Leading others to lead themselves: Followers' perceptions of leaders' self-leadership[1]

Marco Furtner & Julia Tenschert

University of Liechtenstein, Department Entrepreneurship und Management

ABSTRACT

Self-leading leaders can act as positive role models and could positively influence the self-leadership skills of their followers. Although self-leadership perceptions are of central importance for empowering and shared leadership, the social consequences of self-leaders' interpersonal behaviors have thus far not been studied. We elucidate how self-leading leaders are perceived by their followers. Thirty-five leaders provided self-ratings on self-leadership, while 151 followers provided other-ratings on their leaders' self-leadership. Multilevel analyses were used to investigate consensus and self-other agreement of self-leadership ratings. Findings yielded high consensus, but almost no self-other agreement in self-leadership judgments. Follower-reported self-leadership was associated positively with leader-reported natural reward strategies and negatively with leader-reported self-observation. Thus, leaders could act as positive self-leadership role models and have the possibility to transform and reinforce their followers' self-leadership.

Keywords

Self-leadership – empowering leadership – shared leadership

1 Introduction

Self-leadership. Self-leadership – as an adaptive set of self-regulatory mechanisms (Manz, 1986; Markham & Markham, 1995) – refers to skills of regulating one's own thoughts, motivations, and behaviors toward desirable outcomes. As „the process of influencing oneself" (Neck & Manz, 2010, p. 4), self-leadership was originally conceptualized as a substitute for formal leadership (Manz, 1986; Manz & Sims, 1980). Self-leadership is commonly decomposed into three primary dimensions with subfacets (e.g., Andressen & Konradt, 2007; Houghton & Neck, 2002; Manz, 1986): behavior-focused strategies (subfacets: self-goal setting, self-reward, self-punishment, self-observation, self-cueing), natural reward strategies, and constructive thought pattern strategies (subfacets: visualizing successful performance, self-talk, evaluating beliefs and assumptions). Behavior-focused strategies can be used to accomplish active change of thoughts and behavior. Discrepancies between current and desired states can be recognized and behavioral change towards desired states activated via self-goal setting, initiating goal-pursuit, and reduction of perceived discrepancies (see also Carver & Scheier, 1998). Natural reward strategies drive a positive focus on intrinsically rewarding elements of tasks. Two strategies may be employed (Neck & Manz, 2010), which are also found in the natural rewards facet of the established self-leadership measure RSLQ (Houghton & Neck, 2002). First, attentional deployment can be used to defocus unpleasant aspects of a task and focus on pleasant ones (i.e., finding „naturally" inherent positive aspects). Second, task modification can be used to actively incorporate pleasant and (intrinsically) rewarding aspects into (otherwise unpleasant) tasks (i.e., generating „naturally" positive aspects) (Neck & Houghton, 2006). Natural reward strategies are accompanied by intrinsic motivation, fun, joy, and performance (Furtner et al., 2013; Neck & Houghton, 2006; Neck & Manz, 2010; Manz, 1986). It can thus be considered the heart and driving motivational force of other self-leadership strategies (e.g., goal setting, self-reward; see Furtner et al., 2013; Manz, 1986). Constructive thought pattern strategies can be used to accomplish a positive orientation of thoughts. Habitual patterns of thinking can be recognized, reflected upon, and then steered towards desirable patterns (Neck & Manz, 1992). As such, constructive thought pattern strategies may manifest in different cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains (Neck & Manz, 1996).

[1] The term „(self-)leader" is not used as a diagnostic label, type, or categorization here; rather, it should be considered an abbreviation for „people who score highly on the dimension of (self-)leadership" (Chung et al., 2011; Manz, 1986). Thus, „(self-)leader" will be used as a rhetorical means of communication rather than implying any classification via any cut-off criteria whatsoever.

2025 – *innsbruck* university press, Innsbruck
Journal Psychologie des Alltagshandelns / *Psychology of Everyday Activity*, Vol. 18 / No. 2, ISSN 1998-9970
DOI 10.15203/1998-9970-18-2-05

Self-leadership and leadership. Self-leadership and leadership are strongly tied (Furtner & Baldegger, 2023; Furtner et al., 2013; Manz & Sims, 1991; Stewart et al., 2011) because both have influencing processes at their core: Self-leadership has an internal focus (leading oneself), and leadership has an external focus (leading others) (Avolio, 2011; Neck & Houghton, 2006). According to the concept of superleadership (Manz & Sims, 1991), a goal of leaders is to create an environment in which followers can develop themselves and their own self-leadership skills („leading others to lead themselves"). Thus, self-leading leaders may function as positive role models. Especially their natural reward strategies may facilitate their leadership as perceived by themselves and others (Furtner et al., 2013). Based on the finding that leaders' self-leadership manifests in their leadership, it is plausible to assume that followers could also detect self-leadership in their leaders. Moreover, perceptions among followers regarding their leaders' self-leadership should converge because followers are regularly exposed to the same behaviors of the leaders. This common exposition to leaders' behavior may prompt consensual perceptions (Funder, 1995, 1999; Kenny, 1994, 2004).

