Review

Leader-follower transgressions, relationship repair strategies and outcomes: A state-of-the-science review and a way forward

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ABSTRACT

A growing body of literature has focused on transgressions in the workplace and more recently, with respect to leader-follower relationships. Despite the important implications of leader and follower transgressions and relationship repair for work outcomes, there has not been a systematic review that examines the broad spectrum of leader and follower transgressions and most importantly adopts a dynamic relational process perspective. We view transgressions as key events in leader-follower relationships that trigger re-evaluation of the relationship, relationship repair processes and influence work outcomes. The purpose of this review is threefold. First, to provide a state-of-the-science review of the growing literature. Second, to offer a critical analysis of leader and follower transgressions in terms of conceptualization, methodological issues and theoretical underpinnings. Third, to outline a research agenda addressing leader-follower transgressions, relationship repair processes and outcomes based on relationship science.

Introduction

Relationship fractures and transgressions in the workplace have received considerable attention in organizational research (e.g., Basford, 2014; Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998; Liden, Anand, & Vidyarthi, 2016; Olekalns, Barker, & Vogus, 2019). Transgression events threaten workplace relationships and may cause irreparable damage and dissolution. A focal work relationship is that between a leader and a follower and transgression events in this context can potentially have serious implications for work-related outcomes such as well-being, engagement, performance, and retention (e.g., Basford, Offermann, & Behrend, 2014; Byrne, Barling, & Dupré, 2014; Krantz, 2006; Shapiro, Boss, Salas, Tangirala, & Von Glinow, 2011; Stouten & Tripp, 2009).

Prior integrative research on workplace transgressions has focused on work relationships in general (Ferris et al., 2009; Liden et al., 2016; Olekalns et al., 2019) and has offered important insights on relational processes such as relationship resilience and trust repair (e.g., Kramer & Lewicki, 2010). However, there has been limited emphasis on the leader-follower dyad and the specific implications of leader-follower transgressions. The implicit assumption underlying previous general reviews is that leader-follower relations are similar to other relationships in organizational contexts and that any general insights can also

be applied to the leadership domain. Given the abundance of studies focusing on relationship-based leadership perspectives (for a review see Epitropaki, Martin, & Thomas, 2017; Martin, Epitropaki, Erdogan, & Thomas, 2019), with Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) being the second most prolific research area in the leadership domain (e.g., Bauer & Erdogan, 2015), such an assumption downplays the complexity of leader-follower relationships. We argue that leader-follower transgressions warrant special attention as there are some fundamental differences between leader-follower relationships and other workplace relationships which we describe below.

The leader-follower relationship is characterized by power asymmetries due to hierarchical status differences that can influence the outcomes of the transgression and the relationship repair strategies employed. Prior research on forgiveness has shown that the more powerful the partner, the less likely it is for him/her to forgive (e.g., Fincham, Hall, & Beach, 2006) and the more likely it is for him/her to seek revenge (e.g., Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006). Also, leader-follower relationships are characterized by high levels of interdependence (Hollander, 1992; Thomas, Martin, Epitropaki, Guillaume, & Lee, 2013; Tjosvold, 1989). The follower depends upon the leader for a wide range of resources (such as affiliation, service, goods, money, information, status) but also the leader depends upon the follower for resources such

as high levels of performance (Wilson, Sin, & Conlon, 2010). Such high interdependence has important implications for relationship maintenance acts following a transgression.

We are only aware of one major review that has focused on leader transgressions (Krylova, Jolly, & Phillips, 2017) and no reviews that address follower transgressions or, importantly, emphasize *both* leadership and followership perspectives. Krylova et al. (2017) provided a very good review of integrity-based transgressions and adopted mainly a leader-centric view of transgressions. They specifically reviewed the literature on leader's integrity-based wrongdoing and subsequent damage to followers' trust and moral identity. In doing so, they synthesized existing research on integrity-based wrongdoing with the experimental philosophy literature on moral cognition (e.g., Cushman, 2008). The aim of our review is to focus on a broad spectrum of transgressions and adopt a relational lens in order to cast light on *both* leader and follower transgressions, relationship repair strategies and work-related outcomes.

We aim to make three key contributions: First, we critically review existing definitions and typologies, discuss theoretical underpinnings, address methodological issues and offer suggestions for increased definitional clarity and methodological advancement. Second, we provide a state-of-the-science review of the growing literature. We review existing research on both leader *and* follower transgressions, relationship repair processes and outcomes, identify points of convergence and gaps in the literature. Third, we outline a future research agenda by offering an integrative process model of leader-follower transgressions, relationship repair strategies, boundary conditions and outcomes based on insights from the multidisciplinary literature on relationship science. We try to uncover the nuances of the phenomenon of transgressions, its dynamic and events-based nature and its implications for individual, dyadic and group outcomes in organizational settings. We believe that our review is timely and can significantly extend our understanding of what happens when things go wrong in leader-follower relationships as well as how (and under which conditions) the relationship can be repaired.

Conceptualization of leader and follower transgressions

Definitions and typologies

Interpersonal transgressions have been generally defined as "… actions taken by others against a person that go beyond the limits of normative social intercourse and, therefore, violate various social and moral codes" (Jones, Moore, Schratter, & Negel, 2001, p. 234). In the broad workplace relationships literature, in addition to 'transgressions' (e.g., Abrams, Travaglino, Marques, Pinto, & Levine, 2018; Shapiro et al., 2011; van Houwelingen, van Dijke, & De Cremer, 2015), we find similar terms such as 'betrayals' (e.g., Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010; Krantz, 2006; Reina & Reina, 2006), 'offenses' (e.g., Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001) and 'trust violations' (e.g., Schweitzer, Hershey, & Bradlow, 2006) to denote actions that cause harm to a potential victim (or victims) at work.

Leader transgressions have been defined similarly to interpersonal transgressions as "leaders' actions, at work, whose appropriateness is questionable when judged by norms associated with workplace-related policies, procedures, or practices and/or with codes of interpersonal conduct" (Shapiro et al., 2011, p. 412). Basford (2014) further focused on supervisor transgressions at work and defined them as "… supervisor's actions in the workplace that are perceived to violate work norms, including those relating to policies, procedures, practices, or interpersonal conduct" (p. 81). Basford argued that examining supervisor transgressions versus general leader transgressions is relevant due to the unique nature of the supervisor-subordinate relationship. In his view, employees will experience different interactions with leaders at various hierarchical levels (Zaccaro & Marks, 1999) and thus the implications of supervisory (i.e., direct manager's) transgressions will not

be the same as CEO or senior leaders' transgressions. Basford thus indirectly acknowledged the complex and multi-level nature of leader transgressions, but this is not reflected either in his definition or typology of transgressions. To the best of our knowledge, there does not exist a separate definition of follower transgressions.

When it comes to specific transgression typologies, one of the earliest categorizations of workplace transgressions (not necessarily focused exclusively on leaders), is that by Bies and Tripp (1996, 2004). Namely, they suggested that *workplace offenses* can be categorized as: (a) goal obstruction (e.g., actions obstructing an employee's achievements); (b) violation of rules, norms and promises (e.g., taking credit for other's performance or ideas); and (c) status and power derogation (e.g., hypercritical, over-demanding, harsh superiors). In the trust literature, there is a well-established distinction between *competence-* and *integrity-based* trust violations or transgressions (Dirks, Kim, Ferrin, & Cooper, 2011; Ferrin, Kim, Cooper, & Dirks, 2007; Kim, Cooper, Dirks, & Ferrin, 2013; Kim, Dirks, Cooper, & Ferrin, 2006; Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004). *Competence-based transgressions* involve unintentionally harming the followers due to the lack of knowledge, skills or resources (Kim et al., 2004) whereas *integrity-based transgressions* entail intentionally offending or inconveniencing followers because of selfishness, dishonesty or discrimination (Kim et al., 2006; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995).

In the leadership literature, Shapiro et al. (2011) offered a typology of eight leader transgressions: (a) *absenteeism/negligence of duty* (e.g., the leader neglecting duties and/or being absent from the organization during expected work hours); (b) *verbal/physical abusiveness* (e.g., the leader shouting at employees or using offensive language); (c) *discrimination* (e.g., the leader treating male and female followers differently); (d) *favoritism* (e.g., the leader defending preferred followers when they break rules); (e) *dishonesty* (e.g., the leader lying on reports, taking credit for other's achievements); (f) *incompetence* (e.g., the leader not employing correct procedures while performing duties); (g) *interpersonal sabotage* (e.g., the leader impeding followers' promotion to secure their own position in department); and (h) *miscellaneous*. Shapiro et al. (2011) further identified that more than half of the leader-transgressors were just one or two hierarchical levels above the participants and the most frequent type was dishonesty-related transgressions.

Other typologies include the one by Basford (2014) who identified eleven supervisory transgression types and further classified them on a spectrum ranging from active to passive. *Active transgressions* were considered those that the supervisor commits by intentionally behaving in a certain way, such as performance criticisms and demeaning insults. On the other side of the spectrum, *passive supervisor transgressions* are those that arise from the lack of supervisor action, effort, or behavior, such as undersupplied resources, and underprovided recognition. Grover, Hasel, Manville, and Serrano-Archimi (2014) also classified transgressions into two types, *recoverable* and *unrecoverable*. They generally classified competence-based transgressions as recoverable and integrity-based transgressions as unrecoverable but further highlighted the importance of acknowledging factors and conditions that allow for recovery such as intentionality.

In the leadership literature, there are no specific typologies of follower transgressions, but we can borrow insights from the literature on workplace deviance and counterproductive work behaviors. Robinson and Bennett (1995) defined employee deviance as "… voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both" (p. 556) and identified four types of deviance, two organization-focused, i.e., production deviance (e.g., leaving early), property deviance (e.g., stealing from the company) and two interpersonal co-worker focused, i.e., political deviance (e.g., gossiping about co-workers) and personal aggression (e.g., verbal abuse). Gruys and Sackett (2003) have also offered a taxonomy of eleven counterproductive work behaviors: (a) theft and related behavior; (b) destruction of property; (c) misuse of

information; (d) misuse of time and resources; (e) unsafe behavior; (f) poor attendance; (g) poor quality work; (h) alcohol use; (i) drug use; (j) inappropriate verbal actions; and (k) inappropriate physical actions. It is important to note that the above typologies are not directly focused on the leader-follower relationship. The transgression target is either the organization in general (such as stealing from the company, leaving early and wasting resources) or the co-workers (such as gossiping about co-workers and blaming co-workers) and there is no explicit acknowledgement that these are examples of deviance in leader-follower interactions. However, subsequent empirical studies have explicitly linked leadership with employee deviance behaviors (Mayer, Thau, Workman, Van Dijke, & De Cremer, 2012; Park et al., 2019). For example, Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) added supervisor-directed deviance to Bennett and Robinson's (2000) model and adapted their interpersonal deviance items to indicate behaviors targeted against the supervisor (instead of the co-worker). Other studies (e.g., van Gils, Van Quaquebeke, van Knippenberg, van Dijke, & De Cremer, 2015) argued that leaders serve as representatives for their organization and thus follower organizational deviance can be viewed as leader-targeted. Based on this literature, we argue that employee deviance typologies can offer some general insights on the possible content of follower transgressions.

We summarize all the above typologies in Table 1.

As it becomes evident from Table 1, when attempting to synthesize these diverse typologies into a unified framework, three broad types of leader-follower transgressions emerge: (a) transgressions violating the existing task accomplishment and performance norms, such as incompetence, absenteeism and negligence of duty which we classify as *task-focused transgressions*; (b) transgressions violating norms of interpersonal interaction and hurting a person's self-esteem, such as interpersonal sabotage and verbal abuse, labeled *person-focused transgressions*; and (c) transgressions which violate moral and ethical norms such as dishonesty and discrimination, labeled *ethics-focused transgressions*.

