Leadership as Relational Process

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Abstract: Various scholars defend the idea that leadership is something accomplished between the leader and the led, rather than something that coincides with the role of an individual manager. Even so, we argue that shared leadership implies a relational ontology grasping leadership as an ever-changing series of events that is thoroughly processual in nature. Supplementing existing analyses and expanding the possibilities for relational leadership research, we propose a view from the perspective of process philosophy, in which relations determine individual leaders and followers, and not the reverse. The process perspective invites us to see and to feel leadership as an occasion we experience subjectively within ourselves, instead of simply looking at it objectively from the outside. Such a process perspective, which grasps leadership as an internally complex occasion of experience, has implications for expanding the possibilities for what we know in management as relational leadership research.

Leaders and leadership are cornerstones of the human endeavour. Much that human beings have achieved we can trace to the capacity to lead and be led. At the same time, if it is true that we do indeed live at the end of an age and within an ecological crisis (see Cobb, "Series"), then we may conclude that at least some of the fault lies in defining and understanding who leaders are and what leaders do. A new way of perceiving leadership may be required to navigate the new age. While it will be clear that this new understanding should be a process understanding, there are a number of steps required to tease out what this might look like. In this article, we begin this important work. First, we consider traditional and indeed entrenched conceptualizations of leadership and try to unpack the problems therein. Second, we explore leadership from a process perspective. Third, we reframe relational leadership from this process perspective, considering a number of contemporary leadership issues, such as the moral aspect of leadership and the ever-present question of power.

Traditional Conceptualizations of Leadership

It is extremely hard to comment on and displace powerful and very rational theories underlying leadership research. A problem is that past studies (e.g., by Bass; Burns; Conger and Kanungo) focused almost exclusively on the insights psychology provides into leadership, both as a field of study and an area of practice. Psychological research and theorizing posit an elementary unit—an individual leader—on the basis of which leadership is thought to be accomplished and to which organizational work is always supposed to be

reducible (but see Meindl et al.). However, by conceptualizing leadership as a property of individual leaders and their behaviors, a psychological interpretation maintains the point of view of setting leaders apart and grading them as different. Too often, researchers highlight what is interesting and important in theory and practice without fully appreciating leadership as something beyond the "heroic" or "great man" views of "the leader."

Earlier studies by Blake and Mouton, Fiedler, and Hersey and Blanchard did challenge conventional theories and practices and offered critical insights into the potential pitfalls of examining personal and behavioral characteristics alone. Because of their original work, most contemporary research has an explicit focus on the relation between leaders and followers. The more visible approaches pay attention to the beliefs and values followers ascribe to leaders (see Hogg; Lord and Smith; and Meindl et al.), and the relationship between transformational vision and the charismatic (see Bass and Avolio; Bass; Conger; and Klein and House). Subsequent studies placed importance on followership (Collinson) and shared or group leadership processes (Gronn; Pearce and Conger). A substantial body of empirical work has also drawn on organizational role (Dansereau et al.; Dienesch and Liden; Liden and Graen) and social exchange theory (Graen and Uhl-Bien; Scandura and Graen; Sparrowe and Liden) to understand how exchange relationships develop between the leader and the led.

An examination of the literature quickly reveals an underlying assumption that leaders and followers jointly affect leadership (Brewer and Gardner; Graen and Uhl-Bien; Hogg; Klein and House). Most of the research in this area limits its attention to the idea of interactions extending across the leader/follower interface. A problem is the restricted discussion and attention that these studies give to a theoretical understanding of how a relation determines its terms, and not the reverse (see Drath et al.; Hosking et al.; Uhl-Bien).

While they do permit a connection of the leader and the led, inter-subjective "relationship-based" (e.g., Graen and Uhl-Bien) approaches conceive ideas of leadership in terms of clear-cut individuals or groups, each capable of existing separately in their own right and each determining their own relations. In fact, inter-subjective relationship-based theories seem to beg the question because we read leadership into the content of the process actually conditioning it. In such a context, research does nothing but establish a series of relations between individuals or groups, but neglects to show how such relations determine these terms. Researchers (Hosking; Hosking et al.; Ospina and Uhl-Bien; Uhl-Bien; for a recent literature review see Denis et al.) wanting to focus on relations more directly believe in processes of social construction and their implications for understanding the course of leadership. It is to this topic that we now turn.

