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What do leaders have to live up to? Contrasting the effects of central tendency versus ideal-based leader prototypes in leader categorization processes

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Abstract

Leader categorization theory proposes that subordinates perceive leaders against the backdrop of a cognitively represented leader prototype. The match between the two ultimately determines how favourably subordinates respond towards leaders. The respective research, however, yields some confusion as to what kind of prototype is exactly used in this process. Are leaders matched against a central tendency leader prototype, i.e. to an average image of leaders in general, or is it subordinates' goal-directed leader prototype, i.e. their image of an ideal leader, that leaders have to live up to? We reanalysed a field study ($N = 266$) and conducted a second one likewise with employees ($N = 271$) to contrast the relevance of both prototypes. The analyses reveal that only the match with the ideal leader prototype was predictive of subordinates' responses towards their leaders. Previous central tendency leader categorization research thus might have pertained to the ideal aspects in the existing leader population.

Keywords

Leadership perception, information processing, leader prototypes, leader categorization

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Implicit leadership theories (ILTs) have risen to prominence positing that individuals hold implicit assumptions about leadership that inform their responses to the leaders they encounter (for reviews see Schyns and Meindl, 2005; Shamir et al., 2007; Shondrick et al., 2010). Part of ILTs are, for instance, mentally abstracted schematic images of how leaders are (to be) like, so called *leader prototypes*. According to the ILT paradigm, as part of people's recognition-based processing of information, leader prototypes serve as benchmarks against which people judge actual leaders (Lord and Maher, 1991). In other words, when people perceive a leader as a close match to their leader prototype, they will react more favorably (i.e. be more open to and supportive of the leadership) than when they perceive the leader as a poor fit to their implicit leader prototype. This matching process, also known as *leader categorization*, has been confirmed by various studies (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; Hall et al., 1998; Lord and Maher, 1991; Nye and Forsyth, 1991; Rosette et al., 2008).

Yet, respective research retains a high degree of ambiguity regarding the type of leader prototype that is of importance for understanding organizational dynamics. While some researchers seem to have focused on the investigation of the content and structure of a central tendency leader prototype, comprising an image of leaders in general (e.g. Epitropaki and Martin, 2004; Lord and Maher, 1991; Offermann et al., 1994 [1]), others have focused on the content and structure of a goal-directed leader prototype comprising an image of the ideal leader (e.g. Chhokar et al., 2007; Keller, 1999; Kenney et al., 1996). Both types of leader prototype are arguably interesting to explore. However, it is unclear which type of leader prototype is more informative for subordinates' responses towards their leaders as part of the leader categorization process. Moreover, because the distinction between these two leader prototype conceptions has to our knowledge never been explicitly addressed in the respective ILT literature, existing research is potentially misleading as to what the data tell us and what conclusion should be drawn from it.

In response to this empirical and theoretical ambiguity, the present research aims to empirically contrast the relevance of both leader prototypes in leader categorization processes for an array of subordinates' responses to leadership that is regularly used in organizational behaviour research. In doing so, we not only seek to pave the way for more differentiated cognitively oriented leadership research, but also to facilitate the discussion and integration of prior findings.

An introduction to implicit leadership theories

Although the importance of people's expectations for leaders took some time to be recognized, it is apparent today that the various research undertakings in that tradition have deepened the understanding of leadership and its processes substantially. Indeed, what first started with research that by and large regarded ILTs as a source of bias in leadership measurement (e.g. Eden and Leviatan, 1975; Gioia and Sims, 1985; Rush et al., 1977) has today evolved in a research field of its own.

The latter development is largely due to Lord and his associates (Lord et al., 1984; Lord and Maher, 1991) who argued that, because leadership is a natural phenomenon in most groups, people develop an implicit understanding of what leadership does and what leaders are (to be) like. In others words, through socialization and past experiences with leaders, people evolve implicit knowledge structures on leaders and leadership (Lord et al., 2001; Ritter and Lord, 2007). These knowledge structures have been coined Implicit Leadership Theories. The respective research initiated a debate arguing that leadership research should

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place greater emphasis on employees' prior expectations and in particular on their leader prototypes because these essentially shape perceptions of leadership and thus inform people's responses towards leaders in various domains and forms (e.g. Brown and Lord, 2001; Foti et al., 1982; Lord and Alliger, 1985; Lord and Maher, 1991; Lord et al., 1984).

In more extensive accounts, Lord and Maher (1991) specifically point to recognition-based information processing mechanisms as key factors in understanding why some leaders are effective with followers and others are not (Lord et al., 1986). They assert that humans are not only cognitive misers but also generally unable to process all information in their environment. Hence, a cognitive categorization process, i.e. a rapid implicit matching of incoming perceptual information against abstract cognitive structures (i.e. prototypes), is needed to process information effectively and ultimately to facilitate individual sense-making and thereby enabling appropriate responses (Macrae and Bodenhausen, 2000; Meindl, 1995).

Lord and Maher (1991) translated this insight to the study of leadership, arguing that subordinates are likely to implicitly use their cognitive schemas about leaders, i.e. their leader prototypes, when responding to actual leaders. Put differently, people use their leader prototypes as a benchmark in a 'leader prototype versus actual leader' matching process to determine whether they have a (good) leader in front of them or not. The outcome of this benchmarking process determines how favourably a subordinate responds to a leader. This process, coined leader categorization, has been shown to affect the leader–followers relationship via constructs such as leader–member exchange (Engle and Lord, 1997; Epitropaki and Martin, 2005), organizational commitment (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005), subjective wellbeing (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005), evaluation of leader behaviour (Foti and Lord, 1987; Fraser and Lord, 1988; Rosette et al., 2008; Scott and Brown, 2006), acceptance of managerial decisions (Lord and Maher, 1991; Van Quaquebeke and Brodbeck, 2008; Van Quaquebeke et al., 2011a), promotion decisions (Nye and Forsyth, 1991), and the discretion and power a leader is granted (Maurer and Lord, 1991).

Two types of (leader) prototypes

When Lord and his colleagues (Lord and Maher, 1991; Lord et al., 1984; cf. Medvedeff and Lord, 2007) developed their so-called follower-centric perspective on leadership, they focused on Rosch's (1978) theory of cognitive categorization, which posits that categorizations are based on the match of the stimulus' properties to abstractions or prototypes derived from characteristics common to the category members ('family resemblance'). Family resemblance in this conception is defined as an exemplar's average similarity to other category members and its average dissimilarity to members of different categories. The more similar an exemplar is to same category members and the less similar it is to members of different categories, the higher its family resemblance to that category, and the more typical it is considered of the category. An exemplar's family resemblance can also be understood as its similarity to the *central tendency* of a category (Hampton, 1979; Smith et al., 1974) where central tendency can refer to any highly probable property of a category's exemplars such as an average, median, or modal value.

Following Rosch's (1978) conception that prototypes entail abstract sets of features shared by encountered category members, leadership researchers have developed respective leader prototypicality measures (cf. Medvedeff and Lord, 2007). Lord et al. (1984), for example, asked students (not employees) to list as many attributes as they can think of that apply to leaders and respective non-leaders in eleven leadership domains such as

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politics, business, and sports. Subsequently, they let other participants (also students) rate the prototypicality of the generated leader characteristics by asking on a scale from 1 ('does not fit my image at all') to 5 ('fits my image very well') to what degree each of the previously generated leader attributes was characteristic of a leader. The study resulted in 59 prototypical leader attributes and 26 prototypical non-leader items.

Offermann and colleagues (1994) created another leader prototypicality measure rooted in the central tendency conception of prototypes. Similar to Lord et al.'s (1984) approach, they first asked students to list up to 25 traits or characteristics of leaders. Subsequently, other students rated the prototypicality of the generated attributes from 1 ('not at all characteristic') to 10 ('extremely characteristic'). After additional factor analyses and sorting tasks, the result was a 41-item instrument that measures six dimensions of leader-prototypicality (Sensitivity, Dedication, Charisma, Attractiveness, Intelligence, and Strength) and two dimensions labelled leader-antiprototypical[2] (Tyranny and Masculinity).