Interpersonal perception and personality judgment. Personality judgments – even from very small snippets of behavioral information – are formed easily, fast, and often with a reasonable amount of accuracy (Haselton & Funder, 2006; Rauthmann & Kolar, 2010). People observe others and are able to deduce their personalities from thin slices of behavior (e.g., Borkenau & Liebler, 1992). Different questions can be asked in the domain of personality judgments (e.g., Kenny, 1994), such as consensus (Do different judges agree with one another regarding a trait of a judged target person?) and self-other agreement (How much do ratings from the self and other[s] converge regarding a certain trait?).[2] The perceptions of a person formed by others can be seen as social consequences of that person's behaviors with others. This notion is based on literature suggesting that we (a) automatically form impressions of others (b) based on (even very scarce information of) their behaviors (c) with a reasonable amount of accuracy in inferentially determining the trait dimensions underlying the phenotypical behavior observed (Borkenau & Liebler, 1992; Funder, 1999; Gosling et al., 2002; Kenny, 1994). In this work, we address for the first time the extent to which (a) judges (followers) show agreement regarding the judgments of targets' (leaders') self-leadership, and (b) the self (leaders) agrees with others (followers) regarding self-leadership.

The importance of self-leadership and leadership perceptions. Demonstrating that followers can detect self-leadership skills in their leaders presents a fruitful avenue of research. First, perceptions of leaders' self-leadership may be consequential for followers in that they could trigger social referencing processes. Followers may compare themselves with leaders in their own self-leadership. As such, leaders can function as effective role models and „inspire" followers to also lead themselves (Barbuto, 2005; Furtner et al., 2013; Shamir et al., 1993). This may hold for individual as well as group/team levels (Hauschildt & Konradt, 2012; Manz & Sims, 1991; Stewart et al., 2011). If individuals and teams employ more self-leadership, an organizational self-leadership culture could ensue in the long haul (Furtner & Baldegger, 2023; Manz & Sims, 1991; Stewart et al., 2011). Second, followers' perceptions of leaders' self-leadership may also be consequential for leaders themselves. As self-leadership is a socially desirable skill and highly valued in today's markets, ascribing such skills to a leader will likely entail viewing this person as competent and a good leader as a whole (for empirical evidence, see Furtner et al., 2013). This may increase followers' commitment and performance (Stewart et al., 2011) and hence the leaders' effectiveness. Third, a conceptual argument for studying interpersonal perceptions of self-leadership is the importance of demonstrating consensus (i.e., interrater agreement) and self-other agreement. Consensus can be used to demonstrate that perceptions of self-leadership reflect shared social realities-people then agree, on average, who has how much of a self-leadership skill. Self-other agreement can be used to demonstrate that follower-perceptions of self-leadership accurately capture what leaders think of their own self-leadership. A prerequisite is that leaders' self-leadership is manifest in interactions with followers (Manz & Sims, 1991). Thus, self-leaders should manifest cues that let others judge their self-leadership. In this vein, it is interesting to examine which self-leadership facet drives the perception of self-leadership because that dimension may be the most salient and consequential. We have illustrated this in a model (see Figure 1) that is an adaptation of a Brunswikian lens model (Nestler & Back, 2013). As can be seen, different facets of self-leadership on the side of leaders may drive or provoke different perceptions on the side of followers. Followers may use observable behaviors of leaders' to infer the leaders' self-leadership. As a result, there should be consensus and self-other agreement.

Hypotheses. We aimed to examine in a leader-follower sample (a) consensus among followers' ratings of their leaders' self-leadership as well as (b) self-other agreement between leaders' self-rated self-leadership and their followers' ratings of their self-leadership. We hypothesized that there would be significant levels of consensus (Hypothesis 1) and

[2] It should be noted that we do not investigate „accuracy" (sensu target accuracy: Kenny, 1994), which would require sampling self-leadership from multiple sources (self-, informant-, and peer-reports; behavioral observations; etc.), but only to what extent other-ratings apture the self-rating of an individual in a given trait dimension (see Funder, 1999). If the self is taken as a criterion for the „true" standing of a trait (Funder, 1999; Vazire, 2010), then self-other agreement may also be seen as a special form of target accuracy (Kenny, 1994), that is, being accurate in judging how a target sees him- or herself.

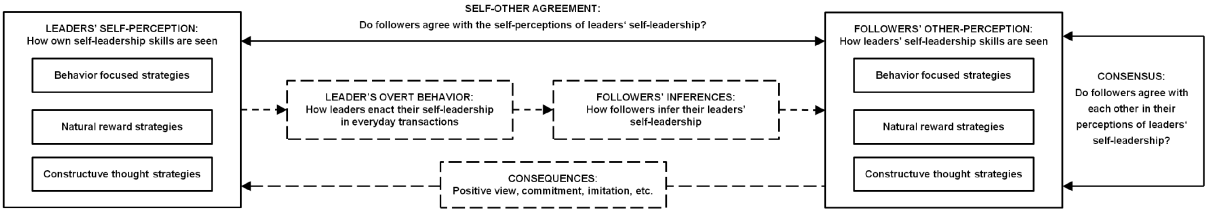


Figure 1: A Model for Interpersonal Perceptions of Self-leadership.
Note: Dashed lines represent information not available in this study.