Leadership Relationships

As process thinkers, we note that it is common enough for contemporary mainstream research to articulate leadership as the product of relationships between leaders and followers (Cunliffe and Eriksen; Hosking; Hosking et al.; Ospina and Uhl-Bien; Uhl-Bien). The original elaboration of relationship-based approaches to leadership lies in research (Blake and Mouton; Fiedler; Hersey and Blanchard) which suggests that leadership effectiveness is contingent upon both an internal organizational context and the external environment. The contingency perspective of leadership had wide currency up to the 1980s and most streams of research coming later have drawn on it to underline the importance of the relationship between leaders, followers, and organizational outcomes (see, e.g., Bennis).

Some studies (Hogg; Lord and Smith; Meindl et al.) have linked the nature of good leadership to the beliefs and values ascribed by followers. For example, Hogg describes leader-follower relations in terms of a group process in which followers invest leaders with apparent influence and define themselves in terms of prototypical cognitive and social identity constructs. Significant research attention (Bass and Avolio; Bass; Conger; Klein and House) has also been devoted to understanding the concept of transformational leadership and related charismatic behaviors. A key component of transformational leadership is the inspiration derived from observed leader behaviors on follower motivation and goal commitment (Bass). Likewise, charisma is said (Conger; Klein and House) to be the product of the relationship between a leader who has certain charismatic qualities and followers' personal identification with that charisma within certain contexts and situations.

Regrettably, research on transformational leadership styles and follower reactions to charismatic behavior has a tendency to focus on outcomes related to the leader. In such a context, defining transformational and charismatic leadership as the ability to envision and change values and goals and to inspire new levels of performance may simply reaffirm a leader's centrality. As an example, following Hogg, it is likely that subordinates will follow those managers they see as embodying the values and goals with which they strongly identify as actually belonging to transformational/charismatic leaders themselves.

Conceiving leadership as a relation-oriented social process demands we give attention to the important role that follower attitudes and motivations play in the leadership process (Collinson). Rejecting the common stereotype of followers as passive recipients of the manager's leadership, Collinson employs poststructuralist theories to develop an alternative way of viewing follower identities and examines their fundamental part in endorsing or challenging a leader's idealized authority or influence.

Organization scholars (Gronn; Pearce and Conger; Spillane; for a recent review see Bolden) now take seriously the idea that leadership behavior can be

shared or distributed among multiple individuals and groups. The term "shared leadership" points to interactions among peers to achieve group or organizational goals (Pearce and Conger). Group interactions make both the concept of single leaders exerting influence and the traditional leader-follower distinction less useful in describing the overall leadership function. For example, distributed leadership suggests collaborative action that can reach beyond unitary perspectives and the idea of a mere aggregate of separate individuals to give rise potentially to new and more concerted patterns of engagement within organizations (Gronn 428–429), which are greater than the sum of their parts.

One of the most familiar approaches examining the issue of leader-led engagement is leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Dienesch and Liden; Graen and Uhl-Bien; Sparrowe and Liden; for analyses of this theory also see Dulebohn et al.; Gerstner and Day). An important feature of LMX theory is its emphasis on manager-subordinate relationships rather than on individual behavior. Drawing from role theory (Dansereau et al.; Dienesch and Liden; Liden and Graen) and social exchange theory (Graen and Uhl-Bien; Scandura and
Graen; Sparrowe and Liden), LMX research shows that leaders and managers develop different quality relationships with members of their teams (Dansereau et al.; Graen and Uhl-Bien). Managers and team members use a dyadic process to evaluate one another through a series of role taking and role making stages. Essentially, effective leadership develops when the quality of these relationships is high (Dulebohn et al.; Gerstner and Day).

