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Is It the Same Boat? Sailing the Interdisciplinarity of Entrepreneur(ship) and Leader(ship) Nexus: Romanian Migrants Stirring Transformational Leadership in London

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Abstract: *To fully understand the transformative leadership potential inherent in the entrepreneurial practices of migrant entrepreneurs, it is crucial for readers of this study to go beyond the common stereotypes of instability and economic survival often associated with migrant entrepreneurship. This study employs interpretive constructivism to investigate transformational leadership identities and practices shared by 16 Romanian immigrant entrepreneurs in London on Facebook and via semi-structured interviews. The participants shared their practices as transformational leaders within their communities and in broader British society. This study draws on theories of Social Identity and self-efficacy (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Leader-Follower (Graen & Cashman, 1975) to enhance our comprehension of how entrepreneurs enacted idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration to motivate and inspire stakeholders towards a broader focus on social positive impact rather than solely economic outcomes. This study focuses on Romanian immigrant entrepreneurs and contributes to the interdisciplinary understanding of transformational leadership through entrepreneurship. It facilitates the shift from belief-driven policies to evidence-driven policies that promote and support the inclusivity of entrepreneurs and leaders.*

Keywords: *Transformational leadership, migrant entrepreneurs, netnography, qualitative*

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Introduction

With increasing global mobility, migrant entrepreneurs are not only a source of long-term economic progress, but also stewards of bicultural values and beacons of hope within their own communities and the broader host society (Chitac, 2023). But the socioeconomic potential and value to the host society are veiled by the epithet "fake entrepreneurship" (Thornquist, 2013), which has been ascribed to Eastern European migrant enterprises (Gurau et al., 2020). Many studies have demonstrated the economic impact of migrant entrepreneurship, including job creation, in host nations (John, 2019), but only a few have examined the social side of this phenomenon (Chitac, 2023; Evansluong et al., 2019).

Yet, the social potential embedded in migrant entrepreneurship remains underexplored, despite its importance for understanding the heterogeneity of today's diverse communities and designing inclusive programs, practices, and policies (Vertovec, 2019).

This study explores the emerging interdisciplinary link between entrepreneurship and transformational leadership, going beyond the usual economic perspective on migrant entrepreneurship. As a result, the purpose of this study is to advance our understanding of how London-based Romanian migrant entrepreneurs become transformational leaders. Particularly, it initiates a qualitative investigation to answer the following research questions: *How do RMEs enact transformational leadership practices through entrepreneurship in London?*

This study employs interpretive constructivism perspective to focus on the transformational leadership practices through entrepreneurship shared by 16 Romanian immigrant entrepreneurs living in London (LRMEs). As such, it is informed by the Social Identity and self-efficacy (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Leader-Follower (Graen & Cashman, 1975) theories, which shape this study's interdisciplinary perspective.

This is one of the very few studies focusing on Romanian immigrant entrepreneurs and their untapped transformational leadership potential. As such, it contributes to the interdisciplinary literature and practice on transformational leadership through migrant entrepreneurship and advances the empirical evidence supporting Vertovec's (2019) call for a shift from conviction to evidence-based policies that support the diversity of entrepreneurs and leaders.

The subsequent sections of this article are organized in the following manner: The first section provides a comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical foundations that are pertinent to the leadership and

entrepreneurship fields. The second section offers a rationale for utilizing the interpretative constructivist methodology and method that are appropriate for this investigation. The third section presents the research outcomes and scrutinizes them in relation to prior empirical data. The fourth section delineates the theoretical and practical contributions of this article, considering its contextual and temporal constraints, as well as future research directions. Lastly, the fifth section concisely summarizes the conclusions of this article.

Literature review

The interdisciplinary nature of this study lies in the convergence of management (i.e. leadership), entrepreneurship (i.e. migrant entrepreneurship), and the social sciences (i.e. transformational practices). This approach facilitates comprehension of the mechanisms through which Romanian migrants develop into transformational leaders as entrepreneurs.

This study's context

The United Kingdom has a rich and varied history of migration, which has paved the way for the phenomenon of "unprecedented super-diversity" (Vertovec, 2007), brought about by the recent intra-EU free movement and the resulting influx of Central and Eastern European immigrants (Fox & Mogilnicka, 2017). As per Favell's (2008, p. 701) assertion, the current influx of migration within the European Union constitutes the most significant demographic shift on the continent since the conclusion of World War II. According to Engbersen & Snel (2013), the immigrants in question have adopted a migratory commuting lifestyle between the Eastern and Western regions.

The present investigation highlights that London has undergone a significant cultural shift due to the influx of a highly heterogeneous cohort of immigrants (Pardo, 2018). The current demographic makeup of the city reveals that over 37 percent of its inhabitants are of diverse racial and ethnic origins (ONS, 2019). Superdiversity is a highly dynamic phenomenon that mirrors the city's own dynamism. The city is host to the second largest group of EU migrants in the United Kingdom, after Poles, namely Romanians (ONS, 2019). This has fostered an overlap of various affiliations that have a significant impact on the identities and life trajectories of all members of society.

