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# Teaching Implicit Leadership Theories to Develop Leaders and Leadership: How and Why It Can Make a Difference

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*Implicit leadership theories (ILTs) are lay images of leadership, which are individually and socially determined. We discuss how teaching implicit leadership theories contributes to developing leaders and leaderships by raising self- and social awareness for the contexts in which leadership takes place. We present and discuss a drawing exercise to illustrate different implicit leadership theories and discuss the implications for leaders and leadership, with a particular focus on how leaders claim, and are granted, leader identities in groups.*

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Day stated in 2001 that “the interest in leadership development seems to be at its zenith” (581), yet a decade later, interest in leadership and leadership development seems to be unbroken, both in academia and, of course, in practice. This special edition on teaching leadership serves as a further indicator of this interest. To date, most leadership literature focuses on leaders as such: their leader-related skills, personal characteristics, and behaviors (e.g., transformational leadership; Bass, 1985; charismatic leadership, Conger & Kanungo, 1994; authentic leadership, Walumbwa, Luthans, Avey, Oke, 2009). Hence it is fair to deduce that the vast majority of the teaching and development is focused on leader skills, characteristics, and behaviors. This draws a distinction between leaders and other participants in the leadership process, such as followers.

However—as Day (2001) pointed out—leadership

is more than just a skill set of an individual, it has also been conceptualized as a social process. He differentiates “leader development” (focused on individual skills) from “leadership development” (focused on the wider relational or social context in which leadership takes place). As Iles and Preece (2006) argue, leader and leadership development are often seen as the same thing. They highlight the usefulness of differentiating between both types of development, arguing that self-awareness is a part of leader development and that social awareness is a facet of interpersonal competence for leadership development. Social awareness includes, for example, empathy, service orientation, and developing others. Bolden and Gosling (2006) stress that this is an important part of leadership, arguing that leadership has to move from individualistic to collective forms.

The social context (leadership development) has

received considerably less attention in research and practice than the individual leader (leader development). With respect to social context, generally, there has been a call for more attention to the specific context in leadership development (see e.g., Liden & Antonakis', 2009, call for leadership researchers to include followers' influence on leaders in their research). We aim to address this gap here by focusing on both the individual leader and the social context in which leadership occurs. Specifically, we outline how leaders operate in social contexts that encompass different cognitive schemas about leaders and leadership, including their and their followers' schemas. Therefore, one way of integrating social context into leader/leadership development is by addressing leaders' and followers' images of leaders in general or so-called implicit leadership theories. *Implicit leadership theories* are conceptualized as everyday images of what leaders are like in terms of traits and behaviors (e.g., Offermann, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994; Schyns & Schilling, 2011). Therefore, implicit leadership theories, as theoretical constructs, focus on the social context in which leadership occurs.

Teaching implicit leadership theories develops leaders and leadership by raising awareness of this social context and of one's own implicit leadership theories and how they might or might not match the social context. The latter is vital for understanding interactions between leaders and followers in organizational settings. The reason for this is twofold: As De Rue and Ashford (2010) argue, a match between a person's implicit leadership theories and his or her self-concept facilitates the taking on of a leader identity. At the same time, the acceptance of someone as a leader is only possible if there is a match between the implicit leadership theories of potential followers and their actual perception of that person. De Rue and Ashford call this process *claiming and granting leader identity*.

However, implicit leadership theories are, by nature, not necessarily conscious to those who hold them. Therefore, we suggest that teaching implicit leadership theories through an awareness-raising exercise develops leaders and leadership by making these images more explicit and, thus, helping leaders and followers to better understand (a) how such implicit leadership theories develop and play out in the social context of leadership, and (b) how leader identities develop and are shaped.

Consequently, our aim of this here is twofold: First, to introduce the theoretical underpinnings of implicit leadership theories and discuss how and why teaching implicit leadership theories can affect leaders and leadership. A particular focus lies on how leader identities are shaped. Second, we

present an exercise that can be conducted in a teaching or training context, which aims to raise awareness of different implicit leadership theories. We discuss how this exercise may help develop leaders and leadership in various contexts. To achieve this, we draw on Day's differentiation between leader development and leadership development to analyze the usefulness of teaching implicit leadership theories, particularly the concepts of self-awareness and social awareness, as crucial elements in both leader and leadership development. At the same time, we integrate De Rue and Ashford's (2010) notion of how a match between leaders' and followers' implicit leadership theories helps to shape leader identities.

