

# Leadership Centrality and Corporate Social Ir-Responsibility (CSIR): The Potential Ameliorating Effects of Self and Shared Leadership on CSIR

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**ABSTRACT.** Recent scandals involving executive leadership have significantly contributed to the topic of corporate social responsibility (CSR) becoming one of the most important concerns of the management literature in the twenty-first century. The antithesis of CSR is embodied in executive corruption and malfeasance. Unfortunately such things are all too frequent. We view the degree of centrality of leadership, and the primary power motivation of leaders, as key factors that influence the engagement in corruptive leader behavior and consequent corporate social ir-responsibility (CSIR) in organizations. Shared and self-leadership, on the other hand, we introduce as alternatives to traditional top-down centralized views of leadership that can establish needed checks and balances capable of reducing corruptive tendencies. We offer a conceptual model along with several propositions to help guide future research and practice.

**KEY WORDS:** leadership centrality, shared leadership, self-leadership, leadership, corporate social irresponsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been gaining increasing attention in the academic literature (Matten and Moon, 2005; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001; Pava and Krausz, 1996). The absolute antithesis of CSR is corporate social ir-responsibility (CSIR). We define CSIR as unethical executive behavior that shows disregard for the welfare of others, that at its extreme is manifested when executives seek personal gain at the expense of employees, shareholders and other organization stakeholders, and even society at large.

Unfortunately, several recent cases of top executives seeking personal gain, at the expense of their

employees and other organizational stakeholders, have spotlighted CSIR as one of the major challenges for management thought and practice in the twenty-first century. Research has already begun to uncover factors that might lead to corruption and CSIR (Anand et al., 2004; Ashforth and Anand, 2003; Giacalone and Knouse, 1990; Trevino, 1986; Trevino and Brown, 2004; Trevino et al., 2000). Philosophical perspectives have focused on the role of standards for moral behavior, while psychological views have taken more of an agent's perspective, with particular attention given to individual differences, for examining ethical behavior (Singer, 2000). For example, level of cognitive moral development (Kohlberg, 1969), locus of control (Trevino, 1986), and Machiavellianism (Giacalone and Knouse, 1990) are among the factors that have been linked to involvement in CSIR and corrupt activities.

Accordingly, in exploring the concept of CSIR, we draw on research findings from the domains of ethics and corruption. In this manuscript, we focus specifically on the role of executive leadership – the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the top management team (TMT) – in CSIR. The influence of leadership on CSIR in organizations is potentially very great. Even well before recent highly visible corporate scandals implicating key corporate leaders, surveys of Harvard Business Review readers found “behaviors of superiors” to be the top ranked factor associated with unethical decisions (Baumhart, 1961; Brenner and Molander, 1977). Ashforth and Anand (2003) have pointed out that leaders play a potentially major role in the institutionalization of corruption because of the behaviors they model as well

as by ignoring, condoning, or even rewarding corruptive behaviors. As the legitimized agents of the organization, leaders, especially those at the upper echelons, can be in a position to authorize corruption (Ashforth and Anand, 2003; Brief et al., 2001).

We propose that leadership centrality (Mayo et al., 2003) is a key factor in understanding the potential for CSIR. In addition, we examine the role of the type of power motivation of the leader, personalized or socialized, in determining CSIR tendencies. We posit that it is the combination of the degree of centrality of leadership, and the primary power motivation of leaders, that together significantly affect the level of CSIR from organizations. A critical feature influencing the effect of these factors is the notion of balance of power.

Balance of power is a concept that has guided international dynamics and nation building (Klitgaard, 1988). Checks and balances are purposely built into nearly all aspects of our social systems ranging from civic endeavors to the creation and administration of the laws that govern our lands. Indeed, even our militaries are founded on checks and balances (Shamir and Lapidot, 2003). The simple fact is that our business organizations are the last arena of our social lives where there is a dearth of checks and balances, at least for the majority of large American enterprises.

One might argue that there are checks and balances at the top of organizations – in the form of boards of directors, whose role it is to oversee the activities of top management. A cursory glance at the composition of the boards of the Fortune 500 firms, however, reveals a disturbing situation. A non-trivial percent of company board seats are occupied by members of the respective firms' TMT. What's more, many boards are chaired by the very person that is the primary focus of review by the board, the CEO of the firm. Beyond consideration of direct membership of members of the top management in their own boards is the issue of "interlocking directorates" (Monks and Minow, 2001), where the members of various TMTs serve on each others' boards. The proverbial fox does indeed seem to be in the hen house: It appears that leadership is often rather centralized, without much in the way of checks and balances, in today's modern industrial organizations.

