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Promoting More Integrative Strategies for Leadership Theory-Building

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The agenda for theory and research in the field of leadership studies has evolved over the last 100 years from focuses on the internal dispositions associated with effective leaders to broader inquiries that include emphases on the cognitions, attributes, behaviors, and contexts in which leaders and followers are dynamically embedded and interact over time. Leadership theory and research has reached a point in its development at which it needs to move to the next level of integration—considering the dynamic interplay between leaders and followers, taking into account the prior, current, and emerging context—for continued progress to be made in advancing both the science and practice of leadership.

Keywords: authentic leadership development, integrative theories, contingency theories

The field of leadership studies has frequently focused on the leader to the exclusion of other equally important components of the leadership process (Rost, 1991). Indeed, if the accumulated science of leadership had produced a periodic chart of relevant elements analogous to that in the field of chemistry, one might conclude that leadership studies had traditionally focused too narrowly on a limited set of elements, primarily highlighting the leader yet overlooking many other potentially relevant elements of leadership such as the follower and context. Highlighting this issue, Zaccaro and Klimoski (2001) noted,

Most theories of organizational leadership in the psychological literature are largely context free. For example, leadership is typically considered without adequate regard for the structural contingencies that affect and moderate its conduct. We maintain, however, that organizational leadership cannot be modeled effectively without attending to such considerations. (p. 12)

Potential Benefits of Taking a More Integrative Focus

By working toward identifying and integrating all of the elements that constitute leadership, researchers can position the field of leadership studies to better address questions such as the degree to which leaders are born versus made; whether what constitutes leadership effectiveness is more universal or culturally specific; whether different forms of leadership, such as charismatic or transformational, are more or less likely to emerge on the basis of the stability or criticality of the context;

and whether one style of leadership is more or less effective depending on the contingencies and demands facing leaders and followers.

Addressing each of the above issues requires an examination of leadership that considers the relevant actors, context (immediate, direct, indirect, etc.), time, history, and how all of these interact with each other to create what is eventually labeled *leadership*. This recommendation is in line with suggestions made by Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001), who criticized the field of leadership studies for its tendency to follow a more reductionist strategy, concluding that “leaders are one element of an interactive network that is far bigger than they” (p. 414).

Moving toward more integrative strategies for theory-building and testing has also been recommended by Lord, Brown, Harvey, and Hall (2001) with respect to one of the more traditionally leadercentric areas of leadership studies. Lord et al. (2001) discussed what they called a *connectionist-based model of leadership prototype generation* to emphasize how perceptions of leadership are contingent on the context and the dynamic states in which such mental representations are created. They argued that one’s schema of leadership can be a function of the culture, leader, follower, task, or behavioral inputs and how they each interact to form leadership categories and behavioral scripts. Lord et al. (2001) emphasized that “leadership categories are generated on-the-fly to correspond to the requirements of different contexts, tasks, subordinates or maturational stages of a group or organization” (p. 314) and that “leadership perceptions are grounded within a larger social, cultural, task and interpersonal environment” (p. 332). Their model indicates that even one’s internal representation of how leadership is mentally construed and how one makes sense of situations appears to be a function of the proximal (group or task) and distal (organizational or national culture) context in which those mental representations are formed.

I begin the promotion of more integrative theories of leadership by first discussing the importance of followers to what constitutes leadership. I then examine how the inclu-

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sion of context found its way into the field of leadership studies, highlighting early work on contingency theories of leadership. This discussion is followed by one of more recent work on leadership, leadership development, and strategic leadership, demonstrating the necessity of advocating more integrative strategies to advance the science and practice of leadership.

Examining a Follower Focus

Grint (2000) described the field of leadership studies as being theoretically inadequate from its inception because it primarily excluded followers when explaining what constituted leadership. Grint (2005) stated that “it only requires the good follower to do nothing for leadership to fail” (p. 133) and that it is the followers who teach leadership to leaders. Howell and Shamir (2005) concluded that “followers also play a more active role in constructing the leadership relationship, empowering the leader and influencing his or her behavior, and ultimately determining the consequences of the leadership relationship” (p. 97). Lord, Brown, and Frieberg (1999) asserted, “the follower remains an unexplored source of variance in understanding leadership processes” (p. 167).