In the following, we first outline the background of implicit leadership theories before introducing an in-class exercise to illustrate how implicit leadership theories can be accessed and how raising awareness for different implicit leadership theories can affect various partners in the leadership process. We then use the elements of the exercise to explain how and why teaching implicit leadership theories is important for practicing and teaching leadership.

With the introduction of this exercise, we respond to Bell's (2010) call for "evidence-based teaching" (7), that is, teaching that "includes current, impactful research in our classes" (7), and address what Burke and Rau (2010) call the research-teaching gap. We do this by providing one example of how to teach a heavily theoretical construct, based on very recent research. Teaching students,<sup>1</sup> and thereby (future) leaders and followers, about implicit leadership theories serves a multiplier function in that they can distribute the knowledge acquired in class into their organizations.

## UNDERSTANDING IMPLICIT LEADERSHIP THEORIES

The concept of implicit leadership theories was first introduced by Eden and Leviatan (1975; see also Eden & Leviatan, 2005). They deduced the idea of implicit leadership theories from Schneider's (1973) implicit personality theories. Implicit leadership theories are images that everyone holds about the traits and behaviors of leaders in general (e.g., Schyns & Meindl, 2005). Similar to stereotypes, implicit leadership theories serve to explain the other person's behavior and also the observer's

<sup>1</sup> We use the term *students* here in the broadest sense. The exercise we outline, as well as its intended aims, are relevant for undergraduate and postgraduate students, but also for adult learners, such as those that are already in leadership positions.

reaction toward that person (Kenney, Schwartz-Kenney, & Blascovich, 1996; Schyns & Schilling, 2011). This means that when meeting or observing a "leader," certain leader images are activated, and the behavior of this "leader" is interpreted in line with these images. For instance, research by Lord and colleagues (see Lord & Maher, 1993, for an overview) has shown that information about success influences the extent to which people are regarded as leaderlike. This means that people mentally connect success and leadership, and this connection feeds back into their perception of a "leader." At the same time, Lord's categorization theory (e.g., Lord, Foti, & de Vader, 1984) shows that implicit leadership theories can be categorized at hierarchical levels. On the superordinate level, the differentiation is between characteristics of leaders versus nonleaders; on the basic level, distinctions are made between different types of leaders (e.g., business vs. political leaders); and on the even less abstract, subordinate level, these leader prototypes are further specified (e.g., leaders of a certain political party).

We know that implicit leadership theories develop early. Ayman-Nolley and Ayman (2005) conducted a study among children and found that they had no problem drawing a "leader," or differentiating what they considered a typical leader. Antonakis and Dalgas (2009) similarly showed that children already have implicit leadership theories. Research among adults confirms interindividual differences in implicit leadership theories (e.g., Felfe, 2005). These implicit leadership theories are also relatively stable when the context changes (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). So, while on the one hand there is a distinct individual aspect to implicit leadership theories, on the other, cross-cultural research has shown that implicit leadership theories are influenced by culture (House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002), thus highlighting a socially shared aspect of implicit leadership theories.

The idea that implicit leadership theories function similarly to stereotypes has prompted research on the influence of implicit leadership theories on the perception of actual leaders. More specifically, research assessing individuals' implicit leadership theories has shown that the mental images individuals hold influence how they see a person labeled "leader," including their own supervisors (Schyns, Felfe, & Blank, 2007; Shamir, 1992). For example, individuals who hold a romantic view of leaders, that is, those who overattribute company performance to leaders (cf. the romance of leadership model; Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985) perceive their leader as more charismatic

(Shamir, 1992). Together, these findings lead to the conclusion that the perception of actual leaders is not independent of the perceiver's implicit leadership theories. To quote Cummings, "It has been said that leadership is like beauty—you know it when you see it" (2007: 143).

From a practitioner's perspective, leadership is taught because there is a belief that the behavior of leaders can be influenced to improve performance and output of organizations. However, research into implicit leadership theories casts doubt on whether this is the whole story, as it emphasizes the role of perceptual processes in the effect of leadership. Thus, traditional leadership trainings (or rather leader trainings), focusing on individual skills and behaviors, may have—at least to a certain extent—overly optimistic expectations placed upon them. At the very least, it should make us wonder whether the traditional leadership development concepts are sufficient in their focus on leader skills and behaviors and why we are not including more concepts and ideas that highlight the importance of the social context and leadership as a process.

The knowledge of implicit leadership theories is still scarce in organizations; therefore, spreading the word about the implications of socially shaped perceptions due to implicit leadership theories and their implications seems vital. Teaching students at different levels can serve as a fast and easy way of transferring knowledge about implicit leadership theories into organizations. Knowledge about implicit leadership theories in turn can, and should, directly affect how leaders and followers are trained, assessed, and developed. In the following, we outline an exercise useful for teaching leadership in different contexts.

