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A qualitative study of senior executive leaders



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# Individualized leadership: A qualitative study of senior executive leaders<sup>☆</sup>

Nancy C. Wallis<sup>a,\*</sup>, Francis J. Yammarino<sup>b,1</sup>, Ann Feyerherm<sup>c,2</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Human and Organizational Development, Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, CA 93105, USA

<sup>b</sup> School of Management and Center for Leadership Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, Binghamton, NY 13902-6000, USA

<sup>c</sup> Graziadio School of Business and Management, Pepperdine University, Irvine, CA 92612, USA

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### ABSTRACT

Individualized leadership (IL) was studied in 11 independent, formally assigned senior-level relationships. Building on leader–member exchange and transformational leadership theories, these dyadic relationships, comprised of senior executive leaders and their direct reports were examined using one-on-one interviews and coding of transcript text using qualitative research software. The results indicated that in dyadic relationships characterized by strong IL, followers determined whether their superiors would support their sense of self-worth and thus come to view their superiors as leaders. In so doing, follower behaviors contributed to the initiation of these effective leadership relationships and did so while being influenced by three sets of contextual moderators: individual characteristics of the leader, interpersonal dynamics, and developmental factors. Key findings also include differences between dyads with hired or inherited followers, and varying levels of personal closeness correlated with the gender of the leader. Transformational leader behaviors were found to support the development of these leadership relationships in unique ways. Implications for future research and practice to understand successful leader–follower relationships are discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

The view of leadership as a relational process has been generally accepted as a vital perspective in leadership research and theory. A relationship-based approach to studying dyadic level leadership processes, both within and across groups, is becoming increasingly recognized as essential to the study and understanding of leadership (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Seers, 2004). Specifically, this approach is viewed as inherently fundamental to a number of leadership paradigms including charismatic (Bass, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Conger, 1988), servant (Greenleaf, 1977), authentic (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; George, 2003), and integral leadership (Wilber, 2000) as well as leader–member exchange (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Contemporary leadership research studies have considered the leader–follower relationship as an important context of study as it has allowed for exploration of the role of the follower in contributing to leadership and its consequences (Bass, 1990; Dansereau & Yammarino, 1998; Yukl, 2001). Research on charismatic, transformational and servant leadership acknowledge the follower role as essential to the leadership process (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Burns, 1978; Conger, 1988; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Greenleaf, 1977; Hollander, 1985; House, 1977; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). However, in leadership and leadership development studies, the follower perspective has generally been limited to their perspectives on leader behaviors, resulting in

<sup>☆</sup> We thank the editor and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments which improved this work greatly. Please direct all correspondence to Nancy C. Wallis.

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 805 898 2912.

E-mail addresses: [ncwallis@fielding.edu](mailto:ncwallis@fielding.edu) (N.C. Wallis), [fjammo@binghamton.edu](mailto:fjammo@binghamton.edu) (F.J. Yammarino), [Ann.feyerherm@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Ann.feyerherm@pepperdine.edu) (A. Feyerherm).

<sup>1</sup> Tel.: +1 607 777 6066.

<sup>2</sup> Tel.: +1 949 223 2500.

claims that research is leader-centric (Crouch & Yetton, 1988; Dansereau, 1995; George, 2003; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Uhl-Bien et al., 1997). The prevailing assumption has been that it is more typically the leader who affects change, and therefore the follower's view of the leadership process is less important than the leader's view (Day, 2001; Meindl, 1995).

This study views the leadership process as a relationship between two active participants in a unique, dyadic relationship known as individualized leadership (IL). IL grows out of two important views of leadership: transformational leadership (TF) (Bass, 1985, 1990) and Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) theory, a role-based and social exchange view that holds that the quality of a dyadic leader–follower relationship is predictive of the relationship's outcomes (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997). The IL approach to understanding the leader–follower relationship can expand and uniquely contribute to our understanding of the general construct of leadership (Mumford, Dansereau, & Yammarino, 2000).

As such, the purpose of this study was to explore and understand the initiation and outcomes of IL in leader–follower dyads from the perspectives of both followers and leaders. To do so and capture the richness of such relationships, in-depth study via qualitative methods was used and did so in a rich and elaborate way, thus shedding light on what has been previously a leader-centric view of how such relationships develop. This study describes the ways followers determined it is possible to gain, and then retain, their superiors' support for their sense of self-worth, thereby coming to view their superiors as leaders. Leader perspectives on this process, and the influence of leader–follower relationship behaviors were included to improve our understanding of the context in which certain follower behaviors contribute to the development of strong dyadic relationships.

This study is unique in several ways. First, it offers the benefits of studying IL while highlighting the connections to TF and LMX theories and dimensions. Second, this study is a qualitative and quantitative descriptive case study, an important but under-represented approach in leadership research. Third, this research study is one of few to explore dyadic leadership relationships with a particular interest in understanding the follower's role and contribution to the development of it. Findings from this study could contribute to our understanding of the dynamics between leaders and followers in close, effective, working relationships in which there is a significant degree of trust, commitment, and successful outcomes. Fourth, themes from this study could help us better understand how followers decide to relate to their superiors as their leaders, and contribute to effective, independent dyadic relationships, a critically important goal as organizations operate in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing global context. Finally, this study explores dyadic leadership with senior executives in one health care insurance organization, a setting in which not much similar research has been done in the past. The findings of this study can have important implications for improving leadership outcomes in similar contexts and could provide themes for future research.

## 2. Theoretical foundations

In this section, we present two well-developed leadership theories that provide the foundation for the conceptual framework of the dyadic and individualized leadership approach used here.

### 2.1. LMX theory

LMX theory is a model of the dyadic leadership process that has supported the study of leader–follower relationships from a perspective that considers the follower role as actively contributing to leadership effectiveness and outcome quality (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Yammarino, 1990; Yammarino & Dansereau, 2002). Evolving from the vertical dyad linkage relational model of leadership (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975), LMX has been foundational to studies of the dyadic leadership relationship, the interaction of leader and follower behaviors such that unique relationships between them are developed, and how their interaction can contribute to unique, dynamic leader–follower relationships that evolve over time (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim, Castro, Zhou, & Yammarino, 2001).

LMX theory, with its focus on the dyadic relationship between a leader and a follower, or “member” of the work group, evolved from the then prevailing traditional view of leader relationships, the average leadership style (ALS) (Dansereau, Cashman, & Graen, 1973; Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The ALS approach held that although leaders differ from non-leaders and other leaders, a given leader treats all subordinates consistently and essentially forms the same relationship with everyone in the same work group (Stogdill & Coons, 1957). In contrast, Dansereau et al. (1975) studied differential relationships of superiors and subordinates within work groups, and as a result, developed a view of leadership that allowed for leaders to have the same or different leader–subordinate relationships within a work group. This vertical dyad linkage (VDL) approach, the forerunner to LMX, suggested that leaders *may* treat subordinates differently, that is, inconsistently, and therefore they may become leaders for some group members (in-group members) and not for other group members (out-group members). This approach highlighted the importance of focusing on leader–follower relationships, and so the leader–follower relationship began to be considered as a viable unit of study separate from the group per se (Dansereau, Alutto, & Yammarino, 1984; Yammarino, 1990).

The LMX framework supports the study of the dyadic leader–follower relationship with simultaneous consideration of three domains: the leader, follower and the relationship between them. The development of this dyadic relationship is based in role and exchange theories (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997; Uhl-Bien et al., 1997). The LMX model describes how effective leader–follower dyadic relationships develop over time and through a role-making process and exchange dynamics.

Throughout its evolution, LMX theory has been used to study dyadic relationships from four perspectives: (1) differences in LMX relationships within groups (in-group and out-group effect); (2) LMX relationship characteristics and their outcomes; (3) a description of dyadic relationship building; and (4) LMX relationships within groups and networks (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). It is the third stage that is of particular interest and serves as a basis for the core IL propositions studied here.

### 2.1.1. Understanding dyadic relationship building

The third stage of LMX research focused on how leader–follower relationships develop, and especially important, how high-quality leadership relationships develop over time. Key studies by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1991a, 1991b, 1995) described this relationship building process through stranger, acquaintance and mature partnership phases as exchanges between a leader and follower move from initially being formal to more informal exchanges accompanied by increased levels of mutual respect, trust and obligation. This research found that each dyad progressed through a unique process according to the relationship (Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen, Scandura, & Graen, 1986; Graen, Wakabayashi, Graen, & Graen, 1990; Liden & Graen, 1980). In the more effective and mature leadership relationships, more effective influence gave rise to more effective outcomes such as greater reciprocal influence, followers taking more initiative, career risks, and being better organizational citizens (Crouch & Yetton, 1988; Duchon, Green, & Taber, 1986; Fairhurst, 1993; Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989; Graen, 1989). Understanding how effective dyadic leadership relationships develop is essential to efforts to expand effective leadership in organizations.

### 2.1.2. Prescription for building high-quality LMX relationships

There have been investigations that have described the characteristics of unique LMX relationships including those measuring mutual trust, respect, and obligation (Crouch & Yetton, 1988; Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen, 1989; Liden & Graen, 1980; Snyder, Williams, & Cashman, 1984). Regardless, key aspects of LMX theory are not well understood including how leaders and followers, or members, influence each other in the development of strong, effective dyadic relationships (Huang, Wright, Chiu, & Wang, 2008). The current study thus provides contextual information about the characteristics and behaviors of both followers and leaders in a dyadic relationship and how they influence the quality of development of that relationship.

Measurement of the LMX construct has been refined from its original two-item scale and subsequent iterations to its current seven-item form referred to as the LMX7 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The central question this scale asks is, “How effective is your working relationship with your leader?” “Low LMX” or lower-quality LMX reflects a stranger stage; “medium LMX” reflects an acquaintance stage, and “high LMX” reflects a partnership between leader and follower. Graen and Uhl-Bien propose that the following three dimensions determine the likelihood of whether a high-quality dyadic relationship will develop: (1) mutual respect for the capabilities of the other, (2) anticipation of deep reciprocal trust, and (3) expectation that a mutual obligation will increase with time (see Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). These are the characteristics in a professional working relationship that are key to the quality of the leadership relationship that develops. The propositions in the current study were designed to explore the characterization of high levels of mutual respect, deep reciprocal trust and mutual obligation in executive leader–follower dyads.

## 2.2. Transactional and transformational leadership

In LMX theory, lower-quality LMX relationships reflect primarily transactional leadership, while higher-quality LMX relationships reflect primarily transformational leadership (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). As IL, the focus here, is a unique formulation that includes elements of both transactional and transformational leadership, these approaches warrant further exploration.

### 2.2.1. Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership (e.g., Hollander, 1979, 1985) theory focused on the leader–follower relationship as an important factor, albeit an impersonal relationship. And even though transactional theories were primarily leader-centric, they considered the follower as part of an active exchange relationship with the leader who is an active interpreter of follower performance and competence. This exchange relationship is considered a dynamic process wherein the leader provides rewards in exchange for the subordinate's effort, and therefore both have active roles in maintaining the relationship (Burns, 1978). Although this theory was originally based on the idea of the exchange of tangible commodities such as pay increases, recognition, promotions, and good performance reviews from the leader in exchange for the follower's completion of tasks and meeting goals, it also can explain the exchange of intangible commodities such as support for one's self-worth (Dansereau et al., 1995).

### 2.2.2. Transformational leadership

In contrast, transformational leadership does not deal with transactions per se (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). Although some viewed transactional and transformational leader behaviors as existing along a continuum, and others held that most leaders use both types of behaviors to different extents (Bass, 1990; Dansereau & Yammarino, 1998), researchers generally agreed that a transformational leader was one who expanded followers' needs and wants, helped followers' transcend their own self-interests for the sake of their team or organization, and challenged them to become more self-actualized. Thus, the relationship between a transformational leader and subordinate is personal and not based on formal organizational roles or reward structures (Yammarino, Dubinsky, Comer, & Jolson, 1997).

Transformational leaders develop their followers by motivating them to achieve goals greater than they previously expected (Bass, 1985). Just as these relationships include followers who are willing to change, the transformational leadership framework assumes also that the leader is willing to change as well (Avolio, Waldman, & Yammarino, 1991). In summary, transformational leader behaviors create meaningful organizational change as they develop followers into leaders while working together to meet organizational requirements and improve organizational performance (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002).

Podsakoff et al. (1990) analyzed seven theorists' models of transformational leadership behaviors and identified six key behaviors of a transformational leader including: (a) identifies and articulates a vision; (b) provides an appropriate model; (c) fosters the acceptance of group goals; (d) has high performance expectations (inspirational motivation); (e) provides individualized support (individualized consideration); and (f) offers intellectual stimulation. This definition of transformational leadership is the one used in the current study.

