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THE CRITERION PROBLEM IN LEADERSHIP RESEARCH: CONVERGENCE THROUGH AN ALTERNATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

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Using time-honored studies and current research, this paper presents an alternative conceptualization of the criterion problem in leadership research. This problem is given new emphasis when viewed from a success/failure perspective. The ideological frame of reference that effective leaders are those who, in the short-term, increase, heighten, or attain, who achieve more or better, who foster an influential increment is shown to be both limited as a conceptualization of leader effectiveness and restrictive to progress toward a fuller understanding of the complex leadership process. Suggestions (not necessarily easy or welcome ones, however) for overcoming these problems are proffered.

Leadership has been studied from many perspectives (for a more complete review see Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992, and Van Fleet & Yukl, 1986 a) the personal qualities or traits of leaders (Stogdill, 1974; Mazur, Mazur & Keating, 1984), patterns of leader behavior (e.g., Stogdill, Goode & Day, 1962; Bowers & Seashore, 1966; Van Fleet & Yukl, 1986 b), the source and amount of power of the leader (e.g., House, 1977), followers' interests (Knickerbocker, 1948), dimensions of the situation in which the leader and the group navigate (e.g., Fiedler, 1967; House, 1971; Vroom and Yetton; 1973), and combinations of these (Yukl, 1989). Despite this diversity of approaches and the resultant diversity of studies they have spawned, conceptions of leadership stand relatively united in one respect -- the use of short-term criteria of effectiveness.

This area of virtual unanimity can be thought of as the major failing in leadership research. This failing is the strongly supported conclusion that leadership should, in the short-term: heighten, attain or increase performance, group goals or satisfaction; foster more or better outcomes; induce an "influential increment" (Katz & Kahn, 1978: 528). For the leader to be "effective," the trajectory of the effects of leadership should be ever upward; leaders who initiate successful plans are effective leaders; leaders who initiate plans that fail are ineffective leaders.

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But, in the investigative sciences, things are not always as they seem. In an effort to clarify the nature of this failing that frequently guides conceptualizations of leadership, this paper will (1) explore some constraints this failing imposes upon a fuller understanding of leadership and (2) provide convergence for the call to modify short-term, narrow criteria frequently used in leadership research.

Properly defined, limited, short-term "failure" can be seen as an aspect of long-term effective leadership and narrow, short-term "success" that of ineffective leadership. Throughout the rest of this paper, "success" is generally used to refer to narrow, short-term increases in criteria and "failure" to limited, short-term setbacks in those same criteria. This paper follows the outline shown in Table 1, illustrating these contentions in both time-honored studies and current research, in empirical as well as conceptual investigations demonstrating convergence on the basis of an alternative literature to that normally covered in leadership research.

THE FAILURES OF LEADERSHIP SUCCESS

Seduction and Treachery of Successful Leadership

Success may spoil. Winners of "win-lose" conflicts lose their fighting spirit becoming complacent, casual, playful, "fat and happy" (Blake & Mouton, 1961: 432; Schein, 1970: 98). Organizations have been known to decline by stagnation during periods of abundance a well as by cutbacks during periods of scarcity (Whetten, 1980). Argenti (1976) poses two models of organizational success which depict success as prelude to failure. In the first, managers lead firms to excellent performance, precipitating smugness and a false sense of invulnerability with the eventual loss of touch with the environment (e.g., the original Pennsylvania Railroad and deficit-plagued Rolls Royce). In the second model, mercurial, overnight success leads to intoxication which, in turn, leads to carelessness heralding decline, also probably overnight (e.g., one-hit rock and roll bands).

The insidious nature of this "short-term success breeds long-term failure" syndrome can be traced in light of the principles propounded by Cyert and March (1963). They argue that organizational leaders formulate heuristic programs for dealing with recurring problems. Empirical research by Tversky and Kahneman (1981) buttresses the Cyert and March conceptualization; decision makers reject relevant new information if it disrupts previously successful patterns of choice-making behavior. Unfortunately, "because situations appear equivalent as long as they can be handled by the same programs,programs remain in use after the situations they fit have faded away" (Starbuck & Hedberg, 1977: 250). Thus, managerial leaders are lulled by early success into patterns of choicemaking behavior that become disastrous when choicemaking environments change. Success is often ephemeral.

