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Follower Behavior and Organizational Performance: The Impact of Transformational Leaders

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This study sheds light on the mediating processes by which transformational leadership influences follower performance and innovation, respectively. We hypothesize that transformational leaders boost follower performance by stimulating organizational citizenship behavior, whereas they enhance follower innovation by triggering controversial discussion of task related issues (debate). On the contrary, we do not expect these mediating effects to hold for the relationship between transactional leadership and follower performance and innovation, respectively. Our hypotheses were confirmed in an empirical study of N = 91 leaders from 91 German companies. Conclusions for leadership research are drawn. Key words: debate, innovation, organizational citizenship behavior, transactional leadership, transformational leadership

For a long time, the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance has been analysed in literature (e.g., Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Howell & Avolio, 1993). Meta-analyses show a positive relation between transformational leadership and organizational performance (DeGroot, Kiker & Cross, 2000; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Patterson, Fuller, Hester & Stringer, 1995). This result holds for different organizational contexts and different success criteria, e.g., (group) performance (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002; Pillai & Williams, 2004), project success in R&D departments (Keller, 1992), and innovation (Howell & Higgins, 1990; Shin & Zhou, 2003).

However, little is still known about the mediating processes between transformational leadership and organizational success (Kark, Chen, & Shamir, 2003; Yukl, 1999). While several authors have repeatedly emphasized to

address this research issue (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Gordon & Yukl, 2004), only few studies actually did. By means of a sample of 170 companies in Singapore, Zhu, Chew, and Spangler (2005) found HRM practices (staffing, training, performance appraisal, and compensation systems) mediating the relationship between transformational leadership and performance and absenteeism, respectively. In a study in the US army, the relationship between transformational leadership and performance was partially mediated by the level of potency and the cohesion of the analyzed unit (Bass et al., 2003). Tsai, Chen, and Cheng (2005) identified employees' positive moods to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and leadership success whereas the leader-follower-relationship was confirmed to be a mediator by Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen (2005). Additionally, previous research also found followers' self-efficacy beliefs (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Walumba et al., 2004), intrinsic motivation (Charbonneau, Barling, & Kelloway, 2001), agreement on values (Jung & Avolio, 2000), as well as trust and satisfaction (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990; Pillai, Schriesheim & Williams, 1999) mediating the relationship between transformational leadership and performance.

In summary, empirical studies on the mediating processes in the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance focus primarily on constructs like followers' trust, agreement on values, group cohesion, satisfaction, self efficacy beliefs and followers' intrinsic motivation. As far as we know, there is only one study (Kearney, 2005) investigating follower behavior to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and

leadership success. This is surprising since transformational leaders are expected to particularly impact followers' behavior by "lift[ing] ordinary people to extraordinary heights" (Boal & Bryson, 1988, p. 11) and causing followers to do "more than they are expected to do" (Yukl, 1989, p. 272).

The goal of our study is to help fill this gap by analyzing the mediating role of follower behavior. We argue that transformational leadership abets different follower behaviors that lead to follower performance and follower innovation, respectively. More precisely, we examine the mediating effects of two different follower behaviors: organizational citizenship behavior (Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997) and controversial discussion (debate; in the sense of Simons, Pelled, & Smith, 1999).

Organizational citizenship behavior is explicitly defined as "extra-role behavior" and has been shown to have a positive impact on follower performance (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Ahearne, 1998; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000), while debate is assumed to enhance follower innovation in particular (Gebert, Boerner, & Kearney, 2006). Debate means engaging in heated discussions and controversies about task-related issues. Thus, it transcends average job requirements by including the risk of pursuing views and ideas that deviate from the shared conceptions of the group. Moreover, debate exceeds in-role behavior since it requires reciprocal questioning of controversial positions, including the risk of turning latent conflicts into manifest conflicts and thus raising the level of conflict in the group. Hence, both OCB and debate can be classified as follower behaviors "beyond expectations" (Bass, 1985) or followers' extra-role behaviors. That is why we assume transformational leadership to trigger these two types of follower behavior. Whereas OCB can be interpreted as the "quantitative" aspect of follower extra-effort, debate specifies the quality of this extra-effort, that is, controversial discussion of task related issues.

