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### The social identity theory of leadership: Theoretical origins, research findings, and conceptual developments

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## The social identity theory of leadership: Theoretical origins, research findings, and conceptual developments

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Over the past decade the social identity theory of leadership (Hogg, 2001a; Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003) has reinvigorated social psychological research on leadership by reconnecting leadership to the social psychology of influence, and by explicitly elaborating on the (social) identity function, and associated social cognitive and social interactive processes, associated with leadership. The main tenet is that group prototypical leaders are better supported and more trusted, and are perceived as more effective by members than are less prototypical leaders; particularly when group membership is a central and salient aspect of members' identity and members identify strongly with the group. This hypothesis has attracted unequivocal support across numerous studies, research teams, and research paradigms. In this article we describe the social identity theory of leadership and its conceptual origins, and overview the state of evidence. The main focus of the article is on new conceptual developments and associated empirical advances; including the moderating roles of uncertainty, group innovation and creativity, deviance, "norm talk", charisma, fairness, as well as the extension of the social identity theory of leadership to an intergroup context. Throughout we identify directions for future empirical and conceptual advances.

**Keywords:** Leadership; Influence; Social identity; Group processes; Intergroup behaviour.

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Leadership is a ubiquitous feature of the human condition. It sets agendas and goals, defines who we are and how we should conduct ourselves, and motivates and organises us to do both great and terrible things. Leadership can dramatically transform our lives—leading us into war, fundamentalism, recession, economic recovery, technological revolution, and so forth. In this article we describe and review a specific social psychological theory of leadership: the social identity theory of leadership.

The social identity theory of leadership is a formal extension and application of social identity theory, particularly the social identity theory of the group (self-categorisation theory) and the social identity analysis of social influence (referent informational influence theory) to explain leadership as a social influence phenomenon. It was developed in the late 1990s and published in 2001 (Hogg, 2001a). A fuller analysis was published two years later (Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003) as was a variant configured for and focused on leadership in organisational and management contexts (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003a). This was quickly followed by a data-based review of what had been done to that point and of the potential of adopting an identity perspective on leadership (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004).

Over the past decade this analysis of leadership has attracted enormous attention in both social psychology and the organisational and management sciences, and has generated a large body of empirical tests of the original ideas, as well as significant conceptual developments and associated empirical tests of these developments. This is a vibrant and dynamic theory that continues to build a growing research base across numerous research teams around the world. The aim of this article is to provide a comprehensive and integrated statement and review of the social identity theory of leadership, with a particular focus on new direction and more recently developed constructs. We review the state of evidence for the theory and its subsequent developments, underscore what remains largely untested or contentious, and comment on where research may go from here.

To do this we first locate the theory in the context of other theories and analyses of leadership, largely in the organisational and management sciences. We then describe the theory's roots in social identity theory, particularly the social identity analysis of influence, and how the theory developed historically; and go on to introduce and overview the main conceptual features of the theory. This conceptual overview focuses on group prototypicality and its implications for perceptions of leader influence, group-based evaluations for and feelings about the leader, and perceived leader legitimacy and trustworthiness. It also focuses on the group-membership-based attribution of leader charisma and on leaders' rhetoric-based construction of the group's identity.

The main body of the article unpacks these basic ideas and overviews empirical tests; and most significantly maps out subsequent and new conceptual developments, directions, and applications, and describes relevant empirical tests. We focus on (1) group prototypicality, (2) trust, (3) innovation and change, (4) leadership rhetoric and norm talk, (5) charisma, (6) leader–member interactions and exchanges, (7) gender and leadership in the context of “glass ceilings” and “glass cliffs”, (8) uncertainty and leadership processes, (9) fair and just leadership, and (10) intergroup leadership.

### THE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP

The scientific study of leadership is enormous and spans many disciplines (e.g., psychology, history, political science, organisational and management sciences)—Goethals, Sorenson, and Burns’s (2004) *Encyclopedia of leadership* runs to 2000 pages and has 373 entries by 311 scholars. The popular interest, more accurately an obsession, with leadership and leaders is even greater—airport bookshop shelves are packed with books about leadership. Some have even argued that leadership serves an evolutionary function for the survival of our species (Van Vugt, 2006; Van Vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008).

Because leadership involves people interacting with and influencing others in the context of a group, leadership has been a key focus for social psychologists studying social influence and group processes, particularly during the heyday of small groups research in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s (see Cartwright & Zander, 1953; Shaw, 1976). However, with the 1970s’ ascendance of social cognition and intergroup relations research and the decline of research on small interactive groups, leadership research declined in popularity within social psychology (see Abrams & Hogg, 1998; Moreland, Hogg, & Hains, 1994; Wittenbaum & Moreland, 2008). In many ways, Fiedler’s (1964, 1967) contingency theory of leadership was the high-water mark of social psychological research on leadership, and Hollander’s (1985) handbook chapter on leadership and power the closing parenthesis on that era of leadership research in social psychology.

The study of leadership has a natural home in the organisational and management sciences. In the world of work people’s career advancement and personal prosperity often hinge on securing positions of leadership, such as becoming a member of the senior management team and perhaps ultimately the CEO (chief executive officer), and organisational success and societal prosperity rest heavily on effective organisational leadership. While social psychology largely turned its back on leadership, leadership research has thrived and expanded exponentially in the organisational and management sciences (e.g., Yukl, 2010).

This work has focused on leadership as a dyadic transaction between leaders and specific followers: leaders provide rewards to followers and in return followers “allow” leaders to lead (Bass, 1985). These transactional theories of leadership include path–goal theory (House, 1971), leader–member exchange (LMX) theory (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), Hollander’s (1958) analysis of idiosyncrasy credit, and some analyses of followership (e.g., Riggio, Chaleff, & Lipman-Blumen, 2008). The other main thrust of leadership research is a focus on the role of charisma, largely as an individual difference or personality attribute, in enabling individual leaders to transform groups and organisations (Avolio & Yammarino, 2003; Berson, Dan, & Yammarino, 2006; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Some of these transformational theories of leadership speak of a “heroic motive” and the “romance of leadership” (e.g., Meindl, 1995; Meindl & Lerner, 1983).

Traditional approaches to leadership do not theorise leadership as a group-membership-based influence process, and have not connected well with mainstream social psychological research on social cognition, group processes, social influence, and self and identity. The past decade, however, has witnessed a significant revival of interest in leadership research within social psychology (see Hogg, 2007a, 2010, 2013)—a revival that has refocused attention on leadership as a group process (e.g., Chemers, 1997, 2001), and has been stimulated by leadership research that focuses on power (e.g., Fiske & Dépret, 1996; see Fiske, 2010), gender (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995; see Wood & Eagly, 2010), social cognition and social perception (e.g., Lord & Brown, 2004; Lord, Brown, & Harvey, 2001), and, the topic of this article, social identity and intergroup relations.

## SOCIAL IDENTITY, INFLUENCE, AND LEADERSHIP

Social identity theory, both the social identity theory of intergroup relations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the compatible social identity theory of the group (self-categorisation theory; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), has evolved and developed over the years, and has recently been comprehensively overviewed (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 2010; Hogg, 2012a).

The social identity theory of intergroup relations was predicated on an analysis of social categorisation and group membership as social identification. However, it largely focused on how the pursuit of positive social identity interacted with people’s beliefs about the nature of status-marked intergroup relations to affect the form taken by intergroup behaviour. It was with the development of self-categorisation theory in the early 1980s that the role of categorisation of self and others in group behaviour as a whole was

more fully explored. Associated with this was a fuller analysis of the process of social influence associated with groups—referent informational influence theory (Hogg & Turner, 1987; Turner, 1982; Turner et al., 1987; also see Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Turner, 1991; Turner & Oakes, 1989).

People cognitively represent social groups in terms of group prototypes, where a prototype is a fuzzy set of attributes (attitudes, behaviours, and so forth) that captures ingroup similarities and intergroup differences. When someone, including oneself, is categorised as a group member we depersonalise them—a process causing us to view them as group members rather than autonomous individuals, and to assign them cognitively and perceptually the prototypical attributes of the group. Group prototypes and group norms differ in that a prototype is an individual's cognitive representation of what he or she believes to be the normative properties of the group (e.g., Hogg & Smith, 2007; Turner 1991; Turner et al., 1987). In principle people could disagree about a group's prototype, in which case group identification would cause members to behave differently as they are depersonalised in terms of different prototypes of the same group. However, in reality social interactive and social comparison processes incline people in a group to have a shared prototype of their own and other groups—thus in this article we will sometimes use the terms prototype and norm interchangeably.

Because group identification depersonalises self-conception in terms of the evaluative and prescriptive attributes of the ingroup, in group contexts members are powerfully motivated to learn what the context-specific group attributes are, and thus what the group prototype or norm is. The prototype is configured to capture both ingroup similarities and intergroup differences, in such a way as to maximise the meta-contrast of intergroup and intragroup differences. The prototype is that position within the group that has the maximum meta-contrast. Mathematically, the meta-contrast of a position within a group is the average difference of that position from all outgroup positions divided by its average difference from all other ingroup positions.

The process of self-categorisation associated with group identification transforms self-conception and behaviour to embody the prototype; thus individuals conform to group norms, and to the extent that ingroup members share the same prototype of their group it generates behavioural convergence among members. The intergroup comparative component of prototype formation often generates a prototype that is more extreme than the average of ingroup attributes and is polarised away from the outgroup; thus the social identity related influence process leads to convergence on a polarised group norm.

The prototype is internalised as an evaluative self-definition that governs what one thinks, feels, and does, and how one is perceived and treated by

others. Thus it is clearly important for people to gain information that they believe is reliable about the group prototype. A critical question arises: Where do people turn to obtain such information about the prototype, and how is this information conveyed? The answer lies in people's tendency to draw on any and all information that they deem informative, and the information is conveyed through what people do, but also perhaps more often through what they say. Indeed "norm talk" dominates group life; people communicate directly and indirectly about who we are and who they are, how we differ from them, and who among us best and least well embodies who we are (e.g., Hogg & Reid, 2006).

