CHAPTER 11

EXTENDING RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY

The Role of Affective Processes in Shaping Leader–Follower Relationships

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Leadership, defined by Yukl (2006) as a social interaction process in which an individual (the leader) attempts to influence the behaviors of another (the follower), continues to be an area of intense research in organizational behavior. Moreover, research on organizational leadership tends to revolve around individual-level elements, as evidenced by the distinct foci placed on leader traits, behaviors, contingencies, and situational factors. Chemers (2000), however, notes that focusing on these aspects of leadership often produces overly-simplified and unrealistic theories of leadership effectiveness. In Chemers' words, "leadership theory and empirical research have been regarded as a fractured and confusing set of contradictory findings and assertions without coherence of interpretability" (p. 27). Yukl agrees with this, arguing that extant leadership theory disregards the social nature of the leadership process and how interactions between leaders and followers shape leadership effectiveness.

335

Among the early attempts to address these limitations, leader–member exchange (LMX) stands out. LMX theorists, such as Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), argue in particular that leadership effectiveness depends on the *quality of the relationship* between leaders and followers. In contrast to earlier leadership theories, LMX theory constituted an advance insofar as it con-ceptualized dyadic leader–follower relationships as the key unit of analysis and antecedent of leadership effectiveness. Thus, leadership outcomes are seen not to be solely reliant on leader-related elements, but also depend on the interplay of leader and follower cognitions, behaviors, and affect. As can be seen in the more recent literature on this topic (e.g., see Chen et al., 2007; Tangirala, Green, & Ramanujam, 2007; Tse, Dasborough, & Ash-kanasy, 2008), LMX theory continues to be an important framework for un-derstanding leader–follower interactions and processes and, subsequently, its implications for leadership effectiveness.

The more recent developments in relational leadership theory extend further in this direction by detailing the leader–member exchange dynam-ics of reciprocity and perceptions, and by clarifying the distinctions be-tween constructs relevant in leader–member exchanges (e.g., see Brower, Schoorman, & Tan, 2000). For example, Uhl-Bien (2006) recently point-ed out that relational leadership theory has potential to serve as a robust framework from which to understand the deeper relational dynamics of leadership. Uhl-Bien, however, also concluded that we still know little about how relationships form and develop in the workplace. Likewise, Bradbury and Lichtenstein (2000) argue that organizational processes and dynamics should not be conceptualized as independent of each other. Rather, these authors suggest that organizational phenomena are essentially created via intrapersonal and interpersonal exchanges.

In this chapter, therefore, we seek to advance the research frontiers for relational leadership theory from both a conceptual and methodological point of view. Central to our position is that our understanding of relational leadership processes can be further developed by recognizing the impor-tance and implications of affective processes and how these processes shape effective leader–follower relationships. We argue that studies of relational leadership to date have largely overlooked the affective dynamics that ex-ist among team members and leaders, particularly how affect influences relationship quality among team members and, in particular, between team members and their leaders. To this effect, we focus especially upon the social phenomenon of emotional contagion, which involves the tacit ex-pression and mimicry of affective states, and underscores the influence of emotional contagion processes in relational leadership theory (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994). In the following section, therefore, we briefly review current issues in relational leadership research, incorporating a dis-cussion on the influence of affect in relational leadership dynamics.

EMOTIONS AT MULTIPLE LEVELS
AND FOLLOWERS' EMOTIONS

Prior to our discussion on the role of emotional contagion in relational leadership theory, we first argue for the relevance of emotions in relational leadership research. We focus on how emotions at various levels, and followers' emotions in particular, influence relational leadership.

Multi-level modeling implies a statistical analysis technique that allows researchers to account properly for the means by which elements at different levels of analysis interact to influence outcomes. In the context of relational leadership research, multi-level modeling allows for researchers to consider how varying levels of behavioral processes (i.e., differentiation of leader's treatment of different team members) may impact overall leader–follower relationship quality. In this respect, calls for multi-level research on leadership by Yammarino and Dansereau (2008) have been heeded and are evidenced in recent studies of relational leadership processes that account for multiple levels of analyses (e.g., see Ashkanasy, 2003; Chen et al., 2007; Tangirala et al., 2007; Tse et al., 2008). Yet, these researchers also acknowledge that, while multi-level research accounts for leaders' differentiation between high and low LMX team members, little attention to date has been paid to understanding of how this differentiation is manifested in the affective reactions that leaders portray towards group members. Thus, we agree that researchers should continue employing multi-level research methods and analysis, but we recommend, in line with Ashkanasy (2003), that future research must also consider the different affective processes and states that inherently exist in leader–follower relationships. To this effect, new and interesting questions can be asked, for example: What are the affective outcomes for relational processes in a group where some followers share a positive, high-quality affective relationship with their leader and others do not? What broader, macro-level factors influence the quality of relational leadership processes at the micro-levels of analysis?

