

# **An Evaluative Essay on Current Conceptions of Effective Leadership**

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Theories of transformational and charismatic leadership provide important insights about the nature of effective leadership, but most of the theories have weaknesses in the conceptualization and measurement of leadership processes. The limitations include use of simplistic two-factor models, omission of relevant behaviours, focus on dyadic processes, assumption of heroic leadership, and overreliance on weak methods. I discuss these weaknesses and present results from a study on leader behaviour dimensions to clarify some of my concerns.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the late 1980s, theories of transformational and charismatic leadership have been ascendant in the leadership field (e.g. Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; House, 1977; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). In contrast to the rational processes emphasized in earlier theories, the new theories emphasize emotions and values, which are necessary to understand how a leader can influence followers to make self-sacrifices, commit to ideological objectives, and achieve much more than they initially believed was possible. The new theories also recognize the importance of symbolic behaviour and the role of the leader in making events meaningful for followers. It is evident that the new theories provide important insights about the nature of effective leadership. Nevertheless, proponents of these theories have exaggerated their uniqueness and capacity to explain effective leadership. As a counter-balance to the hype about the new theories, I will present a more critical appraisal. The focus will be more on transformational leadership than on charismatic leadership. My appraisal will take into account several weaknesses in the conceptualization and measurement of leadership processes. I will discuss the omission of relevant leader behaviours, the neglect of group and organizational processes, and over-reliance on weak research methods. I will begin by describing the

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limitations of two-factor models from a historical perspective that considers earlier theories as well as the newer ones.

## LIMITATIONS OF TWO-FACTOR MODELS

A common approach for describing leadership is in terms of a two-factor model. Most of the well-known theories of leadership effectiveness were initially formulated using a two-factor conception of leader behaviour or traits. Examples include task-oriented versus relations-oriented leadership, autocratic versus participative leadership, leadership versus management, transformational versus transactional leadership, and charismatic versus noncharismatic leadership. These dichotomies provide some insights, but they also oversimplify a complex phenomenon and encourage stereotyping of individual leaders. Four of the two-factor models will be examined in more detail to illustrate how we continue to favour simplistic leadership theories.

### Task Versus Relations Leadership

From the 1950s through to the 1970s, a prominent way to conceptualize leadership behaviour was in terms of concern for task objectives versus concern for people (or relations). The early Ohio State Leadership Studies (Fleishman, 1953) provided evidence that task and relations behaviour are distinct dimensions, and several subsequent theories incorporated this two-factor conception (e.g. path-goal theory, leader substitutes theory, LPC contingency theory, “high-high” theory). Studies on the implications of the two behaviours for leadership effectiveness have not yielded consistent results (Yukl, 1998). Survey studies using behaviour description questionnaires failed to provide much support for the idea that effective leaders have high scores on both dimensions. A refined version of the “high-high” theory is that effective leaders integrate task and people concerns in a way that is relevant for the situation, rather than merely using task and relations behaviour to the maximum extent (Blake & Mouton, 1982; Sashkin & Fulmer, 1988). This theory has never been adequately tested.

The two-factor conceptualization of leader behaviour is limited as a basis for theory building. In any given situation, some aspects of task-oriented (or relations-oriented) behaviour will be more relevant than other aspects. A theory that uses the broad categories rather than specific component behaviours cannot accurately describe how effective leaders vary their behaviour across situations. Moreover, the task and relations categories (as defined in the questionnaires used to measure them) do not include some types of leadership behaviour that are relevant for understanding effective leadership. Examples include visioning, leading by example, symbolic behaviour, management of meaning, and change-oriented leadership.

## Autocratic Versus Participative Leadership

Another popular way to conceptualize leadership during this same period of time was the distinction between autocratic and participative leadership. A large number of studies were conducted to test the proposition that participative leadership is more effective than autocratic leadership. The results were weak and inconsistent (e.g. Cotton, Vollrath, Froggatt, Lengneck-Hall, & Jennings, 1988; Leana, Locke, & Schweiger, 1990), in part because the researchers asked the wrong question. Power sharing is an important aspect of leadership, but classifying leaders in terms of two extreme styles (autocratic vs. participative) fails to accurately portray the complexities of the process. Leaders can select from a wide variety of decision procedures, and most leaders use different procedures for different types of decisions. Effective leaders vary their use of decision procedures and select a procedure that is appropriate for the immediate situation (e.g. Vroom & Jago, 1988; Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

