

A RE-ANALYSIS OF THE FULL-RANGE LEADERSHIP THEORY:
THE WAY FORWARD

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Transformational and charismatic Leadership: The road ahead

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Since Bob House and I wrote our chapter in 2002, there have been three major happenings in the field of transformational and charismatic leadership.

First, a huge void has been left behind after Bernie Bass and Bob House passed away in October 2007 and November 2011 respectively. Although we have lost two leading figures, research in this area continues unabated (in terms of papers published and citations received)—our movement has amassed an army of self-led academics, even from disciplines outside management and industrial-organizational psychology, who constantly push the frontiers of this line of research forward (see Antonakis, 2012).

Second, research in transformational and charismatic leadership research is being consolidated (Hunt, 1999). In addition to the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) factor structure having found the strongest support yet (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003), more meta-analyses have been conducted to determine (a) in a more fine-grained manner the impact of transformational and charismatic leadership on outcomes (Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011), its (b) predictors, notably personality (e.g., Bono & Judge, 2004), and (c) whether it can be developed (Avolio, Reichard, Hannah, Walumbwa, & Chan, 2009). Other interesting lines of research have discovered the mediating mechanisms by which transformational and charismatic leadership have an impact on followers (Naidoo & Lord, 2008). Furthermore, “spin-offs” of transformational leadership theory, namely “authentic” and “ethical” leadership have also been proposed, based in part on extensions of the seminal work of Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) on “authentic” transformational leadership.

Third, this is not a happening, but a nonhappening waiting to happen. Ten years ago, Bob and I ended our chapter by putting out the following challenge: “we hope to see longitudinal research that establishes that transformational leaders have the ability to actually transform individuals and organizations.” (Antonakis & House, 2002, p. 27); I have yet to see any takers. We have methodological tools to test such causal assumptions using field designs that may or may not use random assignment (Antonakis, Bendahan, Jacquart, & Lalive, 2010). I sincerely hope that by 2022 we

will have found the evidence that is core to reifying the “loaded” definition inherent in the word “transformational.” Perhaps all this should be a lesson to us to avoid using terms like “transformational,” “authentic,” and “ethical” leadership. Such terms are perhaps overly ambitious and have expectations of leaders that are maybe too high—researchers must not ignore just how warped the wood is from which humans are actually carved (Ciulla, 2012).

There is still much to be done to better understand transformational and charismatic leadership, particularly regarding individual differences; Bob and I mention this in our 2002 chapter, but I have not seen much progress. For example, although there is a much research showing that general intelligence is linked to leadership (Judge, Colbert, & Ilies, 2004) there is very little research showing the extent to which intelligence predicts charismatic and transformational leadership and whether this link is linear or curvilinear (cf. Simonton, 1985); it would come as a big surprise to me if intelligence did not matter a lot (cf. Simonton, 2006). Next, though we know quite a bit about how to develop transformational leadership (e.g., Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002), there are still only a few studies showing how to develop charisma (e.g., Antonakis, Fenley, & Liechti, 2011; Frese, Beimeel, & Schoenborn, 2003). Finally, Bob and I had suggested in our 2002 chapter that there is a gap in Bernie’s transformational-transactional leadership theory having to do with the strategic and work facilitation functions of leadership, what we called “instrumental leadership.” In empirical work we undertook in the last few years, we found that indeed, the transformational-transactional leadership model should be extended (Antonakis & House, 2012). More such work should be conducted because the full-range theory is not yet full enough; leadership is not just about visions, transformations and transactions, but also applying expertise to ensure organizational adaptation and effectiveness.

Despite my quibbles and suggestions, research in this area is still “hot” and very exciting. I look forward to seeing the new contributions from the next generation of scholars.

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