After reviewing the accumulated research on transformational leadership theory, which has been the most frequently researched leadership theory over the last two decades, I could only find three published studies that specifically focused on how follower characteristics moderated the effects of leadership on work outcomes (i.e., Dvir & Shamir, 2003; Ehrhart & Klein, 2001; Wofford, Whittington, & Goodwin, 2001). For example, Ehrhart and Klein reported that followers scoring high in achievement orientation, self-esteem, and risk-taking were more likely to be drawn to transformational leaders.

What this research suggests is that a follower’s decision to follow a leader may be a more active process, based on the extent to which the leader is perceived as representing the follower’s values and identity (Howell & Shamir, 2005). Unfortunately, most leadership research has considered the follower a passive or nonexistent element when examining what constitutes leadership. An exception to this conclusion is the work that has been done on relational models of leadership, such as the vertical dyad linkage (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975) or leader–member exchange theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The main gist of leader–member exchange theory is that the quality of the exchange relationship between leaders and followers will determine the qualities of leadership and outcomes achieved.

Early Beginnings of Exploring the Context

Although leadership studies dating back to the early 20th century focused more on the leader than on the context of leadership in which it was observed (Ayman, 2003; Avolio, Sosik, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Day, 2000), there have been some important inquiries into what constitutes leadership throughout human history that included reference to the context. For example, Plato’s philosophical discussions of the moral and ethical purpose of leadership highlighted the relevance of the context.

Similar to discussions of ethical leadership, early writings on what constituted charismatic leadership also focused on the context. Weber (1924/1947) recognized that there were certain unique qualities of leaders that differentiated the bureaucratic from the charismatic leader. Weber argued that a social crisis was necessary to promote the emergence of charismatic leaders. Although subsequent research on the emergence of charismatic leadership has challenged Weber’s base assumption (Bass, 1990), the stability of the context remains an important feature in both theoretical and empirical work on what constitutes charismatic leadership (Bass, 1985; Beyer, 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Klein & House, 1995).

Traditional Contingency Models of Leadership

Emergent contingency models of leadership such as Fiedler’s (1967) trait contingency model, Vroom and Yetton’s (1973) normative contingency model, House and Mitchell’s (1974) path–goal theory, and Hersey and Blanchard’s (1969) situational theory all linked different leadership styles to specific contextual demands that resulted in better performance outcomes—including, in some instances, the nature of the follower in the leader-and-follower equation. Contingency theories of leadership emerged in the literature primarily because prior empirical research examining the link between leadership traits and performance had produced conflicting results (Stogdill, 1974). This led to claims that the achievement of desired outcomes was a function of what some authors termed the *fit* or *match* between a leader’s traits, style, and orientation and follower

maturity and situational challenges. Reinforcing this direction, Shartle (1951) reported the best predictors of leadership effectiveness were the values or culture of the organization and the behaviors of the leader's supervisor.

Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) defined the contingency theorist (and, by extension, the contingency theorists' approach to explaining leadership) as "one who is keenly aware of the forces which are most relevant to his behavior at any given time (and) who is able to behave appropriately in the light of these" (p. 101). Stogdill (1974) sharpened this contextualized view of leadership, stating that "the evidence suggests that leadership is a relation that exists between persons in a social situation, and that persons who are leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in other situations" (pp. 63–64).

Contingencies have been incorporated both ad hoc and post hoc into leadership theory by distinguishing between *internal contingencies* and *external contingencies*. External contingencies include facets of the context such as strategy, technology, organizational structure, position, stability, tasks, climate strength, social and physical distance, and culture. Yukl (1999) also suggested that leadership scholars should consider differentiating between these external contingencies, using what he termed *hard* versus *soft* contingencies. For example, for Weber (1924/1947) and Fiedler (1967), the stability of the social context was a hard contingency integrated into their respective theories of leadership. In contrast, Hofmann, Morgeson, and Gerras (2003) suggested that an organization that has a psychologically safe climate in which workers feel comfortable questioning practices, admitting mistakes, and voicing dissent may represent a soft contingency that moderates the relationship between the leader's style and follower safety citizenship role behaviors.

