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## New forms of leadership

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Folkert Mulder

# **New forms of leadership**

**Leading in the plural and plural leadership**



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*Leading in the plural and plural leadership*



# **New forms of leadership**

*Leading in the plural and plural leadership*

# **Nieuwe vormen van leiderschap**

*Leiden in het meervoud en meervoudig leiderschap*

Thesis

to obtain the degree of Doctor from the

Erasmus University Rotterdam

by command of the

rector magnificus

Prof. dr. A.L. Bredenoord

and in accordance with the decision of the Doctorate Board.

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by

Folkert Wilhelmus Mulder

born in Leidschendam.

## **Doctoral Committee**

### **Promotor(s):**

Prof. dr. S.R. Giessner

### **Co-promotor(s):**

Prof. dr. B. Koene

### **Other Members:**

Dr. R.L. Hewett

Prof. dr, D.A. Stam

Prof. dr. M. Salomon

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1:	
GENERAL INTRODUCTION .....	1
New forms of leadership to face organized challenges due to the increased complexity of societies	
CHAPTER 2:	
THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF MULTIPLE LEADERSHIP AND TEAM FUNCTIONING .....	15
A Qualitative Study of Sports Teams	
CHAPTER 3:	
FROM VERTICAL TO HORIZONTAL LEADERSHIP .....	71
How case teaching can change leadership structure schemas about leadership	
CHAPTER 4:	
INTERGROUP LEADERSHIP.....	105
A qualitative study of coalitions in politics	
SAMENVATTING:	
NIEUWE VORMEN VAN LEIDERSCHAP.....	183
Leiden in meervoud, meervoudig leiderschap	
SUMMARY:	
NEW FORMS OF LEADERSHIP .....	189
Leadership in the plural, plural leadership	
ABOUT THE AUTHOR .....	195
ERIM PhD SERIES.....	197



# **CHAPTER 1:**

## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

### **New forms of leadership to face organizational challenges due to the increased complexity of societies**

The increasing complexity of society and the business environment results from numerous interconnected global developments that have shaped the landscape in which organizations operate, such as evolving demands, innovative business models, intricate supply chains, and the rapid pace of digitalization. With that, leaders encounter new challenges questioning the so-far advocated leadership styles and skills, which is crucial in navigating and harnessing the potential of the complex and dynamic business landscape described.

In the face of changing market dynamics and disruptive new business models, effective leaders must embrace innovation, oversee, and optimize complex networks, ensure efficiency, transparency, and resilience, and collaborate with multiple stakeholders across geographical locations, and foster effective communication and coordination. More and more organizational trends are moving away from this traditional model of

organizing towards, new forms of organizing across organizational boundaries, The needed leadership style often demands a different leadership setup and often more leaders involved to manage the complexity. Traditionally, leadership has been framed within a hierarchical structure, with a single leader at the top guiding their followers.

All of these changes lead to new ways of thinking about leadership, whereby we may need more than one leader to tackle the current problems, which has been referred to as leadership in the plural (Denis et al.,2012; Gronn, 2002; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Pearce & Conger, 2002; Uhl-Bien, 2006), distributed leadership (Currie & Lockett, 2011; Gronn, 2002; Mehra et al., 2006) or shared leadership (Carson et al., 2007; Pearce & Conger, 2002). Or we need a leader to manage a group of independent leaders, rather than members of a group, each representing a very different group or organization, this has been referred to as intergroup leadership (Pittinsky & Simon, 2007; Hogg et al. 2012).

In my research, I explore this shifting paradigm of leadership. These ideas counter the traditional single-leader model, spotlighting the intricacies of multiple leadership. Despite some existing literature on this approach, there remains a notable gap, especially regarding its practical application and

real-world emergence. We aim to address this by examining the conditions conducive to the effective practice of multiple leadership and its potential for successful integration.

A focal point of our research is the manifestation of multiple leadership in professional sports teams. Given the intense team dynamics and performance pressures in sports, the nuances of multiple leadership become more pronounced. Players in this setting are highly interdependent, leading to the emergence of varied leadership styles, including multiple leadership. This dynamic offers valuable insights for business- and non-profit organizations on how to lead in an increasingly more complex world. Building on our insights into multiple leadership, our study subsequently delves into transitioning from conventional hierarchical models to other vertical leadership perspectives that fit better with a multiple leadership environment.

In our study of new forms of leadership, we investigate what's needed to shift from traditional vertical leadership paradigms to more collaborative, horizontal approaches. Prompted by our findings on multiple leadership findings, we have conducted an additional complementary study of intergroup leadership dynamics, aiming to deepen our comprehension of how

leaders guide other leaders. While this exploration is supplementary to our primary focus on multiple leadership, it offers valuable perspectives and establishes connections to the broader theme of leadership in pluralistic settings.

### **Leadership in the plural**

To illustrate more than one leader, consider the scenario that a company exists out of two separate businesses whereby the company opts to have two CEOs, each responsible for managing one of the disciplines. An example of having two CEOs was at DSM before they merged with Firmenich. Especially, in the world of sports, it's not uncommon to have multiple leaders on a team, especially when a national team comprises top players from different clubs who normally compete against each other. By having more than one leader, the team can better represent its unique identity and composition through the leadership team. In other words, for the team players, it's easier to relate to one of the leaders who has their own characteristics, whereby players can more easily mirror themselves in one of the leaders. Besides that, if the leadership team collaborates as an integrated leadership team, this also reflects what is expected from the team itself.

The illustrations indicate that traditional forms of leadership with one leader on top of a hierarchical structure might not be the only or best model to represent these new structural requirements to lead. Rather, in some circumstances, we might expect many leaders to lead a team, what has been called leadership in the plural in the literature (Denis et al., 2012). Several notable companies have embraced the concept of leadership in the plural, recognizing the value of shared leadership and distributed decision-making. These organizations have implemented structures and practices allowing multiple leaders to guide and influence teams. For example, SHV Holding has applied leadership in the plural for many years on the board level. The board consists of four board members, whereby the portfolio of companies is managed based on the shared responsibility of the board, which is a form of plural leadership. Decision-making occurs by consensus and means that the board as a whole is responsible for the portfolio companies and the organization's functioning. In this specific example, the portfolio of companies of SHV is rotated once every few years among the board members, making them responsible as a team. (F. van Lede, personal communication, July 22, 2023). Another example of how plural leadership is applied on an organizational level is Morning Star, renowned as the world's largest tomato processor. Since its inception in 1970, the company has

embraced the concept of plural leadership, recognizing its value and benefits. The company operates without traditional managerial roles. In this unique organizational structure, there are no bosses, titles, or promotions. Instead, employees have the autonomy to manage themselves and negotiate their responsibilities directly with their peers. The company fosters a culture where anyone can issue a purchase order, and everyone is responsible for obtaining the necessary tools to perform their work effectively. Morning Star's approach empowers employees to take ownership of their work and decision-making. By embracing this self-management model, the company has created a culture of autonomy, responsibility, and adaptability, contributing to its sustained growth and success (Hamel, 2011).

### **Intergroup leadership**

In other situations, leaders might need to lead more than one team, referred to as intergroup leadership (Pittinsky & Simon, 2007; Hogg et al., 2018). Intergroup leadership is a significant and multifaceted phenomenon that manifests in various contexts. In a business environment, this can be illustrated when a company manages multiple brands, each with its own dedicated management team. These leaders collectively form the company's management team, exemplifying intergroup leadership. They unite to



navigate situations where their distinct and conflicting goals necessitate collaboration to manage interdependencies. Their collective function is not rooted in a common goal, but rather in acknowledging and leveraging their differences.

While coming together to manage interdependencies, as leaders of their own business they first and foremost bear responsibility for their own business unit. A prime illustration of this can be found in the Volkswagen Group, the leadership of the different brands within the Volkswagen Group are part of the overall management structure of the company. They are often members of the Group's Executive Board, which is the top-level management body responsible for making key decisions and setting strategic direction for the entire Volkswagen Group. Having the leadership of the various brands on the overall management structure of the company allows for better coordination, communication, and alignment between the different brands and ensures that the overall corporate strategy aligns with the individual brand strategies.

The illustration exemplifies intergroup leadership, as leaders from disparate brands collaborate within the Volkswagen Group. Their individual achievements hinge on the collective's thriving ecosystem, underscoring the

necessity of harmonizing separate interests for the overarching prosperity of the group.

A very clear illustration of intergroup leadership can be found in politics; a prime minister often faces the task of forming a coalition comprised of multiple parties to govern during the elected period. In such cases, the effectiveness of leadership comes into question, whereby a prime minister leading a governmental coalition must often navigate the dynamics of numerous parties and their leaders within the government. Intergroup leadership in politics is very salient in The Netherlands. Dutch politics operates by creating coalitions among multiple parties, which then unite in a cabinet. The Cabinet of Ministers, responsible for governing the country, adopts an intergroup leadership structure, comprising the leadership from each coalition party. While maintaining its own leadership, each party collaborates within this structure to guide the government's actions and decisions. This form of leadership may require additional or alternative frameworks beyond traditional models. With this, intergroup leadership distinguishes itself from classical leadership theories, whereby it plays a crucial role in fostering a strong intergroup relational identity between different subgroups (Hogg et al., 2012; Pittinsky & Simon, 2007).

In our research, we focus on those two different leadership models, leadership in the plural and intergroup leadership. Exploring these new forms of leadership enables us to provide solutions to the current realities of leadership dealing with complex problems in more complex environments. Further, and forestalling already one of our findings, while leadership in the plural and intergroup leadership are somewhat different conceptualizations of leadership structures and processes, we show that maintaining leadership in the plural may require some form of intergroup leadership, while enacting intergroup leadership may result in leadership in the plural. Thus, those new types of leadership might be closer to each other than the literature has recognized.

### **Dissertation overview**

While the relevance of multiple leadership is clearly described in recent research, what still needs attention is the development and functioning of multiple leadership. Therefore, Chapter 2 focuses on "The Development and Maintenance of Multiple Leadership and Team Functioning," presenting a qualitative study conducted on sports teams. The sports context provides a valuable context for studying processes relevant to management research

(Fonti et al., 2023). The primary focus of this research is to explore the growth of leadership and the emergence of multiple leaders within a team (Denis et al., 2012). Additionally, we examine the formation of multiple leadership teams and explore their maintenance and functioning. Based on our research, we distilled a leadership model that incorporates leadership dynamics. This model offers valuable insights into the applicability of plural leadership in other domains and understanding the conditions under which multiple leadership is effective.

Chapter 3 builds upon the previous chapter by conducting an intervention to transform the leadership paradigms of upcoming leaders. Elaborating on the findings of the second chapter, we have developed a case study in which students are engaged to explore the idea of leadership in the plural. Based on the schema theory (Lipman, 1991; Rumelhart, 1984), we argue that this facilitates a shift from more vertical to horizontal thinking about leadership, which further builds on the research of Wellman, which suggested that more horizontal leadership thinking enabling more than one leader in a team may be even more effective (Wellman et al., 2022).

In the final chapter, we moved to the study of intergroup leadership. While previous studies explore the development and functioning of multiple

leadership, we lack an understanding of how intergroup leadership unfolds and functions. Therefore, Chapter 4 describes our study investigating that leaders might need to lead more than one team, referred to as intergroup leadership (Pittinsky & Simon, 2007; Hogg et al., 2018). In this study, we explore this concept in the context of Dutch politics, in which coalitions are formed between different parties (i.e., groups). Focusing on this context, we shed light on the dynamics of intergroup leadership. The research on intergroup leadership offers valuable insights as it involves interviews with former ministers and vice-prime ministers from various Dutch cabinets. These interviews provided a deeper understanding of how intergroup leadership unfolds in this context. Interestingly, our study also suggests that intergroup leadership may exhibit similarities with leadership in the plural, a concept explored in detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

In Chapter 5, the final chapter of this dissertation, we aim to synthesize the findings from the preceding chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) and present a comprehensive overview of our study's main contributions and results. This chapter summarizes the conclusions from the data and analysis presented in the earlier sections.

## **Declaration of contributors**

In addition to the invaluable efforts of my supervisors/co-authors Steffen Giessner (abbrev. SG), Mariette Kaandorp (abbrev. MK), Irma Bogenrieder (abbrev. IB), and Bas Koene (abbrev. BK), I would certainly be remiss if I did not give credit where credit was due:

Chapter 1 was written by Folkert Mulder (abbrev. FM) and reviewed by SG and BK

Chapter 2 was designed by FM and SG; FM collected data; FK, MK, and IB analyzed data; MK, IB, and BK gave feedback to the chapter; FM and SG wrote the chapter.

Chapter 3 was designed by FM and SG; FM and SG collected the data; SG and FM analyzed the data; FM, SG, BK, and IB wrote the chapter.

Chapter 4 was designed by FM, SG, and IB; FM collected the data; FM analyzed the data; IB gave data analysis advice; BK gave feedback to the chapter, and FM, SG, and IB wrote the chapter.

Chapter 5 was written by Folkert Mulder (abbrev. FM) and reviewed by SG.

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## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF MULTIPLE LEADERSHIP AND TEAM FUNCTIONING.**

#### ***A qualitative study of sports teams***

Folkert Mulder, Steffen Giessner, Bas Koene, Irma Bogenrieder & Mariette  
Kaandorp

Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University

## **Abstract**

Teams often have more than one leader. This is referred to as multiple leadership. Little is known about how multiple leadership emerges and how it can effectively contribute to team functioning. This paper takes an inductive, qualitative research approach and explores how multiple leadership is established and maintained in sports teams and how this relates to team functioning. We focus on sports teams, where high-pressure performance is the norm. In such environments, diverse leadership styles, including shared leadership, become more evident due to the team's interdependence. To research this phenomenon, we interviewed athletes (N=39) and coaches (N=6) from the Netherlands men's national field hockey team, The Netherlands national korfbal team, the Netherlands (women's) national rugby, and the PSV women's soccer team, whereby we focused on the Netherlands national field hockey team over an extended period. Our main findings show that an organic process of emergence (i.e., the structure of multiple leadership emerges from the team itself) and continuous Maintenance of the leadership structure are the key factors in achieving integrated collaboration. We propose a multiple leadership model to consider these factors, and provide practical advice on when and how best to establish multiple leadership in teams.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Shared leadership; Distributed leadership;  
Leadership Emergence,

## **The Development and Maintenance of Multiple Leadership and Team Functioning: A Qualitative Study of Sports teams**

*“As a team, you are much more difficult to follow by your opponent because the game plan is a team effort. Different players can stand up and make choices. Depending on the game's demands, this can change by the day”, Mink van der Weerden (professional field hockey player in the Dutch national team, 2018).*

Groups have an evolutionary tendency to form hierarchical structures to solve group coordination challenges like conflict and competition (Van Vugt, 2006; Van Vugt et al., 2008). This is visible in many social structures, as organizations and teams often form hierarchies with leaders at the top to function more efficiently. Consequently, most leadership research has focused on such hierarchical structures when theorizing about leadership. Leadership is inherently placed with a person and guides and motivates followers from the top (cf. Yukl, 2006). However, in practice, there often is not just one leader managing the team, especially in teams where all members are highly skilled and can be considered experts or leaders by their experience levels. The success and failure of a team should not ride on the

shoulders of just one individual (Bathurst & Monin, 2010; Gronn, 1999; Pearce & Conger, 2003).

An example is a highly skilled R&D team in which everyone has unique expertise and contributes to and leads specific subtasks of an innovation process. Similarly, national sports teams consist of the leading players of local teams with expertise and experience in leadership roles. A growing body of research acknowledges that leadership may often be plural (Denis et al., 2012; Gronn, 2002; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

This is common in practice. For instance, matrix organizations have at least two leaders for their employees (Bazigos & Harter, 2016). This affects how leadership functions (Sahlueller et al., 2022). Even if there is a hierarchical structure in organizations, informal leaders often rise and substitute or provide additional support to the formal leader (White et al., 2016).

The complexity of tasks makes it often necessary to cooperate (Woolley et al., 2015), and multiple leadership seems to be the more appropriate way to lead teams (Uhl-Bien, 2007). This implies that there should be less dominance and control from one person but rather solid social

relationships that facilitate a strong group identity allowing multiple team members to exert leadership (Bathurst & Monin, 2010).

The notion that leadership may be the property of a group is not at all new (cf. Hollander & Julian, 1969), and scientists have recently started to theorize and research the phenomenon. It has resulted in many new labels such as distributed leadership (Currie & Lockett, 2011; Gronn, 2002; Mehra et al., 2006), shared leadership (Carson et al., 2007; Pearce & Conger, 2003), collective leadership (Carter & DeChurch, 2012; Denis et al., 2001; Friedrich et al., 2009), or complexity leadership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Denis et al. (2012) reviewed this literature and argued that the common characteristic of these pluralistic leadership forms is the existence of multiple leaders who exert formal or informal influence in a complex environment. Thus, although an existing hierarchical structure might be in place, multiple leadership can be present via informal influence processes.

Previous literature on multiple leadership has shown that such structures exist in different contexts and can be effective (Brown & Gioia, 2002). However, it has not addressed how such forms emerge and dynamically evolve over time and under which circumstances they can be functional or dysfunctional (Denis et al., 2012). Although plural leadership

can be constructive, power relations can cause these plural leadership structures to become ineffective, or even destructive, over time. Furthermore, studying plural leadership emergence may also address the tension in the literature arguing for a top-down versus a bottom-up process (Denis et al., 2012).

To better understand this phenomenon, this study examines the micro-dynamics of the emergence of multiple leadership more closely, by employing a qualitative, inductive methodology. Through this process, the study provides nuanced insights, aligning with the frameworks suggested by Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) and Glaser & Strauss (1967), into the operational dynamics of multiple leadership roles. We choose national sports teams as empirical context for our study because (1) Multiple leadership was likely to emerge; (2) It was unclear how it emerged; and (3) A strong team context was present in a competitive environment that caused potential conflicts and power struggles, making it likely for constructive forms of multiple leadership to appear, as well as forms that exacerbated conflict and tensions. National men's and women's sports teams match these conditions because the best players from teams across the country are team up in national teams. In other words, more than one player might claim or be

granted a leadership role (cf. De Rue & Ashforth, 2010), providing a context for potential conflicts.

Team coaches may empower players, but multiple leaders might also emerge from the team. Finally, team sports, especially at the national level, are very competitive and highly performance-oriented. This matches business contexts, making our findings and conclusion also relevant for leadership in business. Consequently, we explore how dynamic interactive relationships of plural leadership emerge and evolve in a qualitative case study on multiple leadership in sports teams.

### **From Hierarchical Leadership to Leadership in the Plural**

While leadership was a topic of interest for philosophers at least as early as Plato (cf. Takala, 1998), empirical research on this topic started at the beginning of the 20th century (for overviews, see Lord et al., 2017; Northouse, 2010). At this time, the focus was on leader traits such as intelligence, personality, and physical features (Stogdill, 1948). The goal was to find characteristics that differentiated effective from less effective leaders and how leaders differed from followers. In other words, this first interest in



leadership was primarily person-centered and viewed leadership as a person's property.

The next years of leadership research focused on this person-centered idea of leadership. Researchers in the 1950s and 1960s focused on leader behaviors and attitudes (cf. Bales, 1950; Fleishman, 1953; Hollander, 1954). From the 1960s to the 1980s, research explored the cognitive processes in leadership (Eden & Leviatan, 1975; Lord et al., 1984; Schein, 1973) and the contingency under which certain leadership behaviors would work (e.g., Fiedler, 1964). Consequently, the meaning of leadership also changed. Leadership was defined as a process of social influence that emerges in the interaction of individuals (Northouse, 2010). Many leadership theories also integrated more explicitly the follower's role in understanding how effective leadership might work. Examples include theories on charisma and visionary leadership (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987), leader-follower relationships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and identity and leadership (DeRue & Ashforth, 2010; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2004). While these theories were no longer directed towards a single person or leader, the research and applications of these theories were led by thinking of situations with hierarchical structures involving leaders and their followers (Lord et al., 2017).

Since then, researchers have acknowledged that leadership does not always need such strong hierarchical structures. Leadership theories such as servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1996; van Dierendonck, 2011) and empowering leadership (Ahearne et al., 2005) emphasize that power should be given to followers – making the hierarchical structures flatter or even reversing them. Some researchers argue that having multiple leaders within a team or organization is often better, or they advocate sharing leadership among all team members (Pearce & Conger, 2002). This idea seems more appropriate because the environment in which teams and organizations operate is becoming increasingly complex and ambiguous (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Organizations have more highly skilled knowledge workers, and leadership should be shared to use the full skill potential of all team members (Pearce & Conger, 2003).

Previous studies suggest that groups and organizations function more effectively if a more shared or distributed leadership approach is in place (D’Innocenzo et al., 2016; Carson et al., 2007; Perry et al., 1999; Wellman et al., 2022).

