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Effect of Follower Self-concept and Self-determination on Organizational Citizenship Behavior
from a Servant Leadership Context

Michelle Vondey
Regent University
1000 Regent University Drive
Virginia Beach, VA 23464
Tel: (757-642-1012)
Email: mvondey@regent.edu

Abstract

In recent decades, some scholars have offered an argument for the important role followers play in the leader-follower relationship and organizational effectiveness (Kelley, 1992; Chaleff, 1995; Boccialetti, 1995; Kellerman, 2008). One way followers contribute to the relationship and the organization is through citizenship behaviors that help others within the organization and promote the organization to outsiders. This study proposes that an important catalyst for organizational citizenship behavior rests on the follower's self-concept and self-determination. The purpose of this paper is to suggest a method for exploring if there is a relation between servant leadership and followers' organizational citizenship behavior moderated by follower self-concept and mediated by follower self-determination.

Effect of Follower Self-concept and Self-determination on Organizational Citizenship Behavior from a Servant Leadership Context

Research in leadership studies has tended to focus on the leader as the primary element of the leader-follower relationship (Mayo & Pastor, 2007; Shamir, 2007). This focus has led to the false impression that leaders are more important than followers (Riggio, Chaleff, & Lipman-Blumen, 2008). The misapprehension is changing. Scholars offer an argument for the important role followers play in the leader-follower relationship and organizational effectiveness (Kelley, 1992; Chaleff, 1995; Boccialetti, 1995; Kellerman, 2008), as well as in preventing the advance of unethical leadership (Chaleff, 1995; Kellerman, 2004; Alford, 2008; Kellerman, 2008). These scholars see followership as a noble complement to leadership.

One way followers contribute to the relationship and the organization is through citizenship behaviors that help others within the organization and promote the organization to outsiders. Although leaders have a significant influence on their followers, followers are ultimately responsible for their own behavior (Kelley, 1992; Banutu-Gomez, 2004; Hopper, 2008; Kellerman, 2008). Regardless of the leader's style followers are capable of not only carrying out their duties but also going beyond their job description to help others or the organization because they have a strong sense of self (self-concept) and personal choice in how they act (self-determination). Some scholars have focused on the effect of follower self-concepts (Johnson & Chang, 2006) on organizational commitment and self-concepts coupled with fairness for organizational citizenship behavior intentions (Johnson, Selenta, & Lord, 2005). One study (Gagné & Deci, 2005) offered a theoretical look at self-determination and its relationship to motivation and suggested that motivated employees will perform organizational citizenship behaviors. These organizational citizenship behaviors are considered behaviors that go beyond what is expected for completing work assignments. The effect of servant leadership on follower organizational citizenship behavior has also been studied (Graham, 1995; Ehrhart, 2004). No research was discovered, however, that deals specifically with the degree follower self-concept affects organizational citizenship behavior outcomes or if self-determination mediates the relationship between leader and follower.

Although transformational leadership was proposed as a way for leaders to bring out the best in their followers by inspiring, influencing, and stimulating followers to transcend their own interests for the good of the organization (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985), servant leadership theory, introduced by Greenleaf (1977), suggests that a leader's purpose is to serve in order to develop the follower for the follower's sake. Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2004) explained that because the servant leader's influence is based on service, followers are allowed "extraordinary freedom . . . to exercise their own abilities" (p. 354). This study is limited to servant leadership theory because of its emphasis on the follower and its de-emphasis on the leader. The purpose of this paper, then, is to show support for the correlation between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior and a moderating effect of self-concept, as well as a mediating effect of self-determination on the servant leadership-OCB relationship. A method for testing these relationships is also suggested.

Definition of Terms

Servant leadership, according to Stone, et al. (2004), is the "belief that organizational goals will be achieved on a long-term basis only by first facilitating the growth, development, and general well-being of the individuals who comprise the organization" (p. 355). Self-concept is defined by Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) in sum as a person's values and identities, both personal and social. Self-determination is defined by Deci, Connell, and Ryan (1989) as the

ability of a person “to experience a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one’s own actions” (p. 580). Finally, organizational citizenship behavior “concerns voluntary behaviors that are not directly recognized by the formal reward structure but do promote organizational effectiveness” (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p. 351).