People in groups that are important to self-definition tend to be highly attentive to and aware of differential ingroup prototypicality (Haslam, Oakes, McGarty, Turner, & Onorato, 1995; Hogg, 2005a); and thus, in determining what source of norm information is perceived to be most useful and reliable, we tend to prefer highly prototypical ingroup members over both outgroup members and less prototypical ingroup members. This point was elegantly confirmed by Reicher (1984). Reicher interviewed community members who had participated in or directly observed a riot that occurred in the St Paul's district of Bristol in the UK in April 1980. Far from being a jumble of chaotic violent behaviours the riot was in fact a relatively rule- and identity-governed expression of anti-government protest. To guide their behaviour protesters looked to the behaviour of prototypical community members and to behaviours that were broadly consistent with the general focus (thus normative attributes) of the protest.

## SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY OF LEADERSHIP

Social identity research on the formation and influence of prototypes and norms within salient groups suggests that prototypical ingroup members are often perceived to be the most reliable source of normative information and thus effectively have disproportionate influence over the identity and behaviour of group members. The implication for an analysis of leadership is quite apparent, but it was not drawn out or made explicit. Indeed, the original statements of self-categorisation theory and referent informational influence theory were not applied to leadership and did not relate the concepts of prototypicality and group influence to theories of leadership.

The implication for an analysis of leadership was not explicitly and systematically explored until the mid-1990s (Fielding & Hogg, 1997; Hains, Hogg, & Duck, 1997; Hogg, Hains, & Mason, 1998), and was first published as a formal *social identity theory of leadership* in 2001 (Hogg, 2001a). The same year, 2001, a number of other treatments and extensions of the theory were published, one focusing on emergent leadership (Hogg 2001b) and two relating it to analyses of power (Hogg, 2001c; Hogg & Reid, 2001). In



addition, empirical articles started to appear that more generally examined the role of social identity processes in leadership (e.g., Haslam & Platow, 2001a; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001). A more fully developed and extensive statement of the theory and overview of relevant evidence was published 2 years later (Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003) as was a variant configured for and focused on leadership in organisational and management contexts (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003a) and an associated edited book (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003b) followed by a special issue of *The Leadership Quarterly* (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004). There was also an application of the general ideas to performance motivation in work contexts (Ellemers, de Gilder, & Haslam, 2004).

The premise of the theory is that because groups evaluate and define who we are, and influence what we think, feel, and do, and how others perceive and treat us, prototypical members are disproportionately influential over the life of the group—they occupy a leadership position. Leadership has an identity function that is largely overlooked in traditional leadership research; people look to their leaders to define their identity. The identity function of leadership is very evident in some contexts (for example, national, ethnic, and political leadership), but is also evident in organisational contexts where corporate leaders play a key role in constructing and managing their corporation's identity (e.g., Balmer, 2008).

The key idea is that as group membership becomes increasingly salient and important to members of the group and members identify more strongly with the group, effective leadership rests increasingly on the leader being considered by followers to possess prototypical properties of the group. Indeed as group membership becomes increasingly salient, stereotypes of categories of leaders in general (what Lord and colleagues call leader prototypes in their leadership categorisation theory or implicit leadership theory: Lord, Foti, & DeVader, 1984; Lord & Hall, 2003) will have a conversely weaker influence over leader evaluations and leader effectiveness.

Group members as followers play a significant role in configuring the characteristics of their group's leadership or even creating leadership itself, and are more likely to follow leaders who they consider best able to construct a group identity that is acceptable to them (Hogg, 2008a, 2008b). As people identify more strongly with a group they pay more attention to information that seems most informative about the group prototype and thus to what and who is more prototypical. In these contexts where group membership is psychologically salient, being perceived to be a highly group prototypical leader makes one more influential and a more effective leader. There are some basic social identity and social psychological reasons for this.

### Appearance of being influential

As noted above (e.g., Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Hogg & Turner, 1987) group identification through self-categorisation causes people to conform to a group prototype. Because prototypes are typically shared by group members, members align their behaviour to the same prototype and thus to the behaviour of that member or those members of the group who are perceived to be more prototypical. Prototypical members are perceived to have disproportionate influence over the rest of the members of the group, and to be more influential than less prototypical members (e.g., Haslam et al., 1995). Thus prototypical leaders appear to be more effective sources of influence and thus are more likely to be turned to for reliable information about what the group stands for.

### Prototype-based liking and influence

According to the social identity analysis of group cohesiveness and attraction within and between groups (Hogg, 1992, 1993), people in groups tend to feel more positively about prototypical group members and like them more as members than less prototypical members. Furthermore, because there is usually significant agreement on the prototype, the group as a whole feels positive about and likes prototypical members—they can be thought of as being “popular” in group membership terms. Research confirms that group identification produces relatively consensual liking for more prototypical group members over less prototypical members (see Hogg, 1993).

Research also shows that being liked makes it easier to influence people (e.g., Byrne, 1971; Gordon, 1996). Thus prototypical leaders, who are liked and popular in the eyes of their followers, are readily able to gain compliance with their ideas—they can exercise leadership more effectively than leaders who are less prototypical and thus less liked in group terms.

Furthermore, prototype-based popularity instantiates an evaluative status difference between the consensually favourably evaluated and liked leader and his or her followers. Where, as is often the case, there is a leadership clique rather than a solo leader, this status differential may become a genuine intergroup status differential within the group, in which case the seeds of destructive leader–follower conflict may be sown.

### Legitimacy, trust, and innovation

Prototypical members typically find the group more central and important to self-definition, and therefore identify more strongly with it—social identity studies find that self-reports of identification and prototypicality are

significantly correlated (e.g., Hogg et al., 1998). Because prototypical members embody group norms more precisely as part of their identity, they have a greater investment in the group and thus are more likely to treat ingroup members fairly and to behave in group-serving ways that favour and promote the ingroup. Research confirms that enhanced identification is associated with greater conformity to norms and stronger ingroup favouritism (e.g., see Abrams & Hogg, 2010) and with fairer treatment of fellow ingroup members and more pronounced promotion of the group's goals and welfare (De Cremer & Tyler, 2005; Tyler & Lind, 1992).

These behaviours on the part of leaders confirm their membership credentials, and encourage other members of the group to trust them to be acting in the best interest of the group even when it may not appear that they are. Prototypical leaders are furnished with legitimacy (Tyler, 1997; see Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001) and followers invest their trust in them (Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008; Giessner, van Knippenberg, & Sleebos, 2009; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). As a result, group-prototypical leaders have more leeway in their behaviour and can be effective even when they are not clearly seen to serve the group's interest, whereas non-prototypical leaders need to establish follower trust in their group-serving intentions through their actions (Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008; Giessner et al., 2009; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001; Platow, van Knippenberg, Haslam, van Knippenberg, & Spears, 2006; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005).

An initially paradoxical implication of this greater behavioural leeway, which is discussed below, is that group prototypicality allows leaders to diverge from group norms, and be less conformist and more innovative and transformational, than non- or less prototypical leaders (e.g., Abrams, Randsley de Moura, Marques, & Hutchison, 2008; cf. Hollander, 1958). Prototypical leaders can thus be more effective as change agents (Pierro, Cicero, Bonaiuto, van Knippenberg, & Kruglanski, 2007; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005; van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, & Bobbio, 2008), and can motivate follower creativity (Hirst, van Dick, & van Knippenberg, 2009).

## SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CHARISMA

Because the prototype is central to group life, information related to the prototype subjectively stands out against the background of other information in the group—prototype-relevant information is attention grabbing and thus the perceptual figure against the background of the group. Other research, on focus of attention within groups, has shown that group members with less power in the group tend to pay very close attention to those with more power (Fiske & Dépret, 1996).

Taken together these two attentional processes suggest that leaders (typically those with more power in the group) who are perceived to be prototypical are the focus of attention and are distinctly figural against the background of the group. As in other areas of social perception and inference, people are more likely to infer a correspondence between distinctive people's behaviour and invariant underlying personality attributes or "essences" (e.g., Gawronski, 2004; Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Haslam, Bastian, & Bissett, 2004).

The clear implication of this attribution process is that followers construct a charismatic leadership personality for group prototypical leaders (Platow et al., 2006; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005)—after all, the general class of behaviours that is being attributed to personality includes being the source of influence, being able to gain compliance from others, being favourably evaluated as a group member and liked in group terms, having higher status, being innovative, and being trusted. In this way charisma, which plays a central role in influential theories of transformational leadership (e.g., Avolio & Yammarino, 2003; Judge et al., 2002), is constructed by social identity-related social cognitive and group processes (Haslam & Platow, 2001b) rather than being a static personality attribute that is brought by individuals to the group. The social identity theory of leadership accounts for the role played by charisma in leadership, but identifies a different causal process.

### LEADERS AS ENTREPRENEURS OF IDENTITY

The social identity leadership processes described above largely focus on how followers as group members enable and empower effective leadership. However leaders are not passive in this process—indeed, most traditional leadership theories focus on the leader not the followers or focus on active bilateral transactions between leaders and followers (for overview see Hogg, 2010, 2013).

From a social identity theory of leadership perspective, social identity leadership processes grant leaders considerable power to actively pursue leadership, fend off contenders, and maintain their leadership position. Because they are trusted, given latitude to be innovative, and invested with status and charisma, prototypical leaders can be characterised as "entrepreneurs of identity" (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996a) who can very effectively construct and manage perceptions of the group prototype and thus the group's identity (Hogg & Reid, 2006; Reicher & Hopkins, 2003; Seyranian, 2012; Seyranian & Bligh, 2008). They can define what the group stands for and what the social identity of its members is, by consolidating an existing prototype, modifying it, or dramatically reconstructing it. They

can also manage how prototypical they themselves are viewed by the group.

