



**Consequences of Leadership for Employee Performance  
and Well-Being:  
Exploring Cognitive and Relational Approaches**

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*To my best friend and wife, Maike.*

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# Abstract

For decades, leadership has been heralded as an important driver of employee performance and well-being and, over the years, many different theories have been put forward to explain effective leadership in organizations. The main differences between these leadership theories exist in their respective foci on different aspects of the leadership process: Particularly, whereas some theories focus on leaders (e.g., their traits, behaviors, and cognitions) others emphasize the role of followers and/or the relationship with their respective leaders in the leadership equation (Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, & Johnson, 2011). This dissertation consists of three separate studies (reported in Chapters 2–4) that aim to both theoretically and empirically advance our understanding of the direct and indirect effects of cognitive and relational leadership approaches on followers’ well-being and performance. In Chapters 2 and 3, this dissertation theoretically derives and tests models to explain how paradoxical leadership, that is, leadership behavior that attends to seemingly opposite demands (Zhang, Waldman, Han, & Li, 2015), positively affects followers’ work engagement. Chapter 4 highlights the importance of leadership, more specifically, leader-member exchange, that is, the quality of the relationship followers have with their leader (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), as a contextual factor that leverages employee performance in a more indirect way. Hence, this dissertation contributes to the literature by taking a nuanced approach to examining the direct and indirect consequences of leadership on follower performance and well-being.

# List of Publications

Parts of this dissertation have been submitted for publication in the following outlets in accordance with the ESCP Business School's doctoral program guidelines:

No.	Title	Author(s)	Outlet	ABS	Status	Points
I.	Paradoxical leadership: Understanding and managing conflicting tensions to foster volunteer engagement	1. Alfes, Kerstin 2. Langner, Nils	Journal: <i>Organizational Dynamics</i>  Proceedings: -	C	P	0.75
II.	How and when paradoxical leadership benefits work engagement: The role of goal clarity and work autonomy	1. Fürstenberg, Nils 2. Alfes, Kerstin 3. Kearney, Eric  1. Fürstenberg, Nils 2. Alfes, Kerstin	Journal: <i>Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology</i>  Proceedings: <i>79th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management</i>	A	R&R  P	1  -
III.	Psychological meaningfulness of work as a driver of employee job performance: Understanding mediating and moderating mechanisms	1. Fürstenberg, Nils 2. Alfes, Kerstin 3. Shantz, Amanda	Journal: <i>Human Resource Management</i>	A	R&R	1
Sum						2.75

Note: U = Under Review (passed desk reject); R&R = Revise and Resubmit; P = Published.

ABS = Association of Business Schools.

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# List of Abbreviations

CA	Maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy
cf.	Confer/conferatur (Latin: “compare”)
DC	Maintaining both distance and closeness
e.g.	Exempli gratia (Latin: “for example”)
et al.	Et alia (Latin: “and others”)
i.e.	Id est (Latin: “that means”)
IBM	International Business Machines
JD-R	Job Demands-Resources
LMX	Leader-member exchange
<i>n</i>	Sample size
n/a	Not applicable
OLS	Ordinary least squares
p.	Page
PLB	Paradoxical leadership behavior
RF	Enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility
SO	Combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness
UI	Treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization

*“I will pay more for the ability to deal with people than for any other ability under the sun.”*

— John D. Rockefeller

# Chapter 1

## General Introduction

### 1.1 A Brief History of Leadership Theories

**L**EADERSHIP HAS BEEN described as “one of the world’s oldest preoccupations” (Bass, 1990, p. 3) and has long piqued scholars’ curiosity. Oftentimes, the success of whole political movements or organizations is attributed to their respective leaders’ ability to motivate and influence their followers, for instance in the cases of George Washington and Napoléon Bonaparte or, more recently, Steve Jobs and Elon Musk (Yukl, 2013). Indeed, scholars have estimated that leadership explains approximately 20% to 45% of variance in a firm’s performance (Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008), around 56% of variance in followers’ job satisfaction (DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011), and up to 70% of variance in followers’ work engagement (Gallup, 2015). Thus, Hogan and Kaiser (2005, p. 170) conclude “that leadership matters; it is hugely consequential for the success of organizations and the well-being of employees.”

The term *leadership*, however, holds many different meanings and has been adopted by many researchers without being clearly defined (Yukl, 2013). Bass (1990,

p. 11) sardonically stated that “there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept.”

In their review of the leadership literature, Boal and Hooijberg (2000, p. 516) identified two separate streams of leadership research, namely research focusing on “leadership ‘of’ organizations” and research focusing on “leadership ‘in’ organizations”. Whereas “leadership ‘of’ organizations” primarily involves decisions and influence processes concerning the general strategy or structure of an organization, “leadership ‘in’ organizations” pertains more to operational decisions and day-to-day interactions and influence processes between supervisors and subordinates (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000; Hunt, 2004; Yukl, 2013). This dissertation focuses specifically on the effects of leadership *in* organizations and, hence, employs Yukl’s (2013, p. 23) working definition of leadership *in* organizations as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.”

### **1.1.1 Trait approaches**

Although scholars have written about leadership for hundreds (e.g., Rousseau and Machiavelli) and even thousands of years (e.g., Plato and Aristotle), scientific studies on leadership only began to emerge during the first decades of the twentieth century<sup>1</sup> with the trait or “Great Man” (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002, p. 765) theory of leadership. This theory was grounded primarily in evolutionary arguments and assumed that effective leaders differ in certain characteristics from other people (Yukl, 2013). Although the early studies of this stream were heavily critiqued (e.g., Stogdill, 1948), research focusing on the “Great Man” idea began to re-emerge again

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<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, there is a plethora of noteworthy theories of leadership. For reasons of brevity, I follow Hernandez et al.’s (2011) categorization into trait, behavioral, contingency, relational, charismatic, and cognitive leadership theories and provide examples for each stream of research.

around the 2000s (Hernandez et al., 2011; Kearney, 2013). Among other things, these studies found significant correlations between leader effectiveness and *Big Five* personality traits such as *extraversion*, *openness*, *emotional stability*, *conscientiousness*, and *agreeableness* (DeRue et al., 2011; Judge et al., 2002). Researchers also found relations between leader effectiveness and characteristics such as general cognitive ability (Judge, Colbert, & Ilies, 2004; Zaccaro, 2007), self-esteem and self-efficacy (Atwater, Dionne, Avolio, Camobreco, & Lau, 1999; Chemers, Watson, & May, 2000), and even characteristics such as height (Blaker et al., 2013; McCann, 2001), charisma (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009; Fuller, Patterson, Hester, & Stringer, 1996), or physiognomies (Antonakis & Eubanks, 2017; Re et al., 2013). Although these findings undoubtedly helped to shed light on what makes effective leaders, the average effect sizes of most traits were modest at best (Judge et al., 2002), corroborating Stogdill's (1948, p. 66) assessment "that leadership is not a matter of passive status, or of the mere possession of some combination of traits."

