



## What makes leadership, leadership? Using self-expansion theory to integrate traditional and contemporary approaches

Fred Dansereau<sup>a,\*</sup>, Stephanie R. Seitz<sup>b</sup>, Chia-Yen Chiu<sup>c</sup>,  
Brooke Shaughnessy<sup>d</sup>, Francis J. Yammarino<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 276 Jacobs Management Center State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY 14260, United States

<sup>b</sup> 261 Jacobs Management Center State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY 14260, United States

<sup>c</sup> 263 Jacobs Management Center State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY 14260, United States

<sup>d</sup> Arcisstrasse 21 Technische Universität München, Munich 80333, Germany

<sup>e</sup> Center for Leadership Studies & School of Management State University of New York at Binghamton, Binghamton, NY 13902, United States

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### ABSTRACT

Numerous traditional theories and paradigms of leadership purport to describe what leadership is. It is difficult to reconcile these traditional approaches, however, if each one alone, independent of the others, is viewed as capturing the actual identity of leadership. In this article, we take an integrative view of traditional approaches to leadership. To do so, we first identify some underlying ideas common to them. Next, we explain how these underlying ideas lead us to a fundamental theory about close relationships—that is, self-expansion theory, which refers to a psychological process in which an individual incorporates another into the self (Aron & Aron, 1986). We then review the traditional leadership theories to explore whether these theories may be linked through self-expansion theory and whether self-expansion may help to explain why boundary conditions have been discovered for all of them. In this process, we explore whether traditional approaches to leadership might also be linked with more contemporary approaches through self-expansion theory. Finally, we discuss the implications for future research and professional practice of the integration of traditional approaches to leadership.

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### 1. Introduction

Scholars have studied the concept of leadership from a number of perspectives. In turn, a wide variety of traditional paradigms and theories all purport to describe and define “leadership.” If each of these diverse traditional theories alone captures the meaning of leadership, then how can there be so many views? How can they all share the name of *leadership*? We examine the possibility that the concept of self-expansion, which describes a process through which a person (e.g., a follower) includes another (e.g., a leader) into the self (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991), may be a common theme that runs through and integrates these traditional leadership theories that otherwise might share only a label.

The exploration of a common thread among traditional approaches to leadership has the potential to make at least three important contributions to the study of leadership. First, from this integrative perspective, it becomes possible to view each approach as potentially providing a unique piece of the mosaic of leadership. We are not suggesting that we have finished putting the pieces together or that this is the final picture. Rather, we believe that this type of work, which attempts to define key components of traditional leadership approaches and integrate them, is necessary because otherwise it is difficult to view the

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [mgtdanso@buffalo.edu](mailto:mgtdanso@buffalo.edu) (F. Dansereau), [srseitz@buffalo.edu](mailto:srseitz@buffalo.edu) (S.R. Seitz), [cchiu3@buffalo.edu](mailto:cchiu3@buffalo.edu) (C.-Y. Chiu), [Brooke.shaughnessy@tum.de](mailto:Brooke.shaughnessy@tum.de) (B. Shaughnessy), [fjyammo@binghamton.edu](mailto:fjyammo@binghamton.edu) (F.J. Yammarino).

field of leadership research as a domain of study. Likewise, integration can encourage future research that focuses on multiple approaches to leadership in studies that would allow empirical tests of the utility of the integration. It also allows for new theories to be developed and tested that further expand the field.

Second, such an integration has the potential to offer explanations of why each traditional approach to leadership has been found empirically to be contingent on some aspect of the situation or context being examined. As a result, by following the common thread that links the various perspectives, it may become possible to determine when a particular leadership theory is and is not predictive.

Third, in addition to considering each traditional approach relative to self-expansion theory, we can consider whether contemporary approaches might link with traditional approaches through self-expansion theory. In this way, we can potentially extend traditional approaches by viewing them as a part of a larger leadership mosaic.

We explore these three potential contributions of integrating theories of leadership in the following four ways. First, we attempt to identify basic ideas that seem to underlie most approaches to leadership. Second, we discuss how these basic ideas suggest that a fundamental theory about close interpersonal relationships, called self-expansion theory (Aron et al., 1991), which also has some roots in previous work about leadership, might serve as a way to understand what underlies the apparently disparate views of leadership.

Third, we review the major traditional leadership theories. To accomplish the review we use categories identified by Dansereau and Yammarino (1998a, 1998b) and Yammarino, Dionne, Chun, and Dansereau (2005) to examine whether the common thread of self-expansion seems to run through the traditional approaches and helps explain why each approach has been found to be contingent on the situation. In the last portion of the review, we consider whether other contemporary approaches to leadership might also link with self-expansion theory and in that way interact with traditional approaches to leadership. It should be noted that we do not view this review as exhaustive, nor do we strive to integrate these traditional and contemporary approaches to leadership into one grand theory of leadership including all leadership variables. Instead, our review represents what we believe to be a first step in reconciling a number of different approaches to leadership, all of which purport to describe some aspect of the leadership influence process. This article attempts to accomplish this type of integration on a theoretical and conceptual basis and via incorporating potential boundary conditions. We believe that substantial empirical research/data on all the theories discussed in this article and their links to both self-expansion and boundary conditions are necessary to determine whether the integration will ultimately hold. In our view, very few, if any, of the data in the literature support the creation of a grand unified theory of leadership that incorporates all variables in all leadership theories. Consequently, this article considers an underlying theme in the literature as a first step toward thoroughly integrating leadership theories.

Fourth, in the final section following the review, we discuss the implications of this integrative perspective on leadership for future traditionally based research and professional practice, along with its limitations.

## 2. Basic concepts common to different approaches to leadership

In this section, we will cover some basic knowledge, but also expand that knowledge to link traditional leadership theories with self-expansion. We begin with a discussion of leadership and previous attempts to integrate various leadership approaches, as well as calls for integration of the leadership literature. We then discuss the element of trust, which is inherent in the leadership process, and consider how trust leads to the concept of self-expansion as a common theme in traditional leadership theories.

Leadership is generally described as an interpersonal process in which a leader influences followers. For instance, Yukl (2006) defined leadership as “a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization” (p. 8). In most definitions, the basic elements of leadership usually include a leader, a follower, and their relational interactions. While traditional leadership studies mainly focused on why leaders are influential (e.g., Bird, 1940; Mann, 1959; Stogdill, 1950), more recent research has expanded the original theories by placing greater emphasis on how and why followers are willing to be influenced by their leaders (e.g., Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998; Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004). The growing interest in the notion of followership has shed light on the importance of followers within the leader–follower model (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010). In considering the importance of followers to the concept of leadership, we ask which process might be common to followers when they are receptive to a leader, regardless of the traditional leadership theory applicable to the leader’s behavior.

To address this question, we consider previous attempts to integrate leadership approaches. As such, we follow previous approaches that have shifted the focus from mainly the leader to the relationship between the leader and the follower. Based on that extension, we identify a factor that appears to be common to various approaches to leadership—namely, the relationship between the leader and the follower, which in turn leads to the concept of self-expansion.

The notion that the field of leadership would be better served with an integration of ideas is not a new one. In 1974, Stogdill noted that leadership research had led to an “endless accumulation of empirical data” that “has not produced an integrated understanding of leadership” (p. vii). Since then, some work has attempted to integrate various leadership theories by finding a common thread among them. For instance, House and Shamir (1993) linked the charismatic approach and transformational leadership theories by proposing that each works through the ability to connect followers’ self-concept and self-esteem with the actualization of shared goals. In this way, the authors provided an integrative perspective on vision-based leadership theories. Another integrated perspective on leadership involved characterizing leadership by three major functions of leaders: image

management, relationship development, and resource deployment (Chemers, 2000). This approach focused on the behaviors of leaders that are common across leadership theories. Finally, DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, and Humphrey (2011) developed an integrative trait–behavioral model of leadership, bringing together theories about leader personality (for example) and specific leader behaviors.

These examples of integrative research on leadership provide a starting point for understanding some similarities across leadership theories. For the most part, however, such integrative theories tend to revert back to more basic concepts from traditional disciplines such as psychology.

Not only does leadership research suffer from limited integration across leadership theories about leaders, but it also demonstrates a lack of integration across the two perspectives in leadership—that is, the perspectives of the leader and the follower (Avolio, 2007). This omission suggests a need not only to integrate the various traditional leadership theories, but also to take into account the follower perspectives in such an integration.

One factor that seems to influence the leader–follower relationship and is relatively universal to leadership theories is trust (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Development and maintenance of trust seems to be a key process that underlies many traditional leadership approaches. Trust is defined as “a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviors of others” (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 395), and it motivates followers to comply with and exhibit commitment to their leaders (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Trust has been proposed as a critical factor in making leaders respectable and believable, which is likely why transformational leadership works through followers’ trust to produce positive outcomes (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Trust is also one of the defining elements of a high-quality leader–member exchange (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan, 2000). In addition, charismatic leadership often involves trusting a leader from a distance (Shamir, 1995).

Building on the construct of trust, Rousseau (1995) introduced the concept of psychological contract (PC), which she believes to be a critical factor in the leadership process. PC refers to an unspoken relational contract that involves mutual obligations perceived by both leaders and followers, and is expected to facilitate trust and satisfaction within the relationship (Pillai, Schriesheim, & Williams, 1999). In addition, Van Knippenberg and associates (2004) proposed that followers are motivated by the fulfillment of self-conception. When leadership is able to promote their self-construal, self-efficacy, and self-esteem, followers are more willing to comply with their leaders.

The trust, PC, and the self-conception perspectives all converge in a research trend that involves scholars exploring characteristics of the leader–follower relationship to explain why followers are committed to their leaders. From intensely emotional bonds (trust), to mutual obligations (PC), to self-fulfillment, the implication is that leadership emerges when the psychological and relational distance within a leader–follower dyad becomes shorter and the parties draw closer. In addition to the distance within a leader–follower dyad, trust plays a major role in the emergence of leadership and committed followers.

### 3. Self-expansion as a common theme

Self-expansion is a process that occurs in close relationships, where one person will include another into his or her concept of the self—that is, an expansion of the self occurs (Aron & Aron, 1986). Because a key component of leadership involves relational closeness, we believe that the concept of self-expansion may help to integrate traditional leadership approaches given that it focuses on relational distance. Self-expansion also provides a basis for the existence of trust as well as a focus on relational distance (Aron, Aron, & Norman, 2001); thus it seems particularly relevant to leadership and leader–follower relationships. To link self-expansion with leadership, we present a brief overview of the theory here.

Self-expansion is a valuable instrument for understanding multiple traditional views of leadership because it refers to the inherent social–psychological nature of leaders and followers. Indeed, a common element among multiple leadership theories is a set of fundamental underlying human processes (Dansereau & Yammarino, 1998b): “The general idea is that without basic affective, cognitive, interpersonal, group, collective and communication processes leadership would not be possible” (p. 330). Self-expansion is one of these fundamental human processes. To put self-expansion in context, it is similar to what Day (2001) described as leadership development, which is essentially allowing followers to develop in a way that helps them to solve problems and work toward goals in a self-motivated way. These concepts, however, should not be confused. Self-expansion is the underlying process that allows leadership development to occur and, as such, can be viewed as a precursor to self-development.

