrence as increasing identity threat sensitivity, such that an identity-relevant event that occurs multiple times becomes more salient and thereby threatening than a one-off event. Leavitt and Sluss (2015) also point to social identity complexity and chronic self-identity as determinants of identity threat sensitivity. Individuals with high social identity complexity see themselves belonging to multiple and distinct in-groups (Roccas & Brewer, 2002), and are therefore likely more exposed to identity relevant

events. Chronic self-identity refers to the tendency to incorporate identities existing at a certain level of the self (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010), and is also likely to enhance vulnerability to an identity threat at that level. Thus, scholars have theorized on a variety of factors that shape how people appraise identity relevant events.

Since Petriglieri's seminal article, research on identity threat has flourished. As an illustration, her 2011 article has garnered over 500 citations on Google Scholar. Despite much scholarly interest in identity threat, insights from conceptual articles and empirical studies have yet to be integrated and research on identity threat remains fragmented and disorganized. In this chapter, I address this issue by providing an integrative review of identity threat research. To do so, I organize my review by research on the sources, outcomes, and resolution of identity threat. At the conclusion of this chapter, I highlight promising avenues for future research. I begin with a review of the sources of identity threat.

2.1.1. Sources of Identity Threat

Identity threat arises when individuals perceive an identity relevant event as indicating harm towards the value, meanings, or enactment of an identity (Petriglieri, 2011). Broadly, identity relevant events can be considered situations that invoke one's identity, such as a denied promotion invoking one's professional identity or abusive supervision (i.e., "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which their supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviors, excluding physical contact"; Tepper, 2000: 178) invoking one's relational identity with their supervisor. These identity relevant events, hereafter referred to as "sources", can originate within individuals (intraidentity), from relationships (interpersonal), groups that

individuals belong to (collective), and from macro-level forces (societal). They become sources of identity threats when individuals perceive that they result in harm towards an identity. I now review research on these different sources of identity threat.

One way that identity threat can be triggered is via *intraidentity tensions*.. Tension within an identity describes a mismatch between the meanings and values that individuals ascribe to their identities and those held by others. Workers inherently seek to have their identities verified by others (Swann, 1983); when this does not occur, the meanings and values that workers ascribeto an identity are under question. For example, a worker who sees themselves as hardworking may experience identity threat when their supervisor instead sees them as lazy. Often referred to as identity asymmetries, such mismatches suggest that the meanings and values ascribed to one's identity do not align with others' perceptions (Thatcher & Greer, 2008). When these identity symmetries are negatively charged, such as in the example above, they result in identity threat. As another example of a negative identity asymmetry, a female leader whose position of seniority is not recognized by others may perceive that her professional identity is threatened (Meister, Sinclair, & Jehn, 2017).

Research on imposterism, which describes a fear of being exposed to others as a fraud (Clance & Imes, 1978; Langford & Clance, 1993; Topping & Kimmel, 1985), is another example of a tension within an identity that results in identity threat. Often studied among knowledge workers, imposterism refers to feeling like a phony or fraud, and the perception that one's lack of competence will be revealed to others (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Bothello & Roulet, 2019; Knights & Clarke, 2014). For example, a

newcomer to an organization may feel like an imposter among more tenured and experienced employees, resulting in perceived threat towards their professional identity.

In addition to general sources of tension within an identity, tension within an identity can arise from more discrete events. Researchers have examined how a change in one's job conditions can result in identity threat (e.g., Powell & Baker, 2014; Schabram & Maitlis, 2017; Zikic & Richardson, 2016). For example, Schabram and Maitlis (2017) examine how challenging work conditions can result in professional identity threat by challenging workers' view of their calling. In addition, job change itself has been shown to result in tension within an identity (e.g., Brown & Coupland, 2015; Conroy & O'Leary-Kelly, 2014; Nelson & Irwin, 2014; Kyratsis et al., 2017; Vough & Caza, 2017). In these instances, formerly ascribed meanings associated with one's professional identity may no longer apply when placed into a new role. For example, Kyratsis et al. (2017) examine how specialist physicians who have moved towards a more generalist path may perceive threat towards their professional identity, as the generalist path could be seen as less prestigious than a more narrow specialist path.

While tensions *within* an identity may serve as sources of identity threat, far more research has focused on identity conflict as an intraidentity source of identity threat. Identity conflict describes "a clash of values, goals, or norms" (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008: 354) between two identities, such that the value, meanings, or enactment of one identity threaten the fulfillment of another identity (Hennekam, 2017; Horton, Beyerl, & Jacobs, 2014; Jain, George, & Maltarich, 2009; Petriglieri, 2011). Identity conflict often occurs through changes within one's environment that pit one identity against another identity, such as holding conflicting roles at work (Hennekam, 2017; Jain

et al., 2009) or conflict between work and home roles (e.g., Gabriel, Volpone, MacGowan, Butts, & Moran, 2020; Ladge, Clair, & Greenberg, 2012; Ladge & Little, 2019). For instance, Jain and colleagues describe instances where academic entrepreneurs experience tensions between the responsibilities ascribed to their academic and entrepreneur identities when engaging in technology transfer. As an example of identity conflict across work and non-work domains, Gabriel and colleagues' (in press) research on breastfeeding among female workers finds that making time to pump at work impairs role enactment and vice versa.

To date, much identity conflict research has focused on cross-domain identity conflicts (e.g., Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2013; Horton et al., 2014; Ladge et al., 2012). These studies tend to take the view that identity conflict occurs unidirectionally between family and work roles or work and family roles (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). For example, Harrison and Wagner (2016) found that workers whose jobs required them to creatively solve problems spent less time with their spouses at home due to depleted resources, suggesting the presence of work-family conflict. In another article, Ladge et al. (2012) describe how pregnant professional women revise their professional identities in light of their impending mother identity, suggesting potential conflict between family and work domains.

Identity conflict research has also examined conflict between role and social identities. These studies tend to consider instances where social identities undermine or enhance one's ability to enact their role identity. For instance, leadership researchers have considered conflict among individuals' leader and gender identities (e.g., Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2016; Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Karelaia & Guillén,

2014; Meister et al., 2017). To illustrate, Karelaia and Guillén (2014) examine identity conflict among gender and leader identities among female leaders. They found that gender/leader identity conflict was negatively associated with life satisfaction and affective motivation to lead, but positively associated with stress and social-normative motivation to lead.

Identity threat can also arise from *interpersonal* interactions with others at work. These studies suggest that demographic and status based differences between workers can result in identity threat. Many scholars have explored how demographic differences among supervisors and colleagues can trigger feelings of identity threat (David, Avery, Witt, & McKay, 2015; Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016; Geddes & Konrad, 2003; Kabat-Farr, Walsh, & McGonagle, 2019; Lyons, Pek, & Wessel, 2017; Puranik, Koopman, Vough, & Gamache, 2019; Stewart, Astrove, Reeves, Crawford, & Solimeo, 2017). For example, Dwertmann and Boehm (2016) find that subordinates who had differences in disability status with their supervisors experienced lower leader-member exchange quality. The authors explain this relationship using an identity threat lens, suggesting that subordinates working for a disabled supervisor will perceive that a disabled supervisor threatens their work-related identity. Geddes and Konrad (2003) also point to the effects of dissimilarity among subordinates and managers. They find that men reacted more unfavorably to feedback provided by women, suggesting that male subordinates may perceive that their professional identity is threatened when they receive feedback from a female supervisor.

Status based differences among coworkers and supervisors are also interpersonal sources of identity threats at work. For example, Kabat-Farr et al. (2019) find that

employees perceive supervisor incivility as more threatening to their professional identity when their supervisor has more power than them. As another example, Ramarajan and Reid (2020) find that employees tasked with socializing others in their organization experience cross-race and cross-class interactions as identity threatening. Elsbach (2003) also highlights status attributions tied to physical workspaces, and how the institution of temporary workspaces pushes workers to customize their workspace to convey their status among colleagues.

Additionally, issues within *collectives* that individuals belong to at work can transcend levels to threaten workers' individual identities. Identity threat researchers tend to examine specific collectives within workers' work experiences (workgroup, organization, higher-level collectives like institutions or industries) when considering collective sources of identity threat.

At the workgroup level, group norms and structural factors can result in threat towards workers' identities. For instance, Stewart et al. (2017) examine how teams with a culture of team-based empowerment result in status threat for high-status leaders who struggle to see themselves as holding unique and valuable skillsets. Further, the distribution of roles within a team can result in workers experiencing threat towards their professional identity (e.g., Bolinger, Klotz, & Leavitt, 2018; Koppman, Mattarelli, & Gupta, 2016; Ramarajan & Reid, 2020; Thatcher & Bagger, 2011). For example, workers within non-core roles may perceive their non-core role as a threat towards their professional identity (Bolinger, Klotz, & Leavitt, 2018). Furthermore, events within one's group, like leader departures and peer turnover, can also threaten how individuals see themselves professionally (e.g., Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996; Shapiro, Hom,

Shen, & Agarwal, 2016). For example, research on turnover contagion suggests that coworker turnover triggers individuals to reevaluate their professional identity, influencing quitting behavior (Felps, Mitchell, Hekman, Lee, Holtom, & Harman, 2009).

At the organizational level, company scandals and mergers and acquisitions are common identity relevant events that can impair how people think about themselves (e.g., Eury, Kreiner, Trevino, & Gioia, 2018; Petriglieri, 2011, 2015). Arieli, Sagiv, and Cohen-Shalem (2016) and Elsbach & Kramer (1996) both examine the impact of business school rankings on how individuals think about their business school, which given cross-level dynamics between identities (Ashforth, Rogers, & Corley, 2011), may affect how workers think about their professional identities. As further evidence of these cross-level dynamics, Eury and colleagues (2018) allude to the impact of the Sandusky Scandal at Penn State on how alumni think about their individual identities, such as a professional identity embedded within the Penn State alumni network. Furthermore, changes at the organizational level can trickle down to threaten individuals' professional identities. For example, Lifshitz-Assaf (2018) describe how an open innovation model at NASA, despite leading to a scientific breakthrough, challenged some R&D employees' ability to experience distinctiveness at work.

Institutions and regulatory systems can also trigger identity threat. For example, a country's immigration system and regulatory bodies have been shown to result in identity threat among expatriates and immigrants (e.g., Kyratsis et al., 2017; Zikic & Richardson, 2016). To illustrate, Zikic and Richardson (2016) examine the experiences of immigrants as "outsiders" to their host country's labor market, and describe how institutional

requirements associated with a host country's immigration system, local regulatory bodies, professional bodies, and employers can result in identity threat.

Lastly, macro level forces are another source of identity threat. Societal attributions towards identities, most notably via stigma, can result in workers perceiving threat towards their individual identities. Stigma refers to instances where an identity is discredited or discounted, often due to societal norms or values (Goffman, 1963). Workers may experience stigma related to their demographic attributes, like gender, race, or age (Zebrowitz, 1996). For example, older workers may be stigmatized on the basis of their age and discriminated against when applying for new jobs (e.g., Berger, 2006). The juxtaposition of advantaged occupational identities and disadvantaged social identities may also result in professional identity threat, as seen in Flores and Hondagneu-Sotelu's (2014) study on Latina college graduates. As another example, Kane and Levina (2017) examine different ways that bicultural immigrants manage knowledge intensive projects that involve collaboration between their host and home countries. They find that bicultural immigrants who identify with their home country experience threat towards their workplace social identity due to perceived negative attitudes towards their home country.

In addition to stigma at work involving demographic-based identities, workers can experience stigma involving work-related identities and personal identities (Lyons et al., 2017). For example, workers in dirty work occupations have occupational identities that are stigmatized due to the 'dirty' nature of their work, like picking up garbage (e.g., Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Workers can also experience stigma when asking for flexible

work policies (Kossek & Lautsch, 2018). Further, LGBTQ expatriates can be discredited professionally in their host country for their LGBTQ identity (Moeller & Maley, 2018).

Lastly, *events within society* can result in workers experiencing identity threat. Mega threats, defined as "negative, large-scale diversity related episodes that receive significant media attention" (Leigh & Melwani, 2019": 569), can spillover to the workplace, such that those identifying with threatened social groups may experience conflict between their work-related and social identities. As another example, technological change can result in threat towards workers' identities. For instance, Nelson and Irwin (2014) describe librarians who grapple with threat towards their librarian identity in response to technological advancements that have required them to shift to a new role. Recent research on IT identity threat examines this phenomenon in more detail, suggesting reticence to adapt and engage with IT changes results from threat posed by IT to one's work-related identities (Craig, Thatcher, & Grover, 2019).

When identity threats exist, they tend to be detrimental for individuals. In this next section, I review outcomes associated with identity threat.

2.1.2. Outcomes Associated with Identity Threat

Identity threat is generally considered to elicit undesirables outcomes. Specifically, researchers have examined negative affective and behavioral outcomes associated with identity threat. Affective outcomes are understood to precede behavioral outcomes (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). While I acknowledge this temporal linkage, I do not expand upon it in this section. Rather, I review both affective and behavioral outcomes of identity threat separately.

Because identity threat describes harm towards how one views and enacts their identity, it often results in feelings of negative affect about one's identity (e.g., Aquino & Douglas, 2003; Conroy & O'Leary-Kelly, 2014; Gabriel et al., 2020; Leigh & Melwani, 2019; Shepherd & Williams, 2018). For example, Gabriel and colleagues (in press) describe how breastfeeding working mothers report higher levels of negative affect due to conflict between their professional and breastfeeding identities, which results in downstream impacts on their work performance. Aquino and Douglas (2003) describe antisocial behavior as a way of "venting" negative emotions resulting from identity threat. In their model of work-related identity loss, Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly (2014) link work-related identity loss to negative affect. They draw upon emotion regulation research to describe different ways that workers process such negative affect after an identity threat. In some instances, workers can become "stuck" in a cycle of negative emotions when they fail to progress forward using constructive resolution tactics (Shepherd & Williams, 2018).

Behavioral outcomes of identity threat are generally understood as following *negative affective* outcomes of identity threat. For instance, an identity threat that results in negative feelings about one's identity may lead workers to engage in dysfunctional behaviors, like lying (Leavitt & Sluss, 2015). Many identity threat scholars have examined the relationship between identity threat and withdrawal behaviors (e.g., Aquino and Douglas, 2003; David et al., 2015; Eury et al., 2018; Leavitt & Sluss, 2015; Rothausen, Henderson, Arnold, & Malshe, 2017). These studies suggest that individuals who perceive harm towards their professional identities (i.e., how one defines themselves in relation to their work; Dutton, Roberts, Bednar, 2010) will want to disengage with

their work. For example, David et al. (2015) find that minority coworkers who are racially different from their colleagues feel threatened by their minority status and hold higher levels of absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover likelihood. Further, these racioethnically dissimilar employees who had coworkers with high withdrawal behaviors also had higher levels of absenteeism, tardiness, and supervisor-rated turnover likelihood. In this sense, identity threat can prompt behavioral contagion (Felps et al., 2009). However, it is important to note that Rothausen et al. (2017) qualify that turnover is oftentimes a last resort among employees seeking to reduce identity harm resulting from identity threat.

Identity threat has also been shown to negatively impact employee performance and overall motivation to perform (e.g., Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016; Geddes & Konrad, 2003; Kane & Levina, 2017; Ramarajan, Rothbard, & Wilk, 2017). For example, Ramarajan et al. (2017b) found that identity conflict among employees' professional identities and their client organization's identities had a negative relationship with intrinsic motivation and perspective taking. As another example, Kane and Levina's (2017) study found that bicultural immigrant managers who distanced themselves from their home country due to workplace social identity threat reported impaired knowledge sharing behaviors between their host and home countries compared to bicultural immigrant managers who embraced their home country identity.

2.1.3. Resolution of Identity Threat

Because identity threat carries undesirable outcomes, it is generally understood that workers seek to resolve identity threat quickly (Petriglieri, 2011). Petriglieri (2011) describes different ways that individuals can manage a threatened identity in order to

alleviate identity harm. In her paper, she classifies these responses as protection or restructuring responses. Protection responses involve efforts directed towards the *source of the threat*, such as derogation, positive-distinctiveness, and concealment. In contrast, restructuring approaches are targeted at the *threatened identity* and involve changing the importance or meanings associated with an identity, or, at an extreme, exiting an identity. While Petriglieri's seminal paper provided a solid foundation for examining identity threat resolution, additional research has provided additional insights into ways that workers can resolve identity threat. Recent research has also examined changes that workers can make to their situation itself to alleviate identity harm. . Thus, I account for these studies and view identity protection and restructuring approaches under the broad umbrella of identity construction, and view changes to one's job situation as another type of identity threat resolution approach.

