Self-Ideals and Prototypes: Psychoanalytic Dialogues of Identity and Leadership

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Abstract

The author contextualizes recent developments in the leadership literature using psychoanalytic conceptions of self-identity. It is argued that psychoanalytic views of the self are complementary to contemporary social-cognitive approaches, although historical divergences in these literatures have impeded mutual dialogue. This initiative of dialogue examines charismatic, schema, and self-identity theories of leadership within a psychoanalytic framework, arguing that when self-identity is viewed broadly, convergences between these approaches become apparent. A broad view of the self makes central notions of authority in the construction of personal identities, highlighting the processes by which individuals construct normative ideals, and explaining notions of charisma that are difficult to reconcile with contemporary social-cognitive theories of identity.

Key words: identity, charisma, leadership, self-concept
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Recent leadership literature has taken a social-cognitive turn (e.g. Lord & Brown, 2004; 2001; Hogg, 2005; 2001; Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003). While a continuing tradition focuses on leader traits and behaviors (e.g. Zaccaro, 2007; Judge, Bono, Ilies & Gerhardt, 2002), a growing literature examines leader prototypes and self-schema (c.f. Hogg, 2005), challenging earlier, “big-man” visions of leadership, replacing them with follower-based schema theories (e.g. Lord & Maher, 1991; Hogg, 2001). Such a transition can be understood as an attempt to replace top-down, romanticized theories of leadership with cognitive views and to replace moralized leadership notions with empirical issues of fit. It has also opened the study of leadership to approaches examining in detail the complex psychological processes that lead people to recognize leaders and to follow those who come to embody leadership attributes.

In a largely independent, yet historically parallel movement, psychoanalytic studies have developed from their early roots at the Tavistock group involved psychoanalysis (e.g. Bion, 1961) to a more contemporary literature exploring leadership and projection (e.g. Kets de Vries, 1989), corporate corruption (e.g. Stein, 2007), group dynamics (e.g. Long, 1991; Goethals, 2005), subordinate status (e.g. Oglensky, 1995), neurosis (Kets De Vries and Miller, 1985) and transference (e.g. Diamond & Allcorn, 2003), among other themes. While mentioning possible convergences between psychoanalytic ideas and the growing move toward identity-based approaches in leadership (e.g. Goethals, 2005), this work has tended not to develop such convergences in depth.

I propose that one area in which convergence is possible is in the growing self-identity based focus of leadership studies, an area which can profit from a rich psychoanalytic literature. First, the unique blurring of the distinction in psychoanalysis between identity and
authority can inform debates between leader-focused and follower identity literatures. I argue that bridging this gap pushes ideas of charismatic leadership closer to their Weberian (1947) origins, origins which have been lost in contemporary discussions of charisma (Beyer, 1999). Second, psychoanalytic views of the self as an idealizing, judging faculty can help explain the normative pressures that leaders represent and exert on followers, aligning with current concerns with the normative and ethical bases of leadership (e.g. Messick & Bazerman, 1996). Third, dialogue in this area can highlight non-cognitive aspects of identity, such as ideological and emotional aspects, recently emerging as crucial topics (e.g. Bono & Ilies, 2008; Erez, Misangyi, Vilmos, Johnson, LePine, & Halverson, 2008; Mumford, Espejo, Hunter, Bedell-Avers, Eubanks and Connelly, 2007).

The argument of the paper will unfold as follows: First, I will summarize the progression from leader-based to follower-based views in the mainstream leadership literature, focusing on how this progression has led issues of identity to become increasingly central (e.g. Hogg, 2005; 2001). Next, I will examine identity using early psychoanalytic notions of primary and secondary narcissistic development (Freud, 1914), showing how these processes lead to a multidimensional conception of self-identity. Third, I will apply this multidimensional conception to contemporary leadership theories. To show the value of such disciplinary cross-talk, I will argue that a renewed emphasis on psychoanalytic views of selfhood opens up possibilities for scholars to a.) Clarify the relationship between personal influence and formal organizational structures, a key problematic in Weber’s original charisma notion, and an important component of contemporary agency-structure debates within organization studies, b.) Reconcile descriptive and normative emphases in leadership, and c.) Explore the relationship between leadership and ideal selves, linking cognition with emotional and ideological perspectives.

**Leadership theory: From charisma to prototype**
As mentioned above, follower-based leadership approaches have tended to compete with earlier top-down, romanticized (e.g. Meindl, 1993) theories of leadership, replacing charismatic leadership notions with empirical issues of leader-follower fit. This reflects a tension between a focus on the person of the leader (e.g. Zaccaro, 2007; Judge, et al, 2002) on leader-follower relationships (e.g. Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), or on follower aspects (e.g. Lord & Brown, 2004; 2001). The difficulty specifying the locus of leadership (e.g. Bennis, 2007; Meindl, Erlich & Dukerich, 1985; Pfeffer, 1977) may reflect an underlying theoretical problem that is difficult to address in the language of contemporary leadership studies. Put briefly: how is it that individuals come to embody a model of authority for others, and how is it that others successfully internalize such models? On what psychological foundations can we theorize a bridge between authority and subjectivity?

