

## **An Integrative Literature Review of Responsible Leadership: Knowns, Unknowns, and Implications**

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*This article aims to understand what we do and do not know concerning the construct of Responsible Leadership plus address directions for the future. Since the development of the Responsible Leadership for Performance theory (Lynham, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004), consistent description of Responsible Leadership has lacked, creating tension between increasing interest in Responsible Leadership without a common framework to guide inquiry. Through an integrative literature review we offer descriptive themes of Responsible Leadership from literature including why and how people have written about the construct, as well as unaddressed questions and implications for research, theory, and practice.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The construct of Responsible Leadership (RL) found its way into the academic literature in the early 1990's with the work of Dr. Julie Bell White Newman (1993). While there was a deficiency in the RL literature for almost another decade, the construct began to gain global traction in the mid-2000s. In 2006, interest in RL gained traction in the world of business when an edited book by Maak and Pless (2006) titled, *Responsible Leadership*, supported the claim that "responsible leadership is one of the most pressing issues in the business world" (p. 1). Addressing this pressing issue has taken two routes: speaking to why we need RL and speaking to what RL is in theory and practice

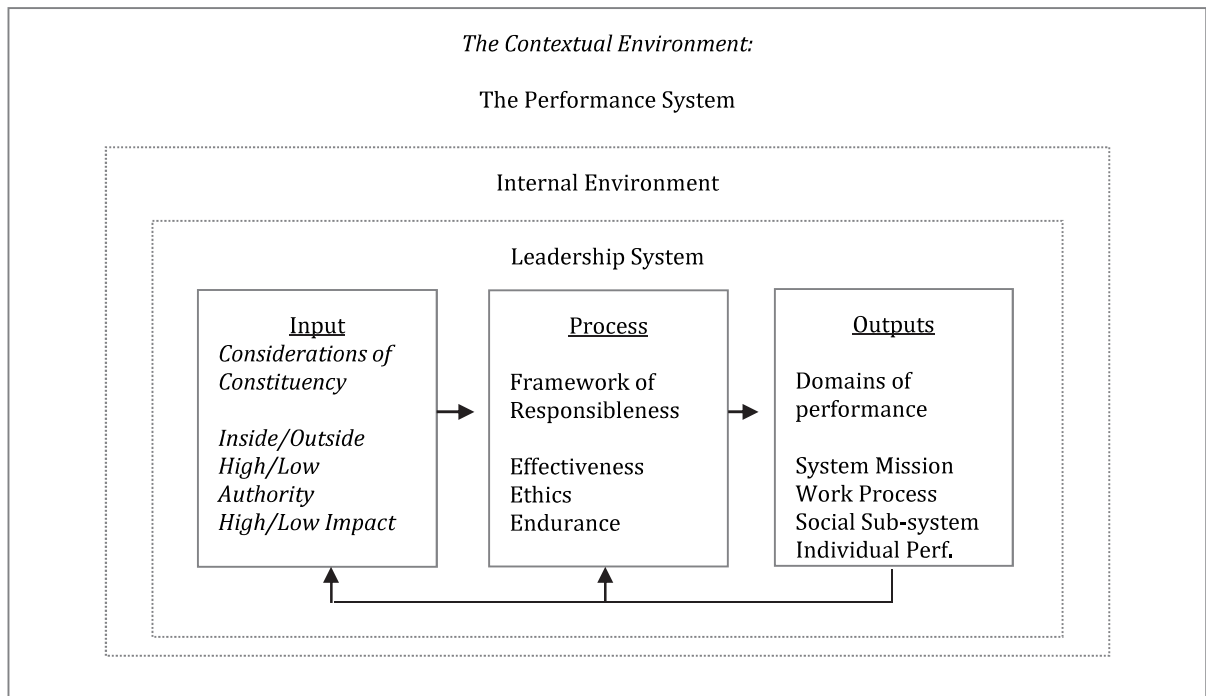
In 2010, the first *Conference on Responsible Leadership*, sponsored by GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), was hosted by the Centre for Responsible Leadership at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. Marking the first annual international gathering of scholars and practitioners, the conference launched the importance of the RL construct and the need to study and understand it further.

