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REVERSING THE LENS: HOW CAN FOLLOWERS INFLUENCE THEIR LEADER'S BEHAVIOR?

Leadership research has been overwhelmingly leader-centric, most often considering follower characteristics and behaviors as consequences or, at best, moderators of leader characteristics and behaviors. It has not been until very recently that scholars have started to “reverse the lens” (Shamir, 2007; p. ix) through which leadership is studied and consider the more active role that followers can play in the leadership phenomenon (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Collinson, 2006) (Agho, 2009; Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2009; Collinson, 2006; Dvir & Shamir, 2003; Howell & Shamir, 2005; Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007). Given the disproportionate amount of attention that has been given to leaders’ role in the leadership process, it has been argued that focus must now be given to the effects that followers can have on the process if we are to eventually achieve a balanced understanding (Shamir, 2007). The purpose of our article is to further develop the burgeoning literature on followership by explaining how employees’ particular enactment of followership can influence the leadership behaviors of their immediate superior in the formal organizational hierarchy. Our intention is to stimulate empirical research on actions that employees can take to receive the type of leadership they would prefer from their superiors. We recognize that a balanced depiction of the process of leadership would also include the leader’s influence on the employee. However, echoing Shamir’s (2007) perspective, because the dominant view of leadership is currently leader-centric, we feel that particular attention must be given to the active role of followers.

Drawing primarily on recent work addressing the social construction of followership and implicit followership theories (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2009; Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Sy, in press; Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007), we begin by offering a behavioral definition of followership and draw parallels between acts of followership and frequently

studied employee behaviors that previous research suggests would affect the behavior of leaders. We then focus on the leader-follower dyad and explain how an employee's behavior can increase the leader's trust in that employee depending on the (mis)match between that employee's followership and the leader's implicit followership theory, that is to say the leader's assumptions regarding follower traits and behaviors. Subsequently, we explain how a leader's trust in the employee would fuel the leader's use of leadership behaviors that denote risk-taking (i.e., participative, supportive) and those that denote risk-mitigation (i.e., directive, laissez-faire). Moving away from the dyadic focus, we then explain how employees, as a group, can collectively influence their leader's actions. Here, we address the leader's charismatic behavior and give particular attention to the whether the vision promoted by the leader incorporates the priorities and concerns of the group. We finish by providing the reader with several methodological considerations required to empirically test our propositions.

WHAT IS FOLLOWERSHIP?

There are different ways in which followers can behave vis-à-vis their leader. The practitioner literature suggests that good followers are engaged, willing to actively support a good and ethical leader, and willing to oppose a bad and unethical leader (Bennis, 2010; Kellerman, 2007). Self-management, commitment to the organization's mission, competence, focus, and courage are other effective follower qualities that have been cited (Kelley, 1988). Furthermore, in an attempt to categorize (in)effective followers, a number of typologies have been developed differentiating followers on their level of independence or critical-thinking and activity (Kelley, 1988), their level of dominance/submissiveness, and their level of engagement (Kellerman, 2007). Finally, a classification consisting of conformist, resistant, and dramaturgical follower selves has also been proposed (Collinson, 2006). While these various suggestions are

interesting and worthy of consideration, it is not clear that they were based on empirical research, whether qualitative or quantitative.

One empirical study had 302 senior-level executives rank 20 characteristics of followers in order of importance (Agho, 2009). The five most important follower characteristics included possessing honesty/integrity, being competent, dependable, cooperative, and being loyal. The five least important characteristics included being inspiring, independent, ambitious, forward looking, and being courageous. While empirical, these results are limited by respondent type (all executive managers above the age of 55) and by the fact the researchers pre-selected the characteristics to be ranked by respondents.

Inspired by research on the social construction of leadership (Meindl, 1995), Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, and McGregor (2010) used a qualitative research methodology that involved semi-structured, open-ended interviews to better understand how employees socially construct the notion of effective followership under organizational managers (i.e., leaders). Their results suggest that followership can vary along a passive-to-proactive continuum. For some, effective followership is very passive and involves actions such as being obedient, being flexible and open to change, and not challenging the status quo. The authors note that this corresponds to the more traditional view of followership, where followers display a high degree of deference to their leader. For others however, effective followership requires significant proactivity and would involve behaviors such as taking ownership, taking initiative, voicing concerns, and offering solutions before being asked to do so by their leader. This more proactive view of followership implies significantly less deference to the leader, but does not suggest that an effective follower should be disobedient. Some deference is necessary, since without deference, there is no followership (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007). The more proactive

follower is less concerned with blind obedience to the leader, and more with partnering with the leader (co-leading) to accomplish the mission of the group or organization. These qualitative findings received support in a follow-up quantitative study in which Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2009) developed a scale for measuring employees' implicit followership theories (i.e., assumptions regarding traits and behaviors of successful followers). They found that such IFTs are best represented by two correlated factors, one denoting proactive followership and one denoting passive followership. Despite the presence of two factors, they conceptualized employee IFTs along a single passive-to-proactive continuum and reported satisfactory internal consistency estimates for the combined measure (.78 and .80). They suggested that the presence of two factors could be more indicative of the passive followership items having been negatively worded.

More recently, Sy (in press) developed a measure of leaders' (as opposed to employees') IFTs and found evidence of six correlated factors, which were grouped under two second-order factors. The first second-order factor ("Followership Prototype") encompassed industry, enthusiasm, and good citizenship, which imply significant proactivity. The second second-order factor ("Followership Antiprototype") included a mix of characteristics, including conformity (which denotes passivity), insubordination, and incompetence. Insubordination and incompetence do not clearly fit with notions of followership reported by Carsten and colleagues (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2009; Carsten et al., 2010). This may be due to the fact that these researchers explicitly focused on the enactment of *effective* or *successful* followership, while Sy did not. For the sake of theoretical parsimony, we chose to focus on what is common across the few existing empirical studies of IFTs, namely the contrast between proactive and passive followership, both of which represent a potentially effective way of behaving with one's leader

(Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2009; Carsten et al., 2010). We use the term “potentially” because, as we explain further in our article, a follower’s enactment of passive or proactive followership will not necessarily be viewed as valuable by the leader. Whether proactive and passive followership represent distinct constructs or two levels of a single underlying construct is of little consequence to our thesis since they are negatively related to each other ($r = -.54$; Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2009), implying that one at least partially precludes the other.