Leadership in part is a result of everyday talk and interaction (Korsgaard et al.). How leaders and followers employ language effectively so they can define and shape the meaning of formal and informal situations (Smircich and Morgan) is a key issue in research on "framing" (Fairhurst; Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien; Shotter and Cunliffe). Seeing leadership in terms of framing avoids casting leaders and followers in specific positions and roles that exist independently, without engaging in interactional behavior that brings their framing of personal visions and priorities and formal policies and procedures to life by means of everyday talk and interaction. Because we do not typically hold roles in advance of interactional behavior, subordinates can meet a leader's attempt to frame the situation with acceptance or rejection: "Each turn at talk is coded as to whether it asserts control, acquiesces or requests control, or neutralises the control move of the previous utterance (Fairhurst, "Textuality," 339).

Problems with Relational Leadership Research

The ability to frame reality provides insight into the relationship between leaders and followers in here-and-now situations. However, scholars also need to be aware that discursively based social constructions, as exemplified by

Fairhurst's approach, tend to conceive leadership in terms of external relations between distinct and self-contained leaders and followers. Too often, and with few exceptions, discursive accounts take leadership to be an inter-subjective performance, constructed through talk and text. Our point is that, while discursively constructed understandings might help us create leadership through language and discourse, the construction has not come from direct contact with experience itself but from analysis. In a sense, framing the meaning of a situation imposes a sort of intellectual straitjacket for the mind that stifles the perception of affective experience.

Mistaking the framing of leadership for leadership itself introduces a great deal of confusion. Framing expresses leadership in general communication concepts, but leadership is not reducible to sentences and propositions. Leadership is more than leaders, managers, and subordinates performing and enacting discourses. As Whitehead writes:

> Some of us struggle to find words to express our ideas. If the words and their order together constitute the ideas, how does the struggle arise? We should then be struggling to obtain ideas; whereas we are conscious of ideas verbally unexpressed (MT 35).

In short, language and discourse are expressions of leadership, not its essence. For Whitehead, language remains only a technical "approximation to the general truths" of experience (PR 13). Thus, relying from Whitehead, the only possible start for knowledge of leadership must be with experience.

Some scholars (Bradbury and Lichtenstein; Dibben; Drath et al.; Hosking; Hosking et al.; Koivunen; Uhl-Bien; Wood; Wood and Ladkin; for a recent review see Denis et al.) see leadership as a center of affective and cognitive experience, rather than as a position or role taken by people possessing their own thoughts, emotions, and purposes. These commentators describe relationships as encounters or passages of intensity that produce leaders and followers as factors of activity and not as "clean-cut" connections produced by the efforts put into them by clear-cut individuals already given to, or lying in the way of, experience. Seeing leadership as a direct encounter with experience gives rise to questions about the adequacy of research that speaks of relations in exchange-based terms and seriously bids us to look on leadership as an intra-subjective going-on in the midst of things and (immanent) relations.

Further, because the event field (see Bracken) individuates leadership in many ways, we cannot give a specific position or role directly to a distinct and self-contained figure in advance. Leaders have no essence or substance beyond exhibiting those characteristics that cause us to see, feel, and think about them in a particular "occasion of experience" (see AI 176). The lived experience of leadership is difficult to perceive because classic and conventional approaches persist in the quasi-objective study of some sort of dialectical interaction between distinct and self-contained leaders and followers, rather than the

process constituting their becoming. The point of the following section is to begin a sketch of this alternative, affective process.

Leadership as Process

Relationship-based thinkers have provided a valuable service. They have shown us how cosy images of functional relationships between leaders and followers falsely acquire an air of authority and objectivity that serves to make individual leaders seem "natural," as if they were a causal law and part of the necessary structure of reality. Instead, they point out how values and roles are often social and personal constructs. Unfortunately, in the course of helping us to see the constructed character of leadership, some thinkers seem at times to deny that we have any real connection to the world "out there." Sometimes it may seem as if there were no world at all, but only the world we construct. As process thinkers, how might we respond?

Set against process ontology, which is replete with understandings of the fallacies of presentational immediacy, objectification, and simple location, etc., studies examining leadership as a shared property between extrinsically related terms find it difficult to detect or know the fundamental nature of internal relations very well. According to Fairhurst, following Hosking and colleagues (Hosking; Hosking et al.), analyses of external relations traditionally take an entity or substance view of reality. An entity-based perspective views leadership as an apparent unfolding of real qualities, which inhere in individual leaders and followers who are themselves absolutely distinct and self-contained.