Identity construction refers to taking on or revising certain aspects of an identity (Dutton et al., 2010). Identity construction enables workers to respond to an identity threat and enact positive changes towards their identity, such as imbuing a threatened identity with positive meanings (Petriglieri, 2011). To that end, identity construction can reduce identity harm.

Identity construction can involve the creation of a new identity (e.g., identity play; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010) or revisions to an existing identity (e.g., identity work; Brown, 2015). Most identity construction research tends to focus on identity work, defined as efforts to create, strengthen, repair or revise an identity (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). For example, Grimes (2018) describes different identity work behaviors that founders engage in following feedback about their company. The founders in their study either

reaffirmed, abstracted, or relinquished their professional identity in the wake of firm feedback. Although less studied, scholars have also pointed to identity play as an alternative identity construction approach for resolving identity harm. Identity play refers to exploratory, non-committal behaviors that allow individuals to test-drive a provisional identity (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Shepherd & Williams, 2018). For instance, Shepherd and Williams (2018) suggest identity play as a functional path for resolving identity threat after workers hit rock-bottom.

Sensemaking is central to the identity construction process (Vough, Caza, & Maitlis, 2020). Here, many scholars point to the value of identity narratives, which involve telling stories about one's identity to others in an attempt to meet one's identity aims, like reconstructing an identity after an identity threat (Brown & Coupland, 2015; Conroy & O'Leary-Kelly, 2014; Dahm et al., 2019; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). For example, Brown and Coupland (2015) describe how professional rugby players in the UK resolve professional identity threats (e.g., injury) by telling identity narratives about desired occupational and masculine identities. In doing so, these players lean on more positive, valued identities and decrease the salience of their threatened professional identity. When making sense of an identity threat, employees may also turn to their organization or others for help (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016; Hennekam, 2017; Koppman, Mattarelli, & Gupta, 2016; Petriglieri, 2015; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). For example, Ravasi and Schultz (2006) argue that organizational culture provides cues via collective history, organizational symbols, and consolidated practices that help individuals make sense of organizational identity threats. Identity construction can ultimately prove to result in positive outcomes of identity threat, such as the creation

of more resilient career identities (Vough & Caza, 2017). Together, these sensemaking efforts inform workers' identity construction efforts, and their path forward for their threatened identities.

In addition to changes to one's identity(ies) via identity construction, scholars have explored changes that individuals can make to their situations to resolve identity threat. These situational changes involve altering aspects of one's job. Job crafting is one way that individuals can change aspects of their work situation to reduce identity harm. Job crafting describes ways that employees proactively alter aspects of their job to improve their work experience (e.g., Elsbach, 2003; Grant, Berg, & Cable, 2014; Mattarelli & Tagliaventi, 2015; Weller, Hymer, Nyberg, & Ebert, 2019; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). For example, Grant and colleagues examine the utility of self-reflective job titles to reduce feelings of emotional exhaustion at work. Workers can also engage in non-work activities to alleviate threat towards a professional identity. For example, Vogel, Roddel, and Lynch (2016) examine leisure activity as way to improve fit with one's organization.

Further, workers can change aspects of their work experience to resolve identity threats. For example, Elsbach (2003) describes how employees displayed physical artifacts at their desks in order to meet their needs for distinctiveness following threat towards their professional identity. At an extreme, workers may leave their job for a new organization (e.g., Trevor & Nyberg, 2008) or disengage entirely from the workforce.

2.1.4. Promising Avenues for Future Research

By reviewing research on distinct components of identity threat (sources, outcomes, resolution), I provide a holistic view of identity threat and research to date.

This review provides several promising avenues for future research. . First, while my review focuses on identity threat towards individual identities, identities at other levels of analysis also face threats. For example, organizations can experience identity threats when faced with challenging mergers and acquisitions (e.g., Clark, Gioia, Ketcher, & Thomas, 2010), scandals (e.g., Petriglieri, 2015), and/or failure to meet stakeholder expectations (e.g., Eilert, Jayachandran, Kalaignanam, & Swartz, 2017). Furthermore, start-ups regularly face a series of identity threats impacting both their short-term and long-term viability (Knight, Greer, & De Jong, 2020). Future research could compare and contrast the sources, outcomes, and resolution of identity threat at both the individual and organizational levels.

Second, my review indicates that extant identity threat research tends to examine identity threat in relation to a single identity. While this has resulted in a substantial accumulation of knowledge on *single* identity threat, iindividuals are inherently multidimensional (Liu et al., 2019; Ramarajan, 2014) and identity threat is unlikely to always beconstrained to one identity. Future research could challenge this predominant perspective by providinga multiple identity view to the identity threat process. For instance, scholars could consider how identity threat towards one identity may spiral to threaten other identities, or how aspects of relationships between the threatened identity and other identities may offset or exacerbate negative outcomes of identity threat.

Lastly, and relatedly, my review finds that research on identity threat tends to focus on present-day identities. Future research could build off of these studies to consider how identity threat unfolds among identities crossing temporal domains. Because identities exist in the past, present, and future (Obodaru, 2012),threat towards a

present day identity may shape how workers think about their past and future identities. Likewise, threat towards a future identity may mean that workers rethink meanings associated with a present identity. It would be interesting and theoretically valuable to consider temporal relationships among identities within the identity threat process.

In the next several chapters of this dissertation, I will expand upon these final two avenues for future research. I do so by providing a conceptual based model of identity threat among one's multiple identities, followed by an empirical test of part of that model in Chapter 4. Then, in Chapter 5, I consider temporal ties among identities, and how threat towards a present day identity affects how workers' think about a future identity.

CHAPTER 3

HOW IS IDENTITY THREAT EXPERIENCED IN LIGHT OF ONE'S MULTIPLE IDENTITIES?

In this chapter, I provide a framework for examining identity threat that accounts for workers' multiple identities. While prior research tends to assume identity threat is constrained to a single identity, or results from another identity in the case of identity conflict, there is surprisingly little research to date on how identity threat unfolds across one's set of identities. This is problematic, as individuals are multidimensional, and their multiple identities are connected to each other in complex and multifaceted ways.

Research on intrapersonal identity networks provides a promising lens for examining this issue (Ramarajan, 2014). Ramarajan (2014) uses a network lens for examining connections between identities, with an intrapersonal identity network describing a person's set of interconnected identities. Relationships between the threatened identity and other identities within the intrapersonal identity network are likely to inform how identity threat is experienced and its relationship with relevant outcomes. Specifically, I argue that aspects of one's intrapersonal identity network – centralization of their threatened identity, identity network density in terms of enhancing relationships, and identity network density in terms of conflicting relationships – are important for understanding identity threat outcomes. This is because identity centralization and identity network density account for the sharedness of meanings between identities, and

the potential for other identities to inform the amount of identity harm incurred. In this chapter, I focus on one relevant identity threat outcome: well-being. I now provide a review of relevant literature and overview of my foundational conceptual model.

3.1 MULTIPLE IDENTITIES AND IDENTITY NETWORKS

3.1.1 Multiple Identities and Multiple Identity Configurations

Identity provides the answer to the question "Who am I?" (Ashforth et al., 2008). Individuals hold a multitude of identities at any given moment (Ramarajan, 2014; Liu et al., 2019), such that one may simultaneously define themselves by their relationships, groups, social categorizations, and/or roles (Ashforth et al., 2008; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For example, a worker might concurrently define themselves in relation to their organization, profession, and workgroup (Johnson, Morgeson, Ilgen, Meyer, & Lloyd, 2006).

Individuals can define themselves by individual-, relational-, or collective-based identities (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). Further, identities can transcend time to incorporate past selves, feared selves, desired selves, and so on (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Higgins, 1996; Markus, 1977; Mead, 1934; Obodaru, 2012). One way that individuals organize their multiple identities is by sorting them into an identity hierarchy. Identity hierarchies are ordered on the basis of salience, known as the personal value and/or situational relevance attached to an identity (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Identities at the top of the hierarchy are deemed most salient and hence, are more likely to be activated within a given situation (Serpe, 1987; Stryker & Serpe 1982). When

multiple identities are arranged via an identity hierarchy, the inference is that only one identity is active at any given time (Ashforth & Johnson, 2001).

Recent perspectives on multiple identities suggest that identities, although differing in salience, can be simultaneously activated (Ramarajan, 2014; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013; Ramarajan et al, 2017; Rothbard & Ramarajan, 2009). For example, multiple identities may co-exist such that one is simultaneously aware of both their work and non-work identities (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2020; Ladge et al., 2012). When multiple identities co-exist peacefully, they complement each other; when they are discordant, conflict among multiple identities exists (Ramarajan, Berger, & Greenspan, 2017; Ramarajan et al., 2017b). For example, Brook, Garcia, and Fleming (2008) find that when multiple identities are important to an individual and in harmony with each other, individuals experience greater psychological well-being; whereas, when multiple important identities are in conflict with each other, psychological well-being decreases. Given that multiple identities can be simultaneously activated and mutually inform outcomes, it is likely that threat towards one identity has implications for other identities and vice versa. An intrapersonal identity network approach accounts for individuals' multidimensionality and the complex and multifaceted ways that identities are connected; hence, it provides a promising framework for examining identity threat that accounts for workers' multiple identities. I now provide a brief review of intrapersonal identity network research.

3.1.2. Intrapersonal Identity Network

In order to provide a multiple identity view of identity threat, I draw upon Ramarajan's (2014) intrapersonal identity network approach. Ramarajan (2014) suggests that individuals' identities, which she refers to as nodes, are arranged within a network.

The number of nodes within an intrapersonal identity network align with the number of identities that individuals use to define themselves. To that end, the nodes represent identities that individuals use to define themselves by, including, but not limited to, work-related, social, and personal identities. For example, a person who defines themselves as a father, athlete, and spouse would have three nodes within their network.

According to Ramarajan, intrapersonal identity networks can be described in terms of the ties between nodes and overall features of the network itself. Ties between nodes describe relationships between identities. Individuals can have different type of ties between their nodes – conflict, enhancement, integration, power, and time. Conflict ties describe instances where individuals feel that one identity undermines the meanings, value, or behavior of another identity within the intrapersonal identity network (Horton et al., 2014). Research has examined many different forms of identity conflict, such as work-family conflict (e.g., Allen, 2001; Butts, Becker, & Boswell, 2015; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Rau & Hyland, 2002), conflict between expatriate and host-country identities (Firth, Chen, Kirkman, & Kim, 2014; Kraimer, Shaffer, Harrison, & Ren, 2012), biculturalism (e.g., Bell, 1990; Benet-Martinez et al., 2002), and professional and organizational/industry identities (e.g., Bermiss & McDonald, 2018; Schabram & Maitlis, 2017). For example, a doctor who regularly works the night shift at the hospital may feel that her job limits time that she can spend with her children; as a result, her professional identity conflicts with her parent identity by negatively impacting her ability to enact that identity.

Conversely, enhancement ties between identities exist when an identity provides resources that support the meanings, value, and enactment of another identity (Ramarajan

et al., 2017b). Some scholars have referred to identity enhancement as identity synergy (Pratt & Foreman, 2000) or identity harmony (Brook et al., 2008). Using the same example as above, a doctor who regularly works the night shift at a hospital may alternatively feel that her job allows her to help others in a meaningful way, and thereby helps her serve as a good role model for her children. In this example, her professional identity enhances her parent identity. While identity conflict and identity enhancement may seem like opposing constructs, such that high identity conflict infers low identity enhancement and vice versa, research suggests that they are actually orthogonal (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Ramarajan et al., 2017b).

Integration ties describe overlap in meanings of identities (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Linville, 1987; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Identities can be considered to be connected with each other on an integration continuum, ranging from high integration to high segmentation (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000). When identities contain strong integration ties, individuals experience blurred boundaries between their identities. For example, workers who work predominantly from a home office may experience strong integration ties between their work and family identities due to the proximity between their work and non-work domains. Workers may intentionally seek strong integration ties, or weak integration ties through establishing clear boundaries between their work and non-work lives (e.g., Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009). For example, a worker who puts in their e-mail signature that they do not answer work calls or emails after 6pm could be said to have a weak integration tie between their work and non-work identities.

Lastly, Ramarajan (2014) introduced two new types of identity ties – power and temporal – within her intrapersonal identity network approach. Power ties describe how

identities are related to each other in terms of their status or privilege (Ramarajan, 2014). Intersectionality research acknowledges power ties between identities, pointing to disconnects between privilege associated with one identity (e.g., white) and disadvantage associated with another identity (high school drop-out) (Crenshaw, 1989). Temporal ties describe how identities are connected with each other across time. For instance, one's past identity as an intern at a company may inform how they see themselves today as a Vice President at that same company. Ramarajan (2014) suggests that identities that are more closely connected in time are more likely to shape each other. For instance, a person who recently made a career change may be more likely to draw upon their prior career in navigating their new career than one who made a career change a long time ago.

Intrapersonal identity networks can also be described in terms of the identity network as a whole and patterns among the identities. The density of an intrapersonal identity network refers to the extent that identities within one's network are connected by certain types of ties. For instance, a worker who has many identities conflicting with their professional identity would be said to have an intrapersonal identity network that is dense with conflicting ties. Patterns between identities refer to ways that identities within the intrapersonal identity network are arranged, such as describing identities in terms of their centrality to each other. Centralization refers to the extent that a single identity is connected to other identities within the intrapersonal identity network. For instance, a salesman who often sells products to his friends and family could be said to have a professional identity that is highly centralized within his intrapersonal identity network because it is connected to his friend and family identities.

Researchers have referenced Ramarajan's intrapersonal identity network approach to examine issues involving multiple identities. For example, Bataille and Vough (In Press) use an intrapersonal identity network approach to describe how individuals engage in identity work invoking multiple identities in response to identity opportunities and identity threats, a process they call inter-identity work. Ebrahimi and colleagues (2020) draw upon Ramarajan's (2014) intrapersonal identity network approach to describe outcomes associated with identity integration. Cha and Roberts (2019) similarly extend Ramarajan's (2014) model by examining synergies between workers' identities, specifically exploring minority workers' willingness to draw upon their minority cultural identity at work. Creary and colleagues (2014) considered the value of identity synergies among workers, and ways that managers can harness the benefits of their subordinates' multiple identities. In another recent article, Yip, Trainer, Black, Soto-Torres, and Reichard (2020) draw upon Ramarajan's model to explore workers' leader identities as integrated in varying degrees with other identities within their intrapersonal identity network. In summary, Ramarajan's model paved the way for scholars to more systematically examine issues involving multiple identities. In that same vein, I draw upon her model to explore the process of identity threat accounting for workers' multiple identities. Specifically, I draw upon Ramarajan's model to unpack the relationship between identity threat and a proximal outcome: well-being. I now describe my model in more detail.

3.2. AN INTRAPERSONAL IDENTITY NETWORK VIEW OF IDENTITY THREAT

Identities are connected to each other in complex and multifaceted ways, as demonstrated through Ramarajan's (2014) intrapersonal identity network approach and

subsequent research drawing upon her model. It is likely then that identity threat too unfolds in complex and multifaceted ways across individuals' intrapersonal identity networks. Given the inherent interconnectedness between identities, it is unlikely that identity threat is ever truly experienced in isolation from other identities. Rather, features of one's intrapersonal identity network and relationships between identities are likely to influence outcomes associated with identity threat. To understand how this occurs, I point to the link between identity threat and a salient identity threat outcome – well-being – and three moderators of this relationship (identity centralization, network density in terms of enhancing relationships, and network density in terms of conflicting relationships).

Well-being refers to overall life satisfaction and captures workers' levels of overall positive and negative affect (Diener, 1994). Well-being is distinct from trait positive or negative affect, which suggests that workers tend to hold certain levels of positive or negative affect (Burke, Brief, & George,1993). Rather, well-being is more state-like, and is shaped by individuals' situations, such as health, finances, or work (Diener, 1994; Kuykendall, Tay, & Ng, 2015). Employees who report higher levels of well-being generally experience lower levels of burnout and hold lower levels of turnover intent (Rothausen et al., 2017). For that reason, employers tend to structure jobs and work situations so that employees experience high levels of well-being (e.g., Grant, Wallace, & Spurgeon, 2013; Kim, Park, & Niu, 2017; Scott, Colquitt, Paddock, & Judge, 2010; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). For example, Scott and colleagues (2010) found that workers whose managers exhibited empathy reported higher levels of daily well-being. Further, the ability to establish self-concordant goals and take work-breaks has also been linked to increased well-being (Kim et al., 2017; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

However, job design efforts aimed at enhancing well-being can backfire. For instance, while remote work policies are often instituted with the intent of improving well-being (Grant et al., 2013), virtual work often results in reduced work/family boundaries which compromises well-being (Becker, Belkin, Conroy, & Tuskey, 2021; Edwards & Rothbard, 1999). Unfortunately, identity threat, which results from an array of possible identity-relevant events such as the ones described above, has also been shown to result in lower levels of well-being (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2020; Ilies, Schwind, Wagner, Johnson, DeRue, & Ilgen, 2007; Rothausen et al., 2017). Thus, I begin by postulating the following:

Postulate 1: The presence of identity threat is negatively related to well-being

Our understanding of the identity threat – well-being relationship can be enhanced by accounting for connections between the threatened identity and other identities within one's intrapersonal identity network. This is because well-being refers to an *overall* view of one's subjective life satisfaction and balance of positive and negative affect. Only examining well-being in relation to a single threatened identity misses the bigger picture of ways that a workers' set of identities jointly shape well-being.