By surveying 91 leaders from German companies, the following hypotheses are tested: First, we expect followers' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB in terms of Podsakoff et al., 1997) to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and follower performance (hypothesis 1a). Second, we suggest

controversial discussion among followers (debate as meant by Simons et al., 1999) to be a mediator between transformational leadership and follower innovation (hypothesis 2a). Whereas OCB has yet been examined in connection with transformational leadership (Bettencourt, 2004; Kent & Chelladurai, 2001; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Bommer, 1996; Podsakoff et al., 1990), debate has not. In contrast to transformational leadership, transactional leadership may trigger rather followers' in-role than extra-role behavior (Avolio & Bass, 1988). Thus, we do not expect OCB and debate, respectively, mediating the transactional-outcome-relationship (hypothesis 1b and 2b).

Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, and Performance: Organizational Citizenship Behavior as Mediator

Transformational leaders inspire followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes by providing both meaning and understanding. They align the objectives and goals of individual followers and the larger organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 3) and provide the follower with support, mentoring and coaching. Bass (1985) identified four components of transformational leadership:

Idealized Influence

Leaders are admired, respected, and trusted. Followers identify with and want to emulate their leaders. Among the things the leader does to earn credit with followers is to consider followers' needs over his or her own needs. The leader acts as a role model, shares risks with followers and behaves in a manner consistent to articulated ethics, principles and values.

Inspirational Motivation

By providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work, leaders motivate their followers. Furthermore, leaders encourage followers to envision attractive future states. Individual and team spirit is aroused, since leaders display enthusiasm and optimism.

Intellectual Stimulation

Leaders stimulate followers by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways.

There is no ridicule or public criticism of follower' mistakes (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Individualized Consideration

Leaders pay attention to each individual's need for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor. Followers are successfully developed to higher levels of potential. New learning opportunities are offered and individual differences in terms of needs and desires are taken into account.

While transformational leadership emphasizes social exchange between leader and follower in the form of the psychological contract and thus stimulates OCB, transactional leadership, on the contrary, is primarily based on an economic exchange (Pillai, Schriesheim, & Williams, 1999). Transactional leaders identify the needs of their subordinates, clarify and negotiate the aspired goals, and regulate follower behavior using contingent positive or negative reinforcement (Bass, 1985). Transactional leadership means that followers agree, accept, or comply with the leader in exchange for praise, rewards, and resources or the avoidance of disciplinary action (Bass et al., 2003). Components of transactional leadership are contingent reward and management by exception (Avolio & Bass, 2002). Using contingent reward leaders specify and clarify goals, which their subordinates are supposed to reach, and announce appropriate rewards. Management by exception both active and passive is characterized by leaders who limit themselves to their role as monitors and intervene only exceptionally.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) comprises extra-role behaviors that are not within role but nevertheless of great importance for efficient processes in organizations (Organ, 1988; Podsakoff et al., 1997). Literature discusses different conceptions of OCB (Podsakoff et al., 2000). In Deckop et al.'s study (Deckop, Mangel, & Cirka, 1999), OCB consists of the following three facets: (1) helping behavior, (2) sportsmanship, and (3) conscientiousness.

Helping behavior stimulates performance because new colleagues are easily integrated into the group. Therefore, the group can establish best practices, ease coordination, and thus variations of performance become less probable. Given high levels of sportsmanship, the group does not need to spend much energy and time on group maintenance functions.

Hence, sportsmanship may raise the attractiveness of group membership for high performers. With increasing follower conscientiousness, leaders may tend to empower their followers and, thus, raise their performance motivation. Accordingly, in a comprehensive literature review, Podsakoff et al. (2000) found OCB to predict followers' performance.