## Reviewing CSIR in relation to leadership

CSIR-type concepts are gaining closer attention by both scholars (e.g., Giacalone and Greenberg, 1997; Mangione and Quinn, 1975) and practitioners (e.g. Caudron, 1998). Different terms, including antisocial behavior (Giacalone and Greenberg, 1997), delinquency (Hogan and Hogan, 1989), anticitizenship behavior (Pearce and Giacalone, 2003), deviance (Robinson and Bennett, 1995; Robinson and Greenberg, 1998), and corruption (Ashforth and Anand, 2003) have been used to describe types of behavior related to CSIR. Nonetheless, the majority of research on these types of behavior in organizations has focused on the lower echelons.

Research on deviant employee behavior has found that it can take a wide-ranging variety of forms including sabotage (Giacalone et al., 1997), theft (Greenberg, 1997), retaliation (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997), litigation (Lind, 1997), aggression (Neuman and Baron, 1998), and even humor (Rodrigues and Collinson, 1995). The common thread that binds these terms and activities is that they describe behavior that is detrimental to an organization.

In many cases, it appears that offensive or abusive leader behavior has served as a catalyst or justification for employees to engage in antiorganizational activities (e.g., Dubois, 1979; Giacalone and Rosenfeld, 1987; Tepper, 2000). For example, Baron (1988) found destructive criticism leads to greater anger, tension, resistance, avoidance, and lower performance goals. Ball et al. (1994) found harshness of discipline to be positively related to anticitizenship. Similarly, the perception of exploitation or provocation has been linked to aggressiveness (Hollinger and Clark, 1983; Mantell, 1994; Tores-tad, 1990). Further, Ashforth (1994) proposed that petty tyranny would lead to increased frequency of complaining, reduction of productivity, defiance and withdrawal, and later found petty tyranny led to organizational dysfunction (Ashforth, 1997). Finally, Pearce and Giacalone (2003) found leader micro-management to be predictive of anticitizenship behavior in teams. While most of these studies have focused on lower levels of organizations, we fully expect similar, yet more profound, effects in the upper echelons of organizations, precisely because

the top management sets the tone for the rest of the organization. Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly's (1998) research on modeling effects supports this logic.

### **Origins of the centralized, vertical leadership mythology that feeds CSIR tendencies**

Conger and Kanungo (1998, p. 142) purported that "the 'visionary leader' is more mythology than reality," while Pearce and Manz (2005) claimed that "Traditionally, organizations have focused on a top-heavy, heroic model of leadership in order to extract work-product from their employees. We believe this model is a myth." Given that the viability of the top-heavy, centralized model of leadership has been questioned by these authors and many others (e.g., Meindl et al., 1985; Pfeffer, 1977), why is it such a persistent force in contemporary organizations? Lord and colleagues (e.g., Lord and Mather, 1991; Lord et al., 1984; Phillips and Lord, 1982) offer a compelling reason. For example, Lord and Mather (1991) suggest that we all possess prototypes of how we believe leaders should behave, that these have been shaped by history, and that they are very resistant to change. Sims and Gioia (1986) extended this notion by articulating how these prototypes can be socially conceived and shared.

As such, if we view the top-heavy, centralized model of leadership from a historical perspective, it becomes easier to understand its prominence today. Organizational leadership began to be formally studied and documented during the industrial revolution. Jean Baptiste Say (1803/1964, p. 330), a French economist, was one of the first to note the importance of leadership to economic enterprise when he proclaimed that entrepreneurs "must possess the art of supervision and administration." Prior to this time, economists were primarily occupied with two factors of production – land and labor – and, to a lesser extent, capital. Accordingly, it was during the industrial revolution that the concept of leadership was recognized as an important ingredient of economic endeavors and the predominant model of leadership was centralized, top-down command and control (Pearce and Manz, 2005).

The development of the railroads, the first large scale American enterprise, necessitated the creation

of systematic approaches to coordinate and control organizations that employed large numbers of people, were geographically dispersed, and required sizable capital investments (Chandler, 1965). A pioneering thinker during the time of the development of the railroads was Daniel C. McCallum (Wren, 1994). He developed six principles of management. One of McCallum's principles dealt with the concept of leadership – specifically that leadership was to flow from the top to the bottom and that unity of command was paramount. Thus, during the 1800s, we observe the development of prescriptions for organizational leadership. With the emphasis on managerial control and oversight, we began to witness the formation of the top-heavy, centralized model of leadership.

By the dawn of the twentieth century, the state-of-the-art thinking on management and leadership had crystallized into what was ultimately termed "scientific management" (Gantt, 1916; Gilbreth, 1912; Gilbreth and Gilbreth, 1917; Taylor, 1903, 1911). The fundamental principle of scientific management was that all work could be scientifically studied and that optimal routines and regulations could be developed to ensure maximum productivity. One important component of scientific management was the separation of managerial and worker responsibilities, with managers having responsibility for identifying precise work protocols and workers following the dictates of management. As such, scientific management perhaps went the furthest in specifying a centralized model of organizational leadership. The formally designated leader was to oversee and direct those below. Subordinates were to follow instructions to the letter. The thought that subordinates had any roles in the leadership process was largely unthinkable at the time (Drucker, 1995).