It is interesting to note that Agho’s (2009) findings (discussed above) regarding the most and least important characteristics of effective followers seem to reflect passivity and proactivity, respectively. It is plausible that Agho’s respondents, being executive-level managers over the age of 55, held a more traditional view of followership that emphasizes passivity over proactivity. Conversely, the views shared in the practitioner literature that effective followership should involve self-management, commitment to the organization’s mission, independence, and critical thinking (Bennis, 2010; Kellerman, 2007; Kelley, 1988) are all consistent with a proactive view of followership. Some have also suggested that an effective follower should be willing to oppose a bad and unethical leader (Bennis, 2010; Kellerman, 2007). While this certainly denotes proactivity that could serve the interests of the larger organization and its stakeholders, it would not exemplify followership if employees become mutineers. It would only represent followership if followers can change the leader’s behavior in a way that emphasizes shared goals or interests, not coercion.

Based on the literature summarized above, we offer the following behavioral definition of followership within the context of formal, hierarchical leader-follower relationships:

Followership refers to the manner in which a person behaves in relation to his or her leader. While it requires some degree of deference to the leader,

followership can vary along a passive-to-proactive continuum. Compared to passive followers, proactive followers display less deference to the leader and try to partner with the leader in advancing the mission of the group or organization.

Comparing Followership to Other Employee Behaviors

Of the most studied theories of leadership, the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) model is the one that has offered the most, albeit limited, insight into the influence that an employee can have on the immediate leader (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Uhl-Bien, Graen, & Scandura, 2000). Echoing social exchange theory, the LMX model predicts that the more often both individuals in a dyad reciprocate behaviors that build trust, respect, and a sense of obligation, the higher will be the quality of their relationship. The two types of employee behavior that have been most frequently studied by LMX scholars include in-role behavior (i.e., task performance) and extra-role behavior (i.e., contextual performance, organizational citizenship behavior). Both types of behavior have been shown to be positively related to the quality of the leader-follower relationship, suggesting they may be used as social currency by followers in their exchange relationship with the leader (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007; Lapiere & Hackett, 2007).

LMX scholars have identified other employee behaviors that have the potential to be used in the exchange process (Uhl-Bien et al., 2000). These include upward influence and impression management tactics. While they have not been studied as much as in-role or extra-role behaviors, we feel that they are salient to our understanding of followership since they have the potential to affect the behavior of one's leader (Rao, Schmidt, & Murray, 1995; Yukl & Tracey, 1992).

By considering followership along a passive-to-proactive continuum, different manifestations of in-role, extra-role, upward influence, and impression management behavior are likely to occur, depending on where along this continuum followership is enacted. We expand upon this below by drawing specific parallels between followership and each of these types of employee behavior.

Followership and in-role behavior. In-role behavior refers to the degree to which one can effectively carry out formal duties and responsibilities associated with one's job, such as those that would be listed in a job description (Williams & Anderson, 1991). Employees displaying satisfactory levels of in-role behavior are successful in accomplishing what is formally expected of them. Even in its most passive form, followership implies an ability to do what is expected. Otherwise, it would be difficult to effectively follow the leader's directions. Given the critical importance of in-role behavior to leaders (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002), the importance of effectively doing one's job is likely to be an integral component of followership, whether it is enacted passively or proactively.

Recent work views proactivity as a process that can be applied to in-role behavior (Grant & Ashford, 2008). The proactive follower would show more initiative in determining with the leader whether his or her responsibilities or the way they are executed should be adjusted. In contrast, the passive follower would be more likely to wait to receive the leader's instructions before changing the way in which he or she carries out formal responsibilities. Thus, while followership would always imply some satisfactory level of in-role behavior, the degree of proactivity used when engaging in such behavior will vary.

The more proactive display of in-role behavior is likely to involve some degree of role innovation, which is one form of job crafting. Job crafting is defined as "the physical and

cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work” (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Role innovation specifically refers to redefining or improving aspects of one’s work role (Morrison & Phelps, 1999a). Because such behavior is sometimes done without direct supervision, it may go unnoticed by management (Wrzesniewski, 2003). Thus, for role innovation to be considered an act of followership, it must be done with the leader’s involvement and with the intention of helping achieve goals that are of some importance to the leader.

It is important to note that, from the perspective of the larger organization, followership may not necessarily imply satisfactory in-role behavior. A passive follower who obeys the commands of a leader whose interests are at odds with those of the organization may be behaving as the leader expects, but not as the organization does. Thus, the “in-role” behavior of the passive follower may actually be considered counterproductive by other organizational constituents depending on what the leader expects of the follower.

It is also essential to recognize that while followership, as defined earlier, necessarily implies at least a minimally acceptable degree of in-role behavior, in-role behavior do not automatically imply followership. If an employee’s job requires very little change in responsibilities or in how those responsibilities are to be carried out, and the employee knows exactly how to fulfill those responsibilities, then there would be no need to receive direction from or work with the leader. Such circumstances would serve as a substitute for leadership (Kerr & Jermier, 1978), implying an absence of followership. Thus, in-role behavior denotes followership to the extent that the leader can play some meaningful role in influencing this behavior.

Followership and extra-role behaviors. Extra-role behaviors denote employee work contributions that transcend their formally prescribed roles (i.e., in-role behavior). Several extra-role behaviors have been studied, and most can be categorized as either helping specific individuals at work (e.g., altruism, courtesy, interpersonal helping; Moorman & Blakely, 1995; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990), or benefitting the group or organization as a whole (e.g., conscientiousness, personal industry, sportsmanship, civic virtue, generalized compliance, individual initiative, taking charge, and voice; Moorman & Blakely, 1995; Morrison & Phelps, 1999b; Podsakoff et al., 1990; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Both individual-focused and organization-focused extra-role behaviors have been shown to be salient to the social exchange with one's leader (Ilies et al., 2007).

Because extra-role behaviors have typically been viewed as being relatively more voluntary in nature than in-role behavior (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Organ, 1988; Smith et al., 1983; Spector & Fox, 2002), and thus more a reflection of employee initiative, one may expect extra-role behaviors to be more frequently displayed by proactive followers than by passive ones. However, we believe that extra-role behaviors will vary in their frequency depending on where along the passive-to-proactive continuum of followership the employee falls.