Entity-based views have the advantage of giving us an objective means of examining the role played by leaders and the expectations of employees at work. Even so, as we have argued, it gives a false sense of intellectual security that only ends up stifling the life out of leadership. Here, the emphasis is on processes of leadership always underway as "moment[s] of interaction frozen in time" (Fairhurst, "Textuality," 341). This is a simple "fixing" of process with "reality caught in flight" (Pettigrew 338). On this view, one reaches beneath the surface appearance of processes to extract some underlying mechanisms as the possible drivers for leadership. Yet, as Whitehead reminds us, it is a fallacy to imagine that a number of abstract conceptions concretely instantiate the actual process of leadership, cut out from the wider context of its occurrence.

We might not be able to think without postulating an arrangement of leaders and followers as the objects of ordinary perception. Leaders seem to act toward followers and followers seem to respond to leaders. However, we ought not to be deceived into treating these impressions as fundamental things: "they are tendencies and not things" (Bergson, Creative, 135). By contrast, we take the position that the terms "leader" and "follower" are simply intellectual shorthand for a more fundamental type of internal relations at work behind the scenes. A process view removes leadership entirely from belonging to a person or group of persons. On the process view, its "substance" is relational (see PR

57). This view invites us to see and to feel leadership as a genuine occasion (see PR 208–211). Following Bergson, we should talk of the process of qualitative movement through which leaders and followers continually segue into each other rather than plotting clean cut connections between clearly defined individuals. Intrinsically, the internal coherence of leadership is no longer an abstract relationship between variables, but rather a fleeting moment in an ongoing process of fleeting moments of affective "matterings" (Gregg and Seigworth).

Whitehead argues that our immediate perception of a portion of the world in front of us does not automatically mean that it sits there in atomic isolation (see Bergson, Creative 29). There is, rather, a unity when immediate physical feelings meet their conceptual counterpart; our fundamental perceptions blend together perfectly with the big picture, so that a wonderful sense of meaning and value emerges. On such fleeting occasions the two modes do not merely intersect, they are "fused into one" (PR 18).

The 'Internality' of Leadership

In order to expand the possibilities for relational leadership research, we must shift toward the idea of internal relations to break away from the claim made by leadership researchers that relations remain external to their terms. Leadership is a novel moment, a continually renewed relational experience, rather than something we can essentialize (e.g., by suggesting that someone is a leader). Pre- or non-personal relational determinations constitute themselves by grasping some aspect or part of the surrounding generality and appropriating them in the event or concrete act of their becoming. Specifically, we view leadership as novel events that cause us to see, feel, and think in terms of movement rather than in terms of essentialized definitions.

Coordinating the insights of process philosophy with the work of leadership researchers, our view is that relations are not only as real as everything else is, they are experienced, and directly so, as things in their own right. We consider leadership as a felt occasion bringing to the fore new relational innovations, experiential novelties grasped as purposive affect. What do we mean by experience here? Psychologists confine experience to processes of mental representation. In a sense, thought and emotion are cognitive processes we use to construct intelligible stories in our minds. From the point of view of process philosophy, experience has a more expansive meaning. The task is not only to understand our environment in a cognitive and analytic sense, but also to grasp the "intensity" of experience that arises out of the physical world through our immersive—bodily, affective, and cognitive—encounters. As humans, we move to meet experience; we are sensitive to something, feel a contact with it, appreciate it in mind and body. This is not necessarily to say that the foregoing is a conscious process, so we must ask how leadership arises out of experience. Our answer is that both the cognitive-analytic representations we

bring to leadership (e.g., judgments about good or bad leadership) and the physical feelings and emotions we receive from moments of leadership in return (e.g., what makes leadership come alive for us here and now) are two parts of the same experience. Thus, set against the tendency in extant relational leadership research to look for extrinsic connections between separate leaders and followers, all we find are dynamic, changing bundles of affective and cognitive experiences, each with its own subjective immediacy, communicated via thoughts and feelings.

Reframing the Leadership Occasion

We commonly recognize that which we call "an event" as either an "effect" or a "situation" that simply occurs, such as an organized social occasion, or as something that simply reveals familiar definitions or objects in the world. However, according to process thought, we always miss an event if we understand it in terms of essential characteristics (Williams). Instead, events are both affected and affecting. They run through and rearrange relations between familiar histories and situations, which are at hand along the way (see Deleuze, Difference).

