Toward a Contingency Model of Leadership and Psychological Empowerment: When Should Self-Leadership Be Encouraged?

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In this paper, we develop and present a contingency model of leadership and psychological empowerment that specifies the circumstances and situations under which follower self-leadership should be encouraged. The model suggests that certain key contingency factors, including follower development, situational urgency and task structure, dictate which of several leadership approaches, including directive, transactional, transformational and empowering, should be chosen. Each specific leadership approach in turn results in a specific combination of predictable outcomes, which include the level of follower involvement, dependence, creativity and psychological empowerment. We also advance research propositions based on the model and discuss the model’s practical implications along with possible approaches for empirically testing its linkages.

Modern organizations face unprecedented challenges in today’s fast-paced, high-tech, information-based competitive environments. As more and more organizations move toward decentralized, organic-type organizational structures, organizational members at all levels are being encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own job tasks and work behaviors. This trend toward more flexible and decentralized organizational forms has focused attention on a variety of participatory management concepts such as employee empowerment (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). The concept of self-leadership (Manz, 1986; Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz & Sims, 2001) appears to have particularly impressive potential for application in today’s dynamic organizational environments characterized by empowerment and decentralized structures. Indeed, self-leadership has often been presented as a primary mechanism for facilitating empowerment (e.g., Manz, 1992; Prussia, Anderson, & Manz, 1998; Shipper & Manz, 1992). Self-leadership is defined as a systematic set of strategies through which individuals influence themselves toward higher levels of performance and effectiveness (Manz, 1986; Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz & Sims, 2001). In recent years, self-leadership concepts have gained considerable popularity as evidenced by the large number of practitioner oriented books and articles on the subject (e.g., Blanchard, 1995; Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz & Sims, 2001; Sims & Manz, 1996; Waitley, 1995) and by coverage in an increasing number of management and leadership textbooks (e.g., Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004; McShane & Von Glinow, 2003; Nahavandi, 2003).

Despite the widespread appeal of self-leadership strategies, Markham and Markham (1998) have questioned the extent to which self-leadership can and should be encouraged across all types of situations. More specifically, they question whether “self-leadership is a contingency theory that best fits certain boundary conditions” or whether it is “a universally applicable theory that will work with all employees under all circumstances” (Markham & Markham, 1998, p.199). Indeed, self-leadership theorists have often suggested that encouraging follower self-leadership may not be universally appropriate. For instance, Manz and Sims (2001) assert, “it is naïve to assume that relying on self-leadership is always appropriate…several important situational factors influence the appropriateness of attempts...
to develop self-leadership in followers…” (pp.63-64). Although Manz and Sims (2001) go on to discuss some important contingency factors, they stop short of developing any sort of comprehensive framework to specify when and under what circumstances leaders should empower followers by encouraging self-leadership.

The purpose of our paper is to develop and present a contingency model of leadership and psychological empowerment that will specify the circumstances and situations under which follower self-leadership should be encouraged. In short, our model suggests that certain key contingency factors dictate which of several approaches to leadership should be chosen. Each specific leadership approach results in a certain combination of predictable outcomes.

Finally, based on the model, we will advance research propositions and discuss possible approaches for empirically testing the linkages suggested by the model. In offering an agenda for future self-leadership research, Markham and Markham (1998) call for researchers to “empirically investigate the boundary conditions under which self-leadership constructs would not be applicable” (p. 208). We believe that the model developed and presented here may represent an important first step toward a clearer understanding of when and under what circumstances follower self-leadership should be encouraged.

Psychological Empowerment

The concept of psychological empowerment can trace its origins to the related organizational theories of participative management and employee involvement (e.g., Cotton, 1993; Wagner, 1994). Initially, organizational theorists defined empowerment in a unidimensional manner in terms of self-efficacy (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) or self-determination (Macher, 1988). More recently however, psychological empowerment has been defined as a multi-dimensional motivational construct consisting of four distinct cognitive dimensions (Spreitzer, 1995, 1996; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Meaning or purpose refers to a person’s perceived congruence between personal work roles and personal beliefs, values, and behaviors (Brief & Nord, 1990). Competence refers to one’s perceptions of possessing the capabilities to perform a specific job or task well (Gist, 1987) and is conceptually similar to the idea of personal mastery or self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Self-determination involves the belief that one has control, choice, or autonomy over one’s work behaviors and processes (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Greenberger, Strasser, Cummings, & Durham, 1989). Finally, impact relates to one’s perception of having made a difference by influencing strategic, administrative or operating outcomes at work (Ashford, 1989). Taken together, these four cognitive dimensions comprise the basic essence of psychological empowerment in the workplace.

Viewed in this way, psychological empowerment is not a stable and generalizable personality trait, but rather a cognitive state created by a set of malleable cognitions that are shaped on an ongoing basis by one’s work environment (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Furthermore, these dimensions combine in an additive way such that a person who lacks one dimension will simply experience fewer empowerment cognitions, rather than no empowerment cognitions at all (Spreitzer, 1995). In other words, psychological empowerment is a continuous variable that reflects the degree empowerment felt, rather than the presence or absence of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). Finally, psychological empowerment results in an active, not passive, approach to work that causes individuals to strive toward and feel capable of shaping work roles and work contexts (Spreitzer, 1995).

