The new psychology of leadership
From theory to practice

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What is leadership?

The process whereby one or more members of a group influence other group members in a way that motivates them to contribute to the achievement of group goals (Haslam, 2004; Smith, 1995; Rost, 2008)

It’s not just about leaders, it’s about followers
It’s not about me, it’s about us (i.e., it’s a group process)
It’s not about power over, it’s about power through (Turner, 2005)
Old and current psychologies of leadership

- **Trait-based**: effective leaders are simply “great men” (Plato, 380bc)
- **Contingency**: effective leadership is a product of a ‘perfect match’ between personality and context (Fiedler, 1964)
- **Behavioural**: effective leaders display ‘initiation of structure’ and ‘consideration’ (Fleishman & Peters, 1962)
- **Transactional**: effective leadership is a process of social exchange (Hollander, 1978)
- **Transformational**: effective leadership is the product of a leader’s charismatic influence (Burns, 1978)

What we’ve learned

- Leaders have skills
- Context matters
- Leaders do things
- Followers matter
- Leaders inspire
Limitations of old and current psychologies of leadership

- **Aperspectival** (leadership is rarely recognised consensually)
- **Inflexible** (leader’s character/style is seen as fixed and inflexible)
- **Individualistic** (emphasis is on ‘I-ness’ rather than ‘we-ness’)
  The least important word in the leader’s vocabulary? ‘I’
  The most important word in the leader’s vocabulary? ‘We’ (Adair, 1991)
- **Non-predictive**
  “Unfortunately, in real time, it is unclear who will be known as visionaries and who will be known as failures” (Nadler & Tushman, 1990)
- **Qualitatively lacking** (fails to explain, the ‘something more’ of leadership)
• Takes the psychological reality of the group (‘we-ness’ or social identity) as its starting point.
• People can (and often do) define themselves in terms of social identity (‘us psychologists’, ‘us members of team X’, etc.) not just personal identity (‘I’).
• People are motivated to have a positive and distinct self-concept.
• When their sense of self is defined in terms of social identity, they want to see their in-group as positive and distinct from out-groups — we want ‘us’ to be special.
The new psychology of leadership
The social identity approach

Why does social identity matter so much?

Social identity makes organization possible (Haslam et al., BJM, 2003)
Leadership as social identity management

• These points are also highly relevant to leadership because

• A leader can be seen as someone who embodies (is prototypical of) a social identity that is shared with other group members — and who exerts influence on this basis.

• Leadership can be seen as a process of social identity management that centres on a leader’s ability to create, represent, advance and embed a shared, special sense of ‘us’.

• Indeed, without social identity there can be no leadership: we can only be led if there is a ‘we’ to lead.

• These ideas can be unpacked in terms of 4 key elements of leadership ….
1. Being one of us
Leaders as ingroup prototypes

• Leaders are more effective (more likely to be *influential*) the more they are perceived to *represent* a social identity that we share.
• They need to be seen as ‘one of us’ (not ‘one of them’) and as embodying ‘who we are’ and ‘what we want to be’.

We are influenced by *our* leaders …

… Not *theirs*.
1. Being one of us
Leaders as ingroup prototypes

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Study of all official Australian election speeches since Federation in 1901
(Steffens & Haslam, PLoS ONE 2013)

Winners use ‘we’ once every 79 words
Losers use ‘we’ once every 136 words

Uses of ‘we’ per speech
1. Being one of us
Leaders as ingroup prototypes

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- They need to be seen as ‘one of us’ (not ‘one of them’) and as embodying ‘who we are’ and ‘what we want to be’.
- Things that set (or are perceived to set) leaders apart from the group can undermine the effectiveness of their leadership.
- Evidence from Sherif (SA, 1956).

Leaders of the losing group are set apart from rank-and-file members.
2. Doing it for us
Leaders as ingroup champions

- Leaders are more effective (more likely to engender *creative followership*) the more they are perceived to stand up for a social identity that we share.
- Their leadership will be compromised if they place out-group or personal interests above those of the in-group (Blanning, 2003; Dening 2002)

Sovereignty resides in my person alone and my courts derive their existence and their authority from me alone. They exercise it only in my name and it may never be turned against me.

Of myself I must say this, I never was any greedy scraping grasper, nor yet a waster, my heart was never set on worldly goods, but only for my subjects’ good... And though you have had and may have many mightier and wiser princes sitting in this seat, yet you never had nor shall have any that will love you better.