self-other agreement (Hypothesis 2) for self-leadership. This is outlined in our model from Figure 1: If leaders exhibit behavior in congruence with their standing on self-leadership (e.g., utilizing self-cueing or setting publicly viewable oals), followers can pick up on these cues and correctly infer the leaders' standing on self-leadership. Funder (1995, 1999) has outlined which conditions need to be met so that accurate perceptions can be formed (see Figure 1). First, cues of self-leadership should be relevant to self-leadership (e.g., self-cueing behavior is relevant, whereas smiling is not) and need to be available (i.e., exhibited in daily transactions). Second, these cues need to be detected and correctly utilized/interpreted by followers. The result of these processes is self-other agreements: Followers can accurately judge how leaders view themselves on self-leadership. Given the behavior manifestation of self-leadership, particularly in leadership settings (Andressen et al., 2012; Furtner et al., 2013; Manz & Sims, 1991; Stewart et al., 2011), we hypothesized that followers should be able to form impressions of leaders' self-leadership. However, we expect the self-other agreement to be at best modest because self-leadership – as it is commonly conceptualized (e.g., Manz, 1986) – taps primarily intrapersonal, regulatory processes that might not be visually salient to perceivers but operate within the person (Brown & Fields, 2011; Vazire, 2010). However, the agentic side of self-leadership should be apparent primarily via natural reward strategies (Hypothesis 3), which would parallel findings from Furtner et al. (2013). Natural reward strategies can be seen as precursors of intrinsic motivation (Furtner et al., 2013; Furtner et al., 2015; Manz, 1986; Neck & Houghton, 2006). Leaders with high intrinsic motivation have more fun and joy in their tasks and thus exhibit more expressive and inspirational behaviors (Barbuto, 2005; Furtner et al., 2013; Shamir et al., 1993). Such behavior should be salient and easily detected by followers. Consequently, intrinsically motivated, expressive, and inspirational leaders would be ascribed higher levels of self-leadership.

Hypothesis 1 (**Consensus**): Self-leadership other-ratings by followers show positive interrater agreement.

Hypothesis 2 (**Self-other agreement**): Self-leadership self-ratings by leaders are positively associated with self-leadership other-ratings by followers.

Hypothesis 3 (**Importance of natural reward strategies**): Followers' ratings of leaders' self-leadership are associated with leaders' self-reported natural reward strategies.

2 Method

2.1 Participants and procedure

A sample of 35 leaders (31 men, 4 women; mean age = 41.33 years, *SD* = 12.25, range: 27-60; mean leading experience = 13.74 years, *SD* = 11.78) and 151 followers (82 men, 60 women, 9 did not indicate their sex; mean age = 37.55 years, *SD* = 12.64, range: 18-67; mean working experience = 7.56 years, *SD* = 8.54) was examined. Leaders and followers were from the branches of finance (25.7%), services (40%), and industry (34.3%) in Switzerland (51.4%), Liechtenstein (22.9%), Germany (14.3%), and Austria (11.4%). More than 50 German-speaking leaders from for-profit organizations (small and medium-sized enterprises and multinational organizations), who participated in Executive MBA programs at the University of Liechtenstein, were contacted by telephone to ask whether they and at least three of their followers would like to participate in an online study involving self-leadership and leadership. Online data were collected from 35 leaders. Among others, leaders rated themselves on self-leadership (leaders' self-view), and 3-6 followers rated their leaders on self-leadership (followers' other-view of leaders). In order to correctly map the two datasets, the leaders' names were recorded in both the leaders' and the followers' surveys. This procedure also allowed for complete anonymity of the followers' responses. We offered feedback for all participants as an incentive for participation. Further information on portions of this study (the influence of leaders' self-leadership on followers' leadership perception) can be found in Furtner et al. (2013).

2.2 Measures

For leaders' self-ratings on self-leadership, a validated German version of Houghton and Neck's (2002) original self-leadership scale (RSLQ-D; Andressen & Konradt, 2007) was used, containing 27 items to be answered on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 totally disagree – 5 totally agree). Example items are „I establish specific goals for my own performance" and „I usually am aware of how well I'm doing as I perform an activity." We found an acceptable model fit in our sample to the hypothesized factorial structure of the RSLQ-D (i.e., triplets of the 27 items load onto nine self-leadership subfacets, which load onto three self-leadership strategy domains, which load onto a self-leadership

g-factor; see Houghton & Neck, 2002), χ^2 (313) = 589.63, p < .001; χ^2/df = 1.88; CFI = .88; TLI = .86; RMSEA = .069.

For other-ratings on self-leadership from the followers' view, a shortened version with nine items (one item per self-leadership dimension), based on Houghton and Neck's (2002) as well as Andressen & Konradt's (2007) original items, to be answered on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 extremely inaccurate – 5 totally accurate), was employed. It was developed for two central reasons. First, the original items from Houghton & Neck (2002) as well as Andressen & Konradt (2007) revolve strongly around more covert, intrapersonal processes that are not well suited for other-ratings (e.g., self-talk, self-observation, evaluating beliefs and assumptions; see also Furtner et al., 2013). Items need to capture behaviorally salient processes that can be potentially picked up by others, which is a prerequisite for accurate judgments (Funder, 1999). Second, no validated other-rating version of any self-leadership scale has been proposed so far (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Houghton et al., 2012). We are thus the first to employ a scale specifically designed to capture perceptions of others' self-leadership.

Thus, referring to the original items from Houghton and Neck's original scale, we generated nine items to capture self-leadership as a behaviorally salient set of adaptive strategies in managing one's thoughts, motivations, and behaviors. An initial item pool of 16 items was generated by the first author of this work; items were then checked by three experts on leadership and management (coming from the fields of psychology and business economics; among them, the fourth author of this work) to ensure content validity, and ultimately revised by the first author according to their suggestions. The resultant nine items of our Self-leadership Other-Rating Scale (SORS) can be found in Table 1. We found an acceptable model fit for other-ratings (N = 151) to the hypothesized factorial structure (i.e., nine items load onto three self-leadership strategy domains, which load onto a self-leadership g-factor; see Houghton & Neck, 2002), χ^2 (25) = 49.71, p = .002; χ^2/df = 1.99; CFI = .94; TLI = .91; RMSEA = .081. In comparison, a single-factor model did not fit the data well, χ^2 (25) = 79.36, p < .001, χ^2/df = 2.94; CFI = .86; TLI = .82; RMSEA = .114.