Transformational leaders are assumed to "stimulate followers to perform beyond the level of expectations" (Bass, 1985, p. 32). Therefore, it seems likely that transformational leaders, by stimulating followers' organizational citizenship behavior (Podsakoff et al., 1990), enhance quality and quantity of follower performance. A transformational leader provides meaning, and thereby makes followers identify with the respective goals and problems (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). If the team leader communicates and continually reiterates the team objectives in an inspiring way, these objectives may become the basis of a shared social identity (Tajfel, 1981). Previous research suggests that transformational leadership strengthens the common identity of work groups (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater, & Spangler, 2004; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). A common identity may stimulate followers' team spirit and helpfulness (helping behavior). Moreover, by identifying with both organizational goals and their team followers may engage in higher levels of sportsmanship, i.e., generously overlook obstacles at work in the interest of reaching the common long-term goal. For the same reason, followers' conscientiousness is likely to increase. Prior research provided consistent support for a positive relationship between transformational leadership and OCB across different settings (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000).

In contrast, transactional leadership is not likely to trigger extra-role behavior (Erhart & Naumann, 2004). Transactional leadership is explicitly designed to clearly define and reward in-role performance (Podsakoff et al., 1990, p. 109) instead of extra-role behavior (Podsakoff, Todor, & Skov, 1982). If the relationship between leader and followers is mainly regarded as an economic exchange (see above), doing more than is required or achieving a higher quality than is required will not be appreciated by the leader. As a result, followers act rationally by only committing to as much as will be rewarded. Some support for

this reasoning can be drawn from the empirically confirmed augmentation effect of transformational leadership on transactional leadership (e.g., Hater & Bass, 1988; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Seltzer & Bass, 1990; Waldman, Bass, & Yammarino, 1990).

Hypothesis 1a: OCB will mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and follower performance.

Hypothesis 1b: OCB will not mediate the relationship between transactional leadership and follower performance.

Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, and Innovation: Debate as Mediator

Debate is defined as “an open discussion of task-related differences and the advocacy (...) of differing approaches to the strategic decision-making task.” (Simons et al., 1999, p. 663). Debate includes open exchange of divergent views and ideas as well as their committed critical examination (Schweiger, Sandberg, & Rechner, 1989) and, thus, seems to be conceptually similar to constructive controversy (according to Tjosvold, 1985). However, debate is operationalized referring to behavior rather than to opinions. Accordingly, items for the measurement of debate do not aim at followers’ opinions or the perception of group mood, but at the followers’ communication behavior.

For groups to be innovative, it is essential that individual creative ideas and divergent perspectives be pronounced and shared with co-workers (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996). Only under this condition, individual ideas and suggestions can be clarified and critically questioned, evaluated, modified and combined in new ways leading to higher levels of work group innovation (Gebert et al., 2006). Thus, controversial discussion of task-related issues -namely, debate- may set the stage for work group innovation (Lovelace, Shapiro, & Weingart, 2001; Tjosvold & McNeely, 1988). Without debate, however, the followers’ differing positions will probably not be openly exchanged, but shielded off to aid smoothing the dissonance (Stasser & Titus, 1985).

For several reasons, transformational leaders may stimulate debate among their followers. By openly expressing his or her individual ideas, the follower runs the risk that his or her view of the problem may deviate

from the shared conceptions of the group and that his or her arguments may reveal weaknesses (Gebert et al., 2006). Transformational leadership seems particularly promising to enhance followers’ motivation to engage in debate despite of these risks. First, by individualized consideration, the transformational leader strengthens followers’ individual self-efficacy and self-confidence (Avolio & Bass; 1998), which in turn may encourage followers to participate in controversial discussion. Second, when followers highly identify with organizational goals, they will be motivated to engage in a (heated) controversial discussion and to accept the transaction costs (i.e., time and effort) (Gebert, 2004). Third, a common identity, enhanced by transformational leadership (see above), raises the probability that the subordinates interpret the situation within the group as cooperative instead of competitive and that trust between the followers increases. In such a climate, expressing divergent ideas and questioning other peoples’ opinions do not bring out a high risk, so that the followers’ fear of a controversial discussion may be reduced (Simons & Peterson, 2000).