Table 1 offers a comparison of existing typologies under this tripartite framework of task-, person- and ethics-focused transgressions. As we can see in Table 1, there are inevitably overlaps and redundancies among typologies. For example, Basford's (2014) category of inequitable behavior encompasses Shapiro et al.'s (2011) discrimination and favoritism themes. Shapiro et al.'s (2011) absenteeism/ negligence of duty category encompasses aspects of Basford's (2014)

undersupplied resources, since employees in both categories are not provided with sufficient support. Furthermore, Basford's (2014) false accusations contain elements of Shapiro et al.'s dishonesty and interpersonal sabotage themes, as well as the categories of recognition and unfair employment decisions. One difference between Shapiro et al.'s (2011) categories of leader transgressions and Basford's (2014) categories of supervisor transgressions is that the category of leader *incompetence* did not arise as a common theme in Basford's study. Basford (2014) suggested that this discrepancy arose due to the change in the focal transgressor - from the leader in general to the supervisor. We can also see that some established typologies such as the competency vs. integrity violations framework (Kim et al., 2004) do not include person-focused transgressions i.e., behaviors that violate interpersonal norms and 'attack' a person's self-concept and self-esteem.

We further observe that the power and hierarchical status differences characterizing leader-follower relationships become more evident in certain transgression types than others. For example, performance criticisms, undersupplied resources, underprovided recognition, unfair employment decisions, favoritism and abuse of power are more likely to be leader-based transgressions. On the other hand, transgression types such as dishonesty and incompetence can equally apply to both leaders and followers. Our tripartite framework offers a broad taxonomy for both leader and follower transgressions and does not explicitly acknowledge issues related to power or hierarchical status differences. We nonetheless discuss such issues in detail in later sections where we present our integrative framework (An integrative model of leader-follower transgressions, relationship repair strategies and outcomes from an interdependence theory perspective section) and most specifically in relation to the relationship repair strategies a transgressor or a victim may employ after a transgression.

When reviewing past typologies, we also notice that attempts to qualitatively differentiate between transgression types, such as Grover et al. (2014)'s classification of transgression typologies into recoverable (competence-based) and unrecoverable (integrity-based) mix boundary conditions and attributional processes in the content of transgressions. Recovery is not an inherent characteristic of the transgression type but dependent upon the victim's attributions and the transgressor's behavior. The exact same transgression (e.g., dishonesty) may be recoverable if the victim makes, for example, an external attribution and/or the transgressor engages in a relationship repair strategy such as an apology

Table 1
A classification of existing transgression typologies.

Existing typologies	Task-focused	Person-focused	Ethics-focused
GENERAL			
Robinson and Bennett (1995)	• Production deviance	• Personal aggression	• Property deviance • Political deviance
Bies and Tripp (1996, 2004)	• Goal obstruction	• Violation of rules, norms and promises	• Status and power derogation
Kim et al. (2004)	• Competence-based trust violations		• Integrity-based trust violations
Fraser (2010)	• Performance issues • Unmet expectations • Ineffective leadership • Unwillingness to acknowledge responsibility • Structural issues	• Disrespectful behaviors • Communication issues	• Incongruence (of values)
LEADERSHIP SPECIFIC			
Pina e Cunha, Campos e Cunha, and Rego (2009)	• Silence • Organizational secrecy	• Indifference • Separation • Distrust	• Dishonesty
Shapiro et al. (2011)	• Absenteeism/negligence of duty • Incompetence	• Verbal or physical abusiveness • Discrimination • Interpersonal sabotage	• Favoritism • Dishonesty
Basford (2014)	• Performance criticisms • Undue demands • Undersupplied resources	• Demeaning insults • Inconsiderate treatment • Disregard of opinions • Underprovided recognition	• False accusations • Unfair employment decisions • Inequitable behavior • Inappropriate contextual selections
Grover et al. (2014)	• Incompetence	• Lack of caring • Interference	• Deception • Abuse of power

but it will be irrecoverable if no action is taken. Similarly, the distinction of active and passive transgressions offered by Basford (2014) mixes intentionality and the attributional processes a victim will engage into within the transgression content. This creates a 'messy' and confusing picture of leader-follower transgressions.

The impression that a reader gets when reviewing existing typologies is that of continuously 're-inventing the wheel' and although the insights on the content of transgressions are valuable, they do not help move the field forward towards addressing more interesting theoretical questions and dynamic phenomena. We hope that our tripartite framework can offer an overarching framework of leader and follower transgressions that future research can utilize to delve deeper into this complex phenomenon.

The way forward on definitional issues

From the previous discussion it becomes evident that existing definitions and typologies of transgressions adopt a narrow and static view, a 'slice in time' lens of a complex temporally unfolding phenomenon. Existing definitions (e.g., Shapiro et al., 2011) generally define transgressions as leader actions that violate organizational norms (such as workplace-related policies, procedures, or practices and/or codes of conduct) but fail to capture: (a) the transgression content, i.e., whether the transgressions are task-, person- or ethics-focused; (b) the relational nature of leader-follower transgressions. Past definitions mainly view transgressions as actions that violate organizational norms and do not acknowledge the importance of leader-follower relationship norm violations; and (c) their event-based occurrence and dynamic essence. Past definitions remain silent regarding the temporal nature of transgressions. We define leader (follower) transgressions as *leaders'* (*followers'*) *actions that violate the established task-focused, person-focused or ethics-focused norms and expectations in the leader-follower relationship. Transgressions are key events in a leader-follower relationship which diverge from the stable or routine features of leader-follower interactions and trigger re-evaluation of the relationship.*

Transgressions represent critical incidents (Flanagan, 1954), negative events (Lavallee & Campbell, 1995), a jolt (Meyer, 1982), 'discontinuous happenings' (Morgeson, Mitchell, & Liu, 2015, p. 519) or a shock in the leader-follower relationship and are thus far from routine and continuous. Given their event-based occurrence, the transgression event strength (Morgeson et al., 2015) is of importance. Characteristics such as criticality ("is the transgression event of high severity?"), novelty ("is the leader or follower transgression a new and unexpected occurrence?") and disruption ("does the transgression involve a discontinuity in the leader-follower relationship? What behaviors need to change due to the transgression? What relationship routines need to be adjusted?") need to be taken into account when studying leader-follower transgressions. Events of low severity, low novelty and low disruption are unlikely to even enter the potential victim's (leader or follower) awareness sphere and thus their implications for the leader-follower relationship and organizational outcomes will be minimal. On the other extreme, transgression events of high severity, high novelty and high disruption are likely to be *anchoring events* (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010) in the leader-follower relationship. Anchoring events are marked by extreme emotional and instrumental content, are encoded in autobiographical memory and have significant effects on the individual, the relationship and work-related outcomes. Such high impact transgression events can serve as anchors based on which subsequent leader-follower exchanges and relational events will be evaluated.

On the other hand, events of high severity and disruption but low novelty will imply some form of abusive supervision and destructive leadership in general (e.g., Tepper, 2007). Thus, transgression event novelty (or transgression frequency) can be a qualifying condition that differentiates leader-follower transgressions as 'discontinuous happenings' that diverge from routine leader-follower interactions (per our

previous definition) from abusive supervision, destructive leadership (e.g., Schyns & Schilling, 2013) and toxic followership (e.g., Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007) phenomena where norm-violating behaviors are routine and stable patterns of leader-follower interaction. Abusive leadership is a broad literature that has been the topic of several reviews (e.g., Mackey, Frieder, Brees, & Martinko, 2017; Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013; Tepper, 2007) and falls beyond the scope of this review.

In sum, our definition extends existing conceptualizations of leader-follower transgressions by acknowledging that: (a) they can be qualitatively different in terms of task-, person- or ethics-focused content; (b) they are fundamentally of a relational nature as they take place in the context of leader-follower relationships; and (c) they are not static 'snapshot' phenomena but instead discontinuous events in the leader-follower relationship that can trigger relationship re-evaluation processes over time.

Relationship repair strategies

After addressing transgression content and definitional issues in the previous section, we now shift the lens of our review to the relationship repair strategies that leaders and followers can employ after a transgression event.

Transgressor strategies

Prior literature on relationship conflict and trust repair (e.g. Lewicki & Brinsfield, 2017; Ren & Gray, 2009) has mainly identified four dominant strategies that transgressors can use in restoring damaged relationships and trust: (a) offer *accounts* for a violation in an attempt to deny, reduce, or explain their culpability; (b) offer an *apology*, (c) demonstrate *concern* for the victim, and (d) show *penance*. The role of the transgressors in promoting (or impeding) prosocial transformation and forgiveness through their actions has also been highlighted by Rusbult, Olsen, Davis, and Hannon (2001). They defined *amends* as the transgressor's inclination to accept responsibility for a transgression, offering sincere apology and genuine atonement. Amends may exert beneficial effects on victim cognition and emotion, thereby enhancing the probability of prosocial victim transformation. For example, by discussing the incident in a concerned apologetic manner, the transgressor may help the victim develop feelings of empathy, thereby promoting a more positive emotional state, or may identify extenuating circumstances, thereby promoting less malevolent attributions regarding the transgressor's motives (Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; McCullough et al., 1998).

One of the common relationship repair strategies that has been examined in the existing literature is the transgressor (mainly the leader) offering an apology. Apology is defined as a statement by which the offender acknowledges the transgression and asserts their responsibility for it (Leunissen, De Cremer, Reinders Folmer, & van Dijke, 2013). As noted by Basford et al. (2014), apologies are a "forgiveness-seeking strategy" (Waldron & Kelley, 2008, p. 112), and the most frequently used technique when individuals pursue forgiveness (Kelley, 1998). Basford et al. (2014) provide two theoretical explanations as to why apologies are effective in eliciting forgiveness and repairing relationships. In Goffman's (1971) view, apologies enable offenders to disassociate their bad self from their good self. Apologizing enables an individual to detach the part of the self that is transgressive from the part of the self that is regretful thus enabling the good self to be forgiven. Along with this "splitting of the self" theory (Goffman, 1971, p. 113), other theories provide arguments as to why apologies are often viewed as effective image-restoration and relationship repair tactics. According to correspondent inference theory (Jones & Davis, 1965), victims make presumptions about offenders considering the extent to which the transgression is under the offender's control and the extent to which the offender benefits from it. By apologizing the offender may
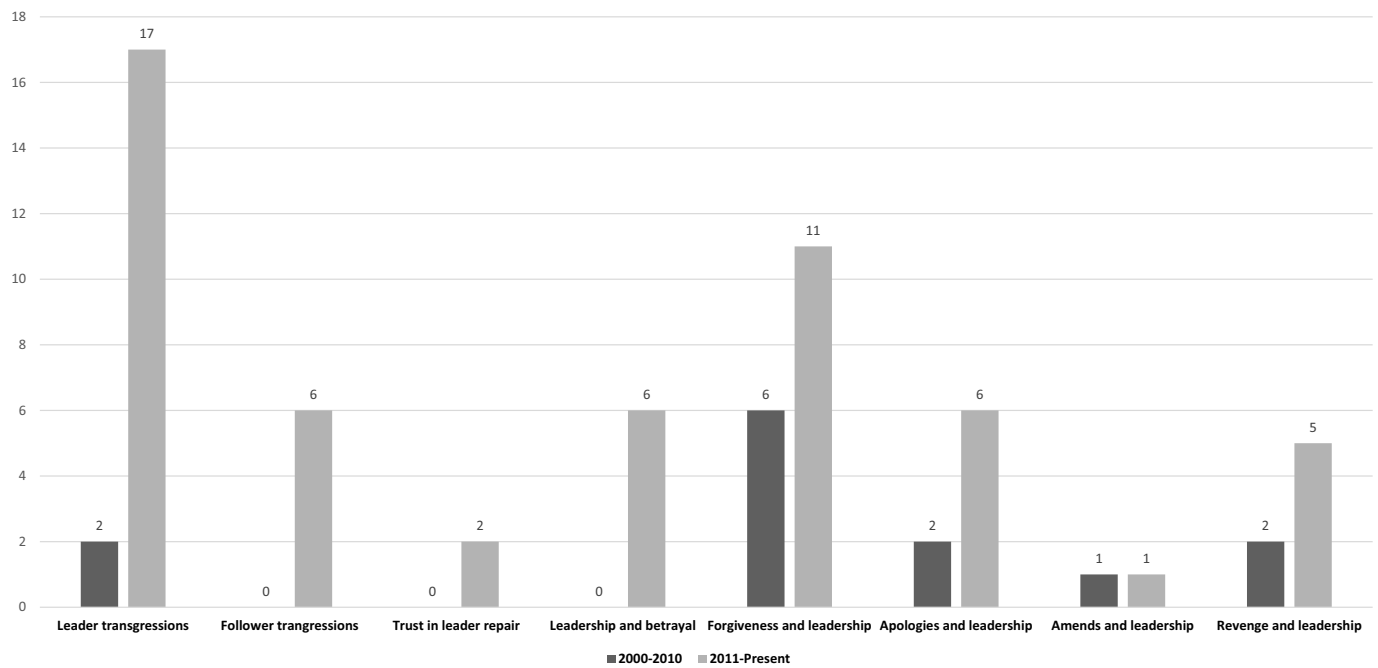
Fig. 1. Frequency count of articles containing leadership transgressions, follower transgressions, trust in leader repair, betrayal, forgiveness, apologies, amends and revenge, in the article title or abstract in 10 year increments since 2000.

convey the message that the harm was not intentional, that its consequences are also harming the offender, and that the offender merits forgiveness. Even though these two theories differ in some respects, they are aligned on the view that apology should facilitate forgiveness (Basford et al., 2014).

