5 Poor Leadership

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An aggressive, bullying boss I used to work for would build himself up into a state of rage at least three times a week. He once became so enraged that he actually threw the office kettle out of the window shouting, "You're not drinking my tea and coffee!" as staff looked on in disbelief.

My boss really drove me up the wall to a point where I started developing stomach problems, which my doctor linked to stress.

My husband worked for the NHS and became the target of the department bully. When he stood up for himself, the manager stood behind his desk waiving his fists and saying my husband was mentally impaired and had lost all his friends.

Employees shared these stories and others on the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) Web site following a news story on menacing bosses and their role in workplace stress (BBC, 2003). Although these stories are extreme, they help bring to light the vital role leaders play in organizations and the profound impact they have on the stress and well-being of those they lead.

The notion that poor-quality leadership has negative effects for individuals is not new (Day & Hamblin, 1964), and the research that has been conducted on the link between leadership and mental health has invariably focused on the potentially negative effects of poor-quality leadership. Poor leadership also has been associated with increased levels of employee stress (Offermann & Hellmann, 1996) and retaliation (Townsend, Phillips, & Elkins, 2000). Ashforth (1997) found that when abusive supervisors used noncontingent punishment, employees felt a sense of helplessness and alienation from work. Furthermore, Atwater, Dionne, Camobreco, Avolio, and Lau (1998) reported that leadership effectiveness of supervisors in the military is negatively affected when supervisors resort to noncontingent punishment. Richman, Flaherty, Rospenda, and Chistensen (1992) found heightened levels of psychological distress among medical residents who reported to abusive supervisors.

Generally, employees who perceive their supervisors to be abusive experience low levels of job and life satisfaction, lower levels of affective commitment, increased work-family conflict, and psychological distress (Tepper, 2000) as well as psychosomatic symptoms, anxiety, and depression (Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999). Additionally, Dupre, Inness, Connelly, Barling, and Hoption (2003) found a relationship between teenagers' experience of abusive supervision and their own aggression directed toward their supervisors.

The stress of poor supervision also manifests in physical outcomes. Wager, Fieldman, and Hussey (2003) reported that on days when a sample of nurses worked for a supervisor they did not like, they experienced a 15-mm increase in systolic blood pressure and a 7-mm increase in diastolic blood pressure when compared with days when they worked for a supervisor they did like. Changes of this magnitude result in a 16% increased risk of a coronary failure and a 38% increased risk of stroke. Moreover, the findings are consistent with the observation that exposure to aggressive behavior at work (i.e., bullying) is associated with increased risk for both depression and cardiovascular disease (Kivimäki, Virtanen, Vartia, Elovainio, Vahtera, & Keltikangas-Järvinen, 2003).

Despite these consistent findings and a wealth of anecdotal evidence, surprisingly little research has concentrated on identifying what constitutes poor leadership or on the mechanisms through which poor leadership affects workplace stress. In this chapter, we attempt to explain the nature of poor leadership and highlight some of the potential mechanisms through which poor leaders contribute to employee stress. First, we identify poor leadership as a source of stress (i.e., a stressor) in and of itself. At least two aspects of leadership may be stressors: leaders who are abusive or punitive and leaders who simply evidence inadequate leadership abilities for a given context. Second, we suggest that poor leadership may be a "root cause" that gives rise to other well-documented workplace stressors. In this sense, we suggest that existing models of organizational stress are deficient in their lack of consideration of organizational context; we suggest that leadership is a

critical element of context that needs to be considered in understanding organizational stressors. Finally, we note the possibility that leadership might moderate stressor-strain relationships. Leaders are, of course, a potent source of social support in the workplace, and such support is documented as a stress buffer. We suggest that poor leadership may serve to isolate individuals and deny access to social support and thereby exacerbate the negative effects of workplace stressors.

_____ Poor Leadership: Definition and Prevalence

Leadership is undoubtedly one of the most ubiquitous potential stressors in the workplace. Although most stressors are specific to a given workplace, virtually everyone has a formal leader to whom they report. Throughout our discussion we shall be using the term "leader" to reference individuals in organizations who have assumed a formal leadership role (e.g., supervisors, managers, etc.). Although leadership theorists typically have focused on leadership as a process rather than leadership as a role (Yukl, 1998), our focus is on individuals who by virtue of their organizational position have legitimate reward and coercive power (French & Raven, 1959).

How might such individuals evidence poor leadership? At least two possibilities are apparent: Leaders may be abusive, aggressive, or punitive, and leaders may simply lack appropriate leadership skills. We suggest that both conditions lead to increased employee stress.