These ideas of strong, centralized leadership have continued throughout the twentieth century and largely remain to this day (Pearce and Manz, 2005). Elsewhere, the prototypical leader fitting this description has been termed the "strong man" leader or the "directive" leader (e.g., Manz and Sims, 1991, 2001; Pearce et al., 2003). This type of leadership relies on command and control in order to obtain compliance, often based on fear and intimidation, from followers. In addition, most other forms of leadership such as transactional leadership – founded on the leader offering rewards and incentives in

exchange for follower compliance – emphasize a one-way influence process of leaders over followers.

Even in the case of the generally more attractive visionary, charismatic, and transformational types of leadership (e.g., Bass, 1985, 1998; Conger, 1999; House, 1977) – which rely on influence factors such as unifying vision and inspiration – the primary focus, source of thinking, ideas, and decision making is designated as the role of the leader. We believe this centralized view of leadership, reinforced by historically embedded leadership prototypes (e.g., Lord and Mather, 1991), without the checks and balances afforded by such concepts as self and shared leadership, is one of the primary antecedents of CSIR in contemporary organizations.

### **Self-leadership: a key mechanism for decentralizing executive leadership**

Leadership literature has largely focused on formally designated leaders and the influence they exert to foster the accomplishment of organizational goals (Bass, 1990; Nahavandi, 2003; Yukl, 2002). This general theme in the way leadership is viewed is consistent and supportive of a tendency to treat leadership as a centralized process that is restricted to persons occupying formal leadership positions in an organizational hierarchy. Manz and Sims (1980), however, introduced the idea that employee self-management might be viewed as a substitute for leadership. This perspective suggests that the equivalent of leadership influence can occur apart from a designated leader exerting influence on a follower and offers an interesting alternative to centralized treatments of leadership influence.

The original introduction of the concept of self-management into the organizational literature (Andrasik and Heimberg, 1982; Luthans and Davis, 1979; Manz and Sims, 1980) was largely based on the self-control and self-management literature in clinical psychology (Cautela, 1969; Mahoney and Arnkoff, 1978, 1979; Mahoney and Thoresen, 1974; Thoresen and Mahoney, 1974). Later Manz (1983, 1986, 1992), Neck and Manz (2010), and Manz and Sims (1990, 2001) introduced the concept of self-leadership as an expanded view of self-influence that incorporates self-management elements and goes beyond them. The literature on self-leadership

provides a theoretical basis for examining the idea that leadership can originate from the self and does not require the traditional roles of leader and follower but instead the leader and follower can be one in the same, as leadership is self-imposed. While leadership has typically been viewed as an outward process involving the influence of formally designated leaders on followers, self-leadership posits that all organizational members are capable of leading themselves to some degree. This self-influence based view is an oft overlooked aspect of leadership influence, even in knowledge-based organizational environments that involve employee empowerment and self-managing work teams, and can be fundamental to the distribution and sharing of leadership throughout an organization.

Contemporary treatments of the individual self-influence process addressed under the label “self-leadership” can be conceptualized as more advanced forms of self-influence (Manz, 1986; Neck and Manz, 2010) in the spectrum delineated by many widely recognized participative and empowerment-based views in the literature (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Ford and Fottler, 1995; Hackman, 1986; Kirkman and Rosen, 1999; Lawler, 1986, 1992; Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). In several ways, self-leadership encompasses and goes beyond earlier and more familiar self-influence concepts such as self-management, i.e., managing oneself via a set of behaviorally focused self-discipline oriented strategies to meet existing standards and objectives, that are typically set by someone else, most notably a leader from above (Luthans and Davis, 1979; Manz and Sims, 1980; Mills, 1983). Self-leadership involves managing one’s behavior to meet existing standards and objectives. It also includes evaluating the standards and setting or modifying them. It addresses what should be done and why it should be done in addition to how to do it.

Self-leadership also incorporates intrinsic motivation (cf., Deci, 1975; Deci and Ryan, 1980, 1985), self-influence skill development, and strategic oriented cognitions (Manz, 1992). Self-leadership represents a significant contrast to more traditional leadership and organizational perspectives that are grounded in external influence and control exercised by formally designated leaders within an authority based hierarchy. Consequently, self-leadership also

complements the notion of reducing dependence on traditional leader authority figures by empowering employees through teams (Cummings, 1978; Manz and Sims, 1987, Pearce and Conger 2003a, b, Sims and Manz, 1996; 1991, 2001). As an example, W.L. Gore and associates has provided its employees with dramatic levels of freedom for self-leadership (Shipper and Manz, 1992, 2000). Gore, manufacturer of diverse goods including electronic wire and cable, fabrics for outdoor sporting activities, industrial and medical products, relies heavily on the initiative of their employees (who are called “associates” in the organization). Every employee is viewed as a knowledge worker that has the capacity for identifying new product innovations. Gore, perhaps the flattest company in the world of its size, relies heavily on self-leadership and shared influence through teamwork and thus intentionally widely distributes influence throughout its overall system of leadership.