We would expect conscientiousness (personal industry and generalized compliance being similar constructs) and sportsmanship to be displayed more by passive than by proactive followers. Conscientiousness refers to an employee's adherence to rules at all times. Assuming one is referring to the leader's rules, conscientiousness is tantamount to being consistently obedient, which would typify the passive construction of followership (Carsten et al., 2010). Sportsmanship denotes an employee's tendency to tolerate less than ideal circumstances

without complaining. Carsten et al. (2010) reported that one of the defining qualities of a passive follower is having a positive attitude. Thus, displaying strong sportsmanship would seem to be particularly consistent with passive followership.

As followership becomes more proactive, employees' use of voice behavior (taking charge and individual initiative being similar constructs) should increase (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2009). Voice is a form of challenging behavior that is intended to be innovative and constructive. Followers who choose to engage in voice behavior openly challenge the status quo and suggest ways to improve processes or the organization, even if they find themselves holding the minority opinion (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Assuming such actions are done in collaboration with the leader and are not meant to substitute for leadership, they would mirror the examples of proactive followership reported by Carsten et al. (2010) since they would reflect a desire from the follower to partner with the leader (co-lead) in advancing the mission of the team.

We would also expect proactive followers to exhibit more civic virtue, which refers to an employee's tendency to participate responsibly in, or display concern about, the political life of the group or organization (Podsakoff et al., 1990), would also be expected of more proactive followers. However, only to the extent that such activities concern the group that the leader is responsible for. Otherwise, such actions would be of little consequence to the leader, thus saying little about followership.

Altruism (and other similar constructs such as courtesy and interpersonal helping) is likely to be displayed by passive as well as proactive followers. However, while passive followers may show a consistent willingness to offer other group members (especially the leader) help when asked by the leader (because they are adaptable and highly willing to follow

the leader's orders; Carsten et al., 2010), proactive followers would more actively search for opportunities (e.g., by carefully observing, directly asking, etc.) to help group members in an effort to ensure the group's overall success.

Followership, upward influence, and impression management tactics. It has been argued that upward influence and impression management tactics would be relevant to the social exchange between an employee and his or her superior (Uhl-Bien et al., 2000; Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Green, 1993). While upward influence and impression management tactics aimed at one's superior have sometimes been treated separately, these constructs are very similar. They both denote actions taken by a subordinate to advance a personal or organizational goal by influencing the boss. In fact, some impression management research has used a measure of influence tactics (Rao et al., 1995). One can argue that influence tactics subsume impression management. Indeed, most research on impression management has focused on the use of ingratiation (i.e., trying to make the target view the agent in a positive light), and ingratiation is considered one of several possible influence tactics.

In addition to ingratiation, tactics that can be used to influence one's superior can potentially include rational persuasion, inspirational appeal, consultation, personal appeal, and legitimatizing (Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Exchange (e.g., promise of favor in exchange for target's compliance), pressure (e.g., use of threats to get target to comply), and coalition (e.g., use of others' support as a reason for target to comply) have also been considered potential upward influence tactics, but these imply an absence of deference to the leader, thus being of little relevance to followership.

Most upward influence tactics assume at least a small amount of proactivity since they are not simply reactions to a superior's behavior (Yukl & Falbe, 1990). Thus, they are unlikely to

be employed by the most passive of followers. An exception may be made in the case of ingratiation. Impression management and influence tactic scholars differ somewhat in their view this behavior. While both recognize that it is used to be viewed favorably by the target, influence tactic scholars have assumed that the agent uses this tactic before asking the target to do something (Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Impression management scholars have not always made such an assumption (Wayne & Ferris, 1990). We would expect the most passive of followers to use ingratiation with their leader without asking him or her to do something for them afterward. This tactic would be used simply as a way of displaying strong deference to the leader as well as a “positive attitude” (Carsten et al., 2010), such as telling a leader that his or her plan of action sounds excellent. As followers become more proactive, they may start to use this tactic before making a specific request of the leader, such as asking the leader for a favor that would advance one of the group’s goals. This implies that the follower is weary of making an unfavorable impression upon the leader with such a request. Thus, we would not expect ingratiation to be used by the most proactive of followers, who have little fear of reprisal from the leader (Carsten et al., 2010).

Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2009) found that employees subscribing to a more proactive construction of followership are more likely to use rational persuasion (e.g., use of logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade the target that a proposal is viable) as an influence tactic with their leader. We would also expect proactive followership to be associated with tactics such as consultation (e.g., seeking the target’s participation in planning a strategy, activity, or change for which target’s support is desired), personal appeal (e.g., appealing to the target’s feelings of loyalty and friendship toward the agent before asking the target to do something), and legitimizing (e.g., trying to gain the target’s support for a request by verifying

that it is consistent with the group's rules, practices, or traditions). Each of these tactics could be used to secure the leader's support in advancing an employee-driven initiative that would advance the interests of the group.

Conclusion. Overall, we would expect followership to involve in-role and extra-role behaviors, as well as several upward influence tactics. However, as explained above, the degree to which these behaviors are displayed as well as the particular manner in which they are displayed should vary depending on whether active versus proactive followership is enacted. For ease of reference, we have positioned each of these behaviors along the passive-to-proactive continuum of followership in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

THE IMPACT OF INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE FOLLOWERSHIP ON LEADERSHIP

We begin our explanation of how followership may affect leadership by focusing on the employee-leader dyad, meaning the influence that a single employee's followership may have on how the leader behaves with that employee. Followership, as we have defined it, is likely (and often intended) to elicit a response from the leader. We propose that a leader's reaction to an employee's enactment of followership along the passive-to-proactive continuum would be reflected in the leader's use of one or more specific leadership styles. Because the enactment of leadership can involve risk for the leader (e.g., giving more decision-making power to an employee) or may be used to mitigate risk (e.g., being directive), we also propose that leader behaviors that are reactions to followership would be explained by the leader's trust in the employee.

Research on leader-follower relational dynamics suggests that trust is one of the key variables explaining the influence of one party on the other (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan, 2000; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Uhl-Bien et al., 2000). Given the leader-centric dominance of leadership research, emphasis has been placed on the trust that employees have in the leader. With few exceptions (e.g., Brower et al., 2000), scholars have all but ignored the role of a leader's trust in employees in the leadership process.