Most of the studies on participative leadership measured only the average amount of participation used by a leader (across subordinates and decisions), and the researchers did not take into account situational contingencies. In their pre-occupation with demonstrating that leaders should be highly participative, most researchers paid little attention to the question of whether the subordinates are prepared, able, and motivated to participate. Leaders have many opportunities to create conditions that will facilitate the success of participation and delegation. These conditions include subordinate clarity and agreement about objectives, skills in problem solving, individual and collective self-efficacy, access to essential information, and cohesiveness and trust among group members. Participative leadership must be combined with other types of leadership behaviour (e.g. supporting, inspiring, coaching, informing, team building, conflict management, and leading meetings) to be effective, and the appropriate mix of behaviours will depend on the situation.

## Leadership Versus Management

Some theorists differentiate between leaders and managers according to their objectives and time orientation (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Zaleznik, 1977). Leading and managing are seen as two mutually exclusive processes requiring different skills and personality traits. According to these theorists, “leaders” are oriented toward change and long-term effectiveness, whereas “managers” are oriented toward stability and short-term efficiency. People with a managerial profile are assumed to be incapable of inspiring and leading major change in organizations, and people with a leader profile are viewed as unwilling to accept the existing strategy (even when it is appropriate) and work to refine it. Some theorists make an even sharper distinction by describing managers as people who

exhibit only negative behaviours such as micromanaging activities, compulsively monitoring and controlling subordinates, and fixating on cost reduction. A more credible view is that people can use a mix of leading and (positive) managing behaviours (Hickman, 1990; Kotter, 1990). A successful executive must be skilled enough to understand the situation and flexible enough to adjust the mix of behaviours as the situation changes.

A key situational variable determining the optimal mix of behaviours is the external environment faced by an organization (Miller & Friesen, 1984; Tushman & Romanelli, 1985). Change-oriented leadership seems more appropriate in times of environmental turmoil when it is necessary to make strategic changes to deal with major threats and opportunities. A “managerial” orientation seems more appropriate when the external environment is relatively stable, the organization is prospering, and it is essential to maintain efficient, reliable operations (e.g. high productivity, high quality, low cost, on-time delivery). Efficiency and adaptation are competing objectives, because actions that enhance one objective may undermine the other. High levels of efficiency can be achieved by actions such as organizing around the strategy, developing a strong supporting culture, refining work processes, establishing norms and standards, and investing in specialized personnel, facilities, or equipment. However, these actions reduce flexibility and make it more difficult to change strategies and work processes in response to new environmental threats and opportunities. Adaptation to a changing environment can be achieved by making major changes in strategy, structure, and work processes. However, these actions tend to reduce short-term efficiency, because they require an investment of extra resources, involve a period of difficult adjustment and relearning, and stimulate disruptive conflict as people seek to protect their power and status. As yet there has been little research to examine what effective leaders do to achieve an appropriate balance between efficiency and adaptation. Stereotyping leaders and managers as opposites detracts attention from empirical research on this important issue.

## Transformational Versus Transactional Leadership

Bass (1985) proposed a two-factor model of transformational and transactional leadership based on an earlier distinction made by Burns (1978). Behaviours defining the two types of leadership processes are measured with the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The components of transformational and transactional behaviour have varied somewhat across different versions of the questionnaire, and more component behaviours have been added to the recent versions (Bass, 1996; Bass & Avolio, 1990). Transformational leadership includes individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence (charisma), and inspirational motivation. Transactional leadership includes contingent reward behaviour, passive management-by-exception, and active management-by-exception (a form of monitoring). Factor analyses of the

MLQ usually support the proposed distinction between transformational and transactional behaviour, but positive reward behaviour sometimes loads on the transformational factor instead of the transactional factor. In a meta-analytical review of 39 studies, Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam (1996) found that three key elements of transformational leadership correlated positively with subordinate satisfaction and performance. Results for contingent reward behaviour were weaker and less consistent, but it was also correlated positively with the criteria. Management-by-exception was not related to leader effectiveness. Two recently added scales in the MLQ (inspirational motivation and active management-by-exception) were not included in the meta-analysis.

