Reciprocal leadership, a practical approach to leadership

Wendy Pierce

University of Richmond

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.richmond.edu/honors-theses

Part of the Leadership Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.
Reciprocal Leadership

A Practical Approach to Leadership

By

Wendy Pierce

Senior Project
Jepson School of Leadership Studies
University of Richmond
Richmond, Virginia
May, 1998
Reciprocal Leadership in the Workplace: A Study of Practical Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Forward-looking leadership carries much more responsibility than in the past. Many organizations today are under fire to change with the times—and why not? We cannot afford to live within the fabulous fifties mindset that thrived under fantastical structures of bosses, middlemen, and elaborate pecking orders. The New York minute has quickly become the pacesetter for many of our industry leaders. Everything happens in a millisecond: email, faxes, and virtual offices have become the norm for American and international business endeavors. Today's competitive environment demands intense improvement in productivity, quality, and response time. In order to keep pace with instant gratification demands, organizations have responded by flattening hierarchy structures. Communication patterns have evolved into two-way pathways that extend into all levels in the chain-of-command. Establishing a leadership paradigm that best suits the needs of a given structure of an organization takes time, patience, and a "...commitment to leadership."1 The successful businesses of the future are those that utilize the entire workforce.2 It is indeed a challenge for the American organization to succeed under today's demanding conditions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A theory called reciprocal leadership (defined later) may prove a valid solution for many of today's organizational challenges. A compilation of many different

---

Reciprocal Leadership

leadership theories, reciprocal leadership has evolved over many years, and the underlying ideas create a leadership paradigm that can lead to success within organizations.

The biggest challenge in the search to develop a literature base from which to work and support reciprocal leadership was the limited number of theoreticians that have developed leadership models along these lines. Many of the texts refer to one another: a phenomenon that creates an interwoven, web-like reference section. That is, the footnotes of each text or article that provided insights into the reciprocal leadership model appear to be rooted in the same literature. Charles Manz and Henry Sims are two of the most prevalent names within this genre of leadership study. In fact, it was impossible to find any source of interest to this research that did not reference either their collective or individual work. Therefore, the information base from which I drew most of my research is somewhat incestuous because cross-referencing occurs so frequently between this collection of leadership sources.

I propose that reciprocal leadership is a widely overlooked leadership paradigm. The ideas at the heart of reciprocal leadership are not revolutionary. In fact, it could be argued that part of the foundation of reciprocal leadership might stem from the Socratic method. Interaction, modeling, and feedback were basics employed by Socrates in his teaching methods. That is, everyone learns through acting out and thinking; everyone learns from each other. And Lao-Tzu similarly articulated "The Way to do is to be." But perhaps Lao-Tzu said it best when he wrote the following:

A leader is best
When people barely know he exists,

1 Manz, Charles and Henry Sims. Company of Heroes. 1996. (pg. 4)
2 Jaworski, Joseph. Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership. 1996. (pg. 57)
Reciprocal Leadership

...When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,
They will say:
We did it ourselves.⁴

Certainly, the above mentioned theoreticians are not referring to a leadership theory specifically. However, their endorsement of values similar to those in reciprocal leadership gives credence to the notion that the basis of reciprocal leadership can be found many years back in history.

If indeed this 'hear-it-again-for-the-first-time' leadership structure fulfills all it promises, why isn't it practiced regularly? Where is the missing link? What are the limiting factors that keep reciprocal leadership out of the mainstream? These questions above are ones that I endeavor to answer throughout this research project. Through a series of investigations (via interviews) of local corporations, I hope to gain a sampling of reasons behind the reluctance to make use of the principles behind reciprocal leadership.

The concept of reciprocal leadership is based on the principles associated with the self-leadership paradigm. Reciprocal leadership is a derivative of several other leadership models such as “SuperLeadership” (Manz and Sims), and leadership processes such as empowerment and modeling.

SuperLeadership is a theory defined as “leading others to lead themselves.”⁵

SuperLeaders are willing to take risks and ‘bet’ on their subordinates and ‘take a risk’ on people.⁶ Almost inherent within an environment that exercises SuperLeadership is a mutual trust and respect between supervisor and employee. However, the SuperLeader maintains a controlling hand in punishing, rewarding, and influencing followers' work.⁷

⁴ Manz, Charles and Henry Sims. Superleadership. 1990. (pg. xv)
⁵ Ibid. (pg. 4)
⁶ Ibid. (pg. 62)
⁷ Ibid. (pg. 142)
Reciprocal leadership promotes a more flattened hierarchy where leaders are not the overseers of work, but rather partners in its creation.

Because modeling is a component of both SuperLeadership and reciprocal leadership, one distinction must be made clear: modeling described in SuperLeadership implies that the leader has reached a level of near-perfection and the follower can learn to emulate this behavior.\(^8\) Modeling employed in reciprocal leadership emphasizes a team-based approach that facilitates a cooperative learning process. Self-leadership is a lifelong process that involves rethinking, reanalyzing, and readjusting to life.\(^9\) Imaginably, no one person could ever achieve the utmost in self-understanding and self-leadership. Therefore, in reciprocal leadership, those with more experience should not pretend to model their version of "correct" behavior, but rather do their best to share and interact with newer employees about thoughts and ideas. Everyone, new hires included, should do their best to maintain a good working example—there are no experts in the field of reciprocal leadership. This scenario is, of course, an ideal toward which organizations should strive. Certainly, some members will have more experience and have the ability to offer insights to more novice members of the organization. Nonetheless, the ideas behind this notion are meant to reinforce a flattened hierarchy and avoid feelings of inferiority and superiority.

Empowerment is defined as the process of "transforming followers into effective self-leaders."\(^10\) As defined in reciprocal leadership, empowerment is the notion that employees should be entrusted to work to their best ability. That is, members of corporations should find a path towards self-leadership, but, self-leadership is a process

---

\(^8\) Ibid. (ppg. 94, 95-97)
Reciprocal Leadership

of learning and no one else can 'transform' one into a self-leader. The similar thread is
that empowerment is the notion of employees achieving a higher standard of self
management, through one process or another, than when they first joined the
organization.

Reciprocal leadership is self-leadership that begets self-leadership. That is, self
leadership is a self-sustaining activity in which those members with more experience
serve as mentors or sponsors to newer employees until they become self-leaders in their
own right. Ideally, the goal is to create an environment in which leadership perpetuates
itself. The SuperLeadership paradigm describes a base in a 'reciprocal view of
influence.'

Persons and their world influence each other in a reciprocal manner. The world influences who each person is and
what he does; conversely, each person helps create the
world that is relevant to him. In this sense, a leader is part
of the relevant world for subordinates, and vice versa.
Leaders can help subordinates to become more effective,
and subordinates are the keys to a leader's success. Only
together can they achieve excellence.

