The Moderating Role of Follower Identification in the Relationship Between Leader and Follower Visionary Leadership

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The findings from this cross-sectional study on 27 corporate employees reveal relationships between leader and follower leadership behaviors and follower identity with the leader. A positive relationship was found between the leaders' follower-centered leadership and followers' follower-centered leadership, and the leaders' capable manager leadership and followers' capable manager leadership. Furthermore, correlations reveal that identification with the leader is positively related to the leaders' self-confidence leadership, leaders' follower-centered leadership, and leaders' capable manager leadership. The results did not support the hypothesized role of follower identification with the leader as a moderator between leader self-confident leadership, follower-centered leadership, and capable manager leadership, and the followers' leadership behaviors in the same domains. Visionary leadership and follower identification in research and practice are discussed.

Visionary leadership is a theoretical synthesis of concepts from transformational leadership integrated with elements from motivational, power, and learning theories (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003). Transformational leadership is the basis from which visionary leadership begins and is expanded by describing leader traits and behaviors within the situational contexts of leading. Visionary leaders' influence is not clearly understood although it is speculated to involve followers' personal identification, resulting from the leader's self-confidence and use of power to benefit the follower. Another way in which visionary leaders are thought to enhance follower identification is by clearly articulating organizational values and beliefs. Then, the leader's behaviors support these principles and the standards and attitudes are then shared consciously throughout the organization. As the follower pursues organizational goals and the visionary leader provides the necessary example and resources to do so, the follower becomes empowered. By empowering the follower to attain shared goals, the follower begins to identify with the leader and organization, thus the espoused values and goals of the leader become self-referential

or self-defining for the follower (Edwards, 2005). As such, visionary leaders are thought to be well-positioned to transform followers into leaders (Sashkin & Sashkin).

Kark, Shamir, and Chen (2003) found a strong relationship between transformational leadership, followers' identification with the leader and the organization, and indicators of followers' empowerment. Their research showed that transformational leadership behavior was positively related to personal identification with the leader. Moreover, their work suggests that transformational leadership primes relationships between the leader and follower that results in follower interdependence and identification with the leader.

Followers who identify with their leader often do so because they see their leader as embodying the same values and goals as the organization. Essentially, the leader's behaviors are the catalyst for motivating them to achieve the organization's goals (Luhrmann & Eberl, 2007; Martin & Epitropaki, 2001). When the follower identifies and internalizes the leader's values and beliefs resulting in action, it is speculated that he or she will develop the same behaviors as the leader (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003).

Visionary leaders have the ability to clearly communicate the organizational vision. These leaders have personal characteristics that create follower self-confidence and trust. They empower their followers by creating an organizational culture that is caring and yet drives high performance (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003). This study examines the relationship between leader visionary leadership behaviors and follower visionary leadership behaviors in three specific visionary leadership domains: self-confident leadership, follower-centered leadership, and capable manager leadership. It also investigates the extent to which follower identification moderates this relationship.

Research Problem and Question

The aim of this study is to better understand the relationship between three exclusive visionary leadership behaviors of the leader and follower, and the moderating effects of follower identification with the leader on these relationships. To this end, the research will inform the relationship between the leader and follower on self-confident leadership, follower-centered leadership (prosocial), and capable manager leadership (organizational capabilities); and the interaction of follower identification with the leader on the relationship of these leader-follower behaviors. Sashkin and Sashkin (2003) proposed that these three crucial visionary leadership behaviors (i.e., confidence, prosocial power behaviors, and organizational capabilities) are, "necessary for followers themselves to have the knowledge, skills, and abilities" (p. 129) so that they can work with leaders to achieve organizational goals. Although little is known about how followers develop into leaders (Fairholm, 2004; Sashkin & Sashkin), it is speculated that as followers cultivate these three characteristics of visionary leadership they will become leaders themselves. Thus, the question is posed: Do followers who identify with visionary leaders with these three behavioral characteristics demonstrate the same three visionary leader behavioral attributes themselves? If so, early identification of individuals with these visionary leader characteristics would facilitate the opportunity for further developing their leadership skills.

