IMAGINING LEADERSHIP

This critique of leadership theory and research starts with an imaginary conversation between Ella Flagg-Young and John Dewey in which they discuss what leadership ought to be. The conversation sets up the more serious critique, which points to fallacies in traditional thought about leadership: the assumptions that we can find a certain, value-free "truth" about leadership, the failure to consider leadership as enacted by women and others who have, heretofore, not attained leadership in bureaucracies, the failure to separate leadership from its enactment in bureaucracies, and the failure of traditional leadership to create school systems that enact social justice. Such schools will require leaders who work collaboratively, inclusively, with sensitivity to the range of potentials of diverse children and adults. Bear with me. Imagine a conversation between two highly educated educational administration professors who, through a slip in laser surgery, had lost the leadership theory part of their brains.

Professor Dewey: What are school leaders for and what are they like?

Professor Flagg-Young: Dear me! I know, let's ask Slater to send us his article on leadership as well as the Primus compendium about leadership (Slater, 1995; Slater, Bolman, Crow, Goldring, & Thurston, 1994).

Professor Dewey: Let's play with some ideas while we await his reply. You'd have to start by asking what are schools for? and what would leaders of those schools be like?

Professor Flagg-Young: I'll start. Schools are places where communities send their young to spend time in a safe, nurturing, and resource-filled environment, being helped by knowledgeable adults who collaborate in the common goal to assist in children's development to their best potential -- physical, spiritual, and intellectual.

Professor Dewey: That sounds lovely, but a tad vague. You must define terms like their best potential, knowledgeable adults, and resource-filled. But maybe that's what leaders do.

Professor Flagg-Young: Surely the papers we're awaiting will give us answers, but I think leaders would need to be good collaborators, listeners, plus they'd have to be caring with adults -- in the community closely in tune with the resources that help, good at helping others coordinate those resources, sensitive to the range of potentials of diverse children and adults, and someone who is caring with children.

Professor Dewey: Plus they'd have to be caring with adults -- in the community and in the school -- so they could coordinate activities and resources and get community involvement.

Professor Flagg-Young: And the community wouldn't entrust their youngsters in schools unless they believed that the leader had a real determination to actively search out problems and push, invent, and generally support efforts at solution.

Professor Dewey: What problems?

Professor Flagg-Young: Communities expect schools to find ways to help every kid, no matter about disability, race, class, gender, sexual preference. Also, they're expected to provide a model of democracy and social justice to prepare young citizens. So leaders would have to create schools that are set up for those purposes. Say, now we're back to schools' purpose, goals, what schools stand for. It's obvious that you cannot separate leadership from goals and purpose. And lots of issues flow from that -- like, Do schools need leaders? Where do they come from? If leadership is good, how can we prepare leaders? Tell you what -- let's see, when we get the Primus and the Slater pieces, we'll see if we didn't come up with the right ways of framing school leadership.

When the professors received the two papers, they were confused and mystified:

Professor Dewey: Could it be that our field has been studying leadership for decades and failed to see the things we see? How did these scholars get the assumptions and approaches they use?

Professor Flagg-Young: Wow, take a look: They are mostly men! In Slater's article 16% of the authors appear to be female. Also, there are references in the Primus chapter's sections that apparently have no female authors or a tiny percentage! Talk about domination of a field!

Professor Dewey: Oh, Ella, stop obsessing over divergent matters! Now, back to the important theoretical discussion: In our brainstorming, we didn't have the years of tradition and expertise on leadership represented in these articles. These "experts" had no way getting outside of the assumptions of their dominant paradigm to challenge assumptions as we did. I don't see much to support our ideas of leadership.

Professor Flagg-Young: Knowing academia, I'll bet the traditional paradigm were rewarded with endowed chairs and achievement awards and those who challenged were belittled and had difficulty even getting tenure.

Professor Dewey: Let's look for literature that challenges the traditional paradigm. Maybe they'll justify our vision of school leadership.

Professor Flagg-Young: If leadership is bright orange, leadership research is slate gray. (McCall & Lombardo, 1978, p. 3)

The Slater (1995, [this issue]) article in EAQ and the Primus chapter provide a review of the traditional ways of thinking about leadership. We, however, have perused important critiques to color the discussion and discover promising lines of inquiry.

Critiques of Leadership Theory and Research

We intend to raise critical questions left unasked and unanswered by the recent efforts to review leadership theory and research for education. We question the assumption that there is, somewhere, a definitive and value-free definition of leadership. We question the assumption that leadership can be defined by studying White males. We question definitions of leadership that are separated from educational purposes, to children? Why does its study continue to ignore the ways our current leadership and structures perpetuate inequality? "Knowledge -- the processes and practices and organization of meaning that we use to make sense of the world -- is never neutral. Rather, it is a result of struggle and conflict over diverse interests" (Martusewicz & Reynolds, 1994, p. 4).

Politics of Knowledge

Why do leadership theorists and researchers continue to search for a value-free definition of leadership? Are schools and their leadership value-free? Why is leadership so often studied in a way disconnected from educational purposes, to children? Why does its study continue to ignore the ways our current leadership and structures perpetuate inequality? "Knowledge -- the processes and practices and organization of meaning that we use to make sense of the world -- is never neutral. Rather, it is a result of struggle and conflict over diverse interests" (Martusewicz & Reynolds, 1994, p. 4).

