Theory and Practice in Transformational and Charismatic Leadership Research and Its Relevance for Executives

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By Reuven Shapira, Ph.D., Western Galilee Academic College, Acre, Israel

Email: shapi_ra@gan.org.il  Website: http://www.transformingkibbutz.com  Phone: 972-46320597; Cell: 972-542-209003. Fax: 972-46320327.

Introduction

Leadership is an elusive phenomenon and despite much research its constructs remain deeply contested (Watson, 2013). Buckingham and Coffman (1999: 63) state that the concept of leadership is unclear as it is mostly confused with management, while for Gini (1997) most leadership studies lack clarity and consensus regarding the very meaning of the term, since ‘Any attempt to describe a social process as complex as leadership inevitably makes it seen more orderly than it is’ (p. 323); ‘...leadership is a delicate combination of the process, the techniques of leadership, the person, the specific talents and traits of a/the leader, and the general requirement of the job itself’ (italics original; p. 329). In fact, this combination is often even more delicate and complex due to additional factors such as the leader’s expertises and local knowledge (Collins and Evans, 2007; Fine, 2012), her/his ignorance and stupidity (Gannon, 1993; Shapira, Submitted[a]; Sterenberg, 2002; Wagner, 2002), her/his past habituses and experiences (Bourdieu, 1990; Collins and Sanders, 2007; Klein, 1998), and non-leader factors such as Boards of Directors, followers, and organizational contexts (Fraher, 2014; Gardner et al., 2005; Haslam et al., 2010; Heifetz, 1995; Hollander, 2009; Ocasio, 1995).

However, Gini (1997) spoke of ‘the process’, i.e., leadership is a process in which many factors change including the leader. Biblical prophets criticized leaders for being corrupted by empowerment, as also asserted by Lord Acton and others. According to Michels’s (1959[1915]) oligarchy theory, with growth, success, and empowerment leaders of formally democratic organizations become low-moral self-perpetuating oligarchic conservatives (Jay, 1969; Kets De Vries, 1993). Only in view of the business scandals of the last decade has managerial ethics become a major topic of organizational research and teaching (Ailon, 2013; Grover et al., 2012; Johnson, 2009; Rhode, 2006), hitherto it was rarely studied by this research (Brown and Trevino, 2006; Sendjaya, 2005). For instance, leadership life cycle theory (LLCT) research did not allude to morality, nor probed use of low-moral means for defending a leader’s job in the dysfunction phase (e.g., Hambrick and Fukutomi, 1991; Hou et al., 2014; Lou et al., 2013; Ocasio, 1994; Miller and Shamsie, 2001; Wulf et al., 2011). LLCT research studied tenures of up to 14 years although oligarchic leaders’ tenures were often prolonged for dozens of years (Jay, 1969; Kets De Vries, 1993; Michels, 1959[1915]). Low-moral practices cause distrust of a leader (Hosmer, 1995), while ‘trust is the single most important variable moderating the effects of transformational leadership’ (Bass, 1998: 173). Many users of the transformational leadership concept ignore Burns’s (1978) emphasis on leaders’ high-moral attributes essential for trust, such as honesty, sincerity, openness of information, and commitment to tasks (Covey, 2009; Grover et al., 2012; Khalid et al., 2012; Klaussner, 2012). As leadership studies mostly disregarded followers, they mostly missed the
decisive impact of low morality on distrusting a leader. A trusted high-moral leader who trust followers tends to vulnerable involvement in their deliberations that engenders an ascending trust spiral (Fox, 1974; Mayer et al., 1995; Zand, 1972) and virtuous trust and learning cycles which create a high-trust culture that enhances functioning, while a leader who conceals low morality by avoiding involvement through distancing from employees engenders vicious distrust and ignorance cycles and a low-trust culture that impedes functioning (Shapira, 2012a, 2013). Thus:

**Virtuous Trust and Learning Cycle** versus **Vicious Distrust and Ignorance Cycle**

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<tr>
<th>Virtuous Trust and Learning Cycle</th>
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<tr>
<td>Trust of subordinates encourages the leader’s vulnerable involvement that exposes ignorance in order to learn</td>
<td>Distrusting subordinates encourages the leader’s avoiding vulnerable involvement to conceal ignorance</td>
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<td>Ignorance exposure causes ascending trust spiral as openness and knowledge sharing enhance learning and right decisions that achieve successes</td>
<td>Ignorance concealment enhances charisma but also distrust that restricts knowledge sharing, retains ignorance, and causes mistaken decisions, indecision, and failures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Successes further trust, openness, learning, problem-solving, innovation, and more successes</td>
<td>Failures further distrust, secrecy, misunderstandings, mistakes, brain-drain, and more failures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Successes engender innovation-prone high-trust culture that enhances trust, learning cycles and functioning</td>
<td>Failures encourage conservatism and low-trust culture which furthers the above maladies, retaining dysfunction for long</td>
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Accordingly, for some authors a true leader is only one who gains followers’ trust and will to follow group/firm aims, proving by policies and practices that like them s/he too is part of the group/firm and serves its aims (Bennis, 1991; Guest, 1962: Ch.4; Haslam et al., 2011; Shapira, 1987, Submitted[a]; Washburn, 2011), in contrast to the inauthentic leader whose concealed selfish deeds negate preaching of advancing common aims (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999; Khurana, 2002; Robison, 2010; Simons, 2002). Similarly, Poulin and his colleagues (2007) contrast successful socialized leaders with failing personalized ones, and Howell and Shamir (2005) contrast socialized charismatic relationships with personalized ones that often cause harmful consequences for the organization and its members. A charismatic leader tends to be personalized (Tucker, 1968), while Burns’s (1978) transformational leader is clearly socialized. The two types of leaders are undifferentiated by much research although the originators, Weber and Burns (respectively), analyzed distinct phenomena (Barbuto, 1997; Beyer, 1999; Yukl, 1999). Weber’s charismatic leader is followed due to the belief in her/his exceptional qualities, a ‘magic gift’ which sets her/him apart from ordinary leaders. Elevated by public mistrust of ordinary leaders who failed to solve major problems in a crisis situation s/he is a savior with a radical, seemingly irrational solution which followers are asked to trust and to obey her/his orders without questioning their logic which only s/he fully understands due to this gift (Tucker, 1968). Research often missed the uniqueness of this combination. For instance, a questionnaire on charismatic leader executives included only 3 items on exceptional traits (‘extraordinary competence...’, ‘...magnetic presence’, ‘...can overcome any obstacle’), versus 7 items on effective leaders’ traits (‘exudes competence...’, ‘mobilizes a
collective sense...’ etc.; Wilderom et al., 2012: 839). Moreover, integral parts of Weber’s theory were missed: charismatic leadership was unrelated to crises/acute situations, it neither fostered belief in seemingly irrational solutions, nor did it ask for unquestioning obedience and unilateral trust in a leader.