It has been argued that trust is a multifaceted construct composed of trusting beliefs (i.e., perceived trust-relevant qualities of the individual being trusted) and trusting intentions (i.e., willingness to make oneself vulnerable to the actions of another in the presence of risk), with the former influencing the latter (Kim, Dirks, & Cooper, 2009; Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004; McNight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998). Distinguishing trusting beliefs from trusting intentions is in keeping with Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) model of trust, where perceptions of a person's trustworthiness (i.e., trusting beliefs) influence whether one will trust that person (trusting intentions). Mayer and associates (1995) argue that trustworthiness can be gauged in terms of a person's ability, benevolence, and integrity. Ability is the situational-specific group of skills, competencies and characteristics that enable one to have influence in a specific domain. This characteristic is comparable to competence or expertise. Benevolence is the extent to which the trustor believes the trustee wishes to do good to the trustor. This perception taps into the trustee's underlying motives behind their actions. The third characteristic, integrity, is the trustor's perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles or values that are acceptable to the trustor. We propose that an employee's enactment of followership would influence a leader's trusting beliefs (i.e., ability, benevolence, and integrity), which in turn would influence the leader's trusting intentions, and finally his or her use of

specific leadership styles. However, as we explain in the next section, we would expect the leader's implicit followership theory, meaning his/her belief regarding how followers ought to behave, to moderate not only the effect of an employee's followership on the leader's trusting beliefs, but also the effect of the leader's trusting beliefs on his/her trusting intentions vis-à-vis that employee. This theoretical model is depicted in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Employee Followership and Leaders' Trusting Beliefs: The moderating Role of Leaders' IFT

Just as employees can hold different social constructions of followership, so can their leaders (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2009; Carsten et al., 2010; Sy, in press). Thus, where some leaders would have a more proactive IFT, others would have a more passive IFT. Carsten et al. (2010) proposed that employee and leader IFTs may differ greatly, and that such mismatches could be problematic. A leader who holds a passive construction of followership may view a proactive follower as threatening or a nuisance (Grant, Parker, & Collins, 2009). This could help explain why whistleblowers are sometimes severely repudiated instead of being commended for thoughtful dissent. Alternatively, a leader who adheres to a proactive view of followership may become frustrated with an employee who exemplifies passive followership.

The influence of an employee's followership on the leader's trusting beliefs concerning that employee should depend on the leader's IFT. The more an employee's followership matches the leader's IFT, the more that employee will be considered trustworthy. This is consistent with Brower and colleague's (2000) general view that similarity between leader supervisor and subordinate would increase trust in both parties. In Table 2, we present a matrix

including four possible (mis)matches between an employee's enactment of followership and his/her leader's IFT. In each cell, we indicate what impact the (mis)match would have on the leader's perceptions of that employee's ability, benevolence, and integrity. In the following paragraphs, we explain why a leader's IFT would moderate the effect of an employee's followership on the leader's trusting beliefs.

Insert Table 2 about here

Trusting beliefs of a leader with a proactive IFT. A leader who's IFT tends to be more proactive should react more favorably to an employee who enacts proactive followership, meaning one who is more self-managed and who wishes to work in partnership with the leader in advancing the interests of the group. This favorable reaction should be reflected in the leader's trusting beliefs regarding that employee. An employee displaying proactive followership would demonstrate the ability (i.e., the skills, competencies, and characteristics necessary for his/her role) that the leader with a proactive IFT expects (at least implicitly), such as engaging in role innovation, voicing concerns with and potential improvements for the group, and consulting with the leader in identifying and implementing a change initiative for the group.

We would also expect an employee who displays more proactive followership to be viewed as being more benevolent by the leader with a proactive IFT. Taking different forms of initiative to advance the interests of the leader's group is likely to be interpreted by the leader as evidence that the employee truly cares about the group, and thus has a positive orientation toward the leader.

A leader with a more proactive IFT would also tend to view an employee's proactive followership as evidence of integrity. Indeed, the employee would be displaying adherence to principles (e.g., taking the initiative to advance the interests of the group, taking a partner role vis-à-vis the leader) that the leader with a proactive IFT would find acceptable.

Conversely, as suggested by Carsten et al. (2010) an employee who displays passive followership should elicit negative reactions by the leader with a proactive IFT. While such an employee would display an ability to follow specific directions, the leader with a more proactive IFT would have little interest in repeatedly having to give direction, preferring instead to see employees engage in more self-management. This leader would thus perceive this employee as lacking the ability (skills, competencies, and characteristics) to be effective.

While the employee enacting passive followership would display a high willingness to please the leader (i.e., high deference), which would indicate some benevolence toward the leader, his/her lack of proactivity may thwart the degree to which he/she is viewed as truly concerned with the success of the leader's group. Moreover, the leader with a proactive IFT would react less favorably to an employee's ingratiation attempts, which would typify passive followership. Such attempts would probably be viewed more as impression management than as a true display of care and concern for the leader. In sum, the employee displaying passive followership would be viewed as less benevolent than would one exemplifying proactive followership.

Finally, the employee enacting passive followership would display an adherence to values and principles (e.g., high deference to the leader, obedience, passivity) that would not be considered acceptable by the leader with a proactive IFT. Such an employee would consequently not be considered by the leader as having high integrity.

Research proposition 1. An employee who enacts more proactive as opposed to more passive followership will be viewed by the leader as displaying higher ability, benevolence, and integrity when the leader holds a more proactive IFT.

Trusting beliefs of a leader with a passive IFT. Among leaders with a passive IFT, we would expect the opposite pattern of trusting beliefs elicited by passive versus proactive followership. A passive follower working under a leader with a passive IFT meets the leader's expectations and is considered to be contributing well. The employee does not display proactivity, nor is it expected of him/her. Because the employee is doing exactly as he or she is told, the leader with a passive IFT would consider the employee as having high ability. Conversely, the same leader would consider an employee enacting proactive followership as engaging in activities that are unnecessary and that could threaten the leader's authority or legitimacy. Because such a leader likely subscribes more to an autocratic than to a democratic approach to leadership, a threat to his/her formal authority would constitute a particularly serious threat to his/her sense of success as a manager. The leader would thus consider proactive followership as disruptive, and consider the proactive follower as possessing potentially counterproductive characteristics, thus having lower ability than a more passive follower. Furthermore, because the employee's proactive behavior would be viewed as potentially threatening, this employee would be perceived as being less benevolent than one displaying more passive followership, whose more frequent attempts at ingratiation would be welcome and serve to reinforce the leader's belief that the employee wishes to do good to the leader.