TABLE 1

Ideas That Challenge Success = Effectiveness*

THE FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP SUCCESS
- Seduction and Treachery of Successful Leadership
  - Argenti, 1976
  - Blake and Mouton, 1961
  - Starbuck and Hedberg, 1977
- Success is not Germane to Leadership
  - McClelland, 1961
- Metamorphosis of Success into Failure
  - Goldner, Ritti, and Ference, 1977
  - Suedefeld and Rank, 1976;
- Detrimental Consequences of Obsession for Success
  - Jacobs, 1981

THE SUCCESSES OF LEADERSHIP FAILURE
- Opacity of Success in Leadership
  - Festinger, Riecken, and Schchter, 1956
  - Greenstein, 1982
- Failure as Inoculation Against Failure
  - Haley, 1963
  - Lewin, Lippitt, and White, 1939
  - Quarantelli, 1970
  - Reagan, 1982
  - Starbuck, 1976
- Organic Flexibility
  - Abrahamson, Mizruchi, and Hornung, 1976
- "Failures" as Indispensable Leaders
  - Tuden, 1956
- Realistic Exigencies/Deliberate Failure
  - Farberman, 1975
  - Goode, 1967
- Object Lessons
  - Martin, 1982
- Novel Behavior
  - Hamilton, 1978
- Profit – The Most Compelling Factor
  - Bourgeois, 1980.

LEADER FAILURE (AND SUCCESS) AND PROBLEM SOLVING
- Power
  - Hambrick, 1981
- Realm of Ill-Structured Problems
  - Kelley, 1973
  - Mintzber, 1973
  - Daft, 1983
  - Zajonc, 1965
  - Hunt and Hillery, 1973
  - Markus, 1978

* "Success" refers to narrow, short-term increase in criteria and "failure" to limited, short-term setbacks in those same criteria.

Success may be treacherous in yet another way. Business leaders highly successful in accumulating material possessions may be miserable failures in their personal lives; they have been said to overwork and underlive (Wolman, 1973). Success may or may not be failure, but it certainly is relative.

Success is Not Germane to leadership

McClelland (1961) advocated the assessment of potential leaders' achievement motive (nAch) as a criterion for selection of effective leaders. A sign of strong nAch is the ability to creatively imagine new ways to accomplish something difficult or significant (Atkinson, 1958: 697). The outcome can be success or failure; success in achieving the goal is immaterial in scoring for nAch; trying to succeed is the important variable.

In fact, excessive success can be a sign of maladjustment. Summarizing the findings of investigations of the fear-of-failure phenomenon, Birney, Burdick, and Teevan (1969) note that fear-of-failure is generally expressed in either selecting goals that are too difficult providing a built-in pre-excuse for failure or selecting goals that are too easy and thus assuring success. Of course, just because some individuals may select such goals is no reason for researchers to make a similar error, and yet they do. Researchers frequently select poor criteria (most notably subordinate satisfaction) simply because the data are easier to obtain than are better criteria (such as performance, productivity, and quality) or because they continue to mistakenly believe that subordinate satisfaction causes improvements in performance.

Metamorphosis of Success into Failure

Why did Jefferson, Lenin, and Castro continue in power after successful revolutions while Hamilton, Trotsky, and Che Guevara lost power after being leaders in the same successful revolutions? Suedefeld and Rank (1976) studied leaders of successful revolutions before and after the revolutions. Long-term successful leaders developed a "flexible" view on issues while long-term unsuccessful leaders retained a "single-minded" approach to issues. Long-term successful leaders changed their leadership ideology (and behavior) to adapt to realistic exigencies (changed environments) while long-term unsuccessful leaders held fast to the views that had served them well in the past but which would serve them poorly in their present context.

Goldner, Ritti, and Ference (1977) found parallel results in their study of socialization processes for new members to the priesthood. In training, the initiate's idealism assured success; in actual priestly practice, a thin shell of hard-bitten cynicism fostered success. The idealistic zeal (which had served well in early stages of training) became an indicator of potential vulnerability which could induce professional failure.

Likewise, the critical stage in an organization's life cycle occurs at the peak of its early growth curve. At this stage it may become necessary for the organization's founding entrepreneur-leader to be replaced by a manager-leader who can solidify gains and initiate the mundane rules and coordination mechanisms required for continued growth. Gettys' (Dawson & Gettys, 1934) classic study of the growth and survival of the Methodist Church in England found that the Church's survival crystallized when efficient bureaucrats replaced zealous agitators as leaders. Had the initially successful zealots remained in power, the church might have plunged into precipitous decline. Thus, leader outlooks which foster initial organizational success may become transmuted in their effect over the course of the organization's life cycle and ultimately lead to decline. Some experience with failure might assist such early success leaders to remain successful in the long-term by being flexible -- changing attitudes and learning new patterns of behavior.