Self-Leadership

In contrast, self-leadership (Manz, 1986; Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz & Sims, 2001) is a process through which people influence themselves to achieve the self-direction and self-motivation necessary to perform. Self-leadership has deep roots in several related theories of self-influence including self-regulation (Kanfer, 1970; Carver & Scheier, 1981), self-control (Cautela, 1969; Mahoney & Arnkoff, 1978, 1979; Thoresen & Mahoney, 1974), self-management (Andrasik & Heimberg, 1982; Luthans & Davis, 1979; Manz & Sims, 1980), intrinsic motivation theory (e.g., Deci and
Ryan, 1985), social cognitive theory (e.g., Bandura, 1986), and clinical cognitive psychology (e.g., Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979; Burns, 1980; Ellis, 1977; Seligman, 1991). Building on these theoretical foundations, self-leadership prescribes specific sets of behavioral and cognitive strategies aimed at positively affecting individual performance outcomes.

Self-leadership strategies are generally divided into three primary categories consisting of behavior-focused strategies, natural reward strategies and constructive thought pattern strategies (Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz & Sims, 2001; Prussia et al., 1998). Behavior-focused strategies are designed to increase self-awareness leading to the successful management of behaviors involving necessary but unpleasant tasks (Manz & Neck, 2004). Based on self-control and self-management theory, self-leadership’s behavior-focused strategies include self-observation, self-goal setting, self-reward, and self-correcting feedback. Self-observation involves closely examining one’s behavior to raise awareness of when and why certain behaviors occur. Through self-observation one can identify behaviors to be changed, enhanced or eliminated (Mahoney & Arnkoff, 1978, 1979; Manz & Sims, 1980; Manz & Neck, 2004). This heightening of behavioral awareness represents an important first step toward behavioral change that can allow individuals to more effectively set goals aimed at improving personal performance (Manz, 1986; Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz & Sims, 1980). These self-set goals, coupled with self-reward contingencies, can be very effective in energizing the behaviors necessary for goal achievement (Mahoney & Arnkoff, 1978, 1979; Manz & Sims, 1980; Manz & Neck, 2004). Self-correcting feedback is also useful for shaping desired behaviors. A positively framed introspective examination of failures and undesirable behaviors may be more effective in reshaping these behaviors than the excessive use of self-punishment involving self-criticism and guilt (Manz & Sims, 2001).

Natural reward strategies focus on the inherently enjoyable aspects of task or activity and are designed to create situations in which a person is motivated or rewarded by the task or activity itself (Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz & Sims, 2001). Natural reward strategies involve two primary approaches: building more pleasant and enjoyable features into a task or activity so that value is obtained from the task itself and it becomes naturally rewarding (Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz & Sims, 2001), and shaping one’s perceptions of an activity by focusing on its inherently rewarding aspects (Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz & Sims, 2001). Both approaches tend to foster feelings of competence and self-determination, the two primary mechanisms of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). To the extent that tasks can be chosen, structured or perceived in ways that lead to increased feelings of competence and self-determination, they will be naturally rewarding and task performance will be enhanced.

Constructive thought pattern strategies deal with the management of cognitive processes and include three primary tools for shaping thinking patterns: self-analysis and improvement of belief systems, mental imagery of successful performance outcomes, and positive self-talk (Manz & Neck, 2004; Neck & Manz, 1992, 1996). The effective utilization of these specific cognitive strategies tends to facilitate the formation of constructive thought patterns and habitual ways of thinking that can positively impact performance (Manz & Neck, 2004; Neck & Manz, 1992). More specifically, individuals can examine their thinking patterns in order to identify, confront and replace dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions with more rational ones to facilitate more constructive thought patterns (Burns, 1980; Ellis, 1977; Manz & Neck, 2004; Neck & Manz, 1992). In like manner, negative and destructive self-talk can be identified and replaced more positive and constructive self-dialogues. Self-talk has been defined as what we covertly tell ourselves (Neck & Manz, 1992, 1996) and generally involves cognitive evaluations and reactions to oneself and one’s environment (Ellis, 1977; Neck & Manz, 1992). Through a careful analysis of self-talk patterns, individuals can learn to suppress or eliminate negative and pessimistic self-talk while fostering and encouraging optimistic self-dialogues (Seligman, 1991).

Finally, mental imagery consists of a symbolic and covert cognitive creation of an experience or task without actual overt physical muscular movement (cf. Driskell, Copper, & Moran, 1994; Finke, 1989). Through mental
imagery, it may be possible to symbolically experience behavioral outcomes prior to actual performance (Neck & Manz, 1992, 1996), and individuals who envision the successful performance of an activity in advance are much more likely to perform successfully when faced with the actual task (Manz & Neck, 2004). This assertion has been supported by a significant amount of empirical research evidence. Indeed, in a meta-analysis of 35 empirical studies, Driskell et al. (1994) found both a positive and significant effect of mental imagery on individual performance outcomes.

The Relationship Between Psychological Empowerment and Self-Leadership

Self-leadership is generally viewed as being conceptually distinct from the construct of psychological empowerment (e.g., Lee & Koh, 2001). As outlined above, self-leadership is conceptualized as a process of utilizing a set of complimentary behavioral and cognitive strategies while empowerment is a cognitive state created by a constellation of malleable cognitions. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, self-leadership is often presented as an effective mechanism for facilitating empowerment (e.g., Manz, 1992; Prussia et al., 1998). For instance, Shipper and Manz (1992) presented a case study of W. L. Gore and Associates in which they suggested that self-management and self-leadership techniques were a central part of the empowerment efforts within that organization. Likewise, Manz (1992) has argued that self-leadership skills lie at the very heart of the empowerment process and are essential for employees to perform successfully in autonomous situations.

