

Impact of Socialization on Transformational Leadership: Role of Leader Member Exchange

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Abstract. This study examined the relationship between socialization of subordinates, superiors' self-reported transformational leadership, and subordinate-rated quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship. Seven dimensions of socialization (tolerance towards unethical behaviors, assertiveness, working long hours, doing tasks well, emphasizing harmonious relationships, self-confidence, and independence) and four mediums of socialization (family, school, peers, and media) were studied using a sample of 102 pairs of managers and subordinates from a large public sector bank in India. Results reveal that subordinates' being socialized to be less assertive enhances superiors' transformational leadership. The hypothesis that LMX as perceived by subordinates would moderate the effect of socialization on transformational leadership was not supported. However, LMX is positively related to subordinates' being socialized to be self-confident.

Within the last decade and a half, exceptional leaders who infuse ideological values and moral purpose into organizations and who have extraordinary effects on their followers and organizations have captured the attention of leadership scholars (e.g., Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991). Various labels such as charismatic, transformational, inspirational, and visionary, these exceptional leaders have qualitatively different and quantitatively greater effects on their followers than the effects of exchange or transactional leaders. The study of transformational leadership in the organizational sciences has primarily focused on the personal characteristics and qualities of the leader. However, several contextual factors affect the emergence and effectiveness of transformational leadership. Characteristics of followers constitute one such contextual factor (Erhart & Klein, 2001). This paper attempts to look at the impact of followers' socialization on transformational leadership. As Bass (1990) observed, leadership can be attributed not only to the exceptional individual, but to the exceptional situation and to the interaction between the two as well. The interaction between the leader and the follower has been studied under various exchange theories, leader member exchange (LMX) being one of them. Though much work has been done in this regard (e.g., Bauer & Green, 1996; Liden & Graen, 1980; Scandura, 1999; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996), work still needs to be done towards understanding the follower, especially in context of differences that exist because of socialization. This study aims to see how followers who have been socialized differently,

would differentially affect the emergence of transformational leadership. The role of LMX in such relationships is also studied.

Theory and Hypotheses

Burns (1978) defined leadership as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations, the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations of both leaders and followers. The essence of leader-follower relation is the interaction of persons with different levels of motivation and of power potential, including skill, in pursuit of a common or at least joint purpose. That interaction, however, takes two fundamentally different forms—transactional and transformational.

Transformational Leadership

The concept of transformational leadership was introduced by Burns (1978) to describe the process by which leaders effect radical change in the outlook and behavior of followers. “Transformational leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p. 20). Bass (1985) extended Burns’ work and applied it to various types of organizations, defining a transformational leader as one who motivates followers to do more than they originally expected to do. He postulated that transformational leadership could move those influenced to transcend their own self-interest for the good of the group, organization, or country. It sharply arouses or alters the strength of needs, which may have lain dormant. Transformational leadership consists of four factors—idealized influence, inspirational leadership, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence in turn consists of two factors—idealized influence attributed and idealized influence behavior. Authors (for e.g., House et al., 1991) have also used the term charismatic leadership to refer to transforming leadership or leadership that transforms others. Bass’s (1985) transformational leadership and Conger and Kanungo’s (1987) charismatic leadership have evolved as two independent streams of research, but the two constructs are used by authors as identical twins if not synonyms. The two terms transformational leadership and charismatic leadership have been used interchangeably, and sometime even a combined term like transformational/charismatic leadership is used.

Transformational leaders are responsible for performance beyond expectations as they transmit a sense of mission, stimulate learning experiences, and arouse new ways of thinking (Hater & Bass, 1988). Schein (1978) described behaviors associated with transformational leaders as integral to creating and manipulating organizational culture. Those who displayed leadership that is more transformational contributed positively to achievement of business unit goals (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Using constructive or developmental theory, Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) viewed the likelihood of transformations to be a function of ongoing changes in how leaders and followers process and organize information about the world.