### **1.1.2 Behavioral approaches**

In the 1950s and 1960s, researchers began to increasingly shift their attention from traits to studying actual leadership behavior (Hernandez et al., 2011). Pioneering in this behavioral stream of leadership research were, amongst others, the Ohio State Studies (Fleishman, 1953), the Michigan Studies of Leadership (Katz, Maccoby, & Morse, 1950), and Harvard University studies (Bales, 1954). All three groups identified two separate, independent dimensions of leadership behavior emphasizing either *task* or *social* aspects of the leadership role (Hernandez et al., 2011). Whereas the dimensions developed in the Ohio State Studies were termed *consideration* and *initiating structure* (Fleishman, 1953), the dimensions developed in the Michigan Studies, were coined *employee-oriented* and *production-oriented* behavior (Katz et al.,

1950) and the Harvard University studies differentiated between *social* and *task* leaders (Bales, 1954), respectively. However, all three research groups initially stressed a clear division between task and social aspects of leadership and argued that leaders could be classified into *either* task-oriented *or* relationship-oriented leaders (Hernandez et al., 2011).<sup>2</sup>

An interesting extension to the Harvard, Ohio State, and Michigan Leadership Studies was proposed by Blake and Mouton (1964) with the *managerial grid*. Departing from Bales's (1954) contention that social and task aspects need to be allocated to different individuals, Blake and Mouton (1964) introduced the concept of so-called *High-High-leaders*<sup>3</sup>, that are, leaders who show concern for production and concern for people *simultaneously*. After some empirical inquiry, leadership researchers generally, although likely precipitately (Kearney, Shemla, van Knippenberg, & Scholz, 2019), suggested that Blake and Mouton's (1964) idea of High-High-leaders "should be abandoned" (Nystrom, 1978, p. 330).

### 1.1.3 Contingency approaches

During the 1960s and 1970s, researchers began to focus on so-called contingency approaches to leadership (Hernandez et al., 2011). These approaches (Fiedler, 1964; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; House, 1971; Kerr & Jermier, 1978; Vroom & Yetton, 1973) argued that the effectiveness of leadership behaviors (e.g., *consideration/relations-oriented behavior* or *initiating structure/task-related behavior*) depend on the contexts in which these behaviors are nested (Kearney, 2013;

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to mention that particularly the Ohio State studies did not see the two dimensions to be mutually exclusive (Whitley & Kite, 2013). Nevertheless, they did not specifically emphasize the need for leaders to be both task- and relation-oriented and primarily focused on examining *additive* over *multiplicative* effects of these leadership behaviors (Hunt, 2004)

<sup>3</sup> The *High-High-Leader* is also often referred to as *Hi-Hi Leader* (e.g., Larson, Hunt, & Osborn, 1976; Nystrom, 1978).

Yukl, 2013). Hence, this lens advanced the existing *either-or* notion with new *if-then* insights, by identifying conditions under which leaders should, for instance, attend more to either task or social aspects of the leadership role (Lewis & Smith, 2014).

One of the most prominent contingency theories of leadership was proposed by Fiedler (1964, 1967). He argued that leaders should be either task- or relationship-oriented, based on the so-called *situational favorableness* (Fiedler, 1967). Building on these initial ideas, Hersey and Blanchard (1969) introduced the *Life Cycle Theory of Leadership* that focused specifically on how leaders should adapt their behavior based on followers' *maturity*. Kerr and Jermier (1978) proposed a similar idea with their *Substitutes for Leadership Theory* in which they proposed that certain contextual variables either substitute or neutralize the effects of leadership behaviors. However, the contingency approaches have generally received only mixed and even contradictory empirical support (e.g., Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005; Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & James, 2002; Schriesheim, Tepper, & Tetrault, 1994; Thompson & Vecchio, 2009; Vecchio, 1983).

#### **1.1.4 Relational approaches**

Also during the 1960s and 1970s, a separate stream of leadership research started to concentrate on role-making processes and the dynamic relationships between leaders and followers (Hernandez et al., 2011; Yukl, 2013), which were later termed *leader-member exchange* (LMX; Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982). LMX theory suggests that effective leadership behavior is less about “instilling pride” or “communicating a vision” but rather about “building strong relationships with followers” that result in reciprocal accommodation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995, p. 224). Moreover, while most of the earlier theories on leadership behavior did not address that leaders may behave differently toward different followers (Yukl, 2013), LMX

research drew from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and accentuated that leaders develop relationships of different qualities with their followers (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). This new perspective was important because it addressed the organizational reality that leaders often do not behave uniformly toward all their employees (e.g., purely task- or relationship-focused), but, instead, develop different behavioral patterns with different followers (Yukl, 2013). According to LMX theory, this differentiation creates high-exchange *in-groups* and low-exchange *out-groups* (Dansereau et al., 1975). Whereas in-group relationships are based on reciprocal respect and helping, out-group relationships are predominantly characterized by formal supervision (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Hernandez et al., 2011). Consequently, whereas influence processes in out-groups are based on the use of formal authority by the leader (e.g., coercion), in-groups are characterized by “influence without authority” (Dansereau et al., 1975, p. 48) (e.g., persuasion or felt obligation).

According to Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), leader-member relationships are formed over time and are based on reciprocity through social exchange between two parties (i.e., leader and subordinate). However, LMX has not only emerged as a dyadic but also as a group-level phenomenon. Specifically, researchers have sought to investigate how, for instance, LMX differentiation among team members (Henderson, Liden, Glibkowski, & Chaudhry, 2009) or the appraisal of relationship stability or change influence follower outcomes (Bolino & Turnley, 2009). Likewise, whereas early versions of the theory suggested a clear distinction between in-groups and out-groups, later research also forwarded the idea that supervisors can have equally good relationships with all subordinates (Yukl, 2013).

LMX research has, by and large, emphasized the beneficial aspects of high-quality relationships and field-experimental (Graen et al., 1982; Scandura & Graen, 1984), as well as meta-analytic studies (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Martin, Guillaume,

Thomas, Lee, & Epitropaki, 2016), found consistent evidence for a causal link between LMX and relevant outcomes such as organizational commitment, well-being, and performance. In this regard, Yukl (2013) argued that high-quality leader-member relationships are especially relevant for complex and challenging tasks. Given the increasing task complexity in modern organizations, LMX, therefore, continues to occupy considerable space in the academic debate on effective leadership.

### **1.1.5 Charismatic approaches**

In the 1980s, drawing from early writings by Max Weber (1947) as well as James MacGregor Burns (1978), scholars began to focus increasingly on charismatic (e.g., House & Shamir, 1993) and transformational leadership (e.g., Bass, 1985) as forms of social influence (cf. van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). According to these theories, leaders can be either transactional (e.g., engage in contingent rewards or punishment; Bass, 1985) or show inspirational leadership behaviors “that transform and inspire followers to perform beyond expectations” (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009, p. 423). Whereas traditional behavioral theories predominantly focused on rational forms of social influence (e.g., quid pro quo exchanges), charismatic and transformational leadership theories put emphasis on *affect* and *values* (Hernandez et al., 2011; Yukl, 1999). The charismatic-transformational leadership paradigm “has enjoyed imperial status” (van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013, p. 50) in the leadership literature since its conception, and myriad individual studies, as well as several meta-analyses, have found evidence for positive correlations between charismatic-transformational leadership and desirable outcomes such as follower satisfaction, motivation, or performance (DeRue et al., 2011; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011).

In the past 20 years, however, there has been increasing criticism of the validity and the effectiveness of the charismatic-transformational leadership construct (e.g., Gebert & Kearney, 2011; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Kearney, 2017, 2013; van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). For instance, while charismatic-transformational leadership behavior is on average positively correlated with relevant outcomes, multiple meta-analyses did not find it to have considerably higher predictive validity than, for instance, the over 70-year-old Ohio-State dimensions *consideration* and *initiating structure* (DeRue et al., 2011; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004). Lastly, van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013, p. 16) have argued that after over 30 years of research, the theoretical underpinnings to understand the processes and conditions under which charismatic-transformational leadership affects relevant outcomes are still “underdeveloped—if not absent.”