Self-leadership strategies are likely to facilitate empowerment by enhancing perceptions of meaningfulness, purpose, self-determination, competence and self-efficacy (Lee & Koh, 2001). Natural reward strategies, for example, are specifically intended to foster feelings of competence, self-control and purpose (Manz & Neck, 2004, pp. 42-44). Likewise, the behavior-focused strategies of self-observation, self-goal setting and self-reward can create feelings of self-determination and competence. Moreover, a primary objective of all self-leadership strategies is the enhancement of self-efficacy perceptions (e.g., Manz, 1986; Manz & Neck, 2004; Neck & Manz, 1992, 1996). Empirical research has provided some evidence in support of this purported relationship. For instance, Neck and Manz (1996) found significantly higher levels of self-efficacy in a group of employees trained in self-leadership strategies as compared to a no-training control group. Subsequently, Prussia and his colleagues (Prussia et al., 1998) demonstrated a direct significant relationship between self-leadership behaviors and self-efficacy perceptions, with self-efficacy fully mediating the relationship between self-leadership and performance. Finally, although some theorists have pointed out that self-leaders do not necessarily experience feelings of impacting the organization (Lee & Koh, 2001), within a properly structured organizational environment a self-leading individual would have ample opportunity to influence key strategic, administrative and operating outcomes (Manz, 1992; Manz & Neck, 2004; Roberts & Foti, 1998).

Based on this empirical and theoretical evidence, a relationship between self-leadership and psychological empowerment seems quite likely. Furthermore, it is possible that this relationship is multi-directional. That is to say, a person experiencing feelings of self-determination, competence, purpose and impact may be more likely to engage in self-leading behaviors than a person who is not experiencing psychological empowerment. However, because self-leadership theory specifies that its various strategies should lead to several of the cognitive states of psychological empowerment and insomuch as empirical research has provided some support for this assertion, it seems more likely that self-leadership strategies facilitate psychological empowerment rather than the other way around. The question remains, however, as to whether the encouragement of self-leadership and psychological empowerment is always desirable.

A Typology of Leadership Approaches

Through the years, leadership theorists have identified a number of distinct leadership
approaches and styles. A considerable portion of this research has been effectively summarized in a typology of leadership approaches originally presented by Manz and Sims (1991) and explicated and expanded by others (e.g., Goel, Manz, Neck, & Neck, 1995; Manz & Sims, 2001; Pearce, 2004; Pearce & Sims, 2002; Pearce, Sims, Cox, Ball, Schnell, Smith, & Trevino, 2003; Sims & Manz, 1996). Within this typology, each of four leadership archetypes represents a distinct leadership perspective that is well established within the leadership literature.

**Directive leadership** involves providing specific task-focused directions, giving commands, assigning goals, close supervision and constant follow-up (e.g., Manz & Sims, 1991; Muczyk & Reimann, 1987). This approach to leadership utilizes position power or legitimate power (e.g., French & Raven, 1959) to exert influence over followers and has theoretical foundations in the concepts of initiating structure behaviors as defined by the Ohio State leadership studies (Stogdill & Coons, 1951) and task-oriented behaviors as identified in the Michigian studies (Katz, Maccoby, & Morse, 1950).

**Transactional leadership** focuses on the creation of reward contingencies and exchange relationships resulting in a calculative compliance on the part of followers (e.g., Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1990). The idea of a transactional approach to leadership reflects a substantial body of theory and research that includes expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), exchange/equity theories (e.g., Adams, 1963; Homans, 1958) and reinforcement theory (e.g., Skinner, 1953). Expectancy theory suggests that individuals will assess behavioral choices on the basis of three variables: valence (the attractiveness of an outcome associated with a given behavior), instrumentality (the subjective probability that engaging in the behavior and will lead to the outcome), and expectancy (the subjective probability that effort will result in a level of behavior needed to obtain the outcome). Exchange/equity theories suggest that individuals strive to maintain equity between their inputs and outcomes in the exchange relationship. Reinforcement theory suggests that behavioral consequences shape whether or not a certain behavior will be continued or repeated.

Drawing upon these classic theoretical views, the transactional leadership approach strives to create and clarify the effort-reward linkage and to reinforce or reward desirable behaviors with rewards that are perceived to be equitable and attractive (Pearce & Sims, 2002). **Transformational leadership**, often contrasted with transactional leadership, involves the creation and communication a higher-level vision in a charismatic way that elicits an emotional response and commitment from the followers (e.g., Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1990). The theoretical foundations of the transformational leadership type include the sociological concept of charisma (Weber, 1947), charismatic leadership theory (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; House, 1977), and transforming/transformational leadership (Bass, 1985). Typical transformational leadership behaviors include charismatic influence, providing vision, inspirational communication/motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Although this perspective of leadership has developed in several separate streams of theory and research, Conger (1999) has suggested that these streams are increasingly converging and stabilizing into a single unified paradigm.