While the research on multiple leadership indicates that it can be very effective, several issues need to be clarified in such collective leadership

forms. First, evolutionary approaches to leadership indicate that there is a tendency to form hierarchies in teams instead of structures with many or no leaders (Van Vugt et al., 2008). based on the assumption of the benefits of forming hierarchies, the question is when and how multiple leadership structures can evolve. Denis and colleagues (2012), who summarized the literature on multiple leadership, also pointed to this gap in the literature, highlighting that some argue that multiple leadership “might be a recipe for chaos or paralysis (Fayol, 1917; Locke, 2003)” and that even most conceptions of leadership in the plural consider some kind of convergence around common goals and directions. Denis et al. argue that “researchers might learn from studies of plural leadership in more contentious organizational situations” and that a stronger focus on possibly conflictual dynamics would address “...some of the essence of what makes this phenomenon worthy of study.” (Denis et al., 2012: 269). Thus, while organizations seem to follow the idea of creating flat hierarchies and enabling satiation of shared or multiple leadership, it is yet unclear how difficult it is for such structures to emerge. Second, multiple leadership might be structurally placed or emerge in specific contexts. While there seems to be agreement that it is to some degree emergent, Gronn (2009) argued that in most contexts, it is a hybrid form with some top-down structuring and some

emergence from the bottom-up. But so far, we do not know how these processes unfold in practice. Third, recent theorizing on leadership further points to an identity-related mechanism in which individuals claim the lead and others grant them the lead (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Through several rounds of this claiming and granting process, individuals may take on the identity of the leader or the follower. DeRue and Ashforth also argue that individuals may have different leadership structure schemas ranging from hierarchical to shared beliefs about leadership. The former believes in the classical single-leader structures, whereas the latter favors multi-leader ones. Although research has already examined the effects of shared leadership structure schemas (Wellman et al., 2022), we explain the identity mechanism underlying the emergence of such schemas.

The tendency to form hierarchies and create potential conflicts about granting and claiming leadership (De Rue & Ashford, 2010) might make it difficult to develop stable structures of multiple leadership over time. Once these structures emerge in teams, it is questionable whether they can remain stable over time and how they can keep the team functioning. The top-down perspective suggests that leaders empower others in a hierarchy, whereas the bottom-up perspective proposes that leadership emerges from a social

system. Our study contributes to the literature by exploring how leadership emerges and how it develops over time.

### **Purpose of the Present Study**

Although multiple leadership has frequently been applied in sports teams, it has received limited research attention. To better understand these processes and develop theoretical insights, we use a qualitative study to understand the phenomena of the emergence and development of multiple leadership in sports teams.

A sports context is relevant because of the high competitiveness in sports teams, the dynamics of claiming and granting team leadership, and because the natural richness of these dynamics. It can give valuable insights into organizational practice, especially when applying qualitative research, because of the overlap to organizational contexts (Wolf et al., 2005). The sensitivity of leadership development is important for team functioning, especially in national sports teams. Consequently, this research contributes to leadership development in more complex team environments where multiple leadership can play a crucial role in team functioning.

## **Method**

We used an inductive, qualitative research design to explore how multiple leadership operates in sports teams. This research method provides an in-depth insight and a better understanding of the effect of multiple leadership on team functioning (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Based on grounded theory, we use the Gioia (2013) method to understand and explain human behavior through an inductive reasoning process (Elliott & Lazenbatt, 2005). By applying this method to analyze our data sources, which are grounded in specific contexts of the interviewee, this approach provides a natural fit for conducting our research (Hussein et al., 2014). We triangulated our interview data with documents and observations of a team the first author had worked with for four years.

## **Research Setting**

Focusing on National level teams for our research we eventually studied four Dutch sports teams: the men's national field hockey team, the national korfbal team, the women's national rugby team, and the PSV women's soccer team. Our main focus was the Dutch men's national field hockey team over a prolonged period of time. In total we interviewed 39

athletes and 6 coaches. Participants ranged from 17 to 30 years, and 49% were female (see Table 1). We opted for national teams because they comprise players from various clubs with different backgrounds and team identities who need to form a team with a shared identity. National team players are often leaders or informal leaders at club level. At a national level, a new pecking order needs to be established, which means a new leadership form is likely to develop. A multiple leadership setting may be more likely to emerge and appropriate to represent the various identities in the team. As the first author had a professional relationship with the Netherlands men's national field hockey team, this was an excellent case to study how multiple leadership functions and evolves. Most of the interviews were conducted with this team because we had the best access. As a result, we could also interview team members and coaching staff over a longer period of the 2nd half of 2016, 2017 and 2018. Based on the rich available data provided by the team and our experiences with the team, we were able to zoom in on this team.

We also investigated a women's club football team to see if we could find differences between club and national teams. However, we found more similarities than differences and therefore we will not take a comparative approach here. Consequently, we included the football team in our inductive,

qualitative research. Our interviews with the other teams deepened and extended our research.

### **Interview Process and Protocol**

This paper uses semi-structured interviews as a primary source of data. Three rounds of interviews were conducted with the Netherlands men's national field hockey team players throughout 2016, 2017, and 2018 on neutral ground in the Netherlands. The Netherlands national (men's) korfbal team players were interviewed at the NOC\*NSF training facilities at Papendal. The players of the Netherlands (women's) national rugby team were interviewed at their training facilities in Amsterdam, and the PSV women's soccer team at their training facilities in Eindhoven. All interviews took between 20 and 50 minutes. The first author conducted the interviews, each taking, on average 30 minutes.



The interviews included the following key questions:

1. What role does leadership play in your team?
2. Can there be more than one leader in your team?
3. How can leadership influence cohesion in the team?
4. How can leadership contribute to performance?
5. To what extent should leadership reflect the identity of the group?

The follow-up interviews used open questions, building on previous interviewees' responses, exploring aspects in more depth, or discussing any changes to team dynamics.

## **Data Analyses**

To ensure the accuracy of the interview data analysis, we first transcribed all recorded interviews and asked participants' permission to use their data. We then conducted a thematic content analysis to identify emerging themes in the interviews. This was guided by the process developed by Gioia and colleagues (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia et al., 2013), bringing qualitative rigor to our inductive research. The Gioia method facilitates a systematic first-order analysis approach using informant-centric terms and

codes and a second-order analysis using researcher-centric concepts, themes, and dimensions (Van Maanen, 1979). In this approach, the informant and the researcher are brought together, allowing for rigorous qualitative data analysis and new concepts (Gioia et al., 2013).

The Gioia method for qualitative analysis (Corley and Gioia, 2004) comprises three stages. In the first stage, we open-coded (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) the interviews using NVivo software (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2020) to create first-order codes (Van Maanen, 1979). A set of 552 codes emerged. In the second stage, we analyzed these codes by moving iteratively between the data, tentative constructs, and the extant literature to refine insights and clarify the conceptual categories (Eisenhardt, 1989). Based on this first coding and conceptualization, we clustered the coding into 17 first-order concepts (Corley & Gioia, 2004) and then distilled five second-order themes by further abstraction of the 17 first-order concepts. Going back and forth through the data to construct concepts and themes, we came up with three aggregate dimensions: ‘Triggers’, ‘Processes’, and ‘Results’ (see table 2). These were the outcomes of several iterative discussions between the authors of this article.

## **Results**

All teams we interviewed had experienced different forms of multiple leadership. Our analysis of the transcripts indicated that our athletes identified three aggregate dimensions, Team Context, Process of Development, and Team Functioning, that enable a multiple leadership structure. Team Context is based on two second-order themes, Team Identity/Identification and Team Complexity. Process of Development includes two second-order themes, Emergence of interactivity and Maintenance. The third aggregate dimension, Team Functioning, is based on Identity Transformation and Team Performance.

Our first aggregate dimension, Team Context, can be seen as a trigger that allows individuals to consider multiple leadership as an option. Our main finding, however, is the second aggregate dimension, Process of Development, that the way multiple leadership is established and maintained in a team is a central process for its acceptance and its potential effectiveness as a leadership approach to team functioning over time. This central finding highlights the importance of understanding multiple leadership as a dynamic process that needs to be managed while it is established and institutionalized in a team. Our third aggregate dimension, Team Functioning, reflects a

specific process of multiple leadership in transforming team identity and team performance.

After discussing the three dimensions and underlying themes in more detail, we suggest how multiple leadership may emerge and be maintained (see Figure 2). We now describe our model in more detail from our observations and background information and provide quotes from athletes and coaches.

### **Team Context**

Team Context reflects that a team setting may be necessary or facilitates team members' willingness or demand for a multiple leadership model. Context can be defined as “situational or environmental stimuli that impinge upon focal actors and are often located at a different level of analysis from those actors” (Johns, 2018). In our analysis two important themes came up in defining team context: Team Identity and Team Complexity. These can be considered such stimuli and are on a team level.

First, Team Complexity is affected by Team Composition. Team Composition relates to the size and diversity of the team (Karriker et al., 2017). Previous research indicates that diverse teams working on complex

tasks may perform better than less diverse teams (Higgs et al., 2005; van Dijk et al., 2012). In our study diversity came up as a relevant team factor in the thematic analysis of our interviews. It was related to team complexity. Members across all teams mentioned that the diversity of the team might require more than one leader. At least, it is one of the options for team leadership. As one of the athletes put it:

*“The structure, the hierarchy, and support for that hierarchy, with three captains from different clubs, is much better. It has the team's support because it's the foundation of the leadership team.” (Interviewee 2).*

This team member acknowledges the differences in the Dutch national field hockey team based on various club cultures and the importance of leadership that represents players with different club cultures. The team supports it because the leadership emerged from the team itself. This also reflects the game style of the national clubs. Some clubs prefer an attacking style, others a defensive style. In a national team, players may need to adapt their playstyle. Multiple leaders might best represent this diversity in the team. In this context, another athlete said:

*“Everyone has preferences. When you have more leaders, the chances that everything and everyone is represented are more likely”* (Interviewee 23).

Many athletes indicated that it might be better to share leadership responsibilities among a few players when a national team has different character traits and backgrounds. This team member acknowledges that having multiple leaders increases the likelihood that the team leadership reflects the diversity of players and can relate to their individual preferences and characters. The leadership team should, therefore, match the actual team.

How can the identity of a team be best represented if it is more diverse (Giessner & Horton, 2022)? A well-fitting framework is the social identity perspective which describes the psychological process at a team level. It consists of social identity theory (SIT, Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987) and has been applied to understand follower perceptions of leadership and the processes of leadership emergence (van Knippenberg et al., 2003). A central concept in this framework is group prototypicality, described as “the degree to which the leader is representative of the group” (Giessner et al., 2013, p. 659; also see Steffens et al., 2021). While group prototypicality is considered to be the property of an individual,

in diverse team compositions, team members seem to think that a group of leaders is a better entity to represent the team. Recent research on mergers and acquisitions suggests similar ideas for top management teams (Giessner & Horton, 2022). We argue that team composition triggers team members to realize that a group of leaders might better represent the team identity than a single leader.

This aspect is closely related to the second team context element: Team identity/identification. Team players indicated that this representativeness for the diverse team is important because a team with a strong connection and bond is needed. Players see the need for strong team identity/identification. As one of the athletes pointed out:

*“I believe that individual leaders need to have an affinity with the players. Therefore, you probably need several leaders in a players' group”*  
*(Interviewee 11).*

This player further indicated that this affinity creates a social bond between leaders and players. This affinity among leaders and players is important to ensure collaboration. In other words, the leaders' prototypicality enables team members to identify with the team. One of our interviewees explains:

*“I think there are several leaders in the team. You have a captain and a vice-captain. That's fine, but there has to be a certain level of support. This support reflects how the team is composed” (Interviewee 11).*

Besides the fact that a team might require multiple leaders, the interviewee mentions the importance of connecting and bonding among leaders and players. Previous research on the social identity processes has shown that team identity/identification has positive implications for team functioning (Riketta & van Dick, 2005). Strong team identity/identification results in higher satisfaction and better in-role and extra-role performance. In this competitive team sport context, players (as well as coaches) indicate that it is important that team members define themselves in terms of the collective and take the team's interest at heart when playing. Multiple leaders might be able to create a stronger team identity/identification. This is also reflected in the following quote: “Team identity is very important. It's what you want to be, what you want to radiate together. The team leaders represent your identity” (Interviewee 19). This quote shows how diverse team composition and the need for strong team identity/identification enable the support for multiple leaders in a team. The athlete argues that multiple leadership might be a way to achieve the need for high team identity/identification in a situation of complex team structures. For this player, having more than one



leader was a way to align both contextual needs. However, this does not mean that multiple leadership always works. Rather, these conditions set the stage for multiple leadership to be accepted. Therefore, we also set this as a starting point in our model (see Figure 2 on page 24). The functioning of multiple leadership is highly influenced on how multiple leadership emerges and develops in a team.

### **Process of Development**

The aggregate dimension, Process of Development, comprises two second-order themes: the Emergence of Interactivity and Maintenance. The Emergence of Interactivity can be defined as a bottom-up and top-down process of leadership emergence. Our interviews indicate that these processes are important for establishing a sustainable way of multiple leadership structures. This differs from previous findings about leadership emergence, which focus on interindividual differences such as extraversion, dominance, and the emotional intelligence of individuals that emerge as team leaders (Cote et al., 2010; Enasari et al., 2011). The literature on the emergence of shared leadership indicates that a shared understanding of purpose, a feeling of being recognized, and a supportive climate help to

establish shared leadership (Carson et al., 2007). While these aspects are also partly reflected in the previously discussed Team identity/Identification theme, Emergence of Interactivity reflects much more about the actual process of emergence in which the coaching staff (top-down) and the players (bottom-up) jointly search for the best leadership team. Leadership preferably emerges from the players' group, with limited steering by the coaching staff. One of the athletes identified an essential aspect in the process of leadership emergence:

*“The group must feel supported and heard and must come with a plan and a DNA that the whole group, say 80% or 90% of the group, can recognize and commit to” (Interviewee 23).*

This athlete implies that the players in a team are part of the emergence of a team because the identity (i.e., DNA) needs to be reflected in the team leadership. The team needs to undergo some team reflection about its main identity to establish a team leadership structure. The athlete mentioned that a sensitive calibration process of team players and potential leaders within the team needs to occur. Multiple leadership can emerge from such an interactive process, representing the team's identity in the best way possible. As the athlete further explains:

*“I think it’s important that all of us can identify ourselves with one of the leaders and that we can express ourselves to that leader” (Interviewee 23).*

This shows that the process is also related to team identity/identification and accepting identity as followers and leaders (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). A more detailed example from one of the teams further exemplifies this. After failing to qualify for the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, a new coach and staff were appointed to the Netherlands women’s national rugby sevens team. After some of the older players left, the team had to be rebuilt. At the time, the coach had to deal with two groups in the team. One group saw themselves as the leaders, and the other group questioned the leadership legitimacy of that group. To overcome this situation, the coach attracted new players and focused on a leadership structure based on clear roles, tasks, and targets to cover all aspects of a properly functioning team. The coach used the metaphor of building a car. You need to have all the parts to be able to drive. In other words, players had a specific role in making the team work. The coach said:

*“You must accept everyone's role - your role and that of your teammates. Once you know what the expertise of the leadership team should be, it must be accepted by the team.” (Interviewee 24).*

The coach explained that she needed the competencies of all the players to perform as a team. from the group during training sessions and matches.

Our research suggests that developing multiple leadership is a complex and sensitive process. Forced leadership can lead to a mismatch and a lack of acceptance in the team. The Netherlands national korfbal team is an example. During a training camp in Turkey in 2005, the coach appointed a leadership team, which was not supported by the team. Players who were not selected felt left out and not recognized for their contributions, and the appointed leaders did not feel the support of their team members for their roles. Both groups became dysfunctional, and the situation impacted almost all aspects of team functioning. One of the athletes explained:

*Suddenly one group started to dislike the group that had been selected for the leadership team. Are you going to tell me what to do? And why did you decide that? The 'why' was explained by the coach to the leadership team, while the others were left out. At one point, one group went out, and*

*the other group stayed behind. So, you're not a team anymore, but two separate groups. (Interviewee 8)*

The coach dismissed the players from their leadership roles a few days later and opted for a process whereby the leadership team organically emerged from the players' group. The coach facilitated this process by allowing the players to take a more natural role in the team and started to enforce this by discussing the qualities with each player to see what role fitted best. In this way, leadership in the team was also granted by the other players who experienced the leadership team selection as a more participative process.

The other second-order theme, Maintenance, refers to a continuous leadership development process to maintain a multiple leadership structure. Our interviewees mentioned that multiple leadership structures could be fragile and require ongoing attention.

*"You need to go through the process continuously. As soon as you think you're performing and after you've performed, you go back to the first stage: storming, norming, forming, and performing" (Interviewee 18).*

The coach explained that team and leadership development was a continuous process. This means that the staff, leadership group, and players

should continuously calibrate the direction and interaction in the team. A continuous maintenance process is required to ensure a longer-term stable equilibrium in a team.

Maintaining team structures is essential for high-performing collaborative research teams. These teams are “committed to a common purpose, approach, and performance goals for which they hold themselves mutually accountable” (p.31; Cheruvilil et al., 2014). This strongly overlaps with our context. While this previous research focuses on maintaining a team, in our case, this issue is even more relevant for establishing a leadership structure with more than one leader. This also makes sense as teams change over time. Some team members (i.e., players) leave the group, and new ones join. Younger players become older and may change their club team, which can bring new diversity to the team. Further, the playing style and tactics might change over time. Thus, group prototypes (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003; Tuner et al., 1987) also change. This implies that team dynamics require continuous adjustment. For example, at the beginning of 2020, new players were added to the leadership team of the national field hockey team to reflect the changing team identity.

Athletes often mentioned sensitivity in developing a leadership team, whereby Emergence of Interactivity and Maintenance of team leadership are

two key related processes. Players emphasized the importance of an organic process in which leadership emerges from the team. This process of leadership emergence, in which all stakeholders participate, involves a continuous calibration of the group's identity. In all the teams, the emergence process of the leadership team required high involvement of the players, coaching staff, and the head coach in particular. In our cases, the emergence of leadership teams was a bottom-up process in which the team granted leadership to team members (cf. DeRue & Ashford, 2010). At the same time, it was top-down, in which the coach played an important role in facilitating the process.

### **Team Functioning**

The third aggregate dimension, Team Functioning, includes the second-order themes, Identity Transformation and Team Performance, and conceptualizes the transformation of the identity and performance of the team based on motivation, trust, and collaboration. Team functioning is “how teams think, feel, and act” (McGuier et al., 2021, p. 2; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006) and includes the affective, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes of teams (e.g., interactions, collective efficacy, cohesion, coordination,

information sharing, and performance). It is also related to accepting the team's identity as a multiple leadership group. In other words, accepting and identifying with a team provides the basis for a well-functioning team (see Riketta, 2005; Van der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005). One of the players explains team functioning as follows:

*The big lesson for me is that it all has to fit in. All the details must be right, and you must do it together. You can't stand on a playing field with eleven good players and hope it will all be okay. You can only win with the best team, not with only the best eleven or best sixteen, or eighteen.*  
(Interviewee 23)

This reflects a positive transformation of identity and a focus on team performance.

Team Functioning comprises two themes: Identity Transformation and Team Performance. The former refers to a change of the players' self-concept that accepts multiple leadership as an essential and positive aspect of the team's identity (cf. Rogers et al., 2017). Multiple leadership is certainly a challenge for teams. Still, based on the first two aggregate dimensions (i.e., Team Context and Process of Development), team members seemed to accept



multiple leadership as part of who they are as a team and to view this team structure as something positive.

*“I think our leaders have three visions. If we can direct these three visions into a shared vision, it would be very powerful” (Interviewee 23).*

This athlete indicates that he accepts three leaders in the team and interprets the differences in vision as a positive and powerful aspect of the team when these visions come together in a shared vision. As individuals strive to have a positive social identity, a feeling of being valued and distinct from other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), team players construct a positive identity in a multiple leadership team. They perceive it as a valuable and powerful characteristic that can differentiate their team from other teams.

This aspect also has consequences for the athletes’ perceptions of team performance. For example, one athlete indicated that multiple leadership could provide strategic game advantages. The team might be able to adjust their game plan more easily. This is reflected in the following quote:

*“As a team, you are much more difficult to grasp by your opponent because the game plan is a team effort. Different players can stand up and make choices, which can vary daily, depending on what the game demands” (Interviewee 19).*

This interviewee refers to the advantages of a multiple leadership structure. Multiple leadership, translated into diverse tactical ways of playing, makes it more difficult for the opponent during a game. The game plan can change from game to game. For example, in the finals of the European Cup, the Dutch national field hockey team were 2-0 down against Belgium with only two quarters of 15 minutes to play. During the break, a reporter asked the captain of the Dutch team questions in the past tense, as if the Dutch team had already lost the finals. The captain, Billy Bakker, corrected the reporter by indicating that they still had to play two quarters and were performing well as a team, except the results did not yet reflect this. During the break, the Dutch team gathered in a huddle and the leadership team referred to team values to increase team identity/identification. They changed their tactical game plan for the final two quarters and changed leadership responsibilities. They won the European Championships in 2017 by 3-2 and played a fantastic second-half final in which Belgium did not have an answer to the game plan and team mentality of the Dutch team.

Although we can certainly not causally link these events, it shows the team's belief in accepting the leadership team, the team identity, and the ability to use this in their performance as a team. This is also reflected by the captain, who told the staff team that this was the first game he had truly

played for the team, not himself. In other words, the shared team identity became a significant source for the players and their cognitive, affective, and behavioral team outcomes.