Although no single theory should be expected to include all aspects of leadership behaviour, use of the label “full range leadership theory” by Bass (1996) invites critical evaluation of completeness. Despite the fact that recent versions of the MLQ have expanded the range of behaviours somewhat, the questionnaire still lacks scales on several aspects of leadership behaviour that are relevant for understanding leadership effectiveness. Key omissions include some task behaviours (e.g. clarifying, planning), some relations behaviours (e.g. team building, networking), and some change-oriented behaviours (e.g. scanning and analysis of the external environment, strategy reformulation, political activities to build support for change, reorganization to support a new strategy). Another omission is participative leadership (e.g. consultation, delegation). Bass (1996) proposed that transformational and transactional leadership can be either directive (autocratic) or participative, but the MLQ does not systematically measure this relevant aspect of leader behaviour. Finally, the MLQ does not include some aspects of charismatic leadership (e.g. nontraditional behaviours, impression management, expressive communication). Most researchers who use the MLQ fail to control for the possible effects of unmeasured behaviours that may be confounded with transformational or transactional leadership. When positive correlations are found in survey research, they are automatically attributed to the behaviours that are measured.

The idea that charisma is an essential component of transformational leadership is a questionable assumption based on results from survey research with the MLQ. In contrast to the survey research, descriptive research using observation and interviews to study transformational leadership in managers found that they were not charismatic in the usual sense of the word (e.g. Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). The managers of successful teams and effective organizations were seldom viewed as superhuman by subordinates or peers. With a few exceptions, they were not colourful, larger than life figures who made spellbinding speeches and used nontraditional behaviours to manage impressions. Thus, the meaning of the questionnaire results showing charisma as the core component of transformational leadership is difficult to interpret. The finding that transformational leadership is prevalent among managers at all levels in most types of

organizations also raises doubts about what is really being measured. The survey results suggest that many leaders are transformational, yet my experience in studying and training managers fails to support this conclusion. Some managers use some of the behaviours some of the time, but few managers use most of the behaviours whenever they are relevant. How many managers do you know that are really transformational, much less charismatic?

## LEVEL OF CONCEPTUALIZATION

Leadership can be conceptualized at different levels (e.g. individual, dyadic, group, organizational). By “level” I mean the identity of the followers and the processes explaining leadership effectiveness, not the leader’s level of authority or the type of statistical analysis that is used. In most theories and research on effective leadership there has been a strong bias toward description of leadership processes at the dyadic level, which involves the interaction between a leader and one individual follower. Key questions at this level are how to develop a co-operative, trusting relationship with a follower, and how to influence a follower to be more motivated and committed.

The research on dyadic processes provides important insights about leadership, but it often underestimates the importance of the context in which a dyadic relationship occurs. The group perspective considers not only leader influence on individual members (on their role clarity, skill development, commitment to task objectives, and access to necessary information and resources), but also leader influence on how well the work is organized to utilize personnel and resources, how well group activities are co-ordinated, the amount of member agreement about objectives and priorities, the extent to which members trust each other and co-operate in accomplishing task objectives, the extent of member identification with the group, and confidence in the capacity of the group to attain its objectives. Group processes are largely ignored in most theories of transformational and charismatic leadership, and these theories do not explicitly incorporate leadership behaviours such as organizing, co-ordinating, team building, and facilitating group decisions. One exception is the charismatic leadership theory of Shamir et al. (1993), which recognizes the importance of leader influence on follower identification with the group and perception of collective efficacy.

Theories conceptualized at the group level provide a better understanding of leadership effectiveness than dyadic theories, but they also have some important limitations. Groups usually exist in a larger social system, and to understand effective leadership requires consideration of organizational processes as well as group-level processes (Hunt, 1991). The survival and prosperity of an organization depends on effective adaptation to the environment. Adaptation is improved by anticipating consumer needs and desires, assessing the actions and plans of competitors, evaluating likely constraints and threats (e.g. government

regulation, input scarcity, hostile actions by enemies), and identifying marketable products and services that the organization has unique capabilities to provide. An essential leadership function is to help the organization adapt to its environment and acquire resources needed to survive. Some examples of relevant activities include gathering and interpreting information about the environment, identifying core competencies that provide competitive advantage, negotiating agreements that are favourable to the organization, influencing outsiders to have a favourable impression of the organization and its products, gaining cooperation and support from outsiders upon whom the organization is dependent, and recruiting new members. Survival and prosperity also depend on the efficiency of the transformation process used by the organization to produce its products and services. Efficiency is increased by finding more rational ways to differentiate subunits, and by deciding how to make the best use of available technology, resources, and personnel. Some examples of leadership responsibilities include designing an appropriate organization structure, determining authority relationships, and co-ordinating operations across specialized subunits of the organization.