In addition to being just a verbal expression of remorse, Grover, Abid-Dupont, Manville, and Hasel (2019) observe that higher-quality apologies involve empathy, acceptance of responsibility and compensation in the form of penance (Fehr, et al.,2010). In their conceptual model of leader-follower reconciliation, Andiappan and Treviño (2011) identified sincere apology as a repair effort that leads to forgiveness. This notion has been supported by meta-analytic evidence which implies a strong link between apology and forgiveness (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010).

Victim strategies

Forgiveness is a rapidly growing area of research that holds promise for understanding leader-follower relationship development after a transgression (Fincham et al., 2006). Existing forgiveness conceptualizations are quite diverse (e.g., Enright et al., 1996; Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002) but they share an important common feature, i.e., the assumption that forgiveness is a complex transformational process, which involves prosocial change regarding a transgressor on the part of the transgression recipient. As McCullough, Fincham, and Tsang (2003) point out "… nearly every theorist appears to concur that when people forgive, their responses (i.e., thoughts, feelings, behavioral inclinations or actual behaviors) towards a transgressor become more positive and/or less negative" (p. 540). Maio, Thomas, Fincham, and Carnelley (2008) further tested the idea that the process of forgiveness is intrinsically different across diverse relationships and found important asymmetries in associates of forgiveness across parent-child and parent-parent relationships. They also pointed out that forgiveness is an evolutionary adaptation that protects relationships and that unforgiveness is related to avoidance behavior.

Scholars have begun to investigate forgiveness in organizational contexts, including the notion of leader-follower forgiveness. In their

review, Cameron and Caza (2002) underline the power that forgiveness has on individual and collective outcomes. In a similar vein, Caldwell and Dixon (2010) argue that love, forgiveness and trust are the core values of contemporary organizational leaders who strive to maximize value for organizations while enabling employees to realize their full potential. Fehr and Gelfand (2012) pointed to levels-of-analysis issues when studying forgiveness in organizational settings and proposed the concept of *forgiveness climate* which they defined as "… the shared perception that empathic, benevolent responses to conflict from victims and offenders are rewarded, supported and expected in organizations" (p. 666). Along similar lines, Bies, Barclay, Tripp and Aquino (2016) further argued that forgiveness must be studied as a multilevel phenomenon, embedded in context, as "…a part of a *system* of interconnecting psychological, social, structural, and cultural relations" (p. 246).

Review of existing research

Procedure and general findings

Given the importance of leader-follower transgressions, we conducted a detailed search of the leadership-related transgressions literature to assess the current state of the field. To identify publications for inclusion in our review, we searched Web of Science and EBSCO databases. The specific search keywords we used were "leader" or "leadership" ("follower" or "followership") 'and' one of the following terms: "transgressions", "betrayal", "offenses", "trust violations", "relationship repair", "trust repair", "forgiveness", "apologies", "amends" and "revenge". Our first search yielded 453 results. We then excluded papers that were not written in the English language, conference papers, dissertations, books and book chapters. This second search yielded 399 papers. We then focused on papers published in the fields of *psychology* (*applied, social, multidisciplinary*), *business and management* as our emphasis is on leader-follower relationships in organizational contexts. The result of this second step was 90 articles. We then read the title, abstract and main content of each of these papers. This final step revealed 67 relevant articles published since 2000 that have focused on leadership and followership transgression-related constructs and it is

evident that this number is rising (see Fig. 1). Interestingly, our search did not yield any relevant papers prior to 2000. As can be seen in Fig. 1, the majority of articles (19 articles) have adopted a leader-centric perspective focusing mainly on leader transgressions whereas there is only a very small proportion (6 articles) explicitly examining follower transgressions. A substantial part of the literature has examined relationship repair strategies, with forgiveness (17 articles) and apologies (8 articles) being the two dominant streams. It also becomes evident that there is a substantial growth of this literature in the last eight years which we anticipate will continue.

In analyzing the literature, one of the first observations is that there is a fragmentation of the leader-follower transgressions and the relationship repair literatures. Transgressions and relationship repair strategies have evolved as separate lines of research and there is limited integration between the two streams. Researchers have either examined leader-follower transgressions and their outcomes or relationship repair strategies (such as apologies) and outcomes. Relatively few studies have attempted to examine the dynamic relational process that unfolds after a leader or follower transgression has taken place, the transgressor's and the victim's actions and reactions and relationship outcomes (e.g., Byrne et al., 2014; Radulovic, Thomas, Epitropaki, & Legood, 2019). This fragmentation becomes evident in the keyword co-occurrence analysis we did as part of our review using VOS viewer (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010, 2019). Fig. 2 visualizes the co-occurrence networks of the most important terms extracted from the body of literature on leader-follower transgressions we have reviewed and presented in Fig. 1. In VOS Viewer, constructs are represented by their label and by a circle. The size of the label and the circle of an item is determined by the weight of the item. Lines between items represent links. The closer two constructs are positioned to each other, the stronger their relatedness (van Eck & Waltman, 2019). In order to construct this visual construct map, we utilized three pieces of information from the papers included in this review: keywords, title and abstract.

As can be seen in Fig. 2, 'transgressions', 'forgiveness' and 'apologies' emerge as nodes with high co-occurrence frequencies but the communication (or overlay) between these streams of literature is limited (as is evident by the few lines connecting the two constructs and by the different colors each node is represented). There is, thus, a need for an integrative framework addressing the dynamic relational processes underlying leader-follower transgressions in organizational environments.

We now proceed with a closer examination and a more detailed discussion of the reviewed papers and summarize findings on Table 2. Table 2 is structured around types of transgression (task-, person- or ethics-focused), who the transgressor is (leader or follower), the transgression target (individual, dyad, group or third party), relationship repair strategies and outcomes.

A first observation from Table 2 is that the vast majority of transgressions in the current literature are ethics-focused with most dominant one that of dishonesty. Leader dishonesty transgressions included deceiving followers, abusing their power, making promises while being aware they cannot keep them, cheating, offering a bribe in order to influence decision making, and many others. Ethics-focused transgressions thus appear to dominate the existing literature.

Table 2 further confirms our VOS analysis finding of a disconnect between research on transgression typologies and research on
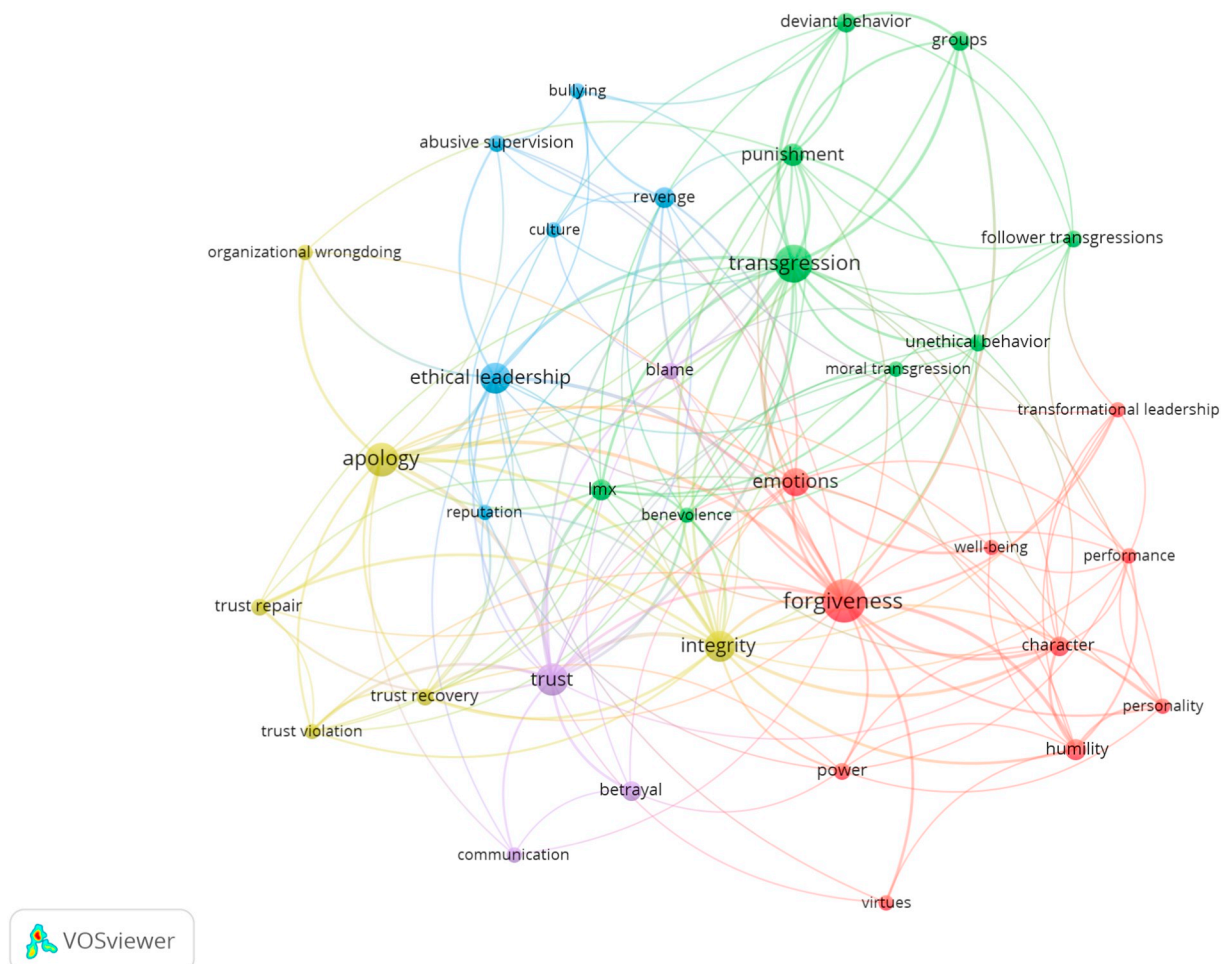

Fig. 2. Keyword co-occurrence mapping of the leader-follower transgressions and relationship repair literature.

relationship repair processes and outcomes. There are seven studies examining leader ethics-based transgressions (mainly dishonesty), a relationship repair strategy (apology) and outcomes together (i.e., Bagdasarov, Connelly, & Johnson, 2019; Byrne et al., 2014; Grover et al., 2019; Grover & Hasel, 2015, 2018; Radulovic et al., 2019; Zheng, van Dijke, Narayanan, & De Cremer, 2018) and one study examining a task-focused transgression (incompetence), a relationship repair strategy (penance) and outcomes (Dirks et al., 2011). The vast majority of studies have examined the direct relationship between leader follower transgressions and outcomes.