## IMPLICIT LEADERSHIP THEORIES DRAWING EXERCISE

The challenge of assessing implicit leadership theories (ILTs) is that they are, by definition, part of our implicit knowledge and, therefore, difficult to assess. To develop and raise self- and other awareness,<sup>2</sup> the cognitive schema that are implicit leadership theories (Kenney et al., 1996) need to be "uncovered." This appears difficult with conven-

<sup>2</sup> Prior teaching exercises to raise self- and other awareness include one suggested by Mirvis (2008), where he describes how he takes executives out of their familiar context into extreme environments (e.g., taking leaders of a car company to inner-city orphanages) to raise their self- and other-awareness and to improve their dealing with diversity. Although not as extreme, our exercise has a similar goal.

tional methods (e.g., presenting ready-made case studies).<sup>3</sup> In the following sections, we outline the aims and structure of the exercise, clarify some of the important contextual factors, and provide theoretical arguments for its effectiveness before turning to explaining the reasoning behind its features in more detail using three illustrating examples.

The implicit leadership theories drawing exercise has three aims. First, to make individuals aware of their personal implicit leadership theories, second to facilitate the negotiation of socially determined implicit leadership theories and, third, to help participants become aware of differences between implicit leadership theories in various social contexts and discuss the implications for leaders and leadership. We thereby address several theoretical issues, namely, self-awareness of implicit leadership theories, social awareness of others' implicit leadership theories, and awareness of how self- and other implicit leadership theories may or may not match and, ultimately, how this match influences the negotiation of leader identities. This integrates Day's (2001) differentiation between leader and leadership development and De Rue and Ashford's (2010) claiming and granting leader identities. The core of the exercise focuses on the leader versus nonleader differentiation and, thus, on the superordinate level of implicit leadership theories categories according to Lord et al. (1984). However, as we outline below, according to Lord and colleagues, it also can be adapted to more specific levels, that is, basic or subordinate levels of implicit leadership theories.

### The Exercise Explained

We developed the implicit leadership theories drawing exercise in three parts of equal importance, to address the above aims. Exhibit 1 shows the instructions. It consists of self-reflection (Part A) and two group exercise parts, consisting of a group discussion and a group drawing (Part B),

<sup>3</sup> Our approach fits neatly into earlier attempts to use drawings in leader and leadership development. The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) uses a drawing exercise in the context of their concept "leading creatively." In contrast to our exercise, the exercise is not directly linked to leadership, but rather explores how both left and right sides of the brain can be used in one exercise, combining rational and emotional thinking (Cartwright, 2009). Cartwright argues that drawing is linked to problem solving and that it helps leaders in slowing down when considering a problem rather than taking rushed decisions. While we agree that drawing exercises tend to force students out of their comfort zones, and that it can help them address everyday problems in different ways, our exercise has a more specific aim in that the drawings are used not only as a stretch exercise but also to uncover specific implicit knowledge.

## EXHIBIT 1

### Sample Exercise for Teaching Implicit Leadership Theories—Instructions to Students

The implicit leadership theories drawing exercise

- (A) Individual reflection (10 min)
- On your own, think about leaders in general. From your perspective: What characteristics do they have? What did they do (and what don't they do)?
- (B) Group discussion and drawing exercise (30 min each)
- Interview each other: What did you find? Which points do you agree/disagree on?
  - Then, discuss the following points: What are other factors that impact on leaders' effectiveness? How, if at all, are your views about leaders rooted in culture? What are possible explanations for agreements/disagreements? [modifications depending on context]
- (C) Plenum presentation and discussion (5–10 min each)
- Present and answers questions in class, one group at a time.
  - Discussion of following questions: What are similarities and differences between the drawings? What stands out for you? How effective would the leader of one group be in the context of another group? What is the role of followers in these drawings? [modifications depending on context]

and last, the presentation and discussion of the drawings in class (Part C).

First, before starting the drawing, each student reflects on images of leaders. The aim is to start the reflective process and is self-centered, thus focusing on self-awareness. In the second part, when working on the group drawing, the discussion that is necessary to get the drawing started helps students realize how their ideas about leaders are similar to, or different from, others' leader images, tapping into both self-awareness (in the sense that one's implicit leadership theories differ from others' implicit leadership theories) and social awareness (knowledge about what others' implicit leadership theories look like). The drawing makes this even clearer, as not only words can be used to express opinions, but also parts of the drawing (e.g., "I would put the followers next to the leader").