A second, possibly more important area for further conceptual advancement in relational leadership theory revolves around the roles of followers. As Weierter (1997) observed, researchers have largely focused on leader-centric elements as the key antecedents to effective leadership processes, but little attention has been given to the roles of followers in influencing leadership outcomes. LMX research is essentially leader-focused, with an emphasis on the means by which leaders form relationships with, and subsequently manage, followers depending on their LMX quality. By focusing exclusively on the leader's role, however, scholars have neglected the influence that followers might have on the emergence and creation of truly effective leaders. This view is consistent with Lord and Hall (1992), Hollander (1992), and Lord, Brown, and Freiberg (1999), who suggest that

the social nature of leadership will be better appreciated if the roles and qualities of followers are considered in greater detail.

One reason the role of leaders takes precedence over followers may derive from the emphasis and interest among practitioners, whose primary focus is on how to develop more effective leaders from a top-down perspective. We argue, however, that this is inherently an overly narrow focus, and that the social and, hence, relational nature of leadership processes can be appreciated only if the role of followers is considered in greater detail. We do not discount the value of the leader-focused approach to the study of relational leadership, but instead encourage researchers and practitioners to give greater consideration to how followers may influence the leader–follower relationship, and subsequently, leadership outcomes. In effect, we encourage a more follower-centric approach in both relational and general leadership theory in order to balance out the current over-dominant emphasis on leader-centric elements (Hollander, 1992; Meindl, 1995; Shamir et al., 2007).

So the question then arises: What can followers do to influence leadership effectiveness? One such mechanism of influence may be the attributions that followers make towards their leaders. As Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2002) have shown, followers' attributions of their leaders may influence their perceptions, and subsequently, their behaviors towards their leaders (see also Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2005). We propose, however, that followers' ability to influence leaders may not necessarily stem from cognitive, but perhaps also from affect-based, processes. We suggest that followers' emotions need to be considered in greater detail in the study of relational leadership. In short, we argue that followers' expressions of emotions towards other team members, and towards leaders themselves, will have implications for relational leadership processes. Hence, while the focus of relational leadership theory is on social exchanges between the leader and the follower, we advocate here a focus specifically on the roles of followers, and how their emotions shape the quality of the leader–follower relationship.

In summary, our position is that the largely leader-centric perspective on leadership that has tended to dominate the leadership landscape to date has resulted in a lack of understanding about how followers' perceptions and behaviors impact the leader–follower relationship. Clearly, therefore, there is a need for researchers to give greater consideration to how followers' affect might shape relational leadership processes.

EMOTION AND AFFECT IN RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY

The role of emotions and affect in organizational behavior research has traditionally been understated by the assumption that logic and rationality

underlie human behavior (Albrow, 1992; George, 2000). Beginning with Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), however, scholars have taken an increasing interest in affect in organizations (see also Ashkanasy & Ashton-James, 2005; Ashkanasy & Humphrey, ~~in press,~~ Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; Humphrey, 2002). To date, research on emotions within the organizational behavior domain is notable in studies of group-level affective climate (Bartel & Saavedra, 2000; Totterdell, 2000), emotional labor and regulation processes (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004; Totterdell & Holman, 2003), and emotional intelligence (Wolff, Pescosolido, & Druskat, 2002; Wong & Law, 2002).

Within the organizational leadership domain, research incorporating affective processes is evident in studies of charismatic leadership (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; Bass, 1985; Bono & Ilies, 2006; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Erez et al., 2008), particularly affective processes involving the transfer of affect between leaders and followers (e.g., see Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). The role of affect in workplace exchange relationships is also garnering attention. For example, Tse and colleagues (2008), in a study of workplace friendship and affective processes in teams, found that team affective climate moderated the quality of team members' workplace relationships. Glasø and Einarsen (2006) also concluded from their study that leader–member relationships are inherently emotion-laden, impacting both parties' judgments and perceptions in the workplace.

The role of affect in leader–member exchange relationships, however, is only just beginning to receive attention. Indeed, this has been a somewhat surprising omission from scholarly research on relational leadership, given that effective leaders lead not just by appealing to their followers' cognition, but also to their emotions in order to achieve desired organizational outcomes (Ashkanasy, Härtel, & Daus, 2002).

Researchers' attention to affect in relational leadership is, however, starting to grow. For example, Brower and colleagues (2000) suggested that affective influence processes impact the cognitive processes inherent in leader–follower relationships; including followers' perceptions of their leader's trustworthiness and the formation and maintenance of trust with their leaders. Ballinger, Schoorman, and Lehman (2009) recently tested this idea. These authors examined the impact of affect on the formation of followers' trust towards new leaders, and concluded that affective states heavily influence followers' motivation to trust their leaders, as well as their judgments of their leaders. Clearly then, relational leadership theory and research can be further extended by giving greater consideration to how affective processes influence leader–follower relationships.