### **1.1.6 Cognitive approaches**

With the advent of the fourth industrial revolution (Schwab, 2017), work environments became increasingly complex, and seemingly contradictory or *paradoxical* demands for leaders became more salient and persistent (Lewis, 2000). Paradoxes refer to “contradictory yet interrelated elements (dualities) that exist simultaneously and persist over time; such elements seem logical when considered in isolation, but irrational, inconsistent, and absurd when juxtaposed” (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 387). Starting in the 1980s and 1990s at the organizational level of analysis, i.e., leadership *of* organizations, scholars began to explore the question of how leaders can effectively manage or resolve such paradoxical tensions (e.g., Cameron & Quinn, 1988; Denison, Hooijberg, & Quinn, 1995; March, 1991; Quinn, 1988; Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996). Departing from previous approaches to leadership which relied mostly on normative or contingency *either-or* approaches to inform management

decisions (Blank, Green, & Weitzel, 1990; Graeff, 1983; Thompson & Vecchio, 2009), this new cognition-focused stream of leadership research adopted a *both-and* perspective to study how leaders can attend to different demands simultaneously. These ideas were grounded in both Western and Eastern philosophies, drawing from the works of Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813 – 1855), Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874 – 1936), or proponents of the school of German idealism such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762 – 1814) or Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770 – 1831) as well as Taoist thinkers such as Laozi (6<sup>th</sup> century BC) or Dong Zhongshu (179 BC – 104 BC).

Building on these initial ideas, Smith and Lewis (2011) forwarded the “theory of paradox” (p. 381) and argued that “the role of leadership is to support opposing forces and harness the constant tension between them, enabling the system not only to survive but continuously improve” (p. 386). However, Smith and Lewis (2011) highlighted that this concerns not only leadership *of* organizations but also leadership *in* organizations. They further contended that contradictory tensions inherently originate from organizational complexity (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Predominantly, these tensions remain latent until specific external (e.g., plurality, change, or scarcity) or internal factors (e.g., cognitive effort) highlight their conflicting nature and make them salient to organizational actors (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Once made salient, these tensions can lead to so-called *vicious* or *virtuous* response cycles (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Vicious cycles, resulting, for instance, from general organizational inertia or leaders’ desire for behavioral consistency (Smith & Lewis, 2011), activate cognitive and behavioral defense mechanisms such as denial or avoidance (Vince & Broussine, 1996) or resorting to choosing one extreme over other (Cialdini, Trost, & Newsom, 1995). These defense mechanisms, however, lead to unintended, suboptimal

consequences for both leaders and followers, such as confusion or behavioral misalignment (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Conversely, Smith and Lewis (2011) argued that leaders can foster virtuous cycles by accepting and attending to competing demands through integrative strategies. Acceptance of contradictions then lays the cognitive basis for leaders to synergistically integrate competing demands in order to achieve a “dynamic equilibrium” (p. 386), which refers to functional responses to conflicting tensions over time (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Consequently, leaders who embrace competing demands simultaneously enable sustainability through “(1) enabling learning and creativity, (2) fostering flexibility and resilience, and (3) unleashing human potential” (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 393). These assumptions are presented in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1:

*Alternative approaches to managing organizational tensions*

Source: Adopted from Smith and Lewis (2011, p. 395). Reprinted with permission.

Characteristic	Normative Theories	Contingency Theories	Paradox Theory
Approach to organizational tensions	A or B	Under what conditions A or B?	How to engage A and B simultaneously?
Research methods	Comparison of alternatives	Mean tendencies, limited variables	Systemic, discursive, contextual methods
Epistemological assumptions	One best way to be successful	Alignment and consistencies with internal and external environment enable success	Contradiction is inherent and can be powerful to enable peak performance if harnessed

Drawing from Smith and Lewis’ (2011) *theory of paradox* and Taoist *yin-yang* philosophy, Zhang et al. (2015) introduced the concept of paradoxical leadership behavior (PLB) in people management. According to Zhang et al. (2015), leaders in organizations are constantly confronted with competing demands to meet (a) their organization’s structural needs, and (b) their followers’ individual needs. Hence,

Zhang et al. (2015, p. 538) define PLB as “seemingly competing, yet interrelated, behaviors to meet structural and follower demands simultaneously and over time.” Following Smith and Lewis’ (2011) line of reasoning, Zhang et al. (2015) argued that in order to address paradoxical tensions constructively, leaders have to deal with both poles of the paradox *simultaneously* and that contrasting behaviors complement each other to foster leader effectiveness. Zhang et al. (2015) defined five different dimensions of PLB: (1) *Treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization* (UI), (2) *Combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness* (SO), (3) *Maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy* (CA), (4) *Enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility* (RF), (5) *Maintaining both distance and closeness* (DC).

The first dimension of Zhang et al.’s (2015) conceptualization refers to treating followers uniformly and without displaying preferential treatment while, on the other hand, allowing individualization (UI). Although uniform treatment is essential to foster feelings of fairness and equity, it can lead to feelings of depersonalization (Brewer, 1991; Zhang et al., 2015). On the other hand, individualized treatment has been proposed as an essential element in relationship building and effective leadership (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Harris, Li, & Kirkman, 2014; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). Hence, paradoxical leaders aim to balance these aspects by assigning similar roles, tasks, and privileges to followers but also taking their individual needs and personalities into account (Li, She, & Yang, 2018; Zhang et al., 2015).

The second dimension, that is, *combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness* (SO), refers to leaders’ consideration for others (Zhang et al., 2015). This means that paradoxical leaders, on the one hand, are highly self-confident, have a wish to be the center of attention, and seek to maintain central influence, but on the other

hand, they also show humility and concern for others and enable followers to undertake leadership roles (Zhang et al., 2015).

The third and fourth dimensions, i.e., *maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy* (CA) and *enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility* (RF), according to Zhang et al. (2015), parallel the two categories of control in organizations outlined by Ouchi (1978). More specifically, Ouchi (1978) differentiated control into *output control*, that is, the use of authority in decision-making processes and *behavior control*, that is, the use of authority to control employee's behavior at work. Hence, the dimension *maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy* (CA) pertains to Ouchi's (1978) dimension of *output control* while the dimension *enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility* (RF) pertains to *behavior control* (Zhang et al., 2015). Accordingly, leaders have to balance control and empowerment regarding subordinate *behavior* as well as *decision-making* in work processes (Zhang et al., 2015). Whereas the leadership literature (e.g., contingency approaches) has typically looked at these choices as either-or (i.e., deciding between control *or* empowerment), PLB attempts to integrate both views and create a "bounded discretionary environment" (Zhang et al., 2015, p. 544) that, on one hand, emphasizes work requirements and the central role of the leader in decision-making, while on the other hand, gives leeway and flexibility to followers to also act independently from the leader within certain boundaries (Zhang et al., 2015).

The fifth dimension of Zhang et al.'s (2015) PLB construct refers to the hierarchical relationships between leaders and followers. Zhang et al. (2015) argue that both closeness and distance are essential for leadership effectiveness. On the one hand, social distance enables paradoxical leaders to exert power as they are appraised as more legitimate or assertive (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; Shamir, 1995; van Knippenberg, 2011; Yagil, 1998). On the other hand, research has shown that close

relationships also have beneficial effects on follower's work outcomes (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Thus, Zhang et al. (2015) propose that leaders should seek to maintain hierarchical differences but at the same time work on forming close relationships.