## **Discussion**

Our research explores how multiple leadership is established and maintained in practice. Focusing on the context of professional sports teams and employing an inductive qualitative research approach, we found three relevant dimensions that enable multiple leadership in practice: Team Context, Process of Development, and Team Functioning. Team Context can be seen as a trigger for individuals to accept multiple leaders in the team as a possible leadership structure. We find that high diversity, size, and the need for a cohesive team identity can trigger athletes to consider multiple leadership as a feasible, maybe even necessary leadership model. This, however, alone is not sufficient. Establishing and maintaining are the key mechanisms that enable a more sustainable way of multiple leadership emergence in our context (i.e., Process of Development). Our findings show that the interviewees consistently argued that an emergence process does

need a bottom-up and top-down approach in which the team is included in decisions (i.e., Emergence of Interactivity).

Given that teams change over time (i.e., players leave, new players join) and context may change (e.g., new game rules, new tactical innovations), a multiple leadership structure cannot be seen as a fixed construct but as an ongoing process that needs continuous Maintenance. The actual changes in the team, certainly depend on the dynamics and the context of the team. It might involve having fewer or more leaders (or even one if this fits the situation).

We found this dynamic consideration especially insightful, given that current literature on shared or distributed leadership often fails to consider how such leadership in plural structures is established or maintained (cf. Dennis et al., 2012; Döös & Wilhelmson, 2021). This development process enables team members to perceive a positive team functioning when implementing multiple leadership. In our case, players transformed their team identity, accepted multiple leaders, and perceived value in their existence. In other words, they formed a positive social identity around multiple leadership (c.f. Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Based on this transformed

team identity, they perceived an increased potential for their team performance in and across games.

Overall, we believe that our insights can help theorize about multiple leadership, especially on the dynamic processes of its emergence and Maintenance. In Figure 3, we suggest a model based on our results. We show how an interactive process of emergence can result in a positively functioning team that establishes itself with an identity transformation of accepting and valuing multiple leadership, strengthening team performance. This may also further strengthen the transformation of identity. We also recognize that this is an ongoing process reflected in the Maintenance of these processes over time. In other words, the emergence process, the identity transformation, and the resulting team performance are ongoing processes that depend on changes in and outside the team. This process might be continuous but can also be disruptive (see also Appendix 1 for a short reflection on the Dutch National Hockey team case).

### **Theoretical Implications**

Our research contributes to research on leadership in three ways. First, it shows that leadership is not always allocated to a single person, but

sometimes multiple leaders are needed to represent the identity of a group. Contextual factors seem to determine whether team members develop a more vertical or horizontal leadership schema (c.f. Welmann et al., 2022). As leadership structures evolve to solve social coordination problems (Van Vugt et al., 2008), we show that complex team compositions and a need for strong identity can be addressed by multiple leadership.

We do not argue that this is the only reasonable strategy. There are undoubtedly capable single leaders who might be able to address these needs too. But multiple leadership is one possible form of leadership that can solve these needs (cf. Giessner & Horton, 2022). Second, the question of how multiple leadership can be established and maintained has largely been neglected in the current leadership literature (Döös, & Wilhelmson, 2021). This, dimension, however, was the one that most of the interviewed athletes mentioned. We argue that future research focusing on the effectiveness of leadership in the plural needs to consider the emergence and maintenance processes by providing more description of the context of the study itself (Johns, 2018) or developing useful measures to tap into these processes in more detail. Third, we show that team members can adapt and form a positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) around teams with multiple leaders, which also relates to stronger team performance. This aspect might show a

possible advantage compared to single, hierarchical leadership models (cf. Yukl, 2010). Our study focused on the advantages of multiple leadership when enabling a team to change tactics and team structures. These changes may not have been possible with a single leader. Yet, we cannot say whether multiple leadership can provide performance levels beyond a single leader model.

### **Limitations and Strengths**

As with any research, this research has some limitations and strengths. First, the size of our empirical study limits the inductive research approach, although 35 interviews represent a sufficient number to do such grounded qualitative research (Rijnsoever, 2017). Although a level of saturation was reached in relation to the research question, additional interviews on the different outcomes of the model could add to our results. Second, we studied various teams who applied multiple leadership. Future research could focus on specific sports and conduct research on similar teams and compare cases. Third, although we obtained new generic outcomes in our research, the specific context may also play an important role in our findings.

However, our unique sample in a competitive and very performance-oriented context has strong similarities to many teams in business contexts. Thus, without generalizing, we believe the dimensions identified in this research could be considered in other contexts. Finally, while we suggest a theoretical model and discuss some potential causal links, our study cannot prove these. This, however, is not the goal of an inductive study. We hope our findings will inspire future research to test some of the assumptions we raised deductively.

## **Conclusion**

Multiple leadership can be well suited for teams and can improve team functioning. It mirrors the complexity of a team better than single-leader models. At the same time, multiple leadership increases complexity, which makes it more vulnerable than traditional models. Our research with professional sports teams reveals new insights on when and how such leadership structures emerge and prevail over time, and how impactful they can be. It adds new options for the current complex problems we face and the way how leadership and when it is established and maintained seem to be the key for an effective way of using such structures.



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**Table 1**  
*Overview of Sports Teams in This Research*

<b>Teams interviewed</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Team distribution gender (excl. coaches)</b>	<b>Coach</b>
Netherlands men's national field hockey team	8	4	11	100% Male	Male (3x)
Netherlands National Korfbal Team	7			67% Female 33% Male	Male
Netherlands women's national rugby sevens	7			100% Female	Female
Dutch women's football team PSV	8			100% Female	Male
<b>Interviews per year</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>		
<b>Total interviews</b>			<b>45</b>	<b># team players interviewed = 39</b>	<b># Coaches = 6</b>

Tabel 2

Overview quotes linked to the Gioia model and literature references

3rd order	2nd order	Quote	Context	Literature reference
	Team context	<i>The whole structure, the hierarchy, and the support for that hierarchy, with those three captains from different clubs, is much better. Because of the foundation that lies beneath the leadership team, it has the support of the team.</i> (interviewee nr. 2)	The team member indicates, the different club cultures within the Dutch National Field Hockey team and, as a result, the game style of playing in relation to the clubs. Clubs play different play styles, which needs to come together in the national team.	
	Team identification	<i>"Everyone has preferences. The moment you have more leaders, the chance that everything and everyone is represented is more likely."</i> (interviewee nr. 23)	The "leadership team" should mirror the composition of the team. Athletes indicated that the difference in character traits and different backgrounds with regard to the national club, demands to have more than one leader. What is meant by 'Team composition', is the diversity within their team (e.g., players with different character traits, club background and age) but also the team size which contributes to this complexity perception. This brings a complexity along in forming a team and within that	Scott De Rue and Ashford (2010) Have done extensive research to this specific phenomena of 'the process of the development of the new leadership group, reflecting the identity process'
	Collective identity	<i>"I believe the individual leaders needs to have affinity with the players, therefore you probably need several leaders to match with the players group"</i> (interviewee nr. 11)	The team composition might steer towards multiple leaders as best leadership form. The quote of the player reflects the importance of the connection and bonding between leaders and players. This kind of relationship between a leader and a player and between players is important to make the collaboration.	This is primarily based on a perception of a collective identity – defined as an internalization of the team into one's self-definition (Ashfort & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979)
	Team context	<i>"The identity of the team is very important, the identity is what you want to be, what you want to radiate with each other. And those leaders represent your identity"</i> (interviewee nr. 19)	The quote of the player indicates how multiple leadership might be a potential answer to reflect the identity of the team in a better way.	

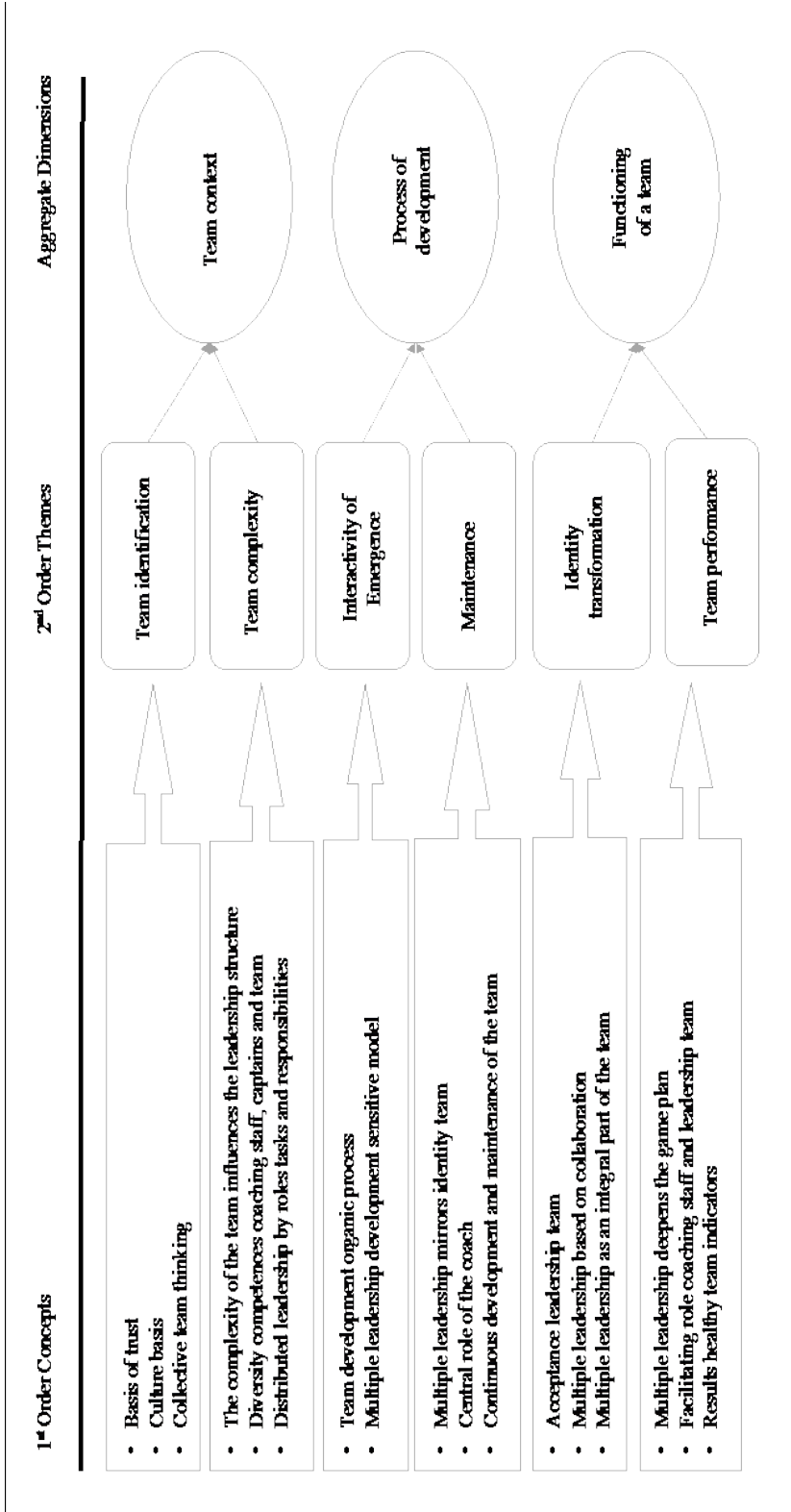


3rd order	2nd order	Quote	Context	Literature reference
Development process	Interactivity of emergence	<p>"The whole group must feel supported and heard and - and must come with a plan and a DNA, in which the whole group, say eighty, ninety percent of that group can recognize and commit to".</p> <p>"You must have acceptance of everyone's role. Of your role and that of other team players.</p> <p>For example, the moment that you know what the expertise of that leadership team needs to be. This needs to have acceptance from the team." (interviewee nr.24)</p> <p><i>"Not really imposed, but chosen by the coach, which in itself is quite normal. Nevertheless, there were two sides to it. On the one hand, the selected players for the leadership role had not asked for the role and didn't feel comfortable in a leadership role."</i> (interviewee nr. 1).</p>	<p>Players in a team are part of the emergence and the development of a team and her leadership, whereby the team as a whole need to develop a plan in terms of direction and interaction which has the support of the team.</p> <p>The development of multiple leadership is a complex and sensitive process. When leadership within the team is forced, the chances on a mismatch and lack of acceptance in the team are substantial.</p> <p>A new leadership team emerged from the group, in the process of team identification.</p>	<p>The process of the development of the new leadership group, reflected the identity process (Scott De Rue and Ashford, 2010).</p>
Maintenance		<p>"There came also a kind of dislike in the team against the other part of the team who were elected as the leadership team. E.g. are you going to tell me what I have to do? And why do you decide that? The 'why' was explained by the coach to the leadership team, while others were left out. At one point, one group went out, and the other group stayed behind. So, then you were no longer a team, it really became two separate groups" (interviewee nr. 8)</p> <p>"You need to go through that process continually. As soon as you think that you are performing, once you've made that performance, you go back to the next stage again: storming, norming, forming, performing". (interviewee nr. 18)</p>	<p>Players who were not selected for the leadership group felt left out and not recognized for their contributions, while at the same time, the appointed leaders did not feel the support of their team members for their role. This situation resulted in two groups and became dysfunctional and started to have impact on almost all aspects of the team functioning.</p> <p>'Maintenance' is a continuous process of development. As one of the coaches describes this in the process of storming, norming, forming and performing.</p>	<p>Psychologist Bruce Tuckman on "forming, storming, norming, and performing" in his 1965 paper, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups."</p>

3rd order	2nd order	Quote	Context	Literature reference
	Identity transformation	"To actually keep pushing the team in different circumstances and to direct the team in the direction you want them to develop." (interviewee nr. 19)	Part of a good functioning team is the fact that the team is in continuous development of improving. Hereby it's important to know as a team what direction you are heading and become resilient in different circumstances to keep on working towards your goals.	
Functioning of the leadership model	Team functioning	"As a team, you are much more difficult to grasp by your opponent, because the game plan is a team effort, different players can stand-up and make choices, this can change by the day, depending on what the game demands".	What the interviewees means by this is that Multiple leadership brings in, different styles, which helps to deepen the game plan, because a team has a broader repertoire to choose from. Multiple leadership translated in a multi-dimensional way of functioning of a team makes it more difficult for your opponent to grasp.	Scott De Rue and Ashford, 2010

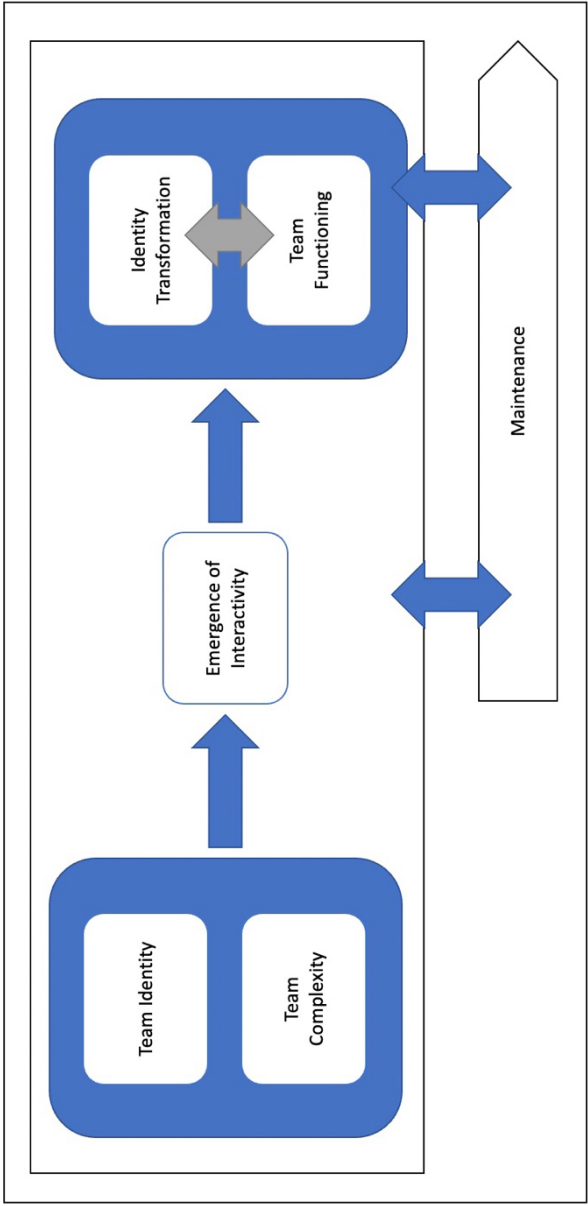
**Figure 1**

**The Gioia Method Applied to Leadership in Sports Teams**



**Figure 2**

The Emergence of Multiple Leadership in Teams with Equivalent High Expertise



## **Appendix**

### **A Multiple Leadership Case Story: The Case of the Netherlands**

#### **National Field Hockey Team**

We applied our multiple leadership to the Dutch national field hockey team and the development process of the leadership team. After a disappointing Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, the team and its leadership team had to reinvent itself. One of the lessons learned was that the coach had appointed a captain and a leadership team without the players' consent. This resulted in a lack of support from the team. Some team members gave up their leadership roles before the Olympic Games because some of the players did not support them. Athlete 1 mentioned: "The leadership team was not really imposed, but chosen by the coach, which was quite normal at the time. There were two sides to it. On the one hand, the selected players for the leadership role had not requested the role and didn't feel comfortable in it" (Interviewee 1). The Dutch national field hockey team staff took another approach and opted for multiple leaders with different backgrounds and character traits to mirror the team's identity in the best way possible.

After six months, a new leadership team emerged organically from the group in the process of team identification, mirrored in the composition of the leadership team. The staff had learned from the mistakes made during preparations for the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. The coach had appointed the captain and a group of senior players without consulting the team. The national team players did not feel represented by the leadership team and were reluctant to grant leadership to the appointed leaders. The leaders gave back their leadership role to the coach before the Olympic Games because they did not feel the team's support.

After the Olympic Games, the coaching staff chose a different approach: a new leadership team would emerge from the players' group. The new leaders could develop organically by taking the lead on various occasions with the Dutch national field hockey team.

The formal appointment of the leadership team was a logical consequence of the emergence of the leaders and contributed to reinforcing the group identity.

The development of the new leadership group reflected the identity process (De Rue & Ashford, 2010), resulting in a team of three leaders who

shared the captain role, representing various field hockey clubs and character traits within the team.





## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **FROM VERTICAL TO HORIZONTAL LEADERSHIP**

#### **How case teaching can change leadership structure schemas about leadership**

Folkert Mulder, Steffen R. Giessner & Bas Koene

Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University

## **Abstract**

Leadership is often understood as being based on hierarchical structures. In reality, teams often may have or need more than one leader. Furthermore, new forms of teamwork require that many team members may take over leadership roles. A more horizontal leadership structure schema may enable teams to work in such contexts. However, deeply learned vertical leadership structure schemas with their evolutionary basis and learned through socialization, may be especially hard to change. This begs the question of whether it is possible to change individual leadership structure schemas to prepare employees for new ways of teamwork. In this paper, we argue that leadership structure schemas can be changed with experiential learning within a relatively short time frame. Based on insights from schema theory, we developed a simple case-teaching intervention providing information disconfirming the old schema and supporting active engagement with the new schema. We show how the case intervention enabled students to revise their leadership structure schema from a more vertical toward a horizontal one. Furthermore, our findings indicate the importance of perceived case quality for schema revisions, supporting the idea that schema revision happens when relevant and believable disconfirming information is provided in an engaging way.

**Keywords:** Vertical and Horizontal Leadership, Multiple leadership, Case Study learning.

## **From vertical to horizontal leadership: How case teaching can change leadership structure schemas about leadership**

While most leadership frameworks assume a hierarchy (Dinh et al., 2014) as traditional views of leadership are mostly based on power relations on a vertical dimension in space (Giessner & Schubert, 2019; Schubert, 2005), new realities require something different. Increasingly highly educated and diverse workforces must tackle complex tasks. This trend is expected to continue in the future, as the share of employees with secondary education will likely increase by nearly 45% within the next 40 years within the EU (EU Science Hub, July 2022). Consequently, a hierarchical leadership approach is expected to become less effective. It puts the burden of leadership too much on individuals in a relatively inert formal organization, limiting access to the wisdom of all employees in the leadership process and complicating inclusivity of a diverse workforce. The required innovation and synergy effects of an increasingly educated and diverse workforce are very much dependent on appropriate forms of leadership. Important new leadership approaches consider that leadership can be in the plural, which assumes that a team might go for more horizontal structures and have more than one leader (Carson et al., 2007; Denis et al., 2012; D’Innocenzo et al., 2014; Perry et al., 1999; Wellman et al., 2022).

Previous research suggests that leadership in the plural can be an answer to overcoming complexity in teams and organizations and improving performance. This is because more than one leader might better embody a diverse workforce (Giessner & Horton, 2022; Mulder, Giessner, Bogenrieder, & Kaandorp, 2022). Further, the environment in which teams and organizations need to operate is often complex, and many heads can provide better solutions and decisions (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). In addition, highly skilled knowledge workers are included in the leadership processes if leadership is shared (Pearce & Conger, 2003). As a result, teams and organizations might be more effective if they apply a more shared or distributed leadership approach (Wellman et al., 2022).

However, introducing these kinds of leadership approaches may not be easy. As shared leadership in teams emerges via an interactive process of taking and granting the lead between team members (DeRue & Ashford, 2010), to enable teams to establish more than one leader in their team requires all team members to see the possibility of a horizontal rather than vertical leadership structure. Indeed, recent research by Ned Wellman and colleagues (2022) indicates that if team members (i.e., structural leaders and their followers) have more horizontal (versus vertical) Leadership Structure Schemas (LSS), they show more positive reactions toward leadership.