Control variables. Because leaders' sex was asymmetrically distributed in our sample (12.9% women), we controlled for it statistically (coded 0= male, 1 = female). Furthermore, age varied considerably among leaders, so we controlled for age as well.

2.3 Statistical analysis

We investigated self-other agreement and consensus with multilevel modeling (MLM), a set of statistical methods that is applicable to research designs where the data is organized at more than one level (i.e., nested data structures). In our sample, followers can be considered nested within their leaders forming distinct workgroups. This implies that followers of the same leader will be likely to give more similar self-leadership ratings than followers of different leaders – a fact that may violate the assumption of statistical independence between observations common to classical regression approaches. MLM overcomes this issue by explicitly modeling dependency within groups. Second, MLM may account for the presence of random effects at the group level (i.e., variability between workgroups that is not attributable to a specified variable; Snijders & Bosker, 2012). We thus opted for the conceptually and computationally superior MLM rather than simple regressions. To estimate what aspects of leaders' self-leadership (level 2) predict self-leadership ratings of their followers (level 1), we used means-as-outcome regressions with random intercepts. In order to justify our decision empirically, we estimated the proportion of variation in followers' other-ratings attributable to group-level processes (between leader differences) by calculating the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC). Parameter estimation was computed by Restricted Maximum-Likelihood. Predic-

Table 1: The Self-Leadership Other-Rating Scale (SORS).

Item	Dimension	Scale
The leader systematically pursues his/her self-set goals.	Self-goal setting	BFS
The leader tends to reward him-/herself after success.	Self-reward	BFS
The leader tends to treat him-/herself severely.	Self-punishment	BFS
The leader often reflects about his/her behavior.	Self-observation Evaluating beliefs and assumptions	BFS
The leader often utilizes memory cues (e.g., to do lists, post its, etc.).	Self-cueing	BFS
The leader shows enthusiasm and joy at work.	Natural reward strategies	NRS
The leader has a positive vision about his/her future.	Visualizing successful performance	CTPS
The leader can motivate him/herself very well.	Self-talk	CTPS
The leader shows behaviors motivated by success.	Constructive behavior	CTPS

Note: All nine items form „global self-leadership." Also, three self-leadership strategy domains can be computed: BFS = behavior-focused strategies, NRS = natural reward strategies, and CTPS = constructive thought pattern strategies.

tors were grand-mean centered for better interpretability of zero points. For self-other agreement, standardized coefficients are reported.

To compute consensus in the form of the interrater (within-group) agreement, we calculated r_{wg} (James et al., 1984), where values ≥ .70 are deemed acceptable. For multi-item scales, we used the more conservative formula of Lindell et al. (1999). It addresses potential concerns with the applicability of generalizability theory to measures of agreement by dropping the assumption that measures of agreement will increase with the number of measurements (Bliese, 2009).

3 Results

Descriptive and correlational results can be found in Table 2. There were only significant positive relations among natural reward strategies (leaders' self-ratings) and global self-leadership, as well as behavior-focused strategies (followers' other-ratings). This already suggests that leaders' natural reward strategies may be a driving force of their followers' self-leadership perceptions.

As depicted in Figure 2, the ICCs of the followers' other-ratings ranged between .15 and .36, which means that group membership accounted for a minor, yet existent proportion of the total variance. This renders the application of multilevel modeling a particularly effective task as, under such circumstances, it yields precise estimates for the whole dataset yet allows for the variation of estimates by group (Gelman & Hill, 2006).

MLM findings are summarized in Table 3. The general pattern of findings indicates that natural reward strategies in leaders were positively associated with being seen as a self-leader by others, whereas self-observation shows the reverse pattern. This self-other agreement was primarily driven by natural reward strategies. As can be seen in Table 3

Table 2: Correlations between leaders' self-leadership self-ratings and followers' other-ratings on leaders' self-leadership (aggregated across followers).

Self-leadership scales	**Descriptives**			**Correlations**			
(leaders' self-ratings)	*M*	*SD*	*α*	1	2	3	4
Self-leadership (global)	3.61	.34	.81	.05	.15	.04	-.08
Behavior-focused strategies	3.39	.48	.79	-.31†	-.26	-.09	-.28
Self-goal setting	3.89	.56	.67	.06	-.04	.10	.11
Self-reward	2.57	.83	.95	-.31†	-.28	-.06	-.27
Self-punishment	3.60	.75	.80	-.16	-.02	-.05	-.27
Self-observation	3.45	.72	.70	-.27	-.24	-.13	-.21
Self-cueing	3.49	.97	.81	-.16	-.04	-.30†	-.23
Natural reward strategies	3.74	.56	.41	**.42***	**.50****	.16	.20
Constructive thought pattern strategies	3.71	.40	.69	-.07	.00	-.01	-.14
Visualizing successful performance	3.68	.51	.61	.14	.11	.14	.10
Self-talk	3.56	.58	.51	-.06	-.02	.04	-.10
Evaluating beliefs and assumptions	3.90	.55	.73	-.23	-.08	-.20	-.29†
Sex	–	–	–	-.08	.18	-.10	-.31
Age	41.49	9.36	–	.23	.14	.11	.25
M				3.79	3.51	4.09	4.14
SD				0.40	0.41	0.67	0.63

Note: N = 35 leaders, N = 151 followers.
1 = self-leadership (global), 2 = behavior-focused strategies, 3 = natural reward strategies, 4 = constructive thought pattern strategies.
Findings with $p < .05$ are indicated in bold for better readability.
*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$.