Socialization

Socialization is the process by which people acquire the dominant beliefs, values, motives, and behaviors of their culture and gradually become more similar to other members of the cultural, ethnic or religious group (Janis, Mahl, Kagan, & Hole, 1969). Our environment bombards both men and women with subtle and not so subtle suggestions that some types of behavior are acceptable and other types of behavior are not. This environment can be divided into four agencies of socialization—family, schools, peer groups, and mass media (Eshleman, Cashion, & Basirico, 1993). Deaux and Major (1987) proposed that

behaviors are influenced by expectations of perceivers, self-systems of the target, and the situational cues.

Behavioral differences due to socialization. The assumption is that the important, lasting socialization takes place during the childhood years (Smith & Rogers, 2000). A major example of the effects of socialization is the widely accepted set of norms that are different for men and women. Posner and Powell (1985) have concluded that because of experiences that occur before employment, men and women may differ in the ways in which they interpret organizational cues, and make sense of their organizational environments once they are employed. Men may be more socialized to view certain activities as helpful when they are made available, whereas women may not be preconditioned to respond to their availability. It should however be noted that the impact of socialization is visible not only across men and women, but also across several other categories. Socialization simply predisposes people to behave in different ways. In this study, we only looked at socialization outside the organization. Therefore, socialization practices adopted by the organization surveyed were not part of the study.

Contextual Factors and Transformational Leadership

Studies suggest that crisis, and associated uncertainty, may foster the emergence of charismatic leadership (House et al., 1991). Waldman, Ramirez, House, and Puranam (2001) suggest that charismatic leadership will only have effects under conditions of environmental uncertainty. Times of stressful change encourage a longing among individuals for a leader who offers attractive solutions and visions of the future or charismatic leaders have an easier time promoting a transformational vision during times of uncertainty, when the status quo appears no longer to function (Bryman, 1992). Shamir and Howell (1999) proposed that charismatic leaders are more likely to emerge under conditions of turbulence and crisis than under conditions of stability and continuity. They further proposed that it is more likely to emerge and be effective in psychologically weak situations than in psychologically strong situations. Being lower in self-confidence, less independent and less assertive can be considered a state of psychological weakness. Therefore, it can be said that when followers are psychologically weak, leaders are likely to exhibit transformational leadership behaviors more frequently.

A distinction needs to be drawn between emergence of transformational leadership and the effect of transformational leadership. A state of psychological weakness like the followers being low in self-confidence would facilitate the emergence of transformational leadership, but transformational leadership behaviors once demonstrated might actually enhance the self-confidence of followers. Priyabhashini and Krishnan (2000) found that transformational leadership was positively related to leaders' expectations from followers, which in turn was positively related to followers' readiness to shoulder greater responsibilities. Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) presented a self-concept based theory of charismatic leadership according to which the transformational effect brought on by such leadership was by focusing on followers' self-concept. Shamir, Zakay, Brainin, and Popper (2000) demonstrated that leadership behaviors like emphasizing shared values and collective identity enhanced the level of social identification of followers.

That culture plays a role in emergence of leadership in general and transformational leadership in particular has received support from several authors. A nurturant-task style of leadership has been shown to be an effective leadership style in the Indian culture (Sinha, 2000). Singh and Bhandarker (1990) demonstrated that effective transformational leaders in India are like heads of Indian families taking personal interest in the welfare of their

followers. Leaders in Indian organizations are therefore more likely to exhibit transformational behaviors if their followers are more self-effacing in approaching the leaders.

Hypothesis 1. Subordinates' being socialized to be less assertive, self-confident, and independent would enhance superiors' self-reported transformational leadership.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

Leader-member exchange (LMX) is (a) a system of components and their relationships, (b) involving both members of a dyad, (c) in interdependent patterns of behavior, and (d) sharing mutual outcome instrumentalities, and (e) producing conceptions of environment, cause maps and value (Scandura, Graen, & Novak, 1986).