Inherent in its name, reciprocal leadership implies a give and take relationship. The
reciprocal leader fully realizes her potential when she allows others to share in the
leadership process and to learn the exhilaration of mastering their own leadership. This
statement is different from SuperLeadership in one very important way. The 'reciprocal
leadership' described in the SuperLeadership paradigm can be interpreted to separate the
follower from the leader. The second description of a reciprocal leader is one of sharing

---

138-139)
Reciprocal Leadership

and mutuality and one where boundaries of hierarchy and structure exist in name only, if at all. This supports the notion of a partnership within the working environment. Both models show that the reciprocal leader does not steal success from the hard work of the subordinates; rather, she realizes her potential only when her followers (or more accurately, “partners,” according to the second version of reciprocal leadership) realize theirs. Furthermore, the mentors have a genuine stake in the development of the younger generation of self-leaders because “the whole work operation becomes one large empowered team [of sorts] in which everyone is individually self-managing and can interact directly with everyone else in the system.”

This allows for a more efficiently run organization that is more productive, and therefore more profitable. It is the associate’s responsibility to find out what he or she can do for the good of the operation. Everyone has a stake in its success or failure when everyone is considered a leader within his own right.

At the root of this type of the reciprocal leadership phenomena is self-discovery. Reciprocal leadership may facilitate “a uniquely effective little world...where yes men and women are not allowed, a place where people really grow and develop and have...the satisfaction of testing the limits of their creativity and ability.” In this kind of arena, one may learn to explore and appreciate one’s ideas instead of mimicking the thoughts of superiors. Furthermore, through mutual acceptance and respect, business leaders and their associates can develop organizations that promote experimentation and risk-taking.

16 Ibid. (pg. 48)
17 Ibid. (pg. 56)
Reciprocal Leadership

The bulk of research on the idea of reciprocal leadership is based in work that explores the notion of self-leadership. Self-leadership is also referred to as self-influence, self-regulation, self-management, self-direction, and self-control.\(^1^9\) All of these are often used interchangeably to describe the same phenomenon. The self-leader is one who relies on personal decision-making, values, judgements, and other skills to lead oneself to excellence.\(^2^0\) Self-leaders practice self-observation, goal setting, and self-reinforcement. Simply, the self-leader exerts influence over him/herself in different ways to act in a manner that duly serves herself and her organization. To do this, the self-leading employee develops self-generated personal standards by which she evaluates her work and rewards herself or punishes herself accordingly.\(^2^1\)

Self-leadership, in terms of freedom, choice, and self-determinism is intrinsically rewarding.\(^2^2\) However, self-leadership is associated with another concept, "self-efficacy," which is concerned with the "level of effectiveness in dealing with one's world."\(^2^3\) More specifically, self-efficacy is the notion that one's perceptions of one's abilities to deal successfully with and overcome situations and challenges that one faces in life can have a major impact on one's performance.\(^2^4\) By definition, self-efficacy is similar to self-esteem; however, there is a distinction. Self-esteem is one's level of confidence and satisfaction with oneself.\(^2^5\) Self-efficacy describes one's feeling of

\(^1^9\) Manz, Charles and Henry Sims. *SuperLeadership.* 1989. (pg. 14)
\(^2^0\) Ibid. (pg. 14)
\(^2^2\) Thoresen, Carl E., and Michael Mahoney. *Behavioral Self-Control.* 1974. (pg. 2)
\(^2^4\) Ibid. (pg. 129)
\(^2^5\) *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary.* 1985. (pg. 1066)
Reciprocal Leadership

competence in succeeding in tasks. In one step further, self-efficacy is defined as a set of beliefs about one’s own ability to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. In order to achieve a high level of self-efficacy, self-leaders establish a sense of self-direction and build natural rewards into their work. Natural rewards are described as activities that make one feel more competent and add to a sense of self-determinism and self-efficacy. A difficult task for the self-leader within an organization, however, is to develop naturally motivating tasks while performing work that must be done though not naturally motivating. That is, the self-leader cannot ignore tasks that are not pleasant. It is important for the self-leader to examine the entire picture because tasks that are not naturally rewarding, if neglected, can result in a failure and a frustrating situation. It might be concluded that “an aspect of [self-leadership] is the process of establishing intrinsic motivation by enhancing one’s feelings of competence and self-control.” Maintaining all tasks, both naturally rewarding and not, is important because it contributes to the overall feeling of self-efficacy and a “job well-done.” Therefore, self-efficacy is an essential predecessor to self-management, while successful self-management experiences can further enhance self-efficacy.

31 Ibid. (pg. 592)
Implementing reciprocal leadership is most simple in new, entrepreneurial organizations because there are few or no other structures with which to compete or change. However, in more developed organizations, implementing reciprocal leadership and restructuring an organization are difficult tasks. 33 American businesses are employing ideas of reciprocal leadership through the use of self-led or self-managed team phenomenon. 34 Self-managed teams are small groups of co-workers who are empowered to manage themselves. 35 This is not to imply the following scenario: “You’re on the team. It’s going to be a winning team. You’re going to work together. And here’s what you’re going to do.” 36 Clearly, this is not what is meant by empowerment and self-leadership.

Actually, teams are clearly becoming a “respective competitive advantage,” and companies are taking the time to consider their benefits. 37 Applications to the team approach have spanned across some of the best-known companies: Proctor and Gamble, General Motors, Ford, Digital Equipment, IDS, Honeywell, Cummings Engine, Tektronix, General Electric, Caterpillar, Boeing, and LTV Steer, to name a few. 38 In many ways, self-led teams are emerging as the major new American industrial weapon. 39

Self-managed teams are a form of self-leadership. Through these empowered teams, workers can begin to learn how to operate without direct supervision. The team approach has become highly visible. But, the self-managed team is only a variation of self-leadership—a building block, if you will. In many instances, employee self-

---

35 Ibid. (pg. 25)
38 Ibid. (pg. 48)
Reciprocal Leadership

management is introduced in organizations through the establishment of formally
designated empowered work teams.\textsuperscript{40} A different approach for businesses today is a
company of self-leaders practicing reciprocal leadership. Essentially, an entire work
operation becomes one large empowered team in which everyone is individually self-
managing and can interact directly with everyone else in the system.\textsuperscript{41} This system does
not rely upon bosses and managers, but rather it relies upon "lots of leaders."\textsuperscript{42}

W. L. Gore & Associates applies this leadership paradigm in an organization
without bosses, titles, hierarchy, or any of the conventional structures associated with
large corporations. (The titles of president and secretary-treasurer are used only because
law requires them.)\textsuperscript{43} Referred to as "un-management," Gore's leadership un-structure,
called the \textit{lattice system}, extends across its 44 plants worldwide with over 5,300
practicing associates. The lattice system is similar to the ideas that make up reciprocal
leadership because both support the notion of an extremely flattened hierarchy structure.