Kuhn (1962/1970) demonstrated the power of paradigms in suppressing challenge. Theorists create boundaries in their discourse about what leadership is, defining what it is not. A strong motivation to study leadership is to keep this commodity, leadership, confined to discourses and definitions that favor a certain type and exclude others. Who benefits and who loses in this discourse? Who controls the discourse?

"Cognitive politics" (Ramos, 1981, p. 76) hide the biases and assumptions in leadership theory and practice, conditioning us to accept a certain version of truth. Metanarratives that construct meaning, for example, for leadership, are actually powerful claims over what Lather (1991) calls "contested cultural terrain" (p. xvi).

People seek knowledge for reasons, purposes, so why would we want to study leadership? Hopeful scholars would answer: to have more of it to improve schooling. Cynics, scholars who study the politics of knowledge, would answer (a) to find its elements and control access to them, (b) to set up programs for training and certifying it according
to their definitions and knowledge, and (c) to keep it from emerging where we do not want it, for example, revolutionaries and "riff-raff." Critical theorists hold that if it is to be about leadership as "administrative control that systematically ignores both educational issues and those social and cultural issues that lie at the heart of people's commitment to, or alienation from, educational institutions" (Bates, 1983, p. 47; Bates, 1986), emphasizing the role of schools in perpetuating inequalities and training children for behavior that benefits capitalist society and calling for leadership for social justice.

The Feminist Critique

One of the built-in fallacies in traditional models of leadership (McCall & Lombardo, 1978) is the assumption of White male superiority (Blackmore, 1993; Marshall, 1988; Regan, 1990). Leadership theory was developed by White males doing observations of White males holding leadership positions in bureaucracies. The behaviors, perspectives, and values of women, minorities, and others who could not get through socialization and selection systems in bureaucracies to attain leadership positions were, therefore, excluded from theory and research on leadership. Behaviors, backgrounds, appearance, language, and values that were different, or were enacted by someone in a lower position, were simply dismissed as uncredentialed, nonleadership-like, deviant, or deficient. The focus on highly visible line administrators leaves unexplored questions about alternative manifestations of leadership that might be exhibited by other professional educators -- teachers, women, minorities, and risk takers -- who cannot or choose not to pass through administrator socialization and traditional administrative filtering systems. To move beyond having White males as the overwhelming majority of leaders (in the western world) and the majority of people who write and theorize about leadership, we must imagine and explore differently.

The protagonist in Marge Piercy's Women on the Edge of Time, "can shift his/her sex at will and . . . lives in a culture that does not institutionalize . . . gender" (Harding, 1986, p. 20). Harding challenges scholars to imagine this; she challenges the assumption that women should try to become just like men. She asks us why we should "contribute to scientific projects that have sexist, racist, and classist problems and outcomes?" (p. 21). Dorothy Smith (1981) proposes to construct a sociology from the "standpoint of women" (p. 155) to create new conceptual schemes based on women's experiences that "do not fit within the distorted abstractions of men's conceptual schemes" (Harding, 1986, p. 156) and that are determined to be important, real, and worthy of study. The leadership enacted by a woman teacher or a female head of household does not count as leadership if it does not fit the dominant conceptual schemes. Such leadership could not be viewed as valuable experience from which to launch a leadership career and traditional administrative practice are male normed, any deviation (e.g., by women and minorities) will be seen as inappropriate or even incompetent. If women have different ways of talking, leading, supervising, collaborating, learning, including, affiliating, relationship building, empowering, nurturing, and valuing, those ways will not appear as leadership (Marshall, 1988; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988).[1]

Important and challenging theory and research pose the likelihood that women do differ, that they speak with less dominating and more inclusive language (Brennan, 1990), that their mode of decision making in moral dilemmas are more focused on relationship maintenance and community than on rights, that their ways of understanding are grounded in their own experience, and that their ethic of caring can assist in relationship building in otherwise coldly bureaucratic organizations (Brennan, 1990; Cilimny, Goldberg, and Tarule, 1996; Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1992). Research shows that women as educational administrators are more attuned to teaching, curriculum and instruction, and children--perhaps because they spend more time as teachers and as mothers before they become administrators; they produce more positive interactions with community and staff; they have a more democratic, inclusive, and conflict-reducing style; and they are less concerned with bureaucracy (Bell & Chase, 1989; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989).

The Challenge to Bureaucracy

Foster (1986) says that "we tend to see leadership as being intimately related to particular social positions rather than as emergent in community and group actions . . . . We have to consider how the concept (leadership) has become so closely identified with the social system within which it is used" (p. 182). Leadership theory is ensconced in assumptions of the inevitability and superiority of bureaucracy (Clark & Melyo, 1988; Ferguson, 1984). Theory seems to be derived from research carded out in bureaucracies and business, as if these were the logical forms of organization; researchers do not question the applicability of these models for schools. They often and uncritically start with studies of business management if production lines for widgets had parallels with helping children learn, so leadership and management in one form or another in an organization should be the same. Also they seem to assume that teaching professionals need someone to direct, monitor, inspire, make meaning for them. With notions of leadership so enmeshed in and miffed by acceptance of hierarchical bureaucratic organization, scholars keep punching at theory with the same fallacious assumptions.