I come before the group

The group comes before me
2. Doing it for us
Leaders as ingroup champions

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Study in which Ps asked to generate ideas to back up leader’s ideas when leader has previously been either (a) pro-ingroup (b) even-handed (c) pro-outgroup.


Only a pro-ingroup leader generates helpful forms of creativity

Other leaders don’t generate much creativity, and it’s the *wrong sort*
3. Crafting a sense of us
Leaders as entrepreneurs of identity (Chapter 6)

• Successful leaders craft identity to ensure that they (and their vision) are prototypical for the group.
• This involves sensitivity to the way they appear to in-group members.

Leaders advance by casting themselves in the image of the group to be led

... and fail if they don’t (or can’t)
Successful leaders are *identity impresarios* who initiate *identity-embedding structure* (e.g., goals, activities, practices).

Leadership is sustained by leaders who devise structures that embed, maintain and promote that sense of ‘us’, and who assume authority on that basis.

Leadership and power arise from identity not resources.
4. Making us matter
Leaders as embedders of identity
(Chapter 7)

- Successful leaders are *identity impresarios* who initiate *identity-embedding structure* (e.g., goals, activities, practices).
- This ensures that the rhetoric of ‘us’ is translated into lived experience and material reality.

Leadership is sustained by leaders who devise structures that embed, maintain and promote that sense of ‘us’, and who assume authority on that basis.

The key social achievement of [Paul’s] community-forming actions [consisted] in the bringing together of many people into one body, the construction of a new form of corporate solidarity … that transcend[ed] former distinctions. (Horrell, 2005)
Research confirms the fundamental point that leadership is about social identity management. This identity leadership has four key elements:

- **C**reating us
- **A**dvanicing us
- **R**epresenting us
- **E**mbedding us

To do leadership you need to CARE — and be seen to CARE — about the group.
The new psychology of leadership
From theory to practice

If you can, please participate in the short study which we will now hand out. This involves reading a job description, some background information and a resumé — and then making some judgements.

I will explain its purpose after the break.
1. Being one of us
Leaders as ingroup prototypes

The female applicant is preferred when the job is risky.

Q: Is a woman also preferred when there is bad news in the wind?
The New Practice of Leadership

For all the large sums of money invested in the leadership industry and for all the large amounts of time spent on teaching leadership, learning leadership and studying leadership, the metrics are mostly missing. There is scant objective evidence to confirm that this massive, expensive, thirty-plus-year effort has paid off… As a whole, the leadership industry is self-satisfied, self-perpetuating and poorly policed… In spite of the widespread disappointment in, and distrust of leaders in the society at large, and despite the seismic changes in culture and technology, there has been little change to the prevailing paradigm of learning how to lead; no significant attempt to reimagine the model … or to adjust to an era in which leadership is less about refining the individual and more about reimagining the collective; no obvious progress in formulating a fundamental, coherent curriculum sequenced in a demonstrably (proven) sensible and successful way; and no thought given to instructing on following, when following wisely and well is manifestly as important as leading wisely and well.

(Kellerman, 2012)
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Prevailing approaches tend to be....

- Individual-oriented
- Focused on benefits to individuals
- Conducted apart from followers
- Follower-excluding, distance-enhancing
- Romanticized (hubris-inducing)
- Abstracted (leading by thinking)
- Off-the-peg
- Non-evidential (“happy sheets for leaders”)

(NPoL suggests they need to be ....)

- Group-oriented
- Focused on benefits to groups
- Conducted together with followers
- Follower-involving, distance-reducing
- Grounded
- Practical (leading by doing)
- Organization- and context-specific
- Evidence-based (demonstrating +ve impact on followers and the group)

(Kellerman, 2012; Mole, 2004; Tame, 2007)
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Three key practical challenges of leadership and identity management

1. How can leaders engage with a diverse workforce (where all groups make a unique contribution to the organization)?

2. How can leaders attend to the goals and aspirations of diverse subgroups (e.g., to respond to diverse group needs)?

3. How can leaders integrate the needs of diverse sub-groups into coherent strategy and policy?

Our answers to these question build on the ASPIRe model (Haslam et al., JOOP, 2003; Peters et al., GOM, 2013) and translate them into a formal programme: the Leadership through Identity Development Approach (LIDA; Peters et al., 2013)
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To address these 3 questions, LIDA takes leaders through a three-stage process in which they work with team members to:

1. Discover what social identities matter to people.
2. Discover the goals and aspirations associated with different identities and facilitate activities that help achieve them.
3. Define and integrate different identity-related goals and embed them in overarching practices and policies.
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Research points to the importance of
(a) finding out (rather than assuming) what identities matter to people in a given organizational context, and then
(b) working with those identities (Eggins et al., 2008)

Leaders need to engage with followers’ subjective organizational realities, not fictionalized representations.
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1. Discover what social identities matter to people.