There are many strategies that prototypical leaders can employ to manage their own prototypicality and shape their group's identity. These strategies largely involve rhetoric and strategic communication but also behaviour that supports the rhetoric—consistency between rhetoric and overt behaviour significantly strengthens credibility and legitimacy (e.g., Stone, Weigand, Cooper, & Aronson, 1997) and thus, in the case of leaders, their moral credentials (cf. Monin & Merritt, 2011) and leadership effectiveness.

Prototypical leaders can talk up their own prototypicality and/or talk down aspects of their own behaviour that are non-prototypical; identify deviants or marginal members to highlight their own prototypicality or to construct a particular prototype for the group that enhances their own prototypicality; secure their own leadership position by vilifying contenders for leadership and casting the latter as non-prototypical; and identify as relevant comparison outgroups, those outgroups that are most favourable to their own prototypicality.

Leaders can also raise or lower the salience of the group. For highly prototypical leaders, raising salience and strengthening members' identification with the group provide the leadership benefits of high prototypicality; for non-prototypical leaders, lowering salience and weakening members' identification protects from the leadership pitfalls of not being very prototypical. Generally, leaders who feel they are not, or are no longer, prototypical, strategically engage in group-oriented behaviours aimed at strengthening their membership credentials (cf. Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001).

## EMPIRICAL TESTS AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Since its original development the social identity theory of leadership has attracted enormous attention in social psychology and the organisation and management sciences; it has not only been systematically tested, but conceptually developed, extended, and applied. The theory itself, and the wider focus on leadership as a social identity-contingent group influence phenomenon, has informed a number of recent integrative publications (e.g., Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011; Hogg, 2010, 2013; van Knippenberg, 2011, 2012).

Thus far we have described the core conceptual components of the original theory. For the remainder of this article we overview empirical evidence for these constructs and, as our main focus, describe significant new conceptual extensions and developments and relevant empirical evidence.

## LEADER PROTOTYPICALITY

The most basic prediction is that as group membership becomes more salient and people identify more strongly with the group they evaluate group prototypical leaders relative to non-prototypical leaders more favourably, support them more strongly, and consider them to be more effective. Not surprisingly the first tests of the theory examined this prediction; which was solidly supported in a controlled laboratory experiment (Hains et al., 1997), a naturalistic field study of “outward-bound” groups (Fielding & Hogg, 1997), and another pair of controlled laboratory experiments (Hogg et al., 1998). These studies also showed, importantly and as predicted, that as leadership evaluations and support became more strongly based on how group prototypical the leader was perceived to be, they became less strongly based on the extent to which participants felt the leader had stereotypical properties of categories of leaders in general (cf. leader categorisation theory; Lord & Hall, 2003).

Many subsequent studies have added further support for the key hypothesis that prototypical leaders are better supported and able to be more effective relative to less prototypical leaders as members identify more strongly with the group (e.g., Cicero, Bonaiuto, Pierro, & van Knippenberg, 2008; Giessner & van Knippenberg, 2008; Giessner et al., 2009; Hirst et al., 2009; Pierro et al., 2007; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001). For example, Hogg and colleagues conducted an experiment with student participants in laboratory decision-making groups (Hogg et al., 2006). They found that when members identified more strongly with the group they endorsed a male leader more than a female leader if the group’s prototype (manipulated via experimentally constructed normative information about the group) was relatively agentic/instrumental (these are male-stereotypical attributes that rendered a male leader more prototypical of the group), and vice versa if the prototype was more communal/expressive and thus female-stereotypical. One implication of this, discussed below, is that organisational groups that are failing may appoint female leaders precisely because they are non-prototypical and can be readily blamed for the failure (e.g., Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

These studies all focus on variation in ingroup prototypicality of the leader. Of course an outgroup leader would be considered highly non-ingroup prototypical and would presumably attract very little support under elevated group membership salience. This has been nicely confirmed in a series of studies by Duck and Fielding (1999, 2003). Subsequent research has replicated this finding with different paradigms and in different contexts, and has explored the role played by other variables (e.g., Alabastro, Rast, Lac, Hogg, & Crano, in press; Cheng, Fielding, Hogg, & Terry, 2009; Subašić, Reynolds, Turner, Veenstra, & Haslam, 2011).

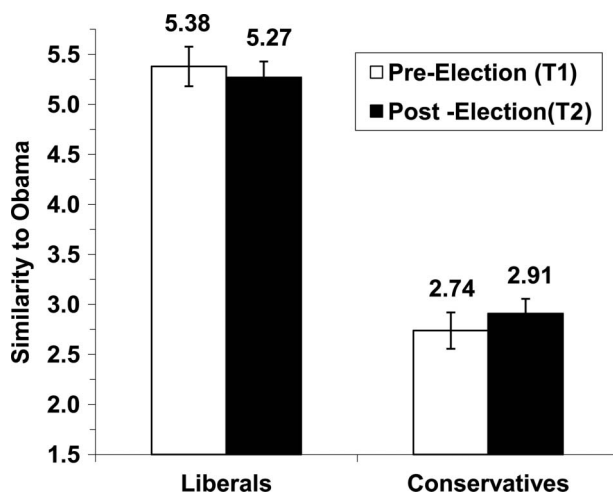
Building on earlier research by Platow, Reid, and Andrew (1998), Cheng and associates (Cheng et al., 2009) conducted two experiments to examine whether student participants' reactions to a leader's procedural discrimination (i.e., favouring the ingroup over an outgroup or vice versa) were moderated by the leader's in- or outgroup membership. Regardless of which group the leader favoured, an ingroup leader (member of the students' own university) was perceived to be more procedurally fair than an outgroup leader (member of a salient and comparable other university), and participants experienced more negative affect when their leader was an outgroup member as opposed to an ingroup member. Participants also reacted less negatively when their own group was favoured over an outgroup than when the opposite was the case. Interestingly, participants felt equally negative when an ingroup leader favoured the outgroup over the ingroup and when an outgroup leader favoured the ingroup over an outgroup. Study Two replicated these findings using different operationalisations and dependent measures.

Building on Duck and Fielding's research, Alabastro and colleagues (in press) examined how perceptions of leader–follower similarity are affected by whether an in- or outgroup leader succeeds or fails, and when the comparative frame of reference changes to make an outgroup leader an ingroup leader. Adopting a longitudinal design (which is rare among social identity theory of leadership studies), a secondary analysis of the American National Election Survey dataset assessed liberals' and conservatives' ( $N = 782$ ) attitudes towards their in- and outgroup leaders (i.e., Obama or McCain) before and after the 2008 US Presidential election.

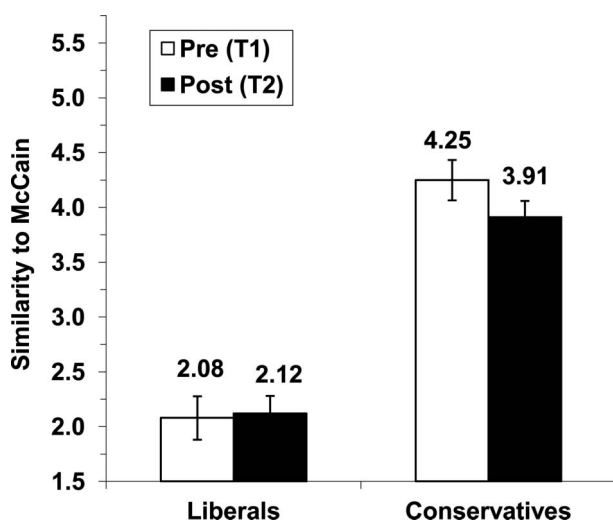
Results revealed that, prior to the election, both liberals and conservatives viewed themselves as attitudinally similar to their ingroup leader and dissimilar to their outgroup leader. After Obama's (liberal) electoral victory, however, conservatives strengthened their perceived similarity with Obama, and significantly distanced themselves from McCain following his loss. Liberals' attitudes were unaffected by Obama's victory and McCain's loss (see Figures 1 and 2).

Basking in reflected glory (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1976) is only a partial explanation of these results; it can explain why conservatives accentuated their post-election similarity to the victor, but not why liberals did not. Alabastro and colleagues' more complete explanation is that this temporal change in attitudes was due to a shift in the group comparative context and an associated re-categorisation process (see Crisp & Hewstone, 2007). Obama's federal electoral victory made Obama the leader of a superordinate national group and thus focused attention on national identity and the fact that Obama was now an ingroup leader, at the salient national level, for both liberals and conservatives.





**Figure 1.** Perceived similarity to Obama pre- and post-election, moderated by political ideology (adapted from Alabastro et al., in press;  $N = 782$ ). Means with 95% confidence intervals. A significant difference was found between pre- and post-election for conservatives, but not liberals ( $N = 782$ ).



**Figure 2.** Perceived similarity to McCain pre- and post-election, moderated by political ideology (adapted from Alabastro et al., in press;  $N = 782$ ). Means with 95% confidence intervals. A significant difference was found between pre- and post-election for conservatives, but not liberals ( $N = 782$ ).



Drawing on the premise that ingroup leaders are more prototypical than outgroup leaders, Subašić and colleagues (2011) conducted two experiments, with psychology and business/management students as participants, investigating how leaders' perceived ability to scrutinise their followers' behaviour (i.e., surveillance through access to followers' responses) might affect in- and outgroup leaders' capacity to influence followers. Replicating previous research, ingroup leaders were more influential than outgroup leaders. However, across both experiments surveillance, and the associated perceived ability to reward or punish followers, reduced the ingroup leader's capacity to influence, but enhanced the outgroup leader's capacity to influence—ingroup leaders were more influential when they did not use surveillance on their members, outgroup leaders were more effective when they did use surveillance. Subašić and colleagues argue that in group contexts surveillance of followers is a violation of trust in leadership that undermines a leader's ability to lead. This erosion of trust does not affect outgroup leaders, because the very fact of them being outgroup members "automatically" renders them disliked and untrustworthy (cf. Hogg, 1993).