Epitropaki and Martin (2004) revised Offermann's (1994) instrument by testing the structure of the instrument's items with respect to situational, individual, and longitudinal factors. Similar to Offermann et al. (1994), they took a central tendency approach by asking employees to rate the 41 Offermann items from 1 'not at all characteristic' to 10 'extremely characteristic' for business leaders. Their analysis indicated that of the original 41 items only 21 should be maintained as truly prototypical or antiprototypical. Epitropaki and Martin argued further that these items should be sorted into a 6-factor structure (Sensitivity, Dedication, Intelligence, Tyranny, Masculinity, and Dynamism), dropping Attractiveness and collapsing Strength and Charisma into a single factor (Dynamism).

However, the psychology of concepts and categories has seen a great deal of progress over the past several decades (for reviews see Murphy, 2002; Wisniewski, 2002). In contrast to the central tendency-based understanding of prototypes, other researchers (Borkenau, 1990; Burnett et al., 2005; Chaplin et al., 1988; Lynch et al., 2000) and in particular Barsalou (1985) have posited and found empirical support for a goal-oriented conception of prototypes, referred to as 'ideal prototypes'. Whereas central tendency-based prototypes comprise the most common characteristics of a category, ideal prototypes comprise the characteristics perceived as most central to the purpose of a category. For example, people tend to categorize diet foods not based on the average number of calories in existing diet foods but rather according to the ideal point of zero calories. This conception of prototypicality is different from the central tendency one in that central tendency depends directly on the existing exemplars of a category with the most prototypical member being at the centre of that structure, while ideal-based conception of prototypicality posits that the most prototypical member can also be at the periphery and is mainly determined by the prevalent purpose or objective of the category (Burnett et al., 2005).

This conception of ideal prototypes seems to be particularly suited to the realm of interpersonal perception. Indeed, research suggests that traits are defined by a purpose and that trait ascriptions consequently follow an ideal-based graded structure (Borkenau, 1990; Chaplin et al., 1988). Further research similarly suggests that the main rationale behind trait ascriptions lies in the evaluation of someone's potential as a resource for the group (Hogan, 1983). In other words, people tend to perceive others' personality traits according to whether others are qualified for an important task. This is especially true if the perceiver does not feel personally competent to handle the task at hand (Wicklund and Braun, 1987). As Borkenau (1990: 382) puts it, '[. . .]the primary purpose of trait terms is to evaluate the aptitude of people'.

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And yet another stream of research similarly suggests that prototypicality can at least be looked at from two perspectives. Specifically, research on group leadership stemming from self-categorization theory (Hogg and Terry, 2000; Turner and Haslam, 2001) argues that much of leaders' legitimacy to lead groups is drawn from the leaders' representativeness of these groups, i.e. their group prototypicality (Hogg and Van Knippenberg, 2003; Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). However, importantly, here too, more recent extensions suggest that groups are not only about 'being' but also about 'becoming' (Reicher et al., 2005). For this reason, followers might endorse leaders less so for their representation of what the group resembles in the present (along the lines of the central tendency prototype), but rather for the representation (and communication of) what the group might be in the future, i.e. what it can transform into (along the lines of an ideal prototype) (Haslam et al., 2010). Increasingly in this stream of literature, group prototypicality, i.e. embodying who we are, is thus less about being the 'average Joe' but rather about being the person group members aspire to be, the ideal (Van Knippenberg, 2012).

Potentially because of the above cited evidence, some leadership researchers in the realm of ILTs have thus discounted the central tendency conception of leader prototypes and instead have started to investigate ideal-based conceptions of leader prototypes. Kenney et al., (1994), for example, generated a list of prototypical attributes for new leaders by asking their participants (given the reported age range of 18 to 50, thus probably not only students) to list traits and behaviors associated with a new leader who would be accepted by a group to which the participant belonged. In doing so, Kenney et al. (1994: 414) were among the first to incorporate the notions of Barsalou on ideal prototypes in the domain of ILTs when they write 'The category of a new leader worthy of influence may involve both typical (new leader) and ideal (worthy of influence) features.'. It is because their measurement development focused on the objective to be accepted by the group, that we consider it in the category of ideal-based leader prototypicality. Kenney et al., (1996) revisit this idea and constructed a measurement of leaders worthy of influence. While they broadened the perspective from new leaders to leaders in general, they retained the same basic procedure for extracting prototypical attributes, this time asking participants (students with work experience) to name characteristics a leader must exhibit in order for the participants to allow him or her to influence their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. Again, they emphasized the difference to central-tendency leader prototypicality measures for which they attest that '[. . .], people may not describe an ideal leader but, instead, may sometimes describe a typical leader, including both positive and negative qualities.' (Kenney et al., 1996: 1129).

The Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) program, which investigates leader prototypes in different cultures (Chhokar et al., 2007; House et al., 2004), however, undertook the yet most significant approach to assessing ideal-based leader prototypes. The objective of the study was not to describe typical leaders in each culture but rather to describe leaders regarded as particularly effective in each culture. Hence, in the development of their measure, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with employees and analyzed the extant leadership literature to determine leader attributes perceived as either contributing to or hindering outstanding leadership. Later, they asked different participants to rate the prototypicality of the 382 generated items from 1 ('extremely hinders outstanding leadership') to 7 ('extremely fosters outstanding leadership'). The study produced the Culturally Endorsed Implicit Leadership Theories (CLTs), an ideal-based leader prototypicality measurement consisting of 21 subscales sorted into six dimensions

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(Charismatic/Value-based, Self-protective, Human oriented, Team oriented, Participative, and Autonomous).

Two types of (leader) prototypes in leader categorization processes?

While previous Implicit Leadership Theory research seems to have been largely unaware of the distinction between central tendency-based and ideal-based prototypes (such as we have presented it above), the question arises which of the two prototype bases, central tendency or ideal, is (more) predictive as a benchmark in leader categorization processes, i.e. when people's responses towards their leaders are to be predicted.

To date, surprisingly few leader categorization studies have used any of the leader prototype instruments described above. Indeed, most leader categorization studies are undertaken in the laboratory and either use single cues such as gender (Scott and Brown, 2006), or race (Rosette et al., 2008; Sy et al., 2010), or manipulate leader prototypicality (Foti et al., 1982). Notably different is the work on leader categorization by Epitropaki and Martin (2005), which rests upon their above described revision of the Offermann leader prototype instrument (Epitropaki and Martin, 2004). They conducted a field study in which they calculated the absolute difference between participants' leader prototypes and participants' perceptions of their actual leaders. Subsequently, they regressed outcomes such as leader-member exchange (LMX), organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and well-being onto these differences, including a cross-lagged analyses of two data points to support the implied causality. Their results indicate that the more employees perceived their actual leaders to match the leader prototype, the better the quality of LMX (e.g. some results from their correlation table: actual leader difference to leader prototype: $r = -0.49$), with further positive effects on employee commitment (-0.38) and well-being (-0.35). Entitling their work 'Ideal to Real' is, however, misleading because they measured the leader prototype with the above described central tendency-based leader prototypicality instrument (Epitropaki and Martin, 2004). A labelling such as 'Typical to Real' thus seems more appropriate. Despite this labelling issue which might confuse the understanding as to what type of leader prototype was used in the study, their study is one of the few that directly assesses leader categorization effects based on a previously developed leader prototype instrument.