AIRing (Ascertaining Identity Resources) involves:

taking organizational members through a process of identity mapping to find out:

(a) what social identities matter to group members and
(b) how they relate to other important social identities in the organization
2. Discover the goals and aspirations associated with different identities and facilitate activities that help achieve them.

Research suggests that in order to develop multiple identities, it is better to move from sub-group identity to superordinate identity, rather than superordinate identity to subgroup identity (Eggins et al., 1998).

So, after developing a sense of which subgroups to work with (through AIRing), leaders need to work with those subgroups to understand the circumstances and aspirations of their members rather than rushing to impose superordinate identity on them (which would tend to foster identity threat and resistance; Jetten et al., 2002).
2. Discover the goals and aspirations associated with different identities and facilitate activities that help achieve them. SubCasing

SubCasing (Subordinate Caucusing) involves working with each subgroup to:

(a) identify issues that matter for the group,
(b) clarify goals and aspirations of the group,
(c) identify obstacles that prevent achieving goals, and
(d) develop strategies to overcome these obstacles.
3. Define and integrate different identity-related goals and embed them in overarching practices and policies.

Research suggests that in complex organizations successful goal-setting involves sensitivity to all group’s goals.
The New Practice of Leadership

3. Define and integrate different identity-related goals and embed them in overarching practices and policies.

SuperCasing bringing groups together to:
- (a) articulate goals related to different identities (i.e., those that are shared and those that are distinct)
- (b) develop strategies for achieving different goals,
- (c) co-ordinate strategies across distinct groups.
The New Assessment of Leadership

Identity Leadership Inventory
(ILI; Steffens et al., LQ, in press)

Identity Entrepreneurship: Creating a shared sense of ‘us’
• This leader makes people feel as if they are part of the same group.
• This leader creates a sense of cohesion within [the group].
• This leader develops an understanding of what it means to be a member of [the group].
• This leader shapes members’ perceptions of [the group’s] values and ideals.

Identity Prototypicality: Representing a shared sense of ‘us’
• This leader embodies what [the group] stands for.
• This leader is representative of members of [the group].
• This leader is a model member of [the group].
• This leader exemplifies what it means to be a member of [the group].

Identity Advancement: Advancing a shared sense of ‘us’
• This leader promotes the interests of members of [the group].
• This leader acts as a champion for [the group].
• This leader stands up for [the group].
• When this leader acts, he or she has [the group’s] interests at heart.

Identity Impresarioship: Embedding a shared sense of ‘us’
• This leader devises activities that bring [the group] together.
• This leader arranges events that help [the group] function effectively.
• This leader creates structures that are useful for [group members].

4 studies in USA, China and Belgium demonstrate:
• Content validity (dimensions capture meaningful constructs)
• Construct validity (dimensions are distinct)
• Discriminant validity (distinguished from other leadership constructs)
• Criterion validity (predicts key leadership outcomes)
The New Assessment of Leadership

ILI used in LIDA to assess 4 components of Identity Leadership from the perspective of both Leaders and other Group members (followers) both pre- and post- intervention

The CARE square
Leadership (and LIDA) involves trying to enlarge the CARE square — and whether it does is something we can assess
The New Assessment of Leadership

Results from an initial study with Allied Health professionals in Queensland (Haslam et al., in sub)

Motivation to CARE

- T1 = 155.1 (78%)
- T2 = 149.0 (75%)
The New Assessment of Leadership

Results from an initial study with Allied Health professionals in Queensland (Haslam et al., in sub)

Ability to CARE
- T1 = 91.7 (46%)
- T2 = 120.3 (60%)

More work is needed, but LIDA appears to be a viable means of ‘tooling leaders up’ for the hard tasks of identity leadership.
The New Practice of Leadership

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LIDA is:
A new politics of leadership

• To understand, and properly do, leadership we need to move beyond the individualistic and hubristic models that have dominated the field to date.
• Leadership is a we-thing, not an I-thing — and so is its psychology.

Learning to lead is about learning (how) to CARE about all the groups for which we have responsibility

• Organizational Psychologists have a major role to play in turning thinking, and practice, around.
• Let’s do it — if we’re serious about investing in all our futures ….