In-groups and out-groups. Certain subordinates chosen because of (a) competence and skill, (b) extent to which they can be trusted (especially when not being watched by supervisor), and (c) motivation to assume greater responsibility within the unit are given preferential treatment by the leader. These selected subordinates (in-group members) make contributions that go beyond their formal job duties and take on responsibility for the completion of tasks that are most critical to the success of the unit. In return, they receive greater attention, support, and sensitivity from the superiors (Liden & Graen, 1980).

Transformational leadership, LMX, and socialization. Bass (1985) termed the charismatic as "an idolized hero, a messiah, and savior who appears in times of great distress" (p. 37). Burns (1978) said that followers are moved towards such heroes "by their need to overcome their frustrations through projecting their fears, hopes, and aggressions onto heroes who can provide at least symbolic solutions; by their need for identification with the mighty and the awesome; by their need for esteem for performers who bestow recognition and flattery on them—and thus by their need for self-esteem" (p. 246). Therefore, socialization along specific lines would be related to transformational leadership, but this relationship between socialization and transformational leadership would however be stronger if the quality of exchange relationship between leader and follower as seen by the latter is also high. If the subordinates who have been socialized to be less assertive, self-confident, and independent considered themselves as also part of the leader's in-group (i.e., higher LMX), then the leader is likely to exhibit transformational leadership behaviors even more frequently.

Hypothesis 2. LMX would enhance the effect of being socialized to be less assertive, self-confident, and independent, on transformational leadership.

Method

Survey method was used and data was collected from 102 pairs of managers and subordinates of a public sector bank in India. Respondents belonged to nine branches of the bank spread over three states in northern India. Managers who responded occupied the positions of Regional Manager, Branch Manager, and Assistant Branch Manager. Of the managers who reported their gender, 81 were males and 12 were females. Median age of the managers was 43 years (range: 30 to 58 years), the median organizational tenure was 18 years (range: 6 to 36 years), and more than half the managers were occupying the current position for at least 3 years (range: 1 to 10.5 years). Sixty-nine of the managers were post-graduates and the remaining had done specialization in different subjects or areas beyond mere post-graduation. The subordinates who responded were at one or more hierarchical levels lower than their respective managers, though all of them had a direct reporting relationship with

their managers. The subordinates held the posts of Assistant Manager, Head Clerk, and Assistant. Of the subordinates who reported their gender, 51 were females and 42 were males. The median age of the subordinates who responded was 38 years (range: 26 to 49 years), and the median organizational tenure was 11 years (range: 2 to 24 years). The median duration for which the subordinates were working under their current superior (manager) was 2 years (range: 1 to 6.5 years). Eighty of the subordinates were graduates and the remaining post-graduates.

Two questionnaires, one for the superior and one for the subordinate, were administered. The Bass and Avolio (1991) 47-item Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was filled by the superior. Self-report was used instead of subordinate rating to measure transformational leadership because we wanted to capture the extent to which leaders would exhibit transformational leadership behaviors as a response to subordinates' socialization. It measured five factors of transformational leadership—idealized influence attributed (8 items), idealized influence behavior (10 items), inspirational leadership (10 items), intellectual stimulation (10 items), and individualized consideration (9 items)—on a five point scale (0=Not at all; 1=Once in a while; 2=Sometimes; 3=Fairly often; and 4=Frequently, if not always). The Cronbach alphas for the five scales were respectively 0.61, 0.72, 0.78, 0.65, and 0.78. The mean of the items in each scale was taken as the score for that factor. The mean of the five factors was taken as the score for transformational leadership.

For the subordinates, the LMX 7-item scale (Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982) and a set of questions evaluating the impact of socialization on the subordinate formed the questionnaire. The LMX 7-item scale is considered the best measure of LMX (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Scandura, 1999; Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999). The LMX questionnaire is included in Appendix A. Subordinate rating was used for measuring LMX because we were interested in its interaction with subordinates' socialization. Responses were recorded on a 5-point scale (Graen et al., 1982). The mean of the seven items was taken as the score for LMX.