Some specific self-leadership skill areas and practical strategies include self-observation, self-goal setting, self-reward, rehearsal, self-job redesign, and self-management of internal dialogs and mental imagery (Manz and Sims, 2001; Neck and Manz, 2010). Research has found that employee training and practice of these kinds of strategies can contribute to a variety of favorable outcomes such as enhanced self-efficacy, performance, and reduced absenteeism (Frayne and Latham, 1987; Latham and Frayne, 1989; Neck and Manz, 1996; Prussia et al., 1998). Self-leadership strategies offer potential for addressing challenges posed by empowerment in complex, dynamic, less hierarchical, and team-based knowledge work systems of contemporary organizations. More importantly for this discussion, self-leadership offers a key element for creating the potential for spreading influence throughout a work system so that its centrality is reduced. This in turn offers promise for providing a foundation of the establishment of checks and balances and sources of accountability within a more evenly distributed influence system.

### **Shared leadership: toward a more robust leadership system**

While self-leadership clearly can help create the potential for decentralizing executive leadership, shared leadership helps to create a set of leadership “checks

and balances” in the overall leadership system (see Higgins and Maciariello, 2004); what Cox et al. (2003, p. 172) describe as “a more robust, flexible, and dynamic leadership infrastructure.” While shared leadership is a relatively new concept in the organizational literature, there have been several rigorous studies of the phenomenon (Avolio et al., 1996; Ensley et al., 2006; Hooker and Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Pearce, 1997; Pearce and Sims, 2002; Pearce et al., 2004; Shamir and Lapidot, 2003). The initial evidence, encompassing a wide variety of contexts, suggests that shared leadership can have a powerful effect on group and organizational outcomes, as outlined below.

To date, at least three empirical studies have directly compared the effects of centralized, vertical leadership to the effects of decentralized, shared leadership on several important group outcomes. First, Pearce (1997) and Pearce and Sims (2002) studied 71 change management teams (CMTs). The teams in this research were cross-functional, highly interdependent and semi-permanent. The findings indicated that shared leadership was a better predictor than vertical leadership of team effectiveness, as well as several other team dynamics variables. Importantly, Pearce (1997) found decentralized, shared leadership to be more effective than centralized, vertical leadership in ameliorating the dysfunctional influence of anticitizenship behavior.

Second, Pearce et al. (2004) studied 28 virtual teams of community revitalization experts from across the United States, who were participants in an executive education program. The action-learning projects for the teams involved the development of a community revitalization plan for the small city in the mid-Atlantic United States. The membership of each team was carefully created so that there were no team members co-located in the same geographic location and so that the teams were as heterogeneous as possible. The participants were given 10 weeks to develop the community revitalization plan via e-mail, groupware, fax, and telephone. The results of their study also found decentralized, shared leadership to be a better predictor than centralized, vertical leadership of several team outcomes including problem-solving quality.

Finally, Ensley et al. (2006) conducted a two sample study of TMTs. The first sample was comprised of 66 entrepreneurial TMTs from the inc. 500. The inc. 500

is a group of privately held firms that are among the fastest growing in the U.S. The second sample consisted of 154 firms drawn from a random national sample of entrepreneurial firms in the Dun and Bradstreet Database. In both samples they found that decentralized, shared leadership was a better predictor than centralized, vertical leadership of firm growth rates.

Taken together, these studies suggest that shared leadership may indeed provide a more robust leadership system than mere reliance on centralized, vertical leadership. Importantly, the Ensley et al. (2006) study specifically demonstrates the applicability of decentralized leadership at the executive level. Perhaps more importantly, the Pearce (1997) study directly links shared leadership to the potential for driving out the possibility of CSIR.

### Theoretical model and research propositions

#### *CEO need for personalized power*

Lord Acton struck a chord with his famous nineteenth century quote that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Indeed, the vast majority of the literature on corporate governance has long stressed the importance of an independent board of directors to provide oversight of the TMT (e.g., Fama and Jensen, 1983; Jensen, 1993; Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Kosnik, 1990; Mizruchi, 1983). Recently, however, in the wake of numerous corporate scandals, several corporate governance scholars have given more focus to the leadership dynamics in the upper echelons of today's modern organizations (e.g., Conger and Lawler, 2009; Conger et al., 2001; De Kluyver, 1999).

Leaders high in a need for personalized power desire positions of power for their personal benefit, rather than the benefit of the larger group or organization (Conger, 1990; Hogan et al., 1994). Indeed, these types of leaders are often described as narcissistic: They can become extremely self-absorbed, have an exaggerated sense of self-importance, have a strong desire to be admired by others, and view the manipulation of others as a sport (Hogan, 1994; Hogan et al., 1994; Kets de Vries, 1993; Maccoby, 2004). Such individuals raise impression management to the level of an art (Gardner and Avolio, 1998; Giacalone et al., 1998).