Charisma was often considered a major ingredient of transformational leadership (e.g., Bass and Avolio, 1995; Shamir et al., 1993), though Burns’s (1978) type did not need it in order to lead a transformation. However, followers often attribute charisma to a transformational leader though only after a success (Yukl, 1999), versus such attribution preceding success in a Weberian charismatic leader (Tucker, 1968: 740). Attribution of charisma to successful transformational leaders can explain the confusion between these two types. Studies usually follow leaders’ successes, thus only post factum charisma is probed, while followers tend to attribute charisma to a leader due to the tendency to adore successful leaders (Goode, 1978) which the mass media often encourages, exaggerating leaders’ achievements (Ailon, 2013; Villette and Vuillermot, 2009). Charisma attribution enhances unilateral trust in a leader versus mutual trust with a high-moral transformational leader, which contrasts attribution: s/he trusts followers, encourages their innovative problem-solving, and as they actively helped achieving success, they would not attribute it to the leader’s ‘magic gift’. Ethnographies of turnarounds depicted high-moral transformational leaders with more or less charisma, but never mentioned irrational following due to a ‘magical gift’. For instance, a transformational leader achieved a turnaround of a 4500-employee failing car plant by trustfully working out with each section’s staff solutions to its problems; both their and his changes and innovations achieved the turnaround (Guest, 1962). Such leaders were trusted and followed due to a rational belief in their high morality, their convincing vision, their practical goals, and their ability to advance these by modelling high commitment to learning and achieving tasks, which engendered mutual trust with followers and encouraged their innovative problem-solving that advances goals set by leaders (Bennis, 1991; DePree, 1990; Downton, 1973; Fairholm, 1994; Giuliani, 2002; Graham, 1991; Harvey-Jones, 1988; O’Toole, 1999; Poulin et al., 2007; Sankar, 2003; Shapira, 1987; Sieff, 1986).

However, the leader of a huge organization is physically and organizationally distant from most of the tens of thousands of employees; unless actively engaging their deliberations s/he knows little about them as they do about her/him (Collinson, 2005) and may be revered as charismatic. A distant charismatic leadership is very different from a close one (Shamir, 1995), and ‘The dynamics of the influencing process differ depending on how ‘close’ or ‘distant’ followers are from their leader’ (Antonakis and Atwater, 2002: 674). A distant corporate CEO may succeed if unit managers are vulnerably involved (Guest, 1962) while s/he may be adored as a charismatic leader with the help of the mass media (Ailon, 2013; Villette and Vuillermot, 2009) since it is hard to know how her/his combination of practices has enhanced success and when combination changed and s/he became dysfunctional. Neither LLCT studies nor oligarchy theory research explain the process of change to self-perpetuating low-moral practices that defend a leader’s job despite dysfunction as distancing helps conceal these practices as a dark secret, i.e., their very existence is kept secret, veiled on the firm’s dark side by a conspiracy of silence (Dalton, 1959; Griffin and O’Leary-Kelly, 2004; Hase et al., 2006; Jackall, 1988; Linstead et al., 2014; Shapira, 1987).

**Prolonged Dysfunction Phases of Previously Transformational Leaders**

For example, founding engineer Ken Olsen led computer firm DEC (Digital Equipment
Corporation) to impressive success from 1957 by high-moral transformational leadership and an innovative egalitarian high-trust culture (Saxenian, 1994: 74). However, after a decade he commenced dysfunctioning, never decided major issues and ignored pressing problems, often left executives in shambles, causing much distrust, destructive conflicts, and brain-drain (Rifkin and Harrar, 1988: Chaps.9-12). He suppressed innovative senior engineer De-Castro, the heir apparent of the R&D department who had led the development of major DEC computers, by importing an outsider as his boss. De-Castro left with his team to establish a successful competitor but more important, Olsen curbed the trust with other seniors who became docile, menaced by a possible similar suppression (ibid: Chaps.9-11). Decentralized DEC became informally centralized; he and a few executives made all the important decisions (Saxenian, 1994: 76). While the above untangled prolonged conservative dysfunction in accord with oligarchy theory, Kunda’s (1992) acclaimed ethnography of DEC’s mid-1980s missed it and its impact on the DEC’s negative ‘engineered culture’. It did show, however, that Olsen kept trust of lower ranks by some high-moral practices such as a humble life style, open door policy, allowing mid-levelers much discretion, and no use of fiat, while rewarding fairness and integrity (Kunda, 1992: 174; Rifkin and Harrar, 1988: Ch.13).

Often a veteran oligarchic leader has both the interest and power to mislead observers concerning his true aims and to conceal low-moral practices that defend his job. Olsen and his loyalists probably concealed from Kunda (1992) the dark secrets of ‘engineered culture’ that defended their power and caused Kunda (1992: 27) to believe industry experts who projected a promising future for DEC just as it suffered an annual loss of US$2.8 Billion, Olsen was replaced, and DEC restructured. This mistake emphasizes the delicacy and complexity of leadership combinations; the neglected domain in leadership studies of followers was appears to have been missed: Olsen’s previous successful innovative deputies who left criticized his suppression that prevented any executive from succeeding sufficiently to become a heir apparent; without any such one, even loyal deputies who criticized his dysfunction deferred any notion of his succession (Rifkin and Harrar, 1988: Ch.37). In accord with Ansell and Fish (1999) Olsen gained the image of an indispensable DEC leader by covertly suppressing and ousting talented critical innovative ascenders who were potential successors.