Based on the argument that adherence to similar values predicts perceptions of integrity (Mayer et al., 1995), an employee would be considered as having more integrity by a

leader with a passive IFT if that employee exemplifies passive followership. The leader with a more passive IFT would value loyalty and obedience from employees, which typify passive followership. Proactive followership is concerned less with such principles and more with taking initiative and taking a partner role vis-à-vis the leader. The leader with a passive IFT would not easily accept the principles associated with proactive followership (and may even interpret them as disloyalty or insubordination). Consequently, such a leader would view an employee displaying proactive followership as having little integrity.

Research proposition 2. An employee who enacts more passive as opposed to more proactive followership will be viewed by the leader as displaying higher ability, benevolence, and integrity when the leader holds a more passive IFT.

Leaders' Trusting Beliefs and Trusting Intentions: The moderating Role of Leaders' IFT

The trust literature suggests that a leader's trusting beliefs concerning an employee would lead to trusting intentions vis-à-vis that employee. However, we have reason to expect that the magnitude of this effect would depend on whether the leader holds a more passive or a more proactive IFT.

As noted earlier, trusting intentions refer to a person's willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another in the presence of risk. This typically means being willing to let another have more influence and decision-making freedom over issues that are important to us. Example items taken from Mayer and Davis' (1999) and Mayer and Gavin's (2005) measures of trust (trusting intentions) include "If I had my way, I wouldn't let ___ have any influence over issues that are important to me," "I would be willing to let ___ have complete control over my future in this company," and "I would be comfortable giving ___ a task or problem which was critical to me, even if I could not monitor his/her (its) actions." Giving an employee more

influence and decision-making freedom is much more consistent with the proactive IFT (where the employee co-leads the group with the leader) than with the passive IFT (where the employee follows orders). A leader with a proactive IFT should be more open to the idea of sharing his/her power with a follower, and thus making him(her)self more vulnerable to that follower's actions, than would a leader with a more passive IFT. Thus, although it is possible for a leader with passive IFT to have highly trusting beliefs about an employee (as argued previously), we expect that this leader's IFT would limit the strength of the trusting intentions that would follow. For example, while a leader with a passive IFT may be able to trust a follower to enthusiastically carry out tasks that he/she assigns, a leader with a proactive IFT could trust a follower to actually decide which tasks should be carried out.

Research proposition 3. The positive effect of a leader's trusting beliefs on the leaders trusting intentions regarding an employee will be stronger when the leader has a more proactive IFT.

Overall, what these arguments imply is that a leader is generally more likely to hold trusting intentions toward an employee to the degree that the employee enacts followership that is consistent with the leader's IFT. However, these trusting intentions will be stronger when the leader holds a more proactive IFT than when the leader holds a more passive IFT.

Leaders' Trusting Intentions and Use of Risk-taking and Risk-Mitigating Behaviors

According to Brower et al. (2000), a leader's trusting intentions regarding an employee would predict the degree to which a leader engages in risk taking behavior with that employee. While some leadership behaviors would constitute such risk taking, others would serve to mitigate risk.

Risk-taking leadership behaviors. Participative leadership would be one example of risk-taking behavior. This type of leadership encourages followers to get involved and provides them with more decision-making latitude as well as a sense of perceived control or autonomy. It denotes participative decision-making (Jex & Beehr, 1991). Some have argued that such leadership exists along a continuum, ranging from simple consultation (i.e., obtaining ideas and/or evaluations from employees) to delegation (i.e., assigning a decision problem to an employee to decide upon) (Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1958; Vroom & Yago, 1988). Giving employees higher levels of influence on important decisions affecting the organization clearly involves risk. Opportunities for such influence are not likely to be given if the leader does not trust a follower to provide insightful contributions that would have a positive impact on the decision-making process. Incorporating poorly thought-out suggestions in an important strategic decision can have dire consequences for leaders. Additionally, giving followers opportunities to provide feedback or input would be a waste of time if the opportunity is not taken seriously (e.g., uncritical conformist behavior). Therefore, leaders are more likely to invite followers whom they trust to participate in decision-making. Consistent with this reasoning, a recent review of the advice taking and decision-making literature (Bonaccio & Dalal, 2006) shows that leaders are more likely to use the advice of employees whom they view as more trustworthy.

Supportive leadership is another type of risk-taking leadership behavior. Those studying transformational leadership would refer to this behavior as individualized consideration (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Such consideration often involves the types of support that mentors can offer a protégé. The mentoring literature clearly distinguishes between the psychosocial and career support (Green & Bauer, 1995; Kram, 1985; Lankau,

Carlson, & Nielson, 2006; Noe, 1988; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Psychosocial support, as it has been conceptualized and measured in the mentoring literature, refers to efforts made to enhance an employee's sense of competence, identity, and work-role effectiveness. It can involve actions such as providing acceptance and confirmation of the employee's actions, counseling, and informal interactions (i.e., friendship). The goal of career support is to prepare an employee for career advancement and can involve behaviors such as sponsoring (e.g., nominating the employee for desirable projects and advancement), providing increased visibility in the organization, providing challenging work assignments, protecting the protégé from potential risks, and offering feedback or strategies for accomplishing work-related objectives. Previous research indicates that the willingness to mentor an employee depends greatly upon that employee's potential for future success (Kram, 1985; Olian, Carroll, & Giannantonio, 1993), which can be inferred from his/her ability/competence and desire to learn (Allen, 2004). This suggests that mentoring involves risk to the leader, such as wasted time and effort, or even a tarnished reputation if the employee causes serious problems because he/she was ill-prepared for a challenging assignment given by the leader. Thus, such support is more likely to be offered to an employee that the leader trusts.

Research proposition 4. A leader with more trusting intentions vis-à-vis an employee will engage in more risk-taking behavior with that employee (e.g., more participative and supportive leadership).

Risk-mitigating leadership behaviors. Leadership behaviors that would serve to mitigate risk would denote leader attempts to control or limit an employee's influence. Such behaviors would be more typically expected among leaders who have little trust in an employee. Good examples would be directive and laissez-faire leadership.

