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Relationships between leadership and follower quitting intentions and job search behaviors

Abstract

A model was developed and tested in which quality of leader-member exchange mediated the relationship between followers' perceptions of transformational leadership behavior and followers' intentions to quit the organization and their job search behaviors. The key contribution of this study was that the exchange relationship (LMX) between leader and follower explained the majority of the relationship between transformational leadership and job search behaviors. A transformational leader may take individual followers' motivations into consideration and attempt to stimulate personal development, but the exchange between the two explains the action of seeking another employment situation. Limitations and implications are discussed.

Key words: Leader-member exchange, transformational leadership, intentions to quit, job search behaviors.

Leadership theory and research has reached a point in its development at which it needs to move to the next level of integration— considering the dynamic interplay between leaders and followers, taking into account the prior, current, and emerging context—for continued progress to be made in advancing both the science and practice of leadership (Avolio 2007, p. 25).

In a special issue of *American Psychologist* several prominent leadership scholars contributed commentary on the importance of leadership, the current state of leadership research, and offered several prognostications about its future study. The opening quotation represents the necessity of integrating the role of followers into the study of leadership and also emphasizes the importance of their symbiotic relationships.

In the discipline of leadership, there have been recent calls for the integration of two prominent, yet unique, perspectives of leader-follower relations (Avolio, Sosik, Jung, & Berson, 2003). The first is transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994), which examines leaders' behaviors and corresponding effects on individuals, groups and organizations which includes, in part, attributions of charisma. Transformational leadership is one of three broad classifications of leadership processes that exist within a "full range" (Avolio, 1999). The other two classifications are transactional and nontransactional (i.e., avoidant). The related but distinct theoretical framework is leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) in which the reciprocal, dyadic relationship between leader and follower is examined including how relationships are formed, change over time and the resulting effects on followers.

Both theories emerged at approximately the same point in the history of leadership research and have developed along divergent yet somewhat parallel paths. While investigations of transformational leadership have linked leader behaviors to a variety of affective, cognitive,

and behavioral (i.e., performance) outcomes, LMX research has focused more on social exchange quality in dyads (Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005). Therefore, a lingering question is, “If the full range model encompasses all leadership behavioral styles then how does LMX fit in?” Given that LMX focuses on specific one-on-one leader-follower relationships, and transformational is a leader-centric theory, the distinction is both important and necessary. The integrative framework has been suggested previously (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and it has also been suggested that LMX encompasses elements of both transformational and transactional leadership (Gerstner & Day, 1997).

LMX theory contends that leader-follower relationships may be classified as high-quality (i.e., respect, mutual trust) (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) or low-quality, which might consist of a reliance on the formal employment contract and increased leader-follower distance (Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). It is in this distinction that Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995) suggested that the linkage between LMX and transformational leadership can be made. For example, new LMX relationships involve a more transactional social exchange with a subsequent evolution into a more transformational exchange. In other words, the progression from low-LMX to high-LMX is a progression from a base level, material exchange to a richer social exchange (Graen & Uhl-Bien) that may be more transformational in nature. Or, to quote Bass and Avolio’s (1994) earlier work on the model “...the evidence to date indicates that viewing transformational leadership as an extension to transactionally based models of leadership is clearly warranted” (p. 70).

Avolio and colleagues (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009) have called for more research to support recent endeavors that have investigated LMX quality as a mediator of workplace outcomes, moving beyond the study of LMX as independent or dependent variable. Empirically, high quality exchange relationships have been found to be significantly associated

with transformational leadership, as evidenced in the following studies. They are most recently, Lee (2008), Wang et al. (2005), Basu and Green (1997), Deluga (1992), and Howell & Hall-Merenda (1999).

Lee (2008) studied the effects of leadership and LMX on innovativeness for R&D professionals in Singapore. LMX as mediator of the relationships between transformational leadership and both follower performance and organizational citizenship behaviors was the premise of Wang and colleagues (2005) work. A study of transformational leadership and LMX explored innovative behavior in leader-follower dyads (Basu & Green, 1997). Howell and Hall-Merenda (1999) found that LMX predicted follower performance beyond transformational leadership. The earliest effort was an explanation of the positive effects of transformational leadership as the result of dyadic, leader-follower relationships (Deluga, 1992).

Turnover is thought to be one of the most expensive decisions employees can make often leading to a cost to the organization of 1.5-2.5 times the incumbent's salary (Cascio, 2006). In this study we examine the effects of leadership on follower's cognitions (intentions to quit) and behaviors (job search behaviors), which are related to employee turnover. The purpose of this research is to integrate both perspectives on leadership to better understand how they are related to each other and how they are related to follower cognitions and behaviors found to lead to turnover, which is a costly problem for all organizations.