Attributes of the relationships between the threatened identity and other identities within the identity network are likely important for understanding the identity threat – well-being relationship. Specifically, I suggest that the centralization of the threatened identity with the intrapersonal identity network, as well as the density of its enhancing and conflicting relationships, influence the negative relationship between identity threat and well-being. I now describe these moderating variables in more detail.

3.2.1 Identity Network Centralization

As mentioned earlier, identity network centralization refers to the extent that an identity is connected with other identities within the intrapersonal identity network (Ramarajan, 2014). Identity centralization is theoretically distinct from identity centrality. Identity centrality focuses on the *importance* of a single identity and assumes a hierarchical arrangement of one's set of identities. In fact, measures of identity centrality include items on identity importance (e.g., Martire et al., 2000; Settles, 2004). Identity centralization, in turn, differs from identity centrality in that it refers to the *number of connections* that one identity has with other identities. Identities that have a number of connections with other identities may or may not be classified as important to one's self-definition. That is, identity centrality describes how *important* an identity is to one's self-definition while identity centralization accounts for the *number of connections* that an identity has within an intrapersonal identity network.

Identity centralization is important to account for within the identity threat process, as it provides a lens for understanding how identity threat can become *shared* across a set of identities. Centralized identity networks contain intertwined identities that share meanings with each other. For example, a female engineer would have a highly centralized identity network if her female and engineer identities were highly integrated with each other and her parent and spouse identities. Threat towards one identity in a centralized identity network is likely to simultaneously impact multiple other identities that share meanings with the threatened identity. More specifically, threat towards a single identity within a centralized identity network may destabilize the entire network (Ramarajan, 2004). Using the same example as above, a female engineer who loses her

job and experiences threat towards her professional identity is likely to also experience identity threat across her gender, professional, parent, and spouse identities due to meanings shared between these identities. To that end, as identity network centralization increases, so does the extent that threat towards a single identity in that network reduces overall well-being. Thus, I anticipate the following:

Proposition 1: Identity network centralization strengthens the negative relationship between identity threat and well-being.

3.2.2. Identity Network Density

Identity network density refers to the extent that "information, values, and memories associated with each identity are frequently drawn upon when other identities are activated" (Ramarajan, 2014: 623). When a majority of an individual's identities enhance each other, one's identity network would be dense in terms of enhancing relationships. Identity enhancement allows for a sense of complementarity among one's identities (Brook et al., 2008; Cast & Burke, 2002; Ramarajan et al., 2017b). For example, a working parent who perceives their parent identity as allowing them to better manage priorities at work would contain a parent identity that *enhances* their professional identity.

Identities that enhance each other provide shared "skills, knowledge, positive emotions, and resources" that support each others' enactment (Ramarajan, 2014: 614). Using the same example as above, this person's parent identity may provide time management skills that they can apply at work to help them achieve work deadlines. As another example, non-work identities can provide resources, like psychosocial support, that enhance optimism at work (Higgins, Dobrow, & Roloff, 2010). Because enhancing

identities support each others' enactment, I expect that identities that enhance threatened identities alleviate identity harm incurred from identity threat. This is because enhancing identities can provide resources that help workers process identity threat. These resources can take multiple forms, such as tools for processing a similar experience or compensating for issues experienced at work. For example, research on dual earner couples finds that couples often rely on stories and experiences associated with their identity as a couple when processing work-related challenges (Crawford, Thompson, & Ashforth, 2019). As another example, workers may lean on leisure identities to help overcome misfit at work (Vogel et al., 2016). Therefore, identities that enhance a threatened identity support that identity's enactment, offsetting identity harm incurred.

As identity network density increases in terms of enhancing relationships, workers have more resources available to process identity threat. To that end, the level of identity harm incurred decreases, suggesting the following:

Proposition 2: Identity network density in terms of enhancing relationships attenuates the negative relationship between identity threat and well-being.

Conversely, identity network density in terms of conflicting relationships is likely to strengthen the negative relationship between identity threat and well-being. When identities conflict with each other, one identity impairs the fulfillment of another identity (Horton et al., 2014). Because identity conflict is a form of identity threat (Petriglieri, 2011), as identity network density increases in terms of conflicting relationships, individuals experience overall higher levels of identity harm. Furthermore, identities connected to the threatened identity are unable to provide beneficial resources for processing the identity threat. For these reasons, I expect the following:

Proposition 3: Identity network density in terms of conflicting relationships strengthens the negative relationship between identity threat and well-being.

Figure 3.1 provides an overview of my conceptual model. In the following chapter, I build off of this conceptual model to provide a preliminary, empirical test. I now turn to Chapter 4.

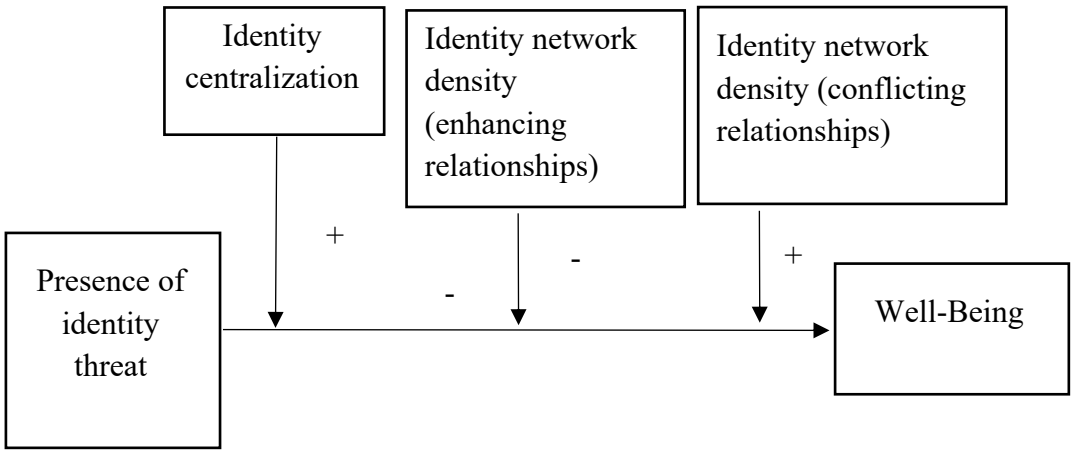

Figure 3.1 An Intrapersonal Identity Network Approach to Identity Threat

CHAPTER 4

AN EMPIRICAL TEST OF THE INTRAPERSONAL IDENTITY NETWORK MODEL OF IDENTITY THREAT

In this Chapter, I provide an empirical test that validates postulate 1 and provides a partial test of propositions 2 and 3 from Chapter 3 (here, hypotheses 1-3). This is a partial test of these propositions, as I do not gather information on participants' entire intrapersonal identity networks; rather, I consider two identities within my analyses (professional, spouse). For that reason, I do not test the impact of the *density* of participants' intrapersonal identity networks in terms of enhancing and conflicting relationships. Rather, I consider the extent that participants' spouse identities enhance and conflict with their professional identity, and the impact of these relationships on the identity threat process. Thus, through this chapter, I provide preliminary insight into the role of enhancing and conflicting relationships on the identity threat process. I revise my hypotheses tests as such to refer to identity enhancement/identity conflict rather than identity network density in terms of enhancing and conflicting relationships.

I first develop and validate a measure to determine the presence of identity threat. Despite calls to do so (Petriglieri, 2011), scholars today lack a measure to assess the presence of identity threat. I use a sample from an online panel of entrepreneurs facing a company setback to validate the scale, followed by another online panel of entrepreneurs

in the wake of COVID-19 to retest the measure's properties. In these samples, the company setback and COVID-19 constitute identity-relevant events capable of producing identity threats.

I then further validate the identity threat scale when testing hypotheses 1-3. In these tests, I use a sample of unemployed workers and view unemployment as an identity relevant event capable of producing identity threat. Thus, my multi-study effort to develop and validate the identity threat scale shows its generalizability across different identity-relevant events (i.e., company setback, COVID-19, and unemployment). I now begin by turning to the first scale validation effort for the identity threat measure.

4.1. SCALE VALIDATION: PILOT 1

I followed standard scale validation procedures to obtain a measure for the presence of identity threat. First, I developed an initial set of 9 items based off of Petriglieri's conceptualization of identity threat. The 9 items refer to identity harm involving the meanings, value, and enactment of identity. That is, 3 items reflected the value dimension, 3 items reflected the meanings dimension, and 3 items reflected the enactment dimension. I then tested the scale and its properties across a series of validation efforts. I now describe the first pilot effort to validate the scale.

4.2. METHOD: PILOT 1

4.2.1. Sample

I obtained an initial sample of 122 entrepreneurs from Amazon Mechanical Turk ('MTurk'). I chose to test the measure first with a sample of entrepreneurs, as entrepreneurs frequently encounter criticism against their company that can trigger threat towards their professional identity (Grimes, 2018). In order to participate in the survey,

participants had to be an entrepreneur and work for at least one start-up. Because online panels have been shown to increase the likelihood of inattentive responses (Aguinis, Villamor, & Ramani, 2021; Meade & Craig, 2012; Porter, Outlaw, Gale, & Cho, 2019), I included one attention checks ("This is to check that you are not a bot! Please select "strongly agree"). Those who failed this attention check question were automatically routed to the end of the survey and excluded from the sample used for analysis. Furthermore, I screened participant responses to an open ended question (Porter et al., 2019) and removed those whose responses were gibberish or nonsensical. These screening efforts resulted in the removal of 36 individuals, generating a final sample of 96 participants.

Average participant age was 37.61 (SD=11.76). Participants were also diverse across gender (58 women, 36 male, 1 fluid, and 1 non-binary). 71 out of 96 participants were Caucasian/White.

4.2.2. Design and Procedure

I asked participants in the survey to reflect upon a recent failure or setback that their start-up faced. Participants were asked to read the following prompt: "Think about a recent failure or major setback that your start-up experienced. In thinking about this incident, answer the following." I chose to ask participants to read a prompt about their company, because entrepreneurs often define themselves in terms of their start-up. Links between an entrepreneur's professional identity and their start-up tend to be highly intertwined (Mmbaga, Mathias, Williams, & Cardon, 2020). Thus, threats towards entrepreneurs' start-ups are likely to also have an effect on how they see themselves professionally.

After reading that prompt, participants were asked to answer the following open-ended question: "What were the general circumstances leading up to this failure or major setback? What was the failure or major setback?" Setbacks took place, on average, 22 weeks prior to survey completion (SD=49.86). Examples of setbacks include inability to get data needed for product launch, failure to get start-up funding, and termination of a large client contract. After providing a description of their start-up's recent failure or major set-back, participants then answered the 9-item identity threat measure.

4.2.3. Identity Threat Measure

I measured the presence of identity threat using nine items (see Table 4.1). The question prompt was: "To what extent do the following statements accurately reflect how you viewed your **identity as an entrepreneur** in the days and weeks after this failure or major setback?". I used a 5 item Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). To test the properties of the scale, I ran a series of confirmatory factor analyses. Results of the confirmatory factor analyses and comparison of model fit are summarized in Table 4.2.

Model 1 represented a 3-factor solution, with one factor for each of the dimensions of identity threat (value, meanings, enactment). All standardized factor loadings were above .81 on their respective factors. Model 1 produced acceptable fit (χ^2=45.722 (24), p<.05; CFI=0.97; SRMR=0.03).

Model 2 represented a single factor solution, suggesting that all dimensions of identity threat (meanings, value, enactment), loaded onto one factor. All standardized factor loadings were above .76. Model 2 also produced acceptable fit (χ_2= 63.363 (27), p<.05; CFI=0.95; SRMR=0.04). A chi-square comparison test suggested that Model 2 fit

the data better than a 3 factor solution ($\Delta \chi_2 = 17.641$, Δ df= 3, $p<.05$). An analysis of the eigen values similarly supported a single factor measure for identity threat. There was only one eigen value above 1 (6.13). Cronbach's alpha for the single factor measure was .95.

Theoretically, I also did not deem it necessary to analyze identity threat along multiple dimensions (value, meanings, enactment). This is because separating analyses based on these multiple dimensions neither aligns with prior theoretical work on identity threat nor the model proposed in Chapter 2. Scholars often discuss identity threat in more general terms focusing on the experience of identity threat itself rather than its underlying dimensions (e.g., devaluation and harm towards the meanings; harm towards the meanings and enactment) or single dimension (e.g., devaluation). However, I conduct a series of supplemental analyses at the conclusion of these chapters that consider the different dimensions of identity threat within my hypotheses tests.

4.3. SCALE VALIDATION: PILOT 2

In this second pilot, I provided another validation of the identity threat measure with a different prompt. This prompt was in reference to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of this pilot survey launch, many businesses were facing cutbacks and decreased profit margins with implications for workers' job situations and employment statuses (McKinsey, 2020), suggesting COVID-19 as a relevant identity-threatening event for many workers.

4.4. METHOD: PILOT 2

4.4.1. Sample

I recruited a sample of entrepreneurs again from MTurk. In order to participate in the survey, participants had to be an entrepreneur and currently work for at least one start-up. In addition, I further restricted the sample to those who dedicate more than 20 hours per week towards their start-up, as those who work part-time with their start-up may be less likely to feel threatened professionally by a company setback than those who are full-time. I also included two attention checks in this survey ("This is to check that you are not a bot! Please select "strongly agree", This is to check that you are not a bot! Please select "does not apply at all"). Those who failed these screening questions and/or at least one of the attention checks were removed from the final sample. I also again screened participants' responses to an open-ended response question, and removed those whose responses conveyed gibberish and nonsensical information. These efforts resulted in the removal of 175 respondents, resulting in a final sample of 173 participants. Average age of participants was 34.52 (SD=10.55). Participants were roughly equal in terms of gender (84 male, 87 female, 2 non-binary). 71% of participants were Caucasian/White.

4.4.2. Design and Procedure

I asked participants in the survey to reflect upon how COVID-19 affected their start-up: "Provide 2-3 sentences describing how COVID-19 has affected your start-up." Whereas in the first pilot participants were asked simply to respond to the prompt, in this second pilot I asked participants to provide 2-3 sentences to help ensure that they reflected upon the prompt. Sample responses included challenges related to

hiring/retaining employees and obtaining funding. I then again asked participants to answer the 9-item identity threat measure. I slightly rephrased the tense of the items, as shown in Table 4.1.

4.4.3. Identity Threat Measure

I again ran a series of confirmatory factor analyses (3 factor solution, 1 factor solution), as summarized in Table 4.2. The single factor solution again fit the data better than the 3 factor solution, as supported by the eigen values and a chi-square difference test. The results of the chi-square difference test was as follows: $\Delta \chi_2 = 43.542$, Δ df= 3, $p<.05$. An analysis of the eigen values with this data similarly supported a single factor measure for identity threat. There was only one eigen value above 1 (7.19). Cronbach's alpha for the single factor measure of identity threat was .97.

4.5. MAIN STUDY

After developing and validating a measure for the presence of identity threat, I then collected data on a final sample of unemployed married workers. I focused on workers who are unemployed, as I view unemployment as an identity-relevant event capable of producing identity threat. Unemployment is a period of time where workers do not hold formally established employment positions. Oftentimes, unemployment exists as a liminal period where workers are in-between jobs and thereby "betwixt and between conventional work roles" (Daskalaki & Simosi, 2018; Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016: 48). Unemployment is capable of producing identity threat, as it literally inhibits the enactment of workers' professional identity. For example, a customer service agent who is laid off and becomes unemployed may perceive unemployment as threatening to her professional identity as she no longer has a job that she can use to enact her professional

identity. Further, unemployment may result in the devaluation of her professional identity, as she may feel that she was not good enough at her job for her employer to keep her employed. Unemployment may also challenge her ability to continue to define herself professionally as customer-oriented, since she no longer holds her customer service position. Thus, unemployment can threaten multiple dimensions of workers' identities.

4.6. METHOD: MAIN STUDY

Beyond providing a relevant context for testing the relationship between the presence of identity threat and well-being, issues around work and family domains are likely to be relevant during periods of unemployment. During unemployment, workers are likely to become strained financially and experience challenges within their family domains. For example, an inability to serve as the primary breadwinner for one's family may mean that an unemployed worker experiences substantial strain between their work and family domains. However, the family domain may provide a reprieve during unemployment, allowing workers to experience a sense of self-worth and meaning outside of the work environment.