According to this understanding, events often exceed our apprehension, but nonetheless are always going on within sensations and affects. The coming event arises in the middle of an experience when we realize the potentialities of the past in the production of the future. Put differently, events absorb us. However, we cannot think of the middling moment of activity without a change in the relation among familiar subjects and objects within experience. Leaders and followers, as familiar coordinates, do not constitute a "personal" experience relative to a subject. On the contrary, they become synonymous with a certain feeling that arises in an occurring event. The qualitative dimension of the event's occurring arises "as the bringing together into one real context of diverse perceptions, diverse feelings, diverse purposes, and other diverse activities" (S 9) into an organic unity. Thus, a characteristic of each unique occasion is how it grasps (prehends) those entities in its event field and renders them in a new subjective form.

It will be clear that while "an event" has a technical meaning for Deleuze, for Whitehead this is not the case; an event can only be subjectively prehended. In the case of higher occasions of experience such as in human beings, events are recognised as such—retrospectively and perhaps enduring objectively. It is important to note that a multitude of occasions make up an event observed in the past as comprising leadership (Cobb, Whitehead 23–30). As an object, an event relies on subjects for its re-cognition by the subject, its re-membering by the subject, in its own immediacy-of-the-now. This re-cognition or re-membering is purely a matter for the subject. In this sense, we might better understand events as a nexus of occasions having an objective existence for the observer (i.e., the follower). As such, the observer loses much; the richness of

leadership is lost to the follower, however much she responds to the affect. On this view, leadership is not the thing; it is the bringing about and the playing out of leadership as a unique content of experience that is the thing. Each occasion of experience involves immediate sensations and our ongoing needs, which together carve out portions of sensible reality in a process that is creative of the leadership subject.

To illustrate, let us return to the theory of framing found in Fairhurst's discursive construction of leadership. According to Fairhurst (168), the history of framing in the social sciences shows how frames "shape" and "define" situations in order to "organize" experience. Likewise, framing helps us to "focus on," "classify," and "arrange" things and information. The frame of language in particular conveys the direction of our attention and is consistent with having a measure of control over what and how we communicate. What the context of leadership communicates, for example, is not so much an essential truth as the ability of leader actors to frame the reality of others. By asserting that their interpretations are better than other possible interpretations, leaders can "structure attention and evoke patterns of meaning that give them considerable control over the situation being managed" (Smircich and Morgan 263). In Fairhurst's terms, for example, a leader's skill in framing can differentiate "constructive" employee buy-in from their "negative" resistance. The work of framing thus employs the faculty of judgment to rule out, and rule in, conceptualizations that we think are important: "To hold the frame of a subject is to choose" (Fairhurst 168). We argue that a discursive approach to judging and ultimately of knowing is insufficient.

The problem with framing, when seen within the context of process thought, is not its reliance on selection per se. We accept the selective nature of framing in which we exclude or cut out some elements of experience while including others. We deny that frameworks of language can put direct experience into words. In seeking to emphasize language, Fairhurst understands leadership in terms of a representational image that does not give us the actual world directly as something in itself, but indirectly through a detour of signs (i.e., a compound of signifier and signified). The claim that leadership is something given to a system of meaning or discourse suggests that the act of framing actually comes from outside of what it frames and is simply employed to order the world and make sense of things for a reflecting subject—as opposed to direct experience, which has an immanent effect on subjectiveness (AI 74). From a process perspective, framing does not cause or produce the events framed. The frame is an internal part of the framing. Therefore, we need invoke no such linguistic turn.