Nonetheless, while scholars have a developed good understanding of the cognitive processes involved in leaders' perceptions of in-groups and out-groups, less is known about the role of affective processes that influence

the creation of these two distinct groups of followers. Research might also examine how leaders may tacitly make use of affective processes to facilitate and/or to maintain the distinction between high and low LMX team members. In this respect, Glasø and Einarsen (2006) suggest that leaders may maintain an emotional distance from specific subordinates in an attempt to prevent development of privileged relationships with certain followers. Hence, it seems probable that leaders will react and portray different types and levels of affect towards different followers, depending on the quality of their relationships with their team members. The affective exchanges between the leaders and their followers will therefore likely differ depending on LMX quality. For example, positive affective exchanges are more likely to exist in high-quality leader–follower relationships, characterized by social attraction, affiliation, and liking for the leader. Conversely, negative affective exchanges would be likely to exist in low-quality leader–follower relationships, resulting in feelings of alienation, disaffection, and perhaps even result in followers' resistance of the leader's influence attempts.

Following on the discussion of the role of followers in relational leadership theory, recent studies have also suggested the importance of considering how followers' affect influences the quality of relational leadership processes. As Dasborough et al., (2009) argue, followers' experience and expressions of negative affect are likely to impact followers' attitudes towards leaders. In line with this idea, Tee and Ashkanasy (2007; 2008) conducted laboratory studies to test the hypothesis that followers' expressed affect would influence leaders' affect and behavior; they found that followers' expressions of affect, and the resulting emotional contagion processes, impacted leaders' affect and cognitive performance. These theoretical and empirical results have implications for future research on relational leadership processes, suggesting that followers and their expressed affect appear to be notable influences in shaping the quality of leader–follower relationships. Moreover, and consistent with the aim of relational leadership theory to conceptualize leadership processes more holistically, these studies provide evidence that effective, high-quality, leader–follower relationship outcomes go beyond leader-centric, cognitive-based processes.

In summary, while extant relational leadership theory has tended to emphasize the cognitive processes involved in the creation of in- and out-group followers, less attention has been given to the affective processes inherent in both the creation and division of LMX quality. With growing interest in how affective processes influence organizational behavior, the study of relational leadership can also benefit from a greater understanding of how affect moderates the quality of leader–follower relationships. A more in-depth appreciation of these affective processes will allow researchers not only to understand better how LMX quality is created, but also to understand how this quality is maintained. Practically, this also suggests that

the challenges in effectively managing low-quality LMX members lie not only in changing followers' cognitions, but also in appealing to their emotions. In line with this idea, we encourage researchers to consider the role of affective processes in addition to the cognitive processes that exist in relational leadership processes.

Following on from our arguments in the preceding sections, we discuss the implications of affective exchanges, driven by emotional contagion processes, on relational leadership dynamics. We refer, in particular, to recent work by Hareli and Rafaeli (2008) and Dasborough et al. (2009), and suggest a multi-level conceptualization of relational leadership processes that incorporates the influence of followers and affective processes as key determinants of leader–follower relationship quality. As Dasborough and her colleagues suggest, followers' experience of, and expressions of, negative affect can consequently impact followers' attitudes towards leaders. Drawing on attribution theory, these authors theorized that negative perceptions of followers form the basis for their experience of, and expressions of, negative emotions towards other organizational members, including both team members and leaders. These negative emotions may then become manifest in negative behavioral outcomes, permeating multiple levels within the organization, and impacting individual, group, and organizational-level affect (see also Mumford, Dansereau, & Yammarino, 2000).

Dasborough and her associates (2009) argue in particular that emotional contagion processes play a central role. In the following section therefore, we elaborate on this emerging area of research and discuss how emotional contagion might ultimately impact leader–follower interactions and relationship quality across multiple levels of organization. We build on our discussion of how emotional contagion among followers (lateral contagion), and between followers and leaders (upward and downward contagion) ultimately impact relational leadership outcomes across multiple levels of analysis.

EMOTIONAL CONTAGION IN RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Hatfield et al. (1994) define *emotional contagion* as "the tendency to automatically mimic and synchronize facial expressions, vocalizations, postures and movements with those of another person, and consequently, to converge emotionally" (p. 5). Emotional contagion is thus conceptualized as a subconscious and tacit process by which affective states are transferred and/or shared among individuals. According to emotional contagion theory, an individual's affective state is linked to her or his own verbal and nonverbal expressions of emotions, so that a change in either will automatically trigger a congruent response in the other. The contagion effect therefore

occurs when a second individual or party "catches" the portrayed affective state of the conveyor and, subsequently, converges on the affective state of the conveyor.

Hareli and Rafaeli (2008) argue further that emotional contagion processes result in "emotion cycles" (p. 35) that can permeate and transcend formal hierarchical boundaries, impacting the experience of emotions at the various levels of an organization. In the following discussion, therefore, we treat emotional contagion as it occurs among team members (lateral contagion), from leaders to followers (downward contagion) and from followers to leaders (upward contagion), and argue how each of these three types of emotional contagion processes might impact the leader–follower relationship.