Abusive Leadership

Abusive leadership occurs when individuals in a formal leadership role engage in aggressive or punitive behaviors toward their employees. These behaviors can vary widely from leaders degrading their employees by yelling, ridiculing, and name-calling to terrorizing employees by withholding information or threatening employees with job loss and pay cuts. Such behaviors have been variously termed "workplace harassment" (e.g., Rospenda, 2002), "emotional abuse" (e.g., Keashly, 1998, 2001), "bullying" (e.g., Einarsen, 1999; Hoel et al., 1999), or simply "workplace aggression" (for a review, see Schat & Kelloway, Chapter 8, this volume). Although conceptually abusive supervision includes acts of physical violence, empirically the incidence of coworker violence (including leader-follower violence) is very low (LeBlanc & Kelloway, 2002; U.S. Postal Service [USPS], 2000). Indeed, in their study, LeBlanc & Kelloway (2002) found no reported incidents of physical violence between coworkers. Acts of nonphysical aggression are relatively more common. Pizzino (2002) reported that supervisors accounted for 20% of aggressive behaviors reported by unionized respondents whereas members of the public were responsible for 38% of respondents' reports of aggressive behavior.

However, we suggest that the impact of such behaviors is exaggerated by the position of the perpetrator. That is, aggressive acts by supervisors might have more deleterious effects on employee outcomes than do similar acts committed by members of the public or other coworkers. Although we know of no data that directly test this suggestion, indirect support emerges from several sources.

First, LeBlanc and Kelloway (2002) examined the impact of aggression from members of the public and coworkers. They found that any effects of public aggression/violence on outcomes were indirect, being mediated by fear of future violence (see also Barling, Rogers, & Kelloway, 2001; Rogers & Kelloway, 1997; Schat & Kelloway, 2000, 2003). However the effects of coworker aggression on personal and organizational outcomes were direct. These data suggest that the actions of coworkers, including leaders, have a stronger impact on personal well-being than do the actions of members of the public.

Second, the data reported by LeBlanc and Kelloway (2002) are consistent with a body of evidence suggesting that organizational context plays a crucial role in understanding the effects of workplace violence and sexual harassment (see for example, Barling et al., 2001; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997). We suggest that the organizational position of the perpetrator is one such critical contextual factor. As a result of their organizational position and their power in the organization, leaders may be more prone to engage in abusive behaviors (see, for example, Keashly, Trott, & MacLean, 1994) perhaps because of a sense of invulnerability (Dekker & Barling, 1998). Moreover, these actions may be more salient to the target because of the aggressor's ability to control organizational sanctions and rewards.

Passive Leadership

Although the foregoing discussion focused on the notion of abusive leadership, we also recognize that a lack of leadership skills may be a source of stress for individuals. We term this lack of skills "passive leadership." We define passive leadership as comprising elements from both the laissez-faire and management-by-exception (passive) styles articulated in the theory of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1997). Leaders engaging in the management-by-exception (passive) style do not intervene until problems are either brought to their attention or become serious enough to demand action (Bass, 1990). Leaders who rely on the laissez-faire style avoid decision making and the responsibilities associated with their position (Bass, 1990; Hater & Bass, 1988).

There is now a great deal of data supporting the effectiveness of transformational leadership behaviors. Transformational leaders exhibit four characteristics in their interactions with employees; idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration

(Bass, 1990). Via these characteristics, transformational leaders positively affect a number of important outcomes. Although a review of this literature is beyond our current scope, it is clear that managers' transformational leadership style is positively associated with employee commitment to the organization (Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996; Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995; Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995), trust in the leader (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996), lower levels of role stress (Podsakoff et al., 1996), and both job satisfaction (Hater & Bass, 1988) and satisfaction with the leader (Hater & Bass, 1988; Koh et al., 1995). Transformational leadership is also associated with higher performance in laboratory studies (e.g., Howell & Frost, 1989; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996) as well as field studies. In the latter, transformational leadership has been associated with performance outcomes such as organizational citizenship (Koh et al., 1995; Podsakoff et al., 1996), employee performance (Hater & Bass, 1988), group level financial performance (Barling et al., 1996; Howell & Avolio, 1993), and project performance (Keller, 1992). Adding external validity to these findings, shop stewards' transformational leadership is associated with their rank-and-file members' commitment to and participation in the union (Fullagar, McCoy, & Schull, 1992; Kelloway & Barling, 1993).

In contrast to transformational leadership, passive leadership is generally considered to be ineffective. For instance, Howell and Avolio (1993) reported that passive management by exception is negatively related to business unit performance, and laissez-faire leadership is generally accounted to be the least effective style (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Perhaps most important, there are both conceptual and empirical grounds on which to suggest that passive leadership (a) is distinct from and (b) has negative effects beyond those attributable to a lack of transformational leadership skills.