Detrimental Consequences of Obsession For Success

An obsession to prevent work-role failure is a prominent characteristic of an organization's very existence (Jacobs, 1981). Policemen, airline pilots, prison guards and workers supporting continuous process technologies (e.g., petroleum refineries) cannot radically heighten total organizational performance through superlative individual performance, but they can ruin organizational performance through lax individual performance (e.g., an airliner crash caused by pilot error, and irate mob sparked by a police shooting, a costly refinery shutdown resulting from a technician's error). Thus, leadership is "not screwing up". Ineffective leader behaviors may be more critical to performance (through avoidance), more frequently possible, more influential in performance appraisal, and remembered longer or more accurately than effective behaviors (Van Fleet, 1974 and 1978). For the maintenance of leadership, then, avoiding ineffective behaviors may be more important than demonstrating effective ones (Albanese & Van Fleet, 1983).

As a consequence of the risks the organization incurs from lax individual performance, organizations may resort to tight behavioral control over members. Through the use of intermediate leaders and stringent rules, executive leaders strive to assure lower level manager and/or worker success or, at least, non-failure. But, as Jacobs (1981:702) points out, organizational obsession with non-failure spawns dysfunctional consequences -- mistakes are hidden, rule violation is covered up, system flaws are kept secret (hence, "cooking the books," see **Business Week,** 1989). In the effort to block the upward flow of negative information, members distort the upward flow of all information. The result can be a catastrophe if executive leaders at a chemical plant, for example, are so obsessed with non-failure that they adopt a leadership pattern that may choke information about shoddily-welded pipes.

Thus, leadership success can be the prelude to organizational failure. The converse is also possible -- leadership failure can augur organizational effectiveness.

THE SUCCESSES OF LEADERSHIP FAILURE

Opacity of Success in Leadership

A central issue affecting leadership research is the deceptive nature of appearances – especially if that research is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal in design. Organizations often facilitate the adaptation of once powerful leaders to lesser power (Goffman, 1952). An alternate status (friend instead of lover, trainer instead of athlete) may confuse the cross-sectional researcher into attributing stable or rising power (i.e., success) to an office-holder whose power has actually diminished.

Further, appearances depend upon the perceptual stance of the observer. Leaders who appear to be abject failures to outside observers may, in fact, retain full status in the eyes of followers. Members of a religious sect who prepared for and experienced together with their leader the last day of the planet Earth (on December 21, 1953) became more devout in their adherence to the commands of the sect's leader after the cataclysm failed to occur than they had been prior to their preparation for the "last day" (Festinger, Riecken and Schachter, 1956).

In a related problem, low profile leadership may be mistaken for ineffective leadership. During his tenure in office, U.S. President Eisenhower was generally regarded as politically inept and stumbling. A research historian (Greenstein, 1982) argues that Eisenhower practiced a "hidden hand" presidency – very effective but not seen to be especially effective in its own time, only to emerge as comparatively effective in the light of history. Correspondingly, many subsequent U.S. Presidents who were regarded as successes early in their tenures of office have failed to retain the status of successful leaders in the eyes of history.

An important point bears consideration in this connection. Failure is sometimes the price of principle. The temporal-judgment argument against attribution of "success" or "failure" is promulgated strongly in the cases chronicled in **Profiles in Courage** (Kennedy, 1955). Republican senators who voted against the impeachment of Andrew Johnson demerged; not one who voted against the dictate of his party was re-elected. "I looked down into my open grave," said Senator Ross as he voted his principles, and in the career sense,he was correct. Yet they re-emerge in history as preservers of the institution of the presidency in the chaos following the Civil War. Labels of success or failure have lives only as long as human memory while principles' lives extend throughout time. While an extreme example, this captures what happens in smaller scope when leadership researchers ascribe value judgments of leader performance in non-longitudinal research designs. Clearly all of this suggests the importance of long-term criteria even where longitudinal designs are not feasible. It may also be that evaluating "social" or "political" leadership is a more complex, longer-term problem than is evaluating "managerial" leadership and one should be extremely careful about transferring the findings from one field to applications in others.