Empirical inquiry into the phenomenon of PLB has yielded initial support for its predictive validity for relevant leadership outcomes such as followers' proficiency, adaptivity, proactivity, task performance, and organizational citizenship behavior, affective organizational commitment, and leadership effectiveness (She & Li, 2017; Zhang et al., 2015) or creativity and innovative performance (Kauppila & Tempelaar, 2016; Liu, Wu, & Lin, 2017; Shao, Nijstad, & Täuber, 2019; van Knippenberg et al., 2019).

## **1.2 Employee Performance and Well-Being as Indicators of Leadership**

### **Effectiveness**

Similar to the question of which leadership approach might be *most effective*, leadership researchers often debate about the criteria by which *leadership effectiveness* can be evaluated (Yukl, 2013). Generally, leadership is evaluated by researchers based on its influence on individual, group, or organizational outcomes (Yukl, 2013). However, Yukl (2013) notes that the specific outcomes chosen to determine leadership effectiveness often echo researchers' personal interpretation of the role of leadership in organizations.

One of the most dominant criteria for effective leadership is the extent to which it enhances followers' *performance* (Kaiser et al., 2008; Yukl, 2013). According to Borman and Motowidlo (1997), performance can be divided into *in-role performance*, which refers to the extent to which employees carry out actions that directly contribute to the functioning of the organization, and *extra-role performance*, which comprises

aspects that benefit the organization indirectly, e.g., by fostering a positive working atmosphere.

More recently, researchers have also highlighted *workplace deviance*, which refers to discretionary behavior that transgresses organizational norms and rules (Bennett & Robinson, 2000) as an important (negative) performance dimension.

Moreover, performance can be divided into short- and long-term facets (Yukl, 2013) on which different leadership behaviors are hypothesized to have varied, even contrasting effects (e.g., Lorinkova, Pearsall, & Sims, 2013; Martin, Liao, & Campbell, 2013). These outcomes can be evaluated using both objective measures like sales or productivity as well as subjective measures like ratings obtained from leaders, peers, or customers (Alexander & Wilkins, 1982; Yukl, 2013).

Although follower performance is arguably the most prevalent indicator used in leadership research, it is not the only theoretically and practically relevant one (Guest, 2017). With the advent of the employee-focused approach in organizational studies, follower attitudes and well-being have gained increasing interest from scholars as an important indicator of leadership effectiveness (Inceoglu, Thomas, Chu, Plans, & Gerbasi, 2018; Yukl, 2013). In this regard, different schools of thought have emerged over the past decades.

The first one is the *Human Relations* approach (Mayo, 1933; Sarachek, 2018), which is based on the general assumption that some outcomes (e.g., satisfaction or stress) are more immediate than others and might, therefore, help to explain the relation between leadership behaviors and distal outcomes such as follower performance, absenteeism, or turnover (Shirom, 1989).

Theoretically, this “happy/productive worker thesis” (Wright, 2004, p. 221) can be explained by the *motivational* and *energetic* components of well-being (Taris & Schreurs, 2009) in that individuals with high well-being are both more *capable* as well

as *motivated* to perform in comparison with individuals with lower well-being (Taris & Schreurs, 2009; Zelenski, Murphy, & Jenkins, 2008). Indeed, empirical research has found moderate but robust positive associations of positive employee well-being with organizationally relevant outcomes such as performance as well as negative associations with undesirable outcomes such as employee turnover (Ford, Cerasoli, Higgins, & Decesare, 2011; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001; Taris & Schreurs, 2009; Wright & Bonett, 2007).

Aside from its importance for predicting distal outcomes such as employee performance (e.g., Judge et al., 2001), employee well-being has also gained attention as a primary outcome of leadership (Inceoglu et al., 2018). According to this second school of thought, studying employee well-being is not only relevant because it leads to organizationally desirable outcomes but also because it is an essential component of corporate social responsibility (Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007; Guest, 2017). Hence, employee health and well-being should not be viewed merely as a means to an end, but rather as a desirable end in itself (Inceoglu et al., 2018; Sparks, Faragher, & Cooper, 2001). This notion is further corroborated by studies suggesting that employee performance and well-being are indeed independent and sometimes conflicting outcomes (van De Voorde, Paauwe, & van Veldhoven, 2012). Hence, certain leadership behaviors and styles may affect these outcomes differently and through different mechanisms (Inceoglu et al., 2018). For these reasons, scholars argued that leadership effectiveness should be assessed against more than one criterion, taking into account both employee performance and well-being to study the effects of leadership behaviors more holistically (Inceoglu et al., 2018; Yukl, 2013).

Lastly, the influence processes of leadership *in* organizations can be dyadic (between a leader and another individual) or group-oriented (between a leader and a group of individuals, e.g., a workgroup) (Yukl, 2013). Depending on the

organizational requirements, leadership needs to be evaluated by how it influences either individuals, workgroups, or both (Williams, Podsakoff, & Huber, 1992).

### **1.3 Purposes and Structure of the Dissertation**

The above review indicates several shortcomings of the leadership literature that concern both the leadership construct itself, as well as the criteria typically employed to measure its effectiveness. The purpose of this work is, therefore, to advance our understanding of the relation between leadership and employee outcomes as well as to shed light on the processes and contingencies that underlie these relations. More specifically, this dissertation aims to provide a nuanced perspective on leadership by arguing that leadership can have both direct and indirect effects on employee performance and well-being. In this regard, especially relational and cognitive approaches have been suggested as promising avenues for future research that address different aspects of the leadership process (Hernandez et al., 2011). Hence, this dissertation will draw on these two different, yet ultimately complementary streams in leadership research and explore their relation with both employee well-being and performance.

By doing so, this dissertation addresses the need to consider both leaders with their respective behavior as well as the relationships they have with their followers, in order to accurately evaluate leadership effectiveness. Conclusively, this dissertation highlights that different aspects of the leadership role, i.e., behaviors and relationships, may influence followers in different (i.e., direct or indirect) ways and, thus, must be considered in concert to maximize leadership effectiveness. This dissertation is based on three individual, self-contained studies which are presented in the following Chapters 2–4. These studies focus specifically on *dyadic* influence processes of leaders

on individual followers, which, despite its importance in the organizational context, “has been known as the most poorly understood level” (Kim et al., 2020, p. 1).

In Chapter 2, I build on paradox theory (Smith & Lewis, 2011) and develop a conceptual framework to suggest that paradoxical leaders effectively foster followers’ work engagement as a well-being-related follower outcome in a volunteering context by simultaneously enacting elements of directive and participative leadership. Based on an illustrative case study, I theorize that both directive and participative leadership hold value in terms of fostering work engagement, but that a one-sided focus on either of these leadership approaches can also have dysfunctional effects. I further provide practical recommendations for how PLB may be applied in a non-profit setting.

In Chapter 3, I first address a methodological limitation of the PLB literature, namely the relatively lengthy and cognitively taxing measurement instruments. To combat this issue, I validate a reliable short-form measure for assessing PLB using three separate samples (total  $n = 734$ ). Second, I empirically test the conceptual ideas of Chapter 2 by conducting two independent field surveys across the non-profit and pro-profit context (total  $n = 704$ ). More specifically, I explore the relation between PLB and followers’ work engagement and examine work autonomy and goal clarity as interactive mediating mechanisms of this relation.