Early theories of leadership focused heavily on individual leaders (Zaccaro, 2007), building on Weber’s (1947) notion of charisma, which developed into a “great man” view of social forces (Andreas, 2007), with a clear focus on the inspirational leader working in the interstices of formal structures to reframe interpretations of the world through inspirational appeals. This formulation placed charisma as one force within the larger context of the creation and overturning of bureaucratic structures (e.g. Andreas, 2007); however, psychology-based leadership theories moved this focus more squarely on the leader him/herself, forming a literature of neo-charismatic approaches (Fiol, Harris & House, 1999), such as transformational leadership (e.g. Bass, 1985), personality approaches (e.g. Judge et al, 2002; House, Spangler & Woycke, 1991), and behavioral approaches (e.g. House, Woycke & Fodor, 1988).

The individualist bent of approaches emphasizing the traits and behaviors of leaders (see Zaccaro 2007), drew criticism early on (esp. Stogdill, 1948), with scholars questioning the importance of individual leaders for (e.g. Pfeffer, 1977, Salancik & Pfeffer, 1984;1977)
Increasingly, the focus shifted to relational and follower aspects, taking leadership to be a relational quality (e.g. Tyler & Lind, 1992; Graen, 2007). Beginning with LMX (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), in this focus further shifted toward followers, increasingly emphasizing the mental states of followers (Lord & Maher, 1991; Lord, Foti & DeVader, 1984).

Follower-based approaches used the notion of cognitive prototypes (Rosch, 1978) to describe how organizational members organize and classify views of leaders. Prototype-based theories took two main forms, the earlier leadership categorization theory (LCT; Lord, 1977, 1985; Lord, Foti & Phillips, 1982; Lord et al, 1984), followed by self-concept based approaches (van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer & Hogg, 2004), most notably, the social identity theory of Leadership (SIT-L; Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000). LCT held that people hold ideal mental prototypes of leaders, and evaluate their current leaders by comparing them with these mental types (Lord et al, 1984). SIT-L, however, built on this tradition by insisting that leader schemas were not independent of, but rather intimately connected to, self-identities, or follower’s schematized views of themselves (Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000).

It is important to note that SIT-L, and subsequent studies that followed this line of research, focused on a particular brand of social identity theory called self-categorization theory (e.g. Turner, 1985), which differed from prior identity approaches by focusing on epistemic versus self-esteem based identity motives. Whereas Tajfel & Turner’s (e.g. 1979) original formulation of social identity theory privileged group-based self esteem mechanisms, self categorization theory was framed around uncertainty avoidance (Hogg & Terry 2000), a self-verification motive that involved individuals’ attempts to build a coherent self view, and is a common feature of schema-based views of the self (Khilstrom, Beer & Klein, 2003; Khilstrom & Klein, 1994).
I argue that social identity approaches are the culmination of the theoretical movement from leader-focused to follower-based approaches, for several reasons. First, unlike charismatic, trait, or behavioral theories, social identity approaches locate leadership in the individual and collective mental states of followers. Second, unlike leadership schema theory, social identity approaches move the object of schematization from the leader proper to the self, thus making SIT-L even more follower-based than LCT. Third, by shifting within social identity theory from enhancement to verification-based views of the self, this approach removes the emphasis on striving, replacing it with cognitive matching. In other words, while the self-enhancement perspective sees the self as motivated by a normative ideal, self-categorization theory tends to occlude this motivation, focusing more on self-coherence (Hogg & Terry, 2000). It is precisely this coherence view of the self that psychoanalysis will problematize, as I describe below.

**Psychoanalytic selves and the leadership role**

Since Freud’s *Totem & Taboo* (1912-13) and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (Freud, 1921), the study of hierarchy, authority and leadership of groups has been linked to issues of self and ego development. While psychoanalytic studies of leadership have proliferated (e.g Kets de Vries, 1989; Stein, 2007; Goethals, 2005), little dialogue has taken place between these view and social-cognitive views. As a result, topics such as identity, authority, leader perceptions, and leader member relations have developed largely independently of discussions of the self within psychoanalysis.

The movement in the academic leadership literature from romanticized images of charismatic mobilization to cognitive fit models echoes relevant psychoanalytic notions of ego formation in relation to power figures. In particularly, it is possible to re-describe these competing theories in terms of varying pictures of ego development in relation to powerful others.
Very briefly, the basis of mental structures according to Freud is a libidinous drive for pleasure that provides the motive force for later developing mental structures (Freud, 1923). This drive, however, inevitably meets resistance from a reality which does not give way to immediate resolution (Freud, 1914). The vicissitudes of the libido in the struggle with this reality principle give rise to notions of objects and the self, and constitute one’s relation to the world through processes of narcissistic self-development (for an organizational exploration, see Schwartz, 1990). Importantly, the cognitive structures so constituted, even if they do not appear as desires, are formed in relation to desire, and reflect transformations of desire.