### 2.2.3. TF leadership behaviors in dyads characterized by IL

Although leaders in dyads characterized by IL do not necessarily have to be transformational leaders, Yammarino et al. (1997) suggested it is logical to anticipate that more often than not effective dyadic leaders would be those who use such behaviors. Transformational leader behaviors have been shown to increase trust and commitment of followers and are believed to be essential to well-run organizations that produce positive outcomes (Bass, 1985; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978; Tichy & Devanna, 1986; Vaill, 1989; Yammarino, 1990, 1996; Yukl, 2001). Key attributes of transformational leaders including holding high performance expectations and providing individualized support, which likely augment the relational dynamics in successful dyads, both those characterized by IL and those considered high-quality LMX relationships. Subordinates might describe events where leaders' inspiration, motivation or modeling supported their actions and ideas or encouraged them to take appropriate risks.

## 2.3. Individualized leadership (IL) theory

### 2.3.1. IL defined

Building on the above background and foundational work on LMX and transformational-transactional leadership, IL is a conceptual framework that offers another leadership alternative. It recognizes the interpersonal aspect of superior-subordinate dyadic relationships and so allows for leaders to form unique, independent, balanced one-to-one relationships with each of their followers in separate and distinct dyads. Formally assigned dyads have unique beginnings because individuals are complex and flexible and form distinct relationships (Dansereau et al., 1995; Yammarino & Dansereau, 2002). The IL approach holds that successful leaders in dyads characterized by high degrees of IL provide support for their subordinates' feelings of self-worth (Dansereau et al., 1995). The roles of followers in such dyads are of particular interest because of the usefulness of understanding how support for self-worth is perceived, and done so over time.

Dansereau et al. (1995) reasoned that the superior-subordinate relationship depended on the ability of the leader to provide support for a subordinate as an individual. Building on the work of earlier theorists, they suggested that exchange theory generally supports the proposition that superiors support the sense of self-worth of those subordinates whose performance is satisfactory (Berscheid, 1985; Homans, 1961; Stogdill & Coons, 1957). This support for one's sense of self-worth encourages the subordinate to continue performing in ways which the superior deems satisfactory in order to continue gaining such support for the subordinate's self-esteem. Therefore, IL has elements of LMX as well as both transactional and transformational leadership, as these involve the dyadic exchange of both tangible and intangible commodities.

### 2.3.2. Follower determination of self-worth (viewing superior as leader)

The IL approach suggests that subordinates in unique, independent, dyadic relationships with formally assigned superiors may determine that they can gain their superior's support for their sense of self-worth, and that if they do, this determination marks their recognition of their superior as a leader. This recognition of formally assigned superiors as leaders, and their support for the followers' sense of self-worth, results in the followers contributing satisfying performance. Thus, a subordinate's perceptions of support for self-worth initiates IL in the dyadic relationship (Dansereau et al., 1995; Yammarino & Dansereau, 2002).

In those leader–follower dyads that evolve to exhibit IL, the approach posits that subordinates viewed their superiors as leaders early in the relationship when they determined support for their self-worth according to the presence of the following three influencing factors (Dansereau et al., 1995): (1) feeling safe to reveal personal things about themselves (Jones & Archer, 1976); (2) feeling inspired by the leader to do his personal best (Dutton & Aron, 1974); and (3) feeling secure about approaching the leader in situations of ambiguity (Bandura, 1986). In these dyads, subordinates make the determination for support of self-worth early in the leadership process and interdependently within the leadership relationship. It would be expected that subordinates could describe early relationship events that included these influencing factors independent of the structural context for the beginning of the relationship. Subordinates could indicate a sense of personal safety supporting their decision to disclose things of a personal nature to the superior. They also might describe events where they perceived superiors to encourage them to do their personal best, and where they felt a sense of trust between them by describing a time when they approached superiors in an ambiguous situation. This discussion suggests to the following:

**Proposition 1.** In leader–follower dyads characterized by IL, subordinates come to view their superiors as leaders in the initial stages of the relationship if they determine the superior supports their sense of self-worth. This occurs when the follower determines the following three influencing factors are present: (1) feeling safe to reveal personal things, (2) feeling inspired by the leader to do his or her personal best, and (3) feeling secure they could approach their superior in situations of ambiguity.

### 2.3.3. Initiation of IL

The essential beginning of the dyadic match appears to be a subordinate's early assessment of support for his/her sense of self-worth regardless of the personal attraction or likeability between them, or even of the subordinate's performance (Yammarino &

Dansereau, 2002). IL research can help us better understand the relationship between this dyadic process and the emerging, related leadership process.

Early pivotal events can set the course of the relationships thereby leading to followers' impressions of support for self-worth and this can change with time as the relationships evolve (Dansereau et al., 1995). IL approach suggests that as the relationship develops, a follower can determine his/her superior's support for his/her self-worth by assessing three factors: the degree to which a superior has confidence in a subordinate's integrity, ability, and motivation (House, 1977; Likert, 1961); the degree to which a superior pays attention to a subordinate's feelings and needs (Bowers & Seashore, 1966; House, 1977, 1988; Stogdill & Coons, 1957); and the degree to which a superior supports an individual's actions and ideas (Dansereau et al., 1975). Support for self-worth is reinforced as subordinates contribute satisfactory performance, and leaders respond in ways that further support self-worth. This exchange dynamic provides a feedback cycle that strengthens the perception of support for self-worth (Yammarino & Dansereau, 2002).

Ascertaining support for one's self-worth is a subtle and private process. Furthermore, support for self-worth is not necessarily related to the level of self-esteem of the follower. IL can be in place with individuals regardless of their level of self-esteem, as it is normal for any individual to seek support for self-worth regardless of their current operating self-efficacy levels (Branden, 1998). The essence of IL is that it provides for the empowerment of individuals by supporting them as independent followers who are acting out their own views and ideas (Dansereau & Yammarino, 2000). This can be accomplished with individuals possessing varying levels of self-esteem.

It should also be clarified that support for self-worth does not mean making the recipient happy by agreeing with or mindlessly supporting every initiative. It does mean, however, treating persons with trust and respect, and acting with integrity, even in the most challenging situations. In their letter exchange with Mumford (2000), Dansereau and Yammarino (2000) follow up on Mumford's use of the case of Jack Welch at GE to describe a leader who may develop IL with some of his direct reports and thereby use self-worth to empower them; yet even those individuals who were empowered may not have experienced this as happiness. This discussion suggests to the following:

**Proposition 2.** Subordinates determine support for self-worth when superiors pay attention to their needs and feelings, superiors have confidence in subordinates' integrity, motivation and ability, and superiors support subordinates' actions and ideas.

IL is only one approach to leadership and is not intended to replace any of the other approaches, e.g., supervision skills, task and relationship skills, and transformational leadership skills (Dansereau & Yammarino, 2000). For instance, individualized and transformational leadership behaviors can be integrated, as Mumford (2000) suggested, such that subordinates' feelings of self-worth can augment a leader's vision so that followers are more likely to transcend short-term difficulties and setbacks.

Likewise, as Ferris and Harrell-Cook (1998) point out, IL can illuminate possible organizational effects of dyadic relationships on human resource processes such as performance evaluations. Examining linkages between individuals when dyads do not develop into strong relationships can further understanding of how to better support individuals whose feelings, needs, actions and ideas are different from one's own (Dansereau & Yammarino, 2000). This discussion suggests to the following:

**Proposition 3.** Transformational leadership behaviors augment IL and are present in dyads characterized by high levels of IL. These TF behaviors may vary in degree and expression.

## 2.4. Summary

Proposition 1 suggests subordinates in dyadic relationships characterized by IL come to view their superiors as leaders in the initial stages of their relationships when they determine support for their sense of self-worth. They do this when contextual factors cause them to feel safe to share something personal (Jones & Archer, 1976), are inspired by the leaders to do their personal best (Dutton & Aron, 1974), and are comfortable approaching their leaders in times of ambiguity (Bandura, 1986). Proposition 2 addresses the crux of IL by looking at whether subordinates determine support for self-worth via superiors paying attention to their needs and feelings (Stogdill & Coons, 1957), superiors having confidence in subordinates' integrity, motivation and ability (House, 1977; Likert, 1961), and superiors supporting subordinates' actions and ideas (Dansereau et al., 1975). Proposition 3 asserts transformational leadership behaviors are likely present and influential in strong dyads characterized by IL and may vary in degree and expression.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Setting

This case study took place in one Western USA health care insurance organization with more than \$2 billion in premium revenues, over 2 million HMO, PPO, and Indemnity members, and which operated with 4000 employees in 30 locations. The Company was considered successful as determined by its annual reports and was recognized among its comparably sized competitors as having one of the fastest growing HMOs by membership, one of the most profitable companies in the industry, and was known to compete successfully by offering new, innovative products each year. The Company was characterized by its senior leaders as an advocate for positive change in the managed care industry, and was involved in continued reform efforts, particularly

at the state level, including public policy initiatives that were designed to improve the cost, quality, and access to health care services.

The setting was confirmed after its COO described the dyadic leader–follower relationships between the senior vice presidents (SVPs) and their direct reports, vice presidents, the two levels of management which comprised the hierarchical dyadic relationships, as being independent across the other dyads in the study and highly interdependent within the leader–follower dyads as defined by IL. He described the formally assigned dyads as being characterized by high levels of closeness, goodwill and maturity, and provided evidence that these dyads performed effectively within the organization. Thus the setting was determined to contain senior-level dyads characterized to some degree by IL.

### 3.2. Participant selection

The senior management team included 10 senior vice presidents and 10 vice presidents each of whom reported either to the President or the Chairman/CEO. Each SVP had at least five direct reports and managed all or parts of operational departments including the life insurance subsidiary, Legal, Finance, Operations, Sales, or the Human Resources Department. Introductory telephone conversations identified six leaders that both met the study criteria and were willing to participate. Those who declined did so either because their schedules were too busy or they were in their respective positions too short of a time to have developed dyadic relationships as characterized by IL. Each of the six leaders gave the names of their direct reports with whom they perceived they shared a relationship characterized by IL, and who they believed might be willing to volunteer as the other part of the potential dyad. This aspect of the design reduced the setting as a source of potential bias in the study as it eliminated multiple department contexts. After following the same protocol with these potential participants, each one agreed to participate in the study. Each follower was one of at least four other direct reports of his/her leader. The resulting sample of 11 dyads was comprised of six different leaders and one, two, or three of their direct reports with whom they shared relationships that fit the criteria of IL.

The participants were highly experienced and educated with, on average, 14 years working experience in the industry. Their ages ranged from the early 30s to the mid-50s, and their education levels ranged from undergraduate to doctorate degrees. Though not by design, it turned out that each of the four possible gender leader–follower combinations was present. Prior working relationships were neither restricted nor sought as a criterion of the sample, and four dyads had prior working relationships although not superior–subordinate as in this study. As this study focused on the notion of dyadic initiation, whether the dyads were new at this Company and their tenure, were two variables that could show some potential associations with follower initiating behavior. Table 1 lists the 11 dyads and pseudonyms for the subordinates and superiors in each dyad, followed by dyadic tenure in years, whether there was a prior working relationship, whether the superior hired or inherited the follower, and the genders of the leaders and followers. The 11 dyads were distributed across the six leaders as shown in the table.

### 3.3. Interview process and protocol

One-on-one, separate, tape-recorded interviews were conducted with each leader and each follower in on-site conference rooms and offices at the organizational setting at prescheduled times. Each leader was interviewed separately for each unique dyadic relationship. Each of the 22 interviews lasted between one and one-and-one-half hours. These researchers transcribed each interview and all participants reviewed their transcripts to confirm their accuracy.

The interview protocol was a self-developed open-ended 23-item question set, one version for the follower and one version reworded slightly in the leaders' protocol to gain their insight of the followers' experience. The structure of the protocols is derived from the theoretical framework on IL (Dansereau, 1995; Dansereau et al., 1995), and the underlying supporting frameworks of LMX (Dansereau et al., 1975) and transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Podsakoff et al., 1990). Details are provided in Table 2.

**Table 1**  
Dyadic composition.

| Dyad no. | Pseudonyms (follower, leader) | Dyadic tenure (years) | Prior working relationship (1) | Follower hired or inherited | Gender (follower, leader) |
|----------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1        | Diana, Alexandra              | 1                     | No                             | hired                       | female–female             |
| 2        | Lyn, Alexandra                | 2                     | No                             | inherited                   | male–female               |
| 3        | Jim, Jeff                     | 3                     | No                             | hired                       | male–male                 |
| 4        | Mariam, Mary                  | 4                     | No                             | inherited                   | female–female             |
| 5        | Sue, Mary                     | 3                     | Yes                            | inherited                   | female–female             |
| 6        | Kate, Mary                    | 3                     | No                             | hired                       | female–female             |
| 7        | George, Dale                  | 2                     | Yes                            | hired                       | male–male                 |
| 8        | Rocky, Caitlin                | 5                     | Yes                            | inherited                   | female–female             |
| 9        | Dave, Caitlin                 | 3                     | No                             | inherited                   | male–female               |
| 10       | Mark, Frank                   | 3                     | No                             | hired                       | male–male                 |
| 11       | Cassie, Frank                 | 2                     | No                             | hired                       | female–male               |

(1) The prior relationships of participants in dyads numbered 5, 7, and 8 were not superior–subordinate relationships.

