

Endrissat, Nada; Müller, Werner R.; Jaeger Fontana, Andreas

Research Report

In search of charismatic leaders or: You get what you ask for

WWZ Forschungsbericht, No. 09/06

Provided in Cooperation with:

Center of Business and Economics (WWZ), University of Basel

Suggested Citation: Endrissat, Nada; Müller, Werner R.; Jaeger Fontana, Andreas (2006) : In search of charismatic leaders or: You get what you ask for, WWZ Forschungsbericht, No. 09/06, Universität Basel, Wirtschaftswissenschaftliches Zentrum (WWZ), Basel

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/127509>

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

Terms of use:

Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.

If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.



Oktober 2006

In Search of Charismatic Leaders or: You get what you ask for

WWZ-Forschungsbericht 09/ 06

Nada Endrissat, Werner R. Müller,
Andreas Jaeger Fontana

The Authors:

Nada Endrissat

Faculty of Business and Economics, University Basel,
Departement of Organization, HRM and Leadership
Rosshofgasse 2, CH-4003 Basel
nada.endrissat@unibas.ch

Prof. Dr. Werner R. Müller

Faculty of Business and Economics, University Basel,
Departement of Organization, HRM and Leadership
Rosshofgasse 2, CH-4003 Basel
werner.mueller@unibas.ch

Dr. Andreas Jaeger Fontana

Faculty of Business and Economics, University Basel,
Departement of Organization, HRM and Leadership
Rosshofgasse 2, CH-4003 Basel
a.jaeger-fontana@unibas.ch

A publication of the Department of Economics (WWZ), University of Basel

Address for information:

WWZ Forum, Petersgraben 51, CH-4003 Basel, Fax +41 61 267 33 33

The WWZ Research Papers document the results of research projects at the WWZ.

© WWZ Forum 2006 and the author. Reproduction for other purposes than the personal use needs the permission of the author and the WWZ Forum. Please contact: forum-wwz@unibas.ch.

In Search of Charismatic Leaders or: You Get What You Ask for*

Paper presented at the Academy of Management Conference, 2006

Work in progress

Nada Endrissat

Department of Organization,
HRM, and Leadership
Basel University
Switzerland

Tel. (+41) 61-267 27 57
Fax (+41) 61-267 27 58

Nada.Endrissat@unibas.ch

Werner R. Mueller

Department of Organization,
HRM, and Leadership
Basel University
Switzerland

Tel. (+41) 61-267 32 24
Fax (+41) 61-267 27 58

Werner-R.Mueller@unibas.ch

Andreas Jaeger Fontana

Department of
Economic History
Basel University
Switzerland

Tel. (+41) 61-267 32 59
Fax (+41) 61-267 27 58

A.Jaeger-Fontana@unibas.ch

* The paper's empirical data are taken from the research project FiS-Führung im Spiegel. We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of this project from the WWZ Förderverein, Basel University, as well as the co-operation of Andreas Alioth, Stephan Burla, Jens Meissner, and Gertrude Schmidlin-Trachsler in collecting, interpreting, and validating the empirical data.

ABSTRACT

The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) study is currently the most comprehensive research endeavor that set out to answer – amongst others – whether or not charismatic/value-based leadership is universally seen to contribute to effective leadership. The results have been appearing in various journals and books supporting this assumption and conveying the image that charismatic leaders are worldwide successful. Given the study's scope and exemplary status we suspect that the aforementioned result will receive the status of a 'given fact' if the study is not critically reviewed. The paper strives to fulfill this call by taking a 'closer look' at the conception of charisma in today's charismatic leadership theories as well as the GLOBE study, its results and interpretation. We argue that the items that are universally endorsed are not primarily pertaining to charisma but rather represent common, positive connoted leadership attributes. Moreover, the paper proposes an alternative to the research approach adopted by GLOBE, i.e. we present a qualitative leadership study and its result and will discuss whether or not charismatic leadership can be found in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Our conclusion suggests that the answer to this question is dependent upon the adopted research approach. The paper closes by outlining implications and encouraging critical reviews of established research results.

Keywords: leadership, critical review, research methods, social constructionism

In Search of Charismatic Leaders or: You Get What You Ask for

INTRODUCTION

In a book chapter entitled ‘constraints on the emergence of new vistas in leadership and management research: an epistemological overview’ Dachler (1988: 265) concludes that “what House [1988] in his overview sees as established knowledge of leadership is not an objective and value-free ‘known’ reality. It is a reflection of what leadership research as a discipline in the context of western cultures has constructed as its reality, which is but one of many possible leadership realities that could be imagined”. What Dachler tries to point out in his statement is that ‘facts’ in the social sciences are not naturally given and objectively observed but socially constructed. That is, they are products of an agreement process which is culturally and historically embedded. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966) this process is marked by the interrelated processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Burr (2003: 202) explains that “potentially shared ways of thinking about the world (‘knowledge’) become externalised when they take the form of social practices or artefacts. These then become ‘objects’ (objectivation) for a social group, and acquire a sense of pre-givenness. They then become part of the thinking of individual members of the social group (internalisation), and of new members as they are born into it”. Thus, what people believe to be a ‘hard’ or ‘objective’ reality is in fact a product of human construction.

With respect to leadership, the common association with the term is a power imbalance and a unidirectional influence process from the leader to the followers. However, as Dachler (1988) has pointed out so tellingly this is but one of many possible understandings. It is the one that traditional leadership theory and research have adopted and that emphasizes the role of the leader

along with his traits and behaviors. It is also the one that supports the existing social order as well as the prevailing assumptions of hierarchy and power (Bresnen, 1995). Because various institutions (re)produce this understanding of leadership the impression of “*the right*” conception of leadership is conveyed. As we observe the leadership field and its development closely we believe that a social construction process is currently under way which corroborates the aforementioned conception of leadership and which aims at objectifying a research result that concerns the universal endorsement of a specific leadership form. More precisely, the cross-cultural leadership field is momentarily marked by the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) study. This research program was launched by Robert J. House in the early 1990s and was designed as a worldwide, multiphase, multi-method project. 170 scholars from 62 countries engaged in data collection applying both qualitative and quantitative measures. The project’s general aim was to understand the interacting effects of leadership, societal culture, and organizational culture. One of the specific hypotheses which has been addressed and which is – for the purpose of this paper - of particular interest is the proposition that attributes (characteristics or behaviors) associated with charismatic/value-based leadership are universally perceived as contributing to effective leadership (e.g. Den Hartog, House, Hanges & Ruiz-Quintanilla et al. 1999: 225; Dorfman, Hanges & Brodbeck, 2004: 673). Since approximately 1999, the results of the study have been appearing in various journals and books supporting the assumption and conveying the image that charismatic leaders are worldwide successful. Given the study’s scope and exemplary status we believe that the results will be referred to and cited continuously leading to its consideration as ‘true’ facts.

We will try to ‘unmask’ this construction by taking a critical, close look at the GLOBE study’s research design, its results and interpretation. We will also look at today’s charismatic leadership theories and consider to what extent they comprise the original charismatic leadership

conception suggested by Weber (1922/1947). Moreover, we will contrast the GLOBE study with a qualitative research approach that asserts to be less suggestive and ‘closer’ to the actual meaning and practice of leadership. By comparing the results of the GLOBE study with the ones of our own study we will try to come to a closing answer whether or not charismatic leadership can be found in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Both research approaches will be discussed with respect to their practical relevance and ability to produce deep and new insights. Implications for future leadership research will be outlined.

We will start now with outlining today’s charismatic leadership theory which is one of the most popular theories in the leadership field, pervading academic and professional circles alike.

CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP THEORY

Max Weber as Point of Origin

Today’s charismatic leadership theory has its roots in Weber’s (1922/1947) theory of charisma in which he incorporates the leader (who possesses or is seen as possessing exceptional qualities), the followers (who are attracted to the leader and attribute charisma to him) and the situation (which is one of crisis or need); thus delineating a social process of leadership in which all three elements interact (Beyer & Browning, 1999: 486; Trice & Beyer, 1991: 151). Charisma, as an extraordinary quality attributed to a person is conceptualized to cope with extraordinary situations rather than with the normal course of life. It can therefore be argued that according to Weber (1922/1947) charisma is a rare and not a common phenomenon.

A fourth aspect in Weber’s (1922/1947) theory is the radical vision and mission which suggest a way out of the crisis. Similarly to the assumption that the followers are only attracted to the leader in a situation of crisis, the fourth aspect suggests that the visions and missions are only of relevance when a crisis exists that needs to be overcome. In this sense, Weber’s (1922/1947)

theory is a situational one with the occurrence of a crisis being the sine qua non for charisma to be relevant. One of the consequences of a situational conceptualization is that charisma is not stable but highly transient and dependent upon the crisis, the emotional attraction of the followers to the leader, and the repeated success of the latter (Trice & Beyer, 1986, 1991).

Because of this transience, Weber (1922/1947) further addresses the ‘condensation’ of charisma into institutional patterns what he calls ‘routinization’: By means of routinization, the mission and vision are put forward; yet not by the power of a charismatic leader but by written and oral traditions of the organization such as rites, symbols, and other cultural forms (Trice & Beyer, 1991: 152). A period of charismatic leadership is hence followed by a period of administrative structures which are stable until a new crisis arises.

Today’s Charismatic Leadership Theories

In the late 1980’s the global business competition commenced and North America’ market dominance started to be threatened by countries such as Japan or Germany (Conger, 1999: 147). The requirement to adapt to the new market circumstances and to reinvent themselves proofed to be difficult for a lot of organizations which had previously been very successful. It seemed like only very exceptional leaders were able “to ensure both organizational adaptation and workforce empowerment” (Conger, 1999: 148). It is therefore not surprising that at the time of great market and business threat the concept of charismatic leadership gained prominence among U.S. American scholars and practitioners. They adopted the concept in a very pragmatic way and focused their attention on the traits and behaviors of leaders who achieved to “influence followers to make self-sacrifices, commit to difficult objectives, and achieve much more than was initially expected” (Yukl, 1999:286). Among the scholars who adapted Weber’s (1922/1947) conception were House (1977), Conger and Kanungo (1987), and Shamir, House and Arthur (1993). According to them, the main characteristics and behaviors of charismatic leaders include:

articulating an appealing vision, communicating high performance expectations, expressing confidence in followers' abilities to achieve goals, displaying self-confidence, modeling exemplary behavior, showing sensitivity to member needs, emphasizing ideological aspects of work and a collective identity, taking personal risks, and displaying unconventional behavior. By means of these attributes, charismatic leaders are able to form a

“unique emotional and value-based bond with their followers. ... Through role-modeling behaviors and frame alignment, charismatic leaders develop followers' values and beliefs to be congruent and complementary with the leaders' ideology, goals, and activities. In particular, charismatic leaders are able to increase followers' intrinsic valence of effort and goal accomplishment, effort-accomplishment expectancies, and prospects and hopes for a better future state” (Yammarino, Dionne, Chun, & Dansereau, 2005: 897).

The central focus is hence on the single, exceptional leader, the ‘great man’ or ‘heroic leader’ who is the source of inspiration, motivation, and the cause of organizational success.

Critics, such as Smith (2000: 102), argue that today's ‘leader-centered’ conceptualization of charismatic leadership has reduced the study of charisma to personality traits. This focus suggests that charisma is located in the person- an assumption which is to Willner (1984; cited by Beyer, 1999a: 308) “the most common misconception about charisma”. Also, only little attention is paid to the situation (e.g. Beyer, 1999a) even though it plays a decisive role in the original conceptualization of charisma. Furthermore, the widespread procedure to give out questionnaires to large samples of followers and ask them about the charismatic qualities of their leaders conveys the image of charisma being a common feature rather than a random and extraordinary one (Beyer, 1999a). Smith (2000) even goes so far as to argue that “the apparently universal application of a key sociological concept [i.e. charisma] has cheapened and trivialized it” (2000:

102). Similarly, Beyer (1999a: 314) states that the assessment of charismatic leaders by large scale questionnaires is dubious: “The longer and less restrictive the list, the less distinctive the whole construct of charisma becomes”. Overall it appears that today’s charismatic leadership theories have reduced and ‘tamed’ the original conception of charisma in favor of a more common concept that can be generalized to various business settings (Beyer, 1999a).

However, the charismatic leadership theory is despite its conceptual weaknesses and critical voices (e.g. Beyer, 1999a; Conger 1999; Yukl, 1999) very popular. One reason for this might be that leadership is in general, and charismatic leadership in particular, seen as socially desirable and hence positive connoted in the U.S. (Beyer, 1999a: 308). However it is not for sure if this also holds true for cultures other than the U.S.

CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP ACROSS CULTURES: THE GLOBE STUDY

Cross-cultural leadership research has been exploding in quantity over the last twenty years (Dickson, Den Hartog & Mitchelson, 2003: 730). Among the central issues in this research stream stands the question of equivalence “determining whether aspects of leadership and leadership theory are ‘universal’ (etic) or are culturally contingent (emic)” (Dickson et al., 2003: 732). One of the most recent research endeavors addressing this issue is the GLOBE project. It defines the term ‘leadership’ as “the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members” (House & Javidan, 2004: 15).

The study tested – amongst others¹ - the hypothesis that attributes (characteristics or behaviors) associated with charismatic/value-based leadership are universally perceived as

¹ For an overview of all leadership related hypothesis which were tested by the GLOBE project, see for example, Dorfman et al. (2004: 669 et seqq.)

contributing to effective leadership (Den Hartog et al. 1999: 225; Dorfman et al., 2004: 673). This hypothesis poses an exception to the theoretical assumptions suggested by the combination of implicit leadership theory (Lord & Maher, 1991) and value-belief theory (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995) which are both constitutive elements of the GLOBE theoretical framework. While the first one explains, for example, how people come to perceive leaders as effective and good or as ineffective and bad, the latter posits that what people come to consider as ‘normal’ or ‘appropriate’ is dependent upon their cultural norms and values. As a consequence, it is assumed that implicit leadership theories vary across cultures (e.g. Brodbeck et al., 2000: 4; Dorfman & House, 2004: 59; Lord & Emrich, 2001: 559). Obviously, the hypothesis concerning charismatic leadership is in contrast to this. Yet it is supported by Bass’ (1997: 135-6) finding which reveals that the prototype of ideal leadership is worldwide considered to be transformational/charismatic. Furthermore, House, Wright and Aditya (1997: 592) found preliminary empirical evidence that future-oriented and inspirational leader behaviors are nearly universal. Since charismatic and inspirational leadership form a single factor (Bass, 1997: 134) this finding also supports the proposed hypothesis.

Research Design of the GLOBE Study

To test the charismatic leadership hypothesis a self-administered questionnaire was sent out to middle managers in 62 countries. The response accumulated to more than 17’000 questionnaires from 951 organizations in three different industries: food processing, financial services and telecommunication services (Dorfman et al., 2004: 673; Hanges & Dickson, 2004: 132; House & Javidan, 2004: 22). The questionnaire contained the following six global leadership dimensions: 1. charismatic/value-based, 2. team oriented, 3. narcissistic/self-protective, 4. participative, 5. humane orientation, and 6. autonomous. The six dimensions comprise twenty-one scales which in turn include 112 items (behavioral and attribute descriptors). The managers were asked to rate

these 112 items on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = ‘This behavior or characteristic greatly inhibits a person from being an outstanding leader’ to 7 = ‘This behavior or characteristic contributes greatly to a person being an outstanding leader’ (e.g. Hanges & Dickson, 2004: 127; House & Javidan, 2004: 21 & 22).