A central aspect of framing choices discursively is that it enables us to distinguish between a figure that is definite and a surrounding environment that remains vague. Researchers generate accounts of framing based on Euclidean geometry, which allows a strict division between a line and the plane or surface

on which it is drawn. Drawing the line is one of those brute acts by which we select and organize a figure against the plane (Ehrenzweig). Thus, to make discursive sense of an event that was previously immanent, we must reduce it to some meaningful form by dividing the line. In leadership research, we organize a structure of relationships in which we array and extrinsically relate leaders and followers. In doing so, we elide leadership's continuity or integrity, making it a self-limiting term for the sake of the conceptual definition (outside of experience) thereby gained. In other circumstances, while the line is a visible separation the boundary it crosses is indistinguishable. In fact, it does not effectively enclose but actively connects that which it separates. Now the line is not a boundary in the usual sense, but simultaneously an intermediary and stopper for the activity of relation. The important point is that leadership is found neither in the discursive framing (representation) of the leader nor in the follower. Rather it exists only in the fluency of the "line-frontier" (Massumi) between an objective quality and the subject possessing the quality. Thus, framing leaders and followers as "a shared space we can never reach but which at the same time seems to originate the specific terms we can specifically identify" (Cooper, "Making," 71) appears to point to the relational dimension of the leadership event's occurring. In process terms, the composition of leadership becomes not framing but deframing within the event field. This does not disintegrate leadership, but rather opens it up to movements of becoming that exceed simple definitions.

Good artists demonstrate such a relational vision of things. Critic Anton Ehrenzweig (23) refers to psychologist Edgar Rubin's famous double profiles to illustrate the sort of single undivided conception we are looking for. In Rubin's double profiles, two faces try to kiss each other, but cannot do so; as the eye focuses on the one, the other disappears. Ehrenzweig points out that, in order to comprehend both alternative views in a single glance, we need an undifferentiated attention akin to syncretistic vision. A diffuse way of looking does not act as a limit (relative to an external viewer), but holds the total structure of the work of art in a single, undifferentiated view. Ehrenzweig's process of unconscious thinking informs our analysis of leadership. The line-frontier, we argue, connects as it separates and so overspills any cognitive framing. In other words, the line puts the surface and the limit, the background and foreground, the standing out and the standing back, leaders and followers, into one another without being reducible to either.

Bauhaus artist and designer Oskar Schlemmer (24) reminds us of the relationality across thresholds of becoming in a drawing titled Man and Art Figure. The drawing depicts the tension between the figure of a human dancer and the surrounding environment or space. The drawing comprises a multiplicity of lines, each succeeding line radiating and each scribing a similar arc. What directly strikes the eye is no longer the stable relativity of the figure, but the activity of relation between the figure and the background. The figure

standing out does not refer to an interior state; rather its edge is fraught with an entire continuum beyond it. In short, like an intensified site of over-crossing, the picture expresses the event field converging on the figure as a relational determination that brings together sensation and feeling. Without the general quality of movement, the figure would lack any dynamic quality and so it would lack the conditions of possibility for it to become an object of concern for us. The conditions of possibility and dynamic quality of leadership arise from the distinctiveness inherent in perceiving the relation between the leadership figure and the background. In process terms, this is an act of conscious discrimination of effective contrasts through an experience of intensive integration of the subject in the context of the wider environment. Referring back to Schlemmer's art figure, we become aware of leadership by the intensity of our experience of it in contrast to other experiences. It becomes "more fully situated and influential in the world that emerges subsequent to and inclusive [of itself]" (Jones 283). Leadership intensity involves more than the mere triviality of making an event in the world sensible to a reflecting subject. Rather it is a coherent integration of affective experience, "much as a narrow beam of light focuses a wide array of light trajectories as one" (Jones 284), separating out the trivial from the important and the vague from the definite in the contrast of what experience illuminates in our consciousness. Together these two affective movements, sensation and reception in a specific context, determine the stance taken on a leadership event and subsequently our active response to it.

Some Implications of a Process Leadership

The above observations point to some of the possibilities and questions remaining by applying process thinking to leadership research. To name just a few: How and why does intensity emerge to form part of our perception, while an infinite number of other possibilities remain excluded? How can we study leadership as process and what counts as leadership when change underlies everything that exists? How does a process perspective on leadership that apparently deemphasizes the relationship between two people handle the issue of morality? Should we pay greater attention to underlying power relationships that might influence the emergence of leadership? What would happen to our thinking about issues of morality and power if we experienced them as ongoing relationships?

