Follower-Focused Leadership: Effect of Follower Self-Concepts and Self-Determination on Organizational Citizenship Behavior

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The purpose of this study is to suggest a model that advances the discussion of follower-centered leadership and the effect that follower self-concepts and self-determination have on follower organizational citizenship behavior. The framework for this study is transformational and transactional leadership theories and shows that although these leadership theories do influence follower behavior, they do so via substantial follower involvement. Followers constitute the complementary side of leadership studies because without followers there is no leader-follower relationship. The proposed model represents an attempt to put the primary responsibility for organizational citizenship behavior on the follower while still recognizing that leadership style does manifest some influence.

The study of how leadership style influences follower behavior is not new. The predominant focus has been on the leader's behavior while the follower has been the receptacle for the leader's input. Consequently, few scholars have focused on the effect of follower self-concept, which includes follower values and identities (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993), and the follower's perception of the leader on follower behavior. Absent also is significant research on the effect of follower self-determination—a theory of intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1980)—on follower organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The framework for this study was that within the leader-follower relationship, although leadership style is important, followers are responsible for their own behavior. The purpose of this research was to suggest a model that advances the discussion of follower-centered leadership and the effect that follower self-concepts and self-determination have on follower behavior. The goal is to determine how follower behavior is impacted by the leader's style when mediated by follower self-determination. The follower has discretion in his or her own behavior and chooses to act in a certain way in relation to the leader. The follower's perception of his or her own role (self-concept as defined by Shamir

et al., 1993) and the follower's perception of the leader's behavior affects follower feelings of competence, autonomy, and thus, motivation (self-determination), and influences the follower's behavior.

In the following pages, I lay out a model for understanding how the leader's style (operationalized as transformational or transactional leadership) influences follower behavior when moderated by follower self-concepts and follower perception of the leader's behavior and mediated by follower self-determination. I start by giving a rationale for the focus on followers. I then present the model, define its variables, and propose some relationships between the variables. Finally, I suggest methods for measuring the variables' relationships and offer some concluding thoughts for future research. This model should provide leadership studies with a different way of looking at the leader-follower relationship.

Follower Focus

Leaders and followers are both essential to the organization. Unfortunately, most scholars have focused primarily on the leader and the leader's role in motivating followers and neglected the significance of followers. The authors who have focused on followers suggest that they are active participants in the leadership relationship and motivate themselves (Boccialetti, 1995; Chaleff, 1995; Kelley, 1992; Shamir, Pillai, Bligh, & Uhl-Bien, 2007). Shamir (2007) posited that transformational leadership theory focuses on followers as recipients of leader behavior and influence. The leader's behavior affects the behavior of the follower, and therefore, the theory is more leader-centric. On the other hand, in a transactional relationship "followers' perceptions of and expectations about the leader's actions . . . are generated in accordance with an attributional process" (Hollander, 1992, p. 48) whereby follower behavior is in response to their attributions about the leader. For the purposes of this study, both transformational and transactional leadership styles will be measured for their influence on follower behavior but as affected by the follower-centric constructs of self-concept and self-determination.

Followers who perceive the leader as responsible for making decisions (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007) are less likely to take an active role in the decision-making process, thereby giving up autonomy. They may expect the leader to motivate them rather than taking the responsibility to motivate themselves. On the other hand, followers who take the initiative to motivate themselves to achieve goals view the leader more as a partner and therefore desire to collaborate with the leader in a relationship, thereby expressing autonomy. Two issues stand out. One issue points to the followers' perception of expected leader behavior (consideration or initiating structure), and the other stems from the perception of the followers of themselves. Both perceptions can increase or decrease the effect that leader style has on the follower's autonomy and motivation. If the follower has as much control over self perception, motivation, and behavior, as these authors claim, then there is no reason why followers cannot determine the quality of their own followership and the leadership process. The following model represents an attempt to put the primary responsibility for follower citizenship behavior on the follower while still recognizing that leadership style does manifest some influence.

Model

Models can serve as heuristic instruments for the study of leadership. They are a visual depiction of what can be a complicated set of relationships between variables. These

relationships more often than not express cause and effect. Mediating variables transmit the effect that the independent variable has on the dependent variable. In addition, moderating variables increase or decrease the effect of the relationship between variables, thereby altering the impact the independent variable has on the dependent variable. Typically models of leadership studies provide a visual understanding of the leader's impact on followers. Although this model begins with leadership style as the independent variable and its influence on follower behavior, the distinction here is that the moderating and mediating variables are follower-centric.