Table 1 gives an overview of the leadership dimensions, scales, and items (Brodbeck et al., 2000: 10; Brodbeck, Frese, & Javidan, 2002: 20; Hanges & Dickson, 2004: 137; Koopman, Den Hartog, Konrad, et al. 1999: 509).

Insert table 1 about here.

Of particular interest for the purpose of this paper is the charismatic/value-based leadership dimension which is defined as “the ability to inspire, to motivate, and to expect high performance outcomes from others on the basis of firmly held core values” (Dorfman et al., 2004: 675). As can be seen from table 1, this leadership dimension includes six leadership scales which are *visionary, inspirational, self-sacrifice, integrity, decisive, performance oriented*. However, please note that only the first three scales are specified as ‘charismatic’.

The research approach adopted by the GLOBE study is a sophisticated example of dominant leadership research: it complies with the psychometric requirements and represents an ‘objective’ respectively ‘naturalistic’ attempt to the study of leadership. The approach to the scale development was theory-driven (Hanges & Dickson, 2004: 123 et seqq.) and the 382 originally generated items reflected a broad variety of traits, skills, abilities, and personality characteristic which were partially based on established leadership theories². These first items were applied in

² Unfortunately, it is not clear who had been involved in generating these items. Yet, since Hanges and Dickson (2004: 128) note that additional items were added in Phase 1 in order to prevent a Western leadership bias, we assume that only Western scholars were involved in the initial item generation

two pilot studies and subsequently analyzed with respect to their underlying structure and the psychometric properties. The revised set of items included 112 items which were (based on first-order factor analysis and correlations) grouped together to 21 leadership scales (see Table 1 above). These 21 scales were correlated and a second-order maximum likelihood exploratory factor analysis yielded four ‘global’ leadership factors. Two of these four factors were further subdivided so that a total of six factors were derived. House & Javidan (2004: 21) provide no further explanation of why these scales were further subdivided and ambiguity prevails since Hanges and Dickson (2004: 136) note – with reference to the same factor analysis - that several criteria were applied to extract the factors and that this led to the six-factor solution.

The internal consistency (Cronbach’s α) of the 21 leadership scales ranges from .52 (‘charismatic III: self-sacrificial’) to .93 (‘charismatic II: inspirational’) and the intraclass correlation (ICC 2) ranges from .87 (‘autonomous’) to .95 (‘procedural’). It is thus argued that all scales are “uni-dimensional, aggregatable to the country level of analysis, and to reliably differentiate countries from one another” (Den Hartog et al., 1999: 235). The authors further conclude that “the psychometric properties of these scales meet or exceed conventional standards” (Den Hartog et al., 1999: 235). Despite the impossibility to measure the scales’ validity directly, Hanges and Dickson (2004: 145) note that the validity is ensured since four of the six global leadership dimensions can be linked to established leadership theories. Yet, this conclusion seems critical since the initial generation of items was influenced by (presumably) the same leadership theories and concepts.

Results of the GLOBE study³

As other authors before (e.g. Brodbeck et al. 2000: 14, Brodbeck et al., 2002; Den Hartog et al., 1999; Scandura & Dorfman, 2004) Dorfman et al. (2004: 677) come to the conclusion that the charismatic leadership dimension is universally perceived as contributing to outstanding leadership. The culture scores for this dimension range from 4.5 to 6.5 (on a 7-point scale) indicating positive evaluation in all countries. Yet, taking a closer look at the results on the scale and item level it becomes evident that not all three of the charismatic scales are universally endorsed but just the charisma I scale (*visionary*) and the charisma II scale (*inspirational*). When looking even closer, the results reveal that only the following charisma indicating items were universally seen as contributing to effective leadership: foresight (*visionary* scale), plans ahead (*visionary* scale), encouraging (*inspirational* scale), positive (!)⁴ (*inspirational* scale), dynamic (*inspirational* scale), motive arouser (*inspirational* scale), confidence builder (*inspirational* scale), and motivational (*inspirational* scale). The criteria that had to be met in order for the item to be considered ‘universally endorsed’ were: 1. 95% of the societal averages for an item had to exceed a mean of 5 (on a 7-point scale) and 2. the worldwide grand mean score for the item (i.e. considering all 62 cultures together) had to exceed 6 (on a 7-point scale) (Dorfman et al., 2004: 677).

Besides the fact that the discriminatory power of the item couples ‘foresight’ and ‘plans ahead’(both contained in the *visionary* scale) as well as of the items ‘encouraging’ and ‘confidence builder’ (both *inspirational* scale) and of the items ‘motive arouser’ and ‘motivational’ (both *inspirational* scale) seems to be rather small and assessing very similar (one might even argue redundant) qualities, the following two aspects are striking when taking a

³ We will focus the presentation of the GLOBE results on the ones referring to charismatic leadership. For a more comprehensive review of the results see, for example, Dorfman et al. (2004: 669 et seqq.)

closer look at the universally endorsed scales and items: 1. the scales which are claimed to be universally endorsed are labeled *visionary* and *inspirational* – however, the items that are contained in the scales *and* universally endorsed do not reflect vision or inspiration. In other words, we question the content validity of the two scales and claim that it is not legitimate to call them *visionary* and *inspirational*. 2. The items that are universally endorsed have in fact little to do with charisma but rather characterize common, positive connoted leadership behaviors which can be described as future-oriented, encouraging and motivational.

Trying to find out whether the claim that charismatic leadership is universally endorsed also holds for the German-speaking part of Switzerland we considered the country-specific results in the appendix (Dorfman et al., 2004: 714). Unfortunately, these results are only available for the level of leadership dimensions but not for the more specific item or scale level. The absolute score for each of the six leadership dimension is as follows (scores are based on a 7-point scale): 1) *charismatic/value-based* = 5.93, 2) *team oriented* = 5.61, 3) *(narcissistic) self-protective* = 2.92, 4) *participative* = 5.94, 5) *humane oriented* = 4.76, and 6) *autonomous* = 4.13. In other, admittedly very general words, effective leadership in the German-speaking part of Switzerland is considered to be both participative (5.94) and charismatic (5.93). Furthermore, a strong focus on team orientation (5.61) and a moderate focus on humane orientation (4.76) together with a moderate tendency to show autonomous attributes (4.13), complemented by a clear rejection of self-protective (narcissistic) elements (2.92) are seen as contributing to successful leadership. Taking the above definition of a ‘heroic’ charismatic leader as a basis, the result appears somewhat counter-intuitive: How can a focus on the leader go together with a team orientation and participative style with the latter two characterizing an egalitarian, non domineering and delegating approach (see Table 1 for items)? We will return to this ‘paradox’ in the discussion.

⁴ We are not surprised to find the item ‘positive’ to be rated affirmatively (i.e. positive).

A CLOSER LOOK AT LEADERSHIP IN SWITZERLAND: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Objectivist methods, as realized by the GLOBE study, have their limitation in the study of contextually rich phenomena like leadership. The attempt to assess leadership as error free and objectively as possible runs the risk of reproducing conventional, a-contextual knowledge instead of yielding new insights. According to Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003: 378-379) prominent “leadership research ... encourages a recycling of versions of the broadly shared discourses on leadership and takes the existence of this phenomenon ... for granted”. The choice and wording of items as well as the pre-defined answer categories suggest a leadership reality that might seem plausible to the respondents but that reveal little about the respondents’ personal understanding of leadership, possible leadership related conflicts, or their implicit leadership theories that guide the behavior.