Furthermore, none of the reviewed studies examined more than one transgression type and a few studies asked participants to think of leader transgressions in general without specifying the content. For example, Shapiro et al. (2011) asked participants to "… think about a leader in their employing organization who had done something that caused them to feel disappointed in him/her as a leader due to actions at work whose appropriateness was questionable" (p. 415) and then to open-endedly describe what their leader had done. Shapiro et al. (2011) content-coded these transgressions into the eight types presented in our section on typologies. They subsequently found that leaders who were perceived to be more competent and inspirational were less punitively evaluated by employees for leader transgressions. LMX (i.e., leader-follower relationship quality) was found to be a significant mediator. Furthermore, employees who punitively evaluated their leaders were more likely to have turnover intentions and to psychologically withdraw from their organization. Similarly, Radulovic et al. (2019) in their field studies asked participants to think of leader transgressions they had experienced before completing the surveys. In their Study 3, they asked participants to specifically think of the eight transgression types proposed by Shapiro et al. (2011) before answering.

With regards to *transgression target*, the majority of studies presented in Table 2 focus on the dyad (whether the follower has experienced a transgression on behalf of the leader and vice versa) (Basford, 2014; Shapiro et al., 2011; van Houwelingen et al., 2015) and few studies

Table 2
Overview of articles focusing on leader and follower transgressions, relationship repair strategies and outcomes.

Transgression types	Transgressor	Transgression target	Relationship repair strategies	Transgression outcomes	Methodology	Indicative papers
TASK-FOCUSED **Incompetence**	Leader	Dyad/Group	None	Procedural fairness, Harm severity, Trustworthiness, Trust	Experimental	Haesevoets et al. (2016)
	Leader	Not specified	None	Discouragement, Demotivation	Qualitative	Thanem (2013)
	Leader	Group	Penance	Trusting intentions	Experimental	Dirks et al. (2011)
	Leader	Group	Apology	None	Case-study	Cels (2017)
	Follower	Dyad	None	Leader disciplinary behavior	Critical incidents and experimental	van Houwelingen et al. (2015)
	Follower	Dyad	None	General trust, Ability, Benevolence, Integrity	Experimental	Wang and Murnighan (2017)
Negligence of duty	Leader	Dyad	None	Ethical leadership perceptions, LMX, Moral reasoning	Experimental	Tumasjan et al. (2011)
	Leader	Third-party	None	Evaluation, Accrual, Conferral	Experimental	Abrams, Travaglino, Randsley de Moura, and May (2015)
	Leader	Dyad		Perceptions of the leader as being worthy of being followed, stress	Experimental and survey	Liborius (2017)
	Follower	Dyad	None	Followers' perceptions of the leader's worthiness of being followed, Followers' OCB, Followers' voice behavior	Experimental	Liborius (2014)
PERSON-FOCUSED **Verbal abusiveness**	Leader	Dyad	None	Subordinate injustice perceptions	Critical incidents and experimental	Liang et al. (2018)
	Leader	Third-party	None	Evaluations (friendliness, likability, warmth, approachability), Inclusion (in the team in the future), Punitiveness/bonus distribution, Prototypicality accrual, Conferral	Experimental	Abrams et al. (2013)
	Leader	Dyad	None	Tolerance, Condemnation, Moral emotional responses, Attributions to abusive behaviors	Experimental	Wang and Chan (2019)
	Leader	Dyad	Forgiveness, Diminished avoidance and revenge	None	Experimental and critical incidents	Zdaniuk and Bobocel (2015)

Table 2 (*continued*)

Transgression types	Transgressor	Transgression target	Relationship repair strategies	Transgression outcomes	Methodology	Indicative papers
ETHICS_FOCUSED						
Dishonesty	Leader	Dyad	Apology	Follower well-being		Byrne et al. (2014)
	Leader	Group	Apology	Perceived integrity, Willingness to risk	Critical incidents & experimental	Bagdasarov et al. (2019)
	Leader	Dyad	Apology	Forgiveness, Trust	Experimental	Grover et al. (2019)
	Leader	Group	None	Punishment recommendation	Experimental	Karelaia and Keck (2013)
	Leader	Group	None	Evaluations (friendliness, likability, warmth, approachability), Inclusion (in the team in the future), Punitiveness/bonus distribution, Prototypicality accrual, Conferral	Experimental	Abrams et al. (2013)
	Leader	Third-party	None	Transgression perceptions and judgements of transgressor	Experimental	Randsley de Moura and Abrams (2013)
	Leader	Group	None	Punishment severity, Punishment recommendation, Attribution of blame	Experimental	Bauman et al. (2016)
	Leader	Group	None	Ethical leadership perceptions		Marquardt, Brown, and Casper (2018)
	Leader	Dyad	Forgiveness	Relational effort, Job satisfaction, Subjective-well-being	Survey and experimental	Radulovic et al. (2019)
	Leader	Group	Forgiveness	None	Experimental	Stouten and Tripp (2009)
	Leader	Dyad	(Withholding) forgiveness	Transgressor compliance	Critical incidents, autobiographical recall and experimental	Zheng et al. (2018)
	Leader	Group	Apology	Forgiveness	Case-study	Grover and Hasel (2015)
	Leader	Group	Apology	Satisfaction with the leader	Experimental	Grover and Hasel (2018)
	Follower	Group	None	Disciplining employee behavior	Experimental	Desmet et al. (2015)
	Follower	Dyad	None	Leader disciplinary behavior	Critical incidents and experimental	van Houwelingen et al. (2015)
	Follower	Group	None	Punishment severity, Punishment recommendation, Attribution of blame	Experimental	Bauman et al. (2016)
	Follower	Group	None	General trust, Ability, Benevolence, Integrity	Experimental	Wang and Murnighan (2017)
	Follower	Group	None	Perceived leader integrity and benevolence, Trust in leader	Experimental	Shao (2019)
Discrimination	Leader	Third-party	None	Evaluation, Accrual, Conferral	Experimental	Abrams et al. (2015)
	Leader	Group	Apology	None	Case-study	Cels (2017)

focus on group-level (e.g., a CEO transgression towards the organization or the leader taking credit for his/her work team ideas) (Dirks et al., 2011; Karelaia & Keck, 2013). An explicit acknowledgement of the transgression target can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of leader-follower transgressions by taking into account the multi-faceted nature of the specific phenomena.

The role of *transgression severity* has been addressed in a few studies (although not presented in Table 2). For example, offence severity has been found to be an important determinant of punitive actions that people are willing to impose on deviant leaders (Karelaia & Keck, 2013). Byrne et al. (2014) found that offence severity moderated the positive association between leader apologies and follower's psychological well-being. Furthermore, offence severity moderated the association between leader apologies and their positive emotions and psychological health. More recently, Grover et al. (2019) examined the conditions under which apologies facilitate restoration of trust in the leader-follower relationship. It was found that the impact of apologies on forgiveness and subsequent trust depended on leaders' intentions and the severity of the trust violation's outcomes. Transgression severity

is thus an important moderating variable that needs to be taken into account in empirical investigations of leader-follower transgressions.

Finally, we could not find any longitudinal studies in the leader-follower transgressions literature. Only Radulovic et al. (2019) used a time-lagged design in one of their three studies to examine the mediating role of forgiveness in the relationship between LMX and follower attitudes and subjective well-being. Thus, time and the temporal nature of leader-follower transgression events have been completely ignored by existing research.

Outcomes of leader and follower transgressions

With regards to outcomes, the articles examined a variety of outcomes such as turnover intentions (Shapiro et al., 2011), psychological withdrawal (Shapiro et al., 2011), trusting intentions (Dirks et al., 2011), moral reasoning (Tumasjan, Strobel, & Welpe, 2011), attributions of blame (Bauman, Tost, & Ong, 2016), among others. From a multilevel perspective, most of these outcomes can be positioned on the individual (Shapiro et al., 2011) or dyadic level (Bauman et al., 2016)

and none of the studies has explicitly addressed group-level outcomes. In a field study of 162 employees, Shapiro et al. (2011) found that leaders who were perceived to be more competent and inspirational were less punitively evaluated by employees for leader transgressions. Furthermore, employees who punitively evaluated their leaders were more likely to have turnover intentions and to psychologically withdraw from their organization.

Abrams, Randsley de Moura, and Travaglino (2013) have examined forgiveness as an outcome in situations of transgressive captains and players in sports teams and tested the hypothesis that people forgive serious transgressions by ingroup leaders but not by other group members or outgroup leaders. Across five studies, they found evidence for a double standard in evaluations of the transgressive targets. Ingroup leaders were granted special license to transgress (transgression credit). More recently, Abrams et al. (2018) once again found support for the deviance credit hypothesis. Their studies showed that ingroup leaders benefited from both accrual of prototypicality and conferral (based on mere occupancy of the leadership role) of the right to depart from existing norms. Zheng et al. (2018) have also examined forgiveness as an outcome and specifically argued that a victim's withheld (vs. expressed) forgiveness promotes transgressor compliance when the victim has low power, relative to the transgressor. In the case of high-power victims there were high levels of compliance from the transgressor, regardless of whether they expressed or withheld forgiveness.

Tumasjan et al.'s (2011) study examined ethical leadership perceptions as an outcome of leader transgression and found social distance to moderate the extent to which leaders are perceived as ethical after moral transgressions. They further found ethical leadership to influence LMX. Karelaia and Keck (2013) examined punishments after transgressions and found an interactive effect of deviance severity and leader status on recommended and actual punishments. Leadership status was found to protect its holders in the case of low-severity transgressions but was a liability in the case of high-severity transgressions. Bauman et al. (2016) also studied punishments and found that people were less punitive when low-ranking transgressors imitated high-ranking members of their organization (i.e., a trickle-down model of transgression). However, imitation only reduced punishment when the two transgressors (high- and low-ranking) were from the same organization, when the two transgressions were similar and when it was unclear whether the high-ranking transgressor was punished. Wang and Chan (2019) utilized moral licensing theory and found that when leaders demonstrated prior unethical behaviors, followers, who were the victims of the leaders' transgressions, felt liberated to act in transgressive ways.

Regarding follower transgressions, our literature search yielded only six articles that addressed follower transgressions and findings are also summarized in Table 2. Desmet, Hoogervorst, and Van Dijke (2015)'s studies looked at follower punishment and showed that increased market competition made leaders' disciplining of ethical transgressions contingent upon the transgression's instrumentality to the organization. Leaders tended to punish the same ethical transgression less when it resulted in profit for the organization than when it resulted in loss. van Houwelingen et al. (2015) examined whether leaders may be unwilling to enforce moral norms and punish followers because of a negative attitude towards these norms. Their studies showed that leaders that construe norms on relatively low (i.e., concrete) levels are more likely to see norms as obstacles, whereas leaders that construe moral norms on high (i.e., abstract) levels have a more positive view of norms and are thus more willing to punish transgressing followers. Wang and Murnighan (2017) also examined follower punishment and uninvolved observers' trust in the leader. Their studies showed that observers trusted leaders who administered large or medium punishment more than leaders who administered no punishment when transgressors deserved punishment. They also showed that people trusted punishers more than non-punishers, but only when punishers' motives were not personal revenge.

Shao (2019) examined leaders' expression of moral anger as an outcome and tested two paths through which leader moral anger affects follower trust: a character-based path and a relationship-based path. The results from two experimental studies did not provide support for the character-based path but provided some support for the relationship-based path between leader moral anger and follower affective trust. It becomes evident from Table 2 that the majority of studies examined leader's punishment of the transgressing follower as the main outcome and that follower transgression outcomes are mainly on the individual and dyadic level (the leader's behaviors or emotions towards the transgressing follower). Once again, no group-level outcomes have been examined. Wang and Murnighan (2017)'s study, however, has looked at third-party reactions (uninvolved observers) and offers an interesting extension beyond the leader-follower dyad. It is highly problematic that the current literature totally overlooks the impact of followers' transgressions on leader-specific outcomes or leaders' perceptions of the leader-follower relationship. The leader's punishment of the transgressing follower (which has been the main outcome examined) is still a follower-centric outcome. Existing research thus gives the erroneous impression that leaders are impervious to followers' transgressions. Recent research has called for a more interactional perspective and highlighted the need to shift the focus and examine follower influences on leader outcomes such as well-being (e.g., Wirtz, Rigotti, Otto, & Loeb, 2017). Future research examining the impact of follower transgressions on leaders' psychological states, behaviors and attitudes can advance our understanding of the mutual interplay of leader-follower transgression phenomena.