To measure socialization, data was captured in a matrix form. The seven socialization dimensions, i.e. tolerance towards unethical behaviors, assertiveness, working longer hours, doing tasks well, emphasis on harmonious relationships, self-confidence, and independence formed one side of the matrix, and the four agencies of socialization, i.e., family, schools, peer groups, and mass media (Eshleman et al., 1993) formed the other side of the matrix. The questionnaire is included in Appendix B. Respondents were required to fill in the extent to which each of the agencies of socialization had an impact on or influenced them. For example, the cell in the first row and first column captured the extent to which the family had an impact on or influenced the respondent in becoming tolerant towards unethical behaviors. Responses were recorded on a 5-point scale. For each of the seven socialization dimensions, the mean of the four agencies of socialization was taken as the score for socialization. An analysis of variance was carried out to test if sex played a role in the way people were socialized towards the seven dimensions being considered in this study. There was no significant difference in the socialization dimensions between men and women.

Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha), and the correlations between all variables. Transformational leadership was significantly negatively correlated to assertiveness (the extent of socialization to be assertive), but was not significantly related to the remaining six dimensions of socialization. Hence, Hypothesis 1 was supported only in the case of assertiveness. LMX was significantly

positively correlated to self-confidence (the extent of socialization to be self-confident), and was not significantly related to the remaining six dimensions of socialization or to transformational leadership.

Taking one dimension of socialization at a time, a regression analysis of transformational leadership was done on LMX, the dimension of socialization, and the product of LMX and socialization to test Hypothesis 2. The product of none of the socialization dimensions with LMX explained significant additional variance in transformational leadership beyond what was explained by only the socialization dimension and LMX. There was thus no moderating effect of LMX on the relationship between any socialization dimension and transformational leadership. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. We also did a partial correlation analysis to look at the relationships between socialization dimensions and transformational leadership after controlling for LMX. Controlling for LMX did not change the relationship between any of the seven socialization dimensions and transformational leadership. The negative relationship between assertiveness and transformational leadership continued to exist. The results of the partial correlation analysis are given in Table 2.

We did regression analyses with the forward-selection technique (Judge, Griffiths, Hill, Lutkepohl, & Lee, 1985) to see which of the eight independent variables (LMX and the seven dimensions of socialization) best predicted transformational leadership. Regression analysis with the forward-selection technique begins with no variables in the model. For each independent variable, it calculates F statistics that reflect the variable's contribution to the model if it is included. The variable that would produce the largest F statistic is added to the model. The evaluation process is repeated with the variables remaining outside the model. Once a variable is entered into the model, it stays. Thus, variables are added one by one to the model until no remaining variable produces a significant F statistic. We regressed transformational leadership on LMX and the seven socialization dimensions. Transformational leadership was best predicted by assertiveness. Assertiveness entered the model in step 1 and explained 5% variance in transformational leadership (parameter estimate = -0.07, $F = 4.60$, $p < 0.05$). Though emphasizing harmonious relationships entered the model in step 2 (model $F = 3.02$, $p < 0.10$), it did not explain significant additional variance in transformational leadership (parameter estimate = 0.04, $F = 1.42$, n.s.). The results are included in Table 3. We also repeated the analyses taking each of the five transformational leadership factors separately. Table 3 presents the results for those models for which the model and the entering independent variable were significant at .05 level.

Discussion

This study investigated how subordinate-reported LMX and the various aspects of socialization of subordinates are related to self-reported transformational leadership of superiors. The results reveal that if followers were socialized to be less assertive, then their leaders would exhibit leadership that is more transformational. This finding has important implications as it brings to light the role of contextual factors like follower socialization in transformational leadership.