Theory and Hypotheses

Transformational Leadership

There has been more empirical research in transformational leadership than any other leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2006) and a wide range of outcomes have been explored. Followers of transformational leaders have been found to exceed typical, performance

expectations, and also have positive attitudes about the leader, such as respect, loyalty and trust. Transformational leadership theory is based primarily on Bass's (1985) work, although Burns's (1978) earlier work influenced the thinking behind its development. Transformational leadership is generally defined in terms of the leader's behaviors and effects on followers and is described in terms of four subcategories of leader behavior: idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation.

Transformational leadership differs from transactional leadership -- defined as an exchange process to motivate follower compliance with a leader's requests and organizational role requirements (Bass, 1985) -- in that the former involves an underlying influence process that motivates followers by encouraging them to transcend their self interests for the sake of the organization and goal accomplishments.

Transformational leaders raise followers' levels of awareness and consciousness about the value and importance of key outcomes and their accomplishments for the organization. They alter followers' needs and wants, expanding these in terms of organizational needs. Moreover, transformational leaders encourage and help followers transcend their self-interests for those of the group, team, organization or larger society. Bass (1985, 1990) draws a distinction between transformational and charismatic leadership. A leader may be charismatic without being transformational in that little or no influence to change followers is exerted. Thus, charisma is a necessary but not sufficient component of transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership and intentions to quit and job search behaviors. Rather than studying actual turnover, it has been suggested that it is more important to investigate high turnover intentions, (Harris, Kacmar, & Witt, 2005). The intent is to prevent undesirable employee behaviors that might affect other employees, as well as to reduce the costs of actual

turnover, both of which have economic costs to organizations. If leaders want to reduce the costs of employee turnover, then a prime area of concern would be to improve support for followers.

In a review of the turnover and work attitude literature, Maertz and Griffeth (2004) found that there was no “overarching framework” to help researchers understand the motives for leaving or staying with an organization. To organize all of the different constructs, they developed a framework of eight motivational forces that lead to intentions to quit and actual turnover. The forces most relevant to this study are the *affective* forces related to emotional responses to the organization; *calculative* forces which are the determination of the value/goal attainment of staying with an organization; *contractual* forces which are related to perceived obligations to stay with the organization to observe a psychological contract, and *constituent* forces which concern the employee’s attachment to coworkers or the organization. They also identify other factors that would influence the decision to quit, such as, job performance and whether the employee has an actual alternative job offer.

Intentions to quit are considered to encompass the decision making process that may lead to turnover (Crossley, Grauer, Lin, & Stanton, 2002), or the transitional link between cognition and behavioral action (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). The intention to quit is a subjective measure consisting of the estimated probability that one will leave the organization at some future time (Vandenburg & Nelson, 1999). This probability is based on one’s behavior (separation from the organization), the target of the behavior (the organization), and the time when the behavior occurs (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Intentions to quit are expected to have a negative relationship with followers’ perceptions of a leader’s transformational style. Extant research seems to support this assertion. Effective transformational leaders decrease followers’ intentions to leave by showing that a fundamental

agreement exists between “the goals and values of the group, follower, leader and organization” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 36). Followers are less likely to quit because the leader is seen as a facilitator of goal accomplishment, specifically goals that are congruent with that of the organization. Furthermore, followers who believe their personal needs are being met through a leader’s individualized attention and consideration will be less likely to leave the leader who is meeting these needs, and thus remain as a member of the organization. In a study of the relationship between transformational leadership and LMX, Krishnan (2005) found that both were significantly negatively related to intentions of subordinates to quit.

Additionally, idealized influence (i.e., charisma) enables followers to identify with and emulate their leaders (Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993). Remaining with the leader allows followers to maintain this part of their identities. Finally, transformational leaders “use inspirational motivation to build emotional commitment to a mission or goal” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 36). Thus, emotional commitment may create the desire to remain in the organization. Preliminary research by Avey and colleagues (Avey, Hughes, Norman, & Luthans, 2008) suggested that transformational leadership is negatively related with followers’ intentions to quit. However, the intention to quit does not equate to the act of turnover (Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978) and thus, behaviors *leading* to turnover should also be considered.

Although there is an expansive literature on a variety of turnover antecedents in the management and leadership literatures, there are relatively few studies exploring the antecedents to job search behaviors themselves (cf. Blau, 1993, 1994; Bretz, Boudreau, & Judge, 1994) with the majority of studies on the subject investigating its outcomes (Van Hooft, Born, Taris, & Van Der Flier, 2004). Of the factors antecedent to job search behavior scholars have classified them into two categories: push and pull factors (Bretz et al., 1994). Push factors are organizational-

contextual in nature while pull factors might be considered to be external-organizational factors, such as market value of the job seeker's skill set or costs associated with the job search.

Following this logic, we suggest that transformational leadership will also lessen one's inclination to engage in job search behaviors. Specifically, followers are less inclined to leave a job where the leader remains salient provided that followers share a personal and social identity with a transformational leader (Shamir et al., 1993).