We propose that the underlying motive that connects seemingly very different traditional leadership styles is rooted in the theory of self-expansion. In terms of a definition of self-expansion, the self-expansion model suggests that humans, first, have a fundamental motivation to self-expand, and second, will seek close relationships in which each individual essentially incorporates the other into the self (Aron & Aron, 1986, 2000). The desire to self-expand stems from the motive to increase the “physical and social resources, perspectives, and identities that facilitate achievement of any goal that might arise” (Aron et al., 2001, p. 478). The distinctions between self-expansion and other approaches such as self-efficacy (Aron et al., 2001), expectancy theory (Aron & Aron, 1996), need theory (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006), and equity theory (Ledbetter, Stassen-Ferrara, & Dowd, 2012) have been discussed in the social psychological literature.

The process of self-expansion begins with a comparison of the current self to the potential self—that is, the self with the relationship and its accompanying perspectives, resources, and identities, among other characteristics. If the potential self represents some improvement on the present self, one will be motivated to self-expand to include the other (for a more complete review of the motivation to self-expand, see Aron & Aron, 1986, p. 23). For instance, if a person anticipates (or experiences) that achieving self-expansion helps in gathering new resources, knowledge, or skills, the individual would be more likely to incorporate another into the self, as such an interpersonal inclusion will result in greater self-efficacy and an enhanced sense of

the self (Lewandowski & Ackerman, 2006). As such, the expanded relationship is characterized by an overlapping of selves; each party has access to his or her own resources plus the other's resources, and each is likewise compelled to protect both his or her own resources plus the other's (Aron & Aron, 2000). Once a close relationship is formed, individuals will resist de-expansion, so that the self-expansion will perpetuate. According to the original model, the motivation for self-expansion stems from at least four areas of interest unique to human beings: physical and social influence, cognitive complexity, social and bodily identity, and an awareness of humans' position in the universe (Aron & Aron, 1986).

Research on self-expansion and constructs similar to self-expansion has been conducted predominantly in the area of social psychology. For example, individuals have been shown to reflect their relationship partner's achievements in the self, such that the individual feels personal pride as if the achievement were his or her own, so long as the achievement does not create a negative social comparison (Tesser, Millar, & Moore, 1988). In addition, Amodio and Showers (2005) found that in less committed relationships, perceived dissimilarity was positively associated with liking. With greater dissimilarity comes the opportunity for a greater degree of self-expansion (Leary, 2007). In a study of individuals in close relationships, Aron et al. (1991) found that self-expansion occurred when it was operationalized as reallocation of resources, sharing of similar perspectives, and the tendency to include the other's characteristics as part of one's own. In studying the process in relationships of treating a close partner's resources, perspectives, and identities as part of the self, Mashek, Aron, and Boncimino (2003) found that the confusion of selves is indeed due to closeness, rather than familiarity or similarity.

Self-expansion may also occur within groups, and not just with one other individual. The same process as was described for two individuals applies for multiple individuals and groups. Research on group dynamics has suggested that when the group succeeds, each group member tends to attribute the success more to the self than to other group members. Thus the self expands to include the group—the group's success is one's own. Conversely, when the group fails, each group member attributes less responsibility to the self than to other group members (Mullen & Riordan, 1988; Schlenker & Miller, 1977). This point echoes Tesser et al.'s (1988) findings of avoidance of a negative social comparison. Research has also shown that individuals who regard an in-group as part of the self exhibit less pleasure when outperforming others in the group. Similarly, those individuals exhibit less displeasure when another group member outperforms other members of the in-group (Gardner, Gabriel, & Hochschild, 2002). Thus the self-expansion perspective can view individuals as including groups as a part of themselves.

Within the leader–follower relationship, followers may expand the self to include leaders (or groups, in the case of shared leadership, for example). In this way, self-expansion may be a tool for integrating various leadership approaches. Research on leadership has identified a number of leadership styles and approaches, each with theoretical and/or empirical evidence of effectiveness. It seems that self-expansion helps to explain the “how” of leadership as a whole. The overall or meta-proposition here is that, while styles of leadership may differ, leadership is ultimately most effective when followers are motivated to develop a relationship with the leader that includes expansion of the self. The leader's goals, vision, and ultimate achievements will be incorporated into the self of the follower, and the follower will perceive that the reverse is true.

Self-expansion also provides some insights into the nature of trust, which is an important part of traditional approaches to leadership. As a concept, according to Anderson and Chen (2002), the notion that others play a role in the self is widely recognized by contemporary researchers in social psychology and is a part of the theory of self-expansion. The nature of the self-expansion is such that an individual in a relationship trusts himself or herself rather than just someone else when the individual follows the leader, because followers incorporate the leader as a part of themselves. Consequently, trust may require followers who are willing to trust themselves and get involved in self-expansion. Accordingly, the concept of self-expansion provides an explanation of why followers trust and in that sense follow leaders: They trust and follow themselves.

The idea that self-expansion is an underlying process through which leadership works might seem a simplistic way to reconcile such a diverse field of research as leadership. However, as Yammarino and Dansereau (2011) have noted, “Complexity, and explaining complex behaviors, does not require complex underlying rule structures (i.e., complex theories or ideas)” (p. 1053). In line with the notion that self-expansion is a very basic motive, Lawrence (2010) suggests that leadership itself may have evolved as a function of four basic human drives. These drives include two that are common to all animals: the drive to acquire resources for survival (dA) and the drive to defend oneself and one's resources (dD). The other two drives are unique to humans: the drive to bond (dB) and the drive to comprehend (dC). Lawrence (2010) describes how these drives relate to the evolution of leadership.

Human brains are capable of taking account of a vast array of *current* circumstances and finding a *unique survival solution* that meets not only their group's requirement for material resources (dA) but also their defensive requirements (dD), their requirements for group support (dB), and their requirements for finding more creative ways to adapt to their changing circumstances (dC). The solutions that meet this demanding test are, by definition, leadership solutions.

[(p. 63)]

Lawrence (2010) further asserts that good leaders exert influence over group stakeholders in a manner that satisfies the four drives of those stakeholders. Good leaders lead in a way that is balanced and allows for long-term sustainability, satisfying their own four drives in the process.

The evolutionary perspective on leadership also takes followers into account. Of the three selection mechanisms proposed by Darwin, group selection is the most appropriate to explain the role of followers in leadership. Group selection, according to this view, derives from an increased drive to bond, which moves beyond the nuclear family (Lawrence, 2010). Survival for the individual depends on being part of the group, so group selection means that the group will select not only those group members who are best for the group, but also those group leaders who are best for the group. It would seem that the process of



self-expansion is a part of this enhanced desire to bond and the inherent consideration of the resources that group members and leaders have to offer. Thus the general notion that more basic processes may underlie leadership has been argued in the literature.

In the following sections, we present a number of leadership approaches and explain how they relate to self-expansion. For each approach, we begin with a very brief description of each leadership approach, which may seem basic and well known. This background is necessary so we can explore in the subsequent section the link between the theory and self-expansion. In the final section for each theory, we consider how self-expansion offers a plausible explanation for known boundary conditions on the theory. We begin with traditional approaches to leadership, followed by more contemporary approaches to leadership.

#### 4. Self-expansion and traditional approaches to leadership

To elaborate further, this section begins by outlining multiple traditional leadership approaches; we integrate these approaches by suggesting how and when they may be effective from a self-expansion perspective. We then consider whether these traditional approaches can be extended into a more contemporary realm by further integration with contemporary leadership approaches, all linked by the self-expansion perspective.

The leadership theories described in this section do not constitute an exhaustive list, but rather were selected as representing the theories most commonly identified in the leadership field (see Yammarino et al., 2005). We divided them into categories based, in part, on the sections used by Dansereau and Yammarino (1998a, 1998b) and Dansereau, Yammarino, and Markham (1995). For each traditional theory, the section presents (1) a brief overview, (2) an explanation of the theory's link to self-expansion, and (3) a discussion of how self-expansion provides an explanation of the known boundary conditions on each theory. After the consideration of the traditional theories in this section, in the next section the same three points are examined relative to several contemporary approaches. In this way, an attempt is made to explore whether traditional approaches link not only with self-expansion but also with more contemporary approaches through self-expansion theory. Table 1 summarizes the key points for each approach.

#### 5. Group-oriented leadership

Group-oriented leadership approaches are those in which the leadership process is primarily at the group level. Either the leader directs the group as a whole, rather than leading at the individual level, or the leadership arises from within the group itself. These types of traditional approaches allow for self-expansion of followers because they enhance group identity, providing the opportunity for self-expansion with group members and/or the group leader.

##### 5.1. Initiating structure and consideration

In response to the proliferation of trait-based leadership research and the disappointing results stemming from that work, researchers at the Ohio State University sought to discover which behaviors make for effective leaders. Their study of leadership was based on Barnard's (1938) suggestion that group cooperation is fostered through more than mere effectiveness; efficiency, or the goals attained relative to the cost of attaining them, is also essential. Stogdill's (1950) deduction was that both goal attainment and the human element of attaining goals are essential in the consideration of successful leadership. Throughout the research, many behaviors were studied, but ultimately two factors were isolated: initiating structure and consideration.

##### 5.1.1. Initiating structure

Initiating structure describes the extent to which a leader shapes and organizes work roles, provides clear channels of communication, and is goal oriented (Fleishman, 1973). One of the premises of the Ohio State Leadership Studies was that leadership depends on three factors: the existence of a group (two or more persons), a common task, and differentiation of responsibilities (Stogdill, 1950). This particular approach fits within the group-oriented leadership category, in that the leader's task-related guidance provides clear objectives for a group of followers.

**5.1.1.1. Self-expansion.** The orientation of leaders within the initiating structure approach is toward the task and has been found to have a relationship with group-organization performance (Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004). This leadership approach, in turn, allows for self-expansion because followers expand when the leader or other group members provide the opportunity to enhance their personal identity through the achievement of team goals. When the follower identifies with the group, not only does this relationship indicate an awareness of membership within the group, but it also suggests that the follower has incorporated the group, including the leader of the group, into the self. In addition to fostering group identity, initiating structure encourages self-expansion because the leader takes on the particular responsibility of shaping and organizing work roles. Other group members, therefore, do not have to perform this responsibility, allowing them to spend their time accomplishing their own individual responsibilities. In this way, the leader is seen as a resource to help followers successfully fulfill their group roles. The followers self-expand because they are able to recognize the value of the leader as a resource in their potential self.

Initiating structure supports self-expansion in followers through the task orientation of the leader. When the leader provides task-related guidance and clear objectives for group members, followers have the opportunity to achieve team goals. This goal achievement heightens their identity with both the group and the leader, allowing for self-expansion in conjunction with group members and the leader.

*5.1.1.2. Boundary conditions and self-expansion.* Boundary conditions relating to the follower include mobility aspirations (O'Reilly & Roberts, 1978), tenure (Badin, 1974), and role conflict/ambiguity (Lee & Schuler, 1980). These follower conditions tend to explain to what extent clear goals are relevant to the follower. Those followers who have low mobility aspirations, high tenure, and low ambiguity, for example, would be likely to have less need or desire for an initiating structure leader and, therefore, would be less likely to self-expand. Leader boundary conditions include level of influence (O'Reilly & Roberts, 1978) and positional power (Badin, 1974). Leaders with low levels of influence and positional power are less equipped to successfully organize work roles and affect the achievement of group and organizational goals. In this scenario, the initiating structure approach would tend to be less effective, and followers would be less likely to self-expand with such a leader. Finally, group size (Badin, 1974) and cohesion (Dobbins & Zaccaro, 1986) act as boundary conditions. The larger the group and the lower the cohesion within the group, the less likely a leader is to be able to effectively use the initiating structure approach. This shortcoming would act as a hindrance to self-expansion, as followers will, in turn, be less likely to identify with the group and the leader.