Prior to 2006, and the focused attention to RL, White-Newman (1993) and Lynham (1998, 2000, 2002, 2004), in a cluster outside of the business literature, described and developed, a model and subsequent theory of Responsible Leadership for Performance (RL/P). White-Newman (1993, 1998), at the time a professor at the then College of St Catherine in the mid-western United States and Director of the MA in Organizational Leadership program, distinguished 3Es of responsible leadership: practices of *effectiveness*, *ethical* habits, and resources for *endurance*. Too often, says White-Newman (1993),

leadership writing and practice have emphasized how to be effective. They need to embrace much more than this singular focus.

The RL/P theory incorporates the 3Es and is characterized by “three units which interact in a systemic way to form the inputs, process, and outputs of the leadership system- in- focus” as shown in Figure 1 (Lynham, 2000, p. 130).

**FIGURE 1**  
**LYNHAM’S (1998, 2000, 2002, 2004) RL/P FRAMEWORK TO VISUALIZE**  
**THE LEADERSHIP SYSTEM IN FOCUS**



RL/P provides a systemic perspective in which inputs, processes, and outputs interact with one another and the external environment. The interaction between the three constructs a useful and meaningful leadership system for multiple constituencies, through effective, ethical, and enduring processes to reach desirable outcomes. Thus, Lynham’s RL/P theory (1998, 2000, 2002, 2004) offers a uniquely robust theoretical perspective to inform RL research and practice.

Responding to concerns of leadership theory replete with academic rigor and negligent of praxis, Sumatra Ghoshal (2005) stressed “bad management theories [were] destroying good management practice” (p. 75). While some in the literature have called for a theory of responsible leadership, they have yet to do so with reference to RL/P (Lynham, 1998, 2000, 2004). However, Maak and Pless’ (2006) roles model has served as a valuable conceptual frame to consider what RL is. Therefore, an integrative review of the extant literature according to Torraco’s (2005) guidelines, is needed to better understand the concept of RL since the construction of RL/P.

The purpose of this literature review is to address the following research questions with a focus to inform future research, theory, and practice regarding the construct:

1. What is the current state of the body of knowledge on RL?
  - a. What do we appear to know about the phenomenon of RL?
  - b. What do we appear to not know about the phenomenon of RL?
2. What are the implications for (a) research, (b) theory, and (c) practice of RL?

The integrative literature review method was structured according to Torraco’s (2005) guidelines and conducted from a constructivist stance (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2013). Literature was selected, reviewed

and contrasted for constructed themes and categories as described in the findings (Callahan, 2010; Torraco, 2005).

Findings are described and discussed in three parts. First, what is known of the RL construct in extant literature is presented in three sub-categories: (a) why people have described RL; (b) how people have described RL; and (c) the associations between RL and other constructs. Second, the unknowns and resulting implications identify characteristics of RL “missing, incomplete, or poorly represented in the literature” and provide direction for future research, theory, and practice (Torraco, 2005, p. 362).

## **METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

Methodology—the theory of how inquiry should proceed—provides the hook on which to hang the particular methods utilized to gain meaningful knowledge through this review (Glesne, 2011; Schwandt, 2007). Methods then, are the particular tools employed in the review to collect and analyze data in a manner consistent with the methodology (Schwandt, 2007).

### **Methodology**

The suppositions of the constructivist paradigm, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985, 2013), undergird this integrative review. Ontologically, reality is assumed to be socially constructed and relative to individuals’ experience (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Therefore, the reality of what is known and unknown about RL is constructed through collecting and analyzing the literature. Constructivism also assumes a subjective epistemology, in which knowledge is taken to be subjective to the person holding it so findings are constructed “due to the interaction between the researcher and the subject” with the researcher acting as an active interpretive participant (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 103). Further, literature was acquired from diverse sources, times, and voices to locate the fringes of description and act as a form of thematic triangulation due to the relativist ontology (Creswell, 2009; Torraco, 2005).

### **Methods**

The goal of an integrative review is to generate new knowledge through systematic steps of inquiry (Torraco, 2005). The integrative method is appropriate to enact the assumptions of constructivism as integration requires the inclusion of diverse sources of knowledge and opens literature to interpretation toward distinct learning.