Relationship-repair strategies

In this section we review strategies for relationship repair from both the transgressor (leader or follower) and victim (leader or follower) perspective found in the reviewed studies. As can be seen in Table 2, two key main strategies are observed. With regards to transgressor strategies, 'leader apologies' are the main focus of existing studies. When it comes to victim strategies, 'forgiveness' emerges as a key strategy and an important relationship maintenance mechanism.

Transgressor strategies

In their survey-based study, Basford et al. (2014) investigated how followers evaluate leader apologies and how these perceptions influence work-related outcomes. Specifically, they examined leader trustworthiness and its impact on subsequent leader apology, perceived humility and perceived transformational leadership. This serial multiple mediation process, in turn, influenced trust in leader, satisfaction with supervision, LMX relationship quality and organizational commitment. Forgiveness was shown to mediate the link between leader apology and the outcomes including LMX.

In another survey-based study, Byrne et al. (2014) found that leader apologies had a positive impact on followers' psychological well-being and emotional health, which was moderated by offence severity. Their second study showed that leader apologies had a positive impact on their own psychological well-being, positive emotional health and authentic pride. Furthermore, the nature of transgression moderated the link between leader apologies and leaders' positive emotions and authentic pride, while offence severity moderated the association between leader apologies and their positive emotions, psychological health, and authentic pride (Byrne et al., 2014).

Cels (2017) investigated public apologies that corporate and government leaders made following organizational transgressions. Their qualitative case-research showed that leaders use ethical leadership strategies developed for the organizational context and adopt them to the public context. In particular, the study identified four strategies that leaders employ: "articulating values in relation to past and future", "defining the wrongdoing", "constructing moral communities", and "differentiating responsibilities" (Cels, 2017, p. 759).

In a similar vein, Grover and Hasel (2015) examined how leaders recover following public revelations of their sexual indiscretions. Using qualitative case-research, the authors found that the survival of a scandal depended on several factors, including the extent to which the indiscretion deviated from accepted norms, the extent to which the behavior differed from leader's expressed values, the leader's power, and whether the leader engaged in atonement. The connectedness of these elements showed that atonement was possible if the behavior was neither too severe nor beyond their character and the leader was powerful enough. Drawing on this research, Grover and Hasel (2018) examined how leader's ethical behavior outside of work impacts follower attitudes towards them. A scenario-based study showed that ethical leaders are hurt by sex scandals more than unethical leaders, and that meaningful apologies are fruitful for personal responsibility but not for transgressions rooted in an official abuse of power.

Interestingly, Stouten and Tripp (2009) showed that following a transgression, followers profit more from apologizing and asking for forgiveness than leaders do. In two experiments using a social dilemma context where the norm of equality was violated, they showed that apologizing and asking for forgiveness led to less negative affect, more forgiveness and less revenge for follower transgressors but not leader transgressors. The authors explain these results by noting that leaders and followers are held to different rules and fairness violations can be tolerated from leaders but not from followers (Stouten & Tripp, 2009).

Victim strategies

More recently, scholars have begun to investigate forgiveness in LMX relationships. Thompson and Simkins (2017) investigated the impact of two distinct forgiveness motives, self-oriented and other-oriented, on LMX relationship quality. In the authors' view, self-oriented forgiveness motive is rooted in self-interest and rational calculation while other-related forgiveness motive is rooted in empathy and compassion for the offender. A field study involving undergraduate professionals and a time-lagged study involving graduate professionals from the USA found that high-quality LMX relationships and interpersonal citizenship behavior can be enhanced by both types of forgiveness motives. The authors further demonstrate that the link between forgiveness motive and LMX can be enhanced by one's disposition. In particular, proactive personality enhanced the impact of self-oriented forgiveness motive on LMX, and empathic concerns enhanced the impact of other-oriented forgiveness motive on LMX.

Drawing on the relationship science literature, Radulovic et al. (2019) proposed and tested a model of forgiveness in LMX relationships. A field study involving employees in various organizations in both individualistic and collectivistic countries (i.e., UK, Australia, Serbia, Greece) showed that higher quality LMX relationships led to higher follower's job satisfaction and subjective well-being via greater follower's forgiveness and subsequent follower's relational efforts (e.g., constructive communication). Furthermore, an experimental scenario study involving undergraduate students showed that LMX positively affected forgiveness and that forgiveness climate was a significant moderator. Lastly, a time-lagged study involving working professionals from the USA found that the indirect effect of LMX relationship quality on follower outcomes was enhanced by forgiveness climate. In general, their three studies elucidate the process of forgiveness in LMX relationships and demonstrate that forgiveness can be used as a relationship maintenance strategy that generates positive outcomes following a workplace transgression.

In summary, it becomes evident from the above discussion that existing research has focused on a narrow repertoire of transgressor and victim relationship repair strategies, namely apology and forgiveness. Expanding the lens to include other relationship repair strategies such as accounts and penance could offer valuable insights in the future. In addition, prior research has been completely mute on whether leaders engage in relationship repair strategies when they are themselves victims of follower transgressions. Do leaders employ forgiveness as a relationship repair strategy, under which circumstances and with what outcomes (follower, relationship and group-related)? This is an interesting question for future research to tackle.

Theoretical underpinnings of the reviewed studies

Prior studies have utilized a wide range of theories to cast light on leader and follower transgressions. Scholars such as Abrams et al. (2013, 2018) have drawn from the idiosyncrasy credit theory of leadership and social identity theory (e.g., Hogg, 2001) to address how ingroup prototypical leaders are granted 'deviance credit' by their followers. Drawing from idiosyncrasy credit theory of leadership, Shapiro et al. (2011) investigated the conditions under which leaders avoid punitive evaluations for their offenses. Radulovic et al. (2019) utilized social exchange and LMX theories to investigate forgiveness as a relationship repair strategy and its positive outcomes. Karelaia and Keck (2013) have used role schema theory to investigate the extent to which deviance severity and perceived rights and responsibility of leaders influence punitive actions directed at deviant leaders. Bauman et al. (2016) have drawn on social learning theory and psychological theories of blame to explain how unethical behavior by higher-ranking individuals modifies the ways in which people respond to lower-ranking individuals who then commit the same offence. Stouten and Tripp (2009) have drawn on equity theory and social dilemma research to investigate the reactions of group members following the violation of equality norm by either a leader or a follower. Zdaniuk and Bobocel (2015) have used the insights from idealized influence leadership to investigate whether leaders who nourish follower collective identity enable forgiveness among employees. Drawing on deterrence theory, Zheng et al. (2018) showed that withholding rather than expressing forgiveness enables the victims to gain offender compliance when the victim has low power compared to the offender. The framework of ethical leadership is also widely used among scholars. For example, Cels (2017) investigated how executives demonstrate ethical leadership when public apologies are needed.

On the basis of the above discussion, the absence of a coherent theoretical framework for examining leader-follower transgressions is evident. We will later attempt to offer such an overarching theoretical framework by drawing from Rusbult's (1980) interdependence theory and relationship science.

Measurement and methodological issues

As can be seen in Table 2, a variety of methodologies have been employed to study transgressions and relationship repair strategies such as *critical incident technique* (Basford, 2014; Byrne et al., 2014; Shapiro et al., 2011), *interviews* (Grover et al., 2014; Thanem, 2013), and *surveys* (Byrne et al., 2014; Shapiro et al., 2011) whereas the vast majority of studies have utilized *experimental designs* (e.g., Abrams et al., 2013; Desmet et al., 2015; Dirks et al., 2011; Randsley de Moura & Abrams, 2013; Shao, 2019; Wang & Murnighan, 2017). Indeed, more than half of the articles presented in Table 2 used experimental designs, most often experimental vignette methodologies (EVM). This is not surprising considering the fact that EVM has been a popular method in ethical decision-making studies (e.g., Pierce, Aguinis, & Adams, 2000). EVM is a suitable methodological approach to study leader-follower transgressions as it allows for experimental control over the manipulated antecedent and can offer important insights on the causal relationship between transgressions and outcomes. Nonetheless, EVM has shortcomings and especially the lack of scenario realism and result generalizability have been raised as a major criticism. EVM can suffer from limitations related to "hypothetical studies" (Lonati, Quiroga, Zehnder, & Antonakis, 2018) that do not elicit actual behaviors as they do not have real-world tradeoffs or payoffs (e.g., Antonakis, 2017). These include misrepresentation of self-report assessments, proneness to demand effects and social desirability responses, among others. Aguinis

and Bradley (2014) suggested that the realism can be improved if the level of immersion of the participants increases. They suggested use of audio, video and pictures as a way to increase the realism of leader-follower vignettes. Also, virtual reality technology (VRT) is another media type that can be used to present more immersive and realistic vignettes. Lonati et al. (2018) also advised researchers using EVM to employ "non-traditional stimulus materials, which can enhance the psychological realism and the immersion in hypothetical experimental environments" (p. 22). Another shortcoming of EVM is the threat of omitting important variables, given that the number of variables that can be manipulated and examined in an EVM study is small. This issue becomes evident in the studies reviewed in Table 2 as all experimental studies presented focus on one transgression type and a few transgression outcomes or one relationship repair strategy and a few related outcomes. Thus, such methodology cannot capture the complex, dynamic and multifaceted nature of leader-follower transgressions, relationship repair strategies and outcomes in organizational settings. EVM is still a useful methodology in this particular research domain as it can offer insights on whether a causal relationship exists but cannot help us understand *how* the leader-follower transgression processes unfold over time.

To answer the second question, different methodologies need to be employed. First, the use of sequential experiments, in which the postulated chain of cause-effect relationships is examined cumulatively in separate experiments, can help to test process models and also alleviate the problem of endogeneity bias (Antonakis, Bendahan, Jacquart, & Lalive, 2010; Fischer, Dietz, & Antonakis, 2017). Second, longitudinal multi-wave studies and latent growth model designs can be utilized to explore transgression dynamics over time. Also, experience sampling methodology and daily diary (ESM/DD) methods can be used to understand within-person processes (such as emotions after a transgression event) over time. Such methods have been widely used to study dynamic within-person processes involving affect, behavior, workplace events and transient phenomena in organizational settings (Fisher & To, 2012). A specific ESM approach that could be suitable for leader-follower transgressions research is *event-contingent reporting* which requires study participants to provide a response each time a discrete event of a particular type (in our case a leader or follower transgression) occurs. Despite its advantages such as ecological validity, examination of within-person phenomena and memory bias reduction, ESM is not without limitations (Scollon, Kim-Prieto, & Diener, 2003). Self-selections bias and sample attrition are important shortcoming as the heavy demand placed on participants may bias the final sample towards highly conscientious individuals. Reactivity may also be problematic for ESM studies as the repeated assessments may lead participants to pay unusual attention to transgression incidents which may unduly magnify the transgression effects.

Leadership research can further benefit from utilizing event-study analysis methodologies commonly used in economics (e.g., Campbell, Lo, & MacKinlay, 1997). Economists are often asked to measure the effect of an economic event on the value of a firm and their event-study analysis starts with a clear definition of the event of interest, identification of the *event window* and subsequent choice of a 'short horizon' versus a 'long horizon' method of study (Kothari & Warner, 2008). Leader-follower transgressions studies in applied settings need also to clearly define the transgression event of interest and carefully choose the transgression event window the study will examine.

Qualitative methodologies such as *process studies* can be further utilized as they utilize ethnographic, discourse analysis and other methods to uncover how and why things emerge, develop, grow, or terminate over time (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013). Narrative analysis (e.g., Clandinin, 2006; Elliot, 2005) can offer an in-depth look at people's experiences of leader and follower transgressions via their own stories and narratives. Such analyses can be further supplemented by computer-aided text analysis (CATA) methods that can enable the quantitative analysis of narrative data based on

word frequencies. CATA methods hold considerable promise for leader-follower transgressions research due to its high internal, external and construct validity but issues related to measurement error variance need to be also addressed by prospective studies (McKenny, Aguinis, Short, & Anglin, 2018).