Failure as Inoculation Against Failure

Lewin, Lippitt, and White's (1939) pioneer study of experimentally created leadership climates investigated two research questions that have since been relatively ignored. These questions merit renewed interest. What happens to group performance when the leader "leaves the room" (leaves the room, goes on a trip or vacation, retires, dies, etc).? What happens to group performance and group cohesion when, in the leader's absence, the group is criticized? Temporary leader demergence is a common occurrence whose effect is commonly overlooked; in battlefields, schools, factories, and offices, the leader frequently "leaves the room". Critical appraisal by outsiders during the leader's absence is a far less common occurrence; however, the question Lewin posed has direct consequences for notable events in organizational life. At the macroanalytic level, it is analogous to the regulatory oversight function of societal agents monitoring organizational performance; at the microanalytic level, it is analogous to boundary permeability transactions – for example, what happens when frustrated customers descend on a sales clerk while the supervisor is doing paperwork in the office?

In crises and disasters, when organizational survival may be in jeopardy, predetermined plans fail because the real disaster is unlike the planned-for disaster. Out of necessity, during crises, decisions are made at lower levels of an organization about matters too important to be decided at that lower level during ordinary times. Nurses or other paraprofessionals, not doctors, make crucial health care emergency decisions at hospitals or field locations during civil disasters (Quarantelli,1970). Neighbors, not civil defense officials, make crucial evacuation decisions during natural disasters (Lammers, 1953). Leadership becomes spread thinly during crises; the demands for leader attention rise sharply, necessitating temporary deemphasis of some leader activities until the crisis has passed. This failure of leader attentiveness to the full spectrum of leader duties during crises could be mitigated by earlier leader-out-of-the-room episodes which (1) generate the seeds of crisis preparedness and thereby (2) reduce the impact of real disasters. The failure of the leader to be omnipresent during normal times inoculates the group in crisis preparedness which may facilitate organizational survival in a genuine crisis when the leader cannot be omni-attentive.

Moreover, well established patterns of autocratic or bureaucratic decision making can hinder responses to crises (Bakst, Berg, Foster, & Raker, 1955). Especially in crises, when the need to respond proactively becomes paramount, bureaucratic leadership is dysfunctional to organizational survival (Smart & Vertinsky, 1977). Because the buffeting winds of rapidly changing technologies, governmental policies, customer preferences, and competitor strategies create organizational crises with increasing frequency, Hedberg, Nystrom, and Starbuck (1976) argue that organizations should resemble collapsible tents rather than stone places; that is, organizations should be characterized by mobility, ad hoc jobs, open communication, and the ability to "self design" – wherein veritably every person in the organization is his or her own leader. These theorists insist that the ability to act autonomously is a crucial ingredient in surviving crises – and the temporary failure of the leader to lead (broadly, when the leader is "out of the room") is the rehearsal hall for work-group autonomy. This is much the same argument used by Lt. Col. (later Brig. Gen.) Carlson in establishing his Marine Raiders in World War II so that they could be an effective fighting force even if their commanaders were killed or they became separated from the main body of troops (Blankfort, 1947).

Not only may leaders fail to lead (temporarily, by "leaving the room"), but they must! The role of the psychotherapist is to work with the patient, but the criterion of effectiveness is to not work with the patient – because the patient has been cured (Haley, 1963). Likewise, the role of the family is to "give its members two things: roots and – wings" (Reagan, 1982). Inoculation is the deliberate introduction of a pathogen into a living organism to stimulate the production of antibodies. Through temporary leader demergence (i.e., physical absence of the leader), a temporary crisis may arise for the group; this temporary potential-crisis can serve to enhance the skills that can foster group survival should an authentic crisis arise. Leadership becomes a substitute for itself (see also, Manz & Sims, 1980).

Inoculation means two things here. One is obvious – inoculating the group for the absence of the leader; the other less obvious – inoculating the leader against the dysfunctional consequences of failure. Learning by experiencing failure may inoculate the learner/leader against the devastating psychological effects of failure as well as providing the opportunity to experiment with a variety of possible responses to such failure.

Organic Flexibility:

Kerr and Jermier (1978) warn against "dysfunctions" that reduce the impact of leadership – and surely leader failure appears at first glance to be a dysfunction. But "dysfunction" is a function of perspective. Pondy and Mitroff (1979) pose the example of a new hotel; from one perspective it can be seen as a leisure-recreation system, but in another perspective it is seen as a system that converts the local population into cabdrivers, bellhops, and prostitutes. Depending on one's perspective, leader failure can be seen in a positive as well as a negative light. The beneficial function of leader failure is its ability to assure that the organizational system is flexible and open. Systems with no provision for downward mobility can be characterized as rigid and caste-like (Abrahamson, Mizruchi, & Hornung, 1976).