Lateral Emotional Contagion

Emotional contagion processes have been examined within the context of both formal and informal groups. Totterdell et al. (1998) posit that emotional contagion may explain how an individual's mood becomes linked with that of a group. Results from these authors' study indicate that individuals tend to mimic fellow group members' affective displays automatically and subconsciously, and consequently to converge on the overall group-level affect. In a subsequent study, Totterdell (2000) found that the collective mood of a group was related to the mood of individuals in the group, and that the emotional contagion effect impacts individual-level perceptions of group achievement. In support of this idea, Bartel and Saavedra (2000), in an observational study, reported that work group members do indeed tend to converge on a collective group-level mood, and that each group's dispositional mood is constructed by team members' observable facial, vocal, and postural cues via emotional contagion. More recently, in a series of quasi-experimental studies, Anderson, Keltner, and John (2003) reported that participants in close relationships converged emotionally over time, and that the resulting intertwining of affective states was partially attributable to emotional contagion.

The studies above share a common finding, in that emotional contagion occurs at the group-level, and can affect individual-level moods and emotions. Totterdell (2000), however, asked if individuals themselves may influence group-level affect. Similarly, Kelly and Barsade (2001) theorized that individual team members bring their own moods, emotions, and sentiments to groups; so, it is plausible that group-level affect may be built from these multiple individual-level team members' feelings. Barsade (2002) has since conducted an experimental study to test this hypothesis, examining emotional contagion processes occurring from the individual- to the group-

level, and found that individual-level affective displays influenced group-level affect via emotional contagion. Barsade's results also illustrated the implications of emotional contagion on group dynamics. Positive-mood contagion, relative to negative-mood contagion, led the groups in her study to experience better levels of cooperation, lower levels of conflict, and more favorable perceptions of the group's task performance. Taken together, this research tells us that group-level affect can influence and, in turn, be influenced by, individual-level affect so that, in effect, emotional contagion operates reciprocally.

In view of the foregoing findings, we believe it is plausible to argue that emotional contagion among team members, and the resulting lateral contagion effect, is likely also to have implications for relational leadership processes. Since groups consist of multiple individuals with varying ranges of felt emotions, we argue that it follows that emotional contagion processes that occur among team members are likely to be shaped by the emotions at both the individual- and group-level, and further that this will present important considerations for the leadership of these groups. Researchers examining collective action in the social identity literature (e.g., Butz & Plant, 2006; Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005) suggest in particular that in-group members may experience and portray negative emotions towards out-group members, and that this may also encourage in-group members to take action against out-group members in order to preserve their group identities. Studies of collective action towards out-groups also show that anger and hostility are the emotions most associated with intentions to take action towards out-group members. More generally, these studies concur with Smith and Crandell's (1984) suggestions that group-level emotions serve to provide emotional support, thereby reducing subjective uncertainty caused by situational stressors.

It may therefore be plausible that out-group members' perceptions of the leaders' treatment of in-group (high LMX) members may also serve to incite negative emotions among out-group (low LMX) members. In line with recent discussions on how followers' attributions translate into expressions of affect (Dasborough et al., 2009), out-group members may thus display negative emotions towards in-group members in order to balance out what they perceive to be unwarranted treatments of favoritism rendered by leaders towards in-group members. The implications of followers experiencing these feelings may then translate into behavioral reactions that go beyond the group context.

In this respect, Mumford and colleagues (2000) found that followers' evaluations and assessments of their status in comparison with their peers may also motivate their intentions to perform in groups and thence to comply with or to resist their leader's influence. The consequences of followers' perceptions of being an out-group member also have implications that

resonate beyond that of their own personal satisfaction and or well-being. Similarly, Stamper and Masterson (2002) found that subordinates who perceived themselves as being out-group members were more likely to engage in acts of deviant behaviors.

Such expressions of negative emotions towards in-group members may be one way in which out-group members cope with their status as out-group members: serving firstly to reduce feelings of uncertainty, ostracism, and unpleasantness associated with poor quality relationships between themselves and their leaders; and secondly to express negative feelings tacitly towards in-group members on the basis that they are receiving unjustified special treatments by leaders. The lateral contagion effect that results from these expressed negative emotions may subsequently impact the affective climate and performance of the group (see also Barsade, 2002; Totterdell, 2000). These, in turn, are likely to present challenges to the leaders of these groups, especially as to how they might manage the different perceptions and felt emotions that exist within any one team.

Downward Emotional Contagion

Researchers have recently shown interest in how emotional contagion impacts upon leadership specifically. For example, Sy and his colleagues (2005) examined emotional contagion from leaders to followers in an experimental study and found that contagion influenced followers' collective mood and performance. Leaders in a positive mood expressed a positive mood that was subsequently caught on by followers, resulting in followers experiencing positive mood and exhibiting elevated group coordination. When the leader was in a negative mood, on the other hand, the followers caught on to the leader's expressed negative mood and were less coordinated than teams that were led by a positive-mood leader.