From entrepreneur (ship) to leader(ship): the interdisciplinary nexus

Wilson (2023) has extensively examined the scientific foundation of leadership. The origins of contemporary leadership studies have been traced back by Tead (1935) and Cawthon (1996) to the great man notions of the 1840s and trait models of the 1940s. In contemporary times, the field of leadership studies has increasingly emphasised the examination of leaders' conduct and actions. According to Burns (1978; 2012) and Bass (1990), transformational leaders motivate their adherents to seek novel opportunities. By contrast, transactional leaders engage in a process of bargaining with their subordinates, whereby they offer incentives or sanctions in exchange for compliance and performance.

Throughout much of the twentieth century, the concept of the leader-centric perspective, which pertains to the ability of a leader to exert influence over groups of individuals, was a prominent topic of discussion within the field of leadership studies (Rost, 1993). Burns' (1993, p. 90) definition of leadership, which characterises leaders as compelling their followers to act towards specific objectives, can be considered a significant shift in the prevailing paradigm. The aforementioned objectives encapsulate the collective values and motivations of the leaders and constituents of the group, encompassing their desires, requirements, and ambitions. According to Rost's (1993) findings, the presence of four fundamental components is imperative for the existence or occurrence of leadership. These components include the individuals who initiate the leadership, the leadership process itself, the followers, and the objectives. According to Rost (1993), leadership can be described as a connection of influence between a leader and their followers, where both parties strive towards achieving shared goals and objectives. Subsequently, the individual reconsidered the social philosophy that shaped their perspective on leadership and contended that the notion of "followership" is outdated and counterproductive in a postindustrial setting (Rost, 2008, 54). The concept of leadership can be defined through tripod ontologies, which involve the interplay between *leaders, followers, and shared goals*. This framework encompasses various definitions, including Burns' (1978; 2012) and Rost's (1993) leader-centric perspectives, as discussed in the works of Bohl (2019).

The existing state of leadership research and practise requires a change in viewpoint, prompting scholars and practitioners to broaden their comprehension of leadership beyond its traditional function as a mere component of organisational analysis (Kelly, 2014). Moreover, the concept of "leadership" is a linguistic construction that occupies a distinctive place in

common parlance, given its capacity to encompass various possible connotations and understandings. Likewise, the aforementioned term possesses the capacity to navigate and oscillate within a system of signs, embodying the functions of both the signifier and the signified, thus functioning as both the medium and the objective, as well as the stimulus and the response. Bohl (2019) asserts that a thorough comprehension of leadership necessitates an analysis of it as both a customary organisational occurrence and a personal interaction.

When examining the ontological perspective, two primary questions arise concerning the presence of leadership: the purpose of leadership's existence and the mode of leadership's existence. Kan & Parry (2004) have delineated four fundamental attributes of leadership, which encompass the ability to instigate change, exert influence on others, navigate group dynamics, and achieve desired objectives. The application of Rost's (2008) fundamental components, specifically significant transformation, influential associations, and common objectives, is apparent in the embodiment of these four attributes (objectives). The use of language that places emphasis on the leader, such as the use of leader-follower terminology, recognises the importance of leadership in promoting engagement and involvement among groups of people. It can be posited that the definitions of leadership theories, including both heroic and post-heroic, share a fundamental basis. Bohl (2019) posits that the identification of common interests may provide a foundation for collaborative efforts aimed at accomplishing a shared objective.

Theories that focus on the leader's characteristics are known as leader-centric theories, while leadership process theories highlight the concept that leadership is an ongoing process that changes over time and is dependent on the circumstances (Simpson, 2016, p. 113). The processual elements of the as-practice environment rely heavily on interpersonal communication, which involves individuals engaging in a dialogic process to create meaning and produce new outcomes. This highlights the importance of effective communication in this context. The aforementioned environment has prompted a reframing of this emergent phenomenon, emphasising its importance, as noted by Simpson (2016, p. 168).

The emergence of a new worldview has required a corresponding adjustment in one's epistemological stance. As a result, there has been a shift in the focus of organisational leadership from positivism to a more intricate comprehension of leadership as a dynamic process that involves social interaction and development. Kempster (2009) proposed a theoretical framework that pertains to the nascent social perspective on leadership, emphasising its unexplored capacity for bringing about transformation. The

author proposed an epistemological framework for leadership that is informed by process-based learning, which is shaped by the interplay between cognitive, situated, and social learning. In essence, this methodology facilitates the process of leaders establishing their distinct identities through the materialisation of their actions and past encounters (Bohl, 2019).

This perspective distinguishes between de facto and de jure leadership to fully grasp the relationship between leadership and entrepreneurship. Upon examination from a dyadic standpoint, it is apparent that de jure leadership is insufficient and dispensable. Formal leadership is associated with the behaviour of an individual whose leadership responsibilities and entitlements are authorised by those in authority. De jure attributes refer to the perceived state of affairs, as indicated by the organisational structure, regulations, employment requirements, and official policies. The de facto dimension of leadership concerns the practical implementation of responsibilities and power structures as they materialise in reality. Wilson et al. (2023) posits that a significant discrepancy exists between the observable presentation of a phenomenon and its inherent nature. Despite the lack of consensus regarding the definition and importance of leadership, and the plethora of theories surrounding it, it is crucial for both scholars and practitioners to view leadership not solely as a constituent of organisational analysis (Kelly, 2014), but rather as a ubiquitous organisational phenomenon and individual experience (Bohl, 2019).