Organizations that are considering the introduction of employee empowerment
and self-management could benefit from the practices of W. L. Gore & Associates.
However, it is a heavy assumption to state that every workgroup of an organization is
suited to adopt a variation of the lattice system. Bill Gore said that his lattice system, no
matter its proven success, is not for everyone.\textsuperscript{44}

When implementing a new leadership paradigm into an organization, every
branch, every level, every department must be taken into consideration.\textsuperscript{45} According to

\begin{enumerate}
\item[39] Ibid. (pg. 48)
\item[40] Ibid. (pg. 49)
\item[41] Ibid. (pg. 49)
\item[42] Ibid. (pg. 49)
\item[43] Ibid. (pg. 50)
\item[44] Ibid. (pg. 56)
\item[45] Hesselbein, Frances, et.al. \textit{The Organization of the Future}. 1997. (pg. 57)
\end{enumerate}
Reciprocal Leadership

the SuperLeadership model, "an organizational culture can only be as strong as its weakest link...the self-leadership of each and every employee is of the utmost importance." Accordingly, implementation of the reciprocal leadership paradigm would prove to be a difficult task. It is important to note that it is often difficult for employees to grasp new models of leadership, particularly in older management structures.

Reciprocal leadership is a leadership paradigm that has the potential to encounter resistance simply because it is challenging and requires giving up some traditional forms of power and control. Furthermore, it relies upon additional thought and work in order to reap benefits. "All our lives most of us have been told what to do, and some people don't know how to respond when asked to do something..."

The transition to reciprocal leadership is one that promises to be challenging because it is different from the traditional models. Yet, any kind of leadership adjustment is difficult for an organization. The challenge for reciprocal leadership is to foster an integrated environment in which self-leadership becomes an exciting, motivating, and accepted way of life. Therefore, a vision of the new model must be completely diffused throughout the firm. Members of the organization must understand their role in the transition to the new model because, if the vision is not vividly communicated to the organization, the employees will develop one of their own through fragmented and often inaccurate information.

---

46 Manz, Charles, and Henry Sims. SuperLeadership. 1989 (pg. 165)
49 Manz, Charles, and Henry Sims. SuperLeadership. 1989 (pg. 164)
Reciprocal Leadership

and motivate associates to embrace the new leadership model. The goal is to develop a rich pool of leaders at all levels who will be change agents inside the company. Simply put: The leaders must walk the walk and talk the talk.52

The old assumptions about business are no longer true. In order to survive the rapidly approaching twenty-first century, organizations must become learning organizations. The new thought pattern should resemble the following: “Look, this organization is a learning organization. We’re going to treat you as franchise owners.”53 “Yesterday, supervisors flourished. Today, supervisors vanish. [This is a] new paradigm.”54 Today, in authority-based organizations, many problems such as management-labor tension, alcohol and drug abuse, substantial worker apathy and discontent, and employee underutilization abound.55 All of these have a negative effect on employee performance.

Reciprocal leadership is a medium through which the organization of today can begin to fit the needs of the upcoming century because it promotes learning and development. Reciprocal leadership supports the notion that leaders and would-be followers engage in a give and take relationship where followers are encouraged to become leaders and leaders are encouraged to be followers. That is, titles and hierarchy structures should not dictate the weight of individual input within an organization. It is the responsible leaders within organizations today who are capable of recognizing that

51 Ibid. (pg. 308)
52 Ibid. (pg. 309)
55 Manz, Charles, and Henry Sims. SuperLeadership. 1990. (pg. 9)
Reciprocal leadership is a process that I believe is overlooked—but why? What other factors play a role in the application of the reciprocal leadership principles? Most importantly, to what extent is this paradigm useful and practical in the corporate environment? How are firms that employ some form of reciprocal leadership different from those that do not? Are employees more or less motivated? This line of questioning seems to be relatively unexplored in the literature that I reviewed pertaining to reciprocal leadership.

**Methodology**

Data to answer the above Rhetorical Questions was gathered via field interviews. Through interviews of employees from local corporations, I hoped to gain better insight into what kinds of companies practice reciprocal leadership. The literature on reciprocal leadership provided for an ample information basis from which to examine theories and related subject matters that are relevant to the development of reciprocal leadership.

Data was gathered via qualitative interviews. Depth interviewing allows the evaluator to enter another person’s world and understand another’s perspective. Interviews add an inner perspective to outward behaviors. That is, interviews reveal what one cannot directly observe.

We cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time.

---

58 Ibid. (pg. 109)
We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter the other person's perspective.\\(^{59}\)

Also, it is the interviewer's responsibility to provide a framework within which people can respond comfortably, accurately, and honestly.\\(^{60}\)

There are four approaches to qualitative interviewing. They are (1) the informal conversational interview, (2) the general interview guide approach, (3) the standardized open-ended interview, (4) the closed interview.\\(^{61}\)

The informal conversation interview relies entirely upon the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction.\\(^{62}\) Data gathered in this type of format was difficult to put together and analyze. Furthermore, it requires a great amount of time to obtain systematic information.

The general interview guide approach consists of a list of questions or issues that are to be explored during the course of an interview. An interview guide was prepared to make sure that similar information is obtained from a number of different respondents by covering the same material.\\(^{63}\) The guide merely serves as a checklist to ensure that all relevant topics are covered. The interviewer may build upon the question set and begin a conversation; but the focus remains upon a predetermined subject.\\(^{64}\)

The standardized open-ended interview consists of a set of questions carefully worded and arranged for the purpose of taking each respondent through the same

---

\(^{59}\) Ibid. (pg. 109)  
\(^{60}\) Ibid. (pg. 109)  
\(^{61}\) Ibid. (pg. 109)  
\(^{62}\) Ibid. (pg. 110)  
\(^{63}\) Ibid. (pg. 111)
Reciprocal Leadership

sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words.\textsuperscript{65} Data from open-ended interviews consist of direct quotations from people about their opinions, experiences, feelings, and knowledge.\textsuperscript{66} Depth interviewing involves listening carefully to answers and following up with additional and relevant questions.\textsuperscript{67} The basic purpose of this method is to reduce the influence of the interviewer.

The closed quantitative interview is highly structured. Questions and response categories are developed prior to the interview. In addition, respondents are asked to choose among a set of fixed answers. This method of interviewing makes the data very simple to analyze. However, the results may be inaccurate or distorted because respondents are asked to fit their experiences and feelings into categories.\textsuperscript{68}

The less structured interview, which is similar to normal conversation, can lead to shallow responses and miscommunication.\textsuperscript{69} Nonetheless, following the strict format of the standardized open-ended interview could restrict the pursuit of topics or issues not anticipated prior to the interview.\textsuperscript{70} In this research, I used a combination of the interview guide and the standardized open-ended approaches because it provided an opportunity to ask some key questions to every respondent. This type of interview structure also allowed me the freedom to probe for more depth and description about responses to ensure that I obtained information relevant to this project.