A study by Van Quaquebeke and Brodbeck (2008) follows a similar rationale. They revised the above described GLOBE instrument into a shorter version for German speaking countries with 31 attribute items. Moreover, they developed an additional Venn diagram measure to capture leader categorization in a graphical fashion. The Venn diagram was a visual representation of two increasingly overlapping circles, in which the one circle represented participants' actual leader and the other participants' image of an ideal leader. Contrary to Epitropaki and Martin (2005), and as outlined above, the GLOBE instrument as well as the Venn diagram are both based on an ideal-based leader prototype. In their study, both measurements of leader categorization, i.e. a leader's match on the Venn-diagram and a leader's match against the 31 GLOBE attributes, show positive relationships with constructs such as subordinates' relational identification with the leader (Venn $r = 0.36$, GLOBE $r = 0.30$), their affective commitment towards the leader (0.68, 0.61), and their vertical respect for the leader (0.85, 0.72). Moreover, Van Quaquebeke and colleagues were able to confirm these relationships at various other occasions (adding different theoretical extensions that are, however, not central to the present paper, Van Quaquebeke and Van Knippenberg, 2012; Van Quaquebeke et al., 2011a, 2011b).

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Apart from these studies, we are not aware of any other that have directly related leader categorization processes along a previously developed leader prototype instrument to subordinates' responses towards actual leaders in the field. Nevertheless, these two studies sufficiently illustrate that an actual leader versus leader prototype match influences employees' responses towards their leaders as proposed by leader categorization. The basic conception of the leader prototype used in the leader categorization process, however, varies slightly. One is based on a central tendency-based leader prototype, while the other is based on an ideal-based leader prototype. Hence, the question arises which kind of leader prototype match is more predictive of employee's responses towards their leaders.

Given the above reviewed literature, we suggest that the ideal-based leader prototype should be more predictive of employees' responses towards their leaders, first because leaders are expected to serve a purpose of leading individuals (Hogan, 1983; Wicklund and Braun, 1987) which fits with cognitive research suggesting that objects which are to serve a purpose are cognitively best represented along respective ideal prototypes (cf. foods for a diet, Barsalou, 1985), and second because leader categorization theory asserts that leader prototypes involve trait ascriptions (Lord and Maher, 1991; Smith and Foti, 1998) which cognitive works have likewise shown to result from ideal-based information processing (Borkenau, 1990).

In our analyses we will focus on outcomes of leader categorization that signal subordinates' openness towards their leaders' influence and their satisfaction with the leadership. Indeed, while other forms of subordinate responses (e.g. mere recognition of a target as a leader) might also be informed by a leader categorization process, we focus with the present analyses on the former responses because not only were such responses central in the latest leader categorization research (cf. Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; Van Quaquebeke and Brodbeck, 2008) but also because such responses are of more immediate concern in an organizational context as prerequisites for leadership effectiveness (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2011a). Important to note is that we deliberately chose a relatively wide array of measures which, as a consequence, do not necessarily stem from one line of organizational behaviour literature. We did so because our more immediate concern lies within the core of ILT reasoning and thus more with the dynamics of the independent variables, i.e. leader categorization. Moreover, by conducting this research, we aspire to integrate existing perspectives on leader prototypes. By narrowing down the dependent variables to those that fit within one organizational behaviour framework and thereby omitting the ones from another, we feared that some of that integration would be lost on potential criticism that effects may only hold for variables within one framework.

> Hypothesis 1: When directly contrasting the effects of leader categorization against an ideal based leader prototype and against a central tendency-based leader prototype, only the former is informative for subordinates' responses that signal an openness for leadership and satisfaction therewith.

Expanding upon the hypothesis, one may also say that any positive relationships between subordinates' categorization of their leaders against a central tendency-based leader prototype and subordinates' responses that signal an openness for leadership and satisfaction therewith are completely mediated by subordinates' categorization of the same leader's match against an ideal-based leader prototype.

Yet, to reconcile the different perspectives on leader prototypes, we further hypothesize that because actual leaders are usually recruited according to the purpose of leadership,

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i.e. to effectively lead others, the existing leader population can be assumed to be already fairly ideal driven. Hence, any central tendency representative of the leader category should to a certain extent also be a representative of the ideal leader prototype, which should be reflected in a correlation between central tendency and ideal leader prototypes and, as a result, also in subordinates' categorization of their leaders against both prototypes.

> Hypothesis 2a: Subordinates' conception of an ideal-based and of a central tendency-based prototype are positively related
> Hypothesis 2b: Subordinates' categorizations of their leaders against an ideal-based leader prototype and against a central tendency-based leader prototype are positively related.

We thus suggest that some previous leader categorization effects on outcomes where actual leaders were matched against a central tendency leader prototype are probably due to the fact that ideal and central tendency leader prototype are related, but that the ideal aspects are the ones which drive the effect.

The present set of studies

To empirically test our theoretical reasoning, we reanalysed a field study from Van Quaquebeke and colleagues (Tilman Eckloff, 2011a) and conducted another field study. In the first, GLOBE leader attributes were used and employees were asked to rate to what extent the 31 attributes represented (a) their ideal leader prototype and (b) their central tendency leader prototype. Subsequently, respondents were asked to rate their current leaders on the same GLOBE attributes. In this way, we were able to inspect the correlation between the two prototypes (Hypothesis 2a), as well as to investigate whether subordinates' perceptions of a leader's attributes informs their responses to that leader more when the leadership attributes are considered representative of an ideal leader prototype versus when the leadership attributes are considered representative of a central tendency leader prototype (Hypothesis 1). Hence, even though the GLOBE instrument is considered to capture a socially shared leader prototype (Van Quaquebeke and Brodbeck, 2008; Van Quaquebeke et al., 2011a), by allowing participants their idiosyncratic definition of what they regard as ideal and typical in a leader, these nuances in definitions of leader prototypes allowed us to test our hypotheses. Note, however, that this procedure represents a slight deviation from the original study which we will come back to in the discussion.

In the second study, we varied the approach by using pictorial Venn diagrams to assess the degree to which employees' current leaders represented their prototypes of (a) an ideal leader and (b) a central tendency leader. In doing so, we were able to inspect the correlation between a leader's representations of both prototypes (Hypothesis 2b) without having to work with problematic difference scores as well as to directly assess the leader categorization effects against both leader prototypes simultaneously (Hypothesis 1) and in particular the encapsulated mediation argument. Moreover, this approach represents a truly idiosyncratic way of assessing leader categorization.

Study 1

Method

Sample. Two hundred and sixty-six participants completed the survey in Germany. The sample's mean age was 36.5 years ($SD = 9.2$). Women made up 53% of the sample.

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The average lifetime employment experience was about 14.6 years ($SD = 9.3$); the average number of supervisors experienced throughout the lifetime of a participant was 5.6 ($SD = 3.8$) of whom on average 23% were female. Employees with higher education made up roughly half of the sample. 62% of all participants had completed vocational training. Participants were employed in more than 20 different industries and more than 30 different departments (approximately 90% white-collar work). Note that some parts of the data for the present study were also used in Van Quaquebeke and colleagues' publication (Tilman Eckloff, 2011a; Study 2). Both papers, however, have a different focus in that the other publication investigates the issue of subordinates' self-definition as a leader on the leader categorization process. Hence, only two constructs in the data overlap, i.e. leader categorization of the actual leader and respect for the leader. All other constructs are original.

Procedure. We followed a multi-site-multi-entry strategy to recruit participants online and prevent strong sampling biases (Birnbaum, 2004; Kraut et al., 2004). Participants were recruited in cooperation with major German public media websites from diverse backgrounds (e.g. stern.de, focus.de) and German worker unions. The entry-type was either a banner, a teaser text box, or a short article on the rough objective of the survey. To increase response rate, we offered motivators such as feedback of the survey results and a lottery for online bookshop gift vouchers. We assured at the beginning of the survey that the research would be conducted anonymously.