In *On Narcissism* (Freud, 1914), Freud presents the predicament of the developing psyche as the attempt to recuperate a lost sense of omnipotent unity with the world, a utopian image referred to as the *ideal ego*. However, this irrecoverable totality proves impossible to achieve, and the ego emerges in an attempt to replace this lost primary narcissistic object in a secondary narcissism, establishing substitute identities that the subject finds readily available in social roles and self-identities. Subsequently, the subject assumes an identity and strives towards attaining this identity, referred to as the *ego-ideal*, a type of mental model of the self (Carr & Lapp, 2005). The difference between the ideal ego and the ego-ideal can be summarized as follows: The former is an attempt to regain an indefinable narcissistic omnipotence, often by irrationally idealizing eminent others (Lagache, 1961), whereas the latter arises when the narcissistic impulse leads the subject to adopt self-identities that seem to promise the achievement of this omnipotence (Mijolla-Mellor, 2005). The ego-ideal has thus been described as a hope, a project (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1985, p.29) that the individual undertakes in a spirit of an autonomous aspiration Blos (1985, p38).

Ironically, this spirit of autonomy and self-assertion finds satisfaction only through pre-existing social models, and involves injunctions and demands for obedience to identity norms. As a consequence, the normative element involved in the motivated project of the self
can also involve a self-loathing, punishing function, the super-ego (Freud, 1933). Both the ego-ideal and the super-ego describe mental structures associated with aspirations and esteem with regards to an image of personal betterment. However, the two structures represent different standpoints with regards to this striving. The ego-ideal is a self-image, representing an embodiment of the values and traits that an individual holds in high regard. The individual develops a consciousness of his/her ego through a nostalgic yearning for an archaic satisfaction (Freud, 1914), and constructs an idealized image of the self whose actualization would secure such a state of satisfaction. Essentially, then, the ego-ideal represents the image of virtue for an individual, the model of the well-lived life. The super-ego, by contrast, is an internalized image of an authority figure (for example, the parental figure) from which the person receives normative pressure and which is the seat of morality. The super ego arises out of the Oedipal complex, an identity transforming event in which the forming subject is pitted against a paternal authority figure (e.g. Schwartz, 2002). The Oedipal context is resolved when the subject identifies with this authority figure, and comes to internalize the paternal demands as moral values (Freud, 1933).

The super-ego, unlike the ego, is not a rational adaptive capacity but a normative, desiring force. In fact, while the super-ego appears, moralistically, as repressive and antagonistic to a person’s drives, it is in fact an expression of those very drives, of the internalized image of the demands of the authority figure. The individual, in a sense, swallows whole the image of authority, whose demands turn the libido back upon the individual, providing a constant moral imperative. Thus while the ego-ideal and the super-ego both objectify the subject through a normative gaze, the gaze of the ego-ideal is essentially aspirational and idealizing, whereas the super-ego is censoring and self-punishing.

What is key to note for our purposes is that ideal ego, ego-ideal and super-ego are all aspects of the individual’s self-constitution, and describe different aspects of this constitution,
throwing into doubt theories that stress a unified notion of identity. More specifically, these constituents describe different moments in the attempt by subjects to negotiate their relation to an unyielding world. The ideal ego reflects the subject’s yearning for unity with a beloved primary object, for Freud, the maternal object (e.g. Freud, 1905). The ego-ideal reflects the aspirational identities that the subject self-consciously adopts in the hope of reaching this ideal. The super-ego reflects subjectivized authority relations by which the subject punishes him/herself for the aloofness and failure that accompany this impossible task. This distinction can lead us to two complementary principles: First, that an examination of self-identity should take into account the dynamic strivings of the self towards an external object, and second, that describing authority involves examining how these relations depend on the subjective introjection of authority figures into the structure of the self.

With these two foundational ideas, we can return to the debates within recent leadership literature between leader-based and follower-based perspectives. Each approach, it is argued, capitalizes on some aspects of the leader-follower relation, but because both lack a theoretical language to create a bridge between leadership and followers, they do not tell the whole story. In the next section, I propose how a psychoanalytic conception of the self can help to think through these approaches.

**Leadership and the psychoanalytic self**

Charisma, neo-charisma, and the vicissitudes of the ego

As described above, charismatic and neo-charismatic theories of leadership focus on unique traits, qualities, or behaviors of leaders that set them apart from non-leaders; exemplary individuals, charismatic individuals create extraordinary effects through their personal capacities (House & Baetz, 1979, p. 399). In the neo-charismatic approaches, these capacities are often treated as tools that a leader can deploy; Bass (1999), for instance states
that every leader has a frequency profile of leadership behaviors ranging from charismatic to laissez-faire (p545).