An astute dysfunctional leader can use his power to enhance his own prestige and supposed charisma by usurping the prestige of a subordinate’s innovation that revived the organization, adopting it as his own and ignoring the innovator. Such usurpation was witnessed by Mehri (2005: 142) in Toyota and I saw it in an Israeli plant: its manager suppressed an innovative mid-manager who left after completing a major successful innovation, its prestige usurped by the former by ignoring its inventor (Shapira, Submitted[a]). Olsen usurped the prestige of DEC’s past inventors by erasing their names from all publications when they left (Rifkin and Harrar, 1988: Ch.37). A leader may not even actively do this because prestige tends to go to those who already have it (Goode, 1978) and a leader’s loyalists may attribute successes to his assumed charismatic leadership. This is often aided by the firm’s size: distance from a leader prevents mid- and low-ranks from knowing who really deserves prestige so they accept loyalists’ attribution, and the leader may enhance his charismatic image by distancing (e.g., Zúquete, 2011: 299). Only if her/his black secrets are exposed, probably years after passing away, the truth about successes may erase the charismatic image (Shapira, 2011).

Leadership combinations change while a leader’s power may mislead all concerned about his/her own dysfunction and others’ successes. Untangling and explaining a leader and his loyalists’ bluffs and abuses requires a deep-digging ethnographic-historical study of the
triangle: leader, followers, and contexts (Fraher, 2014), discerning leadership phases and the practices used in each and explaining changes. A one-time formal survey research may not penetrate the delicate complex changing leadership combinations and the processes involved in a high-moral transformational leader’s covert change to self-perpetuator with success and growth while loyalists and co-opted/shallow students and observers attribute her/him charisma and ignore/conceal low-moral abuses, camouflage, and bluffs. I analyze such misleading in two cases of quite parallel leaders whom everyone depicted as charismatic. While in fact servant transformational at first they became oligarchic within 10-12 years and their presiding on others’ overcoming major problems largely caused by their dysfunction and self-perpetuation efforts, caused many of the minority of followers who did not leave to view them as charismatic.

**Methodology**

I made a historical-ethnographic longitudinal study of two major Israeli leaders of large social communal movements. Their high-moral transformational leadership achieved enormous success, the movements growing over 50 fold within two decades up to 20,000 members each, but after 15-19 years they became dysfunctional low-moral conservative self-perpetuators for another three decades (Shapira, 2008). Both movements were part of a larger social field, the Kibbutz Movement, which grew in the next four decades to encompass 269 kibbutzim (pl. of kibbutz), 129,000 inhabitants and 250-300 inter-kibbutz organizations (I-KOs) with some 20-22,000 employees as of 1985, its peak as a communal movement (numbers are inexact due to a lack of I-KO research; see below). Since 1986, however, a deep debt crisis caused some 80% of kibbutzim to abandon communalism, much like other successful communal movements with oligarchic and assumed charismatic leaders (Brumann, 2000). As the world’s largest and most successful communal movement it was studied by hundreds of scholars for 75 years, its literature consists of 6000-7000 publications including biographies of leaders, major deputies, and histories of the four kibbutz federations they led, known as the Movements, with some 2400 kibbutz member administrators (Near, 1992, 1997; Shapira, 2008). However, all this vast research has used a mistaken paradigm which missed kibbutz uniqueness and helped camouflage leaders’ prolonged dysfunction: Contrary to other successful communal societies which insulated themselves from their surroundings, the kibbutzim were highly involved in their surroundings through the Movements and hundreds of other I-KOs administered by 4000-4500 kibbutz members called pe’ ilim (activists; singular: pa’ il). However, while kibbutz cultures aimed at egalitarian collectivism, democracy, and creativity, I-KOs were bureaucratic, hierarchic, and often oligarchic and conservative. Hence, exposure of I-KO cultures could have spoiled the kibbutz image of a progressive society and researchers collaborated with kibbutz leaders in evading I-KOs (Shapira, 2005, 2008, Forthcoming); thus no student used the paradigm of a social field for explaining kibbutz and I-KO leaderships as I did, concealing the conflicts between contrasting kibbutz and I-KO cultures. Since leaders simultaneously held roles in both, their moral choices which impacted members’ trust and their leadership, were inexplicable without studying both. Thus, for 35 years I have been carrying out anthropological studies of both I-KOs and kibbutzim (see references and autoethnography, Shapira 2012b).

My ethnography included 20 kibbutz plants, 4 kibbutzim, and 7 I-KOs in which I have interviewed and spoken to some 550 members and hired employees. I have made participant observation as an I-KO plant employee, read freely its and its parent I-KO’s documents, and
used other kibbutz ethnographies, leaders’ biographies and autobiographies, mostly in Hebrew books, articles, and dissertations as well as reading kibbutz newspapers for 60 years. I had the unique advantage of making what I call semi-native anthropology: a native anthropologist studies her/his own community, while I as a kibbutz member studied leaders and managers of other kibbutzim and I-KOs administered by pe’ilim. Similar to the leaders and managers studied, I too had considerable managerial experience and a management college education, and I knew some of them personally prior to my fieldwork. I also knew their institutional context, the kibbutz system that socialized them. Usually anthropologists lacked such knowledge and often were unfamiliar with the institutional contexts that socialized leaders and managers (Yanow, 2004). These advantages enabled me to approach interviewees as their peer and to turn interviews into discussions of common managerial and leadership problems. I gained openness and genuine rapport from almost all of them, accessing any document I wished to read. Moreover, as a kibbutz activist I participated from 1960 to 1995 in many of my Movement’s political struggles and was a comrade of some young critics of the old guard, thus having intimate knowledge of one of the two leaderships studied. One proof that all the above enabled a valid explanation of the kibbutz field and its leaderships, was that it was not criticized by any seminal publication (for a review: Tzafrir, 2009).