Information obtained from the interviews represented personal opinions and interpretations; hence, there was no accurate way in which I could check the validity of

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid. (pg. 111)
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. (pg. 112)
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid. (pg. 7)
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid. (pg. 108)
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid. (pg. 116-117)
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid. (pg. 108)
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid. (pg. 113)
Reciprocal Leadership

the information obtained from respondents. Comparing responses from my interviews within the same organization did reveal inconsistencies and threats to the validity of the interview material. However, when conducting qualitative interviews, there can be no one truth. In fact, qualitative methods assume multiple “truths depending on different points of view.”71 The evaluator’s “neutrality” is more important.72 Concerns about the traditional search for “the truth” may be replaced by a search for balanced and useful information in order to achieve multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple possibilities.73

Companies intended for inclusion in this study were chosen because they are large corporations in the Richmond area that span across many different industries. Some of the firms are satellites of larger organizations; some of the firms are based in Richmond. It is important to maintain an inclusive sample of industries and sizes in order to filter out potential bias towards one type of company over another. Qualitative methods are often characterized by small sample sizes.74 Purposeful sampling, such as the varied industry sample for this project, can allow generalization to the population at large.75 Certainly, it would be impossible for me to include businesses from across the country in this study.

I interviewed members of corporations regardless of whether they practiced variations of reciprocal leadership. I was most curious about extremely conservative firms that adhered to strict hierarchical boundaries, manager-subordinate relationships, and downward communication patterns because they served as a stark contrast to the reciprocal paradigm that I endorsed.

---

71 Ibid. (pg. 166)
72 Ibid. (pg. 167)
73 Ibid. (pg. 167)
74 Ibid. (pg. 167)
Reciprocal Leadership

Ideally, I would have liked to interview as many people as possible within each organization. However, because of time constraints and other limitations, such as employee availability and willingness to participate in this interview schedule, my sample from each organization was limited. I tried to interview at least two different people from the organization: at least one manager or supervisor, and at least one associate. Each of the respondents offered insight into the organization and its practices as they pertained to reciprocal leadership. However, as I imagined, the supervisors offered more insight into the development (or lack thereof) of self-leadership processes as they discussed their role in the progression and success of those that work for them. Similarly, I assumed that the followers or associates could provide a better perspective about processes related to learning self-leadership and how it affects their attitude and work ability. Notwithstanding, it was important to gain viewpoints from both leaders and followers because their similarities and/or differences in answers revealed some piece of the missing puzzle to why self-leadership principles are or are not widely practiced in contemporary organizations. Used separately, neither interviews nor literature surveys would have provided enough information for my project goals.

Questions that were a part of the interview process were developed in order to obtain behavioral information about professionals in their workplace. These qualitative interviews centered around professional's behaviors so that I could frame and interpret the responses in terms of reciprocal leadership. I developed five subsets of questions that addressed different aspects of Reciprocal Leadership. The first set of questions aimed to determine the existence of mentor-like relationships within the office environment. The next set of questions dealt with the respondent's personal approach to leadership. The

75 Ibid. (pg. 52)
intent of these questions was to determine from which perspective the respondent’s would answer questions. Furthermore, these questions were aimed largely at superiors to compare the way in which they thought that they lead from what their behavioral responses revealed. The third and fourth lines of questioning aimed to determine the respondent’s motivation for their work. These questions extended into reward-based values and negative feedback in order to determine how employees felt about their work and the means by which they succeed at tasks. These questions also dealt with group and individual work to determine how comfortable respondent’s felt with those in their office environment. The fifth and final set of questions were somewhat inspired by the mentor/mentee relationship, however, this line of questioning focused upon communication patterns. Because cross-communication is one of the most important parts of the Reciprocal Leadership process, these questions aimed to gain a glimpse of the organization or department as a whole in which the respondent’s worked.

These sets of questions were combined to effect responses that would reveal the extent to which processes of Reciprocal Leadership were practiced in the work place. The basic processes of Reciprocal Leadership were included in these questions. Furthermore, the open-ended style of questioning provided for deeper probing into areas that needed clarification. Overall, the sample questions for this research project proved to be a way in which to gain information about the presence or lack thereof of Reciprocal Leadership processes within the corporate environment.
PRESENTATION OF DATA

The participants in this study represented a variety of different jobs and industry related positions. Some of the respondents were in very high levels within their corporation, some were in middle management positions, and some did not have any management responsibilities. Because a number of different professionals in many different levels of management were included in this survey, the results to this interview process clearly did not intentionally exclude one group of professionals over another.

The description of leadership practices can be framed in many different ways. Questions asked of the participants focused upon many different aspects of leadership and the process of reciprocal leadership. Embedded within the questions were many other issues that aided to distinguish or reveal similarities between the leadership practices of the organizations included in this study and the reciprocal leadership process.

'Learning by observation' represented an overwhelming majority of the responses when interviewees were questioned about learning about their introduction and orientation to office policy and culture. However, not every one of the participants described learning by example in the same way. Some of the participants described structured orientation sessions and classes when they were first brought on board. Most of those questioned described scenarios in which they learned by asking questions, following the examples of their peers, and reading all available information. A senior manager at a billion dollar, international textile firm related the following story: “The organizational culture determines people’s behavior within a company. I learned to develop a cultural and political pulse of an organization…Once you understand how
things seem to work, then you can begin to become a part of the operations of a company.”

One of the most important operations within any organization is communication. When asked questions related to communication patterns, respondents’ answers varied from one end of the spectrum to another: from highly structured to very open models. The responses that reflected developed hierarchical and vertical leadership structures were very easy to identify because these respondents were able describe their corporate structure briefly and succinctly. Communication in these kinds of firms evolved in a trickle-down manner from the top management to the workers. This communication is directive and almost confrontational. This perspective represented the smallest percentage of the respondent’s answers. A vice president of a national pharmaceutical firm typifies this kind of management behavior with the following comment. “Business like this is not a democracy... Decisions must be made for political reasons. There is just not enough time to sit down and get everyone’s opinion about how they feel about one of my decisions.” A branch manager of a national banking firm said, “I am the leader of this bank... I am strict, but you have to be strict to get the job done.” The bottom line is that “we are in a service industry and we have to do all we can to accommodate the customer—and I know what it takes.” This same manager described her rationale behind telling those under her what to do. “If I make a decision, that’s it. They have to do it; it’s their job.” An employee of a major utilities firm described an unproductive and uncomfortable relationship with the management directly above her team. “We do what we have to do to appease her... She just isn’t good about communication. She is very directive and harsh. No one has a relationship of any sort with her outside of a
Another perspective from a manager of a federal reserve bank described a lack of understanding that prohibits communication within his corporate environment. "I wish that I could understand [my superior] better. I think that he would be receptive if we could establish some sort of mutual understanding. It's quite frustrating." These types of responses came from companies that had very structured pecking orders and rules to follow. Naturally, if given the opportunity, many indicated that they would make some changes to their offices. Some changes suggested were more frequent meetings and more productive relationships with superiors.