Figure 1 shows that leadership style (operationalized as transformational or transactional) influences follower behavior (organizational citizenship behavior) as mediated by the follower's sense of autonomy and thus motivation (self-determination). The effect of the leader's style on follower self-determination is impacted by the moderating variables of follower self-concept (values and identities) and the follower's perception of the leader's behavior (consideration or initiating structure). In the following sections the variables are defined and propositions given for the relationship between variables.
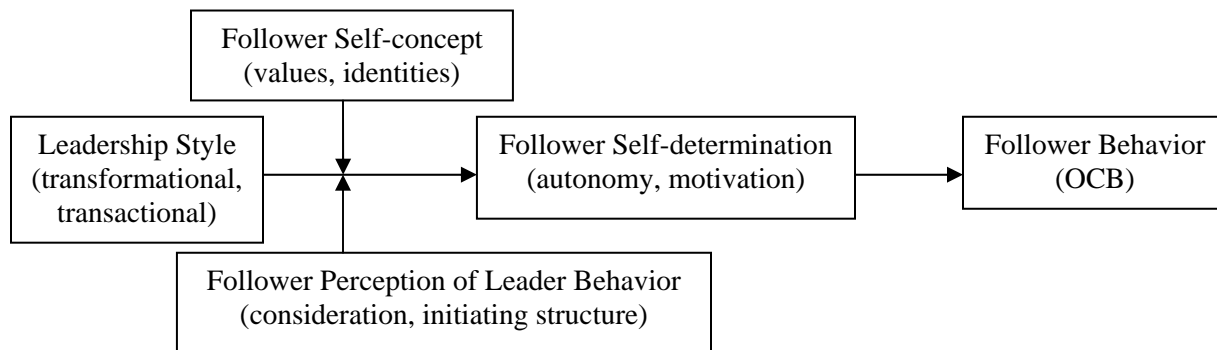

Figure 1. Model of a follower-focused leadership relationship.

Leader Style

The proposed model suggests that it is the leader's style that influences follower behavior. For this study, transformational and transactional leadership theories were considered. More has been written in the past two decades on transformational leadership than any other theory, starting with Burns (1978) and followed by Bass (1985) and others. Although other leadership theories abound, transformational leadership captures many people's idealized notion of how leaders should behave toward followers. Transformational leadership was first proposed by Burns as a counterpoint to transactional leadership. Transactional leadership is an exchange relationship between the leader and follower, whereby the leader sets certain task goals with the reward contingent on their completion. Followers want the reward; therefore, they work toward completing the task. Transformational leadership focuses more on empowering followers to work for the best interests of the organization and to meet organizational goals. Transformational leadership has several characteristics:

1. Leaders communicate a clear vision.
2. Leaders explain how vision can be achieved.
3. Leaders show confidence in both vision and followers.
4. Leaders lead by example.
5. Leaders empower followers to work toward vision achievement.

It has been described as an influence relationship between leader and follower where leaders inspire and motivate followers to put the interests of the organization before their own interests.

Leaders communicate a compelling vision for the organization and explain how to achieve the vision. A vision gives employees' work meaning and serves to guide the decision-making process. The leader must be confident in both achieving the vision and in the followers' ability to accomplish the requisite tasks. The leader's behavior reinforces the vision and the values under which he or she operates requiring the leader to lead by example. Finally, the transformational leader will empower followers to make decisions that will impact achievement of the vision. Empowerment produces a degree of autonomy for the follower. Thus, the follower is motivated to participate fully in the organization.

> Proposition 1a: Leadership style influences follower behavior such that transformational leader behavior results in positive follower organizational citizenship behavior.

Transactional leadership is described by its name. The relationship between the leader and the follower is a transaction. The leader sets forth expectations for task accomplishment with the promise of reward for fulfillment. The follower chooses to work toward the goal in order to be rewarded. There is a social exchange that takes place between leader and follower (Hollander & Offerman, 1990) whereby the two parties can mutually influence one another. As the leader provides benefits for the follower the follower holds the leader in esteem and is responsive toward the leader (Hollander & Offerman, 1990). On the other hand, should the leader fail to live up to the follower's expectation, the leader can lose the follower's allegiance resulting in fewer citizenship behaviors.

> Proposition 1b: Leadership style influences follower behavior such that if the follower attributes positive characteristics to the transactional leader the follower will exhibit organizational citizenship behavior.

> Proposition 1c: Leadership style influences follower behavior such if the follower attributes negative characteristics to the transactional leader the follower will exhibit little or no citizenship behavior.

Follower Self-Concept

The notion of self-concept guides the understanding of follower role in the leader-follower relationship. The rationale is that the follower has certain values and identities (work, social, personal, etc.) they bring to an organization which influences what motivates them as well as their behavior. Self-concept, in its simplest form, represents a person's values and identities (a person's identity at work, how they view themselves in relation to others). Self-concept based theory suggests that how a person views self influences his or her behavior. If the leader has similar values, a follower will allow herself to be influenced by the leader. The follower's values also determine what will motivate her toward goal achievement.

Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) proposed self-concept based theory as a way to explain the motivational implications of "the transformational effects of charismatic leadership" (p. 581). The main assumptions of the theory are: (a) behavior is expressive of values and self-

concepts; (b) people are motivated to maintain their self-esteem (based on a sense of competence and achievement) and self-worth (grounded in values); (c) people are motivated to maintain correspondence between self-concept and behavior; (d) self-concepts are comprised of identities; and (e) people are motivated by faith. The authors suggested that leader behaviors influence these self-concepts because "leaders increase the intrinsic value of efforts and goals by linking them to valued aspects of the follower's self-concept" (p. 584).

While I do not deny the influence leader behavior has on followers, I suggest that follower self-concepts moderate the influence of leader behavior on follower self-determination because followers come to an organization with a set of values and identities already established. Lord, Brown, and Freiberg (1999) proposed that for different levels of self there are implications for transformational and transactional leadership. The follower has a concept of herself "as a physical, social, and spiritual or moral being" (Gecas, 1982, p. 3) and attaches meaning to the self through "the concept of identity" (Gecas, 1982, p. 10). Followers will respect and submit to a leader's direction because they can identify with the values of the leader (Fields, 2007). The implication is that while leader style is influential on follower behavior, it is moderated by the follower's self-concept, what Leonard, Beauvais, and Scholl (1999) referred to as internal and external self-concept based motivation.

> Proposition 2: The follower's self-concept moderates the influence of leadership style on follower self-determination such that the more followers identify with the values espoused by the leader the more likely followers will be motivated to behave in a positive way.

Follower Perception of Leader's Behavior

Both transformational and transactional leadership styles stem from leader behaviors. Since the early 1950s, and based on recorded follower perceptions, researchers have categorized leader behavior into two categories: consideration and initiating structure (Yukl, 2002). In the consideration category, leaders are supportive, show concern for followers, are open to follower suggestions, and invite followers to participate in decision making. In the initiating structure category, leaders are goal-oriented and focus on the tasks, rules, and overall coordination of follower activities (Yukl, 2002). These two categories align closely to the transformational and transactional characteristics, respectively, of leaders. According to Bass (1985), leaders need not be one or the other exclusively; rather, they can utilize both styles of leadership. So, too, can leaders fall into both the consideration and initiating structure categories. These categories were identified as a means of determining leadership effectiveness. For this study, the goal is to determine if one behavior has more influence on follower self-determination than the other.

Follower perception of the leader's behavior is worth examining because followers have certain expectations of a leader. If the leader meets those expectations then followers ascribe respect, trustworthiness and authority to that leader (Hollander, 1978). The opposite is also true. If a leader fails to meet followers' expectations, mistrust develops and the relationship is strained. Followers are motivated to go above and beyond their assigned tasks because of the feelings they have for a transformational leader (Yukl, 2002). In the case of transactional leadership, an exchange relationship is created whereby the leader sets forth expectations for task accomplishment with the promise of reward for fulfillment. The follower in return wants to be rewarded and therefore will work toward accomplishing the goal. Both leadership styles can

result in increased motivation of the follower (Yukl, 2002), but it is the follower's perception of the leader that determines the influence of the leader's style.

> Proposition 3: The follower's perception of the leader's behavior moderates the influence of leadership style on follower self-determination such that if the follower views the leader behavior as consideration versus initiating structure the follower is more likely to feel autonomous and intrinsically motivated.

Follower Self-Determination

Self-determination is defined as experiencing "a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one's own actions" (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989, p. 580). Deci (1980) developed the theory based on the premise that individuals have basic needs for autonomy and competence. Gagné and Deci (2005) reported that

> Work climates that promote satisfaction of . . . [these] needs will enhance employees' intrinsic motivation and promote full internalization of extrinsic motivation and that this will in turn yield the important work outcomes of (1) persistence and maintained behavior change; (2) effective performance, particularly on tasks requiring creativity, cognitive flexibility, and conceptual understanding; (3) job satisfaction; (4) positive work-related attitudes; (5) organizational citizenship behaviors; and (6) psychological adjustment and well-being. (p. 337)

Gagné and Deci (2005) suggested that there is evidence to support the idea that autonomous motivation would promote organizational citizenship behaviors, such as volunteering. Bono (2003) found that the literature acknowledges that "individuals seek to feel competent and autonomous in their work and in their lives . . . that such feelings are associated with positive outcomes, and that certain environmental factors can influence such feelings" (p. 51). The crux of self-determination is that if the follower is intrinsically motivated that motivation will positively mediate the relationship between leadership style and follower citizenship behavior.

> Proposition 4: Follower self-determination mediates between leadership style and follower behavior such that as the leader promotes follower autonomy, follower motivation increases and results in organizational citizenship behaviors.