Two Early Successful High-Moral Transformational Leadership

The kibbutz field’s prime leaders from the 1920s to the early 1970s were Tabenkin and Yaari who were depicted as charismatic (e.g., Argaman, 1997: 216; Ben-Rafael, 1997: 45; Niv and Bar-On, 1992: 221; Rayman, 1981: 268; Rosolio, 1999: 23). The reality was completely different: only Yaari charismatically led two groups of young Zionist pioneers (aged 17-21) consecutively in 1920-1 for several months each. As an ex-WWI officer aged 23-24 he built an image of a charismatic savior of desperate impoverished young pioneers who came from Poland and Galicia to build the new Jewish homeland that Britain promised but encountered unemployment and temporary governmental public works at minimal wages with little prospect of settling the land. Yaari became their leader in this crisis situation by preaching irrational ideas, organized nightly confession sessions which often became a collective hysteria until one night an opposing leader stood up and accused him of cruel despotism over these youngsters, and others joined and forced Yaari’s departure. He soon adopted rational Marxist socialist ideas, joined a communal pioneer group in Tel Aviv with his new wife and changed to servant transformational leadership. Mostly a humble labourer like others, he nonetheless preached to them and to other communes of pioneers who were graduates of the Hashomer Hatzair youth movement about the need to become organized and in 1927 led the establishment of a federation of 4 communes and kibbutzim with 286 inhabitants called the Kibbutz Artzi Movement (hereafter KA; Halamish, 2009).

Tabenkin had no early charismatic leadership phase. A decade older than Yaari, he was a member of Kvutzat Kineret, a small commune established in 1910 on the shores of the Lake of Galilee. He joined Ben-Gurion and Berl Katzenelson’s leadership in 1919 to establish the major socialist party Akhdut Haavoda (United Labour) and in 1920 the three established the Histadrut General Labour Union and became its prime leaders. In 1921 he left his wife and three small children in Kineret to join a large group, over 200 pioneers, who established the large but impoverished Kibbutz Ein Harod of which he became the prime leader. It was an obvious humble act by a high-moral ideologist who proved his belief in the new vision he
preached by the harsh deed of abandoning both family and Kineret’s better standard of living to join followers in implementing his vision. His vision rejected settling the land by small intimate *Kvutzot* (groups) of 10-20 people each such as Kineret, Degania, and others tried quite unsuccessfully since 1910, in favour of large growing kibbutzim which by economy of scale, specialization, advanced agronomical knowledge, and mechanization would enhance yields, work efficiency, and economic viability. In 1923 he furthered these ideas by founding a loose federation of several kibbutzim called Kibbutz Ein Harod Artzi which reorganized and became the Kibbutz Meuakh (KM) Movement in 1927 (Kanari, 2003; Maletz, 1945).

Both Tabenkin and Yaari were effective servant transformational leaders in the 1920s, until the mid-1930s. KM and KA advanced the vision of federatively organized egalitarian and collectivist kibbutzim as a highway to Jewish nation building, developing the Movements and other I-KOs to solve kibbutz problems such as scale (Niv and Bar-On, 1992), and overcame internal and external resistance while encouraging innovators (ibid; Halamish, 2009). The fiercest internal opposition came from leftists who revered Stalinist USSR despite its objection to Zionism and suppression of Russian Zionists. Tabenkin and Yaari each fought leftism in his movement and many leftists either left or were expelled (Near, 1992: 140-3; Tzachor, 1997: 153-8; Zertal, 1980: 168-73). During these struggles until 1933 both KM and KA were democratic: each was controlled by a quasi-parliament of kibbutz delegates which convened every two or three months for 2-3 days, decided major issues, and chose movement secretariats. The two leaders’ high morality and loyalty to their vision was proven not only by their committed intensive political activity in Palestine but also by prolonged tours abroad, mostly to Poland and Galicia, to educate youngsters for kibbutz pioneering while paying the high personal price of minimal amenities for them and their families. Unlike the quite comfortable life in Tel Aviv of Ben-Gurion and Katzenelson, they lived humbly in abstemious kibbutzim. Despite dependence on the latter for obtaining resources for kibbutzim from the Zionist non-socialist establishment in Jerusalem, the leaders established KM and KA headquarters in their kibbutzim, Ein Harod and Merhavia (respectively), indicating that the connection to members in rural kibbutzim preceded the connection to national leaders.

Leaders’ proximity to their followers and encouraging of their innovations minimized charismatic images (Shamir, 1995), signalled transformational leadership as did their struggle with leftists who preached the magic USSR solution and reverence of seemingly charismatic Stalin. These democratic struggles were lengthy as the leaders trusted followers’ faculties and formal moves involving expulsion of leftists came only after long debates and kibbutzim voting, with no leader fiat. Another negation of charismatic leadership: the two did not gain positions by appearing as magic saviors in crises but rather achieved dominance by painstakingly organizing and building the Movements for years, coping with their problems, modelling commitment to tasks, and promoting deputies who were given much discretion that enhanced innovation (Spiro, 1983; Near, 1992; Shapira, 2008; Zait, 2005).

Transformational leadership resulted in enormous growth, from 8 impoverished kibbutzim with less than one thousand residents in 1927 to 71 kibbutzim, the oldest all prosperous, with 17,355 residents, in 1939 (Near, 2008: 262). The Movements and other I-KOs staff reached hundreds, including a hundred emissaries who educated some 100,000 youth in Europe and other countries to be kibbutz pioneers. However, after 1942 no sign of such leadership was found; after Tabenkin’s 19 years at the helm and Yaari’s 15 years they no longer coped with major problems innovatively, nor encouraged deputies to do so, a conspicuous dysfunction versus the continued innovation of autonomous kibbutzim, for instance coping with many
WW II economic problems by establishing 126 workshops and plants (Shapira, 2008). Cited LLCT studies found that CEOs’ dysfunction phase commenced after 3 to 7 years, thus the first question is: Did dysfunction elements appeared in the period between 7 to 15-19 year tenures in the cases studied? Second, can oligarchy theory and/or LLCT explain leaders’ prolonged tenures? Third, as the dysfunction lasted several decades, how did leadership practices change in this period and how did the changes relate to other changes, to charisma attribution, and to self-perpetuation? Did practice changes enhance the charismatic image and help tenure prolongation?