Another category of communication patterns occurs when communication seems to be moving towards a more liberal model. In these situations, it was clear that some changes were being made to effect a more collaborative work environment. However, the migration to a flattened structure is a process that cannot occur overnight. Those respondents that provided answers that reflected some elements of reciprocal leadership described work environments with more flexible communication patterns but where traces of hierarchical bureaucracy and administrative obstacles can sometimes hinder manager and follower relationships. In these situations, lines of communication are maturing through teamwork and scheduled feedback sessions. A senior executive at a major pharmaceutical firm described his work environment in the following way: "We used to get all of our feedback from the top executives of the company. Our new CEO is beginning to establish a new paradigm. He wants feedback about the newer practices. He has sent out questionnaires with a promise to take action in response to the feedback." This company's changing structure is reflective of those in many firms that were a part of this study. Many of the respondents discussed working environments where feedback is
Reciprocal Leadership

encouraged. For example, a manager with a large utilities firm says that ideally she would like to take the time to discuss how to help all of those under her direction how to solve problems on their own. Sometimes she does take time with one of her team members when a difficult problem needs a solution. However, she adds, “If I know the answer, I’ll say ‘here you go’ and then I know that it will get done properly.” This mix of management techniques implies that management is moving towards a more collective, reciprocal management style. Answers of this category provided a positive consensus about the beginnings of a mobilization towards more communication and flattening hierarchy structures.

Many of the responses were surprisingly liberal in the realm of leadership paradigms. Responses that reflected descriptions of open communication patterns, flattened hierarchical patterns, accounts of mutual respect for skill and knowledge, freedom to discuss project work, and suggestions or references to empowerment were most congruent with the ideals of reciprocal leadership. Common terms used in this category of responses were open-door policy, respectful relationships, trust, laissez-faire management, reliability, and freedom. One senior director of a major pharmaceutical company said:

I can be very autocratic, but I realize that it is much more efficient and comfortable when I can interact with people. I am most effective when I manage horizontally. I try to let everyone feel like we are peers...[Those with whom I work] are comfortable [working with me] because they are part of decisions—it's not just laid upon them.

Another manager of a national multi billion-dollar textile firm discusses the benefits of working in an environment where everyone is valued and considered an equal.
Some managers tend to keep their knowledge in their head so that they are always needed. It’s not like that here...If I have an idea or a suggestion, I can bring it to my manager, and we have a conversation about it. She doesn’t automatically tell me how to make it better, even if her experience warrants it...she helps me develop my own ideas as opposed to making them mini versions of hers.

The responses that echoed the concepts of reciprocal leadership depicted environments where teams and individual work achieved a balance. A manager with a consulting and banking firm said, “Everyone’s skill level is so high. I respect their abilities and it just makes sense that those with skills are going to make the best decisions about their jobs...And when one of us needs help, we know that we can seek out others.” A manager at a large utilities firm similarly adds. “A concept should touch one hundred different hands before its fruition...We cannot succeed without relying upon each other.” The key is, she adds, “a clarity of vision and a singularity of focus.” Respect was another reoccurring theme throughout this category of responses. Many responses were similar to the following statement of a senior marketing manager for a local hospital. “We are all professionals. If we respect each other’s talent and professionalism, we won’t waste time getting stuck in micro-management procedures.” Perhaps this is a simplistic way in which to view a corporate structure; however, in many instances, it was reported to work well for those involved.

In fact, micro-management could hamper many working situations because most all of the respondents described themselves as highly motivated and ambitious. Motives discussed with the respondents did differ in one area: internal (or intrinsic) and external factors. There was a relatively even distribution of responses on both sides of this issue. Questions about success, rewards, failure, and creativity were especially insightful in
Reciprocal Leadership

gaining an outsider’s perspective about how the participants of this study felt about their job and how they become motivated to perform on the job.

Certainly, the most simplistic way in which participants described their work motivation was a directive approach. This approach was most typical of organizations where communication patterns were in the form of top-down directives. These respondents, both managers and employees, discussed their motives for work. Some described that they worked according the job description that was assigned to them. “There are things that just have to get done” was a comment made by an employee at a major investment firm in Richmond. This employee was indirectly referring to her performance appraisals. “If I don’t do what I am supposed to do, I won’t be working here for much longer.” This employee also said that she and her peers worked in a constant state of stress because of the fast-paced industry in which they worked. This ‘under-the-gun’ tactic seems to work; however, it was clear that the employees that worked in this kind of environment feared for their jobs.

It was not surprising that many of the respondents that discussed directive, external motivating factors within their organization answered similarly when they discussed policy about making mistakes in their job. A manager with a hospital marketing group discussed consequences such as the loss of her job if she made a major error in a work-related situation. “In this industry, it is most important to cover-up mistakes, and do damage control.” She added, “Most of the time, your boss scolds you and you learn to move on.” Because of the environment where mistakes are punished, this same manager discussed practices of “finger-pointing” when mistakes occur because no one wants to be held responsible for errors. A branch manager of a national bank
described the way in which she deals with employees that make mistakes. “I know that no one is perfect...but when someone makes a mistake, they need to know that they cannot do it again. I show them what they did wrong and then tell them to get it right the next time.” One of the employees of a major utility corporation that worked in this type of environment said, “You just have to have a high tolerance to deal with stress and the demands of your job.”

A much greater number of responses highlighted external motivation factors positively. Many respondents discussed the satisfaction of getting recognized for a job well-done, or the year-end salary boost for higher sales numbers, a promotion, or simply a plaque to hang on the wall that reminds them that they are important. A manager in a national textile firm describes herself as “highly motivated,” but she looks for the Rewards and Recognition program within her division to “get that pat on the back.” Based upon performance and project ideas, members of the company can earn rewards in the form of bonuses, plaques, and overall recognition for their extraordinary work. According to the results of this interview sample, rewards programs are a common practice.

Many of the respondents, not just those that discussed positive or negative external motivation, mentioned performance appraisals. Performance appraisals were a topic of conversation even in professional environments that practiced many processes associated with reciprocal leadership. Whether or not performance appraisals were a part of the evaluation process within an organization, the manner in which they were used was of importance to this collection of data. Performance appraisals were discussed in three basic ways: Some managers used them to determine raises and promotions; some
Reciprocal Leadership

departments used them as talking points for yearly meetings; and sometimes, performance appraisals were used bilaterally between manager and employee.

In cases where the performance appraisal determined their salary and level within the company, it seemed like a tool with which a manager kept track of his or her employee’s mistakes. In these instances, those working under these circumstances did not feel as if they have a stake in their success. An employee in a local branch of a national bank describes the content of her appraisal as “whatever my manager catches me doing—good or bad. And if it’s more bad than good, I don’t get a raise or a promotion...I could get fired.” Few participants, however, described the weight of their performance ratings as severely as this example.