Last, when the drawings of all groups are presented and discussed, students realize the variance in implicit leadership theories, again raising social awareness but also self-awareness by highlighting the similarities and differences between their own and others' implicit leadership theories. We found that when working in, for example, culturally homogeneous groups and presenting to groups from different cultural backgrounds, students realize that implicit leadership theories contain a culturally shared aspect. This discussion

about similarities and differences in implicit leadership theories in general, and cultural communalities in particular can be enhanced by using drawings from earlier groups with which the drawings of the current groups can be contrasted.

The exercise is designed to work equally well with undergraduate and graduate students, individuals with and without leadership or work experience, and executives or teams from a single or different organization(s). Indeed, while we present only the exercise here and not data on its effectiveness, we have used the exercise on these different groups several times over the last years and judging from the feedback, the exercise has challenged ways of thinking in all.

### Teaching Different Groups and Different Context

The instructions can be modified to address the general aim of the course and the context in which the exercise takes place. Two types of modifications are useful: First, the group composition can be varied; second, the type of leader can be specified (see Lord et al.'s categorization theory).

Depending on context and group composition, the instruction under Part B can be modified to focus on cultural or social differences (e.g., for culturally diverse groups or to extract gender differences), or on professions (e.g., physicians vs. nurses; IT vs. HR departments). Hence, paying attention to group composition is important in this exercise. An example of such a modification may illustrate this point. After discussing their findings and areas in which they concur or disagree, students can be asked to discuss factors impacting on leaders' effectiveness in their specific context (e.g., budget cuts in the public sector). They can then be asked to discuss how they believe their views are affected by their professional backgrounds. In terms of group composition, groups should be homogenous with respect to the profession of the members, for example, nurse-only groups and surgeon-only groups in a health service context. In this way, differences between those professional groups can be highlighted in the general discussion.

With respect to type of leader, the exercise can be altered in Part A so that rather than thinking about leaders in general, students could be encouraged to think about, for example, "leaders in health-care." Depending on the specific learning goals, the exercise can be repeated for a specific context or to illustrate changes in implicit leadership theories over time. For example, students can be asked to draw a second picture of a leader in a specific context and would then be asked to discuss the differences between the general leader

and the context-specific leader.<sup>4</sup> This relates to Lord's categorization theory (e.g., Lord, 1984). The first picture would be the leader versus nonleader level in Lord's categorization, and the second picture would be an example of an implicit leadership theory on a lower level of abstraction.

Where student groups are more homogenous, such as BA students, who also have little experience with leadership, it can be useful to later discuss in the group whether and why it was difficult to identify characteristics of a leader and to draw that leader. Sometimes, when students are reluctant to start drawing (e.g., stating that they cannot draw), it can be useful to provide other material, such as magazines, so they can do a collage rather than a drawing.

### THE ADVANTAGES OF VISUAL METHODS IN TEACHING IMPLICIT LEADERSHIP THEORIES

Visual methods such as drawings have been readily used in development and education settings (Haney, Russell, & Bebell, 2004; Pridmore & Bendelow, 1995). Less frequently, visual methods have been used for research purposes, mainly in areas such as education or anthropology rather than organizational behavior or leadership (for an overview see Warren, 2009). As Warren (2009) points out, there are several different methods of employing visual material, such as taking existing material and using it to conclude, for example, an organization, or asking interview partners to draw in response to a question (see, for example, Bagnoli, 2009). The exercise we propose uses the latter approach.

As Crilly, Blackwell, and Clarkson (2006) point out, language can sometimes be unspecific and using language in (intercultural) studies has been criticized (Jepson, 2009). An example from our own use of drawings in teaching illustrates this problem: Students may point out that leaders need followers. However, the drawings add to this information by showing, for example, the size as well as the position of followers in relation to the leader, as well as the relationship between leaders and followers in a social context (see Figures 1–3 for examples). In line with Crilly and colleagues (2006), we believe that the students are best placed to interpret their drawings. Therefore, we ask students to verbalize their ideas in interpreting the drawings and conveying their meaning to other students.

Using drawing is particularly appropriate for

<sup>4</sup> We thank an anonymous reviewer for this idea.

teaching implicit leadership theories, as it encourages "thinking outside the box" (Bagnoli, 2009). It allows for the expression of emotions (Barner, 2008), which may be difficult to achieve when exclusively using verbal techniques. Drawing can help surface tacit or latent constructs (Stiles, 2004). The exercise of drawing itself and then sharing the meaning of the drawing can help making implicit views explicit, thus raising self-awareness of implicit leadership theories.