Finally, **empowering leadership** emphasizes employee self-influence processes rather than hierarchical control processes and actively encourages followers to utilize self-leadership strategies (e.g., Cox, Pearce, & Perry, 2003; Pearce & Sims, 2002). This approach to leadership has been called “SuperLeadership” in popular media and defined as the process of leading others to lead themselves (Manz & Sims, 1991, 2001). Empowering leadership has theoretical roots in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and participative goal setting research (e.g., Erez & Arad, 1986). A primary component of social cognitive theory is the triadic reciprocal model of behavior (Bandura, 1986). This model suggests a triadic and reciprocal relationship between individuals’ cognitive processes, their behaviors, and their environment. The implication from a leadership perspective is that follower performance may be enhanced by encouraging followers to utilize self-leadership strategies to manage behaviors and cognitive processes relative their environments.
Another important tenet of social cognitive theory is the concept of vicarious learning through behavioral modeling (Bandura, 1986). The empowering leadership approach advocates the modeling of self-leadership behaviors for the purpose of facilitating subsequent adoption of these self-leadership strategies by the follower (Manz & Sims, 2001; Pearce & Sims, 2002). In addition, some research has suggested that in certain situations participative goal setting may lead to higher performance and satisfaction than assigned goals (e.g., Erez & Arad, 1986). In contrast to the directive leadership approach, which involves assigned goals, the empowering approach encourages followers to develop self-set goals along with self-reward contingencies in keeping with participative goal setting concepts. Finally, although they share common theoretical underpinnings, it is important to note that empowering leadership and self-leadership are separate concepts. Empowering leadership strives to facilitate follower self-leadership by modeling and encouraging self-leadership strategies, personal responsibility, individual initiative, self-confidence, self-problem solving and psychological ownership of work tasks and duties (Manz & Sims, 2001).

Recently, Pearce and his colleagues (Pearce et al., 2003) provided additional theoretical and empirical evidence in support of the leadership typology outlined above. More specifically, these researchers deductively derived the four theoretical leadership types based on a historical analysis of the leadership literature, before inductively developing alternative models of leadership types from empirical data sets. Finally, Pearce and his collaborators used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on a separate data set to provide empirical support for the existence of the four-factor leadership typology described above (Pearce et al., 2003). This leadership typology has often been used as a framework for developing a variety of conceptual leadership models (e.g., Cox & Sims, 1996; Cox et al., 2003; Liu, Lepak, Takeuchi, & Sims, 2003; Pearce & Sims, 2000, 2002; Perry, Pearce, and Sims, 1999). Likewise, in the following section we will employ this leadership typology as a framework for developing a contingency model of leadership and psychological empowerment.

Before proceeding with the development of our model, however, a word of caution is in order. Although the leadership typology we will employ as our conceptual framework portrays some of the more influential leadership approaches to be presented in the leadership literature over the years, this typology should not be viewed as exhaustive, comprehensive or a perfectly realistic reflection of all leadership behaviors. Many important leadership approaches and roles that may have important influences on follower outcomes are not included in this typology. For instance, supportive, consideration and relationship-oriented leadership approaches may have important impacts on follower performance and attitudes (e.g., Wofford & Liska, 1993). Likewise, boundary spanning leadership roles (e.g., Katz & Tushman, 1983) have long been considered important and are becoming even more so in today’s complex, dynamic team-oriented organizational structures. Followership (e.g., Kelley, 1992) is another important leadership concept not reflected in this typology, and participative leadership (e.g., Wagner, 1994) is a concept that may be viewed separately from the empowerment and self-leadership literature. Finally, in reality, the four leadership approaches included in this leadership typology are multi-dimensional, complex and often overlapping. For example, as Shamir, House and Arthur (1993) have observed, charismatic leaders have the potential to transform work into a meaningful avenue for self-expression possibly leading to higher levels of self-efficacy and self-worth similar to the effects of an empowering leader. Despite such complexities, these leadership approaches are necessarily portrayed within the typology in more pure and less complicated forms than perhaps is warranted in actual reality. For better or worse, it is the nature of conceptual models to simplify component parts in order to facilitate comparisons and examine relationships.

**A Contingency Model of Leadership and Psychological Empowerment**

A contingency model of leadership and follower empowerment is shown in Figure 1. This model contributes to the literature in at least three important ways. First, the model
makes a theoretical contribution by being the first to integrate these contingency factors, leadership approaches and outcomes into a single integrative model. Second, the model makes a practical contribution by providing practitioners with a framework for understanding the conditions under which each leadership approach is likely to be most effective. Finally, the model presented here helps to specify when and under what conditions self-leadership should be encouraged, thus filling a critical gap in the self-leadership literature.

We will now develop and present the various components of the model along with associated research propositions. In brief, three key contingency factors dictate which of the four leadership approaches is most appropriate. Adopting a given leadership approach in turn will result in several predictable follower outcomes. These particular contingency factors and predictable outcomes were chosen for integration into the current model because other theorists (e.g., Manz & Sims, 2001) have suggested them as relevant to these leadership approaches and because of their general prominence as contingency and outcome variables within the leadership literature. Indeed, although many of the relationships proposed here are not new concepts within the literature, the present integrative model makes a novel contribution insomuch as it is the first to combine these proposed relationships into a single practical framework that has the potential to both inform practitioners and encourage additional empirical investigation.

**Figure 1.** A contingency model of leadership and psychological empowerment.

*Note.* L = Low, H = High, U = Unstructured, S = Structured, D = Dependence, I = Independence, M = Mixed or Moderate
Key Contingency Factors

The first key contingency factor is follower development. Development involves the present level of follower capabilities as well as the extent to which further enhancement of these capabilities is desirable. In some situations, short-term efficiency may be more important than long-term follower development. For example, an organization that hires employees on a short-term basis from a temporary employment agency to complete a specific short-term project would most likely not be concerned with the long-term development of these employees. In such a case, a more directive or transactional leadership approach might be more desirable to elicit short-term follower compliance (Manz & Sims, 2001). Conversely, if a leader wishes to enhance follower capabilities over a longer time frame, then a transformational or empowering style might be more appropriate to build follower commitment (Manz & Sims, 2001). This longer-term approach could be viewed as "leader investment behavior" because a later return is expected (Manz & Sims, 2001).