Leadership processes at the organization level are given little attention in the transformational leadership theory formulated by Bass (1985). Some of the transformational leadership theories based on descriptive research (e.g. Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Tichy & Devanna, 1986) acknowledge leader contributions to organizational level processes, but they only begin to describe how these leadership processes occur. Some theories of charismatic leadership describe organizational level processes, but only in relation to selected topics (e.g. leadership succession, institutionalization of charisma). Research on how leaders influence organization culture and implement major changes has increased over the past decade, but more such research is needed. Theories of transformational and charismatic leadership should incorporate more of the relevant concepts and findings from the strategic leadership literature (see Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996).

### BIASED CONCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP PROCESSES

Most transformational leadership theories reflect the implicit assumptions associated with the “heroic leadership” stereotype. One assumption is that an effective leader will influence followers to make self-sacrifices and exert exceptional effort. This orientation steers research in the direction of identifying the essential traits, skills, and behaviours of individual leaders for motivating subordinates, rather than toward understanding reciprocal influence processes in dyads and groups. Even though the importance of empowerment is acknowledged in transformational leadership, researchers study how leaders use power and influence to overcome resistance, not how resistance can be a source of

energy that enables people to collectively make better decisions about what type of change is needed. Inspirational motivation includes encouraging subordinates to embrace, disseminate, and implement the vision, but not encouraging subordinates to challenge the vision or develop a better one. Intellectual stimulation includes communicating novel ideas to a subordinate, but not providing opportunities for subordinates to learn from experience and helping them interpret experience in a meaningful way.

Charismatic leadership theories reflect an even stronger bias toward heroic leadership. Researchers with this bias seek to identify attributes that increase leader influence over subordinates, not to describe how the same qualities can be both a strength and weakness for a leader. For example, expressing strong convictions, acting confident, and taking decisive action can create an impression of exceptional expertise, but it can also discourage relevant feedback from followers. Articulating nontraditional ideas in an emotional way and displaying unconventional behaviour can help the leader win loyal followers, but these charismatic behaviours can also create some dedicated opponents who strive to undermine the leader and his or her programmes.

In contrast to the heroic leader, a very different conception of leadership is in terms of influence processes that contribute to the collective and individual capacity of people to accomplish their work roles effectively. Instead of focusing on a single person who (as the designated leader) influences followers, many people are viewed as contributors to the overall process of leadership in organizations. This conception of shared leadership does not require an individual who is exceptional or who can perform all of the essential leadership functions, only a set of people who collectively perform them. Different people may perform a particular leadership function at different times, and different functions may be performed by different people (e.g. whomever is most qualified). This conception also recognizes that most people have dual roles as a leader and follower in the same organization. The leadership actions of any individual are much less important than the collective leadership provided by many members of the organization. This perspective encourages researchers to examine the compatibility, consistency, diffusion, and relevance of leadership processes in relation to the situation as determinants of organizational effectiveness. Shared leadership is especially relevant for the increasing number of organizations using self-managed teams, executive teams, flexible structures, partnering, and joint ventures. Unfortunately, few researchers seem interested in studying shared leadership processes in groups and organizations.

## A STUDY ON LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR DIMENSIONS

In 1996, I conducted an exploratory field study to see how well the popular two-factor conceptions of leadership hold up when items representing all of them are included in the same questionnaire (Yukl, 1997). The sample for the survey

included 318 direct reports of 48 managers in several US companies and government agencies. Respondents described the leadership behaviour of their immediate boss. It was not feasible to administer several complete questionnaires to the respondents (the short versions of the MLQ and the MPS were not available at the time), but the questionnaire developed for my study included some representative items from several widely used instruments. The questionnaire covered a wide range of behaviours and included items describing leadership behaviours relevant for group and organizational processes as well as dyadic processes.

The results showed that none of the two-factor models discussed earlier explained an adequate amount of the variance. A three-factor model worked better, but it only accounted for only 55% of the item variance. Table 1 shows representative items with their factor loadings. Task-oriented behaviour (the T-factor) included operational planning, clarifying task roles, and monitoring operations and performance quality. Relations-oriented behaviour (the R-factor) included being supportive and considerate, providing recognition, providing coaching and mentoring, encouraging participation in decision making, and encouraging co-operation. Change-oriented behaviour (the C-factor) included identifying external threats and opportunities, envisioning new possibilities, proposing nontraditional strategies, and influencing political support for change.