Such leaders are constantly scheming ways to enhance their own image (Gardner and Avolio, 1998; Giacalone et al., 1998), and persuasively emphasize the importance of personal allegiance to themselves as the leader, rather than the greater organization (Hogan et al., 1994). Moreover, upon ascension to the position of CEO they are likely to campaign for the position of chair of the board as a means of further solidifying their personal grip on power in the organization. Indeed, these types of narcissistic leaders often have great difficulty in building a team, because of their unhealthy need for personal power over others (Hogan et al., 1994). Accordingly, they rely on the centralization of power and are apt to use such power in corrupt manners, if for no other reason than to maintain their position of power. The following proposition more formally articulates this viewpoint and Figure 1 graphically portrays it.

*P1: The higher the CEO need for personalized power the more likely leadership will be centralized in the organization.*

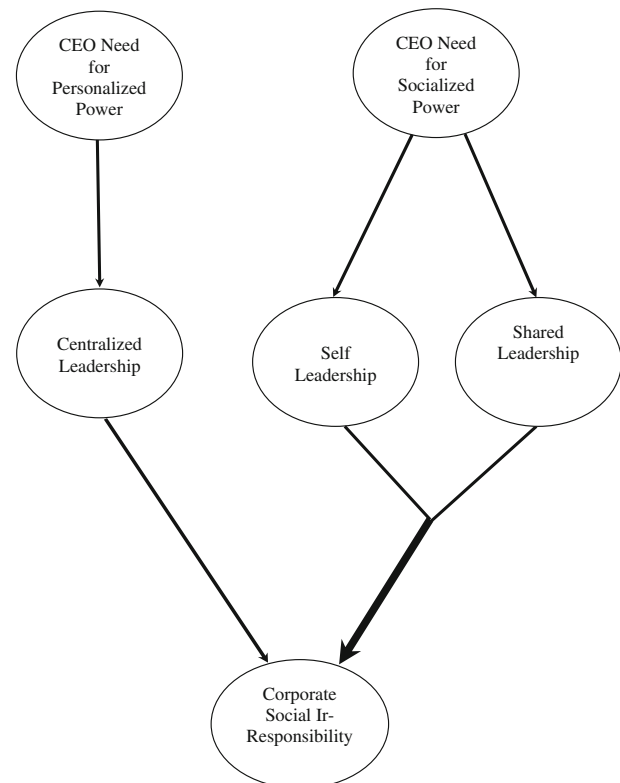


Figure 1. The relationship between leadership centrality, self and shared leadership and corporate social ir-responsibility (CSIR).

*Leadership centralization*

Why should leadership centralization enhance the likelihood of CSIR? When leadership is centralized in the CEO, the CEO can compromise the board's independence by structuring it with a critical mass of inside board members beholden to the CEO for their jobs, or with outside members who are personal friends of the CEO and susceptible to the CEO's influence (Jensen, 1993; Kosnik, 1990; Mizruchi, 1983). The CEO can also weaken the board's ability to monitor the CEO's performance by assuming the additional role of chair of the board. The chair can control the flow of information to other directors and establish the board agenda at meetings so that controversial topics are tabled and critical information is withheld from other board members (De Kluyver, 1999). The result is a board that is a rubber stamp to the CEO's goals and priorities and seeks to avoid any challenges to the CEO. Without a system of checks and balances within both the TMT and the board CSIR can thrive unfettered (Conger et al., 2001).

Moreover, leadership authority, particularly when it is unchecked, can produce a significant force for obedience. Individuals subordinate to an executive leader in a hierarchy will generally experience significant pressure to comply with directives (Ashforth and Anand, 2003; Hamilton and Sanders, 1992). Ashforth and Anand (2003) point to the classic obedience experiments of Milgram (1974) to emphasize the powerful drive to obey authority figures. Even informal encouragement or condoning of CSIR can exert significant perpetuating influence. Meanwhile, they suggest that occupying a subordinate role can create a tendency to abdicate ethical responsibility to superiors. For example, "Let the people making the high salaries tackle the difficult ethical decisions' seems to be a widely held view among occupants of lower echelon corporate positions" (Jones and Ryan, 1998, p. 440).

As Lord Acton (1913, p. 73) so aptly put it in relation to society, "The danger is not that a particular class is unfit to govern. Every class is unfit to govern." We believe that these words can ring equally true when it comes to the leadership of our organizations. The following proposition more formally articulates the content of the previous discussion and it is graphically portrayed in Figure 1.

*P2:* The more centralized leadership is in an organization the more likely the organization will engage in CSIR.