Several existing studies support the distinction between transformational and passive leadership (e.g., Bycio et al., 1995). Bass (1985) distinguished "active" and "passive" leadership as separate higher-order factors underlying his leadership measure. Researchers have since investigated this distinction, often combining Bass and Avolio's (1990) management-by-exception/passive and laissez-faire dimensions into a single higher-order passive leadership dimension (e.g., Den Hartog, Van Muijen, & Koopman, 1997). In general, these studies have supported the usefulness of this distinction. For instance, Garman, Davis-Lenane, and Corrigan (2003) found that management by exception (passive), although positively correlated with the laissez-faire style, is negatively correlated with transformational leadership. Similarly, they reported that active and passive management by exception are independent constructs, thereby furthering the empirical support for the distinction between active and passive leadership.

It is generally accepted that passive leadership correlates negatively, and transformational leadership positively, with numerous organizational outcomes (Den Hartog et al., 1997; Howell & Avolio, 1993). However,

although the laissez-faire or management-by-exception (passive) styles are regarded as ineffective approaches to leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994), few studies have considered the extent of the impact that these styles have on negative organizational consequences (for an exception see Zohar, 2002). Rather, the existing research has focused on the positive organizational impact of more active forms of leadership.

Perhaps because of the consistency of these findings, it has become common to speak of "transformational" leaders as a category; that is, a leader is considered to be transformational or not. Although positive effects are obtained when one is a transformational leader, the presumption is that the absence of transformational leadership simply results in the absence of these positive effects. In contrast, we suggest that passive leadership may create negative effects that go beyond those attributable to a lack of transformational leadership skills.

First, we note that transformational leadership is not a category, and it is incorrect to hold that there are transformational and nontransformational leaders. Interestingly, it is possible for elements of transformational and passive leadership to be present in a single individual. That is, leaders are not differentiated by whether or not they are transformational leaders but rather on the frequency with which they demonstrate various transformational and passive behaviors (Bass, 1985). The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), the most common measure of leader behavior, assesses the frequency of transformational and passive leadership actions. An implication of this approach to measurement is that the labels "transformational" and "passive" leadership actually represent the degree to which an individual engages in various actions (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1990). They do not reflect separate categories of leadership. The implications of this relationship have been largely overlooked in the existing leadership literature.

In a recent study, Kelloway, Mullen, and Francis (2004) examined the impact of transformational and passive safety leadership on safety outcomes. Replicating Barling, Loughlin, and Kelloway's (2002) earlier analysis, they found that transformational leadership was positively associated with safety outcomes. Passive safety leadership, however, was empirically distinct from both transformational leadership and negatively predicted safety outcomes. Moreover, passive leadership offered an incremental prediction of outcome variance (i.e., over and above that attributable to transformational leadership). Kelloway et al. (2004) suggested that passive leadership may explain variance beyond that attributable to transformational leadership for other leadership-related outcomes. One such outcome is employee stress.

Thus, both abusive and passive leadership are exemplars of poor leadership that are plausibly linked to employee stress. One remaining question concerns the mechanisms that sustain this link. That is, how is leadership related to employee stress? We now turn our analysis to this question.

Leadership as a Root Cause

Models of job stress typically begin by distinguishing between the stressor (i.e., the objective source of stress; Pratt & Barling, 1988) and stress or strain (i.e., employee reactions to the stressor). Within this context, models of how individual well-being is affected by workplace conditions have focused on establishing relationships between job characteristics/stressors and either mental (e.g., Kelloway & Barling, 1991) or physiological (e.g., Barling & Kelloway, 1996) health. Theorists and researchers have proposed a variety of mechanisms to explain how these associations occur. Models vary in their "breadth" (i.e., the number of organizational conditions considered) as well as the functional relationships specified between stressors and outcomes.

Although models vary considerably, what they share in common is that they take as a starting point the specification of a list of environmental conditions, labeled stressors. For example, Karasek's (1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990) demand-control-support model is perhaps the best known of all models relating job characteristics to well-being. In brief, the demand-control-support model is based on two hypotheses relating to the main effects and interactions of the constituent variables. That is, the model proposes the following:

1. High demands, lack of control, and lack of social support predict strain outcomes.

2. Demands, control, and support interact to predict strain (such that high control and high social support buffer the effects of demands on strain outcomes).

Warr (1987) identified a broader array of environmental conditions as a source of workplace stress than Karasek's demand-support-control model. Warr's vitamin model listed nine environmental conditions as sources of stress in the workplace: the opportunity for control, the opportunity for skill use, externally generated goals, task variety, environmental clarity, the availability of money, physical security (freedom from physical threat or danger), the opportunity for interpersonal contact, and valued social position.