Table 3: Multi-level models (means-as-outcomes regressions) with leaders' self-ratings on self-leadership (level 2 predictors), leaders' sex and age (level 2 control variables), and followers' other-ratings of leaders' self-leadership skills (level 1 outcomes).

Scales	1		2		3		4	
	γ (SE)	*p*	*γ (SE)*	*p*	*γ (SE)*	*p*	*γ (SE)*	*p*
Self-leadership (global)	.18 (.18)	.327	.19 (.19)	.336	.21 (.35)	.549	.15 (.29)	.613
Sex	-.20 (.21)	.359	.06 (.22)	.805	-.20 (.39)	.615	-.66 (.33)	.065
Age	.01 (.01)	.157	.00 (.01)	.642	.01 (.01)	.346	.02 (.01)	.113
Self-leadership strategy dimensions								
Behavior-focused strategies	-.21 (.13)	.115	-.24 (.16)	.072	-.05 (.27)	.872	-.24 (.23)	.307
Natural reward strategies	**.28 (.10)**	**.009**	**.32 (.10)**	**.004**	.19 (.22)	.379	.27 (.18)	.144
Constructive thought pattern strategies	.03 (.15)	.825	.02 (.15)	.908	.01 (.33)	.972	.06 (.28)	.834
Sex	-.14 (.20)	.497	.11 (.21)	.595	-.17 (.41)	.679	-.61 (.34)	.080
Age	.01 (.01)	.285	.00 (.01)	.983	.01 (.01)	.457	.01 (.01)	.207
Self-leadership subfacets								
Self-goal setting	.06 (.12)	.619	-.042 (.13)	.751	.16 (.28)	.579	.17 (.24)	.481
Self-reward	-.06 (.07)	.378	-.11 (.067)	.116	.06 (.16)	.692	-.04 (.13)	.767
Self-punishment	.11 (.10)	.264	.18 (.10)	.090	.06 (.22)	.776	.01 (.19)	.960
Self-observation	**-.27 (.10)**	**.012**	**-.31 (.11)**	**.007**	-.21 (.23)	.367	-.25 (.19)	.206
Self-cueing	-.05 (.06)	.438	.045 (.07)	.505	-.26 (.15)	.093	-.16 (.13)	.208
Natural reward strategies	**.40 (.12)**	**.003**	**.39 (.12)**	**.004**	.41 (.28)	.148	.42 (.24)	.087
Visualizing successful performance	-.05 (.12)	.690	-.02 (.13)	.872	-.09 (.30)	.774	-.11 (.26)	.683
Self-talk	.14 (.14)	.311	.14 (.14)	.337	.22 (.31)	.489	.19 (.27)	.479
Evaluating beliefs and assumptions	-.08 (.10)	.448	-.14 (.10)	.210	-.07 (.25)	.800	-.06 (.22)	.778
Sex	-.22 (.21)	.309	-.03 (.22)	.885	-.25 (.48)	.060	-.63 (.40)	.134
Age	.01 (.01)	.245	.00 (.01)	.610	.01 (.01)	.541	.01 (.01)	.323

Note: γ = unstandardized regression coefficients, SE = standard error.
1 = Self-leadership (global), 2 = Behavior-focused strategies, 3 = Natural reward strategies, 4 = Constructive thought pattern strategies.
Findings with p < .05 are indicated in bold for better readability.

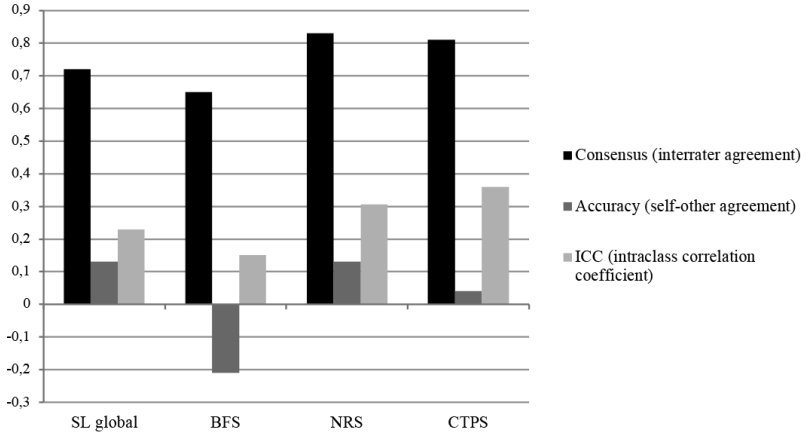


Figure 2: Consensus, self-other agreement, and intraclass correlations of self-leadership ratings.
Note: SL global = global self-leadership, BFS = behavior-focused strategies, NRS = natural reward strategies, CTPS = constructive thought pattern strategies.

and Figure 2, self-other agreement was generally low, but consensus was quite high (i.e., not below .65). These findings stand in support of our hypotheses.

4 Discussion

We conducted a leader-follower study to investigate self-other agreement and consensus for self-leadership ratings. Results yielded that leaders' self-perceptions of their natural reward strategies were related to their followers seeing them as self-leaders and behavior-focused strategists. Self-other agreement in self-leadership was generally low, but consensus was relatively high. This means that judges tend to concur about a target's self-leadership, but that these perceptions do not strongly reflect what the target thinks about him- or herself. The study provided evidence that the perceptually most salient component of self-leadership may be natural reward strategies.