**Non-Charismatic Oligarchization Led to Dysfunction, Leftism, Crises, Mass Attrition, and Charisma Attribution**

After 1942 the two leaders dominated for another three decades with no real challenges despite their dysfunction and followers’ critique, hence the prime explanation is oligarchy theory: with success and growth tenured leaders became conservatives, defending achievements: large scale, many resources, power, high status, prestige, and privileges (Michels, 1959[1915]). The first oligarchic change was the castration of Movement democracies by replacing the quasi-parliaments of kibbutz delegates with leaders’ nominee councils and deferring the convening of quasi-parliaments at first for a year or so and later for years. In the KM this council was called the Extended Secretariat and established in 1933, and in the KA it was called the Executive Committee and established in 1935 (Shapira, 2008: 73). The second oligarchic move was prolonging tenures of loyal deputies and Movement officials. Already at KM’s 1936 Yagur Convention, delegates accused Tabenkin of violating egalitarianism as KM pe’ilim retained their jobs for long and never returned to the ranks (Karani, 2003: 389-91). A third move was centralization: At the Yagur Convention Tabenkin was accused of authoritarian rule, while in the 1939 Naan Convention he himself boasted ‘Bolshevist’ imposition of KM Secretariat decisions on kibbutzim. Yaari’s KA was less centralized in practical matters but more so politically-ideologically. This became decisive with another empowering move by both leaders, the 180-degree turn in 1937-9 from critique of Stalinism to its reverence which legitimized the above oligarchic changes, censorship of the Movements’ publications, and suppression of critics (Near, 1997: 361; Shapira, 2008: Chaps.10-11).

Both leaders sought empowerment as their positions were threatened: from 1935 Tabenkin was threatened by Ben-Gurion-Katzenelson’s effort to demote him by uniting KM with the Ben-Gurion-leaning third Movement which would have made Tabenkin’s supporters a minority within the united Movement. In Yaari’s case co-leader Hazan was docile up to 1937 but then due to the context of Arab revolt he became a threat to Yaari’s primacy (Shapira, Forthcoming). Reverence of Stalin’s dictatorship contradicted kibbutz communal principles and was resisted for a decade by most members, a clear sign of non-charismatic leadership. In 1940 both leaders retreated from their leftist endorsement of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact as its true nature was exposed; Tabenkin called the USSR ‘Imperialistic’ and Yaari criticized it as ‘Machiavellian’ (Karani, 2003: 478; Zait, 1993: 121). In 1942 Yaari renewed his Leftism and defeated Hazan’s objections in 1943 when Tabenkin joined, but mostly their deputies and kibbutz members resisted. Opposition only subsided in 1947 after Stalin changed to support Israeli statehood (Shapira, 2008: Ch.10). Further proof of non-charismatic leadership was renewed resistance: in 1950-1 Tabenkin’s KM suffered a major political setback when one-
third of its kibbutzim and members who opposed Stalinism abandoned it in favour of a non-Stalinist third Movement. Worse still, a quarter of KM kibbutzim split after bitter struggles between pro- and con-Stalinists, which devastated kibbutzim, causing many family tragedies and attrition (Near, 2008: 460-5).

However, this was only the first in a series of Leftism crises which signalled a loss of trust in dysfunctional leaders. Tabenkin’s last major innovation was in 1942 and Yaari’s in 1941, after which they clearly became dysfunctional. However, dysfunction signs were evident as early as 1935: major problems troubling kibbutzim were ignored while leaders’ empowering practices that violated kibbutz principles added problems to kibbutzim, for instance pe’ilim’s privileges annoyed other members (Maletz, 1945). As cited, Tabenkin was criticized about pe’ilim’s retention in KM jobs according to personal loyalties rather than competences (Kanari, 2003: 389; e.g., Hirschman, 1970). The castration of Movement democracy negatively impacted local kibbutz democracies which the leaders evaded while distancing themselves from followers by moving Movement headquarters to Tel Aviv and affording themselves and senior loyalists privileges such as company cars which kibbutz members were not entitled to use even when they stood idle. Other I-KOs followed suit and likewise did some factory managers; these status symbols enhanced the prestige and power of managers and pe’ilim but detracted from innovative problem-solving required for this radical society (Shapira, 2001, 2008).

A leadership is a delicate combination (Gini, 1997); defining a leader as transformational may say little about the changing combinations s/he uses in each phase, and moreover about the changes within each phase: the two leaders introduced oligarchic practices that violated kibbutz principles and signalled leadership dysfunction after 8-10 years in their job and then added more before Tabenkin’s becoming completely dysfunctional on the 20th year and Yaari’s on the 16th year. LLCT research did not allude to diminishing functioning when success-enhancing transformative practices gradually abandoned and leaders became less socialized and more personalized. Members’ growing distrust of the partially dysfunctioning leaders weakened the two who then sought empowerment by USSR reverence which also let them cultivate inspirational motivation among those who believed in its bluffs. Believers were few in 1937-9 but became a majority in a decade due to leaders and loyalists’ preaching and to contextual effects: USSR victories, its support for Israeli statehood, and its reverence by Western socialist leaders (Shapira, 2008: Ch.10). But reverence of this dictatorship negated kibbutz principles hence many opposed it, furthering distrust of leaders. A major sign was massive member attrition after the 1948 War, in which both kibbutzim and the Palmach army which they nurtured led prime victories. Many explain this attrition by kibbutzim’s loss of the major role they played in Zionism until statehood, but historians uncovered other major causes, primarily leftism which almost all Israelis criticized while leaders’ ineptness prevented kibbutzim from coping with the grave problems of the impoverished new state vis-a-vis one million new immigrants (Kafkafi, 1992; Kynan, 1989; Near, 1997: Ch. 7). Near (2008: 467) summed up the non-leadership of the two in this era:

The total balance of this chapter in kibbutz politics was completely negative. The leaders... managed an utterly erroneous policy. ...The excessive engagement of their Movements in [national] politics distracted them from other major problems on the [Israeli] agenda... especially the absorption of [mass] immigration and kibbutz [movement] relations with ‘second Israel’.