Measures

As our research was conducted in Germany, we used the reduced version (Van Quaquebeke and Brodbeck, 2008) of the widely applied Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) leadership scales (Hanges and Dickson, 2006; House et al., 2004). This instrument consists of only those attributes that at least 95% of the original German GLOBE sample ($N = 471$ as reported in Brodbeck and Frese, 2007; House et al., 2004) considered either highly prototypical or highly antiprototypical for leadership (following the method of Dorfman et al., 2004). Attributes regarded as prototypical in Germany are: Inspirational, Future-oriented, Foresight, Positive, Motive arouser, Confidence builder, Dynamic, Encouraging, Motivational, Morale booster, Trustworthy, Decisive, Logical, Improvement-oriented, Excellence-oriented, Integrator, Informed, Team builder, Dependable, Intelligent, and Effective bargainer. Attributes regarded as antiprototypical in Germany are: Dictatorial, Non-delegater, Vindictive, Irritable, Non-cooperative, Cynical, Dishonest, Hostile, and Non-participative. The instrument also includes an additional leadership attribute item ('professional expertise') which was not included in the original GLOBE questionnaire due to its intercultural constraints[3] but which Van Quaquebeke and Brodbeck (2008) regard highly relevant for the perception of leadership qualities in Germany (cf. Brodbeck and Frese, 2007). For the present study, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they see their (a) current leaders, (b) average leaders in general, and (c) their image of an ideal leader representing each of the 31 leadership attributes. To counter any potential demand character on participants to differentiate scores in our study, the order in which the participants were to give their indications on a, b, and c was randomized. Moreover, participants were always asked to fill in all 31 items for a, b, and c respectively, which made it hard to keep particular scores in mind and differentiate specific subsequent ratings. Participants answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1

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(*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). We calculated final scores as means with antiprototypical items reverse coded.

For the dependent measures, and as outlined in the introduction, we focused on subordinate responses towards their leaders which can be argued to signal subordinates' openness for influence and their satisfaction with leadership as these are important for indicators of leadership effectiveness (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2011a) and thus ultimately also performance (Van Knippenberg and Van Knippenberg, 2005). Participants rated agreement with each of the following scales on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*):

Relational identification with the leader (cf. Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Sluss and Ashforth, 2007) was chosen as more indirect assessment of openness towards leadership based on a sense of oneness. It was measured via the 6-item Mael and Ashforth organizational identification questionnaire (1992) adapted to the current leader as the target of identification (cf. Van Dick et al., 2004). The scale reflects the sense of unity that subordinates feel with their leaders. It encompasses items such as 'When someone criticizes my leader, it feels like a personal insult', or 'When I talk about my leader, I usually say 'we' rather than 'he or she'.'

Affective commitment towards the leader was chosen because it signals an affective sense of duty and belongingness with the leader. It was measured via the 6-item Meyer and Allen organizational commitment questionnaire (Meyer and Allen, 1991) adapted to the current leader as the target of commitment. The scale reflects the emotional attachment to and involvement with the leader. Sample items are 'I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this leader' or 'This leader has a great deal of personal meaning for me.'

Vertical respect for the leader was chosen because it explicitly captures the extent to which subordinates respect the leader and voluntarily accept and seek his/her leadership, i.e. are open for influence. It was measured via a 6-item measure (Van Quaquebeke and Brodbeck, 2008; Van Quaquebeke et al., 2011a). The items were (1) 'For me, my leader represents a positive role model at the workplace', (2) 'I trust the judgment of my leader in work issues', (3) 'In a lot of matters concerning work I gladly seek advice from my leader', (4) 'At work I enjoy being able to learn from my leader', (5) 'Due to the influence of my leader I feel very constricted in my professional development [*reverse coded*]', (6) 'I owe respect to the way my leader accomplishes his / her professional functions.'

Satisfaction with the leadership was measured by the supervisory satisfaction facet of the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) (Hackman and Oldham, 1974). Sample items are 'I am very satisfied with the degree of respect and fair treatment I receive from my boss' and 'I am very satisfied with the overall quality of the supervision I receive in my work.'

Results

Table 1 provides an overview of the descriptives, intercorrelations, and internal consistencies of the measures used in Study 1. As can be gathered from it, the degree to which people thought the GLOBE items represented leaders in general (i.e. the central tendency leader prototype) and ideal leaders correlates significantly with $r = 0.19$, which supports our Hypothesis 2a that the central tendency leader prototype is to some extent related to an ideal conception of leadership. The correlation is, however, lower than one might have expected. Indeed, it may echo other surveys that show a rather large dissatisfaction with leaders in Germany in general (Nink, 2009; Van Quaquebeke et al., 2009). The seeming differences in correlations between both leader prototypes and the outcomes are, however, not significant.

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Table 1. Descriptives, intercorrelations, and reliabilities of measures in Study 1.

		Mean	*SD*	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
Predictors	1. Current Leader	3.55	0.83	(0.96)						
	2. Ideal Leader Prototype	4.43	0.40	0.31***	(0.94)					
	3. Central Tendency Leader Prototype	3.15	0.51	0.24***	0.19**	(0.92)				
Outcomes	4. Identification with Leader	2.07	0.77	0.39***	0.07	0.10	(0.76)			
	5. Affective Commitment towards Leader	2.77	0.88	0.59***	0.12*	0.19**	0.52***	(0.72)		
	6. Respect for Leader	3.05	1.15	0.81***	0.12	0.16**	0.47***	0.68***	(0.92)	
	7. Satisfaction with Leadership	2.96	1.22	0.77***	0.16**	0.30***	0.40***	0.60***	0.80***	(0.90)

Note. $N = 266$; Cronbach's α are indicated in parentheses; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

Unsurprisingly, given that that the GLOBE attributes stem from leader prototypicality research, the current leader's representation of the GLOBE leader attributes is in itself significantly related to all outcome variables. Likewise little surprising given the common underlying concept of openness to leadership and satisfaction therewith, all outcomes are relatively highly interrelated. Expectedly, the ideal leader prototype is by and large not related to the outcomes, notably however, the central tendency prototype is. The latter might signal that the central tendency leader prototype is also partly informed by participants' current leaders and not only by the media and past exemplars (Ritter and Lord, 2007). At this moment, we can furthermore only speculate that the scores of the current leader are positively related to those of the ideal and the central tendency leader prototype, because it is the most recent exemplar and thus might inform the conception of both (Ritter and Lord, 2007).

For the following analyses, we used moderation analyses to investigate whether a leader's representation of the GLOBE leadership attributes is more informative of subordinates' responses towards the leader when the GLOBE attributes are seen as indicative of the ideal leader prototype versus when they are seen as indicative of the central tendency leader prototype. Table 2 provides an overview of the respective multiple regression models. R^2 changes from a model only including controls to a model with controls and main effects to the final model including all variables plus interactions (which are depicted in Table 2) are .02/.15/.02 for identification with the leader, .03/.35/.02 for affective commitment towards the leader, .12/.58/.01 for respect for the leader, and .12/.51/.02 for satisfaction with the leadership. Importantly, as can be seen in Table 2, the interaction between current leader and ideal leader prototype is significant at all times. Further simple slopes tests in Table 3 reveal the hypothesized pattern, i.e. the more the GLOBE attributes are thought to represent an ideal leader prototype, the more indicative are the same attributes for participants' responses to their leaders.[4] These findings support Hypothesis 1.

In contrast, the interaction between current leader and the central tendency leader prototype is generally not significant, with one exception in case of the dependent variable satisfaction with the leader. Here, the simple slopes pattern in Table 3 indicates a picture contrary to that of the interaction with the ideal leader prototype. Specifically, it indicates that the more the central tendency leader prototype is represented by the GLOBE attributes, the less relevant the same attributes are for people's satisfaction with their leaders. Notably, the interactions are the same whether controls such as participant and leader gender and age, as well as participants' work experience in terms of years and number of experienced supervisors are

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Table 2. Multiple regression analyses of four DVs on current leader, ideal leader prototype, and central tendency leader prototype in Study 1.