To that end, I recruited unemployed married workers so as to have a consistent set of identities (worker, spouse) for my hypotheses tests. Spouses can play an important role for workers during challenging situations by providing emotional support (Crawford et al., 2019; Wilson, Baumann, Matta, Ilies, & Kossek, 2018), and as such, the extent that one identifies as a spouse may impact the extent that they can garner support resources during unemployment. However, marital issues are an oft-noted source of strain at work, such as dissatisfied spouses impacting expatriates' adjustment to their host country (e.g., Cho, Hutchings, & Marchant, 2013). Thus, it is possible for one's spouse identity to

enhance and/or conflict with one's worker identity during unemployment. In the next several sections, I provide an overview of the sample, design and procedure, and measures used to test my hypotheses.

4.6.1. Sample

I recruited 347 unemployed married workers from MTurk. Average age of participants was 36.80 (SD=8.68). 76% were female and 58% were Caucasian/White. Average length of unemployment was 85 weeks (SD=161.43).

4.6.2. Design and Procedure

I collected data on unemployed, married individuals on MTurk over the course of two time periods. The purpose of this sample was to constrain participants' identity networks to two identities for the analyses – worker, spouse. In order to be eligible for the study, participants had to self-identify in MTurk as unemployed and married. If they did not meet this criteria in the MTurk system, they would not have visibility to the study. Eligible participants were asked to complete an initial survey with questions on their unemployment experiences, assess presence of identity threat, and obtain data on the relationship between their professional and spouse identities. In the first survey, I further validated that they were unemployed and married through additional screening questions in the Qualtrics survey. I also used two attention checks ("This is to check that you are not a bot! Please select "Strongly agree""; "This is to check that you are not a bot! Please select "Does not apply at all"") and removed participants who did not meet the screening criteria and failed at least one of these checks. This resulted in a final sample of 347 participants at Time 1.

After 6 weeks, I sent another, follow-up survey ('Time 2') to these same participants to assess their levels of well-being. 149 participants responded to the Time 2 survey, indicating a 43% response rate between Time 1 and Time 2.

I tested for nonresponse bias by determining whether there was a significant statistical difference between respondents and nonrespondents in terms of several demographic variables (age, gender, weeks unemployed, whether they voluntarily left their job, and years previously employed) and key study variables (identity threat presence, identity enhancement, and identity conflict). There were no significant statistical differences between respondents and nonrespondents in regard to these variables. Therefore, I did not include any demographic variables as control variables within the final analysis.

4.6.3. Measures

Identity Threat. I measured the presence of identity threat using the 9 item scale validated through the two-part validation effort described earlier (see Table 4.1). Workers were asked to respond to the following prompt: "To what extent do the following statements accurately reflect **how you have viewed your identity as a worker** since you've become unemployed?". References to participants' worker identity were included in the scale items (e.g., "It has been hard to feel good about myself as a worker", "My description of my worker identity has changed", "Presenting myself through my worker identity is limited or prevented"). Cronbach's alpha was .94.

Identity Enhancement.. Identity enhancement between participant's worker and spouse identities was measured using Ramarajan et al.'s (2017b) identity enhancement scale. Sample items were "Overall, being a spouse has a lot to do with how I feel about

myself" and "I appreciate being a worker more because I am a spouse." Cronbach's alpha was .83.

Identity Conflict. Identity conflict between participants' worker and spouse identities was measured using Ramarajan et al.'s (2017b) identity conflict scale. Sample items were "I struggle to maintain a worker and spouse way of doing things" and "Being a "good" worker interferes with being a "good" spouse." Cronbach's alpha was .82.

4.7. RESULTS: MAIN STUDY

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for study variables are included in Table 4.3. Regression results are provided in Table 4.4.

In Hypothesis 1, I anticipated that the presence of identity threat was negatively related to well-being. I found support for this hypothesis (β=-.22, $p<.05$). This suggests that as individuals perceive higher levels of identity threat resulting from an identity-relevant event, like unemployment, their levels of well-being decrease.

In Hypothesis 2, I expected that identity enhancement attenuated the negative relationship between identity threat and well-being. This hypothesis was supported (β=.17, $p<.01$; Figure 4.1). This implies that unemployed workers whose spouse identities provide enhancing resources to their worker identity report higher levels of well-being, indicating value associated with leaning on non-work roles during work-related identity threats.

Lastly, in Hypothesis 3, I anticipated that identity conflict strengthened the negative relationship between identity threat and well-being. This hypothesis was not supported (β=.06, $p>.05$; Figure 4.2).

4.8. DISCUSSION

4.8.1 Theoretical Implications

The results from this chapter carry several theoretical contributions. First, I develop and validate a measure of identity threat. I provide a 9-item scale reflective of the different dimensions of identity threat (value, meanings, enactment), and test its factor structure. Much prior identity threat research has been conducted conceptually (e.g., Leavitt & Sluss, 2015) or from a qualitative lens (e.g., Elsbach, 2003). An identity threat measure paves the way for further quantitative work on identity threat.

Second, and in addition to providing a methodological tool for examining identity threat, its validated one factor structure suggests that there is value in examining identity threat holistically rather than in relation to its specific underlying dimensions (value, meanings, enactment). My findings on the factor structure of identity threat also suggest that while workers may vary with regard to the extent that each of these dimensions are impacted, each of these dimensions are important when measuring identity threat. Thus, identity threat implies some degree of harm towards the value, meanings, *and* enactment of an identity.

This important distinction differs from Petrilgieri's (2011) perspective on identity threat which suggests that identity threat can be understood in relation to *one* of those underlying three dimensions. My findings on the factor structure implies that all three of those dimensions, in varying degrees, are impacted during an identity threat, and that conceptualizing and studying them independently may not be the most fruitful path for identity threat research going forward.

Lastly, I provide a view of workers' experiences of identity threat that account for ways that workers' work and non-work roles can jointly shape outcomes associated with identity threat. The results from this chapter point to the value of workers' enhancing non-work roles during their experiences of identity threat at work. This finding supports a key assertion in this dissertation that identities beyond the threatened identity can shape the identity threat – outcome relationship.

4.8.2 Limitations and Areas for Future Research

Despite the contributions of this study, there are several limitations that are important to raise. First, my conceptualization of workers' intrapersonal identity network approaches assumes a static view of workers' identities and the relationships between them. It is possible that the strength of enhancing and conflicting relationships can change across time as workers encounter new situations or engage in identity construction processes that revise the meanings ascribed to their identities. This may mean that identity network density in terms of enhancing relationships for alleviating identity harm waxes and wanes throughout the identity threat process. Further, it is possible that an identity threat shapes the nature of enhancing relationships within one's intrapersonal identity network, such that identity threat may undermine the value that one ascribes to their enhancing identities. Future research could address this limitation by determining whether the nature of workers' identity networks change throughout the identity threat process, and how such changes impact the relationship between identity threat and well-being or other outcomes.

Second, it is important to note that the data in this chapter does not account for participants' full set of identities. For simplicity purposes and to provide an initial test of

my hypotheses, I constrained individuals' set of identities to two identities – worker and spouse. These two identities likely do not reflect participants' full identity networks. Future research could ask workers to explicitly list out all identities that they use to define themselves, and use all of those identities to determine identity centralization and identity network density in terms of enhancing and conflicting relationships. This would provide a more holistic view of workers' intrapersonal identity networks and provide for a more precise test of the impact of identity network density in terms of enhancing and conflicting relationships on the relationship between identity threat and well-being, as well as allow future researchers to test the moderating impact of identity centralization on that relationship.

Lastly, I did not test my hypothesis on the role of identity centralization during the identity threat process (Proposition 1 from Chapter 3). Future research could test this hypothesis by again collecting a list of participants' full set of identities, and measuring the number of identities connected to the threatened identity to capture identity centralization. Researchers could measure identity network density in terms of enhancing relationships and conflicting relationships by using this same measure, but focusing explicitly on the number of enhancing relationships or conflicting relationships, respectively. Researchers could alternativelycreate a standardized measure of network density in terms of enhancing or conflicting relationships by determining an average level of identity enhancement and/or identity conflict among identities connected to a threatened identity.

4.9. SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSES

I conducted a series of supplemental analyses to further unpack these findings. In the first set of supplemental analyses, I reanalyzed the hypothesized relationships based on a 3 factor structure of identity threat (value, meanings, and enactment).

In the second set of supplemental analyses, I tried to account for the extent that workers' identities were relevant within their intrapersonal identity network by standardizing their enhancement and conflicting relationships by average identification strength across their worker and spouse identities. The intent of this supplemental analysis was to see if identification levels across both identities (spouse, professional) are important when considering the impact of enhancing/conflicting relationships within the identity threat process. I now provide the results of each of these sets of additional analyses.

4.9.1 Supplemental Analysis #1

In this set of additional analyses, I reran the results from the main study, but with three forms of identity threat (value, meanings, enactment). I report the results below. Table 4.5 provides the mean, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables for this supplemental analysis. Table 4.6 provides the regression results.

First, I found that the presence of identity threat (value) was negatively related to well-being (β=-.29, $p<.05$). However, I did not find support for the relationship between the presence of identity threat (meanings) and well-being (β=.16, $p>.05$), nor for the relationship between the presence of identity threat (enactment) and well-being (β=-.12, $p>.05$). The results of this additional analysis suggest that the devaluation of an identity may most strongly shape well-being after an identity-relevant event.

Second, when testing the moderating hypotheses, only enhancement significantly moderates the relationship between identity threat (value) and well-being (β=.29, $p<.01$). This again provides support for the value of enhancing relationships during identity threat, particularly when workers feel that their identity is devalued.

4.9.2 Supplemental Analysis #2

In this set of additional analyses, I revised the measures for identity enhancement and identity conflict. I divided participants' levels of identity enhancement and identity conflict by the average identification level of both their professional and spouse identities. For example, if a participant's identity enhancement score was 4 and their identification level between their professional and spouse identities were 3 and 4 respectively, their standardized identity enhancement score would be 4/((3+4)/2) or 1.14. It is possible that when average identification levels between the identities within an enhancing relationship are high, workers are more likely to call upon resources associated with the enhancing identity (here, spouse) during their experience of identity threat. I followed that same measurement approach in the supplemental analysis for the moderating role of identity conflict. Table 4.7 provides the means, standard deviations, and correlations for study variables. Table 4.8 provides the regression results.

In this supplemental analysis, I again found support for Hypothesis 1 (β=-.17, $p<.05$) and Hypothesis 2 (β=.26, $p<.01$; Figure 4.3). This time, and contrary to expectations, the moderating effect of identity conflict was significant, but in the opposite direction (β=.13, $p<.05$; Figure 4.4). This suggests that conflicting identity relationships do not have a detrimental effect as expected on workers' experiences of identity threat, but rather a potentially beneficial effect. It is possible that the conflicting identities

provide a safe haven for workers' experiences of identity threat, alleviating additional identity harm incurred.

To investigate this surprising finding further, I conducted simple slope analyses. I found that at low levels of identity threat, identity conflict had a significant, strengthening effect on the negative relationship between identity threat and well-being (β=-.65, $p<.05$). This is not surprising, as identity conflict alone has been shown to be detrimental to well-being (Horton et al., 2014). However, identity conflict did not have a significant effect on the relationship between identity threat and well-being at average and high levels of identity threat. Furthermore, and interestingly, the slope for the high identity threat condition remains relatively flat (see Figure 4.4). These simple slope analyses suggest that identity conflict does not significantly impact well-being when identity threat is high. I expand more upon this intriguing finding in the discussion section.

In the following chapter, I describe how identity threat oriented towards a future identity is experienced in light of one's current identities. I now turn to the second empirical study within my dissertation.

Table 4.1 Identity Threat Measure Items

Item #	Identity Threat Items (Pilot 1)	Identity Threat Items (Pilot 2)	Identity Threat Items (Final)
1	It was hard to feel good about myself through this identity. (.76)	It has been hard to feel good about myself through this identity. (.89)	It has been hard to feel good about myself as a worker. (.72)
2	It was difficult to rely on this identity for self-worth. (.79)	It has been difficult to rely on this identity for self-worth. (.90)	It has been difficult to rely on my worker identity for self-worth. (.77)
3	This identity felt devalued. (.78)	This identity feels devalued. (.90)	My worker identity feels devalued. (.79)
4	This identity could no longer be defined in the same way. (.85)	This identity can no longer be defined in the same way. (.85)	My worker identity can no longer be defined in the same way. (.84)
5	My description of this identity was changed. (.79)	My description of this identity has changed. (.86)	My description of my worker identity has changed. (.79)
6	I could no longer attribute certain meanings to this identity. (.86)	I can no longer attribute certain meanings to this identity. (.90)	I can no longer attribute certain meanings to my worker identity. (.83)
7	Presenting myself through this identity was limited or prevented. (.86)	Presenting myself through this identity is limited or prevented. (.90)	Presenting myself through my worker identity is limited or prevented. (.81)
8	It became difficult to act out this identity. (.91)	It has become difficult to act out this identity. (.86)	It has become difficult to act out my worker identity. (.82)
9	It was hard to engage in behaviors associated with this identity. (.87)	It is hard to engage in behaviors associated with this identity. (.86)	It is hard to engage in behaviors associated with my worker identity. (.82)

Table 4.2 Model Fit Comparison

Sample	Items	Subfactors	N	df	χ2	CFI	SRMR
Pilot 1	12	Three	96	24	45.722 *	0.97	0.03
		None	96	27	63.363*	0.95	0.04
Pilot 2	12	Three	173	24	67.341***	0.98	0.02
		None	173	27	110.88***	0.95	0.03

Note: CFI is comparative fit index, SRMR is standardized residual mean square.

Table 4.3 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Well Being	3.43	.85			
2. Professional Identity Threat	3.33	.97	-.21*		
3. Identity Enhancement	3.41	.93	.23**	.06	
4. Identity Conflict	3.00	1.02	-.05	.42**	.00

Note. Results based on 149 observations. $^{\dagger}p < 0.10$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$.

Table 4.4 Regression Results Predicting Well-Being

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
(Intercept)	3.44**	.07	3.44**	.07	3.40**	.07
Professional identity threat (H1)	-.18*	.07	-.22**	.07	-.22**	.07
Identity Enhancement			.21**	.07	.27**	.07
Identity Conflict			.04	.07	.03	.07
Professional identity threat X Identity Enhancement (H2)					.17**	.05
Professional identity threat X Identity Conflict (H3)					.06	.06

Note. Results based on 149 observations. $^{\dagger}p < 0.10$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$. Two-tailed tests.

Table 4.5 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables (Supplemental Analysis #1)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Well Being	3.43	.85					
2. Professional Identity Threat (Value)	3.26	1.15	-.25**				
3. Professional Identity Threat (Meaning)	3.32	1.07	-.13	.70**			
4. Professional Identity Threat (Enactment)	3.40	1.01	-.19*	.72**	.80**		
5. Identity Enhancement	3.41	.93	.23**	.14†	-.00	.02	
6. Identity Conflict	3.00	1.02	-.05	.37**	.37**	.41**	.00

Note. Results based on 149 observations. $^{\dagger}p < 0.10$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$.

Table 4.6 Regression Results Predicting Well-Being (Supplemental Analysis #1)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
(Intercept)	3.45**	.07	3.45**	.07	3.38**	.07
Professional identity threat (value; H1)	-.22*	.10	-.29**	.09	-.17	.07
Professional identity threat (meanings; H1)	.14	.12	.16	.11	.08	.11
Professional identity threat (enactment; H1)	-.13	.12	-.12	.12	-.18	.12
Identity enhancement			.24**	.07	.31**	.07
Identity conflict			.05	.07	.05	.07
Professional identity threat (value) X identity enhancement (H2)					.29**	.08
Professional identity threat (value) X identity conflict (H3)					-.03	.10
Professional identity threat (meanings) X identity enhancement (H2)					-.15	.13
Professional identity threat (meanings) X identity conflict(H3)					.12	.12
Professional identity threat (enactment) X identity enhancement (H2)					.08	.12
Professional identity threat (enactment) X identity conflict (H3)					-.03	.12

Note. 149 observations. $^{\dagger}p < 0.10$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$. Two-tailed tests.

Table 4.7 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables (Supplemental Analysis #2)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Well Being	3.43	.85			
2. Professional Identity Threat	3.33	.97	-.21*		
3. Identity enhancement	.88	.17	.14†	-.01	
4. Identity conflict	.81	.31	-.16*	.27**	.05

Note. Results based on 149 observations. $^{\dagger}p < 0.10$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$.