Some scholars answered the critique by applying qualitative research methods. One of the arguments is that the qualitative approach generates a deeper understanding of leadership and puts forth leadership-related issues that are not considered by quantitative methods (Bryman, Bresnen, Beardsworth & Keil, 1988). Furthermore, since qualitative research attempts to interpret “action, events, and perspectives through the eyes of those being investigated” it tends to *expose* rather than *impose* meaning (Bryman et al. 1988:16; also King, 2004).

In the following paragraph we will present our qualitative research approach, its theoretical foundation and the results. A comparison of our approach with the one adopted by the GLOBE study will follow in the discussion.

Theoretical Foundation of the Qualitative Study

We consider leadership to be a social phenomenon which is constructed in and through people’s interaction. Taking up a social constructionism perspective (e.g. Berger & Luckmann, 1966;

Burr, 2003; Gergen, 1985, 1999) implies that we can not provide a single, objective and true definition of leadership. Instead, leadership and its understanding are contingent upon the specific societal, cultural, and historical context. How leadership eventually manifests itself depends on the individuals who interact and who mutually define the respective leadership ‘reality’⁵. We further argue that the interaction is influenced by the individuals’ self-conceptions which are based on their experiences and socialization processes. Borrowing from implicit leadership theory (Lord & Maher, 1991) we maintain that the acquired implicit understanding of leadership provides the individual with a basic framework of appropriate and expected leader and follower behavior and defines, gives meaning to, and directs the interaction process. This means that the self-conceptions and implicit leadership understandings unconsciously guide the individual actor ‘from backstage’ with respect to, for example, what it means to be leading or being led, how it should be performed, and how ‘good’ leadership as well as ‘leadership success’ are defined. Implicit leadership theories are consequently *theories in use* (Argyris & Schön, 1974:7) which ‘govern’ action. Since they are implicit, people are usually not aware of them and can not communicate them directly. Yet, they are crucial for the understanding of what moves and guides people in their expectation and enactment of leadership.

Research Design of the Qualitative Study

The aim of our research project was twofold. First, we wanted to find out what leadership means respectively how leadership is understood by leaders in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Second, we were interested to what extent popular leadership concepts - in this case charismatic leadership - play a role in the leadership realities of the interview partners when not explicitly asked about. We hence opted for the narrative interview technique (e.g. Czarniawska, 2004)

⁵ The specific leadership understanding does thus not necessarily entail a unidirectional influence process as conventional leadership understanding suggests (see above).

because it yields stories and experiences which are constitutive for the understanding and meaning of the narrator's every-day-life reality. By emphasizing and repeating specific aspects and by interpreting certain events, the narrator's perspective, his or her frames of reference and implicit understanding concerning leadership become available. We assume that even though the narrated stories refer to past experiences, they reveal the narrator's current understanding of leadership because the descriptions are selected by the narrator's active frames. Czarniawska (2004: 49) adds that what people present in narrative interviews "is but the results of their perception, their interpretation of the world, which is of extreme value to the researcher because one may assume that it is the same perception that informs their actions". While the interviewee narrates, the interviewer takes on an 'active listener' position and closely follows what is being said. Possible questions should always be open and narration-inducing and not encompass categories or concepts that the interviewee might take on.

Concerning our sample, it is important to stress that our qualitative research was not aiming at representativeness but instead strove for generalizability in the sense of revealing the 'typical'. To achieve this, our sampling strategy had been one of maximum variation (heterogeneity). Patton (2002: 234) puts forward that "this strategy of purposeful sampling aims at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation". The logic is that "any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon" (Patton, 2002: 235). 'Leadership' is practiced with different meanings in many different settings and organizations; and individuals who went through many different leadership settings in their life developed their specific understanding of the term. Yet, we understand each other when talking about leadership. Among all the variations there are common features which define leadership within a cultural community. In other words, if we grasp as much variety as possible in our

sample but are nevertheless able to identify commonalities among all these individual variations, we can conclude that we have found something that is central to our research topic. As a consequence, we have conducted twenty-six interviews with leaders who represent male as well as female managers, different hierarchical levels, and different age categories. They work in various organizational settings and hence provided a great variety of different perspectives.

Data analysis. The overall aim of the analysis was to understand the meaning of leadership from the *narrator's point of view* (Bryman, 1984: 77, Bryman et al., 1988: 61; similarly, Smircich, 1983: 166). To reduce the influence of our own frames of reference and to increase the validity of the interpretation, the data analysis involved several steps.

In a first step, we interpreted the interview scripts individually. We were trying to see through the eyes of the interviewees and asked ourselves: 'What topic is the narrator addressing in this episode?' 'What does the narrator want to tell me here?' 'What is his or her message?' The aim of the analysis was neither to summarize what the narrator was saying nor to categorize and count the statements. We also abstained from focussing on the personality of the narrator, i.e. we did not 'psychologize' by referring to traits, causes or dynamics of the person. This first individual interpretation resulted in a list of approximately 6 to 12 topics. A topic is an issue that has been repeatedly (at least three times) addressed throughout the interview and can therefore be seen as characterizing one of the cornerstones of the interviewee's leadership understanding.

In a second step we met in our research group and compared our individual interpretations. The aim was to control as much as possible for the intrusion of our own concepts into the interpretation of the empirical material. This second step can be seen as a 'communicative validation', i.e. the evaluation of the interpretation in a dialogue, as suggested by Kvale (1995).

After having identified the topics of one interview, the research group tried to get the ‘whole picture’, that is, we tried to relate the different topics within one interview to each other. To support this process we applied the ‘cognitive mapping’ technique (e.g. McDonald, Daniels, & Harris, 2004). A cognitive map is generally a pictorial representation of the data. Since our data deals with the understanding of leadership we call the maps ‘leadership landscapes’.

A further step to enhance the interpretation’s validity was to obtain the interviewee’s reaction to our reconstruction of his or her leadership understanding. For this, we sent the transcribed interview together with the interpretation of topics and the pictorial representation back and asked for their opinion concerning the plausibility of the interpretation.

In a final step we tried to aggregate the individual leadership landscapes by identifying ‘commonalities’ that characterize the ‘typical’ among the varying understandings of leadership. For this, all twenty-six individual leadership landscapes were screened for similarities and recurring topics. At the end of the data analysis we had (re-)constructed twenty-six individual leadership landscapes as well as one ‘overall’ Swiss-German leadership landscape⁶.

Results of the Qualitative Study

As we outlined above, the initial motivation for our research endeavor was to find out what leadership means to practitioners from their point of view. A further interest was to find out whether or not charismatic leadership – which according to the GLOBE study is universally seen as contributing to effective leadership – is appearing in the stories and experiences told by the interview partners. Due to space limitations and the purpose of this paper we will put the focus of the results on the latter. However, since the results are very context specific we will briefly

outline the overall results⁷. before looking at the interview material from a ‘charismatic leadership perspective’.

The meaning of leadership. The analysis of the interview data revealed five leadership topics which are closely interrelated. The topics are: ‘one’s own position’, ‘binding commitment’, ‘relationship to the business’, ‘social proximity’, and ‘authenticity: to be oneself’. These topics emerged as ‘commonalities’ among the twenty-six interviews and reflect the socially constructed leadership understanding in its cultural and societal context.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the aggregated Swiss-German leadership landscape and the topic’s relationship with each other.

Insert figure 1 about here.

‘One’s own position’ represents the need for a leader to clearly and independently take a stand and have one’s own point of view. The own view needs to be stated directly and unambiguously even though it might concern unpleasant issues for the followers. The advantage thereof is that the leader’s behavior becomes predictable and the followers know which direction the leader is heading towards.