However, it is yet unclear whether these LSS are malleable. According to schema theory (Lipman, 1991; Rumelhart, 1984), schemas guide how we interpret new information and might not be easily changed. Research has shown that thinking vertically about leadership is deeply seated (Giessner & Schubert, 2019; Schubert, 2005) and it takes a lot of effort and direct engagement in practice to establish teams with a multiple leadership structure (Mulder et al., 2022). Similarly, (Timperley and Robinson, 2002) show an example of schema change in the workplace through exposure to salient discrepant information and intensive guidance to deal with this information in practice. Key question we aim to address is whether it is possible to engender LSS change in individuals as part of a general leadership training. Previous research argues that experiential learning methods and especially case teaching can bring about fundamental changes in perspective, though research evidencing this claim is limited (Kim et al. 2006). In this research we address this issue by conducting an intervention study with MBA students using a leadership case on multiple leadership teams to change their LSS from vertical to horizontal (Wellman et al., 2022). We developed a teaching case addressing this topic in a team sport context, followed by a discussion with students (Mulder & Giessner, 2022). Such an experiential learning method may enable learning and changes in the mindset of students (Kolb,

2014; McCarthy, 2010), especially if the case transmits new divergent information (cf. Reynolds et al., 1996; Schutzwahl, 1998). Our findings show that for MBA students the case intervention significantly changed their LSS schema from vertical to horizontal with effects lasting for at least three months. Furthermore, we contribute to research on the impact of case quality on learning effectiveness, as we find that perceived case quality affects student learning, which in our case supports the assumption that the quality of the transmission of discrepant information is of importance for schema change (Reynolds et al., 1996; Schutzwahl, 1998). In all, our research shows how we can change individual schemas about leadership structures from vertical to horizontal, enabling organizations to prepare their workforces for new ways of leadership.

### **Theoretical framework**

Over the past decade, the business environment has increasingly become more complex due to shifting demands of consumers, digitalization, complex global supply chains, critical workforce, and macro-economic developments. The more complex business environment has also influenced employees' and leaders' roles, tasks, and responsibilities (Marion, Uhl-Bien,

2001). Roles often have multiple dimensions, especially in complex projects, whereby different stakeholders are involved (Nguyen et al., 2018). Consequently, responsibilities have often become ‘shared responsibilities,’ which demand a different way of collaboration.

New forms of leadership are needed to support these changes. Both academics and practitioners have started to consider leadership in the plural – implying more than one person leading a team or organization – as a way of dealing with those new challenges (Denis, Langely & Sergi, 2012). Basically, the leadership paradigm needs to shift from vertical to horizontal thinking about how responsibilities and decisions are shared in a team. These more shared schemas, with more than one leader, often present a better fit to the identity of a team and its required team dynamics (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Based on experimental and field data, Wellman and colleagues (2022) found that individuals who did not have formal authority had a more horizontal (versus vertical) LSS, more positively associated with effective leadership behavior and concluded that horizontal LSS might be necessary to provide effective leadership/team functioning in a context where more than one leader is required.

## **Difficulty of changing LSS schema**

However, it is not clear yet, whether LSSs are schemas that can be easily changed or not. From a practical point of view, it is essential to understand whether we can shift LSS because this would provide us with a way of preparing teams to engage in the form of leadership in the plural (Dennis et al., 2012).

According to schema theory schemas may be hard to change (see Lipman, 1991; Rumelhart, 1984). Schemas are organized knowledge structures representing concepts which can be events, actions, or situations. They include declarative (i.e., what) and procedural (i.e., how) knowledge. On the one hand, schemas are dynamic because they change with new information and experiences. On the other hand, however, they guide how we see the world and what information we consider or ignore. This can create a feedback loop whereby we perceive what we expect to perceive (Lipman, 1991). Therefore, despite the dynamic nature of schemas, changes may be hard and take time, especially if schemas have a well-developed structure already, such as LSSs.

Leadership Structure Schemas (LSSs) regarding vertical versus horizontal structure may be especially hard to change. Previous research has



shown that we have natural tendency to perceive leadership on a vertical dimension (Giessner & Schubert, 2019; Schubert, 2005). The more powerful individual is seen as being above the less powerful and this association is used to understand the concept of leadership. This association is argued to have its roots in our evolutionary development (i.e., it is adaptive to be afraid of those animals larger than us) or in our social learning (i.e., our parents are taller than us and have control over us in our first years of development) (see Giessner & Schubert, 2007). Schubert, Waldzus and Giessner (2009) indicated that asking individuals to suppress the association of size and power actively can only be achieved partly. In other words, the schemata association of verticality and power is relatively strong. Furthermore, previous research showed that developing multiple leadership structures is a delicate process. In a sport context, Mulder et al. (2022) showed in a rich analysis of the process of change that team members needed to accept such structures, and that *how* the structures were established mattered

### **Changing LSS with experiential teaching**

Research on schema change provides some insight on how schema change can be supported. In a field study of schema change in a workplace

Timperley and Robinson (2002) showed how exposure to salient discrepant information and intensive guidance to deal with this information in practice was beneficial to effective schema change. These findings were in line with previous research arguing that discrepant and surprising information was difficult to incorporate into an existing schema, disconfirming it and increasing the likelihood of schema revision (Reynolds, Sinatra & Jetton, 1996; Schützwohl, 1998). Based on their findings Timperley and Robinson (2001) identified three critical conditions for schema revision. First, salience of discrepant data. If data tell an opposite story, this will trigger the reflection and openness to changing the schema. Second, external support to analyse and interpret the discrepant data, and third availability of alternative practices that are consistent with the novel schema.

These findings help to see how case teaching might support the process schema change. Previous research on the effectiveness of case teaching highlights specifically these aspects of the case method as key contributions to learning with cases, though research evidencing this claim is limited (Kim et al. 2006). As such our key question of whether it is possible to engender LSS change in individuals as part of a general leadership training using a case study is particularly relevant. It aims to provide evidence to a specific contribution of case teaching, i.e., the possibility of learning that

affects rather difficult to change cognitive schemas by doing two things. First, a case study provides rich experiential material to trigger schema reconsideration. And second, the case study provides a rich context for new schema acceptance and internalization offering a storyline to support the development of the novel knowledge structures and rich contextual information presenting the new information and experiences needed to strengthen the declarative and procedural knowledge base supporting the new horizontal LSS schema.

First, case teaching, as a form of experiential learning provides divergent information in a surprising and engaging way (Kolb, 1984; Steffe & Thompson, 2000). It is a form of teaching whereby students create a relationship between theoretical frameworks and real-life practices (Kolb, 1984). By engaging with real-life experiences individuals are presented with salient new discrepant information in a rich and contextualized manner where surprise is in the confrontation with the real-life schema disconfirming experiences (Okan, 1993). In terms of Timperley and Robinson (2001), the salience of discrepant information is increased, and the rich and contextualized experience provides a basis for an alternative storyline supporting the new knowledge structure and internalization of the new schema. Given that new information is provided in an engaging, surprising

way, schema revision should thus be more likely (cf. Schützwahl, 1998). Consequently, we argue that experiential case teaching may help to shift LSS from vertical to horizontal.

Case-based teaching is often described as a more effective instructional method than conventional lecture-based teaching for stimulating students' critical thinking because the students need to analyze real-life problems and make choices based on limited information (Kim et al., 2006). According to Kim and colleagues (2006), an inspiring case enabling an experiential learning experience needs to be: (1) relevant, (2) realistic, (3) engaging, (4) challenging, and (5) Instructional. As explained, these attributes match very well with the conditions for a schema revision (Timperley & Robinson, 2001; Schützwahl, 1998). This implies that the intervention's quality matters in the ability to change schemas. Especially given that LSS might be evolutionary driven (Giessner & Schubert, 2019) and, therefore, potentially hard to change (Schubert et al., 2009), the experienced quality of the case intervention is expected to be important. In line with Kim et al.'s (2006) definition of quality in terms of case content (richness, format, structure, and storyline) as key quality aspects relevant to a schema change.

## **Predictions**

Although case teaching is a standard method used in many business schools and beyond, there is only limited research on the impact of case studies on the change of schemas or mindsets. We argue that case studies enable such changes. First, in providing a rich description of a relevant situation, a case presents new information to students enabling them to acquire new knowledge. Or, as Timperley & Robinson (2001) argued for schema revision, the experiential case will provide rich, first-hand information that provides salient discrepant data, but also a strong storyline supporting new schema internalization. Thus, a high-quality, real-life case on multiple leadership should enable students to acquire new knowledge about leadership in the plural, disconfirming the traditional hierarchical LSS by providing disconfirming data, and providing a context with relevant information and experiences to support the new horizontal LSS. Consequently, we predict;

*Hypothesis 1: Case-based teaching will improve knowledge about multiple leadership.*

More importantly, we predict that the case-based teaching approach should enable a change of the LSS from more vertical to more horizontal. As

we argued above, a case providing an alternative leadership schema of leadership in the plural (I.e., horizontal) should help to trigger a schema change. As we will outline in the methods section, our case provides a new perspective on vertical leadership, offers room for reflection and discussion, and the option of plural leadership. Consequently, we argue that such a teaching case should be able to change the LSS from vertical to horizontal.

*Hypothesis 2: Leadership structure schemas can be changed from vertical to horizontal via a case teaching approach.*

Finally, as mentioned already, cases can differ in quality (Kim et al., 2006). A higher-quality case should provide more potential for schema revision as it is more likely to provide realistic and relevant discrepant data and clear support for a new schema (Timperley & Robinson, 2001). Students who engage in case teaching might differ in their perception of case quality. We expect these differences should be reflected in the capacity of the case to change a schema, in our case, the LSS schema. Consequently, we predict that LSS should change more strongly from vertical to horizontal for those students experiencing the case as high in quality during the intervention (i.e., case teaching).

*Hypothesis 3: The change in leadership structure schemas is stronger for those students who evaluate the quality of the case as high.*

## **Method**

### **Case study ‘The Road to the Olympic Games Tokyo 2021’**

We developed a new teaching case on the topic of leadership in the plural (see Appendix). It was based on a qualitative research study of Mulder and colleagues (2022). We developed the case study to incorporate the key attributes for an adaptive, active learning approach, based on the theoretical framework of case-based learning by Kim et al. (2006).

In the case ‘The Road to the Olympic Games Tokyo 2021’ (Mulder & Giessner, 2021) students can explore practical and theoretical insights about leadership in the plural. The case is designed on the principles of Kim and colleagues (2006), who argue that a high-quality case needs to be relevant, realistic, engaging, challenging, and instructional. The case deals with a National Field Hockey Team and describes the period from the 2016 Olympic games until the planned 2020 Olympics (i.e., which was finally delayed due to Covid to 2021). First, in preparation for the session, students learn what kind of sports, Field Hockey is before entering the case. We used

some videos which are freely available on social media. The case itself exists out of four chronological parts, whereby the students are asked per part to read the text, followed by a limited number of questions on how they would approach, act, or react to events in the case. In other words, they step in the shoes of the leading character in the case and start to see the case through the eyes of the main actor in the case (i.e., a consultant supporting this team through this phase). This should, thus, increase learning through experience (McCarthy, 2010; Kolb, 1984). The teaching note to the case clearly outlines key aspects for the class discussion of each question, provides theory and models relevant to the discussion, and offers key takeaways and conclusions, structuring the storyline and student engagement with the chronological parts of the case. The first two parts of the case are more about identifying and addressing the issues in the case at the start (i.e., the team was more a group of individuals, and certain rituals, as well as suboptimal leadership, contributed to this situation). Part three of the case raised the question of the best-suited leadership structure. In itself, the case does not prescribe that leadership in the plural is the only feasible way. However, it opens the possibility for this and, in reality, the team also took such multiple leadership approaches. In this way, the case initiates a discussion between students about the pros and cons of more than one leader in a team and under certain



circumstances. The class discussion deepens this exploration and critical reflection. The case and the discussion itself provide discrepant perspectives on leadership and, thus, should enable schema changes (Timperley & Robinson, 2001).

## **Participants**

We applied the case in a context of an MBA course in Organizational Behavior (OB) at an international business school. A total of 115 students participated in the class. The sample consisted of 60 women with an average age of 30.55 (SD = 3.27). From those, not all agreed to use their data at all time points (i.e., 108 agreed at T0, 109 agreed at T1, 84 agreed at T2, and 105 agreed at T3).

## **Procedure**

The whole OB course consisted of 10 sessions of 3 hours. We taught the case in session 8. The cohort was divided into 3 groups, implying that we used the case three times. All groups were taught by the same teachers (i.e., two of the paper's authors). The session started immediately with the case. In this session, we only used the case up to part 3, because this is the part in

which a discussion emerges about leadership in the plural. After each case part, student teams discussed the respective question of the case for circa 20 minutes. Afterward, a few student teams presented their ideas, and we discussed them further in with the whole group. The discussion of part 3 was followed by a short, interactive lecture (30 min) about multiple leadership (see Dennis et al., 2012; Mulder et al., 2022). As there were 3 *student groups*, the timing of the case teaching differed. Group 1 received the session 5 days before Groups 2 and 3. Further, Group 2 received the session in the morning, and Group 3 followed in the afternoon. Consequently, one could consider the groups that received the intervention later as control groups.

## **Measures**

*Leadership structure schema (LSS)*. We used the 5-item scale developed by Wellman and colleagues (2022). The items ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). We were able to measure this scale 3 times. We first measured it circa 2 weeks before the session (T0) as part of a course-related individual feedback survey about leadership. The students, however, did not receive feedback for this specific measure at this point. The second measurement point was at the beginning of the session (T1), and the

third followed at the end of the session (T2), and the last measurement point was circa 3 months after this session (T3). For the first and last measurement points, students could indicate whether their data can be used for study purposes. Only those who agreed were included in this study. For the second and third measurement points, we informed students about the purpose of the survey (i.e., evaluation of the case) and asked them to participate. We indicated that this was not compulsory and that they could stop anytime.

***Knowledge about multiple leadership.*** We measured this with two items (“I know what multiple leadership is about”; “I know how multiple leadership works”) on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). This measure was captured before the session (T1) and after the session (T2).

***Case quality.*** Finally, we included a 6-item scale to measure reflecting the dimensions outlined by Kim and colleagues (2006; “The case helps to understand multiple leadership,” “The case is engaging,” “The case is realistic,” “The case is relevant,” “The case is challenging,” “The case is

well explained”) at T2. This Likert scale ranged from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much).

## Open Science

All data and syntax are made available at OSF-website and can be accessed via

[https://osf.io/q8btx/?view\\_only=e54ff6c0578d455c86c677d1ab90bd00](https://osf.io/q8btx/?view_only=e54ff6c0578d455c86c677d1ab90bd00).

## Results

Correlations, reliabilities, means, and standard deviations are reported in Table 1. Before testing for the hypotheses, we want to mention that overall, the case was evaluated as high in quality, as indicated by a T-test against the scale mean,  $t(83) = 21.77, p < .001$ . Thus, the quality of the case was present, which should enable learning (Kim et al., 2006; Timperley & Robinson, 2001).

To test hypothesis 1, we ran an ANOVA with the repeated measure of *knowledge about multiple leadership* and the between-subject factor of the *student group*. This analysis yielded a significant effect of *knowledge* over time,  $F(1,80) = 91.50, p < .001$ , partial eta-square = .53. As can be seen in

Table 1, students indicated that they learned more about multiple leadership (comparing before and after the session). There was no main effect of *student group*,  $F(2,80) = .61$ ,  $p = .55$ , partial eta-square = .02, nor an interaction effect,  $F(2,80) = .002$ ,  $p > .99$ , partial eta-square < .001. This indicates that the gain of knowledge was the same in all groups. This is important to show as the groups have been trained at different time points, and the starting time point of groups 2 and 3 can be seen as a control group for group 1. Thus, we found support for our first hypothesis.

To test hypothesis 2, we again ran an ANOVA with a repeated measure of *LSS* over time and the between-subject factor of the *student group*. This analysis yielded a significant effect of *LSS* over time,  $F(3, 210) = 24.99$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial eta-square = .26. Pairwise comparisons show that there was no significant difference in *LSS* between T0 and T1,  $M^{\text{diff}} = -.12$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $p > .99$ . However, after the training at T2, *LSS* shifted significantly more towards a shared perspective when compared to T1,  $M^{\text{diff}} = -.67$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p < .001$ , and T0,  $M^{\text{diff}} = -.78$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $p < .001$ . Further, *LSS* did not change significantly between T2 and T3,  $M^{\text{diff}} = -.13$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $p > .99$ . In other words, between 2 weeks before and the start of the training, there was no change in *LSS*, but after the training, participants shifted towards a more share *LSS*. This change was stable even 3 months after the intervention.

There was again no main effect of the *student group*,  $F(2,70) = .02$ ,  $p = .98$ , partial eta-square = .001, nor an interaction effect,  $F(6,210) = .42$ ,  $p = .87$ , partial eta-square = .01 (see Figure 1)

Finally, to test for hypothesis 3, we used the MEMORE-Macro to test for moderation in repeated measure designs (Montoya & Hayes, 2017). We used model 2 to test the moderation of case quality (T2) on the relationship between *LSS* at T1 and *LSS* at T2. The analysis yielded a significant effect of case quality on the changes in *LSS* between T1 and T2,  $effect = .25$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $t(82) = 2.37$ ,  $p = .02$ . Looking at 1 SD above and below the mean of *case quality*, *LSS* increased stronger towards a shared perception if the case was more positively evaluated,  $effect = .87$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $t(82) = 7.00$ ,  $p < .001$ , compared to a lower quality evaluation,  $effect = .451$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $t(82) = 3.64$ ,  $p = .005$ . This supports that the perceived quality of the case matters for changing the *LSS* mindset.

## **Discussion**

Using a newly developed case aiming to gain knowledge and changing schemas about vertical versus horizontal leadership, we show that students experienced knowledge gain about multiple leadership, supporting

hypothesis 1. There was no main effect of the student group nor an interaction effect, indicating that the knowledge gain was the same in all three groups. Most importantly, the case teaching intervention changed LSS from vertical to horizontal. In other words, we provide evidence of schema revision and, thus, support for our hypothesis 2. Again, the student group did not interact with this effect. In addition, a schema revision was not observed in the period between 2 weeks before nor the start of the session. Together, this provides supportive evidence that, while reading part A of the case beforehand prepared the students for class, it was the further engagement with the case, through discussion and further exploration using part B, C and D during the session, that changed the individual LSS schemas. Finally, we concluded that Schema revision was stronger for those students evaluating the case higher in quality. Supporting hypothesis 3, this interaction effect provides further evidence that perceived case quality in terms of content (case is realistic, relevant, challenging) and guidance (case is well-explained) are important for effective experiential learning and, in this case, effective LSS schema revision. Thus, supporting our expectation that high-quality cases may support schema revision by providing realistic and relevant discrepant data and clear support for a new schema (Kim et al., 2006; Timperley & Robinson, 2001).

## **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

Our research contributes to existing research schema theory (Lipman, 1991; Rumelhart, 1984) and especially to schema revision (Reynolds, Sinatra & Jetton, 1996; Schützwahl, 1998). A case-based experimental learning approach seems well suited to change schemas because it provides clear and salient discrepant information, while creating a supportive context for the process of schema revision (cf. Timperley & Robinson, 2001). We show that all three groups changed their schema and that this change was most substantial for those individuals experiencing a high-quality case. The realistic and relevant information provided in the case and the guidance in case structure and the discussion in the classroom can revise schemas and overcome potential resistance to schema revision.

This finding is important for two reasons. First, although former research suggests that a hierarchical schema about leadership might be evolutionary driven (Schubert, 2005; Giessner & Schubert, 2019) and, therefore, hard to change (Schubert et al., 2012), we show that such schemas are malleable in a relatively short period by following principles from schema theory (Reynolds, Sinatra & Jetton, 1996; Schützwahl, 1998). Second, and related, this enables organizations to establish leadership in the plural structures within their teams by training their employees to adopt a



more horizontal leadership structure schema. Although previous research has shown that leadership in the plural can be very effective (Dennis et al., 2012), how it can be established has hardly been explored. Qualitative research indicates that it can be a challenging and delicate process to develop and maintain (Mulder et al., 2022). Given that horizontal LSS has been shown to enable more effective leadership outcomes in settings requiring leadership in the plural (Giessner & Horton, 2023; Wellmann et al., 2022), our research indicates that it possible to broaden our toolkit for changing LSS from vertical to horizontal beyond extensive interventions in practice, to high-quality experiential case teaching interventions in an educational setting.

### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

As with every research, ours is not without limitations. One limitation is that we used only one teaching method with one self-developed teaching case. While we assume that other experiential teaching methods or cases may also enable change revision, we cannot generalize. However, a strength of our research is the finding that case quality moderates the schema revision. This finding provides more generalizable certainty that those factors of high-quality cases are essential in scheme revision (Kim et al., 2006; Timperley &

Robinson, 2001). Another limitation is the quest for the best control group. Although we have three groups who received the intervention at different time points and, thus, can serve as a control group in our studies (i.e., we tested for interaction effects of the groups and did not find any reliable effect), one may raise the question whether other types of control groups are needed (e.g., receiving another learning method). In other words, we cannot exclude the possibility that schema change might be possible with a simpler learning approach. However, the interaction effect with perceived case quality provides some evidence that the quality of the intervention method matters for schema change. Future research, however, might still explore different ways of changing the schemas and how effective these might be. The third point is that we do not know exactly how long-lasting these changes in LSS are. Nevertheless, given the strengths of the change, we would assume that they also have some longer-lasting effects here. However, this is certainly a question for future research.