Therefore, it is increasingly acknowledged that understanding the relationship between entrepreneurship and leadership is crucial for addressing global issues and changes. There are identified five areas of theoretical convergence in the relationship between leadership and entrepreneurship. The areas encompassed are vision, influence, creativity and innovation, planning, and dispositional and cognitive approaches. In the field of entrepreneurial scholarship, vision is considered to improve the performance of new ventures through shared leadership (Renko et al., 2015).

Influence plays a significant role in entrepreneurial leadership by inspiring and persuading individuals to work towards common goals. This is achieved through the leader's positive display of emotions, which has a positive effect on employee satisfaction, commitment, and happiness within the organisation (Cardon et al., 2017).

Creativity and innovation encompass the skills and knowledge necessary for generating and implementing ideas. Entrepreneurial approaches have been found to positively influence employees' creativity and innovative performance (Welter et al., 2016). Similarly, leadership characterised by

entrepreneurial effectuation is often linked to increased levels of creativity and innovation among employees.

The entrepreneurial process places a considerable emphasis on leadership, as entrepreneurs are primarily responsible for facilitating the discovery and creation of opportunities, as well as the exploitation and commercialization of such opportunities. The concept of entrepreneurial leadership is motivated by current societal challenges and barriers, with a key focus on the ability to create social value that extends beyond the confines of the organisation. There is evidence to support the notion that transformative leadership can yield favourable results for employees. More precisely, it amplifies the level of dedication of employees towards the organisation and the nearby community, along with their proficiency to participate in creative ideation (Amankwaa et al., 2021).

Contemporary crises like the COVID-19 epidemic and the Ukraine crisis have highlighted the importance and accountability of entrepreneurial leadership (Audretsch & Tamvada, 2022). Leaders must advocate for the company's interests to internal and external stakeholders. Contemporary global communities face major issues that require good leadership. If entrepreneurs don't transcend the market economic rationale that prioritises profit over all else, Tamvada & Chowdhury (2022) say they could worsen world challenges. A powerful reason for inquiry is the global health issue. Several entrepreneurs saw an opportunity to maximise their short-term profits by charging exorbitant rates for basic commodities sold on digital market platforms. Some people prioritised long-term goals like space exploration over immediate needs like finding a cure for the pandemic (The Guardian, 12 June 2021). Without aggressive leadership from business owners during times of turbulence, normalcy is unlikely to return. Entrepreneurship has historically required strong leadership skills (Audretsch & Tamvada, 2022).

This is a major change from typical commercial practises. In responsible leadership, new theories like TRY (Voegtlin et al., 2020) are gaining popularity. The TRY (Trust-Respect-You) leadership model emphasises the importance of trust, respect, and authentic care for colleagues and society as essential qualities for entrepreneurs to cultivate to become effective leaders within their organisations and in the community (Audretsch & Tamvada, 2022).

Transformational entrepreneurship-leadership

Against this conceptual landscape, contextualizing entrepreneurial leadership creates the opportunity to explore its social, transformational

potential. As such, recent evidence suggests that CEOs as entrepreneurial leaders (EL) start businesses and recruit a team to achieve their goals (Hensellek et al., 2023) to better their situation. Entrepreneurial leaders value followers' drive and confidence. Transformational leaders inspire creativity and invention in their followers, according to Bandura (1986) and Cardon et al. (2009). Understanding entrepreneurial leadership demands focusing on leaders' and followers' opportunity-oriented attitudes.

According to Fløistad (1991), entrepreneurial leadership (EL) promotes goal achievement, professional growth, and self-reliance. Researchers dispute whether entrepreneurial and transformational leadership should be regarded two types or integrated into one (Pan et al., 2021). Transformational leaders care about their followers' professional and personal success, according to Zaman et al. (2020). While the EL model may not give personalised attention, contingent rewards can help followers reach their full potential under transformational leadership (Al-Ghazali, 2020). Transformational and entrepreneurial leadership value intellectual stimulation. However, charismatic role modelling and inspiring motivation differ. According to Podsakoff et al. (1990), followers seldom describe business leaders as charismatic or inspirational. All charm aside, an enterprising leader inspires others to follow suit. While a transformational leader uses charm, inspiring appeals, dramatic PR symbols, or other image management strategies to evoke these emotions (Renko et al., 2015).

Burns (1978) introduced transforming, which became transformational leadership. However, criticism has led to the distinction between transformational and transformative leadership (Shields, 2013). Socially oriented transformational leadership increases employee engagement and effort to attain organisational goals. Sun & Leithwood (2012) state that organisational members empower those who inspire their commitment to common aims. Transformational leadership involves direction-setting, personal growth, and structural transformation.

Table 1 highlights the fundamental differences between transformational and transformative leadership styles.