#### *Data Collection and Selection Criteria*

Relevant literature was collected through electronic databases and search engine inquiries. The previous limit to the date range—2004 to 2018—was based on the most recent publication of Lynham’s (2004) RL/P theory. Also, to ensure proper understanding literature was not limited to peer reviewed publications (Torraco, 2005). Trade journal entries (Broadbent, 2015; De Bettignies, 2014), university statements of purpose and private corporation mission statements (LORD, 2015; Wells, 2009), as well as books (Badracco, 2013) were included. RL as a definitive and independent construct was the common feature of the included literature.

An initial search for “responsible leader\*” in Academic Search Premier, Business Source Complete, Business Source Premier, and PsychInfo accessed through a university in the Rocky Mountain region, yielded a total of 462 entries. A “Title only” filter was then applied to ensure RL was a primary construct in each piece resulting in 169 entries. Then, the filter to include peer-reviewed and trade journals was applied yielding, 139 entries, eliminating periodicals and book reviews. The date range was then set from 2004 to 2018 and resulted in 132 entries. Results were then filtered for relevance by eliminating articles that did not specifically pertain to RL in order to maintain a deep focus on the single construct (Torraco, 2005, p. 362). For example, eliminated terms included, “socially responsible leadership”, “globally responsible leadership”, and “discursive responsible leadership.” Finally, all duplicated pieces across data-bases were deleted. The final search compiled 58 unique and informing peer reviewed and trade journal pieces, including two books (Badracco, 2013; Doh & Stumpf, 2005).

In addition to the academic search, a general search engine search for “responsible leadership” yielded six blog and trade articles specifically pertaining to RL published since 2004. Finally, six pieces from the proceedings of the 2010 Responsible Leadership conference, that met the above criteria were added. In total, 72 pieces were included for review.

### *Analysis and Synthesis of Selected Literature*

As recommended by Torraco (2005), an analysis table was created with the entries ordered by date of publication. Each piece of literature was analyzed individually via open coding and constant comparison allowing new meaning to be found in, and across, the set (Merriam, 2002). Each piece of literature was coded via the following sub-questions:

1. Which methods were used in the literature?
2. How have the author(s) described RL within their work?
3. Why did the authors choose to describe “responsible leadership”? To what end was “responsible leadership” described?
4. How does the literature better inform an understanding of what is known about “responsible leadership”?
5. What associated theories, approaches and frameworks did the authors identify in their description?

## **FINDINGS**

By examining literature as individual pieces and as culminated a whole, the intended results of an integrative review are to create new knowledge through a process similar to a qualitative researcher interpreting data with each piece of literature serving as an interview (Merriam, 2002; Torraco, 2005). By first looking within each piece, and then across the entire set, both knowns and unknowns were thematically constructed. The implications for future work are embedded in the gaps between these knowns and unknowns.

### **What is Known about RL?**

What is known about RL from the literature concerns both *why* and *how* people have described the construct. Through interpretation, two main categories were constructed and are presented in Appendix A: (a) *why* people have decided to write on RL and the reasons it has been described; and (b) *how* people have written about RL to describe what RL is and how it manifests.

#### *Reasons for Description of RL*

The extant RL literature ranges across time and field of study but the motivations for its construction have been consistent. Describing RL has been motivated by inclinations to: (a) open leadership systems to include more people, (b) extend leadership focus for the greater good, and (c) promote leadership with strong ethical groundings.

Traditional leadership models ostensibly close their doors to people outside of the board room. Such models include one or a few people at the top of an organization leading down a rigid hierarchy (Northouse, 2016). However, literature suggests RL operates as an open system to include meaningful input from various people acting in and upon it (Berger, Choi, & Kim, 2011; Broadbent, 2015; Dent, 2012; Ketola, 2012; Lynham, 1998, 2000, 2004; Pless & Maak, 2011; Sortie, 2007). For example, RL seems to reject great man leadership and accepts responsibility for the creation of common values and building of strong relationships to support input from a wide range of internal stakeholders (Burton-Jones, 2012; Doh & Quigley, 2014; Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Filatotchev & Nakajima, 2014; Freeman & Auster, 2011; Lynham, 2004; Maak & Pless, 2006; Maak, 2007). Literature also suggests that RL is accessible to external stakeholders such as competitors, customers, and interest groups as valuable inputs who may hold low formal authority over leadership but who have the ability to impact the system at many levels (Doh & Quigley, 2014; Filatotchev & Nakajima, 2014; Lynham, 2004; McCullough, 2012;

Waldman & Galvin, 2008). Finally, RL aggrandizes relationships by connecting people inside and outside of an organizational context to facilitating sustained relationships.