Throughout the current discussion, we have been concerned with showing that leadership neither lends itself to any clarity of definition nor depends on the leader-follower dyad (Drath et al.). Under a process view, there is no essence or substance to leadership events other than the novelty of their occurring (Massumi). Like the throwing of dice, the world arises in the imaginative ideas, the unexpected turns, or creative impulses life might take. The ordinal properties of leadership are the result of the fusing of intensities that make it matter and with intensities that make it matter both now and in the future.

A danger here is that we might dilute the specificity of leadership by so rigorously defining it as process (Denis et al.). We do not deny that specificity of leadership is important for definitional and methodological reasons, but we do question the subject-predicate template with which leadership research is typically concerned. Conceptualizing leadership from a process perspective, we suggest, stretches the field of potential contributions to allow close up study of the role played by the everyday dynamics of experience (Shotter). What we need is a patient, sensory attentiveness to dynamic relationships, in which people are not afraid of their "joint kinship" with the world (Haraway). Subjectivity is thus inherent in the transition between positions as objectively perceived.

The focus on leadership as an intra-dependent process, rather than as discrete relationships between distinct and self-contained entities, dissolves the tension between the close-up view of the here and now and the far off view of its symbolic reference in the world (see S). Perception does not merely link the two modes: they are one. Understanding leadership as process thus results in a mode of being with the particulars of the world that brings it to a focus, not as something abstracted from its context.

A processual understanding of leadership orients around the idea of something continually emergent or unfolding (Bohm), rather than something specified from the outset. Emergence is a form of coherence that happens when physical feelings and mental valuations (prehensions) synthesize in the creation of an event. A creative synthesis provides the perception of the relevant past and serves as a guideline for the future toward which it advances. Shorn of some of its agency, leadership is therefore both a situated outcome of activity and a provisional context for action to come (Denis et al.; Uhl-Bien).

Reciprocal inclusion involves the idea of replacing leaders and followers entering into relations with the awareness that leaders and followers are relations. Leadership does not exist in the external relation between the leader and the follower, but rather as a felt experience in which each grasps some aspect or part of the other and appropriates it in the formation of a new and unique assemblage. The things that are most real, therefore, are the internal relations within the followers—that is, in their own responses to their own perceptions of the actions of the leader—and vice-versa also within the leader, in the leader's own response to the leader's own perception of the followers' actions. What matters is not so much the relationship between the parties, as what each makes of that relationship for themselves and for others (Cobb, "Persons").

The process view represents a new rendering of what has recently been termed "relational leadership" (Cunliffe and Eriksen; Uhl-Bien). Insofar as the "leader holds himself/herself as always in relation with, and therefore morally accountable to others" (Cunliffe and Eriksen 1425), the process view adopts a

philosophical position that understands social experience not as inter-subjective, but rather as intra-subjective. For a process-relational view, leadership is not so much "a way of being-in-relation-to-others" (Cunliffe and Eriksen 1430), but rather more genuinely a way of becoming-in-relation-to-others, as a relational ontology. Process-relational leadership is a way of becoming-in-the-world (contra being-in-the-world), in which the moral responsibility of leadership rests in part in our own responses.

The relational integrity that is brought to the fore in "post-heroic" approaches to leadership is now a function not so much of our response to others, but rather more our response in ourselves. The moral impact lies in our subsequent characterization of the present intensive experience, which exerts its relevance and influence in future events. In process terms, "morality is now a question of the intensive significance of present becoming in the future that will be derived from that present and which impinges on the felt contours of becoming" (Jones 288). In other words, the moral responsibility of leadership now lies in our own responsiveness— how we choose to respond to the actions of others as parts of our experiences.

We can now begin to address in a new way calls in the recent literature to pay greater attention to underlying power relationships that might influence the emergence of leadership (see, e.g. Denis et al.). Our intra-subjective processual perspective on leadership is quite different from an inter-subjective one. Therefore, our rendering/image of power is quite different from bilateralism. If leadership is relational, as we argue, then the power that surrounds it as manifest in the responses of others must also be inherently relational.

Furthermore, with the argument that there is both a receptive side to experience in receiving data from the past, and an active side in making something of that data for oneself in terms of actualizing the possibilities manifest in the present moment, power resides in the decisive capacity for reception, prehension, and actualization. Taken together, power concerns not only "the power to affect, to carry out a purpose, but also the capacity to undergo an effect, to be acted upon" (Murray 242-3).