Development also includes the idea of current follower capabilities or "readiness." The concept of readiness is derived from the situational leadership model (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2001). The situational leadership model prescribes one of four leadership styles characterized by varying amounts of task and relationship behaviors. The four styles include telling (high task, low relationship), selling (high task, high relationship), participating (low task, high relationship), and delegating (low task, low relationship). Readiness is defined as the level of a follower’s willingness or confidence and task specific ability (Hersey et al., 2001). According to the model, as follower readiness increases from its lowest level to its highest, the appropriate leader style moves through a progression from telling to delegating, reflecting a shift from task-oriented behaviors to relationship-oriented behaviors.

The four leadership styles incorporated in the situational leadership model may be loosely associated with the four leadership approaches represented in the model proposed here. Telling is analogous to directive leadership, selling is similar to transactional leadership, participating incorporates some aspects of transformational leadership, and delegating is akin to an empowering approach. Although the situational leadership model has been criticized as a one-dimensional model that suffers from internal inconsistencies and ignores important contextual factors (e.g., Graeff, 1997), readiness nonetheless appears to have some degree of validity as a determinant of appropriate leadership behavior (e.g., Hambleton & Gumbert, 1982; Norris & Vecchio, 1992; Vecchio, 1987). Thus we propose:

Proposition 1a: A directive or transactional leadership approach will be more appropriate and effective when the potential for follower development is low (i.e., current follower capabilities are low and/or the value of long-term enhancement of follower capabilities is low).

Proposition 1b: A transformational or empowering leadership approach will be more appropriate and effective when the potential for follower development is high (i.e., current follower capabilities are high and/or the value of long-term enhancement of follower capabilities is high).

A second key contingency factor is situational urgency. In a crisis situation there may not be enough time available to create reward contingencies or develop self-leadership capabilities in followers. In a time of crisis or high urgency, either a highly directive or a transformational leadership style would seem to be more appropriate (e.g., Conger, 1999; Manz & Sims, 2001). During a fire evacuation or in a military combat situation, for example, specific, directive, task-oriented instructions are needed. Likewise, theorists have often suggested that by creating a sense of follower helplessness and low self-esteem, crisis situations can serve as a facilitating factor for the emergence and effectiveness of charismatic or transformational leadership, particularly in political and religious contexts (e.g., Bass, 1985; Bryman, 1992; Cell, 1974; Weber, 1947). For instance, in a laboratory experiment, Pillai (1996) found that a crisis situation fostered the emergence and effectiveness of charismatic leaders in leaderless student groups relative to non-crisis control groups. Similarly, in a field study Roberts and Bradley (1988) examined the case of a school superintendent who was initially perceived as a charismatic leader while leading a school district
in crisis, but was later not perceived as charismatic when she became state commissioner of education in a non-crisis environment. Although a crisis situation may be neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for the effectiveness of a directive or charismatic leader (e.g., Shamir & Howell, 1999), on balance the evidence seems to provide support for the appropriateness of these approaches in urgent situations. Hence, we suggest:

Proposition 2a: A directive or transformational leadership approach will be more appropriate and effective in situations of high urgency or crisis.

Proposition 2b: A transactional or empowering leadership approach will be more appropriate and effective in situations of low urgency or crisis.

The final contingency factor is the task environment, that is, the degree to which a follower’s task environment is structured or unstructured. A structured task environment is one characterized by clearly specified, routine or simple processes, low levels of uncertainty and very little behavioral discretion. In contrast, an unstructured task environment is one characterized by high levels of uncertainty and ample behavioral discretion. Task processes tend to be largely unspecified and non-routine and are often creative, analytical or intellectual in nature.

Pawar and Eastman (1997) have presented a similar task dichotomy at the organizational level using the contrasting terms of “technical core” and “boundary-spanning units.” The technical core is described as a rational internal system with clearly specified, routinized processes and high levels of coordination (Pawar & Eastman, 1997). The boundary spanning functions, in contrast, interface with the environment, creating a buffer and protecting the technical core so that it may carry out its technical routines. The boundary spanning units face high levels of uncertainty and are forced to adapt to environmental contingencies. The task processes of these units are therefore unspecified and non-routine and are characterized by high levels of discretion (Pawar & Eastman, 1997). Pawar and Eastman (1997) go on to suggest that individuals operating within the routinized technical core will be resistant to leader transformation efforts beyond that which is necessary to carry out their technical tasks. Conversely, individuals within the relatively unstructured boundary-spanning units will be more receptive to the vision and innovation of a transformational leader (Pawar & Eastman, 1997). Based on this theoretical framework, a transformational leadership approach would seem an appropriate choice for followers in unstructured task environments.

In contrast, it seems likely that the transactional leadership style would be more appropriate for a well-structured task situation. For routine, simple and clearly specified task situations, external reward contingencies could serve to provide necessary, but often lacking, task motivation. In support of this assertion, Pittman, Emery, & Boggiano (1982) showed that subjects in a task-contingent reward condition showed a preference for a simple version of a novel game while subjects in a no-reward condition preferred a more complex version of the game. Likewise, Daniel and Esser (1980) found that an external reward contingency increased intrinsic motivation (as measured by willingness to participate in a similar study) for subjects engaged in a highly structured task while undermining intrinsic motivation for subjects engaged in a relatively unstructured task. Finally, in considering the relationships between the transformational and transactional leadership styles and the follower’s task environment, Bass (1985) speculated that “transformational leadership is most likely to appear in organizations where goals and structures are unclear, but where warmth and trust are high” while “transactional leadership is most likely to appear in mechanistic organizations where goals and structures are clear and/or where members work under formal contracts” (p.158).