The questionnaire included some items on key aspects of consideration and initiating structure, as defined in the LBDQ and instruments derived from it. As expected, the consideration items loaded on the R-factor and the initiating structure items loaded on the T-factor. However, it was obvious that the R-factor is much broader than consideration and the T-factor is much broader than initiating structure. The primary component of LBDQ consideration is supportive leadership behaviour, whereas the R-factor also includes behaviours such as recognizing, consulting, and developing. The primary component of LBDQ initiating structure is clarifying of subordinate roles, whereas the T-factor also includes goal setting, monitoring and operational planning. The additional items for the T and R factors came primarily from the MPS. The T and R dimensions can be viewed as a refinement of the two-factor taxonomy identified by the Ohio State leadership studies, whereas the C dimension is an extension of that research into a new behaviour domain.

The questionnaire used in my study also included items from most of the scales in the Managerial Practices Survey (MPS; Kim & Yukl, 1996; Yukl, Wall, & Lepsinger, 1990). The MPS is representative of several leadership questionnaires that measure a variety of specific behaviours or skills. These questionnaires have been widely used for many years to provide feedback to managers, but they are seldom used for leadership research. In the factor analysis, items from three MPS scales (clarifying, planning/organizing, internal monitoring) loaded on the T-factor. Items from five MPS scales loaded on the R-factor (supporting, consulting, delegating, recognizing, and developing). The results for consultation and delegation suggest that participative leadership is

TABLE 1  
Factor Loadings for Representative Items

<i>Behaviour Item and Primary Category</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>C</i>
<i>Task-oriented behaviour:</i>			
14. Plans in detail how to accomplish an important task or project.	0.74		
1. Provides a clear explanation of your responsibilities with regard to a task or project.	0.72		
12. Clearly explains what results are expected for a task or project.	0.69		
54. Determines what resources are needed to carry out a project.	0.65		
4. Determines how to organize and co-ordinate work activities to avoid delays, duplication of effort, and wasted resources.	0.62		
34. Checks work progress against plans to see if it is on target.	0.62		
<i>Relations-oriented behaviour:</i>			
20. Provides encouragement and support when you have a difficult or stressful task.		0.78	
72. Backs you up and supports you in a difficult situation.		0.70	
42. Gives you credit for helpful ideas and suggestions		0.69	
6. Consults with you to get your reactions and suggestions before making a decision that affects you.		0.66	
22. Provides opportunities to develop your skills and show what you can do.		0.65	
9. Expresses confidence in your ability to carry out a difficult task.		0.64	
<i>Change-oriented behaviour:</i>			
28. Proposes new and creative ideas for improving products, services, or processes.			0.67
52. Is confident and optimistic when proposing a major change.			0.67
43. Takes a long-term perspective on problems and opportunities facing the organization.			0.64
3. Describes a clear, appealing vision of what the organization can accomplish or become.			0.57
35. Negotiates persuasively with people outside the work unit to get agreements or approvals necessary to implement a major change.			0.53
32. Studies the products and activities of competitors to get ideas for improving things in his/her organizational unit.			0.53

*Note:* Some items were shortened; factor loadings less than .30 are not shown.

primarily a relations-oriented behaviour. Elements of three other MPS scales (informing, rewarding, and team building/conflict management) also loaded on the R-factor. Some items from three MPS scales (problem solving, inspiring/motivating, external networking) loaded on the C-factor. The very limited coverage of change-oriented behaviours in the MPS is the likely reason it does not yield a separate factor for change-oriented leadership.

The results are also relevant for evaluating the leader versus manager dichotomy. The study provides positive examples of efficiency-oriented versus

change-oriented behaviour to replace the polarized stereotypes (i.e. bureaucratic manager versus inspirational leader) advocated by some theorists. There was no support for the idea that most executives use only one type of behaviour almost exclusively, or that they can be grouped into distinct manager or leader "types" based on their pattern of scores. Most managers appeared to use a mix of the different behaviours. Unfortunately, it was not possible to determine if the behaviour pattern for a manager was related to the environment of the organization or to independent criteria of leadership effectiveness. These questions need to be explored in subsequent research with a more intensive methodology.