Both models, and indeed most models of workplace stress, take as their starting point the existence of job stressors. In considering the potential for poor leadership to affect workplace stress, we suggest that poor leadership might be a root cause of workplace stressors. That is, the presence, absence, or intensity of particular stressors may be determined by the quality of leadership in the workplace. To evaluate how leadership might act as a root cause, we consider the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) model of workplace stress (Sauter, Murphy, & Hurrell, 1990). We focus on the NIOSH model because it is a simple taxonomy of workplace stressors based on extensive review of the empirical literature. Using this model as a framework, we consider how leadership might play a role in

creating workplace stress. The workplace stressors identified in the NIOSH model are outlined in the sections that follow. In each case, we consider how leaders may affect the prevalence and impact of the stressor in the workplace.

Workload and Work Pace

The experience of being overworked is not new, and, if anything, some would suggest that it is increasing within particular sectors (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997). The strains associated with being overworked have been found to be uniformly negative across behavioral, psychological, and physiological outcome domains (e.g., Jex & Beehr, 1991). Measures of role overload are empirically linked to assessments of both context-free (e.g., Kelloway & Barling, 1991) and context-specific mental health (see, for example, Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Posig & Kickul, 2003). Issues of workload and work pace become increasingly important in an environment in which hours of work are increasing. The data suggest that working couples have seen their average work year increase by nearly 700 hours in the past two decades and that up to 30% of the workforce is exhausted by the end of the workday (NIOSH, 2002).

Organizational leadership is clearly linked to workload and pace in most organizations. By establishing the pace of work and the amount of work that is required, and by specifying deadlines, organizational leaders effectively establish workloads and work pace for most individuals. Thus, when leaders set tight deadlines or assign extra tasks without considering existing workloads, they become a source of workplace stress through the experience of overload. To the extent that passive leaders are unaware of the concerns of their employees, they may be less attuned to the amount of work that their employees can reasonably manage and thus endorse a heavy workload or unmanageable work pace. Similarly, abusive leaders who in their actions display little concern for the welfare of their employees may also be more likely to set unreasonable deadlines and workloads than highly effective leaders.

Role Stressors (Conflict, Ambiguity, and Interrole Conflict)

Role conflict exists whenever individuals face incompatible demands from two or more sources. Role ambiguity reflects the uncertainty employees experience about what is expected of them in their jobs; the opposite of role ambiguity would be role clarity. Interrole conflict exists when employees face incompatible demands from two or more roles. The most common form of interrole conflict is work-family conflict in which the demands of work conflict with the roles of parent or spouse. Kelloway and Barling (1991) found that the experience of role stressors at work predicted mental health in the workplace. Considerable research has also now emerged documenting the stressors associated with interrole conflict and, more specifically, work-family

conflict (see, for example, Kelloway, Gottlieb, & Barham, 1999; Gignac, Kelloway, & Gottlieb, 1996; Gottlieb, Kelloway, & Martin-Matthews, 1996).

Because organizational leaders are tasked with establishing the expectations for employees, they are a potent source of role expectations for individuals in organizations. Thus, supervisors who fail to establish clear expectations or who promote conflicting goals actively promote increased role stress. Supervisors who establish expectations for long hours in the office may promote work-family conflict. Researchers have long believed managers play a key role in the presence of role ambiguity. Certainly, passive leaders may neither take the time to assure that their employees have clear role descriptions nor even realize that their employees are experiencing any type of role conflict. In many instances, however, researchers have argued that role ambiguity is the variable that might be most readily influenced by managers. Singh and Rhoads (1991) have argued that role ambiguity is most susceptible to managerial intervention in attempts to reduce stress in the workplace.

With respect to abusive leadership, research by Monat, Averill, and Lazarus (1972) suggests that a hostile situation is even more stressful if one does not know when exactly it will occur (i.e., role ambiguity). Temporal uncertainty is yet another avenue by which abusive leaders affect the stress levels of those they lead. Temporal uncertainty refers to an individual's inability to know when a given event or action is likely to occur. Within the context of this discussion, temporal uncertainty refers to the unpredictability of the leader's behavior. This suggests that abusive bosses who have bursts of aggression not only have a direct psychological impact on individuals but also produce a chronic state of stress in workers as workers find themselves always needing to be on guard, not knowing when another outburst will be directed their way. As highlighted by the example at the start of this chapter, the worker is not shocked by his or her boss's escalation in anger but by the unpredictability of the boss's actions during his state of chaos (i.e., throwing a coffee pot out the window).

Career Concerns

Career-related factors such as job insecurity, fear of job obsolescence, under- and overpromotion, and, more generally, concerns about career development have been identified as stressful. For example, in their study of South African miners, Barling and Kelloway (1996) found that job insecurity was associated with both negative affective reactions and raised blood pressure. The importance of job insecurity as a stressor in the workplace is highlighted by observations that the temporary or contingent labor force is rapidly increasing and that job tenure has declined for many workers (NIOSH, 2002).