### *5.1.2. Consideration*

Consideration is another dimension of leadership effectiveness identified by the Ohio State studies. This approach describes the extent to which the “leader shows concern and respect for followers, looks out for their welfare, and expresses appreciation and support” (Judge et al., 2004, p. 36). Such an approach fits within the realm of group-oriented approaches in that the leader builds relationships with group members and encourages interpersonal relationships to achieve group goals.

*5.1.2.1. Self-expansion.* Because the focus hones in on the relational aspect of leadership, the consideration approach is related to satisfaction and motivation (Judge et al., 2004). Followers are likely to be satisfied and motivated as a result of self-expansion with the leader. Consideration provides an opportunity for self-expansion because the entire group supports positive interpersonal relationships of members. The leader and the group explicitly respect the ideas and perspectives of group members, thereby fostering increased task performance and achievement. When followers perceive that caring and respect stem from the leader and group members, the perception of shared goals is also strong, so followers are likely to expand to include the leader and the group within the self. In addition, one of the key requirements for self-expansion is a close relationship with the other—leaders who foster such relationships allow for more self-expansion.

Moreover, followers will self-expand using the same rationale as discussed earlier for initiating structure. In this model, the leader takes on the responsibility of promoting the welfare of the group and expressing concern, respect, appreciation, and support for group members. Because the other group members do not have to perform this responsibility, they are free to focus on their own differentiated responsibilities. As such, the leader is seen as a valuable resource to be included in the potential self, and followers consequently self-expand.

Consideration provides the opportunity for self-expansion because this approach focuses on the relationship between the follower and the leader (and other group members). Followers perceive that the leader and group care for and respect them, with self-expansion emerging as a result of such close relationships.

*5.1.2.2. Boundary conditions and self-expansion.* The follower's mobility aspirations act as a boundary condition on the consideration approach (O'Reilly & Roberts, 1978), as do the leader's level of influence (O'Reilly & Roberts, 1978) and positional power (Badin, 1974). The influence derived from the consideration approach may have little importance for those individuals with low mobility aspirations (O'Reilly & Roberts, 1978), so these followers may be less likely to self-expand with the leader. In addition, the leader characteristics that act as boundary conditions here likely work in the same way as described in the initiating structure approach. That is, leaders with a low level of influence and positional power will be less likely to affect follower outcomes, regardless of whether they use an initiating structure or consideration approach. In turn, followers will be less likely to self-expand when faced with these less effective leaders. Finally, group cohesion acts as a boundary condition (Dobbins & Zaccaro, 1986)—a logical outcome given that a group with low cohesion is less prone to respond to a leadership approach that emphasizes interpersonal relationships within the group, which will tend to hinder self-expansion of the followers.

## *5.2. Shared leadership*

“Leadership is probably best conceived as a group quality, as a set of functions which must be carried out by the group. This concept of ‘distributed leadership’ is an important one” (Gibb, 1954, p. 884). Gibb viewed leadership as a continuum—spanning from the extremes of focused, where the leadership role is taken on by one leader, to distributed, where two or more group members share the leadership role and responsibilities. The concept of shared leadership has grown from Gibb's distributed leadership view and highlights the importance of leadership being shared among members of a group, rather than remaining concentrated in one particular group member (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007). This perspective fits within the group-oriented leadership category because, with this approach, the group actually leads itself.

### *5.2.1. Self-expansion*

According to the shared leadership approach, leadership can be defined not only as the status of one individual, but also as the status of an aggregate of separate individuals (Gronn, 2002). Thus, to accomplish different tasks, the group members (all followers of the group) must rely on other group members' expertise to share their experience, knowledge, and responsibility (Carson et al., 2007). Self-expansion occurs through the process of reciprocal and interactive influence of group members. Each

**Table 1**  
Leadership approaches and self-expansion theory.

Theme	Leadership type	Fit with theme	Self-expansion explanation	Boundary conditions
<i>Traditional approaches</i>				
Group-oriented leadership	Initiating structure/ production oriented	Task-related guidance provides clear objectives to a group of followers.	Followers expand when leader or other group members provide opportunities to enhance their personal identity through achievement of team goals.	<i>Follower characteristics</i> Mobility aspirations; tenure; role conflict/ambiguity <i>Leader characteristics</i> Level of influence; positional power; considerate behavior <i>Group characteristics</i> Size; cohesion
	Consideration/ employee oriented	Leader builds relationships with group members.	Whole group supports positive interpersonal relationships of members and explicitly respects ideas and perspectives of group members, fostering increased task performance, achievement, and self-expansion.	<i>Follower characteristics</i> Mobility aspirations <i>Leader characteristics</i> Level of influence; positional power <i>Group characteristics</i> Task structure; cohesion
	Shared leadership	Responsibility of leadership distributed among a group of individuals.	To accomplish different tasks, followers rely on other group members who excel in the field and share their experience, knowledge, and responsibility. The process of reciprocal and interactive influence allows each follower to expand with other group members.	<i>Group characteristics</i> Team life cycle; distribution of task competence
Development-based leadership	Path goal theory	Leader concerned with selecting best leadership style for situation to optimize employee skills and experience.	Appropriate leader behavior is dictated by follower-, task-, and situation-related characteristics. Leadership styles allow followers to perceive they are being directed toward a mutually desired goal.	<i>Follower characteristics</i> Need for clarity <i>Task characteristics</i> Task variety; task feedback; opportunity to deal with others
	Decision-making model	Leader promotes development of the group by choosing appropriate decision-making process.	Self-expansion occurs differently depending on the decision-making process chosen, but generally occurs because this process is individualized to the follower and situation.	Built-in boundary conditions
	Servant	Leader's goal is to serve the developmental interests of followers.	Leader committed to growth of followers through compassionate teaching methods and provision of desirable resources, allowing followers to expand in ability to meet expectations of self-image.	<i>Context characteristics</i> Person–organization fit; organizational identification
	Life cycle theory/ situational leadership	Leader guides followers through a process that develops skills and abilities.	Leaders are guides for the process, which begins with providing physical resources and clear objectives to facilitate follower achievement, followed by motivating followers, then encouraging follower participation in decision making, and finally leader's delegation of responsibilities to the follower. The shared experience facilitates self-expansion of leader and follower.	<i>Follower characteristics</i> Task-related maturity/development level
Individual-based leadership	Vertical dyad linkage	Leader treats followers differently, giving more resources to favored members of the in-group.	Members of the in-group are provided with resources and greater responsibility so that opportunity for expansion is high as result of the negotiated level of involvement in leader's decision-making processes.	<i>Follower characteristics</i> Competence; time-based stress <i>Situation (dyad) characteristics</i> Demographic similarity; shared meaning of mutually experienced events; competence congruence; latitude granted to follower

	Leader-member exchange	Leadership based on the quality of the exchange relationship between leader and follower.	Leader provides members with resources critical to success, allowing followers to believe in shared goals and leading to self-expansion and trust in leader.	<p><i>Follower characteristics</i> Extraversion; need for leadership; locus of control; political skill; job embeddedness</p> <p><i>Leader characteristics</i> Agreeableness; perceived organizational support</p> <p><i>Team characteristics</i> Work values; work group diversity; intensity of dyadic interaction</p> <p><i>Situation characteristics</i> Task autonomy; affective climate; psychological climate; virtual workplace</p>
	Individualized	Leader shapes style to fit abilities and individual differences of each follower.	Leader encourages followers to cultivate their different strengths, provides resources to meet needs, and supports followers in pursuing opportunities to meet their needs.	<p><i>Situation (dyad) characteristics</i> Perceptions of support; providing satisfying performance</p>
Contemporary Approaches Vision-based leadership	Charismatic	Leader may or may not be concerned with concrete path to success, but presents vision with which followers can align themselves.	Leader projects himself or herself as an exemplary symbol of humanity, and followers associate themselves with leader's vision; facilitates follower efforts to realize true identity at work.	<p><i>Follower characteristics</i> Arousal; values</p> <p><i>Leader characteristics</i> Values; self-sacrificial behaviors; self-monitoring</p> <p><i>Situation characteristics</i> Dynamism of work environment</p>
	Transformational	Leader presents strategic vision to followers to unify and empower followers toward an overarching goal.	Leader not only provides followers with necessary resources, but also allows followers to change, allowing for opportunity for expansion.	<p><i>Follower characteristics</i> Developmental characteristics; trust/loyalty in leader; learning orientation; self-schema</p> <p><i>Leader characteristics</i> Vision; intellectual stimulation; emotional intelligence; values</p> <p><i>Situation characteristics</i> Structural distance; deep-level similarity; spatial proximity</p>
Outcome-based leadership	Transactional	Leader's primary goal is obtaining required resources for completion of the task at hand.	Leader supplies guidelines and resources to allow followers not only to expend minimal effort but also to achieve success, so that they have time and energy to expand in realms outside of work.	<p><i>Follower characteristics</i> Psychological empowerment; self-schema</p> <p><i>Leader characteristics</i> Vision; intellectual stimulation; use of contingent reward</p> <p><i>Situation characteristics</i> Procedural justice climate</p>
	Pragmatic	Leader considers reality of the situation when directing followers to ensure completion of the task and achievement of the desired outcome.	Leader promotes a work environment that values objective presentation, proper placement of followers, system of accountability, and well-thought-out strategy for the future.	<p><i>Follower characteristics</i> Professionalism; skills/capabilities</p> <p><i>Leader characteristics</i> Intelligence/expertise; influence tactic choice; Machiavellianism</p> <p><i>Situation characteristics</i> Psychological distance; procedural/distributive justice; problem type</p>
Organizational leadership	Romance of leadership	Illusion that leader's success can be attributed to organizational changes.	Followers confuse influence of leader with organizational influences, such that the perceived influence of leader by which followers enhance self-identity is actual organization-based influence.	<p><i>Follower characteristics</i> Negative views of work environment; passivity/proactivity</p> <p><i>Leader characteristics</i> Identity-affirming behavior; impression management; gender</p> <p><i>Situation characteristics</i> Economic conditions; magnitude of performance; general performance expectations</p>
Non-leadership	Laissez-faire	Leader tries not to influence followers, allowing them to spend time as they please.	Hands-off approach allows followers to pursue work-related goals and expand potential efficacy through personal achievement.	
	Substitutes	Substitutes can replace, enhance, or inhibit leadership.	Substitutes allow followers to pursue work-related goals via rules, regulations, and tasks, and to self-expand via knowledge, skills, and abilities.	



group member may be seen as a resource both to the group and to each other group member. This perspective allows group members to self-expand and include the group members and the group as a unit in the self.

Shared leadership allows for self-expansion because the group shares leadership responsibility. Group members share knowledge and experience, providing resources to the group. This allows for self-expansion both with those group members and with the group as a whole.