**Table 2**

Interview protocol for follower interviews.

*[Questions 1–3 establish the degree to which IL is present in the dyad.]*

1. Do you have latitude in doing your job, such as completing projects and directing other individuals in such a way that others would say you are independent? Do you think XXX views you independently, as a unique individual? As compared to her other direct report relationships? Can you think of an example that shows this?
2. How would you describe the interdependence between XXX and yourself? Please use any characterization that reflects the dimensions and aspects that you find to be important and illustrative of your relationship.
3. Some researchers say that there is a relationship between the satisfactory performance of a subordinate (as determined by a superior) and the subordinate's feelings about how much the superior supports his sense of self-worth. In your relationship with XXX, how would you describe these two factors, performance and support for your self-worth, in this relationship?

*[Questions 4–6 refer to the beginning stage of the relationship and determine whether the follower came to view his/her superior as a leader.]*

4. Was there a time early in your relationship when you came to believe it was safe to reveal personal things about yourself with XXX? If so, can you remember an example of this?
5. Was there a time early in your relationship when XXX inspired you to do your personal best? If so, can you remember an example of this happening?
6. Was there a time early in your relationship when you looked to XXX in a situation of ambiguity? If so, can you describe an incident you might remember?

*[Questions 7–13 also refer to the beginning stage of the relationship and explore whether/how the follower determined his/her superior would support his/her self-worth.]*

7. Tell me about the beginning of your working relationship with XXX. What were your initial impressions of the relationship (give examples)?
  8. Did your impressions of him/her change (if yes, how and give examples)?
  9. Were there pivotal events that put your relationship on its ultimate path, or set the character of your relationship? If so, what were some of them and if not, how did it happen?
  10. How do you think this relationship affected, or influenced, how you did your job, or you as a person?
  11. Were there key events that indicated XXX would pay attention to your needs and feelings? Give an example of an event when you concluded this.
  12. Was there a time when you concluded that XXX had confidence in your individual motivation, integrity, and ability? Give an example.
  13. Were there particular events when you decided that XXX supported your actions and ideas? Give an example.
- Anything else you might remember about the beginning of your relationship as relates to your viewing XXX as a leader, or the development of your relationship?

*[Questions 14–18 explore transformational leader behaviors.]*

14. Behavior 1: Articulates a Vision. Does XXX inspire others with his/her plans for the future such that s/he is able to get others committed to his/her dream of the future? Give an example of a recent time this occurred.
15. Behavior 2: Provides an Appropriate Model. Do you think XXX provides a good model to follow and leads by example? Why or why not?
16. Behavior 3: Fosters the Acceptance of Group Goals. Does XXX develop a team attitude and spirit among his/her employees? Give an example of how s/he does this.
17. Behavior 4: Communicates High Performance Expectations. Do you think XXX insists on only the best performance, and will not settle for second best? Why do you think this?
18. Behavior 6: Provides Intellectual Stimulation. Does XXX stimulate you to think about old problems in new ways and provide some of these new perspectives?

*[Questions 19–21 control for retrospective nature of core questions above by asking parallel set of questions about support for self-worth behaviors at the present time.]*

19. Can you give an example of a time recently when XXX paid attention to your needs and feelings?
20. Has there been a situation that happened recently, which showed you that XXX had confidence in your motivation, integrity, and ability? Would you describe what happened?
21. Finally, can you think of a recent example that confirmed for you that XXX supports your actions and ideas?

*[Questions 22–23 explore the dyad's performance level.]*

22. How would you describe the effectiveness of your relationship with XXX? I'm thinking about the professional aspects (meeting the goals and objectives set for you and your area) and things like performance. For example, on a scale of 1–10 with 10 being excellent performance and all key goals met, how would you rate its effectiveness and why?
  23. How would you describe the effectiveness of your relationship with XXX today, that is, from an interpersonal level, considering aspects such as interdependency, maturity and generally how the relationship feels to you as a professional? For example, on a scale of 1–10 with 10 being high levels of trust, safety, closeness, support, and interdependency, how would you rate it and why?
- Is there anything more you would like to add to our discussion?

### 3.4. Transcript coding

All interview transcripts, debriefing summaries, and field journal notes were studied to identify patterns and themes. Using qualitative research software, QSR NUD\*IST version 4.0, the text units in the transcripts were indexed and coded by background data, interview question, and group of questions. The final logical tree structure is shown in [Table 3](#).

#### 3.4.1. Coding contextual moderators

The primary researcher coded all interview text into a set of emerging concept nodes so that while the theoretical framework of the study defined the initial concept nodes, subsequent nodes were identified as other patterns and themes emerged. These form the basis for the findings considered as contextual moderators. All 22 transcripts were coded by one researcher as part of the emergent part of the logical tree structure resulting in 254 content units. Sixty-eight percent of the coded transcripts were cross-coded by a second coder. The second coder's labeling agreed 87.8% with the contextual factor being described by the respondent. Comparing the frequencies of conceptual themes across the dyads has been done to provide another way of looking at the data.



**Table 3**  
 NUD\*IST logical tree structure developed in coding transcripts.

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|          |   |
|----------|---|
| (1)      | /background data  |
| (1 1)    | /background data/gender                                 |
| (1 1 1)  | /background data/gender/female                          |
| (1 1 2)  | /background data/gender/male                            |
| (1 2)    | /background data/age                                    |
| (1 2 1)  | /background data/age/30 and under                       |
| (1 2 2)  | /background data/age/31-40                              |
| (1 2 3)  | /background data/age/41-50                              |
| (1 2 4)  | /background data/age/51-60                              |
| (1 2 5)  | /background data/age/61-70                              |
| (1 3)    | /background data/race                                   |
| (1 3 1)  | /background data/race/spanish-hispanic                  |
| (1 3 2)  | /background data/race/API                               |
| (1 3 3)  | /background data/race/white                             |
| (1 3 4)  | /background data/race/black                             |
| (1 3 5)  | /background data/race/american indian                   |
| (1 3 6)  | /background data/race/eskimo                            |
| (1 3 7)  | /background data/race/aleut                             |
| (1 4)    | /background data/education level                        |
| (1 4 1)  | /background data/education level/elementary             |
| (1 4 2)  | /background data/education level/some high school       |
| (1 4 3)  | /background data/education level/high school graduate   |
| (1 4 4)  | /background data/education level/some college           |
| (1 4 5)  | /background data/education level/2 year college grad    |
| (1 4 6)  | /background data/education level/4 year college grad    |
| (1 4 7)  | /background data/education level/some graduate work     |
| (1 4 8)  | /background data/education level/graduate degree        |
| (1 5)    | /background data/graduate degrees - professional cert   |
| (1 5 1)  | /background data/graduate degrees - prof cert/masters   |
| (1 5 2)  | /background data/graduate degrees - prof cert/ph.d.     |
| (1 5 3)  | /background data/graduate degrees - prof cert/prof cert |
| (1 5 4)  | /background data/graduate degrees - prof cert/none-unk  |
| (1 6)    | /background data/present position                       |
| (1 6 1)  | /background data/present position/analyst               |
| (1 6 2)  | /background data/present position/manager               |
| (1 6 3)  | /background data/present position/director              |
| (1 6 4)  | /background data/present position/vice president        |
| (1 6 5)  | /background data/present position/senior vice president |
| (1 7)    | /background data/years in position                      |
| (1 7 1)  | /background data/years in position/1 year or less       |
| (1 7 2)  | /background data/years in position/2 years              |
| (1 7 3)  | /background data/years in position/3 years              |
| (1 7 4)  | /background data/years in position/4 years              |
| (1 7 5)  | /background data/years in position/5 years              |
| (1 7 6)  | /background data/years in position/6-10 years           |
| (1 7 7)  | /background data/years in position/11-15 years          |
| (1 7 8)  | /background data/years in position/16-20 years          |
| (1 7 9)  | /background data/years in position/21 or more years     |
| (1 8)    | /background data/years at company                       |
| (1 8 1)  | /background data/years at company/1 year or less        |
| (1 8 2)  | /background data/years at company/2 years               |
| (1 8 3)  | /background data/years at company/3 years               |
| (1 8 4)  | /background data/years at company/4 years               |
| (1 8 5)  | /background data/years at company/5 years               |
| (1 8 6)  | /background data/years at company/6-10 years            |
| (1 8 7)  | /background data/years at company/11-15 years           |
| (1 8 8)  | /background data/years at company/16-20 years           |
| (1 8 9)  | /background data/years at company/21 or more years      |
| (1 9)    | /background data/years in industry                      |
| (1 9 1)  | /background data/years in industry/1-5 years            |
| (1 9 2)  | /background data/years in industry/6-10 years           |
| (1 9 3)  | /background data/years in industry/11-15 years          |
| (1 9 4)  | /background data/years in industry/16-20 years          |
| (1 9 5)  | /background data/years in industry/21-25 years          |
| (1 9 6)  | /background data/years in industry/over 25 years        |
| (1 10)   | /background data/moved up thru ranks?                   |
| (1 10 1) | /background data/moved up thru ranks? /yes              |
| (1 10 2) | /background data/moved up thru ranks? /no               |

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(continued on next page)

**Table 3** (continued)

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|            |  |
|------------|--|
| (1 11)     | /background data/years with leader                       |
| (1 11 1)   | /background data/years with leader/1 year or less        |
| (1 11 2)   | /background data/years with leader/2 years               |
| (1 11 3)   | /background data/years with leader/3 years               |
| (1 11 4)   | /background data/years with leader/4 years               |
| (1 11 5)   | /background data/years with leader/5 years               |
| (1 11 6)   | /background data/years with leader/6-10 years            |
| (1 11 7)   | /background data/years with leader/11-15 years           |
| (1 12)     | /background data/prior working relationship?             |
| (1 12 1)   | /background data/prior working relationship? /yes        |
| (1 12 1 1) | /background data/prior working rel? /yes/1 year or less  |
| (1 12 1 2) | /background data/prior working rel? /yes/2 or more years |
| (1 12 2)   | /background data/prior working rel? /no                  |
| (1 13)     | /background data/no. of direct reports                   |
| (1 13 1)   | /background data/no. of direct reports/1-3               |
| (1 13 2)   | /background data/no. of direct reports/4-6               |
| (1 13 3)   | /background data/no. of direct reports/7 or more         |
| (1 13 4)   | /background data/no. of direct reports/0                 |
| (1 14)     | /background data/leader                                  |
| (1 15)     | /background data/follower                                |
| (1 16)     | /background data/dyad                                    |
| (1 16 1)   | /background data/dyad/alexandra#1                        |
| (1 16 2)   | /background data/dyad/alexandra#2                        |
| (1 16 3)   | /background data/dyad/jeff                               |
| (1 16 4)   | /background data/dyad/mary#1                             |
| (1 16 5)   | /background data/dyad/mary#2                             |
| (1 16 6)   | /background data/dyad/mary#3                             |
| (1 16 7)   | /background data/dyad/dale                               |
| (1 16 8)   | /background data/dyad/caitlin#1                          |
| (1 16 9)   | /background data/dyad/caitlin#2                          |
| (1 16 10)  | /background data/dyad/frank#1                            |
| (1 16 11)  | /background data/dyad/frank#2                            |
| (1 17)     | /background data/groups of dyads                         |
| (1 17 1)   | /background data/groups of dyads/alexandra               |
| (1 17 1 1) | /background data/groups of dyads/alexandra/alexandra#1   |
| (1 17 1 2) | /background data/groups of dyads/alexandra/alexandra#2   |
| (1 17 2)   | /background data/groups of dyads/jeff                    |
| (1 17 2 1) | /background data/groups of dyads/jeff/jeff#1             |
| (1 17 3)   | /background data/groups of dyads/mary                    |
| (1 17 3 1) | /background data/groups of dyads/mary/mary#1             |
| (1 17 3 2) | /background data/groups of dyads/mary/mary#2             |
| (1 17 3 3) | /background data/groups of dyads/mary/mary#3             |
| (1 17 4)   | /background data/groups of dyads/dale                    |
| (1 17 4 1) | /background data/groups of dyads/dale/dale#1             |
| (1 17 5)   | /background data/groups of dyads/caitlin                 |
| (1 17 5 1) | /background data/groups of dyads/caitlin/caitlin#1       |
| (1 17 5 2) | /background data/groups of dyads/caitlin/caitlin#2       |
| (1 17 6)   | /background data/groups of dyads/frank                   |
| (1 17 6 1) | /background data/groups of dyads/frank/frank#1           |
| (1 17 6 2) | /background data/groups of dyads/frank/frank#2           |
| (2)        | /CLUSTERS  |
| (2 1)      | /CLUSTERS/C1   |
| (2 2)      | /CLUSTERS/C2   |
| (2 3)      | /CLUSTERS/C3   |
| (2 4)      | /CLUSTERS/C4   |
| (2 5)      | /CLUSTERS/C5   |
| (2 6)      | /CLUSTERS/C6   |
| (2 7)      | /CLUSTERS/C7   |
| (3)        | /QUESTIONS   |
| (3 1)      | /QUESTIONS/Q1  |
| (3 2)      | /QUESTIONS/Q2  |
| (3 3)      | /QUESTIONS/Q3  |
| (3 4)      | /QUESTIONS/Q4  |
| (3 5)      | /QUESTIONS/Q5  |
| (3 6)      | /QUESTIONS/Q6  |
| (3 7)      | /QUESTIONS/Q7  |
| (3 8)      | /QUESTIONS/Q8  |
| (3 9)      | /QUESTIONS/Q9  |
| (3 10)     | /QUESTIONS/Q10   |
| (3 11)     | /QUESTIONS/Q11   |