## HOW THE EXERCISE AFFECTS LEARNING

Although we cannot present data here to support the effectiveness of our exercise, there are several theoretical reasons why we assume that the exercise affects learning. According to Burgoyne, Hirsh, and Williams (2004), "there is astonishingly little evidence on how management and leadership development affects individual capability and performance of managers" (38). They argue that there are several reasons why finding a relationship between leadership development and performance cannot necessarily be expected. First, leaders may not apply the new competencies they have learned, for example, due to low motivation. Second, leaders work in teams, and leader development needs to include the ability to build social capital for leaders to improve performance. Third, leader development can have personal effects without leading to performance outcomes. So even when leaders acquire new competencies or capabilities in the development process, a transfer to their actual performance or the performance of the team or company does not necessarily follow. Therefore, looking solely at performance as an outcome of leader/leadership development may not be the best strategy for assessing the effect of development on leaders.

How, then, do we determine whether our exercise is "successful" in terms of raising self- and social awareness? Looking at the learning literature, we find that several aspects that are key to learning are included in our exercise and make us confident about the effects the exercise has on our students. First, as Burgoyne and colleagues (2004) point out, feedback is key in development. We use multiple sources of feedback and participants are able to discuss feedback with those participants who provided it. Second, our exercise incorporates several aspects of the experiential learning theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2005); namely,

- "Learning is best facilitated by a process that draws out the students' beliefs and ideas" (194). In asking students to draw a typical leader,

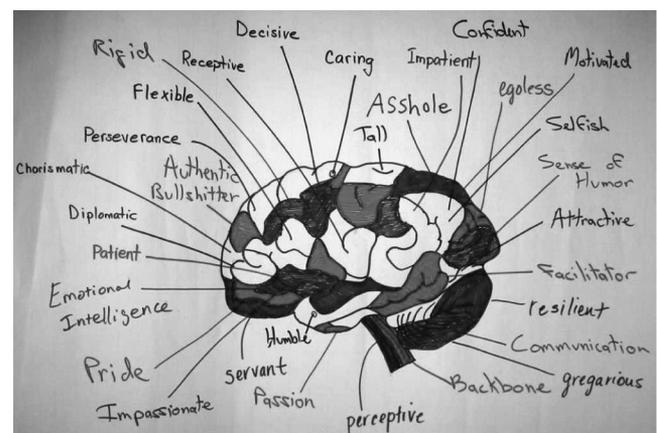
this exercise is specifically geared toward assessing and making salient beliefs and ideas about leaders.

- "Conflict, differences, and disagreement are what drive the learning process" (194). An important part of the exercise is the discussion about different images of leaders as an element of the drawing process and also in the larger group when the drawings are presented.
- "Learning is the process of creating knowledge . . . whereby social knowledge is created and recreated in the personal knowledge of the learner" (194). By drawing in groups and discussing the drawings in the larger groups, the students are made aware of the images of leaders that others have (social knowledge) and are able to integrate this knowledge into their own knowledge.

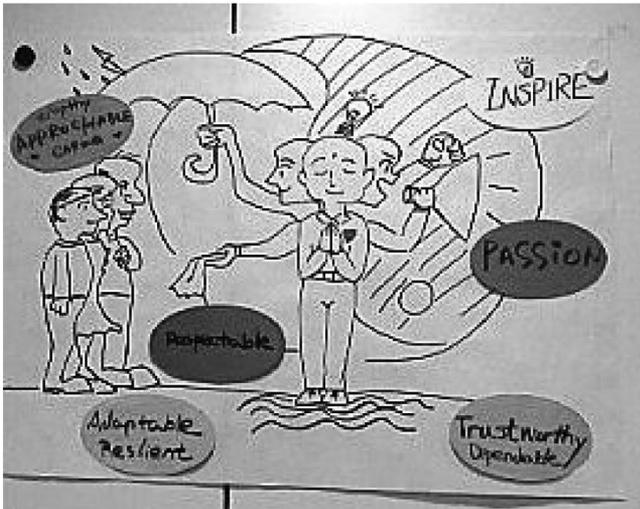
## EXAMPLES

We have used this drawing exercise over 20 times in several different contexts over the last few years. We mostly used the exercise with mature MBA and MSc students (about 15 times) and in executive teaching (5 times). We have also used it in the context of a BA course on leadership (twice). While the exercise itself has not changed, we did adapt it to different contexts (see above, e.g., using "effective leaders" vs. "leaders in general").