Beyer (1999) critiqued the neo-charisma approaches, claiming that, in order to apply the charisma concept to everyday business contexts, scholars had tamed the magnetism inherent in the original conception. Attempting to recuperate this quasi-mystical aspect of visionary leaders, some scholars have referred to the idealization component inherent in charisma, for instance, in Bass and Avolio’s (e.g. 1993) notion of idealized influence. However, the nature and process of subjective idealization is largely absent from these literatures.

By contrast, idealization in relation to authority figures is central to the identity forming process described in psychoanalysis. Using the notions of ideal ego, ego-ideal, and super-ego, the charisma phenomenon may be interpreted as the re-emergence and projection of libidinal desires onto an omnipotent authority figure. The follower, rather than simply perceiving the leader as imbued with special powers (e.g. House & Beatz, 1979), derives vicarious empowerment from identification with the leader. The function of the charismatic leader, in this vision, is not to inspire followers through a show of personal excellence, but rather to embody the possibility of achieving satisfaction, which orients the ego-struggles of followers.

Following psychoanalytic theory, this struggle can take different forms, depending on the nature of the narcissistic identification of the follower with the leader, a variable which to my knowledge has not been studied in the organizational literature. In a primary narcissistic relation (Freud, 1914), the charismatic leader appears as a vision of perfection to be followed, an all-encompassing good imbued with a gift of grace, a view clearly in line with the early theological vision of Weber with regards to charisma (Weber, 1947). In a secondary narcissistic relation (Freud, 1914), the follower constructs a sense of identification with the
leader, using the figure of the leader as an aspirational target, in line with the ego-ideal. The aspiration-identificatory relation can be seen somewhat in the earlier versions of social identity theory, which focused on positive self-strivings (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Finally, in an *Oedipal* relation (e.g. Freud, 1933), the leader takes on a super-egoic function, wherein the follower’s identification with the leader results in the internalization of authority relations and the subsequent guilt associated with being an unworthy subject, for having inadequately embodied the symbolic demands of authority. This relation has received much less treatment in the literature; however, some authors have touched upon it using Lacanian notions of symbolic *indebtedness* (e.g. Arnaud, 2002).

That leader-focused theories underplay the importance of relationships has been pointed out by several scholars (e.g. Beyer, 1999, Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), with exchange theories noting the importance of relationships, but focusing on relationships in terms of leader follower outcomes of quality exchange (e.g. Graen, Hui, & Taylor, 2006) rather than on the complex psychological identifications and struggles with authority from within the minds of followers. Other critiques have focused on the heuristic value of leaders in explaining complex and uncertain environments (Beyer, 1999, Pfeffer, 1981), thus comparing individual charismatic leader perceptions to fundamental attribution errors (e.g. Pfeffer, 1981). These critiques acknowledge leader perceptions as a function of follower psychological needs. However, by focusing on sensemaking and epistemic coherence, they miss the essential psychoanalytic insight that followers project charisma perceptions onto leaders in an attempt to establish identity models essential to their social and personal development.

By contrast, follower based theories such as LCT (Lord et al, 1984; Lord & Maher, 1991) and SIT-L (Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000) focus specifically on role identities, and thus have a closer affinity to a psychoanalytic perspective. Still, the cognitive bent of both of
these theories results in the loss of a key insight of charismatic and neo-charismatic perspectives, namely, the inspirational and quasi-mystic hold over followers that leaders can exert. In moving from charismatic qualities to follower cognitions, the gift of grace disappeared as a vestige of a romanticized view of the charismatic leader (e.g. Beyer, 1999). As we shall see, a psychoanalytic view of leadership returns this gift to the leader, but treats it as a gift from followers.

Social-cognitive approaches and the internalization of leadership

Leadership schemas as subjectivized charisma. Critiques of the personalist bases of leadership research in the 1970’s and 1980’s (e.g. Salancik & Pfeffer, Pfeffer, 1977) gave rise to follower-based views that focused on leadership perceptions by organizational members (e.g. Lord & Maher, 1991; Meindl et al, 1985). Using social-cognitive research on categorization, LCT (Lord, 1977,1985; Lord et al., 1984; Lord, et al, 1982; Nye & Forsyth, 1991) attempted to examine leadership as a knowledge structure in the minds of followers, and focused on the alignment of implicit leadership categories with leader qualities (for a meta-analytic review, see Lord, DeVader & Alliger, 1986).

This shift to perceptions of leader performance was important in the light of various developments related to the leadership area, for example, the finding that inspirational leaders often impact subjective perceptions more than they impact objective performance (Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam 1996), the finding that performance often affects leadership evaluations more than highly evaluated leaders affect performance (e.g. Agle, Nagarajan, Sonnenfeld & Srinivasan, 2006), and the use of cognitive biases such as the fundamental attribution error to explain leadership perceptions (e.g. Pfeffer, 1981). LCT shifted the theoretical terrain by viewing charisma as a projected image by followers upon leaders. Thus, the inspirational leader was reframed as a cognitive structure and could be studied in terms of
perceptual, memory and attribution processes on the part of followers, enriching the potential of studying leadership as a properly psychological phenomenon (e.g. Lord & Maher, 1991).