A number of leadership theories, such as path-goal theory (see House & Mitchell, 1974), have included in their revised formulations internal contingencies such as personal qualities of leaders, experience of followers, personality of followers, gender, motivation, capability, and cultural orientation. With respect to leadership development, motivation to learn and to develop oneself could be considered soft internal contingencies, potentially impacting how what constitutes the rate or impact of leadership development is conceptualized (Avolio, 2005; Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Maurer, 2002).

Judge and Piccolo (2004) completed a meta-analysis examining some of the core research predictions and contingencies associated with Avolio and Bass's full-range model of leadership (see Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1998), which includes both transformational and transactional components of leadership. Judge and Piccolo (2004) concluded,

the meta-analytic results presented in this study provide the most complete test of the full range of leadership. . . . The results provide important support for the validity of transformational, as well as contingent reward and to some extent, laissez-faire leadership. The validity of transformational leadership, in particular, seems to generalize across many situations, including when it is studied in rigorous settings. (p. 765)

However, when Judge and Piccolo examined a number of soft situational contingencies, there was considerable variation in the validity coefficients for both transformational and transactional leadership. For example, they reported that transformational leadership and performance had a correlation of .42 in business versus one of .51 in military settings.

Like many other leadership theories, transformational leadership started out without sufficient attention to contextual contingencies, with later revisions to the theory incorporating a number of soft contingencies to provide a more complete picture of the relationship between transformational leadership and performance. These contingencies now include cultural differences, environmental stability, industry type, organizational characteristics, task characteristics, nature of the goals, nature of the performance criterion, characteristics of followers, and group membership.

One might ask a very practical question: *Should this theory, like others in leadership, have started with a more integrative focus that included a broader array of potential contingencies?* It can be inferred from Marion and Uhl-Bien's (2001) comments that researchers need to stop underestimating the many potential elements that should be considered from the outset to "fully" explain the complexity of leadership.

Conger (2004) clearly answered the above question, criticizing authors who have produced normative theories of leadership such as transformational leadership, stating that "we have been losing an appreciation for the fact that leadership approaches do indeed depend on *the situation*" (p. 138). It seems many theories in the field of leadership have been "back-filled" with a very narrow set of contingencies rather than from the outset using a broader and more integrative strategy that encompasses whatever the field of leadership deems to be core elements to theory-building.

Culture as Context

Cross-cultural researchers have begun to examine whether the qualities of desired and effective leadership are contingent or universal. A universal cultural theory describes or prescribes aspects of leadership that could apply to any situation (Yukl, 2002), whereas contingent theories either describe or prescribe aspects of leadership that apply in some but not all situations (Yukl, 2002). House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta (2004) suggested that integrity may generalize across cultural contexts as being a quality desired in all leaders. Yet, even though the construct of integrity may be seen as desirable and universal across cultures, other scholars have acknowledged that it could be observed in a variety of forms and still be referred to as *high-integrity leadership* (Bass, 1997).

An additional challenge to advancing cross-cultural leadership theory and research is that the "exact same" leadership action or behavior may not be viewed in the same way by different leaders or followers within the same culture or between cultures (Lord & Brown, 2004). For example, according to Triandis (1995), *allocentric*s define

themselves or their identity in terms of the in-groups to which they belong. Allocentrics are more likely to view the actions of leadership as being more desirable and effective to the extent that these focus on what is good for the group versus individual self-interests (Bass, 1985).

In contrast, *idiocentrics* view the individual as having primacy over in-group goals. Idiocentrics are more motivated to satisfy self-interests and personal goals, whether at the expense of group interests or not (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Idiocentrics may view leadership behaviors that reinforce actions that are good for the overall group as being in conflict with their self-interests and, therefore, less desirable.