The literature also suggested RL as leadership for the greater good (Siegel, 2015; Waldman, 2011). RL requires leadership to assume an active role in surrounding communities toward “the advancement of humanism and the promotion of welfare on a global scale” (De Bettignies, 2014; Gond et al., 2011, p. 115; Maritz, et al., 2011; Pless, 2007; Voegtlin, 2015). RL has additionally been conceptualized as an approach capable of connecting people toward common human welfare (Cameron, 2011; Maak & Pless, 2006; Pless & Maak, 2011; Voegtlin, Patzer, & Scherer, 2012; Witt & Stahl, 2015). Focus on others requires RL to be affectively oriented with personal integrity (Broadbent, 2015), virtuousness (Cameron, 2011), and authenticity (Freeman & Auster, 2011), as well as heart and compassion (Mofuoa, 2010). Through affective nature and consideration for the well-being of multiple constituents, RL is not motivated by profit and internal success. Instead RL is created and maintained to serve the human community.

A final motivation for the conceptualization of RL has been in response to cases of ethical indiscretion (Dassah, 2010; Maak & Pless, 2006; Pless, 2007). RL literature suggested that ethical action be both the goal and the starting line for leadership behavior, judgements, and actions (Dassah, 2010; McCullough, 2012; Poff, 2010; Smit, 2013; Voegtlin, 2015). In regard to human resources, Swanson (2008, 2009) underscored a notion of ethical practice in the three-legged stool model sitting atop an ethical rug that “serves as a filter through which the integrity of . . . the host organization can be maintained” (p. 2). Such a focus on ethics may require a move away from profit centered leadership to being guided by doing good and avoiding harm (Pearce, Wassenaar, & Manz, 2014).

RL has been described to open leadership systems, extend leadership focus to the greater good, and ground leadership in ethical behavior. In order to enact and accomplish the three descriptions, RL has been described in multiple ways.

### *Descriptions of RL*

Three themes of RL description were constructed including: (a) association with extant ideals and leadership approaches, (b) a contextually bound system of inputs, processes, and outputs toward serving others; and (c) a set of affective leadership characteristics, actions, and images.

Throughout RL literature it is described in relationship to extant leadership approaches and processes including transformational and servant leadership. Miska and Mendenhall (2015) provided a substantial comparison between RL and other leadership orientations that illustrated connections with affective characteristics such as the focus on the welfare and prosperity of others. For example, RL has been strongly associated with transformational leadership practices (Bass, 1990; Burton-Jones, 2012; Cilliers & Coetzee, 2010; Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Waldman, 2001). Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as the process in which “leaders and followers raise *one another* [italics added] to higher levels of morality and motivation” (p. 20). RL has also been associated with servant leadership and the prioritization of fulfilling followers’ needs (Burton-Jones, 2012; Greenleaf, 1970; Patterson, 2003; Waldman, 2001). RL is implied to not only transform the status quo but to do so in a way that serves the need of others over the needs of self. Others have described RL in relation to virtuous leadership that raises the bar from “accountability, dependability, authority and empowerment” to the pursuit of prospective prosperity for all (Coldwell, 2011, p. 32). Still other writers found meaning in spiritual leadership bolstered by “values that have long been considered spiritual ideals, such as integrity, honesty, and humility” (Reave, 2005, p.1).

Descriptions of RL are also informed by which leadership approaches have not been associated such as: trait, skills, behavioral, nor leader-member exchange approaches (Northouse, 2016). Such approaches are focused on leader as individual operating to the better the work and lives of some, but not all, constituents. A lack of description of RL in relationship to leader-first theories further suggests it to be an approach to serve others.