Table 4.8 Regression Results Predicting Well-Being (Supplemental Analysis #2)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
(Intercept)	3.44**	.07	3.45**	.07	3.38**	.07
Professional identity threat (H1)	-.18*	.07	-.17*	.07	-.12†	.07
Identity enhancement			.14†	.07	.21**	.07
Identity conflict			-.08	.07	-.08	.07
Professional identity threat X identity enhancement (H2)					.26**	.06
Professional identity threat X identity conflict (H3)					.13*	.06

Note. Results based on 149 observations. †$p < 0.10$, *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$. Two-tailed tests.

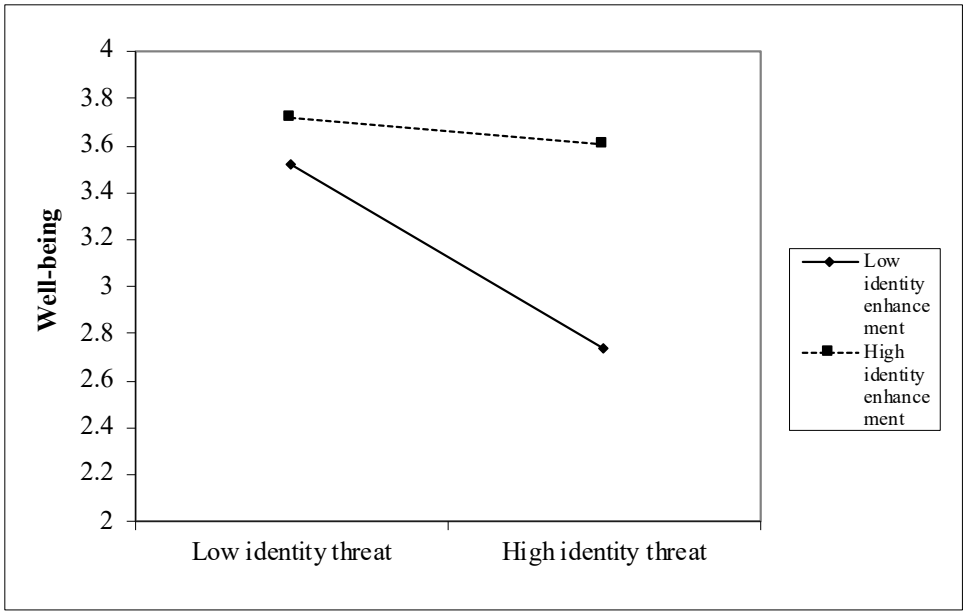

Figure 4.1 The Moderating Role of Identity Enhancement on the Relationship Between the Presence of Identity Threat and Well-Being

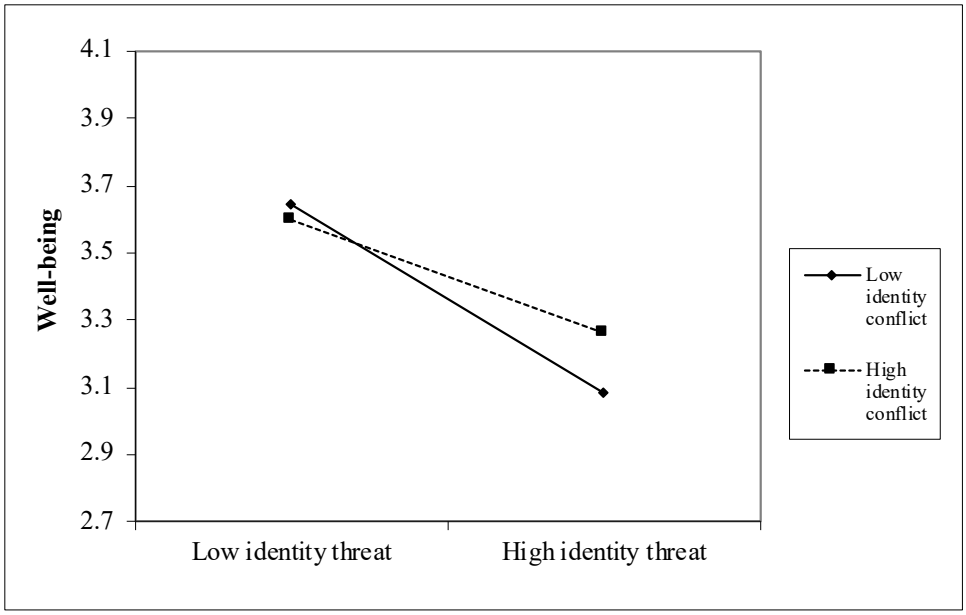

Figure 4.2 The Moderating Role of Identity Conflict on the Relationship Between the Presence of Identity Threat and Well-Being (H3)

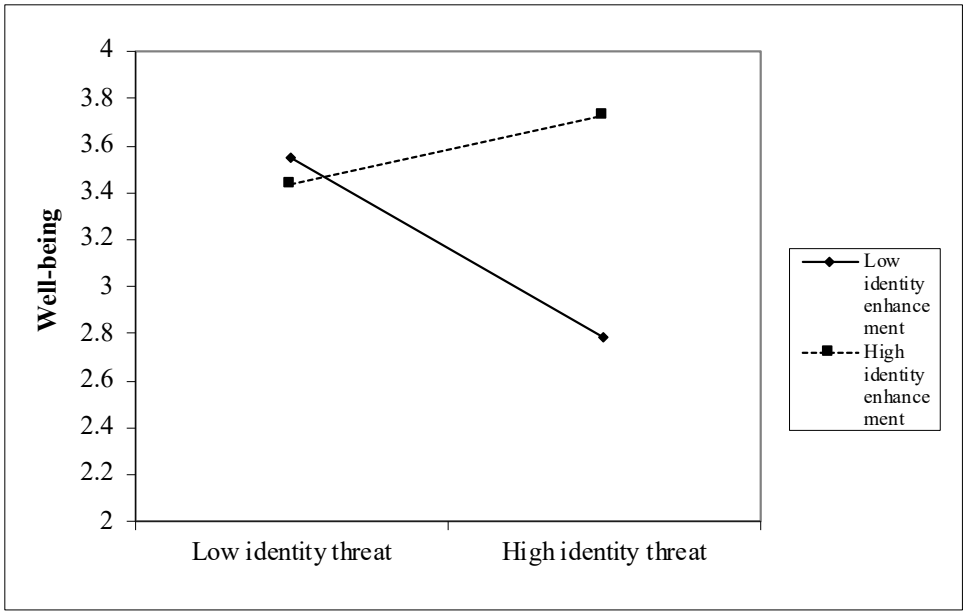

Figure 4.3 The Moderating Role of Identity Enhancement on the Relationship Between the Presence of Identity Threat and Well-Being (H2; Supplemental Analysis #2)

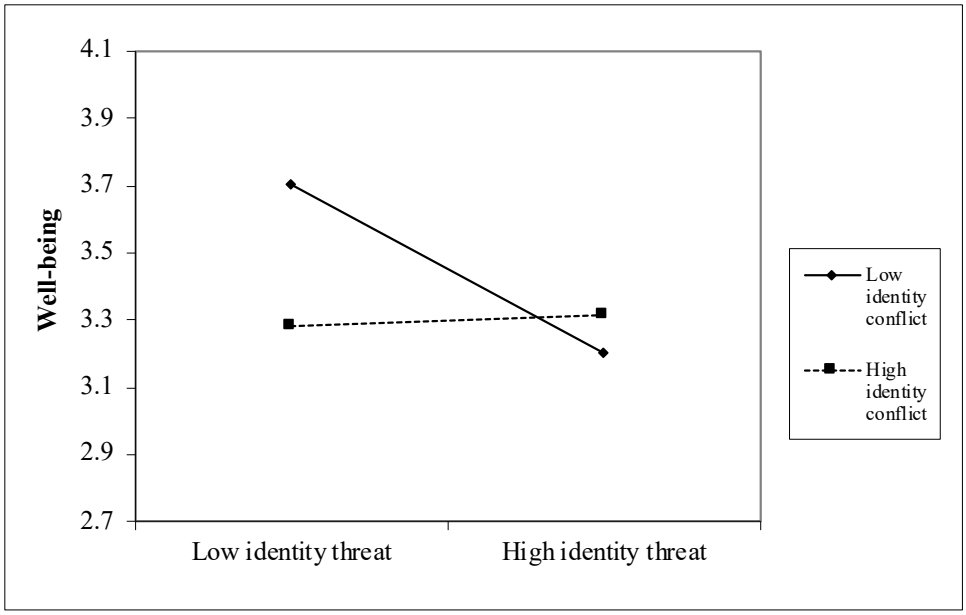

Figure 4.4 The Moderating Role of Identity Conflict on the Relationship Between the Presence of Identity Threat and Well-Being (H3; Supplemental Analysis #2)

CHAPTER 5

HOW IS IDENTITY THREAT EXPERIENCED ACROSS MULTIPLE TEMPORAL DOMAINS?

In this chapter, I build off of the previous chapters to provide a perspective of identity threat that accounts for identities crossing temporal domains. Identities can be connected to each other in terms of different temporal relationships (Ramarajan, 2014). Past selves can influence the meanings of current selves (Obodaru, 2017; Zheng et al., 2020) and future selves can motivate changes towards current selves (Ibarra, 1999). Strauss et al. (2012) provide an example of identities interacting across temporal domains by examining how salient future work selves can drive individuals to engage in proactive career development behaviors that change how they enact their current professional identity. As another example, Humberd and Rouse (2016) describe how mentors and protégés may identify with past, present, and future selves during different phases of their relationship, affecting the quality of the current mentoring relationship.

In this chapter, I consider how the presence of identity threat and identity construction efforts associated with a current professional identity shape future professional identity clarity growth. Future professional identity clarity refers to confidence about one's intended career path (Strauss et al., 2012). Workers who experience future professional identity clarity growth obtain greater confidence about their

career choices, make job decisions that ring true to who they are, and are more resilient to career setbacks (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Petriglieri, Petriglieri, & Wood, 2018; Vough & Caza, 2017).

I hypothesize and test how identity threat towards a current professional identity (specifically, imposterism; Clance & Imes, 1978; Langford & Clance, 1993; Topping & Kimmel, 1985) influences future professional identity clarity growth. Further, I examine the impact of two identity construction processes (identity work, identity play) on individuals' future professional identity clarity trajectories. Identity construction is often conducted in response to an identity threat (Bataille & Vough, 2020); thus, I also consider how efforts often used to manage a threat associated with a current professional identity shapes future professional identity clarity growth. I now review relevant research on future identities to situate my model.

5.1. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

5.1.1. Future Identities

A future identity is a cognitive representation of who someone sees themselves becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman & James, 2011; Pratt et al., 2006; Strauss et al., 2012). Research suggests that future identities serve as a "homing beacon" (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016: 115), providing present-day benchmarks towards the realization of who one wants to become (Ibarra, 1999; Strauss et al., 2012; Zhang, Liao, Yan, & Guo, 2014). For example, an entry level engineer may desire to become a senior engineer, with senior engineer serving as a future professional identity.

Individuals can envision a plethora of possible future identities that are distinct from who they are today (Markus & Kunda, 1986; Markus & Wurf, 1987). In their

seminal work, Markus and Nurius (1986) argue that individuals construct positive "hoped for" identities and negative "feared" identities. For example, a new hire may hope to become CEO one day at their company and simultaneously fear being stuck in the same job in twenty years. Thus, future identities are not yet realized identities which individuals may or may not desire to one day hold.

Future identities, as compared to past and present identities, are highly flexible and able to be changed. That is, individuals have substantial room to revise their future identities (Cross & Markus, 1991). Individuals can engage in identity construction to close the gap between who they are today and who they wish to be (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Vignoles et al., 2006). For example, a worker desiring to be CEO of a company one day may apply for and take on a team leader role within their current company to help them reach that goal. Furthermore, circumstances, like organizational and personal events, may lead individuals to reconstruct their future identities. For example, Ladge et al. (2012) describe how pregnant professional women revised their future, post-maternity leave, professional identities in light of their new role as a mother.

5.1.2. Future Professional Identity Clarity Growth

Identity clarity around future roles is important because individuals rely upon future identities when making decisions within their present-day roles (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). Without clearly defined future professional identities, workers are likely to disengage with their work and feel disillusioned within their career (Conroy, Becker, & Menges, 2017; Follmer, Talbot, Kristof-Brown, Astrove, & Billsberry, 2018; Shepherd & Williams, 2018). For instance, workers desiring senior management positions may seek out opportunities to achieve those positions by obtaining international experiences (Kraimer, Bolino, & Mead,

2016). In addition, workers may try out aspects of future identities to see what fits with their hopes and aspirations (Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). For example, workers hoping to make a career shift may take on temporary roles (e.g., internships) within a different industry before deciding to leave their current role or industry (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). Thus, the clarity of workers' future professional identities shapes their enactment of current professional identities (Strauss et al., 2012).

In general, research suggests that workers gain greater clarity over their identities over time (Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavalee, & Lehman, 1996; Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010). However, attitudes and behaviors associated with current professional identities can enhance or derail future professional identity clarity growth. Workers who lack confidence in competencies associated with their current professional identity are likely to have attenuated future professional identity clarity growth trajectories. The imposter phenomenon describes a fear of being exposed to others as a fraud (Clance & Imes, 1978; Langford & Clance, 1993; Topping & Kimmel, 1985) and is common in knowledge-based occupations, like academia (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Knights & Clarke, 2014). For example, Bothello and Roulet (2019) describe how young academics often face and must counteract their 'imposter syndrome' as they begin their career. In addition, workers may report high levels of imposterism during career transitions. For example, Ladge and Little (2019) suggest that individuals balancing work-family demands may believe that they have succeeded in tricking others to see them as committed employees when they do not see themselves that way. Furthermore, scholars suggest that in some instances female leaders may feel that they have successfully deceived others to seeing them as qualified for leadership roles (Meister et al., 2017).

I suggest that feelings of imposterism associated with a current professional identity are linked to less positive future professional identity clarity trajectories. Those who hold high levels of imposterism are likely to hold less positive beliefs associated with their current professional identities. Given that identity clarity increases as external and internal perceptions align (DeRue & Ashford, 2010), feelings of imposterism are likely to attenuate future professional identity clarity growth. If workers do not have a solid understanding of who they are in the present, it is difficult for them to use that identity as a foundation for attaining future professional identity clarity growth. For this reason, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: Future professional identity clarity growth is lower for those high in imposterism.

I anticipate that identity construction associated with workers' current professional identities shape future professional identity clarity growth. Identity construction reflects changes that individuals make to their identities that allow for identity change (Anteby, 2008; Brown, 2015; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Identity construction can be done in response to a specific identity threat (Bataille & Vough, 2020), or more broadly in an effort to help move towards a future professional identity. Individuals' approaches to identity construction can vary based on situational and individual differences. In particular, aspects of one's job and career have been shown to influence identity construction (Low, Bordia, & Bordia, 2016; Meister et al., 2017; Nicholson, 1984; Strauss et al., 2012). For example, in his seminal paper on work role transitions, Nicholson (1984) links job attributes (i.e., degree of

discretion and novelty) to the type of work role transition individuals are likely to experience (replication, absorption, determination, exploration).

Furthermore, individual differences, like level of proactivity and holding a chronic self-identity, have also been associated with variance in identity construction approaches (Leavitt & Sluss, 2015; Strauss et al., 2012). Orientations, such as being promotion or prevention focused, have also been linked to different forms of identity construction. For example, Conroy and O'Leary-Kelly (2014) found that promotion focused individuals tend to include a wider range of information in their identity narratives that they test with a wider range of people, as compared to prevention focused individuals. Shepherd and Williams (2018) also considered individuals' regulatory focus, suggesting that promotion focused individuals tend to engage in more identity play behaviors after hitting rock bottom as opposed to prevention focused individuals.

Identity construction can be conducted from a *work* or *play* orientation. Identity work is defined as attempts to form, repair, maintain, strengthen, or revise one's identity (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Identity work typically involves changes made towards a current identity (Caza, Vough, & Puranik, 2018; Koerner, 2014; LaPointe, 2013). For example, Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep (2006) describe how Episcopalian priests engage in various identity work tactics to maintain optimal balance between their social and personal identities. In contrast, identity play refers to exploratory, non-committal behaviors that allow individuals to test-drive a provisional identity (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Shepherd & Williams, 2018). For example, individuals post job-loss who experiment with a new career path could be viewed as engaging in identity play (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). In their seminal paper on identity

play, Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010: 14) differentiate between identity work and play by stating the following: “Identity work and play have different purposes. Whereas, identity work fundamentally seeks the preservation of existing identities or compliance with externally imposed image requirements, I propose that identity play is concerned with inventing and reinventing oneself.” Thus, identity work and identity play are distinct in that the former involves moving towards an ought identity whereas the latter involves trialing an unelaborated and immature identity (Kark, 2011). However, both inherently involve movement towards a *future* identity.