*CEO need for socialized power*

Leaders with a high need for socialized power – those who desire power to help develop the group or organization – have been also been labeled as "empowering" leaders (e.g., Pearce and Sims, 2002; Pearce et al., 2003) or as "SuperLeaders" (Manz and Sims, 1990, 1991, 2001). The essence of empowering leadership or SuperLeadership is "leading others to lead themselves" (Manz and Sims, 2001 p. 4). Houghton et al. (2003, p. 133) specifically link this type of leadership to the development and display of both self and shared leadership in teams: "SuperLeadership may be viewed as the art of creating and facilitating self-leadership and shared leadership in team members." Focusing expressly on TMTs, Vera and Crossan (2004, p. 227) purported that "the ideal leader might recognize his or her limitations and share the leadership of organizational learning with colleagues in the top management group." Accordingly, CEOs high in the need for socialized power are likely to develop both self and shared leadership in the TMT. The following propositions more formally articulate this position and Figure 1 graphically portrays this.

*P3a:* The higher the CEO need for socialized power the more likely self-leadership will flourish in the TMT.

*P3b:* The higher the CEO need for socialized power the more likely shared leadership will flourish in the TMT.

*Self-leadership and CSIR*

Research has supported the positive influence of self-leadership capability and practice on various positive individual and organizational outcomes. For example, one study found a positive relationship between self-leadership training and mental performance, positive affect and job satisfaction (Neck and Manz, 1996). Other research has demonstrated a significant relationship between self-management

training, self-efficacy, and reduced absenteeism (Frayne and Latham, 1987; Latham and Frayne, 1989). Similarly, Prussia et al. (1998) found a significant relationship between self-leadership strategies, self-efficacy, and performance. Part of the significance of this line of research is that self-leadership skill is logically important for equipping team members to share leadership (Bligh et al., 2006) – individuals skilled in self-leadership may be more likely to possess the self-motivation, self-efficacy, and self-direction needed to step forward and contribute leadership when they have a particular expertise that is needed at a point in time by a team that shares leadership influence. In addition, the recognition and allowance for self-influence in a system creates a natural tendency toward the distribution of power, and the inherent checks and balances contained in the practice of self-leadership, as opposed to strict reliance on external leadership from a centralized source, throughout a system.

Taken together, these factors may reduce CSIR tendencies. TMT members and organizational employees in general, skilled in self-leadership create a foundation for effective shared leadership (at least to the degree that they are motivated by socialized power). Further, the distribution of influence facilitated by self-leadership recognition, skill and practice introduces important checks and balances that can counter CSIR tendencies seeded by centralized leadership (particularly when powerful executive leaders are motivated by personalized power). The following proposition more formally articulates this position and Figure 1 graphically portrays it.

*P4:* The more well developed the self-leadership of the members of the TMT the lower the likelihood of CSIR.

#### *Shared leadership and CSIR*

The empirical evidence on shared leadership, thus far, has consistently linked it with positive organizational outcomes (Avolio et al., 1996; Ensley et al., 2006; Hooker and Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Pearce, 1997; Pearce and Sims, 2002; Pearce et al., 2004; Shamir and Lapidot, 2003). The majority of the research has examined some dimension of perfor-

mance. Nonetheless, several studies have examined other constructs, such as group dynamics.

Most relevant here, Pearce (1997) found shared leadership an effective mitigation against the emergence of anticitizenship behavior in teams. Pearce defined anticitizenship behavior as including avoidance of work, complaining, and defiance. While anticitizenship behavior may not rise to the level of Enron-like behavior, it is clearly deviant and a stepping stone to more egregious behavior: Once certain forms of ir-responsibility are commonplace a slippery slope is encountered where other more serious forms become tolerated and the cycle continues (Anand et al., 2004; Ashforth and Anand, 2003; Badaracco and Ellsworth, 1989; Gladwell, 2000). As such, shared leadership appears to provide a buffer against nefarious influences in teams, and when the team in question is the TMT then this should naturally spill over to the organization as a whole. The following proposition more formally articulates this position and Figure 1 graphically portrays it.

*P5:* The more well developed shared leadership is in the TMT the lower the likelihood CSIR.

#### *The relationship between self and shared leadership and CSIR*

Simply restricting our discussion to saying that decentralization of leadership in the TMT should result in decreased likelihood of CSIR is overly simplistic. While we believe that both self and shared leadership should have mitigating effects on CSIR, CSIR may infect the organization if either source of leadership is weak. For example, Conger and Pearce (2003) caution that if the team members are not aligned with the superordinate goals of the organization they may be effective in pursuing their own goals to the detriment of the organization. This may have been the case in a few of the more prominent recent corporate scandals. For example, executives may have conspired to inflate earnings in order to receive higher remuneration in such cases as Enron and WorldCom. While this is one possibility, we believe that these cases were more likely due to leadership being concentrated in the hands of a powerful few.