Figures 1–3 illustrate implicit leadership theories drawings from three different cultural groups. Figure 1 shows the drawing from a group of United States students, indicating implicit leadership theories typical of "focus on leader," highlighting his/her skills, characteristics and behaviors. Figure 2 portrays the drawing of a Far-East Asian group. In their presentation, the students highlighted that to



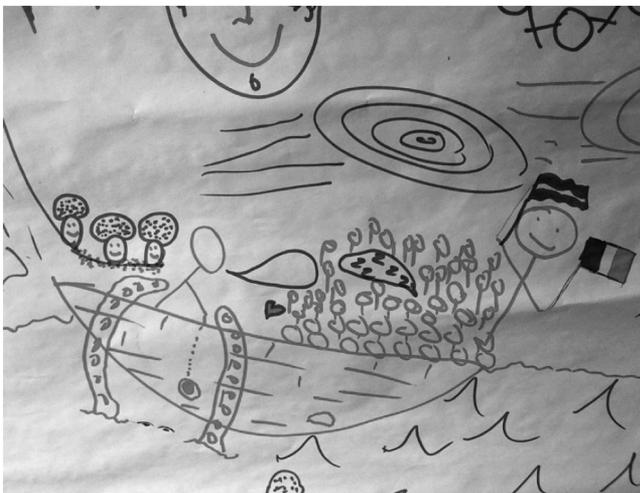
**FIGURE 1**  
**Prototypical Drawing With Focus on Leader Skills, Characteristics, and Behaviors (United States students). "An effective leader needs to be all these things at once."**



**FIGURE 2**

**Drawing Highlighting a Wider Societal Purpose of Leadership in Relationship to Followers (Far-East Asian students).** "An effective leader is responsible for employees' and their families' well-being."

be effective leaders need to be looking out not only for the well-being of their employees, but also of their employees' families. Figure 3 exemplifies the process that can lay behind the implicit leadership theories of effective leaders, involving many parties (e.g., shareholders, here Unions, represented by the octopus reaching out from the sea, or market forces, represented by the waves and weather). In



**FIGURE 3**

**Excerpt of a Drawing Describing Different Power Relations Within the Leadership Process in a Wider Organizational and Societal Context (Latin students).** "An effective leader is in the same boat with the followers and is just one aspect of the leadership process."

contrast to the first two drawings, the third drawing describes leadership as effective, although the leader is not the most central figure but just one of many important contributors in the leadership process. Also of interest was that the characteristics attributed to effective leaders were similar in many drawings (e.g., passionate, charismatic, inspiring); however, the context in which leadership is "carried out" and "interpreted" varies considerably.

When presenting and discussing the drawing, different groups' implicit leadership theories are contrasted, for example, by comparing different drawings and highlighting similarities. Here, we often see that the topic of "charisma" appears in drawings even across different cultures, which is in line with the results of the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) study (e.g., House et al., 2002). The advantage of using this exercise as a group exercise (for a similar approach see Barner, 2008), is that it is often useful to ask students to what extent they found it easy or difficult to agree *within* their group to highlight individual differences. At the same time, instructors should highlight that these images can be influenced by social contexts (here, we introduced culture as a social context).

In our example, we could see that the presentation and discussion of drawings is a vital part of the exercise, as it often exposes very deeply rooted assumptions. For example, it is striking that drawings like the one depicted in Figure 1 often get challenged on the aspects that are represented (e.g., does an effective leader have to be "selfish"), but very rarely are questions asked regarding their absence of followers in the drawing.

The drawing in Figure 2, however, was strongly challenged by the North American group. One participant was particularly struck by the drawing, nearly incredulous: "You cannot be serious, how can it be the role of effective leaders to look after the families of employees?" The discussion that followed made clear just how deeply rooted cultural assumptions about leadership are. Figure 3 is a good example of drawings that highlight even more of the context in which effective leaders are seen to operate. In this drawing, an effective leader is portrayed as only one of the key factors in the leadership process. The leader is literally in the same boat with the followers, and the system (boat) is kept afloat by a whole series of processes and forces (leader, followers, markets, unions, and economy).

In the following, we discuss links between the implicit leadership drawing exercise and leader and leadership development, in particular the

ways in which the exercise helps to raise self- and social awareness; affects (leader and follower) cognition, motivation, and behavior; and shapes leader identities (in followers).