RL is also described through relationships to extant processes, most notably, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). For example, RL has been described as an approach intended to achieve CSR and

positive social welfare (Filatotchev & Nakajima, 2014; Sortie, 2007). Other writers seemed to view CSR as a necessary component of RL or RL itself as a sum product of CSR and leadership ideals (Voegtlin, Patzer, & Scherer, 2012). In the literature it is clear that writers described RL through CSR and vice versa further relating RL action and social benefit.

RL has also been described as a system defined as, “a collection of parts which interact with each other to function as a whole” (Kauffman, 1980, p. 1). Systems such as RL are comprised of inputs, processes, outputs and contextual boundaries (Kauffman, 1980).

The literature consistently emphasized the importance of placing value beyond formal leaders in RL systems. Stakeholders—“a person with an interest or concern in something” (Mirriam-Webster, 2016)—was the most common term used in the literature to describe the multitude of inputs of RL (Blakeley & Higgs, 2014; Lynham, 1998, 2000, 2004; Maak & Pless, 2006). Defining who and what such stakeholders are is difficult but literature suggested that they include diverse people, concerns of time (having to take action now versus later), and even the physical environment (Financial Times, 2015; Sortie, 2007). The literature substantiated stakeholders as internal and external including formal leaders, employees, shareholders, customers, interest groups, governments, etcetera (Doh, Stumpf, & Tycoon, 2011; Doh & Quigley, 2014; Stone-Johnson, 2014; Voegtlin, Patzer, & Scherer, 2012). Literature also suggested that such stakeholders should be active contributors to the leadership system (Voegtlin, 2015). For example, Maak (2007) stated RL should “enable stakeholder relationships instead of limiting or controlling them” in order to facilitate their input and engagement (p. 331)

Across the literature stakeholders informed three categories of RL processes: (a) intentional individual action, (b) use of power, and (c) maintaining balance. Intentional individual action of multiple stakeholders was suggested to maintain or improve the leadership system (Doh, et al., 2011; Gond, Igalens, Swaen, & Akremi, 2011; Waldman, 2011; Waldman & Baleen, 2015). Individual action was described as vital, strategic, ethical and intentional through careful consideration and prudence (Broadbent, 2015; Coldwell, Joosub, & Papageorgion, 2012; Financial Times, 2015). The literature suggested that individuals must be responsible with their actions in order for the entirety of the system to be responsible.

The literature also described the dispersion of power with the processes of RL. Ketola (2012) described that power has potential to destroy or support RL, but seemed to suggest that to be supportive power must be shared to give voice to the unheard. In Lynham’s (1998, 2000, 2004) RL/P theory, power seemed to be a negative aspect of leadership as it can deteriorate ethical habits and enduring resources. Alternatively, power should be shared by leaders who act humbly through learning and adapting (Lynham, 1998).

A final RL process described in the literature was the act of balancing results, power, and organizational health. The literature consistently indicated that leadership must balance getting results and getting them the right way (Wells, 2009). Business oriented RL systems certainly need to create revenue, however balancing profit and success with ethical behavior characterized RL. RL was also indicated to balance power amongst individuals to avoid distorting empathy and humility (Cilliers & Coetzee, 2010). Finally, RL was described as balance between the concerns for the financial health of people and the physical health of their environment (Szekely & Kirsch, 2005).

The suggested inputs which inform RL processes ultimately lead to desirable RL outcomes. For example, RL outputs have been described to strengthen stakeholder relationships and solicit feedback to be shared and adjustments to be made (Maak & Pless, 2006; Pless & Maak, 2011; Voegtlin, et al., 2012). Desired RL outputs in the literature also included a focus on serving the common or ultimate good as discussed earlier (Maak & Pless, 2006; Maak, 2007; Cameron, 2011; Gond et al., 2011). Pless and Maak (2011) for example, described RL as “a force of good for the many, not just the few” (p. 5). Other writers suggested that RL should promote positive social change by challenging the status quo and altering societal norms (Dent, 2012; LaRocca & Groves, 2011; Pless, Maak, & Waldman, 2012; Voegtlin, 2015; Stone-Johnson, 2014). Finally, the literature suggested RL should aim to serve the Triple Bottom Line—going beyond profit to positively impact people and the planet (Burton-Jones, 2012; Dassah, 2010; Miska, Hilbe, & Mayer, 2014).

