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Leadership Style as an Outcome of Motive: A Contingency 'State' Rather Than 'Trait' Concept

The notion that differing leadership styles have differing motives is not new but what this conceptual article offers is a new way of seeing leadership styles, specifically the four styles of charismatic, transformational, servant, and transactional as a set of contingent styles that leaders select from based on the leader's 'state' of motive at the time of any given leader–follower exchange. Leaders, according to Yukl (2005) engage in persuasive behavior as a means of gaining followers' compliance toward some desired goal attainment. This conceptual study contends that there is/are one or more motives that drive the leader's use of persuasive means. Brown (2003) claims that motives "do not reveal themselves directly. Instead, we must infer their existence by analyzing behavior and the conditions under which the behavior occurs" (p. 604). Brown's comment implies that leaders tend not to divulge the motive that underlies the behavior but rather researchers are engaging in ethnographic observation and implying motives based on observed behavior. However, behaviors are sometimes the same when different motives are at play. For example, while leaders may behave in ways that benefit the follower, transformational leadership, according to Bass (2000) as well as Patterson et al. (2004) differs from servant leadership in that the

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transformational leader is focused on the well-being of the organization whereas the servant leader is interested in the well-being of the follower. Thus, the mere observation of leader behavior may not be sufficient to truly understand the leader's motive. This paper argues that leaders should consciously recognize their motives; understand how those motives affect the leadership style selected for any given leader–follower interaction; and disclose to the follower what motive lies beneath the behavior to avoid the follower's misinterpretation of the leader's behavior.

There is a paucity of research on leaders' motives with the one notable exception of McClelland's (1961) motive-based motivation theory that posited that all leader behavior can be understood through the three motives of (a) need for achievement, (b) need for power, and (c) need for affiliation. This present paper looks at a different set of motives that may be used to explain and predict which one of four leadership styles a leader may use: (a) charismatic, (b) transformational, (c) servant leadership, and (d) transactional leadership. The underlying motives of each of the four respectively are: (a) me, (b) we, (c) thee, and (d) it. This paper presents each of the four motives/leadership styles and presents support for the premise that motive and style are related. Similar to McClelland's work, these four motives can be seen as a configuration of motives that lead to the situational selection of style. But contrary to McClelland's approach this paper argues that motives are 'state' rather than 'trait,' and the leaders vary their motives from situation to situation. The scope of this paper is limited to single-motive leadership styles and does not discuss multiple motive styles such as the paternalistic or clan leadership styles that might include multiple motives or the absence of motives such as the laissez-faire style.

Charismatic Motive of 'ME'

House (1977) presented his theory of charismatic leadership as a set of behaviors, which was in contrast to Weber's (1947) consideration of charisma as a trait of leadership. House claimed that charismatic

leaders engage in impression management strategies as a means of building their image. This present paper makes the connection between the motive of self-image building as a driving force for the leader to engage in the charismatic leadership style.

The use of self-enhancement strategies, according to Kobayashi and Brown (2003) is universal in that both Western and Eastern cultures seem to exhibit equivalent levels of self-esteem and engage equally in self-enhancement strategies. If Kobayashi and Brown are correct in their claim, then it is logical that we should expect to see all leaders engage in some form of self-enhancement behaviors in some leader–follower interactions. This article does not address the dysfunctional 'dark side' of charismatic leadership as Conger (1990), and Sankowsky (1995) present the dysfunctional side but rather considers the 'functional' use of charismatic motives and behaviors.

In addition to self-enhancement, charismatic leaders engage in persuasive rhetoric and dialogue as a means of gaining compliance and support from followers to achieve the leader's vision. Jacobsen and House (1999) imply that charismatic leaders present the leader's vision in such a manner as to convince the follower that the follower has the 'right' to achieve the vision. Usually, according to Jacobsen and House, the follower seeks to expend energy and resources to achieve the leader's goals because the goals are inline with the followers' own desires. For this present conceptual article, the underlying 'ME' motive of charismatic leadership behavior rests in the desire by the leader to see his/her image enhanced or his/her vision/goals achieved.

This conceptual chapter proposes that if leaders self-disclose that the leader wants to enhance his/her image or that the leader seeks to achieve his/her vision and goal, the follower will have accurate information as to why the leader seeks to persuade the follower and may help to remove the follower's suspicion about the leader's motive. This fits well with Avolio et al. (2004) authentic leadership concept in that according to Avolio et al. authentic leaders "transparently [interact] with others" (p. 802) although Avolio et al. do not specifically call for authentic leaders to disclose their motives.

Transformational Motive of "WE"

Bass (2000) as well as Patterson et al. (2004) stipulate that transformational leaders do what they do to achieve the organization's goals. The transformational leader subjugates his/her personal interest and expects the follower to subjugate personal interests so that the organization's interests may be served. During the leader–follower interaction, it may not be clear if the leader's motive is personal or organizational. It is also not clear in some cases if the good of the organization also becomes a means of enhancing the leader's image. Further, ambiguity arises when both the leader and follower share in the values and vision of the organization and thus are not able to see a difference in the motive for behaviors that achieve the organization's goals. It is for precisely this reason that this conceptual article argues for the leader to be cognizant of the motives for the behavior and to be able to articulate the motives to the followers such that, as Avolio et al. (2004) call for, transparency in the motive-behaviors occurs.