Table 1. Transformational vs transformative leadership

Transformational leadership	Transformative leadership
Inspirational motivation	Deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge frameworks that cause inequality.
Individualized consideration	Power and privilege acknowledgement
Intellectual stimulation	Prioritising individual and public good
Idealised influence	The pursuit of freedom, justice, and equality

Source: Based on Chitac & Agheorghiesei (2023) and Shields, (2013)

The theory of transformational leadership, based on Burns' seminal work on leadership (McDowelle, 2009), gained legitimacy in 1978 by portraying the leader as a role model who inspires and motivates employees to become change agents and achieve goals beyond the immediate enterprise economic goals. According to Conger (1999), transformational leadership involves being a leader. To be transactional was to calculate manager. The heroic leader reappeared, evocative of "great man" notions, with a humanistic twist due to the transformational leader's focus on learning.

Despite operationalization criticism, transformational leadership through role modelling and mentorship improves contextual performance as entrepreneurs become transformational leaders (Deinert et al., 2015). Although transformational leadership typologies differ, they all share certain core characteristics (Crede et al. 2019).

Transformational leaders inspire followers to achieve a shared vision through active listening, openness, participation, communication, and relationship-building, while promoting participative leadership (Boukamcha, 2019). As such, transformational leadership involves idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, according to Bass (1997; Bass & Bass, 2009).

*Idealised influ*ence refers to entrepreneurs-leaders who become community role models (Boukamcha, 2019), if not icons, by demonstrating charisma and a clear vision that inspires respect and trust in their followers (Beh & Shafique, 2016).

Metwally & El-bishbishy (2014) define *inspirational motivation* as a leader's ability to persuade subordinates to adopt a compelling, cooperative vision of desired future states while instilling optimism and a sense of common purpose to serve the greater good. This helps them match their organisations' aims with their followers', increasing their devotion.

The transformational leader challenges presumptions and encourages followers to find solutions, even if they disagree, by s*timulating their intellect* which promotes personal and professional growth (Chen et al., 2019).

Transformational leaders showcase individualized consideration and thus they teach or coach their followers and address their success and development requirements by creating new learning opportunities and a supportive environment (Bass & Bass, 2009). Beh & Shafique (2016) emphasise the need to cultivate interpersonal connections with employees by means of mentorship, feedback, and efficient communication. According to Franco & Matos (2015), transformational leaders provide an environment where subordinates are given the chance to articulate their thoughts, improve their abilities, and achieve personal satisfaction.

Against this landscape, it becomes clear that CEO's transformational leadership improves personal performance, motivation, and creative problem-solving (Phungsoonthorn & Charoensukmongkol, 2019) and it affects the organization's success (Jensen et al., 2020), but not alone. Instead, innovation (Chen et al., 2019) and market competition mitigate this effect. Transformational leadership practices are extensively established, showcasing how transformational leaders encourage and enable their followers to go beyond self-interest and achieve self-actualization, equality, integrity, and constructive societal change that benefits others through these channels, according to growing evidence (Caza & Posner, 2019; Kouzes & Posner, 2019).

Social Identity and Self-efficacy Theory (Tajfel and Turner in 1979)

The present discourse pertains to the Social Identity and Self-efficacy Theory postulated by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. Scholars have investigated the concept of identity through the unique framework of the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel &Turner, 1979). The theory under consideration exhibits a dual nature, encompassing both a psychological aspect, which pertains to an individual's self-perception or self-identity, and a sociological aspect, which pertains to an individual's group affiliations and memberships, viewed holistically (Smith et al., 2014).

This theory posits that individuals align themselves with specific social groups to enhance their sense of empowerment (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013), social identity, acknowledgment, and assistance (Moghaddam, 2012), resistance to prejudice (Datta & Gailey, 2012), avoidance of skill erosion (Munkejord, 2017), and prospects for upward social advancement (Dannecker & Cakir, 2016).

The aforementioned theory posits that social stigma and prejudice based on group identity are the primary factors that prompt minority members to seclude themselves from the dominant host society in an attempt to attain social recognition and inclusion within their migrant community. This theory is based on the identity-rejection model proposed by Branscombe et al. (1999) as cited in Ramos et al., 2012).

One's self-efficacy in adapting to and capitalising on change is considered a valuable asset. Transformational leaders are those who motivate their followers to have faith in their own capabilities. Research indicates that transformational leaders utilise self-efficacy as a tool to foster favourable responses towards organisational change. According to Shamir et al. (1993), effective leaders are able to instill a sense of optimism in their followers regarding the potential positive outcomes of the proposed change. Initially, these leaders can function as role models for the individuals comprising the team. According to Bass & Riggio (2006), a leader's self-assurance communicates to their subordinates that they possess the capability to manage the novel challenges arising from the transformation. According to Harland et al. (2005), employees may experience an increased sense of self-assurance in their capacity to handle challenges, leading to a perception of reduced difficulty in meeting the job demands. According to Bass & Riggio (2006), managers can motivate their employees by offering support and assistance in case they face difficulties related to low self-esteem.