Consensus and self-other agreement in self-leadership. As can be seen in our model in Figure 1, there should be substantial consensus in self-leadership ratings from followers. First, consensus is needed to demonstrate sufficient self-other agreement: If judges cannot agree on a target's rating, then self-other agreement will be diminished due to interraterunreliability. Second, consensus indicates that judges share a „social reality" or similar meaning systems (Kenny, 1994, 2004). In the case of self-leadership, we have found strong consensual beliefs about leaders' self-leadership. We thus conclude that followers utilize similar cues to deduce the socially shared construct of leaders' self-leadership. However, we did not find relatively high levels of self-other agreement despite high consensus (see Figure 1). This, however, is no exception, but the rule (e.g., Funder, 1995, 1999; Kenny, 1994, 2004).

Leaders' natural reward strategies predict being seen as self-leaders by followers. This study further corroborated the central position of natural reward strategies in self-leadership. There was virtually no self-other agreement, which prompts two explanations. First, self-leadership may be barely salient – even in working contexts – and therefore, people cannot infer the processes within others that may underlie self-leading behavior (Brown & Fields, 2011). Supporting this interpretation is the fact that self-leadership refers to intrapersonal processes of self-regulation that may be hard to observe. Second, while certain facets of self-leadership may be salient and observable by judges, they may be unable to discriminate between different self-leadership domains. Supporting this interpretation is that judges show relatively high consensus in all of the self-leadership domains and seem to primarily use (cues of) natural reward strategies to judge targets as self-leaders. Indeed, two dimensions of self-leadership seem to be indicative of whether or not a leader is seen as a self-leader: while leaders' natural reward strategies seem to be beneficial, self-observation seems to be detrimental. Leaders with high intrinsic motivation who love what they are doing – they express natural reward strategies – may be seen as more agentic and inspirational (Furtner & Rauthmann, 2010; Furtner et al., 2013). Natural reward strategies are linked to the intrinsic motivation of leaders (see Furtner et al., 2013; Neck & Manz, 2010), and behaviors of intrinsically motivated leaders are highly salient and personally expressive (Barbuto, 2005; Barbuto et al., 2002; Furtner et al., 2013; Ilies et al., 2005; Shamir et al., 1993). Thus, a leader can function as a role model and also inspire his/her followers to pursue self-leading strategies (Barbuto, 2005; Ilies et al., 2005; Furtner et al., 2013; Manz & Sims, 1991; Shamir et al., 1993). Based on our finding that natural reward strategies seem to be a proxy to judge self-leadership in others (evidenced in relatively low self-other agreement of judging others' self-leadership strategies because most strategies seem to be judged by targets' display of natural reward strategies only), we contend that natural reward strategies are likely the behaviorally most manifestive, expressive, and salient self-leadership domain. Thus, this study adds to the body of research emphasizing the crucial role of natural reward strategies in both self-leadership (e.g., Manz, 1986) and leadership (e.g., Chung et al., 2011; Furtner et al., 2013).

We also found evidence that leaders engaging in self-observation are not seen as self-leaders by their followers. Internal regulation processes referring to behavior-focused strategies in self-leadership are not easy to determine and may lead to false conclusions about a person's self-leadership. Considering the fact that self-leaders seem to be described as fairly agentic and hence as „go-getter types" (see Furtner & Rauthmann, 2010, for associations among self-leadership and agentic traits), the notion of a pondering, self-reflective person does not fit into this picture. Self-observation is rather passive in that the self and goals pursued are analyzed internally in reflective loops (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Neck & Houghton, 2006). Such people may not seem to others as agentic, which may drive being judged less of a self-leader.

Limitations and prospects. We investigated interpersonal perception for self-leadership. Findings yielded a crucial role of natural reward strategies, but further research should replicate, corroborate, and extend present findings. Several limitations should thus be addressed by future in-depth research. First, we used cross-sectional data, which do not allow causal inferences. We could thus not estimate how and why perceptions of self-leaders were formed. These questions correspond to the dashed boxes and lines in Figure 1: Which cues are used to infer self-leadership? How are cues processed to infer self-leadership? Experimental studies varying the behavioral cues of leaders can address such questions, which will be particularly useful in examinations of leader-follower processes. Second, we did not include behavioral cues as mediators for self-observer correlations and thus cannot address

which behaviors exactly account for people utilizing natural reward strategies as a proxy for self-leadership (see Figure 1). We only know that natural reward strategies seem salient and somehow behaviorally manifestive, but the process of how it is judged is not understood. Third, the measurement of self-leadership, particularly the natural reward strategies dimension, is a recurring issue in publications on self-leadership (e.g., Andressen & Konradt, 2007; Houghton & Neck, 2002; Konradt et al., 2009). Future research on the crucial role of natural rewards would greatly benefit from a more reliable measure (e.g., Furtner et al., 2010; Furtner et al., 2011). Similarly, we used the self-constructed SORS because there was no feasible self-leadership measure available that could be used for interpersonal perception studies. Future studies should aim to extensively investigate the psychometric properties of the scale. Additionally, qualitative analyses (e.g., interviews of judges) seem in order. Fourth, we did not include the consequences of self-leadership perceptions. For example, prospective research should explore whether being seen as a self-leader also entails role model qualities ascribed by others, and whether being seen as a self-leading role model may help to further self-leading skills in followers. In a similar vein, it should be checked whether consequences also hold for entire groups (Pearce, 2007) because concepts of shared leadership and group dynamics have been thus far neglected in empirical self-leadership research. Finally, we investigated interpersonal perception for self-leadership only in individualistic and „westernized" cultures (i.e., Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein). According to Alves et al. (2006), it needs to be clarified whether self-leadership can be considered a „universal" and cross-culturally replicable construct that may extend to collectivistic cultures (see Neubert & Wu, 2006). Ho and Nesbit (2009) proposed a collectivistic self-leadership questionnaire, which also incorporated social and communal aspects of self-leadership (that has not been previously covered in content by any of the other scales). We invite other researchers to extend our findings to non-Westernized cultures and assess whether natural reward strategies are crucial there.