Bono and Ilies (2006) and Erez and colleagues (2008) subsequently extended on Sy and colleagues' (2005) study, and found evidence that charismatic leaders' displays of positive affect are linked with followers' own experience of positive mood. They also reported that charismatic leaders' displays of positive mood were associated with followers' perceptions of effectiveness and attractiveness towards the leader. These findings are congruent with results of survey research by Johnson (2008), who studied emotional contagion processes in educational leadership. Johnson found that emotional contagion explained the relationship between leaders' and followers' experienced affect and that positive affect contagion caused followers to perceive their leaders as being more charismatic and also to engage in more organizational citizenship behaviors.

In sum, these studies suggest interesting implications for relational leadership theory. Beyond impacting followers' experience of affect and task performance, downward contagion may have long-term implications for followers' perceptions of a leader's fairness, and the extent of followers' trust towards their leader. Ballinger et al. (2009), for example, found that followers' felt affect played a significant role in determining how group members formed perceptions of their judgments and trust towards newly-appointed leaders. In these authors' field study of veterinary hospital employees, followers' affect was found to influence the degree of trust towards newly-appointed leaders. Ballinger and associates in effect demonstrated that the formation of high-quality leader–follower relationships, particularly during the initial formation stages, may be strongly dependent on how these new leaders make their followers feel. Hence, beyond proving their technical competence, leaders need to be aware that they need to appeal to their followers' emotions in order to facilitate the creation of long-term, high-quality, leader–follower relationships. Positive downward contagion, in this regard, may help leaders create a warm relationship with their newly-acquainted followers and assist in the formation of trust in the leader, at least within the initial stages of the relationship.

The relevance of downward contagion, however, may differ in more established leader–follower relationships. As initially discussed, leaders' expressions of emotions towards their followers may be one way leaders create and maintain distinctions between in-group (high-quality LMX) and out-group (low-quality LMX) members (Glasø & Einarsen, 2006). Building on this point, we suggest further that leaders' expressions of emotion towards their followers will also shape followers' perceptions of leader fairness and attraction towards their leaders. Out-group members, who are share a more distant relationship with the leaders, are more likely to have their leaders express negative affect towards them, in contrast with in-group members. Consequently, such expressions of leader negative affect may impact followers' perceptions of how fairly they treat their followers, their attraction towards their leaders, and the overall leader–follower relationship.

Upward Emotional Contagion

Existing research on emotional contagion processes in leadership is often framed under the assumption that emotional contagion in leadership settings occurs exclusively from leaders to followers. As Sy and colleagues (2005) note, positional power infers a leader with additional control and hence more opportunities to express and to transmit affect to followers. The possibility of followers (or individuals with comparatively less power) influencing leaders, however, should not be overlooked. Consistent with

our suggestions that emotions can permeate formal organizational boundaries, we suggest that followers themselves can influence leaders and the leader–follower relationship via emotional contagion processes. In this respect, an experimental study by Hsee et al. (1990) provided initial evidence for the possibility that followers influence their leaders through emotional contagion processes. Hsee and colleagues hypothesized that emotional contagion was more likely to occur from powerful to powerless (or less powerful) individuals but found, contrary to their predictions, that individuals with greater, rather than lesser, power were more susceptible to emotional contagion. These findings suggest an interesting consideration for further follower-centric studies on leadership and the role of affect in leader–follower relationships.

More recently, Tee and Ashkanasy (2007; 2008), conducted laboratory studies to test the hypothesis that followers' expressed affect can influence leaders. They found that followers' expressions of affect, and the resulting emotional contagion processes, did indeed impact leaders' own affect and cognitive performance. Results from these studies have implications for future research on relational leadership processes. Consistent with arguments that relational leadership theory should be viewed from a more holistic perspective, upward contagion processes may be one way in which followers impact the leader–follower relationship. We thus suggest that followers' experience and expression of emotion can also be directed upwards—towards the leaders themselves.

In this regard, expressions of positive affect towards leaders (positive upward contagion) may serve to encourage and communicate acceptance and approval of a leader. Conversely, expressions of negative affect (and resulting negative upward contagion) may instead be seen as a way in which followers convey disapproval of a leader's actions. For instance, followers who perceive their leaders to be displaying unwarranted favoritism towards specific in-group members may tend to express more negative affect towards their leaders (see Dasborough et al., 2009). The resulting upward contagion impact may then impact a leader's own perceptions of how much followers trust them and, ultimately, the quality of the working relationship between the leader and the follower. Collectively, these propositions are in line with both our initial discussions of how relational leadership theory and research can be enhanced by considering more follower-centric perspectives, along with the impact of emotions in leader–follower relationships.

Summary

In this section of our chapter, we introduced the notion of emotion and affect as core drivers of relational leadership. More particularly, we

discussed how the process of emotional contagion underlies the conveyance and experience of emotions at multiple levels of the organization. We built on recent work by Hareli and Rafaeli (2008) and Dasborough and colleagues (2009) and suggested how emotional contagion processes that occur among team members (lateral contagion), from leaders to followers (downward contagion) and from followers to leaders (upward contagion) can impact relational leadership processes. Consistent with relational leadership theory's aims of conceptualizing leadership processes more holistically, we also suggested that high-quality leader–follower relationship outcomes go beyond leader-centric, cognitive-based processes. On this basis, it is clear that future research should consider how the quality of leader–follower relationships is also influenced by followers, and affective exchanges between leaders and followers.