### 5.2.2. *Boundary conditions and self-expansion*

Previous studies have summarized several boundary conditions for the impact of shared leadership, including the distribution of task competence and the team life cycle (Carson et al., 2007; Pearce & Conger, 2003). All of these conditions relate, to some extent, to how team members expand their self-identities and rely on others for sharing leadership responsibilities. For instance, shared leadership may be more beneficial to team effectiveness when the team members possess a high level of different task competence (Carson et al., 2007), as the self-expansion processes among the group members may assist them to better utilize the team's internal resources (i.e., a variety of individual expertise). If the team members have similar expertise, they may be less likely to realize the benefits from self-expansion due to the redundancy of resources, which may decrease the influence of shared leadership.

In addition, shared leadership may be more effective when the team life cycle promotes the development of shared leadership (Carson et al., 2007). In the team development model proposed by Kozlowski and associates (2008), for team members to improve their teamwork capacities (i.e., task–role interactions, mutual trust, and cooperation), they must develop task abilities (i.e., individual task mastery and role acceptance). The effectiveness of shared leadership could be mitigated if the team remains at the stage of building task capacities, because at this stage the members still have to develop individual skills and identify their own roles in the team, which provides them no incentive to process self-expansion. Likewise, a lack of the necessity for task interdependence may result in shared leadership being perceived as a burden rather than as an opportunity for self-expansion.

## 6. Development-based leadership

Development-based leadership approaches are designed to encourage followers to move forward toward their goals and develop as employees. This category of traditional leadership approaches generally provides followers with a guided autonomy, where they are nudged along a path but are given the resources and responsibilities to achieve goals on their own. These types of traditional leadership approaches foster self-expansion because the goals are mutually desired and the leader serves as a resource for the followers' goal achievement.

### 6.1. *Path goal theory*

Path goal theory was introduced by House (1971) as a leadership style characterized by the leader motivating followers by increasing payoffs for goal achievement and by simplifying and removing obstacles from the path to goal completion. Ideally, the result of this approach is a reduction in role ambiguity and, therefore, increased satisfaction and job performance (Keller, 1989). This leadership approach is considered development based because it fosters motivation through rewards and resources; followers are able to develop and grow because the leader removes obstacles and provides resources for follower development.

#### 6.1.1. *Self-expansion*

The path goal theory style of leadership encourages self-expansion in followers by directing followers toward a mutually desired goal. Much like situational leadership, path goal theory is a style that is tailored to individual followers. The appropriate leader behavior is dictated by follower-, task-, and situation-related characteristics: Individuals face different obstacles and require different resources in achieving goals, and leaders base their behavior and assistance on these varying needs. Followers, in turn, tend to self-expand due to two factors. First, a sense of shared purpose develops because leaders are so closely involved in clearing the path for followers' achievements. Because leader and follower move along the same path toward the follower's goals, the follower will likely self-expand to include the leader. Second, followers recognize that the leader is a source of the very particular resources that are needed for goal completion. Because the leader possesses such valuable resources, followers tend to include the leader and those resources in the self.

Path goal theory allows for self-expansion in followers because the leader provides resources needed to make goals more achievable by followers. Because leadership is customized to address particular follower obstacles and needs, followers view the leader as a valuable resource and will expand to incorporate the leader in the self. In addition, followers perceive the leader to have mutually held goals because the leader focuses on helping followers achieve those goals. This can also result in the close relationships required for self-expansion.

#### 6.1.2. *Boundary conditions and self-expansion*

Because a leader who adheres to path goal theory should reduce followers' role ambiguity, it is important to note that not all followers will respond to role ambiguity in the same way. As such, boundary conditions for path goal theory include factors influencing followers' reactions to role ambiguity. For example, need for clarity (Keller, 1989) acts as a boundary condition for path goal theory. Keller (1989) noted that "subjects who also have a low need for clarity may prefer to provide their own task

structure rather than rely on the leader” (p. 209). This suggests that those persons with a low need for clarity may not find a leader who initiates structure according to path goal theory as a resource and, therefore, may not self-expand.

In addition, the leader's role in path goal theory is to make goals more accessible. Consequently, the nature of the task may act as a boundary condition. Three task dimensions—task variety, task feedback, and opportunity to deal with others—act as boundary conditions as well (Schriesheim & DeNisi, 1981). For those followers with low task variety, the need for an instrumental leader may be diminished because the tasks would become routine. This may mean that there is less opportunity or motivation for the follower to expand with the leader. Conversely, higher task feedback and opportunity to deal with others may hinder the self-expansion process because the follower has other resources to use in achieving goals, so expansion with the leader may not be necessary.

## 6.2. *Vroom–Yetton decision-making model of leadership behavior*

The decision-making model describes rules for managerial decision making, which require examination of the nature of a problem or decision from a number of different angles. This model, which is depicted as a decision tree, stipulates that managers take into account a number of problem and situation attributes before settling on a decision-making style (Vroom, 2000; Vroom & Jago, 1978). A manager may then choose from five decision-making processes that vary in the amount of participation, ranging from autocratic to consultative to group decision making (Field & House, 1990). This theory is placed within the development-based leadership category because the leader promotes the development of the group by choosing the appropriate decision-making process. Each decision-making process provides unique opportunities for follower development as well as self-expansion.

### 6.2.1. *Self-expansion and boundary conditions*

The decision-making model promotes self-expansion differently, depending on which decision-making process the leader chooses. If the appropriate decision-making process is autocratic, the leader makes the decision alone (Field, 1979), allowing followers time to develop their skills and abilities. In this decision-making process, followers are free to grow and develop in other areas because the leader serves as a resource for decision making. Followers do not have to use their personal resources to make the decision, but instead may use their time for other purposes. Thus followers will include the leader as a resource in the self.

In contrast, if the appropriate decision-making process is based on a consultative level of participation, the leader involves followers in this process by sharing the problem with subordinates and then making the decision (Field, 1979). By involving followers in the decision-making process, leaders provide the opportunity for followers to develop critical thinking and decision-making skills. This promotes self-expansion because followers view this opportunity as a resource for their personal growth and will expand to include the leader in the self.

Finally, if the appropriate decision-making process results in a group decision, the leader and the group work together to come to a consensus on the problem (Field, 1979). In this way, followers share the influence of the leader and are closely involved in the leader's decision. This shared influence process allows for self-expansion because there is a shared experience with the leader in solving a problem or making a decision. The bond that this collaboration forges between the leader and the followers will allow the followers to self-expand.

The rules for choosing a decision-making process mean that the decision-making model has built-in boundary conditions (Wofford & Liska, 1993). The autocratic, consultative, or group decision-making processes may all be effective, provided that certain problem or situation attributes are either present or absent.

The decision-making model of leadership behavior provides for self-expansion in followers by either making the leader a resource for decision making, allowing followers to develop their critical thinking and decision-making skills, or allowing for shared influence with the leader. As long as the decision-making process chosen is appropriate given the problem attributes, followers will self-expand to include the leader in the self.

## 6.3. *Servant leadership*

Servant leadership involves putting other organizational members' needs, aspirations, and interests before the leader's needs, aspirations, and interests (Greenleaf, 1977). The goal of a servant leader is to produce followers who “grow healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants” (pp. 13–14). Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) describe the difference between servant leadership and other traditional leadership approaches as a paradigm shift in (1) who a leader is and (2) what a leader does. The self-concept of a servant leader is that of a servant or steward, rather than a leader or owner; the primary intent of a servant leader is to serve others first, rather than to lead others first. This approach falls under the umbrella of development-based leadership because the leader's goal is to serve the developmental interests of the followers.

### 6.3.1. *Self-expansion*

Servant leadership fosters self-expansion within followers because the leader is committed to the growth of followers through compassionate teaching methods and the provision of desirable resources. The leader essentially works for the follower. In this vein, the leader is really a resource for the follower. Such a style of leadership also allows followers to relate to a leader who puts self-interest last—the leader is perceived as an equal and exudes a “we're in this together” attitude. Followers will likely perceive a close bond with such a leader and, therefore, will incorporate the leader in the self.

Servant leadership fosters self-expansion in followers because the leader's primary goal is to serve followers. Followers will view the leader as a resource and as a partner in achieving goals and developing in their roles. As such, followers will expand to include the leader in the self.

### 6.3.2. *Boundary conditions and self-expansion*

Although empirical work on the boundary conditions for servant leadership remains limited, the preliminary conclusion is that context may play an important moderating role. For example, [Vondey \(2010\)](#) found that person–organization fit and organizational identification act as moderators on the relationship between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behaviors. In terms of self-expansion, these findings are not surprising. If followers do not fit in an organization or identify with the organization, a leader who serves those followers in achieving goals and developing according to organizational needs will not be viewed as a valuable or necessary resource. Those followers will be less likely to self-expand to include the leader.

### 6.4. *Situational leadership (life cycle theory)*

Situational leadership, which was originally called life cycle theory, is a leadership approach in which leader behavior is determined by situational factors. These factors include both job maturity—the ability of the individual to perform the job—and psychological maturity—the follower's general motivational state ([Graeff, 1983](#)). The situational leadership model identifies four different leadership styles: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. In response to an examination of the maturity factors, the leader adjusts the degree to which he or she displays each of these styles, which refer to a task or relationship orientation ([Vecchio, 1987](#)). This type of leadership fits within the development-based leadership category because leaders use cues from their followers and the environment to determine how to best serve as a leader. The leader is then able to guide followers through a process that develops their skills and abilities.

#### 6.4.1. *Self-expansion*

Situational leadership allows for self-expansion in followers because leaders serve as guides in a process that begins with providing physical resources and clear objectives to facilitate follower achievement. This is accompanied by motivating followers, encouraging follower participation in decision making, and delegating responsibilities to followers. The leader is able to tailor this process, providing more or less task or relationship resources depending on the needs of the individual follower. The leader becomes a resource for the follower in a way that is customized to the follower, and the follower is in turn more likely to incorporate the leader in the self as a valuable resource. There is also a shared experience between leader and follower in the process of goal achievement, and the shared experience and shared goals allow the follower to more deeply relate to the leader, form a close relationship, and self-expand.

#### 6.4.2. *Boundary conditions and self-expansion*

Situational leadership has been criticized as a “quick fix” management style, and its validity has been questioned. As such, only limited empirical research has explored the boundary conditions of this leadership approach ([Graeff, 1997](#)). However, situational leadership involves a balancing of the particular behaviors characteristic of directing, coaching, supporting, or delegating. Empirically, these behaviors have been operationalized as those described in initiating structure and consideration. As such, the boundary conditions for those leadership styles may also apply to situational leadership.

## 7. **Individual-based leadership**

Traditional individual-based leadership approaches assume the leader does not lead in a uniform way across followers. Such leadership approaches typically promote self-expansion in followers because, when followers perceive that they are seen as individuals in the eyes of the leader, they are likely to believe that shared goals exist in the leader–follower relationship. In perceiving that a leader shares the same goals, a follower will expand to include the leader in the self, thereby ensuring that both the leader's and the follower's resources are available in pursuit of the shared goals.