Theory and Hypotheses

The theoretical underpinning for visionary leadership is set forth by Sashkin and Sashkin (2003). Visionary leadership includes behaviors and characteristics marked by good

communication, trust, caring, creating opportunity (risk), self-confidence, empowerment orientation, vision (as an advanced cognitive ability), and organizational context (culture-building). Moreover, Sashkin and Sashkin proposed that visionary leaders have the ability to construct culture through empowering people to accomplished shared goals, in groups and teams, throughout the organization. This is important in identity building in that individuals who are high identifiers will enact specific behaviors if it coincides with the values, beliefs, and norms enacted by the group or leader (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Thus, visionary leadership has the attributes to promote high identification in the follower and it is speculated that this will result in followers who enact visionary leader behaviors.

While transformational leadership has been found to be related to followers' organizational identification (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Martin & Epitropaki, 2001), to date very little research has focused exclusively on variables in visionary leadership and follower identification with the leader. A review of transformational leadership theory and identity theory suggests that such leadership may create followers' identification with the leader through clear communication (Yukl, 2006); trust (Connaughton & Daly, 2004); caring; creating opportunity (Luhrmann & Eberl, 2007); and empowerment (Kark et al.). Moreover, it has been suggested that a followers' self-concept is a key mediating variable linking leader influence to follower behavior (Luhrmann & Eberl). Interaction between the leader and follower is thought not to merely influence follower's self-concepts, but is a precondition for identity building.

Identification is thought to occur when an individual adopts attitudes, values, and behaviors to be connected with another person, group, or organization (Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996). Thus, identification is socially constructed through interaction between leader-follower-organization (Luhrmann & Eberl, 2007). The operational definition of personal identification used in this research project is based on Pratt's definition (Edwards, 2005) and modified to be specific to the leader instead of organization, "Identification with the leader occurs when an individual's beliefs about his/her leader become self-referential or self-defining" (p. 215). The main concept in this definition is the integration of beliefs about one's leader into one's identity. Therefore, since visionary leaders have behaviors that are thought to influence the follower, it is expected that followers' visionary leadership behaviors are positively related to leaders' visionary leadership behaviors. Moreover, it is proposed that followers' identification with the leader is related to leaders' visionary leadership behaviors.

H_1: Followers' visionary leadership behaviors, specifically self-confident leadership, follower-centered leadership, and capable manager leadership will be positively related to leaders' visionary leadership behaviors, specifically self-confident leadership, follower-centered leadership, and capable manager leadership.

H_2: Followers' identification with the leader will be positively related to leaders' self-confident leadership, leaders' follower-centered leadership, and leaders' capable manager leadership.

Visionary leaders have been found to have high levels of self-confidence (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003). Their self-confidence gives them the ability to act because they believe their actions will yield results. Furthermore, the visionary leader enables the follower to act and to get things done. The self-confidence of visionary leaders permits them to give followers authority to

accomplish their goals, take responsibility, and experience success. This may include allowing the follower to be a leader. Moreover, the leader exhibits credible confidence by demonstrating visible results of success. To this end, visionary leaders provide more opportunity to be successful in their assignments. Therefore, the hypothesis is:

> H_3: Followers' identification with the leader will moderate the relationship between the visionary leader's self-confident leadership behaviors and followers' self-confident leadership behaviors. As followers identify with self-confident leaders, followers build personal self-confidence and act in a way that demonstrates visible results, follow-through, and credibility. Therefore, follower identification with the leader will strengthen a positive relationship between leader self-confident leadership behaviors and follower self-confident leadership behaviors.

It has been demonstrated that individuals with high organizational identification also share the organization's goals and are therefore motivated to achieve them for the collective good (Martin & Epitropaki, 2001). To a great extent, visionary leaders may facilitate follower's identification because they become teachers to the followers. The leader desires for the follower to succeed and provides the knowledge and resources to accomplish the goals (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003). By providing opportunities for followers to use power and influence, the visionary leader teaches the followers how to use power to benefit others and themselves. The visionary leader does not typically give one follower authority, but rather many. They accomplish this by explaining and modeling how to share influence and how to use power for others. This prosocial promotion of individuals for the collective good may be more likely to inspire others to become this type of leader (Haslam et al., 2001; Kark et al., 2003; Martin & Epitropaki, 2001). The visionary leader shares power, demonstrating prosocial power for the good of the organization, and empowering the follower to take an active role in achieving the organizational goals. Thus, the next hypothesis is:

> H_4: Followers' identification with the leader will moderate the relationship between the visionary leader's follower-centered leadership behaviors and followers' follower-centered leadership behaviors. Follower identification with the leader will strengthen a positive relationship between leaders' follower-centered behaviors and followers' follower-centered behaviors such that followers demonstrate prosocial power (e.g., use their influence to benefit others, help others succeed, and share power and influence with others). This is a result of the leader teaching the follower, by example, the value of shared power to accomplish organizational goals.