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Table 3 (continued)

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|          |   |
|----------|---|
| (3 12)   | /QUESTIONS/Q12  |
| (3 13)   | /QUESTIONS/Q13  |
| (3 14)   | /QUESTIONS/Q14  |
| (3 15)   | /QUESTIONS/Q15  |
| (3 16)   | /QUESTIONS/Q16  |
| (3 17)   | /QUESTIONS/Q17  |
| (3 18)   | /QUESTIONS/Q18  |
| (3 19)   | /QUESTIONS/Q19  |
| (3 20)   | /QUESTIONS/Q20  |
| (3 21)   | /QUESTIONS/Q21  |
| (3 22)   | /QUESTIONS/Q22  |
| (3 23)   | /QUESTIONS/Q23  |
| (4)      | /CONCEPTS   |
| (4 1)    | /CONCEPTS/independent                                 |
| (4 2)    | /CONCEPTS/interdependence                             |
| (4 3)    | /CONCEPTS/exchange dynamics                           |
| (4 4)    | /CONCEPTS/safety                                      |
| (4 5)    | /CONCEPTS/personal best                               |
| (4 6)    | /CONCEPTS/trust                                       |
| (4 7)    | /CONCEPTS/respect                                     |
| (4 8)    | /CONCEPTS/support                                     |
| (4 9)    | /CONCEPTS/openness                                    |
| (4 10)   | /CONCEPTS/needs and feelings                          |
| (4 10 1) | /CONCEPTS/needs and feelings/initially                |
| (4 10 2) | /CONCEPTS/needs and feelings/recently                 |
| (4 11)   | /CONCEPTS/motivation, integrity and ability           |
| (4 11 1) | /CONCEPTS/motivation, integrity and ability/initially |
| (4 11 2) | /CONCEPTS/motivation, integrity and ability/recently  |
| (4 12)   | /CONCEPTS/actions and ideas                           |
| (4 12 1) | /CONCEPTS/actions and ideas/initially                 |
| (4 12 2) | /CONCEPTS/actions and ideas/recently                  |
| (4 13)   | /CONCEPTS/TF1-visionary                               |
| (4 14)   | /CONCEPTS/TF2-role model                              |
| (4 15)   | /CONCEPTS/TF3-team spirit                             |
| (4 16)   | /CONCEPTS/TF4-excellence                              |
| (4 17)   | /CONCEPTS/TF5-intellectual                            |
| (4 18)   | /CONCEPTS/values                                      |
| (4 19)   | /CONCEPTS/acceptance                                  |
| (4 20)   | /CONCEPTS/love  |
| (4 21)   | /CONCEPTS/confidence                                  |
| (4 22)   | /CONCEPTS/communication                               |
| (4 23)   | /CONCEPTS/authenticity                                |
| (4 24)   | /CONCEPTS/fun   |
| (4 25)   | /CONCEPTS/integrity                                   |
| (4 26)   | /CONCEPTS/self-responsibility                         |
| (4 27)   | /CONCEPTS/learning                                    |
| (4 28)   | /CONCEPTS/competence                                  |
| (4 29)   | /CONCEPTS/intuitiveness                               |
| (4 30)   | /CONCEPTS/creativity                                  |
| (4 31)   | /CONCEPTS/realism                                     |
| (4 32)   | /CONCEPTS/flexibility                                 |
| (4 33)   | /CONCEPTS/change                                      |
| (4 34)   | /CONCEPTS/mistakes                                    |
| (4 35)   | /CONCEPTS/benevolence                                 |
| (4 36)   | /CONCEPTS/cooperativeness                             |
| (4 37)   | /CONCEPTS/task-centered                               |
| (4 38)   | /CONCEPTS/dev of rel                                  |
| (4 38 1) | /CONCEPTS/dev of rel/consistent                       |
| (4 38 2) | /CONCEPTS/dev of rel/pivotal event                    |
| (4 38 3) | /CONCEPTS/dev of rel/F initiates                      |
| (5)      | /theory testing                                       |
| (5 1)    | /theory testing/RQ1-is IL present?                    |
| (5 1 2)  | /theory testing/RQ1-is IL present? /RQ1 by dyad node  |
| (5 2)    | /theory testing/RQ2-F views as L?                     |
| (5 3)    | /theory testing/RQ3-support for s-w?                  |
| (5 4)    | /theory testing/s-w adjectives                        |
| (5 4 1)  | /theory testing/s-w adjectives/S-W less Box 2         |
| (5 5)    | /theory testing/TF leader behaviors                   |

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Each transcript was completely coded for the 38 concepts that emerged such that all coded responses in this study are in one or more of these 38 concept nodes.

### 3.4.2. Coding transformational behaviors

All 22 transcripts were coded by one researcher, thus determining the content units for analysis. Each transcript was coded using the six transformational leader behaviors from Podsakoff et al. (1990) resulting in 273 content units. Subsequently, a second researcher coded the same content units for all the transcripts. The resulting inter-rater reliability was 83.9%. There were patterns in the disagreements that reflected how the transformational leader behaviors characterized the dyadic relationship. In particular, the second coder, the individual who conducted and transcribed the interviews, was more likely to code a transformational leader behavior as individualized support, thus explaining the majority of the coding differences. These differences and notions will be elaborated in the results section.

## 4. Results

Preliminary discussions with organizational senior executives suggested IL characterized the SVPs' dyadic relationships with their direct reports. Responses to research questions 1–3 in the interview protocol provided strong evidence in confirming this. Followers were viewed as independent, unique individuals, particularly as compared to the other direct report relationships of their superiors. In some dyads this independence was emphasized as one of the key reasons for the success of the relationship and was one of the ways subordinates used to describe the manner in which the relationship routinely operated. Superior-subordinate interdependence was evident as well and emphasized over subordinate independence. Examples showed a high degree of agreement in the perceptions and behaviors between the leader and follower in each of the dyads. This fits with previous findings that superior–subordinate agreement is a characteristic of stronger, balanced dyadic relationships (Yammarino, 1996; Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1992, 1994).

One example of the nature of interdependence was shown in the relationship between Kate and her leader, Mary. Kate was extremely independent, as evidenced by her creation of a brand new Organizational Development function at the Company. With a Ph.D. in Organizational Psychology, Kate's work brought a new dimension to leadership development and increasing cross-cultural competencies within the organization. In this role, Kate emphasized trust as key to her successful relationship with Mary:

*I couldn't be successful in my job without the relationship I had with Mary because she runs with that senior group, and so she was able to do lots of context setting for me and also to be a thought-partner on difficult issues, and because we had amazing trust in our relationship, I could feel free to talk with her about all the confidential stuff I was hearing and knew was going on, and she could feel free to do the same. And in that context we could figure out, okay, what's best for the organization, what's best for the client, and how can we work together to resolve that.*

The presence of IL in the dyads was also evidenced by the reciprocal exchange of follower performance for leader rewards, both tangible and intangible. While participants did mention the effect of tangible rewards such as merit increases, bonuses, positive performance reviews and promotions, they found most meaningful the intangible rewards such as increasingly challenging job assignments and increased levels of responsibility in the organization. These development opportunities for the followers were discussed with their leaders and incorporated into the exchange of performance for rewards in their relationships.

### 4.1. Support for IL – Propositions 1 and 2

#### 4.1.1. Viewing superiors as leaders given determination of support for self-worth [Proposition 1]

Without exception, the followers in each dyad came to view their superiors as leaders early in the relationships. There was evidence for pivotal events having a significant influence on the followers coming to view their superiors as leaders and for each relationship developing “slow and steady” over time. This support was in the quantity and quality of the examples followers used to describe their sense that it was safe to share something personal, that their superiors inspired their personal best, and that they were comfortable going to their superior in a situation of ambiguity.

Determining support for a follower's sense of self-worth occurred earlier in the dyads with hired followers, as the interview and hiring process offered opportunities for developing knowledge of and trust in the other. Followers in the inherited follower dyads cited significant organizational changes, such as the abrupt resignation of a leader, as events that influenced the development of the relationships over an initial period of time. Both hired and inherited followers described this process as one that occurred over several months and during significant events that happened early in the relationships. An example for a dyad including an inherited follower and one including a hired follower follow.

A feature unique to the dyad comprised of Jeff as a leader and Jim whom he inherited was that they carpooled to work, and both mentioned the time they spent commuting together as a critical factor in the early development of their working relationship and Jim's coming to view Jeff as a leader. Jim described how carpooling with his boss made it easier, and personally safer, to explore issues he viewed as critical to his success. The informal nature of the hours spent together traveling was a critical opportunity for Jim to ask about what it took to succeed in his position, about the amount of power he actually had, about critical corporate relationships he needed to make, and about “forces” in the company's political environment. He said he got candid feedback this way as a result of their deeper conversations.

In the dyadic relationship between George and the leader who hired him, Dale, George was clear in his belief that Dale inspired him to do his personal best, adding that this was Dale's approach with the entire Law Department as it worked to a high standard of quality. Dale clearly illustrated in his response how this inspiration related to the successful relationship they shared. He said:

*I think that George does his personal best because he respects me and trusts me and wants to inspire the same kind of respect and trust of him. I think that how we manifest that is in our everyday dealings with one another. I don't think there is An Incident or A Technique or An Event that occurred that motivated George to do his personal best. I think he's motivated to do his personal best because of the nature of our relationship and that we want to not disappoint each other.*

In dyad 1, both Diana and Alexandra cited the example of Diana approaching Alexandra in a situation of ambiguity where there was a work style difference between them. Diana felt clarification was necessary for her to do her job. Their different work styles made this something they needed to work through, even though they came from the interview process with significant levels of commitment and trust. Diana needed to clarify things more often, such as deadlines, whereas Alexandra's style was more intuitive and she tended to go with the natural flow of things. Even more interesting is that the comfort level was so high between them that this resolution process was often done publicly. Diana described their method of resolving little ambiguities using their process abilities this way:

*Where she (Alexandra) is much more intuitive, and likes to let the process flow more...I try to institute a process, like deadlines, sometimes...our differences become very clear because I'll be impatient, she'll be impatient, and then we get over it within seconds. She says, 'Yeah it drives me crazy but I appreciate the fact that you're always clarifying it.' ...Yes, in the moment we will drive each other crazy, just like anything from a different perspective would, but I haven't heard it to be a problem.*

#### 4.1.2. Early initiation of IL [Proposition 2]

Without exception, each follower in the study determined his/her superior supported his/her sense of self-worth within the first several months of the reporting relationship. Retrospective interview questions confirmed that these aspects of the dyadic relationships were present in the early stages of the relationships. Key events in which the followers made these conclusions included the leader giving the follower time to heal over the loss of a close boss; providing a sense that a leader was genuine and cared about people; and shared foibles early in their relationship which created a bond borne of embarrassment and/or sensitive interactions. Followers determined their superiors had confidence in their motivation, integrity, and ability when the leaders relied on them to be successful in their new jobs, when the leaders delegated large, complex, and highly visible tasks to them, such as department-level turnarounds and company-wide new products implementations, and when leaders trusted them with highly confidential matters. Finally, leader support for followers' actions and ideas was often illustrated by stories having to do with leaders sending followers to external projects in which they represented the Company, asking them to assume new responsibility for whole functional areas, and including them in highly strategic tasks such as corporate planning teams and close work with the top-level executives.