### 7.1. *Vertical dyad linkage*

Vertical dyad linkage (VDL) is a traditional leadership approach that is based on the individual exchange relationship between leader and follower. Under this model, leaders develop different relationships with followers. With some followers, there is a relationship of leadership exchanges, where the influence over the follower stems from the perception of the existence of a partnership; with other followers, there is a relationship of supervisory exchanges, where the influence over the follower is primarily based on authority ([Dansereau, 1995](#)). This leadership approach fits within the individual-based leadership category because it refutes the assumption that leaders lead all followers uniformly.

The VDL model “describes the process by which a leader and a member develop various behavioral interdependencies between their respective roles” ([Graen & Schiemann, 1978, p. 206](#)). Empirically, this model is tested using the variable *negotiating latitude*, which illustrates the extent to which the follower perceives the relationship with the leader as one characterized by interpersonal exchange at one extreme and by contractual obligations at the other extreme, or else falling somewhere in the middle of the spectrum ([Dansereau, 1995](#); [Liden & Graen, 1980](#)). The negotiating latitude variable taps into specific aspects of the

relationship, including the leader's willingness to evolve change in the follower's job, use his or her power to help the follower complete work, and "bail out" the follower at the leader's expense.

### 7.1.1. *Self-expansion*

The VDL process encourages self-expansion in certain individuals because those at the "high" end of the spectrum—characterized by high interdependence, reciprocal influence, extra-contractual behavior, mutual trust, and common fate (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Schiemann, 1978)—feel that their leader shares the same goals, owing to the fact that the leader has cultivated the perception of a partnership between them. In addition, the leader of these preferred followers encourages change; as followers change their jobs in pursuit of the leader's goals, they consequently self-expand to include the leader's goals. Followers who enjoy a high level of negotiating latitude with the leader are provided with resources and greater responsibility, and the opportunity for expansion is high as a result of the negotiated level of involvement in the leader's decision-making process. These favored followers are considered the in-group, and all others are considered the out-group. This variation of treatment, in turn, affects the quality of the relationship between the leader and the various followers (Gerstner & Day, 1997). An excellent example of this in-group versus out-group idea can be found in Schriesheim, Neider, and Scandura (1998).

The VDL model encourages self-expansion in followers because their leader treats them differently. Those followers who are given preferential treatment feel that they have a partnership with their leader and include the leader in the self and take on the duties of the leader.

### 7.1.2. *Boundary conditions and self-expansion*

The boundary conditions within the VDL paradigm are those that would tend to affect which type of relationship the leader has with the follower. Because the type of relationship affects the extent to which self-expansion occurs, these boundary conditions influence self-expansion of the follower. Such conditions include the latitude granted to the follower (Dansereau et al., 1975), demographic variables or compatibility (Duchon, Green, & Taber, 1986; Larwood & Blackmore, 1978; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989), follower competence, and competence congruence (Snyder & Bruning, 1985). An additional boundary condition pointed out by Dansereau (1995) comes from the context of the original VDL study. In that study, there was a great deal of turmoil on campuses involving the need for change and the need to delegate activities. In turn, the ability of superiors and subordinates to negotiate changes to deal with the turmoil was likely valued by at least some subordinates. Conditions where such changes or delegation is not needed, in contrast, would be less likely to serve as a basis for self-expansion. Thus these boundary conditions may either foster or inhibit the development of a partner-type relationship between the leader and the follower. Where the relationship is enhanced by the condition, there is a greater likelihood of self-expansion.

## 7.2. *Leader-member exchange*

Leader-member exchange (LMX) has its roots in VDL theory, which presented the idea that leaders do not treat all subordinates in the same way (Dansereau et al., 1975). However, LMX is distinct from VDL. Although VDL was a theoretical precursor to LMX, LMX does not fully encompass VDL: It moves in a different direction rather than building on VDL as a distinct foundation. Dansereau (1995) specifically noted that LMX should not be treated as a replacement for previous research on dyadic approaches to leadership. One particular way that LMX is distinct from VDL is in its incorporation of many levels of analysis, whereas VDL remains explicitly at the dyadic within-group level of analysis. In addition, as LMX has developed conceptually, the relationship quality it describes has grown to include factors such as competence, interpersonal skill, trust (Graen, 1976), attention, sensitivity (Cashman, Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1976), support, reward, and satisfaction with the leader (Graen & Ginsburgh, 1977); VDL by comparison focuses primarily on negotiating latitude and delegation. LMX does fit under the umbrella of individual-based leadership because, using this approach, the leader treats followers differently. As will be pointed out, LMX suffers from a large number of methodological problems involving levels of analysis and variable definition and measurement.

### 7.2.1. *Self-expansion*

High-quality LMX relationships are characterized by mutual trust, respect, and commitment (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Such relationships are likely to promote self-expansion because the leader may provide members with resources critical to success. Indeed, it is well documented that high-quality LMX tends to relate to positive outcomes, including affective commitment, satisfaction, perceived organizational support, and supervisor effectiveness (Anderson & Williams, 1996; Brouer, Duke, Treadway, & Ferris, 2009; Kinicki & Vecchio, 1994; Kramer, 1995; Liden & Maslyn, 1998; Schriesheim, Castro, & Coglisier, 1999; Wayne & Green, 1993). Given these positive outcomes, a follower in this type of relationship likely feels fully supported by the leader and, consequently, will believe in shared goals and feel the closeness with the leader that is required for self-expansion.

High-quality LMX promotes self-expansion by providing those followers with the tools they need for success. Followers involved in high-quality exchanges should tend to see the leader as having shared goals because of the specialized treatment they receive in attaining those goals. This allows the followers to include the leader in the self.

### 7.2.2. *Boundary conditions and self-expansion*

Characteristics of the follower that act as boundary conditions include locus of control (Martin, Thomas, Charles, Epitropaki, & McNamara, 2005), political skill (Brouer et al., 2009; Harris, Harris, & Brouer, 2009), and job embeddedness (Sekiguchi, Burton, &

Sablynski, 2008). Political skill—a social effectiveness measure—in this context relates to the likelihood of developing a high-quality LMX relationship. As such, low political skill acts as a hindrance to developing high-quality LMX, and those subordinates who lack this skill will be less likely to self-expand. Both job embeddedness and locus of control can be understood as shaping the extent to which a follower is affected by the high-quality LMX relationship. For example, those followers with a low level of job embeddedness may resist self-expansion regardless of their LMX quality because they may feel uninterested in the goals of their job.

As Schriesheim, Castro, and Cogliser (1999) have noted, the LMX construct has undergone a great deal of definitional changes over the years. As a result of this evolution, the scale by which LMX has been measured has varied over time. While this inconsistency may highlight a problem with LMX research generally, it also draws attention to an important point for the conceptualization of leadership as outlined in the current work—that is, context may act as a boundary condition to self-expansion within the LMX paradigm. When researchers perceive a need for change in a construct definition, their call for change likely reflects the unsuitability of the current definition. The argument here is that the lack of suitability of a construct definition may relate to the context of the research. Where a certain definitional approach to LMX works within a certain line of research, we can assume that the context contributes to this appropriateness—that is, a certain definition is appropriate given a certain context. As contexts change, however, the definition of LMX may be perceived as less accurate. In such a case, researchers are induced to change the definition not because the definition is wrong per se, but rather because the definition no longer works as applied to new contexts.

As Schriesheim et al. (1999) have noted, the measurement of LMX has been inconsistent, but meta-analysis shows that the ability of LMX to predict individual-level outcomes such as job performance, satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intentions is strong, even across inconsistent measures (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Given a stable definition of LMX, it is likely that the ability to obtain consistent results would depend on the context within which LMX is measured. As such, while context acts as a boundary condition, it is difficult to be specific about those boundaries due to numerous definitional and measurement changes in LMX over the years.

### 7.3. Individualized leadership

Individualized leadership shares some common ground with the approaches associated with VDL and LMX, in that all of these approaches acknowledge that the leader may not necessarily treat all subordinates in the same manner. However, individualized leadership departs from the previously described approaches by focusing on the leader treating the follower as a unique individual in a unique one-to-one dyadic relationship with him or her independent of the work group. Thus individualized leadership differs from the VDL approach, which interprets the leader's relationship with a follower as relative to the leader's relationship with other followers in the work group. The uniqueness of individualized leadership lies in the idea that individuals are much more complex and flexible than VDL or LMX would suggest (Dansereau, Yammarino, Markham, Alutto et al., 1995). Individualized leadership advocates that individuals (whether they are leaders or followers) develop relationships completely independent from the relationships they form with other individuals (Dansereau et al., 1995). In this way, the concept of individualized leadership fits under the category of individual-based leadership.

This concept allows leaders to treat all subordinates either in the same way or differently. Nevertheless, the basis for the treatment in individualized leadership is not a relativistic assessment of the followers as in VDL or the supposed value of LMX for everyone, but rather the characteristics of the follower.

#### 7.3.1. Self-expansion

The individualized leadership approach cultivates self-expansion in followers because the leader shapes his or her leadership style to fit the abilities and individual differences of each follower. The leader encourages followers to cultivate their different strengths, provides resources to meet needs, and supports followers in pursuing opportunities to meet their needs—all of which provide the opportunity for self-expansion. In this model, followers are likely to expand to incorporate such a leader in the self because each perceives himself or herself as having a unique relationship with the leader. The followers believe the leader has resources to apply to their distinct needs, and these resources provide a benefit to the current self.

Individualized leadership encourages self-expansion within followers because they see themselves as having unique needs that the leader addresses individually. Followers view the leader as giving them the particular resources that they need for success and as being supportive of them as individuals and of their self-worth. As a result, followers will expand to include the leader and those resources in the self.

#### 7.3.2. Boundary conditions and self-expansion

Boundary conditions for the individualized leadership approach include perceptions of support (Dansereau et al., 1995) and provision of satisfying performance as desired by the leader (Yammarino & Dansereau, 2002). These boundary conditions make sense within the context of self-expansion because the more individual support that followers perceive to exist, the more they will be able to envision such support as a resource available to the potential self. Likewise, Jung, Yammarino, and Lee (2009) have suggested that this very individualistic approach may not be effective in more collectivist cultures. This theory also makes sense, in that in such cultures self-expansion may involve expansion involving the group (collective) rather than the individual.



## 8. Contemporary approaches

The discussion now turns to more contemporary approaches to leadership. The purpose here is to see whether traditional approaches to leadership might be integrated with more contemporary approaches by considering how and when contemporary leadership approaches may also be effective from the self-expansion perspective.

### 8.1. Vision-based leadership

The first category of relatively more contemporary leadership approaches to be considered here includes those that promote self-expansion in the follower through development of a vision. Characteristic of these vision-based approaches are their appeal to followers' sense of a “big picture” and their presentation of an overarching goal. When a clear vision is presented by a leader in whom followers believe, followers are more likely to adjust or change their behaviors and attitudes in line with that vision. Change in the followers is essential for self-expansion because self-expansion is the incorporation of another into the self, which inevitably changes the self.

#### 8.1.1. Charismatic leadership

Charismatic leadership fits under the umbrella of vision-based leadership because charismatic leaders present a vision with which followers can align themselves, regardless of whether the leader has outlined a concrete path to success. As [House and Baetz \(1979\)](#) point out, charismatic leaders are described as those who, by the force of their personal abilities, are capable of having profound and extraordinary effects on followers. Accordingly, they point out that certain characteristics distinguish followers of charismatic leaders from followers of other types of leaders—namely, an unquestioning acceptance of the leader, trust in the leader's beliefs, affection for the leader, willing obedience to the leader, identification with the leader, having similar beliefs to the leader, emotional involvement in the mission, and heightened goals. Thus the essential functioning of charismatic leadership relies on subordinates' willingness to “buy into” the leader's vision.