However, letting go of the theory of organization as instrumental --concerned with manipulation and control -- and, instead, embracing the educative model, can support leaders who would be taking on the challenge of creating organizational patterns that enhance nurturance and collaboration -- multiplier effects rather than competitive zero-sum games (Fay, 1977). (See "Feminist Critique," above.)

Critical Theory

In critical theory, we find the basis for leadership of empowering systems, the critical humanist leader who engages in a constant search for inequality and oppression, questioning assumptions that governments set up institutions (like schools) to guarantee equal opportunity.

Critical theorists are generally concerned with issues of social justice and believe that many of the institutions and structures that organize our lives, especially our economic system, the state and its institutions, operate to keep in place fundamentally unequal and unjust social and political relations. (Martusewicz & Reynolds, 1994, p. 6)

Critical theorists take a stand for moral and democratic practices in schools (Giroux, 1994; Pulpil, 1989).

Leaders would be critical humanists who "appreciate the usual and unusual events of our lives and engage in an effort to develop, challenge, and liberate human souls . . . and are therefore not satisfied with the status quo; rather they hope to change individuals for the better and to improve social conditions for all" (Foster, 1986, p. 18). They would be empowerers. As Fay (1977) says, "The function. . . is to enlighten the social actors so that, coming to see themselves and their social situation in a new way, they themselves can decide to alter the conditions which they find oppressive" (p. 103).

Combining critical and feminist perspectives would provide a framework for leaders who are carers, people who constantly work to maintain relationships, community, caring, and connection (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1992). The challenge of such frameworks, however, causes discomfort to those who benefit from the current system. "Education has fundamental connections with the idea of human emancipation, though it is constantly in danger of being captured by other interests" (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett, 1982, p. 208). (See "Politics of Knowledge" above.)

Imagined Leadership

The prevailing views of leadership fail to identify leaders who persist in uncovering, naming, and reordering schooling to eliminate the perpetuation of poverty, social Darwinism, factory models, competitiveness, silencing and exclusion, loneliness and frustration, violence -- physical and mental -- and sexism and racism. They do not help identify leadership in women, minorities, and people in lower hierarchical positions. They obviate the possibility of establishing a caring ethic by reifying traditional bureaucratic structures in schools, where the goals are control, standardization, and bureaucratic maintenance -- the antithesis of situation-specific, holistic, relationship-building caring.

Leadership theorists need to let go of fallacies and imagine leadership that emphasizes coordinating resources for teaching professionals, assists in creating caring, nurturing relationships in schools, incorporates the talents of nontraditional, nonmale leaders, and identifies as leaders those who are constantly searching for ways to enhance social justice. Take a moment to imagine leadership without the embarrancements of previous theory and research but with schools and schooling in mind; if you can do that, you will be starting on a promising and useful venture, and you will find scholars of the politics of knowledge, the challenge to bureaucracy, the feminist critique, and critical theory to provide guidance.

After sending their article to EAO, Dewey and Flagg-Young reflected:

Flagg-Young: I'd say we certainly laid out an exciting challenge with our words!
Dewey: Yeah, but now I'm going to lose my leadership status in educational administration.

Flagg-Young: Oh, John, lighten up.

NOTE

1. The idea that women from their different socialization and/or their different values systems offer a different way of leading and decision making is substantiated by plentiful research on women in school administration, generally, in "women's ways feminism" (Marshall and Anderson, 1995). Liberal feminism, on the other hand, promotes women attaining equal access to the current socio-political system, on equal footing with men but without challenging the structures in that system. "Power and politics feminisms" focus on the ways in which the current system has embedded powerful structures that are set up to benefit white males, so more radical change is needed than just equal access or the valuing of women's ways.

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By Catherine Marshall

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Item Number: 9508231092
The purpose of this study was to refine understanding of transformational leadership theory by a specification and test of boundary conditions. Multiple levels of analysis (individual, dyad, and group) were used to identify conceptually and assess empirically the potential bounds on transformational leadership theory. Multi-source data were collected from a sample of 105 salespersons and their 33 sales supervisors, and within and between analysis (WABA) procedures were conducted. Contrary to higher-level (dyad, group) and cross-level assertions in the literature, transformational leadership results were based solely on individual differences. That is, in this sales setting, transformational leadership theory was determined to be an individual-level theory bounded by individuals' (superiors' and subordinates') perceptions and not holding at higher levels of analysis. Implications of the findings for future leadership research and practice are discussed.

Transformational Leadership Theory: Using Levels of Analysis to Determine Boundary Conditions

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achievement and growth. Transformational leaders develop their followers to the point where followers are able to take on leadership roles and perform beyond established standards or goals (see Bass & Avolio, 1990, 1993, 1994).

To accomplish this transformation, four key dimensions of leadership are employed (Bass, 1985). Charismatic leadership, or charisma, is central to the transformational leadership process and the key component of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985, 1990; Yukl, 1989). It involves gaining respect, trust, and confidence of others and transmitting a strong sense of mission to them. Inspirational leadership, or inspiration, is communicating a vision with fluency and confidence, increasing optimism and enthusiasm, and giving pep talks to energize others. Intellectual stimulation is actively encouraging others to look at old methods in new ways, fostering creativity, and stressing the use of intelligence. Individualized consideration is giving personal attention to all individuals, making each individual feel valued, and recognizing each individual’s contribution as important.