The emerging field of cross-cultural leadership research has underscored the importance of examining how the inclusion of the context in models of leadership may alter how what constitutes effective or desirable leadership is operationally defined, measured, and interpreted. Integration of culture as a contextual factor in models of leadership necessitates that researchers consider

- the cultural implicit theories of both leaders and followers;
- enacted behaviors and how they are interpreted;
- the broader cultural context in which leaders and followers interact;
- the duration of the leader–follower relationship; and
- exogenous events that may trigger different interpretations of leadership, such as instability, uncertainty, and growth.

Exploring Individual Differences

Since the inception of research on what constitutes leadership, the focus has been on the role that individual differences like personality and general mental ability play in determining who emerges as a leader and how effective the person is in leadership positions (e.g., Bass, 1990; Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Judge, Bono, Iles, & Gerhardt, 2002). Highlighting this focus, Carlyle's (1907) *great man* theory framed leadership as being primarily focused on specific traits that differentiate effective from ineffective leaders. The accumulated research now shows that there are some universal traits leaders possess that are repeatedly associated with effective leadership, including persistence, tolerance for ambiguity, self-confidence, drive, honesty, integrity, internal locus of control, achievement motivation, and cognitive ability (Den Hartog & Koopman, 2001; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Yukl, 1998).

Although traits were originally thought to be fixed, there now is a growing awareness, expressed by authors such as Dweck and Leggett (1988), that some traits may be more malleable and interact with facets of the context in contributing to leadership emergence and effectiveness. This research stream stems in part from the work of developmental psychologists like Riegel (1975), who suggested that "human development can only be understood by conceiving the emergence of behavior over time as a result of an ongoing exchange between the organism and the environment" (p. 46), and from early work by Graves (1959),

who stated, "Finally, it was assumed that just as the seed must have favorable living circumstances to flower fully so to is man's ethical potential limited by the life circumstances which the human develops" (p. 8).

Plomin and Daniels (1987) suggested that "behavioral-genetics research seldom finds evidence that more than half of the variance for complex traits is due to genetic differences among individuals" (p. 1). Supporting this claim, preliminary evidence from behavioral genetics leadership research suggests that 30% of the variance in leadership style and emergence can be accounted for by genetic predispositions, while the remaining variance can be attributed to nonshared environmental influences such as individuals being exposed to varying opportunities for leadership development (e.g., Arvey, Rotundo, Johnson, Zhang, & McGue, 2006). It seems reasonable to suggest that traits interact with the context and, therefore, that the relationship between one's traits and leadership emergence will vary as a consequence of the nature of the context.

There has also been some recent discussion in the leadership literature that certain types of events can trigger leadership emergence and nurture its development, yet there is little empirical evidence linking such events to individual dispositions of either leaders or followers (Avolio, 2005; Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). This emerging research stream on what the authors have called *authentic leadership development* underscores the importance of a view of leadership that takes into consideration the facets of the context that contribute to and detract from its development.

Evidence regarding the impact that events have on development include children who were exposed to an authoritarian parenting style and were shown later in life to have higher achievement orientation, self-confidence, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy (Baumrind, 1991). For example, Schmitt-Rodermund (2004) investigated the impact of personality and authoritative parenting on adolescents' and business founders' self-reports of early entrepreneurial competence, reporting higher levels of leadership in high school, curiosity, and entrepreneurial skill.

In sum, there appears to be some recognition in the leadership literature that not all traits are fixed with regard to their impact on leadership development, emergence, and success. Moreover, traits themselves may evolve over time and change depending on the dynamic exchange between the leader, follower, and context, suggesting that traits are not either/or but a matter of degree in shaping leadership effectiveness, emergence, and development.

A More Integrative View of Leadership Theory-Building

On the basis of a review of the literature, there are some elements that I would deem essential to building more integrative theories of leadership that have well-established lines of research. The broad categories for characterizing these elements include the following:

Cognitive Elements: One element of what constitutes an emergent leadership theory is the way leaders *and*

followers interpret their relationships, roles, capabilities, motivation, emotions, challenges, and objectives. Each and every action or reaction is filtered by leaders' and followers' implicit models or cognitive categorization schemes—systems. Moving to the next levels—in which behaviors and, in turn, context are examined—each is shaped by the way information is recognized, categorized, processed, interpreted, and recalled.