Identity theory suggests that an individual will develop and maintain identity based on the "sameness" with a group or individual (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). The individual manifests this identity in the form of concrete decisions, behaviors, and commitments. It is therefore a social bond, a connection between the leader and follower linking the leader's goals and values to those of the followers that define followers' identity with the leader. Thus, theoretically it is possible for the visionary leader to transfer decisions, behaviors, and commitments to the follower by the follower identifying with the leader's capable manager behaviors. It is likely that the visionary leaders' capable manager behaviors of support, clarity in articulating goals, and provision of required resources will further shape the followers'

leadership skills (Janson, 2008). To this end, it is expected that through follower identification with the visionary leader's capable behaviors the follower will have capable manager behaviors. Therefore, the hypothesis is:

H_5: Followers' identification with the leader will moderate the relationship between leader capable manager leadership behaviors and follower capable manager leadership behaviors. Follower identification with the leader will strengthen a positive relationship between the leader's capable manager behaviors and follower's capable manager behaviors. Visionary leaders act as capable managers in that they teach the follower that their actions can produce results. Followers learn that they can control their actions and outcomes. Visionary leaders, as capable managers, develop and train followers and provide assignments for the follower to accomplish (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003). Through this mentor-mentored process it is hypothesized that identification with the capable leader will occur and the follower will demonstrate capable leader behavior.
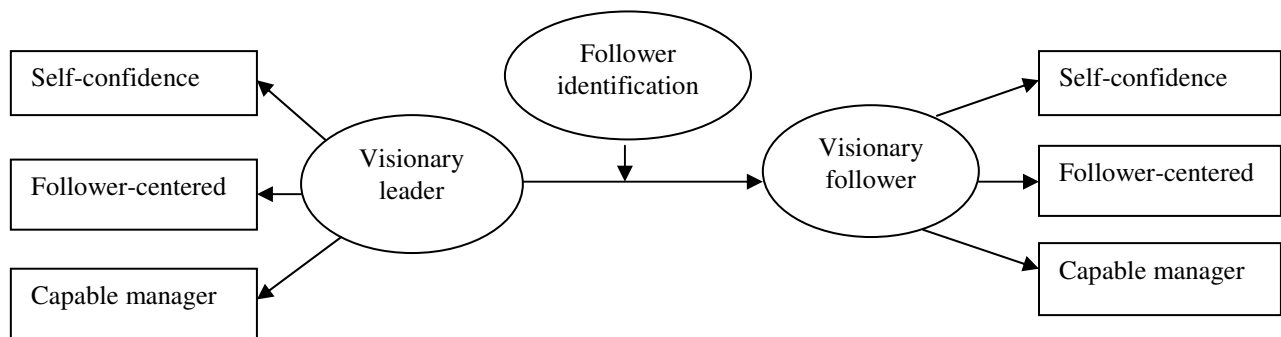
Proposed Model

Figure 1. This study model argues that leadership is a process of influence and the effectiveness of the leader is dependent upon his or her ability to change the follower.

The main study variables (see Figure 1) are three constructs thought to be instrumental in transforming followers into leaders (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003). These three visionary leadership characteristics are: confidence, follower-centered (prosocial power), and capable manager (organizational capability). These elements have been found to enable followers to develop personal self-confidence, apply skills that help others, and improve their ability to perform their jobs. In this way, the follower is not a subordinate who follows orders, but rather a self-directed leader.