Given extensive prior research on transformational leadership theory, a set of five expectations, relevant to the current study, can be stated:


Transformational Leadership and Levels

A conceptual issue remains, however, to enhance clarification and understanding of transformational leadership theory; that is, the boundary conditions on the theory must be specified. Levels of analysis can be used for this purpose. Specifically, three primary levels of analysis were viewed as separate as well as collectively: (1) as potential boundary conditions on transformational leadership theory; (2) individuals. The person level of analysis, or individual differences, may serve as the boundary condition. We use this term to convey individual variability on concepts and relationships in transformational leadership theory, that is, individual-level effects.

Yammarino and Bass (1990), Avolio and Yammarino (1990), and Avolio, Yammarino, and Bass (1991) operationalized concepts in transformational leadership theory, including provide direct support for this assertion, their key limitations must be noted which suggest consideration of additional levels of analysis boundary conditions. First, in terms of conceptualization, all three studies were exploratory in nature and so did not hypothesize the level of analysis expected to be placed on analysis on the variables and relationships. Second, in terms of measurement, only same-source data (subordinates of the focal leader) were obtained. So the results must be tempered by the potential for individual-level same-source bias. Third, in terms of empirical testing, because of a lack of matched superior-subordinate reports, Graen’s level of analysis alternative explanation of dyads within groups, Haga 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Wakabayashi, 1992) and a purely dyadic alternative explanation independent of formal work groups (Dansereau et al., 1984; Hollander, 1985; Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1992) were not tested.

Dyads within groups. The group level of analysis, or specifically dyads within groups, may serve as a boundary condition on transformational leadership theory. There is a constant focus on the transformational leader’s ability to get subordinates to think and act beyond their self-interests and in terms of the interests of the group or team in which they are members (Bass, 1985; Graen & Wakabayashi, 1992; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). There also is a focus on the tailoring of transformational leadership within the group to each subordinate’s unique needs, interests, and desires (Avolio & Bass, 1988; Bass 1985). This position is compatible with that of Graen and Wakabayashi (1992) and Yukl (1989), who argue that transformational leadership may represent another form of exchange within the group—a “higher order” exchange (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987) with intangible rather than tangible benefits in high quality, mature dyads (also see Graen & Scandura, 1987; Snidhar & Marks, 1991).

Compatible with the work of Graen and his colleagues (Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Wakabayashi, 1992), to identify dyads within groups as a levels of analysis boundary on transformational leadership theory, reports of both superiors and subordinates about their interactions are needed. In obtaining multiple perspectives on each superior-subordinate dyad, there is an opportunity to assess leader-member agreement and identity the in-group and out-group; that is, dyads within the group that are part of the leader’s cadre (high-quality dyads) versus those dyadic relationships within the group that involve the hired hands (low-quality dyads). Support for this level of analysis as a boundary condition on transformational leadership theory has been provided by Graen and his colleagues (e.g., Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Wakabayashi, 1992) and other researchers (see Bass, 1990; Hollander, 1985; Yukl, 1989) for leadership and outcome relationships similar to those of transformational leadership theory. Dansereau et al. (1984), Yammarino and Bass (1991), and Yammarino and Dubinsky (1992) have clarified this level of analysis view. In particular, consistent with the position of Graen and Scandura (1987) and Graen and Wakabayashi (1992), they note that superior-subordinate interactions occur on a one-to-one (dyadic) basis within a group where the nature or quality of each interaction differs. In other words, the superior displays a different style toward each subordinate in a group; some subordinates are linked more closely to the superior than others (a relative notion); and the superior controls, manages, or influences all the differential interactions. Reviews by Bass (1990), Graen and Wakabayashi (1992), Hollander (1985), Podsakoff and Schriesheim (1985), and Yukl (1989) suggest that the relationships of focus in the present study may hold for dyads within groups. The dyads-within-groups view indicates that superior-subordinate relationships are managed by a superior and differ within a group, and
A major controversy is whether charisma [transformational leadership] is primarily a result of leader attributes, situational conditions, or an interactive influence process between leader and followers. This controversy resembles the divergent perspectives of the trait, situational, and reciprocal influence approaches within the mainstream leadership literature. (p. 205)

Yuki (1989), summarizing this work, notes that:

Yammarino and Bass (1991) elaborated this point and clarified the perspectives using multiple levels of analysis. Briefly, leader attributes or trait approaches noted by Yukl (1989) are individual-(leader) or person-level explanations of leadership. Situational conditions, or situational approaches, discussed by Yukl provide group- or collective-level explanations of leadership. Person-situation views then address leadership in terms of these multiple levels of analysis. The interactive influence process or reciprocal influence approaches mentioned by Yukl deal with leader-follower relationships that are dyadic in nature. Given these multiple views, a cross-level formulation is plausible.

Yuki also states that:

Charisma [transformational leadership] is believed to result from follower perceptions of leader qualities and behavior. These perceptions are influenced by the context of the leadership situation and the followers’ individual and collective needs. (Yuki, 1989, p. 205)

As noted by Yammarino and Bass (1991) and Yammarino and Dubinsky (1992), follower perceptions of the leader and follower needs may be individual- or person-level (i.e., in the eye of the beholder), dyad-level (i.e., determined by one-to-one follower-leader interaction), or group-level (i.e., shared by a group of followers). The context of the leadership situation is typically a set of group- or collective-level factors (Yammarino & Bass, 1991). Again, given these different views, a cross-level formulation is plausible.