		Identification with Leader			Affective Commitment towards Leader			Respect for Leader			Satisfaction with Leadership		
		B	*SE*	β	*B*	*SE*	β	*B*	*SE*	β	*B*	*SE*	β
Controls	Participant Age	−0.02	.01	−0.26*	−0.02	0.01	−0.16	−0.03	0.01	−0.22**	−0.03	0.01	−0.20*
	Participant Gender	−0.05	.09	−0.04	−0.04	0.09	−0.02	0.07	0.09	0.03	−0.02	0.10	−0.01
	Years of Work Experience	0.02	.01	0.25	0.01	0.01	0.11	0.01	0.01	0.07	0.00	0.01	0.03
	Past No. of Supervisors	−0.01	0.01	−0.07	0.00	0.01	−0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00
	Leader Age	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.01	0.01	0.13*	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.05
	Leader Gender	−0.01	0.11	−0.01	0.01	0.11	0.00	−0.09	0.10	−0.04	−0.02	0.11	−0.01
Current Leader		0.29	0.05	0.38***	0.53	.05	0.60***	0.93	0.04	0.81***	0.89	0.05	0.73***
		(0.29)	(0.05)	(0.38***)	(0.52)	(0.05)	(0.59***)	(0.96)	(0.04)	(0.84***)	(0.92)	(0.05)	(0.76***)
Ideal Leader Prototype		0.05	0.06	0.06	0.02	0.06	0.03	−0.09	0.05	−0.07	−0.01	0.06	−0.01
		(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.00)	(0.06)	(0.00)	(−0.09)	(0.06)	(−0.08)	(−0.04)	(0.06)	(−0.03)
Central Tendency Leader Prototype		0.00	0.05	−0.01	0.05	0.05	0.06	−0.05	0.04	−0.04	0.14	0.05	0.12**
		(0.00)	(0.05)	(0.00)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(−0.02)	(0.04)	(−0.02)	(0.17)	(0.05)	(0.14**)
Current Leader X Ideal Leader Prototype		0.08	0.04	0.17*	0.09	0.04	0.16*	0.10	0.03	0.13**	0.13	0.04	0.16**
		(0.08)	(0.04)	(0.15*)	(0.07)	(0.04)	(0.13*)	(0.08)	(0.03)	(0.11*)	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.13*)
Current Leader X Central Tendency Leader Prototype		0.02	0.04	0.02	−0.04	0.04	−0.05	−0.05	0.04	−0.05	−0.09	0.04	−0.09*
		(0.01)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(−0.03)	(0.04)	(−0.04)	(−0.06)	(0.04)	(−0.06)	(−0.10)	(0.04)	(−0.10*)
R^2		0.19 (0.17)			0.38 (0.37)			0.70 (0.68)			0.66 (0.63)		
F		5.37*** (10.57***)			14.74***(30.98***)			54.80*** (110.00***)			44.06*** (88.70***)		

Note. $N = 266$; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$. Respective values without controls are shown in brackets.

Table 3. Simple slopes analyses of current leader at ± 1 SD of ideal leader prototype, and ± 1 SD of central tendency leader prototype for four DVs in Study 1.

	Identification with Leader			Affective Commitment towards Leader			Respect for Leader			Satisfaction with Leadership		
	B	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*
Current Leader at −1 SD of Ideal Leader Prototype	0.22	0.07	3.32**	0.45	0.07	6.95***	0.88	0.06	14.62***	0.84	0.07	11.85***
Current Leader at + 1 SD of Ideal Leader Prototype	0.37	0.05	6.96***	0.60	0.05	11.33***	1.03	0.05	20.96***	1.05	0.06	18.17***
Current Leader at −1 SD of Central Tendency Leader Prototype	0.28	0.06	4.57***	0.54	0.06	8.86***	0.98	0.06	16.79***	1.00	0.07	15.21***
Current Leader at + 1 SD of Central Tendency Leader Prototype	0.32	0.06	5.41***	0.49	0.06	8.31***	0.89	0.06	15.77***	0.81	0.06	12.78***

Note. $N = 266$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

included or not (analyses available from the first author upon request). Interesting in itself, of the controls only participants' age reduces the scores on almost all outcomes. Note that a 2-way interaction between both types of leader prototypes or a combined 3-way interaction were not hypothesized but also not observed and thus not reported here.

Study 2

In the second study, we opted for a leader categorization measurement via pictorial Venn-diagrams. In this case, the pictograms enabled us not having to list all kinds of leadership attributes that people potentially consider ideal for leaders or in general typical of leaders and instead left it to the participants to project those attributes into the Venn-diagrams. Overall, this renders the measurement idiographic, easy to use, time-efficient, and largely free of contextual or cultural biases. Moreover, because participants directly rated the degree to which their actual leaders matched their ideal leader and central tendency leader prototypes (via the degrees of overlap in Venn diagrams), we were again able to avoid the problematic issue of difference scores in our analyses. Furthermore, with the second study, we sought to extend the list of dependent variables to be explained by leader categorization processes.

Method

Sample. Two hundred and seventy-one participants completed the survey in Germany. The average age of respondents was 37.9 years ($SD = 13.1$). Women made up 59% of the sample. The average lifetime employment experience was 17 years ($SD = 13.0$) with an average number of 6.7 supervisors experienced throughout the lifetime of a participant ($SD = 6.2$) of whom on average 22% were female. Employees with higher education made up around 50% of the sample. 66% of all participants had completed vocational training. Participants were employed in more than 20 different industries and more than 30 different departments (approx. 80% white collar).

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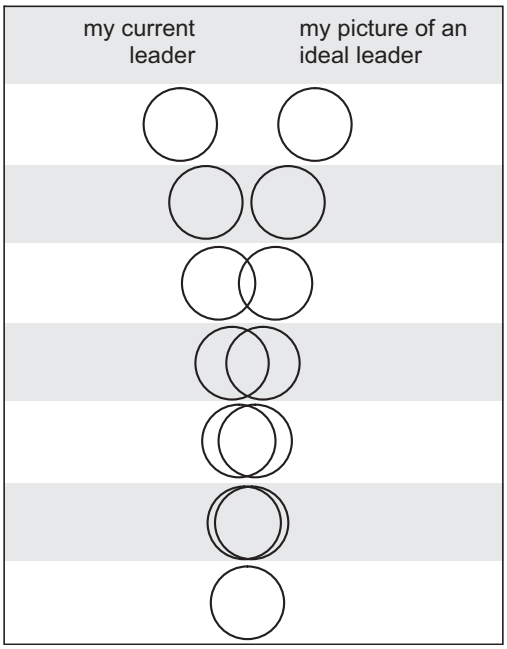


Figure 1. Venn diagram item to measure the degree to which a participant's current leader represents participant's picture of an ideal leader. (A similar Venn item was presented to measure the degree to which a participant's current leader represents participant's picture of leaders in Germany in general).

Procedure. We recruited participants through a professional consumer panel usually used for consumer research in Germany (i.e. Sozioland). We invited only participants with at least one year of work experience. By clicking on a link in an email invitation, participants anonymously entered the survey. All programming aspects again followed standard recommendations in the field (Birnbaum, 2004; Kraut et al., 2004). All participants were debriefed after the survey. Again, as incentives, we offered gift vouchers and an option for participants to receive feedback of the survey results.

Measures. We constructed the predictor variables as pictorial Venn diagrams (as, for instance, used in Van Quaquebeke and Brodbeck, 2008; Van Quaquebeke et al., 2011a). The Venn diagrams themselves consist of two circles that start apart from each other and converge over the course of seven steps until completely overlapping in the last step. On two consecutive pages, we asked participants to indicate via the overlapping Venn diagrams to what degree their current leaders represented (a) their image of an ideal leader (e.g. Figure 1) and (b) their image of leaders in Germany in general. Again, as in Study 1, the order in which participants were asked to give their indications on a and b was randomized. Previous studies showed that the measurement of leader categorizations with such graphic measures is convergent valid with more elaborate leader categorization measurements such as the GLOBE measure used in Study 1 ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.01$, with an estimated reliability of 0.69 as reported in Van Quaquebeke and Brodbeck, 2008; cf. similar graphical measurements and their highly similar results to more extended verbal measures in Aron et al., 1992; Shamir and Kark, 2004).