In Chapter 4, I explore the role of LMX as an important contextual factor that leverages the potential positive effect of psychological meaningfulness on employees’ job performance. Whereas Chapters 2–3 explore the direct effects of cognitive leadership approaches (i.e., PLB) on followers’ well-being, this study examines the relation between relational leadership approaches (i.e., LMX) with employees’ performance. Chapter 4 thus complements the findings presented in Chapters 2–3 with a different dimension of leadership outcomes, that is, employee performance. Moreover, Chapter 4 provides an alternative view of leadership by examining leader-

member relationships as a contextual factor, rather than focal variable. In a survey study among employees from the United Kingdom with time-lagged performance appraisal data ( $n = 249$ ), I demonstrate empirically that high-quality leader-member relationships strengthen the relation between psychological meaningfulness of work and promotive voice behaviors and subsequently employee job performance.

In Chapter 5, I conclude this dissertation with a general discussion and integration of the major findings and implications of the three manuscripts and propose avenues for further theoretical development and empirical inquiry. Table 1-2 summarizes the three manuscripts of this dissertation.

Table 1-2:

*Overview of the three manuscripts*

	Manuscript 1	Manuscript 2	Manuscript 3
Title	Paradoxical leadership: Understanding and managing conflicting tensions to foster volunteer engagement	How and when paradoxical leadership benefits work engagement: The role of goal clarity and work autonomy	Psychological meaningfulness of work as a driver of employee job performance: Understanding mediating and moderating mechanisms
Research Question	What are the functional and dysfunctional aspects of one-sided leadership styles? How can paradoxical leadership behavior foster volunteer engagement?	How does paradoxical leadership behavior affect followers' work engagement? How do different job resources, namely goal clarity and work autonomy, interact to predict work engagement?	How does leader-member exchange affect the relation between psychological meaningfulness, promotive voice behaviors, and subsequent job performance?
Sample(s)	n/a	5 samples: Total of 1435 participants from the UK and Germany; cross-sectional & multi-wave design	249 employees from the UK; multi-wave design; multi-source design
Method	Conceptual review	Multiple OLS regression	Multiple OLS regression
Theoretical perspective	Theory of Paradox (Smith & Lewis, 2011)	Job Demands-Resource Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)	Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 1998, 2000)

*“The challenge of leadership is  
to be strong, but not rude;  
be kind, but not weak;  
be bold, but not bully;  
be thoughtful, but not lazy;  
be humble, but not timid;  
be proud, but not arrogant;  
have humor, but without folly.”*  
—Jim Rohn

## Chapter 2

### Manuscript 1

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Title:	Paradoxical leadership: Understanding and managing conflicting tensions to foster volunteer engagement
Authors:	Kerstin Alfes and Nils Langner
Status:	Published
Conference Proceeding:	none
Journal:	<i>Organizational Dynamics</i> ( <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2017.04.005">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2017.04.005</a> )
Journal Ranking:	C (Chartered ABS Journal Guide 2018)

*Manuscript is available from thesis author upon request.*

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*“Leaders need to provide strategy and direction and to give employees the tools that enable them to gather information and insight from around the world.*

*Leaders shouldn’t try to make every decision.”*

— Bill Gates

## Chapter 3

### Manuscript 2

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Title: How and when paradoxical leadership benefits work engagement: The role of goal clarity and work autonomy

Authors: Nils Fürstenberg, Kerstin Alfes, and Eric Kearney

Status: Revise and Resubmit

Conference Proceeding: *79th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management*

Journal: *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*

Journal Ranking: A (Chartered ABS Journal Guide 2018)

*Manuscript is available from thesis author upon request.*

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*“True leadership lies in guiding others to success. In ensuring that everyone is performing at their best, doing the work they are pledged to do and doing it well.”*

— Bill Owens

## Chapter 4

### Manuscript 3

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Title:	Psychological meaningfulness of work as a driver of employee job performance: Understanding mediating and moderating mechanisms
Authors:	Nils Fürstenberg, Kerstin Alfes, and Amanda Shantz
Status:	Revise and Resubmit
Conference Proceeding:	none
Journal:	<i>Human Resource Management</i>
Journal Ranking:	A (Chartered ABS Journal Guide 2018)

*Manuscript is available from thesis author upon request.*

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*“The quality of all our lives is dependent on the  
quality of our leadership.”*  
—Warren Bennis

## Chapter 5

# General Discussion

### 1.4 Summary and Key Findings

**O**VER THE PAST 90 years, sundry leadership theories have been put forward to understand what makes leaders effective. In this dissertation, I focused on two distinct, yet complementary streams of leadership, namely the relational (i.e., LMX; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and cognitive approaches (i.e., PLB; Zhang et al., 2015) to leadership. By doing so, I addressed the theoretically and practically pressing question of how leadership, directly and indirectly, affects followers’ performance and well-being. More specifically, the theoretical arguments and empirical evidence forwarded in Chapters 2–4 support the notion that both cognitive and relationship-oriented approaches to leadership have their merits. Figure 5-1 provides a summary of the relations examined in this dissertation.

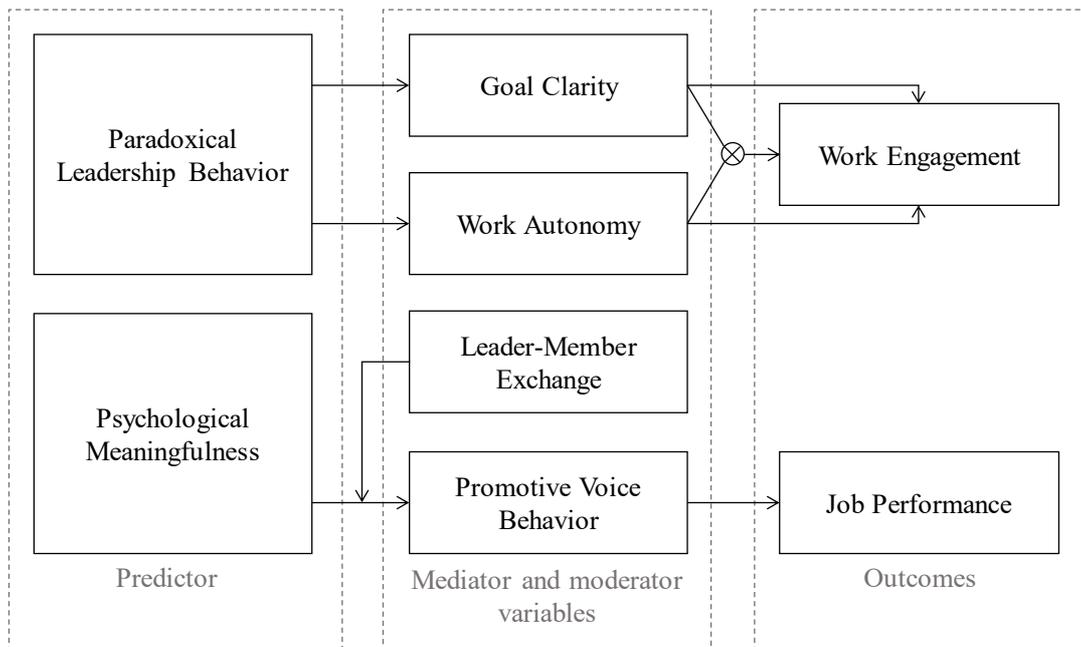


Figure 5-1. Summary of the relations examined in this dissertation

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the existing literature on leadership in the volunteering context and, drawing from paradox theory (Gebert, Boerner, & Kearney, 2010; Smith & Lewis, 2011), deduced that one-sided leadership styles such as participative or directive leadership might have the potential to affect volunteer engagement positively, but, by the same token, may each also involve unintentional, adverse effects. Whereas participative leadership behavior may engender the risk of losing control over followers completely, directive leadership entails the risk of being perceived as repressive and rigid (e.g., Gebert et al., 2010), ultimately leading to suboptimal levels of engagement. Analysis of an illustrative case study suggested that leaders should adopt a more “paradoxical” approach to leadership and attend to both directive and participative aspect of leadership simultaneously and over time to effectively enable followers’ work engagement.