Viewing transformational leadership theory as a cross-level formulation means that in transformational leadership theory, relationships among constructs hold at more than one level of analysis (see Behling, 1978; Dansereau et al., 1984; Miller, 1978; Rousseau, 1985). In this case, transformational leadership theory would be more of an unbounded formulation, holding for individuals, dyads, and groups. This suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Relationships derived from transformational leadership theory will hold cross-level in nature, holding at three levels of analysis; that is, they are based on individual differences, between-dyads differences, and differences among dyads within groups.

Method

Sample

The entire domestic sales organization (188 salespersons and 42 sales supervisors) of a $1 billion multinational medical products firm was asked to participate in this study (also see Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1994). Of the contacted sales personnel, 174 subordinates (93%) and 38 superiors (90%) participated in the study. Usable matched reports of complete data (i.e., subordinates reported about their superiors and superiors reported about each of their subordinates) were obtained for 105 subordinate-superior pairs (and their 33 superiors). As such, the effective response rates were 56% for salespersons (subordinates) and 79% for sales supervisors (superiors). Potential participants were dropped from analyses if (a) a subordinate report was provided, but a matching superior report was not; (b) a superior report was provided, but a matching subordinate report was not; or (c) the host company informed us that a subordinate or superior was no longer linked in the organizational hierarchy. The participating subordinates and their superiors comprised 105 superior-subordinate dyads and were embedded in 33 work groups.[2]

All respondents (subordinates and superiors) were males. For the subordinates, mean age was between 29 and 39 years; mean educational level was a bachelor’s degree. Average tenure in the organization, in their present position, and with their current superior were 2 to 4 years, 5 to 10 years, and 1 to 1.5 years, respectively. For their superiors, mean age was between 40 and 50 years; mean educational level was a bachelor’s degree. Average tenure in the organization and in their present position were 4 to 10 years and 1 to 1.5 years, respectively.

Measures

Data were collected from matched questionnaires distributed via intracompany mail to all subordinates and superiors. Each subordinate was asked to respond regarding his relationship with a superior, and a superior was asked to respond regarding his relationship with each subordinate. This approach permitted individual, dyad, group, and/or cross-level effects to be displayed. The surveys, which focused on perceptions (rather than actual behaviors) of superiors and subordinates, were returned directly to the researchers. Multiple-item measures were summed and divided by the appropriate number of items to
Leadership. Five leadership measures were obtained using 47 items from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 1990). Because some of these items focus only on a group of subordinates or leave the referent ambiguous, the items were modified slightly to specifically tap the interactions (relationships) between a superior and each subordinate. For example, an item on a subordinate questionnaire stated, "My superior gives personal attention to me when I seem neglected." The matched item on the superior questionnaire stated, "I give personal attention to this subordinate when he/she seems neglected." Respondents (subordinates and superiors) were asked the frequency with which each item described the interaction between the superior and specific subordinate. Potential responses for each item ranged on a 5-point format from 0 = "not at all" to 4 = "frequently, if not always."

Four dimensions of transformational leadership--charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration--were measured using items from the MLQ. The four scales, number of items in each, and a sample item for each scale from the subordinate questionnaire were:

Charisma (10 items)--"My superior has a sense of mission which he/she transmits to me."

Inspiration (7 items)--"My superior's vision spurs me on."

Intellectual Stimulation (10 items)--"My superior's ideas have forced me to rethink some of my own ideas which I had never questioned before."

Individualized Consideration (10 items)--"My superior treats me as an individual."

To assess transactional leadership, the contingent reward items from the MLQ (Bass & Avolio, 1990) were used:

Contingent Reward (10 items)--"When I do good work, my superior commends me."

Outcomes. Three outcomes of transformational and transactional leadership were measured using reports of subordinates and superiors. First, using three additional items from the MLQ (Bass & Avolio, 1990) that were modified slightly for parallelism as noted above, subordinate extra effort was assessed. Subordinates and superiors were asked the frequency with which a subordinate was motivated to do more than expected. Potential responses for each item ranged on a 5-point format from 0 = "not at all" to 4 = "frequently, if not always."

Second, in terms of performance, superiors were asked to rate the performance of each of their subordinates using a 10-item multi-dimensional performance measure (Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1990). This measure, designed for evaluating sales personnel, included criteria such as profitability of sales efforts, overall work attitude, and product knowledge. Potential responses for each item ranged on a 5-point format from 0 = "poor" to 4 = "excellent." This measure is called subordinate performance in subsequent analyses.

Third, also in terms of performance, subordinates were asked to rate the performance of their superiors using the MLQ 4-item effectiveness measure (Bass & Avolio, 1990). This measure assessed the effectiveness of the superior in meeting subordinate, unit, and organizational needs and requirements. Potential responses for each item ranged on a 5-point format from 0 = "not effective" to 4 = "extremely effective." This measure is called effectiveness of superior in subsequent analyses.

Descriptive Statistics

Because of the very high correlations among the four transformational leadership dimensions (r's ranged from .70 to .91 for subordinate reports and from .49 to .73 for superior reports) and the very high loadings of these items on a single transformational factor for both subordinate and superior reports, an overall transformational leadership measure was used in all the analyses. This collapsing of dimensions is further justified on theoretical grounds given the conceptual connections among the dimension of transformational leadership (see Bass, 1985, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1990). Results and inferences for the overall measure were compatible with those based on the four dimensions separately.