‘Second Israel’ meant hundreds of thousands of impoverished and unemployed Eastern
Jewish immigrants living for years in refugee-like camps due to failed capitalist absorption while socialist kibbutz Movements did not initiate alternative collectivist absorption as did their founders and those of moshavim (co-operative settlements) and urban cooperatives thirty years earlier when facing a similar severe situation. A few years earlier, in 1942, the KM instigated the innovative radical underground Palmach army, answering a grave national problem, lack of military defence power for the Jewish community. But in 1949 and later, dysfunctional leaders suppressed initiatives for coping with the serious immigrant absorption problem (Kafkafi, 1992; Kynan, 1989). This ineptness furthered critique, distrust, and attrition of up to 60-80% of members (Leviatan et al., 1998: 163; Shapira, 2008: Ch. 14).

Others’ ethnographies and my own point to leaders’ oligarchic dysfunction encouraging attrition in an additional way: I-KOs induced oligarchization in kibbutzim through leaders’ auspices of tenured pe’iliim who as privileged prestigious officials of the Movements or other I-KOs became permanent informal rulers of their respective kibbutzim. They promoted conformist loyalists to local offices and then to circulation among I-KO managerial jobs, while blocking careers of radical creative high-moral local leaders aimed at furthering kibbutz cause, another reason for kibbutzim ineptness in the immigrant absorption crisis. Ineptness and the suppression of these radicals encouraged their departure, often followed by many of their loyalists (Shapira, 2008: Chaps.12-15).

Crises Encouraged Seeking Charismatic Saviors, Leaders & Loyalists Used This for Charisma Attribution

According to Near’s (2008: 467) citation the leaders failed due to excessive engagement in national politics, but in view of their dysfunction since 1943 the opposite explanation is more probable: dysfunction concerning kibbutz problems encouraged this excess on the outside to camouflage dysfunction inside. Be it as it may, engagement failed: The KM and KA’s Mapam Party remained outside the government from 1949 to 1955 as a powerless Knesset (parliament) opposition while Ben-Gurion’s Mapai Party ruled through coalitions with right-wing and clerical parties. Crisis after crisis devastated leftist KM and KA from 1950 to 1954: concurrent with KM’s split, Stalin resumed anti-Semite and anti-Israeli policies, and revering Mapam was hard hit (ibid: 414). This was aggravated by the 1952-3 Prague anti-Zionist show trials in which a prominent Mapam official was caught, convicted of high treason, and jailed. Then in 1954 the KM left Mapam and established its own competing non-USSR-revering party, primarily in objection to Yaari’s promotion of leftist KA pe’iliim to dominate Mapam staff (Izhar, 2005; Near, 1997: 220-2).

This dire situation invited charismatic saviors, but as DEC’s Olsen made certain that no heir apparent would emerge after the De-Castro conflict, so the two leaders from 1936 (Tabenkin) and 1942 (Yaari) suppressed talented critical thinking innovators who seemed potential successors, who either left or turned to non-leader-threatening domains. The leaders’ position was supported by the ideological-political nature of the 1950s crises: as they specialized in this domain, leaders from other domains such as economic I-KOs seemed implausible successors. The latter leaders kept kibbutzim and I-KOs viable and, backed by this viability, the two leaders’ other advantages barred emergence of a charismatic savior:

1. From the 1930s no open competitive elections were held for Movement leaderships,
2. Castrated democracy and centralized rule enhanced their dominance,
3. The leaders controlled ample kibbutz publications, two publishing houses, and a daily
4. The supposedly egalitarian rotatzia (rotation) norm stipulating short terms in managerial jobs legitimizes early demotion of critical pe’elim, presenting it as normal rotatzia.

5. USSR reverence empowered them: A) Revolutionary rhetoric suited their specializing in oral and written discourse, masked their conservatism, and created a facade of radical socialism. B) Leftism legitimized autocracy, democracy castration, centralization, power continuity, censorship of publications, and privileges. C) Leftism radically changed the cosmic worldview of followers such that leaders’ supremacy became independent of their deeds. Wolf (1999: 283-4) studied extreme ideologies and concluded that:

It is better to deal with such foundational ideas in terms of their functions in society. They can be shown to be legitimate and justify forms of rulership. At the same time, these functions anchor rulership in a cultural structure of imagining, which… postulates cosmologies; cosmologies in turn, articulate with ideologies that assign the wielders of power the role of mediators or executors on behalf of the larger cosmic forces and grant them ‘natural’ rights to dominate society as delegates of the cosmic order.

In the leftist cosmic order, Stalin was the ‘Sun of the Nations’ and the USSR was the center of Socialism and its highest form, the yardstick of kibbutz communism, rather than kibbutz successes compared to other communities; it demoted both kibbutz successes and its unsolved problems to secondary importance. Leaders’ authority was not harmed by dysfunction, as it was based on their ‘role as mediators or executors on behalf of the greater cosmic powers which grant them ‘natural’ rights to prevail in society’, as Wolf has stated. They were likened to Admors (acronym of ‘our lord, teacher, and Rabbi’) in Hassidic courts, spiritual leaders, prophets of Leninist deceptions, such as Tabenkin’s assertion that faith was more important than knowing the truth (Kafkafi, 1992: 27). They were supposedly above mundane Movement problems, though, in practice, they made every major decision and interfered in minor ones as well. In accord with Hughes (1958) they sent low-prestige, problematic tasks to aides whose failures did not harm their positive image, while strengthening their status and power.

In accord with Lord Acton, the almost absolute power corrupted the leaders. For instance, as cited in the 1940s, they and a few Movement officials were given company cars which no kibbutz member was permitted to use. This was a major privilege, as abstemious kibbutzim had no cars, only trucks, pickups, and jeeps, while public transport was often minimal. In the early 1950s Yaari and his co-leader Hazan obtained fancy large chauffeured American cars, similar to Cabinet ministers, which contrasted even more with the egalitarianism they preached. These and other privileges dissociated leaders from ordinary members and changed their self-concept: in 1951, KA’s Yaari publicly declared himself the personification of the Movement and its affiliated party: ‘I, Me’ir, am Mapam. I am Hashomer Hatza’ir. I am the expression of Hashomer Hatza’ir’s historical way’ (Kynan, 1989: 190). Quite similar was Tabenkin’s self-glorification: A deputy who criticized his decision to split Mapam in 1954 resigned and did not answer his letters. Tabenkin came to his kibbutz, angrily broke into his house, took a chair and, banging it on the floor, broke it, shouting: ‘What do you, think I am [more] important to our Movement than Lenin was to Russia!’ (Kanari, 2003: 745).