As previously discussed, transformational leaders help create meaning in the job context, by motivating and inspiring workers. These motivational processes are expected to act as mechanisms reducing not only desire to leave the organization, but the behaviors associated with job searching as well.

Hypothesis 1a: Followers' perceptions of transformational leadership will be negatively related to their intentions to quit.

Hypothesis 1b: Followers' perceptions of transformational leadership will be negatively related to their job search behaviors.

Leader-Member Exchange

Formerly known as vertical dyad linkage (VDL) theory, leader-member exchange (LMX) theory describes the reciprocal process of mutually defining the exchange relationships that develop over time between a leader and individual followers (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). VDL was the first theory to recognize that leaders treat followers, from the same work group, differently. . Scholars previously assumed that leaders treated followers similarly within groups. Using the key variable of negotiating latitude, leaders can create differentiated dyads within work groups such that some are members of the in-group, while others are members of the out-group (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

LMX is typically dichotomized in terms of high to low based upon the basis of personal compatibility between the leader and follower as well as the competence and dependability of the follower. In early LMX theory, leaders were thought to develop high-exchange relationships with a select number of followers who were part of the leader's in-group. Low-exchange relationships comprised a leader's out-group.

However, current LMX thinking suggests that leaders attempt to develop special exchange relationships with all followers, if possible, and not a select few favorites. Furthermore, the relationship is thought to progress across a series of phases, which has been conceptualized as a life-cycle component of developing high-exchange leader-follower relationships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Initially, leaders and followers test each other in establishing mutual role expectations, representative of transactional leadership. In the second phase, the exchange arrangement is defined and trust continues to develop. The third phase of LMX corresponds to transformational leadership.

Researchers have found that LMX, primarily for members (i.e., followers), is associated with positive attitudes and higher performance ratings (Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993). LMX has also been found to be related to higher overall satisfaction (e.g., Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982), greater supervisor satisfaction (Duchon, Green, & Taber, 1986), and stronger commitment to the organization (Nystrom, 1990). Additionally, LMX was related to more positive role perceptions (Snyder & Bruning, 1985). Support for other relationships, such as turnover (Graen, Liden, & Hoel, 1982; Vecchio, 1984), have been less clear. However, given the richness of the relationship that can be developed between leaders and followers, it is likely that followers will be disinclined to opt out of a meaningful relationship comprised of high quality information exchange, trust and mutual respect.

LMX and intentions to quit and job search behaviors. While LMX has been considered in relation to turnover (Graen, Liden, & Hoel, 1982), there is little extant research on the relationship between LMX and intentions to quit and job search behaviors. However, tenets from LMX theory provide theoretical support for these relationships. Specifically, with lower quality LMX relationships there is a material exchange (e.g., payment after fulfillment of an employment contract) that is purely transactional: Each party fulfills their portion of the agreement. In high quality LMX there is a social exchange in which psychological benefits exist, such as trust, approval and consideration (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and intrinsic rewards such as autonomy, favorable job assignments *and* the potential for more in the future (Basu & Green, 1997). The exchange relationship between leaders and followers is one of negotiation between “role recipients” (Wang et al., 2005). Leaders convey expectations and followers elect how the exchange will emerge. The reciprocal nature of the exchange across time defines the quality of the relationship. This was borne out by Harris et al. (2005) who found that study participants who reported higher quality LMX relationships also reported lower ratings of their intent to leave the organization than those with lower quality LMX relationships.

In this study, our endeavor is to establish the inverse relationship between LMX quality and both job search behaviors and intentions to quit. As the relationship becomes higher quality LMX we expect a shift from self-interest to one more in line with the organization’s goals. While previous research revealed a small relationship between LMX and intentions to quit (Gerstner & Day, 1997), more current research suggests the relationship may be meaningful (Harris, Kacmar, & Witt, 2005; Tse & Lam, 2008). Specifically, Tse and Lam (2008) note that the benefits of quality LMX relationships – tangible and intangible – convey signals to followers about their individual identities with the group. Once the identity is activated, followers will promote a

strong commitment to the LMX relationship and thus working towards achieving the benefits of the relationship (Hogg et al., 2005). This identification will be instrumental to followers, leading to lower levels of withdrawal cognitions and actual turnover” (Tse and Lam (2008, pp. 2). They conclude by noting that organization members suffer a cost, or “psychological loss,” when leaving an organization in which they experienced a quality LMX relationship (Mossholder, Settoon & Henagan, 2005). Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: Followers’ perceptions of the quality of the leader-member exchange relationship will be negatively related to their intentions to quit.

Hypothesis 2b: Followers’ perceptions of the quality of the leader-member exchange relationship will be negatively related to their job search behaviors.

