

Exploring Issues in Follower- Centered Perspectives on Leadership

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Let's start with some questions:

What is leadership?

What is power?

*How many of you want
power?*

The “Myth” of Leadership

- Leadership is good management.
- Leadership is “great men and women” with certain preferred traits influencing followers to do what the leaders wish in order to achieve group/organizational goals that reflect excellence defined as some higher level of effectiveness (Parks, 2005)
 - This isn’t leadership, it’s management, or if you prefer, *managerial leadership*.

An Expanded View of Leadership

- Leadership is a *behavior*, not a formal role.
- Therefore anyone can engage in it.
- Is not only top-down.
- It involves using influence to create change in an organization.

What is Power?

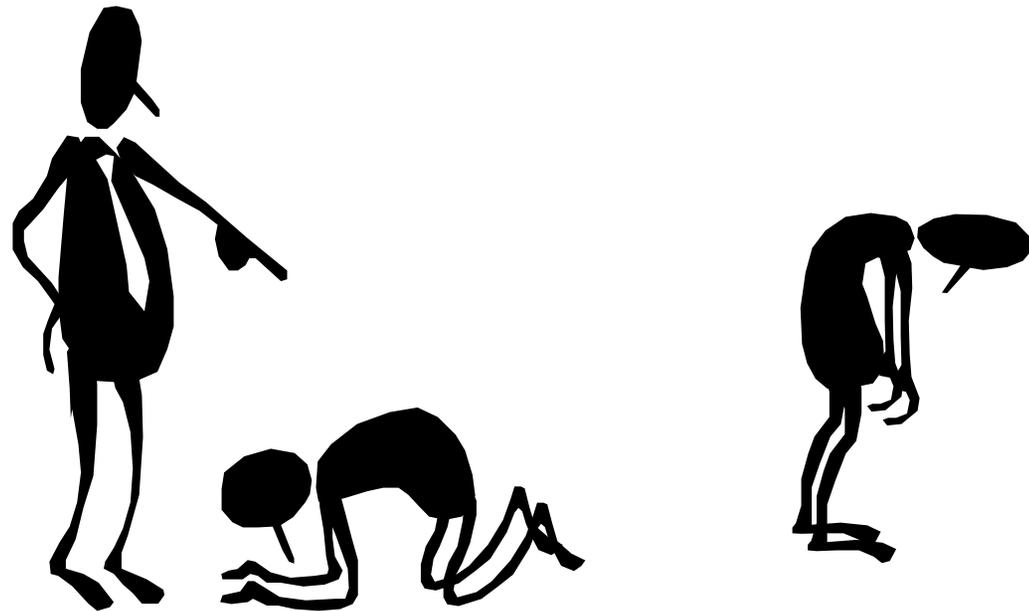
- Power is influence.
- Power is based on dependencies.
- Power is given by followers.
- Power is situationally dependent
- People have different power needs.

Power

- Although power has negative connotations it is not necessarily or always negative
- Power is neutral--whether power is perceived as positive or negative depends on how it is exercised
- Power is a fact of life in organizations--*it is necessary.*

Power

- It is powerlessness, not power, that undermines organizational effectiveness



“Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people that you are, you aren’t.”

--Margaret Thatcher

*So what does this all have to do
with followership?*

--Leading Up (and avoiding the
“victim mentality”)

Leading Up Study

- Semi-Structured interviews conducted with 12 people identified as “high potential” employees in their organizations.

Representative Quotes

- “Not only is it possible, it is imperative for the livelihood of the organization.”
- “I think that people leading from the top down provide control and drive efficiency across an organization. I think people leading from the bottom-up drive convergence and innovation, and create new ideas and new possibilities. And I think the tension between the two is what drives growth in an organization.”

Additional Theme and Quotes

- “I was working for a leader once who was incredible, but couldn’t make the strategy practical and realizable to the organization. And having a great understanding of what many others were saying in the organization, [my role as a subordinate] was to influence him to back off of the strategy, and to say, you know, great idea, great strategy, great vision. You get it, I get it. But you’re overwhelming the organization. “
- Additional Themes:
 - Offering solutions to problems
 - Challenging leaders
 - Picking your battles

Table of Code Frequencies- Leading Up

Code	Frequency
Confidence	11
Mission Conscious	9
Communication	9
Unselfish	7
Self-awareness	6
Perspective taking	5
Learning Orientation	5

Followership Study

- Semi-Structured interviews conducted with 31 respondents from education, health care, engineering, consulting, city government, and high-tech industries.