According to LCT, leadership attributions involve relatively simple categorizations (leader/non-leader or leader/follower) of the stimulus person into preexisting hierarchically oriented categories (Foti, Fraser & Lord, 1982, p. 326). While viewing leadership as a primarily cognitive phenomenon did open up the black box of the individual, it nevertheless privileged cold processes of cognitive processing over hot processes of emotion, motivation and moral intuition, processes that we now know affect social judgment making (e.g. Haidt, 2001). Recent work in the charisma area, for example, has demonstrated the importance of affect transfer (Bono & Ilies, 2008; Erez et al, 2008) to the functioning of charisma, a point which was strongly emphasized in Weber’s (1947) original work. Given the link between charisma and emotional contagion, it is unlikely that leadership attributions would be made purely on the basis of a prototype matching process, a point which Erez et al. (2005) emphasize.

As the tide in this literature moves toward emotion-laded views of leadership, psychoanalysis’ linking of cognition and desire becomes increasingly relevant. While Erez et al. (2008), for example, establish an empirical correlation between leader and follower affect, neglecting psychodynamic explanations leaves their findings to be explained through cognitive mimicry (e.g. Barsade, 2002; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000). But if, as described above, we frame leadership schema as attempts by the subject to establish an identity internalizing authority roles, then affect transfer becomes better understood as the vicarious pleasure that the follower experiences via the introjected authority figure. From a psychoanalytic perspective, emotional mimicry makes sense because the very emotional life of the individual is in a sense borrowed, and possibility for emotional self-expression ultimately depends on the
coordinates provided within the symbolic authority structures within which the individual inhabits.

From the point of view of idealization, furthermore, the projected identification with a leader is normatively loaded, and a psychological theory of leadership categorization should give some account of how an individual comes to inhabit this normatively privileged position. The ego dynamics resulting from the narcissistic progression (Freud, 1914) give grounding to such a normative account because all the ego-constitutive steps that give rise to self-knowledge are, at base, attempts to return to an imagined original state. These origins are imagined as a utopian beginning and ending point, and cognition itself is simply the working out of a labyrinth whose goal is to reach this imaginary point. To echo Novalis’ (1923), ego awareness is a kind of homesickness, an urge to be at home everywhere (p. 179).

Seen in this light, all cognition contains a normative element, because thought inherently attempts to reach an idealized origin, constructing schematic structures to represent this ideal while by this very construction blocking its goal. These structures may be thin, as in the almost thoughtless submission to the ideal ego, the figure of the superstar or world-changing leader. They may be rigidly stereotypical, as in the super-egoic internalization of a leader-type which is rigidly applied according to consistent criteria. Or they may be reflective, contemplative and ambitious, as in an individual’s earnest attempt to create a self-project by emulating a mentor, who comes to stand for the ego-ideal. In each case, the decision to be made is thoroughly normative, for it responds to the fundamental question “How should a person be”? Leadership theory simply must at some point deal with this hard question, and can benefit for the conceptual tools present in psychoanalysis.

*Social identity and the unified self.* As mentioned above, the SIT-L emphasized leader fit within follower *self-schemas*, rather than fit with leadership schemas, focusing on the link between self-identity and leadership. While LCT treated cognitive prototypes as individual
information processing (Fielding & Hogg, 1997), SIT-L focused on the social bases of identity formation, conceiving of identity in terms of social or depersonalized categories (Hogg 2001; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Fielding & Hogg, 1997).

While SIT-L converges with psychoanalysis in emphasizing the importance of identity to leadership cognitions, it frames identity very differently, leading the two approaches to fundamentally different conceptions. This difference rests in the motivational structure of identity emphasized in psychoanalysis but deemphasized in the self-categorization approach of SIT-L and on two theoretical divergences resulting from this difference in emphasis.

First, SIT-L holds that leaders emerge from follower identifications. While contemporary perspectives recognize the presence of multiple self-schemas (e.g. Shower & Zeigler-Hill, 2003), self-schemas tend to be seen as internally consistent cognitive structures (Khilstrom & Klein, 1994). Because the internal unity of self-identities is often taken for granted, identity becomes equivalent to similarity, such that leaders emerge who are similar to the prototypical self-identities of followers (Hogg, 2001, 2005; Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003). These identities are more or less coherent social groupings, and the questions remain of a.) How particular social prototypes become appropriated and internalized or b.) Why this should happen in the first place, other than the general cognitive motive of uncertainty reduction (e.g. Hogg 2001).