In fact, most of the respondents did not have negative feelings about performance evaluations. Many that participated in this study felt that the appraisals were just a part of their job. A manager of a federal reserve bank notes that, “[Performance appraisals] are important, to a point; however, day-to-day discussions and a positive professional relationship is much more important than a piece of paper that we submit to the ‘higher-ups’.” This is reflective of most of the discussion about formal evaluations. In fact, most of the participants in this study focused upon the informality of their ‘formal evaluations.’ Furthermore, this manager notes that “interaction and evaluation need to occur on an every-day basis, not just once a year.”

Internal or intrinsic motivational factors represented a larger-than-expected portion of the responses of this survey. Out of the sixteen respondents, nine described factors such as ‘professional pride’ and existing in a ‘constant state of learning’ that propel them to work hard and succeed. A manager for a marketing department of a local
hospital said, “I want to do my best because I have a responsibility to myself...I set very high expectations for myself...I like challenges.” An employee with a national bank similarly notes that he is his own worst critic.

Some of the respondents described feelings of self-motivation; however, very few descriptions took this to a more profound level to what can be described as self-leadership. These responses reflected an internal barometer against which they measure themselves. The self-leaders are those that discussed a constant state of learning. The sentiments of a manager of a consultant firm in Richmond seem to epitomize self-leadership: “Everyday I go home to think about how I could do things better. I am so aware of the consequences of my actions on other people that I want to constantly correct myself to become a better leader.”

Still, another echelon of self-leadership was revealed in one of the respondent’s answers: self-efficacy. This is the concept that an individual’s perception of how successful the are able to function within their world and perform their job is most important. That is, they don’t rely upon others judgement to stimulate or squelch feelings of success or happiness. A manager for an international textile firm exudes competence, confidence, and self-leadership simultaneously. She is aware of her successful contribution to the firm and her role in its success.

The manager mentioned above and other participants in this study that practice self-leadership indicated that they had some sort of mentor or currently have a manager who facilitates their self-leadership process. These managers talk about helping others become self-leaders. A senior manager at an international textile firm talks about ‘Blue Sky dinners’ that he hosts once a month. “When do we ever spend time at work talking
about the ideal, the crazy, and "blow-the-doors-off" ideas? These "blue-sky" dinners are designed to create the opportunity to throw practicality out the window." Sharing ideas serves as great motivation technique, as well as a team building experience for members of his team. Ironically, in these types of environments, where creativity is encouraged and consequences are few that the greatest amount of self-leadership occurs. This manager adds that his aim is to "try and create the future leaders." His process seems to invite members of his team to take initiative. This kind of environment, though perhaps more dynamic, is representative of the environments in which the participants of this study worked.

Self-leading managers that participated in this study discussed the importance of understanding their team and their peers around them. More accurately called empowerment, the notion of trust and dependability was a common thread with many respondents' portrayals of self-leadership growth. A manager of a federal reserve bank talked about his desire to create leadership from his leadership. "When I see positive growth in those on my team, it pulls me back to what is really important within my job: the people." A senior director for a national pharmaceutical firm notes that it is "so important to depend on those around you. My superiors depend upon me and trust me to bring something new to the table...Sheer mutual respect is a valuable teaching technique." A team member of an international textile firm said that her manager is an amazing manager because he is so empowering. She added, "He uses his authority for us...to really go to bat for us, not against us...Always having to seek permission only results in impotence and frustration...Things can just get stalled in the system."
Reciprocal Leadership

Certainly, the respondents provided interesting and diverse insights into the different leadership structures that exist in America. Furthermore, it was an interesting task to measure the results of this study against the leadership process for which I had designed the interview questions.

**DISCUSSION OF DATA AND CONCLUSIONS**

When the line of questioning sought descriptions of general leadership practices, varied responses included the discussion of empowerment, upward communication patterns, peer quality circles, modeling, mission statements, ethical honesty and integrity, feedback, management by walking around, and other leadership buzz-words. Ironically, when probed in depth, many respondents could not offer specific examples of instances of “modeling” or “mission-building,” those same concepts that they described in their general approach to leadership. Clearly, the sampled population was educated in the textbook definition of leadership—the challenge is in practicing what is preached. It is ironic that people seem to be informed about progressive leadership techniques, but do not put this knowledge into practice. An even more perplexing scenario revealed in the interviews is when managers have very open, “reciprocal-like” relationships with their superiors, but employ very strict structures in their management practices. Another unusual situation that was common amongst the participants of this study was the discussion of “pockets of people.” These are small groups of individuals that employ a process similar to reciprocal leadership, one which is completely opposite from the practices of the rest of their traditionally oriented organization. These unexpected results
Reciprocal Leadership

are interesting, but what does this imply about the practicality of reciprocal leadership within the workplace?

Data compiled about reciprocal leadership in corporate structures in this study was interesting for a number of different reasons. The results of this study supported the claim that reciprocal leadership as a whole is an overlooked paradigm within the corporate organization. However, the interpretation of the literature review of this subject matter naively boasts that reciprocal leadership is a process that is a valid solution to many of “today’s organizational challenges.” The combination of the literature review of reciprocal leadership and the interviews that sought the organizational applications of such a model represents an odd combination of idealism and practicality. This study revealed that it is of greater interest to discuss the extent to which practices of reciprocal leadership are used and in what combinations, not tick-marking the ways in which an organization doesn’t measure up to an idealistic standard.

It seemed an impossible task to find an organization in which the reciprocal leadership model represents an entire organizational pattern, though this is what the model originally described. The organizations that were studied in this project did not practice the reciprocal leadership model in its entirety, nor could they. In fact, many times certain processes of an organization exemplified reciprocal leadership, and in other situations, they were far from it. For example, the manager of a bank discusses her authoritative approach to management, and conversely is allowed complete freedom and autonomy in her position. The co-existence of seemingly diametrically opposed leadership styles seems perplexing, but in actuality, it occurs frequently. The principles of reciprocal leadership were discussed in a number of different combinations.
Reciprocal Leadership

Interestingly, most all of the respondents that practiced principles of reciprocal leadership somewhat consistently said that their department / division / team was completely different from the rest of their respective organization. The literature review discusses the importance of communicating a vision throughout an organization in order for the introduction of a leadership paradigm. The results of interviews conducted for this project seem to imply otherwise. In fact, many of those that practice reciprocal leadership, especially within a small workgroup, said that their relationship was highly unusual and that their success probably was not indicative of the results were groups throughout their organization to follow their lead. Two members of a multi-billion dollar textile firm work in a small team that stands out from the rest of their organization as “a bunch of eccentrics.” They describe their serendipitous combination of personalities as an enabling factor which facilitates their microenvironment that resembles many principles of reciprocal leadership. This phenomenon, however, was one that was not typical of the entire sampled population.

Other discussions of reciprocal leadership that occurred much more frequently were the on-again / off-again use of the reciprocal leadership model, whenever time allowed. Because reciprocal leadership is a process that requires development and time investment, it is difficult to implement. A manager and one of his team members that work for a national bank discussed the merits of the interaction and communication, respect and empowerment. This manager / follower team described their relationship as professional and personal. In many different ways, the environment in which this manager has tried to develop is reminiscent of reciprocal leadership because he encourages bilateral communication, attempts to develop mentor relationships with those
who seek his guidance, and he attempts to model his behavior in the way he would expect his team to follow, among other examples. However, he notes, days when it is busy and hectic, practicing reciprocal leadership seems to get in the way because it seems easier to “shut the door and hack away at problems by yourself instead of practicing good management techniques.”