Descriptive statistics for all measures are presented in Table 1. Separate reliabilities (coefficient alpha) were calculated for subordinates and superiors to determine the internal consistency of the multiple-item (summed) scales. All scales yielded re...
are input into a dyad-level WABA. In the ideal case, this analysis would yield results that indicate significant variation and covariation between and within dyads. There is superior-subordinate agreement on the variables within dyads. These findings would suggest that between-dyads differences are evidenced. In this case, transformational leadership theory would be bounded at the dyad level.

Moreover, in terms of multiple levels of analysis, if there is evidence of (a) individual differences, (b) between-dyads differences, and (c) differences among dyads within groups, then cross-level effects would be inferred. In this case, support would be provided for a more unbounded view of transformational leadership theory, holding at the individual, dyad, and group levels of analysis.

Results

The findings for this study are summarized in Table 2. For each WABA, within- and between-dyads, within- and between-group correlations, within- and between-components, and the resulting raw-score (individual-level) correlations are shown for each relationship of interest. All the associated test results also are indicated in the table.

Results from within- and between-dyads analyses are summarized in the first portion of Table 2. These results are based on superior-subordinate multi-rater reports. There is no variable for which the E and F-tests of the etas are significant. There is no relationship for which the A-and Z-tests of the correlations and the A-tests of the components are significant. These results indicate variation and covariation both between and within dyads. Dansereau et al. (1984) and Yammarino and Markham (1992) call these "equivocal results" at the dyad level or "nondyadic" results. However, all the raw-score (individual-level) correlations are significant, based on R- and t-tests. Overall, therefore, these findings suggest that the relationships of interest do not hold at the dyad level of analysis, but operate based on individual differences in responses of superiors and subordinates. Support is provided for Hypothesis 1 but not for Hypothesis 3.

Results from within- and between-groups analyses based on subordinate (same-source) reports are summarized in the second portion of Table 2. There is no variable for which the E and F-tests of the etas are significant. There is no relationship for which the A-and Z-tests of the correlations and the A-test of the components are significant. These results indicate variation and covariation both between and within groups (of superordinates) and are called "equivocal" at the group level or "nongrouped" results. Note all the individual-level (raw-score) correlations are significant, based on R- and t-tests. Overall, therefore, these findings mean that the relationships of interest do not hold at the group level. This is supported on individual differences in responses of subordinates. Support is provided for Hypothesis 1 but not for Hypothesis 2.

Results from within- and between-groups analyses based on superior (same-source) reports are summarized in the third portion of Table 2. Contingent reward is the only variable for which the E and F-tests of the etas are significant, suggesting between-groups (superiors) variation on this variable. There is no relationship, however, for which the A-and Z-tests of the correlations and the A-test of the components are significant. These results indicate variation and covariation both between and within groups (superiors) and are "equivocal" at the group level or "nongrouped" results. Again, all the individual-level (raw-score) correlations are significant based on R- and t-tests. Overall, therefore, these findings mean that the relationships of interest do not hold at the group level but operate based on individual differences in responses of superiors. Support is provided for Hypothesis 1 but not for Hypothesis 2.

Results from within- and between-groups analyses based on superordinate-subordinate (cross-rater) reports are summarized in the fourth portion of Table 2. These results are based on different-source data—subordinate reports of leadership and superior reports of outcomes. The etas were interpreted above as equivocal at the group level. There is no relationship for which the A- and Z-tests of the correlations and the A-test of the components are significant. Two of the four individual-level (raw-score) correlations are significant, based on R- and t-tests. These results indicate variation and covariation both between and within groups (superiors and subordinates) and are "equivocal" at the group level ("nongrouped" results) for the transformational leadership-performance and contingent reward-performance relationships. The results further indicate "null effects" at the group level (lack of significant between-and within-groups covariation) for the transformational leadership/extra effort and contingent reward/extra effort relationships (see Dansereau et al., 1984; Yammarino & Markham, 1992). Null results were also evident for all other cross-rater relationships among variables at the group level (not shown to conserve space). Overall, therefore, while there is limited cross-rater agreement (two relationships), the relationships of interest do not hold at the group level. No support is provided for Hypothesis 2.

Discussion

Bounded Results

Given the lack of dyad- and group-based results, no support is provided for Hypothesis 4. Contrary to higher-level (dyad, group) assertions (Hypotheses 2 & 3) and cross-level assertions (Hypothesis 4) based on the extant literature, results in the current study were based solely on individual differences/variability in the responses of superiors and subordinates (Hypothesis 1). As such, expected positive relationships among variables derived from transformational leadership theory were bounded at the individual level of analysis. There was a general lack of support, whether at the superordinate or subordinate level (superiors or subordinates). Support is provided for Hypothesis 1 but not for Hypothesis 2.

The same-source (within-rater) results for superordinates and subordinates separately (second and third portions, respectively, of Table 2) essentially parallel the multi-source and cross-rater results (first and fourth portions, respectively, of Table 2). In the case of superior reports, because the specific focus is a particular relationship and because the superior data based on the group-level WABA ("superior") were "nongrouped") (null effects) and independent of data points is maintained. Regardless of the source(s) and analyses that were conducted, relationships among the variables generally are positive and significant. As such, common-methods bias or rater effects do not appear to have influenced the findings. The key conclusion is that the relationships of interest, regardless of source, hold solely at the individual level and not the dyad or group levels. Respondents in this study experienced leadership at the individual level.