Recently, the development of the effort-reward imbalance model has focused research attention on the role of organizational rewards as a

psychosocial stressor. Siegrist (1996) proposed the effort-reward imbalance model that essentially suggests that strain results when rewards are not consistent with efforts in work environments. In this view, efforts are described as the strivings of the individual to meet the demands and obligations of the job. Rewards are conceptualized as encompassing financial rewards, esteem rewards, and career rewards, including job security. Similar to its intellectual forebearer, equity theory (Adams, 1965), the effort-reward imbalance theory is based on the notion that individuals attempt to maintain a state of equilibrium and cannot maintain an imbalance between effort and rewards over an extended period of time. Siegrist does, however, involve an individual variable (i.e., overcommitment) to explain potential discrepancies. That is, individuals who are overcommitted to their work may maintain a high-effort, low-reward environment. Eventually, however, this condition will result in ill health (Siegriest, 1996). Initial results using cardiovascular risk as the outcome generally support the model propositions (Peter & Siegrist, 1999). The relative recency of the effort-reward imbalance theory has resulted in a lack of formal evaluation of the theory, although these initial results seem promising.

Organizational leaders are, of course, the primary gatekeepers of organizational reward structures. Indeed the legitimate power (e.g., French & Raven, 1959) of supervisors is closely linked to reward power. Managers have the power to reward subordinates (Yukl & Falbe, 1991) or, alternatively, to deny such rewards. For example, bonuses, merit pay, and career decisions are frequently based on annual performance reviews conducted by organizational leaders (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Milliman, Nason, Zhu, & De Cieri, 2002). The empirical data suggest that such ratings are often a function of whether or not supervisors like their subordinates (Lefkowitz, 2000). For example, Scullen, Mount, & Goff (2000) found that over 50% of the variance in performance ratings was attributable to idiosyncratic rating errors—more than twice as much as was attributable to true variation in employee performance.

Work Scheduling

Working rotating shifts or permanent night work results in a disruption of physiological circadian rhythms as well as disrupted social activities and has been identified as a work-related stressor. For example, employees who work nights or overtime report that this affects their mental and physical health outcomes (Ettner & Grzywacz, 2001), and there is a great deal of literature on how to schedule shifts so as to minimize these effects (e.g., Tucker, MacDonald, Folkard, & Smith, 1998). These effects are sufficiently well established to provide the basis for labor law in the European Union that regulates the scheduling of shifts and rest days (International Labour Office, 1988, 1990). On a more macro scale, researchers have examined the effect of scheduling of vacation time (Westman & Eden, 1997) on well-being. Related

to issues of workload and pace, there has been concern expressed about the absolute number of hours required of some employees, particularly trainees and interns who may be required to work excessively long hours during the course of their training (e.g., Bartle & Rodolfa, 1999).

Again, in many organizations, shift schedules are drawn up by those in organizational leadership roles, and supervisors can create or minimize stress by adjusting how they schedule shifts. Decisions as to when to require over-time or who is required to work overtime are also frequently left to man-agers and supervisors. To that extent, individuals who report to passive or abusive leaders may not receive optimal work scheduling options, as these leaders are likely less aware of or concerned about the importance of work scheduling for the well-being of individual employees.

Interpersonal Relations

Poor interpersonal relations in the workplace are consistently identified as a source of stress. Conversely, having well-established sources of social sup-port (i.e., receiving support from coworkers and supervisors) may actually reduce the effects of other workplace stressors (House, 1981). As we previ-ously reviewed, leaders who are abusive, aggressive, or punitive are a clear source of stress for individuals in the workplace. However, such behaviors by a supervisor may also lead to individuals becoming isolated or rejected by the work group. That is, in order to win favor with, or avoid being a victim of, an abusive supervisor, coworkers may harass, exclude, or engage in "mobbing" (Schuster, 1996) coworkers.

Supervisors may also affect well-being through their impact on interac-tional injustice. Interactional injustice refers to the perceptions of low-quality interpersonal treatment experienced by individuals within a work environ-ment (Bies, 2001). A sample of behaviors exhibited by a supervisor that could be perceived as interactional injustice may include not paying attention to subordinates' concerns, not displaying any empathy for an employee's quandary, not treating employees in a fair manner, betraying confidences, and not interacting with employees in a civil manner. These examples are by no means exhaustive but are examples of forms of injustice that share the common thread of being interpersonal in nature and at the dyadic level. Although the other two forms of injustice (procedural and distributive) have received more empirical scrutiny, Mikula, Petrik, and Tanzer (1990) report findings that a large portion of perceived injustices concern the manner in which people were treated interpersonally rather than the procedural or distributive elements in a job.