One of the most vibrant examples given by a follower of her superior's attention to her needs and feelings was given by Rocky. She recalled a recent example wherein Caitlin supported her feelings in a tough situation at work, where they had just terminated a physician group from which more than 50,000 members had been receiving their health care services. As the leader of the Provider Relations Department, Rocky said:

*Even just yesterday, she came down here and we had just terminated one of our physician groups...and I guess I appeared somewhat frazzled, so last night she called me at home to say, 'Are you okay? You're my barometer, so when you're frazzled then I know...it's affecting others.' It's just her sensitivity and taking the time to call me to see what was doing... It's like the best possible situation. Somebody who I feel extremely comfortable with, sharing my feelings, I don't have to worry about any kind of political games or issues, I tell her what's on my mind, and she accepts me!*

A leader's confidence in his follower's motivation, integrity and ability was well illustrated in the comments by Cassie about her relationship with her superior Frank. Cassie said that she knew "right away" that Frank had confidence in her ability and integrity, beginning as early as in the interview process and being evident in the first projects she worked on after reporting to Frank. Cassie had completed an assessment of their department and approached Frank with a gap analysis showing where they were and what they needed to accomplish. It impacted their Department budget allocations and actually revealed some previous errors made by colleagues no longer with the company but who had reported to Frank. She described Frank as being confident in her ability to present her findings to others in the company with integrity and balance, even though there were some findings that were less than favorable. She said he was never defensive, never wanted to rehearse the presentation, that he trusted her as a professional to describe the case and propose an action plan. In her words:

*I got in front of this group, and talked about it, and he just accepted that as real and let anything that looked like a criticism just be there. 'Never was defensive, never said 'that's wrong'...He just said, 'You know what you're talking about, give us your best hit on the situation' without rehearsing it. And that's just been the way it's gone since then...I have a working relationship with the senior people because he never gets in the way of that, ever. I always feel like that's because he trusts me that it's correct.*

**Table 4**  
Contextual development of dyads.

| Dyad no., Name                   | Pivotal event?  | Follower-initiated IL?   | Level of personal closeness  |
|----------------------------------|---|--|--|
| <i>Inherited-follower dyads:</i> |   |  |  |
| 2. Lyn, Alexandra                | No single key event or "crisis" that established the strength of their relationship. But learning in her new role as president of the Life Ins. Co. provided key bonding experiences. Lyn said of their relationship, "It started off as it ended up developing."   | Yes, A. decided to trust and wait to be proven wrong as opposed to build trust incrementally. Lyn accepted the opportunity created by A. in new role of president, and decided to trust her since she was trusting him, opening up, and to be the informal go-between for the staff and A. Lyn "saw an opportunity for me to help her out. We all had a tough challenge to keep the company together," A. said, "in the first six months it was very clear I was using him, to me and to him."<br>Yes, After Mariam healed she "took a whole fresh look...and that was the beginning of our relationship for me." Mary said, "Once she understood she could trust me – she knew ... whether she was going to give me the chance to develop a working relationship with her." Mariam said their relationship pushes her to do "150% because I want her to be successful, and when she's successful, I feel I am successful."<br>Yes, Since M. was very open and willing to share "the hard parts" of personal things, it made it "okay" for Sue to share hers. M. remembered when Sue "came forward to engage in the relationship by declaring that she fully supported me...this was really a decision point for her." M. added that she "was very open to that (bonding) but she (Sue) had to commit in order for it to happen." Sue said she used their respective strengths "in the nicest way possible" to express her interest in their "developing some common ground" early in their relationship.<br>When assigned to report to C. 5 years ago, "didn't have a problem whatsoever working for C. I completely understood what he was trying to do...I completely agreed with what he was doing," said Rocky. Rocky went on to say that their relationship never really changed, even after she started reporting to C. "SHE ACCEPTS ME!"<br>Dave's openness allowed his relationship with Caitlin to grow. He said, "I guess our personal relationship has grown because of shared aspects of their that willingness to share with one another, and professional relationships has grown because of the mutual in the other to get the job performance that she needs." He also wanted to develop himself as a leader with the people-oriented strengths he saw in C. so he committed to the relationship. This is a major progression from his previous belief he did not want to go into business because of the individuals he saw in management positions. | Lyn doesn't share "personal stuff" but A. knew they had a "really good relationship" when Lyn spearheaded the music video project for her 40th birthday. Their close working relationship includes a lot of humor, openness, and trust. But they couldn't be more different in terms of outer life per A. and do not socialize outside of work.<br>Deep level of "respect and trust and love." "We have a delightful relationship and I (Mary) were to walk out the door tomorrow, we would still have that, which is great. It's not that many folks in the world you can do that with." "She is a great friend to me."<br>Have a "deep level of relationship." M. adds, "I know that she's there for me, and I'm always there for her." Their deep sense of mutual respect, trust and love has been forged in the trenches with some pain per M. Sue appreciates that they have a close relationship of peers that is also a friendship and is not hierarchical. |
| 4. Mariam, Mary                  | Difficult beginning given Mary's replacement of prior VP of HR and impact on Mariam. Mary's deep sensitivity in allowing Mariam to "grieve" and "repair" in first 3 months of relationship formed the basis of their trust.   |  |  |
| 5. Sue, Mary                     | Sue knew her work style from previous teamwork. Knew M. was "nurturing" and that it was "safe to be who I am." Relationship was strengthened by managing M.'s transition into her role as VP of HR, considered to be a pivotal event. M. called it a "baptism by fire" event and said she and Sue "really bonded as a result of that" event.  |  |  |
| 8. Rocky, Caitlin                | Went from peers to direct reporting relationship of Rocky to C. Didn't remember pivotal event that occurred either 13 or 5 years ago when dyadic relationship began. C. said the "transition occurred pretty seamlessly."   |  | In 13 years they have developed a close relationship on a deeply personal level. They use a lot of humor and understand each other well. There are high levels of trust and respect between them. C. said, "it's a really great relationship – it's fluid, it's responsive, it's built around honesty and integrity and it works. It's very results-oriented."<br>They have a close personal relationship because as Dave said, they are both willing to personal sides. There is a high degree of mutual trust, respect and confidence done. C. encouraged Dave to keep a balanced life, and encouraged him to alternate periods of great work stress with periods of play.   |
| 9. Dave, Caitlin                 | Initially Dave reported to Rocky and was doing special projects for C. and at first this was source of contention between all three and was bonding event as they each resolved the tension in their relationships. respect and ability to deliver the Dave learned "to manage C." By watching Rocky, C. Was "blown away" by Dave's level of Understanding and ability To explain and analyze Things early on.                            | More personal conversations take place "because she (Diana) has opened up and we found a common ground. I didn't open that up to her to begin with."   | Relationship became more trusting with time, as they discovered the many personal things they had in common. They also developed a close understanding because they "were process people." The level of trust between them sounded like it could not be any higher.  |
| <i>Hired-follower dyads:</i>     |   |  |  |
| 1. Diana, Alexandra              | Interview and hiring process was critical in the development of their relationship as Diana negotiated to have the position upgraded, the scope agreed to, and needed to be convinced that the opportunities to grow and be successful really existed and A. was committed to helping her succeed. Diana was also "thrown into" crash course on Life Ins. Co. products and the annual planning process which began her first day at work. |  |  |

|                   |  |   |  |
|-------------------|--|---|--|
| 3. Jim, Jeff      | <p>Embarrassing first day of carpool when Jim rang the doorbell. Embarrassment of first turning down the job offer and then accepting it given the same commute as the first job accepted.</p>   | <p>Jim tested the relationship and Jeff's response once when he admitted a mistake. He called it a "defining moment" because Jeff did not get upset or reprimand him but focused on fixing it. Agreeing to carpool was another way Jim committed to the relationship with Jeff, as they spent "so much time together...it's kind of taken a life of its own."</p>   | <p>"Very close working, not personal, relationship" per Jeff. They are still carpooling together even 3 years into their relationship and this has allowed them to learn how each other thinks. Jeff said they have "a close mutual admiration" that "really is important."</p>  |
| 6. Kate, Mary     | <p>In hiring process Kate "asked millions of questions" and reached agreement with M. about their relative roles. And opportunities in which Kate could be successful. Such as creating new area "Organizational Consulting" which would provide Org. Development (OD) types of Services to MHC. Kate said, "I always felt like Even early on, she would Trust my point of view. We Seemed to believe each other. That there weren't alternate Agendas happening."</p>   | <p>Kate was "very declarative" about the types of mentoring she wanted from M., and was "very deliberate about setting up these opportunities for mentoring" early on. Mentoring areas included sensitive ones like "I want to get along with people better." M. continued to say that Kate "very much signaled the notion that she was willing to engage in that kind of relationship and that happened really early on" after M. was first open with personal issues. M. said about Kate, "She was very willing to put herself out there and she was also going to see if she got anything back." Kate said that M. role modeled by being the first to share "stuff about her personal life."</p> | <p>Developed "a very strong relationship with her (Kate) very early on." Kate said because M. recognizes that people are whole people, she is very understanding of people's needs to balance work and life issues. They are friends and they work together, as Kate described, which can sometimes make the work stuff more complex to deal with. She said, "the things worth having take more work."</p> |
| 7. George, Dale   | <p>Introduced to each other by common friend establishing "high regard." George initially accepted job offer, then changed his mind, and then changed his mind back to accept the offer. Per D, this was "a foundation for a trusting relationship" as it developed in an "unusual" and "embarrassing" situation. D. said his confidence in George's ethics, values, trustworthiness, and the value of his expertise "happened really fast" in the relationship. "A bonding process started very quickly because stuff happened" early including many corporate restructurings, layoffs, and acquisitions. F. initially identified Mark as a "bright, aggressive superstar" as he tested boundaries and the quality of Mark's work early in the relationship. Early bonding occurred in interview and hiring process. Both experienced camaraderie early on around similar intellectual pursuits and "high energy about implementing change." Mark attracted to vision F. laid out in interview process.</p> | <p>In the process of working through his second thoughts about taking the job, and making such a significant life decision, George developed and evidenced a deep trust in Dale by discussing with him his concerns and doubts about a position he eventually came to accept. George's willingness to expose himself like that formed the foundation of their continuing and trusting relationship.</p>   | <p>Per D., their relationship started out like "partners" and still is that way. High levels of trust, respect, and support characterize their strong, close working relationship. But they do not spend much time together outside of work. They see each other "occasionally socially" probably a couple times a year.</p>   |
| 10. Mark, Frank   | <p>Cassie took huge risk and accepted job and moved her family to city of MHC headquarters "on the basis of one phone call and a personal interview" with Frank. She was very attracted to F.'s "huge mind," huge mind," intelligence, ideas, and the possibilities and opportunities at MHC.</p>  | <p>After Mark started at MHC and saw that F.'s vision was really being created and there was a significant role and opportunity for him, trust and faith between the two was crystallized. In one of the first times Mark confided in F., F. responded "openly" and thereby increased Mark's comfort level in disclosing sensitive things to him. Mark noted this as an occasion when their relationship was strengthened.</p>  | <p>Mark can be completely open with Frank and they share a deep level of trust. Frank is not comfortable discussing personal things with his subordinates – they do not have a "relationship that is separate from work." However, he has close WORKING relationships with some of his subordinates including his with Mark which has a high level of trust, integrity, and commitment.</p>                |
| 11. Cassie, Frank | <p>Cassie has always felt safe to say whatever was on her mind, "but F. doesn't talk about personal stuff, really." "I'm not sure he knows that I have two children!" They have a close working relationship characterized by high levels of trust. F. valued their level of confidentiality even though he didn't share much of a personally risky nature with Cassie.</p>  | <p>Per F. Cassie took some early risks to see how he would respond, such as confiding in F. with personal matters, and sensitive issues in the Department about which she was frustrated. She also redesigned her job position in the interview process with F. expanding it from "the old market research activity" type of position to include other skills she had and wanted to use for the evolution and improvement of MHC.</p>   | <p>Cassie has always felt safe to say whatever was on her mind, "but F. doesn't talk about personal stuff, really." "I'm not sure he knows that I have two children!" They have a close working relationship characterized by high levels of trust. F. valued their level of confidentiality even though he didn't share much of a personally risky nature with Cassie.</p>                                |

Followers cited many examples which showed their belief that their superiors supported their actions and ideas. Leader Frank referred to the new HMO product implementation in confirming his confidence in Mark's actions and ideas. He had assigned this massive project to Mark in the first 3 months after he hired Mark. Frank said of Mark: "I think many of the day-to-day things that had to be done, that he was driving and deciding, I think he would have concluded I was supportive of him, and those decisions, and of how he kept the project moving." Frank gave another example of his confidence in Mark's ideas regarding the evaluation of an idea from one of the business units, and his deferring to Mark's opinion. Frank described it this way:

*There was one (example) recently where a half-baked recommendation came from our Medicare unit to do something and I was asked to take a look at it in Mark's absence...And my comment was that based on what I see here I can't support it; there's just not sufficient information. Mark, after looking at it and getting some additional information, believed it was something we should support. And I supported him in making that recommendation, even though it had overturned what I had said... supporting his actions and ideas in that he looked into it and had more information, and then convinced me it was the right thing to do. And I trusted that. I didn't go back and look at it; I didn't ask him to prove it to me.*

Responses from leaders and followers to questions 7–13 also depict mutual respect, reciprocal trust and mutual obligation thus providing unique illustrations of high-quality (LMX-type) relationships developing over time. Illustrative of mutual respect, at least one of the participants in each dyad noted that the terminology of "follower" and even "leader" failed to capture the sense they had about their relationship with each other. This was apparent in the responses to the question about the subordinate "coming to view the superior as a leader." The participants noted the awkward language as they described their interactions more as if they were peers than colleagues in hierarchical relationships.