## **Conclusion**

The complexity of tasks and the diversity of a high-quality workforce may challenge whether “classical” vertical leadership approaches are the

most suited for structuring teams. Recent research suggested that more horizontal leadership thinking enabling more than one leader in a team may be even more effective (Dennis et al., 2012; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Mulder et al., 2022; Wellman et al.,2022). While research predicted that changing LSS might be difficult, our research shows that we can change individual schemas about leadership structures from vertical to horizontal with a well-designed experiential case-teaching approach providing both discrepant knowledge and guidance in the process of LSS revision. In this way, organizations can be enabled to prepare their workforces for new ways of leadership thinking in the plural instead of one at the top.

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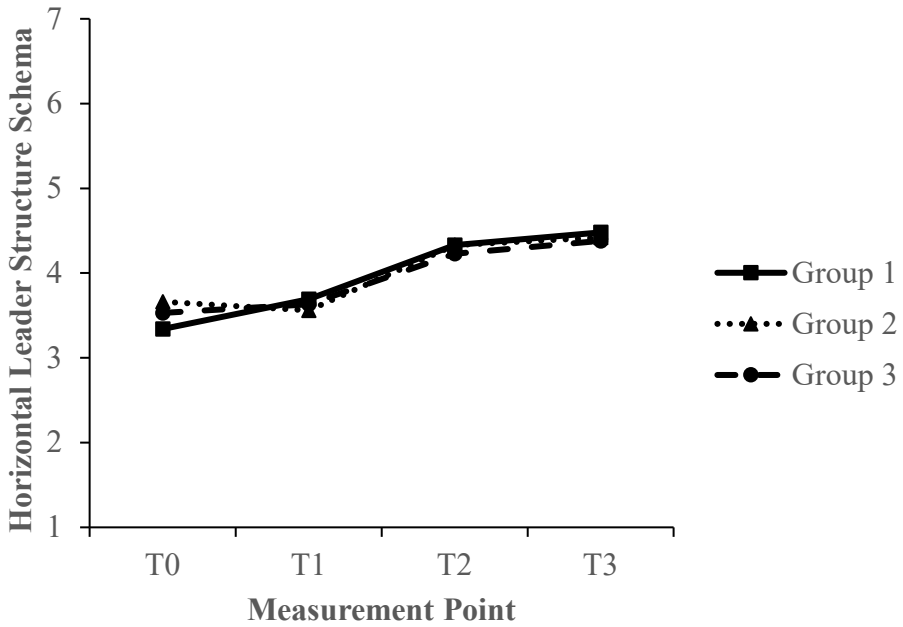
Table 1. Correlation Table

	M	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) LSS T0	3.68	1.20	(.82)							
(2) LSS T1	3.63	.96	.64***	(.76)						
(3) LSS T2	4.33	.80	.57***	.58***	(.62)					
(4) LSS T3	4.43	1.18	.38**	.47***	.57***	(.80)				
(5) Knowledge T1	3.98	1.33	.10	.38***	.03	.22*	(.82)			
(6) Knowledge T2	5.62	.88	.19	.26*	.40***	.35**	.13	(.77)		
(7) Case quality T2	5.95	.82	-.10	-.10	.14	.04	-.07	.41***	(.86)	
(8) Gender	1.43	.50	.01	.01	.07	-.01	.05	.05	-.08	
(9) Age	30.55	3.27	-.11	-.03	-.01	-.14	.14	-.20	-.06	-.07

Note. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; Gender (1 = Male, 2 = Female); T0 circa 2 weeks prior session, T1 = beginning of the session; T2 = end of session; T3 = circa 3 month after session; LSS = Leader Structural Schema; All scales ranges from 1 to 7.

**Figure 1**

*Changes in LSS over time*



*Note.* T0 = circa 2 weeks prior session, T1 = beginning of session; T2 = end of session; Hi



## Appendix

Below follows a short description of the context and the four parts of the case:

**Context and case:** The case follows the National Field Hockey team's journey from preparing for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro to the 2021 Olympics in Tokyo and describes the process of building cohesion within the team by addressing the challenges on the team- and leadership development. The case is seen from the perspective of an independent advisor on strategy and organizational change. The first part (Case A) is about setting the scene by describing what happened during the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. The 2<sup>nd</sup> part (Case B) describes rebuilding trust and cohesion in the team by addressing team development and leadership development issues. The third part (Case C) describes the process of the emergence of a new leadership team, followed by the fourth part (Case D), which describes the aftermath of the team development process toward the Olympic Games in Tokyo. All four parts end with open questions to consider as case readers. By thinking about the questions, the reader steps into the consultant's shoes in the case, making the case real and realistic. In other words, the reader steps into a real case.

**Teaching note and assignments:** The teaching note to the case clearly outlines key aspects for the class discussion of each question, provides theory and models relevant to the discussion, and offers key takeaways and conclusions, structuring the storyline and student engagement with the chronological parts of the case. Different assessments must be made on other occasions in the case.

The first assessment (A) involves developing an approach to face the team's challenges. The second assessment (B) focuses on establishing a shared perspective within the team and shaping the team-building process. The third assessment (C) centers around the development of leadership within the team. Lastly, the fourth assessment (D) pertains to determining the next steps in the team's overall development. Each assessment is accompanied by a set of questions that need to be answered by the students.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **INTERGROUP LEADERSHIP AND GROUP FUNCTIONING:**

#### **A qualitative study of coalitions in politics**

Folkert Mulder, Steffen Giessner, Bask Koene and Irma Bogenrieder

Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University

## **Abstract**

When a leader needs to lead multiple, very different, groups or organizations, this is defined as intergroup leadership (Pittinsky & Simon, 2007; Hogg et al. 2012). Previous theorizing and research on intergroup leadership have outlined that such a leadership situation requires additional qualities from a leader beyond the ones the classical leadership frameworks would suggest. Previous research has used deductive theorizing and showed how intergroup leadership could increase intergroup performance, however it is unclear whether the deductive theorizing is exhaustive. To fill this gap, our research takes an inductive, qualitative approach to understand and explore how intergroup leadership functions. Building on the existing research, we focused our research on the leadership of political coalitions in The Netherlands, which require intergroup leadership as a leadership form to lead the government. We had the privilege of getting access to previous ministers and vice premiers (N=14). We did a thematic analysis to analyze the data from these interviews (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013). Our main findings reveal that having clarity on the party- and coalition identity, the process of continuous calibration, and the leadership- and leadership in the plural that define the functioning of a coalition are central for intergroup leadership in this context. We propose a model of intergroup leadership

considering these factors and providing practical advice on when and how best to establish intergroup leadership.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Intergroup Leadership, Shared- and distributed leadership, Collaboration, Emergence, and Performance.

## **Introduction**

People have an evolutionary tendency to form hierarchical structures to overcome challenges that are difficult to solve as individuals (van Vugt, 2006; van Vugt & Kaiser, 2008). These hierarchical structures are common in social structures such as organizations and teams. As a result, most leadership research focuses on these hierarchical structures. It defines a leader as someone who guides and motivates others from the top in such a hierarchical structure (cf. Yukl, 2006). Definitions of leadership focus on intragroup dynamics and conceptualize it as a process in which an individual influences one or more individuals toward achieving a common goal (Bass, 1990). The focus has been primarily on leading towards common goals (Conger & Kanungo, 1987) or providing some form of individualized considerations towards team members (Atwater & Bass, 1994; Bass, 1990), focusing on dynamic relationships between leaders and followers (Graen & Graen, 2005), schematic matching of leaders to a specific category (Epitropaki, 2017; Lord & Maher, 1992), or considering the leader as a member of the group and their matching to the group prototype (van Knippenberg, & Hogg, 2003). The existence of subgroups has largely been ignored by these approaches to promote positive intergroup relations.

Promoting the subgroups' identity will help reduce competition among the different groups and increase trust and intergroup collaboration.

However, leaders often lead not just one group of individuals but many. Previous leadership theory considering hierarchical structures of leading just one team or group has not recognized that a subgroup structure may exist of different groups that define themselves as distinct from each other (Dinh et al., 2014). For example, a physician in a hospital might lead a medical team and a research team, and a CEO of a merging company leads both organizations until they feel like one. Moreover, in politics, a prime minister might have to show a coalition existing out of more than one party for the elected period. In all these cases, the question arises whether effective leadership can be achieved with classical single-hierarchy theorizing or whether those situations need some additional or different.

In the context of a democratic political system, leading a coalition and, thus, more than one group is rather the norm than the exception. A prime minister of a governmental coalition leads many parties in a government, and this form of leadership might only partly be understood with traditional leadership frameworks. Therefore, researchers started to theorize on the concept of intergroup leadership to address this leadership challenge (Hogg

et al., 2018; Pittinsky & Simon, 2007; Salem et al., 2019). Intergroup leadership is defined as “leadership of collaborative efforts of more than one formal group or organization toward a joint goal, in which the purpose of the collaboration relies on the presence of these groups or organization” (Hogg et al., 2012, p. 234). The effectiveness of intergroup leadership is, thus, based on the ability of the leader to foster a collaborative intergroup performance (Richter et al., 2006).

Although previous research in intergroup leadership has theorized about those aspects necessary for intergroup leadership to be effective (Hogg et al., 2018; Pittinsky & Simon, 2007), it is yet unclear whether this list of theoretically driven assumptions is exhaustive. In other words, while previous research has focused on a more deductive theory-driven approach, an inductive study is missing. Given that intergroup leadership is a relatively new theoretical leadership approach, and it is argued that previous theorizing on leadership might be not enough to understand intergroup leadership (Hogg et al., 2018; Pittinsky & Simon, 2007), we aim to complement previous research by providing an inductive study on intergroup leadership to further develop theory on this concept. Based on an inductive qualitative process (Gioia et al., 2013), going back and forth on the data collected in interviews with top-level politicians, we develop an extended model that



explains intergroup leadership. As we will show, this approach reveals some new facets of effective intergroup leadership that have been previously missing.

In sum, we extend the previous theorizing on intergroup leadership by applying an inductive research approach. Our study contributes to the existing research on intergroup leadership theory, whereby we focus on the emergence, the functioning, and the continuous balancing act between superordinate identification and sub-identification of intergroup leadership. While our study is conducted in the context of political parties, we argue that those insights are likely to be applicable in other contexts. We discuss how these insights might be used to study the concept of intergroup leadership further.

### **Theoretical reflections on political coalitions**

Political democratic settings differ per country but are based on the fundament of coalition forming (Laver & Schofield 1990). To form a new Cabinet, political parties must first come to a consensus on a preliminary Coalition Agreement. This agreement is negotiated by the leaders of the parliamentary groups. (Tweede Kamer, n.d.). Based on the Coalition

agreement, the leadership of a coalition is formed on the leaders of the coalition parties, which need to form together the leadership. The prime minister is the first among equals and needs to play the role of *primus inter pares*, which makes leadership a sensitive process, whereby intergroup leadership seems to be the most suitable form to lead (Hogg et al., 2018; Rehwinkel & Willink, 1991). This is especially the case because they need to consider the high complexity of leading a country with a network of stakeholders and topics to solve. Thus, intergroup leadership is the core job of the prime minister.

There are certainly some differences in democratic systems worldwide. The United States, for example, has a two-political party system (Bibby & Maisel, 2003) existing out of Democrats and Republicans. After an election, one of the parties who won the elections is entitled to fill in the role of president, who needs to lead the country, often dealing with a divided House of Representatives and Senate (Cox, Kernell, 2019). This leadership demands, on the one hand, to unite and create a collective or, in other words, a superordinate group identity to reduce intergroup tensions (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a) while on the other hand acknowledging the sub-group identities of both parties.

## **Intergroup leadership in Dutch Politics**

Our research focuses on intergroup leadership in Dutch politics. The democratic system of The Netherlands (Hendriks, Toonen, 2001) consists of multiple parties, which are the basis for forming coalitions to lead the country (Hendriks, 2017). Because multiple parties need to create a coalition together (The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, 2008), this democratic system can be classified as complex. As an example, between 2002 and 20022, all coalitions existed out of three or more parties except for one. See Table 1 (p.26): coalitions in The Netherlands (2002-2022) for a complete overview.

Within this setting, the prime minister has the role of *primus inter pares* (first among equals). The prime minister has no extra structural powers or greater voting weight in the council of ministers. However, the PM represents the coalition and needs to lead the coalition to a successful collaboration (Rehwinkel & Willink, 1991). This makes the Dutch political arena very suitable to study the phenomena of intergroup leadership (Hogg et al., 2018).

## **Intergroup leadership**

Todd Pittinsky (2010; Pittinsky & Simon, 2007) addressed leadership challenges within complex political settings by introducing the concept of intergroup leadership. Pittinsky and Simon (2007) define intergroup leadership as the task to deal with challenges in promoting positive relations among different groups one is leading. While more traditional, hierarchical leadership might be the right form to lead a single group, when subgroups are involved, hierarchical leadership might be insufficient and can increase the chances of conflict between existing subgroups. Consequently, they developed various theory-driven ideas of those conditions, enabling leaders to promote intergroup collaboration and performance.

Pittinsky and Simon (2007) focus in their research on intergroup leadership through the promotion of positive intergroup relations by her leadership. To establish intergroup leadership, they argue for five pathways that encourage positive intergroup relations. First, leaders may encourage contact, which is assumed to improve intergroup relations. Second, leaders should manage the collaboration, available resources, and interdependencies to reach their shared goals. Which is about “Leaders find that the trend toward intergroup cooperation in activities involving superordinate goals widens the spheres for joint endeavors and planning future contacts” (Sherif

et al., 1961, p. 213). Third, leaders may promote superordinate identities to establish a superordinate group identity whereby sub-group members can identify and reduce intergroup tensions (cf. Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a). Fourth, besides establishing superordinate identities, leaders should also keep promoting subgroup identities. Therefore, they need to manage those dual identities, which refers to the idea of keeping one's original group membership (e.g., being a member of party X) while at the same time identifying with the more inclusive group membership (i.e., being a member of the current government; cf. Gaertner et al., 1993). Finally, leaders may show positive intergroup attitudes. In other words, these five pathways are assumed to have a significant influence on effective intergroup leadership and should not be seen as stand-alone factors but as a combined approach to managing multiple groups. In other research, Pittinsky (2009) indicates that effective leadership must adapt social identity processes to group dynamics to create and reinforce group identity. Further, Pittinsky (2009) proposes that instrumental collaboration, whereby the unique strengths of each group is used, can both cover the majority group's need for a shared identity and the subgroup's need for positive distinctiveness. Hogg and colleagues (2012) extended this perspective and argued that those factors might help to create an intergroup relational identity. They focus on intergroup relational identity,

explaining the relationship between parties based on the different roles and contributions parties bring to the relationship.

Further building on these ideas, Hogg and colleagues (2018) argue that effective intergroup leadership depends on successfully constructing a relational identity. An intergroup relational identity (Hogg, van Knippenberg & Rast, 2020) defines the self in terms of a group membership that simultaneously incorporates the ingroup's relationship with an outgroup, that is, the self-concept is based on the relationship between two or more groups (Hogg et al., 2012a; Hogg, 2015). Further, they argue that effective intergroup performance depends on constructing a positive intergroup relational identity and describe key leadership actions to establish an intergroup relational identity. Hogg and colleagues state that social identity dynamics, derived from being a member of a relevant social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), are key in developing intergroup leadership (Hogg, 2001, 2008; Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003; Lord et al., 1999; Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). In sum, previous research argued that intergroup leadership implies managing three different identity layers: (1) the superordinate identity, (2) the subgroup identity, and (3) the relational identity.

The effectiveness of such intergroup leadership has already been established in previous research. For example, Kershaw and colleagues (2021) found evidence that intergroup relational identity can be effective for out-subgroup leaders when members strongly identify with their group. This relational identity reduced the ingroup bias. In the theoretical overview of Hogg and Rast III (2022), they further elaborate on those leaders who are promoting intergroup relational identification across subgroups and, at the same time, stimulating collaboration across subgroups to increase employees' psychological empowerment. Another study applied the framework of intergroup leadership in a humanitarian aid context (Salem et al., 2019). It was shown that intergroup leadership contributed to a significant operational performance by stimulating collaboration between local and expatriate subgroups. This was especially the case when subgroups were cohesive and based on a clear identity.

In sum, although intergroup leadership was theorized already fifteen years ago, the literature is still relatively sparse on this topic and primarily on theorizing based on a deductive research approach. Lately, more empirical studies have shown the positive consequences of intergroup leadership. While this has already contributed to our knowledge, we aim to extend this line of research by providing an inductive research approach for exploring

further factors that may matter for intergroup leadership. In this way, we aim to discover potential new facets for intergroup leadership that have not yet been considered in the literature and may potentially extend the theoretical perspective on intergroup leadership (Pittinsky & Simon, 2007). To forestall our findings, while we confirm the importance of identification processes in intergroup leadership, we are adding new dimensions to the model in how intergroup leadership emerges, functions, and continuously needs a balancing act between superordinate, sub-, and relational identification.

We have opted for a qualitative study to better understand coalitions' processes and dynamics and develop theoretical insights. Our research helps to establish an in-depth understanding of coalition formation and the functioning of intergroup leadership within coalitions (Mizrahi, Ph.D., Beth B. Rosenthal, 2001).

## **Method**

To explore the functioning of intergroup leadership within coalitions, we opted for an inductive, qualitative research design. Inductive qualitative research creates an in-depth insight and a better understanding of the effect of intergroup leadership on the functioning of coalitions (Eriksson &



Kovalainen, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For our research, we use thematic analysis (Corley et.al, 2013) based in Grounded Theory, where conclusions are derived through an inductive reasoning process, starting from the specific to the general (Elliott & Lazenbatt, 2005). The thematic analysis is thus grounded in the specific contexts of the interviewee. This methodology approach is fit for doing our research on intergroup leadership in politics (Hussein, Hirst, et al. 2014). We triangulated the data from the interviews and combined this with our study on existing research on intergroup leadership.

### **Using the Gioia methodology for thematic analysis**

What has become known as “the Gioia methodology” (Magnani & Gioia, 2023) “is a qualitative methodological approach to developing a data analysis that can meet the rigorous standards of trustworthy research” (Magnani & Gioia, 2023, p. 1). It provides methodological rigor compared to unstructured case study designs without any data-coding or data analysis methodology involved. The systematic method involves three important steps. First, analytical codes and categories are created and summarized in 1<sup>st</sup> order (informant-centered) codes, 2<sup>nd</sup> order (theory-centered) themes, and

more inclusive aggregated dimensions. Based on this, second, a theoretical model is developed via an ongoing comparison of the data across the interviews. Finally, and third, the findings of the analysis are presented using data-based narratives from the 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes and the aggregated dimensions, including references to 1<sup>st</sup> order quotes. Further, the first aggregate dimension, focuses on ‘triggers’, the 2<sup>nd</sup> aggregate dimension focuses on ‘processes’ and the 3<sup>rd</sup> one on ‘result’.

### **Process of data collection**

For our study purpose, we studied existing research and interviewed former ministers and parliamentarians of different coalitions (N= 14). We have opted for various coalitions because these coalitions are composed of ministers with different political backgrounds. They translated the coalition parties' sub-identities into a coalition's superordinate identity.

Although our sample size is relatively small, it can be considered adequate for studying such a “difficult-to-access” population (Baker & Rosalind, 2012). Ministers and vice premiers, who are not only very limited in numbers but also hard to access, reduce the possibility of conducting interviews for research purposes. Baker and Rosalind (2012) argued that a

limited number of people to interview in such cases, such as between six and twelve interviews, can still offer important insights for such populations. Further, our interviews reached thematic saturation. This is in line with a recent finding of Henning and Kaiser (2022) who showed that studies with more homogenous samples with a narrowly defined objective (as it is in our case) reach saturation within 9 to 17 interviews.

During our interviews, we got in-depth insights into different coalitions in the last 20 years. Based on the rich-available data provided by the interviewees of the various coalitions, we conducted our inductive, qualitative research to extend previous research on intergroup leadership. The data collection is based on interviews with former ministers from the different coalitions; the age of participants ranged from 45 to 74 years, with a mean of 64 (SD = 9.49), and 29% were female. The interviews had an average length of 41 minutes. The first author conducted all interviews.

### **Interview Process and Protocol**

Our research is based on semi-structured interviews as a primary data source on neutral ground in the Netherlands. The interviews included the following key questions: What does it take to lead a coalition?; How do you

experience leaders of a coalition?; How does it work to have one leader leading other leaders?; How do you get a strong cabinet?; Which factors matter?; What is the best way to build up a coalition?; What are the parallels with leadership in other political systems and/or businesses?; What is the role of the prime minister?; What restricts the system?

During the interviews, follow-up questions were sometimes used. These served to either gain more depth on a specific issue or theme or to build on previous interviewees.