Another scenario that was revealed in my interviews was one at a large consulting firm. In this scenario, a manager with whom I spoke related stories of her management style. Although she realized that many different approaches could be successful, she had to follow a model in which she could be herself. Admittedly, her management style is different from any other in her organization. She discovered that following her instincts and trusting her abilities earned her a respect within her firm because she constantly strives to achieve and better herself as an employee and a manager. Her self-leadership allowed her to practice a style of leadership that suits her and that molds well with the diversity of leadership in her workplace.

The differences between these scenarios is not in the degree to which these different managers buy into the reciprocal leadership paradigm, but rather, the way in which they make it work for them in their respective situations. This study revealed that reciprocal leadership is not an open-and-shut theory. Rather, practices of reciprocal leadership are part of a process that exists in conjunction with many different leadership practices. This is why reciprocal leadership is defined as a process. It is an ever-evolving dynamic that changes and morphs with time and practice. This project was not claiming that reciprocal leadership as the only worthwhile leadership theory. Rather, it is
Reciprocal Leadership

a working theory that, in this study, sought to determine the practicality within the current corporate world.

The results of this study provided insights into the would-be Reciprocal Leadership model. The foundation of this model is a practical one, however, it is inaccurate to say that this process is close to completion. The development of this theory is one that is much more flexible than the model originally proposed. Rather, I would suggest, after examining the results of this study, that different parts of Reciprocal Leadership are more useful than the process as a whole. I endorse the ideals of Reciprocal Leadership; however, perhaps not to the degree that was originally proposed.

From this study, it can be concluded that some ideas and practices of reciprocal leadership have infiltrated the corporate world. Some of the responses to question indicate that many of these employees that I interviewed are aware of what should be done to make this genre of leadership work. However, through stories and specific examples of leadership examples and behaviors that were described, these practices are not part of standard practice.

LIMITATIONS

Perhaps the most limiting factor in this research project was time. Time was a limiting factor in many different ways. The data collected via interviews was compiled over a period of two weeks. Within that time, I was able to contact many different businesses throughout the Richmond area. However, time became a factor because I could only schedule so many interviews during these two weeks. In addition, many executives with whom I wanted to speak did not have time to devote to an interview
within these two designated weeks. By default, members of a given corporation who had some spare time and were referred to me by their managers to participate in the survey. Therefore, had I allowed more time for interviews, I could have been more prepared to work around demanding work schedules in order to include more data in this project. In addition, more time would have allowed me to observe people in interaction in order to gain more insights into the environments in the corporate settings. In fact, there are many possibilities that could have been explored had time been less of a constraint.

Many of the subjects that I interviewed could only commit to a fifteen to twenty minute phone conversation. Therefore, it was difficult to gain a lot of information about the subjects and their leadership philosophy and professional environment during a short interview. Abbreviated interviews provided a difficult challenge because I had limited time in which to inquire about the most basic principles of reciprocal leadership: such as self-leadership, open communication, empowerment, and intrinsic motivation. More time would have allowed more conversation and perhaps greater insight into their leadership perspective.

Another limitation of this study was its sample size. This study was aimed at various different industries across the Richmond metropolitan area. Although an effort was made to contact many different people in many different companies, only a small portion of those asked to participate agreed. This disinterest, lack of availability, or any other factor that resulted in an inability to participate in interviews pertaining to this study on reciprocal leadership effected a relatively small sample size. This study reflects responses from only sixteen employees from ten different corporations. In some cases, I was able to interview two members within a corporation. And, in all of these cases, I was
able to interview two employees who worked together within the same management team. Unfortunately, in the instances when I was able to interview two members from the same work group, I was unable to choose the relationship between those members—some were peers, some were managers and their subordinates. There were instances where I was only able to interview one employee. In these instances where I could only interview one employee it is possible that their perspective is unrepresentative of any one else's within the organization. In corporations where I was able to interview two members of the same work group, I could compare their answers against one another in order to minimize bias. Many of the employees that I interviewed offered very insightful opinions and perspectives. Therefore, more time would have allowed me the opportunity to interview their peers and those superior to them. These additional interviews could have provided a deeper understanding and different perspectives of the professional environment and culture.

Small sample sizes are not necessarily the mark of a poor study; however, the corporations that are a part of this sample were used primarily because employees were available and cooperative. There were few qualifying factors in this interviewing process except that those being interviewed had to be working in an organization in the Richmond area. More time would have provided an opportunity to include more corporations in the results of this study. Moreover, a greater number of participants included in this study could have provided more insightful and representative results.

In addition to the small sample size, the organizations used in this study are the result of a convenience selection, and therefore, the resulting information may be the product of an inaccurate sample. These corporations may be unrepresentative of the
Reciprocal Leadership

corporate population at large. Furthermore, these generalizations may also prove to be false on a greater scale because the members interviewed within these organizations were from of a various number of different divisions within their respective company. There was no consistency with respect to the selection of the subjects. Therefore, it is untrue to imply that the generalizations derived from the results of this study are an accurate representation of the professional population at large. The conclusions could indeed be valid; however, this study does not confirm the generalizations to be true on a greater scale.

Another concern about the results of this study was the “truth.” When dealing with human subjects, all points of view are subject to each individual’s perspective. Therefore, a primary concern when conducting interviews was the potential to influence the subjects’ answers. Developing questions that provided a base from which to analyze the value of reciprocal leadership without leading the subjects towards a desirable answer was a difficult task. Despite my attempts to conduct an objective interview, other factors could have influenced the answers of the respondents to my interview. All of the subjects for this research knew that I was conducting these interviews for my Leadership project. Therefore, it is possible that the responses to my questions were not accurate or altered to fit what the subjects thought were answers that were more appropriate. Although I assured the interviewees that the results of the interviews would be reported in a way that identities of the subjects and corporations would remain unnamed, they could have been fearful of being discovered.

Many of the interviews were conducted over the phone. This impersonal approach prevented me from directly observing their working environment. Observation,
Reciprocal Leadership

especially long term observation within a corporate organization could have allowed me an additional medium through which to draw conclusions about the working environment. In additions, in these phone interviews, I was unable to observe the environment in which they were when responding to the questions. For example, crowded offices could have influenced answers, or they might have feared their superiors hearing their responses.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The results of my study show that certain components of the reciprocal leadership model are part of the workforce today. However, to what extent and to what level these practices occur on a national level, I am unsure. My research was geographically limited to the Richmond metropolitan area and therefore, future studies should include a more broad perspective. A broader perspective could offer a more accurate investigation into leadership trends (or lack thereof) towards models similar to reciprocal leadership.