**8.1.1.1. Self-expansion.** Charismatic leadership allows for self-expansion in followers because, like transformational leaders, charismatic leaders encourage change in followers. Charismatic leaders are characteristically able to persuade followers not only to “buy into” the vision, but also to wholly “buy into” the leader. In this model, followers identify with the leader's vision as well as the leader's attitudes, behaviors, decisions, and beliefs. Such unreserved identification with the leader allows for self-expansion because, when a follower compares the current self to the self that incorporates the leader's perspectives, the leader has already persuaded the follower of the apparent benefits of the latter. Followers, therefore, change themselves to integrate the charismatic leader into the self.

Charismatic leadership promotes self-expansion by providing followers with a compelling motivation to change. This compelling motivation is driven by the charismatic leader's ability to influence the follower through the force of the leader's personality. In this scenario, followers see the charismatic leader as more than simply a manager, and they tend to become emotionally attached to the leader ([Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993](#)). The formation of an emotional attachment is the cornerstone of the close relationship involved in the self-expansion process. An attachment allows a follower to easily include the leader in the self.

**8.1.1.2. Boundary conditions and self-expansion.** The boundary conditions that exist for charismatic leadership tend to reflect the effectiveness of the leader's charisma and the follower's tendency to respond to such charisma. As such, the boundary conditions for charismatic leadership include follower arousal ([Pastor, Mayo, & Shamir, 2007](#)) and values ([Ehrhart & Klein, 2001](#)) that allow self-expansion; leaders' self-sacrificial behaviors ([Halverson, Holladay, Kazama, & Quiñones, 2004](#)), values, and self-monitoring ([Sosik, 2005](#)); and the dynamism of the work environment ([De Hoogh, Den Hartog, & Koopman, 2005](#)), which may either limit or enhance self-expansion. In addition, [Weber \(1947\)](#) argues that charismatic leadership is more likely when a crisis arises. In a crisis environment, the leader's vision becomes the follower's vision through self-expansion and offers the follower an opportunity to overcome the crisis.

#### 8.1.2. Transformational leadership

As [Bass \(1985\)](#) points out, a transformational leader is one who motivates others to do more than the followers were originally expected to do. Transformational leadership falls under the rubric of vision-based leadership, in that transformational leaders present a strategic vision to their followers to unify and empower followers toward adopting and achieving an overarching goal. Followers may change themselves, or transform, to achieve the overarching goal. As such, it is the vision that the leader presents that allows and encourages followers to transform themselves.

**8.1.2.1. Self-expansion.** Transformational leadership allows for self-expansion in followers because this style of leadership encourages deep-level change in followers. [Gordon \(1996\)](#) argued that the results of transformational leadership can arise from three paths: (1) subordinates become more aware of the value of certain outcomes, (2) leaders encourage subordinates to rise above their own self-interest, and (3) subordinates' needs change or expand. Subordinates may self-expand along any of these paths because each encourages subordinates to work with the leader toward a shared goal. Subordinates see the leader as a resource in working toward that vision and, therefore, will self-expand to include the leader in the self.

The behavioral elements of transformational leadership include charisma/inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999). These factors would also encourage self-expansion in followers because they include behaviors that encourage personal change in line with the leader's vision. Inspirational leadership would include persuading followers to adopt shared goals; intellectual stimulation provides followers with the path to solve problems in new ways; individualized consideration takes into account the individual needs of the follower in achieving these shared goals. Thus, transformational leadership promotes self-expansion by providing followers with not only necessary resources, but also the support required for personal change. Burns (1978) identified the transformational leadership approach as one in which the result is "a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (p. 4). Indeed, transformational leadership is seen as a reciprocal process, whereby each party is transformed by the other (Dvir & Shamir, 2003). This description is in line with self-expansion as a process by which each party includes the other in the self, and there is an overlapping of the selves.

*8.1.2.2. Boundary conditions and self-expansion.* Under transformational leadership, some boundary conditions affect the extent to which self-expansion is likely to occur in the follower. Follower attributes include developmental characteristics (Dvir & Shamir, 2003), trust in or loyalty to the leader (Jung, Yammarino, & Lee, 2009), learning orientation (Sosik, Godshalk, & Yammarino, 2004), and self-schema (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). These attributes indicate a follower's propensity to self-expand, because each is generally concerned with the follower's willingness or ability to change and adapt for a leader. Leader attributes that represent boundary conditions include the vision itself (Vecchio, Justin, & Pearce, 2008), intellectual stimulation (Vecchio et al., 2008), emotional intelligence (Jin, Seo, & Shapiro, 2008), and traditional values (Spreitzer, Perttula, & Xin, 2005). These attributes help determine whether followers will commit to a leader and the accompanying vision, because they generally indicate how effective a leader is in encouraging transformation and change in followers. Finally, boundary conditions that correspond to situational characteristics include structural distance (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004), deep-level similarity (Wolfram & Mohr, 2009), and spatial proximity (Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). These characteristics relate to self-expansion in that they identify the initial connection that a leader and a follower are likely to make.

## 8.2. Outcome-based leadership and transactional leadership

The next category of leadership approaches includes outcome-based perspectives. These more contemporary leadership approaches are characterized by the leader's focus on tangible goals and the followers' execution of tasks to fulfill those goals. Leaders who demonstrate task-based leadership styles are generally concerned with providing resources and guidance to their followers to complete specific objectives. This category of leadership styles promotes self-expansion in followers by allowing the leader to focus on task completion so that the follower may experience success with minimal effort and grow or change elsewhere. Included in this category are the relatively more contemporary transactional leadership and pragmatic leadership approaches.

### 8.2.1. Transactional leadership

A transactional leader's relationship with followers is characterized by transactional exchanges or bargains. For example, followers perform tasks and are rewarded for such task completion. Howell and Avolio (1993) describe this relationship as one in which "both the leader and follower reach an agreement concerning what the follower will receive for achieving the negotiated level of performance. Rewards are then provided consistent with satisfactory completion of the agreement" (p. 892). Transactional leadership fits within the category of outcome-based leadership because the series of exchanges that occur between leader and follower revolve around the successful completion of tasks or outcomes.

*8.2.1.1. Self-expansion.* The agreement between the leader and the follower concerning rewards and level of performance provides the follower with clear expectations of the relationship. Followers may adapt or change to fulfill these expectations, or they may use this clarity as an opportunity to change and grow in other areas. As such, this leadership style allows for self-expansion of the follower owing to the congruence in goals. The integration of the leader into the follower's self is likely to appear beneficial to the follower because both parties desire the successful completion of tasks. The follower, therefore, is likely to recognize that the leader has resources to offer in the fulfillment of these precise goals.

Under the appropriate conditions, the transactional leadership approach will promote self-expansion in followers by aligning the relationship with the shared goal of successful task completion. It is possible that the level of self-expansion depends on exactly what is being exchanged. The most obvious elements of a transactional relationship likely include, for example, agreed-upon hours of work for agreed-upon pay. Less obvious, and deeper, elements of this relationship may include exchanges of trust, support, and emotional resources (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). In any case, self-expansion occurs when the follower acknowledges that the leader is also interested in the follower's success, and this exchange relationship facilitates the follower's success.

*8.2.1.2. Boundary conditions and self-expansion.* Boundary conditions for transactional leadership include follower characteristics such as psychological empowerment (Pieterse, Van Knippenberg, Schippers, & Stam, 2010) and self-schema (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). These characteristics influence the extent to which the follower is predisposed to self-expand under the aegis of a transactional leader. For example, a follower with high psychological empowerment is unlikely to respond well to a transactional leader because this type of relationship offers little freedom or empowerment. As a result, highly psychologically empowered followers will be less likely to self-expand in response to a transactional leader.

Within transactional leadership, leader characteristics that act as boundary conditions include the leader's vision, intellectual stimulation, and use of contingent rewards (Vecchio et al., 2008). These characteristics involve the leader's ability to manage a transactional relationship and will affect the extent to which a follower self-expands with the leader in response to the transactional style of leadership. In addition, the procedural justice climate acts as a situational boundary condition (Walumbwa, Lawler, & Avolio, 2005); it likely affects how the follower anticipates the agreement will actually unfold and, in turn, affects the propensity for the follower to self-expand.

### 8.2.2. Pragmatic leadership

A more contemporary approach to an outcome-based approach to leadership involves pragmatic leadership. Pragmatic leaders structure goals around objective threats and opportunities given the current situation in which they are operating (Mumford, Antes, Caughron, & Friedrich, 2008). As such, the leader considers the reality of the situation when directing followers to ensure the completion of tasks. Pragmatic leadership fits within the category of outcome-based leadership because, although the leader's focus is on practicality and logic, this focus is directed toward the objective of formulating appropriate goals that may be successfully fulfilled. Characteristic of this type of leadership is the realization that the workplace is dynamic, with the leader using logic to manage changing situations and changing goals. Consequently, when the follower understands the logic, the leader is encouraging adaptability and change in the follower.

**8.2.2.1. Self-expansion.** Pragmatic leadership promotes self-expansion in the follower because the persuasive power of the logic that the leader uses may bring about mutual interest in the goal. The follower is then able to self-expand in a way that incorporates this mutual goal in the self. Appealing to followers' logic means that the leader is likely to make rational arguments to knowledgeable elites, rather than to the general population. As Mumford et al. (2008) note, "The commitment of these elites to the leader will, in turn, be based on mutual interest rather than on personal commitment to the leader" (p. 147). Therefore, self-expansion in followers will occur based on an understanding of the rational argument for supporting the shared goal.

Self-expansion occurs under pragmatic leadership when the leader persuades the follower to have mutual interest in a goal using the power of logic. Followers of pragmatic leaders will incorporate the leader in the self once there is an understanding of the leader's rational argument. The follower is able to self-expand because he or she knows the leader will expend resources in furtherance of the (now shared) goal.

**8.2.2.2. Boundary conditions and self-expansion.** Boundary conditions within the pragmatic leadership paradigm include follower characteristics such as professionalism, skills, and capabilities (Mumford et al., 2008). These characteristics are representative of the "elite" followers discussed previously. The elites are most likely to understand the leader's rational appeals and, therefore, are most likely to self-expand and incorporate the leader's goals as their own. Leader characteristics that act as boundary conditions within pragmatic leadership include intelligence and expertise (Mumford et al., 2008); they influence the choice of tactics (Mumford, 2006) because the ability to formulate rational arguments is most likely to promote self-expansion in the elite followers. Finally, situational characteristics that act as boundary conditions include psychological distance and procedural/distributive justice (Mumford et al., 2008). Because self-expansion requires a connection with the leader to include the leader in the self, psychological distance and low justice conditions will impede the follower from relating to the leader in the meaningful way required for self-expansion.