Organizational scholars have empirically linked justice evaluations to a host of organizational outcomes such as organizational citizenship (Skarlicki & Latham, 1996), job satisfaction (Parker, Baltes, & Christiansen, 1997), and retaliation (Skarlicki, Folger, & Tesluk, 1999). However, research into the relationship between interactional justice and employee health

variables is lacking (Elovainio, Kivimaki, & Helkama, 2001). Articles do exist, however, that link these two variables through indirect mechanisms. Thus, drawing on this thin literature, we reason supervisor interactional injustice to have negative impact on employee stress. More specifically, we propose that abusive supervisors through unjust interactions negatively affect employees' pride and self-esteem, which serially affects the level of stress they encounter at work.

Subordinates who experience interactional justice come to trust and respect their leaders. We argue that this, in turn, is likely to result in high-quality relationships with their supervisors, which will have positive effects on employees' psychological well-being and performance on the job. A meta-analysis exploring this proposition found high-quality relationships between supervisor and follower to be positively correlated to job performance, satisfaction with supervision, overall satisfaction, commitment, lack of role conflict, and low turnover intentions (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Conversely, when passive or abusive supervisors behave in an unjust manner, employees may deem these interactional injustices to be a breach of the psychological contract. These employees, in turn, are more likely to feel stress and anger and be moved to retaliate (see Rousseau, 1995).

Job Content and Control

As phrased by Sauter et al. (1990, p. 1153), "narrow, fragmented, invari-ant and short-cycle tasks that provide little stimulation, allow little use of skills or expression of creativity and have little intrinsic meaning for work-ers" are considered as stress provokers in the NIOSH content model of workplace stressors. There is now substantial evidence that job characteris-tics such as skill use, skill variety, and autonomy are associated with both motivation and individual mental health (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Kelloway & Barling, 1991; Parker & Wall, 1998). Because organizational leaders are responsible for job design and task assign-ment, they have the potential to influence the content of jobs. Perhaps most significantly, supervisors and managers directly affect the amount of control experienced by employees.

The notion that personal control is beneficial to psychological and physio-logical well-being is not new. Organizational scholars have confirmed repeat-edly the convincing relationship between job control and health and lack of job control and ill health (e.g., Bosma, Stransfeld, & Marmot, 1998; Shirom, Melamed, & Nir-Dotan, 2000; Tetrick, Slack, DaSilva, & Sinclair, 2000).

Control, autonomy, and decision latitude are increasingly referred to, often interchangeably, as organizational practices that promote job perfor-mance. Within research circles, control has long been regarded as a critical element in job redesign research to promote performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) and worker mental health (Wall & Clegg, 1981). Not sur-prisingly, the role of job control in stress-strain process has been receiving

increased investigation. The primary impetus for this line of research has largely been a result of Karasek's (1979) demand-control-support model. Karasek and Theorell (1990) argue that a healthy workplace is one where the worker's level of demand on the job is met with appropriate levels of control, promoting growth and development on the job. Conversely, a job in which demands are high and control is low is posited to result in job strain and burnout. Empirical findings, however, have not supported a moderating pattern between job control and employee health (Pomaki & Maes, 2002). Nonetheless, increasing empirical evidence accumulates in the literature on the importance of job control in promoting well-being (see Karasek & Theorell, 1990).

Although certain organizational level policies restrain the amount of control one has on the job (Thomas & Ganster, 1995), following Karasek and Theorell's (1990) model, we argue that an employee's immediate supervisor, given behavioral and psychological proximity to his or her followers, has a vast influence on an employee's perceived level of job control. Given that passive leaders either avoid the responsibilities of their position or only step in during crisis situations, it is unlikely that they will take the necessary time to engage in a stress prevention strategy such as attempting to positively influence an employee's perception of control. With respect to abusive supervisors who occupy an immediate leadership role, we suggest that their unique position may enable them to significantly limit employees' job control across two areas—*environmental control* and *perceived control.*