### TRUST IN LEADERSHIP

A key feature of the social identity theory of leadership is that prototypical leaders can be effective in salient groups because followers trust them. They are, as Haslam and Platow (2001b) put it, perceived to be "one of us" and "doing it for us". Because such leaders are prototypical and strongly identified with the group, we relatively unquestioningly trust them to do us no harm and to do what it takes to protect and promote the group; even if trust is misguided. One consequence of prototype-based trust is that to be effective, prototypical leaders do not need to behave in overtly group-oriented ways designed to confirm their good intentions and thus build follower trust, whereas non-prototypical leaders certainly do (Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001).

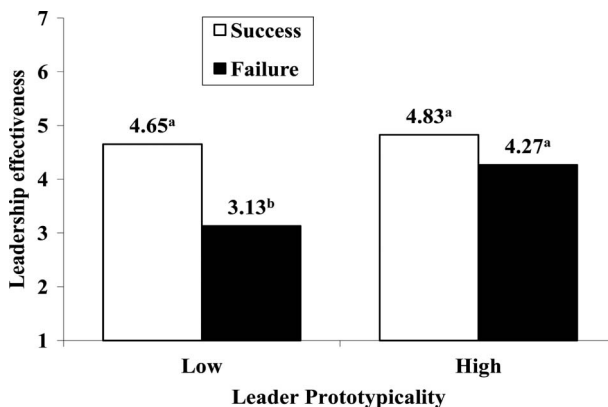
First evidence for this was provided by Platow and van Knippenberg (2001), who showed that in an intergroup context students who identified strongly with their ingroup university (a measured variable) only endorsed a non-prototypical leader when the leader made ingroup-favouring task allocation decisions, whereas a prototypical leader was equally endorsed regardless of whether the leader's allocations were ingroup-serving, even-handed, or outgroup-serving. Prototypicality was experimentally manipulated by providing information identifying the leader as having a lot in common with or being very different from the ingroup.

Van Knippenberg and van Knippenberg (2005) delved deeper by focusing on leader self-sacrificing behaviour (the extent to which the leader invested substantial time and effort on the group task). Across four studies

(experimental and field studies of business students and organisational employees) they found interactive effects on perceived leadership effectiveness of leader group prototypicality (feedback on the leader's match to the group) and leader self-sacrifice on behalf of the group (information on the leader's self-sacrificing behaviour). For non-prototypical leaders self-sacrifice increased effectiveness ratings as well as the perception that the leader had group-oriented intentions; for prototypical leaders effectiveness and perceived group-orientedness were high regardless of whether or not the leader was self-sacrificing. In a related vein, Platow et al. (2006) showed that non-prototypical leaders were more effective when they appealed to collective interest rather than member self-interest, whereas prototypical leaders were effective independent of the nature of their appeal.

To demonstrate the mediating role of trust in the leader in the interactive influence of leader prototypicality and leader "group-oriented behaviour" on leader effectiveness (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003a), Giessner and van Knippenberg (2008; Giessner et al., 2009) conducted a series of seven experiments and field surveys. Their initial study (Giessner et al., 2009, Study 1,  $N = 153$ ) was a scenario experiment with members of the German Green Party as participants. Leader prototypicality (the hypothetical fit of the leader to the Green Party's ideology) and the leader's performance on behalf of the group (the leader's success or failure in implementing Green Party policy relating to a specific issue) were manipulated, and leader trust and effectiveness measured (see Figure 3).

They found that non-prototypical leaders were endorsed only when they succeeded on behalf of the group, not when they were associated with



**Figure 3.** Leadership effectiveness as a function of leader group prototypicality and leader performance (adapted from Giessner et al., 2009, Study 1;  $N = 153$ ). Means not sharing a superscript differ significantly ( $p < .05$ ) by simple main effect test.

failure. In contrast prototypical leaders, because they are trusted more, were endorsed irrespective of whether they were successful or not. Subsequent studies in this series of seven studies replicated this finding with different samples and variations in measures and paradigm, leading Giessner and van Knippenberg (2008) to refer to this latitude conferred upon prototypical leaders as a “license to fail”.

Trust also plays a key role in social dilemmas—indeed social dilemmas are characterised as crises of trust (e.g., Dawes & Messick, 2000). One effective structural solution to social dilemmas is leadership; specifically leadership that can build trust among those who access the resource that is being over-consumed or under-contributed to. Such a leader needs to be trusted in order to transform selfish individual goals into shared group goals by building a sense of common identity, shared fate, inter-individual trust, and custodianship of the collective good (e.g., De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2003; De Cremer & van Vugt, 1999, 2002; van Vugt & De Cremer, 1999). Although this research has largely not been explicitly framed by the social identity theory of leadership and its analysis of the role of prototypicality in effective leadership, the research does suggest that a leader who is considered prototypical is most effective.

## INNOVATION AND CHANGE

A significant implication of the role of trust in social identity-related leadership is that trust in leadership, paradoxically, allows a prototypical leader of a salient, self-definitionally central group to be innovative; to modify group norms and practices and steer the group in new directions. Innovation and transformation are key attributes of effective leadership (Avolio & Yammarino, 2003). The germs of this idea that prototypical leaders are able to be innovative can be found in Hollander’s early notion of idiosyncrasy credit (Hollander, 1958). Leaders who have climbed the corporate ladder as committed and normative members of the group accrue idiosyncrasy credits from the group that they can “spend” when they arrive at the top. In this way once they acquire the mantle of leadership they are able to be more innovative and thus more effective leaders.

Abrams and colleagues (Abrams et al., 2008; Randsley de Moura et al., 2011) develop this idea, now more accurately framed as innovation credit, and ground it squarely in the social identity theory of leadership to argue that whatever leaders do and however they acquire the mantle of leadership, the key factor that underpins their ability to get group members behind an innovative vision for the group rests on perceptions of leader prototypicality and feelings of trust in leadership. One twist to the innovation credit idea is a series of studies showing that future leaders are given greater latitude than past or present leaders to argue against the group prototype. The rationale is

that people believe a future leader (someone who has been elected or appointed as leader but has not yet occupied the role, e.g., a president-elect) should be looked to as indicative of the group's future, and thus represents a new (replacement) prototype that is yet to be fully defined (Abrams et al., 2008).

In another study Randsley de Moura, Abrams, Hutchison, and Marques (2011) show that a group is more tolerant of a future leader whose behaviour deviates from the group norm in the direction of an outgroup (anti-norm deviance) than of a regular group member who behaves in the same way. The group attributes the leader's behaviour to situational factors rather than dispositional factors; presumably because members assume and trust that a new leader is adapting to the situation so as to benefit the group. Being identified as a future leader can thus weaken the more usual "black sheep effect" in which an ingroup member who is an anti-norm deviant is harshly evaluated by the group, indeed more harshly than an outgroup member occupying the same position (Marques & Páez, 1994).

Abrams and his colleagues have recently extended their innovation credit idea to address what they call transgression credit. Typically, people in groups derogate ingroup norm violators most harshly if the transgressor is highly prototypical (e.g., Pinto, Marques, Levine, & Abrams, 2010). However, when such a norm violator is an ingroup leader (not merely an ingroup member, or an outgroup leader or member) he or she is treated significantly less harshly. Abrams and colleagues have conducted a number of preliminary studies showing this effect; for example, in the context of norm transgressions by a soccer captain versus a soccer player, bribes accepted by an ingroup versus outgroup university panel member, and blackmail by a member of one's own nation or another nation on an international committee (Abrams, Randsley de Moura, & Travaglino, 2011; Randsley de Moura & Abrams, 2011).

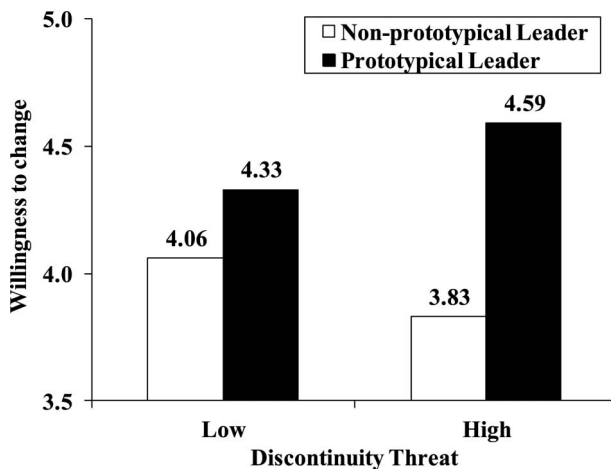
In a related vein, van Knippenberg et al. (2008) argued that in leading collective change, prototypical leaders would be more trusted to be "agents of continuity" and guardians of group identity, than non-prototypical leaders, and thus more effective in motivating followers' willingness to contribute to the change. This is precisely what they found across two scenario experiments focusing on an organisational merger. In these studies participants responded to a leader advocating the merger of the participant's organisation with another organisation.

In the first study ( $N = 61$ ) the identity implications of this merger were described, and the leader's group prototypicality was manipulated by means of information about the leader's match to the group. Perceptions of the leader as an agent of continuity, and members' willingness to contribute to the change process, were measured. As predicted, prototypical leadership was associated with greater willingness to change, but this was mediated by

perceptions of the leader as an agent of change. The second study ( $N = 182$ ) closely replicated the first, but also manipulated identity discontinuity threat (i.e., the extent to which the merger would affect organisational identity). Again, willingness to change was greater when the leader was prototypical. Importantly, this effect was stronger when participants experienced high, rather than low identity discontinuity threat (see Figure 4).

Together these studies demonstrate that prototypical leaders are more effective than non-prototypical leaders in motivating change particularly when perceived identity threat is elevated, and that this is mediated by the perception that the leader is an agent of continuity who will preserve defining features of collective identity even when the collective changes.