LMX as Mediator

There have been recent calls for additional research using quality of leader-follower exchange relationships as a mediator of relationships between leadership and workplace outcomes (Avolio et al., 2009). Given the preceding discussion, questions remain outstanding on the optimal integration of these two frameworks resulting in five studies that have considered both theories. Introduced previously, the five are more thoroughly discussed below.

In an investigation of the relationships between leadership styles, LMX, and innovativeness in a sample of Singaporean R&D professionals, Lee (2008) found that the loyalty dimension of LMX mediated the relationship. The nature of the sample was offered in explanation of this finding. LMX as mediator of the relationships between transformational leadership and both follower performance and organizational citizenship behaviors was the premise of Wang and colleagues (2005) work. In this study, LMX was found to mediate these relationships. A study of transformational leadership and LMX explored innovative behavior in

leader-follower dyads (Basu & Green, 1997). Howell and Hall-Merenda (1999) found that LMX predicted follower performance beyond transformational leadership thus supporting the earliest finding in support of the positive effects of transformational leadership as the result of dyadic, leader-follower relationships (Deluga, 1992).

In this study, we believe that LMX accounts for a portion of the relationship between transformational leadership and the workplace outcomes of intentions to quit and job search behaviors. Both outcomes were discussed above as important workplace attitudes and behaviors, respectively, which managers must somehow overcome to retain valuable human capital.

LMX has been found to mediate transformational leadership and a variety of workplace outcomes. For example, LMX mediated relationships between transformational leadership and performance outcomes (Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999; Wang et al., 2005), innovative behavior (Basu & Green, 1997), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Deluga, 1992; Wang et al., 2005). In a study of employees at a large call center in China, it was found that transformational leadership, mediated by a high quality leader-member-exchange (LMX) relationship, was related to employee intentions to quit and actual turnover (Tse & Lam, 2008). Additionally, LMX was found to mediate the relationship between locus of control and job satisfaction and organizational commitment, among other outcomes (Martin, Thomas, Charles, Epitropaki, & McNamara, 2005). Leader-follower relationship quality was found to influence the relationship between leader influence tactics and helping behaviors (Sparrowe, Soetjpto, & Kraimer, 2006).

Additionally, Lee (2008) examined the effects of transformational leadership and LMX on innovation finding that transformational leadership was significantly related to innovation and that the loyalty dimension of LMX indicated a positive, significant relationship with innovativeness.

Given that transformational leaders behave in ways that develop followers' respect for them, and followers subsequently long to be associated with the leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2006), it is anticipated that followers are more likely to invest in exchanges with transformational leaders. Conversely, when leaders do not engage in transformational behaviors, followers may be disinclined to attempt the development of higher quality LMX. Thus, when followers attribute transformational qualities to their leaders, the resulting investment in exchanges will proximally result in higher quality LMX and distally result in lower intentions to quit and fewer job search behaviors. Thus, we present our final hypotheses.

Hypothesis 3a: Followers' perceptions of the quality of the leader-member exchange relationship will mediate the relationship between their perceptions of transformational leadership and their intentions to quit.

Hypothesis 3b: Followers' perceptions of the quality of the leader-member exchange relationship will mediate the relationship between their perceptions of transformational leadership and their job search behaviors.

Methods

Sample and Procedures

The initial sample for this study included 189 mechanical, electrical and aeronautical engineers and technicians. All were employees of a large, aerospace design and manufacturing firm in the U.S. Managers sent emails asking for voluntary participation in an anonymous research survey. Participants completed the first round of survey instruments via electronic submission. The initial data collection included selected items from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5x) to assess their leader's transformational leadership behaviors, and the LMX-7.

Participants were assigned a randomly generated seven-digit code in order to track the results between the Time 1 data collection and the dependent variable measures at Time 2, which occurred one week later. At Time 2, 170 of the original participants responded to the request for data. These 170 completed data sources were used as the final sample size used in the analyses. The dependent variable measures included an assessment of intentions to quit and participant job search behaviors. The temporal separation in data collection is recommended in cross sectional, non-experimental designs in order to reduce common method variance (Podsakoff, Lee, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2003).

Measurement

The following measures employed Likert scales consisting of response options from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The MLQ-5x consisted of response options from 1 “hardly ever” to 5 “frequently, if not always.” All scales demonstrated excellent internal reliability ($\alpha > .90$), which is reported in Table 1.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership was measured with 20 items from MLQ-5x (Bass, 1985). The MLQ is one of the most widely used instruments to measure transformational leader behaviors and has been employed in a variety of disciplines and contexts. The items ask followers to indicate the extent to which their leaders’ engage in behaviors of individual consideration, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation. Sample items include “Talks optimistically about the future” (inspirational motivation); “Asks questions that prompt me to think” (intellectual stimulation); “Goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group” (idealized influence), and “Helps others to develop their strengths” (individualized consideration). The MLQ yielded an internal reliability of $\alpha = .95$.