The second topic is termed ‘binding commitment’. It suggests that in order to be relevant to the construction of leadership, one’s own, unambiguous position also needs to be consequently put into practice and to reflect itself in the leader’s self-commitment (‘walk your talk’). Binding

⁶ This overall leadership landscape was validated in a final workshop with the interview partners.

⁷ A more detailed description of the results concerning our first research question can be found in Author 1 & Author 2 (2005).

commitment requires dependability, forecloses arbitrariness and seems especially relevant at a time when everything else appears ‘unstable’ and ‘random’.

According to the interview partners, leaders further need to have a personal ‘relationship to the business’’. That is, an all-rounder who is migrating between many different businesses is viewed critically. It is therefore not enough to act as a professional manager. For the attribution of leadership it is decisive to what extent the leader identifies with the tasks and the business. Furthermore, the personal relationship to the business often serves as a motivational source.

Among the citations that are subsumed under the topic ‘social proximity’ are the interviewees’ concerns about being caught up in formal positions while wanting to be close to the led and wanting to be perceived as individuals who are not ‘aloof’ but instead ‘down to earth’ and approachable. It also deals with the experience that leaders receive high appreciation if they do not demonstrate their status power and reduce the social distance that usually comes along with it.

Finally, the centre of the leadership landscape is labeled as ‘authenticity: to be oneself’. The main question addressed here is the one of the self in the ‘leadership-game’, the maintenance of one’s integrity and authenticity, and the different challenges in staying oneself.

Charismatic leadership in Switzerland. As today’s charismatic leadership theories conceptualize the leader as the source of inspiration, motivation and cause of organizational success they are ‘leader-centered’ and – according to critics- reduce the original charisma conceptualization suggested by Weber (1922/1947) to the study of leadership traits and behaviors. Given the rich qualitative interview material that we have gained in our research

study, we screened the interview material with respect to manifestations or references to ‘charismatic’ leadership.

A member of the corporate executive committee of a pharmaceutical company tells us that he has always worked for organizations that were in fundamental transformation processes where action was required to meet the challenges of globalization. He remembers that the environment he found himself operating in one time was extremely critical. The credibility of the old management, the ‘establishment’ as he calls it, was gone. People did no longer belief in the power of formal authority, but asked for credible and sustainable action. Faced with this demand, the interview partner brought in a new breed of managers - managers who did not want to be told what they had to do, but who knew what they wanted to achieve and contribute; hence helping him to accomplish what he calls a ‘*Palastrevolution*’: a small minority of change agents became the nucleus of a broader movement with the objective of revitalizing the organization. Referring to this group the interview partner (ip) notes:

“This was about creating a future, jointly. Defining the *raison d’ être* for a department, a company, or whatever. This spirit of ‘we’ that had been developed, was enormous. Usually, you are only able to observe this in ice hockey teams when they fight against each other. This sense of community really worked.” (ip 3)

The interview partner stresses how much he enjoyed working in a team with talented people and emphasizes that they achieved the change jointly. In his accounts we were not able to identify a reference to a single person, a great man or ‘big shot’.

Operating in a similar context, another interview partner portrays the boss he had at the beginning of his career, as follows:

“He was a flamboyant character - like coming from another planet, a ghost light. With him I experienced intuitive leadership, manipulation. He was a motivator: motivating people to go the extra mile, kind of a guru He was a charismatic character. Never ever did I experience somebody like him motivating me to peak

performance, always on the edge of a collapse. Others tried to copy him, like clones, talking like him, being dressed like him.” (ip 12)

Due to a close relationship the interview partner was able to ‘look behind the scene’ and to understand that the successful ‘ghost light’ was at the same time worried and afraid of things. For instance, there were meetings where he did not really understand the details of the subject matter at hand. His impact was only due to some sort of anticipatory obedience of the participants. At one point in his life, the interview partner found himself behaving in exactly the same leadership way, without really adding value. But he eventually grew tired of the pseudo-hierarchies and the affectations, narcissms that usually go with it. He didn’t think he was contributing to the organization’s success by manipulating people and ultimately changed his style and attitude towards leadership. This change was triggered by an encounter he had when he applied for a CEO position in a mid-sized, traditional, pharmaceuticals company which was facing huge problems. The person who hired him, that is, the president of the board of directors, appeared— in comparison to his earlier ‘ghost light’ boss - to be a ‘down-to-earth”, very solid, type of person. The interview partner had the immediate feeling that these people knew what they wanted. Looking back to the turnaround which was accomplished under the new management, including himself, he notes:

“I never saw as little ego trips as here. We wanted to show that we can set up a solid, sustainable company in this field. This is what we wanted. And concerning this matter, we all had the same goal. It was not about demonstrating who was the better manager. This made everything easier. This way a culture of ‘fighting and sticking together’ developed. It is like a conspiracy, I never felt anything like this before in any other company. This is really OUR company. We all feel responsible and this really mobilizes much“. (ip 12)

Overall, the interview partner prefers a down-to-earth, solid leadership approach which provides room for mutual commitment and joint efforts over a ‘ghost light’, motivational and manipulative approach that often proves to be ‘hot air’.

In asking himself what his contribution in a re-organization initiative was and how it worked, another interview partner recalls the specific situation as one in which the organization’s members did not know how to reach a future state. According to him, the employees were like “lambs that had always been happy to have a bellwether”. The approach he finally adopted was to increase the professional maturity level of the staff by teaching them some basic problem solving tools and methods. The result was impressive in that the change process was eventually achieved through the commitment and energy of all. Concerning his role as leader in this whole process he distances himself from

“leaders who hover in the clouds and somehow lost contact to earth. I think you have to be realistic. You have to come down to earth, and be in contact with all the people who also contribute to success. Whatever the achievement - it is usually the result of the contributions of many, many people and sometimes of a particularly favorable constellation but never the result of a single person” (ip 13)

It is not the charisma that makes the difference. If a leader is able to create a sense for what is realistic and achievable, if the vision which is based on a sound analysis and problem solving techniques is implemented persistently then people will follow almost automatically.

All of the interview partners so far had been in situations of change and crisis which would have according to theory fostered the emergence of charismatic leadership. But instead of glorifying a ‘great man’ the stories of all three interview partners are marked by the emphasis on the mutual achievement, the motivational force of the common commitment and a rather restrained estimation of their own importance. This understanding is further supported by the following CEO who describes himself as

“The kind of person who leads a team by not standing out from the team, not demonstrating an ‘I am the boss’-attitude or telling others what they have to do” (ip 7)

Another CEO, leading a mid-sized high-tech company expresses his admiration for role models whom he encountered during his professional career. One he describes as

“a very special character, an incredible motivator. Never in my life did I meet somebody who was as able to inspire and motivate people as he was. I would have done anything for him.” (ip 17)

The other person is remembered as

“having a talent that I never saw again. To the same degree as my first boss had the ability to motivate, this one had a feeling for people. He could talk to people about everything.” (ip 17)

Even though both made a big impression on him, and despite his attempt to copy them, the interview partner realized that he did not possess such motivational or people-oriented power and abilities himself. As a result, he adopted a more rational, authentic approach which proofed to be successful: by letting his staff take a share in the company he motivated them to act as entrepreneurs and to align their individual objectives with the ones of the organization.