Altogether, we assume debate to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and follower innovation: Transformational leadership will strengthen debate among followers and this communication style again will stimulate follower innovation. On the contrary, transactional leadership emphasizes the exchange of subordinate performance for reward and thus does not explicitly put an emphasis on followers’ identification with organizational goals. In the same way, no common identity with the leader is built up. Regarding the leader-follower-relationship as an “economic exchange“ rather emphasizes that leaders and followers live in two different “worlds.” Consequently, no relation between transactional leadership and debate is to be expected.

Hypothesis 2a: Debate will mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and follower innovation.

Hypothesis 2b: Debate will not mediate the relationship between transactional leadership and follower innovation.

Method

Participants and Procedures

We interviewed $N = 91$ leaders (department heads and group leaders) from $N = 91$ German companies (operating in e.g., engineering, insurance, telecommunication companies, banks) working in different functional departments (production 23%, marketing and sales 20%, commercial administration 19%, human resources and organization 15%, R& D 13%, and technical support 10%). The respondents were predominately male (86%), in average 44 years old ($SD = 8.99$), and disposed over 7.8 years ($SD = 7.05$) of leadership experience in average. The departments had an average size of 34 members ($SD = 52$). The return rate was 90 %, probably, since we addressed each participant personally.

Measures

Transformational and Transactional Leadership

Transformational and transactional leadership were measured by using the German translation of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire" (MLQ-Form 5X Short; Bass & Avolio, 1995) by Felfe (2006). As the four single components of transformational leadership usually show high intercorrelations ($r = .83$ on average; Bass & Avolio, 2000), we measured transformational leadership as unidimensional concept (see Hambley, Kline, & O'Neill, 2005; Walumba et al., 2004). We used nine items from the subscales, "idealized influence" (i. e., "I emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission"), "inspirational motivation" (i. e., "I enthusiastically talk about what needs to be accomplished"), "intellectual stimulation" (i. e., "I suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments"), and "individualized consideration" (i. e., "I treat others as individuals rather than just as members of a group"). Transactional leadership was measured by five items, covering the subscales, "contingent reward" (i. e., "I provide others with assistance in exchange for their efforts"), and "management by exception" (i. e., "I concentrate my full attention on dealing with mistakes, complaints, and failures"). (Since passive management by exception often correlates negatively with active management by exception and with

contingent reward (e.g., den Hartog, van Muijen, & Koopman, 1997), only active management by exception was included in the questionnaire.)

The participants were asked to rate their leadership behavior on a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from "never" to "almost always"). Since the leaders themselves were asked to assess their leadership style, we used a version for self-evaluation that had already been used in previous studies (Felfe, 2003; Goihl, Tartler, & Kröger, 2001; Liepmann & Goihl, 2001). Cronbach's alphas for these scales were .78 for transformational leadership, and .62 for transactional leadership (see Table 1).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

OCB was measured by five items based on Deckop et al.'s (1999) version of the instrument originally developed by Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1989). This version includes the OCB-subscales, fairness or sportsmanship (e.g., "my subordinates consume a lot of time complaining"), cooperativeness or helping (e.g., "my subordinates are always ready to lend a helping hand to those around them"), and conscientiousness (e.g., "my subordinates' attendance at work is above the norm"). The leaders were asked to rate their followers on a seven-point scale, ranging from "disagree" to "agree." Cronbach's alpha was .62 (see Table 1).

Debate

Debate was measured by the four-item scale developed by Simons et al. (1999). Since these authors investigated debate in top management teams, we changed the questions' focus from management level to department level for our study. We asked the leaders to rate their subordinates' task-oriented communication behavior (e.g., "my subordinates openly challenge each other's opinions") on a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from "disagree" to "agree"). Cronbach's alpha was .77 (see Table 1).

Performance

We measured follower performance by five items based on Becker, Billings, Eveleth and Gilbert's (1996) seven-point scale, which covers both qualitative and quantitative aspects of performance (e.g., "my subordinates complete work in a timely and effective

manner”), ranging from “disagree” to “agree” and from “very low” to “very high.” Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .79 (see Table 1).