Leader-member exchange. There is little agreement on how to best measure LMX,

despite considerable theorizing and scale development (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden & Maslyn, 1998). The theoretical progression of LMX is illustrated by the changes in how it is measured (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Based on the extent of its development and refinement, we employed the seven-item LMX measure (LMX-7) (Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982; see Gerstner & Day, 1997, for meta-analytic evidence). The member only questionnaire was employed in this study. The member-only questionnaire is recommended for one-time measurement of LMX, which was the case in this study (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). Furthermore, leaders often respond in a socially desirable manner, which is not consistent over repeated administration of the measure (Scandura, Graen, & Novak, 1986). Sample items included “How well does your leader recognize your potential,” and “How would you characterize your working relationship with your leader?” Here, LMX-7 yielded a reliability of $\alpha = .90$.

Intentions to quit. A four-item scale (Crossley et al., 2002) was used to measure participants’ intentions to quit. The scale was designed in order to avoid content overlap with instruments measuring job attitudes and search behaviors (Tett & Meyer, 1993). The 7-point scale (7 = *strongly agree*) included the following items: “I intend to leave this organization soon,” and “I will quit this organization as soon as possible.” Internal reliability was $\alpha = .93$.

Job search behaviors. Search intentions were measured using an adaptation of Blau’s (1994) six-item preparatory job search scale (Crossley et al., 2007). Participants were asked how much time they had spent on preparatory job search activities, such as resume revision, on a scale anchored at 1 = *zero times* and 5 = *at least 10 times*. The factor structure and reliability of this scale ($\alpha = .94$) has been supported previously (Adams & Rau, 2004). The theoretical process of the formation of these cognitions places job dissatisfaction as antecedent to search intentions

followed by intentions to quit (Crossley et al., 2007). This approach was intended to reduce spurious correlations that may have occurred when both cognitive-based intentions to search and intentions to quit are considered simultaneously. Internal reliability was $\alpha = .94$.

Analysis and Results

Means, standard deviations, zero-order correlations and alpha reliability coefficients are presented in Table 1. All measures were significantly correlated ($p \leq .01$). Transformational leadership was significantly correlated with LMX ($r = .68$), intentions to quit ($r = -.28$) and job search behaviors ($r = -.21$). The LMX measure was also significantly related to intentions to quit and job search behaviors ($r = -.35$ and $r = -.31$, respectively).

Insert Table 1 about here.

LMX and transformational leadership were highly correlated ($r = .68$), as were the two outcome measures ($r = .63$), although lower than that considered to be multicollinear (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006). Given the theoretical similarity of the two outcome variables hypothesis tests and psychometric evaluation of measurement structure were done simultaneously in a series of structural equation models (SEM) using maximum likelihood techniques (Version 3.13; Muthen and Muthen, 1998-2004; www.statmodel.com). This simultaneous test offered a more rigorous hypothesis test than standard regression models. For this SEM, the measurement model was fit to the data with each item loading on the respective construct as reflective indicators. Once the items were fit to the latent constructs, the structural model was set as follows: (1) LMX was regressed on transformational leadership, (2) turnover intentions was regressed on both LMX and transformational leadership, and (3) job search behaviors was also regressed on both LMX and transformational leadership. Including the measurement and structural parameters of the

model, the SEM demonstrated adequate, though not ideal, fit to the data ($\chi^2(896) = 1402.316, p < .01, CFI = .92, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .06$).

In terms of construct measurement, each scale demonstrated adequate internal reliability and the items each loaded more highly on their respective construct than on the other factors (factor loadings are available from the first author). All of the items loaded onto the respective constructs at .45 or greater, exceeding the .30 loading common in confirmatory factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006). All items loaded higher on their respective constructs than items from the other constructs. In addition, the measures were discriminant from each other.

 Insert Figure 1 about here.

Several hypotheses were advanced above. First, we hypothesized that followers' perceptions of high transformational leadership would be inversely related to followers' intentions to quit (H1a) and followers' job search behaviors (H1b). This was examined through bivariate correlation and tested in a SEM *sans* the LMX variable. Support was found for both hypotheses in that the effect of transformational leadership on both outcomes revealed an inverse relationship: intentions to quit ($r = -.28, \beta = -.31, p < .01$) and job search behaviors ($r = -.21, \beta = -.21, p < .05$). Therefore, Hypotheses 1a and 1b were supported by the findings.

The second set of hypotheses suggested that LMX would be negatively related to followers' intentions to quit (H2a) and job search behaviors (H2b). This was examined through bivariate correlation and tested in SEM *sans* the transformational leadership variable. Both were supported in that the effect of LMX on both outcomes occurred as hypothesized: intentions to quit ($r = -.35, \beta = -.40, p < .01$) and job search behaviors ($r = -.31, \beta = -.35, p < .01$).