Moreover, I provided specific examples for practitioners on how to embrace these seemingly contradictory behaviors in practice using an illustrative case study method. This is an important contribution because unlike traditional leadership

approaches, such as the Ohio State dimensions, or constructs like transformational and transactional leadership, PLB, at first sight, represents a very abstract and almost improbable leadership approach, which might, therefore, hinder its practical application. In this regard, Zhang et al. (2015) found that PLB requires a strong cognitive basis consisting of the ability for *holistic thinking*, that is leaders ability to perceive different elements as interdependent and interrelated (Peng & Nisbett, 1999) as well as *integrative complexity*, which refers to leaders' openness to accept divergent opinions and contradictory information (Zhang et al., 2015). Thus, not all leaders may have the same natural ability to exhibit this leadership behavior. By highlighting the practical relevance of this leadership approach and by providing easily digestible examples of how to apply PLB in everyday leadership situations, this chapter of the dissertation helps to bridge the often-critiqued gap between research and practice (Kieser, Nicolai, & Seidl, 2015) and fosters the applicability of paradoxical leadership theory in organizational practice.

In Chapter 3, I first developed a short-form measure to assess PLB in people management. Ambitious survey research projects often face severe limitations concerning the scope and length of questionnaires organizations and their respective employees are willing to fill out (Credé et al., 2012). This is especially relevant when using cognitively taxing double-barreled items, as in the 22-item instrument developed by Zhang et al. (2015). However, in order to be relevant, theories must also be testable (Whetten, 1989). The PLB-5 measure developed in Chapter 3 constitutes the shortest reliable measure of PLB to date. The item reductions are illustrated in Figure 5-2. Thus, this dissertation contributes to the advancement of paradoxical leadership theory by offering researchers interested in measuring global PLB, especially in projects where PLB might not be the direct focus of the investigation, a valid and reliable alternative to the original 22-item instrument developed by Zhang et al. (2015).

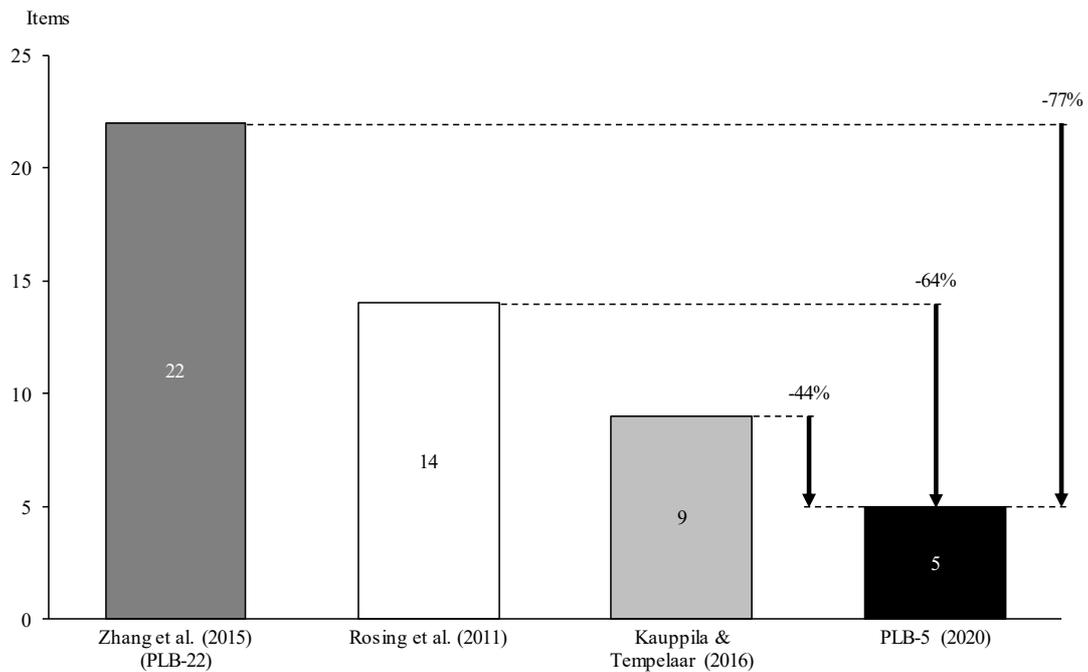


Figure 5-2. Scale length comparison between PLB-5 and alternative instruments

Second, I empirically tested the propositions forwarded in Chapter 2 using the newly developed PLB-5 measure. Evidence from two independent samples generally provided support for the assumption that by attending to seemingly opposing ends of the control-autonomy paradox (e.g., Waldman & Bowen, 2016) and thus incorporating both participative as well as directive behavioral aspects simultaneously and over time, paradoxical leaders are able to foster *both* followers' goal clarity *and* work autonomy. The results also showed that the interaction of goal clarity and work autonomy explained additional variance in followers' work engagement over and above that of the main effects.

The theory and empirical evidence forwarded in Chapter 3 suggest that paradoxical leadership theory might be a viable advancement to traditional normative or contingency *either-or* approaches to leadership. For instance, Fiedler's (1967) least preferred co-worker theory suggests that leaders should vary between task- and relationship-oriented behavior based on the *situational favorableness*. However,

Fiedler's (1967) theory does not specifically address circumstances under which leadership should be *both strongly* task- and relationship-oriented (Whitley & Kite, 2013). Fiedler (1967) even argued that these two styles are likely mutually exclusive, meaning that leaders cannot score high on both simultaneously (cf. Whitley & Kite, 2013). Thus, most contingency theories are limited to an *either-or* perspective and fall short of incorporating the interrelatedness of seemingly opposing behaviors (Kearney, 2013; Lewis & Smith, 2014).

In Chapter 4, I took an alternative approach to most prior leadership research (Yukl, 2013) by investigating leadership, more specifically, leader-member exchange, as a *contextual factor* that can help to leverage beneficial effects of meaningful work on employee performance. Although psychological meaningfulness generally constitutes a relevant motive to think about the wider work context and to come up with ideas on how to improve organizational performance (i.e., engage in promotive voice behavior; Morrison, 2011), the empirical evidence provided in Chapter 4 suggests that employees only engage in promotive voice behavior when they feel that it is safe and worthwhile to do so, which is promoted through high-quality relationships with their leaders. This suggests that leadership, more specifically, the relationship followers have with their leaders, not only plays a direct role in promoting desirable outcomes (cf. Martin et al., 2016), but may, and perhaps more importantly, help to leverage human potential by creating an environment in which employees feel safe and efficacious to go above and beyond what is usually expected of them.

In sum, this dissertation highlights that effective leadership is not simply characterized by certain behaviors, but also by the quality of relationships that leaders establish with their followers. To be effective in modern workplaces, leaders must, on one hand, manage seemingly conflicting demands to effectively lead followers. On the other hand, leadership researchers and practitioners should not forget that leadership

*in* organizations is a phenomenon involving social interactions and relationships that need to be carefully attended to in order to maximize leadership effectiveness.