Innovation

We operationalized follower innovation using the “Role Based Performance Scale”

(RBPS) developed by Welbourne, Johnson, and Erez (1998). The participants were asked to rate their subordinates’ innovativeness on a seven-point scale (ranging from “never” to “almost always”), using four items, e.g., “How often do your subordinates create better processes and routines?” Cronbach’s alpha was .85 (see Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations for All Study Variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. transformational leadership	5.60	.61	.78					
2. transactional leadership	4.95	.77	.45***	.62				
3. innovation	4.46	.99	.36***	ns	.85			
4. performance	5.74	.65	.45***	.28**	.28**	.79		
5. debate	5.18	1.00	.53***	ns	.54***	.47***	.77	
6. OCB	5.21	.80	.32**	ns	.23*	.66***	.37***	.62

Note. The reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha) are shown in the principal diagonal; N = 91;

*** p < .001

** p < .010

* p < .050

Results

To test for the scales’ discriminative validity and, thus, to control for a common method bias, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses in AMOS (version 5.0) including all variables under study (transformational leadership, transactional leadership, debate, OCB, innovation, and performance). We found that a one-factor

model (CFI = .646; RMSEA = .090; see Table 2) did not fit the data as well a six-factor model (CFI = .905; RMSEA = .047; see Table 2). This result confirmed satisfying discriminative validity for the six scales under study. Furthermore, common method bias seems not to pose a serious threat to the substantive interpretation made on the basis of the findings reported below.

Table 2: Results of a Confirmatory Factor Analysis Including all Study Variables

	X ²	df	C _{min} /df	CFI	RMSEA
One-factor model	793.81	460	1.73	0.646	0.090
Six-factor model	534.24	445	1.20	0.905	0.047

Note. All chi-square values are statistically significant at p < .01; df = degrees of freedom; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; C_{min}/df = X²/df

Our hypotheses were tested using the following three-step procedure recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986): We tested (1) whether there is a significant relationship between independent variable and dependent variable, (2) whether there is a significant relationship between independent variable and mediator, and (3) controlling for the influence

of the mediator, whether the original relationships between independent variable and dependent variable become significantly smaller or non significant, which provides evidence for full or partial mediation. Tests of the hypotheses are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3: Summary of the Regression Analyses for the Mediating Effect of OCB

Step/ Equation	Dependent variable	Independent variable	β	t	Adjusted R ²	F
1	performance	transformational leadership	.453	4.787***	.196	22.917***
2	OCB	transformational leadership	.319	3.172**	.091	10.064**
3	performance	OCB	.520	6.213***	.435	35.604***
		transformational leadership	.287	3.431**		
4	performance	transactional leadership	.281	2.765**	.069	7.647**
5	OCB	transactional leadership	.097	.920	-.002	.846

Note. β = Standardized regression coefficient.

*** $p < .001$

** $p < .010$

* $p < .050$

Transformational leadership significantly ($\beta = .453$, $p < .001$) explained variance in follower performance (see equation 1; Table 3). Equation 2 shows that transformational leadership significantly ($\beta = .319$, $p < .010$) explained variance in OCB. The results for equation 3 indicate that we met the third condition for mediation: After controlling for OCB, the effect of transformational leadership on follower performance was significantly (Goodman (I) test = 2.851, $p < .010$; Goodman, 1960), though not completely reduced, suggesting partial mediation. These results confirmed hypothesis 1a. Hypothesis 1b, which negates an analogous mediator effect for transactional leadership, was also confirmed. Since the regression of OCB on transactional leadership was not significant (see equation 5; Table 3), the second condition for mediation was not met.