Last, we hypothesized that leader-follower exchange quality would mediate the

relationship between transformational leadership and both outcomes (H3a and H3b). Both hypotheses were tested using Baron and Kenny's (1986) technique for testing mediation. This process required the examination of three regression equations: the relationship between the predictor on the criterion, predictor on the mediator, and the mediator on the criterion.

There is support for mediation if the following are observed: (1) the first regression equation shows that the predictor relates to the criterion; (2) the second equation shows that the predictor relates to the mediating variable; and (3) the third regression shows that the mediating variable relates to the criterion and the relationship of the predictor with the criterion is significantly lower in magnitude in the third equation than in the second. For full mediation, the predictor must not relate to the criterion when the mediating variable is added to the equation.

Results of the full SEM (see Figure 1) provide partial support for the third set of hypotheses. LMX did fully mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and intentions to quit. However it partially mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and job search behaviors. More specifically, transformational leadership was related to intentions to quit ($\beta = -.31, p < .01$) and LMX ($\beta = .80, p < .01$) and LMX was related to intentions to quit ($\beta = -.40, p < .01$). Further, when LMX was entered into the SEM as the mediator, the relationship between transformational leadership and intentions to quit became non-significant. This provides support for full mediation consistent with hypothesis 3a.

Hypothesis 3b however was only partially supported as transformational leadership was related to job searching ($\beta = -.21, p < .01$) and LMX ($\beta = .80, p < .01$) and LMX was related to job searching ($\beta = -.35, p < .01$). Further, when LMX was entered into the SEM as the mediator, the relationship between transformational leadership and job searching did not weaken and remained significant ($\beta = -.21, p < .01$). This provides no support for hypothesis 3b.

We then conducted a model comparison between the hypothesized SEM and one without the direct path from transformational leadership to intentions to quit. As noted, the original hypothesized model demonstrated adequate fit ($\chi^2(896) = 1402.316, p < .01, CFI = .92, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .06$). When compared to the model without the path from transformational leadership to intentions to quit the model still yielded adequate fit ($\chi^2(897) = 1404.5, p < .01, CFI = .92, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .06$). A model comparison yielded no meaningful difference between the nested models ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 2.184, p = .34$). Thus, following the rules of parsimony the optimal model was as hypothesized but without the path between transformational leadership and intentions to quit given the full mediating effect of LMX.

Discussion and Implications

There has been increasing concern in the literature about the relationship between managers, leadership, and employee turnover. Allen, Shore, and Griffeth (2003) found that perceived organizational support (POS) and supportive human resources practices were significantly negatively correlated with turnover intentions and actual turnover. Furthermore, Cascio (2006) cautioned that the challenge is to develop a culture that will encourage employees to stay and suggested implementing progressive management techniques such as promoting feelings of accomplishment, making work fun, and providing a challenging but supportive environment.

In this study, we explored the relationships between transformational leadership and quality of leader-member exchange on participants intentions to quit and self-reported job search behaviors. Support was found for five of the six hypotheses advanced in the theoretical underpinning of this work. In all cases there are significant implications both for management and continued research of this collage of constructs.

First, both followers' perceptions of transformational leadership and the exchange relationship between them and their leaders shared significant inverse relationships with followers' intentions to quit and self-reported job search behaviors. In other words, this research indicated that when followers' perceive their leaders to behave in a more transformational manner, and report a higher quality exchange relationship, preparatory job search feelings, thoughts, and behaviors are less salient. This is important to the practice of management at the individual and dyadic levels of analysis in that leaders who develop a relational and high quality exchange with their followers may mitigate their inclination to think about leaving the organization and possibly limit actual behaviors in seeking other employment situations.

Second, a more personal exchange relationship was found to partially, yet substantively, account for the effect of transformational leadership on reported job search behaviors. However, this mediating influence was not found for the transformational leadership → intentions to quit relationship. The act of seeking new employment is a significant step beyond the cognitive intent to quit a job and while the quality of the exchange relationship may be enough to affect actual search behaviors it may not have been enough to form intentions. However, leaders and managers who share high quality exchange-based relationships with workers can mitigate the actual search for new employment by creating a personal connection with followers. These qualitative comments were supported by findings in a longitudinal study in which core self-evaluations (e.g., self-esteem and locus of control) were related to job search persistence (Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005).

The key finding from this study was that the exchange relationship between leader and follower explained the majority of the relationship strength between transformational leadership and job search behaviors. In other words, a transformational leader may take individual

followers' motivations into consideration and attempt to stimulate personal development, but the quality of the exchange relationship between leader and follower explains the action upon seeking another employment situation beyond perceptions of transformational leader behavior. In sum, when it comes to job search behaviors results from this study suggest that the relationship with the leader may be a primary driver of job search activity, not simply transformational behaviors by the leader as perceived by the follower. This was not found to be true for intentions to quit.