### 8.3. Organizational leadership

The category of organizational leadership is relatively new and might seem to challenge traditional approaches. If self-expansion does, indeed, underlie organizational leadership, however, then it fits in the domain of leadership as do the more traditional and contemporary approaches. This category includes those types of leadership that followers attribute to the organizational level. Although this category essentially involves viewing the organization as the leader, followers may be under the leadership of an individual whom they see as representative or the embodiment of the organization. Under these conditions, followers will self-expand to include the entire organization in the self. This self-expansion happens because organizational leadership is likely to induce a feeling of identity with the organization within the followers, clearing the way for expanding the self to include the organization.

#### 8.3.1. Romance of leadership

As Meindl and colleagues (1985) point out, "One of the principal elements in this romanticized conception is the view that leadership is a central organizational process and the premier force in the scheme of organizational events and activities" (p. 79). When leadership is romanticized, followers will perceive the leader's actions as organizational actions; thus this type of leadership falls within the category of organizational leadership.

The romance of leadership differs conceptually from the leadership approaches discussed to this point. Unlike the previously discussed leadership approaches, the romance of leadership actually refers to a process of attribution in the follower about the leader (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987), which the follower uses to make sense of a complex organization (Meindl et al., 1985).

**8.3.1.1. Self-expansion.** This conceptualization of leadership allows for self-expansion in the follower based on the illusion that the leader and the organization are one and the same. Followers, in turn, believe that the leader has all the resources of the organization. In comparing the current self with the potential self that includes the organization's resources, it would not be surprising that followers self-expand to include a leader whom they perceive to have such an abundance of resources.

The romance of leadership allows for self-expansion with the organization as well as with the leader. Followers who possess a romanticized view of leadership tend to view the leader and the organization as one and the same. Consequently, these followers incorporate the leader in the self because they view the leader as possessing the resources of the organization.

**8.3.1.2. Boundary conditions and self-expansion.** The boundary conditions that apply to self-expansion in the romance of leadership model include those conditions that would obstruct the development or maintenance of a romanticized view of leadership in followers and self-expansion. They encompass follower characteristics such as passivity/proactivity (Carsten et al., 2010) and negative views of the work environment (Bligh, Kohles, Pearce, Justin, & Stovall, 2007). Boundary conditions that focus on the leader, by comparison, include gender (Kulich, Ryan, & Haslam, 2007) and impression management techniques (Gray & Densten, 2007). Finally, the situation provides boundary conditions that include economic conditions and performance expectations (Meindl et al., 1985).

## 9. Non-leadership

The final category of leadership styles includes leadership that would not traditionally be considered leadership at all. Subordinates confronted with non-leadership expand themselves through self-reflection and personal initiative.

### 9.1. Laissez-faire leadership

Laissez-faire leadership is characterized by “the avoidance or absence of leadership” (Judge & Piccolo, 2004, p. 756). Leaders using this style try not to influence followers, instead allowing them to spend time as they please. In the absence of leadership, subordinates find their own ways to pursue work-related goals and even have the freedom to create their own work-related goals, outside the influence of the leader. Although the leader does not directly influence followers, followers may still view the leader as an essential resource. Laissez-faire leaders, while avoiding influencing followers, are still responsible for their followers' actions and progress. Followers can, therefore, rely on the leader as a “safety net” of sorts, allowing them to take risks within their work roles. Followers may see this aspect of the leader as a valuable resource for their own interests and creativity, and self-expand to include the leader in the self.

### 9.2. Substitutes for leadership

Kerr and Jermier (1978) note that traditional views on leadership focus on the influence of a hierarchical leader on subordinates. In reality, other elements in the workplace may act as substitutes for leadership—for example, individual, task, and organizational characteristics, such as individual professional orientation, intrinsic satisfaction of the task, and special distance within the organization (Kerr & Jermier, 1978). When followers find substitutes for leadership, they self-expand in directions other than that associated with their hierarchical leader. For example, as Kerr and Jermier explain, those followers with a professional orientation tend to cultivate relationships laterally, rather than upward. These individuals would then use peer relationships as substitutes for leadership, so they would tend to self-expand with their peers rather than with their leader. Rather than comparing their current self to a future self that includes a hierarchical leader, these followers would compare their current self to a future self that includes whichever substitute for leadership they find or employ.

## 10. Discussion

The preceding review of the concept of self-expansion and traditional and contemporary approaches to leadership suggests that the study of leadership has actually developed a rather impressive and extensive view of what binds leaders and followers into close relationships, which allows for an integration of the various theories via an underlying foundation. The literature also seems so extensive that through the specification of boundary conditions, it provides empirical and theoretical explanations for when different aspects of leadership tend to bind leaders and followers into a close relationship. It is important to keep in mind that we are not suggesting that self-expansion is the *only* concept that might allow such an integration of leadership with broad implications for the future. Nevertheless, we believe that our approach is a valuable attempt to build this type of integration. Thus the remainder of this article may also be viewed as illustrating the potential advantage of trying to integrate leadership theories.

This integration of the field suggests the importance of retaining—and not dismissing—traditional approaches to leadership when constructing new theories of leadership. In the past, the development of new leadership theories has often meant ignoring or rejecting more traditional approaches to leadership. Our integration of leadership theories, both traditional and contemporary, suggests that each of these leadership theories may have merit if the conditions are appropriate for fostering self-expansion in followers. This integration gives an explanation for why and how more traditional theories remain valid for predicting leadership effectiveness. It is through such reconciliation that we may extend and advance more traditional approaches to leadership by showing what they have in common with one another and with a new generation of leadership theories through the notion of

self-expansion. This understanding provides a platform for theoretically framing and empirically testing traditional leadership approaches in new and innovative ways. The remainder of the current work considers the theoretical, empirical, and practical issues raised by this integration.

## 11. Theoretical implications

This section considers the implications of the integration for (1) extending traditional approaches to leadership, (2) extending traditional and contemporary approaches, and (3) extending traditional, contemporary, and new approaches.

### 11.1. *Traditional approaches*

Two different sets of implications emerge in conjunction with traditional theories. The first set of implications arises from the notion that all of the traditional theories of leadership may very well be tied to one another through self-expansion. As a result, it is desirable to consider multiple traditional theories simultaneously. The second set of implications involves questions that arise from viewing self-expansion as potentially underlying the traditional approaches.

#### 11.1.1. *Combining multiple traditional approaches to form new theories*

Given the integrated nature of the traditional theories, it is possible to develop broader general theories that integrate several traditional theories in three ways: (1) specify how these theories may separately bring about self-expansion under different conditions; (2) specify how the traditional theories hold simultaneously, with each contributing to self-expansion; and (3) specify how one theory or set of theories serves as a contingency on a second theory or set of theories for explaining the development of self-expansion. Each of these three ways to develop new theories from traditional theories is illustrated in this subsection.

First, we can integrate traditional theories through boundary conditions. For example, in a situation characterized by a lack of latitude, the VDL approach is less likely to result in self-expansion through negotiation and may not apply. Likewise, when a group-oriented culture is present, the individualized leadership approach may be less likely to result in self-expansion through enhancing the individuals' needs and ideas as individuals. Instead, the group approaches, such as those involving consideration and structure, may apply where the focus is on self-expansion through accomplishing group goals (initiation of structure) and developing a sense of group membership (consideration).

Second, it is possible to integrate traditional theories by thinking in terms of multiple traditional theories being predictive at the same time. For example, in a situation where there is latitude and a culture in which both individuals and groups are seen as viable, then the three theories discussed previously may apply simultaneously. For example, VDL, with its focus on relativistic relationships within work groups, may allow self-expansion of some individuals who take on additional delegated tasks. At the same time, other individuals may self-expand to include the supervisor through the development of self-worth as an individual independent of others (individualized leadership). Simultaneously, consideration and structure may allow self-expansion through the accomplishment of group goals (initiation of structure) and development of a sense of group membership (consideration).

This raises some important questions about self-expansion and levels of analysis in traditional approaches. Specifically, at the individual level, individuals may self-expand to include the leader (individualized leadership theory). At the individual-within-group level, they may self-expand to include the leader and a subset (in-group) of individuals who report to the same leader (VDL theory). Finally, individuals may self-expand to include the leader and the entire group as in the group theories—the group level. When these three theories hold, the individuals are aligned in terms of dynamics at all three levels of analysis. One implication of this multilevel theory, which combines three traditional theories at three different levels of analysis, is that self-expansion can itself be viewed at multiple levels of analysis. This perspective, of course, has implications for the measurement of self-expansion and analyses, a topic that will be considered later in this article when empirical implications of the review are discussed.

In addition to the notion that traditional theories may either hold under different conditions or hold simultaneously, there is the third possibility: the contingency of traditional theories on one another. For example, to develop individualized leadership with subordinates and delegate as in the VDL approach, perhaps it might be necessary for leaders to focus on group relationships (consideration) and goals (initiation of structure). This combination of leadership theories may be necessary even in situations characterized by latitude and cultures in which both individuals and groups are seen as viable.

The question of whether different traditional theories hold under different conditions, hold simultaneously, or are contingent on each other not only provides a way to advance traditional theories, but also offers a means to test traditional theories of leadership more thoroughly. With such testing, some traditional theories that may seem limited based on previous research might turn out to hold empirically, albeit contingent on other theories holding in the situation.

#### 11.1.2. *Implications for traditional leadership theories of self-expansion*

The second set of implications follow from additional questions that arise upon viewing self-expansion as potentially underlying the traditional approaches. The first implication is that traditional leadership theories may be more parsimonious than previously thought. The notion of self-expansion as a simple and parsimonious explanation for leadership allows for development of more complex contingency theories because the theories are viewed as being based on a very simple concept. More complex contingency theories, however, may be necessary when testing these models in naturally occurring situations.



Second, the focus so far has been limited to the self-expansion by the follower. It is possible to move beyond that focus. In this regard, it seems quite plausible to suggest that leadership might also involve the leader (not just the follower) and the leader's self-expansion to include the follower. For example, the individualized leadership approach focuses on a dyadic relationship involving the leader and the follower. Thus this theory seems to imply that the leader self-expands to include the follower, in addition to the follower self-expanding. Likewise, the VDL approach seems to imply that the leader self-expands to include at least some subordinates who report to him or her. In a similar way, the group-oriented approaches seem to imply that the leader self-expands to include the group. In turn, one can theorize about different types of self-expansion in traditional leadership theories involving multiple actors. Again, such a model suggests a multiple levels of analysis perspective in advancing theories that include multiple traditional theories.

Third, as fundamental questions, if self-expansion is actually based on drives such as the ones suggested by Lawrence (2010), how does it develop over time? Moreover, is there a propensity toward self-expansion, such that some individuals tend toward more self-expansion and others toward less, much like a personality trait or characteristic? Also, do individuals learn to self-expand in different ways over time? An answer to these types of questions could provide insights into not only how individuals become followers, but also how individuals become leaders. Questions of this type become relevant because they raise broad issues about how leadership unfolds over time. Is leadership a result of differences in the degree to which people are willing, or have a greater need, to self-expand (a kind of individual difference), or is it related to individual experiences—or both? In other words, conceptually, what are the limits on when self-expansion and, therefore, leadership occur?