Implications. The findings of this work have theoretical, practical, and social implications. First, we demonstrated the importance of natural rewards strategies, which havealso been stressed elsewhere (e.g, Furtner et al., 2013; Furtner et al., 2015; Manz, 1986; Neck & Manz, 2010). Self-leadership needs to undergo a reconceptualization (Furtner & Rauthmann, 2011). For example, future conceptual work could particularly focus on operationalizing natural reward strategies as a core element of the self-leadership construct by clarifying its underlying processes and manifest behaviors. Second, our findings may be extended to self-leadership trainings and leader/leadership development programs in that we provide evidence on how (self-)leaders[1] are seen by others. For example, natural reward strategies seem to be viewed quite favorably by others, which might be a good starting point in developing the abilities of a leader. Leaders should seek to inspire themselves (via natural reward strategies) before they inspire others (Ilies et al., 2005; Shamir et al., 1993).

However, as the concept of (intrinsic) natural reward strategies is not as easily grasped as its extrinsic counterpart, self-reward, training concepts should seek to clarify the unique characteristics of the two and their interplay in building rewarding work environments, both at the personal and team level. To this end, using assignments to help trainees discover their own naturally rewarding tasks and the impact on their sense of competence, self-control, and purpose may be the most direct and promising path (Neck & Manz, 2010). Finally, our findings also affect the domain of social influence, especially leadership. Reichard and Johnson (2011) describe self-leadership within their leader self-development model as an ability that can be used to develop leadership, and thus leading oneself can be seen as a prerequisite in leading others (see Furtner et al., 2013). To effectively lead others, one must be recognized by others as a leader and positive role model (Manz & Sims, 1991; Shamir et al., 1993). If a leader is ascribed as a self-leader via his or her self-leadership skills, we expect that this leader can be more effective.

5 Conclusion

We provided first evidence that self-leading leaders not only ascribe themselves self-leadership skills (Furtner et al., 2013) but are also ascribed self-leadership skills by their followers. Further, there seems to be high consensus in self-leadership judgments of others, but only relatively low self-other agreement. However, leaders exercising natural reward strategies seem to be particularly judged as self-leaders, whereas deep and reflective self-observing seems detrimental. The current study thus highlights the importance of natural reward strategies for perceptions of self-leadership.

Acknowledgments

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

References

Alves, J. C., Lovelace, K. J., Manz, C. C., Matsypura, D., Toyasaki, F. & Ke, K. (2006). A cross-cultural perspective of self-leadership. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *21*, 338-359.

Andressen, P. & Konradt, U. (2007). Messung von Selbstführung: Psychometrische Überprüfung der deutschsprachigen Version des Revised Self-Leadership Questionnaire [Measurement of Self-leadership: a psychometric analysis of the German version of the Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire]. *Zeitschrift für Personalpsychologie* [*Journal of Personnel Psychology*], *6*, 117-128.

Andressen, P., Konradt, U. & Neck, C. P. (2012). The relation between self-leadership and transformational leadership: Competing models and the moderating role of virtuality. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, *19*, 68-82.

Avolio, B. J. (2011). *Full Range Leadership development* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Barbuto, J. E. (2005). Motivation and transactional, charismatic, and transformational leadership: a test of antecedents. *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, *11*, 26-40.

Barbuto, J. E., Fritz, S. M. & Marx, D. (2002). A field study examining two measures of work motivation for predicting leaders' influence tactics used. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *142*, 601-616.

Bliese, P. (2009). *Multilevel modeling in R (2.3)*, Retrieved from http://cran.r-project.org/doc/contrib/Bliese Multilevel.pdf

Borkenau, P. & Liebler, A. (1992). Trait inferences: Sources of validity at zero acquaintance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *62*, 645-657.

Brown, R. T. & Fields, D. (2011). Leaders engaged in self-leadership: Can followers tell the difference? *Leadership*, *7*, 275-293.

Carver, C. S. & Scheier, M. F. (1998). *On the self-regulation of behavior*. Cambridge University Press.

Chung A., Chen, I-H., Yun-Ping Lee, A., Chun Chen, H. & Lin, Y. (2011). Charismatic leadership and self-leadership: A relationship of substitution or supplementation in the contexts of internalization and identification? *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *24*, 299-313.

Fletcher, J. K. (2004). The paradox of postheroic leadership: An essay on gender, power, and transformational change. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *15*, 647-661.

Funder, D. C. (1995). On the accuracy of personality judgment: A realistic approach. *Psychological Review*, *102*, 652-670.

Funder, D. C. (1999). *Personality judgment: A realistic approach to person perception*. Academic Press.

Furtner, M. R. & Baldegger, U. (2023). *Self-Leadership und Führung – Theorien, Modelle und praktische Umsetzung* [*Self-leadership and Leadership – Theories, Models, and Practical Applications*]. Springer Gabler.

Furtner, M. R., Baldegger, U. & Rauthmann, J. F. (2013). Leading yourself and leading others: Linking self-leadership to transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *22*, 436-449.

Furtner, M. R., Rauthmann, J. F. & Sachse, P. (2015). Unique self-leadership: a bifactor model approach. *Leadership*, *11*, 105-125.

Furtner, M. R. & Rauthmann, J. F. (2010). Relations between self-leadership and scores on the Big Five. *Psychological Reports*, *107*, 339-353.