By contrast, the problem of the establishment of an identity out of the myriad pieces of the social world is the defining problem of psychoanalysis (Schroeder & Carlson, 2007). In most psychoanalytic views, the self is inherently split, that is, because the ego-ideal is a symptom of the fractured nature of the self, it is not possible to equate identification with sameness in psychoanalysis. Rather, identification involves the projection of a self ideal onto another, which also produces alienation.
This difference is important for thinking about identification with leaders because, while both perspectives stress identification, the differing views of the nature of identity lead to quite different conclusions. In psychoanalysis, identification brings with it alienation, the fact of seeing oneself (or one’s self-ideal) as outside of oneself, and thus combines identity with lack. It is precisely this lack with creates the desire associated with emulating an authority figure, a desire which is difficult to explain as long as the self remains whole in the process of identification.

An important corollary follows from this point. In SIT-L, complete identification with a leader should lead to an infinitely positive relation between follower and leader, while differentiation should lead to an antagonistic relationship. For example, Hogg & Terry (2000) distinguish between self categorization based leadership and leadership based on structural differentiation, a distinction which they use to contrast virtuous and abusive leadership. In psychoanalysis, however, this distinction breaks down, given the fact that complete identification would destroy the leader-follower bond, since the difference giving rise to the ideal relation would be erased. To fully identify with the Leader, in other words, would risk “the danger of our getting too close to the object and thus losing the lack itself” (Zizek, 1991 p. 10). It is the subtle interplay between identification and alienation that establishes the charismatic myth, framing the leader as an improved version of the self, or more precisely, what the self would look like were it to become fully realized. In this respect, charismatic and identity views of leadership are complementary from the point of view of psychoanalysis, and both describe the vicissitudes of the split subject in search of him/herself.

Second, and relatedly, the SIT-L view of identity as holistic and unified reflects its origins in the cognitive psychology tradition. Indeed, Tajfel’s (e.g. 1969) early work was in the Gestalt tradition, which focused on the cognitive treatment of figures and wholes. This cognitive bent may explain the underplaying of the normative bases of social cognition. For
example, key to SIT-L is the idea that liking and complying with leaders is a function of their self-prototypicality (Hogg, 2001, 2005). Leadership is a function of liking, which is in turn a function of both salience and similarity (Hogg, 2001). Leaders that match self-prototypes are more likely to benefit from cognitive heuristics because they appear perceptually distinctive (e.g. figural against a background) or cognitively salient (Hogg, 2005, p. 60). In addition, because people tend to exhibit greater liking for people similar to them, self-prototypical leaders will be more liked, and this will lead to leader-follower alignment in the organization. The motivational drive for these effects is the reduction of cognitive uncertainty (Hogg, 2001).

Very differently from identification in psychoanalysis, which is a guilt-ridden and traumatic process, in SIT-L identification is largely descriptive and sanitized of inner struggles. In psychoanalysis, the ego does not only recognize itself in the identified object, but strives toward self-realization through it. What is at stake is not simply the reduction of uncertainty, a primarily cognitive process, but rather the narcissistic struggle by the follower to achieve an ideal, a thoroughly normative picture of the self that is absent from the prototype discussion. While SIT does not deny this libidinal push toward an ideal (e.g. Tajfel and Turner, 1979), it does tend to marginalize questions of self-worth missing the moral dimension involved in the formation of subjectivity.

This point follows naturally from, that of similarity versus difference in leader-follower relations. SIT-L, in the tradition of social cognition (e.g. Fiske & Taylor, 1991), views the subject in self-categorical terms, with individuals possessing self-schema which they are motivated to view in a positive light. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, holds a dynamic view of the subject, in which an inarticulable and hidden subject struggles to express itself by constructing narcissistic identities which never quite fit. By not getting behind the traumatic origins of self-identities, SIT-L loses the important insight that self-schemas always
hide the subject in and through the very act of embodying the subject. Thus, ego defense mechanisms come to appear as similarity-liking biases, and we can no longer see the existential struggle underlying authority relations.

Whence the super-ego: The great disappearing act

One consequence of this sanitization of the self-leader relation, similarly to the taming of charisma cited by Beyer (1999), is the disappearance of the equivalent of the super-ego in mainstream leadership research. Occluded is the self-alienation and objectification that identification with a powerful authority entails. This self-objectification, while present in the ideal ego (as nostalgic longing) and the ego-ideal (as imaginary self-image), it is most acutely felt in the super-ego function, which involves actively submitting oneself to unrelenting judgment.

The disappearance of a super-ego function in leadership theory seems odd, since this area deals inherently with issues of power relations, and the super-ego relies on internalized power relations (Freud, 1933). Indeed, several organizational scholars have viewed the norms of an organization as essentially related to Oedipal processes involved with the super-ego (e.g. Arnaud, 2002; Long; 1991; Styhre, 2008). The absence of the super-ego is apparent in both leader-centered views and in follower-centered views. For example, the neo-charismatic construct of transformational leadership (e.g. Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985) emphasizes follower empowerment and moral uplift. For abusive, punishing, or immoral leadership, Bass retains the label pseudotransformational leadership (Bass, 1999, 1993). LCT likewise disregards normative notions such as the super-ego treating leader schemas similarly to other cognitive categories (e.g. Greenwald & Banaji, 1989). Yet, it is hard to imagine a leadership prototype not involving normative judgments or normative self-comparisons. Similarly, with regards to SCT-L, it is difficult to imagine following a leader because that leader embodies one’s cognitive self-prototype without judging the leader and oneself normatively in terms of that
prototype. And if one’s leader is more self-prototypical that oneself, then it is likely that the subject will feel awe (ideal ego), ambition (ego-ideal) or self-loathing (super-ego) as a result.