Directive leadership consists of clearly indicating what work needs to be done and how to do it (e.g., what work method(s) to use, what timeline to respect). Such leadership involves what transactional leadership scholars refer to as management-by-exception, which means monitoring employee performance and intervening with directiveness when the employee does not perform well (Bass, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995). Leaders will tend to use a more directive style when they do not trust an employee to perform a task properly. This would be consistent with literature on the repair of trust suggesting that instead of attempting to repair trust directly after it has been violated, individuals may instead implement constraint-oriented remedies (e.g., policies, contracts, monitoring) to reduce their own vulnerability to risk (Kim et al., 2009). Indeed, direction would serve to mitigate the risk that less trustworthy employees would make costly mistakes at work. However, when leaders can trust an employee to do good work and make the decisions that would benefit the group, there should be less of a perceived need to use such a leadership style. There is some indirect empirical support for this position. For instance, low levels of employee performance have been shown to lead to an increased display of task-oriented verbal statements used by the leader (i.e., telling a subordinate *how* to do a task) (Sims & Manz, 1984). In addition, high employee performance has been linked to decreased closeness of supervision and initiating structure (operationalized in a similar manner to directive behavior) (Lowin & Craig, 1968).

Laissez-faire leadership refers to an absence of leadership, where the leader is rarely if ever involved in the employee's work (Sosik & Jung, 2010). Such behavior would be tantamount to ignoring an employee. We would expect such leadership behavior when involving the employee more in the group's tasks would present too much of a risk to the leader.

Research proposition 5. A leader with less trusting intentions vis-à-vis an employee will engage in more risk-mitigating behavior with that employee (e.g., more directive and laissez-faire leadership).

Overall, propositions 1 through 5 imply that a match between an employee's followership and the leader's IFT will generally result in more risk-taking and less risk-mitigating leadership behavior. However, as argued above, we expect trusting beliefs to have a stronger positive effect on trusting intentions when the leader has a more proactive IFT. Thus, a proactive followership – proactive leader IFT match will result in more risk-taking and less risk-mitigating leadership behavior than a passive followership – passive leader IFT match.

Earlier in our article, we noted Sy's (in press) reporting of incompetence and insubordination as possible leader IFTs. We did not include these views of followership in our earlier arguments because neither have the potential to be viewed as effective by the leader. Put otherwise, the enactment of such followership would rarely if ever enhance a leader's trusting beliefs, let alone his/her trusting intentions, irrespective of the leader's IFT. Thus, such ineffective followership would increase the leader's use of risk mitigating behavior and decrease his/her use of risk-taking behavior.

THE IMPACT OF COLLECTIVE EMPLOYEE FOLLOWERSHIP ON LEADERSHIP

The arguments presented thus far all apply specifically to a dyadic leader-follower relationship and do not take into account the collective influence of multiple employees on the leader's behavior. We propose that the level of trust that a leader has in his/her group of employees as a whole affects manifestation of group-focused leader behavior. Both idealized influence (i.e., charisma) and inspirational motivation are behaviors and have been studied as dimensions of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bycio et al., 1995). Both types

of behavior are considered group-focused because of their emphasis on common ground, shared values, and ideology (Kark & Shamir, 2002), and because they both stress building a collective vision (Atwater & Bass, 1994; Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & Spangler, 2004). As explained by Wu and colleagues (2010), “because achieving a collective vision requires the involvement and collective effort of all employees, leaders adopting idealized influence and inspirational motivation behaviors tend to focus on an overall bond with their follower group as a whole rather than with individual followers” (p. 92). Our position is that a leader’s display of such group-focused leadership behavior is more under the collective influence of direct reports than of any single employee. We explain our reasoning below.

Using idealized influence and inspirational motivation with one’s employees involves the risk that they will not follow and contribute towards making the vision a reality. This would be a considerable risk since failure to follow would typically imply failure of leadership given today’s leader-centric view of leadership. Given this risk, it would be much easier for a leader to engage in such behavior if there is at least a critical mass of employees that can be trusted to help build and/or fulfill the vision. This critical mass need not to be the majority of employees in the group. It may also be a smaller number of employees who have considerable power (e.g., referent power, expert power; French & Raven, 1960) in the group and are therefore likely to have significant influence over their peers. Individuals possessing strong referent power are more likely to succeed in achieving target commitment through influence attempts (Yukl, Kim, & Falbe, 1996). Thus, a leader may be willing to articulate a vision to the group in hopes that a small number of trusted influential followers will serve as proxies to assist in indoctrinating and inspiring the remainder of the group. A leader’s vision may also spread peripherally through the process of social contagion. Social contagion is the unintentional spread of behavior from an

individual (i.e., an initiator) to another individual or an entire group (Levy & Nail, 1993). The status of the initiator (e.g., relative prestige or importance) is one factor that can determine the spread of behavior (Polansky, Lippitt, & Redl, 1950; Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007).

Trusting beliefs and intentions are not only applicable to individuals, but also to groups (Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). We would therefore expect the model describing the effect of an individual employee's followership on leadership behavior to be applicable at the group level. Thus, the group of employees' overall enactment of followership would affect the leader's trusting beliefs regarding the group as a whole, and this effect would depend on the leader's IFT. These trusting beliefs would then influence the leader's trusting intentions regarding the group, also as a function of the leader's IFT. Finally, the leader's trusting intentions would determine the degree to which he/she would engage in risk-taking behavior with the group, namely idealized influence and inspirational motivation. A graphic depiction of this group-focused process is presented in Figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here

When describing the effect of an individual employee's followership on leader behavior, we argued that a proactive followership – proactive leader IFT match would result in more risk-taking leader behavior than would a passive followership – passive leader IFT match. The same should hold true in the case of collective employee followership. Specifically, a proactive group followership – proactive leader IFT match should result in more idealized influence and inspirational motivation than would a passive group followership – passive leader IFT match. Moreover, we believe that the highest levels of idealized influence and inspirational motivation, because they would be displayed by leaders with a more proactive IFT, would speak of a vision

that would more clearly reflect the views, opinions, and concerns of the employees (or at least of the critical mass of employees necessary for the leader to engage in such charismatic behavior), as opposed to a vision that emphasizes the leader's priorities. Incorporating the views and concerns of followers would be consistent with a proactive IFT, where followers are considered the leader's partners.

Research proposition 12. When the leader has a more proactive as opposed to a more passive IFT, the leader's trusting intentions in the group will lead to the expression of a vision that reflects more of the views and concerns of the group.