Furtner, M. R. & Rauthmann, J. F. (2011). The role of need for achievement in self-leadership: Differential associations with hope for success and fear of failure. *African Journal of Business Management*, *5*, 8368-8375.

Furtner, M. R., Rauthmann, J. F. & Sachse, P. (2010). The socioemotionally intelligent self-leader: Examining relations between self-leadership and socioemotional intelligence. *Social Behavior and Personality*, *38*, 1191-1196.

Furtner, M. R., Rauthmann, J. F. & Sachse, P. (2011). The self-loving self-leader: Examining relations between self-leadership and the Dark Triad. *Social Behavior and Personality*, *39*, 369-380.

Gelman, A. & Hill, J. (2006). *Data analysis using regression and multilevel/hierarchical models*. Cambridge University Press.

Gosling, S. D., Ko, S. J., Mannarelli, T. & Morris, M. E. (2002). A room with a cue: Judgments of personality based on offices and bedrooms. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *82*, 379-398.

Haselton, M. G. & Funder, D. C. (2006). „The evolution of accuracy and bias in social judgment". In M. Schaller, J. A. Simpson & D. T. Kenrick (Eds.), *Evolution and Social Psychology* (pp. 15-38). Psychology Press.

Hauschildt, K. & Konradt, U. (2012). Self-Leadership and team members' work role performance. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *27*, 497-517.

Ho, J. & Nesbit, C. L. (2009). A refinement and extension of the self-leadership scale for the Chinese context. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *24*, 450-476.

Houghton, J. D., Dawley, D. & DiLiello, T. (2012). The abbreviated self-leadership questionnaire (ASLQ): a more concise measure of self-leadership. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, *7*, 216-232.

Houghton, J. D. & Neck, C. P. (2002). The revised Self-Leadership questionnaire: Testing a hierarchical factor structure for self-leadership. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *17*, 672-691.

Ilies, R., Morgeson, F. P. & Nahrgang, J. D. (2005). Authentic leadership and eudaemonic well-being: Understand leader-follower outcomes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *16*, 373-394.

James, L. R., Demaree, R. G. & Wolf, G. (1984). Estimating within-group interrater reliability with and without response bias. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *69*, 85-98.

Kenny, D. A. (1994). *Interpersonal perception*. Guilford.

Kenny, D. A. (2004). PERSON: A general model of interpersonal perception. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *8*, 265-280.

Konradt, U., Andressen, P. & Ellwart, T. (2009). Self-leadership in organizational teams: A multilevel analysis of moderators and mediators. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *18*, 322-346.

Lindell, M. K., Brandt, C. J. & Whitney, D. J. (1999). A revised index of interrater agreement for multi-item ratings of a single target. *Applied Psychological Measurement*, *23*, 127-135.

Manz, C. C. (1986). Self-leadership: Toward an expanded theory of self-influence processes in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, *11*, 585-600.

Manz, C. C. & Sims, H. P. Jr. (1980). Self-management as a substitute for leadership: A social learning perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, *5*, 361-367.

Manz, C. C. & Sims, H. P. Jr. (1991). Superleadership: Beyond the myth of heroic leadership. *Organizational Dynamics*, *19*, 18-35.

Markham, S. E. & Markham, I. S. (1995). Self-management and self-leadership reexamined: A levels-of-analysis perspective. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *6*, 343-359.

Neck, C. P. & Houghton, J.D. (2006). Two decades of self-leadership theory and research: Past developments, present trends, and future possibilities. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *21*, 270-295.

Neck, C. P. & Manz, C. C. (1992). Thought self-leadership: The influence of self-talk and mental imagery on performance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *13*, 681-699.

Neck, C. P. & Manz, C. C. (1996). Thought self-leadership: The impact of mental strategies training on employee cognition, behavior, and affect. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *17*, 445-467.

Neck, C. P. & Manz, C. C. (2010). *Mastering self-leadership: Empowering yourself for personal excellence*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall.

Nestler, S. & Back, M. D. (2013). Applications and extensions of the lens model to understand interpersonal judgments at zero acquaintance. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *22*, 374-379.

Neubert, M. J. & Wu J-CC. (2006). An investigation of the generalizability of the Houghton and Neck Revised Self-Leadership Questionnaire to a Chinese context. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *21*, 360-373.

Pearce, C. L. (2007). The future of leadership development: The importance of identity, multi-level approaches, self-leadership, physical fitness, shared leadership, networking, creativity, emotions, spirituality and on-boarding processes. *Human Resource Management Review*, *17*, 355-359.

Rauthmann, J. F. & Kolar, G. P. (2010). Implicit simplicity at low acquaintanceship: evidence for a g-factor of personality in personality judgments. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *48*, 522-526.

Reichard, R. J. & Johnson, S. K. (2011). Leader self-development as organizational strategy. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *22*, 33-42.

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.

Snijders, T. A. B. & Bosker, R. J. (2012). *Multilevel analysis: An introduction to basic and advanced multilevel modeling* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Stewart, G. L., Courtright, S. H. & Manz, C. C. (2011). Self-leadership: A multilevel review. *Journal of Management*, *37*, 185-222.

Vazire, S. (2010). Who knows what about a person? The Self-Other Knowledge Asymmetry (SOKA) model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *98*, 281-300.

Correspondence to:
Prof. Dr. Marco Furtner, MBA
Universität Liechtenstein
Department Entrepreneurship und Management
Fürst-Franz-Josef-Strasse
FL-9490 Vaduz
marco.furtner@uni.li