There are, nonetheless, alternative reasons why TMTs that practice effective shared leadership may still be susceptible to CSIR. For instance, if shared leadership is well developed, but self-leadership is underdeveloped, the team may be vulnerable to the debilitating effects of group dysfunction such as groupthink (e.g., Aldag and Fuller, 1993; Janis, 1972, 1982, 1983), which, while seemingly less sinister, may prove equally harmful over the long term. As such, the possibility of groupthink resulting in CSIR should not be discounted. This may, in fact, have accounted for the well-documented Pinto fire case: According to Gioia (1992, p. 383), “a group of decision makers...voted not to recommend a recall to higher levels of the organization.” Without adequate self-leadership exercised by individual members, self-censorship, conformity, and collective rationalization can obscure morally or ethically questionable views that can lead to CSIR that members may not have supported on their own. Accordingly, CSIR may seep out of the organization because the independent self-leadership of TMT members is not sufficiently developed.

Table I summarizes some likely outcomes of different combinations of self and shared leadership. For example, when shared leadership is high but self-leadership is low there is a risk of dysfunctional group decision processes such as groupthink. The following proposition more formally articulates this position.

*P6a:* If shared leadership is well developed, but self-leadership is underdeveloped, the potential for

Groupthink and concomitant lack of independent critical cognitive processing in the team may lead to CSIR.

Conversely, if self-leadership is well developed in individual team members but shared leadership is underdeveloped the team may be vulnerable to self-serving CSIR on the part of one or more members of the team. For instance, Langfred (2005) found high levels of individual autonomy in highly interdependent teams to be associated with lower team performance levels. While Langfred did not explicitly measure self or shared leadership, it seems likely that team members may feel higher levels of individual autonomy precisely when there is a lack of shared leadership providing them cues and guidance on how to integrate their individual efforts into the team. It is possible, for example, that part of what Langfred identified was role ambiguity, and role ambiguity has been linked to dysfunction in teams (Fisher and Gitelson, 1983). Nonetheless, moving the discussion to the potential for CSIR, if individuals perceive that they have autonomy without accountability, they may be inclined, in some cases, to engage in CSIR. Accordingly, without the balance of influence afforded by shared leadership a renegade member may pursue a line of activity, unregulated, and engage in self-serving CSIR.

*P6b:* If self-leadership is well developed, but shared leadership is underdeveloped, the potential for self-serving CSIR on the part of one or several members

TABLE I  
The relationship between self and shared leadership and corporate social ir-responsibility

Shared leadership	Self leadership	
	Low	High
High	Some potential for groupthink and concomitant lack of cognitive processing leading to unintentional corporate social ir-responsibility	Lowest potential for corporate social ir-responsibility due to greater integration of leadership checks and balances
Low	Highest potential for corporate social ir-responsibility due to lack of strategic involvement of the team and because of blindly following the CEO	Some potential for self-serving corporate social ir-responsibility on the part of one or several members due to lack of checks and balances from other team members

exists, due to lack of checks and balances from other team members.

If neither self nor shared leadership is well developed we revert back to the centralized leadership situation addressed earlier and highlighted in proposition one, which we described as the scenario most likely to engender CSIR. At the opposite end of the spectrum, however, is the situation of well developed self and shared leadership. We posit that this is the combination in which there is the lowest potential for CSIR. In this scenario, we observe the greatest engagement of members in the strategic decision making of the team and research has demonstrated that active debate of diverse opinions over strategic goals can lead to higher quality decisions (Amason, 1996; Ensley and Pearce, 2001; Schweiger and Sandberg, 1989; Schwenk, 1990). This requires members to be effective self-leaders, fostering development and expression of independent opinions, and skilled at shared leadership, in order to effectively engage others in the decision making process. As Houghton et al. (2003) suggest, self and shared leadership are interdependent, and full activation of both sources of leadership ensures greater integration of leadership checks and balances. It is the combination of significant self and shared leadership, with the inherent checks and balances that are created when they are combined, that we predict will most reduce the potential for CSIR.

*P6c:* Self and shared leadership work synergistically to lessen the potential for CSIR.

## Implications

There are several important implications to derive from the model we presented. First, for example, is what Bass et al. (1987) described as the “falling dominoes effect.” They found that followers tended to emulate the leadership behavior they experienced from above, and used the phrase to capture that effect. More recently, Pearce and Sims (2002) also observed this effect regarding less desirable types of leadership. They found that the best predictor of follower aversive leadership – the use of threats and intimidation – was the aversive

leadership of the designated leader. Similarly, Robinson and O’Leary-Kelly (1998) found that work groups influenced the antisocial behavior of individuals. As Schein (1992) so astutely observed, leadership and culture are inextricably linked. Thus, while we have focused on the role of executive leadership in CSIR, we believe that such practices at the top are likely to have broad and profound emulative influences throughout organizations. Accordingly, leader selection is paramount when it comes to inoculating organizations against the potential for CSIR.