Social identity and social categorization theories posit that individuals who identify with a particular group also develop an awareness of the group's distinctive values, norms, and practices, thereby distinguishing it from other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Leader-Follower Theory (Graen and Cashman, 1975)

Graen & Cashman's Leader-Follower Theory studies leaders' relationships with their followers. According to LMX theory, leaders and subordinates have different relationship quality depending on their transactional interactions (Graen & Cashman, 1975). This view contradicts the "average leadership style" theory, which holds that managers should treat all employees equally. Instead of focusing on individual traits or acts, the LMX theory evaluates leaders and followers' dynamic connection. According to Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995), leaders and subordinates have collaborated to achieve a goal for a long time. Thus, employee-manager relationships vary in Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) quality. This can range from a low LMX quality, where interactions are mostly task-oriented and matched with the

employment contract, to a high LMX quality, where employees and managers have a strong sense of loyalty, trust, support, and rewards. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) research supports this viewpoint.

LMX's antecedents, organisational practices, and effects have been extensively studied (Bauer & Erdogan, 2015), but there is still room for improvement (Li et al., 2020). Li et al. (2020) found a beneficial link between the enterprise leader and employees, who are portrayed as vital members of the organisation.

Recent research has focused on group-level phenomena in LMX theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Martin et al., 2018), even though the theory is largely about leaders and followers. This statement recognises that leaders manage many subordinates and that each interaction between a leader and a subordinate occurs within the context of many Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) interactions. Leaders continuously separate team members, making this concept difficult to use theoretically and practically (Martin et al., 2018). Leaders' LMX relationships with subordinates vary depending on their connections with individual employees and the collective unit. Martin et al. (2018) claim that the LMX differentiation process can help managers transform their teams from ordinary to complimentary.

Social identity and social categorization theories suggest that people who identify with a group also become conscious of its collective ideals, norms, and practices (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social identity theory has focused on intergroup dynamics, according to Hogg & Terry (2000). LMX theory, on the other hand, emphasises dyadic linkages. Hogg (2005) noted that LMX variation's emphasis on team-level dynamics is a key point of convergence between the two theories. Martin et al. (2018) investigated leadership and social identity theory. This strategy focuses on group dynamics, particularly the creation of sub-group membership identity, which gives followers a feeling of social identity.

In light of the theoretical and empirical context presented earlier, the subsequent research inquiries and goals aim to fill the current gap in knowledge and research on Romanian migrant entrepreneurs in London. This study provides a novel outlook on the second-largest group of immigrants in the United Kingdom, as reported by the Office for National Statistics in 2019.

Research design

The present research employs an interpretative constructivism approach, which is consistent with the prior scholars' preference for phenomenology due to its ability to explore the essence of phenomena (Saunders et al., 2019). The interpretive epistemological perspective places emphasis on comprehending the social environment that individuals have created and perpetuate through their ongoing actions, as a process of "becoming" that has various connotations (Blaikie, 2009, 124). According to Saunders et al. (2019), the interpretative constructivism philosophy favours inductive reasoning over the "hypothetico-deductive" approach, which places greater emphasis on assessing preexisting theories.

Aligning with the interpretative constructivist goals, this study triangulated semi-structured interviews, fieldnotes and social media posts to investigate the participants intersectional identities as transformational leaders (Kozinets, 2019). Due to the pervasiveness of digital platforms, academics may research online interactions and behavior's cultural context (Kumar & Dholakia, 2022). The advantages of engaging in netnographic data presents its advantages, including its relatively untapped potential to expand our understanding of digital cultural phenomena should motivate academics to examine its methodological obstacles and basic conflicts (Kozinets, 2019).

Nethnographic posts on Facebook (Facebook, 2020), where over 30% of the population is active, and fieldnotes are used to analyse identities and practises shared on social media by 16 Romanian migrant entrepreneurs in London. The sample size utilised in this study is in accordance with the qualitative and disciplinary tradition (Saunders et al., 2019). Empirical saturation has been established as a point at which no further emergent themes were identified either across social media participants' posts or within these posts, which participants emphasise their transformational practices. The data obtained from these sources were subsequently categorised into conceptual themes (i.e., *idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration)*, which were further organised into open codes, supported by illustrative examples from social media posts.

Aligning with interpretative constructivism epistemological-ontological position, the research process involves a crucial human element that is being carried out with greater detail and consistency (Smith, 2018). Furthermore, a thematic analysis has been conducted on each of the interviews, following the guidelines proposed by Braun & Clarke (2013). The process of analysing the data is organised into three distinct stages. Initially,

a comprehensive examination of the demographic profiles of Romanian entrepreneurs based in London is presented. Subsequently, a synopsis of the principal research discoveries that correspond with the objective of this investigation is formulated, and evaluative deliberations are incorporated, predicated on the discerning evaluation of how these research findings are pertinent within the interdisciplinary entrepreneurship-leadership nexus.

The ethical research regulations of GDPR (2018) were meticulously taken into account, encompassing securing participants' preservation of their confidentiality and anonymity, by coding their names and avoiding using sensitive and full personal, social media posts.

Research findings and discussion

This section presents and discusses the research findings related to the aim of this study, which is to investigate how migrant entrepreneurs' transformational leadership practises, including idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, contribute to a sense of belonging for themselves and other stakeholders.