Research Questions

The overarching questions guiding this research are: (a) How strong is the relationship between servant leadership and follower organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)?; (b) What role does follower self-concept play in the relationship between servant leadership behavior and follower OCB?; and (c) What role does follower self-determination play in the relationship between servant leadership behavior and follower OCB? The goal of this research is to advance the understanding of follower-centered leadership (Shamir, 2007), operationalized as servant leadership, and the effect that follower self-concept and self-determination have on the relationship between servant leadership and follower organizational citizenship behaviors (see Figure 1).

Theory That Supports The Questions

The past ten years have seen a surge in servant leadership models (Farling, et al., 1999; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Russell & Stone, 2002; Patterson, 2003; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008; and Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). Most recently, Liden, et al. (2008) have suggested a model which they tested for multidimensionality and its ability to predict certain attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, a number of their constructs were shown to relate to community citizenship behavior. Therefore, Liden and colleagues’ servant leadership model is suggested as an appropriate model for predicting organizational citizenship behavior. Furthermore, it has been suggested that a servant leader will express love for his or her followers (Patterson, 2003). The rationale is that love formed the basis for the servanthood of Jesus Christ, and Jesus commanded his disciples to love others just as he had loved them (see John 13:34; 15:9). Thus, the agapao love construct from Patterson’s (2003) model is considered in conjunction with Liden, et al.’s concepts because of the contention that love is foundational to all other servant behaviors. Winston (2003) proposed that the leader’s service to the follower results in the follower’s reciprocal service to the leader. Stone, et al. (2004) suggested that “the motive of the servant leader’s influence is not to direct others but rather to motivate and facilitate service and stewardship by the followers themselves” (p. 356). This service and stewardship can be construed as organizational citizenship behavior.

Although a leader can be a role model, feelings of personal agency do not require the effect of environmental factors, such as a leader’s behavior. Bandura (2001) proposed that humans are endowed with a personal agency that allows for independent intentions and actions. Self-concept and self-determination are independent cognitive conditions that do not require the input of a leader in order to develop. Bandura (2001) noted, “After they adopt personal standards, people regulate their behavior by self-evaluative outcomes, which may augment or override the influence of external outcomes” (p. 7). Individuals come to an organization with a set of values and identities in place. An individual’s self-concept will determine how well he or she fits with an organization and if he or she strongly identifies with the organization.

Self-determination theory concerns itself with the motivational, relatedness, competence, and autonomy needs of individuals (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Autonomous motivation, a key component of self-determination, occurs on a continuum as an individual is motivated to perform some activity (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Motivation that is intrinsic to the individual is by its nature autonomous, but extrinsic motivation for a “have to” activity can be internalized, and thus

becomes autonomous because the need for the activity has become internalized and integrated (Gagné & Deci, 2005). As a leader helps to fulfill the competency, relatedness, and autonomy needs, a follower is likely in turn to respond with citizenship behavior, not only as a response to the leader's behavior towards the follower, but also as a response to intrinsic satisfaction that comes with prosocial behavior (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Penner, Mdili, & Kegelmeyer, 1997).

The four dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior used in this study, interpersonal helping, individual initiative, personal industry, and loyal boosterism classify the range of extra-role behaviors that benefits the organization and others. These behaviors are other-oriented, communication-oriented, task-oriented, and organization-oriented. These dimensions were chosen because of the emphasis on participation in different facets of organizational life.

Follower Focus

Leaders and followers are both essential to the organization, but only a few scholars in recent years have focused on followers in detail (Kelley, 1992; Chaleff, 1995; Boccialetti, 1995; Shamir, Pillai, Bligh, & Uhl-Bien, 2007; Kellerman, 2008, Riggio, Chaleff, & Lipman-Blumen, 2008). These authors have suggested that followers are active participants in the leadership relationship and motivate themselves. Indeed, exemplary followers add value to the leader and organization because they focus on goals, take initiative to increase their value to the organization by improving their skill set, and realize "they add value not just by going above and beyond their work but in being who they are—their experiences, ideals, dreams" (Kelley, 1992, p. 131). Followers support their leaders by helping them to achieve established goals for the organization. They take ownership of what they do and often look for more responsibilities that take advantage of their skill sets. Excellent followers help others succeed.

On the other hand, followers who perceive the leader as responsible for making decisions (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007) are less likely to take an active role in the decision-making process, thereby giving up autonomy. They may expect the leader to motivate them rather than taking the responsibility to motivate themselves. A follower's self-concept informs all he or she does and can augment or hinder the relationship between that of the leader and follower. In effect, followers determine the quality of their own followership and the leadership relationship (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007). As Kellerman (2008) noted "focusing on followers enables us to see the parts they play, And it empowers them, which is to say that it empowers us" (p. xxi). Thus this study focuses on the degree to which follower values, identity, feelings of autonomy and self-motivation predicts organizational citizenship behavior.