Identity play, which refers to exploratory actions meant to trial a potential identity (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010), is likely to occur during transitional periods where workers may seek to try out new career paths (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). Identity play is considered a functional path towards identity construction that opens up and expands avenues for seeing oneself in the future (Shepherd & Williams, 2018). Business schools are often considered spaces promotive of identity play (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). In these environments, students can safely develop and test potential future selves with low fear of invalidation. In fact, such spaces, also referred to as ‘identity workspaces’ (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010), provide individuals with the resources necessary to craft portable career identities that they can deploy across different organizations and roles. Identity play has also been conceptualized as explicitly associated with the development of a future leader identity (Kark, 2011). Kark (2011) suggests that identity play behaviors, like simulations, role-plays, and outdoor experiences, positively relate to leader identity development.

Identity work, in contrast, is more narrow in focus (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010). Individuals engaging in identity work are focused on the preservation of existing identities. For example, Pratt et al. (2006) describe how medical residents engaged in different forms of identity work to resolve mismatches between the work that they were assigned to do and how they viewed themselves. Despite the value of identity work, it may limit workers in their ability to envision other, clearer possible selves. Further, attention towards a more narrowly defined identity path may mean that individuals engaging in identity work are less adaptable and flexible in renegotiating and redefining their future identity in light of new circumstances. Thus, it is likely that identity play accelerates future professional identity growth more quickly than identity work. For these reasons, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2a, b: Future professional identity clarity growth is (a) higher for those engaging in high levels of identity play and (b) lower for those engaging in high levels of identity work.

5.2. METHOD

I test these hypotheses using longitudinal survey data collected over the course of 9 months, between October 2019 and June 2020.

5.2.1. Sample

My sample was comprised of 27 post-doctoral researchers and 8 late-stage PhD students (all-but-dissertation, 'ABD') within STEM disciplines ('research fellows'), with a total of 223 observations. I obtained my sample by partnering with a non-profit organization ('Greenbranch'). Greenbranch sponsors an annual, nine-month program to encourage collaboration between early-career STEM academics and start-ups. At the start of the

program, Greenbranch created 10 teams, each comprised of 3-4 early-career STEM academics and 1-2 start-up employees. The early-career STEM academics were responsible for providing R&D expertise to their assigned start-ups and were invited to attend a series of networking and career events throughout the program. 100% of the early-career STEM academics within the program participated in the study. Because study participants applied their current professional capabilities to assist start-ups and were prompted to consider their future professional identities within the program, Greenbranch provided an ideal context to study the influence of current professional identity beliefs and behaviors on future professional identity clarity trajectories. Further, issues around workers' future professional identities are likely to be salient within this population, as recent studies indicate grim career prospects for STEM PhDs (National Science Foundation, 2019; Weissmann, 2013).

Greenbranch partners with select universities to host a 1-year fellowship program for late-stage STEM PhD students and post-doctoral STEM students. Greenbranch establishes formalized collaboration opportunities by forming around nine collaboration teams each year that are composed of two startup members, four research fellows, and one or two external mentors who have extensive start-up experience. Collaboration teams are tasked with addressing a critical problem that the start-up faces. For example, a start-up developing a novel form of solar panels will ideally be able to draw upon research fellows' extensive research background to improve the design of their product. Each team formally collaborates for 9 months in duration. Because research fellows are placed onto teams where they may be unfamiliar with the subject matter, and it may be their first time collaborating with industry and outside of their existing academic network, the research

collaboration context enables me to study research fellows' perceptions of imposterism when interacting with other research fellows and start-up companies.

Further, as part of their fellowship, research fellows receive a large unfettered grant that they can spend on research-related activities of their choosing. Greenbranch is unique in that it is the first of its kind to provide late-stage STEM PhD students with almost entirely unrestricted usage of their grant. The unfettered grant provides research fellows with the opportunity to engage in identity play, as identity play is most likely to occur under conditions that are safe and exploratory in nature (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). However, research fellows may also opt to use the grant to advance existing research interests; in that case, they would be engaging in identity work (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Thus, research fellows have substantial volition over how they apply their funds, such that they can choose to use their grant to advance existing research interests or explore novel research questions.

Surveys were administered to participants on a monthly basis over the course of nine months, from October 2019 through June 2020. The total number of observations was 223. Participants had a mean age of 33.4 (SD=4.5) and were diverse in gender (11 females, 24 males).

Participants accessed surveys via a shared page that they frequently used within their collaboration teams. I posted the monthly surveys on these shared pages and then followed-up individually with research fellows who had not yet completed each survey to obtain additional responses. Greenbranch also posted announcements encouraging survey participation. There was no compensation provided to participants.

5.2.2. Procedure

I tested my hypotheses using a repeated-measures design, with monthly data collected over nine months. Survey links were posted at the start of each month on an online platform that participants frequently accessed for their team projects.

5.2.3. Measures

I used a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) for all measures, unless otherwise specified.

Future professional identity clarity. I used two items from Strauss et al.'s (2012) future work self salience scale. The items are: "I am very clear about who and what I want to become in my future work", "What type of future I want in relation to my work is very clear in my mind". The measure was reliable across each week of data collection (Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.87 to 0.98).

Imposterism. I adapted three items from Leary, Patton, Orlando, and Funk's (2000) imposterism scale to fit the context. The items are: "I'm afraid others on my PKP team may find out that I'm not as capable as they think I am", "In some situations I feel like an imposter on my PKP team", "Sometimes I'm afraid others on my PKP team will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack".

I measured imposterism at all time periods, but used the measure from the second time period within the data analysis. This is because I am interested in research fellows' initial levels of imposterism in shaping and having an effect on future professional identity clarity growth. I decided to use the second measurement occasion for imposterism within my analysis instead of the measure from the first measurement occasion because some teams had not yet held their first meeting by the time the first survey was deployed and some

participants would have had trouble answering the imposterism items at that point. Cronbach's alpha for imposterism measured at the second time period was .91.

Intended grant usage (identity work). No measure exists for identity work. I used a one item measure to assess identity work within this context. Participants were asked: To what extent do you plan to use the unfettered grant to… "Advance current research projects." The analyses used identity work measured at the first time period to capture participants' early intentions for using the grant.

Intended grant usage (identity play). No measure exists for identity play. Again, I used a one item measure to measure this form of identity construction. Participants were asked: To what extent do you plan to use the unfettered grant to… "Examine research questions that are distinct from current projects." Similar to the identity play measure, I used participants' responses for this measure from the first time period within the analyses to capture their intent at the beginning of the program for using the grant.

Time. Time ('*Time*') was indexed by 9 measurement occasions (0-8). This coding allowed me to examine the linear growth trend (i.e., trajectory) associated with future professional identity clarity.

Control variables. I controlled for gender and career stage (ABD; post-doctoral researchers). I controlled for gender, as gender has been shown to affect workers' career intentions and progression (e.g., Bonet, Cappelli, & Hamori, 2020; LaPointe, 2013). I further controlled for career stage, as it is possible that ABDs hold less clarity about their future professional identity because they are earlier in their career than post-doctoral researchers. Alternatively, post-doctoral researchers may have less clarity about their future professional

identity clarity if there are limited outlets for their career path after their post-doctoral position.

5.2.4. Analytical Strategy

I tested my hypothesized relationships in R using random coefficient growth modeling (Singer & Willett, 2003). I developed time covariates that represented the 9 time periods (*Time*) to capture participants' growth trajectories. I analyzed 223 responses across 35 individuals over the 9 time periods, with missing survey responses treated as random. Growth models have been shown to be robust when missing data is present (Bliese & Ployhart, 2002; Singer & Willett, 2003).

5.3. RESULTS

I followed standard model building procedures for testing my hypotheses (Bliese & Ployhart, 2002). I first calculated the intraclass correlation coefficient ((ICC(1)) from a null model with future professional identity clarity as the dependent variable. The ICC (.69) suggests that 69% of the total variance in future professional identity clarity can be explained by individual differences. Then, I calculated a fixed effects model (Model 1) containing *Time* as a predictor of future professional identity clarity. Afterwards, I calculated a random effects model which allowed trajectory slopes to vary randomly across individuals. A comparison of model fit, including the fixed effects model and the random effects models specified above, indicates that the model with the random effect for *Time* fit best ($p < .05$). Thus, I retained the random slope term for subsequent model tests. I then tested for evidence of autocorrelation within the model (Lang & Bliese, 2009). Results from this analysis did not support evidence of autocorrelation (L.Ratio=6.29, $p<.05$).

Table 5.1 contains the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all study variables. Table 5.2 provides the regression results.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that future professional identity clarity growth is lower for those high in imposterism. Contrary to my expectations, I found that for individuals high in imposterism, future professional identity clarity trajectories were more positive than those among individuals low in imposterism ($\beta = .04$, $p < .05$; See Figure 5.1). This means that the future professional identity clarity of individuals high in imposterism trended upward relative to individuals low in imposterism.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that future professional clarity growth was higher for those engaging in high levels of identity play and lower for those engaging in high levels of identity work. Neither of these hypotheses were supported ($\beta = .04$, $p > .05$; $\beta = .01$, $p > .05$; See Figures 5.2 and 5.3). One possible explanation for these non-significant results is that external circumstances impacted workers' levels of future professional identity clarity growth in a way that made identity construction efforts less impactful. Over the course of data collection, COVID-19 occurred and undoubtedly had impacts on participants in a myriad of ways. In fact, in the final survey, I asked participants how COVID-19 impacted their career plans. I found that participants consistently reported experiencing setbacks and the need to readjust their career plans (see Table 5.6). Thus, I conducted a series of supplemental analyses to examine the impact of COVID-19 on participants' future professional identity clarity trajectories.

5.4. SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSES

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent impact on research fellows' career outlooks made it a relevant event during data collection that was difficult to ignore.

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted industries, organizations, and employees alike to ponder the future of work (McKinsey, 2020). As quickly as the pandemic arrived, organizations across different industries were forced to make tough decisions, such as widespread budget cuts and furloughs. Academic conferences and hiring posts were cancelled or postponed, creating challenges for research fellows interested in identifying avenues to apply their unfettered grant. Further, during the months following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate within the U.S. skyrocketed from 3.8% in February 2020 to 14.4% in May 2020 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). These substantial labor market shifts resulted in many workers, including research fellows, operating under a persistent cloud of uncertainty and unsure of the ultimate impact of COVID-19 on their careers and future professions. Thus, I analyze the impact of COVID-19 on participants' future professional identity clarity trajectories.

I also analyzed the impact of a new moderator variable – self-efficacy– on participants' future professional identity clarity growth trajectories, in addition to continuing to consider the impact of imposerism. I focus on self-efficacy and imposterism because they are both related to participants' perceptions of their value added to the collaboration teams. I dropped the identity construction moderators, as COVID-19 limited participants' ability to use their unfettered grant to explore novel research interests or advance existing research avenues, as evidenced through anecdotal reports of cancelled conferences.. In fact, a majority of research fellows at the conclusion of the program had leftover funds that they were unable to use, since their plans for using the funds had to be reconsidered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, I felt that the two moderator variables – self-efficacy and imposterism – would better capture perceptions of participants' competency beliefs associated with their

current professional identity, and how different aspects of identity threat (or lack thereof) associated with a current professional identity shape future professional identity clarity growth. Further, similar to the conceptual model presented in Chapter 3, self-efficacy represents beliefs associated with a current professional identity that are likely to have a beneficial impact on one's future professional identity, whereas imposterism beliefs are negative beliefs that are likely to be detrimental to one's future professional identity.

Thus, in this supplemental analysis, I consider the influence of workers' current identity beliefs (self-efficacy, imposterism) on the trajectories associated with workers' levels of future professional identity clarity before an identity-threatening event and after an identity-threatening event. I provide a brief rationale of the hypotheses below.

5.5. HYPOTHESES: SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSES

In the supplemental analyses, I consider the impact of two current professional identity beliefs – self-efficacy and imposterism – on workers' future professional identity clarity trajectories. Self-efficacy refers to workers' confidence in their ability to achieve a goal (Bandura, 1997) – such as an inherent objective to obtain greater clarity over who one is becoming (Campbell et al., 1996). Self-efficacy prompts goal achievement through triggering ongoing proactivity and dedication towards a task (Bandura, 1991; Mitchell, Hopper, Daniels, George-Falvy, & James, 1994; Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). Because self-efficacy directs individuals towards future oriented objectives, those high in self-efficacy should be motivated to persistently engage in behaviors that facilitate the attainment of future professional identity clarity growth. Further, and using the same logic as in the original study, I anticipate that future professional identity clarity growth is lower for those high in imposterism. Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: Future professional identity clarity growth is (a) greater for those high in self-efficacy and (b) lower for those high in imposterism.

While commonplace and one-off events can instigate identity threat, strong identity-threatening events are those that are highly novel, critical, and disruptive to workers' identities (Morgeson, Mitchell, & Liu, 2015; Petriglieri, 2011). For instance, shocks related to one's job, like job loss, leader departures, and peer turnover, can threaten how individuals see themselves professionally (Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996; Shapiro et al, 2016; Shepherd & Williams, 2018). Scholars have also examined how external, strong identity-threatening events can impact workers' identities (e.g., Leigh & Melwani, 2019).

In response to strong identity threatening events, workers seek to stabilize their current situation by protecting or restructuring their threatened identity (Petriglieri, 2011). For instance, workers whose professional identity is threatened by job loss may trial other possible professional identities before adopting a new professional identity and gaining clarity over who they are becoming (Shepherd & Williams, 2018). These identity construction efforts are time-intensive and require significant cognitive and social resources for workers to transition between who they were and who they are becoming (Brown, 2015; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016). Because workers must dedicate substantial resources towards resolving a current threatened professional identity, a conservation of resources argument would suggest that workers then dedicate fewer resources towards obtaining future professional identity clarity growth after a strong identity threatening event (Hobfoll, 1989). Thus, I expect that strong identity threatening events stymie future professional identity clarity growth, suggesting:

Hypothesis 2: A strong identity-threatening event decreases growth in future professional identity clarity, relative to pre-identity-threatening event growth.

Given that self-efficacy provides motivation towards a desired, future goal, it should also provide a protective benefit for workers' future professional identity clarity trajectories following a strong identity-threatening event. This fits with prior research suggesting that those high in self-efficacy are likely to continue with a task as it becomes more challenging (Bandura, 1982, 1991; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Workers high in self-efficacy tend to respond favorably to negative feedback and feel more confident about their ability to achieve their goals when faced with obstacles (Bandura, 1991, 2012; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). As a result, I expect that workers high in self-efficacy will remain committed to future professional identity clarity growth following a strong identity-threatening event, despite limited resources for achieving that goal. Thus, there will be a smaller drop in future professional identity clarity growth after a strong identity-threatening event for those high in self-efficacy, suggesting:

Hypothesis 3: The impact of a strong identity-threatening event on future professional identity clarity growth will be moderated by self-efficacy, such that the decreased growth in future professional identity clarity following the onset of a strong identity-threatening event will be mitigated for individuals high in self-efficacy.

However, I expect that workers high in imposterism will experience greater drops in future professional identity clarity growth after a strong identity-threatening event. Workers high in imposterism tend to feel shame and guilt about themselves and may withdraw from their professional identity for fear of being revealed as a fraud (Johnson et al., 2006; Meister et al., 2017). For instance, Johnson and colleagues (2006) suggest that imposterism shapes

workers' levels of identification with their professional and organizational identities, such that workers may feel more comfortable identifying with their organizational identity as opposed to their professional identity when expertise within a particular field is expected.

As suggested earlier, workers are likely to dedicate more resources towards their current threatened professional identity than obtaining future professional identity clarity growth following a strong-identity threatening event. Because workers high in imposterism already view their current professional identity in a negative light, I expect that such workers are likely to dedicate even more resources to protecting or restructuring their current professional identity following a strong identity threatening event than those low in imposterism. Therefore, I expect that workers high in imposterism are likely to experience a larger decline in future professional identity clarity growth imposed by a strong identity-threatening event, suggesting:

Hypothesis 4: The impact of a strong identity-threatening event on future professional identity clarity growth will be moderated by imposterism, such that the decreased growth in future professional identity clarity will be enhanced for individuals high in imposterism following a strong identity-threatening event.

5.6. METHOD: SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSES

The same sample and procedure were used in this supplemental analysis. I detail below details on the new measures and analytical approach.

5.6.1. Measure

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was measured at the first time period with three items adapted from Jones (1986). I adapted the measure to refer to participants' collaboration teams. A sample item is "My past experiences and accomplishments increase my confidence

that I will be able to perform successfully on my team" (1= "*strongly disagree*"; 5= "*strongly agree*"). Cronbach's alpha was .75.