Representative Quotes

- **Passive Social Constructions (n = 10)**

“Mostly following orders. Following through and carrying out orders. Making sure that things get done. Basically to support the leaders and their decisions and do things that way.”
(Organizational Position: Dental assistant)

- **Active Social Constructions (n = 11)**

“It seems to me that many times, the knowledge that [leaders] have, working with different ideas and different concepts, different mandates, different financial knowledge that they have; a lot of decisions have to be made there. I would say that I’m often times given the opportunity to voice ideas or concerns. But when the final decision has to be made...many times I feel like I’m more in a follower position.” (Organizational Position: School Principal)

Representative Quotes

- **Proactive Social Constructions (n = 10)**

“To me, to be an effective follower is all about being proactive. Doing some of the detailed thinking that your leader may not. Knowing when to bring other valid information to the table that says, you know what, let’s talk about what you’re trying to achieve rather than the solution you are asking me to implement. So challenging the thinking of that person you are following.” (Organizational Position: Insurance Manager)

Code Frequencies- Followership

Code	Passive	Active	Proactive	Total
Team Player	8	9	7	24
Positive Attitude	10	8	5	23
Initiative / Proactive Behavior	1	8	13	22
Expressing Opinions	2	6	14	22
Obedience / Deference	13	8	1	22
Flexibility/ Openness	7	5	7	19
Communication Skills	4	5	8	17
Loyalty/ Support	3	4	2	9
Responsible Dependable	3	3	3	9
Taking Ownership	1	3	5	9
Mission Conscience	2	3	3	8
Integrity	3	3	1	7

Findings from SLMX Study

- What do managers report in high quality relationships with subordinates?
 - Commitment to Goals
 - Competence
 - Candor

Congruence:

We show each other respect.

I get a high level of cooperation from this employee.

I feel this person works with me rather than in opposition to me.

This employee looks out for our organization's best interests.

This employee's goals are consistent with the organization's goals.

This person has the best interests of the department in mind.

Competence:

I don't have to give this employee a great deal of direction.

I don't have to micromanage this employee.

This employee requires very little management.

Managing this employee requires little effort on my part.

Candor:

This employee provides me with constructive feedback.

We are candid with one another.

This employee openly questions me when he/she doesn't think I'm right.

Sources of (Personal) Power for Leading Up

- Relationships
- Networks
- Competence
- Reputation
- Information
- Communication Skills

Why are Relationships Power Sources for Leading Up?

- Partnership (competence, dependence)
- Have the “ear”—ability to influence other
- Trust
- Reciprocity
- Support
- Advice
- Open Feedback
 - Interactional Transparency

Necessary Conditions for Interactional Transparency...

- Followers must assume responsibility.
- Must have good relationships.
- Followers need self-confidence.
- Must trust one another's intentions.
- Must have shared goal.
- Must involve supportive communication.

Transparent Communication is...

- Open:
 - openly sharing opinions.
 - discussing different perspectives.
 - discussing each others' motives.
 - discussing any topic.
- Truthful:
 - sharing true feelings.
 - being truthful with each other.
 - never withholding important information from each other.
 - sharing all relevant information.

Transparent Communication is...

- Clarifying
 - clarifying respective goals.
 - explaining the reasons underlying actions.
 - clarifying the reasons behind our decisions.
 - creating a clear understanding of rationale behind decisions.
- Feedback
 - discussing with each other mistakes one's made.
 - openness to receiving critical feedback.
 - openly discussing how to best work together.

Conditions that Foster IT

- Reduced status differences
- Openness and Self-Control in receiving feedback
- Managing emotions and mixed messages
- Absence of fear climates

Followers and Transparency

- *Most often, interactional transparency is not about the manager, it is about the subordinate.*
- Followers need to get over their lofty and romanticized notions of leaders and realize they are human with human frailties. No one is perfect—we all have weaknesses. Do not get emotionally invested in your leader's weaknesses.

Followers and Transparency

- Followers need to also recognize the difficulties of the leadership position and the forces working against the leader.
 - there are two sides to every story
 - try to understand leader's perspective and position.

Followers and Transparency

- Followers need to understand the flaws of “followership”:
 - obedience/deference
 - sense of powerlessness
 - follower dependency on leader
 - fear
 - “romanticizing” the leader
 - relinquishing personal responsibility

“Leadership is the courage to admit mistakes, the vision to welcome change, the enthusiasm to motivate others, and the confidence to stay out of step when everyone else is marching to the wrong tune.” (E.M. Estes, former president of GM)

“Knowing others is intelligence;
knowing yourself is true wisdom.
Mastering others is strength;
mastering yourself is true power.”
(Tao)