In the following section, we discuss ideas for methodological advancement that may help researchers to understand further the implications of affect and emotional contagion processes in relational leadership interactions.

IDEAS FOR METHODOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT

Mixed Methods in Relational Leadership Research

Owing to the inherent complexity of leadership (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007), researchers will need sophisticated and nuanced approaches if they are to understand the nature of relational leadership. One approach lies in the use of mixed methods, or research designs that utilize both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a holistic interpretation and representation of the phenomena of research interest. Studies that integrate perspectives from both a positivist/empiricist paradigm and a constructivist/phenomenological orientation are, however, rare and under-applied in organizational research (Tashakorri, 1998). Qualitative researchers take the view that the persistence of employing quantitative research methods is one reason why findings from leadership research are often conflicting, and explain only small amounts of variance (Prasad & Prasad, 2002; van Maanen, Dabbs, & Faulkner, 1982). Despite this criticism, leadership has traditionally been examined from an objectivist, empirical perspective. Consequently, the presuppositions imposed by such quantitatively-driven paradigms orientate the organizational researcher towards survey-based and experimental research designs. Bolden and Gosling (2006), on the other hand, argue that the concept of an effective leader may not simply stem from one specific leader or follower-related element, but rather as a result of multiple, interrelated components that cannot be captured via a single research paradigm.

The use of mixed methods in the study of leadership processes may thus be particularly beneficial for advancing current understandings and uncovering additional dynamics in leader–follower relationships. For example, Tashakkori (1998) noted the dialogue between quantitatively and qualitatively oriented researchers, and concluded that these diverging orientations to social science research are not incompatible, and that both paradigms can be used to complement the quality and depth of research (see also Cresswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). We believe that this pragmatic perspective in social science research is promising (e.g., the pragmatic critical realism of Johnson and Duberley, 2000), and may ultimately benefit organizational and leadership research, a social research domain traditionally characterized by clear-cut distinctions between research conducted from different paradigms. Of course, effectively integrating these two research paradigms in the study of relational leadership processes is a challenge in itself, but researchers stand to be rewarded with a more holistic understanding of relational leadership.

We also point out that employing multiple methods in relational leadership research is likely to yield two particular advantages: triangulation and refinement of theory. Triangulation refers to the use of other data sources, research designs, or measurement scales in order to circumvent biases inherent in relying on any one single data source (Creswell, 1994). We suggest that one form of triangulation is to utilize methods from different research paradigms to augment the findings from any one study. Thus, relational leadership theory research could benefit substantially from the complementary use of quantitative (e.g., survey-based) methods and qualitative research methods, such as interviews and focus groups. In particular, some aspects of relational leadership theory, such as follower-centered models, are not currently well enough informed by a strong research tradition. In this respect, we lack a firm understanding of the impact of the follower (e.g., follower perceptions and affect as discussed in the preceding section) on leadership effectiveness. These processes can be explored in rich contextual detail via qualitative and ethnographic methods (e.g., see Pratt, 2000).

The value of employing mixed methods is evidenced in our own research. In one recent study, for example we (Tee, Ashkanasy, & Paulsen, 2009) employed interviews and focus group methods to uncover the different emotions felt and expressed by followers towards their leaders in the workplace. Building on the laboratory studies we mentioned earlier (Tee & Ashkanasy, 2007, 2008), this approach provided rich, first-hand accounts from organizational members as to how emotions affected the quality of interactions between leaders and followers, confirming that relational leadership processes in organizations are indeed impacted by the affective exchanges between leaders and followers.

Our qualitative study also built upon earlier findings that a leader's personality traits may result in their elevated susceptibility to followers' affect. Thus, while Tee and Ashkanasy (2008) reported that that neurotic leaders were more susceptible to followers' negative affect, Tee and colleagues' (2009) found in their qualitative study that empathy also inclined leaders to be more receptive of their followers' emotions. In this regard, the qualitative study not only added to, but also refined, theory by uncovering additional affect-based factors (in this case the leader's empathy and reactivity towards emotions) as key determinants of leader's overall effectiveness.

In line with Tashakkori's (1998) suggestions, the above studies illustrate that studies of relational leadership processes from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives are not incompatible. Rather, mixed research methods can be used in a complementary manner, ultimately contributing towards a more refined understanding of relational leadership. As such, we recommend that researchers make use of mixed methods designs in order to develop data sets that allow complementary analyses of leadership phenomena. Given that studies incorporating such traditionally distinct research paradigms are limited, we hope that our discussion in this chapter will serve to encourage researchers to tap into the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods to expand and refine relational leadership theory.