Contextual boundaries were composed the final systems description common in the RL literature. Within private industry, for example, RL was commonly described as a means to enhance reputation and revenue (Coldwell, et al., 2012; LORD Corporation, 2015; Maak & Pless, 2006) while also impacting society through campaigns such as CSR (Lehmann, Toh, Christensen, & Ma, 2010; Pless, 2007; Sortie, 2007). Alternatively, RL outputs were measured by the impact on patients and students instead of revenue and stock value in education and healthcare (McCullough, 2012; Stone-Johnson, 2014). The literature also suggested significant impact from external factors on RL. For example, in Lynham's (1998, 2000, 2004) RL/P theory the organization is surrounded by external and internal environments that allow for information to flow in and out of the leadership system. Badracco (2013) similarly described the importance of understanding "the forces shaping the economy and the society around [the organization] and the full implications of these driving forces" (p. 15). Having a clear understanding of contextual boundaries seemed vital for RL.

To complement the system perspective of RL, affective characteristics were entwined throughout the literature as images and metaphors. Traditional leadership theory has tended to highlight individual level leader-as-hero narratives (Northouse, 2016, p.19). Broadbent (2015) lamented, "most leadership frameworks exclude everyone except Superman or Superwoman" (p. 44). Conversely, characteristics associated with RL were endearing and engaging such as: honesty, integrity, courage, wisdom, compassion, virtuousness, tolerance, and empathy.

The literature commonly used images and metaphors to illustrate RL's affective traits. For instance, Maak and Pless (2006) described images in their Roles Model including RL as: visionary, servant, steward, and citizen (p. 107). Responsible leadership was also characterized as: change agent (Maritz, Pretorius, & Plant, 2010), architect (Maritz, et al., 2010), web-weaver (Maak & Pless, 2006) and integrator (Pless, et al., 2012). Metaphors through the literature also seemed to suggest that RL aids in development of nurturing and trusting relationships (Blakeley & Higgs, 2014; Maak & Pless, 2006; Pless, 2007; Stone-Johnson, 2014; Voegtlin, 2015) through love, tolerance and compassion (Mofua, 2010). Though these roles vary in meaning and responsibility they share a common affective optimism for RL.

RL literature is scattered in terms of origin and framework but the described needs and means are consistent. However, one notable issues arise from the lack of empirical methods of inquiry regarding the construct and reference to a robust theoretical framework.

### **Unknowns and Implications**

Though the extant literature has provided description of RL and its potential for positive impact there is still much to learn. The unknowns and implications resulting from this review are expressed in lacking: (a) empirical research and robust theoretical development, (b) descriptions within various contexts and (c) a description of shared essence that could aid in identification and refinement of RL. Such gaps in understanding thus qualify implications for future research, theory and practice on RL.

#### *Implications for Research*

This review was intended to contribute to the growing research on the construct of RL and suggest direction for future research. Thick and rich description of RL is lacking because the construct has prominently been studied with anecdotal and non-empirical research methods due to its relative youth in the leadership field. Thus, further empirical research with rigorous methodology could continue to add to our understanding of RL and respond to Miska and Mendenhall's (2018) call for "increased methodological diversity capable of capturing the particularities of each level of analysis" of RL (p. 124).

Torraco (2005) claimed that integrative literature reviews such as this one, provide sample questions to guide future research (p. 364). Some provocative questions might include:

1. What is the experience of RL by those in various leadership and management contexts?
2. How is RL experienced by those in various leadership and management contexts?
3. How are ethical processes enacted across RL contexts?
4. What are the implications of RL experiences for leadership and systems practice, development, study and policy?

### *Implications for Theory*

This review indicates a need for increased theoretical foundations of RL to further description and refinement of the construct. Throughout the literature RL was defined and described in a wide variety of ways. Some writers utilized one of the few existing frameworks. Other writers defined RL for themselves at the outset of their work. While other authors chose to not offer description of their framework the construct. Kelly (2010) highlighted,

Theory influences research design, including decisions about what to research and the development of research questions. Theory underpins methodology and has implications for how data are analyzed and interpreted. Finally, theory about a particular . . . issue may be developed, contributing to what is already known about the topic that is the focus of the study (p. 285).