Given the high correlation between intentions to quit and job search behaviors one might question why LMX did not mediate the relationships between transformational leadership and *both* outcomes rather than intentions only. In short, why would a participant more strongly report engaging in search behaviors without quit intentions? A possible explanation for this finding stems from the aerospace industry from which the participants were recruited. Given the lagging economy at the time of the data collection and the nature of the industry perhaps aerospace engineers keep their eye out for opportunities in the event of possible downsizing despite their desire to keep their current employment situation, if possible. Workers in volatile industries are likely to be mindful of their alternatives and develop and monitor a fall back plan to avoid the uncertainty in the event of job loss.

Another possible explanation for this finding comes from a study of the engineering industry itself. In a series of semi-structured interviews with engineers in private industry, Kennedy (2009) found that mature engineers (i.e., those over 40 years of age) are concerned about their skills and the perception that their managers see them as replaceable with younger graduates who will work for lower pay. They report that engineers are constantly looking for the next job because of perceptions of lack of job security. Similarly, engineers may not intend to

leave, but may simply cover their bases, so to speak, in order to mitigate possible job loss. The average age of the participants in this study of LMX was over 40 years.

Both forms of leadership focus on the leader-follower relationship and follower *intentions* to leave appear to be consistent across both forms of leadership. However, in investigating the quality of exchange relationship between leader and follower, we have the potential to predict whether or not a follower is actively seeking employment.

Given the importance of employee retention, and the costs of turnover, one practical implication from this study is the emphasis for leaders to behave in such a way to build positive relationships that aid in lowering the intention to quit the job and search behaviors. Specifically, the results of this study suggest that leaders engaging in individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence and inspirational motivation (four dimensions of transformational leadership) are likely to be associated with followers who engage in fewer job search behaviors. A second implication is that of a substantive dyadic exchange between leader and follower. Organizations are more effective when followers and leaders share good relations – this is not a new or ground-breaking discovery – but the results dig deeper into explain why this statement is true. Our findings suggest a strong association between high quality LMX and the mitigation of both intentions to quit and job searching. This suggests that leaders should pay careful attention to investing in relationships with key performers in the organization in order to enhance critical employee retention and avoid devastating dysfunctional turnover.

Limitations and Future Research

Given that this study is somewhat unique in the organizational sciences literature only future intervention research will yield a more solid understanding of the potentially mediating role of LMX on the relationships that transformational leadership shares with follower job search

behaviors and intentions to leave the employer. This study has several limitations that are noted and discussed below. They include single source bias, the non-experimental study design, generalizability of findings, and measurement of perceptions instead of behaviors.

A primary limitation of this study was single source bias. The data were self-reported observations and perceptions measured from the followers' perspective. While the study was not comprised of data from multiple sources, the effort to collect the various data at two different time points was a helpful mitigating effort (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Further, collecting follower-only perceptions of leader behavior was appropriate in that follower perceptions were likely to drive followers' attitudes and behaviors toward intentions to quit and job search behaviors more so than leader's self-perceptions. An additional approach taken to ensure the theoretical model presented here was the most empirically accurate was the confirmatory factor analytic comparisons. Results from this analysis lent support to our hypothesis that transformational leadership might predict LMX more so than the opposite. However, given the limitations of non-experimental research (Cook & Campbell, 1979) this study employed cross sectional data and inferences cannot be made without caution.

Another potential limitation of measuring only the member perspective of LMX is whether or not we have measured the same construct. Gerstner and Day (1997) suggest that empirical support for the relationship between leader and member LMX is equivocal, at best. Correlations of .50 between leader and member LMX have been found (Graen & Cashman, 1975); however, others have reported correlations as low as .24 (Scandura et al., 1986). These low correlations are consistent with meta-analytic research on self-supervisor agreement on performance ratings, which has demonstrated relatively low agreement ($r = .35$, corrected; Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988). Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) suggested that the degree of leader-member

agreement can be used as an index of the quality of data and that an aggregate, sample-weighted correlation assessing the level of agreement between leader and member reports would be positive and strong.

A third limitation is the non-experimental study design. Beyond a discussion of the relationships among the variables there is no basis for inferring cause and effect (Stone-Romero & Rosopa, 2008). Furthermore, the discussion of mediation is limited for the same reasons. As in many research endeavors, the window of opportunity for data collection was narrow. We were not able to conduct an experimental or quasi-experimental study. Therefore, we have limited our discussion of the findings to the relationships between the variables and not as prediction. In the end, given the cautions offered in the organizational sciences (Stone-Romero & Rosopa, 2008), we are led only to argue that our findings demonstrate consistency between (1) a model assumed to be causal and (2) the results of our study.

The generalizability of the findings is also worth mention. The participants were representative of a specific component of the workplace, and were comprised of limited demographic variety. The participants were employed as engineers in the aerospace industry. Additionally, they were primarily white males with advanced degrees. The ethnicity, sex, and educational variables, while not correlated with the study variables, are not representative of the U.S. workforce at large. However, the participants were representative of those in their industry and occupation (Rast, 2004). In this case, the findings have validity within the industry, but not in the common workplace and must be interpreted accordingly.