Servant Leadership

A central tenet of servant leadership theory is to place followers' interests above one's own (Joseph & Winston, 2005). Several authors suggest servant leadership may be more conducive to organizational citizenship behaviors due to its focus on follower development, community building, authentic leadership, and shared leadership (Graham, 1995; Laub, 2003; Sendjaya, et al., 2008).

Several models have been offered in the last 10 years to describe servant leadership (Spears, 1998; Farling, et al., 1999; Page & Wong, 2000; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Russell & Stone, 2002; Patterson, 2003; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Sendjaya, et al., 2008; Liden, et al., 2008). Table 1 shows the models in comparison. There is some variation across themes but also similarities. The studies focus on "traits" (Spears, 1998), "factors" (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006), "attributes" (Russell & Stone, 2002), "dimensions" (Liden, et al., 2008), or "virtues" (Patterson, 2003) of servant leaders. Many of the models are purely theoretical (Spears, 1998; Farling, et al., 1999; Russell & Stone, 2002; Patterson, 2003), while other scholars have attempted to provide

empirical evidence of these constructs (Page & Wong, 2000; Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Sendjaya, et al., 2008, Liden, et al., 2008). Scholars speak of different foundations upon which servant leadership is built, such as calling (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006), morality (Graham, 1991; Sendjaya, et al., 2008), principle over against behavior (Farling, et al., 1999), character (Page & Wong, 2000), being vs. doing (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002), and personal integrity (Liden, et al., 2008). Many of these scholars offer comparisons of servant leadership with other leadership styles, such as transformational (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Farling, et al., 1999; Patterson, 2003; Sendjaya, et al., 2008), charismatic (Graham, 1991), “command” (Page & Wong, 2000), authentic or spiritual (Sendjaya, et al., 2008), and LMX (Liden, et al., 2008).

For this study, it is suggested to use Liden and colleagues’ (2008) recent contribution of a servant leadership instrument to measure servant leadership behaviors. They focused on developing and validating the instrument as well as providing evidence that servant leadership explains community citizenship behaviors, in-role performance, and organizational commitment over and above transformational leadership and LMX. In addition, the ‘agapao love’ dimension from Patterson’s (2003) seven-virtue servant leadership model was selected for this study. Dennis and Bocarnea (2005) created an instrument to measure Patterson’s (2003) model. As the instrument had some issues with validity, only the ‘agapao love’ dimension would be used to test for follower OCB. Followers may be more inclined to perform citizenship behaviors directed at others if they have a role model in a leader who contributes time and talents to the community at large, as well as one who serves the followers in the organization. If love for others is modeled by the leader, it is conjectured that the follower will in turn show love by the performance of citizenship behavior.

Hypothesis 1: Servant leadership is significantly and positively related to follower organizational citizenship behavior.

[Insert Table 1 about here.]

Follower Self-concept

A follower's self-concept determines his or her role in the leader-follower relationship. Self-concept, in its simplest form, represents a person's values and identities (a person's identity at work, how they view themselves in relation to others). Self-concept based theory suggests that how a person views self influences his or her behavior (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). The rationale is that followers bring their entire being to an organization--experiences, values, and beliefs, and these components of the person taken together influence their relationships to others and the organization. If the leader has similar values, a follower will allow herself to be influenced by the leader.

Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) proposed self-concept based theory as a way to explain the motivational implications of "the transformational effects of charismatic leadership" (p. 581). The main assumptions of the theory are: (a) behavior is expressive of values and self-concepts; (b) people are motivated to maintain their self-esteem (based on a sense of competence and achievement) and self-worth (grounded in values); (c) people are motivated to maintain correspondence between self-concept and behavior; (d) self-concepts are comprised of identities; and (e) people are motivated by faith. These assumptions are potentially met by a servant leader because the leader's focus is on followers' higher and lower order needs. And yet I suggest that follower self-concepts moderate the influence of leader behavior on follower OCB because followers come to an organization with an established set of values and identities. Identity theory suggests that self-concept has a causal effect on future actions (Finkelstein & Penner, 2004). Some studies (Penner, 2002; Finkelstein & Penner, 2004; Finkelstein, Penner, & Brannick, 2005; Finkelstein, 2006) have shown that role identity predicts OCB. Gecas (1982) contended that a follower has a concept of herself "as a physical, social, and spiritual or moral being" (p. 3) and attaches meaning to the self through "the concept of identity" (p. 10). Moreover, merely enacting servant leader behavior does not necessarily guarantee followers will perform OCB. Followers choose which behaviors and tasks to engage in based on their self-perception (Leonard, Beauvais, & Scholl, 1999). Thus, it is suggested that self-concept would likely augment the strength of the relationship between servant leadership and citizenship behaviors.