"Failures" as Indispensable Leaders

Marginal people, "failures" in terms of majority values, may play a vital role in political leadership (Tuden, 1966). Among the Ila tribe of Zambia, for example, Tuden found two distinct processes in political leadership. Ordinary, small-scale disputes that involved members of the same kin group were settled under the leadership of the heads of the kin group, but large-scale disputes between members of different kin groups were settled by "mediums" who communicated directly with the territorial gods through visions. The medium was usually an outcast from society, the son of a slave or a stranger to the region. Mediums were entrusted with the important role of settling serious disputes precisely because they were marginal and outsiders – who could thus see matters objectively.

Among the Swat Pathans, a fierce warlike tribe of mounted nomads in Asia Minor, the same general pattern pertained (Barth, 1959). Powerful Khans dealt with disputes within their territories, but settling disputes between Khans accrued to Mullahs, marginal holy men who had renounced wealth and physical pleasure. These holders of "detached" statuses functioned as mediators and promoters of overall group solidarity by virtue of their inability or unwillingness to adopt majority standards as guidelines for their own lives.

Realistic Exigencies/Deliberate Failure

Realistic exigencies may occasion an executive leader of an organization to eschew success and embrace a degree of failure in organization performance. In 1970 General Motors sustained a dramatic and unprecedented 7.1 percent loss in market share. General Motors dealers suspected that GM was deliberately attempting to avert a rumored impending anti-trust indictment by posing as a victim of fierce competition (Farberman, 1975). In 1971, after the threat of legal action by the government had evaporated, GM easily recouped all but 1.6 percent of the prior year's market share loss.

A high level of law-enforcement performance by metropolitan police vice-squads and anti-gambling units may elicit a storm of protest from powerful interest groups with connections in municipal government. As a consequence, commanders of these police units often encourage performance at a low, almost ritual, level of accomplishment (Goode, 1967).

Object Lessons

Aside from the obvious lessons of "what not to do" associated with organizational sagas about the careers of failed managers, sagas also present information for new comers to positions of leadership about which rules to break, that is, which rules new leaders can fail to keep and yet succeed (Martin, 1982; a somewhat different version appears in Martin, Feldman, Hatch, and Sitkin, 1983). Martin relates the organizational legend, which influenced all new first-level supervisors in IBM. A slender, 22 year-old woman on her first day as watch-supervisor for a small detachment of security guards at a remote IBM manufacturing facility was standing at her post outside the door to a semi-restricted area of the factory. The intimidating Chairman of IBM, Thomas Watson, was making a surprise visit to the plant. The plant manager had outfitted Watson with the orange badge necessary to gain access to most areas of the factory, but the manager had forgotten to pin a green badge to Watson's lapel necessary for entry to the corridor where the frail-looking supervisor stood watch. According to the saga, Watson strode to the door where the girl stood watch, but the girl halted his progress by asking to see his green badge. "He's the C.E.O. of IBM," Watson's entourage protested. "I know," the woman said, "but without a green badge he cannot enter." The young supervisor, though trembling, upheld the badge rule. As the legend ends, Watson commends her action. Organizational legends reveal which rules to keep and which rules to fail to keep; some rules are more important than others (here, upholding the security rule was more important than a rule of demonstrating deference to the CEO. Failure to demonstrate deference lead to success in terms of a promotion).

Novel Behavior

The downward socially mobile, "skidders" (Wilensky & Edwards, 1959), often display more novel behavior than members of the cohort from which they skidded (Lopreato & Chafetz, 1970). The most compelling evidence that skidders display novel behavior is Hamilton's (1978) myth-dispelling analysis of the impact of organization structure on "adventurer" behavior. Hamilton studied adventurers who responded to the lure of the 1849 California gold rush and found that home-area structural ambiguity spawned personal, novel behavior (the success of which, in turn, benefited the home-area).

The overwhelming majority of adventurers were not freebooters or derelicts; they were well-integrated in their home societies with families and jobs. They left these and traveled to California with the express intent of returning home with their fortunes. Additionally, migration originated in specific, widely-dispersed places: Chile supplied more migrants than all of the other nations of South and Central America combined; China supplied more than 95% of the migrants from the Far East and Pacific Basin; the U.S. border states (Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri) supplied more migrants per capita than the South. In none of these cases could adventurism be explained by availability of information about the gold find, by availability of transportaton to the gold fields, or by push factors (famine, revolution) compared to neighboring nations or states which provided few adventurers. The crucial distinguishing factor was home-area structural discrepancy: in all of these situations, the home-area offered the opportunity for personal status advancement but lacked local means for expeditious personal advancement. Since the adventurers traveled with the express intent of returning home to use newfound fortunes (e.g., Kulp, 1925), home-area structural discrepancy encouraged individual, novel behavior that ultimately benefited the home-area.