Environmental control refers to the measure of alternatives the employee is given by the supervisor, the organization, or the immediate work environment (Spector, 1998). In most instances, the specified amount of control remains at the discretion of the employee's immediate supervisor. For instance, Johansson, Aronsson, and Lindstrom (1978) found that jobs that taxed employees' cognitive ability while giving employees little control of the pace of work (machine controlled) resulted in increased health disorders, job strain, and job dissatisfaction. Abusive leaders exert tight control over their environment (Offermann & Hellmann, 1996), and by controlling their environment, they are able to control the people within it. It is this control these types of leaders mobilize in abusing their power. Environments in which leaders are granted the power to control work demands present an ideal situation for abusive supervisors to exercise their power. Perceived control is a measure of the alternatives individuals believe they have (Spector, 1998). It is possible, even with control, for the individual to perceive the situation to be out of control. For instance, Steers and Rhodes (1978) have shown a small degree of absenteeism to be healthy for an organization as it allowed employees to temporarily escape the stressful conditions. Many organizations subscribe to this notion and have set policies that allow employees to be absent from work when they feel it is needed, for example, for family or personal responsibilities. Nonetheless, individuals may not trust management (Kramer, 1999) enough to exercise their control, instead fearing that they might be

disciplined or punished. In a relationship that is already characterized by power and status differences, employees who have to deal with abusive supervisors may, out of distrust or fear, choose not to approach them.

In addition, individuals may also feel low job control when they lack self-efficacy. Self-efficacy (a form of perceived control) refers to a person's conviction that he or she can accomplish a certain task successfully (Bandura, 1997). Given the ability to change the pace of work, work environment, or resources, an individual with low self-efficacy will likely feel incapable of accomplishing the work. This problem is compounded when this same individual reports to an abusive or passive supervisor. Given that an individual's self-efficacy can be influenced by words and actions directed at the individual (Bandura, 1997), verbally abusive supervisors who constantly put down their workers are most likely to have an adverse effect on their employees' self-efficacy. Passive leaders, relative to transformational leaders, are often out of touch with the needs of their employees. To that extent, they will be less likely to engage in encouraging conversations and provide the type of positive feedback that may elevate an employee's self-esteem. In either case, when employees are faced with a job-related setback and must take control, their run-down self-efficacy will make this an arduous task.

Parkes, Mendham, and von Rabenau (1994) found that a job that entails high demands but low control prompts ill health in employees only when support is low. This suggests that in jobs where there is an inherently high level of demands and low control and in jobs where supervisors have little influence on job demands or control, the amount of support extended by the supervisor to the employees has the potential to help cushion the psychological and physiological impact of the work environment. Thus, it is not hard to imagine an unskilled leader in this situation (a) failing to recognize employees' struggle in coping with a high-demand, low-control job, and consequently (b) failing to extend the necessary support for the employees in such jobs. Drawing on past research (Tepper, 2000), it is also conceivable that abusive supervisors, recognizing employees' struggle with the work conditions, intentionally withdraw support for their employees as a form of passive aggression toward them (Neuman & Baron, 1998).

Lack of Supervisor Social Support

A plethora of studies have repeatedly illustrated that individuals who have a network of family and friends for psychological or material support show evidence of greater physical and psychological well-being than those who lack this network (Gottleib, 1981). Moreover, social support has been established to be a causal agent in the well-being of individuals (House, 1981). Although the importance of social support has been established in the literature, the process by which it influences psychological well-being remains to be clarified. One proposition argues that social support "buffers" individuals from

the damaging effects of stress. Thus, the ability to rely on social resources helps individuals gird themselves for life's stressful events (Cohen & McKay, 1984). The alternate proposition argues that irrespective of stressful events, a rich social support network provides individuals with regular positive interactions, stability, and relational rewards. These positive experiences collectively help individuals avoid many of the negative experiences that could result in increased stress (Wills, 1985). Review of the literature suggests that both models are accurate in varying degrees (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Similar interpersonal relational networks that individuals rely on for social support are also evident within a work arena. The social relationships that occur within a workplace have far-reaching impact on the individual's mental and physical well-being. For many, the importance of this social support is not appreciated until retirement. The findings of Bosse, Aldwin, Levenson, Workman-Daniels, & Ekerdt (1990) suggest that for many workers the most meaningful friendships they look to for social support are those formed at work; and the importance of workplace-based social support extends into periods of unemployment (Jackson, 1986). Not surprisingly, an abundance of empirical studies have highlighted the importance of social support within a work environment (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; Dignam, Barrera, & West, 1986; Dormann & Zapf, 2002). Although the evidence for a low degree of social support having a direct effect on stress is more convincing within an organizational context than that of a buffering effect of a high degree of support, a leader's social support (or the lack thereof) will have both a direct and indirect effect on followers. The assumption that leaders exert both direct and indirect effects seems reasonable given the meta-analysis findings by Viswesvaran, Sanchez, and Fisher (1999) that suggest social support has both a direct and an indirect effect on the stressor-strain relationship.