Hypothesis 2: The follower's self-concept has a moderating effect on the relationship between servant leadership and follower organizational citizenship behavior.

Follower Self-determination

Self-determination is defined as experiencing "a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one's own actions" (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989, p.580). Deci (1980) developed the theory based on the premise that individuals have basic needs for autonomy and competence, but they also need "ongoing nutriment and supports from the social environment in order to function effectively" (<http://www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT/theory.html>). Gagné and Deci (2005) reported that

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

Gagné and Deci (2005) suggested that there is evidence to support the idea that autonomous motivation would promote organizational citizenship behaviors, such as

volunteering. Bono (2003) found that the literature acknowledges that “individuals seek to feel competent and autonomous in their work and in their lives . . . that such feelings are associated with positive outcomes, and that certain environmental factors can influence such feelings” (p. 51). Her research revealed that self-determination mediated the relationship with regards to transformational leaders and prosocial performance of followers. Graham (1991) purported that servant leadership encourages followers to pursue “not only intellectual and skill development, but [also] moral reasoning capacity”, which allows followers to “become autonomous moral agents” (p. 116). It is the autonomy that a follower feels to act in a positive way that regulates his or her prosocial behavior. That is, the intrinsic value of doing good for others or the organization undergirds the citizenship behavior, and thus the relationship between the servant leader’s behavior and the follower’s citizenship action. Thus, it is suggested:

Hypothesis 3: Follower self-determination mediates the relationship between servant leadership behavior.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is considered “discretionary” because it is not a formal part of a follower’s job description, yet “promote[s] the effectiveness of the organization” (Moorman & Blakely, 1995, p. 127). One study (Penner, et al., 1997) proposed that “job attitudes, organizational variables, motives, and personality traits all affect initial levels of OCB” (p. 112). Moorman and Blakely (1992) created an instrument of four dimensions called interpersonal helping, individual initiative, personal industry, and loyal boosterism. Interpersonal helping focuses on helping co-workers. Individual initiative describes communications to others that improve individual and group performance. Personal industry relates to specific tasks that are not part of the job description, loyal boosterism promotes the organization’s image to others (Moorman & Blakely, 1992).

Dasborough (2006) found that employees whose leaders displayed motivational and inspirational behaviors felt “motivated to work harder and were more likely to perform citizenship behaviors” (p. 171). Penner, et al. (1997) suggested that followers who engage in OCB may broaden their self-concept to include prosocial behavior as part of their identity and thus continue to display behaviors that maintain the role of “organizational citizen” (p. 128). And finally, Graham (1995) proposed that servant leaders encourage followers “to do their own thinking, . . . to engage in independent moral reasoning, . . . [and] also to follow it up with constructive participation in organizational governance” (p. 51). Participating in organizational governance, or civic virtue, is a right of citizenship and to be expected from actively engaged followers (Graham, 1995). Sendjaya, et al. (2008) concluded “that servant leadership is an altruistic leadership style that potentially contributes to the development of positive attitudes in followers, most notably Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)” (p. 419). Thus, it seems likely that a servant leader’s influence, coupled with a follower’s self-concept and feelings of autonomy and motivation (self-determination) predicts follower organizational citizenship behaviors.

Data Needed to Answer Questions

In order to answer the question of what effect servant leadership has on follower organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), further research will need to determine if employees consider their manager to be a servant leader and if the employees perform organizational citizenship behaviors. In order to answer what role follower self-concept plays in the relationship between servant leadership behavior and follower self-determination, the study would seek to determine what values participants have and whether these values fit with the values of the

organization and if participants self-identify with the organization. Finally, in order to understand what role follower self-determination plays in the relationship between servant leadership behavior and follower organizational citizenship behavior, the study would ask respondents to what degree they have a sense of choice in how their work is accomplished and whether the leader is supportive of their autonomy.