These results are compatible with prior investigations which incorporated levels of analysis (Avolio & Yammarino, 1990; Avolio et al., 1991; Yammarino & Bass, 1990). The current findings, however, provide much stronger support for this effect because boundary conditions on transformation of leadership theory in terms of levels of analysis were hypothesized, measurement procedures included matched multi-source data, complete tests of dyad- and group-level effects were conducted, and several levels of analysis alternative explanations for the relationships were ruled out to draw stronger inferences (see Behling, 1978; Dubin, 1976).

The central conclusion of this study—that the expected relationships held only at the individual level of analysis—can be explained in at least two different ways. First, the effects may be due to implicit leadership theories in that relationships were found among perceptual measures at the individual level. This interpretation could imply that perceptions of leader behavior differs for different subordinates, and thus, the different perceptions of subordinates are valid. In this case, leader behavior actually affects the measured outcomes. However, this second explanation seems less likely than the first because the dyad-level results were equivocal, suggesting individual differences/variability and not between-dyads differences.

Implications

Given that the first explanation seems more likely, there are several implications for transformational leadership theory. First, the network of relationships among variables derived from the theory seems reasonable and supported. Second, level of analysis assertions derived from the theory suggesting higher level (dyad, group) and cross-level effects may need rethinking, as these findings were supported in the current study. Third, cross-rater correlations (fourth portion of Table 2) suggest that contingent reward leadership may be more strongly linked to subordinate performance than is transformational leadership. This result, however, may be due, in part, to the setting/sample of this study (see below). Fourth, these findings could replicate for actual leader behaviors and objective performance data (rather than perceptual measures and subjective data as in this study) is an issue for future research. Bass (1990) and Yukl (1989) appear to provide mixed evidence on this point. There is a tendency in leadership research to collect subordinate perceptual data and label these;
“leader behaviors.” As Bass notes, sometimes the perceptions and behaviors are closely linked, other times they are not; but the perceptions may be as important or more important than the actual behaviors in determining subsequent actions by subordinates and superiors. As such, future research on transformational leadership theory could explore these issues by gathering perceptual and behavioral leadership data as well as subjective and objective performance data in the same studies to assess their degree of convergence.

The current findings are not too surprising given that the host organization was a somewhat traditional sales setting in which sales personnel are driven by monetary incentives. As such, the transformational leadership variables and relationships are likely to be consistent with the way the sales force is organized and rewarded. Furthermore, the findings are consistent with the work of Lord and his colleagues (Lord et al., 1984; Phillips & Lord, 1981) on other dimensions, transformational leadership relationships were based on individual differences in perceptions and information processing. Thus, at least in terms of levels of analysis, presumably different leadership theories or seeking out the common themes in these works to enhance understanding of leadership per se.

In terms of management practice, the results of this study suggest that managers must be cognizant of the particular dimensions of leadership in use. For example, if leadership or its outcomes are institutionalized or manipulated on a group-wide basis, but subordinates perceive these notions on an individual basis, managerial efforts will fail. As suggested by the results of this study, fostering subordinate motivation and performance with transformational and transactional leadership should occur on an individual basis for each subordinate, independent of other group members. To do otherwise would seemingly be inappropriate and not improve managerial effectiveness. Clearly other dimensions and aspects of transformational leadership theory not investigated here may operate differently, or the investigated aspects may operate in another fashion in other settings.

Limitations and Future Research

Some limitations of the current study warrant attention in future research before conclusions of the study are accepted. First, this investigation was limited to transformational leadership and operationalized as espoused and operationalized by Bass and his colleagues. Potential measurement problems with the MLQ (see Yuld, 1989) may have resulted in its failure to operate at higher levels of analysis. Whether other theories and operationalizations of transformational/charismatic leadership operate in a similar way, are bounded to hold at the person (individual) level of analysis, hold at other (and multiple) levels of analysis, or are cross-level in nature remains an open research question. Relatedly, although multiple raters were used in the current study, all raters completed the same instrument, a paper-and-pencil measure of transformational leadership. The amount of influence of common-methods bias and rater effects on the current findings could be explored in future research with a more comprehensive multivariate method design and structural equation modeling.

Second, the current study included only male superiors and subordinates, and the organization was a traditional, male-dominated one. Some prior research (see Bass, 1990) suggests differences between men and women leadership styles, and the investigated aspects may operate in another manner as well as between male and female subordinates reporting to them. Thus, replication and extension of the current findings to samples of men and women leaders and subordinates are necessary.

Third, additional elaboration of transformational leadership theory in terms of precursors and consequences and the levels of analysis at which these variables operate seems warranted (also see Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1994). For example, how do various personality characteristics and job assignments of subordinates influence their perceptions of leaders and leadership? How do personality characteristics of superiors influence their subordinates’ perceptions, motivation, and performance? What role do various macro-level organization variables (e.g., structure, technology) play in determining leader behaviors and perceptions of these behaviors? Or in stressful or crisis situations, would differing processes be operating, thus resulting in a different set of obtained effects? Clearly, different and multiple levels of analysis are implied here and should be accounted for in future investigations. To date, investigations have generally ignored the specification and test of the levels of analysis involved in these potential precursors and consequences of transformational leadership theory.