Though theory underpins much of inquiry, RL does not appear to have been developed through robust theory building methods aside from Lynham's (1998, 2000, 2004) RL/P theory. For example, Maak and Pless' (2006) conceptual roles model has regularly served as a helpful guiding framework for RL research. Future theoretical inquiry may continue to refine the model through formal theory building processes. Lynham's (1998, 2000, 2004) RL/P theory was built through the General Methods Model of Theory Building (Lynham, 2002) but has yet to be informed and applied in various contextual environments for further description and refinement. Both RL/P theory (Lynham, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004) and the roles model (Maak & Pless, 2006) function to isolate the construct of RL. Both are also evidence that future RL research should continue to explore and apply strong theoretical frameworks by "contributing to what is already known about the topic that is the focus of the study" (Kelly, 2010, p. 285).

### *Implications for Practice*

Leadership and management practice are the testing grounds for leadership approaches including RL. For example, Swanson (2008, 2009) described human resource development practitioners as the "advocates of individual, group, process, and organizational integrity" (p.1). Without practitioners who implement RL in their work, the construct cannot be adequately refined.

The descriptions of RL offer lenses through which to view implications for practice. For example, RL has been described as a way to open leadership to more people. In practice this may require systems to seek the voices of a wider constituency both within and outside of their physical walls. Also, the ethical groundings of RL central to the leadership processes of the RL/P system (Lynham, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004) suggest that practitioners who implement RL may have opportunities to consistently make systemic ethical decisions and take ethical actions. For example, if serving the greater good is a central consideration of an RL system then ethical habits must be in place. The temptation to serve ourselves and our immediate interests is strong so leadership must counteract that inertia with ethical considerations across an organization. Lynham (1998, 2000, 2002, 2004) found that leadership in an RL/P system prioritized ethical habits including: doing the right thing, nurturing differences, possessing courage, and holding a deep belief in people (p. 214). Such ethical habits, in conjunction with an open system that values the many influential voices of leadership, seems to provide a platform to promote the good of the many over the few. RL is a leadership approach that could ensure that ethics are an always present consideration and process in an organization.

The affective characteristic associated with RL may provide actionable practices to follow. Being honest, straightforward, and empathic to nurture relationships amongst many diverse stakeholders is contrary to some leadership approaches. However, practitioners may look to such standards as both goals and evaluative measures. For example, in times of decision, RL requires transparency and openness so practicing leaders can reflect that in what they do but also by reevaluating past actions. RL is not intended to be a perfect recipe to an incredibly dynamic world. RL does seem to offer practitioners a useful framework to understand their work not as a lonely walk but rather as an ongoing trek alongside others for the betterment of society.



This review was purposefully based in the current state of RL literature since the inception of RL/P theory (Lynham, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004). Future research is now needed to identify congruence between the RL/P framework and RL literature as a whole. Based on this review, it seems that the systems approach to RL/P and the 3Es of responsibility (effective, ethical, and enduring), could be a viable framework from which to continue description, refinement, and application of RL across leadership and management contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This review sought to gather and learn from related RL literature to gain understanding of the current knowledge and provoke future inquiry. The RL literature has been motivated by lapses in ethical judgement and a need for selfless, open and systemic leadership. In response, RL has been described: in congruence with altruistic traits of extant leadership approaches, as a system to serve the greater good, and through positive metaphors of connection. However, how RL manifests in a variety of contextual boundaries and how RL may be further described and refined to inform future research, theory, practice and policy remain mainly unexplored.

Simon Sinek (2014) has claimed that “the true price of leadership is the willingness to place the needs of others above your own” (p. x). RL may continue to gain relevancy as expectations for business, leadership, and management continue to grow toward serving society alongside their own interests. RL seems to be a construction of, and approach to, leadership primed to pay the price for a more effective and ethical organization, society, and planet.

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## APPENDIX A

Structure of findings pertaining to what is known about RL from the extant literature. Sub questions included are: 1. the association between RL and other theories; 2. Why people have written about RL; and 3. How people have written about RL