### LINKING THE EXERCISE BACK TO LEADER AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Our exercise is aimed at raising awareness by making implicit knowledge explicit. It consists of several parts that are geared toward raising awareness about students' implicit leadership theories and how these are similar to, or differ from, others' implicit leadership theories, as well as the implications arising from this knowledge. An advantage of using a drawing method of teaching is that the students directly experience the prevailing differences themselves, rather than merely being told about them. By provoking conflict, differences, and disagreements to the way of thinking, the exercise stimulates learning (in the Kolb & Kolb sense), and many students experience a "Eureka!" moment when they realize how differently leaders and leadership are constructed, and how this may impact on the daily leadership processes.

#### The Role of Self- and Social Awareness for Leader and Leadership Development

One underlying assumption of our approach is that leaders and leadership cannot be developed independently of follower images of leaders and leadership. Most students who have leadership experience can recall an example of a situation where what they "normally do" was not effective in a particular context (e.g., a leader with a self-image as portrayed in Figure 1 leading in a context portrayed by Figure 2). Self-awareness of their implicit leadership theories can help leaders understand why they behave in a certain way to achieve goals, whereas social awareness of followers' implicit leadership theories helps them understand why this might not be effective in a particular context. The integration of self- and other awareness may, therefore, facilitate behavioral change (in all parties) toward a more effective approach in a particular context.<sup>5</sup> Thus, whenever leaders are trained to behave in a specific way, we argue that their and others' images of leaders and leadership need to be taken into account for training to be effective.

<sup>5</sup> Note that this is by no means to be confused with "pleasing the followers" or even "doing what they want."

Before turning to a more in-depth exploration of identity, we first outline the broader implications of a raised awareness for cognition, motivation, and behavior. As mentioned in the introduction, many articles on leader development emphasize the importance of self-awareness for leaders and leadership. Hall (2004) calls self-awareness a "major aspect" (154) of leader development. As Krauss, Hamid, and Ismail (2010) put it, "Self-aware leaders are sensitive to how their actions affect others and have a greater capacity to adjust to situations" (4). Teaching self-awareness can be considered part of leader development. The drawing exercise also focuses on social awareness, which is part of leadership development. We define *social awareness* here very broadly as the awareness that leaders and followers have (or should develop) about images of leadership that others around them hold and how these might differ from their implicit theories. This includes an understanding about how I as a follower may react to leaders based on my implicit leadership theories and how leaders more generally are judged within a certain social context. This awareness forms the basis for the above-cited capacity to adjust effectively to various social contexts.

#### Cognition, Motivation, and Behavior

Our approach to teaching implicit leadership theories tries to overcome a central problem of leadership training and development, namely that it often ignores that leaders (inter-)act with their social environment (Day, 2001). Olivares, Peterson, and Hess (2007: 79) state: "Leadership requires that individual development is integrated and understood in the context of others, social systems, and organizational strategies, missions, and goals." Making leaders aware of the social context in which they work with respect to implicit leadership theories is the first step to alter their behavior in ways that will be more effective in their specific context. Thus, raising awareness of implicit leadership theories is complementary to leadership behavior training, as the latter sort of training does not include information about the implicit leadership theories context in which leaders operate.

Leaders who are aware of differences in implicit leadership theories between themselves and their followers (disagreement) and among their followers (differentiation, lack of consensus) have made a first step in altering their own behavior. Similar to cultural intelligence (Early & Ang, 2003), cognition is the first step when behavior needs to be adapted to different circumstances, followed by motivation to change behavior and, finally, actu-

ally behaving in line with the respective social context. Our exercise can serve as the first step to enhance *cognition*. It can help leaders to adapt their behavior according to the implicit leadership theories context in which they are operating. In addition, as leaders develop a deeper understanding of the context of leadership, our exercise can foster *motivation* in the leader to adapt his/her behavior to match this context. Finally, being motivated to try out new *behavior*, leaders will eventually improve their leadership as they receive feedback from their followers and can further adapt and refine their leadership skills. In this way, the awareness raised by our exercise can help leaders to stay alert to the necessity to adapt and refine their leadership. The same argument applies to followers, in that their awareness of their own and others' implicit leadership theories influences their cognition (which follower and leader behavior is adequate in a given context), and their motivation to change their own behavior and to improve the leadership process by engaging in these behaviors.