Although we acknowledge the continuing discourse among researchers on what exactly constitutes "social support" (Payne & Jones, 1987), given the short length of this chapter and our focus on leadership, we use one frequent definition of social support in explaining how leaders extend social support to their followers. Using House's (1981) classification, we argue that leaders have the responsibility for providing instrumental support (task-specific help), emotional support (empathy, affect, and comfort), informational support (awareness, advice, and directives), and appraisal support (feedback, suggestions, and encouragement). Abusive leaders not only fail to provide social support to buffer stressful conditions but neglect to provide the bare amount of support that followers desire to function without stress. For example, an abusive leader may fail to help an overworked follower by reducing the task load (instrumental support). Similarly, this same leader may fail to provide much needed empathy for an employee coping with bereavement (emotional support), fail to provide the necessary safety directives to carry out tasks in a safe manner (informational support), and fail to motivate and engage followers in their jobs (appraisal support). Passive leaders are also

unlikely to provide adequate social support for their employees. Given that they avoid the responsibilities of their role until serious issues come to their attention, it is conceivable that they will often be unaware that their employees need social support, be it emotional, informational, instrumental, or appraisal in nature. For instance, consider the case of a passive supervisor who does not provide instrumental help to an overworked employee because that leader is not paying attention to the demands in the workplace. This lack of social support, either individually or collectively, has far-reaching effects on the levels of employee stress.

Cummings (1990) provided early evidence of the importance of supervisory social support. Examining employed graduate and undergraduate students, Cummings (1990) found that supervisory social support buffered the effects of occupational stress and its effects on job dissatisfaction. This effect was even more pronounced in supervisor-employee relationships in which the employee valued the relationship. Extending this further, accumulating evidence suggests that supervisor social support is potentially most vital in occupations that are inherently stressful. Karlin, Brondolo, and Schwartz (2003) studied New York City traffic enforcement agents, individuals who have the stressful job of issuing parking violations to motorists, who often greet agents with insults and threats. In such a stress-provoking job, the study found that immediate supervisor support to be negatively correlated with systolic blood pressure.

Additionally, and also discouraging to workers, abusive leaders pose a double threat to employee stress. Barling, Bluen, and Fain's (1987) findings suggest that the support extended to employees is most effective when the source of support originates from within the same realm as the stressor. Barling and colleagues found social support from immediate supervisors to be more effective than family support following an acute disaster. That is, if the source of stressor is the work environment, supervisors are in a favorable position to have the largest positive impact on this stressor through their supervisory social support. However, support received from a supervisor may not be beneficial when the supervisor is perceived to be the source of the stress (e.g., MacEwen & Barling, 1988), and the presence of abusive supervision or tyrannical leadership may thus be expected to exert significant negative effects on employee well-being.

Thus, with longer working hours, shorter contracts, and a culture of downsizing (Tetrick & Barling, 1995) all adding to job-related stress, the need for efficient leaders who can afford their followers the necessary social support to confront their work environments is critical.

Epilogue

Consistent evidence has now accumulated on the weight of key variables in the promotion of employee stress. Interpersonal relations, job scheduling,

job control and content, lack of supervisor social support, career concerns, workload and pace, and role stressors magnify the presence or degree of stress among workers (Sauter et al., 1990). Leaders in their central roles are granted the power to influence all these variables. This power and resulting influence on employees is often underestimated by leaders (Offermann & Hellmann, 1996) and has often resulted in detrimental effects on employee well-being. The management of employees and their well-being is more crucial in our workplace since 9/11 (Dutton, Frost, Worline, Lilius, & Kanov, 2002; Frost, 2003).

In this chapter, we have outlined the ways in which poor leadership is related to workplace stress. In doing so, we first engaged in a discussion of what constitutes poor leadership. In particular, we concluded that leaders who are passive or abusive may have a negative impact on the health and well-being of their employees. Abusive leaders are those who act in an overly punitive or aggressive manner. Passive leaders are those individuals who do not demonstrate the necessary abilities for a leadership role and often fail to live up to their responsibilities. We suggest that poor leaders contribute to the experience of stress among their employees in two main ways. First, poor leadership by itself is likely a source of stress for the individuals who report to them. Additionally, poor leaders are likely to create a work environment that is rife with other work stressors such as lack of control and heavy workloads. Taken together, these points suggest that leadership has a pervasive effect on stress and well-being in the workplace.

In light of the direct connections we have drawn between the qualities of organizational leaders and the prevalence of stressors in the workplace, we encourage both researchers and practitioners to explore more fully the nature of the relationship between leadership and stress. Clearly, leaders influence the amount of stress that employees experience. Given that stress is a pervasive and expensive organizational problem, with some estimates suggesting that employee stress costs organizations $150 billion per year, we encourage a program of work that investigates leadership training as a primary stress-prevention strategy. For example, research suggests individuals can be successfully trained in transformational leadership (Barling et al., 1996). If individuals can acquire more active and appropriate leadership behaviors, we suggest that employee stress will be lessened and employee well-being improved.

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