Figures 1 and 2 are based on an integration model presented by Whittington, Pitts, Kageler, and Goodwin (2005). They argued that leadership is a process of influence and the effectiveness of the leader is dependent upon his or her ability to change the follower. It is in this change process that the current study assumes the follower begins to internalize and thus identify with the leader. The study variables are expected to be moderated by the followers' identification with the leader and subsequently followers will demonstrate the same leadership behaviors.
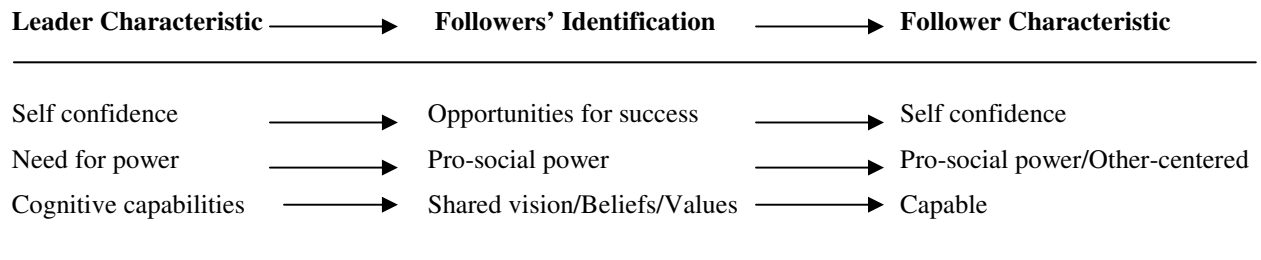
Leader Characteristic ⟶	Followers' Identification ⟶	Follower Characteristic
Self confidence ⟶	Opportunities for success ⟶	Self confidence
Need for power ⟶	Pro-social power ⟶	Pro-social power/Other-centered
Cognitive capabilities ⟶	Shared vision/Beliefs/Values ⟶	Capable

Figure 2. Path linkages between variables.

Method

Participants

The participants were 34 employees from the Human Resources (HR) department and Corporate Affairs department of a Fortune 500 company located in the Midwest United States. The departments are part of the executive offices in the corporate headquarters which employs more than 800 individuals. The corporate headquarters includes the offices for the CEO, executive board members, and vice presidents (VPs). The company has several hundred branches internationally. Participants were selected for inclusion in the study as part of the HR talent management project. These participants include 1 VP of Corporate Affairs, 3 staff VPs from HR, 9 managers, 6 supervisors, and 12 salaried employees. The total number of participants is 34, however due to missing values there are only 27 valid cases.

Valid cases are represented as leader-follower dyads. Each unit of analysis (leader-follower dyad) includes the follower's rating of his or her leader's leadership behaviors and characteristics and identification with his or her leader, and the leader's rating of the follower's leadership behaviors and characteristics. Figure 3 illustrates an organizational view of the leader-follower units of analysis.
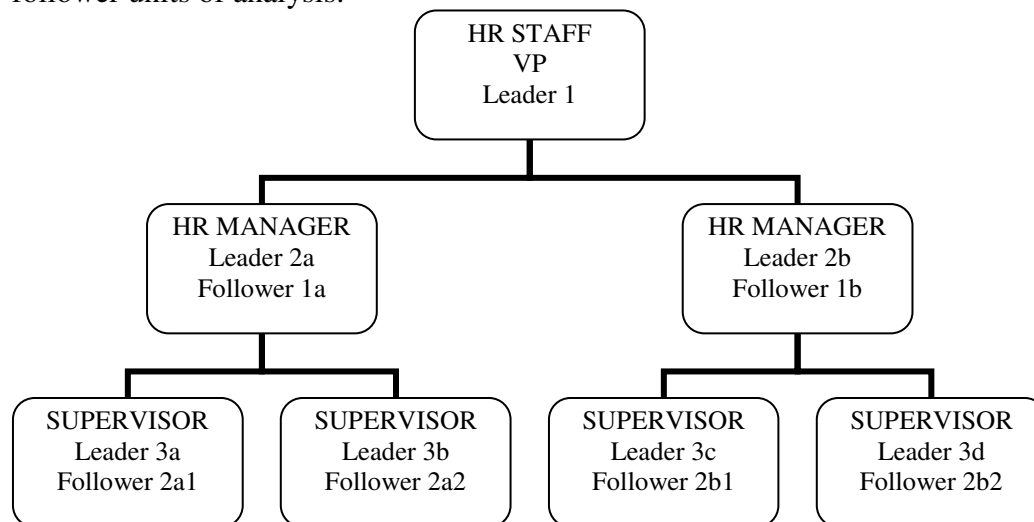