Unfortunately, leader selection is far from perfect. One conundrum for those responsible for leader selection is the issue of the candidate’s need for power. While we articulated a distinction between personalized versus a socialized need for power, identifying and clearly separating these two drives can be challenging. This is particularly true because those who are high in the need for personalized power are also generally skilled at impression management (Giacalone et al., 1998). Couple this with the fact that the way leaders are selected is often a less than rigorous process, and this is true even at the top of organizations. As such, leader selection requires serious attention. Accordingly, one potential strategy would be the employment of sophisticated psychological testing as an important component of the leader selection process, at all levels of the organization. For example, Hogan and Hogan (2001) offer an approach that has promise for uncovering the hidden motives of would be narcissistic leaders. Nonetheless, this is an area that would benefit from considerable research.

Leadership development is another important issue to consider in the context of guarding against the potential for CSIR. Unfortunately, again, evidence suggests that organizations rarely provide sufficient training and development (Pearce, 2004). According to the American Society for Training and Development, most employees receive less than 24 hours of training per year. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of leadership development is delivered to those individuals who are currently in formal leadership positions or have been identified as leadership candidates, as opposed to providing leadership skills learning opportunities to the wider work force, which typically represents an important source of leadership for the future (Cox et al., 2003). As Gioia (2002, 2003) and Trevino and McCabe

(1994) have observed, this responsibility is not solely one of organizations, but also one that requires attention in universities.

Perhaps, this lack of attention to leadership development is what accounts for the general level of dissatisfaction with leaders that is so prevalent in organizations (Cranny et al., 1992; Fisher and Locke, 1992). After satisfaction with pay, satisfaction with leadership is generally the second most dissatisfying aspect of most employees' organizational lives (Hackman and Oldham, 1980), and this is very consistent across a wide array of contexts ranging from service workers, to employees in the machine trades, to professional and technical employees, and even to the ranks of management. Accordingly, leadership development is an area that requires serious attention, particularly as we move beyond the traditional top-down model of leadership to one that involves both self and shared leadership: Leadership development is something that is needed at all levels, especially in the context of knowledge work (Pearce and Manz, 2005). Providing training on self-leadership skills and effective shared leadership philosophy and behaviors would seem to be especially important. The efficacy of this approach, however, needs to be verified by future research.

In addition to the two major implications of our model highlighted above, several other important implications are raised for future research. For example, one of our primary objectives was to shine some light on the importance of executive leadership in unleashing or curtailing the potential for CSIR. We have suggested that self and shared leadership each offer important potentially ameliorating influences on CSIR tendencies, particularly stemming from centralized executive leadership. Thus, more research directly examining relationships between self-leadership and CSIR, as well as shared leadership and CSIR would be very helpful. Also, further studies on how self and shared leadership capabilities in executive team members can be developed would be a fruitful area of research. Of particular note would be investigations regarding the interaction and joint development of self and shared leadership.

Perhaps even more significantly, self and shared leadership may possess important limitations when standing alone. For example, as discussed earlier, significant literature has been devoted to the potential for decision making dysfunction in highly

cohesive and conforming groups (Aldag and Fuller, 1993; Janis, 1972, 1982, 1983; Moorhead et al., 1998). This raises the possibility that TMTs that are high on shared leadership but low in self-leadership of individual members might experience an implicit drive toward displaced goals. Specifically, a focus on agreeing with one another, even in the face of ir-responsible decisions, as opposed to voicing contrasting views and exerting individual leadership in the team consistent with personal convictions, values, and beliefs opposed to ir-responsibility, might emerge. Thus, shared leadership, without the balancing influence of self-leadership possessed by individual members, may lead to unintentional CSIR tendencies. Research is needed that investigates this possibility if we are to more fully understand CSIR tendencies, even in empowered environments characterized by shared leadership.

Self-leadership, on the other hand, in the absence of shared leadership in a TMT, may produce tendencies toward individual member self-serving CSIR. This is particularly likely when members are motivated by personalized power. Indeed, TMT members who have well developed self-leadership capabilities and are driven by personalized power, without the balancing influence of shared leadership, may well represent multiple sources of potential CSIR, and in extreme cases theoretically increase CSIR tendencies in the organization beyond a situation of highly centralized leadership. Thus, future research that explores the interaction between self and shared leadership is needed to more fully understand their joint and separate influences on CSIR.

Another potential area for future research might involve the examination of how different organizational factors and contexts affect the appropriate balance of shared and self-leadership. For example, the amount of weight placed on self and shared leadership, respectively, could be significantly influenced by the level of task interdependence (Langfred, 2005; Wageman, 1995). In the case of high interdependence, shared leadership might be more important than self-leadership, not only in order to foster higher performance but also to assure effective distribution of power and to buffer against CSIR. Conversely, when task interdependence is low self-leadership may be more important than shared leadership. We view these kinds of considerations as yet another important area for future research.

## Conclusion

Overall, it seems clear that self and shared leadership deserve more theoretical and empirical attention, both as important under researched leadership perspectives, and as promising approaches for ameliorating potential CSIR tendencies in organizations. Such work may ultimately reveal that it is time to move beyond the moribund myth of heroic, top-heavy leadership, and the CSIR it can engender.

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