Leadership theorists have further suggested that a directive leadership style would be most appropriate for unstructured task environments (e.g., House, 1971, 1996; Keller, 1989). The directive style would be inappropriate for followers with simple, routine, structured tasks because the leader’s task instructions could be viewed as unnecessary, purposeless or irritating.

Finally, leadership researchers have often speculated that an empowering leadership style would be most appropriate for followers in unstructured task environments involving
creative, analytical or intellectual work along with ample behavioral and decision-making discretion (e.g., Manz & Sims, 2001). Empirical evidence has provided some support for this speculation. For example, in a field study Roberts and Foti (1998) found that individuals low in self-leading behaviors were more satisfied in highly structured job environments while individuals high in self-leading behaviors were more satisfied in more unstructured work environments. Insomuch as a hallmark of the empowering leadership style is the encouragement of follower self-leadership, it seems likely that this style would be more effective in unstructured task environments that allow followers the flexibility and discretion to engage in self-leadership. Based on the evidence outlined in the preceding paragraphs we submit:

**Proposition 3a:** A directive, transformational, or empowering leadership approach will be more appropriate and effective in an unstructured task environment.

**Proposition 3b:** A transactional leadership approach will be more appropriate and effective in a structured task environment.

**Predictable Outcomes**

Choosing and implementing one of the four leadership approaches will result in at least four predictable outcomes. The first predictable outcome is the degree of *follower commitment*. Follower commitment can range from a simple behavioral compliance to a deeper affective commitment. Behavioral compliance is the extent to which a follower simply obeys the directives or submits to the will of a leader (e.g., Rahim & Afza, 1993; Rahim & Buntzman, 1988). In contrast, follower affective commitment is described as a deeper relationship in which followers identify with and are involved in an organization to the extent that they are willing to give of themselves in the interest of the organization’s well being (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Affective commitment is distinct from other types of commitment such as continuance commitment, which is based on a financial need to remain with an organization, and normative commitment, which is based on feelings of obligation to maintain organizational membership (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Leadership theorists have generally suggested that the directive and transactional leadership styles will result in behavioral compliance while the transformational and empowering leadership styles will result in affective commitment (e.g., Bennis & Nannus, 1985; Conger, 1999; Manz & Sims, 1991, 2001; Sims & Manz, 1996). Available research evidence tends to support these proposed outcomes. For instance, in a field study involving a sample of 308 accounting professionals, Rahim & Afza (1993) found significantly higher correlations between a leader’s use of coercive and legitimate power, two primary power sources for the directive leadership style, and follower behavioral compliance (.28 and .48 respectively) than they found between a leader’s use of these power sources and follower affective commitment (.10 and .12 respectively). Furthermore, Rahim & Afza (1993) also showed a higher correlation between a leader’s use of referent power, a primary power source for the transformational leadership style, and follower affective commitment (.50) than they found between a leader’s referent power use and follower behavioral compliance (.20).

More recently, a number of researchers have reported significant relationships between a transformational leadership style and follower commitment in a variety of organizational settings (e.g., Kent & Chelladurai, 2001; McCann, Langford, & Rawlings, 2003; Viator, 2001). For example, Rai and Sinha (2000) reported a significant relationship between a superior’s transformational leadership style and follower commitment in a commercial bank setting. Masi and Cooke (2000), on the other hand, found a significant negative relationship between a transactional leadership and follower commitment in the US Army Recruiting Command. In harmony with these findings, Bennis and Nannus (1985) have predicted compliance as an outcome for the transactional style: “Management typically consists of a set of contractual exchanges, ‘you do this for that reward’…What gets exchanged is not trivial: jobs, security, money. The result at best is compliance; at worst, you get spiteful obedience” (p. 218). Finally, theorists have often argued in favor of the efficacy of the empowering leadership style for creating
follower affective commitment and ownership (e.g., Houghton, Neck, & Manz, 2003; Manz & Sims, 1991, 2001; Sims & Manz, 1996). Based on this line evidence and theorizing we predict:

Proposition 4a: The directive and transactional leadership approaches will result in follower behavioral compliance.

Proposition 4b: The transformational and empowering leadership approaches will result in follower affective commitment.

The second predictable outcome is the level of follower dependence. Relative follower dependence is one of the primary contrasts often made between the empowering leadership approach and the directive, transactional and transformational leadership approaches. In general, the directive, transactional, and transformational styles may lead to largely dependent followers while the empowering style is thought to result in largely independent followers (e.g., Manz & Sims, 2001; Sims & Manz, 1996). Followers tend to look to the directive leader for commands and task instructions, to the transactional leader for reward contingencies, and to the transformational leader for inspiration. When these types of leaders are not present, followers may lose motivation, focus and direction (Sims & Manz, 1996). In contrast, followers of an empowering leader tend to be more independent, largely looking to their own self-leadership for the direction and motivation necessary to perform (Manz & Sims, 1991).

The concept of dependency among followers of transformational or charismatic leaders has been particularly noted (e.g., Conger, 1999). Some theorists have speculated that followers are drawn to charismatic leaders primarily because they have an essentially dependent character marked by low self-confidence, feelings of helplessness and a lack of conviction (e.g., Downton, 1973). This seems to be particularly true for followers of charismatic religious cult leaders (e.g., Freemesser & Kaplan, 1976; Galanter, 1982). In contrast, others have suggested that followers of transformational leaders, particularly in a workplace setting, may in fact be self-confident and assertive, viewing their association with a charismatic leader as an opportunity to constructively enhance their self-esteem, self-worth and self-efficacy (e.g., Conger, 1999). A dependency may develop nonetheless as the leader’s approval comes to define the followers’ perceptions of their own ability, performance and self-worth (Conger, 1999). Finally, recent empirical evidence provides some support for this view. Kark, Shamir, and Chen (2003) found that transformational leadership was positively related to follower dependence as mediated by personal identification with the leader. Based on the foregoing discussion:

Proposition 5a: The directive, transactional, and transformational leadership approaches will result in follower dependence.