Research participants' demographic profile

The research sample for this study consists of 16 Romanian immigrant business owners based in London, United Kingdom. The sample includes an equal number of males and females, with an average age of 39. After obtaining their bachelor's or master's degrees in the EU, the majority of individuals established businesses in the products and services, construction, and real estate industries. Simultaneously, a small portion of the population pursued entrepreneurial endeavours in the fields of management consulting and healthcare. Furthermore, the study found that, on average, there were 16 job opportunities created by these businesses. Additionally, all were first generation immigrants and immigrant entrepreneurs. The demographic profile of this study's research participants is detailed in the table below.

Table 2. Research participants' demographics

Participant's code	Age	Education	Industry sector	No. of Employees
Radu	37	Bachelor's degree	Consumer goods & services	3
Claudiu	47	High School	Construction & Real Estate	20
Gabi	26	Bachelor's degree	Consumer goods & services	20
Alexe	33	High School	Construction & Real Estate	56
Dan	36	Bachelor's degree	Construction & Real Estate	60
Codrut	71	High School	Consumer goods & services	20
Silviu	36	High School	Construction & Real Estate	20
Seba	32	Bachelor's degree	Construction & Real estate	15
Ionel	45	Bachelor's degree	Construction & Real estate	100
Dia	23	Master's degree	Consumer goods & services	5
Lori	40	High School	Consumer goods & services	15
Vero	45	Bachelor's degree	Management consultancy	1
Ral	38	Bachelor's degree	Consumer goods & services	4
Andra	32	Bachelor's degree	Consumer goods & services	3
Vali	41	Bachelor's degree	Consumer goods & services	1
Eca	47	Master's degree	Healthcare	1

Source: Researchers' own

Romanian migrant entrepreneurs' practices of transformational leadership

The transformational practises of Romanian migrant entrepreneurs are categorised using the theoretical framework proposed by Gioia et al. (2013). The examples provided from their personal narratives and netnographic posts address the research questions regarding the experiences of Romanian immigrant entrepreneurs in their journey towards becoming transformational leaders and their use of transformational leadership practises (ie., role modelling and mentoring) in their entrepreneurial endeavours in London.

Transformational leadership aggregated dimensions	**Romanian migrant entrepreneurs' transformational leadership practices (RMEs) - open codes**	**Illustrative examples from social media posts & Interviews**
Idealised Influence	The RMEs talk about his values and believes that expand beyond personal well-being to include others' well being	"I've always wanted to run a marathon. But, since my favourite sport is yoga, there was no way I was going to stand at the start line with runners. Good thing cultural marathons have come up. They fit my energy perfectly. Don't miss the book launches, author talks, concerts prepared by the organizers." (Vero, Facebook, 2023)
	The RMEs acts towards building personal and immigrant community respect	"Today is a magical day. After almost 10 weeks in the hospital, our dear friend is going home. What a journey! We love you man! He lives in Hamstead, so stop by his house and say hi to him, whenever possible!" (Lori, Facebook, 2023)
Inspirational motivation	The RMEs emphasises the importance of a shared, common goal	"Since the beginning of my business, I have only worked with Romanians because it is easier for me to combine my visions with those with whom I share a cultural background and we work together to grow the business." (Codrut,

		Interview, 2021)
	The RMEs empower followers to engage in participative leadership	"UK-based Romanian entrepreneurs make significant contributions to this society. And while I can't claim that it couldn't have been done without us, our contribution shouldn't be undervalued. Everyone at work is encouraged to grow individually. My own goal is to support my employees' personal and professional development and thus raise their performance levels. Additionally, this also encourages and prepares them to become more socially involved. " (Seba, Interview, 2021)
	The RMEs inspire others as community role models	"I keep your book on my nightstand. To see it when I go to bed, but especially when I wake up. I look at it and your picture gives me something...it makes me feel good, it gives me strength." 🫂 I get a lot of messages referring to my book cover, to the "insightful", "powerful message", "determined", and "exuding strength" photo" (Vero, Facebook, 2023) "I`m humbled and grateful to be a finalist of the Migrant Entrepreneur Award - Charity Entrepreneur of The Year. This nomination means a lot to me as I feel it shows my dedication and hard work and makes all the efforts and long hours worthwhile." (Vero, Facebook, 2023) "Being an entrepreneur makes me

		feel unique and gives me the chance to serve others since I believe it is the only way I can truly provide value. You believe that I have given enough of myself to the individuals who looked up to me and who have improved as a result of my leadership." (Alexe, Interview, 2021)
Intellectual stimulation	The RMEs encourage others to find solutions	"By employing college students who were assigned to work part-time to get experience, I support this society. Once again, the quality of the food is important in the kitchen. We were unable to hire people from other countries. I also tried working with a Mauritian chef, but he struggled to adjust to the unique dishes." (Radu, Interview, 2021)
	The RMEs enable others' professional development	"Do you know young people in London who would like to attend an , employability course for free? Organisation X Educational is recruiting young people aged 14-18 for the free HeadStart Action personal and professional development programme The project is aimed at young people living in London and offers them the opportunity to develop life and career skills." (Vero, Facebook, 2022)
	The RMEs create opportunities for personal development	"Did you know that by simply reflecting on the way you think and act, you can change the way you perceive experiences and thereby contribute to a fulfilling and rewarding life? I invite you to discover your passions, get to know your fears, analyse and understand your emotions, develop your