The increasing social and organizational distance between privileged oligarchic leaders and the rank and file enhanced charisma attribution in accord with Shamir (1995). It was also encouraged by leaders’ reverence of the USSR, which became irrational after the 1956 exposure of Stalin’s horrors and Hungary’s brutal repression of democracy and contrasted...
with the reaction of Western socialist leaders. Kibbutz researchers adopted this attribution, evading leaders’ conservative oligarchic practices with their research evasion of I-KOs to maintain kibbutz progressive image (Shapira, 2012, Forthcoming). It is not known how many of the minority of members who did not leave followed the two due to charisma, though it could be a considerable percentage as mostly those who did not believe in leftism probably left, while many who stayed were indifferent to dysfunctional leaders who did not solve any major problem from the early 1940s. One proof was the case of a group of critical young KA leaders who after 1956 called the USSR a bluff but members’ indifference denied them of support and enabled suppression by Yaari (Beilin, 1984; Shapira, 2008: Ch.10). Another example was KM pa’il Avraham Brum’s 8 years of almost solitary struggle to free the kibbutzim from exploitation by the banks, costing 11.3% of revenues in the 1950s. The two leaders did nothing about this although they controlled a quarter of the cabinet and some 15% of the Knesset (parliament). Kibbutz treasurers supported Brum’s struggle but as this was not accompanied by members’ public outcry the leaders and deputies continued their evasion, letting Brum struggle for three more years and eventually achieve the change with the help of prominent outsiders (Brum, 1986; Shalem, 2000; Shapira, 2011).

Summary, Discussion, and Conclusions

Longitudinal ethnographies of various units in the kibbutz field plus historical study discerned early failed charismatic leadership episodes by one of the two leaders. Then their high-moral transformational leaderships enhanced high-trust innovative-prone kibbutz cultures, achieving exceptional successes which encouraged prolonged low-moral oligarchic dysfunction camouflaged by charisma attribution supported by leaders’ narcissism. Dysfunction explains brain-drain and retention of loyalists while later on mid-level innovators entered the leadership vacuum created by dysfunction, rejuvenated the field, and their successes enhanced leaders’ prestige and charismatic image (Shapira, 2011). As in DEC’s case, mid-levellers’ successes that helped leaders’ charismatic image empowered them to suppress talented critically-minded innovative prospective successors who mostly left while other seniors became docile. Then came students, who neither met leavers who could have told the truth about leaders’ dysfunction nor penetrated leaders’ secrets (e.g., Kunda, 1992; Mehri, 2005; Welker et al., 2011), and as students did not study the Movements and other I-KOs they missed leaders’ low-moral self-perpetuating conservative practices that negated charismatic leadership (Shapira, 2008). The unanimous mistaken depiction of leaders as charismatic also caused students to miss the early transformational leadership, helped by the literature’s mixing these two types.

In accord with oligarchy theory, which kibbutz students ignored (ibid), early success and enormous growth encouraged leaders’ change to low-moral self-perpetuation by castration of democracy, centralization, and prolonging loyal deputies’ tenures contrary to kibbutz principles. In accord with LLCT research, the first dysfunction signs appeared after 6-8 years tenure, but it took a decade for all transformational features to vanish, replaced by low-moral conformist transactional practices. Amid this decade leaders’ positions were threatened as their diminishing functioning and violations of kibbutz principles enhanced critique and distrust while contextual changes empowered competing leaders. Then the two empowered themselves by a 180 degree turn to USSR reverence that took a decade and major contextual changes to succeed. Soon a turnaround of Stalin’s policy was detrimental to this reverence and caused major crises which the narcissistic inept leaders survived due to low-moral
practices and selective mass attrition of critics and innovators that empowered conservative loyalists (Hirschman, 1970). Then younger transformative mid-levels entered leadership vacuum and revived the field economy with the help of national organs (Shapira, 2011), but renewed growth and success helped leaders’ charismatic images and power to continue dominate and prevent essential reforms. Once they disappeared, mediocre loyalist successors did even worse (e.g., Hirschman, 1970), led the field to a major crisis and to the adoption of conformist cultures (Ben-Rafael, 1997; Near, 2008; Shapira, 2001, 2008).

The findings support Gini’s (1997) warning against missing the delicacy and complexity of leadership combinations: self-perpetuating dysfunctional leaders fooled 60-70,000 people and generations of researchers even after critical historians untangled much of the truth about leaders’ dysfunction. But ignorant of oligarchy theory and LLCT historians missed the processes explaining leaders’ prolonged hegemony despite their dysfunction, reminiscent of Kurt Lewin’s dictum ‘there is nothing more practical in science than a good theory’. A good theory requires clear concepts; the leaders fooled so many people by instilling a half-true concept of the kibbutz that excluded I-KOs, the other half of the field, enhancing leaders’ charismatic image by preventing study of conformist conservative oligarchic I-KOs that would have disproved it (Shapira, 2008, 2012b, Submitted[b]). This points to the need for clear leadership concepts, supporting critics of mixing transformational and charismatic leadership concepts (Barbuto, 1997; Beyer, 1999; Yukl, 1999) and Burns’s (1978) emphasis on transformational leaders’ high-moral honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness that engender followers’ committed efforts to advance moral-elevating visions and goals (Downton, 1973; Grover et al., 2012; Khalid et al., 2012; Sendjaya, 2005). Such features are not essential for a charismatic leader, nor are trustful relations and other above features of truly authentic transformational leaders (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999; Haslam et al., 2010) which enhance knowledge sharing, learning, problem-solving, and innovation-prone cultures that lead to exceptional successes like 1930s-1940s kibbutzim (e.g., Semler, 1993; Whyte and Whyte, 1988) and to revival of degenerating/failing organizations (Guest, 1962; Washburn, 2011). A charismatic leader may not trust followers; like the two leaders’ late period s/he seeks unilateral followers’ trust and belief in her/his ‘magic gift’ that promises salvation through followers’ unquestioning obedience. Such a belief is easier to infuse from a social and organizational distance concealing the reality of the leader’s competences and shortcomings, interfering with rational assessment of her/his deeds, misdeeds, and abuses, rather seeking followers’ belief in his greatness like Lenin or in his sole ingenuity in creating huge Hashomer Hatzair, KA, and Mapam movement. Distancing detracts from leaders’ functioning in many ways as depicted by ethnographers (Collinson, 2005; Dalton, 1959; Mehri, 2005; Shapira, 1987, 2013). A leader’s distancing often indicates efforts to gain a charismatic image that conceals dysfunction. The opposite is a leader’s vulnerably engaging followers’ deliberations that tend to indicate high-moral transformational leadership (Shapira, 2012a, 2013). Thus, one practical conclusion is that those who choose leaders would do a better job by probing candidates’ previous managerial jobs, whether they vulnerably engaged employee deliberations while trustfully allowing them discretion for creative problem-solving or used distancing to conceal incompetence and dysfunction.