Studying Emotions in Relational Leadership

Despite the late entry of emotional dimensions into the organizational research domain, we believe that considerable progress has now been achieved. Positive outcomes include the qualitative and ethnographic approaches that we discussed above (see also Fineman, 2005; Maitlis & Özçelik, 2005), as well as survey methods (Dasborough, Sinclair, Russell-Bennett, & Tombs, 2008), laboratory methods (e.g., Barsade, 2002; Sy et al., 2005; Tee & Ashkanasy, 2007, 2008), and field research (e.g., Totterdell, 2000).

One of the characteristics of emotion that would seem to present a complication is that it tends to be transient. Moreover, as Robinson and Clore (2002) point out, relying on individual's recollections of emotional events is inherently problematic because respondents tend to state their *beliefs* about emotional experiences, rather than report accurately the experiences themselves. The solution to this is to collect emotion data in real time. This can be done using diary studies (e.g., see Weiss, Nicholas, & Daus, 1999) or what is termed the Experience Sampling Method (ESM) (Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1983), where respondents enter data in real time (see also Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005; Fisher, 2008).

Finally, we acknowledge that there still exists a level of uncertainty about the nature of emotional phenomena. For example, Gooty, Ashkanasy, and

~~Gavin~~ (2009) recently outlined ~~three~~ particular challenges that confront today's emotion researchers. These are that (1) definitions of emotions are often inconsistent; (2) researchers need to study discrete emotions (rather than positive versus negative affect); (3) emotions need to be studied as dynamic phenomena; and (4) emotions need to be studied in context. Clearly, these represent challenges for researchers in this field. Despite these issues, however, and like Ashkanasy and Ashton-James (2005), we see a bright future for the study of emotions in organizational settings. Moreover, based on our earlier arguments of the central role played by emotion in relational leadership, we believe that untapped opportunities exist to research the role emotions play in this field.

Multi-level Methods in Relational Leadership Research

Our final point, consistent with our earlier theorizing, is that multi-level organizational research designs that seek to account for relationships and interactions between individual-, group-, and organizational-level variables (Ashkanasy, 2003; Hofmann, Griffin, & Gavin, 2000; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) are crucial for understanding relational leadership, and especially to study the role of emotions and affect in these processes. Multi-level models in leadership research imply that individual-level leader and follower variables will influence, and will in turn be influenced by higher-level, group-related variables. Multi-level research is fundamentally distinct from traditional organizational research that simply aggregates scores across various respondents as a mean score of a variable of interest. Instead, studies that account for the different levels of analysis acknowledge that meaningful variances exist at both the individual and group-levels, and should be properly accounted for in data analysis. Multi-level models are a quantitative attempt to circumvent the "ecological fallacy" problem inherent in simply aggregating survey scores (i.e., averaging) across different raters and groups (Hofmann, 1997; Hox, 2002; Luke, 2004; Nezlek, 2002).

Consistent with this argument, Klein and Kozlowski (2000) note that inferences and conclusions drawn from aggregated data make the unjustified assumption that phenomena occurring at the group level can be assumed to hold for individuals. Yammarino and Dansereau (2008) advocate the use of multi-level approaches, particularly within the study of leadership, and their suggestion is also consistent with calls for more integrative studies of organizational behavior (House, Rousseau, & Thomas-Hunt, 1995). More specifically, Schriesheim, Castro, and Cogliser (1999) recommend that researchers employ appropriate analytic techniques to account for the effects of leader–follower exchanges at different levels of analysis. These authors also note that, unless researchers address this limitation in LMX research,

subsequent research findings may not provide further understandings of relational leadership processes beyond what leadership scholars already know. In this respect, Henderson et al., (2009) note that the limited number of research designs that incorporate different levels of analysis in LMX research is surprising, given that LMX research essentially revolves around how multiple subordinates collectively influence group-level outcomes.

In line with our earlier discussion of conceptual issues, and extending on our suggestions for researchers to reconceptualize leader–follower relationships in the context of teams (as opposed to dyads), we advocate the development of models that appropriately account for the leader's relationships with multiple followers. Reconceptualizing relational leadership theory and research in this manner necessitates the need for methods and analytical techniques that appropriately account for both within-group and between-group differences of followers' relationships with their leaders. In the context of our discussion, followers' perceptions, and subsequent felt and expressed affect towards their leaders may depend on their status as either in-group or out-group members, and hence, these within-group variations may impact leaders' relationships with their groups as a whole. Could a few out-group members significantly impact the leader's overall relationship quality with his/her team?

Finally, and consistent with Johns' (2006) suggestions that researchers should consider the contextual influences that impact organizational behavior, multi-level research in relational leadership can account for the ways in which group-level, between-group differences may impact on leader–follower relationships. Tse and colleagues (2008), for example, found that team affective climate moderates team member relationships. Tangirala and associates (2007) likewise found that LMX quality was partly moderated by the leaders' relationship with their own supervisors, while Harris, Wheeler, and Kacmar (2009) found that the relationship between LMX quality and followers' perceptions of job satisfaction and turnover intentions were moderated by their perceptions of empowerment. These studies illustrate that contextual and higher-level factors have implications for individual-level, leader–follower relationships. Further research can examine whether team affective climate (i.e., a group-level factor) influences leader–member relationships. Henderson and his associates (2009) suggested that researchers consider organizational-level factors such as organizational culture, structure, and human resource practices as potential factors that may impact leader–follower relationships and differentiation. James et al. (2008), likewise, argue for the importance of organizational-level climate as a determinant of group and individual-level satisfaction and well-being in organizations. More recently, Ashkanasy and Humphrey (in press) presented a multi-level model of leadership and emotions (see also Ashkanasy, 2003).