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                        HR STAFF
                          VP
                        Leader 1

        HR MANAGER                      HR MANAGER
        Leader 2a                       Leader 2b
        Follower 1a                     Follower 1b

   SUPERVISOR    SUPERVISOR       SUPERVISOR    SUPERVISOR
   Leader 3a     Leader 3b        Leader 3c     Leader 3d
   Follower 2a1  Follower 2a2     Follower 2b1  Follower 2b2
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Figure 3. Leader-Follower Units of Analysis.

Of the 27 valid cases, 25% are male leaders in the leader-follower dyads and 75% female leaders. The average age of all the participants is 37 years. The mean number of years that participants had worked in their current dyadic relationship is 6.52 years, with a range of 18.3.

Sample size is an important issue for consideration (Cohen, 1992). According to Hair et al. (2006), the optimum sample size for a multiple regression analysis is a ratio of observations to independent variables (IV) that never falls below 5:1. While that is the minimum ratio, the desired level is between 15 – 20 observations per IV. Based on this general rule, the preferred sample size should have been at least 75 participants. Due to the HR project concept, the organization restricted the number of participants to those who are to be observed for talent management. Considering the value the research would contribute to the understanding about leadership practices, the decision was made to continue with the study as a springboard for further research.

Measures

The Leadership Profile. The Leadership Profile (TLP) is a 50-item comprehensive assessment of leadership characteristics and behaviors (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003). The 50 items from the questionnaire form ten separate scales. Each scale measures a particular behavior or characteristic. The items from each scale cluster together in order to assess a single aspect of leadership. Each item is rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (*to a very great extent*) to 5 (*no extent*). TLP is administered electronically and accessed via a website. Table 1 summarizes TLP dimensions.

The reliability of TLP is acceptable. Test-retest reliability coefficients demonstrate that TLP yields consistent results over time (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003). Cronbach alphas support the internal consistency reliability of TLP (scale coefficients ranging from $\alpha = .70$ to $\alpha = .90$), thus indicating that the scales, "hang together" and are inter-correlated (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003).

For more than 13 years, validation research has been done on TLP (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003). Studies have demonstrated significantly meaningful relationships between TLP transformational leadership and performance. It has been found to be high in content validity. Examination of the five questions that comprise each scale reveals face validity such that the scale describes what it purports to measure.

In the current study, internal consistency reliability studies were performed to evaluate the three scales used to measure three main study visionary leader variables. These scales are visionary leader self-confidence, follower-centered, and capable manager. Each of the three TLP scales for both leaders and followers were evaluated separately. Table 2 displays Cronbach's alpha for each scale for the leaders.

Table 1
The Leadership Profile Dimensions

Scale #	Domain
1. Capable Manager	The leader accomplishes tasks necessary for organization to function well in the short term. Capable managers make sure people have the knowledge, skills, and resources. (Transactional Leadership)
2. Reward Equity	The degree to which transactional leaders make clear and explicit their goals and performance expectations. (Transactional Leadership)
3. Communication	The ability to manage and direct the attention of others through clear and focused interpersonal communication. (Transformational Behavior)
4. Credible Leadership	The leaders' consistency over time in doing what they say they would do and establishing trust. (Transformational Behavior)
5. Caring Leadership	The degree to which the leader demonstrates respect and concern for others. (Transformational Behavior)
6. Creative Leadership	The leader's willingness to take risks in developing opportunities for others to successfully take action. (Transformational Behavior)
7. Confident Leadership	The extent to which the leader possesses and displays self-confidence and the extent he/she is able to instill the same self-confidence in followers. (Transformational Characteristic)
8. Follower-Centered	The degree to which the leader see followers as empowered partners rather than as pawns to be manipulated. (Transformational Characteristic)
9. Visionary Leadership	The leader's ability to define and clearly express an idea about the future for the organization, based on shared values and beliefs. (Transformational Characteristic)
10. Principled Leadership	Effectiveness of leader to develop and support certain shared values and beliefs among organizational members. (Transformational Characteristic)

Table 2
Leader TLP Scale Reliability Cronbach's Alphas in the study sample (N = 27)

Scale	Alpha	# of items
Leader Capable Manager (LCM)	.91	4
Leader Confident Leader (LCL)	.90	5
Leader Follower-Center Leader (LFCL)	.76	5

The internal consistency reliability for the follower TLP scales revealed adequate correlation among items. Moreover, Cronbach alphas demonstrated good overall scale reliability (see Table 3). Two items were dropped from FFCL scale (tlpv6 and tlpv38) and this increased the alpha from $\alpha = .687$ to noted $\alpha = .854$.