The study supports LLCT research findings that all leaders reach a dysfunction phase, but indicates that this research ignores oligarchy theory at its peril when depicting and explaining this phase: ubiquitous oligarchic moral degradation of leaders with success and tenure engenders use of dysfunctional practices for self-perpetuation, but their use may commence
years before leaders are fully dysfunctional, when they are still partially effective. Moreover, an organization may continue to function well for some time after full dysfunction of its leader and only then may outcomes begin dwindling as in the present cases: early dysfunctional elements were introduced in the mid-1930s, leaders fully dysfunctioned only after 1941-2, while Movements’ success continued to 1948-9. Thus, the LLCT research strategy of measuring a firm’s outcomes and defining its leader’s dysfunction phase commencing when outcomes start dwindling may miss this phase’s initiation by years or even more than a decade. This, points to the need for a change in LLCT research strategy.

The findings untangle a major democracy problem: The two leaders commenced dysfunctional oligarchic practices that aroused the critique and distrust of some followers but not succession after 6-8 years in their job, and when critique and distrust enhanced threats to their positions by competing leaders and contextual pressures they entrenched by adding a low moral practice, the leftist bluff. Later they added more dysfunctional oligarchic practices, while all these changes might not have succeeded without early oligarchic castration of democracy, deputies’ prolonged tenures, and centralization to which members did not object; only two of Tabenkin’s deputies did and were suppressed and left lacking members’ support. Subsequently opposition to leftism failed, saddled by oligarchic practices instituted earlier and by a lack of convincing leaders in the KM case, and the failure and co-optation of an opposing quite charismatic leader in the KA case (Shapira, 2008: Ch. 10; Tzachor, 1997). Early non-object to introduction of oligarchic anti-kibbutz-culture practices is explicable by trusting leaders when they were still partially trustworthy as they partially functioned; when they violated this trust further by more such practices distrusting members were already disempowered by previously instituted changes and resistance failed. This problem supports calls for leadership research to pay more attention to followership (Gardner et al., 2005; Haslam et al., 2010; Hollander, 1998).

One remedy can be new anti-oligarchic succession leader norms. Succession encouraged by ‘Golden Parachutes’ is mostly oligarchic; these are allotted independently of a CEO’s functioning on the job with no say to non-director executives and managers who know best whether s/he deserves generosity. Successes of democratic firms (Erdal, 2011; Semler, 1993; Shapiro, 2008; Whyte and Whyte, 1988) suggest that a democracy which includes knowledgeable insiders in succession decisions side by side with directors can curb oligarchic tendencies and discourage leaders’ low-morality by periodic tests of trust in a leader, say every four years like the reelection of US presidents. However, the leader cases studied and many other cases of successful leaders who managed to function effectively for more than eight years support allowing CEOs more than two terms. This is plausible by allowing up to four terms for those trusted by extra large majorities, over 67% for a third term and over 88% for a fourth term (Shapira, 2013: 24). Findings concerning members’ reactions to leaders’ low-moral entrenchment support this solution. Ethnographies of kibbutzim explain members’ seeming indifference to leaders’ entrenchment by selective attrition that helped it: talented, educated, critically-minded, and stronger members, due to some marketable proficiency, left and those who remained became docile (Shapira, 2002, 2008; e.g., Hirschman, 1970), as also happened in DEC after suppressed De-Castro and his team left. Similarly, after the 1950-4 crises, mass attrition, and purges of hundreds of KA left-wingers, remaining docile members did not support a group of younger KA leaders who criticized Yaari’s USSR bluffs after 1956, he suppressed these critics, and his most promising successor left (Beilin, 1984; Shapira, 2008: Ch.11). If, however, these critics and especially the promising successor could have
seen clear succession prospects due to the above proposal they would have had strong incentives to stay and wait for the inevitable succession.

The findings indicate that fruitful concepts and leadership theories require study of leaders’ practices to discern which leadership type’s practices were used in each of a leader’s career phases to explain the etiology of her/his changing ‘delicate combinations’. Recent organization studies rediscovered the concept of practice; major advantage of the ‘practice lens’ is its critical power (Gherardi, 2009) but organizational ethnography has not used this ‘lens’ to analyze executives’ practice changes as it failed to study them (Welker et al., 2011: S5). The findings show that overcoming this failure is plausible by using possibilities for longitudinal ethnographying of executives, while rigorous formal survey research may not cope with the delicacy of leadership combinations, the complex processes involved, and leaders’ power to avoid their own study and to conceal low-moral deeds in organizations’ dark sides (Hase et al., 2006) that maintains dominance at the expense of efficiency and effectiveness (Heifetz, 1995). Ethnographic longitudinal case studies of leaders are needed, acknowledging leaderships’ changing practices, explaining the complex processes instigated by internal and contextual variables and by leaders’ choice of practices in each leadership phase, including their black secrets of low-moral choices, as only when exposed are their leaderships truly explained. Truly explained leaderships are relevant and practical for both leaders’ education and practicing leaders. Such longitudinal studies do not have to take decades but they must be much longer and extensive than usual ethnography, and they must be phronetic, seeking a concrete, practical, and ethical answers to major troubling questions concerning power-holders of one’s society, much as the Aalborg Project was for Flyvbjerg (2006) and the study of kibbutz society for myself (Shapira, 2012b).

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