Corroborating the notion that group prototypicality positions leaders to be effective change agents, the research by van Knippenberg and van Knippenberg (2005) described above shows that the interactive effect of leader prototypicality and self-sacrifice in the context of organisational change extends to willingness to change. Pierro et al. (2007) also link leader prototypicality to greater willingness to change in an organisational change context, contingent on follower identification and need for closure (closure, and this research, is discussed below where we discuss the impact of uncertainty on leadership). Complementing this evidence from change contexts with evidence regarding follower creativity as a leadership outcome, Hirst et al. (2009), in a survey of organisational employees, show that contingent on follower identification, prototypical leaders'



**Figure 4.** Willingness to change as a function of leader group prototypicality and discontinuity threat (adapted from van Knippenberg et al., 2008, Study 2;  $N = 182$ ).

inspirational appeals are more effective in engendering creativity than less prototypical leaders' appeals.

### NORM TALK AND IDENTITY RHETORIC

We have seen how leader prototypicality plays a direct and indirect role in leadership in groups that are important to self-definition and social identity. We have also explored moderators and mediators of this effect. The question arises as to how people know what the group's norms are, and what role followers and perhaps more importantly leaders may play in this.

When group membership is salient people spend a great deal of time communicating directly or indirectly about group norms—this is how norms are constructed, conveyed and learned (Hogg & Giles, 2012; Hogg & Reid, 2006). Prototypical leaders play a pivotal role in “norm talk” as they have the most influential and effective voice within the group; through their rhetoric they act as entrepreneurs of prototypicality and identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2003). They shape perceptions of the group's attributes and goals and of their own embodiment of group prototypical attributes, and are thus able to enhance their own leadership position, transform the group and mobilise its members (Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005; see also Klein, Spears, & Reicher, 2007).

To support this analysis Reicher and his associates have conducted research on the rhetoric and language that leaders use to exercise their leadership and convey their vision of the group's identity (for a summary of this research see Haslam et al., 2011). Social identity construction through leader rhetoric has been shown in the speeches of Margaret Thatcher (Britain's Conservative Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990) and Neil Kinnock (leader of the British Labour Party from 1983 to 1992) concerning the 1984–1985 British miners' strike (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996a); in the political mobilisation attempts of British Muslims around voting in or abstaining from British elections (Hopkins, Reicher, & Kahani-Hopkins, 2003); in anti-abortion speeches (Hopkins & Reicher, 1997; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996b); in the preservation of hunting in the UK by a focus on the connection between nation and place (Wallwork & Dixon, 2004); in Scottish politicians' speeches (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001); and in Patrice Lumumba's speeches during the Congolese decolonisation from Belgium (Klein & Licata, 2003).

Other studies have focused on US presidential leadership rhetoric. For example, using the term “social identity framing” Seyranian and Bligh (2008) analysed the rhetoric used by US presidents to construct an electorally inclusive vision of American national identity that makes them appear highly prototypical and thus secures their tenure in the White House. The sample included 112 speeches given by 17 presidents from 1901

(Theodore Roosevelt) to 2000 (George W. Bush). Only speeches with a national audience, such as State of the Union addresses or Bush's 9/11 Address to the Nation, were included. Using a computerised content analysis, each speech was coded for social identity rhetoric; and 10 political scientists rated the charismatic appeal of each president. The results showed that charismatic leaders employed more imagery/abstract language and more identity-inclusive rhetoric to communicate social change than did non-charismatic leaders.

Another study, by Hohman, Hogg and Bligh (2010), drew on uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2007b, 2012b; see below) to argue that because self-conceptual uncertainty can strengthen group identification, leaders might instil uncertainty for strategic reasons aimed at securing greater identification-sponsored support from the group. Hohman and associates had student participants read an actual speech made by President George W. Bush, under conditions in which they were instructed (primed) to focus on aspects of the speech that either elevated feelings of uncertainty about themselves or lowered uncertainty. Political party and national identification were then measured.

Under uncertainty Republicans identified more strongly with both party and nation—as a Republican, Bush was both a party and national ingroup leader and Republicans viewed national and party identity to be isomorphic. Under uncertainty Democrats only identified more strongly with party—they identified less strongly with nation because they did not consider their Democratic identity to be well represented in Bush's vision of national identity (cf. Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2007). The take-home message from this study is that leadership rhetoric focusing on self- and identity-uncertainty needs to be carefully tailored to the relevant ingroup and the leader's perceived relationship to that group.

## CHARISMA

Being an effective communicator and inspiring and persuasive orator are qualities that are often associated with charisma; and charisma, as a wider constellation of attributes, generally facilitates effective leadership. However, the key factor when social identity is salient may be that followers perceive their leader to be a charismatic leader, not that the leader actually has an enduring charismatic personality that is independent of his or her normative position in the group. The social identity theory of leadership describes how social identity processes help strongly identifying followers cognitively construct a charismatic personality for prototypical leaders.

This attribution process in which followers see a correspondence between their leader's leadership behaviour and his or her enduring personality has empirical support from four studies by van Knippenberg and van



Knippenberg (2005), described earlier. These studies show that prototypicality may predict the attribution of charisma; but other variables, in this case self-sacrifice behaviour, may also play a role. Van Knippenberg and van Knippenberg showed in the lab and in the field that the interaction of leader prototypicality and leader self-sacrifice influenced attributions of charisma—highly prototypical leaders were viewed as being highly charismatic regardless of their self-sacrifice behaviour, whereas less prototypical leaders were viewed as charismatic only if they engaged in self-sacrifice behaviour. Converging evidence is provided by Platow et al. (2006) who showed that leader prototypicality resulted in relatively strong attributions of charisma regardless of whether the leader appealed to collective interest or group member self-interest, whereas a non-prototypical leader was seen as charismatic only when appealing to the collective interest.

Leader charisma and leader prototypicality have both been shown to enhance effective leadership, and leader prototypicality has been shown to be a basis for the cognitive construction of leader charisma in salient groups. The question arises as to what circumstances privilege charisma over prototypicality, and vice versa, as bases of effective leadership. Research by Halevy, Berson and Galinsky (2011) may be a useful start. Halevy and associates report five experiments from which they conclude (a) that participants prefer visionary (their operationalisation of charisma) over group representative (their operationalisation of prototypicality) leaders, especially in times of crisis, (b) that visionary leaders can better regulate followers' moods and strengthen followers' group identification than could representative leaders, and (c) followers are more willing to endorse change when it is promoted by a visionary than representative leader.

There is, however, a notable limitation to Halevy et al.'s studies. The authors themselves note that their manipulations of leader charisma and prototypicality, although empirically piloted, "may have inadvertently manipulated additional variables" (Halevy et al., 2011, p. 903)—thus the two variables may not have been fully independently manipulated. The authors conceptualise and operationalise visionary leadership as focusing on the group's future, and representative leadership as focusing on the group's present—depending on the nature of the group either leadership style could be prototypical or non-prototypical, and indeed in these studies the visionary leader seems to also be somewhat prototypical. Arguably the research is better interpreted as speaking to when followers prefer a leader to *not only* be prototypical, but *also* visionary.

An additional issue, from a social identity theory of leadership perspective, is that Halevy and associates' characterisation of prototypicality as central tendency is inconsistent with social identity theory, which argues that the prototype is an ideal type that is often polarised away from a relevant outgroup (e.g., Haslam et al., 1995; Hogg, 2005a). Furthermore,



social identity leadership processes are fundamentally impacted by the group's importance to followers' self-concept and thus how strongly followers identify with the group; that is, absent inclusion of the moderating role of identification (or social identity salience) the studies are compromised as "competitive" tests of prototypicality versus charisma effects (cf. Hains et al., 1997).

Further research is needed, but one key consideration derives from uncertainty-identity theory (e.g., Hogg 2007b, 2012b), which is discussed below. Essentially, in circumstances of uncertainty where people desperately yearn for a simple, distinctive, and unambiguous group prototype, they will endorse a leader who effectively provides this information—any legitimate ingroup leader may do, but given a choice a prototypical leader will be preferred, and a decisive, charismatic, and even autocratic leadership style may be particularly attractive (Rast, Gaffney, Hogg, & Crisp, 2012; Rast, Hogg, & Giessner, in press).

## LEADER-MEMBER TRANSACTIONS

We have seen how the social identity theory of leadership provides a somewhat different analysis of the role of charisma in leadership from that provided by conventional transformational and charismatic leadership theories. The theory also provides a different perspective on transactional leadership processes from that provided by conventional transactional theories of leadership.

Effective leaders provide substantial material and psychological resources and rewards to their followers. In return followers allow leaders to lead and are prepared to make sacrifices to follow them. This notion of a mutually beneficial resource transaction between leaders and followers lies at the core of many traditional leadership theories, considered transactional theories of leadership (Bass, 1985); such as path-goal theory (House, 1971), the vertical dyad linkage (VDL) model (Danserau, Graen, & Haga, 1975), leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997), and Hollander's (1958) notion of idiosyncrasy credit. We have already seen how Abrams and colleagues' notion of innovation credit provides a broader-based social identity analysis of idiosyncrasy credit (e.g., Abrams et al., 2008).

Other research has focused explicitly on LMX theory, exploring how leader-member exchanges might be affected by social identity processes (Hogg & Martin, 2003; Hogg et al., 2005; Hogg, Martin, & Weeden, 2003). LMX theory predicts that in order to be effective leaders develop personalised leader-member exchanges where they cultivate closer relationships with some followers than others, and followers endorse this leadership dynamic.

From a social identity theory of leadership perspective Hogg and Martin and colleagues made a different prediction. Members who identify strongly with a group would find differentiated LMX relationships that favour some members over others to be uncomfortably personalised and fragmentary of the group, and they would not endorse such leaders. They would prefer a more depersonalised leadership style that treated all members relatively equally as group members; endorsing such leaders more strongly. Two field surveys of leadership perceptions within organisations in Wales and India confirmed this prediction (Hogg et al., 2005). The fact that the effect was found in both independence-oriented (Wales) and relationship-oriented (India) cultures is testament to the robust impact of group identification on leadership endorsement processes in groups.