### **Process of data analyses**

Analyses of the interview data were done to bring qualitative rigor to our inductive research (Gioia et al., 2013). Data analyses existed out of three stages to evaluate the procedure (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). In the first analysis stage, we coded the responses, moving iteratively between the data, tentative constructs, and the extant literature to refine insights and clarify the different conceptual categories (Eisenhardt, 1989). Using the Goia method for qualitative analysis (Corley & Gioia, 2004), we developed a complete set of 378 codes. Based on this first coding, we conceptualized the coding and were able to cluster the coding into 22 first-order concepts. By further

abstraction of the 22 first-order concepts, we could distillate 7 second-order themes out of the coding. Going back and forth through the data to construct concepts and themes, we came up with 3 aggregate dimensions as described in (Corley & Gioia, 2004). These aggregate dimensions are the outcomes of the iterative process of order, concepts, and themes. They are distilled into ‘Triggers,’ ‘Processes,’ and ‘Results,’ which can be applied to the aggregate dimensions of intergroup leadership.

A second coder also analyzed the data to provide more robustness to our analysis. Further, she confirmed the results of the coding and the way how the Gioia method was applied. Based on this second coding, some suggestions were made by the second coder to change codes and integration a few codes into themes. Based on this feedback, the authors underwent an alliteration process and further refined the analysis and results.

## **Results**

By analyzing the data, we could build on a data structure, which allowed us to configure our data into an overview and a graphic representation of how we progressed from raw data to terms and themes in conducting the analyses (Tracy, 2010). We present a conceptual model to

preview our findings and serve as a guide for the processes described herein (Figure 1).

Based on our analysis, we distinguish between three aggregate dimensions: (1) the context of a coalition (representing the trigger); (2) The ‘Process of continuous calibration’ (representing the process part); and (3) the outcome of two aggregate dimensions the ‘Intergroup Collaboration’. These three aggregate dimensions are based on seven 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes. The first aggregate dimension, context of a coalition is based on ‘Party identity,’ ‘Coalition identity,’ and ‘Structure of collaboration.’ Our research shows that the collective identity of coalitions and, within that, the complexity of a coalition needs to be represented by the leadership team. The ‘Continuous development of society’ and the ‘Interaction of emergence’ triggers a process of continuous calibration, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> aggregate dimension. These first two aggregate dimensions result in the *Intergroup Collaboration*, which exists out of two 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes, (1) *Authentic Leadership* and (2) *Leadership in the plural*. These outcomes are represented in a model in Figure 1. While our results partly reconfirm previous theorizing on intergroup leadership (Hogg et al., 2013; Pittinsky & Simon, 2007) we also identify a few new aspects and details in the context of political party coalitions and will discuss these in more detail.

### **The first aggregate dimension, the trigger: context of a coalition.**

In the *context of a coalition* two group memberships are considered significant: the 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes, *party identity* and *coalition identity*, for the functioning of a coalition and her leadership. In literature, extensive research has applied insights about team and organizational identity towards leadership research (Giessner et al., 2013; Haslam, 2013; Steffens et al., 2021; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2013). Previous research based on the social identity perspective, including Social Identity Theory (SIT, Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Self-Categorization Theory (SCT, Turner et al., 1987), has established that membership in groups is an essential aspect of our self-definition and influences our cognition, emotions, and behaviors. Individuals are seeking positive balanced groups to increase their self-esteem (Haslam et al., 2011). In this context, the party membership (i.e., *party identity*) and the coalition membership (i.e., *coalition identity*) are important aspects of how those politicians want to define themselves. In the interviews, politicians emphasized the importance of maintaining a clear *party identity* and a *coalition identity*. As one interviewee explains:

*“In the end, such a coalition functions on the identity of those parties and ultimately on the underlying voters who voted for that party. Ultimately,*

*this is reflected in a coalition, the coalition agreement, and how decisions are made. Which is calibrated continuously” (interviewee 13).*

The interviewee emphasized the importance of maintaining a clear *party identity* to facilitate effective collaboration with other parties and establish a shared *coalition identity* that is continuously calibrated. Creating a strong and cohesive coalition requires the establishment of a shared coalition identity built upon the foundation of the *party identity*. This point becomes clearer in the following quote:

*“The political system, you have political parties. They stand for something, and that gives them a right to exist. That is their identity, and then they have their leaders who propagates that identity in policy. Those are the House of Representatives factions. And then you have the people who will implement it, so the top will come at a certain point, if all goes well, in the Council of Ministers. But when you look back, it’s the identity that ultimately matters: your identity as a political party. What makes you different from the others?” (Interviewee 14)*

However, forming a coalition can also lead to uncertainty and ambiguity. Previous research has demonstrated that individuals who experience uncertainty or ambiguity tend to identify with those groups who



have high levels of entitativity (i.e., defined as the degree to which a “collection of people is perceived as being bonded together in a coherent unit” Lickel et al., 2000, p. 224) (Hogg et al., 2007).

Our research suggests that this process of identifying with one’s own party and the superordinate coalition is a ‘delicate’ process because the own part has obviously a higher level of entitativity than the coalition. As a result, party identification is present, but achieving a clearly defined coalition identity enabling identification on the superordinate level is more difficult. Nevertheless, our interviews reveal that this coalition identity and identification is highly important. The following quote reveals how parties often negotiate about the content of the coalition identity (cf. Eggins et al., 2002). One may describe this as a process of mediation:

*“If you look at Dutch politics from a certain distance, it is always coalition politics in the first place. That means there is always give and take. When something has been negotiated between those parties, and something has emerged that they can live with. Then it has to be adapted to the realities. But yes, the negotiation continues, almost by definition, as a kind of mediation.” (interviewee 13).*

The interviewee sheds light on the intricate interplay between *party identity* and *coalition identity*, both of which hold significance. It is described as an ongoing process, which is further explained in the following themes we describe. This process of identity negotiation is in line with former social identity research on conflict resolution suggesting that groups aim for a positive superordinate identity negotiation and achieve this if they can build on a strong subgroup identity (in this case, the *party identity*) (Eggins et al., 2002). Another interviewee also provides insights into the interplay between *party-* and *coalition identity*, highlighting that as the number of parties in a coalition increases, it becomes more challenging to establish a distinct profile within the coalition. As the interviewee put it:

*“If you make a coalition, which of course, also applies to the Netherlands, then you are dealing with different parties that all have different perspectives, with different ideas, and want different things to be achieved. The smaller the coalition, the simpler the play is. The bigger the coalition, the more complicated the play is. As the years go by, you see that the coalitions, now four parties, are becoming very large. This means that a great deal is lost from the original programs of the political parties. So supporters hardly recognize themselves in what ultimately lies in the coalition agreement” (Interviewee 3.)*

This quote reflects that parties aim to have part of their identity represented within the larger coalition and that the number of coalition partners makes it harder to have such a representation within the superordinate category (cf. Mummenday & Wenzel, 1999). As a result, the entitativity of the coalition is difficult to achieve, creating a threat to the whole coalition itself. This is, in a way, also reflected by the fact that the Netherlands has had 10 governments since 1994 due to failed coalitions.

Furthermore, the interviewee offers additional insights into *party* and *coalition identity* dynamics in another quote. This provides a clear understanding of the interdependencies between party and coalition identity. As the interviewee points out:

*“Well, of course, every minister has... the party-political program of his party in mind and, of course, tries to contribute as much as possible. If everyone does that, you will get into clashes.... but in the coalition, you have agreed to achieve certain things with each other. You must, of course, adhere to that, also as a minister within the coalition.” (Interviewee 3.)*

Moreover, the quote highlights that *party identity* serves as the foundation for a consensus-based standpoint within a coalition. Managing

relationships and reducing tensions to achieve shared goals requires continuous interaction and alignment between *party* and *coalition identity*.

To promote intergroup harmony, it is necessary to maintain subgroups within the superordinate *coalition identity*. This involves a delicate balance of establishing subgroup *party identities*. While identification with the *party identity* is "natural," the superordinate identity needs to be established so that members can identify with it to foster a dual identity. Entitativity is essential here, whereby strong coalition entitativity helps to connect on a coalition level.

The successful achievement of balance among coalition parties can lead to the creation of intergroup harmony within the coalition. This is because a robust superordinate category, such as the *coalition identity*, helps to turn members of the outgroup (i.e., other parties) into an ingroup on this level of identity as well. At the same time, establishing a strong subgroup identity (i.e., *party identity*) ensures the distinctiveness of the coalition members in terms of the party. Further, given that the coalition is only in place for a specific period, forsaking the *party identity* is impossible. This situation of dual activation of both nested identities, thus, provides benefits in this context and has been previously shown to foster intergroup

collaboration and harmony (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2014; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). Hogg and colleagues (2012) suggest that a collective identity can help balance subgroup identities within the larger, inclusive identity, potentially promoting greater cooperation and collaboration among members of different parties within the coalition. This is also highlighted by Gaertner et al. (1993) and Dovidio et al. (2000), who indicate that a strong common group identity can facilitate positive intergroup relations. However, if subgroup identities within the coalition are threatened, it can lead to conflict and uncertainty. To successfully navigate the complexities of coalition governance, our interviews also show that it is essential that the coalition identity is continuously calibrated in relation to the *party identities*. The basis of this interplay between *party-* and *coalition identity* is that individuals are driven to form and maintain strong social identities and groups to alleviate uncertainty about one's identity. They actively seek out information and experiences that can help them better understand and define their identities, as Hogg (2016) suggested.

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**The second aggregate dimension the process: *process of continuous calibration.***

The 2nd aggregate dimension, the *process of continuous calibration*, is built up by three 2nd order themes, the *internal structure of collaboration*, the *external influence on the coalition* and *relational balancing*. The first 2nd order theme, the *internal structure of collaboration*, provides some new perspective for the theorizing on intergroup leadership and helps to understand how the *process of continuous calibration* of the coalition (and party) identity is achieved. With the *internal structure of collaboration*, we refer to established routines used for the coalition's interactions. It builds on a common understanding of shared mental models (Mathieu et al., 2000), which refers to the degree to which team members share a common understanding of the task and each other's responsibilities. It plays an important role as a stronghold for a coalition to collaborate and forms the basis to continuously calibrate to keep 'equilibrium' in the coalition and to function as a coalition. It, therefore, includes the base of the functioning of intergroup leadership. As one of the interviewees put it:

*It's all according to specific protocols and certain ways of dealing.*  
(Interviewee 3.)

The interviewee refers to the routines being used in the coalition

work, providing a clear way of collaborating to come to decisions, and elaborates further in the following quote:

*“Of course, you have for the Council of Ministers....on Thursday evening, you have your round with your political supporters. So, then you talk to the MPs. Then you know what the agenda is for the Council of Ministers..... The next day you have that formal meeting, which is quite formal and where the prime minister has an important role in coloring in conclusions.....while everyone tries as much as possible from their own party to color in... color it where possible. But there is a direct relationship with your supporters in such a cabinet” (interviewee 3).*

The interviewee explains the structure facilitating the collaboration and reducing potential internal conflicts. Regular meetings with political supporters before the Council of Ministers meeting let each member know the agenda and can prepare accordingly. During the formal meeting, the prime minister plays a key role in aligning the group's decisions and the members try to color it from their own party's perspective. This jointly agreed structure promotes collaboration and reduces potential conflicts among members of different parties by providing a clear way of collaborating to come to decisions. The importance of working towards a common goal despite different party affiliations cannot be overstated. These routines of



working together facilitate a shared mental model for the coalition. Those, in turn, help to create a stronger perceived entitativity (cf. Swaab et al., 2002) of the coalition which enables stronger identification with it. This is critical for ensuring that political coalitions can function effectively and that the needs and interests of all groups within the coalition are adequately represented. Ultimately, the success of political coalitions hinges on their ability to work together towards a common goal, and the promotion of collective identity can be a powerful tool in achieving this aim.

Having a well-defined infrastructure to collaborate that includes a shared comprehension of a team's goals, objectives, and purpose is closely linked with team effectiveness (Doolen et al., 2003). In our research, this is represented in the coalition agreement, which is negotiated by the coalition parties as a starting point for a new coalition by having shared goals and identity to lead the coalition. This coalition agreement provides structure and support for collaboration.

In our research, this is displayed in the rhythm of the week, whereby there is a clear routine that facilitates the interaction between the different coalition members in parliament and within the coalition (Council of Ministers) to come to decision-making. One of the findings within our research was the complex setting in which political parties and a coalition

need to maneuver. This also displays the need for routines to facilitate collaboration among the coalition parties. We find that coalitions require an ongoing *process of continuous calibration* to make decisions, particularly when responding to unexpected events. This *process of continuous calibration* is facilitated by routines and patterns, which provide a communication structure and systems for collaboration across boundaries.

The general importance of routines is highlighted by Edmondson and colleagues (2016), who argued that collaboration in complex settings requires temporary and ad-hoc teams with established routines. In the context of political coalitions, these routines can help safeguard the representation of party identities by ensuring that the ideas and opinions of all stakeholders are considered during the collaboration process.

Effective intergroup collaboration within a coalition requires managing both internal tensions between parties and external factors that threaten both party and coalition identities. These external factors we refer to as *external influences on the coalition* and can directly impact the coalition's functioning, which elicit the need for leadership and in specific the leadership of the prime minister to manage the intergroup context. For example, crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic or war can increase the

voices of more extreme opinions and place pressure on the coalition and their parties. In such situations, the routines of working together may not be enough to maintain a collective identity and work towards a common goal. The pandemic, for instance, has forced coalitions to adapt quickly and respond to unforeseen circumstances, which can challenge established routines and communication patterns. Balancing those external influences while maintaining a collective identity and working towards a common goal becomes increasingly important for effective intergroup collaboration within coalitions.

The interviewees further refer to the fact that in a democratic system like the Netherlands, coalitions are elected by the society, making politics and the coalition sensitive to public opinion. Politicians, parties, and coalitions closely monitor public opinion on societal developments and will immediately react, if necessary, to position themselves and their parties in the public debate. Various actors in the political arena can influence public opinions, such as the opposition by coalition parties in parliament and the coalition itself. The media plays an important role in facilitating this process (Savigny, 2002). Other research confirms the significant impact of external influences, such as events, on collective identities in relation to social movements, which can strengthen or weaken the identity of a group

(Robnett, 2002). This relates to the idea that external factors can pose a threat to party identities, potentially leading to conflicts stemming from opposing interests. The following quote exemplifies how external events often question the party and/or coalition identity to which the prime minister or one of the cabinet ministers must react:

*“You have to realize, that's a general comment about leadership that there is a strategy, and I speak from experience. Leaders respond to events 80% of the time. I don't know if you know the story of British Prime Minister Macmillan; just after the war, Macmillan, a Conservative, had become Prime Minister. And a young journalist asked him, ‘prime minister, you now have this important responsibility, what are you most worried about?’ And then Macmillan gave the historical answer, events, my dear boy.” (Interviewee 1)*

The interviewee describes an ongoing phenomenon that consistently affects the coalition and consequently influences the underlying support of the voters, as evident in the polls. When one party in the coalition experiences a decline in the polls, it can create tension within the coalition. In such cases, the affected party may feel compelled to strengthen its image, possibly at the cost of the other coalition parties.

A concrete example of external influence on a coalition that was put forward in the interviews is the aim of the Dutch Government to reduce CO2 emissions (Valk, 2023). Despite the need to address this issue, public resistance to the measures taken has led to a loss for the current coalition during the 'Provinciale Staten' elections in 2023. The difficulty of some coalition parties in identifying with the coalition agreement has led to a divide within the coalition and a loss of voters who can no longer identify with the party. In situations with significant public resistance, a coalition may need to return to the drawing board. As the saying goes, sometimes it's necessary to return to the drawing board to find a solution. As put forward by one of the interviewees in the following quote;

*“...that someone has announced a new CO2 emission policy in June next year, and there is massive resistance, then you can say a hundred times that the decision has been made, but then I say on a note that it is highly questionable whether you will get any further.” (Interviewee 2.).*

As this interviewee notes;

*"Well, you see, you now see how it is necessary to show leadership with the whole thing about nitrogen and CO2, and every day is a new day with a mountain of problems that need to be solved. ...leadership is also it*

*is mainly responding to events, to external factors that you do not know at all at the beginning of the day in the morning at 11 o'clock or in the afternoon at 4 o'clock, or in the evening at 9 o'clock (Interviewee 1).*

The final theme that emerged from our interviews is the importance of leadership in maintaining a relational balance between the parties within a coalition, we refer to as “*intergroup relational balancing*”. On a group level, relational balancing is defined as “a process of managing, negotiating, and navigating the social and psychological relationships that individuals have within a group or coalition to create and maintain a positive and functional social context for individuals” (Schmader et al.,2014, p. 538).

Our interviews show a similar process on an intergroup level, in which “*intergroup relational balancing*” is about orchestrating the relationships and social connections between the parties. It is essential for achieving subgroup goals and that tensions or conflicts between groups can be resolved through effective communication and negotiation. This process promotes reciprocity and mutual participation, which can further enforce productive relationships within the group. As one of the interviewees explains:

*“So, I also experienced moments when we as a group said: we are*

*going to draw a line here; you should not do this because then we really lose our identity too much. And that is actually terrible... if this is played cleanly, which unfortunately does not always happen, I will tell you, because those negotiators already know where they want to end up. Played cleanly, this is a wonderful example of how democracy can work. And then you have the leaders... if we now look at this cabinet, you have four party leaders who conduct those coalition talks. All of them with a mandate, first of all from the DNA of their party and then in those discussions from their group every time entering into those talks with each other. And then see what you can come up with, and that is 'give and take'. That's the whole game.” (Interviewee 14.)*

The interviewees refer to “give and take” which has parallels to “claiming and granting” leadership processes theorized by De Rue and Ashford (2010) who describe these claiming and granting process to explain leadership emergence. Here, the intergroup balancing is enacted by allowing other party leaders to claim more leadership. This may involve public visibility in the media or setting some new agenda points for the coalition. At the same time, this would require others to grant leadership to the respective party leader. This process of claiming and granting is orchestrated by the prime minister and is dynamic. This *intergroup relational balancing* can be seen as a strategy for establishing and

maintaining a positive intergroup relational identity which has been argued to be central for intergroup leadership (Hogg et al., 2012). By acknowledging the positive attributes of other groups, individuals can help to reduce intergroup tension and foster positive relationships between groups. However, this behavior can be challenging since it can be difficult to balance the positive representation of one's own group with the need to recognize the positive qualities of other groups. And it becomes more difficult with the numbers of parties within a coalition,

The *intergroup relational balancing* is aimed at re-establishing the power relationships within the coalition. With power relationships we refer to the distribution of power and resources among coalition parties. After an election, parties differ in the number of seats in parliament. This, in turn, impacts how coalition parties interact, how the division of ministers is decided, what coalition agenda points are agreed, and how power distributions are perceived (De Rooij et al., 2017). The importance of these power relationships is also present in other contexts. For example, in the context of mergers and acquisitions, power relations within such events are critical for the acceptance of the merged identity (Giessner et al., 2016). Further, Hornsey and colleagues (2000) also highlight the role of intergroup relations, social norms, and intergroup power dynamics in shaping



subgroup relations within a larger group. The importance of intergroup leadership in managing power relationships via cooperation between different groups has recently been shown in the context of humanitarian operations Salem et al. (2019). According to their findings, leadership plays a critical role in addressing the complexities and conflicts that can emerge when multiple groups collaborate. Our own research in the political context aligns with these findings and extends it by revealing the balancing act of intergroup leaders via managing the claiming and granting of parties and their leaders to re-establish the power relations within the coalition (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). This is reflected in the following quote:

*“But that relationship, so to speak, between the ministers and also with their party members in parliament, is largely determined by the perception of the mutual relationships and the power relationships”*  
(Interviewee 9)

While Pittinsky and Simon (2007) do not directly describe this process of *intergroup relational balancing*, this process aligns with their theorizing that intergroup leadership needs to step in to manage the negative dimensions of intergroup relations and stimulate positive intergroup relations. Further, they argue that intergroup leadership requires

understanding power dynamics and that effective intergroup leaders must navigate these dynamics to build positive relationships between groups. Similarly, Hogg and colleagues (2012) emphasize the significance of power dynamics in intergroup relations and group solidarity. Our interviews show the dynamics of leadership within a coalition, pointing to the importance of the prime minister to manage claiming and granting processes of parties and their leaders if power relationships shift and provide a potential threat to the party identity of one or more coalition partners. In this process, the prime minister himself may sometimes grant other party leaders the leadership role. This actually leads to a perception of a prime minister as *primus inter pares*, with equal power as of any other minister, the leadership of the prime minister and the individual minister in the cabinet emerges based on balancing relationships. It creates trust and strengthens the positive perception of the coalition identity which is assumed necessary for intergroup collaboration (see Hogg et al., 1995).

The process of intergroup relational balancing is especially important to manage the *external influences on the coalition*. As one interviewee explains:

*“Every time something is different than from day one. Does that mean investing heavily in each other? Yes, for sure. On the one hand, a type of leader is needed who is constantly working to carry out the shared agenda with the other ministers, in which their sound remains heard, and on the other hand, to be the manager of a group who is not best friends. While at the same time managing the party members in parliament, who gets worried least of the slightest concerns, with polls four times a week.”*  
*(Interviewee 4.).*

This quote reflects again the balancing act by claiming leadership to manage and lead the shared agenda but also by granting leadership to others in the coalition so that they can be “heard”. And external polls often make these two processes of claiming and granting extremely important, while also not easy to handle. The prime minister plays a crucial role in managing external influences by effectively balancing the interests and perspectives of the coalition parties by recognizing, acknowledging, and validating each group's unique identities and perspectives while also finding ways to overcome differences and build strong relationships. By skillfully navigating these intergroup dynamics, the prime minister ensures that the coalition maintains a cohesive and productive environment while addressing the external pressures and demands from stakeholders, the

public, and other political parties. This *intergroup relational balancing* process allows for the maintenance and strengthening of a shared coalition identity that unifies the various parties and promotes collaboration and cooperation toward shared goals.