Table 3
Follower TLP Scale Reliability Cronbach's Alphas in the study sample (N = 27)

Scale	Alpha	# of items
Follower Capable Manager (FCM)	.84	4
Follower Confident Leader (FCL)	.89	5
Follower Follower-Centered Leader (FFCL)	.85	3

Supervisor-Related Commitment Questionnaire. The Supervisor-Related Commitment Questionnaire (SRCQ) was used to measure follower identification with the leader. SRCQ is a 9-item questionnaire describing employee commitment to a supervisor as defined by identification with the supervisor and internalization of the same values as the supervisor (Fields, 2002). Questions are rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The SRCQ is a paper-pencil assessment that is self administered.

The reliability and validity of the Supervisor-Related Commitment Questionnaire in previous studies has been excellent (Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996). Reliability coefficient alphas were $\alpha = .85$ for supervisor-related commitment based on identification and $\alpha = .89$ for supervisor-related commitment based on internalization. Supervisor-related identification and internalization were positively correlated, thus supporting construct validity (Becker et al.).

Furthermore, confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated that commitment to a supervisor and commitment to the organization are mutually exclusive. In multivariate analyses, an important distinction was made that both supervisor-related identification and internalization were positively correlated with employee performance ratings, but was not correlated with organizational commitment (Becker et al.). This theoretical delineation is crucial in measuring identification instead of commitment since both are two distinct constructs (Cheney & Tompkins, 1987; Edwards, 2005).

In the current study sample, the SRCQ Cronbach's alphas for the identification scale is $\alpha = .839$ and for the internalization scale is $\alpha = .826$. The identification scale from the SRCQ is used to measure the identification study variable. The internalization scale was not used in this study because identification is the variable of interest.

Control variables. Information on demographics and background was collected. Prior research has tied demographic information to commitment phenomena (Becker et al., 1996). To this end, demographics are used to control for leader-follower similarities. Thus, the variables of gender, age, organizational position (manager, supervisor, salaried employee), and the frequency of day-to-day contact with the leader will be treated as control variables. The question about the frequency of contact with the leader was presented as, "How often do you have contact with your supervisor?" and measured on a 3-point scale from (*not at all*) to (*sometimes*) to (*always*).

Tenure at their current position was ascertained since prior research found it to be a significant predictor of organizational identification (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008; Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

Procedure

The written instructions (including limits of confidentiality), TLP codes with website access, and SRCQ were distributed in individual envelopes assigned to each participant and given to managers at a management. At the meeting, managers were informed by the principal investigator (PI) and the HR staff VP about confidentiality and research concepts, and asked to distribute materials to the participants within their departments. Limits to confidentiality as it related to the talent management project were also discussed with the managers.

Questionnaires were coded and matched to each participant by the PI and only the PI had access to the coding log. After completion of the measures, participants were asked to return the SRCQ in the provided envelope to the staff VP. At the end of the reporting period (two weeks), the envelopes were collected by the principal investigator. Completed TLP raw data were electronically transmitted to the PI by the TLP website administrators.

Results

SPSS 15.0 (SPSS, 2006) was used to perform the statistical tests. The data was examined for outliers and screened for errors by reviewing the descriptive distribution and scatter plots of the main study variables. Scatter plots of the main study variables illustrated normal Q-Q plots and detrended normal Q-Q plots suggesting a normal distribution. Two outliers were discovered, however based on the 5% trimmed mean, these scores did not influence the overall distribution mean and therefore these cases were retained.