In appreciating power as the capacity to act or be acted upon, we also gain a new description of "struggles for power." Rather than an inter-subjective rendering of power struggles between parties, our intra-subjective view suggests a direct experience of the wishes of others which each appropriates in the formation of its own nature. Each party, as a center of experiencing, contributes to the process of the becoming of another to the extent to which it responds and acts toward the other. Being able to achieve one's wishes is thus in part a function of the responses and actions of the other because the desire to achieve something is an aspect or part of the capacity to undergo an effect.

From a process perspective, the synthesis of relations conveys a mode of inclusion by which "the differences initially experienced in our encounter with a diverse world" are "reconciled" and "worked up into a unified whole" (Allan

91). If taken seriously, as theorists of power have done (see, e.g., Foucault), the "unity of self-experience" (PR 57) makes it impossible to think about leadership in terms of individual agents as detached substances imposing their will upon others. Similar to Schlemmer's line drawing, the tension felt as a power struggle is no longer a struggle between, but rather a struggle within, subjects. It is a function of the personal felt experiences of the individual intentions of the parties; they are each quite literally in-tension.

Consistent with an intra-subjective conceptualization, we argue that leadership cannot be atomistic, divorced from a thoroughgoing sense of relatedness, but rather is fundamentally interdependent. Leadership does not congeal into human subjects, but is always an achievement that is momentary within an ever-evolving field of relations. Thus, subjectivities dissolve if we consider they are themselves created along with the ever-changing event field that runs through them. To that extent, leadership relationships are not given, but are always in the process of becoming, on the way in or out.

Conclusion

Our analysis contributes to the literature in three ways. We have endeavoured to state explicitly the shortcomings in existing literature concerned with exploring the concept of relational leadership. While this work highlights some important insights for research practice, we note that it does not tackle inadequacies in current theory, which assume a conventional person-to-person exchange. Second, we have turned to a more technical terminology to account for leadership as an intra-subjective experience, which we grasp in terms of affective engagement. Set against the tendency in studies to consider leadership functions in the guise of an external contact between leaders and followers, we argue that internal relations provide insights regarding the actual nature of leadership. Finally, we have considered how an understanding of the internal constitution of leadership can supplement existing analyses and expand the possibilities for more thoroughgoing process relational leadership research.

Our contribution situates leadership studies more firmly within "applied process thought" in organization and management studies (see, e.g., Hernes; Langley; Nayak; Tourish; Tsoukas and Chia; Van de Ven and Poole; Wood). We anticipate that our contribution will facilitate a shift in perspective from external relations, typically conceived to act as direct one-to-one correspondences between two substantial individuals, to a perspective more fitted to recognize the complex of processes constituting leadership as an occurrence or event. Our contention is that leadership is neither a personal quality nor attribute, nor an instrumental interaction extending between a pair of related terms. We see leaders and followers arising in what, extending from Deleuze (Logic), we might call the most "contracted points" or "concentrated moments" of leadership's event field. These precise points or moments (relational determinations), which involve the interplay of many elements, are

not the same as a general field of events, but rather consist in the individuations-in-context that give them their defining essence. While we cannot reduce leadership to a person or persons, if we are to give sense to it in a particular experience, it must insist or inhere in both the individuation and at the same time the relationality inherent in "persons-in-community" (Cobb, "Persons"). Thus, a process of mutual relating gives rise to leaderful occasions replete with leadership as affect, which, in their cooperative unfolding, enable a sense of leadership to emerge, objectively perceivable retrospectively as an event in which leadership could be seen to have had an effect.

We have placed stress on the fact that it makes sense to speak of relations themselves—and more than this, how we respond to our experiences of these relations—before enquiring about the substance and hence fixity associated with simply located things. As such, we have outlined a distinctive way of conceptualizing leadership as an event in the making. Considering leadership in this manner overcomes some humanist beliefs and replaces the familiar bifurcation of distinct and self-contained leaders and followers with a more diverse, novel, and coherent appreciation. This is important for humankind's capacity to navigate the future that appears to lie ahead.

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