As we also see in Table 2, field studies are generally rare (e.g., Byrne et al., 2014; Radulovic et al., 2019; Shapiro et al., 2011) due perhaps to the difficulty of obtaining organizational approval to study transgressions. Field studies are also constrained by the lack of an established measure of leader-follower transgressions that can be used in organizational surveys. Despite the multiple typologies discussed in Definitions and typologies section there is lack of a coherent framework utilized in survey research and prior field studies mainly asked whether transgressions have been experienced (without focusing on specific types) (e.g., Radulovic et al., 2019). We believe that our tripartite transgression framework (discussed in Definitions and typologies section) offers a useful platform for the development of such a scale and for a more systematic measurement of transgression phenomena in applied research.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the dyadic and at the same time multilevel nature of leader-follower transgression phenomena. Prior research has highlighted the misalignment of theory and methodology examining such dyadic phenomena (Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012) and the *pseudo-unilaterality* (i.e., failing to take into account both members of the dyad perceptions and behaviors) prevailing in existing research. We observe such pseudo-unilaterality in the context of leader-follower transgressions research. Most studies measure victim (most often follower) perceptions of the transgressive incident as well as their subsequent behaviors and outcomes whereas very few studies additionally focus on the transgressor's perceptions and behaviors after the event (e.g., engaging in some form of a relationship repair strategy such as apology). Such an approach disregards the fundamentally relational nature of leader-follower transgressions. Transgressions are dyadic situations in the sense that they occur within work relationships between individuals (leaders and followers) who are primarily nested within dyads and further nested in higher level units such as teams and organizations (Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012). Methodologies such as the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) as well as One-With-Many (OWM) models can be useful in studying leader-follower transgressions. Whereas APIM designs focus on unique dyads that do not share members with other dyads, OWM designs focus on dependent dyads in which multiple partners (e.g., followers) share a focal person (e.g., a leader). In organizational contexts, we normally encounter dependent leader-follower dyads and thus OWM models may be more appropriate. Reciprocal OWM designs in particular consider multiple perspectives on an interpersonal interaction or relationship and provide a more complete picture of the multifaceted nature of relational phenomena. Also, repeated measures OWM models can cast light on how a leader-follower relationship is unfolding after a transgression incident.

As a general comment, in all quantitative approaches discussed in the previous sections, endogeneity issues need to be addressed. Endogeneity refers to situations when a predictor variable is correlated with the error term of the outcome variable (see Antonakis et al., 2010; Hughes, Lee, Tian, Newman, & Legood, 2018). Endogeneity biases can mainly result due to (a) omitted variables, (b) designs that do not take account of simultaneity and (c) measurement errors (Hughes et al., 2018; Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2019). Endogeneity biases can potentially render results uninterpretable (Antonakis, Bendahan, Jacquart, & Lalive, 2014) and thus they need to be explicitly addressed. For example, a cross-sectional study examining followers' perceptions of leader's transgressions (predictor), a relationship repair strategy such as forgiveness (mediator) and turnover intentions (outcome) would be affected potentially by all three endogeneity biases. The cross-sectional design cannot address causality and simultaneity, there will be measurement error due to common method variance and followers'

perceptions of the leaders' transgressions are likely to be influenced by a series of exogenous variables such as their personality, Implicit Leadership Theories, positive and negative affect and so forth. Randomized control experiments are considered to be 'the gold standard method' for estimating causal effects (e.g., Antonakis et al., 2014) and thus the experimental designs that have been widely employed in leader-follower transgressions research (see Table 2) potentially help overcome endogeneity issues. With regards to field studies, instrumental variables can be used to combat endogeneity biases. Instrumental variables are exogenous predictors (i.e., influencing but not being influenced by the variables in the model) of an endogenous predictor. Examples of instrumental variables include individual differences (e.g., personality), demographic or biological factors (e.g., sex, age), or geographic factors. None of the studies we reviewed explicitly performed instrumental variable analyses such as 2SLS and this is an important limitation of existing research in this domain.

Leader and follower transgressions research can further advance by borrowing methodologies from other scientific fields. For example, agent-based modeling methodologies (Bonabeau, 2002), currently used across various disciplines (such as finance, marketing, medical sciences, and the social sciences), can potentially be utilized to capture the complex, dynamic, interactive processes underlying leader-follower transgression and relationship repair phenomena. Agent-based systems modeling (ABSM) is a powerful simulation technique that allows researchers to model phenomena in which multiple individuals (i.e., agents) situated in a social system (in our case leaders and followers) influence one another through their interactions (Serban et al., 2015). Specific events (such as a transgression incident) can be modelled and the process of how lower-level interactions (such as those taking place in a leader-follower dyad after a transgression) can yield higher-level outcomes (such as team outcomes) over time can be captured (e.g., Acton, Foti, Lord, & Gladfelter, 2019). Grand, Braun, Kuljanin, Kozlowski, and Chao (2016) state that the first step in an ABSM analysis is "… a narrative theory of what individuals do, think, feel, that gives rise to a higher level outcome." (p. 1354). The integrated model we present in An integrative model of leader-follower transgressions, relationship repair strategies and outcomes from an interdependence theory perspective section can provide the basis for such a narrative theory of the leader-follower transgressions process that could potentially be modelled in ABSM.

Finally, leader and follower transgressions research can borrow methodologies from neuroscience. Prior neuroscientific research has studied brain activation patterns in the process of forgiving and has found specific brain areas to be associated with forgiveness and specifically the left ventromedial prefrontal cortex, posterior cingulate gyrus and right temporo-parietal junction (Billingsley & Losin, 2017). Strang, Utikal, Fischbacher, Weber, and Falk (2014) used fMRI methodology to investigate brain processes involved in receiving an apology and active forgiveness of an ambiguous offence. They found that receiving an apology yielded activation in the left inferior frontal gyrus, the left middle temporal gyrus, and left angular gyrus and that forgiving judgments activated the right angular gyrus. Although neuroscience research on transgression-related topics and forgiveness remains in its infancy, the scope for future research clarifying the neural mechanisms underlying transgression and relationship repair mechanisms is vast.

Theoretical integration and future research directions

In previous sections, we reviewed existing literature on leader-follower transgressions, relationship repair strategies and outcomes and critically discussed the current state of the particular research domain with regards to its definitional, theoretical and methodological challenges. The need for a unified theoretical framework that can help capture the dynamic relational process of transgressions and repair processes over time became evident. Below we offer an integrative

model that synthesizes the existing literature and utilizes insights from Rusbult's (1980) interdependence model as its theoretical foundation.

Interdependence theory and insights from relationship science

Theory and research from the multidisciplinary literature on relationship science (otherwise referred to as close or personal relationships, see Berscheid, 1999) can enhance our understanding of relationship maintenance processes in leader-follower relationships following a transgression. While some distinctions between personal and workplace relationships exist, there is arguably sufficient overlap for cross-fertilization (e.g., Loignon, Gooty, Rogelberg, & Lucianetti, 2019; Mayseless, 2010; Thomas, Martin, Epitropaki, et al., 2013). For example, both close non-work and leader-follower relationships are typified by mutual influence, high trust, reciprocal liking, coordinated goals, responsiveness, and the provision of various kinds of resources and support (see Thomas, Martin, Epitropaki, et al., 2013). In addition, the relationship science literature emphasizes a number of generic relationship maintenance strategies that could be fruitfully generalized across virtually all kinds of relationships (Berscheid, 1999; Martin, Epitropaki, Thomas, & Topakas, 2010).

Interdependence theory is the central theoretical framework in relationship science and in a similar vein to LMX theory it is guided by the logic of social exchange and reciprocity (Epitropaki, Martin, & Thomas, 2017). Rusbult's (1980) investment model stems from interdependence theory and its central principle is that dependence on the relationship is a function of both the extent to which the relationship meets the individual's most important needs and the quality of alternatives for satisfying such needs. Dependence in turn leads to relationship commitment which is enacted by both parties adopting maintenance strategies to ensure that the relationship is perpetuated at the desired level (Rusbult, 1980). The investment model broadly differentiates between two forms of relationship maintenance mechanisms: cognitive and behavioral. Cognitive maintenance strategies serve to diminish the negative impact of transgressions on relationship perceptions and can be likened to a first line of defence against relational damage. The cognitive approach treats relationship transgressions as, in part, socially constructed, and thus as much in the eye of the beholder as in the behavior of the beheld (Thomas, Martin, & Riggio, 2013). In contrast, behavioral maintenance strategies are more effortful and involve either the inhibition of destructive behavior or the promotion of constructive behavior in response to transgressions. Behavioral maintenance tactics are more likely to be needed in the face of serious relationship transgressions that cannot be easily condoned or explained away (e.g., ethics-focused transgressions).

It is important to note that the literature on leader-follower transgressions has largely overlooked the role of cognitive maintenance strategies. Here we briefly review three kinds of cognitive maintenance tactics (for a more detailed discussion, see Maio & Thomas, 2007). First, people can idiosyncratically interpret the transgression in ways that enables them to maintain a positive view towards the leader-follower relationship. For example, Murray and Holmes (1993) found that ostensibly negative behavior (e.g., adversarial and judgmental) can be interpreted as positive behavior (e.g., willingness to be a straight talker and confront important issues), and that this flexible reinterpretation can help to maintain relationship perceptions over time. That said, the relabelling of transgressions is likely to be psychologically taxing, and in the case of serious offenses may not be always possible without appearing misguided (Maio & Thomas, 2007).

Second, it may be possible to recast the transgression by considering it in the broader context of other positive behavior. This tactic of re-integration is akin to saying, "Yes, but…". In other words, the transgression is acknowledged but offset by desirable characteristics. Murray and Holmes (1993) provide examples of such integrative thinking in their research on close relationships. Couples were asked to write

narratives describing both the development of their relationship and their partners' greatest faults which revealed many serious character flaws (and implied transgressions). Nevertheless, the significance of such faults was downplayed by integrating them with compensatory virtues, and the capacity to engage in such integrative thinking predicted greater relationship stability. Based on this logic, those people who cognitively cluster transgressions and compensatory positive behavior together may more effectively maintain leader-follower relationships than those who cluster them separately (Murray & Holmes, 1999).

Finally, it may be possible to reconstrue the transgression by attributing it to a benign cause that diminishes the transgressor's responsibility for the offence. This tactic of reattribution can be likened to saying "Yes, because…". For example, research on close relationships reveals that some people attribute their partner's most egregious behaviors (e.g., jealous rages; controlling behavior) to important virtues (e.g., loving; caring). People can also discount such behavior by attributing it to some temporary, external causal factor. Indeed, such congenial attributions can result from in-depth cognitive processing in which people consider the extent to which the perpetrator transgresses in different situations and across time (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953).

In contrast, the literature on transgressions in leader-follower relationships has paid some attention to the role of behavioral maintenances strategies. In line with the investment model, and as reviewed above, there is growing recognition that certain behavioral tactics used by both the transgressor (e.g., apology) and the victim (e.g., forgiveness) can be effective in repairing the leader-follower relationship. Here we highlight the role of accommodative behavior, a victim-instigated relationship maintenance strategy that has received considerable attention in the relationship science (but not the leadership) literature (e.g., Fletcher, Thomas, & Durant, 1999; Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991). In the context of relationship transgressions, accommodative behavior represents the willingness to restrict the urge to reciprocate in kind and instead to respond constructively.

Theory and research on behavioral accommodation is rooted in the investment model and the exit-voice-loyalty-neglect typology of relationship conflict (e.g., Rusbult et al., 1991). According to this typology, the four possible responses to a transgression can be distinguished on the basis of two dimensions: activity vs. passivity and destructiveness vs. constructiveness. Exit reactions are actively destructive (e.g., retaliation; seeking revenge; terminating the relationship), whereas voice reactions are actively constructive (e.g., constructive dialogue; adopting a problem-solving approach). Loyalty reactions are passively constructive (e.g., minimising or shrugging of the problem; patiently waiting for progress) whereas neglect reactions are passively destructive (e.g., stonewalling; disengaging from the relationship) (Rusbult et al., 2001). The good manners model of relationship conflict suggests that it is less important that people display constructive behaviors, rather that they do *not* display destructive behaviors due to the disproportionately harmful effect of destructive acts (Gottman, 1998). Thus, behavioral accommodation helps maintain relationships by 'nipping problems in the bud', and in doing so it prevents a downward spiral of negative reciprocity that is destructive to relationships.