The questionnaire in this study also included items adapted from key scales in the MLQ. The factor loadings for these items are shown in Table 2. The items on individualized consideration had primary loadings on the R-factor, although some of them also had secondary loadings on another factor. The items on other aspects of transformational leadership usually loaded on the R-factor or the C-factor. Items on contingent rewarding (a transactional behaviour) loaded on the R-factor. Active monitoring (a transactional behaviour) loaded on the T-factor. The weak representation of items on change-oriented behaviour in the MLQ may explain why factor analyses of it do not yield a separate C-factor. The weak representation of effective task-oriented behaviours and the strong representation of ineffective task-oriented behaviours (e.g. management-by-exception, *laissez-faire* management) may explain why factor analyses of the MLQ yield a factor for transactional leadership but not for task-oriented behaviour.

A limitation of my study is that it only included sample items from other questionnaires and they were sometimes modified. The research needs to be replicated with the complete version of these instruments and a larger sample. Nevertheless, the results suggest answers to some bothersome questions about the meaning and scope of transformational leadership. As operationally defined in the MLQ, transformational leadership seems to be primarily concerned about motivating subordinates and satisfying their individual needs for attention and personal development. These behaviours are more representative of relations-oriented behaviour than change-oriented behaviour. The motivating behaviours in transformational leadership (e.g. role modeling, visioning) can be used to build commitment to objectives and strategies that are either traditional or revolutionary. In other words, the transformational leadership scale describes a leader who attempts to support and inspire subordinates, but not necessarily to make major changes in the objectives, strategies, or structures of the organizational unit. As operationally defined in the MLQ, transactional leadership seems to be primarily concerned about manipulating and controlling subordinates. Transactional leadership has a negative connotation, much like the "managing" stereotype in the leader/manager dichotomy described earlier. Most of the positive task-oriented functions that are a necessary part of effective leadership are not included in the scale or the theory.

TABLE 2  
Factor Loadings for Items on Transformational or Transactional Leadership

<i>Behaviour Item</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>C</i>
<i>Transformational leadership:</i>			
49. Treats each subordinate as an individual with different needs, abilities, and aspirations.		0.61	0.35
40. Talks about the importance of mutual trust among members.		0.62	0.34
63. Behaves in a way that is consistent with the ideals and values he/she espouses.		0.57	
16. Provides advice and coaching to help you develop new skills.	0.31	0.56	
45. Encourages you to look a problem from different perspectives.	0.31	0.49	
24. Describes exciting new opportunities for the organization.		0.34	0.59
33. Talks with conviction about his/her values and ideals.		0.33	0.49
39. Makes personal sacrifices and goes beyond selfinterest for the benefit of the organization.		0.36	0.41
11. Questions traditional assumptions and beliefs about the best way to do things.			0.40
<i>Transactional leadership:</i>			
70. Rewards subordinates for effective performance and contributions to the organization.		0.64	
31. Explains what must be done to get rewards such as a pay increase or promotion.		0.47	0.30
54. Checks on the quality of your work.	0.56		
58. Asks you to report on your progress.	0.58		

*Note:* Factor loadings less than 0.30 are not shown.

## LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH METHODS

Static correlational analysis of data from survey questionnaires continues to be the dominant method for research on transformational and charismatic leadership in large organizations. Critics of traditional quantitative research contend that it has an inherent bias toward exaggerating the importance of individual leaders. Most leadership questionnaires ask subordinates or peers to rate retrospectively how often or how much a leader exhibited some behaviour over a period of several months or years. This frequency format may reduce the relevance of the measures, especially if a scale has many behaviours that are ineffective when overused or used at inappropriate times (Shipper, 1991). Frequency ratings on individual behaviours are poorly suited for studying leadership as a dynamic process embedded in complex social systems. How often a particular category of behaviour is used is less important than whether it is used in a skilful manner at an appropriate time in the sequence of events. Moreover, the effectiveness of any individual behaviour depends in part on the overall pattern of leadership behaviour.

Some of the critics of questionnaire-correlational research advocate greater use of descriptive methods such as observation, interviews, and intensive case studies (e.g. Bryman, Bresnen, Beardworth, & Keil, 1988). These methods appear better suited for studying leadership from a systems perspective at the group or organizational level. However, the descriptive research methods also have limitations, regardless of whether the form of data analysis is qualitative or quantitative (e.g. Martinko & Gardner, 1985). The limitations of each type of methodology make it desirable to use multiple methods whenever feasible (Jick, 1979; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1982). Unfortunately, most researchers select a single method that is traditional and easy to use. Few researchers conduct longitudinal studies or use multiple methods (which may produce inconsistent results that are difficult to explain).