Howell & Shamir (2005) differentiate between two different ways a leader can express a vision by describing personalized and socialized charismatic relationships. A follower and leader form a personalized charismatic relationship when the follower personally identifies with the leader and accepts the leader's vision unconditionally. This will most likely occur when the follower has low self-concept clarity and a relational identity; this means that they seek self-validation and clarity by identifying with an individual who displays traits and behaves consistently with their prototype of a charismatic leader. This description may best typify passive followership. Indeed, according to Howell and Shamir (2005), followers who form a personalized charismatic relationship are more likely to be dependent on the leader for direction, and are more prone to blind faith. Sometimes referred to as "the dark side of charisma", personalized charismatic relationships afford the leader substantial latitude to choose the nature and content of their vision and behave in a manner that may be unethical, leading to potentially harmful consequences. A leader with a passive IFT may prefer passive followers for this reason. Although not always with malicious intent, a sense of complete control or autonomy would be desired by a leader with a passive IFT.

In contrast, socialized charismatic relationships are characterized by respect and admiration for the leader, but only under the condition that the leader behaves in the best interest of the group. Followers who are more prone to form a socialized relationship have a clear sense of self based on the group to which they belong (i.e., collective identity), strong values, and tend to derive their sense of direction not through the leader's traits, but through the content of the vision articulated by the leader. By taking an active interest in the organization and making constructive suggestions, proactive followers bear a resemblance to this description. Leaders who have socialized charismatic relationships with their followers must articulate a vision that reflects the views and concerns of the group, and pursues the collective goal.

In sum, we build upon this conceptualization by arguing that the group, not the individual employee, influences the display of charismatic behavior. Further, we propose that such an influence depends, not only on the self-concept clarity and relational or collective identity of the follower, but on the match between the group's followership and leader's IFT.

DISCUSSION

Drawing upon extant research on followership, trust, and leadership behavior, we sought to provide theoretical explanations for the effects that an individual employee and a group of employees can have on the leader's behavior. Our arguments generally imply that the stronger the match between employees' enactment of followership and the leader's IFT, the more that leader will engage in risk-taking behaviors and the less the leader will display risk-mitigating behaviors. Moreover, we propose that a proactive match will yield more risk-taking and less risk-mitigation by the leader than would a passive match. To the extent that followers desire their leader to engage in more risk-taking and less risk-mitigating behavior, these

arguments suggest that it is in followers' interest to establish as close a match as possible between their followership and their leader's IFT and, to the extent possible, to ensure this match is a proactive one.

To test our proposed relationships, several methodological issues should be considered. Additional work is required to refine the measurement of key constructs in our models, including leader IFTs and the degree to which a leader's vision incorporates the views and concerns of the group. Regarding leader IFTs, we suggest that the work of Carsten and colleagues (2010) and of Sy (in press) be integrated and built upon to resolve the issue concerning the scope of possible IFT factors, from both the employee and the leader perspectives. We also suggest that researchers refrain from using the terms "follower" or "followership" in their protocol with participants since such terms have the potential to bias participants' responses. As an alternative, we suggest the use of a more neutral term, such as "employee." Regarding the measurement of the leader's vision, we suggest that previously used measures of visionary behavior (e.g., MLQ5x - Bass & Avolio, 1995; GTL - Carless, Wearing, & Mann, 2000; LPI - Kouzes & Posner, 1990; see also - Rafferty & Griffin, 2004) be amended such that items reflect the whether the vision promoted by the leader incorporates the priorities of the group.

In addition, researchers interested in testing the relationships we have proposed should take great care in avoiding the pitfalls of single-source data, particularly since all constructs in our models are perceptual in nature. One way of avoiding such difficulties is by conducting laboratory experiments, where employee enactments of followership would be manipulated. Such methodology has been used in past leadership-related research (e.g., Crowe, Bochner, & Clark, 1972; Lapierre, Bonaccio, & Allen, 2009; Lowin & Craig, 1968; Sims & Manz, 1984). A

second way is to use temporal separation (e.g., 10 days) (Greene, 1975; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) between the measurements of constructs at different stages in the causal model. Such an approach would reduce the prevalence of method-induced biases such as consistency motifs and demand characteristics. A third is to measure the same construct using data from multiple sources (Podsakoff et al., 2003), such as using employee and leader reports of employees' enactment of followership and of leader's use of risk-taking and/or risk-mitigating behaviors. Relationships that vary little as a function of data source would be deemed more valid. A research agenda that combines these various methods would be best since each would help overcome the limitations of the other. We do not strongly advocate the use of longitudinal designs to test lagged effects because the duration of any such effect would be less than certain.

Since one of the applied implications of our arguments is that employees can try to adjust their followership to their leader's IFT, future work should consider to what extent such adjustment is possible. Carsten and colleagues (2010) reported anecdotal evidence that employees preferring to enact proactive followership would find it difficult to display more passive followership. Such difficulty could manifest itself in the form of reduced satisfaction at work. Alternatively, it may be possible for followers, perhaps as a group, to alter their leader's IFT (Crowe et al., 1972), particularly given the possibility that IFTs be influenced by context (Carsten et al., 2010). This avenue should also be explored in future research.

Conclusion. The current body of leadership research has done little in the way of providing an integrative theory explaining how specific follower actions can influence different types of leadership behavior. We have developed our model with the intention of highlighting the influence followers can have, as individuals and as a group, on their leader's behavior. Our

arguments are meant to complement, not contradict, previously published explanations of a leader's influence on follower behavior, and thus serve as a solid base for additional research seeking to understand the reciprocal influence between leader and follower behavior.