It is also interesting to compare the examples given by the leader versus the follower in those dyads in which an early event occurred which was embarrassing to the follower. In both examples where followers changed their minds about taking the job, neither follower mentioned it and both leaders did. It seems the leader was more willing to describe such illustrations of the trust and closeness in their relationships whereas the follower did not want to reveal those illustrations, even though they responded that there were high levels of safety and mutual trust in the relationship. For example, one follower said there were ambiguities and trust building in the beginning of his relationship related to his acceptance of the job offer but did not mention that he changed his mind twice about accepting it.

In the older dyads, and in particular in the oldest dyad (13 years), it was more difficult for both individuals to recall examples of responses to the questions asked in support of whether the subordinate came to view the superior as a leader early in the relationship. However, it was in this oldest dyad that the follower offered this in response to questions regarding coming to view her superior as a leader: "She accepts me!" She was clear that this was a cornerstone of their highly successful, close, unique relationship, and that she felt validated as a person no matter what the circumstances.

#### 4.2. Illustrations of leadership relationship development in IL relationships

##### 4.2.1. Contextual moderators of relationship development

Each relationship was unique and independent from other dyads in the study, including the multiple ones involving a specific leader. In addition to their responses to the core questions of this study, participants described three sets of contextual factors in the development of their relationships. These were the effect of pivotal events on the early development of the relationships, specific follower initiating behaviors that support IL theory, and a range of levels of personal closeness in the dyads. Though they differed in the severity of the pivotal events, all 11 dyads were alike in that they developed steadily over time as the consistent behaviors of the followers and leaders allowed trust, respect, and commitment to deepen.

These contextual moderators illustrate the unique characteristics and behaviors of the followers and leaders that influenced the high quality of relationships that developed. The followers typically initiated IL after the leaders took a first risk such as sharing personal things, or explicitly taking a risk and trusting first. One of the most interesting findings is that in 10 of 11 dyads the followers were explicit about their early decisions to commit to making the relationships with their leaders successful ones. Table 4 highlights participants' comments about the three contextual factors in the development of the dyads: pivotal events early in the dyadic relationship, specific follower initiating behaviors, and their levels of personal closeness in the dyads. These descriptive stories illustrate the wide range of relationships, the individual nature of each one and a sense of how they developed over time.

In 9 of the 11 dyads, participants recalled pivotal events early in their relationships that provided an impetus for the development of IL. These pivotal events occurred for both hired and inherited followers. Hired followers cited critical conversations and major commitments made in the interview and hiring process, embarrassing changes of mind by followers about whether they wanted to accept a job offer, and even being convinced by a leader that the job was a great opportunity when he/she was not looking to leave his/her current job. Hired followers used different examples for the building of trust and safety levels in the relationships, such as occurred in the transition of leaders into new positions and one dyad in which the individuals transitioned from peers to a direct reporting relationship. In some cases the individuals knew of each other before actually having a direct reporting relationship, and some got to know each other through initial months of working together to achieve a difficult goal, such as transforming the culture and strategy of their department. Such early events provided a context for bonding to occur, which happened in each case.



In each of the dyads, the followers deliberately sought to discover in their own natural way, whether the superiors would be trustworthy, would respect or support them, or would treat them with compassion and sensitivity, thus initiating IL. It was clear in the stories they told that the relationships did not really “take off” until the followers decided to engage and risk, and that this process was interwoven with a similar one by the leaders. One leader specifically described the testing process she undertook with her inherited follower to see if he was trustworthy, and described how while she was doing that, he decided to trust her since she was opening up and confiding in him, albeit as part of her testing of him. They both needed the relationship to work for the success of their department, and bonded together to tackle the challenge of keeping the department together during a critical change in its leadership. In another dyad, the follower engaged with the leader after several months of being left alone to heal and process the change of her prior boss' abruptly leaving the organization. One leader was clear that she opened up about personal things only after her follower signaled that she was interested in doing so. In yet another case, a follower was very deliberate about the kinds of mentoring she desired and confirmed that this was going to be part of their relationship before she accepted the job offer.

The more mature dyadic relationships were characterized by deeper levels of trust, respect and commitment than were the less mature dyads. There was a sense in the older dyads of deep connection, deep trust, and unquestioned personal commitment between the individuals. This difference supports the maturity issue relevant in IL.

The level of personal closeness in the dyads varied approximately with gender. At one end of the continuum, female leaders tended to have deeper, warmer, and more participative unique relationships with their followers, as in most cases they incorporated close friendships within their leadership capacity and spent time together outside of work. At the other end, it was one of the male leaders who did not share much of his personal matters with his follower colleagues. In the middle were female leaders with moderately close dyadic relationships and two male leaders with strong relationships but who did not spend much time together outside of the workplace. The nature of these interpersonal, dyadic relationships was each different, even in the case of more than one dyad including a common leader, and seemed to help strengthen the dyadic bonds between the leaders and their subordinates. Table 5 shows the approximate level of closeness for each of the dyads compared to dyadic tenure, number of years together in the relationship, whether the follower was hired or inherited, and gender.

Although not specifically asked about, this finding is not surprising given the gender role stereotyping that has occurred in organizational leadership (Bass, 1990). There did not appear to be a significant relationship between tenure of dyad, total length of relationship, or whether the leader inherited or hired the follower and the level of closeness in the dyad (Table 6).

#### 4.2.2. Additional contextual factors supporting development of IL

In addition to their responses to the core questions in this study, participants also identified several dozen additional factors that supported the development of the relationship. These additional factors do not repeat the responses to the research questions reported above, as the text of the responses related to these factors was counted after excluding the responses to the other questions. Besides further support for IL, these 15 additional contextual moderators, expressed in the language used by the participants, were found in the majority of dyads (six or more). These contextual moderators can be generally considered in three groups: individual characteristics of the leader, interpersonal dynamics between them, and developmental considerations by the leader.

In the majority of dyads, one or both participants mentioned the following four individual characteristics of the leader as being critical in the quality of the relationship: being honest; showing respect for the follower; having a sense of humor; and being transparent or self-disclosing. The following quote by Frank about how he works with his directs Mark and Cassie illustrates this:

*There certainly is a trust and a constructive working relationship that we have, I think a two-way street, for each other...There's the openness and trust that I have such that I tell him what the issues are and what I'm grappling with politically. What I normally do is process my ideas with Mark and Cassie as a small team first and move it forward with them as much as I can. So I'm personally getting comfort and support from them as sounding boards.*

Leader Alexandra describes her transparency in her relationship with Diana:

*One of the things about my relationship with Diana is my style, and as with everyone pretty much, I'm very open. You know if I'm upset about something – people know about things that are going on in my life, not to the extreme but I don't keep that all in*

**Table 5**  
Approximate levels of personal closeness.

|                                      | Closest       |              |           |             |          |                 | Not as close  |          |             |              |            |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-----------------|---------------|----------|-------------|--------------|------------|
|                                      | Caitlin/Rocky | Caitlin/Dave | Mary/Kate | Mary/Mariam | Mary/Sue | Alexandra/Diana | Alexandra/Lyn | Jeff/Jim | Dale/George | Frank/Cassie | Frank/Mark |
| Dyadic tenure (years):               | 5             | 3            | 3         | 4           | 3        | 1               | 2             | 3        | 2           | 2            | 3          |
| Total relationship tenure (years):   | 13            | 4            | 3         | 4           | 4        | 1               | 2             | 3        | 9           | 2            | 3          |
| Hired (H) or Inherited (I) Follower: | I             | I            | H         | I           | I        | H               | I             | H        | H           | H            | H          |
| Gender (leader–follower):            | F-F           | F-M          | F-F       | F-F         | F-F      | F-F             | F-M           | M-M      | M-M         | M-F          | M-M        |
| Gender of leader:                    | ← Female →    |              |           |             |          |                 | ← Male →      |          |             |              |            |

**Table 6**  
Additional contextual moderators by dyad.

| Contextual moderator/dyad   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| <i>Mentioned in more than half of dyads:</i>                                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Trust – interpersonal (integrity)   | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Openness/appreciate diverse opinions  | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Dialogues with direct rpt – spending time on relationship                     |   | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Respect – mutuality   |   | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Liking  | * |   | * | * |   | * | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Appreciation  | * | * |   |   | * |   | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Supports development/leadership development, business competencies            |   | * |   | * | * |   |   | * | * | *  | *  |
| Humor   |   | * | * | * | * | * |   | * | * | *  | *  |
| Learning/willing to take risks  | * | * |   | * | * |   |   |   | * | *  | *  |
| Direct/confrontive/candid   | * | * | * |   |   |   | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Shared interest   | * | * |   |   |   |   | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Synergy   |   |   |   | * | * | * | * | * |   | *  | *  |
| Autonomy/working independently  | * |   |   |   | * |   | * | * |   | *  | *  |
| Honest  |   | * |   | * |   |   | * | * | * | *  |    |
| Transparent/self-disclosing   | * | * | * | * | * | * |   |   |   |    |    |
| <i>Mentioned in less than half of dyads:</i>                                  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Mentoring   | * | * | * |   |   |   |   |   |   | *  | *  |
| Process oriented  | * |   |   | * | * | * |   |   |   |    |    |
| Clarifies/seeks clarity   | * | * |   |   | * | * |   |   |   |    |    |
| Business sense  | * |   |   |   |   | * | * |   |   |    |    |
| Feedback (giving and receiving)   | * | * | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |    | *  |
| Good energy and enthusiasm  |   |   |   |   |   | * | * | * | * |    |    |
| Communicates organizational information – sets context                        |   |   |   |   | * | * |   | * |   |    | *  |
| Taking systems view/systems thinking  |   |   |   |   | * | * |   |   |   | *  |    |
| Change leadership/models flexibility  |   |   |   |   |   | * |   | * |   | *  |    |
| Ethical reputation of leader  |   |   | * |   |   | * |   |   |   | *  |    |
| Responsive/follows through  |   |   |   | * | * |   |   | * |   |    |    |
| Creative  |   |   |   | * |   |   |   |   |   | *  | *  |
| Identifies shared values  |   |   |   |   | * |   | * | * |   |    |    |
| Listening   |   |   |   |   | * | * |   | * |   |    |    |
| Bright  |   |   |   |   |   |   | * |   |   | *  | *  |
| Encourages loyalty  |   |   | * | * |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Flexible work style   |   | * | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Work life balance   |   |   |   |   |   | * | * |   |   |    |    |
| Fair  |   |   |   |   |   | * | * |   |   |    |    |
| Confident/recruits strong talent  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | *  | *  |
| Accessible  |   |   |   | * |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Encouragement   | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Decides nature of decision making   |   |   |   | * |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Connectedness in org  |   | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Organized   |   | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Org culture development   |   |   |   |   | * |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Intuitive   | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Consistent  | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Attentive   | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Savvy communicator  | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Fun   | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Compassion  | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Love  | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| <i>Core to IL (redundant)</i>   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Support   | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Confidence in follower competence (specialized skills) judgment               | * | * | * | * | * |   | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| High Standards/meaningful work/holds accountable                              | * |   | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Safety (to disagree, to explore, to complain)                                 | * | * | * | * | * |   |   | * |   | *  | *  |
| Collaborative   |   | * | * |   | * | * |   | * |   | *  | *  |
| Pays attention to human aspects of process and relationships                  |   | * |   |   |   |   | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Motivates (by self-worth support, by role modeling, by building relationship) |   |   | * | * |   | * | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Visionary/strategic   |   | * |   |   |   | * |   | * |   | *  | *  |
| Role model  |   | * |   |   |   |   | * | * | * | *  | *  |
| Role model  |   |   |   | * |   | * | * |   |   |    | *  |
| Expressing feelings (not always happy)  | * | * | * | * |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Mutual dependency   |   |   | * | * |   |   | * |   |   |    |    |
| Likes challenges  |   | * |   |   |   |   |   |   | * |    |    |
| Appreciates individual uniqueness   |   |   |   |   | * |   |   |   |   | *  |    |
| Inspires commitment   |   |   |   | * |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| <i>Core to IL (redundant)</i>   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |

Table 6 (continued)

| Contextual moderator/dyad | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| Goal oriented             |   |   | * |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| OK with ambiguity         |   |   |   |   | * |   |   |   |   |    |    |
| Develops self-esteem      |   |   |   | * |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |

*a separate box. People know I have two dogs and am wild about them; people knew when I turned 40 last year that it was fairly traumatic for me and they made a big deal about it. I try to keep boundaries, obviously, between personal and professional but I also think the more I'm a human being to everybody in my Company, the better it is.*

Respondents also used five descriptors of their interpersonal dynamics that created a sense of mutuality between them and thus contributed to a high-quality working relationship. These were: mutual trust, liking each other, appreciation showed by one to the other, shared interests even when they were engaged in outside of work, and a sense of synergy. Using their own examples, leaders and followers in the majority of dyads described how these five moderators contributed to the high quality of their relationships as they developed. A strong sense of trust between Alexandra and Lyn underscored his willingness to take her coaching about his propensity for not completing his work until right up at the deadline causing undue stress and not leaving time for her review. He said:

*And sometimes I may cut it really close and Alexandra helps me to not do that as often as I think I otherwise would. But I'm always looking for something else to add...there are different ways of being creative...I think there is a fair amount of trust because knowing Alexandra as I do, if she didn't trust me, sometimes she would be a lot more uncomfortable with my style and probably if I didn't trust her, I would be maybe a little more resentful of her style and not take it as constructively as I try to.*

Leader Jeff described the liking between himself and his Vice President of Sales, Jim:

*Jim and I have developed a very close working – not exactly personal – relationship...There is a mutual admiration between Jim and I that really is important. I mean, that for very goal-oriented people, which we are, it really makes a difference when you know the other guy is going to hit his goals, and I know that I am going to hit my goals. Neither wants to let the other down.*

Cecily, Vice President of HR, illustrated the importance of the synergy in her relationship with Fatima:

*We have a lovely friendship as well as a beautiful working relationship, and I rely on her and her independent approach and analysis very much, and between the two of us there is a synergy that she and I both understand and rely on to produce whatever product it is – sometimes successfully, sometimes not so successfully but then we have the ability to reflect and say 'here's where we erred, here's where we need to do things differently.' And both of us share the notion that in those instances what we're really trying to do is move ahead, learn from that, and serve our customer the best that we can.*

The third group of contextual moderators was those that encouraged the development of the relationship and of the follower by the leader. They included: openness and appreciating diverse opinions; dialoguing with the follower and spending time on the relationship; allowing for learning and encouraging a follower's taking risks; using direct, confrontive and candid conversation; and supporting the follower in working autonomously. Cassie illustrates Frank's priority in spending time on their relationship in the following excerpt:

*He knows who he is, is clear about all his strengths (as a leader), and is very generous about spending time with me. Some folks have complained about his lack of visibility because he is here only 3 days a week. But for me, if I call him and leave a message for him he usually returns it within the day, and sometimes within a couple of hours even though I know how busy he is. So that's another part of how he makes me feel valuable and makes the work that I'm doing important because he responds to it... I'd rather have someone like Frank who spends time with me, who says you're important, what you're doing matters, and those kinds of things, who are helping me think more richly about problems, and problem-solving, that a sort of rigid staff development approach.*

General Counsel Dale commented about the autonomy he supports in George's performance as follows:

*So what does motivate performance, for both of us, is a degree of authority, autonomy, trust and respect that is unquestioned, absolutely unquestioned. That is a motivation and something I would look for in my relationship with my boss – does he give me unfettered discretion to exercise my judgment with the assumption that it will be in his highest interest and the highest interests of the Corporation? If he does, I'm gonna' be a happy camper, at least on that one dimension. And that characterizes my relationship with George at least from my perspective.*

Such responses indicated a sense of mutuality between the follower and leader as noted by the 15 additional contextual moderators and can deepen our understanding of how these dyadic relationships developed over time.

#### 4.3. Transformational leadership behaviors augment IL [Proposition 3]

Transformational leader behaviors were an important aspect of the success of these relationships and augmented the presence of IL in each dyad. A total of 273 content units were coded across the 22 transcripts and showed the presence of each of six transformational leader behaviors in each dyad. Transformational leader behaviors in the follower and leader transcripts for each dyad were combined because the interview protocol allowed for different emphasis by each respondent. The researchers found a range of the presence of transformational leader behaviors across the eleven dyads. Details are provided in Table 7.

Certain patterns were noted. For example, transformational leader behaviors were somewhat more present in the dyads with hired followers, possibly due to the increased opportunity for their use in the process of recruiting, selecting, and early relationship building that the hiring process allows.

The leaders with the strongest measure of transformational behavior were Frank, SVP of Corporate Marketing, and Alexandra, SVP and President of the Life Insurance company. And yet, as these dyads illustrate, transformational leader behaviors can look very different. Alexandra used most all the transformational leader behaviors in both her dyads with Lyn and Diana as noted in her sense of leadership style and responsiveness to her followers. Frank was recognized to be “the idea man” among the senior leaders as he played a large role in guiding the strategic transformation of the Company. Frank’s followers appreciated his using them as a “think tank” to flesh out ideas as he set high expectations and provided for their intellectual stimulation in bringing these ideas forward in the form of new health care insurance products and delivery mechanisms. And, he showed variation in his two dyads in a stronger use of inspiring a vision with Mark than Cassie, thus showing the influence of the follower on the transformational leadership dynamic.

Transformational leadership behaviors can look very different in multiple dyadic relationships. For example, attorneys Dale and George shared a legalistic, intellectual, high performance expectations nature of their relationship, as the focus was the application of laws and regulations pertaining to the delivery of health care services and the management of the Company’s employee base. Alternatively, HR VP Mary’s leadership style was characterized as more intimate and soft-hearted even as it showed variation across her three dyads. Caitlin was hard-charging in her leadership style, using primarily high expectations and intellectual

**Table 7**

Transformational leader behaviors – content unit totals by dyad (follower name listed first).

| Dyad                       | Inspires with vision (A) | Provides role model (B) | Group goals (C) | High expectations (D) | Intellectual stimulation (E) | Individualized support (F) | Total units for transcript | Total units for dyad |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Inherited followers</i> |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| <i>Lyn/Alexandra</i>       |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| Lyn                        | 1                        | 4                       | 0               | 2                     | 1                            | 0                          | 8                          | 30                   |
| Alexandra                  | 1                        | 1                       | 4               | 6                     | 5                            | 5                          | 22                         |                      |
| <i>Miriam/Mary</i>         |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| Miriam                     | 0                        | 5                       | 3               | 3                     | 1                            | 3                          | 15                         | 22                   |
| Mary                       | 0                        | 2                       | 1               | 1                     | 1                            | 2                          | 7                          |                      |
| <i>Sue/Mary</i>            |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| Sue                        | 0                        | 1                       | 0               | 1                     | 2                            | 3                          | 7                          | 16                   |
| Mary                       | 1                        | 0                       | 0               | 3                     | 2                            | 3                          | 9                          |                      |
| <i>Rocky/Caitlin</i>       |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| Rocky                      | 0                        | 0                       | 1               | 0                     | 1                            | 0                          | 2                          | 7                    |
| Caitlin                    | 0                        | 0                       | 1               | 4                     | 0                            | 0                          | 5                          |                      |
| <i>Dave/Caitlin</i>        |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| Dave                       | 0                        | 6                       | 1               | 7                     | 5                            | 1                          | 20                         | 21                   |
| Caitlin                    | 0                        | 0                       | 0               | 1                     | 0                            | 0                          | 1                          |                      |
| <i>Hired Followers</i>     |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| <i>Diana/Alexandra</i>     |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| Diana                      | 3                        | 4                       | 5               | 5                     | 7                            | 3                          | 27                         | 43                   |
| Alexandra                  | 1                        | 3                       | 2               | 4                     | 2                            | 4                          | 16                         |                      |
| <i>Jim/Jeff</i>            |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| Jim                        | 1                        | 1                       | 2               | 2                     | 2                            | 2                          | 10                         | 16                   |
| Jeff                       | 0                        | 1                       | 0               | 3                     | 1                            | 1                          | 6                          |                      |
| <i>Kate/Mary</i>           |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| Kate                       | 2                        | 3                       | 1               | 0                     | 2                            | 4                          | 12                         | 40                   |
| Mary                       | 5                        | 2                       | 4               | 7                     | 6                            | 4                          | 28                         |                      |
| <i>George/Dale</i>         |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| George                     | 1                        | 1                       | 0               | 2                     | 2                            | 0                          | 6                          | 7                    |
| Dale                       | 0                        | 0                       | 0               | 1                     | 0                            | 0                          | 1                          |                      |
| <i>Mark/Frank</i>          |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| Mark                       | 2                        | 3                       | 1               | 1                     | 4                            | 1                          | 12                         | 31                   |
| Frank                      | 6                        | 0                       | 3               | 7                     | 2                            | 1                          | 19                         |                      |
| <i>Cassie/Frank</i>        |                          |                         |                 |                       |                              |                            |                            |                      |
| Cassie                     | 3                        | 4                       | 1               | 8                     | 7                            | 9                          | 32                         | 40                   |
| Frank                      | 1                        | 0                       | 0               | 2                     | 4                            | 1                          | 8                          |                      |

stimulation to motivate and develop her followers. These researchers also noted that certain transformational leader behaviors appeared together in patterns. For example, in this organization, setting a high vision was strongest in the dyads where there were also high expectations for performance, as shown in dyads between Diana and Alexandria, Kate and Mary, and Mark and Frank. High expectations and intellectual stimulation were the most frequently noted transformational leadership behaviors and they traveled differently with leader/dyad along with the other three behaviors resulting in a leadership dynamic unique to each dyad. These unique patterns of transformational leader behaviors can deepen our appreciation for how IL gets activated differently in each dyad.

The participants' responses included many illustrations of the impact of these behaviors on the followers' assessment of support for their self-worth, and thus on the development of IL in their relationships. Highlights and key phrases from their transcripts are shown in [Table 8](#), arranged by dyad. These selected transcript excerpts were made by either the leader or follower in the dyad, and represent the deeper, more insightful examples that were shared. These excerpts richly illustrate the five transformational leader behaviors consistently present in each dyad. The sixth behavior, individualized support, is not included in this table as it is built into [Propositions 1 and 2](#) (and the previously presented results).

These findings support transformational leadership theory in that the followers described their enthusiasm in committing to the critical missions of the organization and growing as leaders themselves ([Bennis & Nanus, 1985](#)). These findings also support [Liden and Graen's \(1980\)](#) findings that higher-quality leader–follower relationships corresponded with followers who took more job responsibility, contributed more, and were rated by their leaders as higher performers than the followers with lower-quality leader relationships. Finally, they support [Dienesch and Liden's \(1986\)](#) studies which showed that the quality of the leader–follower exchange was affected by the degree to which the leader and follower share mutual trust and influence and interpersonal attraction.

Followers described with enthusiasm the effect of transformational leader behaviors. They described the leaders' confidence in them, their commitment to the relationship and to high levels of trust, respect, and integrity between them, and even in the less close dyads, a sense of a unique interpersonal bond between them. This strong evidence for the influence of transformational leader behaviors on the development of IL supports the findings in earlier studies ([Dansereau et al., 1995](#); [Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1992](#); [Yammarino et al., 1997](#)).

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Limitations

Before presenting the conclusions to be drawn from these results, the limitations of this study should be noted. First, this qualitative case study was limited to a specific health care insurance company and the senior executive team consisting of six leaders and 11 followers. There are limits to generalizing what was learned in this setting to other settings where leaders and their followers work together. Future research is needed to confirm the findings in this study.

A second limitation was the single event in which the participants provided their own perceptions. While this restricts the generalizability of the results from this sample to a larger population, the results nevertheless contribute to understanding IL directly and indirectly to LMX and transformational leadership.

Finally, the retrospective nature of the study depended on the participants' ability to recall events in the initial phases of their relationships. The interview protocols were designed to offset this potential limitation as they asked about the theoretical three components of support for self-worth behaviors both in the early phases of the relationship and at the time of the interviews. If the participants had trouble recalling the early stage of the relationships, questions about self-worth support in the present tense might have helped them remember key events early on.

### 5.2. Conclusions

Following from prior work on LMX and transformational leadership, this study was undertaken to better understand the dynamics between leaders and followers in close, effective relationships characterized by IL, and whether and how followers initiate unique aspects of their role in building effective dyadic relationships. This study focused on whether followers in 11 senior-level dyads determined their superiors would support their sense of self-worth and thereby come to view them as leaders. Additionally, this study set out to identify whether transformational leader behaviors balanced factors in the development of these relationships. The research was designed to be flexible enough to capture the participants' stories about the early development of these relationships.

Our study found that subordinates in dyadic relationships characterized by IL came to view their superiors as leaders in the initial stages of their relationships when they determined support for their sense of self-worth. Three sets of contextual factors were present in this process of determination for self-worth including pivotal events early in the relationship, specific initiating behaviors on the part of the followers, and the degree of personal closeness between leader and follower. Additional contextual moderators of the IL process were present and included individual characteristics of the leader, the interpersonal dynamics between leader and follower, and developmental considerations exhibited by the leader. Transformational leadership behaviors were found to be present and influential in the development of IL in each dyad.