### GLASS CEILINGS AND GLASS CLIFFS

The study of gender and leadership is not only a huge and important topic in social psychology (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 2007), but is also intrinsically and possibly fundamentally a study of identity and leadership. One general finding is that even in progressive western democracies where women are relatively well represented in middle management, they are under-represented relative to men in senior management and “elite” leadership positions—there is a “glass ceiling” (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly et al., 1995). Although women tend to adopt different leadership styles from men, they are usually rated as just as effective leaders as men and are perceived to be slightly more effective on some dimensions (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, van Engen, & Vinkenbunrg, 2002). So, why the glass ceiling?

According to role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), there is a “gender gap” in leadership because there is greater overlap between general leader schemas and agentic/instrumental male stereotypes than between leader schemas and communal/expressive female stereotypes. Thus people have more favourable perceptions of male leaders than of female leaders, and it is easier to lead effectively if you are male than female. One implication is that the evaluation of male and female leaders will change if the leadership schema changes or if people’s gender stereotypes change. For example research has shown that male leaders are evaluated more favourably than female leaders when the role or group norm is defined in more masculine terms and vice versa when the role or group norm is defined in less masculine terms (Eagly et al., 1995; Hogg et al., 2006). This is consistent with predictions derived from the social identity theory of leadership.

Women may also hit a glass ceiling because they have a tendency to claim authority less effectively than men (Bowles & McGinn, 2005). There are a number of reasons for this, among which may be lack of inclination due to

stereotype threat (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002) and recognition that self-promotion and leadership-claiming are viewed as non-female stereotypical behaviours that can attract negative reactions from group members (Rudman, 1998).

A further identity-related leadership obstacle that women can encounter has been called the “glass cliff”; a phenomenon where women are more likely than men to be appointed to leadership positions associated with increased risk of criticism and failure because the organisational unit is in crisis (Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Haslam, 2007). From a social identity theory of leadership perspective this is an interesting phenomenon because one might expect that collective crises would accentuate identification and thus enhance support for a prototypical leader. However, the critical factor here may be whether the “crisis” is viewed as a surmountable “challenge” or an insurmountable “threat” (cf. Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996; Lazarus, 1991). Where it is a challenge then the usual preference for a group prototypical leader comes into play (in many or most organisational contexts such a leader is a man); however, where it is a threat the group might protect its identity by favouring a non-group prototypical woman leader who can become a scapegoat for anticipated leadership failure.

### UNCERTAINTY AND LEADERSHIP

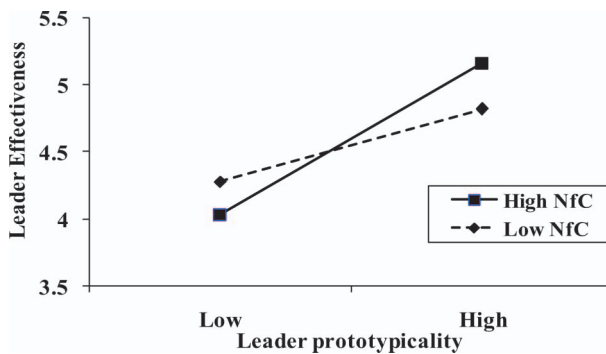
Another recent development of the social identity theory of leadership is grounded in Hogg’s (2007b, 2012b) uncertainty-identity theory. We have referred to this theory above as it affects leadership a number of times, and explore it more directly here. Uncertainty-identity theory argues that people find feelings of uncertainty, particularly about themselves and things that reflect on or relate to their identity and self-concept, aversive—they are motivated to reduce or fend off self-uncertainty. Group identification is a powerful satisfaction of this motive because the process of categorisation of self and others provides a social identity and depersonalises perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and behaviour to conform to group prototypes—thus one knows how to behave and how one will be perceived and treated by others, and furthermore one’s identity-based perceptions and behaviour attract consensual ingroup support. Groups that are highly distinctive and coherent entities have clearer and more unambiguous and prescriptive prototypes and are thus better equipped to reduce self-uncertainty—self-uncertainty makes people seek out and identify particularly strongly with highly entitative groups.

Pierro, Cicero, van Knippenberg, and colleagues build on the general idea that uncertainty related to or directly about one’s self-concept motivates people to rely more on their group membership. They argue that factors associated with a desire to reduce uncertainty moderate the relationship

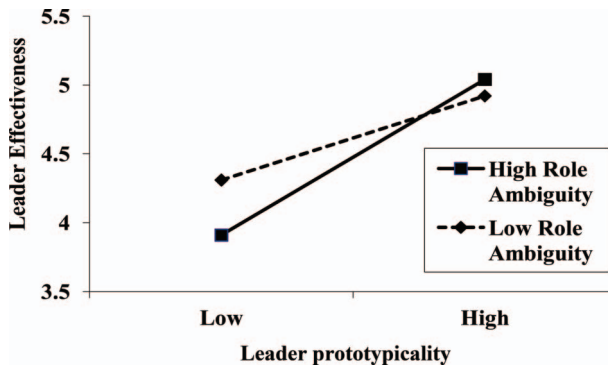
between leader group prototypicality and leadership effectiveness, such that this relationship is stronger when the desire to reduce uncertainty is elevated—more prototypical group members are more likely to emerge as leaders under conditions of higher uncertainty (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, & van Dijk, 2000). Research by Pierro and colleagues focused not on self-uncertainty per se, but rather on the plausibly related construct of need for cognitive closure—the desire to reduce uncertainty and reach closure on judgements, decisions, and actions (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994).

Need for closure has both dispositional and situational determinants, both of which have been tapped in a series of organisational field studies of leadership by Pierro, Cicero, van Knippenberg, and colleagues. Pierro et al. (2005;  $N = 242$ ) focused on dispositional differences in need for closure, and found that leader prototypicality was more strongly related to a series of indicators of perceived leadership effectiveness for followers higher in need for closure (see Figure 5). Pierro et al. (2007) qualified this finding by showing that the moderating effect of need for closure on the leader prototypicality–effectiveness relationship was stronger for followers who identified more strongly with the organisation.

Cicero, Pierro, and van Knippenberg (2007, 2010) shifted emphasis onto situationally created need for closure—they found that measured job stress and role ambiguity, which they treated as situational influences sponsoring a desire for uncertainty-reduction, moderated the leader prototypicality–leadership effectiveness relationship (see Figure 6;  $N = 268$ ). Together, these studies by Pierro and associates show that leader prototypicality is more strongly related to perceived leadership effectiveness among followers with a need for cognitive closure and thus, by implication, a motivation to reduce uncertainty.



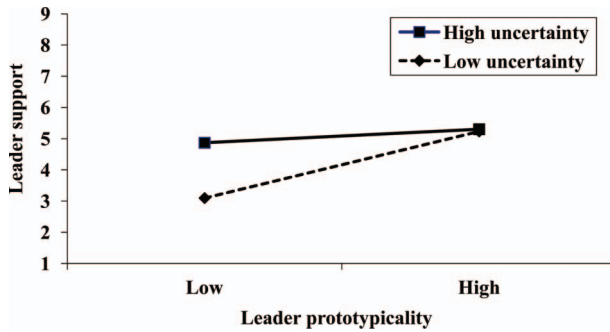
**Figure 5.** Leadership effectiveness as a function of leader group prototypicality and need for closure (NfC) (adapted from Pierro et al., 2005;  $N = 242$ ).



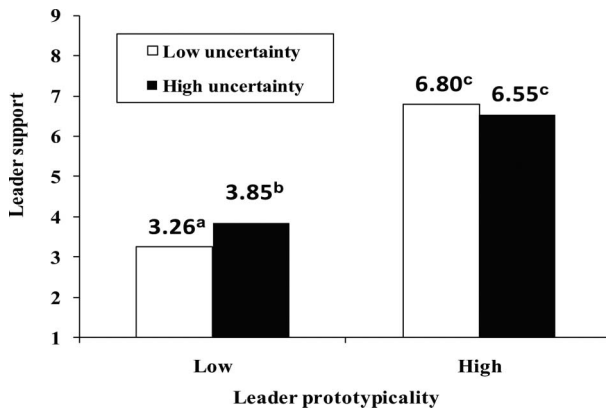
**Figure 6.** Perceived leadership effectiveness as a function of leader group prototypicality and role ambiguity (adapted from Cicero et al., 2010;  $N = 268$ ).

A pair of studies by Rast et al. (2012) suggests that the role of uncertainty in the effects of group prototypicality on leadership is more complex. Rast and colleagues derive directly from uncertainty-identity theory the hypothesis that under conditions of self-uncertainty group members will have a particularly strong yearning for prototype-defining leadership and will therefore be particularly supportive of a prototypical leader. However, Rast and colleagues focused directly on self-uncertainty (Pierro and colleagues focused on possible correlates of self-uncertainty that might also affect many other variables) and made the more textured prediction that although self-uncertainty would enhance support for a prototypical over non-prototypical leader, uncertainty would also lead people to yearn for leadership per se and this would be most apparent when leadership options were prospective rather than incumbent and when there was only one leadership option.

Rast and colleagues conducted two studies in which student participants indicated their level of uncertainty and their support for a prospective student leader who was portrayed through controlled information as prototypical or non-prototypical of students at their university; prototypicality was a between-participants variable in Study 1 ( $N = 98$ ), and a within-participants variable in Study 2 ( $N = 132$ ). As predicted, participants supported the prototypical leader more strongly than the non-prototypical leader, but this effect disappeared (Study 1; see Figure 7) or was significantly weakened (Study 2; see Figure 8) under uncertainty, due to a significant increase in support for the non-prototypical leader under elevated uncertainty. Of interest, Study 2 of this pair of experiments is the first known published social identity theory of leadership study to examine leader prototypicality as a within-participants variable, a situation that more accurately captures leadership in natural contexts where followers make comparative judgements among two or more leaders or potential leaders.



**Figure 7.** Leader support as a function of leader prototypicality, moderated by uncertainty (adapted from Rast et al., 2012, Study 1;  $N = 98$ ).



**Figure 8.** Leader support as a function of leader prototypicality and self-uncertainty (adapted from Rast et al., 2012, Study 2;  $N = 132$ ). Means not sharing a superscript differ significantly ( $p < .05$ ) by simple main effect test.