Another area of leadership study that would be worthy of exploration is the relationship between reciprocal leadership and different industries. Are certain industries more prone to use models and theories of reciprocal leadership? If, indeed, certain industries tend more towards the use of reciprocal leadership, what components are missing from other industries that do not facilitate this leadership model? Additional studies might reveal that it is not industry that determines a company's model of leadership, but another factor instead, such as size. Is there a relationship between the size of a corporation and its use of reciprocal leadership? Perhaps future studies might reveal that the corporate culture plays the greatest role in determining the leadership
Reciprocal Leadership

model. Naturally, many different factors influence the development of leadership models within organizations. But, what are the common variables in different types of organizations that promote the development of newer, more up-to-date leadership models, such as reciprocal leadership?

There are an innumerable amounts of relationships that could be explored between the practices of reciprocal leadership and success, culture, new and old companies, upper and lower levels of management, implementation techniques, and the list goes on. In fact, this study allows a substantial amount of room for new discovery and analysis of this subject matter.

Considering the results of this project, the most desirable next step for this study would be a comprehensive look at a various different industries with depth to the number of respondents sampled from each organization. The results obtained from this study would provide insights into the practices utilized by certain organizations. These results would provide a basis from which to separate corporations that practice ideas of Reciprocal Leadership and those that do not. Once this comparative list is established, conclusions could be drawn about which variables are factors in determining the practice of Reciprocal Leadership.

CONCLUSION

As a student of leadership, it is a relatively common practice to notice, study, and observe leadership styles. However, when a student of leadership finds oneself in a position of leadership for the first time, it is a different perspective altogether. The impetus of this study was four years of learning about ‘someone else’s leadership
theories.” Recalling internship experiences, I combined leadership theory with leadership practice to develop a theory that I felt was one that could prove to be an exciting and useful process for the modern organization. Instead of developing what I all but promised to be a leadership paradigm to revolutionize the corporate world, I learned something of much greater importance within the realm of leadership study. It is this: Leadership is centered around many different theories and processes because no one law can account for the many different individual needs of corporate America. Perhaps reciprocal leadership will not go down in leadership texts as “a theory to end all leadership theories.” Instead, this study represents a leadership process that reflects many different principles that in many different combinations can effect practical leadership for many different people in many different situations. Further analysis will provide greater insight to the practicality of Reciprocal Leadership, however, until then, the Reciprocal Leadership presented in this project provides a workable model with which organizations can begin to build a flattened, interactional, and dynamic corporate environment.
Sample Questions

1. How did you learn to function within this organization? That is, how did you learn office policy, behaviors, culture, or generally 'stuff that they didn’t teach you in school'? Describe a typical job-related task and tell me how you learned to perform it. How is this scenario different or similar to others in your department or work group? Why?

2. Describe your approach to leadership. How is your style of leadership similar or different from other styles that you have observed in your organization?

3. How do you get motivated to perform your job? How did you deal with a situation in which you encountered a task that was not very pleasing but you had to complete it anyway? Describe a situation in which you worked alone on a project. What was the result? How did you feel after the completion of this project? Tell me about a job-related project on which you worked with a group. How did you feel about this project? How did others respond to this work?

4. Tell me about a situation in which you initiated a new or creative process in your decision making for a job-related situation. Tell me about a situation where you had to take a risk in your decision-making in a job-related situation. What was the result? Describe a job-related situation in which you made a decision, but in retrospect, you are not pleased with. How did others respond?

5. Tell me about a situation in which you sought advice about a situation in your job. How did you decide to whom you should speak? How did the person from whom you sought advice respond? How did this relationship evolve? Tell me about your relationship with your immediate supervisor. How does this relationship influence your work? How is this relationship similar of different from one of your peer’s relationship with your manager throughout the organization? Describe your relationship(s) with those whom report directly to you. How do these relationships influence your work? How is this relationship similar or different from your relationship with others on the work team?
APPENDIX II

Interviewee Profiles

Because most all of the participants in this study asked that they and the company for which they worked remain completely anonymous, the profiles will be very general and vague. These profiles are included to provide a general characterization of those individuals and corporations that provided the basis for this project. The participants were:

1. A young female professional who works in a consulting and banking firm described her corporate environment as open and interactional. She is new to her position and finds that open communication and personal skills are an important part of her office environment.

2. A middle-aged male professional who works in a federal reserve bank describes management style as an 'open-door-policy.' He is confident in the ability of his subordinates, and treats them as equals, though he does not have this kind of relationship with those in positions superior to him.

3. A middle-aged male professional who works under the above mentioned man describes his working environment as rewarding and educational. He feels comfortable with his manager and with those that work with him.

4. A middle-aged male professional who works for the Marketing department for a local hospital describes his leadership style and working environment as professional and respectful.

5. A young female professional who works under the above mentioned manager discussed the dynamics of her work group. She said that they all rely upon each other for feedback. Everyone respects the other’s ideas and works for the overall benefit and growth of the group.

6. An older female professional who managed a local branch bank describes her management style as demanding with a personal touch. She alternatively has an open and interactive relationship with her superior.

7. An older male professional at a major pharmaceutical firm says that management must stem from the top and trickle throughout the organization. He emphasized that in his line of work, democracy is not an option—decisions must be made by those in charge who understand the consequences for the entire company.

8. A middle-aged male professional who works under the above described manager described his relationship with this manager as respectful and one with an educational focus. He described his relationship with his subordinates as very open and devoid of title-barriers. He said that everyone should communicate with everyone in order to accomplish a task successfully.

9. A middle-aged female professional with a large utilities firm described her management as a mix of many different styles of leadership. She said that she is open to suggestions from others, however, when a task needs to be accomplished, she tells someone how to do it so that it gets done properly.
10. A middle-aged female who works under the manager described above describes their relationship as hindered. She expressed that she would prefer to have a more open relationship with her management.

11. A middle-aged female manager at a multi-billion dollar national textile firm described her management style as open and personal. She said that everyone works well together because everyone within her department considers everyone else an equal.

12. A middle-aged female who works for a major investment firm said that her working environment is not interactional. In fact, her relationships with her superiors and peers are purely professional. There is little, if any, emphasis upon the individual as a member of the corporate environment.

13. A middle-aged male professional who works for a billion-dollar textile firm described his management style as highly interactive. He discussed specific instances of ways in which he directly solicited advice and cooperation from the rest of his work group. He thinks of the members of his team as his equals.

14. A middle-aged female professional who works under this manager described her work group as a pocket of individuals who have an amazingly dynamic relationship within the office.

15. A young female professional with a utilities firm in Richmond described her professional environment as one that does not promote personal interaction. Her job does not require that she work with others. She mentioned, however, that she wished that her manager was more open to delegating work.

16. A middle-aged male professional with an investment firm described his job as stressful and not very interactive. His job relies heavily upon his productivity, and therefore, he does almost all of his work individually.
Works Cited