According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership arouses and heightens motivation among followers. The finding that being less assertive enhances transformational leadership is perhaps the most relevant when it comes to identifying mentors for new recruits. Many companies, specially marketing oriented firms, recruit candidates who are assertive, probably because such a behavioral trait fits with the work environment of the company. However, this finding shows that when the subordinates are less assertive, the managers or

the leaders tend to exhibit transformational leadership, thus providing the subordinates emotional support and inspirational talks and enhancing their productivity. Therefore, the new recruit being assertive or not may not affect the organizational efficiency and productivity. A transformational leader relies on emotional appeals and inspirational talks to arouse the motivation of the follower, and mentoring requires executives who can tolerate emotional interchanges (Bass, 1985). Therefore, the present findings imply that followers or new recruits, who are less assertive, should be made protégés of mentors who have the potential to exhibit transformational leadership behaviors to enhance organizational productivity. It further implies that organizations should not be unnecessarily worried about choosing the “assertive” people, for it may not be of much consequence whether the candidate is assertive or not; managers might exhibit transformational leadership behaviors for less assertive followers to ensure appropriate levels of performance. The manner in which subordinates are socialized may not affect performance in the organization. The manager would exhibit different aspects of transformational leadership required to enhance subordinate productivity.

The findings further reveal that LMX as seen by subordinates is not significantly related to the frequency of transformational leadership behaviors exhibited by the leader. This is interesting considering that LMX and transformational leadership have traditionally been assumed to be positively related to each other. A closer look at the job profile of the leaders in our sample suggests some possible explanations. The job profile of the senior people sampled requires them to remain on tours for controlling the functioning of different branches of the bank. As a result, though the quality of interaction between the follower and the leader is high, the quantity is low, resulting in the followers respecting the ideals of the leader, but not getting individualized consideration or intellectually stimulated because of less time the leader spends with them in the office, guiding and correcting them. The differences that exist across hierarchical levels and the job profile of the seniors might explain why the leaders, while they may be rated by followers as having high quality LMX relationship, may not exhibit transformational leadership behaviors. This possibly suggests that in such organizations, where superiors are supposed to control many subordinates who are below them in hierarchy, and their job involves traveling, such policies should be formulated which allow healthy interaction between the subordinates and superiors—say weekly meetings—so that the level of motivation and productivity of the employees do not fall below desired levels.

These findings have some important implications for organizations in terms of their recruitment strategies, team building, and human resource policies. Socialization of followers may not affect their efficiency as their managers might adopt leadership behaviors to suit the followers’ socialization patterns.

Limitations and directions for future research. While this study provides preliminary evidence about the relationship between subordinates’ socialization to be assertive and superiors’ transformational leadership behaviors, there are limitations associated with the survey methodology. In addition, the generalizability of the findings may be questioned given that the survey was conducted in a public sector enterprise, as the work environment and culture is different in public sector and private sector enterprises in India. Similar research needs to be done in the private sector enterprises and results need to be compared. Further, the socialization variables of working longer hours, having self-confidence, and being independent had Cronbach alphas less than 0.50. Studying more agents of socialization apart from the four used in this study—family, school, peers, and media—could increase the reliability of these measures. In addition, using one item to capture each of the four agents

and each of the seven dimensions of socialization is a limitation of our socialization measures. Using multiple-item scales would enhance the reliability of findings.

The results of the current study indicate a need for future research efforts in several directions. Firstly, this study primarily aimed at the socialization of the follower and its impact on transformational leadership. The socialization patterns of the leaders could be studied to see their impact on the quality of LMX, and if any relationship exists between leaders and followers socialized towards similar behavioral patterns. Secondly, more research could be undertaken on sex issues and socialization patterns, or the socialization patterns of men and women under the same leader could be studied.

Conclusion. This study aimed at understanding the extent to which transformational leadership behaviors exhibited by leaders would vary depending upon followers' socialization patterns. The role of LMX was also studied. The findings show that subordinates' being socialized to be assertive is negatively correlated to superiors' transformational leadership. LMX as perceived by subordinates is not related to superiors' transformational leadership. However, LMX is positively related to subordinates' being socialized to be self-confident. These findings have important implications for practicing managers while recruiting new candidates, forming teams, and while formulating organizational human resource policies.

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Appendix A Leader-Member Exchange Questionnaire

Please indicate the degree to which each item below is true for you, by circling one of the responses.