Fourth, examining whether transformational leadership effects aggregate or operate at still higher levels of analysis seems useful. In this study, the sample size was relatively small (105 dyads and 33 groups), and the groups were to be small. Perhaps in larger groups of subordinates reporting to a common superior, group-level effects for transformational leadership would be more likely to be displayed. Moreover, with larger samples and multiple organizations, department, functional area, organization, and social system levels of analysis could be investigated. To date, investigations have been limited in their explicit incorporation of these higher levels of analysis in formulations and tests of transformational leadership theory.

Fifth, leadership processes develop over time, so a cross-sectional study, like the current investigation, cannot capture the full range and dynamics of transformational leadership theory. Perhaps individual-level effects develop over time to a point where agreement or consensus is reached by superiors and subordinates and dyad- or group-level effects are obtained. Another possibility is that in times of organizational change or crisis, the operation of transformational leadership theory shifts from level (individual) to another (organization) or becomes cross-level in nature. These speculations could be investigated in future work.

The authors acknowledge discussions with Bernard Bass, Fred Dansereau, George Graen, Robert House, Henry Tosi, and Gary Yukl that helped solidify our ideas in this manuscript. We also appreciate the helpful comments of three anonymous reviewers on previous versions of this paper.

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1 Although other levels of analysis boundary conditions are plausible, only the three most feasible, based on transformational leadership theory and research, are developed here. This strategy allows us both to conserve space and limit the complexity of this manuscript. For additional boundary conditions expressed as levels of analysis, interested readers can consult the work of Dansereau et al. (1984), Yammarino and Bass (1991), and Yammarino and Dubinsky (1992).

2 Although the response rates were adequate, several checks were performed to ensure that there was minimal nonresponse bias. In particular, biodata (e.g., age, education, tenure in the organization) and scale scores based on individual transformation leadership theory (as well as outcomes) for subordinates included in the final sample and those excluded because of a Jack of a matching superior report were compared. Likewise, biodata and scale scores based on survey responses for superiors included in the final sample and those excluded because of a lack of a matching subordinate report were compared. In these
cases, there were no significant differences on these variables between respondents (subordinates and superiors) who were included in the study as compared to those individuals who were excluded. Thus, nonresponse bias was not deemed to be problematic.

**TABLE 1**

Descriptive Statistics[a]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Subordinate reports</th>
<th>Superior reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent reward</td>
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<td>2.34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of superior</td>
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<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Based on responses of 105 subordinates and their 33 superiors reporting about each of them.

**TABLE 2**

Dyad-Level and Group-Level Results

Information is presented in the following order: Level and relationships; etas, Between; etas, Within; Correlations, Between; Correlations, Within; Components, Between; Components, Within; Raw-score correlations

Dyad (Sub.-Sup.){[a]}

TF and; .69; .73
CR: .68; .74; .71; .76; .33; .41; .74[e][g]
EE: .62; .78[f]; .78; .84; .33; .48; .81[e][g]
CR and
EE; .47; .66[f]; .20; .38; .58[e][g]
Group (Subordinates)[**]
TF and; .73[g]; .69
CR: .65; .76; .85; .73; .40; .38; .78[e][g]
EE: .64; .77; .93[e][g]; .80; .43; .42; .85[e][g]
EF: .66; .75; .72; .70; .35; .36; .71[e][g]
CR and
EE; .76; .56; .31; .33; .64[e][g]
EF; .67; .51; .29; .29; .585[e][e]
EE and
EF; .62; .50; .26; .29; .55[e][g]
Group (Superiors)[**]
TF and; .79[g]; .62
CR: .90[e][g]; .44; .50; .55; .35; .15; .50[e][g]
EE; .79[g]; .60; .73[d]; .53; .46[d]; .20; .66[e][g]
PF; .66; .75; .48; .30; .25; .14; .39[d][g]
CR and
EE; .40[d]; .09; .28[d]; .03; .31[d][g]
PF; .46; .39; .28; .13; .41[d][g]

EE and
PF; .40; .22; .10; .31[d][g]
Group (Sub. x Sup.){[c]}
TF (Sub.) and
EE (Sup.); .10; .30; .06; .13; .07
PF (Sup.); .37; .21; .18; .11; .29[d][g]
CR (Sub.) and
EE (Sup.); .17; .15; .09; .07; .02
PF (Sup.); .38; .16; .23; .39[d][g]

Note: TF = transformational, CR = contingent reward, EE = subordinate extra effort, EF = effectiveness of superior, and PF = subordinate performance. Subordinates (sub.) and superiors (sup.) designate the raters.

a Analyses are based on N=210 and J=105. All relationships are based on superior-subordinate matched reports. The inference for all relationships is "nondyadic," indicating individual-level effects.

b Analyses are based on N=105 and J=33. All relationships are based on same-source (subordinate or superior) data. The inference for all relationships is "nongrouped," indicating individual-level effects.

c Analyses are based on N=105 and J=33. All relationships are based on cross-rater (different-source) data. The inference for the second and fourth relationships is "nongrouped," indicating individual-level effects; for the first and third relationships and all other cross-rater relationships (not shown), the inference is "null results."

d 15 degree; e 30 degree; f p<.05; g p<.01

REFERENCES