As discussed earlier, a central principle the investment model is that of partner dependence which in turn leads to relationship commitment and the adoption of relationship maintenance strategies (Rusbult, 1980). Applying this logic to leader-follower relationships there are good reasons to believe that followers should be more motivated to maintain the relationship than leaders. First, leaders typically have better access to important resources (e.g., money, information, status) than followers, and therefore followers are likely to be more dependent on leaders than leaders are on followers. Second, given that a leader has many followers but followers only have one leader, a leader has disproportionate access to alternative relationships for meeting his/her needs. Hence, if a follower routinely transgresses, rather than undertake

the psychologically difficult process of repairing the relationship, a leader could transfer this investment to an alternative (more rewarding) follower. Followers, by contrast, are in essence 'stuck' with the leader. The upshot of this discussion is that leader-follower relationships are likely to be more important to followers than to leaders, and thus followers should be more inclined to engage in maintenance strategies than leaders.

An integrative model of leader-follower transgressions, relationship repair strategies and outcomes from an interdependence theory perspective

Let us now examine what happens after a leader or follower transgression event has taken place. From an interdependence perspective (e.g., Rusbult & van Lange, 2003), in the aftermath of a transgression, the victim (whether the leader or a follower) may find it difficult to depart from the negative affect associated with the incident. When victims experience negative transgressor-directed emotions, such as anger, a reduced motivation to engage in relationship repair strategies can be expected. Conversely when victims experience positive transgressor-directed emotions such as empathy, an enhanced motivation to forgive can be expected (Worthington Jr., 2006). Reconciliation following a significant transgression entails mutual investment, whereby both partners exert significant, coordinated effort to achieve a desired end state, i.e. restored dyadic functioning. Critical in the process is the pre-transgression relationship commitment (Rusbult et al., 2001). According to Finkel et al. (2002) strong commitment promotes positive mental events, pro-relationship motives and forgiveness. A second component of commitment involves long term orientation and forgiveness might be a conscious or unconscious means of maximizing long-term self-interest. A third component of commitment involves broadened interpersonal interests. In committed relationships, the motives of self and partner may become compatible to the extent that departures from self-interest benefitting the partner are not experienced as antithetical to self-interests (e.g. Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998). Commitment may thus inspire other-oriented actions that benefit the relationship, and therefore the self.

In order to understand leader-follower transgressions and relationship repair processes we propose an integrative model in the leader-follower relationship context. This model is presented in Fig. 3.

Guided by Rusbult's investment model (Rusbult et al., 2001), as well as the research of Fehr et al. (2010), we propose that victims' prosocial motivation transformations occur via (a) mitigating *cognitions* regarding transgressions and transgressors; (b) positive rather than negative *affect*; and (c) relational, dispositional and situational boundary conditions for relationship repair. For the process to begin, the transgression must first enter awareness, i.e. one member of the dyad to realize that the other has violated the relationship norms. This is an important stage that does not follow the same pattern for leaders and followers. As recent research on employee deviance has highlighted, leaders may be less accurate when assessing workplace mistreatment or even unable to detect it due to limited and screened information (e.g., Kluemper, Taylor, Bowler, Bing, & Halbesleben, 2019).

Affective reactions

After the transgression enters awareness, the initial reaction is often one of shock, repression and denial (e.g., Enright et al., 1996). The injured dyad member often feels deluged with mixed emotions such as hurt, anger, anxiety and sadness. The empirical literature reveals that following transgressions, victims experience diverse negative emotions and emotional reactions vary as a function of the nature of the dyadic relationship. Reactions generally tend to be more negative in highly committed relationships (Finkel et al., 2002; Rusbult et al., 2001).

Cognitions

According to attribution theory (e.g., Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1973) relationship repair strategies such as forgiveness emanate from a
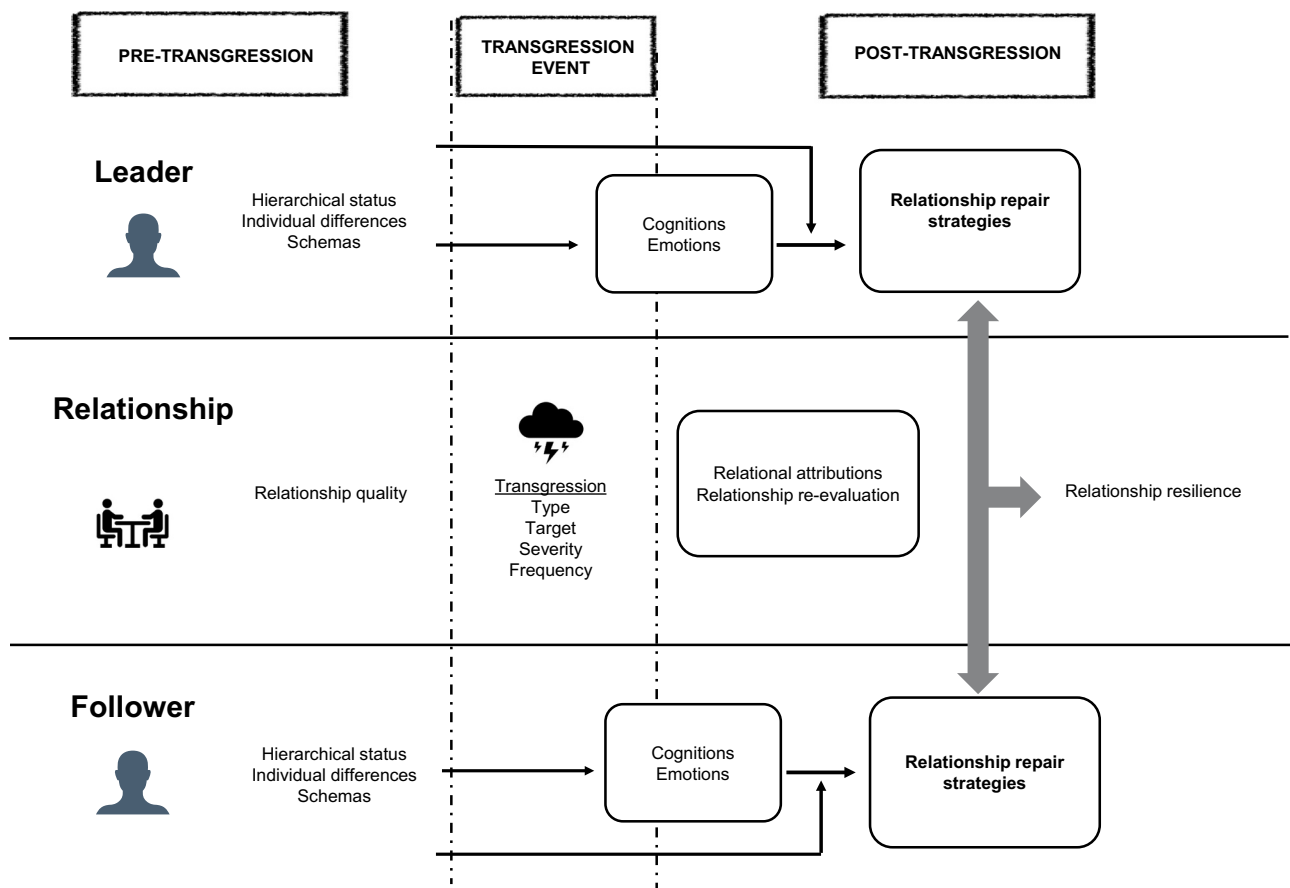
Fig. 3. An integrative process model of leader-follower transgressions, relationship repair strategies and outcomes.

victim's perception that the transgressor and offence are decoupled - that the offence was not an act of volition but rather a product of circumstance. If a victim makes internal, global and stable attributions of a transgression (e.g., "My manager committed this offense because he/she is untrustworthy, no matter the situation, and isn't going to change") he/she may be more likely to react negatively towards the transgressor. In contrast, external, specific and unstable attributions (e.g. "My employee committed this offense because he/she got put in a bad situation and won't do it again") might be more likely to lead to positive behaviors towards the transgressor (Hall & Fincham, 2006).

In the dyad context, relational attributions are also likely to occur (Eberly, Holley, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2011). Victims (leaders or followers) based on their relationship history will make relational attributions about the cause of a transgression event within the relationship (e.g., "my manager took credit for my work because we don't have a good relationship"). Eberly et al. (2011) argued that relational attributions lead to relational uncertainty and anxiety. Thus, dyad members will be more likely to proactively seek to repair their relationship through relationship repair strategies when they make relational attributions than when they make individual attributions as the ones we described earlier.

Boundary conditions

In our model we highlight a series of boundary conditions that are likely to affect cognitive and affective reactions to a transgression incident. First, transgression event criticality or severity is of importance. The effects of transgression severity have been examined in many close relationship studies (e.g., Fincham, Jackson, & Beach, 2005; McCullough et al., 2003; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002). Bradfield and Aquino (1999) showed that blame attributions were influenced by offence severity. Furthermore, it was shown that a global information

processing style increases willingness to forgive by making the offence appear less severe (Mok & De Cremer, 2015). Perceived severity of the critical incident significantly predicted whether or not a victim engaged in forgiveness (Beattie & Griffin, 2014). Fehr et al. (2010)'s meta-analysis found severity and forgiveness to be negatively correlated. Offence severity has also been found to be an important determinant of punitive actions that people are willing to impose on deviant leaders (Karelaia & Keck, 2013). Byrne et al. (2014) found that offence severity moderated the positive association between leader apologies and follower's psychological well-being. Furthermore, offence severity moderated the association between leader apologies and their positive emotions and psychological health. More recently, Grover et al. (2019) examined the conditions under which apologies facilitate restoration of trust in the leader-follower relationship. It was found that the impact of apologies on forgiveness and subsequent trust depended on leaders' intentions and the severity of the trust violation's outcomes. Transgression severity is thus an important boundary condition that needs to be taken into account into empirical investigations of leader-follower transgressions.

Second, transgression event novelty or frequency needs to be taken into account. As discussed in The way forward on definitional issues section, transgression frequency can distinguish transgressions that are novel, non-routine 'discontinuous happenings' in a leader-follower relationship from phenomena where norm-violating behaviors are routine and stable patterns of interaction such as abusive supervision (e.g., Schyns & Schilling, 2013) and toxic followership (e.g., Padilla et al., 2007).

Third, the *transgressor's hierarchical status* is an important boundary condition, i.e., whether the transgressor is the leader or the follower. Prior research has highlighted the role of the hierarchical status for forgiveness. Aquino et al. (2006), for example, argued that victims will not seek vengeance when the power dynamics of the situation make the

costs of doing so too high and that a victim may find it more advantageous to maintain a relationship with a high-status transgressor than with a low-status transgressor, thus motivating prosocial coping responses and discouraging revenge. Given that a transgressor of a higher hierarchical status can more negatively impact the victim than a lower hierarchical status transgressor "… due to the fact that the former may influence desired outcomes (e.g., pay, promotion opportunities, access to social networks), the victim may refrain from pursuing revenge because he or she fears the loss of these outcomes" (p. 54). They also suggested that people with higher hierarchical status may find it particularly insulting to be harmed by a lower status follower so they may believe that an aggressive response is necessary to enforce social deference. Forgoing the opportunity to enact retaliation would be to relinquish the opportunity to demonstrate their superior power. Thus, those in a more powerful position are likely to be less motivated to forgive, whereas those with less power may be more inclined to forgive (Fincham et al., 2006).

Kramer (1999) also investigated trust-enhancing and trust-decreasing behaviors as a function of where people were at in the hierarchical ladder in the organization. The results showed that because of their greater dependence and vulnerability, trust concerns were stronger for individuals in low-status positions. Interestingly enough, Zheng et al. (2018) found that an apology (vs. no apology) from high-power transgressors was relatively ineffective in increasing forgiveness from low-power victims and this moderating effect was mediated by victim cynicism.