Table 4 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlation matrix for the main study variables. These correlations suggest statistically significant relationships between leader-follower capable manager leadership ($r = .38$, $p < .05$) and follower-centered leadership ($r = .61$, $p < .01$), but not self-confident leadership.

Thus, these findings provide partial support for hypothesis 1 by followers' visionary leadership behaviors having a statistically significant relationship with leaders' visionary leadership behaviors in two of the three leadership domains (capable manager leadership and follower-centered leadership). Moreover, followers' identification with their leader is significantly related to leader capable manager leadership ($r = .46$, $p < .05$), leader self-confident leadership ($r = .51$, $p < .01$) and leader follower-centered leadership ($r = .44$, $p < .05$). These findings support hypothesis 2.

Table 4
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Matrix of Main Variables (N = 27)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. ID	24.5	5.7	-							
2. Tenure	6.5	4.9	-.05	-						
3. LCM	15.7	3.8	.46*	-.31	-					
4. LCL	19.7	3.8	.51**	.07	.54**	-				
5. LFCL	17.0	4.1	.44*	-.25	.72**	.56**	-			
6. FCM	15.8	2.5	.24	-.10	.38*	.41*	.50**	-		
7. FCL	20.8	3.3	.09	-.05	.26	.17	.23	.63**	-	
8. FFCL	10.9	2.4	.37	-.09	.49**	.48*	.61**	.67**	.53**	-

Note. LCM = x. LCL = x.
*$p < .01$. **$p < .05$.

For hypotheses 3 to 5, moderated multiple regression analyses were performed to determine the relationship between visionary leadership behaviors and follower visionary leadership behaviors and the interaction effects of follower identification. Due to the small sample size, the moderator regression analysis is performed separately for each of the scales.

Visionary leader confident leadership (LCL) did not predict visionary follower confident leadership (FCL), nor did the moderator variable (LCL multiplied by ID) (see Table 5). Thus, hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Table 5
Summary of Moderator Multiple Regression Analysis for Follower Confident Leader (N=27)

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	β
Step 1			
Tenure	-.04	.13	-.06
ID	.02	.11	.04
Step 2			
Tenure	-.05	.13	-.08
ID	-.02	.13	-.04
LCL	.12	.20	.16
Step 3			
Tenure	-.05	.14	-.08
ID	-.11	.55	-.20
LCL	.01	.72	.02
MODVCL	.01	.03	.26

Hypothesis 4 predicted a moderator effect of follower identification on the relationship between leader follower-center leadership and follower follower-centered leadership. Table 6 displays the results from the moderator multiple regression analysis. These results should be interpreted with consideration of the small sample size. The $\Delta R^2 = .081$, $F(1,21) = 3.25$, $p < .08$ was non-significant, yet the ANOVA confirms that ID, tenure, leader follower-center leadership, and the moderator variable are significant predictors of follower follower-centered leadership $F(4, 25) = 4.75$, $p < .007$. However, when the moderator (LFCL multiplied by ID) was computed in model 3, it was non-significant.

Table 6
Summary of Moderator Multiple Regression Analysis for Follower Follower-Centered Leader (N=27)

Variable	B	SE B	β
Step 1			
Tenure	.04	.09	-.07
ID	.16	.08	.37
Step 2			
Tenure	.03	.09	.06
ID	.05	.08	.13
LFCL	.35	.12	.57**
Step 3			
Tenure	-.06	.09	-.11
ID	.73	.38	1.67
LFCL	1.29	.53	2.11*
MODVFCL	-.04	.02	-2.68

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

The final hypothesis results did not support the prediction that follower's identification with the leader moderates the relationship between visionary leader capable manager and follower capable manager. Table 7 presents a summary of the moderator multiple regression analysis for follower capable manager.