With regards to normative emphases, psychoanalytically informed views, which place issues of punishment as foundational to identity development, have historically explored the sadistic and tyrannical side of leadership (e.g. Goethals, 2005; Kets de Vries, 2006; Stein, 2007). For example, Stein (2007) describes how unresolved Oedipal issues may have lain at the heart of the Enron scandal, and Kets de Vries (2006; 2004) has recently explored the psychological bases of despotic leadership. With regards to leadership perceptions, Goethals (2005) reminds us that according to Freud, authority figures are not only seen as charismatic, but also as dangerous and threatening, leading to ambivalent feelings by followers that are difficult to explain with prototype-based theories. This focus on the moral ambivalence of leadership facilitates psychoanalytic approaches in important contemporary issues such as corporate corruption (e.g. Stein, 2007), worker precariousness (e.g. Deranty, 2008), and crisis management (e.g. Stein, 2004). Recuperating the notion of the super-ego provides inroads into explaining how the dark side of leadership may be built into the very concept of leadership, rather than as a marginal aberration.

**Theoretical implications**

I have attempted to demonstrate how many issues related to the self in leadership theory can be expanded through dialogue with psychoanalysis. It was my objective to show how these approaches have moved along a trajectory that has progressively demonstrated the importance of self-processes in leadership, and has does so largely independently of psychoanalysis. However, the very cognitive turn that has produced interesting results in this literature has also occluded issues of irrationality, mystique, and blind authority that make leadership an interesting field of study (Beyer, 1999). In this section, I will attempt to
summarize some of the theoretical extensions that maintaining such a dialogue can offer future research.

First, psychoanalytic views, because of their dual focus on desire and pleasure, on the one hand, and on authority and Law on the other hand, work importantly at the interface of agency and structure, and can thus inform the agency-structure debate that is central in organization studies, an area in which some work already begun apply psychoanalysis (Cederstrom, 2006). Although this topic seems peripheral from the point of view of traditional leadership theory, it is central to a psychoanalytic view because the formation of identity relies on the internalization of authority structures with become “lived” in the various form of ego-identity. In addition, psychoanalysis contributes to agency-structure issues by viewing laws through the lens of the super-ego (Freud, 1933), seeing the cold formality of bureaucratic structures as fundamentally conditioned by the hot dynamics of personal agency.

Interestingly, the relationship between hot charisma and cold formal structure was a key feature in Weberian (1947) charisma. Charisma explained social influence in precisely those areas in which bureaucratic norms did not govern. Some contemporary institutional theories have imagined formal structures as concretized versions of agentic action, (Mayer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer & Jepperson, 2000), structures in which action-forming power is locked within background rules, and thus appears impersonal. For example, Meyer & Jepperson (2000) describe institutional norms as the reconstruction of god as basic principles (p 105). On the other hand, when such rules and structures are not present, it may be that the force of agency-structuring power is personalized in the figure of those who stand in positions of command. Although beyond the scope of the current paper, psychoanalytic ideas about personalizing figures of the Law offer deep inroads into understanding institutions, and offer a rich potential research program.
The notion of personalization also informs Weberian, institutional vision of charisma, as distinct from more recent trait theories (c.f. Beyer, 1999), which may be reconciled by integrating psychoanalytic concepts. Referring to Oedipal terms, before the establishment of the impersonal Law, there is the authoritarian, decadent paternal enjoyment (Freud, 1965), and paternal authority later becomes depersonalized into general rules for conduct and internalized into the individual’s moral conscience. This internalization of paternal demands tames the violence of authority, and gives the subject a sense of control. Institutional perspectives such as those of Meyer and Jepperson (2000) have thus echoed psychoanalytic notions of the formation of formal structure. Because this idea, foundational to psychoanalysis, has been articulated over almost century, psychoanalysis can offer a language with which to express ideas that are currently being worked out in organizational theory.

Second, as discussed above, a psychoanalytic perspective reinstates self-based views of leadership as a morally relevant, dealing with ideals and normative exigencies rather than simply categorization and uncertainty reduction. This aspect developed one of the most interesting aspects of leadership as a phenomenon, that it resides in the interstices of the descriptive and the normative. Leadership is not purely descriptive because being a leader is not equivalent to holding power or exerting influence, but involves an ideal vision for followers. It is not purely moralistic because simply being morally admirable is not sufficient for effective leadership.