**The third aggregate dimension, the result: *intergroup collaboration*.**

The third aggregate dimension, *intergroup collaboration*, consists of two 2nd order themes, *leadership authenticity* and *leadership in the plural*.

*Leadership authenticity* focuses on the perceived personal characteristics of the coalition leader, such as being genuine, honest, and true to oneself, while also having the capability of personal bonding and building strong relationships. Authentic leadership has been studied extensively in literature (Lemoine et al., 2019), and Avolio and Gardner (2005) describe this as a behavior

This pattern of leader behavior incorporates and encourages positive psychological capacities and a supportive ethical climate. It aims to cultivate heightened self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, the ability to process information in a balanced manner, and transparent relationships between leaders and their followers. By doing so, it fosters positive self-

development among individuals within the organization.

It comprises four essential dimensions: self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, and internalized moral perspective. Self-awareness refers to the ability to understand oneself, including strengths, weaknesses, values, and emotions. Balanced processing involves objectively examining all sides of an issue before reaching a decision. Relational transparency involves acting in a genuine and honest manner, rather than trying to project a contrived or fake persona. Finally, internalized moral perspective refers to moral self-regulation and behaving in accordance with one's moral values.

Our interviews indicate that the coalition leader, the prime minister, is judged in terms of leader authenticity:

*"If you're really a strong leader, uh... authentic, sincere, people know that: This is not about him or herself but about society. Uh... then you can actually... and if people also experience that, there is room. So not someone who uh... enforces their own will. No, then you don't need to... especially in such a complex society, there is a need for someone who sees the big picture and has a vision." (Interviewee 14.)*

The interviewee continues talking about the importance of having authenticity as leader. The interviewee takes the current prime minister of

The Netherlands as an example in the following quote:

*"And he has something else that is very important for a leader, and not many have it, and that is authenticity. He is just who he is. He gets on his bike while he buys his toilet paper. And that is... people see right through all those politicians who have big stories and are not authentic. There is a huge... people long for authenticity." (Interviewee 14).*

This quote refers to the relational transparency of the prime minister, defined as “acting in accordance with one’s true nature rather than contrived or fake manners” (Lemoine et al., 2019, 151). His actions are seen as being true in nature. Further, these actions seem to make him also very representative for the coalition, a concept referred to as leader group prototypicality in the social identity literature (Turner et al., 1987; van Knippenberg, 2011), which has been shown to contribute to perceived authenticity of the leader (Reicher et al., 2018). Another interviewee emphasizes the importance of leadership within a coalition in more general, stating, *"Actually, within the coalition, you have that leadership, that social construct in every process that runs"* (Interviewee 1.)

Overall, the interviews indicate that the prime minister's actions in managing the *process of continuous calibration* are positively evaluated and reflected in the perceptions as an authentic leader. In our context, he engages

in balanced processing of information due to his *intergroup relational balancing* within the coalition.

Our second-order theme of *leadership in the plural* refers to the perceived relationship between the prime minister and the ministers in a coalition which together forms the Council of Ministers, where the prime minister is considered as *primus inter pares* (De Vries, 't Hart & Ornstein, 2012). To explain, the Council of Ministers, known as the 'Ministerraad' in Dutch, serves as the executive body responsible for governing the Netherlands. Comprising the Prime Minister as its chair, it holds a pivotal role in decision-making, policy formulation, and government coordination.

When the various aspects of this process are effectively managed, and there is a positive alignment of party and coalition identities, along with party members and leaders embracing both, the Council of Ministers is perceived as exemplifying leadership in the plural – implying that ministers see that the coalition is led by more than one leader (Denis et al., 2012; Gronn, 2002; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

While the Prime Minister holds a prominent leadership role as the head of government and chair of the Council, individual ministers also exercise leadership within their respective ministries. They are responsible for decision-making, policy implementation, and managing their

departments, showcasing multiple leadership roles. Moreover, leadership is fostered collectively through collaborative decision-making processes within the Council, where all ministers contribute to shaping government policies and actions. This shared leadership approach ensures a combination of centralized leadership, individual ministerial leadership, and collective decision-making, thus exemplifying the presence of multiple leadership dynamics within the Council of Ministers (Pearce, Conger, 2003).

Our study revealed the significance of social bonding among the Council of Ministers, which positively impacts coalition success. As a Minister, one not only upholds the party identity within the coalition but also functions as a member of a team of Ministers who aims to work collectively. The following interviewee explains:

*“On the one hand, you are, of course, the Council of Ministers. On the other hand, you are also the football team that wants to win the game. So, you are fellows of each other, fellow ministers of each other. So, what always happens after the Council of Ministers, is you go for lunch together. I have never had so many croquettes, soups, and tasty bites as there”*  
(Interviewee 5.)

The interviewee in our study emphasized the importance of building social connections among members of the Council of Ministers as a way to



strengthen their teamwork and achieve their collective goals. This aligns with the research on intergroup collaboration based on a perception of a common ingroup (Gaertner et al., 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In other words, the calibration processes create a sense of a positive and strong coalition identity with which ministers, and party members can identify. Thus, intergroup collaboration can help overcome subgroups' differences by creating a shared identity and objectives to work towards. As one interviewee explains quite well the emergence of intergroup leadership;

*"We had a really strong team there, and I was in....five working groups that had to develop parts of the coalition agreement. So, we had to investigate, how do we come to a compromise in the field of traffic and transport, what are we going to do with sports, what are we going to do with healthcare, what are we going to do with housing and spatial planning? Well, I was allowed to participate in all those groups. But of course, he [the coalition leader] can't foresee whether we were also there with 15 ministers, and he can't completely foresee whether that will be a great team." (Interviewee 10.).*

The interviewee's statement underscores the importance of intergroup collaboration in fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among diverse subgroups. They emphasize that although the leader's role is significant, the

success of intergroup collaboration ultimately relies on the collective efforts and effectiveness of the team members involved.

In summary, the third aggregated dimension, *intergroup collaboration*, emphasizes the importance of leadership authenticity and leadership in the plural, highlighting how these factors contribute to the success of coalitions and the achievement of collective goals.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

Intergroup leadership is a concept introduced by Pittinsky and Simon (2007) to address leadership challenges within complex conflictual and politicized settings. The concept involves promoting positive relations among a leader's different groups. According to the authors, effective intergroup leadership can be promoted through five pathways: encouraging contact, managing collaboration, promoting superordinate and subgroup identities, and showing positive intergroup attitudes (Pittinsky & Simon, 2007). In addition to these pathways, Hogg and colleagues (2012) further developed the concept of intergroup relational identity. They argued that effective intergroup performance depends on constructing a positive intergroup relational identity. This involves fostering a sense of shared identity and common goals among different groups (Hogg et al., 2010). In

practice, intergroup leadership is prevalent in democratic political context, where different parties are nested in an inclusive coalition. We focused on this context and aimed to explore how intergroup leadership is practiced and what processes are important in this context. In this way, we aimed to extend previous theorizing on intergroup leadership which was purely based on a more acontextual theoretical reasoning without studying specific cases. Therefore, some additional dimensions of intergroup leadership might have been overlooked. Using a qualitative case approach enables us to provide more detail in how intergroup is enacted.

Our results indicate overlap with the research of Pittinsky and Simon (1997) as we find that promotion of subgroup (part) and superordinate (coalition) identities is important. Extending their work, we show that management of the collaboration is achieved in a process of continuous collaboration through three different processes. First, an internal structure of collaboration helps to manage the daily interactions and collaboration in a structured, bureaucratic way. Second, the Prime Minister's leadership becomes necessary when external events influence the collaboration. And finally, the PM engages in a form of intergroup relational balancing in which he tries to keep the power relationships between party members in balance if these are in question. All of these factors seem to develop what Hogg and

colleagues named a positive intergroup relational identity. These aspects reveal in a much more nuanced way how a leader of a coalition might manage the balance between part and coalition identity (see Figure 1).

Our interviews also clarified that those processes also help to create a stronger entitativity of the coalition identity which enables party members not only to identify with their party but also the coalition. This creates a dual identity context that has previously been shown to foster more intergroup harmony and collaboration (Gaertner et al., 1993; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a, 2000b). But we also show that managing the party identifies within the coalition identity is an ongoing dynamic process which seemingly becomes more complicated with more coalition partners. What we found of special interest is that internal bureaucratic structures are a very important element of increasing the entitativity of the coalition and enabling the collaboration between the parties. And the focus on the power relations between parties within the coalition is an important aspect a leader needs to balance to keep the dual identification alive.

Another finding extending previous theorizing is the actual perceived results of “successful” intergroup leadership. The interviewed ministers described the prime minister as authentic and experienced the leadership as

a plural form of leadership in which all ministers and party leaders have lead (see Figure 1). To our knowledge, previous literature has neither related intergroup leadership to authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Lemonie et al., 2019) nor leadership in the plural (Denis et al. 2012). The relationships, however, makes a lot of sense, given that two dimensions of authentic leadership are balanced processing and relational transparency which align with our dimension of intergroup relational balancing. Similarly, as the intergroup relational balancing assures a certain power balance in the coalition and the internal structure of collaboration ensures that party perspectives are considered when making decisions, it may also not be a surprise to see that those being interviewed experience the coalition leadership as one involving more than one leader. While the literature on intergroup leadership focuses on one leader leading many groups (Hogg et al., 2012) and the literature on leadership plural focuses on one group with many leaders (Denis et al., 2012. In our Figure 1, we visualize how we believe that intergroup leadership unfolds in the context of democratic political party coalitions. We argue that *the process of continuous calibration* is influencing the way party members experience their own party identity, the coalition identity and the relationship between the party identities and coalition identity (i.e., similar to intergroup relational identity, Hogg et al.,

2012). At the same time, if this *process of continuous calibration* is managed well, the prime minister is perceived as authentic and the leadership of the coalition in more general is perceived as one in the plural.

On a practical side, our conceptual model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how intergroup leadership operates, offering valuable insights to inform the development of effective leadership strategies for political party coalitions. The model highlights the significance of both external and internal processes in shaping a relational intergroup identity (Hogg et al., 2010), by which these processes are managed through the utilization of routines. This novel perspective sheds light on an important aspect that was previously overlooked in intergroup leadership, thereby supporting the leadership dynamics within the coalition.

Active leadership is required to manage external processes to maintain a balanced power dynamic. The media's critical role in exerting external influence cannot be ignored. Promoting collective identity within political coalitions emerges as a powerful tool for fostering collaboration among members of different parties, a vital ingredient in ensuring the effective functioning of political coalitions. The alignment of shared objectives with the concept of collective identity emphasizes the importance

of perceiving oneself as part of a larger, more inclusive social category that encompasses multiple groups. Meanwhile, internal processes can be managed through the establishment of routines, which help establish a common ingroup identity and reduce internal conflicts. Creating effective routines requires a deep understanding of the broader context in which tasks must be performed. These routines and patterns provide a structured communication framework and systems for collaboration across boundaries, contributing to the perception of the coalition as a coherent and distinct entity with a strong sense of entitativity (Hogg et al., 2012). Authentic leadership plays a fundamental role in intergroup leadership, encompassing personal traits such as genuineness, honesty, and the ability to build strong relationships. Our research confirms the importance of authentic leadership, particularly that of the prime minister, in collaboration with fellow ministers during the construction and crafting of a coalition. Furthermore, we discovered that social bonding among the Council of Ministers positively impacts coalition success. Intergroup collaboration emerges as a valuable approach for overcoming subgroup differences by creating a shared identity and working towards common objectives.

## **Limitations and Strength**

As all research approaches, our is not without its limitations, First, the interviews we conducted were limited in terms of numbers of ministers and vice-premiers. However, accessing this group is rather challenging and a limited population is available. Therefore, it is justified to consider such a sample as relevant to study ((Baker & Rosalind, 2012). Second, we conducted our study in the context of the Dutch government. The themes identified in our interviews may not be universally applicable. However, they could hold significance for other democratic coalitions, particularly in environments characterized by constrained power dynamics, notable differences, or the presence—or potential—for hierarchy. This merits further investigation, especially also within networked organizations that operate across organizational boundaries.

Nevertheless, future research might explore whether additional or other themes emerge in other political contexts. Finally, our research is inductive in nature and, thus, provides new theoretical considerations for the research on intergroup leadership. Thus, we cannot yet make any argument about the importance and causality of those aspects we outlined in more general. But we hope that our findings motivate further deductive research on intergroup leadership in the future, especially focusing also on the



relationship of intergroup leadership to authentic leadership and leadership in the plural.

## **Conclusions**

Intergroup leadership is an important phenomenon it is present in many contexts, including politics. It is important to understand that it differs from classical theories of leadership. Our research contributes to understanding how leaders might achieve a strong intergroup relational identity how it can result in a perception of authentic leadership that actually involves more than one leader. In this way, our research may inspire to explore whether the concept of intergroup leadership can be integrated with other new perspectives on leadership. Further, we show that while intergroup leadership involves more complexity than traditional models (Mulder & Giessner, 2021), an inductive approach studying intergroup leadership reveals some more details in how to best establish those processes previously argued to make intergroup leadership effective (Hogg et al, 2012; Pittinsky & Simon, 2007).

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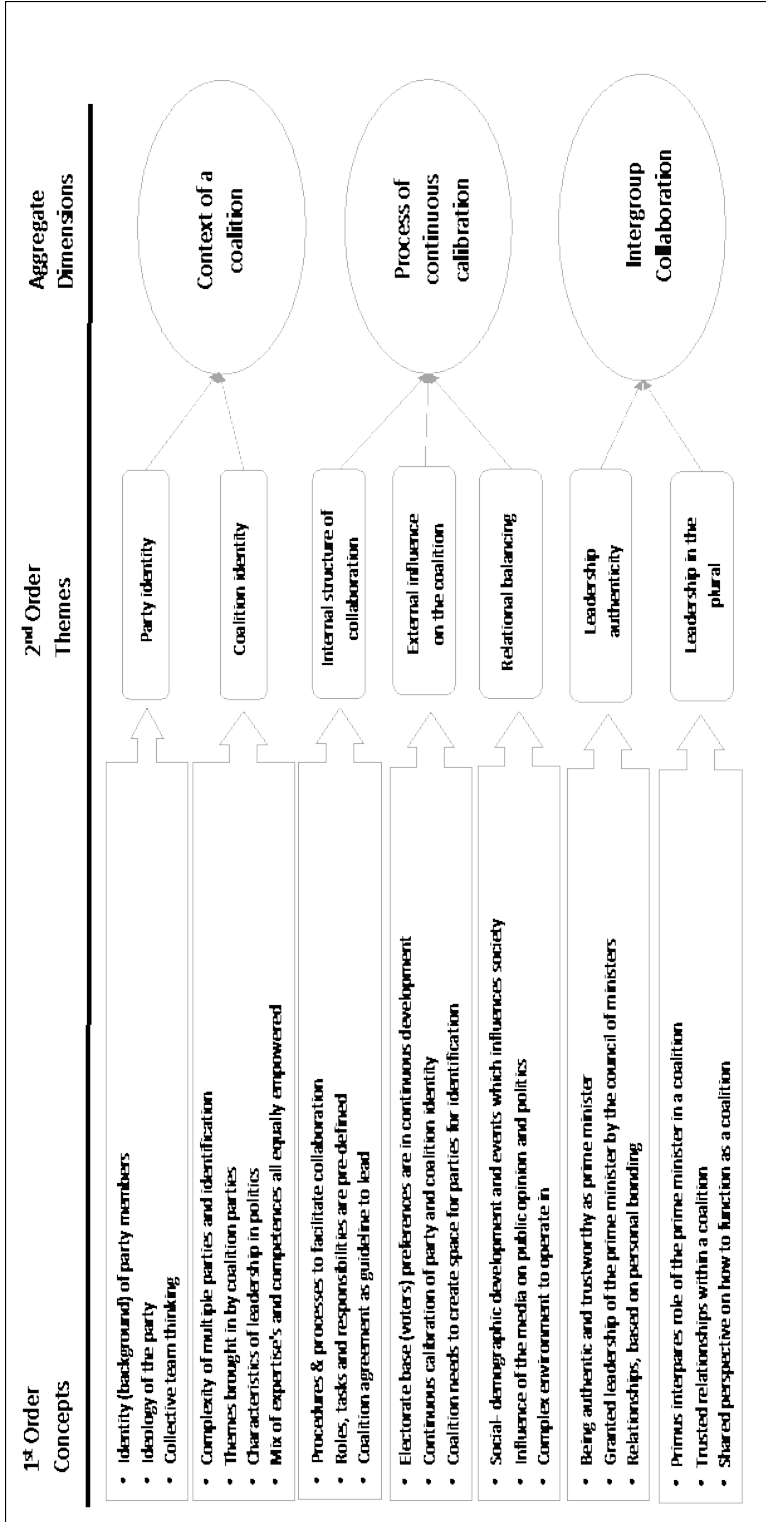
**Table 1: coalitions in The Netherlands (2002-2022)**

Overview of the coalitions in The Netherlands from 2002-2022					
Name: of the coalition	starting	ending date	# days	Coalition parties	Political position
Balkenende I	22 June 2002	27 May 2003	339 days	CDA • LPF VVD	Right-wing
Balkenende II	27 May 2003	7 July 2006	3 years, 41 days	CDA • VVD D66	Centre-right
Balkenende III	7 July 2006	22 February 2007	230 days	CDA • VVD	Centre-right
Balkenende IV	22 February 2007	14 October 2010	3 years, 234 days	CDA • PvdA CU	Centrist
Rutte I (Rutte-Verhagen)	14 October 2010	5-nov-12	2 years, 22 days	VVD • CDA (PVV)	Right-wing
Rutte II (Rutte-Asscher)	5-nov-12	26 October 2017	4 years, 355 days	VVD • PvdA	Centrist
Rutte III	26 October 2017	10 January 2022	4 years, 191 days	VVD • CDA D66 • CU	Centre-right
Rutte IV	10 January 2022	Incumbent	115 days	VVD • CDA D66 • CU	Centre-right

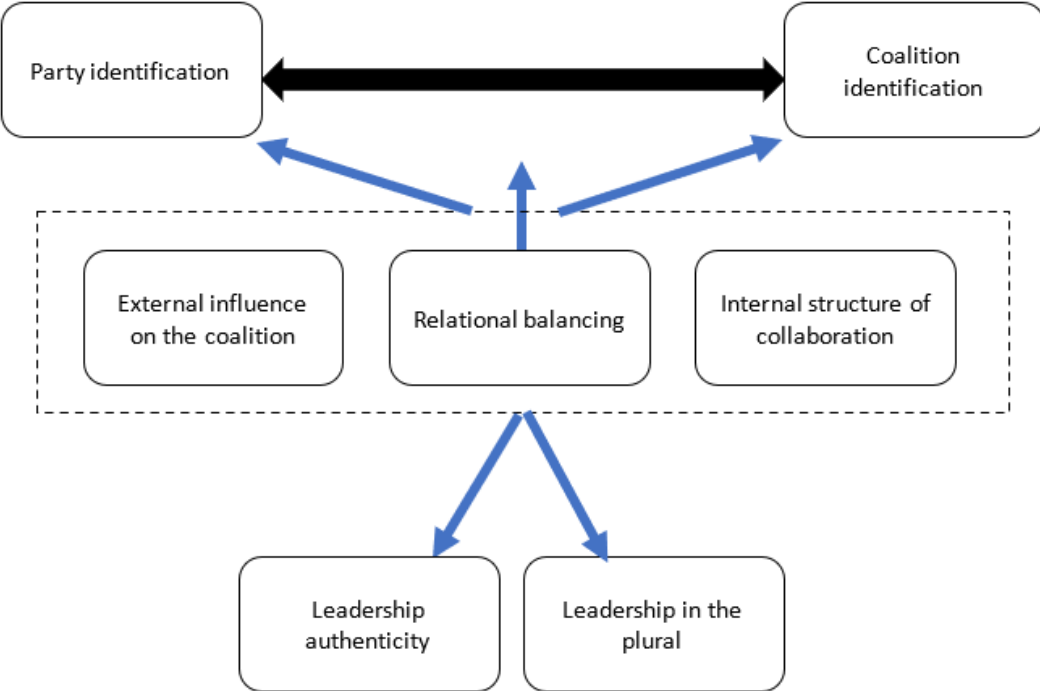
**Table 2: for the last decennia, the ‘internal structure of collaboration’ displays how coalitions work towards decision making.**

Order	Activity
Step 1	The prime minister meets with the vice premiers on monday, followed by a meeting with the leaders of the coalition parties in the parlement.
Step 2	Based on these meetings topics are further worked out by ministeries on Tuesday and Wednesday, and further discussed with ministers involved and within the coalition parties, to gain support and establish a majority support in the parlement.
Step 3	On Thursday, there is an informal meeting with the prime minister and vice ministers, together with the leaders of the coalition parties to align on the agreements.
Step 4	On Friday, the outcomes are discussed and decision taken by the council of ministers. This drumbeat repeats itself every week and is an important stronghold for a coalition to collaborate in.