Implicit theories of the self are also particularly relevant to understanding leadership and its development. For example, Dweck and Leggett (1988) have made the distinction between *entity* and *incremental* theory with respect to how one views traits or predispositions. Entity theory views traits as fixed, whereas incremental theory views them as malleable. Each theory explains different modes of processing regarding what constitutes “the self,” which affects the likelihood of different individuals being more or less willing to embrace leadership development. For example, for an individual who views leadership as something that can change over time, challenges being confronted will more likely positively trigger or shape development than they will for someone who views leadership as preordained (Maurer, 2002).

Individual and Group Behavior: Going back 50 years in the leadership literature, many prominent models of leadership were built on how leaders behaved—the individual level (Bass, 1990). Yet it is also known that the perception of such behaviors by followers and the choice by the leader to exhibit them are guided by the intraindividual level and will vary in their impact depending on the nature of followers and context at the group level, including prior, emerging, and possible future contexts, as detailed below. Leadership behaviors can be directed to specific followers or they can be directed toward an entire group of followers. For example, a leader may prime a group of followers to be more promotion oriented, supporting greater risk-taking, challenge, and innovation (Kark & Van-Dijk, in press), which could emerge as a group-level climate.

Historical Context: Since the inception of leadership studies, attention has been given to what has transpired prior to the emergence of leaders. The characteristics of the historical context provide opportunities for the emergence of different orientations toward leadership (e.g., charismatic leaders emerge during times of social crises). The historical context can impact what types of leadership and followership are considered acceptable and unacceptable, effective and ineffective.

Proximal Context: The proximal context is what leaders and followers are embedded in and includes the work or unit climate, group characteristics, task characteristics, and performance domain. The proximal context is the most immediate in terms of time and in terms of impact on both leaders and followers and their relationships. In contingency models, it has been a central feature included to explain leadership effectiveness.

Distal Context: The distal context comprises the organizational culture and characteristics of the broader social-cultural environment such as stability-turbulence, na-

ture of competitors, cycle time in terms of innovation, national events, and culture. One could add here a “distal historical” context that continues to impact current behavior (e.g., the civil rights movement) as well as a “proximal historical” context (e.g., the controversy over immigration rights). Leaders and followers interpret, decide, and behave in part on the basis of the distal context they import into current meaning and decision making and in part on the basis of what they may have previously overlooked and now reflect on and reinterpret.

Applying these five facets to the promotion of more integrative theories of leadership, assume that a particular leader somehow gets his or her immediate follower to successfully assume a leadership role, which is a core proposition in transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985). Examining this leader-and-follower link, one might assume that their respective implicit models of leadership include the belief that leadership is something that can be mutually developed. Connected to these beliefs is the behavior modeling exhibited by a positively oriented leader who builds the follower's efficacy to exercise greater responsibility for leadership. For example, the leader may signal his or her belief that followers who identify their core strengths can accelerate their development as leaders (Avolio, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Followers may then behave in ways that demonstrate their willingness to assume increased responsibility, which the leader reinforces through feedback and recognition, completing the cycle for development.

Of course, what is observed at the leader-and-follower level in part is a result of the climate in which each are embedded. *Organizational climate* refers to shared perceptions among organization members with regard to the organization's fundamental properties (i.e., policies, procedures, and practices; Reichers & Schneider, 1990). For example, if the follower describes the unit's climate as “forgiving of mistakes” and “open to new ways of thinking,” he or she would be more likely to engage in tasks requiring greater responsibilities, discretion, and risk. If the tasks happen to be ones that are of lower risk, the likelihood is even higher that followers will engage in developing leadership potential. Overall, the more an organization's climate is positively oriented toward developing followers into leaders and has a history of doing so, the more likely followers will be to engage in leadership responsibilities and experiences, creating a climate of engagement.

An Integrative View of Authentic Leadership Development

It may seem ironic, given the inordinate amount of attention paid to leadership development, that only recently has there been any serious attempt to formulate a *theory* of leadership development (Avolio & Luthans, 2006). Most of the attention in the leadership literature has been focused on determining what causes leaders to emerge and be effective. Relatively little effort has been devoted to sys-

tematically explaining how such leaders and leadership develop.