## **1.5 General Limitations and Future Research**

This dissertation should be assessed against its limitations. The first limitation is that the empirical studies reported in the previous chapters to a large extent relied on single-level and self-report data from employees. Although collecting self-report data on individuals' affective states and subjective well-being is a common research practice (Linton, Dieppe, & Medina-Lara, 2016; Sandvik, Diener, & Seidlitz, 1993), it may raise concerns regarding the prevalence common method biases, particularly same-source bias (Conway & Lance, 2010) in the data. This could potentially have led to inflated parameter estimates and consequently higher probabilities of Type 1 errors, i.e., false positives (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Fetter, 1993). However, research has demonstrated that self-reports are valid tools for measuring subjective well-being such as work engagement (Sandvik et al., 1993). Moreover, Crampton and Wagner's (1994) meta-analytic findings indicate that inflation from same-source bias is often overestimated and concerns largely unfounded. Lastly, the models in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 both included interactive effects between variables. According to Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff (2012) as well as Siemsen, Roth, and Oliveira (2010), interactive effects are unlikely to be results of common method variance. In fact, Podsakoff et al. (2012, p. 564) note that whereas common method variance can affect main effects, "it cannot inflate (but does deflate) quadratic and interaction effects".

Nevertheless, I followed recommendations by Podsakoff et al. (2003), who argued that common method bias could be combated using design-based or statistical remedies (e.g., adding relevant control variables into regression equations). Regarding precautionary measures in the studies' designs, I assured all participants of the

confidential and voluntary nature of the data collections. Moreover, I paid specific attention to the questionnaire design in order to alleviate problems of understanding and to reduce participant boredom and cognitive fatigue (e.g., Credé et al., 2012). As an additional countermeasure to common method bias, I tested all models with at least one sample in which data were obtained across different points in time. In all analyses, I included relevant control variables to reduce the potential influence of extraneous variables. In Chapter 4, additionally to collecting data across two points in time with a 4-month time lag, I also collected data from different sources (i.e., employees and HR department) to reduce potentially biased estimates. Lastly, I conducted series of confirmatory factor analyses for all studies to assess the differentiability of the study constructs and found sufficient evidence to assume that the measures were distinguishable, and that common method bias did not majorly influence the relations in the reported studies.

A second methodological limitation is that, although I employed time-lagged designs throughout this dissertation, none of the studies reported in Chapter 3 or Chapter 4 employed longitudinal research designs (e.g., repeated measures designs; O'Brien & Kaiser, 1985) to examine behavioral changes over time. Whereas early research largely assumed relative stability of leadership behaviors (cf. Lord, Day, Zaccaro, Avolio, & Eagly, 2017), empirical evidence suggests that leadership behavior varies considerably over time (McClean, Barnes, Courtright, & Johnson, 2019). The concepts examined in this dissertation, i.e., PLB and LMX, however, represent a rather special case in this regard. First, Zhang et al. (2015) conceptualized PLB as occurring “simultaneously and over time” (p. 536), which suggests that PLB is likely to be mostly invariant over time. Paradoxical leaders are, therefore, unlikely to switch between *both-and* and *either-or* approaches, but rather between putting more or less emphasis on attending to each of the respective poles of a certain paradox (Zhang et

al., 2015). By the same token, leader-member relationships, once formed, are rather stable (Cropanzano, Dasborough, & Weiss, 2017). Nevertheless, as Lorinkova et al. (2013) suggested, taking a longitudinal approach to examining the effects of leadership on follower outcomes may provide more minute findings compared to cross-sectional studies. Hence, examining both short-term as well as longitudinal effects of leadership on follower outcomes, for instance using diary, experience sampling, or panel designs, might be a fruitful avenue for future research. These designs could advance our understanding of potential developmental, compounding, or reciprocal effects of leadership (Hunter, Bedell-Avers, & Mumford, 2007).

Third, as the leadership constructs in this dissertation were not exogenously manipulated, none of the studies presented in this dissertation (Chapters 2-4) permits drawing definitive causal conclusions about the proposed or examined relations (Antonakis, Bendahan, Jacquart, & Lalive, 2010). Although I used established theories and previous empirical findings to delineate the causal directions of my hypotheses, a reverse or reciprocal causality cannot be dismissed completely (Hayes, 2018; Sparr, 2008). Given the evidence from previous longitudinal studies on leadership and employee performance and well-being (e.g., van Dierendonck, Haynes, Borrill, & Stride, 2016), especially reciprocal relations are conceivable. In Chapter 3, I drew from the JD-R model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) to suggest that paradoxical leaders generate specific job resources for followers which influence the latter's work engagement in an interactive way. Now, conversely, work engagement could lead to a positive gain spiral whereby employees may be more performant, which could lead their supervisors to provide them more job resources (e.g., autonomy) as a result (Ouweneel, Le Blanc, & Schaufeli, 2011; Salanova, Schaufeli, Xanthopoulou, & Bakker, 2010). However, as elaborated earlier, the studies reported in Chapters 3 and 4 used temporal separation, robust statistical techniques (e.g., non-parametric

bootstrapping) and controlled for several confounding factors. Thus, the studies reported in this dissertation to a great extent fulfill R. Martin, Hughes, Epitropaki, and Thomas' (2020) general criteria for causal inference, that are a) temporal precedence (i.e., the independent variable(s) must precede the outcome variable temporally), b) reliable prediction (i.e., the effect of the independent variable(s) on the outcome variable must be statistically significant) and c) non-spurious association (i.e., the relation between the independent and outcome variable must not be explained by other causes). Moreover, considering that leadership behavior can be trained (e.g., Antonakis, Fenley, & Liechti, 2011) and developed (e.g., DeRue & Wellman, 2009) the previously hypothesized mechanisms can be exogenously manipulated, e.g., through leadership training (e.g., Emerson, 2013). Hence, there are both theoretical and empirical rationales to support the proposed causal directions examined in this dissertation. Nevertheless, future research should try to adopt alternative causal frameworks such as the Rubin Causal Model (Imbens & Rubin, 2008) to leadership research and to conduct experimental studies of PLB and employ instrumental variable approaches (Sajons, 2020), to provide internal validity to the findings of this dissertation.

Fourth, a limitation not only of this dissertation but of research on PLB and LMX, in general, is of conceptual nature. In Chapter 3, this dissertation specifically relied on the conceptualization by Zhang et al. (2015) who identified five prevalent paradoxes in people management, namely (1) *Treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization* (UI), (2) *Combining self-centeredness with other-centeredness* (SO), (3) *Maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy* (CA), (4) *Enforcing work requirements while allowing flexibility* (RF), (5) *Maintaining both distance and closeness* (DC). Although the authors linked these dimensions to the existing theoretical body of literature, their approach to deriving these dimensions was

mainly inductive, and other categorizations of organizational paradoxes do exist (e.g., Denison et al., 1995; Gebert & Kearney, 2011; Kauppila & Tempelaar, 2016; Purvanova & Kenda, 2018; Rosing, Frese, & Bausch, 2011; Smith & Lewis, 2011). For instance, Smith and Lewis (2011) list organizational paradoxes of *belonging (identity/interpersonal relationships)*, *learning (knowledge)*, *organizing (processes)*, and *performing (goals)* and posit that tensions operate both within and between these categories. Other examples include Gebert and Kearney (2011) or Rosing et al. (2011), who developed paradox dimensions for managing innovation processes, Purvanova and Kenda (2018), who derived a set of paradox dimensions for leaders in virtual/remote contexts or Kauppila and Tempelaar (2016), who, following early conceptualizations of leadership behaviors into *task* and *social* aspects, defined and operationalized PLB as combining “high performance expectations and strong managerial support” (p. 1030).