Rast et al.'s finding that uncertainty diminished relative support for a prototypical over a non-prototypical leader contrasts with Pierro et al.'s finding that uncertainty increased relative support. One reason for this difference between the studies is of course that Rast and colleagues focused directly on self-uncertainty, whereas Pierro and colleagues focused on need for closure.

The other difference, which raises an intriguing issue, is that the studies by Pierro and colleagues focused on the effectiveness of incumbent/established leaders whereas the Rast et al. studies focused on support for a leadership candidate/prospect. Whether the leader is an established

incumbent or a prospective candidate matters in terms of social identity dynamics. For example, we saw above how Abrams and colleagues in their research on innovation credit (Abrams et al., 2008) found that a leader who occupies an anti-norm position in the group is better supported if he or she is a future leader (a leadership prospect) than an established/incumbent leader.

From an uncertainty-identity theory perspective one can predict that where there is an incumbent leader (a leader is already in place) the desire for leadership sponsored by self-uncertainty will strengthen support for that leader, particularly when he or she is prototypical (this is what Pierro et al. found). However, when the group has no leader and is faced with leader possibilities (leader candidates), the desire for leadership sponsored by self-uncertainty will strengthen support for leadership *per se*, and thus strengthen support for even non-prototypical leader candidates (this is what Rast et al. found). Further empirical studies of the moderating role of leader incumbency (established versus prospective) on the interactive effect of self-uncertainty and leader prototypicality on leader support and perceived effectiveness are currently underway.

Another issue in relationship to leader prototypicality is that uncertainty may also invoke the “dark side” of leadership (Hogg, 2001c, 2005b; Rast, Gaffney, & Hogg, 2013). Prototypical leaders of high salience groups typically enjoy the support of followers, have mutually favourable transactions with them, and are able to be constructively innovative and transformational. However, as in many leadership situations this arrangement not only empowers the leader, but it also creates the potential for the leader to have substantial power *over* the group. One situation where the leader may gradually turn to the dark side and exercise power over rather than leadership of the group is when the prototype-based status difference between leader and follower becomes an instantiated status gulf that psychologically and materially isolates the leader from the group. The leader may now become paranoid (Kramer, 1998; Kramer & Gavrieli, 2005) and adopt a narcissistic (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006) and Machiavellian (Christie & Geis, 1970) leadership style in order to protect his or her leadership position in the group and his or her power over the group. Influence through group-promotive leadership is transformed into resource-based power over the group and its members (cf. Turner, 2005).

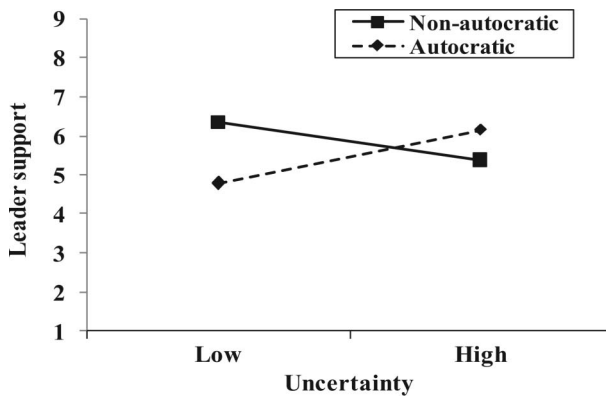
Self-uncertainty may also incline group members to actually support, endorse, and follow a more extreme, directive, even autocratic leader (e.g., Haller & Hogg, in press; Hogg, 2007c). This idea draws on uncertainty-identity theory, which argues that feelings of uncertainty about oneself are aversive and can very effectively be resolved by identifying with a self-inclusive group, particular one that is highly entitative and has a clear, distinct and unambiguous prototype (Hogg, 2007b, 2012b). Research

confirms that under uncertainty people do indeed identify more strongly with a high than low entitativity group (e.g., Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moffitt, 2007), and they also prefer a more rigidly and hierarchically structured group (Hogg, Meehan, & Farquharson, 2010).

Because directive leadership is more likely to communicate a clear prototype and be associated with hierarchical group structure, it can be hypothesised that self-uncertainty should lead to a preference for directive, even autocratic, leadership. Rast et al. (in press) recently tested and confirmed this hypothesis. A survey of 215 UK employees of different organisations revealed that less self-uncertain participants reported being more supportive and trusting of a non-autocratic than autocratic leader. The opposite was true for more self-uncertain participants; they were more supportive of an autocratic than non-autocratic leader (see Figure 9). Moderated mediation analyses confirmed that the perceived prototypicality of the leader mediated the impact of the interaction between uncertainty and leadership style on support for and trust in the leader. Specifically, prototypicality (a) mediated the way that uncertainty strengthened support for and trust in an autocratic leader, and (b) mediated the positive relationship between less autocratic leadership and greater support and trust under low uncertainty.

### LEADER FAIRNESS

A fundamental aspect of leadership is the authority to make decisions that affect followers; often quite impactful decisions regarding their well-being and life circumstances (e.g., employment, compensation, work roles).



**Figure 9.** Leader support as a function of uncertainty, for autocratic and non-autocratic leaders (adapted from Rast et al., 2012;  $N = 215$ ).



Questions of justice and leader fairness are closely associated with these decisions: specifically, the fairness of outcomes (distributive justice), the fairness of the process used to produce those outcomes (procedural justice), and the fairness of the interpersonal treatment followers receive in the course of delivering those outcomes (interactional justice; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Rupp, 2011). Not surprisingly, followers' perception that the leader is fair (which usually, but not necessarily, maps onto the fact that the leader really is fair) can enhance perceived and actual leadership effectiveness (van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & van Knippenberg, 2007). The question arises as to how leader fairness and leader group prototypicality interact to affect leader support and effectiveness.

Two key variables are trust and uncertainty. Because fair treatment reduces uncertainty about and instils trust in an authority's good intentions (van den Bos & Lind, 2010), leader fairness and leader prototypicality may fulfil partly overlapping functions, both instilling trust in leadership and reducing uncertainty. Perhaps fairness and prototypicality have a compensatory relationship; if one is low then the other becomes more important as a source of trust and self-uncertainty reduction and thus effective leadership. Research provides some support for this idea. For example, Janson, Levy, Sitkin, and Lind (2008) focused, across two samples, on both leader procedural justice (the fairness of the procedures used to arrive at outcomes) and leader interactional justice (the fairness of interpersonal treatment as evident in the respect and dignity with which one is treated) and found, as predicted, that perceived leadership effectiveness was predicted by prototypicality when fairness was low and by fairness when prototypicality was low.

This compensatory relationship is, as one would predict, enhanced by strength of identification. Focusing only on procedural fairness, Ullrich, Christ, and van Dick (2009) conducted a scenario experiment and an organisational survey to confirm that the interactive effect of leader fairness and leader prototypicality on leadership effectiveness was enhanced where followers identified more strongly with the group.

One obvious question to ask is whether people generally infer that prototypical leaders will be fair and that fair leaders are prototypical—after all, prototypicality and fairness both engender trust and enhance leader effectiveness. Two studies confirm this. Van Dijke and De Cremer (2008, 2010) showed that leader prototypicality enhanced perceptions of procedural fairness, especially among more strongly identifying followers; and, in an organisational survey, Kalshoven and Den Hartog (2009) showed that leader fairness enhanced perceptions of leader prototypicality.

This research confirms the compensatory role that can be played by leader fairness and prototypicality (one can “substitute” for the other) in leadership effectiveness. However, there is also evidence for a different

relationship in which one amplifies the role of the other—leader prototypicality may amplify the effect of leader fairness. For example, Lipponen, Koivista, and Olkkonen (2005) observed that leader prototypicality strengthened the relationship between leader fairness and followers' perceptions of their own social standing. Although perceptions of one's own social standing are not the same as perceptions of leadership effectiveness, perceptions of one's own standing do signal a feeling that the leader is trustworthy—unfair treatment conveys lack of standing, whereas fair treatment confirms one's standing (Koper, van Knippenberg, Bouhuijs, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1993).

However, the interactive effect of leader prototypicality and procedural and interactional fairness appears to be different on perceived leadership effectiveness compared to followers' perceived social standing in the group. Leadership effectiveness may be less contingent on leader fairness with higher leader prototypicality (and vice versa), because both the latter concern leader trustworthiness. In contrast, follower social self-evaluations may be more contingent on leader fairness with higher leader prototypicality, because the social evaluation conveyed by leader fairness increases in value as the leader is more representative of the collective (cf. the notion that the value of fair treatment has strong roots in social identity; Tyler & Blader, 2000).

There is a further twist to the story. Group members compare their own fair treatment by their leader with how fairly other members of the group are treated by the leader. De Cremer, van Dijke and Mayer (2010) conducted a study in which they found that group members differentiated between self and others being the recipients of procedurally fair treatment by the leader. When others were treated fairly (as opposed to unfairly), leader prototypicality enhanced the effect of leader fairness towards self on willingness to cooperate. One reading of this finding is that the social evaluation component of procedural fairness may be particularly salient in the context of the treatment that others receive. Unfair treatment of self in the face of fair treatment of others would presumably more easily be understood as a negative evaluation of self than similar treatment in a context where there are no others or others can be assumed to receive equally unfair treatment (i.e., the latter seems closer to the context as studied by Janson et al., 2008, and Ulrich et al., 2009). This in turn would invite an enhancing rather than an attenuating effect of leader group prototypicality as observed in the Lipponen et al. (2005) study.

To conclude, research on leader prototypicality and fairness points to at least one issue to address in future research: when does leader prototypicality attenuate the effects of leader fairness on leadership support and effectiveness, and when does it enhance these effects? The answer to this

question seems likely to lie in the extent to which the context invites, or the dependent variable reflects, concerns with leader trustworthiness or rather with one's own social standing in the group.