Table 7

Summary of Moderator Multiple Regression Analysis for Follower Capable Manager (N=27)

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	β
Step 1			
Tenure	-.00	.10	-.00
ID	.11	.09	.25
Step 2			
Tenure	.06	.11	.11
ID	.03	.09	.07
LCM	.27	.16	.39
Step 3			
Tenure	.06	.11	.11
ID	.11	.30	.24
LCM	.40	.51	.60
MODVCM	-.01	.02	-.32

Discussion

The study's results found support for the first two hypotheses, but did not support the research hypotheses of a moderator effect of personal identification with the leader on the relationship between leader visionary leader behaviors and follower visionary leader behaviors, specifically visionary leader behaviors of self-confident leadership, follower-centered leadership (prosocial power), and capable manager leadership. Even so, the results do confirm that a statistically significant positive relationship exists between the leaders' follower-centered leadership and followers' follower-centered leadership behaviors, and leaders' capable manager leadership behaviors and followers' capable manager leadership behaviors (see Table 4). Moreover, as shown in Table 4, the followers' identification with their leader was significantly related to their leader's self-confident leadership, follower-centered leadership, and capable manager leadership. While the study hypotheses were not supported, the statistically significant correlations among study variables suggests that with more statistical power from a larger number of subjects, the moderator effect may be detected.

The correlations between study variables are remarkable because it supports the idea that follower identification with leaders with self-confident leadership behaviors, follower-centered leadership behaviors, and capable manager leadership behaviors play a role in followers exhibiting the same leadership behaviors. It is also consistent with prior research that points to follower identification with leaders who show these kinds of leadership behaviors (Haslam et al., 2001; Janson, 2008; Kark, Shamire, & Chen, 2003; Martin & Epitropaki, 2001). More importantly, these findings are a springboard for further research on the concept that followers identify with visionary leaders who demonstrate these characteristics (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003).

A major limitation in this study was the sample size. The optimum number of participants for the study would have been 75 leader-follower dyads. As a result of the limited number of

participants, a decision was made to drop one of the control variables (i.e., frequency of contact) to increase statistical power in the multiple regression analysis. Tenure with the current leader variable was used in the analysis and frequency of contact was excluded as a control variable because identity research indicates that tenure may predict bottom-up identification (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). For this reason, tenure was retained as a control variable in the study. Future research should control for frequency of contact in studying follower identification such that individuals seek a picture of self that evolves over time through contact with self-confirming feedback (Ashforth et al., 2008). Thus, the frequency of contact (negative or positive) may have an impact on identity formation.

Common method biases were addressed in the areas of source and timing of measurement in the study. Participants were asked to rate their leaders and leaders were asked to rate their followers. In many instances, the leader rated more than one follower. Some leaders not only rated followers, but were also followers who rated a leader (e.g., a supervisor rated both their employees and their manager). A two week timeframe was given to participants to complete TLP. They were asked to spread the completion of TLPs over the course of that timeframe and not complete the assessments all at once. The leader-follower dyad was used as a way to remedy common source bias. Even so, other rater biases such as leniency and acquiescence exist. Attempts were made to control these factors by assuring response anonymity.

One goal of this research is to better understand how visionary leaders impact their followers. Of particular interest is whether a follower who identifies with the visionary leader is likely to develop visionary leadership behaviors and characteristics. The implications of follower identification to the organization has been tied to organizational commitment (Meyer, Becker, & Van Dick, 2006), job satisfaction, well-being, turnover intentions (Martin & Epitropaki, 2001), and performance (Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996). Even so, little is known about the benefits that occur as a result of the followers' identification to the leader.

While transformational leaders have behaviors and characteristics that engender follower identification (Connaughton & Daly, 2004; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Luhrmann & Eberl, 2007; Yukl, 2006), and visionary leaders have transformational behaviors and characteristics, very little is known about follower identification with visionary leaders. Sashkin and Sashkin (2003) proposed that visionary leader self-confidence leadership, follower-centered leadership (prosocial power), and capable manager leadership (organizational capabilities) are critical behaviors for effective leader-follower relationships. Future research should include evaluating the mediating effects of follower identification with the leader on these three crucial visionary leader variables and follower visionary leader variables. Furthermore, a longitudinal study of this nature would provide data elucidating the transformation of the follower into leader.

As leaders recognize the values and vision that shape their followers' behaviors, they can better develop the follower and thereby present a united force for strengthening the achievement of organizational goals. This study was performed to inform important information about the moderating effects of followers' identification with the leader and the relationship between leader visionary leadership and follower visionary leadership. Moreover, it provides a starting point for better understanding about the degree that visionary leaders transfer knowledge to the follower and inspire them to think and behave in the same way. The information derived from the study could be used to guide future research, talent management, employee engagement, and leadership development.

About the Author

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