The limits on self-expansion may relate, for example, to followers' willingness to self-expand. It is possible to view this from a number of different angles, including variations in willingness to self-expand across the life span and career stages. Do workers of different ages have a different propensity to self-expand because of their varying needs in the workplace (Waldman & Avolio, 1993)? For example, do older workers, who likely have a greater degree of experience with various leaders than younger workers, develop a greater willingness to self-expand because of their experience with its effectiveness? Or do older workers have a diminished willingness to self-expand because of their leaders' diminished utility to them? The case could also be made that willingness to self-expand might vary with followers' career stage. Ornstein, Cron, and Slocum (1989) suggest that Levinson's life stages model may be more closely related to career decisions, while Super's career stages model may be more closely related to job attitudes. Likewise, it is possible that Super's (1957) career stages model may apply to workers' willingness to self-expand with leaders, and this could be an indication (or result) of job attitudes. Are workers in the late stages of their careers less likely to self-expand with leaders because of their own emergence as leaders in their organizations, or are they more likely to self-expand because of a greater need to succeed? Additional research is needed to clarify these points.

In addition, willingness to self-expand and the manifestation of self-expansion may vary across cultures. For instance, Markus and Kitayama (1991) reported that people from more individualistic cultures tend to protect and enhance the uniqueness of self-identity; in contrast, individuals from more collectivistic cultures are motivated to maintain their group memberships and are inclined to incorporate others into their self-defining process (Gardner, Gabriel, & Hochschild, 2002). As a consequence, one might expect that occurrence of self-expansion would be more likely if the individual possesses a collectivist orientation. Nevertheless, as described for the topic of individualized leadership, the way in which self-expansion occurs may vary by culture. For example, support for the individual by the leader may be more likely to be associated with self-expansion in individualistic cultures. Leadership styles emphasizing collective identity and shared goals, such as transformational leadership, may have a greater impact on those who are more collectivist-oriented (Jung, Bass, & Sosik, 1995) because of the tendency of collectivism to promote the development of self-expansion.

Fourth, for the most part, the focus of this article has been on leadership—but are there circumstances in which self-expansion and leadership might not occur? In other words, which personality characteristics might inhibit self-expansion and leadership? For example, the Big Five personality characteristics may play a role in the occurrence of self-expansion. Do extroverts tend to avoid self-enhancement and leadership? Are emotionally unstable followers less likely to trust their leaders enough to self-expand, or are they more likely to need leader support, and therefore, more likely to self-expand (Barrick & Mount, 1991)? Do followers low in agreeableness and/or conscientiousness limit self-expansion to the most favorable conditions? These followers may be averse to self-expanding with a leader because they tend to lack the characteristics of dependability, perseverance, and cooperativeness. Some data suggests that followers high in the characteristics of agreeableness and conscientiousness may have higher job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). This outcome may be potentially related to their willingness to self-expand with their leaders. In addition, if followers are low in openness to experience, will they find self-expansion too risky? Openness to experience is characterized by curiosity, broad-mindedness, and culture. Those followers who are low in such traits may not demonstrate a willingness to self-expand with a leader. Additional research is certainly needed in this area.

Developmental factors may also influence the incidence of self-expansion. Do followers require a certain amount of experience and learning to undertake self-expansion? Can a person act as a leader by learning how to help others self-expand? These issues require additional theorizing and research to fully explore them. Nevertheless, the concept of self-expansion seems to offer some implications for traditional approaches to leadership. Moreover, addressing these types of issues may help to explain when the non-leadership approaches may hold rather than the traditional leadership approaches.

### 11.2. *Traditional and contemporary approaches*

Based on this review, traditional approaches seem to have the potential not only to develop on their own, but also to extend contemporary approaches. For example, contemporary approaches that focus on vision suggest that the vision appeals to the

follower's sense of the big picture and an overarching goal. On this basis, followers can expand to include the leader. From a contingency perspective, however, without the interpersonal dynamics being developed that are often described in traditional approaches (for example, VDL, individualized leadership, and group approaches), it is difficult to see how a vision can be implemented. Thus, even though followers may self-expand with the leader around the vision, the vision may fail to be implemented if the interpersonal dynamics to make it happen are lacking. In this way, the more traditional approaches can be viewed as serving as a potential boundary condition on the actual implementation of a vision. At the same time, the notion of vision may provide a direction for the future for both the leader and the follower, who are tied together on an interpersonal basis. As was the case with the traditional approaches, the notion of vision may hold under different conditions than traditional theories, hold simultaneously with traditional theories, or involve contingencies.

An additional—and interesting—question that arises is whether the contemporary transactional leadership approaches include any notion of self-expansion on the part of the leader to include the follower. The notion of a lack of self-expansion could also serve as way to illustrate the difference between traditional approaches and the contemporary transactional view of leadership. Viewed from this perspective, transactional theory does not necessarily subsume traditional leadership approaches.

Without additional research the issue clearly remains open as to whether contemporary approaches can ignore traditional approaches to leadership. From this perspective, traditional approaches seem able to further develop contemporary approaches and, in the process, simultaneously enhance traditional approaches. Again, until more research is conducted in this area, traditional and contemporary approaches need not be viewed as subsuming each other, but rather can be viewed as making potentially unique contributions to understanding self-expansion and leadership.

### 11.3. *Traditional, contemporary, and new approaches*

Thus far it seems that a number of new theories can be constructed that integrate multiple traditional and multiple contemporary approaches. This approach to theorizing, however, does not preclude new approaches that focus on new variables that are tied with self-expansion. For example, Owens and Herkan (2012) have suggested that leaders showing humility tend to be more successful. Indeed, a humble leader may allow some individuals to self-expand. For example, assertive individuals may tend to self-expand to incorporate the leader because the leader allows a follower to take credit for actions and to easily move in a direction he or she wants. In a somewhat similar way, individuals who are more humble may perceive greater similarity between themselves and the leader and, therefore, view the leader as someone who can be included in the self. In general, it should be possible to formulate new theories that further elucidate the self-expansion of followers with leaders and the accompanying boundary conditions. It might be helpful, if these new theories were considered in the context of traditional and contemporary approaches, thereby ensuring that their role relative to at least some of these theories would be tested along with boundary conditions. This is not so much a criticism but rather a call for theorists to enrich new theories with traditional and contemporary theories in the same way that developing theories took into account multiple traditional theories as described previously.

We also note, as we indicated previously, that we do not view our list of leadership theories as exhaustive. The theories presented were chosen based on categories of leadership theories developed by Dansereau and Yammarino (1998a, 1998b) and Yammarino et al. (2005). However, this list does not preclude the inclusion of other traditional and contemporary theories that may also be viewed through the lens of self-expansion theory. For example, Fiedler's cognitive resource theory may lead to self-expansion because followers may wish to incorporate the useful resources of the leader's intelligence and expertise into the self (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987). Much as with the other theories of leadership, there would likely be boundary conditions on self-expansion for this theory.

This presentation of leadership theories provides a basis for integrating ideas of leadership via the common thread of self-expansion. We do not view this integration as creating one grand theory of leadership, but rather as offering a way to reconcile a number of leadership theories that, seem very different, yet all purport to describe leadership. Indeed, this is just one first step toward integrating the wide array of theories within the literature on leadership. It sheds light on why different leadership styles have empirical evidence of their effectiveness and how boundary conditions may be viewed through the lens of self-expansion. Future research may take this further by explicitly linking leadership theories to one another, for example, based on the idea that self-expansion is a common theme.

## 12. Empirical implications

The theoretical implications of this integration suggest a number of studies that could test multiple traditional, contemporary, and new theories and their boundary conditions simultaneously, as well as contingencies between theories at various levels of analysis. A variety of analytical methods are available to test these types of theories, though these methods will not be described here. Nevertheless, several issues arise when moving in the direction of theory testing regarding the concept of self-expansion.

One particularly important aspect of this approach is that future research could begin by considering an existing empirical measure of self-expansion to test whether self-expansion itself holds as suggested here. This measure typically involves the individual showing the overlap between the respondent and the other person. A continuous version of a scale ranging from 0 to 100% was developed by Le, Moss, and Mashek (2007) and goes beyond the interval version of the scale. Certainly, one or more additional scales could be created for use in assessing self-expansion in a variety of settings and involving multiple levels of analysis. Indeed, researchers might even try to assess individuals with whom a person has self-expanded to see if the expansion holds from both sides.

Accordingly, a key question is whether the self-expansion scale actually relates to the measures associated with various approaches to leadership. At a simple level, it is possible to test for such relationships. If, as the current article suggests, researchers measure multiple theories simultaneously, it would be interesting to test which, and if, traditional measures of leadership relate to the self-expansion measures. It would also be useful to test whether the relationships among traditional and contemporary leadership variables and outcome variables hold when self-expansion is held constant. Moreover, it should be possible to design, validate, and develop measures of self-expansion at different levels of analysis, as was suggested earlier for the VDL, individualized leadership, and group-based approaches. Measures from multiple theories and from multiple levels of analysis will facilitate sorting out the various types of leadership configurations that accommodate the differing ways in which leaders and followers self-expand. In attempting to assess the multifaceted relationship between leadership and self-expansion, it is necessary not only to test boundary conditions for each theory and for multiple theories as described previously, but also to test for boundary conditions indicating that some theories, although described here as related to self-expansion, may not tie in with self-expansion on an empirical basis.

Thus a basic issue raised in this article is whether existing or new self-expansion scales actually do relate to the various measures of leadership from different theories and, if so, how and in which ways. Empirical tests of this sort can serve to elucidate whether self-expansion empirically underlies the various approaches to leadership as suggested on a conceptual basis in this article.

### 13. Applied implications

Assuming empirical support is found for the ideas outlined in this article, a key professional practice implication of these ideas is that no single approach to leadership may work in all managerial situations. The question then becomes which theory, or combination of theories, can serve as the basis for self-expansion and under which conditions. All of the boundary conditions presented here raise serious questions about the universality of all current leadership theories. In turn, training individuals to use a particular approach to leadership in some situations may not result in positive results. Thus, from an applied perspective, the question becomes, which combination might work, and when, to produce self-expansion?

The multiplicity of possible relationships would suggest an eclectic approach be taken in regard to leadership training. For example, instead of viewing transformational leadership as the only way to train individuals to assume leadership roles, the situation of the trainee and characteristics of the trainees themselves would need to be taken into account. Likewise, although one might like to obtain the theoretical benefits of transformational leadership, one might need to consider which other leadership theories might support a movement in that direction. For example, would a combination of visionary, individualized leadership, and group leadership enhance the effectiveness of training or an intervention?

### 14. Conclusion

The literature on leadership has produced a great deal of information on the effectiveness of leader behaviors, the characteristics of followers, and the elements of the leader–follower relationship. However, distinct leadership theories remain just that—distinct. Few attempts have been made to unify traditional and contemporary leadership theories to date, although all of the various theories purport to fall under the umbrella of leadership. Leadership as a broad term has its own set of definitions, but the process by which leadership emerges and is effective has received little attention beyond the development of new leadership paradigms. The main contribution of the current work is the introduction of self-expansion as a connection or integrative construct involving traditional and contemporary leadership theories.

Moreover, we suggest that whether this approach to integration is plausible will depend on future research to test whether self-expansion does, indeed, underlie various approaches to leadership. We hope that we have shown that attempting to integrate leadership theories is a worthwhile endeavor. Regardless of whether this particular integration withstands empirical testing, this approach represents a first step in the direction of integration of what seems to us to be a very informative and valuable set of traditional and contemporary studies of leadership in this field.

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