

Transformational and Active Transactional Leadership in the Canadian Military

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Researchers Gary Ivey from the National Defense Headquarters, Ottawa, and Theresa Kline from the University of Calgary examine the effects of transformational and active transactional leadership in the Canadian military. Transformational style leadership elicits efforts and commitment from followers by addressing followers' emotions, values, and long term goals, while also assessing followers' motives and satisfying individual needs at a personal level. In contrast, transactional style leadership is characteristically more structured, and based upon contingent punishment and reward. As the authors note, previous research has indicated that transformational leadership styles elicit greater effort, motivation, and commitment by followers when employed by leaders. The authors' study of the effects of these styles of leadership across the Canadian armed forces has three goals: first to examine the presence of transformational and active transactional leadership styles across ranks, and the affects of these leadership styles on the effectiveness of leadership outcomes as perceived by followers. Secondly, to determine whether or not the type of leadership expected of leaders by followers was influenced by organizational norms and expectations and if leadership expectations differed as a function of rank. Finally, the authors sought to examine whether or not the discrepancy between what followers expected of leaders and actual leadership styles affect outcomes associated with good leadership.

The study conducted by the authors examined about 700 members of Canadian Army, Navy, and Air Force, all of whom varied by rank, gender, education, years of service and other factors. Data was collected over the course of one year using the Unit Morale Profile (UMP), a survey comprised of a variety of scales measuring organizational factors deemed to contribute to military unit effectiveness. To test leadership, a Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), modified for military use, was used to assess a full range of leadership behaviors based upon followers' perceptions and expectations of their immediate supervisors' leadership behaviors. Using this method, transformational, transactional, and laissez faire leadership characteristics were measured.

Data gathered by the authors indicates that transformational leadership is prevalent, expected, and effective at all hierarchical levels across the Canadian armed forces. Furthermore, transformational predicted effective leadership and follower job satisfaction across all ranks measured, though the authors note that the study did not support pure situational theories of leadership. Transactional leadership style characteristics (such as contingent reward and management by exception behaviors) were uniformly apparent across both non-commissioned and commissioned officers and their respective subordinates. Although contingent reward leadership was a strong predictor of job satisfaction and follower attitudes toward the leader, it did not predict the outcome as

strongly as transformational leadership. According to the authors, this is consistent with prior research done by Kane and Tremble (2000); Waldman et. Al (1990) in which transformational leadership predicted both of the above outcomes better than contingent reward leadership.

Finally, the authors review some of the limitations of the study conducted. Regarding sample size, the authors acknowledge that the senior officer group was relatively small, and that the collected data came from the same followers. Regarding data collection, because the data is based upon followers ratings of leaders only, the results may not be a true measure of the leaders' actual behaviors. Furthermore, priming effects in the questionnaire used may have been responsible for the high correlations between transformational and contingent reward leadership behaviors and attitudes toward the supervisor.

The authors also suggest that future research could potentially look at the effects of individual differences in leaders or followers along such variables as personality, values, and preferences, and could also look at the differences in follower attitudes amongst minorities in the armed forces.