Bass and Avolio (1994) theorized that transformational leaders engage in four elements of behavior: (a) inspirational motivation, (b) idealized influence, (c) individual consideration, and (d) intellection stimulation as well as charismatic and transactional behaviors but the focus of transformational leadership lies in the four I's of behavior. However, closer inspection reveals that charismatic leaders as well as servant leaders also seek to inspire, influence, reward, and stimulate as well. The difference, though, lies in the motive that underlies the reason for the behavior. The motive of 'WE' that focuses the efforts of all for the good of the organization drives the persuasive behavior of the leader to gain compliance from the follower.

Servant Motive of "THEE"

Bass (2000) as well as Patterson et al. (2004) postulate that servant leaders seek the greater well-being of the followers even at the potential expense of the organization. This sentiment is shared by Winston and Ryan (2006) in their presentation of servant leadership as a

humane orientation. The servant leader, according to Patterson (2003) and Winston (2003) selects employees/followers that are aligned with the organization's values (person-organization fit) and, in contrast to charismatic leaders, seeks to understand the follower's vision with the intent of modifying the organization within environment/resource constraints such that the follower can achieve his/her goals. The presumption here is that if there is true values alignment (high degree of person-organization fit) then whatever the employee/follower wants to do will be good for the organization. But this is not the only approach to goal attainment. A tenet of servant leadership, according to Patterson and Winston, is that as the leader–follower exchanges progress there is an ever-increasing bond between the leader and follower such that the follower begins to seek out what the leader wants just as the leader seeks what the follower wants such that the follower begins to behave in ways that achieve the leaders' goals. This is similar to charismatic leadership, and another example of why observing behaviors may not be an acceptable means of determining motive as Brown (2003) contends one should do. The difference in motive here is that the servant leader does not set out to persuade the follower to achieve the leader's goals but rather the follower sets out to discover the leader's goals and works to achieve them in an altruistic manner.

Transactional Motive of "IT"

The motive for transactional is devoid of relationship and shows a contrast between the use of 'IT' as compared to the other three 'ME,' 'WE,' and 'THEE' as a means of showing that sometimes the leader's motive is not about the relationship but task only. While it is not predictable what task-related behaviors leaders may see as devoid of relationship it is likely that every leader has some things that he or she needs to get done just for the sake of getting them done. For example, while it is possible that a leader asking a follower to empty a trash can may have organizational value (ascetics) or follower-value (health) it is more likely that the behavior of emptying the trash can is just something that has to be done and for which the leader is willing to pay for the accomplishment.

The 'pay' may be in the form of extrinsic rewards, or intrinsic but usually transactional behavior rewards are extrinsic. Bass (1985) adds to this understanding of pay for performance, or contingent rewards as he refers to it, by including punishment for lack of performance or wrong performance. Bass makes a point that all leaders exhibit both transformational and transactional styles, but Bass does not discuss whether or not leaders make it clear to followers why they are using each of the styles. The leader may not be interested in 'excellence' as Bass (1990) points out in that transactional leadership behaviors may lead to mediocrity as followers perform at minimum levels to maximize the extrinsic reward for work done.

The ambiguity in motive is evident here as in the other motive sections in that a leader may present a persuasive message to the follower to achieve some goal and it may be seen as the leader framing the request within the greater good of the organization or the follower, wherein the leader may really be just engaging in a negotiated discussion or a 'telling' discussion as a means of accomplishing the task. A follower who seeks relational interaction with the leader may misinterpret the leader's behavior resulting in the follower ascribing motives to the leader that are not accurate. By disclosing the motive of 'IT' to the follower, the leader removes the relational aspect from the behavior or the motive and transparently shows the follower that the behavior is sought and rewards are given simply for accomplishing the goal.

Discussion

The literature implies that followers, through observation and interpretation, will ascribe a motive to a leader's actions. The literature also shows that leaders' behaviors may be similar even though different motives are at work. These two observations from the literature show that if different motives yield similar behaviors and if followers may be motivated to behave based on the leader's motive then it is logical that the leader may want to articulate his/her motives in discussions with followers.

The information presented in this conceptual article implies that leaders have different motives at work at different times, and it may be

that a leader may interact with followers for a period of time using a variety of motives—sometimes out of self-enhancement, sometimes out of interest for the organization, sometimes out of interest for the follower and sometimes out of no particular motive but just wanting to complete a task. The literature lacks the depth of coverage of the notion of the contingency approach of differing motives driving different leadership styles.

The crux of this conceptual article is that leaders may find higher levels of effectiveness if leaders disclose their motives to followers during the exchange of persuasive communication with the follower. This disclosure gives the followers a clearer reason for the requested efforts and the follower can decide whether or not to comply and at what level of involvement.

Future research on this topic might include ethnographic studies using interviews and observations of both leaders and followers to determine levels of commitment and involvement based on different levels of leader-disclosure of the underlying motives. Leadership development training may find higher levels of follower performance effectiveness if leaders are trained to be cognizant of their motives and disclose the motives to followers.

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