Proposition 5b: The empowering leadership approach will result in follower independence.

The third predictable outcome is the level of follower creativity or innovation. Creativity is generally defined as the formation of novel, appropriate and useful ideas by individuals or small groups (e.g., Amabile & Conti, 1996; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993). Innovation refers to the implementation of such creative ideas in an organizational context (e.g., Amabile & Conti, 1996). Thus, individual and team creativity serve as the origin of organizational innovation (Amabile & Conti, 1996).

Low levels of individual creativity and organizational innovation have been suggested as a predictable outcome for the directive and transactional leadership styles (Manz & Sims, 2001). Research evidence tends to support these assertions. For example, Williams (2001) found a negative relationship between initiating structure, a primary aspect of the directive leadership approach, and subordinates’ creative performance. Likewise, research has demonstrated lower levels of creativity for followers of transactional leaders as compared to the followers of transformational leaders (e.g., Jung, 2001). Indeed, research evidence has demonstrated a detrimental effect for reward contingencies on creative performance (e.g., Amabile, Hennessey, & Grossman, 1986). Although some researchers have argued that the detrimental effects of rewards on creativity have been overstated (e.g., Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996) and that the way in which rewards are administered may in part help determine whether or not follower creativity will be adversely affected (e.g., Kerr, 1997), it is largely acknowledged that rewards decrease creativity.
in the performance of routine or conventional tasks (e.g., Eisenberger & Shanock, 2003).

In contrast, theorists have predicted that high levels of individual creativity and organizational innovation will result from an empowering leadership approach (Manz & Sims, 2001). In support of this suggestion, a number of researchers have observed that creativity is encouraged when individuals and teams operate in a relatively autonomous environment, experience a sense of ownership and perceive control over their ideas and work processes (e.g., Amabile and Conti, 1996; Bailyn, 1985). For instance, Amabile and Gitomer (1984) found that individuals who perceive a choice in how they proceed to accomplish a task produce more creative work than those who perceive little or no choice. In addition, Shalley (1991) observed that subjects with difficult and specific goals and high personal discretion showed higher levels of creativity than subjects with either no goals or no personal discretion. Taken together, this evidence supports the effectiveness of an empowering leadership approach that encourages follower self-leadership for facilitating follower creativity.

Additionally, research has often shown that a transformational leadership style is related to higher levels of follower creativity (e.g., Jung, 2001; Sosik, Kahai, & Avolio, 1998). Indeed, most conceptualizations of transformational or charismatic leadership include the idea of intellectual stimulation, which could facilitate creative processes (Conger, 1999). On the other hand, Basu and Green (1997) found a negative relationship between transformational leadership and innovative follower behaviors, while Kahai, Sosik, and Avolio (2003) found transactional leadership to be more associated with group creativity than transformational leadership. Based on this contrasting evidence, it appears that the effects of transformational leadership on follower creativity may be somewhat mixed or moderate. In some instances followers would react to the intellectual stimulation of the transformational leader with creative behaviors, while in other situations the followers will rely more heavily on the leader’s vision, inspiration, and role modeling with little creative initiative of their own. Given the entire stream of evidence outlined above, we suggest the following:

**Proposition 6a:** The directive and transactional leadership approaches will result in low levels of follower creativity and organizational innovation.

**Proposition 6b:** The transformational leadership approach will result in mixed or moderate levels of follower creativity and organizational innovation.

**Proposition 6c:** The empowering leadership approach will result in high levels of follower creativity.

The final predictable outcome is the level of **psychological empowerment.** Theorists have suggested that the directive and transactional styles will result in low levels of empowerment among followers, while the empowering style will result in high levels of empowerment (e.g., Manz & Sims, 2001). Available research tends to support this assertion. For example, in a study involving 405 hospital employees, Irvine, Leatt, Evans, and Baker (1999) found that employee empowerment was negatively related to a directive leadership style but positively related to an empowering leadership style that encouraged self-leadership. Additionally, Masi and Cooke (2000) found no relationship between transactional leadership and the development of empowering norms in a military setting.

Most conceptualizations of transformational or charismatic leadership include the concept of empowerment as a primary leadership outcome (Conger, 1999). Indeed, theorists generally suggest that transformational leaders use empowerment rather than control strategies to influence their followers (Conger, 1999). Research evidence, however, is somewhat mixed. Several recent studies have shown that a transformational leadership approach is significantly related to empowerment (e.g., Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003; Jung & Sosik, 2002; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). Masi and Cooke (2000), on the other hand, found a positive but non-significant relationship between transformational leadership and empowering norms in a military context.

A possible explanation of these mixed findings may be provided by Howell’s conceptualization of a dichotomous model of charismatic leadership (e.g., Howell, 1988). According to this view, socialized charismatic leaders focus on the interests of the collective while leading in an egalitarian and unpretentious
manner that serves to empower and develop followers. In contrast, personalized charismatic leaders focus on their own self-interests while leading in an authoritarian and egotistical manner that demands complete obedience and dependence from followers. Given this dichotomy of charismatic leadership, it seems plausible that socialized charismatic leaders will create high levels of empowerment among their followers while personalized charismatic leaders will create low levels of empowerment among their followers. Based on the evidence presented in the preceding paragraphs we suggest:

Proposition 7a: The directive and transactional leadership approaches will result in low levels of psychological empowerment among followers.