## INTERGROUP LEADERSHIP

The social identity theory of leadership views leadership as a group process that pivots on identity dynamics. In this respect it is different from most conventional leadership theories; but its focus on how one individual motivates a collection of other individuals to get behind and work towards a shared collective vision is fairly conventional.

Leaders are, however, often confronted not by a collection of individuals but by two or more distinct and self-contained groups of individuals with their own well-defined social identities. The great challenge of leadership is to be able to transcend and bridge these sometimes profound intergroup divisions within the larger group. For example, how does one effectively lead a nation divided into polarised political parties, ethnic groups, religious factions, and so forth? Leadership often has an intergroup dimension (Pittinsky, 2009; Pittinsky & Simon, 2007).

Building on some initial ideas (Hogg, 2009; Platow, Reicher, & Haslam, 2009), Hogg, van Knippenberg and Rast (2012) have recently extended the social identity theory of leadership to address intergroup leadership and present a formal theory of intergroup leadership. One problem for effective intergroup leadership is that the leader of the overarching group often comes from, or is closely affiliated with, one of the subgroups—the leader is thus an ingroup member for some people and an outgroup member for others. As we have seen above, outgroup leaders are viewed as highly unprototypical and untrustworthy and thus suffer compromised effectiveness. Indeed, one reason why corporate mergers so often fail is that the leader of the “new” organisation is viewed by many as a member of the former outgroup (Ullrich & van Dick, 2007).

Associated with this is a process of ingroup projection (e.g., Wenzel et al., 2007). The fact that the overarching group's leader comes from one of the subgroups encourages a perception that the overarching group's identity is or may become more reflective of that subgroup's identity—a process that may weaken other subgroups' trust in leadership, and commitment to and identification with the overarching entity. Another problem for intergroup leaders is that an attempt to build a common ingroup identity that transcends and ultimately erases subgroup boundaries is beset with problems—primarily because the process poses a serious threat to the distinctiveness of the subgroups and the associated identities that members cherish (see Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000).

To circumvent these problems, and drawing on the social psychology of intergroup relations (e.g., Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010), Hogg et al. (2012) introduce a new concept, *intergroup relational identity*. They argue that intergroup leaders may be more effective if they strive to balance the superordinate identity of the larger group with the distinctive identities of the various subgroups, by constructing and embodying an intergroup relational identity that defines the superordinate group in terms of mutually beneficial relationships between distinctive and valued subgroups. The concept of intergroup relational identity differs from Brewer's notion of relational identity (e.g., Brewer & Gardner, 1996; see Chen, Boucher, & Tapias, 2006) in that the former "relationship" is between groups not individuals. This is a very significant difference as the former implicates intergroup relations whereas the latter does not.

There are at least three general classes of concrete actions that leaders may need to take to successfully construct and maintain an intergroup relational identity and thus lead effectively. They can engage in rhetoric championing intergroup collaboration against a background of intergroup distinctiveness as a valued aspect of group identity; they can consistently and publicly exemplify the intergroup relational identity through their own overt behaviour that spans intergroup boundaries; and they can form a leadership coalition that spans intergroup boundaries because it includes an array of subgroup leaders.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The social identity theory of leadership, first formally published more than 10 years ago (Hogg, 2001a; Hogg & van Knippenberg 2003), has its roots firmly in social identity theory, particularly the social identity theory analysis of group membership-based social influence (e.g., Hogg & Turner, 1987; Turner, 1982; Turner et al. 1987; also see Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Turner, 1991; Turner & Oakes, 1989). The theory's overarching insight is that social identity concerns often play a critical role in leadership processes in social groups and categories, and that this aspect of leadership has been significantly underemphasised in leadership research (cf. Hogg, 2010, 2013).

People in groups that are central aspects of their social identity tend psychologically to identify strongly with such groups and look to their leaders to define the group's identity and thus their own identity. Under these circumstances perceptions of group prototypicality are highly influential in social cognition and social interaction, and leaders who are perceived to be prototypical group members are more strongly supported and are evaluated as more effective leaders than leaders who are less prototypical.

An important caveat is that the social identity theory of leadership has, like other theories, boundary conditions—it explains leadership in situations which are much more prevalent than often thought, where social identity is self-conceptually central and salient. It does not apply or applies less strongly in leadership situations where the group is not a chronically central or situationally salient anchor for one's social identity; in these latter situations other leadership processes are more important, processes that are theorised by other theories of leadership (see Hogg, 2010; Yukl, 2010). Psychological group identification transforms the basis of leadership so that it is increasingly governed by social identity and social identity related processes.

The theory attributes the leadership effectiveness of prototypical ingroup leaders of salient groups to an array of associated social cognitive and social interactive processes—these include the fact that their prototypicality (a) makes them (appear to be) the focus rather than the target of conformity processes across the group, (b) renders them consensually positively evaluated and liked (i.e., popular) in group terms, thus imbuing them with status within the group, (c) makes them appear to be “one of us” and thus trustworthy, which paradoxically extends them latitude to be normatively innovative, and (d) encourages followers to dispositionally attribute their influence, status, and innovativeness and thus construct a charismatic personality for them that further facilitates leadership. The social identity theory of leadership has become a significant focus for research in both social psychology and the organisational and management sciences, as has the more general leadership meta-theory that recognises the central role played by social identity in many leadership situations (e.g., Haslam et al., 2011).

The key prediction—that as group membership becomes more central to self-definition, and people identify more strongly with their group prototypical leaders attract relatively greater support and are more effective than less prototypical leaders—has attracted very robust support across scores of studies. However, recent research has begun to explore situations where the leadership effectiveness of being prototypical may be diminished. One situation is when the group is faced by a crisis that makes leadership success almost impossible and the leader is bound to fail—supporting a non-prototypical leader can be strategically propitious as failure can be blamed on the leader's not the group's attributes. In the context of women being placed in precarious leadership roles this has been called the glass cliff (e.g., Ryan & Haslam, 2007). Another situation where non-prototypical leaders may gain some traction is when followers' social identity-related self-uncertainty is high and thus there is a hunger for leadership per se (e.g., Rast et al., 2012).

The past decade has witnessed a significant number of other new empirical and conceptual developments of the social identity theory of

leadership. There has been substantial research on the role of trust in social identity-based leadership (e.g., van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005); studies have confirmed that prototypical leaders enjoy elevated trust because they are considered “one of us”, and that people are therefore prepared to support them as legitimate leaders. One consequence of leadership trust is that followers are, within limits, prepared to extend innovation credit to prototypical leaders, allowing them to be normatively innovative and thus able to transform the group (e.g., Abrams et al., 2008). There is even some provocative evidence that deviant group members can be more accepted when they occupy a leadership role and their behaviour is viewed as indicative of change towards a future group norm (e.g., Pinto et al., 2010).

People in groups spend substantial time communicating directly or indirectly about group norms, engaging in “norm talk” (e.g., Hogg & Giles, 2012), and leaders lead largely through norm talk. Research is increasingly focusing on the structure and role of leadership rhetoric in constructing, consolidating, and transforming group norms and associated social identities—a number of studies have started mapping this communicative process (e.g., Reicher et al., 2005; Seyranian & Bligh, 2008).

Charisma plays a central causal role in many contemporary theories of leadership as a transformational process. However the social identity theory of leadership argues that in salient group contexts charisma may often be an attributional consequence rather than a cause of effective leadership. Some research supports this analysis (e.g., van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005); however further research is needed to fully disentangle the relationship between social identification, prototypicality, and charisma in leadership.

In recent years uncertainty-identity theory has described how self-uncertainty motivates group identification and preference to identify with highly entitative groups (e.g., Hogg, 2012b). Applied to leadership this theory predicts, and research confirms, that uncertainty affects leadership support and effectiveness in a number of different ways. Where there is a legitimate incumbent leader preference for a prototypical leader may be accentuated (e.g., Pierro et al., 2005), but where there are one or more prospective acceptable leaders the thirst for leadership per se will cause members to look more favourably on non-prototypical leadership prospects (e.g., Rast et al., 2012). Self-uncertainty also creates a preference for leaders who have a directive and possibly autocratic leadership style (e.g., Haller & Hogg, in press; Rast et al., 2013, in press). Research is currently being conducted to better map out the effect of self-uncertainty on leadership, and key moderators of different effects.

Fairness perceptions play a key role in leadership—members are more likely to follow a leader who treats them fairly, particularly in terms of procedural fairness. Research supports this general idea and focuses on the

extent to which prototypical or non-prototypical leaders and fair versus unfair leadership behaviour build trust and reduce self-uncertainty within the group (van Knippenberg et al., 2007). Some studies suggest that prototypicality and fairness have a compensatory relationship in building trust and reducing uncertainty, and thus in sponsoring leader support and leadership effectiveness; other studies identify an amplificatory relationship in which leader prototypicality may amplify the effect of leader fairness. Overall it seems that prototypicality and fair treatment may have different interactive effects on leadership effectiveness directly, and indirectly through followers' feelings of social standing in the group. Research is under way to clarify these processes.

Finally, a very recent and quite radical conceptual development of the social identity theory of leadership is a focus on intergroup leadership (Hogg et al., 2012). Most leadership research, including the social identity theory of leadership essentially explains how an individual can effectively lead a collection of individuals within a group. However an all too common leadership challenge is to provide leadership across deep and often hostile intergroup divisions. Hogg and colleagues argue that in these situations the leader needs to construct and embody an intergroup relational identity that defines the superordinate group in terms of the mutually beneficial relationships between distinctive and valued subgroups. Research is being conducted to test a wide range of hypotheses generated by this idea.

In conclusion, the social identity theory of leadership has sponsored a new look at leadership both within social psychology and across the organisational and management sciences. It has reconnected leadership with influence and placed identity dynamics and associated social cognitive and social interactive processes centre stage in the process of leadership. It has attracted substantial research attention and provided the impetus for significant conceptual developments framed by the theory in a specific sense and also by the wider meta-theory that privileges social identity processes in leadership. As described in this article there are a number of exciting new developments that will continue to fuel research into the future and further help us understand leadership.

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