Without a doubt, future research on leadership development will need to focus on the interaction of genetic and developmental components that foster leadership at different points across the life span (Ilies, Arvey, & Bouchard, 2006; Plomin, DeFries, McClearn, & McGuffin, 2001) while including a closer examination of relevant contextual factors (Arvey et al., 2006). As noted by Arvey et al. (2006),

what might be of great interest is the question of determining more precisely the kinds of environmental experiences that are most helpful in predicting and/or developing leadership and the ways in which these experiences possibly interact and/or correlate with genetic factors. (p. 16)

Paralleling the field of leadership studies in general, leadership development theory and research has focused on changing the leader, with much less attention given to the interaction of leaders, followers, and context (Avolio, 2005; Day, 2000). It is rather surprising that previous discussions of leadership development have not integrated the context into models of development, ignoring numerous authors' suggestions that coping with difficult situations or challenging events facilitates leadership development (Maurer, 2002; McCauley & Van Velsor, 2003).

Bray, Campbell, and Grant (1974) reported that high-capacity managers at AT&T exposed to challenging events early in their careers were the most successful over a 10-year period. McCauley (2001) focused on the need to integrate the individual and the context as a strategy for fostering leadership development, suggesting that it is important to "provide a variety of developmental experiences, ensure a high level of ability to learn, and design the context so it supports development" (p. 348). These facets are captured in London and Maurer's (2003) model of leadership development, which includes establishing the congruence between characteristics of the organization and the individual in shaping the potential for leadership development. How, then, does one build a theory of leadership development without considering the nature of those experiences and contingencies across a person's life span that contributes positively and/or negatively to leadership development?

Recent work by Avolio and his colleagues (W. L. Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May & Walumbwa, 2005) has attempted to take on the challenge of including up front the core facets described above in explaining what constitutes what they have referred to as *authentic leadership development*. Their model of authentic leadership development includes elements of the leader, follower, and context in explaining what actually improves or develops leadership (W. L. Gardner et al., 2005), which was their rationale for choosing the word *authentic*. For example, the model explicitly shows that the cognitive elements comprising a leader's development, such as self-awareness and self-regulation of the leader's behavior, are mirrored in the follower's development. Gardner et al. take the position that parallel processes are associated with both leader and

follower development and that these processes are embedded in a climate, as noted above, that may be more or less facilitative of actual leadership development.

Due to space limitations, I cannot fully describe the authentic leadership development model, but I can offer an example of how its core elements correspond to those identified above as being essential to promoting an integrative strategy for building leadership theory (for a more detailed discussion of the model, see W. L. Gardner et al., 2005):

- *Cognitive Elements*: A key starting point for the model is the focus on leader and follower self-awareness, which includes how individuals view their actual self and translate that into what could be their possible self or selves. It includes what W. L. Gardner et al. (2005) have called *balanced processing*, which refers to how objectively individuals view information about themselves in current as well as projected future contexts and, then, how they determine decisions. Bridging actual and possible selves helps to represent fundamental aspects of leadership development.
- *Individual Leader-Follower Behavior*: The model incorporates an emphasis on exhibiting authentic leadership behavior, which links to how leaders and followers regulate the translation of their awareness into behaviors-actions that are considered authentic, such as regulating transparency in relationships and ethical decision making.
- *Historical Context*: History is included in terms of the personal background of both leaders and followers and how such history has triggered or stifled development in the past. The model emphasizes that throughout one's life course, there are many potential trigger events that can stimulate growth and development, in part dependent on the level of leader and follower self-awareness and energy placed in self-reflection activities.
- *Proximal Context*: The model highlights how an engaged and ethical organizational climate can facilitate the development of authentic, transparent, ethical leaders and followers.
- *Distal Context*: In W. L. Gardner et al.'s (2005) model, distal context is not specifically presented, but as part of their discussion of leadership development, they include national or international events that are outside the organization that may shape development.

Although the model of authentic leadership development starts with a more integrative focus, as this theory evolves, it must remain open to including additional elements, such as internal and external contingencies that may help explain the full complexity involved with how leaders and leadership genuinely develops. Nevertheless, taking a more integrative focus from the outset may lessen the need to include post hoc additions to this theory.