**Table 8**  
Transformational leader behaviors: Highlights and key phrases.

| Dyad no., Names                  | Inspires others  | Good role model  | Creates team spirit  | Demands excellence   | Intellectually stimulating  |
|----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
| <i>Inherited-follower dyads:</i> |  |  |  |  |   |
| 2, Lyn, Alexandra                | When A. openly shared that she wanted the challenge of Life Insurance Co. president and was not just in it for the interim, she inspired key members of her team like Lyn to feel committed as well.   | "I want to share with you that Lyn and Janice came to me and told me that we were getting off base here and I really appreciate that." "I try to ask myself how would I have handled that if I just did it without thinking" (how would it compare to what A. would do).<br>Mary is a very customer-focused individual and tries to instill that in others. She exhibits those behaviors, such as answering a ringing phone if she walks by one. | Created inclusive planning process. "I might throw out an idea or a concept and then I want them to fill it in." Shared sense of Humor as demonstrated by music video for 40th birthday party for A. and her holiday gifts to the team. Team building is a priority.<br>She has a very loyal and committed group. Includes Mariam in her role as an analyst in her management team meetings as she is very insightful and is accepted by the team. | A. was up front about not having actuarial training and wanted to learn basics to support excellence by senior team. A. helps Lyn with managing deadlines so it doesn't get in the way of his excellent performance.   | "I think he has a much broader perspective on the business world now. I think I've helped him see both sides of it, the thinking side and the people side...he would avoid the personal conflict things and he's much better at that now."<br>Mary stimulates creative thinking by making it safe to brainstorm solutions, which is how team comes up with many of their solutions. Offers additional opportunities for development of staff as much as possible. |
| 4, Mariam, Mary                  | "Because of the respect we have for her as a person and as a leader of our Org., I think that as her direct report group we all feel very, very committed to making whatever that project is a very successful one."   |  |  | "I think she does shoot for high performance but I also experience her to have a very deep understanding of people needing to make mistakes in order to learn."<br>Inspired Mariam to do her personal best by helping her understand her capabilities.<br>Coached Sue to speak more "forcefully" in the specific contexts.<br>"You have great things to say – stop apologizing. You're great and start acting like it and here are some ways to do that." Encourages diverse opinions among her staff.<br>Caitlin has high standards, as do many on her team and works hard and at a fast pace to keep the commitments going, keep getting the work done." | Provides stimulation when there is a decision to be made with major financial impact on the Company or with a particularly important provider negotiation. She also brainstorms frequently.   |
| 5, Sue, Mary                     | Motivates staff in HR Dept. to model the behaviors and beliefs desired in the new company culture. Inspires others to be creative thinkers and open to change.   |  | All are "very in sync" and have been since the early days. One reason Rocky has stayed at Company so long is the team spirit.  |  |   |
| 8, Rocky, Caitlin                | Though Rocky's motivation is "innate," she does tackle more and more work as Caitlin inspires her to do it, and perhaps a little bit faster than she otherwise would. Knowing Caitlin is doing just as much work with the same intensity is inspirational.           | Caitlin assigns special projects and relies on and manages those people to complete them. She is very busy and builds up skills and rapport with her team. "My job could go anywhere from writing a strategic plan for the Company to getting her a Mountain Dew."   | "There's no politics here, it's very open. That's one thing I really enjoy about this place, everybody's genuine and very real." Caitlin sets the tone for this through her behavior.  | "Never have I been able to get away with doing anything but my best when turning a project into C. She will never tolerate that." C. has little tolerance for error especially if it's due to just being lazy or not caring about the outcome.   | C. had anticipated the questions that the president/COO would ask in their presentation to him and so was able to guide Dave in his detailed preparation. This helped Dave learn how to do same. Dave is also learning "more of how to be an effective leader, and how to treat people" from C.   |
| 9, Dave, Caitlin                 | "A. talked about the opportunity to actually have a say in how the Org. moved and changed and grew in the years to come, in a small Company that was already well-funded."<br>"From day one I really felt a bond around a value of process, a value of involvement." | "I am open, I will tell you what's on my mind, because I do think it's okay to have fun, because I do disclose more, from a healing standpoint, and care about that aspect of our culture." "I trust she's going to look at things in a way that has compassion and business sense."   | "I believe that if you pay attention to that stuff, your business results are going to be a lot better and I've done relationship selling and I believe you're just selling ideas and concepts and changes internally. That's core."<br>"She wants to make sure that as a group that we've all got a perspective that we can all stand by."  | "I've tried to make it a safe environment for them to come and say, "I'm stuck, can you help?" because she knew she needed their best thinking and wanted to create the environment where they could be sounding boards.   |   |
| <i>Hired-follower dyads:</i>     |  |  |  |  |   |
| 1, Diana, Alexandra              |  |  |  |  |   |

Hired-follower dyads:

|                          |  |  |  |   |  |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|---|--|
| <p>3. Jim, Jeff</p>      | <p>"Jeff does a better than average job. But I think that visions and visionaries are way overused terms."</p>   | <p>Jeff paved the way for Jim to make a financial presentation to finance people, and diffused the skepticism implicit with having a sales VP drive a pricing decision; and he let Jim take the credit for his work. "He's ethical, he's cheap, he's profit-oriented."</p>   | <p>Jeff encourages feedback and promotes a team environment by encouraging others to express their opinions openly. "Resources are an issue and the only thing that mitigates total teamwork." Teamwork is attributed to Jim's strategies, Jeff's "bean-counting," and their good relationship with Underwriting.</p>  | <p>Yes as far as anything that can be measured quantifiably like profitability, growth, budgets. No, as far as facilitating others' development and preparing for the next job, as in succession planning. Jim and Jeff are very goal-oriented people and will try just about anything to meet their aggressive goals.</p>                          | <p>"Absolutely." He leads problem-solving by soliciting various options for how to do something, anticipating how the market will respond to some action they might take. He is excellent at thinking through all the different repercussions and who is affected by certain actions. Jeff's motto is "Nothing is simple." Has coached staff to ask, "How can we lift our thinking about what we can do vs. what we can't do" regarding HR policies. Mary asks for alternative solutions rather than just one solution. "I don't really believe there is just one way to do something anyway."</p> |
| <p>6. Kate, Mary</p>     | <p>"Articulation of that vision is critical to anybody knowing what the heck it is we're doing around here every day." "If we agree that these are the Org's goals, and these are our goals, we need to be laser-like in our notion of what supports that." "What got me excited about joining her Div., and MHC, was a clear vision she had for how she wanted to see HR transformed and the role she saw HR playing in transforming the organization."</p> | <p>Shared openly in relationship first; demonstrates support and sensitivity in difficult times by listening, allowing others time to process change. spent much time together. "Walks the talk"; "This is my personality!" is authentic. "We need to be the kind of org. that people can move in their careers, and develop as they want to."</p> | <p>Supports MHC. Direct reports have more access than rest of Dept. and so probably experience more team spirit. "Community is important and so every once in a while I'll break out to demand that we all have lunch together!" Tells team: "You all have a stake in the other person's work. You must be aligned to understand the alignment of the organization and you have to meet regularly to do that."</p> | <p>Created growth and stretch assignments which were meaningful to her and MHC; otherwise Kate might have left MHC by now. "I think I am getting better at being clear about high performance expectations – developing those relationships helps me understand what motivates people."</p>   | <p>Has coached staff to ask, "How can we lift our thinking about what we can do vs. what we can't do" regarding HR policies. Mary asks for alternative solutions rather than just one solution. "I don't really believe there is just one way to do something anyway."</p>   |
| <p>7. George, Dale</p>   | <p>Dale got staff enthused about moving to a new computer system, replacing widespread skepticism with motivation to learn it. "When he's very enthusiastic about something, it's hard not to be."</p>   | <p>Dale is a very hard worker, keeps long hours as others in the Dept. sometimes do. He also rewards hard work. Provides good ideas in working through issues with his staff.</p>  | <p>Yes, although given their 9-year relationship, George said he might have a skewed view of team attitude. Didn't have time to ask TF questions in interview with Dale.</p>   | <p>"The client is expecting nothing but the best and that's what we have to deliver." Dale does insist on the best and would ask for additional work to be done if it was needed.</p>   | <p>Yes because he is a very bright lawyer with experience in more than one state.</p>  |
| <p>10. Mark, Frank</p>   | <p>Frank delegated a critical, highly visible project to Mark and "always held out the ideal" when Mark was discouraged. Frank said, "My goal was to keep the vision clear, that we can, and to facilitate getting the vision (implemented)." Mark accepted the job offer because of Frank's vision.</p>   | <p>F. had a pervasive "sense of calm." In crisis he would "kind of shrug and immediately go into problem-solving mode." His sense of calm and ability to focus on the issue helped his staff do the same with their staffs.</p>  | <p>Lowest of five TF behaviors but he is working on it, as it has been requested by his direct reports! F. had recent management retreat off-site at his house which went well. Team spirit is difficult as his first nature is to be more introverted, and he directs work on large projects independently.</p>   | <p>Helped Mark see how to "re-ach" and create innovative products that were "truly breakthrough." F. demands Mark's best by "nurturing" him through developmental opportunities and advising him as he works. The delegation-hand-off aspect of their relationship supports excellence.</p>   | <p>Uses key staff as a "think tank" in developing new products and strategic directions for MHC. Frank's intellect was a key factor in Mark's decision to accept position. F. is a very creative problem-solver and has excellent grasp of health care industry and current trends and challenges.</p>   |
| <p>11. Cassie, Frank</p> | <p>Inspired Cassie to accept job and move her family from another state to create a new strategic consumer research function, to continually think in new ways, to take on new tasks and flesh out new product and strategies in think-tank style.</p>   | <p>F. models the hard work and behaviors it will take to "change our organizational behavior." F. does not micro-manage, exhibits high degree of trust in his staff. He hires very strong people and responds when his directs raise issues of concern. He says, "What do I need to do to help facilitate a change in this?"</p>                   | <p>Is good natured about helping Cassie when she admittedly is critical in an unproductive way. He always drives toward a "solution set" and does not spend time blaming or chastising. Frank understands Cassie's effectiveness in creating Support for new ideas and products in the Company though some don't understand the "organic" nature of her work.</p>  | <p>Understands the health care insurance industry and competitive challenges and continuously develops strategic game plans. "He can leave a meeting and the next morning come in with something (new)." Provides Cassie with development opportunities by spending time dialoguing to "think more richly about problems, and problem-solving."</p> | <p>Understands the health care insurance industry and competitive challenges and continuously develops strategic game plans. "He can leave a meeting and the next morning come in with something (new)." Provides Cassie with development opportunities by spending time dialoguing to "think more richly about problems, and problem-solving."</p>  |

### 5.3. Theoretical implications

This study provides a contemporary approach to appreciating the complementary IL and LMX constructs of dyadic leadership relationships and the similarities between these theories relative to characteristics and behaviors of leaders and followers. The characteristics and behaviors of followers and leaders in independent dyads, including mutual respect, reciprocal trust, and mutual obligation support the idea that specific role behaviors and the exchange of tangible and intangible commodities contribute to the development of positive, effective working dyadic relationships.

Second, IL makes an important contribution to current LMX theory by highlighting the importance of the early stage of a new leader–follower dyadic relationship. These findings illustrate impactful behaviors and attributes including how follower determination of leaders support for self-worth, including determining the leader pays attention to his/her needs and feelings, has confidence in his/her integrity, motivation and ability, and supports his/her actions and ideas. Early pivotal events provide a crucible in which this determination occurs, thereby contributing to the development of effective leadership relationships.

Third, there are contextual moderators that are important to consider in establishing effective dyadic relationships early on and as these relationships develop over time. These include individual characteristics of the leader such as acting respectfully and being transparent with the follower, interpersonal dynamics such as developing a mutual trust and synergy in working together, and individual developmental factors including supporting the followers' skill building in business and leadership competencies. Both leaders and followers benefit professionally and personally from such relationships and this provides a foundation for successful organizational contributions at the individual, group, and organizational levels.

Finally, transformational leader behaviors are present in dyads characterized by high-quality IL and augment factors in these approaches in unique ways. Six transformational leader behaviors were found in each dyad whether they consisted of newly hired or inherited followers.

### 5.4. Practical implications

The most consequential ramification of this study is that followers contribute a critical role in the determination of whether and how effective dyadic leadership relationships form. In dyadic relationships characterized by IL, not only do they determine whether their self-worth will be supported, they do so in ways beyond which have been documented to date. Followers can decide to initiate effective, close working relationships with their leaders depending on the presence of factors such as feeling trusted, respected and accepted by their leaders. Leaders can benefit from understanding the important influence this has at the beginning of new relationships they form with hired and inherited direct reports. Additional factors that also help followers know that they are valued and considered competent support earlier studies that show that followers are motivated by transformational leaders because they trust and respect them. This study also supports Kouzes and Posner's (1995) findings that the leader characteristics most valued by followers are honesty, integrity, and truthfulness. Leaders that display these behaviors contribute to these perceptions on a case-by-case basis as they described varying degrees of trust within their dyads.

On the basis of the above discussion and conclusions, the following three recommendations are made. First, further studies should be conducted that examine the ways in which leaders become effective at behaviors that followers understand to be supportive of their self-worth, such as trusting without having proven confidence levels, showing respect when the relationship hits troubled times, and being compassionate when the follower's behavior provokes a less considerate response. Second, it seems necessary to undertake more research to better understand the organizational and relational factors that encourage the development of IL and high-quality relationships. Such trust-based interpersonal relationships are critical in high-performing organizational cultures (Yammarino & Dansereau, 2002). Finally, the findings of this study, if confirmed in additional future research, could be incorporated in leadership development and organizational change management programs for companies concerned with leadership effectiveness.

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