Proposition 7b: The transformational leadership approach will result in mixed levels of psychological empowerment among followers. More specifically, socialized charismatic leaders will create high levels psychological empowerment among followers while personalized charismatic leaders will create low levels psychological empowerment among followers.

Proposition 7c: The empowering leadership approach will result in high levels of psychological empowerment among followers.

Our model also suggests that the effects of the empowering leadership approach on the follower outcomes of commitment, dependence, creativity, and psychological empowerment will be mediated through follower self-leadership. As discussed in detail earlier, the primary focus of the empowering leadership style is the encouragement of self-leading behaviors among followers (e.g., Manz & Sims, 2001; Pearce & Sims, 2002). Follower self-leadership, in turn, is likely to facilitate the predictable follower outcomes specified in the model. More specifically, self-leading individuals tend to take ownership of tasks and work processes and therefore demonstrate higher levels of commitment than individuals who are being directed by others (Manz & Sims, 2001). Moreover, individuals operating at high levels of self-influence through the use of self-leadership strategies may experience greater feelings of control and autonomy (Manz & Neck, 2004). They are therefore less dependent on a traditional leader for direction and influence and much more likely to think and act in creative ways (Houghton, Neck, & Manz, 2003). Finally, the relationship between self-leadership and psychological empowerment was explained in some detail in an earlier section of this paper. Although self-leadership’s mediating role and its effects on follower outcomes have not yet been subjected to extensive empirical examination, based on self-leadership theory (e.g., Manz, 1986; Manz & Neck, 2004; Manz & Sims, 2001) and a limited amount of empirical evidence (e.g., Neck & Manz, 1996; Prussia et al., 1998) it seems reasonable to propose:

Proposition 8: The effects of the empowering leadership approach on the follower outcomes of commitment, dependence, creativity, and psychological empowerment will be mediated through follower self-leadership.

Implications and Future Research

The model presented here has important implications for leadership practice and future leadership research. In particular, this model represents a good first step toward defining the boundary conditions under which the encouragement of follower self-leadership might be appropriate. In short, the model suggests that an empowering leadership style that encourages follower self-leadership is appropriate when follower development is currently high or continued long-term development is important, when there is low urgency and no immediate crisis, and when the task is unstructured or complex. Furthermore, the model suggests that follower self-leadership should be encouraged when the leader wants followers who are committed, independent, creative and psychologically empowered.

Despite the considerable potential for self-leadership in today’s modern organizations, the model suggests that the encouragement of follower self-leadership through an empowering leadership approach is not always appropriate. For instance, in urgent or crisis situations, a directive or transformational leadership approach would likely be much more effective than an empowering approach which requires relative stability and a longer timeframe. Furthermore, the directive or transactional styles might be more successful when follower
development is presently low or when the long-term development of followers is unnecessary. Likewise, a transactional approach might be preferred when tasks are relatively simple, structured, or routine. Finally, an empowering leadership approach that encourages follower self-leadership may also be inappropriate when strict follower compliance to a well-established protocol with no creative deviations is desired. In such situations, the directive or transactional leadership approaches would be a better choice.

The model presented here is not intended to be exhaustive or comprehensive with regards to all possible leadership approaches or behaviors, contingency factors and outcomes. Nor does this model address all possible combinations of the contingency factors and outcomes included in the model. Rather, the model simply posits the particular combination of contingency factors under which the given leadership approach is likely to be most effective. Likewise, the model suggests a likely combination of predictable outcomes for each leadership approach.

It is important to realize that the four leadership archetypes presented in the model, although relatively distinct and contrasting, are not mutually exclusive. It may be possible to blend more than one style or to move from one approach to another as the situation dictates. For example, former Southwest Airlines CEO Herb Kelleher blended a transformational leadership style that inspired his followers to embrace his low-cost, high-customer-satisfaction vision, with an empowering approach that helped build employee self-leadership and commitment into the organizational culture (Manz & Sims, 2001). In a similar display of multiple leadership styles, former GE CEO Jack Welch seemed to move through a progression of all four leadership approaches from directive to transactional to transformational to empowering as the environmental situations at GE evolved over time (Sims & Manz, 1996).

The model presented here also has important implications for future research in the leadership domain, particularly in the areas of psychological empowerment and self-leadership. Although some of the linkages represented in the model are supported by both existing leadership theory and empirical evidence, it is the task of future researchers to further examine these linkages, particularly those that have not been investigated empirically and those that have been under-investigated in the past. More specifically, the propositions outlined in the previous section could serve as testable hypotheses for future research endeavors. For instance, future research could examine the relationships between situational urgency and the effectiveness of each of the four leadership approaches, especially the extent to which a crisis situation relates to the effectiveness of the transformational and empowering styles. Likewise, future research could empirically investigate the relationships between each of the four leadership types and levels of follower creativity and organizational innovation or feelings of empowerment among followers. Additionally, an examination of the potential mediating role of self-leadership between the empowering leadership approach and follower outcomes is of particular interest. Finally, the model could also facilitate an examination of the effects of blending more than one leadership approach, as in the case of Herb Kelleher. Specifically, researchers could investigate whether a blended transformational/empowering approach would result in higher levels of employee self-leadership, commitment, creativity and psychological empowerment than either approach used in isolation. Through investigations such as these, the boundary conditions under which an empowering leadership approach leading to the encouragement of follower self-leadership is likely to be effective in today’s dynamic organizations may be more clearly defined.

References

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