While this latter episode illustrates a positive reaction towards ‘great men’, the following interview partner demonstrates a critical stance towards fulfilling motivational needs and providing guidance. After her appointment, the Managing Director of a Swiss-based non-profit-organization was confronted with a Management Team that had absolutely no vision and no drive to change at all. Furthermore, most of the employees had joined the organization at a time when it was dominated by a very strong character:

“It was the great [Name], the president between [year x] and [year y], who founded this cooperation between churches and missionary organizations as well as the partner organization in Germany and who strongly contributed to the World Council of Churches. He was also one of the key drivers of the [specific program] And when

I was appointed there was this expectation that I would be willing to shape the organization in a similar way.” (ip 2)

Although ready to accept the challenge of shaping the organization and providing direction as well as perspective, the interview partner was happy to see that the others’ expectation for her to become a ‘great woman’ disappeared over time. She professionalized the organization’s management and developed a ‘*Leitbild*’ (statement of intent) which was communicated internally and externally and which served to guide actions and to structure the organization accordingly, i.e. to clarify roles and responsibilities as well as to define decision making processes. She thus empowered her employees and by installing substitutes for personal leadership, depersonalized the whole organization from the former great man.

Another interview partner who is running his own business in the information technology industry, describes himself as the one “keeping up the banner and running ahead”. But he never saw himself as a motivator.

“I don’t think you can motivate people. They rather have to motivate themselves. The only thing I can do is to give them direction, to describe a vision ... I understand it to be my task to create an environment that allows people to be successful, to offer stimulating jobs where they can identify with and where they can develop themselves, and to make sure their goals are the goals of the company.” (ip 16)

Instead of motivating people he tries to provide an environment which induces an involvement to the business and which facilitates taking on responsibility.

The Business Unit Manager of a company in the air transportation business reports that her boss

“was the CEO. He was much more popular with the people than me. He showed up, was close, and, therefore, was able to get consent much faster. Yet, this did not help the system as a whole. He made my job and the jobs of my colleagues much more difficult. (ip 4)

Not giving up, she decided to take responsibility for her situation and convinced her boss to step back a little which allowed her to become more visible and to send out more consistent messages. She was convinced that legitimization to lead comes from an outstanding ability to cope with complexity, proficiency in the business and support through clear structures. When the company was threatened by ruin - a new and unique situation in that company's history - "there was, more or less, great hope for the '*Lichtgestalt*' to come and to turn the ship around." But this is not what our interview partner considered to be the appropriate response or expectation. She kept the perspective, stayed calm and unemotional. She stressed the need for structure, calculable behavior and clear positions. Her leadership approach adopted is thus characterized by a rational, unemotional attitude and a potential distrust towards popular 'great man'.

In the following episode, the CEO of a quality watch company expresses his critical stance towards management fashions, like the adoption of visions. He is of the opinion that the clear communication of one's own position and goals is more promising than the illustration of some vague vision. By describing a country manager who reports to him, he states

"Maybe he is an old-fashioned patriarch, unbelievable but the most successful of all the country managers. Many others lead according to the motto 'Live your ego, make your vision reality!' - without success. He says 'This is what I want you to do!' and it works. There are many young visionaries nowadays. I think I have developed a balanced view by now. I do not believe in only-visionaries at all." (ip 8)

To conclude, the interpretation of our interview material suggests that references to strong characters and 'great leaders' do exist. However, they are often accompanied by a critical stance and were - due to their overall rareness - not identified as 'recurring' topics like the ones illustrated above in the overall leadership landscape. It can be argued that even though we find some admiration for great leaders who guide their followers or who are able to motivate people most of these episodes refer to the past suggesting that charismatic leadership is not of practical

relevance for the interviewee's current leadership reality. Today, it seems, leadership in the German-speaking part of Switzerland is more rational and down-to-earth with a clear focus on the business and the task than on visions and missions or emotional bonds. People are not motivated by 'charismatic leaders' which are associated with different attributes such as narcissistic, aloof, manipulative, depriving people of their independent judgment, messing up the structures, and attracting all the attention⁸. Instead, motivation and inspiration stem from the relationship to the specific task and the mutual commitment and effort. To attribute the success of an organization to a single person is generally rejected in favor of a joint achievement. For this purpose, people are empowered and given space to develop.

The interpretation can be linked to the overall leadership landscape which highlights, for example, the importance of a close relationship to the business as a source of motivation and legitimization for the attribution of leadership. The mutual commitment and the relationship to the community is evident in the interrelationship among the topics 'social proximity', 'relationship to business' and 'binding commitment'. Also, the critical stance towards people who are aloof or dominating others is reflected between the (sometimes) opposing poles of 'one's own position', 'social proximity', and 'authenticity'.

DISCUSSION

In the beginning of the paper we argued that a) social phenomenon, like leadership, are not naturally given but socially constructed. Yet, by means of objectivation they attain the status of given facts. We further argued that b) currently, an objectivation process is under way, claiming

⁸ Our interpretation can be linked to a study by Uhl-Bien, Arnaud, and Deluga (2002). They found out that unlike Americans, German managers rate charismatic leadership to be one of the least preferred and least effective leadership styles. Furthermore, charismatic leadership was among the least typical styles enacted by German

that charismatic leader attributes are universally seen as contributing to effective leadership and hence suggesting that charismatic leaders are worldwide successful. To ‘unmask’ this claim we took several closer looks at the following: first, we looked at today’s charismatic leadership theories and detected a dilution and reduction of the original charisma conception proposed by Weber (1922/1947). Second, we looked at the GLOBE study and found that their conception of charismatic leadership reinforces today’s charismatic leadership understanding by asking for leader’s traits and behaviors as well as their perceived effectiveness. Since the items which are universally endorsed can be summarized as reflecting general, positive connoted leadership attributes we argued that it is not legitimate to claim that the leadership scales assess charismatic leadership. Third, we have proposed a qualitative leadership study which maintains to yield deeper insights by being context-sensitive and close to the interviewee’s point of view. The screening of the results led to the conclusion that charismatic leadership is a rare phenomenon that is mostly seen critical.

In the subsequent discussion we will combine these three lines of arguments and address conceptual as well as methodological issues.

In Search of Charismatic Leaders

Concerning the GLOBE study, the search of charismatic leadership seems at first to have been successful. The project yielded a result that had previously been hypothesized: the universal endorsement of charismatic leadership attributes. Yet, given the study’s minimalistic and hence trivial definition of charismatic leadership (see Dorfman et al.2004: 675) which reflects itself in the generated items, this result is not very surprising. The study of ordinary attributes such as ‘encouraging’, ‘positive’, and ‘motivational’ might be interesting, but it is not obvious “how it

managers. Even though Germany and the German-speaking part of Switzerland are two different countries, they have many cultural values in common and are thus comparable.

informs us about charisma” (Beyer, 1999b: 585). One can argue that the GLOBE study adopted a prevalent and attention getting concept and operationalized it in a way that would eventually prove to be universal. Given the leadership field’s current interest in authenticity and integrity (see, for example, the special issue on authentic leadership development in *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16 (3), 2005), it could be that we soon find the above mentioned leadership attributes in a research study claiming to be universally seen to contribute to authentic leadership.

Our own search of charismatic leaders has – apart from some exceptions - not been very successful. Despite the fact that most managers in today’s business environment are familiar with the popular charismatic leadership concept and its inherent positive value, the concept is not well reflected in their narrated stories and practices. One reason might be that the knowledge about the concept does not originate from personal experiences but from magazines and bestselling books, training courses, or MBA programs. Their leadership concepts often bear little practical relevance to the managers’ work contexts since they generally disregard the specific societal and cultural context in which practices and interactions take place. Leadership, its enactment and connotation is culturally embedded and thus a culturally contingent concept.