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We used the same dependent measures as in Study 1 to assess participants' relational identification with the leader, affective commitment towards the leader, and their vertical respect for the leader. Satisfaction with the leadership was measured via the Kunin-faces scale (Kunin, 1955) with the depiction of seven faces ranging from very unhappy to very happy on which participants indicated their degree of satisfaction with their leaders. Leader-Member-Exchange was additionally chosen because it signals an openness to influence that springs from relationship quality. It was measured via the LMX 7 measure (Graen et al., 1982), which encompasses items such as 'How would you characterize your work relationship with your leader?' with a scale format from 1 'very ineffective' to 5 'very effective'. Intention to leave the job was chosen as an additional proxy for subordinates' satisfaction with the leadership. It was assessed with 6 items drawn from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al., 1979). The scale includes items such as 'I will probably look for a new job in the next year' and was answered with an agreement Likert scale ranging from 1 'do not agree at all' to 5 'completely agree'.

Results

Table 4 provides an overview of the descriptives, intercorrelations, and internal consistencies of the measures used in Study 2. Again, dependent variables are related signalling that they tap into the same concept of openness to leadership and satisfaction therewith. Importantly, the results show a strong correlation to all dependent variables for subordinates' categorization of their leaders' match against the ideal leader prototype and weaker correlations to all dependent variables for subordinates' categorization of their leaders' match against the central tendency leader prototype. Furthermore, the two prototype representations significantly correlate ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$) with each other, which supports our Hypothesis 2b that the actual leaders' representation of the central tendency and the ideal leader prototype are related in the field.

To test for our Hypothesis 1, we again conducted multiple regression analyses. The results are depicted in Table 5. Similar to Study 1, we only depict the final model due to space concerns (other models are available from the first author upon request). Increments in R^2 from a model with only controls, to a model with controls and the main effect of leader categorization against the central tendency leader prototype to the final model of all variables including leader categorization against the ideal leader prototype are .04/.03/.15 for identification with the leader, for .04/.02/.30 affective commitment towards the leader, .06/.05/.35 for respect for the leader, .07/.05/.42 for satisfaction with leadership, .04/.03/.34 for Leader Member Exchange, and .02/.02/.11 for intentions to leave. These changes in R^2 already signal that albeit the inclusion of leader categorization against a central tendency leader prototype explains some variance above controls, it is the inclusion of leader categorization against the ideal leader prototype that shows marked difference in variance explained. The final model depicted in Table 5 further supports our Hypothesis 1 in that it reveals that the effect of leader categorization against the central tendency leader prototype (as shown to be significant in Table 4) turns insignificant for each dependent variable once leader categorization against the ideal leader prototype representation is controlled for. In other words, a leader's representation of the ideal leader prototype not only explains more variance in the dependent variables but it also captures the complete effect of a leader's representation of the central tendency prototype on these DVs (as can be gathered from the mediation scores in Table 6).[5] Notably, this is again the case whether controls are included

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Table 4. Descriptives, intercorrelations, and reliabilities of measures in Study 2.

		Mean	*SD*	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
Predictors	1. Current Leader's Representation of Ideal Leader Prototype	3.49	1.71	(na)							
	2. Current Leader's Representation of Central Tendency Leader Prototype	3.17	1.55	0.36***	(na)						
Outcomes	3. Identification with Leader	2.24	0.83	0.43***	0.17**	(0.79)					
	4. Affective Commitment towards Leader	2.73	0.80	0.56***	0.14*	0.58***	(0.73)				
	5. Respect for Leader	2.99	1.17	0.65***	0.23***	0.55***	0.71***	(0.92)			
	6. Satisfaction with Leadership	4.28	2.13	0.71***	0.23***	0.46***	0.67***	0.82***	(na)		
	7. Leader Member Exchange	3.11	0.93	0.62***	0.18**	0.53***	0.72***	0.82***	0.82***	(0.91)	
	8. Intentions to Leave	3.53	1.87	−0.37***	−0.14*	−0.39***	−0.46***	−0.45***	−0.52***	−0.53***	(0.80)

Note. $N = 271$; Cronbach's α are indicated in parentheses where available; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

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Table 5. Multiple regression analyses of six DVs in Study 2 on categorization of current leader against participants' ideal leader prototype and against participants' central tendency leader prototype.

		Identification with Leader			Affective Commitment towards Leader			Respect for Leader			Satisfaction with Leadership		
		B	*SE*	β	*B*	*SE*	β	*B*	*SE*	β	*B*	*SE*	β
Controls	Participant Age	0.00	0.01	−0.05	0.02	0.01	0.30**	0.02	0.01	0.19	0.04	0.01	0.22*
	Participant Gender	0.26	0.10	0.15**	0.17	0.08	0.10	0.11	0.11	0.05	−0.02	0.19	−0.01
	Years of Work Experience	0.01	0.01	0.14	−0.02	0.01	−0.25*	−0.02	0.01	−.24*	−0.04	0.01	−0.26**
	Past No. of Supervisors	0.00	0.01	−0.03	0.00	0.01	0.00	−0.01	0.01	−0.03	−0.02	0.02	−0.05
	Leader Age	−0.01	0.01	−0.07	0.00	0.00	−0.03	0.00	0.01	−0.01	0.00	0.01	−0.01
	Leader Gender	−0.14	0.10	−0.08	0.09	0.09	0.05	0.29	0.12	0.12*	0.30	0.20	0.07
Leader Categorization Against Central Tendency Leader Prototype		0.02 (0.02)	0.05 (0.05)	0.02 (0.02)	−0.06 (−0.06)	0.04 (0.04)	−0.07 (−0.07)	−0.01 (−0.01)	0.06 (0.06)	−0.01 (−0.01)	−0.07 (−0.07)	0.10 (0.10)	−0.03 (−0.03)
Leader Categorization Against Ideal Leader Prototype		0.35 (0.35)	0.05 (0.05)	0.42*** (0.42***)	0.48 (0.47)	0.04 (0.04)	0.60*** (0.59***)	0.77 (0.77)	0.06 (0.06)	0.66*** (0.65***)	1.53 (1.54)	0.10 (0.10)	0.72*** (0.73***)
ΔR^2		0.21 (0.19)			0.36 (0.32)			0.46 (0.42)			0.54 (0.51)		
ΔF		8.92*** (30.35***)			18.14*** (63.08***)			28.07*** (98.42***)			37.71*** (139.58***)		
		Leader Member Exchange			Intention to Leave								
		B	*SE*	β	*B*	*SE*	β						
Controls	Participant Age	0.01	0.01	0.18	−0.02	0.02	−0.16						
	Participant Gender	0.02	0.09	0.01	−0.07	0.23	−0.02						
	Work Experience	−0.01	0.01	−0.10	0.01	0.02	0.08						
	Past No. of Supervisors	−0.02	0.01	−0.11*	0.03	0.02	0.09						
	Leader Age	0.00	0.00	−0.02	0.00	0.01	−0.01						
	Leader Gender	0.12	0.10	0.06	−0.08	0.23	−0.02						
Leader Categorization Against Central Tendency Leader Prototype		−0.06 (−0.05)	0.05 (0.05)	−0.06 (−0.06)	0.01 (0.01)	0.12 (0.11)	0.00 (0.01)						
Leader Categorization Against Ideal Leader Prototype		0.60 (0.59)	0.05 (0.05)	0.65*** (0.64***)	−0.70 (0.68)	0.12 (0.11)	−0.37*** (−0.36***)						
ΔR^2		0.40 (0.38)			0.15 (0.13)								
ΔF		22.24*** (83.69***)			5.69*** (20.81***)								

Note. $N = 271$; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$. Respective values without controls are shown in brackets.