1. Do you know where you stand with your leader...do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?

Rarely -- Occasionally -- Sometimes -- Fairly often -- Very often

2. How well does your leader understand your job problems and needs?

Not a bit -- A little -- A fair amount -- Quite a bit -- A great deal

3. How well does your leader recognize your potential?

Not at all -- A little -- Moderately -- Mostly -- Fully

4. Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, what are the chances that your leader would use his/her power to help you solve problems in your work?

None -- Small -- Moderate -- High -- Very high

5. Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your leader has, what are the chances that he/she would "bail you out" at his/her expense?

None -- Small -- Moderate -- High -- Very high

6. I have enough confidence in my leader that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so.

Strongly disagree -- Disagree -- Neutral -- Agree -- Strongly agree

7. How would you characterize your working relationship with your leader?

Extremely ineffective -- Worse than average -- Average -- Better than average --
Extremely effective

Appendix B Questionnaire Capturing Data on Socialization

Please judge how each of the four mediums has had an impact or influenced you on the factors listed. Fill in only one number in each cell.

Key	0	1	2	4	5
	Not at all	Very little	Fairly enough	Quite a lot	Maximum

Factor/ Medium	Family	School	Peer groups	Mass media
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a) Tolerance towards unethical behaviors

b) Assertiveness

c) Working long hours

d) Doing tasks well

e) Emphasizing harmonious relationships

f) Self-confidence

g) Independence

Tolerance towards unethical behaviors: This would include items like not cheating in an examination etc.

Assertiveness: Includes the demands and expression of strong emotion.

Table 1
Correlations between Variables ^a

(N=93)	M	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Transformational leadership	3.09	.26	(.83)								
2. Leader-member exchange	3.75	.73	.02	(.78)							
3. Tolerance-unethical behavior	1.70	.67	-.02	.13	(.59)						
4. Assertiveness	1.85	.81	*-.22	-.01	.08	(.66)					
5. Working long hours	1.71	.66	-.01	.15	.01	*.25	(.40)				
6. Doing tasks well	1.75	.72	.04	.02	.12	-.15	-.01	(.54)			
7. Harmonious relationships	1.67	.81	.13	-.12	** .28	-.04	.05	†.19	(.63)		
8. Self confidence	2.02	.71	-.11	*.23	.04	** .28	.14	**-.33	-.16	(.47)	
9. Independence	1.96	.67	-.07	.09	.01	*.22	** .29	.11	-.03	†.17	(.44)

^a Alphas are in parentheses along the diagonal.

† = $p < .10$. * = $p < .05$. ** = $p < .01$. *** = $p < .001$.

Table 2
Partial Correlations between Variables Controlling for Leader-Member Exchange

(N=93)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Transformational leadership							
2. Tolerance-unethical behavior	-.02						
3. Assertiveness	*-.22	.09					
4. Working long hours	-.01	-.00	*.26				
5. Doing tasks well	.04	.12	-.15	-.01			
6. Harmonious relationships	.13	** .31	-.04	.07	†.20		
7. Self confidence	-.12	.01	** .29	.12	***-.34	-.14	
8. Independence	-.07	-.00	*.22	** .28	.12	-.02	.16

† = $p < .10$. * = $p < .05$. ** = $p < .01$. *** = $p < .001$.

Table 3
Linear Regression Using the Forward Option

Dependent variable	Step	Independent variable entered	Parameter		Model	
			estimate	F	R ²	F
Transformational leadership	1	Assertiveness	-.07	*4.60	.05	*4.60
	2	Assertiveness	-.07	*4.41		
		Emphasizing harmonious relations	.04	1.42	.06	†3.02
Attributed charisma	1	Emphasizing harmonious relations	.14	**7.27	.07	**7.27
	2	Emphasizing harmonious relations	.12	*5.60		
		Self-confidence	-.12	*4.24	.12	**5.88
Idealized influence	1	LMX	.12	*4.46	.05	*4.46
Inspirational leadership	1	Assertiveness	-.13	*6.85	.07	*6.85

† = p < .10. * = p < 0.05. ** = p < 0.01.