Conclusions, Future Directions, and Implications

The evolution of leadership theory and practice has come to a point at which a more integrative view spanning from genetics to cultural–generational and strategic levels should be considered at the outset when building theories of leadership and leadership development (Hunt & Dodge, 2000). The recommendations in this article go beyond more traditional situational or contingency models to advocate a fuller and more integrative focus that is multilevel, multicomponent, and interdisciplinary and that recognizes that leadership is a function of both the leader and the led and the complexity of the context. Indeed, future leadership theory and research may focus on what Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001) described as leaders dealing with the conditions of organizations versus local manifestations. As an example, Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001) said that for leaders to create innovation, they may have to create the conditions that spark innovation rather than creating innovation in the individual per se; in their words, “leaders are part of the dynamic rather than being the dynamic itself” (p. 414).

Focusing on the creation of conditions by leaders, I also advocate that more work needs to be done on the connections created by leadership. For example, there is emerging work linking social network theory to leadership theory, even though to date, “little empirical work has been done on leadership and social networks” (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004, p. 800). To the extent that leadership creates the conditions for distinct patterns of relationships between individuals in organizations to create and/or transform social network structures, there is a need to establish linkages between leadership and social network theory. A starting point for exploring this area comes from Balkundi and Kilduff’s (2005) proposed model showing how cognitions in leaders’ and followers’ minds influence the actual social network structures and relationships that are established and that these social networks within and even between organizations ultimately facilitate leadership effectiveness. For example, the leader’s ability to influence others will depend in part on the social network in which that leader is embedded and how positive the network is regarding the leader’s initiatives. In this proposed model, there is a full extension of an integrative framework spanning cognitive implicit theories through to the external structure of social network relationships and how individual actors and their relationships are embedded in a larger social network structure. In line with the proposed integrative framework, Balkundi and Kilduff (2005) concluded, “Our network approach locates leadership not in the attributes of individuals but in the relationships connecting individuals” (p. 942).

I suspect that a more integrative focus regarding leadership theory and research will become even more relevant as the study of leadership is escalated to more strategic levels. For example, whether one is studying individual top leaders, top management teams, or the entire leadership system in an organization, focusing on ways to integrate the context at multiple levels of analysis into leadership

models will take on increasing importance. Specifically, how the top executives in an organization share leadership and influence that organization’s performance may depend in part on the evolutionary stage of the organization and the stability of the context in which it is presently operating (Lord & Maher, 1991). Rapidly changing contexts will place more pressure on leaders to use the talent and wisdom of their top management teams in arriving at critical decisions. At the strategic leadership level, it also becomes important not only *that* a good decision is made but *how* that decision is effectively executed across levels of the organization—and again, the context will matter.

This discussion extends to the emerging work in the area of strategic leadership (Boal & Hoojberg, 2001; Canella & Monroe, 1997; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Various authors have suggested that the executive’s personality and leadership style can impact many aspects of the organization’s strategy and culture. For example, Waldman, Javidan, and Varella (2004) were interested in examining how the charismatic leadership of firms impact firm performance. They suggested that charismatic leadership at the top can influence subsequent relationships both directly and indirectly through social contagion effects, thus cascading strategic influence across levels in terms of its impact on others. Building off of the work of Mischel (1973), Waldman et al. (2004) discussed how uncertain or weak contexts may make employees more receptive to change, which characterizes charismatic leadership. Charismatic leaders may prime all of their followers to take greater risks.

In sum, the emerging patterns in leadership research provide support for what John W. Gardner (1990) described over 15 years ago in his book *On Leadership*, in which he stated,

Leaders cannot be thought of apart from the historic context in which they arise, the setting in which they function (e.g., elective political office), and the system over which they preside (e.g., a particular city or state). They are an integral part of the system, subject to the forces that affect the system. (p. 1)

In line with Gardner’s arguments, the main thrust of this article has been to promote a more integrative examination of leadership theory-building and research so as to lay the groundwork for a more full understanding of what constitutes the best and the worst forms of leadership and how those forms develop.

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