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Table 1

Followers' Display of In-Role Behaviors, Extra-Role Behaviors, and Upward Influence Tactics

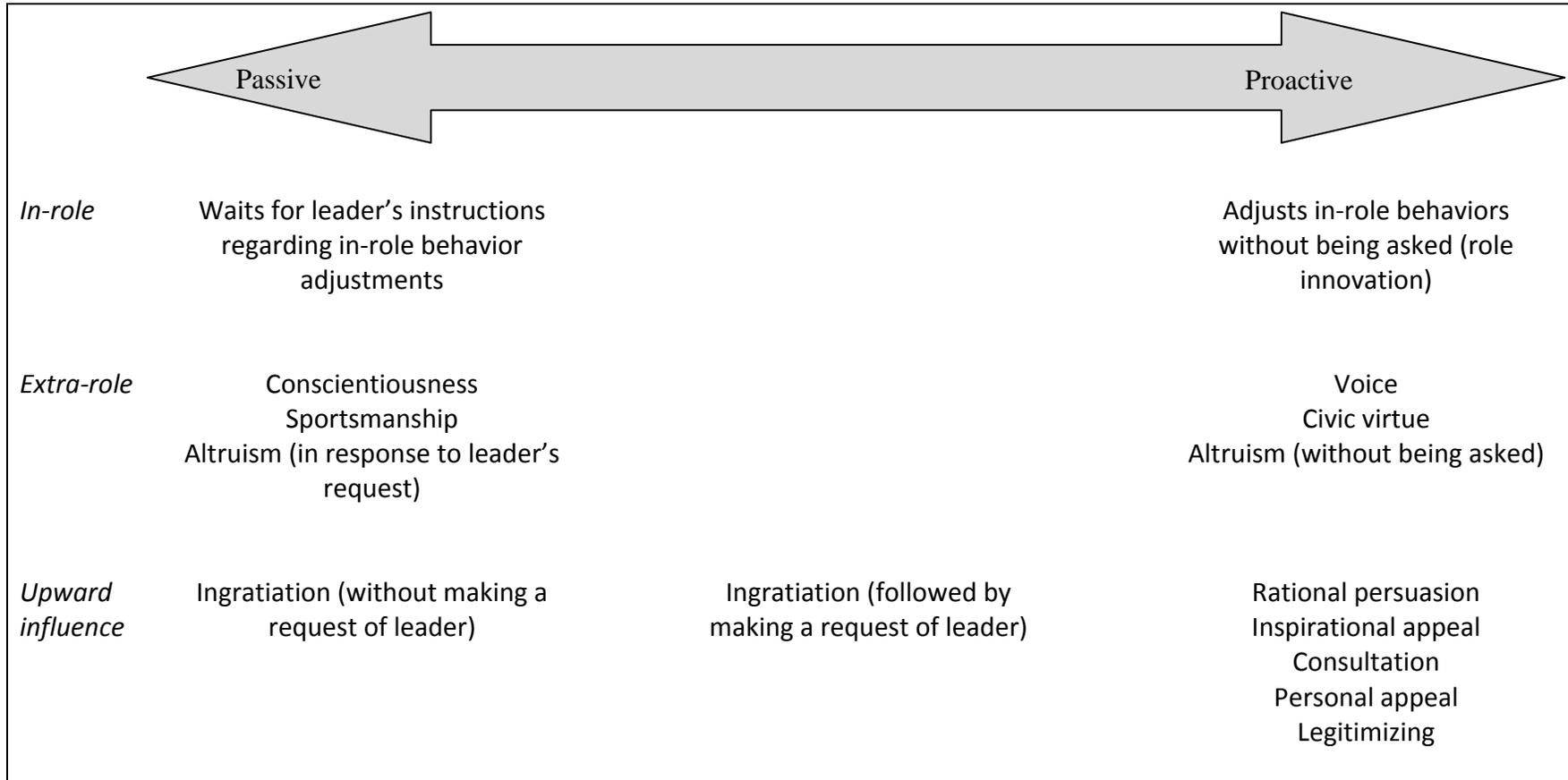


Table 2

Followership and Leader IFT (Mis)Match and Leader Perceptions of Trustworthiness

	Proactive Leader IFT	Passive Leader IFT
Proactive followership	Ability: HIGH Benevolence: HIGH Integrity: HIGH	Ability: MODERATE Benevolence: LOW Integrity: LOW
Passive followership	Ability: LOW Benevolence: MODERATE Integrity: LOW	Ability: HIGH Benevolence: HIGH Integrity: HIGH

Figure 1
The Impact of Individual Employee Followership on Leadership Behavior

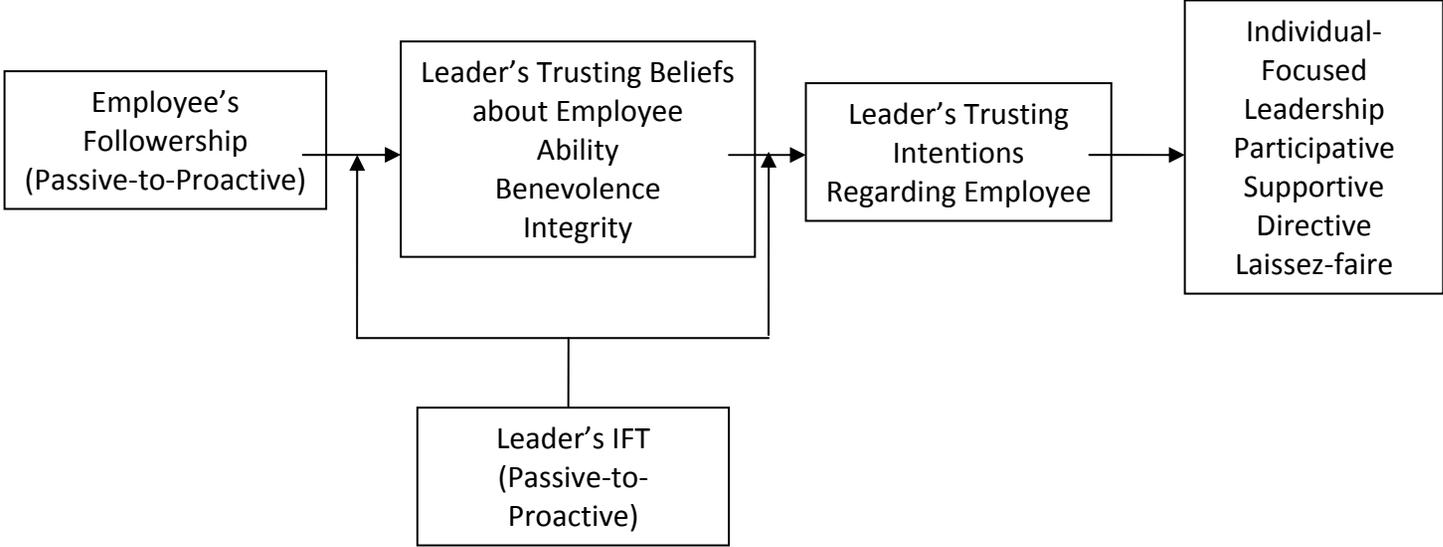


Figure 2
The Impact of Collective Employee Followership on Leadership Behavior