**Figure 1: The Gioia method applied to the functioning of intergroup leadership in political coalitions.**



**Figure 2: the process of continuous calibration of a coalition to be able to function as a coalition**



## **Summaries of the main findings and contributions**

Chapter 2 has explored how multiple leadership (Denis et al., 2012) are established and maintained in practice. By focusing on professional sports teams and utilizing an inductive qualitative research approach, we have identified three dimensions crucial for enabling multiple leadership in action: *team context*, *the process of development*, and *team functioning*.

Team context serves as a catalyst for individuals to accept multiple leaders within the team as a viable leadership structure. Factors like high diversity, team size, and the need for a cohesive team identity can prompt teams to consider multiple leadership as a feasible and sometimes necessary model. However, these factors alone are not enough. The key to a sustainable emergence of multiple leadership lies in the establishment and maintenance processes, referred to as the *process of development*. Our research has consistently shown that interviewees advocate for a bottom-up and top-down approach involving the team in decision-making to foster the emergence of multiple leadership. Multiple leadership, compared to single-leadership models, proves to be well-suited for those national sports teams, as it better mirrors the team's diversity and task complexity. Our research with professional sports teams has provided valuable new insights into the triggers

and processes of such leadership structures' emergence, as well as their significant impact on *team functioning*.

It is also worth mentioning that some potential dynamic aspects surfaced. Considering that teams change over time, for example, with players leaving or new players joining, the context may have evolved. Therefore, a multiple leadership structure cannot be seen as a fixed construct but should be viewed as an ongoing process that requires continuous maintenance. The specific changes within the team depend on its dynamics and context, which may involve adjusting the number of leaders, potentially even having just one leader if the situation calls for it. This dynamic perspective is particularly insightful because the existing literature on shared (Carson et al., 2007; Pearce & Conger, 2002) or distributed leadership (Currie & Lockett, 2011; Gronn, 2002; Mehra et al., 2006) often ignores how leadership in plural structures is established and maintained. Our insights shed light on how team members perceive positive team functioning when implementing multiple leadership. In our case, players transformed their team identity, accepting multiple leaders and recognizing their value. In other words, they formed a positive social identity (cf. Tajfel & Turner, 1986) around multiple leadership. Based on this transformed team identity, they perceived an enhanced potential for team performance within and across games.

Overall, our insights have contributed to the theoretical understanding of multiple leadership, especially concerning the dynamic processes of its emergence and maintenance. Based on our findings, we have proposed a model illustrating how an interactive process of emergence can lead to a positively functioning team. This process involves a transformation of the team's identity, marked by the acceptance and appreciation of multiple leadership, which ultimately strengthens team performance. This identity transformation can, in turn, reinforce the emergence process. We also recognize that this is an ongoing process, as reflected in the maintenance of these processes over time. In other words, the emergence process, identity transformation, and resulting team performance are continuous processes influenced by both internal and external changes. This process can be continuous but may also encounter disruptive moments.

Chapter 3 of our study has utilized a newly developed case, based on the interviews from Chapter 2, to investigate knowledge acquisition and schema revision (Lipman, 1991; Rumelhart, 1984) related to vertical and horizontal leadership. The objective was to examine the impact of a case teaching intervention on students' understanding of multiple leadership. The results have shown that a case teaching intervention can shift students' schema from vertical to horizontal leadership (Wellman et al., 2022).



Moreover, we have found that the extent of schema revision was stronger among students who have rated the case higher in terms of quality. This finding supports our argument that the quality of a case-teaching method is important in changing leadership structure schemas. In other words, we can change individual schemas about leadership structures by engaging in case teaching. Further, these effects seem to have some stability over time, which might be the base for establishing leadership in the plural in practice (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

In summary, the findings from Chapter 3 have demonstrated that the case teaching intervention has successfully enhanced students' knowledge of multiple leadership and has induced a shift in their schema from vertical to horizontal leadership. Active engagement with the case during the session has been critical for facilitating schema revision. Additionally, the perceived quality of the case has played a significant role in the effectiveness of experiential learning and schema revision. These results have contributed to understanding how case-based interventions can support schema revision and promote shifts in thinking about leadership from vertical to horizontal.

Chapter 4 has delved into intergroup leadership, initially introduced by Pittinsky and Simon (2007), to address leadership challenges in complex

political settings. This concept focuses on fostering positive relations among different groups under a leader's influence. While Pittinsky and Simon argued that effective intergroup leadership involves encouraging contact, managing collaboration, promoting superordinate and subgroup identities, and demonstrating positive intergroup attitudes, which may then result in a positive intergroup relational identity (Hogg et al., 2012), the theoretical considerations so far are based on general psychological theories and have not been inductively explored in actual intergroup leadership contexts. We focused on politics as a context to further develop the theorizing on intergroup leadership because it is a “classical” context in which intergroup leadership is necessary.

We have conducted an inductive qualitative research study to explore the establishment and functioning of coalitions and intergroup leadership (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Our objective has been to uncover how coalitions have operated and how effective intergroup leadership has been enacted within this context. Through our analysis, we have developed a conceptual model comprising three dimensions that pertain to intergroup leadership in practice: coalition context, continuous calibration process, and intergroup collaboration.

Our research findings indicate that the delicate process of aligning with one's own party and the overarching coalition necessitates a clear party identity, which then contributes to establishing a continuously calibrated shared coalition identity. Our conceptual model offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the operational dynamics of intergroup leadership, providing valuable insights for developing effective leadership strategies within political party coalitions. The model emphasizes the significance of both external and internal processes in shaping a relational intergroup identity. To manage these processes, the utilization of routines becomes crucial. This novel perspective sheds light on an overlooked aspect of intergroup leadership, supporting the leadership dynamics within coalitions.

Active leadership is required to manage external processes and maintain a balanced power dynamic. The media also plays a critical role in exerting an external influence that cannot be ignored. Promoting collective identity within political coalitions emerges as a powerful tool for fostering collaboration among members of different parties, which is vital for the effective functioning of such coalitions. The alignment of shared objectives with the concept of collective identity underscores the importance of

perceiving oneself as part of a larger, inclusive social category encompassing multiple groups.

On the other hand, internal processes can be managed by establishing routines, which help create a common ingroup identity and mitigate internal conflicts. Developing effective routines requires a deep understanding of the broader context in which tasks must be performed. These routines and patterns provide a structured communication framework and systems for collaboration across boundaries, contributing to the perception of the coalition as a coherent and distinct entity with a strong sense of entitativity (Hogg et al., 2012).

*Authentic leadership* plays a fundamental role in intergroup leadership, encompassing traits such as genuineness, honesty, and building strong relationships. Our research confirms the importance of authentic leadership, particularly that of the prime minister, in collaboration with fellow ministers during the construction and crafting of a coalition. Additionally, we discovered that social bonding among the Council of Ministers positively impacts coalition success and leadership functioning *in the plural*.

*Intergroup collaboration* emerges as a valuable approach for bridging subgroup differences by fostering a shared identity and working towards common objectives.

### **Implications for future research**

Our studies show new theoretical facets of intergroup leadership and leadership in the plural that should be quantitatively studied in the future. In this way, we extend previous theorizing on both concepts. Further, we show that it is possible to change leadership schemas, enabling leadership development to adjust to new leadership realities. These new leadership realities, specifically intergroup leadership, may result in the perception of leadership in the plural. Those two concepts of multiple leadership and intergroup leadership may show some important overlap. This is important to emphasize because both research streams are rather independent of each other. Future research may aim to integrate this literature theoretically and empirically.

## **Conclusions**

The new complexity of challenges and business environments requests new forms of leadership. In the current work, we considered two forms addressing these complexities: leadership in the plural (more than one leader) and intergroup leadership (leading more than one team). While we show some new insights on how to manage those forms of leadership, we also revealed that both forms are overlapping. More precisely, good intergroup leadership seems to result in perceptions of leadership in the plural. Furthermore, we show we can change vertical leadership schemas into horizontal ones. Therefore, this thesis offers (1) new pathways for theoretical development and integration of leadership in the plural and intergroup leadership and (2) provides practical insights into how to enact those leadership styles and to change the “old” vertical schemas of leadership into the “new” horizontal schemas necessary to lead the complex world around us.

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# **Nieuwe vormen van leiderschap**

## **Leiden in meervoud, meervoudig leiderschap**

### **Nederlandse samenvatting**

De toenemende complexiteit van de samenleving en daarmee de omgeving waarin bedrijven moeten opereren, is het resultaat van talrijke onderling verbonden mondiale ontwikkelingen.

Door deze complexiteit ontstaan er nieuwe, vaak innovatieve bedrijfsmodellen, ingewikkelde toeleveringsketens en een andere manier van communiceren en samenwerken. In deze veranderende wereld moeten organisaties hun weg vinden en worden leiders geconfronteerd met nieuwe uitdagingen die de tot nu toe bepleite leiderschapsstijlen en -vaardigheden niet altijd meer te voldoen.

Geconfronteerd met veranderende marktdynamiek en ontwrichtende nieuwe bedrijfsmodellen, moeten leiders innovatie omarmen, complexe netwerken overzien en samenwerken tussen de verschillende belanghebbende managen. Deze veranderingen leiden tot nieuwe manieren van denken over leiderschap, waarbij we mogelijk meer dan één leider nodig hebben om de huidige problemen aan te pakken. Dit wordt aangeduid als

meervoudig leiderschap, ofwel 'leadership in the plural' (Denis et al., 2012; Gronn, 2002; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Pearce & Conger, 2002; Uhl-Bien, 2006), 'distributed leadership' (Currie & Lockett, 2011; Gronn, 2002; Mehra et al., 2006) of 'shared leadership' (Carson et al., 2007; Pearce & Conger, 2002). Ook kan het zijn dat meerdere zelfstandige groepen of teams geleid worden door één leider. Dit wordt in de literatuur aangeduid als 'intergroup leadership' (Pittinsky & Simon, 2007; Hogg et al. 2012).

In mijn onderzoek verken ik dit verschuivende paradigma van leiderschap. Traditioneel wordt leiderschap ingekaderd binnen een hiërarchische structuur, met een enkele leider aan de top die zijn volgers stuurt. Echter, steeds meer organisatorische trends bewegen weg van dit model naar plattere hiërarchieën. In sommige situaties zien we de opkomst van dubbele leiderschapsrollen. Deze ideeën gaan in tegen het traditionele enkele-leider-model en vragen aandacht voor de complexiteit van 'multiple leadership'. Ondanks de bestaande literatuur over deze benadering, blijft er een opmerkelijke leemte bestaan, vooral met betrekking tot de praktische toepassing en de daadwerkelijke opkomst van deze nieuwe vormen van leiderschap.

In het onderzoek richt ik me in eerste instantie op het ontstaan van meervoudig leiderschap in professionele sportteams. Gezien de teamdynamiek en prestatiedruk in de sport, komen de nuances van in leiderschap en daarmee ook van meervoudig leiderschap goed naar voren. In sport teams zijn spelers sterk afhankelijk van elkaar, terwijl de verschillende spelers ook unieke kwaliteiten meebrengen met eigen leiderschapsstijlen die van belang zijn voor het team, waardoor in het team meervoudig leiderschap kan ontstaan. De analyse van deze dynamiek biedt waardevolle inzichten voor bedrijven en non-profitorganisaties over hoe te leiden in een steeds complexere wereld. Voortbouwend op de inzichten in meervoudig leiderschap, gaat mijn onderzoek vervolgens dieper in op de verschuiving van verticale, naar meer horizontale leiderschapspectieven. Aangespoord door de bevindingen, heb ik mijn onderzoek verbreed naar intergroup leadership. Hoewel dit onderzoek aanvullend is op mijn primaire focus op meervoudig leiderschap, biedt het waardevolle perspectieven en legt het verbanden met het bredere thema van leiderschap in pluralistische situaties.

## **Overzicht van onderwerpen**

Hoofdstuk 1 introduceert het concept van leiderschap in meervoud en verheldert de twee belangrijke invalshoeken van mijn onderzoek, te weten de ontwikkeling van multiple leadership leiderschap en de uitdagingen van intergroup leadership.

Hoofdstuk 2, is gericht op de ontwikkeling en het onderhoud van ‘multiple leadership’ en hoe dit werkt in teams. In dit hoofdstuk presenteer ik een kwalitatieve studie over multiple leadership in sportteams. Sport biedt een waardevolle context voor het bestuderen van processen die relevant zijn voor managementonderzoek (Fonti et al., 2023). De primaire focus van dit onderzoek is het verkennen van het ontstaan van ‘multiple leadership’ binnen een team (Denis et al., 2012). Daarnaast onderzoek ik het functioneren van teams met ‘multiple leadership’.

In Hoofdstuk 3 wordt voort gebouwd op de inzichten verkregen in Hoofdstuk 2 door de introductie van een casestudie die studenten uitnodigt om het concept van 'gedeeld leiderschap' te onderzoeken. Deze casestudie is gefundeerd op schematheorieën zoals uiteengezet door Lipman (1991) en Rumelhart (1984), die stellen dat casestudies de transitie van traditioneel verticaal leiderschapsdenken naar een meer horizontaal, collaboratief begrip

van leiderschap kunnen bevorderen. Dit idee wordt verder uitgediept met referentie naar recent onderzoek van Wellman et al. (2022), die voorstellen dat een horizontale benadering van leiderschap - waarin teams worden aangemoedigd om meerdere leiders te herkennen en te ontwikkelen - potentieel nog effectiever is. (Wellman et al., 2022). Toevoegend aan deze discussie introduceert Hoofdstuk 4 het concept 'intergroep leiderschap', dat zich richt op de uitdagingen en kansen van het leiden van diverse groepen of teams. Dit concept, gedetailleerd beschreven door Pittinsky & Simon (2007) en Hogg et al. (2018), is bijzonder relevant in situaties waarin leiderschap over meerdere groepen moet worden uitgevoerd. Dit fenomeen onderzoek ik binnen de context van de Nederlandse politiek, waar coalitievorming tussen verschillende partijen een belangrijke rol speelt. Een significante bevinding is dat 'intergroep leiderschap' en 'gedeeld leiderschap' parallellen vertonen, vooral in de waardering en integratie van de verschillen tussen groepen binnen het leiderschapsproces. In Hoofdstuk 5, het laatste hoofdstuk van mijn onderzoek, geef ik een overzicht van de bevindingen uit de voorgaande hoofdstukken en brengen dit bij elkaar in de belangrijkste bijdragen en resultaten van onze studie.



# **New Forms of Leadership**

## **Leadership in the plural, plural Leadership**

### **English Summary**

The increasing complexity of society and the environment in which companies must operate is the result of numerous interconnected global developments. This complexity leads to new, often innovative business models, complicated supply chains, and different ways of communicating and collaborating. In this changing world, organizations must find their way, and leaders are confronted with new challenges that previously advocated leadership styles and skills do not always meet.

Faced with changing market dynamics and disruptive new business models, leaders must embrace innovation, oversee complex networks, and manage collaboration between various stakeholders. These changes lead to new ways of thinking about leadership, where we might need more than one

leader to address current problems. This is referred to as pluralistic leadership, or 'leadership in the plural' (Denis et al., 2012; Gronn, 2002; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Pearce & Conger, 2002; Uhl-Bien, 2006), 'distributed leadership' (Currie & Lockett, 2011; Gronn, 2002; Mehra et al., 2006), or 'shared leadership' (Carson et al., 2007; Pearce & Conger, 2002). It can also happen that multiple independent groups or teams are led by a single leader. This is referred to in the literature as 'intergroup leadership' (Pittinsky & Simon, 2007; Hogg et al. 2012).

In my research, I explore this shifting paradigm of leadership. Traditionally, leadership is framed within a hierarchical structure, with a single leader at the top directing followers. However, more organizational trends are moving away from this model towards flatter hierarchies. In some situations, we see the emergence of dual leadership roles. These ideas contradict the traditional single-leader model and call for attention to the complexity of 'multiple leadership'. Despite the existing literature on this approach, a notable gap remains, especially regarding practical application and the actual emergence of these new forms of leadership.

In my research, I initially focus on the emergence of pluralistic leadership in professional sports teams. Given the team dynamics and



performance pressure in sports, the nuances of leadership and, thus, pluralistic leadership become evident. In sports teams, players are highly dependent on each other, while the different players also bring unique qualities with their leadership styles that are important to the team, allowing pluralistic leadership to emerge within the team. Analyzing this dynamic provides valuable insights for companies and non-profit organizations on how to lead in an increasingly complex world. Building on the insights into pluralistic leadership, my research then delves deeper into the shift from vertical to more horizontal leadership perspectives. Spurred by the findings, I broadened the research to intergroup leadership. While this research is supplementary to the primary focus on pluralistic leadership, it offers valuable perspectives and links to the broader theme of leadership in pluralistic situations.

## **Overview of Topics**

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of leadership in plurality and clarifies the two key perspectives of my research, namely the development of multiple leadership and the challenges of intergroup leadership. Chapter 2 focuses on the development and maintenance of 'multiple leadership' and

how it works in teams. This chapter presents a qualitative study of multiple leadership in sports teams. Sport provides a valuable context for studying processes relevant to management research (Fonti et al., 2023). The primary focus of this research is to explore the emergence of 'multiple leadership' within a team (Denis et al., 2012). I also investigate the functioning of teams with 'multiple leadership'. In Chapter 3, I build on the insights gained in Chapter 2 by introducing a case study that invites students to explore the concept of 'shared leadership'. This case study is grounded in schema theories as laid out by Lipman (1991) and Rumelhart (1984), which suggest that case studies can facilitate the transition from traditional vertical leadership thinking to a more horizontal, collaborative understanding of leadership. This idea is further explored with reference to recent research by Wellman et al. (2022), who propose that a horizontal approach to leadership - in which teams are encouraged to recognize and develop multiple leaders - can be potentially more effective (Wellman et al., 2022). Adding to this discussion, Chapter 4 introduces the concept of 'intergroup leadership', which focuses on the challenges and opportunities of leading diverse groups or teams. This concept, detailed by Pittinsky & Simon (2007) and Hogg et al. (2018), is particularly relevant in situations where leadership across multiple groups needs to be exercised. I explore this phenomenon within the context of Dutch

politics, where coalition formation between different parties plays a significant role. A significant finding is that 'intergroup leadership' and 'shared leadership' show parallels, especially in the appreciation and integration of differences between groups within the leadership process. Chapter 5, the final chapter of my research, provides an overview of the findings from the previous chapters and brings together the key contributions and results of our study.





## About the author

Folkert Mulder's primary role is to facilitate organizational transformation and strategy redirection. His special talent lies in establishing trust within

organizations and in mastering group dynamics. Folkert has the experience and insight to understand what individuals and organizations need.

Folkert holds a Masters degree (honour of excellence) in business economics from Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and a Masters degree from INSEAD, Fontainebleau, France. Prior to founding his own company, Folkert worked as a consultant for an international consulting company involved in a variety of strategic and due diligence projects throughout Europe and the US. Facilitating organizational transformation and strategy redirection, Folkert successfully support companies in developing their business across industries and geographies. Examples include top-tier businesses in fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), professional service firms, financial institutions and major energy companies in Europe, Asia and the Americas. Besides managing strategy formation and organizational

development, Folkert facilitated several post-merger integration processes within different industries. He works for management boards and staff, but also advise shareholders and supervisory board members.

Besides working for a wide range of first-class companies and management teams, Folkert facilitates top-flight sport teams. Teams he inspired to excel were a golf team that won the World Championship in 2006, a sailing team that was the HCP winner of the prestigious Sydney Hobart Rolex Yacht Race in 2008 and a Dutch field hockey team who became national premier league champions in 2011 and 2012. Folkert is part of the coaching staff of the Dutch men's national field hockey team in preparation for the Olympic Games.

Folkert serves as a board member of the Erasmus Centre for Leadership at Rotterdam School of Management and of the Development Board of the Erasmus Trust Fund Foundation.

Folkert lectures at Erasmus University Rotterdam on the MBA and Executive Programs on organizational change.

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In an era marked by escalating complexity, the dynamics of leadership have transformed.

Folkert Mulder's research delves into the emerging paradigm of 'multiple leadership', challenging traditional hierarchies in favor of a collaborative approach. This shift from vertical to horizontal leadership perspectives is vividly illustrated through professional sports teams, whose interdependent dynamics and performance pressures shed light on the nuances of shared command.

Through qualitative studies, this dissertation explores the rise of 'multiple leadership' within teams, where diverse leadership styles contribute uniquely to collective success. It extends into 'intergroup leadership', examining the intricacies of steering multiple autonomous groups, particularly within the Dutch political landscape of coalition-building.

This work not only bridges the gap between theory and practice but also offers valuable insights into leading amid complexity, advocating for an appreciation of pluralistic leadership as an effective strategy in contemporary organizations.

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Burgemeester Oudlaan 50

Mandeville (T) Building

3062 PA Rotterdam, The Netherlands

P.O. Box 1738

3000 DR Rotterdam, The Netherlands

T +31 10 408 1182

E [info@erim.eur.nl](mailto:info@erim.eur.nl)

W [www.erim.eur.nl](http://www.erim.eur.nl)