Identity-threatening event and post-identity-threatening event trend. COVID-19 constitutes a strong event, as it was unexpected, resulted in critical economic and health concerns among workers, and was highly disruptive to workers' day-to-day routines (Morgeson et al., 2015). COVID-19 also prompted economic uncertainty among workers that impaired the enactment of their professional identities in a variety of ways. For instance, COVID-19 resulted in the devaluation of workers' professional identities via mass layoffs (Borden, Akhtar, & Hadden, 2020) and enhanced conflict between worker and parent identities via reduced childcare options (Lewis, 2020).

The data contains 5 measurement occasions prior to the onset of COVID-19 and 4 measurement occasions after. Within the data, I code the onset of COVID-19 as occurring in February 2020, as that aligns with global recognition of COVID-19 as a public health emergency. On January 30th, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a public health emergency, and three days later on February 3rd, 2020, the United States followed suit with their own public health emergency declaration.

I created a post-event covariate ('*Post'*) to examine participants' future professional identity clarity trajectories following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic relative to participants' future professional identity clarity trajectories prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. I assigned a 0 for each month prior to the onset and through the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and allowed that value to increase by 1 point for each observation afterwards. Thus, I analyzed *Post* beginning with observations collected in the 6th measurement occasion. A negative and statistically significant coefficient for *Post*, while

controlling for *Time,* indicates less positive slopes than had the identity-threatening event (i.e., COVID-19) not occurred.

5.6.2. Analytical Strategy

I tested the hypothesized relationships in R using random coefficient discontinuous growth modeling (DGM) (Bliese & Lang, 2016; Singer & Willett, 2003). The DGM is a variation of the mixed-effect model that enables researchers to examine the effects of specific events on trajectories. I developed time covariates that represent time (*Time*) and relative change (*Post)* parameters that align with my hypotheses. The model specifies a linear growth term for the entire measurement period and another covariate examining growth occurring in the measurement occasion following the onset of COVID-19. Again, I analyzed 223 responses across 35 individuals over the 9 time periods, with missing survey responses treated as random. The DGM is robust to missing data (Bliese & Ployhart, 2002; Singer & Willett, 2003).

5.7. RESULTS: SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSES

I followed mostly the same model building procedures as the previous set of analyses. In this supplemental analysis, I also calculated a fixed effects model containing *Time* and *Post* as predictors of future professional identity clarity, as opposed to a fixed effects model containing just *Time.* Afterwards, I calculated a series of random effects models which allow trajectory slopes to vary randomly across individuals. In the first model, I inputted a random effect for *Time* and in the second model, I inputted random effects for both *Time* and *Post*. A comparison of model fit, including the fixed effects model and two random effects models specified above, indicates that the model with the random effects for *Time* and *Post* fit best ($p < .05$; see Table 5.3). Thus, I retained these random slope terms for

subsequent model tests. I then tested for evidence of autocorrelation within the model (Lang & Bliese, 2009). Results from this analysis did not support evidence of autocorrelation (L.Ratio = 1.07; p> .05). I then examined the model's error structure but did not find evidence of heteroscedasticity (loglikelihood= -172.83, p> .05).

Table 5.4 contains the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all study variables. Hypothesis 1a predicted that future professional identity clarity growth is greater for those high in self-efficacy and was tested by the interaction of *Time* and self-efficacy, as reported in Model 3 (Table 5.5). I found support for this hypothesis, such that individuals with high self-efficacy experienced steeper future professional identity clarity trajectories than those with low self-efficacy (β= .18, p< .01; See Figure 5.4). This indicates that the future professional identity clarity of high self-efficacy individuals trended upwards relative to that of individuals with low self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 1b stated that future professional identity clarity growth is lower for those high in imposterism. I tested this hypothesis using the interaction of *Time* and imposterism in Model 3 (Table 5.5). Again, I unexpectedly found that for individuals high in imposterism, future professional identity clarity trajectories were more positive than those among individuals low in imposterism (β= .10, p< .05; See Figure 5.5).

In Hypothesis 2, I predicted that a strong identity-threatening event leads to individuals' future professional identity clarity trajectories that are less positive than pre-identity-threatening event trajectories. I find that the relationship between *Post* and future professional identity clarity was negative and statistically significant (β= -.12, p< .05; See Model 1, Table 5.5). This means that after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the slope of participants' future professional identity clarity trajectories was less positive than that before

the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, the post-COVID-19 slope for future professional identity clarity became slightly negative, indicating that individuals' future professional identity clarity dropped after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Table 5.6 provides additional, qualitative evidence supportive of COVID-19 creating ambiguity around participants' career plans. In the first survey (October 2019), I asked participants the following question: "Please explain what your intended career path is and how you plan to get there.". Then, in the final survey (June 2020), I asked participants: "In what ways, if any, has COVID-19 impacted your intended career path?" As Table 5.6 shows using 6 representative participant responses, many participants started with some degree of clarity over their future professional identity clarity, which COVID-19 lowered through changes in funding opportunities, job opportunities, and immigration challenges.

Hypothesis 3 stated that the impact of a strong identity-threatening event on individuals' future professional identity clarity growth will be moderated by self-efficacy, such that the decreased growth in future professional identity clarity following a strong identity-threatening event will be mitigated for individuals high in self-efficacy. This hypothesis was tested by the interaction of *Post* and self-efficacy in Model 3 (Table 5.5). I found support for this hypothesis, such that for those with high self-efficacy, there was a smaller drop in the upward trend of future professional identity clarity after COVID-19 than for those low in self-efficacy ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .01$; See Figure 5.4).

Lastly, Hypothesis 4 predicted that the impact of a strong identity-threatening event on individuals' future professional identity clarity growth will be moderated by imposterism, such that the decreased growth in future professional identity clarity following a strong identity-threatening event will be enhanced for individuals high in imposterism. I tested this

hypothesis using the interaction of *Post* and imposterism in Model 3 (Table 5.5). Contrary to my expectations, the results were in the opposite direction, but did not reach standard levels of statistical significance (β= -.06, p> .05; See Figure 5.5).

5.8. DISCUSSION

5.8.1.Theoretical Implications

This chapter carries several implications for theory. First, I consider the impact of current professional identity beliefs on individuals' future identity clarity trajectories. Although identities can exist in the past, present, and future (Eury et al., 2018; Ibarra, 1999; Maitlis, 2009; Obodaru, 2017; Strauss et al., 2012), there is a dearth of research that explores the development of future identities and how future identities are affected by past and present identities (Bataille & Vough, In Press; Ramarajan, 2014; Vough & Caza, 2017). In this chapter, I consider the relationship between different temporal domains of individuals' professional identities to provide a more complete view that accounts for their complexity. Future research could build upon my findings by exploring how other types of beliefs shape identities across different temporal domains. For instance, executives who were fired from a previous role may hold negative beliefs associated with their past professional identity, which can stymie future professional identity clarity growth.

My findings from this chapter also provide an opportunity for future research to challenge the notion that high imposterism is bad. Contrary to expectations, I find that imposterism strengthens the pre-COVID-19 trajectory for future professional identity clarity. This unexpected finding suggests a potential motivational benefit to imposterism. Imposterism reflects a perceived poor match with one's current situation, as workers high in imposterism feel like a fraud within their current environment. Given that workers who

perceive a poor match with their situation may engage in activities aimed at improving match quality (Weller et al., 2019), it is possible that those high in imposterism also engage in activities aimed at promoting future professional identity clarity growth to improve match quality with their career path. This perspective aligns with recent research highlighting the potential value associated with imposterism, as imposterism suggests a sense of discomfort where self-growth is possible (Ibarra, 2015; Nurmohamed, 2020).

Lastly, and through my supplemental analysis, I provide a lens to understand how identity-threatening events impact identity growth. Beyond answering calls to empirically examine workers' identity trajectories (Ashforth et al., 2008; Cloutier & Ravasi, 2020; Pratt, 2012; Ybema, 2010), I find that individuals' future professional identity clarity trajectories are shaped by identity-threatening events (here, COVID-19). My findings open the door for future research to examine how other features of identity-threatening events, such as duration, shape workers' future professional identity clarity trajectories. For instance, while workplace injury has been studied as an identity-threatening event (Brown, 2015), those that are long-lasting (e.g., paralysis) may create steeper drops in workers' future professional identity clarity trajectories due to their long-term impact on workers' abilities to perform certain tasks than injuries that are temporary (e.g., broken hand). Thus, the longer that an identity threatening event constrains workers' activities, the greater likelihood of its negative impact on workers' future professional identity clarity trajectories.

5.8.2. Limitations and Areas for Future Research

Despite the contributions of this research, the data in this chapter suffers from potential generalization concerns and a small sample size. It is possible that findings from this chapter may not apply to older workers or those in fields where job security is more

certain. It is important to note, however, that my sample was highly unique and among the first of its kind. As a result, gaining access to a larger sample would have been difficult or impossible. My longitudinal design allowed me to obtain a total of 223 observations, which offsets power concerns typically associated with small samples. Future research may seek to validate my results among a larger sample and/or with a sample from another population.

Further, scholars could examine the impact of another identity threatening event within organizations (e.g., downsizing effort) or one manipulated within an experimental setting. Researchers could measure participants' competency beliefs before the identity threatening event, as well as their future professional identity clarity before and after the event. This would help to validate the results of my supplemental analyses and generalize them to another setting.

Additionally, it is possible that the human capital of research fellows may shape their future professional identity clarity trajectories. As mentioned earlier, research fellows came from different universities and were at different stages of their academic career (ABD, post-doc). For example, since specific human capital is more strongly related to performance than general human capital (Crook, Todd, Combs, Woehr, & Ketchen, 2011), it is possible that research fellows whose research backgrounds more closely align with the start-up's focus area also hold more positive competency beliefs (i.e., higher self-efficacy, lower imposterism). Future research could measure participants' general human capital (e.g., GPA) or specific human capital (e.g., extent of alignment between their research interests and the start-up's focus area) within these trajectories. Further, scholars could retest these hypotheses considering employees' human capital within their workgroup or organization. To that end,

the type and extent of individuals' human capital may shape their future professional identity clarity trajectories.

Table 5.1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Future professional identity clarity	3.51	.90						
2. *Time*	4.00	2.59	.14					
3. Identity play	3.79	1.02	.24	.00				
4. Identity work	3.97	1.13	.29	.00	-.38			
5. Imposterism	2.40	1.06	-.07	.00	-.07	-.10		
5. Gender	1.69	.47	.02	.00	-.01	-.25	-.19	
6. Stage	1.77	.43	-.16	.00	.18	-.35	.09	.07

$^{\dagger}p < 0.10$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$.
Gender: 1=female, 2=male
Stage: 1= ABD, 2=post-doc

Table 5.2 Growth Model Results Predicting Future Professional Identity Clarity Growth

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
(Intercept)	3.53**	0.34	.79	1.24	1.94*	1.37
Gender (2)	0.11	0.29	.17	0.32	0.16	0.32
Stage (2)	-0.39	0.32	-0.29	0.36	-0.29	0.36
Time	0.06*	0.02	0.04	0.02	-0.28	0.18
Imposterism			-0.00	0.14	-0.17	0.16
Identity play			.40	0.17	0.25	0.19
Identity work			.29	0.15	0.25	0.17
*Time**imposterism (H1)					0.04*	0.02
*Time**identity play (H2a)					0.04	0.03
*Time**identity work (H2b)					0.01	0.02

Note. Results based on 223 observations nested within 35 individuals.
$^{\dagger}p < 0.10$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$. Two-tailed tests.
Gender: 1=female, 2=male
Stage: 1= ABD, 2=post-doc

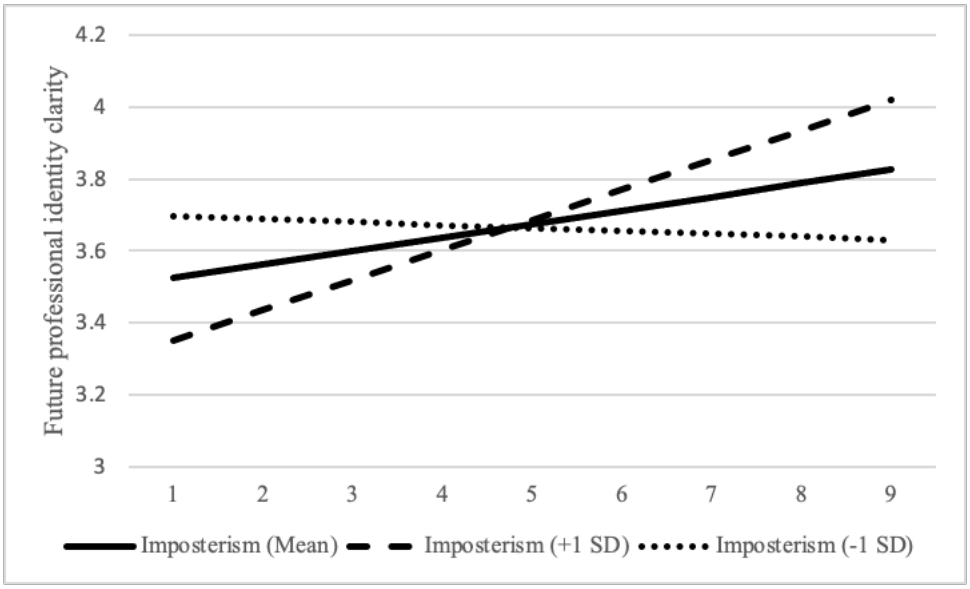

Figure 5.1 The Moderating Role of Imposterism on Future Professional Identity Clarity Growth (H1)

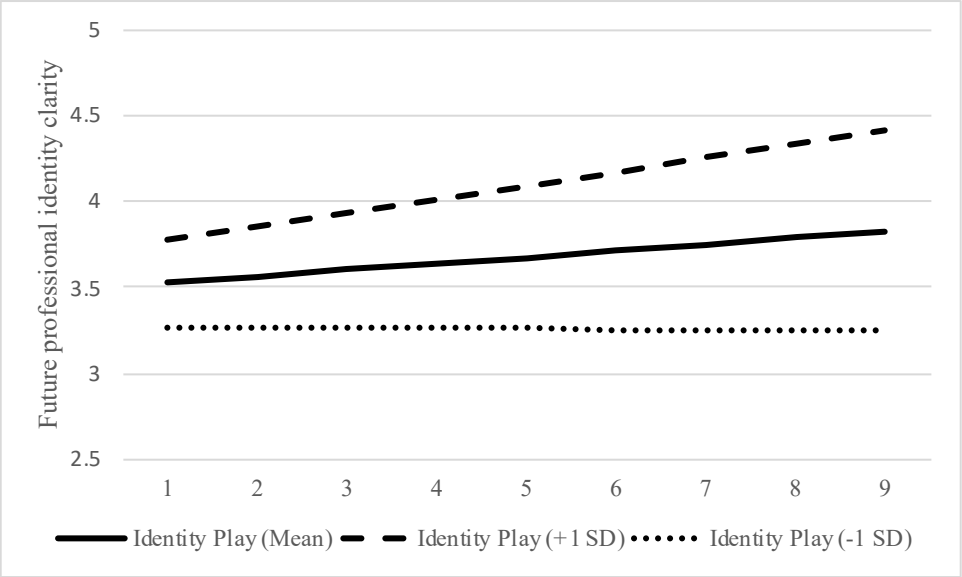

Figure 5.2 The Moderating Role of Identity Play on Future Professional Identity Clarity Growth (H2a)

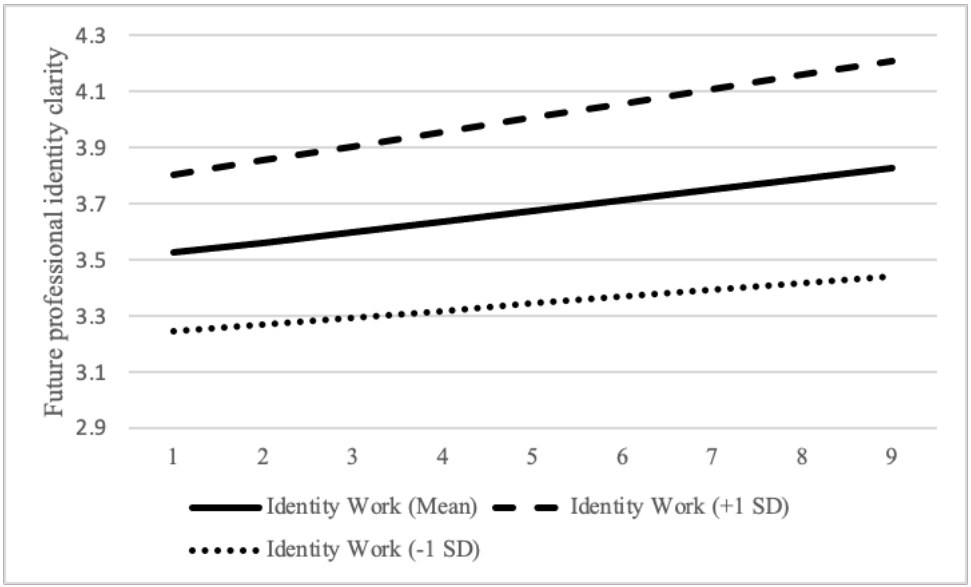

Figure 5.3 The Moderating Role of Identity Work on Future Professional Identity Clarity Growth (H2b)