Suchner and Jackson's (1976) laboratory work further amplifies the risk reward and self beneficiary-group beneficiary dimensions of novel behavior. Subjects were led to believe that the leader was the most or least competent group member. The leader did or did not take members' advice. The leader's course of action led to success of failure. In this 2x2x2 design, high competence leaders and successful leaders were evaluated favorably. But among successful leaders, those who achieved success by deviating from group-members' advice were rated more favorably than those who achieved success by conforming to members' advice. (Conversely, among leaders who failed, those who deviated were rated lower than those who conformed.)

Hall (1977) asserts that the best example of leadership is the innovator who can also persuade others of the correctness of his or her vision. In practice, the innovators are the entrepreneurs who bring together ideas, money and people into an operating team. Hall decries the lack of emphasis on this leadership style, but notes an explanatory reason for the neglect of innovators – their rarity. From an individual leader's point of view, the cost of failure is high and the probability of success is low if the innovator's course is embarked upon; but from the larger society's view, payoff for an innovator's success is so great that innovation is encouraged even if so many innovators fail. Considering gross numbers of attempters, innovators are largely failures, but considering the contribution of the few successes, innovation is a successful strategy. Thus, as a process, innovation is yet another example of the success of failure.

Profit – The Most Compelling Factor

Top leaders who fail to transmit their goals to second-level leaders or who fail to obtain consensus among the top executive team about which goals the organization should pursue could be considered failures. But maybe not; they may be profit makers. Empirical evidence reveals that goal disagreement among top executives (the chief executive and the functional-area vice-presidents) is related positively to performance measured in profit. Grinyer and Norburn (1977) interviewed top management teams in 21 British firms in 13 industries in an attempt to investigate the relationship between various strategy-making practices and economic performance. The researchers found no significant relationship between goal consensus and profit performance over the whole sample, but when they concentrated their analyses on the six highest performing firms, goal disagreement among members of the top management team was correlated positively with performance.

More powerful is the result of Bourgeois' (1980) empirical study of the same phenomenon. Bourgeois ascertained the goals and strategies of members of top management teams in twelve diverse West Coast firms and compared the congruence of goals and strategies with firm profitability. The results ran significantly counter to Bourgeois' hypotheses and counter to intuitive logic. Consensus on means (strategies) and ends (goals) did not yield the highest profit performance. Instead, the higher performing firms were characterized by: agreement on means but disagreement on ends among top managers. Firms bearing this characteristic-set performed more than twice as highly on the standardized score of economic profit than firms with any other combination of means-ends/agreement-disagreement patterns.

LEADER FAILURE (AND SUCCESS) AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Power

Technology (Woodward, 1965), workflow (Hinnings, Hickson, & Pennings, 1974), and the external environment (Anderson & Paine, 1975) have all been posited to be creators of uncertainty. The impact of uncertainty on organizations is expected to quicken as the next few decades wittness unprecendented rates of change (Naisbit, 1982). The face of "managerial leadership" is expected to change (Nunlist, 1968; Mee, 1976). This accelerating pace of change has led strategic theorists to search beyond traditional conceptualizations of power. From a strategic perspective, the primary base of power (and thus, the roots of leadership) can be seen to be the ability to cope with uncertainty (Hambrick, 1981; 253; for other approaches to the study of leader power see Yukl & Taber, 1983, and Yukl & Falbe, 1990 and 1991).

Realm of Ill-Structured Problems

Ill-structured problems ("wicked problems," Mason & Mitroff, 1973) are problems for which alternative answers are not easily identifiable, meaningful guidance is difficult to obtain outcomes of various actions are inherently unpredictable, and little certainty exists that the "solution" will solve the problem. These factors are compounded because the problem solver faces additional limitations (like Simon's "bounded rationality"; Simon, 1957): key pieces of information may be missing, existing information may be suspect, deception distracts the focus of attention, yesterday's "right" answer may be wrong today,and solution cannot be found in textbooks. But, despite these plaguing facets of ill-structured problems, leaders must make decisions.