If we abstain from calling the universal GLOBE items *charismatic* and speak of them as *conventional positive leadership attributes* (including ‘encouraging’, ‘positive’, ‘motivational’, and ‘future-oriented’) the following reasoning can be put forward: First, the project GLOBE and its results represent a relapse into a ‘one-best-way’ approach that conveys the idea that the cultural, societal, and historical context is worldwide irrelevant for the practice of leadership. Given our own understanding of leadership, we strongly object to this idea. Second, the GLOBE study’s result concerning the profile of an effective leadership style in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, which at first sight had appeared paradoxical, would no longer be surprising: The

conventional positive leadership attributes go well together with a participative and team-oriented leadership style. In fact, people-oriented, participative, and democratic behaviors represent the ‘old’ normative bias with respect to effective leadership (Beyer, 1999a: 313). Third, if the universality claim concerning the charismatic leadership concept is abandoned, the results of our qualitative study would differentiate rather than contradict the GLOBE study’s results. While the qualitative results still suggest other motivational sources than just the leader, they do confirm the notion that leaders can have a positive impact and motivate as well as inspire others.

One of the questions that remain is why the leadership field has moved so far from Weber’s (1922/1947) original conception and reduced it to a ‘one-best-way’ trait-approach. Following Beyer (1999a: 319-320) who maintains that Burns’ (1978) writing has influenced today’s charismatic leadership theories much more than Weber’s (1922/1947) we believe that the subsequent arguments are important to consider: Burns’ (1978) description of transformational/charismatic leadership attributes fits well with the dominant psychological paradigm and its quantitative methods. Since psychology generally aims at understanding individuals and their differences, its research focus is on individuals and their traits and behaviors as the cause of charisma. This prevalent research orientation is difficult to combine with Weber’s (1922/1947) complex conception of contingent charismatic leadership (Beyer, 1999a: 309). It can thus be argued that a ‘reinforcing circle’ of a reduced charismatic leadership conceptualization and research methods that confirm this conceptualization exists. Because the confirmation is based on scientific methods it has received the status of an objective fact. However, reinforcing circles – be they positive or negative - have the characteristic of being difficult to stop, ultimately leading the leadership field in something that might turn out to be a dead end.

You Get What You Ask for

While quantitative, large-scale questionnaire approaches like the one adopted by project GLOBE tend to reduce complex social phenomena in order to assess them in a standardized way, qualitative studies like the one we pursued have the potential to catch social phenomena in their full complexity. To be more precise, the researcher who is working under the positivistic paradigm and applying a quantitative method is likely to get clear and easy-to-process answers. He will further get a confirmation or rejection of his proposed model and hypothesis, depending on the operationalization and validity of the constructs under study, i.e. if charismatic leadership is operationalized by a list of common, generally positive connoted leadership attributes, the chances are high that the hypothesis is confirmed. The focus on testable propositions has, of course, its costs. Since the data collection is very narrow, focusing on a set of specific hypotheses, and providing pre-defined answer choices it is unlikely to see or discover something that was not expected. In other words, by means of pre-defined answer categories and a specific wording of items, the respondents are 'trapped' to see the world through the eyes of the researcher and not able to express their own perspectives. The quantitative method is thus inclined to reproduce existing models and assumptions.

On the other hand, the researcher who is operating in an interpretive paradigm applying qualitative methods such as narrative interviews will usually get contextually rich stories concerning personal leadership experiences. These stories are shaped by the narrator's active frames, expressed in their own language and following their own logic. The stories are sometimes diffuse or not to the point and always need to be interpreted because their message does not automatically reveal itself to the researcher. Since the narrative approach is very open, providing the interview partner with hardly any concepts or categories, the researcher might get results that are completely unexpected and not corresponding with, for example, conventional leadership theories. However, to get access to the individual's and the collective's point of view can be of

great relevance. As we argued earlier, the narrative interview technique discloses the actor's *theories in use* which reflect the implicit knowledge on how to do things. According to Argyris and Schön (1974:7) they are the ones that 'govern' action. The *espoused theories*, on the other hand, are the ones that people declare, for example, in order to justify their behavior or to present an opinion. They usually inform us about the person's explicit knowledge and expertise but reveal little about the enacted reality. As a consequence, a quantitative study like GLOBE might report that charismatic leadership is seen as very effective in the German-speaking of Switzerland while at the same time is not to be found in personal leadership accounts. The GLOBE result can thus be seen as reflecting an espoused theory that middle-managers in Switzerland hold.

To summarize the above, the way in which a phenomenon is studied, i.e. the way in which the research question is formulated and operationalized, has an impact on the results. This can explain why quantitative and qualitative research studies come to different results concerning, for example, charismatic leadership in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. To advance knowledge in this area, it seems important to note that the quantitative method will necessarily lead to a reduction of the phenomenon's complexity into testable propositions. To capture new aspects, such as, the charismatic leadership context, the attribution process, the vision's and mission's content as well as the long-term success of the charismatic leader (e.g. Beyer, 1999 a,b), qualitative methods - especially, longitudinal, historical, and ethnographical studies - seem to be a promising avenue. By means of these incorporations, it might be possible to advance a more complex and detailed understanding of charismatic leadership – an understanding that would also prove to be closer to Weber's (1922/1947) original conceptualization.

CONCLUSION

The paper aimed at showing that the research methods which are available for the study of leadership have an impact on the results and the knowledge we gain. We tried to show that it is worth taking closer looks at the theoretical conceptions and empirical operationalizations of constructs as well as at the exact research results. Conventional knowledge is not value-free and objective as it might appear at first sight and to challenge it is crucial for the advancement of any scientific field. We therefore encourage a critical stance toward taken-for-granted research practices and established research results and hope for more qualitative insights.

REFERENCES

- Alvesson, M., & Sveningsson, S. 2003. The great disappearing act: difficulties in doing “leadership”. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14: 359-381.
- Argyris, C. & Schön, D.A. 1974. *Theory in practice. Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bass, B.M. 1997. Does the transactional-transformational leadership paradigm transcend organizational and national boundaries? *American Psychologist*, 52: 130-139.
- Berger, P. L. & Luckmann, T. 1966. *The social construction of reality*. New York: Doubleday.
- Beyer, J. M. 1999a. Taming and promoting charisma to change organizations. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10: 307-330.
- Beyer, J.M. 1999b. Two approaches to studying charismatic leadership: competing or complementary? *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10: 575-588.
- Beyer, J.M. & Browning, L.D. 1999. Transforming an industry in crisis: charisma, routinization, and supportive cultural leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10: 483-520.
- Bresnen, M. J. 1995. All things to all people? Perceptions, attributions, and constructions of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 6: 495-513.
- Brodbeck, F. C. et al. 2000. Cultural variation of leadership prototypes across 22 European countries. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 73: 1-29.
- Brodbeck, F.C., Frese, M., & Javidan, M. 2002. Leadership made in Germany: Low on compassion, high on performance. *Academy of Management Executive*, 16: 16-29.
- Bryman, A. 1984. The debate above quantitative and qualitative research: A question of method or epistemology? *British Journal of Sociology*, 35: 75-92.
- Bryman, A., Bresnen, M., Beardsworth, A. & Keil, T. 1988. Qualitative research and the study of leadership. *Human Relations*, 41: 13-30.

- Burr, V. 2003. *Social constructionism* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Burns, J.M. 1978. *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Conger, J. A. 1999. Charismatic and transformational leadership in organizations: An insider's perspective on these developing streams of research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10: 145-179.
- Conger, J.A. & Kanungo, R. N. 1987. Toward a behavioral theory of charismatic leadership in organizational settings. *Academy of Management Review*, 12: 637-647.
- Czarniawska, B. 2004. *Narratives in social science research*. London: Sage.
- Dachler, H. P. 1988. Constraints on the emergence of new vistas in leadership and management research: An epistemological overview. In J. G. Hunt, B. R. Baliga, H. P. Dachler, & C.A. Schriesheim (Eds.), *Emerging leadership vistas*: 261-285. Lexington: Lexington Books.
- Den Hartog, D. N., House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., & Ruiz-Quintanilla, S. A. 1999. Culture specific and cross-culturally generalizable implicit leadership theories: are attributes of charismatic/transformational leadership universally endorsed? *Leadership Quarterly*, 10: 219-256.
- Dickson, M. W. Den Hartog, D. N., & Mitchelson, J. K. 2003. Research on leadership in a cross-cultural context: Making progress, and raising new questions. *Leadership Quarterly*, 14: 729-768.
- Dorfman, P. W., Hanges, P.J. & Bordbeck, F.C. 2004. Leadership and cultural variation. The identification of culturally endorsed leadership profiles. In R. J. House, P. J. Hanges, M. Javidan, P.W. Dorfman & V. Gupta (Eds.), *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations. The GLOBE study of 62 societies*: 669-719. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Dorfman, P.W. & House, R.J. 2004. Cultural influences on organizational leadership. Literature review, theoretical rationale, and GLOBE project goals. In R. J. House, P. J. Hanges, M.