		creativity, and find out who you really are at the Reflect & Explore workshop. " (Vero, Facebook 2023)
Individualized consideration	The RMEs act as mentors for others	"Teaching, empowering, and helping children, young people, and women to overcome their fears and embrace their strengths, to discover and develop their skills are part of my daily work. It becomes a bespoke lifestyle and is wonderful for my own personal and professional development. I love my work, my family, my clients, my friends, and as some of them would say...I`m blessed!" (Vero, Facebook, 2023). "Because most of my staff members struggle to grasp the British electrical designs they must utilise, I frequently have to teach and coach them. " (Silviu, Interview, 2021) "I've also gotten really good at this part of leadership. I currently serve as a volunteer mentor for the football players at the Football Academy, teaching them how to bounce back from setbacks and establish a strong brand." (Gabriel, Interview, 2021)
	The RMEs consider individual uniqueness in terms of each one's abilities, aspirations, needs	"We're back, as promised, with the webinar announcement for those interested in the Help to Grow mentoring program. ☑ If you didn't meet the selection criteria required by the Government (UK) to apply for the full programme, which offers 10

		mentoring (and) sessions with me, I invite you on Thursday 20 April, 19:00 (UK) to a free session." (Vero, Facebook, 2023)
	The RMEs engage in active listening and supporting individual needs	"As a volunteer for several foundations in Romania, I sometimes arrived at the Maria Curie hospital sometime around 3:30 in the morning, after leaving London on my flight/ship from Gatwick at 9:50 in the evening. In the bag, I had neatly arranged chemotherapy meds, which were preserved between the ice packs. From the airport, I stopped directly at the 5th floor of the hospital, where I was awaited by mothers who were tired of sleepless nights." (Lori, Facebook, 2023)

Idealised influence

Romanian migrant entrepreneurs (RMEs) demonstrate how their identity as entrepreneurs creates the environment within their ethnic enclave to enact idealised influence, that is a hallmark of transformational leadership. These leaders, despite being driven by self-interest, they also weave together a set of shared values and look out for the greater good of the community. As Vero puts it, *"I have always wanted to participate in a marathon... They align perfectly with my energy,*" demonstrating the entrepreneurs' deep love of cultural marathons and ethnically hybrid inclusiveness. This shared interest showcases their commitment to activities that serve a greater good than their own narrow interests. Lori's message, which is both kind and heartfelt, stresses the importance of today and urges people to greet one another whenever possible. A genuine desire to encourage mutual regard and harmony is shared in this message: *"Today is a magical day. After almost 10 weeks in the hospital, our dear friend is going home. What a journey! We love you man! He lives in Hamstead, so stop by his house and say hi to him, whenever possible!" (Lori, Facebook, 2023).*

Inspiring motivation

Inspiring and motivating others to work towards their own personal goals is at the heart of the notion of *inspiring motivation.* Specifically, these migrant entrepreneurs' social media posts and narratives, portray them as agents of community, thanks to their ability to rally people around a common goal. In his interview, Codrut emphasised that his primary focus is to be inclusive of other Romanian co-nationals, by encouraging professional collaborations and by building a business model that supports and hires Romanians. This finding highlights how synergy between corporate goals and cultural norms fosters teamwork and camaraderie in the workplace. Seba's story is a great situated example of transformational leadership practices through entrepreneurship, whereby the Romanian migrant entrepreneur is dedicated to promoting its workers' professional and personal growth by highlighting the necessity of empowering individuals not merely for job advancement but also for substantial personal development: *"UK-based Romanian entrepreneurs make significant contributions to this society. And while I can't claim that it couldn't have been done without us, our contribution shouldn't be undervalued. Everyone at work is encouraged to grow individually. My own goal is to support my employees' personal and professional development and thus raise their performance levels. Additionally, this also encourages and prepares them to become more socially involved. " (Seba, Interview, 2021)*

For many of these entrepreneurs, shaping their entrepreneurship identity and journey means giving back to their community and the host society, by becoming role models and thus inspiring others to take this journey of trading social stigma and anti-immigrant discourse (Morosanu, 2018) for legitimacy and transformational leadership, as captured in this Facebook post: *"I`m humbled and grateful to be a finalist of the Migrant Entrepreneur Award - Charity Entrepreneur of The Year. This nomination means a lot to me as I feel it shows my dedication and hard work and makes all the efforts and long hours worthwhile." (Vero, Facebook, 2023).*

As such, these migrants' entrepreneurial identity becomes a trusted vehicle for transformational leadership as one of the interviewees vividly shared and for whom: *"being an entrepreneur makes me feel unique and gives me the chance to serve others since I believe it is the only way I can truly provide value. You believe that I have given enough of myself to the individuals who looked up to me and who have improved as a result of my leadership." (Alexe, Interview, 2021).*

These narratives showcase the interplay between Leader-Follower relationship and social identity, where the entrepreneur becomes a transformational leader because he empowers his followers, his community, which returns the favour of creating an environment of trust, loyalty and

legitimacy for entrepreneurs and their businesses as they support them in their entrepreneurial endeavors and follows them as community role-models. Consequently, their entrepreneurial and leadership identities co-exist as social identities, whose legitimacy seems to be grounded in its valuable transformational nature. This transformational approach to practice almost secures the recognition of these two identities.