Follower Behavior

For this study, follower behavior was defined as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), which "concerns voluntary behaviors that are not directly recognized by the formal reward structure but do promote organizational effectiveness. Examples include helping co-workers, formulating innovations, serving on committees, and helping to organize work group events" (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p. 351). OCB can also be explained as organizational obedience, loyalty, and participation (Fields, 2002, p. 236), as well as "interpersonal helping, individual initiative, personal industry, and loyal boosterism" (Fields, p. 238). One study (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983) described two distinct types of citizenship behavior: altruism and generalized compliance. Altruism refers to acts done to benefit specific persons. Generalized compliance, on the other hand, refers to acts done conscientiously but not necessarily for any particular person.

The authors have found that leader supportiveness, defined as consideration, influence both types of citizenship behavior. Farh, Podsakoff, and Organ (1990) suggested that leader fairness, played out in distributive justice and procedural fairness, contributes to follower citizenship behavior. Dasborough (2006) found that employees whose leaders displayed motivational and inspirational behaviors felt "motivated to work harder and were more likely to perform citizenship behaviors" (p. 171).

Suggestions for Testing Propositions

The transformational and transactional leadership tendencies can be measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). The research of Fields and Herold (1997) showed respondents were able to distinguish between these concepts when describing leadership behaviors. The five dimensions of LPI are (a) challenging the process, (b) inspiring a shared vision, (c) encouraging the heart, (d) modeling the way, and (e) enabling others to act. Fields and Herold (1997) indicated that transformational leaders exhibit the dimensions of challenging the process and inspiring a shared vision exclusively, while transactional leaders exhibit exclusively the dimension of enabling others to act. Both styles, however, share the dimensions of encouraging the heart and modeling the way.

The Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) (1962) will determine the degree of consideration or initiating structure of leaders as perceived by followers (moderating variable). Consideration is a behavior that is associated more with transformational leadership; whereas initiating structure behavior fits more with the transactional leadership style, although in a high-exchange relationship, consideration can also be ascribed to the leader.

The follower self-concept variable can be measured using the Perceived Person-Organization Fit (Lovelace & Rosen, 1996) measurement. Perceived Person-Organization Fit asks respondents to indicate the fit between their values and the organization's values (Fields, 2002). Items assessed include values, goals, skills, and attitudes.

Self-determination will be measured by the Empowerment at Work (Spreitzer, 1995) and Job Role Discretion (Gregersen & Black, 1992) measurements. Empowerment at Work measures meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact related to a person's feeling of empowerment in the job. Job Role Discretion assesses whether employees believe their job role provides autonomy in deciding when and what work gets done.

Finally, two organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) inventories will measure follower behavior. The first OCB measurement (Moorman & Blakely, 1995) assesses four dimensions: interpersonal helping (other-oriented), individual initiative (performance-oriented), personal industry (task and rule-oriented), and loyal boosterism (organization-oriented). The second OCB measurement (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990) measures five dimensions of behavior: altruism (other-oriented), conscientiousness (extra-role behavior), sportsmanship (tolerance), courtesy, and civic virtue (corporate responsibility).

Because each of these measurements were developed using a Likert-scale response system, they will be combined under the cover of one quantitative survey in order to capture the various variables and their impact on the corresponding variables. Prior to testing the propositions, correlations between variables will be calculated to determine the extent to which the independent, dependent, mediator, and moderator variables are related.

Conclusion

This study has presented a model to explain follower-focused leadership within the framework of transformational and transactional leadership theories. The goal has been to show that although these leadership theories do influence follower behavior, they do so via substantial follower involvement. No longer is it sufficient to study leadership from the leader perspective alone. Followers constitute the other side of leadership studies because without followers there is no leader-follower relationship.

The model presented in this study represents, on the one hand, a wide swath of thought into the position followers have in the leader-follower relationship. It includes follower self-concepts, self-determination, follower behavior, and follower perception of leader behavior. On the other hand, the model is narrow in its focus on moderating and mediating variables. These suggest that followers are the key to understanding how leadership works from a non-leader perspective; in this case, how transformational and transactional leadership play out in light of follower factors. Other models have hinted at the follower-centric nature of leadership, but the present model attempts to cover a broader perspective.

The broad nature of the model may be a detriment to its workability. Until the model's propositions can be tested, it is not known whether the model can actually stand as a valid construct for follower-focused leadership. It is my hope, however, to advance the discussion of the role of followers in the leader-follower relationship. I began with transformational and transactional leadership theories because they are well-known and well-worn. One suggestion for further research would be to test servant leadership theory for its follower-centeredness since a central tenet of servant leadership is to place followers' interests above one's own (Joseph and Winston, 2005). Servant leadership may prove to be more conducive to organizational citizenship behaviors due to its focus on follower development, community building, authentic leadership, and shared leadership (Laub, 2003), especially when moderated by follower self-concepts and perception of leader behavior and moderated by follower self-determination.

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