Given this plethora of different frameworks for categorizing paradoxical tensions in people management, future research should assess to what extent findings derived with a specific conceptualization and operationalization of PLB may generalize to other contexts. Whereas conceptualizations for most traditional leadership styles, e.g., transformational or visionary leadership behavior, could be applied in different contexts and levels of analysis (e.g., Sully de Luque et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2005), this might not be possible for PLB. Hence, a major challenge—but also opportunity—for future research on paradoxical leadership is to compare the usefulness of specific versus broader conceptualizations of PLB, for instance, using comparative meta-analyses, and explore ways to synthesize and integrate empirical findings derived with different conceptualizations and operationalizations.

Moreover, Fairhurst et al., (2018) highlighted the *multiplicity* of and *interconnectedness* between organizational paradoxes as a critical theme in the

paradox literature, meaning that leaders often face multiple and nested tensions at the same time. For instance, organizational-level tensions such as focusing on short-term or long-time goals may simultaneously affect individual-level tensions of maintaining and letting go of control, and vice versa (Waldman & Bowen, 2016). However, leaders often overlook these nested tensions and instead focus only on specific paradoxes (Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016). Given that the conceptualization and operationalization of PLB are still in their infancy, more research is needed to explore how leaders can successfully manage multiple nested and interrelated paradoxes simultaneously.

Similarly, there has been substantial concern about the LMX construct and its measurement for over 30 years (Gottfredson, Wright, & Heaphy, 2020). For instance, while some researchers conceptualize and operationalize LMX as a unidimensional construct (e.g., using the LMX-7 scale; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) others (Liden & Maslyn, 1998) view it as being multi-dimensional, including dimensions such as *mutual affect, loyalty, contribution, and professional respect*. Thus, whereas Chapter 4 focused specifically on a unidimensional and behavioral conceptualization of leader-member exchange, other alternatives do exist. The use of several different conceptualizations and operationalizations of LMX that exist within the LMX literature makes it challenging to compare results from different studies and synthesize empirical findings in a meaningful way (Sheer, 2015; Yukl, 2013). Hence, more critical assessments of the LMX constructs, like that by Gottfredson et al. (2020), that challenge current measurements and theoretical underpinnings of LMX are needed to ensure the theoretical and practical usefulness of future LMX research.

Furthermore, the theory forwarded in Chapter 4 followed Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) approach and defined LMX as a primarily dyadic phenomenon occurring between one leader and one follower. However, with the increasing importance of

workgroups, LMX has also been suggested to represent a meaningful group-level phenomenon, highlighting that the mean or median level of LMX within a workgroup, as well as the variance in quality of the relationships between a leader and his/her followers matter for both team- and individual-level outcomes (Henderson et al., 2009). Hence, while the theory presented in Chapter 4 is in line with current conceptualizations of LMX, it is important to shed further light on the conceptual nature of the LMX construct as well as examining potential multi-level effects on group and follower outcomes.

Accompanying the previous limitation, it is important to note that Chapter 4 conceptualized and operationalized LMX as a stable trait of the leader-member relationship. Although the few longitudinal studies examining LMX indeed suggest that leader-member relationships are established relatively quickly and mostly remain stable over time (e.g., Liden & Graen, 1980; Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993), findings from general research on dyadic relationships (e.g., romantic relationships) suggests that relationships regularly progress through high- and low-quality phases (Arriaga, 2001; Knee, Canevello, Bush, & Cook, 2008). To resolve these theoretical and empirical inconsistencies, future research on leader-member relationships should more closely assess the patterns of leader-member interactions over time (Yukl, 2013).

Lastly, it is important to address the fact the studies presented in Chapters 2-4, similar to leadership studies in general (Hunter et al., 2007), all focused on separate leadership approaches. Whereas Chapters 2-3 focused on cognitive leadership approaches (i.e., PLB), Chapter 4 concentrated on a relational approach to leadership (i.e., LMX). This general trend of seemingly separate research streams in the leadership literature led Yukl (2013, p. 415) to attest a “prevailing pattern of segmentation in research on leadership over the past 50 years.” Thus, an important task for future research lies in the integration of different streams of leadership research such as PLB

and LMX. Indeed, while seemingly independent from each other, PLB and LMX theories hold potential for further integration in future research. For instance, leader-member relationships have often been suggested as explanatory (mediating) processes through which leader behaviors (e.g., PLB) affect employee outcomes like performance (Wang et al., 2005; Xu, Huang, Lam, & Miao, 2012) or well-being (Boer, Deinert, Homan, & Voelpel, 2016). Moreover, there is substantial conceptual overlap between PLB and the LMX construct that provides opportunities for further integration. Both the first (*Treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualization; UI*) and fifth (*Maintaining both distance and closeness; DC*) dimensions of Zhang et al.'s (2015) conceptualization of PLB directly address the relationships paradoxical leaders establish with their followers. More specifically, whereas the *DC* dimension addresses how paradoxical leaders behave toward each employee (dyadic level), the *UI* dimension addresses how paradoxical leaders behave toward multiple employees and thus reflects LMX from social network perspectives (i.e., group level; Hernandez et al., 2011). In this regard, Yukl (2013, p. 225) argued that "it is not necessary to treat all subordinates exactly the same, but each person should perceive that he or she is an important and respected member of the team rather than a 'second-class citizen.'" Thus, a fruitful avenue for future research could be to try to integrate these streams of the leadership literature and, for instance, explore how PLB affects leader-member relationships on the team and dyadic level of analysis. Reflecting on the nature of paradoxical leadership, it seems reasonable to assume that paradoxical leaders, on the dyadic level of analysis, are able to develop high-quality relationships with their followers but, at the same time, maintain a professional distance to avoid potential curvilinear effects of LMX of follower outcomes (Harris & Kacmar, 2006; Harris, Kacmar, & Witt, 2005). Similarly, on the group level of analysis, research could shed light on how PLB relates to mean group level LMX as

well as LMX differentiation (Henderson et al., 2009). Here, Zhang et al.'s (2015) conceptualization of PLB gives reasons to assume that, by treating followers equally but allowing individualization, paradoxical leaders could foster high group mean LMX on one hand, and low LMX differentiation on the other hand.

## **1.6 Final Conclusion**

Notwithstanding its limitations, this dissertation provides valuable new insights into the effects of leadership on followers' performance and well-being. The evidence forwarded in Chapters 2–4 suggests that leadership affects follower outcomes both directly and indirectly. Through its theoretical and empirical inquiry, this dissertation advances our understanding of both relational (i.e., LMX) and cognitive approaches (i.e., PLB) to leadership *in* organizations. In that sense, however, this dissertation highlights one of the critical challenges of leadership: Paying attention to one's style of leadership (e.g., exhibiting specific leadership behaviors) and simultaneously focusing on personal relationships with one's followers. Both, behavioral as well as relational aspects require substantial consideration from leaders to foster desirable outcomes. I hope that this dissertation will beget future research of both conceptual and empirical nature to further broaden our knowledge of the antecedents, contingencies, and consequences of leadership.

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