Fragale, Rosen, Xu, and Onypchuk (2009) focused on subjective rather than hierarchical status and found that transgressor's status affected attributions for the transgression incident and specifically observers attributed higher intentionality to high- relative status transgressors rather than low-status transgressors (see also Heider, 1958). In the case of high intentionality attributions, one would expect less inclination for observers to forgive. It is, however, important to note that there was no relational dependency or a hierarchical relationship between transgressor and observers in their study. Observers were not relying on the transgressor for valuable resources and rewards and this may well explain the differential results.

Finally, the pre-transgression quality of the leader-follower relationship is likely to be an important boundary condition in this context as we expect the relationship repair process to be different in the case of high versus low quality leader-follower relationships. High quality leader-follower relationships are characterized by high levels of dependence, commitment and relationship satisfaction and thus leaders and followers in such relationships will be more inclined to make benevolent attributions of the event and to show pro-relationship transformation motivation and reach forgiveness (e.g., Radulovic et al., 2019). Committed and satisfied partners tend to attribute negative experiences to transient and external sources and even in the face of declining relationship quality they maintain optimism (e.g., Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; McCullough et al., 1998). Thus, in leader-follower relationships of high quality, transgression victims will generally tend to make benevolent attributions and attribute the transgressor's behavior to more uncontrollable, transient, external sources, view transgressions as more incidental, and the transgressor as less responsible for the transgression. In contrast, victims in low quality leader-follower relationships (i.e. low commitment, low investment and low satisfaction) will tend to make distress-maintaining, malevolent attributions and view transgressions as more internal, permanent and under the control of the transgressor, and thus more likely to ascribe intentionality and culpability.

As can be seen in Fig. 3, after the stage of transgression awareness and relevant cognitions and emotions, the next stage involves transgressor behaviors that can contribute towards the relationship repair process. Transgressors (leaders or followers) can engage in a series of behaviors in order to address the transgression. The role of the transgressors in promoting (or impeding) prosocial transformation and

forgiveness through their actions has been highlighted by Rusbult et al. (2001). Transgressor's relationship repair strategies such as an apology are likely to promote positive affect and thus create the conditions for prosocial transformation of motivation, whereas lack of relationship repair action is likely to induce negative affect. Also, regarding victim cognitions, at this stage, after having acquired more information about the factors contributing to the transgression, injured parties may begin to develop revised explanations for their partner's behavior. Enright et al. (1996) in their theory of forgiveness refer to a strategy entitled "re-contextualizing" the transgressor, meaning that the injured partners can reconstrue the transgression by placing the act in the broader context of the relationship and environment. Acknowledging the context might cast light on the partner's decision to engage in the betrayal. For example, organizational crisis conditions might explain why a leader didn't grant a promised reward to a member or fear for one's job security might explain a verbal outburst and snapping incident on behalf of the member. Maio and Thomas (2007) describe this process as akin to the victim saying "Yes, but…" or "Yes, because…" Taking into account the surrounding conditions, the good history of the relationship, or the transgressor's otherwise good character can alleviate the sense of transgression.

Alternatively, negative framing may also occur, which can accentuate the sense of transgression. For example, reflecting upon one's pre-existing knowledge of the relationship, especially past transgressions may heighten the perception of injury or harm. Putting the event in context and changing the attributions for the event can result in a new understanding of oneself, one's partner and the relationship. In the final stage of the relationship repair process, both leader and follower have ascribed meaning into what has happened, strong emotions have subdued and are ready to act on what happened. Victims can now choose one of three behavioral strategies to react: (a) grant *forgiveness*; (b) opt for some form of *retribution*, i.e. some form of revenge or punishment (e.g., a leader can fire a member for a violation or a member can stop putting extra effort in his/her work); and (c) opt for *refuge*. Whereas restitution and retribution are in some fashion "making up for" the transgression, refuge is more a demand for protection or proof that the event will not happen again (Baucom & Epstein, 1990). Refuge might involve either an emotional or physical distancing from a hurtful partner "They hurt me once, so I will not let them get close enough to hurt me again".

The role of individual variables

Certain individual variables will enhance or inhibit victims' tendencies to engage into relationship repair strategies such as forgiveness. Prior meta-analytic work on forgiveness in close relationships has highlighted the role of three dispositional variables; *agreeableness*, *trait forgiveness or forgivingness* and *perspective-taking* (Fehr et al., 2010). Among the Big 5 personality factors, agreeableness is most frequently linked to forgiveness. It is defined as the tendency to get along well with others. When faced with a conflict event, agreeable people seek cooperative and integrative solutions and are also likely to understand and empathize with others' situations (Ashton, Paunonen, Helmes, & Jackson, 1998). Trait forgiveness is conceptualized as the tendency for an individual to forgive across situations and time (Berry, Worthington, Parrott, O'Connore, & Wade, 2001). Individuals high on trait forgiveness tend to interpret offenses as worthy of forgiveness whereas those low on trait forgiveness tend to interpret offenses as unworthy of forgiveness and perceive retribution or refuge as the most useful strategy.

Perspective taking represents a cognitive capacity to consider the point of view of another person (Davis, 1983). Within the context of forgiveness, perspective taking has been shown to enhance victims' understanding of why the transgressors might have offended them and facilitate prosocial transformation of motivation (Fehr et al., 2010). Furthermore, prior research (e.g., Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004) has highlighted the role of *narcissistic entitlement* for forgiveness. Narcissistic entitlement involves expectations of

special treatment and preoccupation with defending one's rights. Individuals high in narcissistic entitlement have been found to be less willing to forgive and more skeptical of forgiving in general. In fact, Exline et al. (2004) have reported narcissistic entitlement to be a robust, distinct predictor of unforgiveness.

Schemas, such as Implicit Leadership and Followership Theories (e.g., Epitropaki, Sy, Martin, Tram-Quon, & Topakas, 2013; Lord, Epitropaki, Foti, & Hansbrough, 2019) can also play a role in relationship repair processes. A victim (follower or leader) may be more willing to forgive a transgressor who matches their leadership (or followership) prototype as prototypical transgressors enjoy 'deviance credit' and license to transgress (e.g., Abrams et al., 2018). Relational schemas may also be important (Baldwin, 1992) in this context. Prior research (e.g., Huang, Wright, Chiu, & Wang, 2008) has shown that leaders and members form different relational schemas. Leaders develop schemas focused on work-related issues whereas members are focusing more on interpersonal concerns. These differential schemas may trigger a different evaluation process of observed transgressions (e.g., leaders may be more tuned to task-focused transgressions and followers to person-focused ones) with implications for subsequent relationship repair processes.

Outcomes at three levels of analysis

We expect a series of possible outcomes of the relationship repair process of a transgression based at three levels of analysis (individual, dyadic, and group). Specifically, on the individual level, possible *follower outcomes* may include reduced turnover intentions and psychological withdrawal (Shapiro et al., 2011), well-being and positive emotion (Byrne et al., 2014; Radulovic et al., 2019), fairness perceptions (Liang et al., 2018), moral identity (Krylova et al., 2017) and follower OCB and voice (Liborius, 2014). From the *leader's perspective,* possible individual outcomes include perceived leader integrity and trust in the leader (Shao, 2019) and moral identity salience (Krylova et al., 2017) following relationship repair. Other possible outcomes that have not been examined by prior research include leader efficacy and leader identity. For example, after effective resolution of a transgression event, leaders may experience renewed granting of their leader identity (DeRue & Ashford, 2010) and increased confidence in their ability to lead. Leaders may also experience negative individual outcomes such as diminished power base, lower leader identity and efficacy and social rejection (e.g., Freedman, Burgoon, Ferrell, Pennebaker, & Beer, 2017) and increased employee deviance (license to transgress-trickledown effect).

After follower transgressions, followers may experience punitive and authoritarian leadership behaviors and transactional (versus socioemotional) exchanges with the leader. However, if the leader grants forgiveness it is possible for the relationship to return to pre-transgression levels of outcomes in terms of follower well-being, job satisfaction, follower identity and leader trust.

Relationship resilience is a key outcome of a relationship repair process after a transgression. Relationship resilience is demonstrated when leaders and followers restore their relationship to the status quo or exhibit positive adaptation and growth after the transgression (e.g., Murray & Holmes, 1999; Olekalns et al., 2019). Other dyadic outcomes may include increased relational effort (Radulovic et al., 2019), and relational trust (Olekalns et al., 2019) as well as enhanced leader-follower relationship quality. Furthermore, given that leader-follower dyads are nested in groups, group-level outcomes may occur. Group-level outcomes may include forgiveness climate (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012), justice climate (Colquitt, Noe, & Jackson, 2002) and group performance. For sake of parsimony, we do not present all possible outcomes in Fig. 3 apart from relationship resilience which is fundamental for relationship continuance.

Transgression antecedents and triggers. Although not explicitly presented in our model in Fig. 3, future research could also identify specific transgression event triggers and antecedents. For example, prior research in the close relationship literature has shown that attachment orientations predicted transgression frequency and reactions towards a partner's transgression (Martin, Hill, & Allemand, 2019). Specific transgression *event triggers* may also be identified such as uncertain environmental conditions, organizational changes and performance pressures (Mitchell, Baer, Ambrose, Folger, & Palmer, 2018) or ego depletion factors (e.g., Barnes, Schaubroeck, Huth, & Ghumman, 2011).

Other future directions. As previously discussed, time is generally an important parameter that needs to be explicitly conceptualized and operationalized (e.g., Day, 2014). Time is a key factor for experiencing a transgression in a relationship, for relationship repair and relationship outcomes in the aftermath of the transgression. Generally, transgressions early in a relationship can be damaging (e.g., Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Lount Jr., Zhong, Sivanathan, & Murnighan, 2008) in the sense that the relationship might never recover as relationship-norms have not been fully established. On the other hand, transgressions that happen later in established relationships can yield deeper damage than if the violation occurred earlier before relationships were formed and commitments made (e.g., Tomlinson, Dineen, & Lewicki, 2004). In these circumstances, the violation is a shock and it is worse than unreliability or deception because it violates a deep trust and confidence in a longer-term relationship (Glovier, 1998).

Identity is also a promising line of research in the context of leader-follower transgressions relationship repair strategies and outcomes. Krylova et al.'s (2017) review has already offered an identity perspective utilizing social identity (e.g., Hogg, 2001), moral identity (Aquino & Reed II, 2002) and identity threat (Petriglieri, 2011) theories. They argued, for example, that when leaders transgress and behave in a manner that is incompatible with prototypical group attributes, they are redefining the group prototype. The ambiguity created by the transgression creates a discord between the leaders' behavior and the followers' moral identities which can be identity threatening. We further argue that transgressions can have implications for leader and follower identities (Epitropaki, Kark, Mainemelis, & Lord, 2017; Epitropaki, Martin, & Thomas, 2017), leader efficacy and follower self-concepts. Trickle down effects of transgressive behaviors, similar to ethical (e.g., Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009) or abusive leadership (e.g., Mawritz, Mayer, Hoobler, Wayne, & Marinova, 2012) can also be examined. For example, a middle manager who is the victim of their leader's transgressions may then emulate similar transgressive behaviors in their relationships with their own followers.

In sum, we believe that we have offered an integrative model and a broad future research agenda that the interested researcher may find useful when conducting research in the field of leader-follower transgressions, relationship repair strategies and outcomes.

Conclusion

Recently there has been considerable research focusing on leader and follower transgressions and relationship repair strategies. In this review, we have critically synthesized this growing literature, discussed conceptual and methodological challenges, offered suggestions for definitional clarity, added new insights based on closed relationship science perspectives and outlined an integrative framework for guiding new directions of research in this field. Addressing relational transgressions between leaders and followers can be a challenging process. However, the utilization of relationship repair strategies can have a transformative effect on the leader-follower relationship through redefining relationship norms and boundaries. Multiple outcomes on the individual, dyadic and group levels for both leaders and followers can be expected to follow the relationship repair process. We consider this an exciting field of study and we hope that future research will

empirically integrate transgressions, relationship repair strategies and outcomes as well as explicitly address their events-based nature, their complex unfolding over time, boundary conditions and levels-of-analysis issues.

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