Highlighting the normative aspect of leader perception opens several theoretical possibilities. First, it unmaskst attempts to rationalize leadership processes by viewing followership as compliance, and emphasizes the internalization and identification aspects of persuasion (e.g. O’Reilly & Chatman, 1986). At the same time, in the notion of the split-self it gives a theoretical base for internalization and identification. Individuals internalize and identify with powerful other in an attempt to construct identities symbolically linked with
drive satisfaction. This attempt is always unsuccessful because their act of identification with another is self-alienating, paradoxically reinforcing the urge for self-discovery. It is ideological because in their search, the clues they find have been laid out for them in a network of social roles that scaffold their attempts at self-discovery. Without the notion of a split-self, neither the tragic nor the ideological aspects of this dynamic are visible, because the choice of identifying with a leader appears as if made by an already constituted self, based on preferences and liking, and not an existential choice about who to become.

Third, and relatedly, psychoanalysis provides a critique as to the ideological nature of current leadership theory itself, as an attempt to sanitize authority process by seeing leader identification as epistemically driven, rather than the politically salient self-enhancement motivation described by earlier identity theorists (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As many (e.g. Butler, 2000; Althusser, 1971; Zizek, 2004) have argued, the symbolic image of authority constitutes ideology itself, and any attempt to create an identity must rely on the symbolic social nexus within which the individual is embedded. From this perspective, identification with leaders is thoroughly epistemic, reducing subjective uncertainty, but it is also ideologically engaged. By glossing over the self-enhancement motive of identification, much of contemporary leadership theory implicitly occludes this ideological dimension of identification with leaders.

Some difficult questions about the place of leadership in society follow from this observation. If identification involves a hierarchical projection of authoritative others by a fundamentally lacking self, how does identification with leaders combine with an ethic of liberal democracy that posits formal equality among persons? Is, for example, a psychoanalytic view of leadership consistent with liberal ideas about human dignity and worth? Can we re-insert notions of the ego-ideal or super-ego into our view of persons and still hold on to the intrinsic self-sanctity of the liberal subject? Seen in this light, the dialogue
between unified self-views views in social psychology and psychoanalytic views over the self may reflect struggles over how to cleave together the sanctity of the self with an ethic of leadership. Social psychology has brought leaders down to earth by making them prototypes of everyday social groups. Can psychoanalysis reinsert notions of authority, guilt, and self-separateness without radically undermining a notions of democratic leadership? The richness and importance of such a dialogue offers many possibilities for the future of leadership studies.

Finally, psychoanalytic views of the self help unify leader and follower-centered approaches. Because both leaders and followers are co-constituted in the interpersonal dynamic, leader and follower centered views are not mutually exclusive. In this respect, psychoanalysis follows views such as leader-member exchange (LMX) theory; however, the relational aspect in psychoanalysis goes deeper to explore how the very roles involved of the exchange are constituted in and through their relations. Leaders and followers enact relational scripts, whereby each takes on a complementary role in a psychological game writ large. The leader stands in for the archaic paternal authority, gaining a seemingly unexplainable power from this position, and the followers can gain a sense of stability and vicarious enjoyment from this authority.

Notwithstanding the above points, there are lacunas within a psychoanalytic approach to leadership that call for future clarification. For instance, a key question is that of how symbolic authority structures at work become internalized in individual identity structures, and why certain elements of a person’s surroundings undergo this internalization while others do not. To paraphrase Zizek (2009), the central mystery of authority is the point at which the it becomes subjectivized, in other words, how exactly the leader gets into the head of the subject. Research in this area would examine, for example, how certain leadership processes can promote relatively unconscious ideal egoic follower support, versus the more self-
conscious ego-ideal identification, versus the hypercritical super-egoic leadership internalization, and how such differences affect workplace dynamics.

In addition, while recent psychoanalytic work has conceived of identification as internalization of social meanings (e.g. Arnaud, 2002), and has stressed focusing on group (e.g. Goethals, 2005), organization, and system (e.g. Fotaki, 2006) levels of analysis there remains a need to unpack the relation between the symbolic macro-structure and the figure of the individual leader. Under what circumstances do authority structures become condensed into single individuals, and how does the institutional authority of social symbols differ from the personal authority of a powerful leader? This question, as discussed above, brings us around to the question of charisma versus bureaucracy that Weber put at the center of his theory, but has been largely overlooked in the charisma literature.

Both of these research agendas imply an extension of themes already present under the surface of contemporary leadership theory. I argue that psychoanalysis can enrich existing notions of identity, while bringing current charisma theories back to their origins. In the past decades, psychoanalysis has been applied to areas as diverse as political science, legal theory, literary criticism, and women’s studies. In the study of leadership, it has been present, but has remained largely outside of dialogue with other traditions. The current moment, I have argued, is ripe for an integration of psychoanalytic ideas into the mainstream of leadership studies.
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