Last, we measured follower intentions to quit rather than turnover. Although measuring the behavioral outcome would have been optimal (Allen et al., 2003), with this sample we were limited to an investigation of intentions. In order to mitigate this limitation we measured the

independent and dependent variables one week apart. Additionally, we measured both cognitive and behavioral predictors of turnover. Certainly, an investigation of actual turnover behavior, and its variety of antecedents, within an expansive multivariate, longitudinal model would have explained variance above and beyond that discovered in this investigation. However, workers in the aerospace industry are often limited to working in said industry. Therefore one of the few turnover options available to an engineer with industry-specific training is to change projects within a firm rather than change firms.

Conclusion

There has been a call for the integration of prominent perspectives of leader-follower relations (Avolio et al., 2003) and more research to support recent investigations of LMX quality as a mediator of workplace outcomes (Avolio et al., 2009). Given these calls and a number of studies in which the mediating role of LMX has been investigated (Basu & Green, 1997; Deluga, 1992; Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999; Lee, 2008; Wang et al., 2005), we have explored the effects of transformational leadership and LMX on two important workplace outcomes: intentions to quit and job search behaviors.

In sum, one purpose of this research is to consider both the prominent theories of LMX and transformational leadership to better understand if and how they are related with followers intentions to quit and job search behaviors. We anticipate that insights from this research will enable future researchers to consider how best to integrate these two theories moving forward to create more sustainable and meaningful models of leadership for both research and practice.

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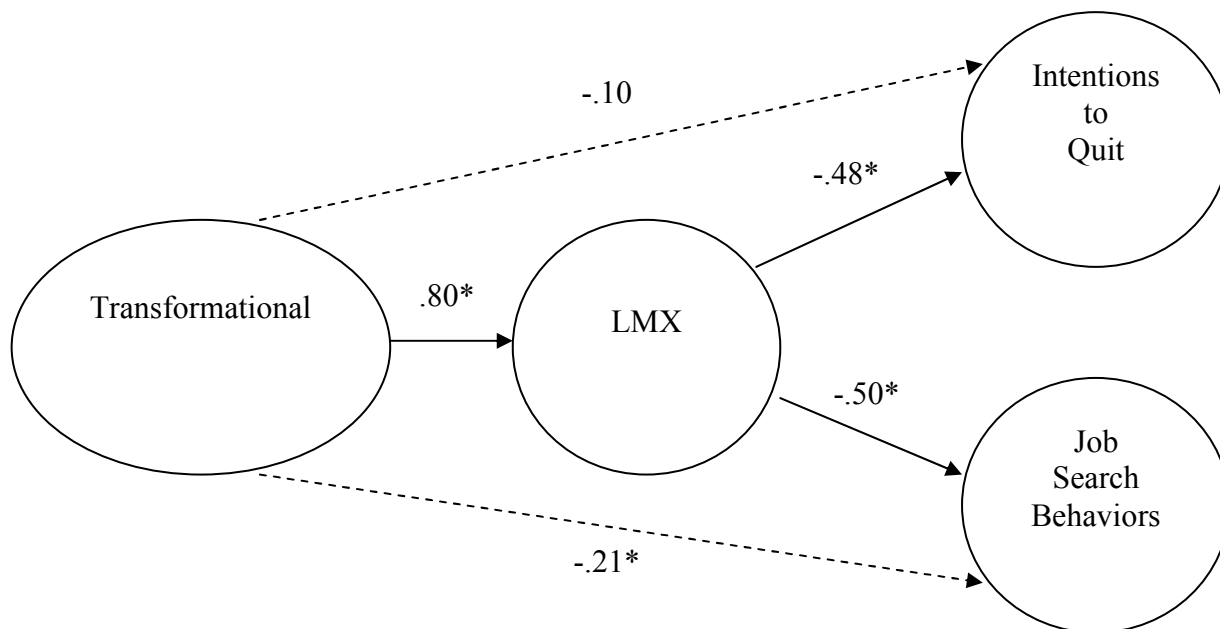
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Figure

Figure 1 caption: Transformational leadership and LMX structural equation model.



Note. Analyses conducted with the full structural equation model including all items. * $p \leq .05$. (χ^2 (896) = 1402.316, $p < .01$, CFI = .92, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .06).

Table

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Transformational Leadership	189	3.93	0.71	0.95			
LMX	189	4.16	0.78	0.68 *	0.90		
Intentions to quit	170	6.09	1.05	-0.28 *	-0.35 *	0.94	
Job search behaviors	170	1.45	0.59	-0.21 *	-0.31 *	0.63 *	0.93

Note. Elements on the main diagonal are alpha reliabilities. * = .01