- Javidan, P.W. Dorfman & V. Gupta (Eds.), *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations. The GLOBE study of 62 societies*: 51-73. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Gergen, K. J. 1985. The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. *American Psychologist*, 40: 266-275.
- Gergen, K. J. 1999. *An invitation to social construction*. London: Sage.
- Hanges, P.J. & Dickson, M.W. 2004. The development and validation of the GLOBE culture and leadership scales. In R. J. House, P. J. Hanges, M. Javidan, P.W. Dorfman & V. Gupta (Eds.), *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations. The GLOBE study of 62 societies*: 122-151. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Hofstede, G. 2001. *Culture's consequences: international differences in work related values* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- House, R.J. 1977. A 1976 theory of charismatic leadership. In J.G. Hunt & L.L. Larson (Eds.), *Leadership: The cutting edge*: 189-207. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- House, R. J. 1988. Leadership research: some forgotten, ignored, or overlooked findings. In J. G. Hunt, B. R. Baliga, H. P. Dachler, & C. A. Schriesheim (Eds.), *Emerging leadership vistas*: 245-260. Lexington: Lexington Books.
- House, R. J. & Javidan, M. 2004. Overview of GLOBE. In R. J. House, P. J. Hanges, M. Javidan, P.W. Dorfman & V. Gupta (Eds.), *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations. The GLOBE study of 62 societies*: 9- 28. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- House, R. J., Wright, N. S., & Aditya, R. N. 1997. Cross-cultural research on organizational leadership. A critical analysis and a proposed theory. In P. C. Earley & M. Erez (Eds.), *New perspectives on international industrial/organizational psychology*: 535-625. San Francisco: The New Lexington Press.

- King, N. 2004. Using interviews in qualitative research. In C. Cassell & G. Symon (Eds.), *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research*: 11-22. London: Sage.
- Koopman, P. L., Den Hartog, D. N., Konrad, E., et al. 1999. National culture and leadership profiles in Europe: some results from the GLOBE study. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 8: 503-520.
- Kvale, S. 1995. Validierung: Von der Beobachtung zu Kommunikation und Handeln. In: U. Flick, E. von Kardorff, H. Keupp, L. von Rosenstiel & S. Wolff (Hrsg.), *Handbuch qualitative Sozialforschung. Grundlagen, Konzepte, Methoden und Anwendungen*: 427-431. Weinheim: Psychologie Verlags Union.
- Lord, R. G. & Emrich, C.G. 2001. Thinking outside the box by looking inside the box: extending the cognitive revolution in leadership research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 11: 551-579.
- Lord, R. G. & Maher, K. J. 1991. *Leadership and information processing. Linking perceptions and performance*. Londong: Routledge (published in paperback in 1993).
- McDonald, S., Daniels, K., & Harris, C. 2004. Cognitive mapping in organizational research. In C. Cassell & G. Symon (Eds.), *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research*: 73-85. London: Sage.
- Patton, M.Q. 2002. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Scandura, T., & Dorfman, P. 2004. Theoretical letters: Leadership research in an international and cross-cultural context. *Leadership Quarterly*, 15: 277-307.
- Shamir, B., House, R.J. & Arthur, M.B. 1993. The motivational effects of charismatic leadership: a self-concept based theory. *Organization Science*, 4: 577-594.
- Smircich, L. 1983. Studying organizations as cultures. In G. Morgan (Ed.), *Beyond method. Strategies for social research*: 160-172. Beverly Hills: Sage.

- Smith, P. 2000. Culture and charisma: outline of a theory. *Acta Sociologica*, 43: 101-111.
- Triandis, H.C. 1995. *Individualism and collectivism*.. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Trice, H.M. & Beyer, J.M. 1986. Charisma and its routinization in two social movement organizations. In B.M. Staw & L.L.Cummings (Eds), *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 8: 113-164. Greenwich: JAI Press.
- Trice, H. M. & Beyer, J.M. 1991. Cultural leadership in organizations. *Organization Science*, 2: 149-169.
- Uhl-Bien, M., Arnaud, A., & Deluga, R. J. 2002. Preferred leadership styles in Germany: charismatic leaders beware! In R. D. Norton (Ed.), *Creativity and leadership in the 21st century firm*: 97-129. Amsterdam: JAI.
- Weber, M. 1947. *The theory of social and economic organization*. New York: The Free Press.
(Original German publication in 1922: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr).
- Yammarino, F. J., Dionne, S.D., Chun, J.U. & Dansereau, F. 2005. Leadership and level of analysis: a state-of-the-science review. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16: 879-919.
- Yukl, G. 1999. An evaluation of conceptual weaknesses in transformational and charismatic leadership theories. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10: 285-305.

TABLE 1

GLOBE leadership dimensions, scales, and items

(Brodbeck et al., 2000: 10; Brodbeck, Frese, & Javidan, 2002: 20; Hanges & Dickson, 2004: 137;

Koopman, Den Hartog, Konrad, et al. 1999: 509).

Global leadership dimension	Leadership scales	Leadership items
1. Charismatic/value based	1. Visionary (Charismatic I)	Visionary, foresight, anticipatory, prepared, intellectually stimulating, future oriented, plans ahead, inspirational
	2. Inspirational (Charismatic II)	enthusiastic, positive, encouraging, morale booster, motive arouser, confidence builder, dynamic, motivational
	3. Self-sacrificial (Charismatic III)	risk taker, self sacrificial, convincing
	4. Integrity	honest, sincere, just, trustworthy
	5. Decisive	willful, decisive, logical, intuitive
	6. Performance oriented	improvement-, excellence- and performance-oriented
2. Team oriented	7. Team collaborative	group oriented, collaborative, loyal, consultative, mediator, fraternal
	8. Team integrator	clear, integrator, subdued, informed, communicative, coordinator, team builder
	9. Diplomatic	diplomatic, worldly, win/win problem solver, effective bargainer
	10. Malevolent (reversed)	irritable, vindictive, egoistic, non-cooperative, cynical, hostile, dishonest, non-dependable, intelligent
	11. Administratively competent	orderly, organized, good administrator, administratively skilled

(continued)

Table 1 continued

Global leadership dimension	Leadership scales	Leadership items
3. Narcissistic/Self-protective	12. Self-centered	self-interested, non-participative, loner, asocial
	13. Status consciousness	status-conscious, class-conscious
	14. Conflict inducer	intra-group competitor, secretive, normative
	15. Face saver	indirect, avoids negatives, evasive
	16. Procedural	ritualistic, formal, habitual, cautious, procedural
4. Participative	17. Autocratic (reversed)	autocratic, dictatorial, bossy, elitist, ruler, domineering
	18. Participative	non-individual, egalitarian, non-micro manager, delegator
5. Humane orientation	19. Humane orientation	generous, compassionate
	20. Modesty	modest, self-effacing, patient
6. Autonomous	21. Autonomous	individualistic, independent, autonomous, unique

FIGURE 1

The Swiss-German leadership landscape