### Identity

These concepts of self- and social awareness can be linked to different types of identity. Day and Harrison (2007) emphasize the role of three levels of identity: individual (also called personal), relational, and collective. The differentiation of different levels of identity goes back to Brewer and Gardner (1996), who argue that individuals have different levels of identities available to them and that, at different times, different levels of identity are activated. At the personal level, the self-concept is defined as traits that make the person different from others. The relational self-concept refers to roles taken on in relationships with others. Finally, the collective self-concept is the definition of the self in terms of group memberships as outlined in social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

With respect to the different levels of identity, Day and Harrison (2007) argue that better leaders are able to use all three levels of self-concept, which is especially relevant in complex situations. Again, teaching implicit leadership theories can sharpen all three identities, in that self-awareness relates to individual self-concept and what leaders know about their own images of leadership. Social awareness relates to relational and collective levels of identity, in that leaders and followers need to understand how their images of leaders and leadership may shape their relationship, and ultimately, their collective identity. Only when im-

PLICIT leadership theories of leaders and followers match sufficiently, will leaders claim and be granted leader identity, will relationships be clear, and leaders be collectively endorsed (De Rue & Ashford, 2010).

Linking this idea to social exchange relationships, Flynn (2005) argues that in employee exchange relationships (of which leadership is one), the terms of the exchange are implicit when relational and collective identities are activated. In contrast, when individuals' personal identities are activated, they will engage in more explicit negotiations of exchange. However, as Flynn argues, different forms of negotiation styles based on different levels of identity can lead to conflict. By making implicit images explicit, the drawing exercise can render the negotiation of leader identities more explicit, thus provoking conflicts in the learning setting, and therefore, facilitate the negotiation of identities. At the same time, in the sense of De Rue and Ashford (2010), it can also make the implicit exchanges involved in the leadership process more explicit and start the process of negotiating a more effective leadership process within a social context.

Awareness of the variation of implicit assumptions can work in a similar way to diversity training, namely, that leaders aim to overcome differences and emphasize communalities to establish a joint group identity. This crafting of a joint group identity goes beyond making leaders aware of the social contexts in which they lead, and beyond establishing their social identities. In that sense, the social identity of the leader as a group member spreads to the other group members. Hence, raising awareness about implicit leadership theories can be integrated into the latest approach to leadership development, namely, training leaders about behavior relevant to group identity (e.g., social identity theory of leadership; Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011). To successfully build a group's social identity, the leader needs to be aware of the implicit leadership theories of the followers and how they fit to the leader's own implicit leadership theory (cf. De Rue & Ashford, 2010). The ultimate aim is for leaders and group members to have a socially shared social identity.

### LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

We described an implicit leadership theories exercise and gave examples of drawings; however, we did not provide any evidence for the effective working of the exercise. Future research should, therefore, aim to collect data showing how the exercise affects the participants in their self- and other

awareness. For example, the exercise could be repeated with the same participants after they have gone back to their workplaces and then compare the drawings and comments to examine whether they have become more differentiated and less self-focused in the second exercise. Also worth examining is if the attributes named and drawn have changed when the exercise is repeated. Or even more simply, a questionnaire could be distributed before and after the exercise to see if and how the prototypical attributes of leaders have changed.

Another way of examining the effectiveness of the exercise would be to compare two groups of participants that have done the exercise with different foci (e.g., one focusing on cultural differences, one focusing on professional differences) and compare how their self- and other awareness has changed differently by looking at the attributes they name and compare the drawings in a repeat exercise.

In addition, the exercise could be compared to other methods of raising awareness. For example, to examine if the exercise actually raises both self- and other awareness, two groups could be compared: One which has undergone training or development using methods focusing on only one of those aspects and one doing our drawing exercise. A test could compare if there are differences in the awareness (self- and other) between those groups, for example, using questionnaires that focus on both types of awareness.

## CONCLUSIONS

According to Cummings (2007: 143): "A good number of leadership scholars and practitioners of leadership development continuously search for innovative yet practical examples of what leadership looks like for educational purposes"—and we are no exception. The general learning outcome of our drawing exercise is that apart from learning about their own images of leaders and leadership, students understand that their implicit leadership theories have an individual and social component that others may or may not share. Based on the theoretical underpinnings of implicit leadership theories outlined, a key outcome of teaching implicit leadership theories is that students understand there can be no overall valid truth to what effective or "good" leadership is, and that it depends more on individual, social, and cultural constructions than on the characteristics and behaviors of the leader as such. Understanding this notion involves first, getting a sense of one's implicit leadership theories; second, understanding how and why we perceive leaders in a specific

way, and third, understanding that these constructions vary between different (groups of) people, which has implications for followers, leaders, and leadership. Thus, combining leader and leadership development by raising self- and social awareness of implicit leadership theories can facilitate the development of leader identities (cf. De Rue & Ashford, 2010) and, ultimately, ease the process of negotiating leadership more constructively and effectively, and hopefully with less conflict (cf. Flynn, 2005).

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