Hypothesis 2a was confirmed in our data, too. Transformational leadership significantly ($\beta = .364$, $p < .001$) explained variance in follower innovation (see equation 1; Table 4). Equation 2 shows that transformational leadership explained significant variance in debate ($\beta = .527$, $p < .001$), meeting the condition that the independent variable significantly explains variance in the mediator. The results for equation 3 indicate that we met the final condition for mediation. After controlling for the mediator (debate), the effect of transformational leadership on follower

innovation was completely reduced ($\beta = .113$, ns), suggesting full mediation. Since the first two steps testing the analogous mediator effect for transactional leadership did not show significant effects (see equations 4 and 5; Table 4), hypothesis 2b, stating no such mediating effect to occur for transactional leadership was also supported.

Discussion

Summary

We analysed mediating processes by which transformational leadership leads to leadership success. Followers' OCB was shown to partially mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and follower performance (hypothesis 1a), whereas followers' debate completely mediates the relation between transformational leadership and follower innovation (hypothesis 2a). Additionally, as expected, the described mediator effects could not be firmed for transactional leadership (hypotheses 1b and 2b).

These results provide some clarity about the underlying processes by which transformational leadership influences organizational success and that have scarcely been researched so far (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Gordon & Yukl, 2004; Yukl, 1999).

Table 4: Summary of the Regression Analyses for the Mediating Effect of Debate

Step/ Equation	Dependent variable	Independent variable	β	t	Adjusted R ²	F
1	innovation	transformational leadership	.364	3.687***	.123	13.593***
2	debate	transformational leadership	.527	5.854***	.270	34.275***
3	innovation	debate transformational leadership	.476 .113	4.520*** 1.075	.280	18.494***
4	innovation	transactional leadership	-.007	-.066	-.011	.004
5	debate	transactional leadership	.197	1.891	.028	3.576

Note. β = Standardized regression coefficient.

*** $p < .001$

** $p < .010$

* $p < .050$

Whereas the relationship between OCB and transformational leadership has already been examined (Podsakoff et al., 2000) the relationship between debate and transformational leadership is investigated here for the first time. Hence, our study can add to understand the ‘black box’ –the mediating processes– between transformational leadership and performance.

Limitations

First, since all variables of our study have been collected from the supervisors, common method bias may lead to percept-percept inflation. Although we applied one of the most widely used techniques to address the issue of common method variance, it would have been better to conduct a confirmatory factor analyses controlling for the effects of an unmeasured latent methods factor, as suggested by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003). However, for this procedure, our sample size was too small. Thus, further research should try to obtain independent and dependent variable from different sources.

Second, our cross-sectional design does not allow drawing any conclusions about the causality of the discovered relations. Hence, a longitudinal design for measuring dependent and independent variables and the mediating variables at different times over an extended period of time would have been more revealing than a cross-sectional study.

Implications

To further deepen our understanding about the underlying processes by which transformational leadership impacts organizational success we suggest to specify mediators for additional success criteria. The “goal-oriented leadership”-model developed by Gebert and Ulrich (1991) seems to be a useful approach: They assume that distinctive leadership behaviors stimulate specific patterns of follower behavior, which, in turn, boost respective success criteria. To identify the appropriate leadership behavior for attaining a desired success criterion, they do not start from established leadership concepts (such as consideration and initiating structure). Instead, the authors propose asking the following questions:

(1) Which organizational goal should the subordinate contribute to? (2) Which follower behavior is required to reach this particular goal? (considering the specific situational context) (3) Which leadership behavior is suitable to trigger the identified follower behavior?

This approach turns around the usual order of research questions since it ends reflections with the relevant leadership behavior. As a result, leadership behavior can be better aligned with the desired leadership goal. Accordingly, empirical findings in the banking sector indicate that leadership behavior identified by asking the three questions is a stronger predictor of leadership success than consideration and initiating

structure leadership style (Gebert & Ulrich, 1991).

The described heuristic “leadership behavior – follower behavior – leadership success” exactly corresponds to the logics of the mediator approach followed in our study. First, we concentrated on the relationship between the mediator, follower behavior (debate or OCB) and the particular success criterion (follower innovation or performance). Subsequently, the relationship between transformational leadership and follower behavior was highlighted. Thus, for identifying mediators, the question to start with should not be about leadership style but about the desired outcome criterion.

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