Ill-structured problems need not be global in their impact (e.g., the possibilities for World War III?): they also are everyday-real in their impact on organizations (e.g., What market niches are unexploited and why? How will clients, competitors, or suppliers pursue their interests?) Addressing ill-structured problems is part of the everyday nature of work for top management leaders (Mintzberg, 1973). Intuition, judgment, and trial-and-error are commonly utilized by decision-making leaders to solve ill-structured problems, but trial-and-error means that some trials will be in error (Daft, 1983). Consequently, failure is a common ingredient in solution attempts; indeed, failure may be a necessary part of struggling toward suitable solutions. Occupational mobility of upper managers may be directly related to their experience in attempting to solve ill-structured problems. Kelley (1973: 492) found that as a person's career progresses, "past failures are forgiven and past successes are forgotten" – perhaps a necessary concession to the intractable nature of ill-structured problems.

The presence of leaders, co-workers or the mere physical (or even symbolic) presence of anyone may inhibit learning necessary to confront ill-structured problems. On a fundamental level, Zajonc's (1965) theory of social facilitation describes the conditions under which certain types of learning occur. For much problem-solving, a learner learns best when he or she learns alone. Citing a breadth of empirical research, Zajonc demonstrated that interaction with other learners or watchful supervisors retarded learning (see also Gates & Allee, 1933). Similar results were found for medical students who had to learn how to evade painful electric shocks (Ader & Tatum, 1963): solitary learners learned faster. Replications (Zajonc, Heingartner, and Herman, 1969; Hund and Hillery, 1973) as well as tightened research design (Seta, Paulus, and Schkade, 1976; Markus, 1978) reconfirm the findings. These outcomes assume special relevance in light of Hambrick's (1981) insistence that coping with uncertainty (which is roughly equivalent to addressing ill-structured problems, which itself is roughly equivalent to learning in problem-solving situations) is the central base for power in organizations.

An interesting conflict is, of course, that leaders need to learn not just problem-solving but also social interaction skills. Social interaction – whether competitive or collaborative -- is very unlikely to be learnable in solitary situations. As the learning of problem-solving supersedes that of social interaction, the role of leadership changes dramatically. With ill-structured problems, "success" is never assured because of the unknown and known-but-uncontrollable contingencies that intervene between the leader's decision and the enactment of a policy. The freedom to fail on the path to a semblance of success transcends the simplistic more-better-increase brand of success found with current conceptions of what the dependent variable of the leadership process should be.

CONCLUSION: LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS (Flaws in the Dependent Variable)

We have argued against the use of short-term, more-better-increase criteria for gauging leadership effectiveness by demonstrating instances where "successful" leaders are essentially ineffective and where "failures" are essentially effective leaders. Obviously short-term success does not always lead to long-term failure, but, in like manner, it does not always lead to long-term success either. We also focused on coping-with-uncertainty as an ascendant source of leader power and suggested that "failure" may be a more important component of effectiveness than short-term, narrowly defined "success."

More than two decades ago, Deutsch (quoted in Julian, Bishop, & Fiedler, 1966: 322) presciently noted that groups possess multiple goals and these often conflict with each other as well as with individual goals. "Strictly speaking, an organization's purpose has directly no meaning for the individual... We have to clearly distinguish between organization purpose and individual motive" (Barnard; 1968, p. 88). Georgiou (1973) expands this and argues that organizations do not have goals, only individuals have goals – and the correspondence among individual goals is highly problematic. Further, even when there is firm consensus about goals, joint action by organizational members is not assured; subgoals may displace purportedly higher-level goals; some goals are simply unclear even to the person(s) who hold them; goals are often specified only in retrospect where they serve as devices to justify the already-completed actions of the people who invented the goals.

Summarizing the state of "organizational effectiveness" research, Campbell (1979) chronicles the more than 30 sometimes overlapping, occasionally contradictory criteria of success (e.g., profit, productivity, quality, morale, growth, stability, flexibility, extent of control, extent of consensus, etc.) in an admittedly non-exhaustive list. Hoy, Van Fleet, and Yetley (1984) in an empirical study also found little convergence among models of organizational effectiveness as "success". Yukl (1989: 5-7) reports the same sort of diversity among effectiveness criteria in leadership research.