Faster progress in our understanding of transformational and charismatic leadership will require use of more varied research methods and increased reliance on intensive, longitudinal studies. In one example of a novel approach (House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991), researchers analysed the content of speeches of US Presidents and biographies by their cabinet members to identify leader behaviours and traits that differentiated between charismatic and non-charismatic leaders and correlated with indicators of leadership effectiveness. In another example (Roberts, 1985; Roberts & Bradley, 1988), researchers conducted an intensive, longitudinal case study of a woman who held two successive positions as an educational administrator (one in which she was regarded as charismatic and one in which she was not) to identify the behaviours, processes, conditions, and outcomes associated with attributions of charisma.

Leadership researchers are not limited to a choice between survey studies and descriptive field studies. Controlled experiments in a laboratory setting (e.g. Howell & Frost, 1989; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996) or a field setting (e.g. Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996) are effective research methods that should be utilized more often. Whenever possible, field experiments (or quasi-experiments) should be conducted over a fairly long time interval with a combination of descriptive methods (e.g. interviews, observation, diaries) and repeated application of questionnaires. Realistic simulations also have promise for studying particular aspects of leadership, especially when the simulations are conducted over repeated sessions with actual managers (not undergraduates). Finally, the benefits of diverse research methods can be realized by use of comparative case studies that include quantitative measures (which are feasible when there are enough cases) as well as detailed ethnographic description.

## CONCLUSIONS

Theories of transformational and charismatic leadership contribute to our understanding of leadership effectiveness, but their uniqueness and contribution have been exaggerated. In much of the hype about the newer theories, there is a

tendency to ignore or discount earlier theory and research on leadership behaviour. Some transformational behaviours (e.g. individualized consideration, active monitoring) are already represented in earlier theory and research; others (e.g. intellectual stimulation, idealized influence) are vague about what a leader really does. A similar criticism can be made for charismatic leadership theory. More attention should be devoted to clearly identifying the behaviours relevant for transformational and charismatic leadership.

Some theory refinement is desirable to correct the deficiencies discussed earlier. The description of dyadic processes should be supplemented with a description of leadership processes in groups and organizations. The inherent assumption of heroic leadership should be replaced by a broader conception of leadership as a shared, reciprocal influence process. The scope of the core behaviours should be expanded to include other types of leadership behaviour known to be relevant. The practical implications of the theories for organizations need to be identified more carefully. Transformational leadership may be widely relevant for all types of organizations, as claimed by its proponents, but the relevance of charismatic leadership appears to be overstated. A charismatic leader is not always necessary, and strong charismatics pose many potential dangers for organizations. More research is needed to determine if it is possible to have the potential benefits of charismatic leadership without the negative consequences.

On a different note, some critics have expressed concern about the ethics of influencing followers to be constantly doing more for the organization (Stephens, D'Intino, & Victor, 1995). It is not always in the best interests of employees to maximize benefits for other stakeholders (such as owners or customers). Much of the current interest in "ethical leadership" and "servant leadership" seems to reflect the issue of how a leader's actions affect different parties (who gains and in what ways?). Theories of effective leadership should deal more directly with the question of how to balance the competing values inherent in organizations. Researchers studying leadership should use criteria of leadership effectiveness that take these complexities into account.

The promise of the new theories will not be realized until the research on them improves. Despite all the hype about a "new paradigm" for studying leadership, most of the research uses the same superficial methods that have been prevalent for decades. Correlating one popular questionnaire with another, or conducting endless replications of criterion-related correlations tells us little about effective leadership. A different approach is needed to gain a deeper understanding of effective leadership in organizations. We need to use methods that are powerful and appropriate for the research question, rather than relying so much on methods that are easy and samples that are convenient. A greater variety of research methods should be used, and the mix of methods should include more intensive, longitudinal studies that examine leadership from a systems perspective.

In summary, my overall assessment of transformational and charismatic leadership theories is that they make an important contribution to the literature,

but they should not be heralded as a revolutionary approach that makes all the earlier theories obsolete. I do not mean to diminish the very real contribution made by these theories, but only to put them into proper perspective and suggest ways to make them more useful.

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