Table 6. Mediation test of leader categorization against ideal leader prototype in the relationship between leader categorization against central tendency leader prototype and six DVs in Study 2.

	Effect	*SE*	*Z*	Lower CI	Upper CI
Identification with Leader	0.18*** (0.18)	0.03 (0.03)	4.73	0.07	0.20
	0.12*** (0.12)	0.03 (0.03)	4.62	0.07	0.19
Affective Commitment towards Leader	0.17*** (0.17)	0.03 (0.04)	5.48	0.11	0.25
	0.17*** (0.17)	0.03 (0.04)	5.38	0.10	0.24
Respect for Leader	0.28*** (0.28)	0.05 (0.06)	5.72	0.17	0.38
	0.27*** (0.27)	0.05 (0.05)	5.59	0.17	0.38
Satisfaction with Leadership	0.56*** (0.56)	0.09 (0.11)	5.90	0.35	0.80
	0.53*** (0.53)	0.09 (0.10)	5.74	0.34	0.75
Leader Member Exchange	0.21*** (0.21)	0.04 (0.04)	5.65	0.13	0.29
	0.21*** (0.21)	0.04 (0.04)	5.52	0.13	0.30
Intention to Leave	−0.25*** (−0.25)	0.06 (0.06)	−4.33	−0.38	−0.14
	−0.24*** (−0.24)	0.06 (0.06)	−4.25	−0.40	−0.14

Note. $N = 271$; Values in brackets were calculated based on bootstrap with 1000 samples. First row values represent model without controls, second row values represent model with controls (cf. Table 4); *** $p < 0.001$.

or not. Of the controls, participants' age this time is, if at all, only positively related to outcomes, potentially because the simultaneously regressed work experience captures the general scepticism that comes with a longer work life.

Discussion

Research on the cognitive underpinnings of leadership perceptions and the social construction of leadership has established that leadership is to a certain extent in the eyes of the beholder. The more we see the attributes of a leader prototype represented in an actual leader, the more we believe in the leader's leadership qualities and the more favorably we respond to the leader (Lord and Maher, 1991; Medvedeff and Lord, 2007; Meindl et al., 1985; Schyns and Meindl, 2005; Shamir et al., 2007). The present data extend these findings by adding several previously unsurveyed dependent variables to the extant literature.

The key purpose of the present paper, however, was to contrast the effects of two kinds of leader prototypes whose differentiation so far has not been made explicit in the respective ILT literature. Specifically, within leader categorization, we contrasted the effects of a central tendency leader prototype versus the effects of an ideal leader prototype on subordinates' responses towards their leaders. Analyses across studies, methodologies (verbal vs. graphical), and dependent variables with and without controls support our prediction that a leader's perceived representation of an ideal leader prototype is more predictive of employees' response towards their leaders. The present analyses are thus the first to show that leader prototypes can be differentiated and that the ideal leader prototype more directly informs subordinates' responses.

Our results moreover suggest that previous leader categorization effects against a central tendency leader prototype are likely to be due to covariance with the ideal leader prototype. Further mediation analyses indeed suggest that any effect a central-tendency leader prototype based categorization might have been due to the inherent ideal aspects. The significant positive correlation between both prototypes supports this interpretation, i.e. people

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apparently perceive leaders in general as fulfilling the purpose of leadership, presumably because they are recruited and promoted for their ability to fulfil leadership objectives. The found positive relationship between the two prototypes moreover aligns with most recent cognitive psychological insights (Barsalou, 2009, personal communication). Yet, the intercorrelation is also not as high as one might expect given that leaders in the field should be hired according to ideals. This may be an echo of other recent findings by the Gallup Institute (Nink, 2009) that Germans on average are not too happy with their leaders (cf. Van Quaquebeke et al., 2009). Moreover, due to the instruments used in both studies we cannot investigate these relationships with respect to certain content dimensions. Indeed, because Study 2 employed a graphical depiction and left it to the participants to mentally fill the Venn diagrams with leadership attributes, we have no access to it. Moreover, even though Study 1 used 31 leadership attribute items, prior analysis suggested that subdimensions cannot be reliably distinguished with the reduced GLOBE scale (Van Quaquebeke and Brodbeck, 2008). Any content interpretation based on the reduced GLOBE scale thus would have to be considered shaky at best. Instead, we advise to revisit this issue in future studies which may be able to comprehensively capture leader prototypes with more subdimensions, for instance, by employing the complete 112 item GLOBE measure or the complete measure developed by Offermann and colleagues (1994), or leave it entirely to the participants to fill the leader prototypes with attributes of their choosing such as it has, for example, been done in the realm of ideal and counter-ideal leader values (Graf et al., 2011; Van Quaquebeke et al., 2010).

Interestingly, our study aligns with previous leadership research in the realm of Self-Categorization Theory (Turner and Haslam, 2001) and Social Identity (Van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2003). At the core of that research sits the argument that group members' perceptions of a leader's group prototypicality are accompanied by a sense of trust that the leader will also act in a group-oriented way. Any endorsement of the leader under condition of high leader group prototypicality is thus also an endorsement of the group's identity. Importantly for the present paper though, research in that tradition likewise broadened its scope noting that leaders' group prototypicality is not only about what groups actually represent (like a central-tendency group prototype), but also about representing the future path in terms of ideals (Haslam et al., 2010; Van Knippenberg, 2011; cf. the ideal self in individual level conceptualizations of identity as in Higgins, 1987). Notably, research in that tradition has also ventured in to the domain of leader prototypes, calling them leader stereotypes. Hogg and colleagues (Hains et al., 1997; Hogg et al., 1998) have, for instance, found that leader stereotypicality became a weaker basis for leadership and leader group prototypicality a stronger one among high identifiers. A future line of research might thus lie in the extension of their studies with a more thorough differentiation into ideal and central tendency leader prototypicality. Following the reasoning from our present paper, it would indeed be interesting to investigate whether group prototypicality is also more informative for high identifiers' endorsement of their leaders when the comparison condition is leader stereotypicality based more pointedly on an ideal and not a central tendency leader prototype. Or, more specifically, whether there are situations in which even high identifiers might look more towards leader stereotypicality based on the ideal than towards a leader's group prototypicality, such as when, for instance, the very group identity encompasses non-viable behaviours (cf. the growing support even among true hearted Italians for Mario Monti versus increasing resentment of Silvio Berlusconi in the financial crisis years 2011/2012).

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While our results align nicely with many different theoretical strands, it needs to be noted that they stand somewhat in contrast with previous leader categorization research regarding leader categorization effects against a central-tendency leader prototype (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; Rosette et al., 2008; Scott and Brown, 2006). Future research thus seems well advised to investigate whether the central-tendency leader prototype does play a role in itself, or whether any previous leader categorization results against a central-tendency leader prototype are mediated by the ideal leader prototype. An alternative potential framework to integrate both types of leader prototypes in cognitive processing might lie in a sequential information processing model in which a target must first be recognized as an exemplar of a certain category (by matching it against a central tendency leader prototype) and only after successful recognition will the target be evaluated with regard to its quality through the process of matching against an ideal leader prototype. While this model seems theoretically plausible enough to investigate, we should point out that the present empirical data did not show a significant interaction effect between both types of leader categorization for any of participants' responses towards their leaders. Yet, such interactions would be needed as preliminary evidence for a sequential information processing model. That being said, interactions are notoriously difficult to detect in the field (McClelland and Judd, 1993). It is thus our belief that we should not too readily discard further investigation into sequential processing.