The main point is that "success." is a slippery and perilously volatile construct. By blithely accepting simplistic more-better-increase short-term, single criterion operationalizations of leadership effectiveness, leadership researchers have imposed an iron grid over a protean sea of human interaction. Missing almost entirely from the traditional approach to leadership are the nuances of longer-term effects and relationships, the intrigue of political behavior, the complexity of dealing with multiple constituencies, and other necessary and meaningful aspects of the phenomenon so necessary to a real understanding of it. Many of the problems in leadership research spring from the dependent variables; concerted attention to the independent variables in various schools of research has diverted attention from this important point (This may have resulted, at least in part, from the backgrounds of the researchers, see Van Fleet, 1975).

Of course, merely shifting to long-term criteria will not resolve all of the problems in leadership research. Variables which are moderators in the short-term may become independent variables in the long-term. The use of long-term criteria may lead to over attribution -- attributing all changes to the effect of leadership rather than to changes in other important variables. Nevertheless, careful consideration of relevant criteria should be the hallmark of leadership research rather than merely something advocated by all and done by none.

Relevance is, of course, also "slippery." Relevant to whom or for what? Practicing managers operating under short-term performance measures are far more likely to see short-term criteria as the relevant criteria to study; scholarly researchers studying organizational effectiveness are less likely to do so. Lower level managers are more likely to see narrow criteria as relevant than are higher level managers. Political leaders may be likely to define relevance differently than do business leaders. Again, carefully considering the question(s) to be addressed by the research strategy should enable researchers to select those criteria relevant for their purposes; readers should be equally diligent in interpreting the results only for the questions addressed rather then generalizing well beyond that point.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

During the thirteenth century, professors at the University of Paris became interested in whether oil would congeal if it were left outdoors on a cold winter night, and they launched a research effort to find out. But after great effort, they concluded that the question was unanswerable – for they had searched all of the works of Aristotle very diligently, and they could find nothing he had written which answered their question. "The lesson is, of course, that the professors (at the University of Paris) were absolutely right: the question was unaswerable in their ideological frame of reference." (Starbuck, 1982: 25).

If leadership research's ideological frame of reference involves short-term, more-better-increase criteria, researchers will be condemned to repeat the University of Paris history lesson. Researchers must recognize that by using improvement in short-term performance indices as criteria, they may be solving the wrong problem and contributing to an increase in the failures of leadership success – the measurement horizon must be longitudinal, not cross-sectional. Further, even when longer-term criteria are employed, researchers must be certain that "paths," which may include early errors, are examined to assure that any successes of leadership failure are directly investigated – leader effectiveness is not simple, rather it is quite complex. Researchers must also recognize that leadership in situations replete with ill-structured problems may necessitate very different criteria, behaviors, interactions, power bases, constituencies, and processes than do other situations.

This ideological frame of reference is a constraint to the full comprehension of leadership and a restraint to the exploratory power of leadership research. The ability to find answers is limited largely by the inability to seek them. So seek them we must. This means utilizing research designs which yield no quick publications nor simplistic solutions. This means research which is both qualitative and quantitative without forsaking a building of knowledge. This means combining macro and micro approaches to the research problem. This means research which examines "multiples" – linkages, variable criteria, methods, and periods of time (for a fuller discussion of the measurement problem in leadership research, see Clark and Clark, 1990).

All of these research elements (see Table 2) need not be present in any given project, of course, but, if we are truly to learn, the research strategy must be developed with all of these elements in mind (for an example of one type of research like that being advocated here see Yukl, and Van Fleet, 1982). For, unless projects are linked to one another as well as to the existing body of knowledge, we will forever be stuck at that stage in the development of knowledge where each person uses his or her own set of definitions to describe his or her own perceptions of reality with little integration, only small advancements of the body of knowledge, and, consequently, limited contributions.

These arguments then serve to frame the issue – the conceptualization of the criterion in leadership research. The "criterion problem" is not new. Craig (1927: 156-159) suggested that numerous "hard" criteria be combined into an index over time as a measure of leadership, and noted that, while opinions could be used, they should not be due to their subjective nature. We are not arguing, then, a new position, rather we have presented a novel argument for an old position which should not be but nevertheless is frequently ignored.

TABLE 2
Issue And Resolutions

ISSUE	RESOLUTIONS		
Leader Effectiveness	Complex quantity quality development	not	Simple quantity
Measurement Horizon	Longitudinal more than once	not	Cross-sectional once
Methods	Multiple observation questionnaire interview experimental	not	Single Questionnaire
Perspectives (Constituencies)	Multiple superior peer subordinate external	not	Single subordinate
Time/Term (View)	Long (history) provide background	not	Short (journalism) isolated report
Situations	Critical start-up war intense competition	not	Mundane routine peace no competition

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