In summary, it is clear that theory, measurement, and research design require a more realistic conceptualization of these multi-level factors, and researchers need to consider that leaders are embedded within the context of multiple groups. We also need to understand how group-level factors impact on relational leadership processes. Our suggestion is for researchers to account appropriately for these meaningful individual-level and group-level differences in further research, thereby circumventing potentially inaccurate inferences made via aggregation of individual-level variables.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we have highlighted avenues for advancement in relational leadership theory, both conceptually and methodologically. We focused specifically on the affective dimensions of relational leadership theory, and we suggest the means by which followers and leaders collectively shape leadership outcomes through emotional contagion processes. Following this, we discussed ideas for methodological advancement and how researchers can effectively capture the affective elements of interest in leader–follower relationships.

We suggested first that researchers consider the affective exchanges between leaders and followers as a key determinant in shaping relational leadership outcomes. We also pointed out that further research on relational leadership processes should distinguish between multiple levels of analysis, and we added that the multi-level conceptualization of relational leadership should also capture the different affective elements that exist at both the individual- and group-level of any one team. Additional research on other contextual, higher levels, such as organizational culture and climate (see James et al., 2008), can also shed further light on how leader–follower relationship quality may be moderated by affective elements that exist at the macro-level.

Second, we suggested that researchers more carefully consider the role that followers play in the relational leadership processes. Our current understanding of leader–follower relationships from extant research focuses heavily on leader-centric elements, driven by the assumption that followers are compliant and reactive towards the leader's influence attempts. We propose instead that followers themselves can act collectively in their own interests (or in the interest of their teams) and effectively convey support or disapproval of their leaders, subsequently impacting their leader's overall effectiveness. While we do not understate the importance of leader-centric perspectives in relational leadership theory, we also argue that our understanding of relational leadership processes can be enhanced by studying high-quality leader–follower interactions from the followers' point of view.

Building on our emphasis on the affective aspects of relational leadership processes, we also highlighted the importance of understanding how the followers' affect (not just the leader's affect) influences relational leadership outcomes.

Following this, we discussed the role of emotions, focusing on how affect is conveyed in leader–follower interactions. Additional research on the means by which affect enhances or inhibits the development of high- and low-quality leader–follower relationships can complement our understanding of cognition in relational leadership processes. The growing interest in the role of affect in contemporary leadership research illustrates that leaders are influenced by affective elements. Our current understanding of relational leadership processes can be enhanced by examining affective exchanges between leaders and followers based on processes of emotional contagion, and evaluating the impact of these exchanges on overall leadership effectiveness. In this respect, we provided a brief overview on the social phenomenon of emotional contagion and explained how this tacit expression and mimicry of affective states between two parties has implications for relational leadership processes. Building on recent work on the cyclical nature of emotions in organizations (Dasborough et al., 2009; Hareli & Rafaeli, 2008), we discussed how emotional contagion processes among team members (lateral contagion), from leaders to followers (downward contagion), and from followers to leaders (upward contagion) can all have implications for the quality of leader–follower relationships. Methodologically, and consistent with our methodological arguments, we propose that three specific avenues may be fruitful.

First, we suggest that researchers consider employing mixed-method designs in future studies of relational leadership processes. We argue that quantitative and qualitative research designs are not necessarily incompatible, although we do acknowledge they can be challenging to implement effectively. Nonetheless, researchers and the field of study more generally stand to be richly rewarded from studies that integrate the strengths of these two traditionally distinct research paradigms. The use of multiple research methods benefits the study of relational leadership theory by enhancing methodological rigor via triangulation and by refining the theory itself.

Second, and consistent with our arguments that emotions and in particular emotional contagion plays a central role in developing leader–member relations, we urge researchers in this field to employ some of the newly developed approaches to studying emotions in organizational contexts. While such approaches are not without their problems, as Gooty and her associates (2009) point out, the study of emotions presents a range of exciting new possibilities for improving our understanding of relational leadership.

Finally, and following from our suggestion that researchers should consider the broader contextual factors impacting leader–follower rela-

tionships, we also recommend that researchers conceptualize relational leadership processes in multi-level models. Multi-level models are able to capture the hierarchical and multi-layered nature of leader-team interactions more accurately, and to account for meaningful variances that exist in multiple followers' perceptions and affect. Although multi-level research in relational leadership is still in its infancy, with the increasing availability of appropriate statistical software packages to facilitate multi-level data analysis, along with recent publications that conceptualize leader–follower relationships at multiple levels, the study of affect in relational leadership looks set to continue being a worthwhile perspective on understanding the determinants of effective leadership.

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