Table 5.3 Model Comparison of Random Effects (Supplemental Analysis)

Fit Statistic	Model 1 Random Intercepts	Model 2 Random Intercepts & Slopes (*Time* only)	Model 3 Random Intercepts & Slopes (*Time* and *Post*)
AIC	418.35	377.05	370.65
BIC	438.69	404.17	407.93
Log Likelihood	-203.18	-180.53	-174.33
DF	6	8	11
Δ DF		2	3
P-value		<.0001	0.0061

Table 5.4 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables (Supplemental Analysis)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender	1.69	.46						
2. Stage	1.77	.42	.07					
3. *Time*	4.00	2.59	.00	.00				
4. *Post*	1.11	1.45	.00	.00	.89**			
5. Self-efficacy	3.63	.76	.11	-.06	.00	.00		
6. Imposterism	2.40	1.04	-.19*	.09	.00	.00	-.44**	
7. Future professional identity clarity	3.51	.90	.02	-.16*	.14*	.10	.19**	-.07

Note. Results based on 223 observations nested within 35 individuals. †$p < 0.10$, *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$. Two-tailed tests.
Gender: 1=female, 2=male
Stage: 1= ABD, 2=post-doc

Table 5.5 Discontinuous Growth Model Results Predicting Future Professional Identity Clarity

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
(Intercept)	3.45**	.35	1.89	1.24	4.34**	1.38
Gender	.10	.29	-.07	.34	-.02	.35
Stage	-.38	.32	-.27	.37	-.26	.37
Time	.11**	.04	.08*	.04	-0.81**	.23
Post (H2)	-.12*	.05	-.08†	.05	.66†	.37
Self-efficacy			.42	.27	-.05	.30
Imposterism			.05	.17	-.26	.19
*Time**self-efficacy (H1a)					.18**	.05
*Time**imposterism (H1b)					.10**	.03
Post *self-efficacy (H3)					-.16*	.08
Post *imposterism (H4)					-.06	.05

Note. Results based on 223 observations nested within 35 individuals. †$p < 0.10$, *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$. Two-tailed tests.

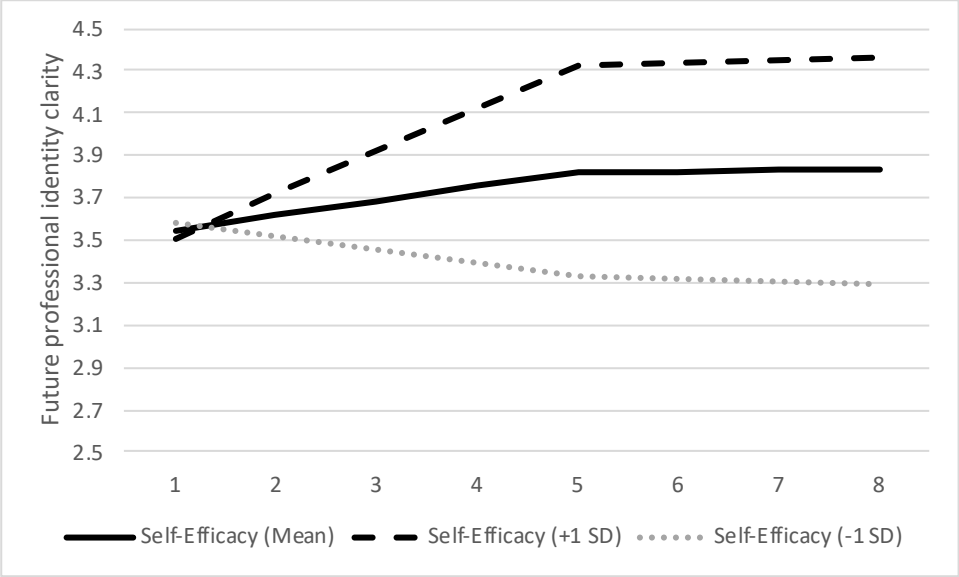

Figure 5.4 The Moderating Role of Self-Efficacy on Future Professional Identity Clarity Growth (Supplemental Analysis)

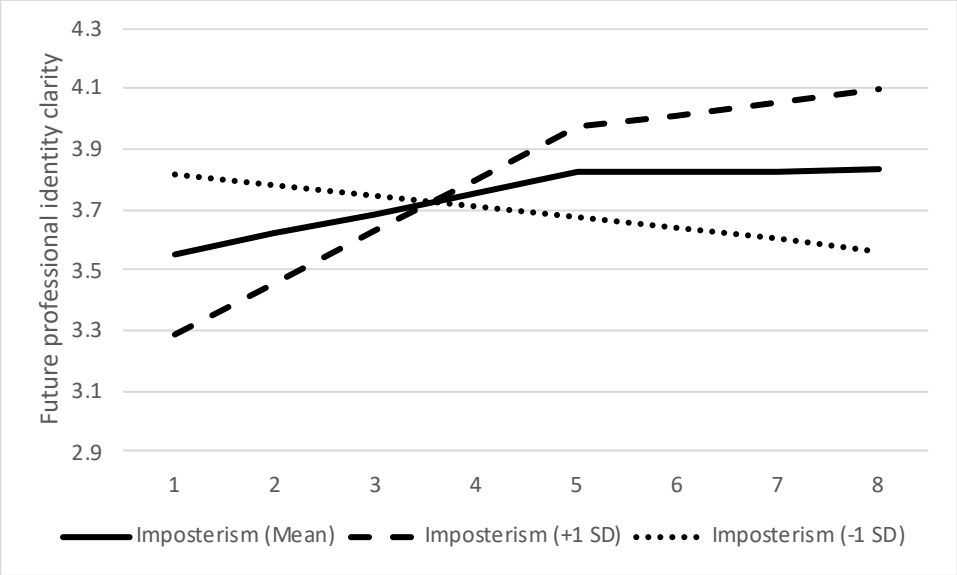

Figure 5.5 The Moderating Role of Imposterism on Future Professional Identity Clarity Growth (Supplemental Analysis)

Table 5.6 Demonstrative Pre- and Post-Covid-19 Career Intentions

Participant Example	Please explain what your intended career path is and how you plan to get there.	In what ways, if any, has COVID-19 impacted your intended career path?
Example #1	I see myself as a tenure-track professor in an R1-university in two years. Toward this end, I am working on developing a new research direction different from my Ph.D. and Postdoc advisor. One of the crucial criteria for these academic positions is evidence that one can bring grant funding.	Not sure yet. Perhaps openings will be scarce in this cycle.
Example #2	I would like to continue to conduct research as that [is] what I really enjoy as part of my postdoc. However, whether that is in industry or academia in the future I am uncertain. I plan to continue to build connections and collaborations. I am fortunate to be in a position to live anywhere in the world, therefore if and when a job arises I am willing to move for that perfect position.	COVID-19 has made job security/ funding uncertain for the foreseeable future. I had been offered a job prior to COVID and am waiting to see whether that job offer will be honoured post COVID.
Example #3	Within 5-years time, would like to become a faculty member of a university (e.g., assistant professor). My plan is that i am going to take up one/two more overseas postdoctoral research position, in addition will teach part-time if possible (now i am a part-time lecturer. In addition, will continue to apply for fellowships and grant (e.g., the current [Greenbranch] Research Fellowship).	In some way, covid-19 may have some impact to my next move. My plan to apply for overseas job is on hold. Will think of the overseas application later when the worldwide covid situation alleviates.
Example #4	To become a Professor	Unknown at this point
Example #5	I want to be a researcher either in academia or industry. My plan is get well trained as a postdoctoral researcher in terms of different skills such as independent research capabilities, collaborating and communication, grant application, etc.	All the positions that I have applied for were delayed and the funding to support my postdoc training was also largely impacted.

Example #6	I am planning on earning a professorship position. I am applying for professorship positions.	In all ways. My research lab is shut down so no progress on my project can be made. Purchasing is shut down, so ordering and prep can not be done. Many Universities and Colleges are on hiring freezes and froze last years searches, so the job market is a challenge.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

With a focus on how identity threat is experienced across multiple identities, this dissertation contributes most squarely to research on identity threat. I began by providing a comprehensive review of identity threat research, considering the sources, outcomes, and resolution of identity threat. Following my review, I provided an intrapersonal identity network approach to conceptualizing identity threat across multiple identities. I considered how features of workers' identity networks (centralization, network density in terms of enhancing relationships, network density in terms of conflicting relationships) shape the identity threat – well-being relationship. I conducted a partial test of my model in Chapter 4, followed by another empirical study considering temporal ties between a threatened identity and future identity in Chapter 5. My dissertation carries several overarching theoretical and practical implications, which I now detail below.

6.1. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This dissertation carries several implications for research on identity threat. First, I provide a framework for examining identity threat that accounts for workers' multiple identities. In this dissertation, I extend Ramarajan's (2014) intrapersonal identity network approach to explain how identity threat unfolds across workers' multiple identities. I suggest that features of the relationships between workers' threatened identity and other identities are important for understanding outcomes associated with identity threat. While prior identity threat research considers identity threat outcomes in relation to a single

identity, my model highlights the importance of identity centralization and network density – features of one's intrapersonal identity network – in the identity threat process.

An intrapersonal identity network approach to examining identity threat has implications for how scholars study setbacks that workers face, such as career setbacks. For example, Vough and Caza (2017) consider that workers can benefit from denied promotions when they construct growth based stories following a denied promotion. Using an intrapersonal identity network approach to studying identity threat suggests that other identities, such as enhancing identities, ought to be included within workers' growth based stories. For example, because dual career couples often process challenging situations together (e.g., Crawford et al., 2019), growth based stories associated with one's career may be more intertwined with non-work identities than previously considered. That is, non-work identities like a parent, child, or athlete identity can help workers rationalize and problem solve issues associated with work, providing vital input as workers construct their growth-based stories. Alternatively, workers may lean on their work-related identities to process difficult situations associated with their personal lives. For example, a worker experiencing death in their family may lean on their work-related identity, such as the structure a commute to the office provides, in order to cope with grief associated with the death. Thus, relationships between the threatened identity and other identities within one's intrapersonal identity network shapes how workers process identity threats both inside and outside of work, and outcomes associated with those threats.

Second, my model implies that identity threat can impact other identities beyond the focally threatened identity. By accounting for relationships between the threatened

identity and other identities in one's intrapersonal identity network, we can understand how identity threat can shape the meanings that workers attribute to other, non-threatened identities. In Chapter 5, I show that competency beliefs associated with a current professional identity have implications for the rate that workers obtain clarity over their future professional identity.

Scholars could apply my model to study the opposite of identity threats: identity opportunities. Identity opportunities refer to "experience[s] appraised as indicating potential for growth in the value, meanings, or enactment of an identity" (Bataille & Vough, in press). As workers perceive opportunities associated with their current professional identity, it possible then that their net of other, possible future identities also becomes widened. Further, while identity motives, defined as specific identity goals that orient identity construction efforts, are normally satisfied via one's current set of identities (e.g., current work-related identity; Vignoles et al., 2006), it is possible that they can be satisfied by future identities. This means that the fulfillment of identity motives via future identities could offset identity harm associated with a current professional identity whose identity motives are not being met. For example, a low level employee who is heir to a family-owned company may experience status threat associated with their current professional identity due to their low status position. However, because they are the designated heir to the family firm one day, they may experience self-enhancement through their future professional identity which offsets status threat experienced in regard to their current professional identity.

A third implication of my dissertation revolves around multiple identity threats. In Chapter 4, I find that there is a non-additive effect to identity threats, such that an

additional identity threat (i.e., identity conflict) does not result in a strengthened negative relationship between identity threat and well-being. One explanation for this intriguing finding is that workers experiencing identity conflict are already worn down by identity threat, and additional identity threats may do little to shift their levels of well-being. This indicates that the relationship between identity threat and well-being may not operate in an additive fashion as more identity threats are experienced. In fact, workers' levels of well-being appear to beslightly higher in the high identity threat and high identity conflict condition than in the high identity threat and low identity conflict condition.

It is also possible workers holding conflicting identities have scripts they can use to help them process additional identity threats. Scripts are defined as predetermined plans of action that guide the enactment of an identity (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). They provide rules that determine individual behavior within a given situation (Barley, 1989; Duberley, Cohen, & Mallon, 2006; Zikic & Richardson, 2016). For example, an engineer may have a script to greet colleagues every morning when he walks into the office. Scripts are especially helpful in knowing how to approach challenging situations (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Crawford et al., 2019; Zikic & Richardson, 2016). Much research has explored the role of scripts during periods of transition, like unemployment. For example, Ashforth (2001) describes how individuals construct transition scripts to aid in micro-role transitions, like transitioning from home to the office. In a recent study, Crawford and colleagues (2019) suggest that relational scripts shared between dual-earner couples promotes effective sensemaking when recovering from work shocks (e.g., a job promotion that requires a geographical relocation). To that end, because scripts can be helpful resources during challenging

situations, they can also aid during identity threats when workers have a history of identity conflicts.

6.2. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

My dissertation carries several practical implications for managers. First, applying an intrapersonal identity network approach to studying identity threats suggests that employees can turn to identities beyond the focally threatened identity to alleviate identity harm. As shown in Chapter 4, the presence of enhancing identities can offset the negative relationship between identity threat and well-being. To that end, managers ought to encourage their subordinates to create identities that enhance their professional identity. For example, involvement in subcommittees within the organization, like health and wellness committees, can provide a source of enhancement for workers' professional identities. Connections forged within these subcommittees or approaches used to solve problems within the subcommittee may provide workers with resources that they can use to then process setbacks experienced with regard to their professional identity. As another example, it is possible that employees who have enhancing relational identities with their supervisors (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007) can lean on those relational identities to offset challenges associated with their professional identity. Most notably, research on perceived supervisor support acknowledges the value of such enhancing relational identities for identity threats (Eisenberger, Stinglehamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Perceived supervisor support refers to perceptions that one's supervisor values them, their contributions, and their overall well-being (Kottke & Sharafinski, 1988). However, such supervisor support may sometimes come at a cost to managers by resulting in increased negative affect among managers (e.g., Lanaj & Jennings, 2020), so

organizations should work to foster healthy supervisor-employee relationships so as to not overwhelm managers in these scenarios.

Second, my dissertation implies that setbacks experienced in the present have wide-reaching ramifications for how workers think about their future identities. In Chapter 5, I found that participants experiencing low self-efficacy reported less positive future professional identity clarity trajectories. This means that low self-efficacy slows down the rate that workers are able to gain clarity about where they are heading professionally. This may mean that employees who become disillusioned with their future professional path as a result of identity threats are more likely to leave their organization or pursue opportunities elsewhere if those alternative paths provide a clearer future professional identity for them. To that end, managers ought to help workers resolve challenges or setbacks tied to their current situation in order to help them more quickly gain clarity over their future professional identity. As mentioned before, when workers experience future professional identity clarity growth, they make more confident and clearly defined career decisions. Managers can intervene to help employees process identity threats by validating their challenges and offsetting feelings of low self-efficacy, but fostering potential motivational aspects of imposterism.

Lastly, the results of this dissertation imply that managers should be aware and sensitive to workers' repertoire of identities. Cultures around authenticity and bringing your whole self to work (e.g., Sandberg, 2013) can help managers be more aware of workers' set of work and non-work identities within their intrapersonal identity network. Managers can proactively help workers to realize enhancing work and non-work identities to establish the foundation for an intrapersonal identity network that is dense in

terms of enhancing relationships. Managers can do so by helping employees establish enhancing work-related identities or realize how non-work identities can provide value for work-related identities. For example, how workers prepare for athletic competitions outside of work may help inform how they can better prepare for big presentations at work. By encouraging authenticity and transparency around workers' full set of identities, managers can play a vital role in helping employees to forge these enhancing relationships.

6.3. CONCLUSION

The objective of this dissertation was to provide a multiple identity view to workers' experiences of identity threat. Through a comprehensive review of identity threat research, followed by a foundational conceptual model and two subsequent empirical tests, I provide insight into ways that managers can positively influence how employees experience identity threats, and offset the negative implications associated with them. In conclusion, this dissertation forges an initial path for advancing research on identity threat that acknowledges the complex and multifaceted ways that workers' identities are intertwined.

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