Moreover, it stands to reason that unique aspects in the central-tendency leader prototype might have simply not been relevant in the leader categorization process for the specific dependent variables surveyed in the present study. It could, for instance, be that for some outcomes and under some circumstances, the central tendency leader prototype exhibits a relevance beyond the attributes in the ideal leader prototype. Specifically, it might be that in contexts in which a target person is not to serve a purpose for the perceiver, i.e. when a perceiver meets an unknown person at a Christmas party and wants to determine how to adequately react in the interaction, it is only the target's match with the central tendency leader prototype that is of relevance. In other words, if in these kinds of situation the target represents the features of the general tendency leader prototype (cf. race or gender), a respective leader categorization will lead to more polite or reverential behaviour on the side of the perceiver. Things may change, however, when the same target is perceived with respect to the question of whether the perceiver is willing to follow the target's leadership. Under these circumstances, our study suggests, it is only the categorization against the ideal leader prototype that counts. Moreover, it might be that uncertainty about the purpose of a category, as it is often found in novices, may lead people to categorize against a central tendency prototype rather than an (for them still vague) ideal prototype. Put more concretely, in the context of our study, it might be that people, who have not questioned what leaders are for or who have not accumulated enough experience with leaders, might engage in leader categorization against the central tendency leader prototype while those, who have reflected upon the purpose of leaders or those with more experience, engage stronger in leader categorization against an ideal leader prototype. Similar results have, for instance, been found in cognitive science with regard to novices versus tree experts who are to categorize tree types (Lynch et al., 2000) or people who are to categorize fish (Burnett et al., 2005). While, in the present study, we do not find an interaction with work experience, this might also be due to the fact that, as hinted at above, work experience itself might not be the best indicator of whether someone has reflected upon the purpose of the leader category. Thus, these issues remain unanswered for now and call for clarification in future studies.

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Limitations

While we consider the present study a first step to reintroduce cognitively driven leadership research to more recent cognitive theorizing, it is naturally not without limitations. For instance, as already noted in the sample description of Study 1, we reused some data from a previous study (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2011a). In that study, we regarded a leader's match on the 31 GLOBE leader attributes simply as an indication of his or her representativeness of the ideal leader prototype. This is commensurable with Van Quaquebeke and Brodbeck (2008) who identified those 31 items as being indicative of a highly effective leader. The present investigation, however, provides a more nuanced analysis by looking additionally how the present sample actually rated the 31 items in terms of representativeness of ideal and central-tendency leader prototype. While we think that such additional data analyses paint an interesting picture, we nevertheless think that replication with other leader prototypes instruments is warranted. Indeed, one might argue that the GLOBE measure we used in Study 1 was initially developed as an ideal-based prototype instrument and thus potentially confounds the results in that aspects that are deemed typical of leaders, i.e. representative of a central-tendency prototype, are not well represented in it. Yet, we would like to note that the ideal focus of the scale in Study 1 likely worked against finding our hypothesis confirmed because there was less variance to be captured by an ideal leader prototype compared to the central tendency leader prototype. In general, Study 2 is in our eyes already able to remedy some of these concerns as it represent a truly idiographic measurement of leader categorization. Nevertheless, it would be good to apply a similar design as in our Study 1 with a more central-tendency based leader prototype instrument such as the one developed by Offermann and colleagues (1944; and as later revised by Epitropaki and Martin, 2004).

A second issue to note is that both of our studies may be subject to common source bias. And while our second study used different item types to at least circumvent some common method bias, the first study may also be subject to that. Of course there is an argument to be made for the common source design because perceptions of leaders and responses towards leaders both rest within the subordinates. However, future designs may be able to tackle some of the common source bias by providing co-worker ratings for some of the dependent variables (cf. Van Dijke et al., 2012). Despite the concern with both kinds of biases (Podsakoff et al., 2003), it should be noted, however, that they work against finding interactions confirmed (Evans, 1985; McClelland and Judd, 1993). Finding so many interactions confirmed in our first study thus lends weight to the robustness of the effect. Likewise, also the inclusion of controls did not render any of the results insignificant which speaks further to the robustness.

Another potential limitation might concern the causality implied in our theorizing. Indeed, it is possible that some of the relationships work the other way around. This might be especially true in our Study 2 in that participants who know that they are generally open towards their leaders' leadership (as indicated by respect for, identification with, and commitment to the leaders), who experience a good relationship with their leaders (as indicated by LMX), and are generally satisfied with their leaders (as indicated by satisfaction with the leadership and lower intentions to leave) feel compelled, if only for cognitive consistency reasons, to indicate that their leader also represents the ideal leader and, potentially even as a contrast, that he or she does not represent the typical leader. Speaking against such argument, however, is that categorization in our Study 2 was measured prior to all

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dependent measures and thus salience on dependent measures was prompted after an indication for leader categorization. Also, and drawing on other research, the ILT theorizing and thus the implied direction in the postulated relationship rests on quite a number of experimental or cross-lagged studies where causality is clearly addressed (e.g. Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; Lord and Maher, 1991; Nye and Forsyth, 1991; Rosette et al., 2008; Scott and Brown, 2006).

Finally and as already discussed above, the present set of studies was not designed to investigate how certain content dimension between a central-tendency and an ideal-based leader prototype might be related. We think that this is an exciting field to explore. Moreover, it seems an even more promising research avenue considering that more recent theorising suggests that leader prototypes are also highly dynamic and context dependent in nature (Lord et al., 2001, cf. group prototypicality, Haslam, 2004). It thus seems valuable to explore how different contextual cues might impact the contents of central-tendency and ideal-based leader prototypes. We hope that the present work provides some legitimacy why such studies are warranted and worthwhile to pursue.

Conclusion

All in all, the current work resolves some of the ambiguity in the realm of Implicit Leadership Theories, specifically with regard to leader prototypes in the process of leader categorization. It is the first empirical study to contrast the relevance of different leader prototypes in predicting subordinates' responses towards their leaders. In doing so, the paper not only strengthens the ties between leadership research and fundamental socio-cognitive research, but it also paves the way for more informed cognitive-oriented leadership research and thus ultimately also for more nuanced practical implications of the same.

Notes

1. Offerman et al.'s (1994) studies focuses on the content and structure of leader prototypes. Table 5, which reports results for effective leaders, only confirms the previously identified factor structure but not the factor contents.
2. The label 'antiprototypical' is unfortunate. Considering the questions asked in the development of the questionnaire and the factor 'masculinity', 'atypical' seems a more appropriate label.
3. Note though, that the significances of results did not change when this item was left out.
4. While the reported results are on an overall level, we conducted the same analyses separately for all 31 leadership attributes. These hierarchical regression analyses show a similar picture as the overall results in that the more a leadership attribute was thought to represent an ideal leader prototype, the more a leader's representation of the same attribute was indicative for people's attitudes towards that leader. More specifically, for the dependent variable of respect for the leader such interactions showed in 23 cases (21 with $p < 0.05$; 2 with $p < 0.10$), for affective commitment towards the leader such interactions showed in 18 cases (17 with $p < 0.05$; 1 with $p < 0.10$), for identification with the leader such interactions showed in 13 cases (7 with $p < 0.05$; 6 with $p < 0.10$), and for satisfaction with the leader such interactions showed in 23 cases (19 with $p < 0.05$; 4 with $p < 0.10$). In contrast, an interaction between a leader's representation of a leader attribute and its central tendency rating was hardly found and, if so, often with the reverse pattern, i.e. the more indicative this attribute was for the central tendency prototype the less informative a leader's representation of the same was for subordinates' responses. More specifically, for the dependent variable of respect for the leader such interactions showed in 2 cases (1 with $p < 0.05$; 1 with $p < 0.10$), for affective commitment towards the leader such interactions showed in 2 cases (1 with $p < 0.05$; 1 with $p < 0.10$), for identification with the

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leader such interactions showed in 3 cases (2 with $p < 0.05$; 1 with $p < 0.10$), and for satisfaction with the leader such interactions showed in 1 case (with $p < 0.10$). These analyses are not reported in more depth because of space concerns and because single items are not regarded as reliable measures, they are, however, available from the first author upon request.

5. There were no significant interaction effects.

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