In the present study, the term *"idealised influence"* pertains to entrepreneurs who assume the role of community role models, potentially even attaining iconic status. These entrepreneurs and leaders demonstrate leadership qualities such as charisma and a well-defined vision, which foster respect and trust among their followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). It has been asserted that inspiring motivation is a consequence of a leader's ability to effectively influence subordinates into embracing a compelling and collaborative vision of desired future states while simultaneously fostering optimism and a sense of teamwork (Bass & Riggio, 2006). As a result of this phenomenon, they effectively establish congruence between the objectives of their respective organisations and the aspirations of their followers, thereby augmenting their unwavering commitment (Seloane, 2010).

Intellectual stimulation

RMEs showcase *intellectual stimulation* as an act of actively participating in tasks that foster learning and improvement. These leaders use intellectual stimulation, which helps to inspire its members and spread knowledge. According to Radu, the choice to hire only college students, therefore eliminating the possibility of recruiting persons from other countries, exemplifies the dual commitment of fostering new talent and solving difficulties using creative approaches. Vero's passionate plea, "Are you acquainted with the youth residing in London who are actively cultivating essential life and professional competencies?" is illustrative of a leadership style that encourages a hunger for learning and growth, laying the groundwork for future success.

These findings reveal how these transformational leaders foster *intellectual stimulation* by challenging assumptions and motivating their followers to generate problem-solving ideas, regardless of whether they align with the leader's own perspectives (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This approach facilitates the personal and professional development of both the leader and their followers. Transformational leaders create an environment that promotes new learning opportunities and a supportive atmosphere. They take on the role of a mentor or coach and offer personalised attention to the unique requirements of each follower, with the aim of facilitating their

success and growth (Bass & Riggio, 2006).There is a growing body of evidence indicating that transformational leaders utilise these mechanisms to motivate and enable their followers to transcend their own personal interests and strive for self-actualization, equality, integrity, and the promotion of positive social change that enhances the well-being of others (Burns, 1978; Islam et al., 2020; Tripathi & Bharadwaja, 2021).

Individualised consideration

These CEOs shared accounts of *individualised consideration* as they described situations when they encouraged and demonstrated unique care and assistance for each of their employees. As such, transformative leadership is on display among Romanian emigre business owners in their practises of personalised care, which emphasises a compassionate and tailored approach. Vero's testimony is an excellent illustration of a leadership strategy that is based on empowering others to grow in their talents since it emphasises her dedication to teaching, encouraging, and aiding children, young people, and women in overcoming their fears. In her moving essay, "Empathy in Action: A Volunteer's Perspective," Lori describes her experiences volunteering for various nonprofits and helping sleep-deprived mothers. This story is a reflection of Lori's exceptional capacity for empathy, as she shows great sensitivity to the unique needs of those in her community.

Overall, the leadership practices shared by Romanian immigrant business owners may be summed up as an amalgam of idealistic sway, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and personalised care. Their leadership narrative goes beyond focusing on transformational details by speaking to shared ideals, encouraging self-determination, inspiring originality, and celebrating the wide variety of human experiences. These businesspeople, as leaders in their communities, not only help themselves by boosting morale, making connections, and shaping the future in their chosen ways, but they also benefit the community as a whole, as they become inspirational role models for their immigrant community and host society.

These findings align with Berntsen et al.'s (2022) image of transformative leaders, who are becoming agents and facilitators of favourable socioeconomic transformations by prioritising the welfare of the wider community. However, their economic and social motives go hand in hand, creating the perfect framework for their intersectional identities as entrepreneurs and community leaders to co-habit. Consistent with prior empirical findings, this study demonstrates that the possibility of transformational leadership in migrant entrepreneurship was realised by means of transformational practices at the entrepreneur-leader nexus, such

as role-modeling and mentoring, which incorporate social identity, learning, and leading as a driving force for effecting positive socio-economic change (Giraldo et al., 2020; Rayburn & Ochieng, 2022).

Contribution, limitations, and future research directions

The research findings demonstrate how these Romanian immigrant entrepreneurs went beyond "their subsistence to create income for others," overcome their stigmatized image, and became transformational leaders. Specifically, these entrepreneurs engaged in knowledge sharing through mentoring and role-modeling and thus creating a legacy of socioeconomic value for the benefit of their stakeholders and the broader host society.

The present investigation underscores the importance of understanding the interrelatedness of leadership and entrepreneurship as a collaborative endeavour for the progress of communities, from a theoretical perspective. The present study is in line with the expanding corpus of scholarly works that acknowledge the importance of the sociocultural context within which leadership and entrepreneurship are situated, as highlighted by Harrison et al., (2016). The results confirm the claim put forth by scholars regarding the importance of leadership in the context of migrant entrepreneurship, specifically, in the case of 1st generation of migrant entrepreneurs who become passively or actively community role models and agents of change for their co-national community and the broader host society (Chitac, 2022).

These findings should be considered in light of this study's methodological and empirical limitations. Specifically, this study presents time and context-bound illustrative examples, which could become the starting point for a longitudinal and cross-cultural study, which would give more depth to these practices, exploring their socio-economic impact.

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