Suggested Instruments for Measuring Variables

Several instruments can be combined under one cover using a Likert-scale response system in order to measure each variable: servant leadership, follower self-concept, follower self-determination, and follower OCB.

The instrument created by Liden, et al. (2008) will be used to measure servant leadership. The coefficient alphas ranged from .86 to .91 (Liden, et al., 2008). In addition, four items from the Servant Leadership Assessment developed by Dennis and Bocarnea (2005), which deals with agapao love, would be added to the servant leadership section to determine if the love dimension correlates to the other dimensions of Liden, et al.'s instrument and how leader love relates to follower OCB. The coefficient alpha for the love construct was .94 (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005).

The follower self-concept variable could be measured using the Perceived Person-Organization Fit (Lovelace & Rosen, 1996) instrument and the Organizational Identification measurement of Mael and Ashforth (1992). Perceived Person-Organization Fit asks respondents to indicate the fit between their values and the organization's values (Fields, 2002). Items assessed include values, goals, skills, and attitudes. Coefficient alpha was .92 (Fields, 2002). The Organizational Identification six-item instrument measures a person's identification with the organization. Coefficient alpha was .87 (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Self-concept as defined in this study encompasses a follower's values and identities, and these instruments cover both.

Self-determination could be measured by the Work Climate Survey (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989) and the Self-Determination Scale (Sheldon & Deci, 1993). The Work Climate Survey measures employees perceptions of whether their managers provide autonomy support. According to the authors, "the alpha coefficient . . . is virtually always above 0.90" (Deci, et al., 1989, p. 584). The Self-Determination Scale measures self-awareness and autonomy of choice in behavior. Alpha coefficients ranged from .86 to .92 (Sheldon, 1995).

Finally, the Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) inventory developed by Moorman and Blakely (1995) assesses four dimensions: interpersonal helping (other-oriented), individual initiative (performance-oriented), personal industry (task-oriented), and loyal boosterism (organization-oriented). Coefficient alpha values ranged from .61 to .86 for the four dimensions (Fields, 2002).

Demographic variables, such as gender, age, and tenure would need to be controlled for because it is yet unknown if they would affect the relationships between the independent, moderating, mediating, and dependent variables.

Suggested Analysis Methods

Correlations between variables would be calculated to determine the extent to which the independent, dependent, mediator, and moderator variables are related. In order to ensure reliability and validity the questionnaire would be pre-tested and altered as necessary. Hierarchical regression analysis would be employed to determine if the independent variables predict the criterion variable, and to what degree. In addition, regression analysis would be run for each outcome dimension of the OCB variable. If the moderator variable showed significance, interactions would be calculated and regressed to determine the moderating effect.

Conclusion

This paper has offered a method for measuring the moderating effect of follower self-concept, as well as the mediating influence of follower self-determination, between servant leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. This paper has suggested that servant leadership behavior influences the organizational citizenship of followers with considerable follower involvement. Using the suggested instrument, future research should be undertaken to confirm the hypotheses. The outcome will add to the growing body of knowledge on the impact that followers have on the leader-follower relationship. The likely implication for organizations is that more attention should be paid to how leaders and followers interact, with particular emphasis on granting followers more autonomy to decide how their work should be completed. The expected result is positive follower behavior that goes beyond the job description and adds value to the organization.

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Table 1

Constructs of Servant Leadership

Spears (1998)	Farling, et al. (1999)	Page & Wong (2000)	Russell & Stone (2002)	Patterson (2003)	Barbuto & Wheeler (2006)	Sendjaya, et al. (2008)	Liden, et al. (2008)
listening	vision	integrity	vision	agapao love	altruistic calling	voluntary subordination	emotional healing
empathy healing	influence credibility	humility servanthood	honesty integrity	humility altruism	emotional healing persuasive mapping	authentic self covenantal relationship	creating value for the community conceptual skills
awareness	trust	caring for others	trust	vision	wisdom	responsible morality	empowering helping subordinates
persuasion	service	developing others	service	trust	organizational stewardship	transcendental spirituality	grow and succeed putting subordinates first
conceptualization		empowering others	modeling	empowerment		transforming influence	behaving ethically
foresight stewardship commitment to the growth of people building community		visioning goal-setting leading modeling team-building shared decision making	pioneering appreciation of others empowerment	service			

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Model of relationship between servant leadership behaviors and follower organizational citizenship behavior moderated by follower self-concept and mediated by self-determination.

